



**gondir**  
health services



# daring to be different

At Goondir Health Services we are change makers and visionaries, remaining true to the values of co-operation, respect, quality, learning diversity and innovation.

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For more than two decades we have been at the forefront of holistic primary health care for indigenous communities in the Darling Downs and South-West Queensland region.

Our vision remains clear: to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ... by providing holistic health care and medical services that meet best practice standards.

We are a group of creative thinkers with deep connections to country, culture and tradition. We are committed to delivering programs that are culturally sensitive and appropriate, that are built on trust, respect and co-operation.

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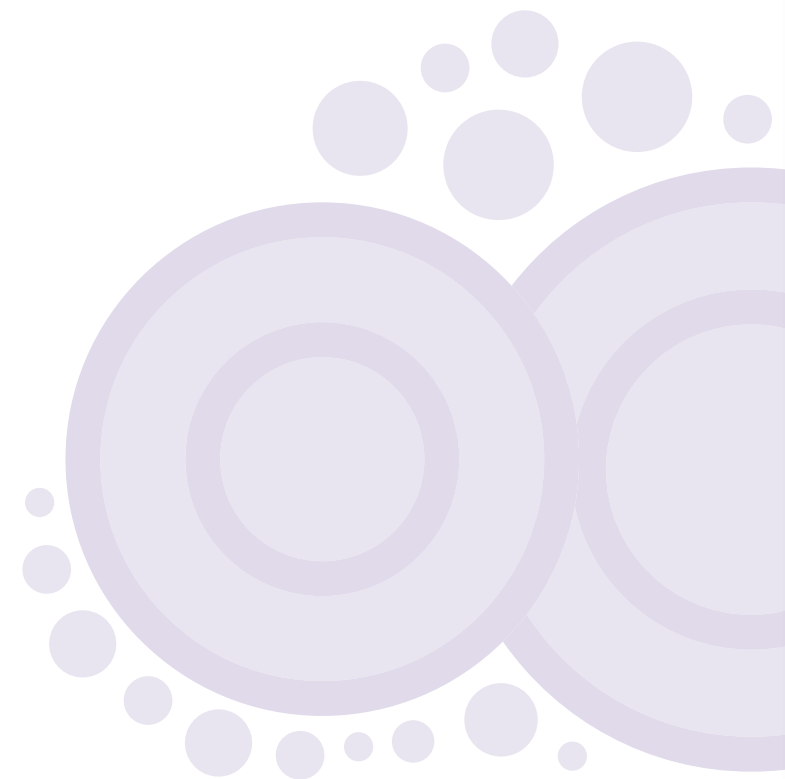
We want to take you on our continued journey of change. Join us in making a difference in this generation and the next.

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Our long-standing Board of Directors brings strong leadership from within and a dedication to high-level, quality governance.

The social and emotional well-being of our clients is at the forefront of all we do. We believe in partnership, collaboration and innovation.

Goondir is about empowering our youth, breaking down barriers to care, reconnecting our people and healing the hearts of indigenous communities.



*Goondir Health Services acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pays respect to elders, past, present and emerging.*



# Goondir is ...

## empowering our youth

The Big Buddy program is at the heart of all we do at Goondir Health Services. It is truly a holistic health care model, connecting mental health, physical exercise and education in innovative programs that are creating real change in the future prospects of local youth.

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“While access to doctors, nurses, allied health workers and specialists is important, we don’t just want to be employing more health professionals year on year. We want to think outside the box and create programs of empowerment that inspire our people to think big,” says Goondir CEO Floyd Leedie.

One of the greatest social determinants of health is meaningful employment. Keeping young people on track through their education (and the jobs that follow) helps break down the barriers to health for the next generation.

“If you apply common sense and logic, having a job removes an individual from the cycle of poverty and the financial hardship that often leads to dysfunctional families. You are able to put quality food on the table and provide decent housing that doesn’t cause illness from overcrowding or poor sanitation,” explains Mr Leedie.

Many of Goondir’s programs under the Big Buddy umbrella flow into others. Sports programs build friendship and teach participants about commitment and dedication. Physical exercise boosts endorphins and serotonin, which helps improve mental health. Better mental health means better attendance at school. Improved school results lead to more young people going to university or securing meaningful employment which breaks the vicious cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

Connecting young people with older members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community also creates bonds of kinship that mirror traditional indigenous society.

*“I believe the greatest barrier to health improvement is unemployment. Our holistic approach to healthcare is leading the way in creating genuine intergenerational change.”*

**Floyd Leedie**  
CEO Goondir Health Service





# Goondir is ...

## educating through play

At the heart of it, this is like most other playtime get togethers, kids rough and tumble while parents and carers chat.

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With child health checks in the region still below national targets, the weekly Goondir playgroup also brings opportunity to connect with medical professionals and allows the monitoring of maternal health.

Early intervention and prevention is key to successful child health and community outcomes. Preparing children through play for the structure of the education system helps the transition to school.

Confidence in parenting skills leads to better family dynamics and health choices.





# Goondir is ...

## breaking down barriers to care

The tyranny of distance plays a large part in the barriers to better holistic health care, so with the sprawling Western Downs hundreds of kilometres from capital city specialists this is a significant challenge for Goondir Health Services.

The solution to this has been to create a visiting allied health and specialist services program providing a “one stop shop” to improve follow up care and health outcomes.

“One of the most important parts of this program is the ability for us to tailor it to provide culturally safe, client centred care to the indigenous community,” said Gary White, Goondir Health Services Chair.

The Goondir health service region has an indigenous population of more than 3000 people (6.8% – more than double the national indigenous population of 2.8%), with many living in outlying regional areas. When you consider the area covers over 72,000 square kilometres it's also an enormous geographic challenge.

“We saw that residents weren’t always able to attend the services even if we brought the services to major regional towns in our patch, so another initiative was to invest in a mobile health van and also provide a transport service to help people reach the clinics,” explains Mr White.



*“Our visiting specialists program brings care workers to our clients but we also innovate to make local access easier”*

**Gary White**  
Goondir Health Services Chair



# and driving change

With life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people significantly below that of non-indigenous communities, Goondir needs to innovate to achieve better healthcare outcomes.

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Goondir's complimentary transport service is literally "driving change" and breaking down further barriers to care in the region.

Theresa Spies has been brought to town for a doctor's appointment:

"It's a wonderful service. It's the best thing going for all of us that don't have a car," said Theresa.

"Not everyone has access to cars and they can live a long way out of town. We take people from all over the area to Goondir Health Services. Sometimes we even drive them to Brisbane for specialist appointments or Roma for cataract surgery," explains Mick one of Goondir's drivers.

It means more people attending appointments and better follow up care, with cars sometimes covering thousands of kilometres in just a week.

*"It's saving lives that's for sure. I don't think some would bother going to appointments if it wasn't for this transport service."*

**Theresa Spies**  
Goondir Health Service Client



# Goondir is ...

## reconnecting with country, culture and tradition

Knowing where you have come from brings a strong sense of belonging and identity. Goondir is working to reconnect indigenous communities with sacred rituals, dreamtime stories and traditional crafts through hands-on cultural programs.

The link between the acceptance and understanding of cultural identity and an individual's mental health and well being is well documented.

"Sometimes they cry with joy when they feel the spiritual connection. It touches you inside, the emotions and the feeling of belonging, the ownership of yourself," says Cultural educator Josh Brown.

It is not only the melody of a song that is taught, but it is the deeper meaning and message from generations before that is shared, helping indigenous people connect the past and present to "walk between two worlds."

Groups might "go bush" to find wood for the digeridoos they'll make as part of the artefacts program, creating a shared experience that is outside of a classroom and teaching forgotten skills with traditional storytelling methods.

"It is a chance for them to feel the wood and change it into something beautiful. To have a creative outlet if you feel stressed or upset is very important for our mental health," explains Josh, highlighting Goondir's commitment to holistic health care.

*"We are teaching them how to walk in both worlds"*

**Josh Brown**  
Cultural Educator





# Goondir is ...

## healing hearts

The healing power of music is well known and Goondir's Reconciliation choir brings all members of the community together to lift up local hearts with the love of song.

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Social inclusion, reconnection through a creative outlet and the pure joy of singing are working together to bring harmony to our local people.



# and creating healthy communities

The hum of sewing machines is the unlikely symphony of social connection that's bringing together women in the Goondir Health Service's region.

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Studies have shown that self-help support programs in group settings can be more effective than individual counselling sessions. The sewing and craft group talk over their stitches about their shared experiences, which can be healing on many levels.

"If they have problems at home we chat about that, we talk about the kids and grandkids, just about life generally," says Shirley Webb.

The skills can also provide physical therapy: "We had a lady who had had a stroke who made a quilt. To start with she had trouble using her fingers and it really did help her get the use of her hands back – she improved out of sight."

*"It's more than just the sewing.  
We talk about all kinds  
of things."*

**Shirley Webb**  
Group facilitator



# Goondir is ...



## changing lives

Long walks, cooking lessons and growing support networks: Suga Shakers is an innovative diabetes health education program that's literally changing lives.

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"It's a holistic approach to healthcare. It's not just about making sure medicines are taken and sugar levels are checked. It's also about what we eat, how we eat it, how we prepare it and how we cook it," explains Goondir Aboriginal Health Worker and Chronic Disease Coordinator Katrina Johnston.

With diabetes and obesity on the rise in indigenous communities, the Suga Shakers program is designed as both a chronic health management scheme and a support network.

"We look forward to seeing each other every week. We do little field trips, walks and swims and we're learning how to cook meals that help us look after ourselves better," says Sugar Shakers participant Theresa Spies.

The program is credited with increasing routine allied health service visits amongst members who are becoming more proactive about the other healthcare issues that accompany diabetes.

*"It's more fun than going to the doctor!"*

**Theresa Spies**  
Sugar Shakers member

# and getting mobile

Increasing healthcare accessibility and improving health outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community means thinking outside the box, and becoming more mobile has been key to Goondir's success in the region.

The mobile medical clinic is part of a multi-disciplinary initiative to combat chronic disease. The van, funded by Queensland Health, provides access to a doctor, registered nurse and Aboriginal Health worker and travels around the expansive western Queensland district.

Bringing services to regional and remote areas has seen adult health checks rise and 72% of Goondir clients with a chronic disease have a current GP Management Plan.



# Goondir is ...

## leading the way in best practice

Goondir Health Services is committed to excellence and achievement in all we do. We strive every day to deliver better services through collaboration in strong partnerships and participation in research to continue to lead in evidence-based best practise. Our innovative health programs and holistic approach to health care are driving change across the region.

*"We understand what is needed to make a difference."*

**Floyd Leedie**  
CEO Goondir Health Service

"Our connection to community and our knowledge of how historical events and the social determinants of health are still impacting modern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, helps us tailor and deliver services like no other organisation," said Goondir CEO Floyd Leedie.

"We invest in our human resources, by providing ongoing education and training to staff to build the experience and qualifications of an already high performing team. We also know when external expertise needs to be brought in and recognise the contribution of specialists in their field to help deliver quality care and services in our catchments," said Mr Leedie.

Goondir has an exceptional business framework, with systems, processes and tools

that are paving the way for other Indigenous health organisations.

"Goondir's governance model is key to achieving the best outcomes. We are guided by four overarching policies based on the four Pillars of Governance – Corporate, Clinical, Financial and Resource. Under these four policies, hundreds of procedures ensure a good operational flow," said Mr Leedie.



# and helping train the health workforce

The importance of good dental health as a gateway to a better life cannot be underestimated. To be able to speak without difficulty, socialise without embarrassment and eat without pain are significant factors in the health and emotional well being of all humans.

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*"I love the transformations when people smile and say 'gosh I never thought I would look like that'."*

**Jade Utz**  
Clinical Co-Ordinator

Dental hygiene and access to dentistry services is a major barrier to oral health amongst disadvantaged communities and people living in rural and regional areas. Goondir Health Services has partnered with The University of Queensland School of Dentistry to provide a five chair dental clinic in Dalby and four chair dental clinic in St George as part of a practical teaching facility for fifth year dental students.

This ground breaking partnership provides free dental services to the region.

Goondir Health Service also provides opportunities for hands on, practical training for medical specialists, nurses and registrars. We are helping to train the future rural and regional health workforce in Queensland.



# Goondir is ...

## an investment in the future

Goondir is a health service like no other. It is led by a group of creative thinkers who are dedicated to the improvement of indigenous lives through a holistic approach to social issues, as well as specific health care needs.

Goondir is about breaking new ground in health care delivery to bring about social change.

The vision for the future includes the Health Farm project: an integrated health care initiative to target education and training, with a social enterprise arm comprising a corporate retreat and tourism projects. This will deliver financial viability and sustainability for the organisation into the future.

Goondir is planning to invest in health research in the region to assist in tailoring health programs to local needs. This research

investment is vital if Australia is to see indigenous outcomes improve.

“We need to take our services outside the clinical setting, which we know can be an obstacle for indigenous people. We have moved some of our services out of medical centres and into community buildings, with great success,” says Mr Leedie.

Goondir is also working towards the creation of Wellbeing Centres in regional towns and building a culturally safe practising workforce.

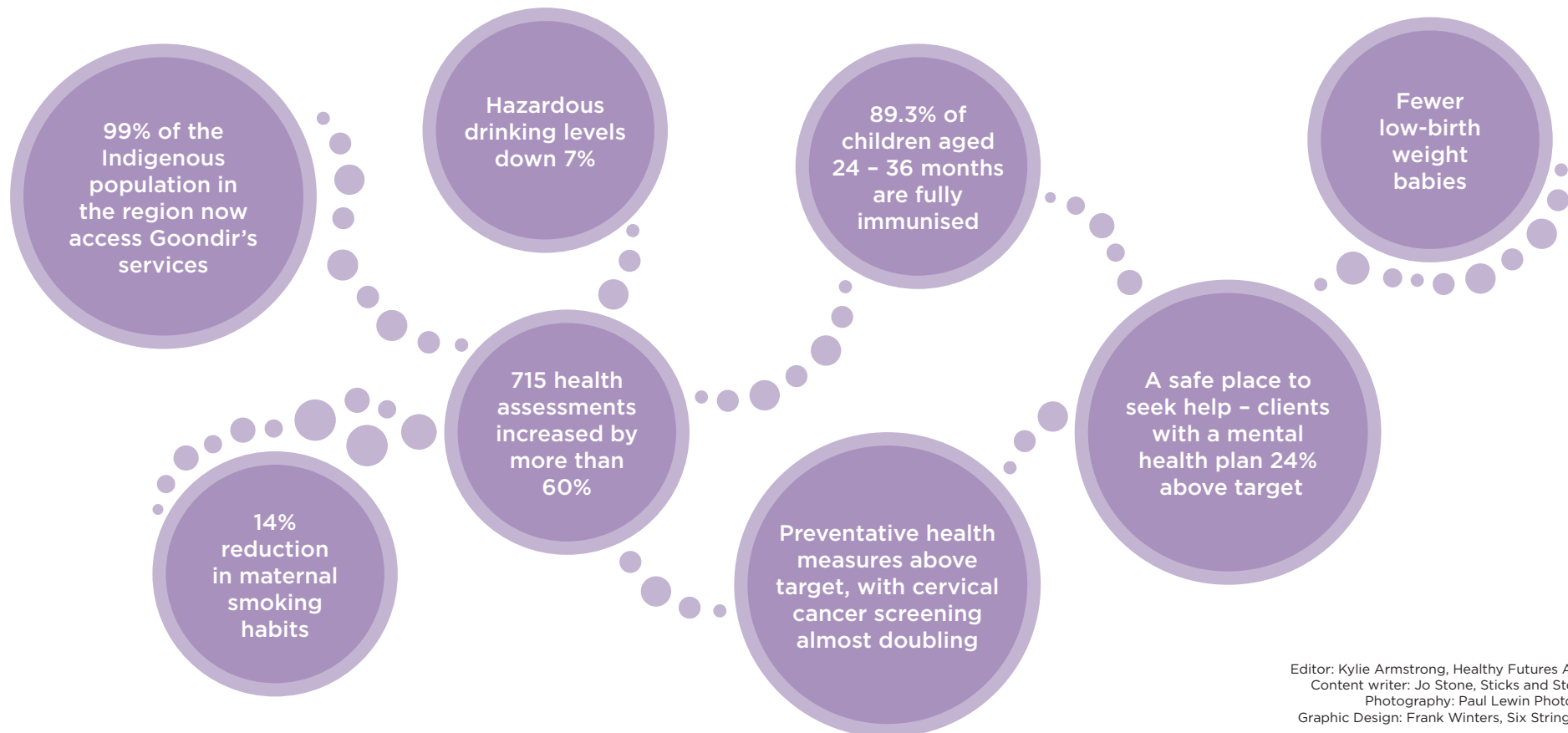
Big dreams can become a reality if we combine the courage to do things differently, with community support and a financial commitment from stakeholders who also believe in our vision.



*“ATSI health should be viewed through more than just a clinical lens. This is how we are going to close the gap.”*

**Floyd Leedie**  
CEO Goondir Health Service

through innovation, empowerment  
and client centred holistic care.





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*Better Health, Better Living, Longer Life*

