



## ***The Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health*** **Announcement of Inaugural Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous** **Psychology Program Recipients**

“Jilya” means “my child” in Nyamal: for this is about our children. It reflects the underlying vision of Jilya – to provide a world in which our most vulnerable Indigenous children can have at the very least, an equal opportunity to thrive.

On World Suicide Prevention Day, 10 September 2020, Dr Tracy Westerman, The Westerman Jilya Institute for Mental Health (the Institute) Board, along with The Honourable Kim Beazley AC, Governor of Western Australia and Patron for the Institute, will launch the Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health in the Government House Ballroom.

The launch will celebrate the establishment of the Institute and focus on raising much-needed funds and awareness around the need for dedicated research and training to address the escalation of suicide, mental health, incarceration, and child removal rates in Indigenous Australian populations. The launch will also announce the first recipients of the Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program under the Institute.

The Dr Tracy Westerman Indigenous Psychology Scholarship Program was developed by Dr Westerman in recognition that the voices of bereaved Indigenous parents and communities, who had for decades been crying out for help, remained unheard in any meaningful way. To date, the program has managed to attract close to \$800,000 in total commitments, including Dr Westerman’s \$50,000 commitment to commence the scholarship in 2018. The Institute hopes that the stories of the incredible 2020 scholarship recipients will serve to inspire many more Indigenous people to undertake study in the field of psychology.

To date the Institute has received four-year commitments from WA Corrective Services, Wanslea Family Services, Life Without Barriers (SA), Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY) Aboriginal Corporation, SA; Serco; Restore Hope, along with a whopping \$250,000 personal donation from Stephen Grant and his family but we need many more if we have any opportunity of addressing the escalating rates of child suicide, incarceration and child removal that are arguably at the world’s highest in Australia.

Significantly, and due to the support of scholarship donors, in its first year the Institute has been able to support 13 Indigenous Psychology recipients. This followed an extremely competitive assessment process fielding 37 applications of the highest calibre. The number of applicants clearly demonstrates the need for this program and the need for the personal mentoring and support that will be provided by the Institute and Dr Westerman. The scholarship recipients include:

Tex Garstone (WA)  
Shaun Garlett (WA)  
Anika Gosling (WA)  
Kiera-Lee Carrol (WA)  
Shannon McNeair (WA)  
Taylor-Jai McAlister (NSW)  
Jodi Jones (Tas)

Dom Barry (SA)  
Charlotte Sapio (SA)  
Michael Cullen (SA)  
Corey Kennedy (SA)  
Myles McKenzie (QLD)  
Dale Rowland (QLD)

**- ENDS -**

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## **ABOUT DR TRACY WESTERMAN**

Dr Tracy Westerman is a proud Nyamal woman. She grew up in the remote Pilbara town of Tom Price, completing most of high school via distance education. Although she was passionate about studying psychology, quite early in her undergraduate studies she became determined to develop specialist, evidence-based practices that are more appropriate to the cultural needs and life circumstances of Indigenous people, especially those living in rural and remote areas. She has developed nine unique psychological tests to identify those at most risk of mental illness and suicide & which determine measurable, objective cultural competencies of practitioners and organisations. In the absence of government funding, Dr Westerman founded Indigenous Psychological Services in 1998 to progress her goals for improving Indigenous mental health. She has trained 30,000+ clinicians in culturally appropriate psychological approaches and delivered her mental health & suicide intervention programs into remote Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. Her work has attracted international acclaim since 2003 for its evidence-based approach in an area which is often criticised for its lack of objective and measurable outcomes. In 2002, Dr Westerman became the first Aboriginal person to complete a combined Master/PhD in Clinical Psychology. In 2018, she was named Australian of the Year (WA), recipient of the Curtin University Lifetime Achievement Award, was inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame and in 2020 was the winner of the Telstra Women's Business award, Small Business Category (WA) amongst many other accolades. Dr Westerman stands as an example to Indigenous people, to females, to those from remote and disadvantaged backgrounds that anything is possible.