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AUSTRALIA HAVE
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BY A PARTNER¹

MARRIN WEEJALI

MARRIN WEEJALI - HEALING MINDS, HEALING SPIRITS

Marrin Weejali is an Aboriginal community organisation providing culturally safe alcohol, other drug and non-acute mental health counselling, referral and advocacy services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Sydney.

One in six women in Australia have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner, and one in four have experienced emotional abuse¹. These rates are often higher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Aboriginal women are just one of the groups supported at Marrin Weejali.

In 2020, Marrin Weejali adapted their programs during COVID-19 restrictions to run online sessions and created virtual safe spaces for service users.

Maya* self-referred to Marrin Weejali in July 2020, having acknowledged her need for drug and alcohol misuse support. This followed a drink-driving car accident with one of her children in the car.

During Maya's first assessment call with Marrin Weejali, it became apparent that she was subject to severe domestic violence. The assessment could not be completed as her partner kept intruding and demanding to know who she was speaking to and what she was disclosing. Maya had to leave the house to finish her assessment in private later that day.

Marrin Weejali helped Maya recognise the pattern between her alcohol use in response to domestic violence and provided her with information on both topics. Maya attended Zoom AA meetings with Marrin Weejali to talk through her issues. She was also referred to

emergency assistance services. She left her partner within a month.

Maya is now separated, sober, and safe with her children. She recognises that she was self-medicating with alcohol and other drugs to cope with emotional and psychological violence. Since leaving, Maya has had multiple altercations with her ex-partner but has reported his behaviour to the police, who have issued an AVO.

Despite the challenges Maya now faces as a single parent, she describes this as healthier than the constant fear she was living with before. Maya is now focused on her recovery and helping her children overcome the trauma of witnessing family violence. The car accident, which she once saw as the incident that destroyed her life, she now views as a turning point. It presented an opportunity to determine the root causes of her struggles and a chance to better the life of her family.

For more information about how WentWest supports Western Sydney, visit www.wentwest.com.au.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of this client.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019) *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story*