

Kamira

PASSIONATELY INSPIRING WOMEN
TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGE IN THEIR LIVES

*Kamira is committed to breaking the cycle of intergenerational removal of children
from their mothers due to the impacts of substance dependency*

2024 - 2025
ANNUAL REPORT



Kamira provides treatment services on Darkinjung Country and welcomes clients from across what is now known as New South Wales.

We acknowledge the Darkinjung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, and recognise their continuing connection to this land and these waters.

We commit to respecting the lands we walk on, and the communities we walk with, as we work to provide a healing place for women on land where Aboriginal people have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation, healing and renewal. We further acknowledge that this land was, is and always will be Aboriginal land.

Kamira acknowledges and thanks our funding bodies:

- *NSW Health*
- *Department of Health and Ageing*
- *Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECC PHN)*

OUR VALUES



We value **respect**, which means we recognise and nurture the dignity, rights and contributions of everyone.



We value **integrity**, which means we emphasise honesty, transparency, and ethical behaviour in all our actions and decisions.



We value **collaboration**, which means we work together, share knowledge, and leverage diverse perspectives.

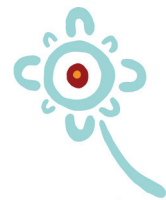
OUR VISION

A place where women are empowered to access compassionate, culturally responsive care and support to achieve lasting wellness and thrive.

OUR PURPOSE

Kamira provides holistic, culturally safe and non-judgemental care. We are committed to prioritising the unique needs and strengths of Aboriginal women while embracing and supporting all women in their journey toward healing and recovery.

Kamira is committed to breaking the cycle of intergenerational removal of children from their mothers due to the impacts of substance dependency.





PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with both great pleasure and a touch of sadness that I present my final report as President of Kamira. After ten years of Board service, the time has come for me to hand over the reins as Kamira continues its proud journey as a leader in the challenging yet deeply rewarding field of alcohol and other drug treatment.

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with admiration for my fellow Board members. Their commitment, expertise, and willingness to engage in courageous conversations have been inspiring. Together, we have navigated complexities with integrity and optimism. Knowing that the governance of Kamira is in such safe and capable hands has made my decision to step aside far easier, and I do so with absolute confidence in the future.

While there have been hurdles along the way, particularly with gaining approvals for the on-site secondary dwelling project, one of the real highlights has been the development of Kamira's Strategic Plan 2025–2028, officially commencing on 1 July 2025. This plan provides a strong foundation for the next stage of Kamira's journey and reflects the collective vision and commitment of the Board, leadership team and staff.

The true heart of Kamira remains its people. Our Senior Management Team – CEO Monique Cardon, Clinical Director Karen Britton Regan, and Operations Manager Natalie Williams – along with

every member of staff, are the driving force behind our success. Over the past year, they have faced challenges with creativity, professionalism, and an unwavering focus on providing the very best service for the women and children who walk through our doors. It is their dedication that keeps Kamira's mission alive every single day, and it has been a privilege to witness their impact.

As I prepare to step away, I am reminded that leadership is not about one individual, but about nurturing a collective spirit of hope and determination. Kamira embodies this spirit. Our programs, our advocacy, and our culture are built on values that will carry the organisation into its next chapter with strength and purpose.

Finally, I extend a heartfelt thank you to our outgoing CEO, Monique. Your vision, energy, and commitment have left a lasting mark, and we will miss you greatly, though I suspect many of us will be keeping your number on speed dial! On behalf of the Board, staff, and the women and families whose lives you have touched, thank you.

It has been an extraordinary honour to serve on the Board and as President. I leave with immense pride in what we have achieved together and with excitement for all that is still to come for Kamira.

Margot Castles
President

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



It's hard to believe this is the last annual report I'll write as CEO of Kamira. When I stepped into the role just over two years ago, I knew I was joining a passionate, values-led team committed to walking beside women and children on some of the most courageous journeys of their lives. That commitment remains the heart of everything we do.

Client numbers steadily returned to pre-COVID levels, and we welcomed a growing number of babies and young children into the residence. These little ones remind us every day why the work matters. Watching women graduate with their babies in arms — or reconnect with family, secure housing, and return to study or work — is a powerful testament to the strength of our clients and the therapeutic model.

In early 2025, we achieved full ACHS accreditation for the next five years. The preparation required across every part of the service was immense, and I want to acknowledge the team's hard work in reaching this milestone.

Over the past twelve months, we worked closely with The Centre for Impact and Change to develop Kamira's new three year Strategic Plan 2025-2028. It charts a bold, thoughtful and achievable path forward, and it will trigger a few exciting changes — including a website redevelopment to better reflect who we are and how we work.

This year saw continued investment in our infrastructure. We upgraded fridges, freezers, and air conditioning; and secured a secondary dwelling through a NADA grant to support the program. We restructured the Support Team to provide more consistent, holistic care for clients, and welcomed 'Dr Ash', our onsite GP — introduced with the support of the HNECC PHN — who has been a standout success, improving access to responsive health care and reducing time spent offsite.



Our sector engagement remained strong. I was honoured to attend the NSW Drug Summit and contribute to the voice of specialist non-government services. We connected with services across NSW, participated in NADA's conference and leadership forums, and welcomed visitors from organisations including Ngwala Willumbong, The Glen Group and Coast Shelter. These relationships continue to enrich our practice.

Kamira's workforce is its backbone. I'm proud of the work we've done to build a culture that values wellbeing, reflection and learning. This year, we introduced mental health days for staff, revised annual performance reviews, and achieved a 100% response rate to the annual staff engagement survey — a rare and affirming result.

Looking ahead, the most important work for me personally has been setting the scene for Kamira's next chapter. I've advised the Board of my intention to retire in October 2025. Our robust and thoughtful recruitment process attracted strong interest in the CEO role from capable and values-aligned leaders, and we are delighted to welcome Sally Regan into the role from September 2025. I've also had the privilege of supporting the Board to appoint several outstanding new Board members, positioning us well for the future.

It has been a joy and an honour to lead Kamira and to end my career with such an inspirational organisation. I leave feeling deeply grateful for what we've achieved together — and confident in the people who will carry the mission forward.

Warmly,
Monique Cardon
Chief Executive Officer

CASE STUDY

LEE'S STORY

Lee's story reflects the journey of a woman whose healing from addiction and trauma required a safe space, time, and cultural connection to flourish. Her experience highlights the profound impact that a trauma-informed, person-centred, and culturally responsive program can have, not only for the individual, but for the next generation.

Background

Lee, a 33-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman, is mother to her five-year-old son, John. Her early years were marked by instability, moving frequently and navigating environments that lacked consistency and emotional safety.

Raised by a single mother, Lee's childhood was shaped by complex family dynamics, identity confusion, and a deep longing for emotional connection. These experiences contributed to mental health challenges in her adolescence and early adulthood, including anxiety, depression, and suspected PTSD.



Substance Use and Seeking Help

Substance use was introduced early in Lee's life and became normalised. By twelve, she was experimenting with alcohol and cannabis. At eighteen, she began using methamphetamine, which progressed to intravenous use. Her dependence intensified over time, interwoven with grief and unresolved trauma. A house fire shortly before entering treatment added another layer of distress and instability.

In 2019, a personal family event prompted Lee to confront long suppressed memories, leading her to seek help. Several years later, while living in Mittagong and caring for John, she told her mental health worker, "I think I need rehab." That moment changed everything. Her worker found Kamira online, and when Lee saw the image of a feather, a

recurring spiritual symbol throughout her life, she took it as a sign. A Kamira staff member offered to meet her at the train station, and she recalls that this small gesture of care became the beginning of her transformation.

Experience at Kamira

Arriving at Kamira was overwhelming. John initially remained in the care of family, and Lee felt a deep mix of fear and uncertainty. Suppressing emotion had long been her way of coping, and even simple, everyday routines like eating regular meals or engaging in group activities felt unfamiliar.

One of the most transformative moments occurred during her first Qigong session. As her body slowed and connected with her breath, Lee experienced a flood of emotion, a panic response to a sensation of safety she had never known. Supported by staff, Lee recognised it as a breakthrough. Slowly, she began to rebuild trust in herself and others.

Lee engaged in regular one-on-one counselling and case management sessions, where she was able to safely explore and process past trauma, build emotional regulation strategies, and make sense of the experiences that shaped her substance use. Her therapeutic team walked beside her as she uncovered her strengths and began to set goals that reflected the life she wanted for herself and her son.

Cultural reconnection was central to Lee's healing. Smoking ceremonies, yarning circles, and Welcomes to Country helped her reclaim her identity as a proud Bundjalung and Yorta Yorta woman. These experiences restored her sense of belonging and spiritual grounding.

Kamira's person centred and trauma informed approach provided the foundation Lee needed to begin unpacking the past. Individual counselling sessions offered a safe, non-judgemental space →

where she felt truly heard. Group programs in parenting, communication, and emotional regulation equipped her with the tools she needed to rebuild her relationship with herself and her son.

Kamira staff also spoke directly with Lee's mother, advocating strongly for John to join her in the program. They explained the intensive parenting support and the dedicated Early Childhood Program that is tailored to the developmental and emotional needs of each child. With this encouragement, and the assurance that John would receive individualised, trauma-informed support, arrangements were made for him to come to Kamira.

It was after John arrived that Lee began working closely with a member from the Parenting and Early Childhood team. This staff member's calm, consistent presence made Lee feel safe enough to trust someone with her son for the first time. This relationship was pivotal. For Lee, entrusting John to this staff member's care whilst she attended the group program, was not only a practical decision, it was a profound act of healing and growth.

John's Journey in Kamira's Early Learning Program

When John joined Lee at Kamira, he began attending Kamira's Early Learning Program, a play based, trauma informed environment designed to support children's development and emotional wellbeing. At first, John was hesitant to participate in unfamiliar or non-preferred activities. However, with one-on-one support and the guidance of the Early Childhood Teacher, he gradually developed confidence and curiosity.

Over time, John built trusting relationships with familiar adults, developed his expressive language with the help of a speech pathologist, and became more attuned to his own emotions. He learned to label and express his feelings and accept support to self-regulate. His social skills blossomed. He learned to share, take turns, and enjoy cooperative play with peers. He especially loved caring for younger children and showed a natural gentleness and empathy.

John experienced many milestones at Kamira. He learned to write his name, draw people, recite the alphabet, and "read" his favourite picture books. He loved games with rules and had a lively imagination, a bright sense of humour, and strong general knowledge.

Importantly, his relationship with Lee deepened and flourished. Together, they engaged in daily check ins, shared learning experiences, and celebrated successes. John was able to observe Lee and his

teacher interact positively, helping him feel safe and connected. The Parenting and Early Childhood program recognised Lee as John's first and most important teacher, supporting her to grow in confidence in her parenting role.

The Early Learning Program also helped nurture John's cultural identity. He led the daily Acknowledgement of Country with confidence and joy, and participated in NAIDOC celebrations, nature walks, storytelling, clay work, and culturally informed craft activities. Resources from Koori Curriculum are embedded throughout the program, and John thrived in this culturally safe space.

Transformation and Growth

Throughout her time at Kamira, Lee developed mindfulness, emotional regulation, assertive communication, and self-compassion. She began to recognise difficult emotions without being overwhelmed by them and started to trust her decisions, respect her boundaries, and live according to her values.

"I was literally a plastic bag in the wind, now I show up every day," she reflected recently.

Sobriety brought a sense of stability and empowerment that Lee had never known. She found pride in being the kind of mother John needed, and now describes herself as "confident, grounded, and capable".

Lee is currently studying a Certificate IV in Community Services, with aspirations to someday return to Kamira as a staff member. Her vision is to continue her studies and build a career supporting others on their own healing journeys.

Legacy of Healing

Lee's journey is not only a story of healing from substance addiction, it is a story of transformation. Through trauma informed care, cultural reconnection, and the loving bond between mother and child, she has broken the cycle of intergenerational trauma. John's development and healing reflect the strength and safety he felt by Lee's side.

"This too shall pass. Just breathe and let be."

Lee continues to walk forward with strength and clarity, proud of the life she is building. Her story is a powerful reminder of what becomes possible when a woman is supported to reclaim her voice, her culture, and her future.

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF AT KAMIRA

At Kamira, we launched a grief-specific support group to help clients understand the link between grief, trauma, and addiction. Many realised their substance use or compulsive behaviours began as ways to numb the pain of loss. When they stop using substances, waves of intense grief often resurface due to previously suppressed emotions. Unaddressed grief can fuel addiction and trauma, leading to feelings of emptiness and hopelessness, which may drive further substance use or maladaptive behaviours. Recovery involves not only managing substance use but also healing from underlying grief and trauma.

The Grief Recovery Method

The Growing Through Grief Group incorporates the Grief Recovery Method, an evidence-based approach designed to help individuals process and heal from various types of loss. Developed by John W. James and Russell Friedman, this method focuses on resolving unresolved grief and emotional healing, rather than suppressing it. It's effective for all forms of loss, including death, healthy/unhealthy relationships, loss of children to care, health issues, and significant life transitions like moving into recovery. It adapts to the specific nature of the grief and helps participants work through it in a healthy and compassionate way.

The method guides participants through seven core recovery actions:

Step 1: Identify and express the painful feelings: Participants are guided to express feelings they have around their loss (eg sadness, anger, regret).

Step 2: Identify what was left unfinished: Reflect on the unresolved emotions or things left unsaid or undone during the relationship or after the loss: Participants learn to understand these emotions and move toward more hope, acceptance and a positive future.

Step 3: Completion of unresolved grief to support acceptance of the loss: Acknowledge that loss is a part of life, face the emotional pain tied to it, and resolve unprocessed grief to find emotional freedom, remembering the loss with more love than pain.

Step 4: Develop new insights: Understanding the loss and its emotions brings clarity and emotional freedom, fostering self-awareness and a more fulfilling future beyond grief.

Step 5: Take responsibility for actions and feelings: Recognise personal responsibility in the grieving process and the way one responded to the loss.

Step 6: Forgiveness: Forgiveness is a critical component in the process, both in terms of forgiving others and oneself. This helps release any lingering bitterness or resentment.

Step 7: Create new life goals and dreams: The final step involves setting new intentions to build a future that honours the past while moving forward with hope, embracing new possibilities for joy and fulfillment. →

The Grief Recovery Method is based on the understanding that grief is a natural and personal response to painful loss.

"In the first few weeks, I avoided doing the work. It felt too much, but now I realise the relief it brings, and I'm looking forward to the next round of group."

It recognises that there is no "right" way to grieve, as grief manifests uniquely for each person. A key component of the method is encouraging individuals to express their emotions fully, as grief is often suppressed, leading to prolonged suffering.

"I was so scared coming into this group, I didn't want to do it, but I feel so much relief now that I did it and got to the end." The method emphasises the importance of verbalising feelings such as sadness, anger, and guilt to help individuals understand and accept their emotions.

"I feel relief not having so much guilt anymore."

A central goal is to help individuals "complete" their grief, resolving emotional pain tied to past losses, so that the memories are remembered with more love than pain.

"I thought I would never speak to my Dad again, but I'm able to have a relationship with him now."

This process supports emotional freedom, helping to ensure that past grief no longer negatively impacts one's life or decisions.

"I used to get so angry with my mum, and we had a terrible relationship. Since doing this group, I've let go of anger, and I now have a much closer relationship with my mum."

The method also acknowledges that healing is not a linear process, with each person moving through their recovery at their own pace. Unlike conventional models that expect quick closure, the Grief Recovery Method encourages individuals to take the time needed to complete their grief. Ultimately, the method helps individuals move from

emotional pain to hope, acceptance, and a positive future, while fostering personal growth.

"I didn't realise how much my addiction was because of the grief and loss in my life. I have more compassion for myself now that I've completed the group."

It encourages self-awareness and understanding of emotional needs, helping individuals move beyond grief to create a more fulfilling life.

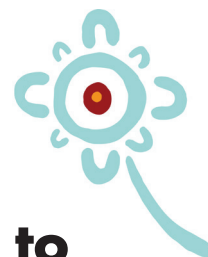
"I've learned to listen to people rather than trying to fix their problems."

Additionally, the method is versatile, addressing all types of loss, including death, divorce, job loss, or any significant life change, and adapting to the specific nature of the grief experienced.

"I feel I have the skills to move through loss in the future; it does not seem as scary anymore."

We are proud to offer this program helping individuals transform grief into hope, acceptance, and personal growth.

"Completing this group feels like an achievement."



Kamira is proud to offer this program that helps individuals transform grief into hope, acceptance, and personal growth.

OUR PEOPLE

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

At Kamira, our managers and team leaders are central to the quality and impact of our services. Their guidance ensures a workplace culture that values accountability, where every staff member feels confident in their role and proud of their contribution.

By setting clear expectations and offering consistent support, our leaders motivate their teams to achieve excellence in service delivery. They cultivate an environment where collaboration and open

communication are the norm, and where continuous learning and improvement are encouraged.

This leadership approach not only strengthens the quality of care provided to our clients but also builds a workplace where staff feel respected, valued, and inspired. The result is a team united by pride in their work and a shared commitment to making a positive difference—benefiting our clients, our organisation, and the wider community.

Chief Executive Officer

Monique Cardon
Master of Business Administration

Clinical Team Manager

Cassandra Rhook
B. Social Science

Operations Manager

Natalie Williams
Certificate IV in Business Admin
Diploma of HR Management

Clinical Director

Karen Britton-Regan
B. Psychology (Hons)

Support Team Leader

Stephane Shipman
Diploma of Case Management
Certificate IV in Community Services



Cassandra Rhook



Karen Britton-Regan



Stephanie Shipman



Natalie Williams

OUR BOARD

Margot Castles
President

Jessica Pitscheider
Secretary

Ruth Jordan
Treasurer

Sharon Wilkinson
Board Member

Susan Sohn
Board Member

Miriana Barrie
Board Member

Joan Purcell
Board Member

Shanell Bennett
Board Member

Teresa Findlay-Barnes
Board Member
(resigned 15 October 2024)

OUR APPROACH

At Kamira, our commitment to the women we serve is at the heart of everything we do. Our dedicated staff are passionate about providing comprehensive, evidence-based treatment and support tailored to the unique needs of each individual. We understand that adverse substance use often stems from complex underlying issues...so we prioritise a deep understanding of these root causes, empowering women to embark on transformative journeys toward recovery.

Our holistic approach is fundamental to our philosophy. We believe that true healing involves addressing all aspects of an individual's life. This means considering not only the physical and mental health of our clients but also their social and economic circumstances. By adopting this multifaceted perspective, we create a supportive environment that fosters growth and resilience.

Physically, we ensure that our women receive the care they need to reclaim their health. This includes nutrition, exercise, dental and medical support - all crucial in rebuilding strength and vitality. Our trained staff work closely with each woman to develop personalised wellness plans, encouraging them to take an active role in their physical recovery.

Mentally, we provide a safe space for reflection and healing. Through individual counselling, group therapy, and mindfulness practices, we equip our clients with the tools they need to manage their emotions and thoughts effectively. Understanding the psychological triggers that contribute to substance use is a vital part of our treatment, and we strive to foster a culture of openness and support.

Socially, we recognise that the relationships and community connections the women have are pivotal to their recovery. We encourage building healthy connections with family, friends, and peers, emphasising the importance of a supportive network. Our programs often include family involvement and community integration activities, helping to break down the isolation that can accompany adverse substance use.

Economically, we empower our clients with skills and resources necessary for independence. This includes financial literacy programs, financial counselling, and debt reduction through Work Development Orders. We believe that fostering economic stability is essential for long-term recovery, allowing our clients to envision and create brighter futures for themselves.

At Kamira, we see our clients not just as individuals facing challenges, but as strong, capable women ready to reclaim their lives. Together, we are committed to guiding them on their journey toward healing and self-discovery.

Early Childhood Education at Kamira

At Kamira, our early childhood education service is so much more than childcare. Each weekday, our dedicated educators, Carolyn and Soni, create a safe, nurturing space where children can play, learn, and grow while their mums focus on their own recovery.

Our playroom and outdoor areas are filled with opportunities for fun and discovery – from bikes and climbing frames to the sandpit and trampoline. Every experience is shaped around each child's needs and stage of development, guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the National Quality Framework Standards (NQFS) and the ECA Code of Ethics. Aboriginal perspectives are also embedded in everyday practice, drawing on Koori Curriculum resources and training.

Our teaching is hands-on, creative and responsive: child-led inquiry, loose parts and open-ended play, sensory exploration, and constructive activities spark curiosity and imagination. We help children build emotional literacy and socially conscious behaviours, while gently embedding early literacy and numeracy skills into daily learning.

To support children who may have experienced trauma, we also use Circle of Security and Theraplay. Circle of Security helps mums and children build stronger bonds, giving little ones the security to explore and the comfort of knowing their parent is a safe base. Theraplay uses playful, joyful activities to nurture connection, confidence, and resilience.

Together, these approaches ensure that children at Kamira are not only cared for, but also given the chance to heal, thrive, and embrace their early years with joy, culture, and safety.



OUR SERVICES

Kamira provides an abstinence based residential treatment service for women who are experiencing problematic alcohol or drug use. The residential program ranges from approximately 5 to 7 months. Women, 18 years and older, with dependent children, pregnant women and women without children in their care can seek treatment at Kamira.

Kamira has a multifactor, person-centred approach to understanding and treating problematic drug and alcohol use.

A multifactor approach means looking at the physical, emotional and social reasons that have led to a woman's alcohol and drug use problems.

Taking a person-centred approach means working collaboratively with each woman to identify her values. These values are used as a base to develop her own program and set her own goals. We support women to address medical, legal, financial, housing and family and relationship issues. Every woman completing the program devises her own recovery plan and is supported to develop the skills that will help her succeed.



Kamira's program content and structure is developed from a trauma informed perspective. This means recognising the widespread impact of trauma and understanding how it can shape a person's behaviour, emotions, and coping mechanisms. It acknowledges that trauma often permeates various aspects of an individual's life, influencing their interactions and responses in both conscious and unconscious ways. Specific evidence-based therapies used in individual counselling and groups include Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics [NMT], Attachment Theory, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy [ACT], Dialectical Behaviour

Therapy [DBT], and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy [CBT].

In addition, women are provided with comprehensive services to improve their physical health and well-being.

Kamira's clinical staff are qualified and experienced allied health professionals. All staff are involved in ongoing professional development and training.

Kamira offers a warm, homely and safe environment. It is child and family friendly.

There are gardens and outdoor areas for rest and relaxation.

Children at Kamira

Kamira's attachment-based approach uses therapies and programs that have been demonstrated to build positive and secure attachment relationships between mothers and children. Parent specific interventions include Circle of Security group, attachment-based play therapy, parenting skills training, and infant massage.

Transition and Continuing Care

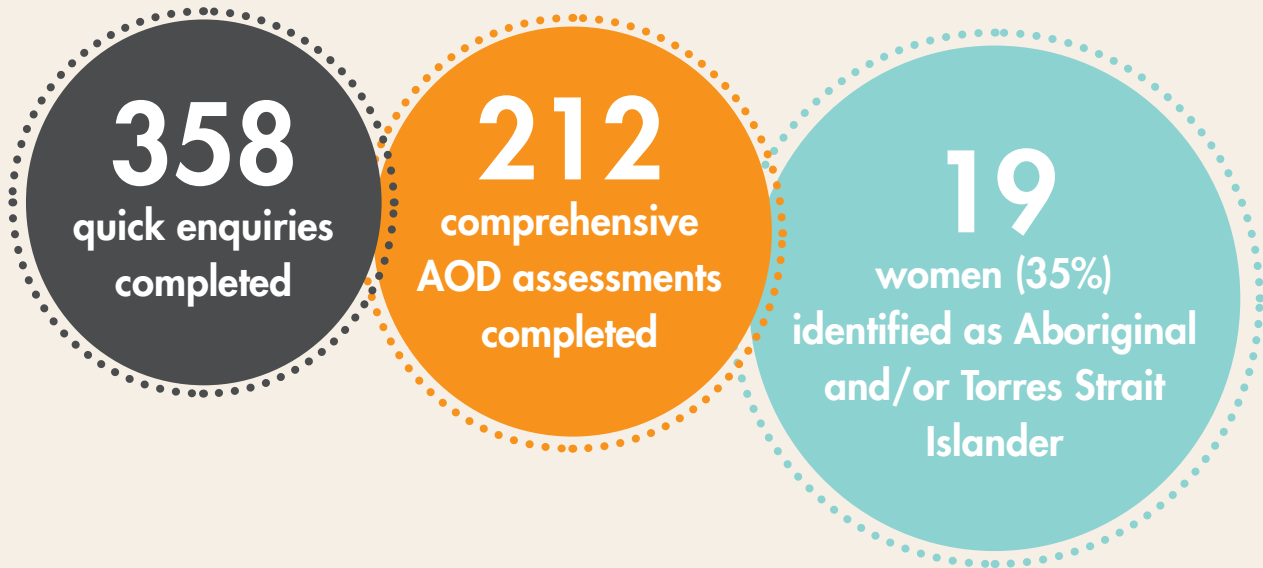
Women transition from Kamira back to the community at the pace of their own recovery plan. This plan includes referrals to support services and an individualised plan for continuing care.

Kamira provides ongoing support through an Aftercare Program for up to one year, available to clients who complete the residential program.



TREATMENT OUTCOMES

For the 2024-25 financial year — 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025



Source of Referral

Self	51
Hospital	2
Other	2

Principal Drug

Alcohol	16
Cannabinoids	13
GHB	1
Heroin	3
Methamphetamine (inc. speed – ice)	22

Client Exit Pathways From Treatment

43 women entered and exited the program during the year:

Completed treatment	11
Discharged for non-compliance	9
Left without notice / against advice	10
Transferred to another service	2

Eleven clients remained in treatment as at 30 June 2025

Work Development Orders

Throughout the year we submitted 33 applications on behalf of clients for WDOs and achieved a reduction of debt of \$33,514.

CASE STUDY

THE OPPOSITE OF ADDICTION IS CONNECTION: MIA'S STORY

When Mia arrived at Kamira at age 37, she brought with her a complex history of substance use, depression, and family challenges. She grew up in rural NSW with her mother and stepfather, enjoying a generally supportive family life, although she had little connection to her biological father. Mia is the eldest of four siblings and the mother of three children aged 16, 12, and 2.

Although she had always known of Aboriginal heritage in her family, Mia had never identified as Aboriginal. At Kamira, cultural connections encouraged her to explore her history. Conversations with her mother revealed her great-grandmother was an Aboriginal woman. This discovery has become a powerful source of strength, pride, and belonging.

Mia began using methamphetamine five years before entering Kamira, following the breakdown of a long-term relationship. Until then, she had only used drugs occasionally in social settings. Her use escalated during a time when she was living

away from support networks, feeling isolated, and experiencing depression.

She described feeling like a failure as a mother, withdrawing from meaningful interactions with her children, and using substances to cope with guilt and loneliness. Mia never used intravenously. Although she had experienced depression at different points in her life, she had never received a formal diagnosis.

Mia chose Kamira because she wanted a safe, abstinence-based environment to focus on her recovery. She also embraced the program's non-smoking policy, quitting cigarettes during detox – a commitment she has proudly maintained, experiencing both health improvements and financial benefits.

In counselling, Mia's therapist used Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) to help her recognise thoughts, emotions, and urges without reacting impulsively, and Acceptance and Commitment



CASE STUDY

Therapy (ACT) to support her in accepting discomfort without turning to substances. Sessions were strength-based, building on her strong work ethic, task focus, and appreciation for structure. Setting weekly, achievable goals provided a clear focus and kept her engaged and accountable.

Mia thrived in a structured environment where progress could be measured and celebrated. Her determination and discipline were major assets in her healing journey. She valued the group sessions and the opportunity to connect with staff who had lived experience, describing these connections as powerful motivators that showed her recovery was both possible and sustainable.

Being apart from her youngest daughter was painful. While her daughter was safe with Mia's mother, their relationship was strained by reactive communication. Living alongside peers with different values about order and responsibility also tested her patience.

Through counselling, Mia embraced the mantra: "Don't react, respond." This helped her strengthen her bond with her mother and start building healthier relationships with her children.

At first, Mia wasn't sure she needed the full program. After her first month, she realised how much there was to gain and chose to stay. This was a pivotal decision.

She learned coping strategies such as breathing techniques, boundary setting, and emotional regulation. Most importantly, she embraced the belief that: "The opposite of addiction is connection." She began intentionally rebuilding positive relationships and reconnecting with community.

Achievements and Growth

Since completing the program, Mia has remained abstinent from both drugs and cigarettes. She has completed her White Card, is training for a Traffic Controller Card, and has enrolled in a Certificate III in Community Services. She has participated in a parenting pathways employment program and completed 250 hours of court-ordered community service through lawn maintenance. Her parenting style has also changed significantly. She is now

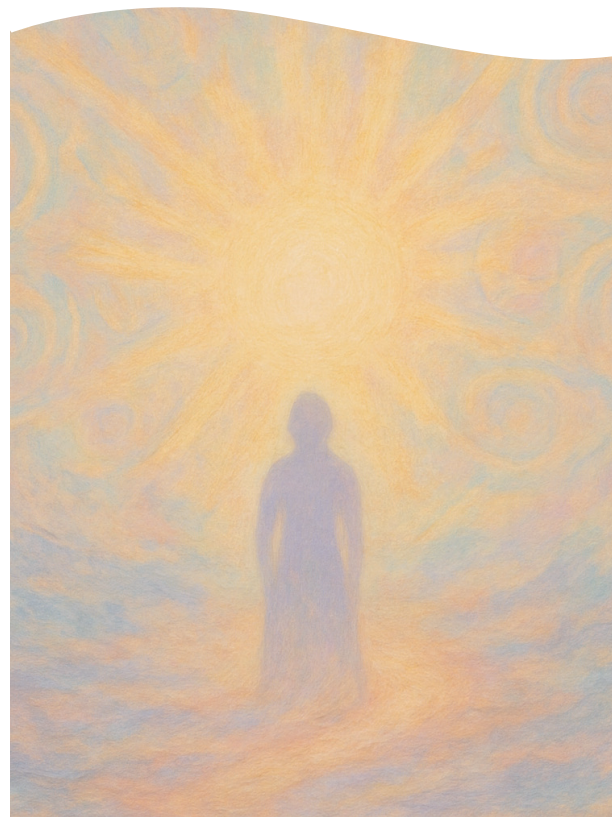
more emotionally available, responds to challenges with calmness, and uses consistent routines and boundaries to provide her children with a greater sense of security and connection.

Current Outlook

Mia describes herself now as the complete opposite of who she was when she arrived at Kamira. She is more present, engaged, and connected in her life. She credits much of her progress to the program's structure, the trusting relationship she built with her counsellor, and the skills she developed throughout her stay.

Looking ahead, Mia hopes to secure stable housing, continue building a meaningful career, and further strengthen her family relationships. She also aspires to give back to others who are healing from problematic substance use, inspired by the support she received during her own journey.

For Mia, Kamira provided more than treatment. It gave her identity, hope, and the belief that connection is the foundation of lasting recovery.





TRIBUTE TO TERESA FINDLAY BARNES



At the AGM in 2024, we bid a fond farewell to Teresa Findlay Barnes, Chair and long standing Board member of Kamira.

Kamira acknowledges with deep gratitude the leadership and commitment of Teresa Findlay Barnes, who served as President of the Board during a pivotal period in our organisation's history.

Teresa guided Kamira through the challenges of the COVID-19 era, ensuring that our governance remained strong and that our services continued uninterrupted for the women and children who rely on us. Under her stewardship, the Board strengthened its strategic and cultural focus, supporting initiatives such as the the creation of the Yibadha Bitalba Maru yarning circle in collaboration with local Elders.

Her leadership was marked by steady hands during times of uncertainty, unwavering advocacy for staff and clients, and a vision for innovation in treatment and support. In her final year as President, Teresa also supported Kamira through a significant leadership transition, farewelling a long-serving CEO and welcoming new leadership with confidence in Kamira's continued growth.

Beyond her formal role, Teresa brought warmth, wisdom, and an enduring belief in the power of community to transform lives. Kamira thanks her sincerely for her dedication, her generosity of spirit, and her legacy of strong, values-driven governance.

BRINGING HEALTHCARE ONSITE:

WELCOMING DR ASHLEY VAN LEEUEWESTYN



This year Kamira was delighted to welcome Dr Ashley Van Leeuwestyn (“Dr Ash”) as our visiting GP. Dr Ash attends onsite each fortnight, ensuring our clients have direct and timely access to high-quality primary health care.

Dr Ash brings a wealth of expertise in women’s health, chronic disease management, and preventative care. Her skills in areas such as fertility, antenatal support, contraception, and menopause are especially valuable for Kamira’s client group, many of whom have had limited access to consistent medical care prior to entering treatment. Having a GP onsite removes significant barriers – clients no longer need to navigate external appointments, transport, or long wait times. Instead, they can receive compassionate and confidential care within the safety of Kamira.

The benefits extend beyond clients. Staff now have

the reassurance of regular medical oversight, which strengthens our holistic model of care and enhances collaboration between clinical, counselling, and support teams. This integrated approach means we can respond more quickly to client needs, improve continuity of care, and support better long-term health outcomes.

Raised on the Central Coast and deeply connected to her community, Dr Ash combines her professional expertise with a genuine warmth and approachability. Her presence at Kamira reflects our commitment to providing wrap-around, person-centred support – helping women and their children not only recover but also thrive.

Kamira thanks Brendan Chandler, our HNECC PHN Commissioning Coordinator, for the part he played in bringing Dr Ash to Kamira.



OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2026



Kamira’s Strategic Plan for 2025–2028 sets a clear direction for the future, building on our strengths and responding to the evolving needs of women experiencing problematic substance use. Developed in consultation with staff, Board members, and key stakeholders, the Plan reflects our commitment to holistic, culturally safe, and trauma-informed care.

The Plan identifies four key priorities that will shape Kamira’s work over the next three years:

1. **Our Programs** – We will deliver evidence-informed, trauma-informed treatment that empowers women to make lasting change. Services will be tailored to individual needs, with a strong focus on Aboriginal women, pregnant women, and women with children. We are committed to strengthening referral pathways, building outreach and aftercare programs, and deepening collaborations with

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. By 2028, Kamira will deliver comprehensive programs that support women across all stages of the recovery journey, with high engagement, retention, and long-term positive outcomes.

2. **Our People** – Attracting and retaining a skilled, compassionate, and inclusive workforce is central to achieving our goals. We will actively invest in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, ensuring our staff reflect the communities we serve. Professional development, cultural capability training, and wellbeing programs will support staff to thrive. Our performance management and career pathways will foster growth, while initiatives to attract and retain Aboriginal staff will strengthen cultural safety. By 2028, Kamira will be recognised as an employer of choice, with a motivated, engaged, and resilient workforce.

T3. Our Future – Sustainable growth depends on building strong partnerships, raising brand awareness, and investing in infrastructure. We will diversify funding through government, non-government, philanthropic, and academic partnerships, while also contributing to sector-wide advocacy. Investment in Kamira’s brand and impact storytelling will increase community awareness and support. At the same time, modern digital and physical infrastructure will be developed to improve efficiency, data security, and collaboration. By 2028, Kamira will have fit-for-purpose spaces and systems that enable us to grow sustainably while meeting the needs of women and families.

4. Our Governance – Robust governance and ethical leadership will underpin Kamira’s future. The Board and leadership team will ensure best-practice policies and accreditation standards are maintained, with clear succession planning and a strong focus on diversity and inclusion. Transparency, accountability, and integrity

will guide decision-making, while structures will be regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with Kamira’s purpose. By 2028, Kamira will be recognised for sector-leading governance, characterised by strong oversight, diversity, and ethical leadership at all levels.

This Strategic Plan represents a bold, future-focused roadmap, ensuring that every woman who comes to Kamira receives the highest quality of care and the opportunity to heal, grow, and create lasting positive change for themselves and their families.

We thank Allison Salmon and Maria Tchan from the Centre for Impact and Change for their support and guidance in developing this strategic plan.



