



STRONG IN OUR WAY

Investing in Aboriginal Men.

Strengthening Families. Building Communities.

Executive Summary

Across Australia there is growing evidence, recognition in line with Government strategy, that lasting change is achieved when Aboriginal communities lead the design and delivery of solutions for their own people. Governments, philanthropy, and corporate Australia are increasingly looking beyond crisis response and investing in approaches that strengthen people, families and communities before challenges escalate.

At Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC), we believe one of the greatest opportunities for long-term social impact begins with Aboriginal men.

More than a decade ago, men in Kununurra asked for a culturally safe place where they could reconnect with culture and Country, strengthen identity, support one another, develop skills and grow as fathers, grandfathers, uncles, partners, mentors, and community leaders. They were not asking for another service. They were asking for somewhere they belonged.

KWAC listened.

Over the past decade, we have walked alongside Aboriginal men as they shaped what has become **Strong in Our Way**, an Aboriginal-led model that recognises strengthening men is not an end in itself, but one of the most powerful ways to strengthen families, communities and future generations.

Throughout that journey, one truth has remained constant.

When Aboriginal men are supported to heal, reconnect with culture and step confidently into leadership, the benefits extend far beyond the individual.

Families become stronger.

Children experience greater stability and positive role models.

Communities become safer and more connected.

Demand on crisis services reduces.

Aboriginal leadership grows.

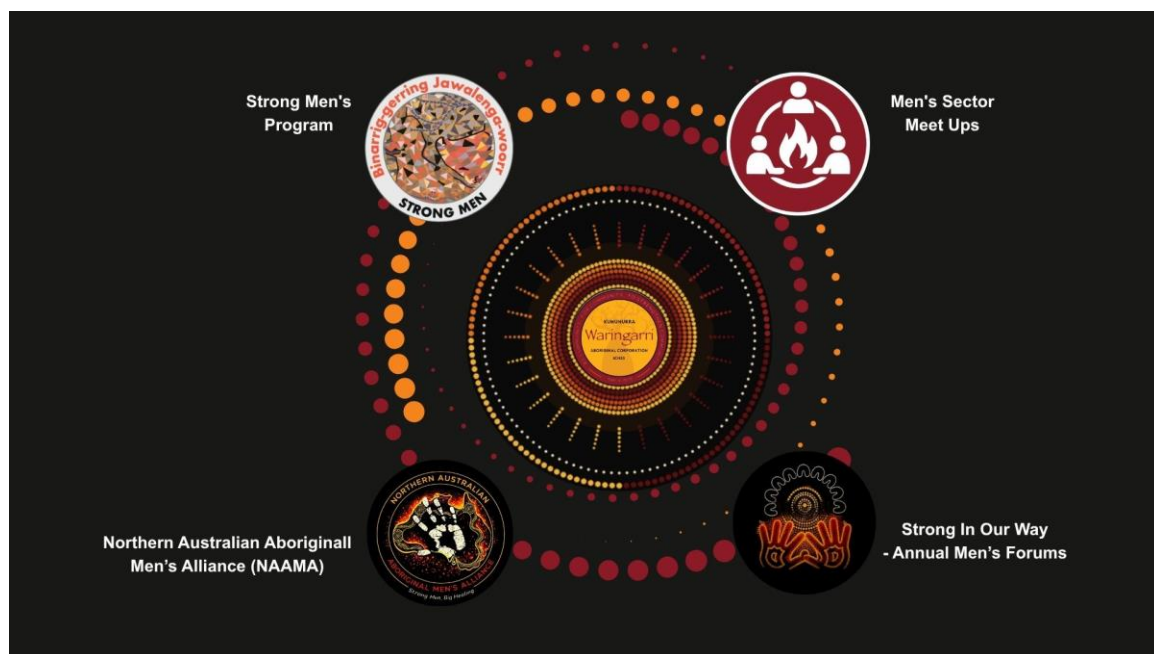
Future generations inherit stronger foundations.

Strong in Our Way is therefore not simply a men's program.

It is a community-led investment in prevention, leadership, and long-term community wellbeing.

At the heart of the model is the **Strong in Our Way Circular Healing Model**, a philosophy that recognises healing is not linear, leadership grows through accountability, belonging and responsibility, and every Aboriginal man should always have a place to return. Built by Aboriginal men over more than a decade, it provides the foundation for everything we do, from daily engagement and on Country healing to mentoring, leadership development, regional collaboration, and national advocacy.

Today, Strong in Our Way has grown into an integrated model that connects the **Strong Men's Program**, community-based activities, **men's sector collaboration**, the annual **Strong in Our Way – Men's Forum**, the **Northern Australian Aboriginal Men's Alliance (NAAMA)** and a growing prevention campaign that celebrates positive Aboriginal masculinity and leadership. Together, these initiatives form one connected approach to strengthening Aboriginal men so they can strengthen their families and communities.



The opportunity before us has never been greater.

Across Australia there is increasing recognition that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are best placed to lead place-based solutions, and that prevention delivers better outcomes than responding after harm has occurred. At the same time,

governments, philanthropic foundations, and corporate partners are seeking investments that create measurable social impact, strengthen community capability, and build long-term resilience.

Strong in Our Way responds directly to that opportunity.

This is a proven, evidence-based model, built through more than a decade of trusted relationships, practical delivery, and continual learning. Every element has been shaped by community experience and refined alongside the men who participate.

Over the next three years, KWAC will strengthen and expand this work by investing in six interconnected priorities:

1. strengthening healing, social, and emotional wellbeing, and cultural connection;
2. growing Aboriginal leadership, mentoring, and intergenerational knowledge sharing;
3. expanding workforce development and employment pathways;
4. strengthening collaboration across communities, organisations, services and sectors;
5. building the evidence base for Aboriginal-led prevention; and
6. sharing knowledge and influence across Northern Australia through NAAMA.

This is not about delivering more programs. It is about strengthening a community-led model that invests in Aboriginal men before crisis occurs, creating stronger families, safer communities, and better outcomes for future generations.

For more than 45 years, KWAC has walked alongside Aboriginal people in Kununurra and the surrounding communities as a trusted ACCO. Governed by a local Aboriginal Board and delivered predominantly by an Aboriginal workforce, our work is grounded in cultural authority, community leadership, and enduring relationships.

We know that lasting change cannot be delivered to communities.

It must be built with them.

Strong in Our Way represents an opportunity to invest in a proven Aboriginal-led approach that strengthens leadership, builds community capability, and creates lasting social impact. We invite governments, philanthropy, corporate Australia, and community partners to walk alongside us in building a future where Aboriginal men are recognised, supported, and empowered as leaders of positive change for their families, communities, and generations to come.

Why Aboriginal Men?

Strong in Our Way begins with a simple but powerful belief: when Aboriginal men are strong, families and communities are stronger.

For too long, conversations about Aboriginal men have been dominated by statistics that describe deficit and crisis rather than potential. While the challenges facing many Aboriginal men are real, they do not tell the whole story. Every day we see fathers wanting to be present for their children, Elders passing on culture, uncles mentoring young people and men striving to create better futures for their families.

Our experience, supported by growing evidence, shows that when Aboriginal men have opportunities to reconnect with culture and Country, strengthen identity, build healthy relationships and step into leadership, the benefits extend well beyond the individual. Families become more connected. Children experience greater stability and positive role models. Communities become safer. Demand on crisis services reduces while opportunities for prevention, healing, and self-determination increase.

Investing in Aboriginal men is therefore not about prioritising one group over another. It is a practical investment in stronger families, healthier communities, and better outcomes for future generations.

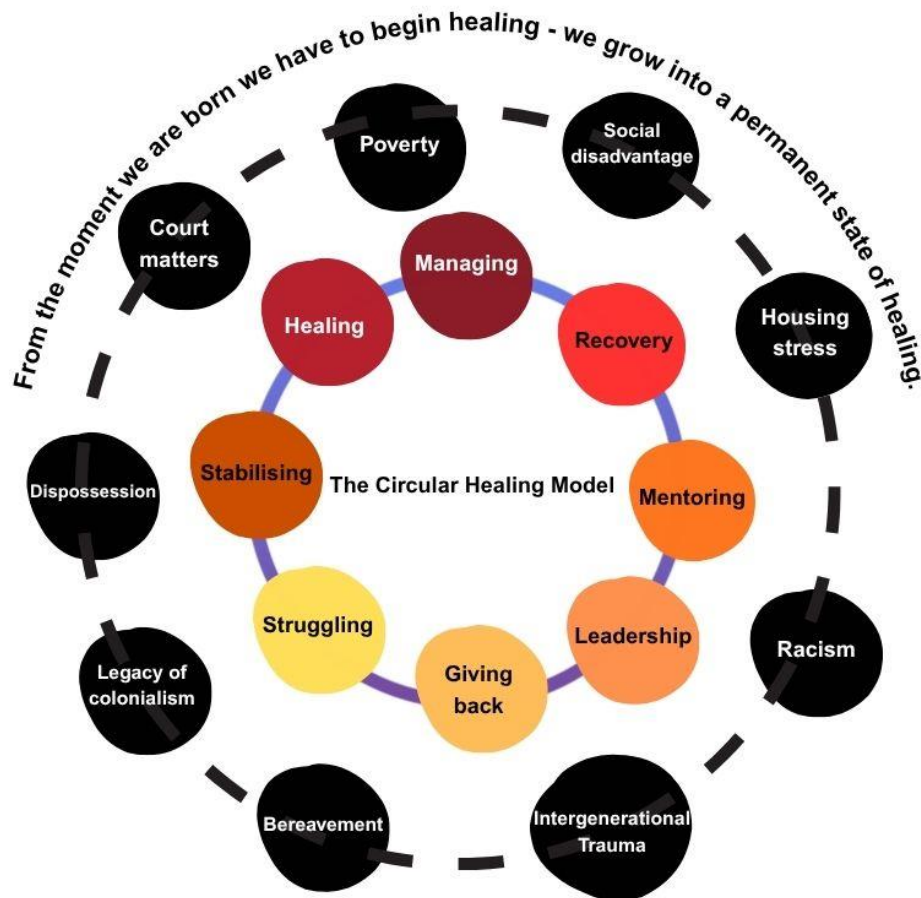
The Strong in Our Way Circular Healing Model

Strong in Our Way is built on a different understanding of change.

Traditional services are often designed around a linear pathway, people enter a program, complete it, and move on. Our experience, and the voices of Aboriginal men themselves, tell us something different. Healing is not linear. Life brings grief, family responsibilities, justice involvement, unemployment, periods of disconnection, and times of strength. Men move forward, experience setbacks and begin again. That is not failure; it is the reality of life.

At the heart of Strong in Our Way is the **Circular Healing Model**. It recognises that every Aboriginal man enters the journey at a different point, and every man has the capacity to grow from receiving support to becoming someone who supports others. Through belonging, cultural connection, responsibility and leadership, men strengthen not only themselves but also their families and communities.

Most importantly, the Circle remains. No matter where a man is on his journey, there is always a place to return—a place of belonging, culture, and hope.



A Community-Led Model

The Strong in Our Way Circular Healing Model explains how Aboriginal men grow and strengthen over time. Our community-led model explains how KWAC supports that journey.

At the centre is the daily Strong Men's Program, providing a culturally safe place where men build relationships, strengthen wellbeing and reconnect with culture. Around this are community activities, mentoring, on Country experiences and leadership opportunities that help men continue their journey. Beyond the individual, KWAC brings organisations together through Men's Sector collaboration to strengthen referral pathways and coordinated support. Regionally, the annual Strong in Our Way – Men's Forum creates opportunities for healing, leadership and shared learning on Country, while nationally the Northern Australian Aboriginal Men's Alliance (NAAMA) weaves a songline of connection of Aboriginal men across Northern Australia to share knowledge, strengthen leadership and influence future policy and investment.

Together, these initiatives are not separate programs. They are one integrated model that strengthens individuals, families, communities, and systems.



What We Deliver

Strong in Our Way delivers far more than activities. It creates opportunities for Aboriginal men to belong, heal, learn, lead, and give back.

Through daily engagement, on Country gatherings, cultural learning, mentoring, leadership development, practical skills, employment pathways, sector collaboration and regional forums, men are supported to strengthen their own wellbeing while contributing positively to their families and communities. Every activity is intentionally connected to the Strong in Our Way Circular Healing Model, recognising that men require different forms of support at different stages of their journey.

Rather than measuring success by attendance alone, we measure it by the strength of relationships, leadership, cultural connection, and the positive ripple effects experienced by families and communities.

Why KWAC?

For more than 45 years, KWAC has walked alongside Aboriginal people in Kununurra and the surrounding communities as a trusted ACCO. Governed by a local Aboriginal Board and delivered predominantly by an Aboriginal workforce, KWAC combines cultural authority with deep local relationships and practical experience.

Strong in Our Way has evolved through more than a decade of listening, learning, and walking alongside Aboriginal men. It has been shaped by community, refined through experience, and strengthened through trusted partnerships with government, local organisations and Aboriginal leaders. This long-term commitment positions KWAC to lead one of Australia's most significant Aboriginal-led approaches to strengthening men, families, and communities.

Investment Priorities

Over the next three years, KWAC will strengthen Strong in Our Way through six interconnected priorities:

1. strengthening healing and social and emotional wellbeing;
2. growing Aboriginal leadership and mentoring;
3. expanding workforce and employment pathways and developing a community of practice;
4. strengthening collaboration across communities and sectors;
5. building the evidence base for Aboriginal-led prevention;
6. and sharing knowledge nationally through NAAMA.

These priorities are designed to strengthen the entire Strong in Our Way model, ensuring Aboriginal men continue to have culturally safe places to belong, opportunities to grow as leaders and pathways to create lasting change within their families and communities.

Partnership Opportunities

Lasting change cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. It requires governments, philanthropy, corporate Australia, researchers, and communities working together around a shared vision.

KWAC is seeking partners who believe in Aboriginal-led solutions and recognise the value of investing in prevention rather than responding only after crisis has occurred. Whether through funding, workforce development, research, advocacy or strategic collaboration, every partnership strengthens our collective ability to build healthier families, safer communities, and stronger futures.

An Invitation to Walk Alongside Us

Strong in Our Way began because Aboriginal men asked for somewhere to belong.

Together, over more than a decade, we have built a model grounded in culture, relationships and community leadership that is creating stronger men, stronger families, and stronger communities.

The opportunity now is not simply to sustain this work, but to strengthen it, share it and demonstrate what is possible when Aboriginal men are recognised as leaders of positive change.

We invite governments, philanthropy, corporate Australia, and community partners to walk alongside us in investing in Strong in Our Way, because investing in Aboriginal men is an investment in stronger families, stronger communities, and stronger futures for generations to come.