

Newsletter



August 2025



From the CEO

It is exciting to see that building has commenced on the extension to the clinic. Workers have been very busy in realigning the power and water connections and the land has been graded in readiness for the building to commence. We are expecting that the project will be completed by June next year.

Congratulations to both Lionel Cooper (clinic) and Jessica Matthews (travel) for being nominated employee's of the month for July; both workers are well regarded by their colleague's for their support and excellent work ethic.

We are negotiating with the Commonwealth government the terms and conditions for the impending building to take place at our Aged Care facility; an Architect has been appointed to oversee the development of the project; it is anticipated the building will be finalised by 2027.

The new Renal unit is also currently under consideration, with the \$4M grant being formalised; a prefabricated building is to be built in Darwin and transported to Maningrida; this is a work in progress as plans for the new building have to be finalised and a building contractor appointed.

We were delighted to hear that Mala'la Health Service has been recognised by the Royal Australian College of General Practice, Northern Territory as the best performing General Practice in the NT.

The team at the Clinic are to be congratulated on the award which is testament to the commitment, hard work and organisation that enables us to provide a quality Primary Health Care service to Maningrida and the surrounding Homelands. Well done!

Ray Matthews
CEO



Retirement celebrations

We were delighted to be invited to Dr Christine Connors retirement in Darwin recently. Dr Christine Connors had been very supportive and involved with Mala'la over the past 40 years, particularly when we were transitioning to community control.



Dr Connors will be fondly remembered for her commitment to Primary Health Care in the Maningrida region. Mala'la board members Charlie, Reggie, Valda and Marissa presented Dr Connors with a large pandanus mat and conveyed our thanks and appreciation to Dr Connors for her support over the years.

Meet our newest team member!

We're excited to welcome Ashleigh Whittaker as the newest member of our PHC Office team in the role of Receptionist/Administration Officer!

Born in the Territory and raised between Darwin and Jabiru, Ashleigh brings a strong local connection and a friendly, community-focused attitude to the role. Outside of work, Ashleigh is an avid AFL player with the Southern Districts Crocs and is passionate about the outdoors—whether it's fishing, camping, or hunting, you'll find Ashleigh making the most of life outside. After spending 2.5 years travelling across Australia and covered half of Australia, Ashleigh has returned with stories, experience, and a love for life on the road—especially when shared with a beloved pack of five dogs that go everywhere with her and her partner.

Please make Ashleigh feel welcome as they settle into Maningrida and Mala'la.



Ashleigh Whittaker



Gold Coast Marathon

Mala'la physiotherapist Hamish Peberdy, nurse Nathan Rutledge and his wife, Monica, all travelled to the Gold Coast, QLD recently to compete in the 45th Gold Coast Marathon.

Great times were recorded by all and we are very proud of their effort and achievements.

Well done!



Quality & Safety

Training

We continue to look for opportunities to train and empower our community workers (ACW's) in their very important support role in the Primary Health Clinic. This month saw 3 ACW's, that work with and support the TB nurse, complete their 'Assisting with Administration of Medication' course.



In collaboration with The Menzies School of Health Research, Mala'la was able to deliver this course onsite with the assistance of the TB Nurse (Sophie Carey) and Quality & Safety Coordinator (Lorraine Harry), delivering the face to face components and supporting the online learning.



Will Martin, Damaris Murphy and Juan Darwin successfully complete this training, providing them with the skills needed to safely assist with administering medications to clients in the community. This was a very exciting time for all involved and we look forward to establishing further training in the near future.

Primary Health Care data

It is data reporting period so take a look at some of the highlights showing the great work the Primary Health Care team is doing:



84,500 client contacts! That's an average of **1625** contacts per week.



100% fully **immunised children** aged 6 month -2 years



82% of all children under 5 years were **screened for anaemia.**



81% of children under 5 years had an **ear check**, with only 9% with ear discharge.



81% of diabetic clients had their HbA1C (**diabetic blood check**) completed.

These measures show the great work the primary health care staff are doing in screening and preventative health measures to ensure that the community is strong and healthy.

Maningrida Healthy Women's Project

On 18th June, Women's Cultural Support Hub Coordinator Jessica Phillips and Menzies' project officer Norlisha Bartlett attended the Lowitja 4th International Health and Wellbeing Conference in Adelaide.

They spoke about our Healthy Women's Project, an innovative new program that supports self-determination of Maningrida women to take back control of their health.

With Diabetes still a major challenge across the Northern Territory, especially during pregnancy, the project focussed on prevention and support. Key priorities included health education, regular exercise and healthy food choices.



The Menzies' DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE team would like to say a big thank you to the women, community members, and families of Maningrida for their generosity of time, for trusting us with your stories, for participating in activities, and for welcoming us into your community.

We would also like to thank Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and especially the Women's Cultural Support Hub team for collaborating with us on this project.

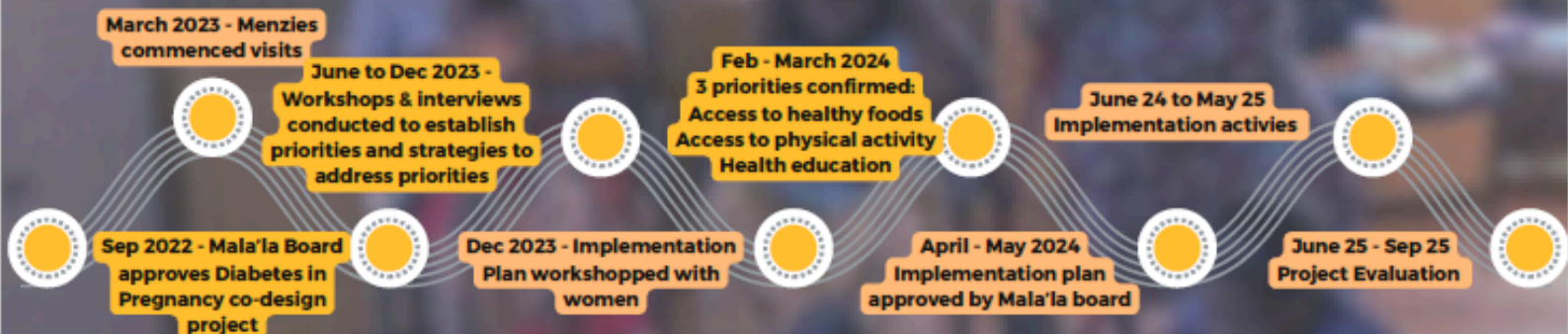
The Maningrida Healthy Women's project is being wrapped up, and implementation activities are now over. You may see members of our evaluation team in the community over the coming months, and we look forward to sharing with you what we have learned.

Take a look at our achievements on the next page.



Manayingkarinna HEALTHY WOMEN'S PROJECT

Our Journey - Led by Women, Guided by Community



What we achieved:



151

Maningrida women participated in an implementation activities



14

Physical activity sessions held



13

Health Education Sessions held



8

Community Engagement Events held

What we covered:

Health Education

13 sessions held, covering topics such as:

- Women's health
- Healthy cook up with dietitian x 2
- Bush medicine/skin health
- Healthy kidneys
- Checking Sugars

Physical activity

14 sessions held:

- 11 x water fun sessions, including warm up activities with physio
- 2 x stretching sessions, using exercise bands
- 1 x gathering pandanus

Stores & Nutrition

- The Mala'la dietitian and community stakeholders continue to work with the local stores to ensure access to healthy foods.
- Local stakeholders and Menzies provided feedback on the NT Remote Stores draft standards

Whats next?

- Menzies' evaluation team will be working with the community from June to September 2025 to see what we have learned so far
- The evaluation team will come back to Maningrida to discuss the evaluation findings. They plan to provide feedback to Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation sometime between late 2025 and early 2026.

We would like to thank the family and community members of Maningrida for their time and support.



If you have any questions, please contact
Norlisha Bartlett - Project Coordinator on
8946 8698 or ntdippartnership@menzies.edu.au



Murnun Men's Space

Training

Our team at the Men's Shed recently completed two additional units as part of their ongoing professional development, gaining valuable hands-on experience in chainsaw operation and quadbike safety.



Chainsaw Operation

During the chainsaw course, each team member disassembled, cleaned, maintained, and reassembled their chainsaw, ensuring the tension was correct.

These practical skills play a role when the team is out bush on remote camps, where safe and effective equipment handling is essential.

It was also a good reminder of the little extra tools needed specifically for chainsaw maintenance that must be on hand to perform proper maintenance.





Quadbike Safety

Although the Men's Shed has no plans to purchase quadbikes due to the high risk of injury and fatality associated with them, staff undertook this unit to better understand industry-standard safety protocols.

The training focused on safe driving techniques, terrain awareness, and vehicle handling on varied slopes and ground.

Training like this empowers our team to operate confidently and responsibly in challenging environments—and keeps safety front and centre in everything we do.



Strong Fathers Program

Our Strong Fathers Program supports both Ndjebbana and Burarra dads' groups who head out bush each week to hunt, yarn, and bring food back for their families.

The program is open to any dad under the age of 25, with a special focus on supporting young fathers who may have left school early.

It's a chance to reconnect with culture, build community, and access further education and learning along the way. Some of our young dads are already well underway to completing their first VET courses.

We are hoping to start a Kuninjku dad's group in the future.



Primary Health Care

Construction begins on clinic expansion

Work is now underway on the expansion of the Manayingkarirra Primary Health Care Centre in Maningrida, a project set to improve access to health care and strengthen services for the region. The new build will add more clinical rooms, a dedicated rheumatic heart disease space, and a training room to support staff development and visiting health teams. The expansion is taking place at the current clinic site and is expected to be completed in 2026.

Mala'la's Primary Health Care Centre is one of the busiest clinics in the Northern Territory, recording over 40,000 client contacts a year. With approximately 3,500 residents living across Maningrida and surrounding homelands, the expansion will help meet the growing demand for local health care. "This is a much-needed investment in health infrastructure for our region," said Jessica Gatti, Mala'la's primary health care manager. "It means more space to care for our clients, more support for our staff, and more room for services that matter to our community."

The clinic will continue normal operations throughout the build, with no change to day-to-day service delivery. This project follows Mala'la's transition to community control and its continued focus on Indigenous-led, community-driven health care in Arnhem Land.

While the clinic will stay open during the construction period, there will be some unavoidable disruptions such as temporary changes to clinic access points, closure of parking areas and roads, noise and construction activity and planned power and water outages. Power and Water Corporation will notify the community in advance of any service interruptions. Mala'la Health Service will also share regular updates as the build progresses.

"We thank the community for their patience while this expansion is underway," Jessica said.



Flu Vaccination Week

Over 4 days in July, we led a community-wide flu vaccination drive delivering nearly 600 vaccines across Maningrida.

The outreach program saw 3 teams of nurses, health workers and community staff going door-to-door, visiting homes, workplaces, Maningrida College and community hubs to offer flu and COVID vaccines. Residents also had the option to get vaccinated at Mala'la Clinic.

Binh Van Phan, Mala'la's Senior Project Officer, who coordinated the outreach effort said the drive was important for protecting themselves and their families. "We worked closely with community members to support informed decision-making and make the process easy," said Binh.

"Our outreach approach helped us reach people who might not otherwise attend the clinic." Flu can affect anyone, but it can be more serious for older people, young children, and those with underlying health conditions. The flu shot helps reduce the risk of severe illness and hospitalisation.

The flu vaccination drive is part of Mala'la's broader work to support community health through early prevention, local leadership and strong community relationships.



TB Warriors update

We recently hosted the Menzies TB REACT team in Maningrida for a week-long visit focused on improving tuberculosis (TB) care and awareness. The visit was part of ongoing work around resource development and community consultation to support the delivery of latent TB therapy in remote settings.

Over the week, the REACT team worked alongside Mala'la's local staff and community members to draft a standard operating procedure (SOP) for delivering TB treatment in community settings. With the REACT team based in Maningrida for an extended period, the team had the time and space to consult carefully and meaningfully with Traditional Owners, health staff and residents.

"Tuberculosis can be complex and tricky to explain," said Sophie Carey, Mala'la's TB nurse. "That's why it's so important to work with the community to get the messaging right."

They developed key health messages in plain language and worked on new visual materials to support community understanding. This included drafting a flipbook and scripting a series of short videos which will be translated into local Aboriginal languages with support from community members.



Supporting Health on Outstations

As the dry season returns to Arnhem Land, many Maningrida families head back to their homelands and outstations. In response, we have resumed our outreach health care directly to outstations.

Each week, a small team consisting of a nurse, doctor, and community worker travel out to provide basic medical care, wellness checks, vaccinations and follow-up support.

So far this season, the team has visited Jimarda, Buluh Kaduru, Borlkdjam, Gochan Jiny-Jirra, and Gamardi with many more scheduled through the dry season. Some outstations have a few residents while others can have up to 40 to 50 people.

"We work with Traditional Owners to make sure it's the right time to visit and that the right people are on the trip. Everyone has to be safe and respectful."

During the trips, the check-ups vary immensely. The team responds to whatever health needs come up on the day from general check-ups to recalls that might be missed otherwise. "You're also responding to any health problems that people raise while you're there," Sophie added.

Our health workers need to have some cultural considerations when visiting outstations. Events such as funerals or ceremonies can affect when and how site visits happen.

From the SCG to Maningrida: Strengthening “Kick the Habit” Partnerships

In May, representatives from Maningrida travelled to Sydney to join the Sydney Swans for the AFL’s Sir Douglas Nicholls Round – known as “Marn Grook at the SCG.” This special round celebrates the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the game, and built on the strong relationship formed last year during Mala’la’s Kick the Habit campaign and AFL carnival.

Mala’la was represented by Chairperson Charlie Gunabarra, Health & Community Services manager Lesley Woolf, and TIS Coordinator David Freier. They were joined by other Maningrida stakeholders, including David Jones (DJ) and Seide Ramadani from Nja-marléya, Sergeant Timothy Gillahan from NTPFES, and AMSANT’s Top End TIS lead, Professor David Thomas.

Over three busy days, the group toured Swans HQ, met players and coaches, visited La Perouse and Redfern AMS, and attended the Chairman’s function before watching the Swans take on Carlton at the SCG. There were also lighter moments – at the Captains Run, DJ surprised everyone by slotting a goal through the posts, making him the first person from Maningrida to kick a goal on the SCG. Despite being a lifelong Hawthorn Hawks supporter, DJ admitted he had a soft spot for the Swans now.



For Charlie, the trip was also a journey down memory lane, as he recalled the last time he was in Sydney was for a Scout Jamboree in the 1960s.

This visit strengthened relationships between Maningrida organisations and the Sydney Swans, ensuring that the Kick the Habit partnership will continue to grow. We look forward to welcoming the Swans back to Maningrida in the future, working together to inspire our community towards healthy, smoke-free living.



Aged Care & Community Services

Washing Waitlist

We are currently experiencing some unexpected delays with the repairs of two broken washing machines, leaving us with only one washing machine in operation.

Our daily washing is a huge undertaking with many HCP, CHSP and NDIS clients, as well as all our Aged Care facility's laundry needs. Therefore, if you have recently been assessed as needing our laundry service, you will be placed on a waiting list.

We are hoping that the repairs will be completed soon and we can have our laundry service be back up running as soon as possible.



Weekly BBQ's

Our weekly BBQ continues to be a much-anticipated event that brings joy and variety to everyone's routine, creating moments of laughter, connection, and shared experiences. It is definitely a favourite time of the week for everyone, especially for the NDIS children.



20th Anniversary Celebration

This year marks the 20 years since the opening of our Aged Care facility.

We will be celebrating this milestone on Thursday the 28th August with a BBQ for our clients and their families.

We are hoping old staff members that have been with us over the course of these 20 years will be joining us for the celebration as well.

New Aged Care Act

The Australian Government has developed the new Aged Care Act 2024 which aims to make Australia's aged care system stronger.

It will change how aged care providers deliver services to older people in their homes, community settings and residential care homes. It will introduce laws to make sure aged care is safe, and people are treated with respect and have quality of life. It will also replace the aged care laws we have now.

The new Act comes into effect on the 1st of November 2025 and will align with the launch of the New Support at Home Program. This means that the Home Care Package Program as it's currently known will become the Support at Home Program. The CHSP program will in time move over to the Support at Home Program as well.

The 'Statement of Rights' and 'Statement of Principles' will replace the 'Charter of Rights', which is what our clients sign when they sign up for services after being assessed for aged care services by My Aged Care.

Under the new Act, the new Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards will be:

Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards



The National Regulator will continue to conduct regular audits of our aged care services to ensure that we comply with the new Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards as listed in the new Act.

If you have any questions about the changes to the Aged Care Act or how this may affect you and the services you or your family member receives, come see us at Aged Care or give us a call.

