

## Case Study

### Weaving together the brand identity of the Ngarrindjeri Nation



### Background

The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) is the peak Indigenous organisation in the Lower River Murray, Lakes and Coorong region of South Australia. Traditional owners came together to form this organisation following the controversy over the construction of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge in the 1990s and the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, an episode which forged their conviction to deal collectively with land management and cultural heritage. Today, the NRA represents more than 12 community organisations from a broad range of sectors including land care, traditional governance, eco-tourism, community services and cultural education.

While they stood firmly together in principle, the member organisations of NRA had never had a common brand or visual identity, except for the Ngarrindjeri flag. Instead, each community organisation used their own symbols, images and logos. This meant that NRA's collective identity was not widely understood, and opportunities were being missed for communicating the core values of Ngarrindjeri culture in a unified way. In an age where a digital presence is critical for engagement and advocacy, the lack of a common brand also meant NRA risked low visibility as a major player in the region.

In late 2015, the NRA asked Jawun for support with a marketing strategy, the centrepiece of which would be a new logo and brand representing the culture and values of the Ngarrindjeri Nation. Other components included branding to help the commercialisation of several Ngarrindjeri businesses. Seven of the NRA's member organisations agreed to be part of the project.

By February 2016, a Jawun secondee from the Department of Treasury and Finance from the South Australian government was deployed. Immacolata 'Mac' Bollella, Acting Manager of Communication Services, had the right skills and experience, and was keen to support the capacity of Indigenous organisations in the Lower River Murray region.

### Approach

Initially, Mac spent time listening to key Ngarrindjeri elders and community members, hearing their stories and aspirations as a nation. Through this, she began to build a picture of Ngarrindjeri spirituality and culture, and the importance of maintaining and passing this on. She remembers, *'I learnt about elders, their expectations and legacies – and how these are handed down through generations.'* Considering how to translate this into a unified 'comms strategy' was not an easy task, but Mac was undaunted: *'It was a challenging experience, which took me out of my comfort zone... exactly what I needed.'*

After the consultations with elders and community members, Mac did a desktop review of previous Ngarrindjeri branding efforts. She analysed how these matched the aspirations of the NRA and how they were perceived in the marketplace. She went back to elders and community members with ideas, emphasising to them the importance of a compelling brand and the components which make it successful. They gave feedback, and encouraged others in the community to join the consultative process.

## Outcomes

By the end of the secondment, Mac had delivered a marketing strategy and a new logo representing the culture and values of the Ngarrindjeri Nation. With this generated through community participation, there was confidence that it represented the Ngarrindjeri Nation faithfully. For the first time, member organisations could represent themselves externally in a way that was united and visually powerful.

Overall, NRA staff and partners agreed that the new marketing and branding products had enabled:

- **consistency** across all NRA and partner documentation;
- **confidence**, optimism and respect from those who support NRA the most, i.e. staff;
- **a community of supporters** and people who want to represent their culture – past, present and future;
- **education** among Ngarrindjeri citizenry of the legacy of their culture and their connection to people, land, water, plants and animals;
- **promotion** of Ngarrindjeri and their importance to the South Australian community; and
- **co-branding opportunities** for partner organisations to build positive and bold identities.

Mac's secondment also produced several other branding and marketing products to support Ngarrindjeri businesses. These included a new retail brand for three commercial garden nurseries, and a marketing brochure for Camp Coorong accommodation which is expected to increase the number of bookings. Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service adapted a version of the NRA branding for Moorundi Health Service, creating its own brand identity and a new uniform for health workers.

Taken together, the application of the new branding should drive local employment opportunities for Ngarrindjeri people, and further drive the sustainability of NRA and the Ngarrindjeri Nation. Clyde Rigney Jnr, CEO of Moorundi Health Services, spoke of the significant impact Mac's placement had for the whole Ngarrindjeri Nation:

*'Mac was able to translate a number of conversations with key elders and turn that into a logo that we can identify with and support together. Through this, Mac has helped our Nation take a step forward with our brand identity, and we've been acknowledged for this by key Indigenous leaders from other communities.'*

He added: *'Mac had the ability to work with people to get their comfort and trust, to quickly understand what Ngarrindjeri are about and then translate that into a body of work that is going to be really beneficial to us – we were very pleased to have Mac as Jawun secondee.'*

## Next Steps

Successfully applying the branding and marketing strategies developed by Mac is the next step in consolidating and strengthening the Ngarrindjeri Nation's brand identity, and in the commercialisation of several Ngarrindjeri-run businesses. Mac's secondment and its outcomes also prompted plans for the NRA to re-design their website and create a new intranet using the new branding's theme.