



## Become a member

**Danila Dilba is a community controlled Aboriginal health organisation with a Board elected by members. You can join your health service by asking for a membership application form at a clinic, or getting one from our website.**

## 25 years strong

**The 8th of November, 1991 was a day of great pride for Darwin's Aboriginal community with the official opening of Danila Dilba Health Service.**

Its beginnings as an Aboriginal community controlled health organisation go back to the 1970s — a time of great activism for Indigenous people across Australia.

After Cyclone Tracy hit in 1974, Darwin people were evacuated to southern cities where local Aboriginal medical services had started. People from the local Aboriginal community were impressed with the services and wanted their own one.

Danila Dilba grew out of the community, with people holding meetings, lobbying government, lodging petitions and even holding a 'sit-in' at government offices for a culturally appropriate primary health service for Indigenous people.

The name Danila Dilba Biluru Butji Binnilutlum was given to the service by the local Larrakia traditional custodians.

In the Larrakia language Danila Dilba means 'dilly bag used to collect bush medicines' and Biluru Butji Binnilutlum means 'Aboriginal people getting better from sickness'.

Our logo reflects this meaning and was designed by Larrakia elder, the Reverend Wally Fejo.

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The service was friendly, comfortable and provided holistic care. Danila Dilba was a safe place for Indigenous people to raise their concerns and find solutions to their health concerns.

Danila Dilba has grown significantly in size and capacity, from eight staff and one building in 1991 to five clinics, including separate men's and women's clinics, mobile and dental clinics, community programs and a staff of over 130 serving almost 12,000 clients in 2016.

Our Aboriginal Health Practitioner First policy, where new clients see an AHP before a GP, and our large Indigenous staff are the core of our culturally appropriate care.

## Why Danila Dilba Health Service was set up

**Barb Cummings, founding member, DDHS's first patient**

“My earliest time in Danila Dilba started in the late seventies really. I was working



*Barb Cummings*

as a field officer with DAA and the concept arrived about the need to have our own medical service. The late Sally Ross, who was from Alice Springs but worked as a health worker in the Katherine region, and I knew the population here in the Darwin region. So we chose to set up a committee, a Board of people who would be able to you know direct and look at establishing such a service. That's how it all started right from there. Rhonda Calma and myself who worked in the town camps, we did a survey in the town camps to gauge an opinion of those people as to whether or not they would like to have their own medical service, and they agreed they didn't want to go to the hospital they were happy to have their own medical service.”

**Sutti Ah Mat, founding member**

“For a long, long time there were a number of us that wanted to have their own community controlled medical services because of the obvious



*Sutti Ah Mat*

reasons where we were going to the hospital and we felt that we weren't getting that type of service that we should have been getting because of cultural reasons. I guess in a lot of cases a lot of our mob weren't seeking doctors. It's about us self-determining what we want to see happening at the service. We decide on the priorities for the type of service that we provide and if we have situations where we have an outbreak of some sort of illness, we're able to respond much quicker, because we're on the ground and we're listening to the community. That's important, that we listen to the community. I think it's a very good model because our numbers increased quite substantially, and that's a good indication that the service that you're providing is meeting the needs of the clients.”

## Social determinants of health

**What are the underlying causes of poor health? Why do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally have poorer health than other Australians?**

Problems are often beyond an individual's control and can be determined by the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age. On a basic level, factors such as access to clean water, sewerage and electricity, and overcrowding in housing are obvious examples of social factors that affect health.

Education, employment, income, housing, access to services, social networks, connection with land, racism, and incarceration all influence health. On all these measures, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples suffer substantial disadvantage.

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## Staff profiles

### Dr Fiona MacDonald

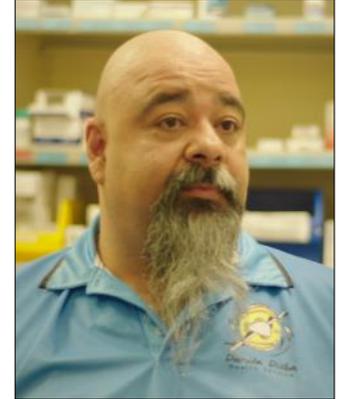
Dr Fiona McDonald has been with Danila Dilba from the very start as one of two doctors who founded the service. “It started in a little house in McLachlan Street. In the beginning, there was no medical equipment at all we just had copies of the Aboriginal Health Strategy and a desk and a phone. The original staff was much smaller - two doctors, two drivers, an Aboriginal health worker, a trainee Aboriginal health worker and a receptionist. We later moved to the clinic at Knuckey Street, and from there, Danila Dilba grew very rapidly. Because the need was there. Sometimes it’s difficult, both medically and socially, and things often don’t go well, but it’s really nice being part of the solution rather than part of the problem. It is different after 25 years. Different and the same, really. The clinics are different, the individuals are different, some of the health problems are different. But working with and for the community and building the relationships - which is what I value so much - is still the same.”



*Dr. Fiona MacDonald*

### Malcolm Darling, General Manager Darwin clinics

“I worked for the health department for 15 years, then I took on the health worker training at Danila Dilba. I enjoyed that and working the people, the clients, the staff... I’ve been working here for nearly 10 years. It’s a great environment to work in. I haven’t looked back! It’s actually great for people to come in and have an adult health check once a year. You come in, you have an hour appointment, they do your screening, do your bloods. It’s just to find out if anything may be an issue. That’s why this place works so well, it’s because we’ve got that holistic care. Our Aboriginal Health Practitioner First policy, where new clients see an AHP before a GP, is what makes our care culturally appropriate. That, and our large Indigenous staff.”



*Malcolm Darling*

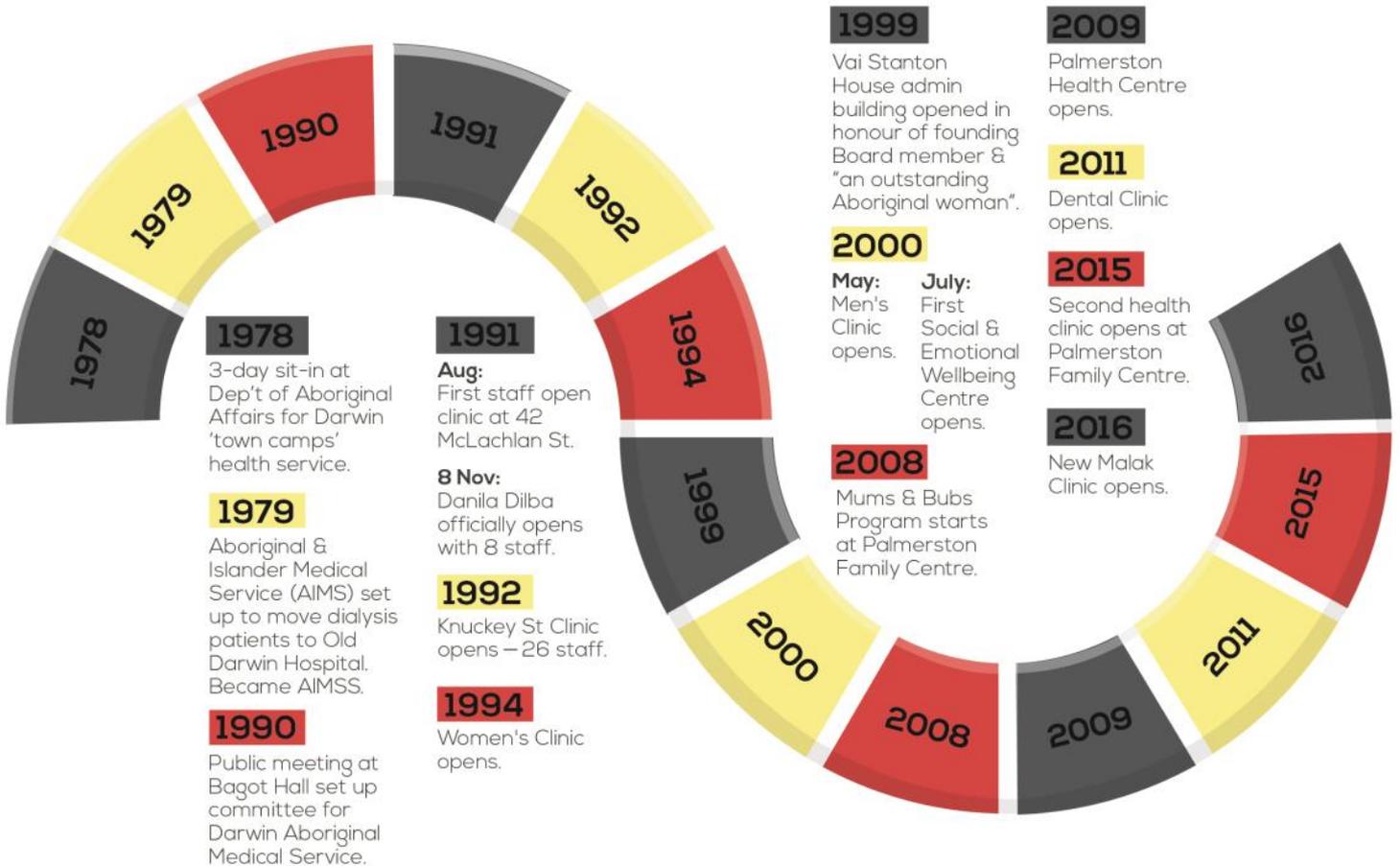
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Stressors such as intergenerational grief, insecurity, low self-esteem, and lack of control over work or home life can have powerful effects on health. For many Indigenous people, the ongoing effects of ‘protection’ and the forced separation of children from their families compound other social disadvantages.

It is also important to note that the impacts early in life can last a lifetime. Poor social and economic circumstances, or poor nutrition of mother or child, can lead to childhood problems and chronic conditions later in life.

Indigenous peoples in Australia generally enjoyed better health in 1788 than most people living in Europe. All of this changed after 1788. The health disadvantages experienced by Indigenous people can be considered historical in origin, but perpetuation of the disadvantages owes much to contemporary structural and social factors, embodied in what have been termed the ‘social determinants’ of health.

# Danila Dilba Health Service timeline



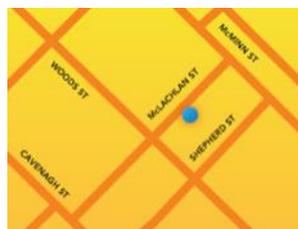
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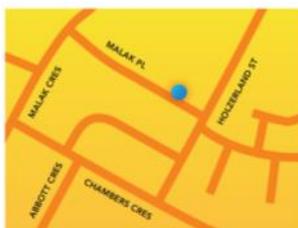
www.daniladilba.org.au



### Men's Clinic

42 McLachlan St,  
Darwin NT 0800

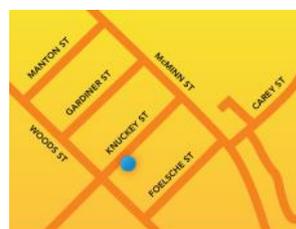
(08) 8942 5495



### Malak Clinic

Shop 3, 1 Malak Place,  
Malak NT 0812

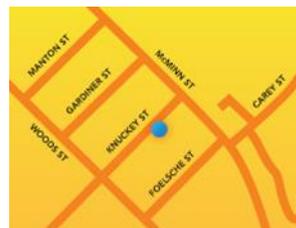
(08) 8920 9500



### Community Programs

Enterprise House  
28-30 Knuckey St,  
Darwin NT 0800

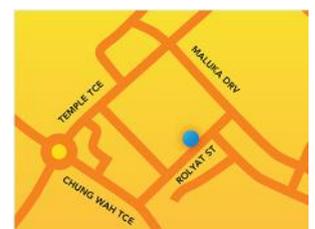
(08) 8942 5400



### Knuckey St Clinic

32-34 Knuckey St,  
Darwin NT 0801

(08) 8942 5444



### Palmerston Health Centre

Unit 1/7 Rolyat St,  
Palmerston NT 0831

Health Clinic  
(08) 8931 5711

Family Centre  
(08) 8931 5700