

Working Together in Prison-Based Therapeutic Drug and Alcohol Treatment: A Cultural / Clinical Model

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CARANICHE

Connections that better lives



We acknowledge that we meet today on the land of the Kurna people, and we offer thanks for their continuing care and custodianship of this land.

We pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders past, present, and emerging, and to all First Nations people, whose sovereignty of the land has never been ceded.

Caraniche – who we are and what we do

- Drug and alcohol, mental health and wellbeing service provider in Victoria.
- Specialise in working with people in the justice system, including adults in prison and community, and young people in youth justice.
- Grown over 27 years from a small group of psychologists working in the prison system, to more than 115 mental health professionals delivering group and individual counselling.
- Around 10% of the men and women we work with in custody identify as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander



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Developing a culturally-based therapeutic drug and alcohol program

In 2015 Justice Health provided the opportunity to develop and deliver, in partnership with members of the Victorian Aboriginal community, a culturally based drug and alcohol program for Aboriginal men in custody.

The program was developed in 2 phases

Phase one – Pilot program

Developed in collaboration with an **Aboriginal Program Development Advisory Board** and **Aboriginal men in custody** – action research approach

Phase two – Current program

Cultural and clinical consultants from Justice Health reviewed the program

Program participants, and cultural and clinical facilitators provided feedback through focus groups and interviews to guide program revisions

Who was involved in development?

- Caraniche Program Design team
- Western Metropolitan Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC)
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)
- Aboriginal AOD Division and Aboriginal Health Branch of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Aboriginal Clinical Consultant, Forensicare
- Cultural and clinical consultants, Justice Health
- Aboriginal men in custody
- Cultural and clinical program facilitators

About the Program

- Uses a cultural / clinical model, combining therapeutic drug and alcohol counselling and cultural ways of healing
- Aligned with evidence and frameworks from contemporary Indigenous psychology literature
- Co-facilitated by an Aboriginal Elder / Respected Person, and a clinician
- Funded by Department Justice & Community Safety – Justice Health
- Developed for men who
 - have a history of problematic substance use
 - identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and prefer to participate in a cultural program
 - are classified as requiring more intensive support to address their offending and substance use
- Currently developing an evaluation framework, including identifying culturally valid outcome measures

Establishing trust, safety and participant goals

- Establishing the facilitator relationship – we had to get to know each other
- Building safety in the group – who are you and where are you from?
- Learning about each other – what has brought you here and what do you need from this group?



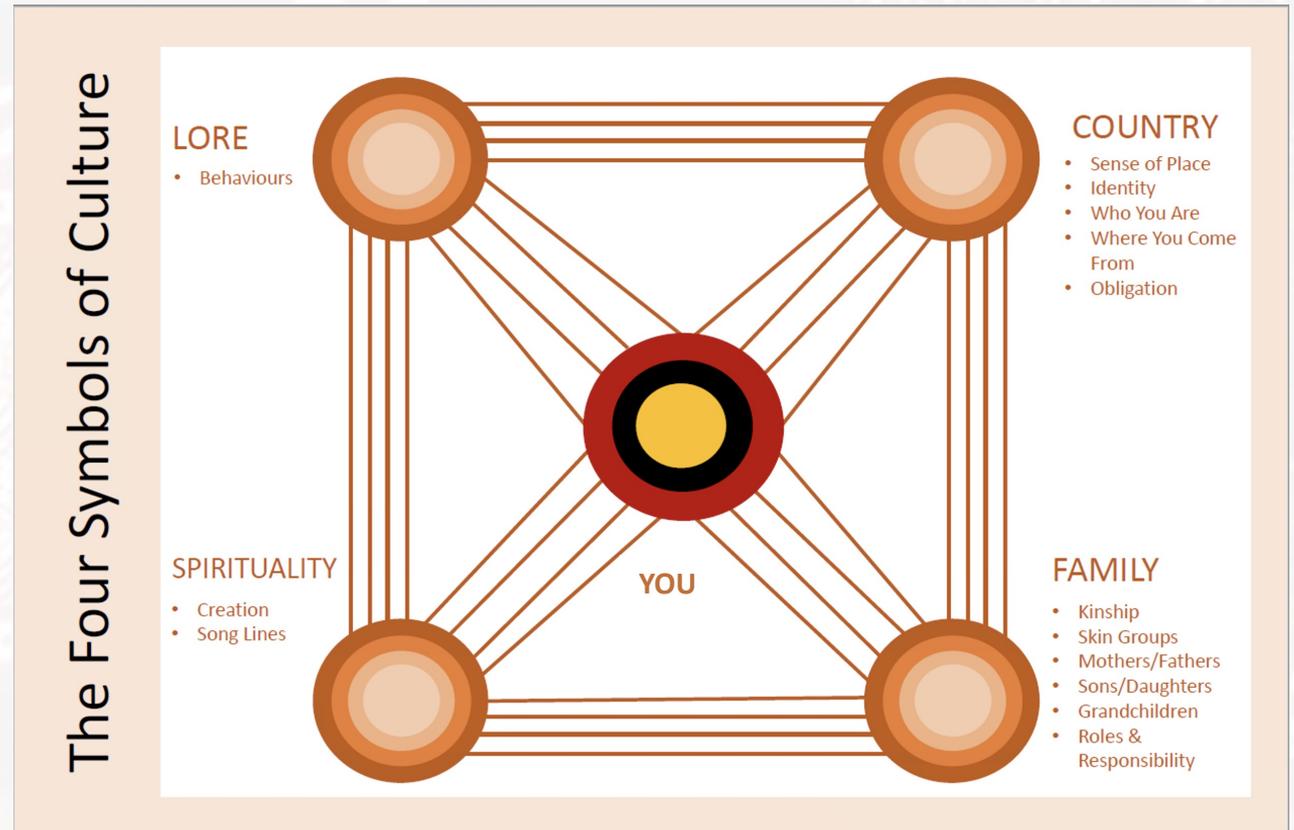
Healing is at the centre

The core focus of the program is on healing – addressing the trauma and disconnection that contribute to substance use and offending, and developing strengths and skills for improving social and emotional wellbeing.

The cultural and clinical come together to facilitate this healing process.

Connecting the past and the future through story telling

- Men explore their stories in their own way, e.g., yarning, painting, listening to others, and are guided by facilitators to learn from those stories
 - Know yourself and know your story to move forward
 - Yarns go deep, addressing issues of grief, loss, disconnection
 - Strengths in self and culture are identified
- Narrative therapy, strengths-based approach
 - Men lead, and facilitators guide exploration
 - Focuses on healing, resilience and skills for change



4 Symbols of Culture provides a tool for helping men identify areas of cultural disconnect

Healing and moving forward

Smoking ceremony

- marks the point of moving on from the past - cleansing from what has come before

Yarning circle

- Men lead, facilitators listen
- Start to identify goals and strategies for change – values, interests etc.

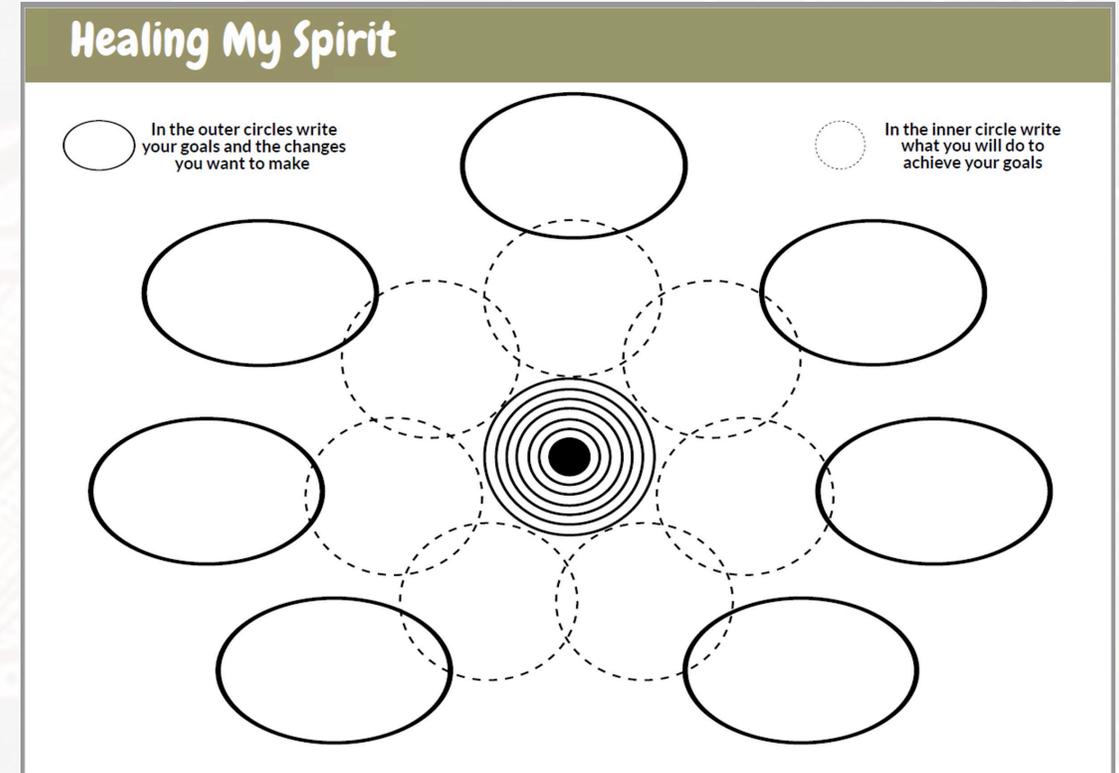


Building strengths and skills for social and emotional wellbeing

Strengths and skills-building happens across the whole program, but is the focus of the second half

Includes activities and yarns to

- Identify personal strengths and values
- Develop cognitive and emotional management skills
- Develop skills for managing cravings and preventing relapse
- Understand individual pathways into offending and the role of substance use
- Strengthen healthy relationships and manage challenging ones
- Set and work towards positive goals



The Healing Plan is focused on self – where is my disconnect and what do I need to do to reconnect?



Our views on co-facilitating
a cultural / clinical model

Group artwork created at Loddon Prison

“The circles in the middle represent the program room we would meet in. The ‘U’ shapes are each man in group committing to the process. The white dots are each man’s future journey in life with each man’s handprint being their own future.”



“Reconnecting with Country”



The Pride of Dreaming

The painter explained the painting is a message to himself moving forward.

“The snake is a reminder to be careful of sneaky buggers at every corner in life.

The platypus represents not letting people look down upon you.

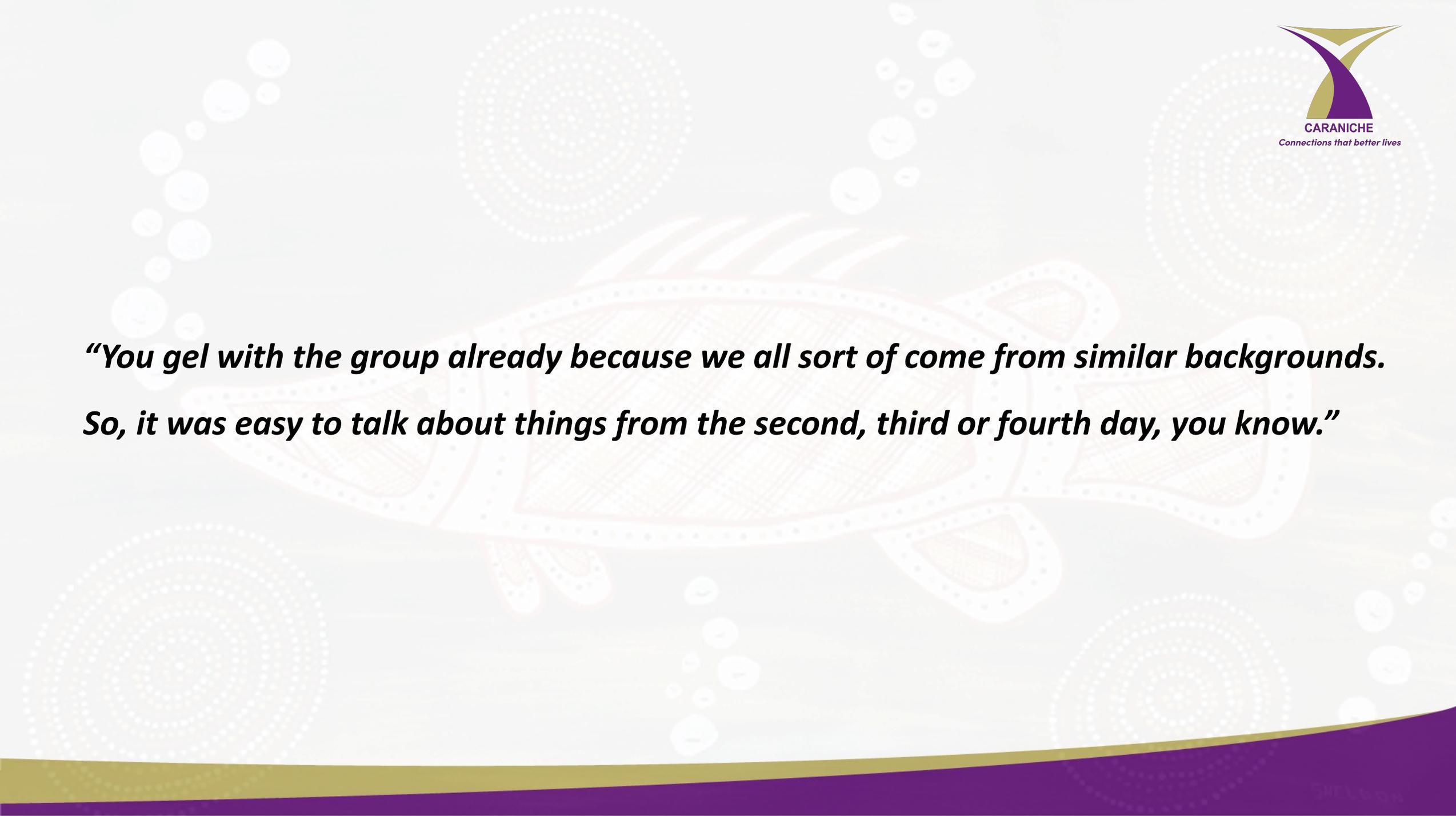
The barra reminds me to not get caught up in the bad things in life.

The brolga tells me to keep my head up.

The turtle reminds me to pull my head in every once in a while.

The hands are mine and need to be kept off everything bad whilst holding onto everything good in this life.”





“You gel with the group already because we all sort of come from similar backgrounds. So, it was easy to talk about things from the second, third or fourth day, you know.”

“I’ve done just about all the programs over the past 12 year’s jail; but this program having an Aboriginal Elder made me feel more comfortable to open up. I felt more at peace to share my story.”

“I think it’s a bit easier (in this program) to deal with the things we normally don’t get to deal with (in other programs), especially if it’s loss and grief and pain and all that, we just normally hold it in, and we wouldn’t be so forthcoming in other groups.”

Thank you

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For more information feel free to email us at

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