



“YOU HELPED
SAVE MY LIFE”

MARRIN WEEJALI

MARRIN WEEJALI - HEALING MINDS, HEALING SPIRITS

Marrin Weejali is an Aboriginal community organisation providing culturally safe alcohol, drug and non-acute mental health counselling, referral and advocacy services in Western Sydney. They take a personal and community-driven approach to identify the root causes of substance misuse and help clients find healthy solutions to work through their mental health issues.

Over 13,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Western Sydney¹. WentWest commissions services such as Marrin Weejali to work towards the strategic aim of improving Aboriginal health in the region.

Domestic and family violence is the most common reason for homelessness in Australia. Despite the high focus on women and children as the victims of family violence, many men also suffer. One in sixteen men have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15, yet 68% never seek advice or support².

Michael* was the victim of emotional and physical domestic violence and began using the drug Ice as escapism. As the violence and drug use continued, the Department of Communities and Justice intervened and removed Michael's four children - *“That was the worst time in my life. I could not believe that as a father I had let my children down. I was meant to protect them, and I didn't, so then I had to live with the guilt.”* Struggling to cope with the loss of his children, and stuck in an unhealthy relationship with his wife, Michael spent up to \$450 per day on drugs and became involved in criminal activity to support his habit.

Eventually, after twenty years of marriage, Michael had the strength to leave his wife and walk away from the abuse. This decision, however, left him homeless. Michael had decided it was time to change. He moved back in with his mum

and decided to stop using drugs.

With his old life and negative influences behind him, Michael had a limited number of people he could turn to, so he reached out to Marrin Weejali for support. Marrin Weejali connected Michael to a dedicated Support Worker and provided weekly counselling sessions to help him talk about his past without judgement. With his life back on track, Michael found a healthy relationship and moved in with his new partner. The couple were expecting a child together but unfortunately lost the baby. Despite the grief of this loss, Michael refrained from drugs, and has maintained being a committed stepfather to his partner's two daughters. He has a stable job and is taking steps to regain custody of his children.

“Thank you, Marrin Weejali, for all of your help, you all do an amazing job, and you helped save my life.” - Michael.

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 Bureau of Statistics (2016) 'Indigenous Geography', 2016 Census

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