



PALM ISLAND COMMUNITY COMPANY

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-2019



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

So much has happened recently, is happening now or is about to happen that PICC seems to be at a turning point in its history. As you read in last year's annual report, PICC celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2018. This gave us the opportunity to think about the next ten years – what achievements do we want to celebrate in 2028? I wrote at the time about how much I looked forward to a new and exciting era for PICC and about our ambitious plans for the community. Since then, we have put in the work to start making all this happen.

One part of our thinking about the future was to have external consultants evaluate the operations and effectiveness of PICC. Last year's annual report had some of their preliminary findings, but we are now pleased to have the final evaluation report. It has been a confirmation of all the work we have done for Palm Island and an important step on the way to PICC becoming an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation we have worked for since the start. We are already acting on most of its recommendations to improve our operations and services.

There are a number of plans and projects underway or starting soon, demonstrating our work for the community of Palm Island continues, and the number of services we offer has grown even further, particularly those aimed at Closing the Gap.

As many of you know, we pick a topic of focus for our work every year. Last year, it was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices in the community. This year, our recent projects have focussed on

improving the mental health of Palm Islanders and reducing the rate of domestic violence. Not only are both of these worth getting rid of for their own sake, it is a well-known fact that they are related: domestic violence is a cause of mental illness in many of its victims, and mental illness is often present in users of domestic violence. Furthermore, both domestic violence and mental illness are both barriers to our ability to successfully deliver improved outcomes for the community in other areas. In any case, both are too common on Palm Island, and the community deserves something be done about them.

To reduce the rates of domestic violence and poor mental health, PICC has set up three new services in the last year. With new funding from the Queensland Government, we have established the Domestic Violence Specialist Service, which will help those who have experienced or used domestic violence. The Service will support and help those who have experienced it to recover, and those who have used violence understand its effects and be accountable for changing their ways.

We also have created the new Mental Health Team, which provides permanent, dedicated staff to help Palm Islanders treat their mental health concerns. New funding means that we can now provide this service after many years of not having sufficient staff in our existing services.

The Family Participation Program is also a new service and helps Palm Island families stay safe and together.

It provides help, advocacy and a true voice in decision-making for families when the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women is concerned about a child's welfare. The major aim of the Program is to help make sure that a child is never again removed from parents' care on Palm Island.

Now that our existing services have stabilised, these services will ensure any gaps between them are filled. All in all, Palm Islanders made about three and a half thousand visits to the services and programs provided by us in 2018-19, and we expect the numbers to grow further in 2019-20.

Lastly, we haven't forgotten that the Palm Island community is still feeling the effects of the weather and flooding earlier this year. PICC made sure that our services continued as much as possible during that unprecedented catastrophe. We put in our efforts to help the community recover – for example, we organised the distribution of food and essential goods that had been donated – and we also monitored disaster recovery efforts.

Now that our first decade is behind us, watch this space for what we will achieve in our second.

Rachel Atkinson
Chief Executive Officer





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to write to you in an annual report for the first time as the Chair of the Palm Island Community Company since my election to the position last year.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my predecessor as Chair, Jim Petrich. Jim has been an invaluable part of PICC from the start, and I am honoured to follow him as chair of the board, and to be the first chair from the Palm Island community.

For those of you who may not know me, I have been a member of the board of PICC for the last three years and also between 2011 and 2012. I was a councillor for the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council from 2012 to 2016.

As the new Chair of PICC, I hope to help deliver, when it is ready, the transition of PICC to a full Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation . This has long

been a goal of PICC and the community, because we know that Palm Island and other communities like it are best off when we can make decisions on and control our own futures. The evaluation report, which you can read about in this report, is an important step in the process of moving PICC to this new model. I am glad to see how well PICC stands up even under minute scrutiny and the benefits of whatwe do on Palm Island.

I look forward to many happy years ahead as the Chair of the board of PICC and working with all of you. I know that there's much more left to do on Palm Island, and I will do my part to make sure it happens.

**Mislam Sam
Chair**



WHAT WE DO

The Palm Island Community Company is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers human services, community-capacity building and staff development programs on Palm Island.

Through the establishment of a network of partnerships and collaborations, the ongoing recruitment and training of staff, and an uncompromising attitude towards the building of community capacity, PICC continues to make a real difference in the lives of the people we serve.

With a successful history since our establishment eleven years ago, PICC delivers innovative, community-driven programs that are squarely aimed at supporting and strengthening the social, cultural and economic fabric of the Palm Island community.

PICC continues to work hard to strengthen the infrastructure of this remote island and create local jobs for local people while delivering vital human services to the community.

The fundamental focus of the Company is underpinned by the belief that the residents of Palm Island are entitled to have ready access to the range of reliable and high-quality human and social services like those enjoyed by most mainland Australians.

PICC is proud of our role in helping Palm Island to lead the way in the development of a new model of Indigenous community-capacity building that has demonstrated success.

The human services provided by PICC help improve Palm Islanders' childhoods, safety and health. PICC has agreements for eighteen programs and services with eleven different funding providers. Although our services focus on three areas of greatest need on Palm Island - health, early years education and care, social and emotional wellbeing - PICC aims to provide support to all Palm Islanders in need.

In addition to these services, PICC goes beyond the standard ways we help Palm Island to help our clients, the broader Palm Island community and our staff. The businesses operated by PICC provide products and services unavailable elsewhere on the Island, or choice for consumers if they are. We offer help to community members for funeral expenses, disaster relief funding, a transport service connecting to health services in Townsville, and the community safety net by which PICC accepts referrals from all Palm Islanders or connections to services that can.

To our staff, PICC offers local employment, professional development, training and capacity-building. These are skills that can be used in the Palm Island community even if the staff member leaves PICC. We are the second-largest employer on Palm Island, making sure that over eighty Palm Islanders have an income to support themselves and their families and to spend in their community.

PICC also can, through our recognised expertise in service delivery in a remote Indigenous community, provide high-level advice and representation to government bodies, boards, NGOs and other organisations - particularly through our CEO, Rachel Atkinson - which ensures that the Palm Island community has a voice on the national stage. PICC also aims to document and share what it learns so that other remote Indigenous communities can benefit from our experience. Our website is continuing to develop to showcase the Palm Island Community.

PICC is, in short, determined to deliver high-quality, needed services to the Palm Island community and to develop the community's strengths, so that Palm Islanders can enjoy the health, services and quality of life equal to those enjoyed by so many Australians.





PICC IMPACT EVALUATION

As part of the plan for PICC to become a community-controlled organisation, an external consultancy firm was engaged to evaluate the operations, structure and effect on the Palm Island community of PICC. Some of its preliminary findings were released in the 2017-18 PICC annual report, and the final report was released in May 2019.

The overall question to the evaluation was: has the Palm Island Community Company achieved the intended outcomes of a well-governed, sustainable vehicle for providing services for Palm Islanders that improve the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and the community? The answer was a clear yes. The report showed that PICC is:

Relevant – “PICC is relevant (wanted and valued) by most community [members] and stakeholders ... PICC provides services that are critical to the needs of Palm Island residents.”

Efficient – “PICC has been financially stable and well managed”.

Effective – “Stakeholders and staff say that without PICC it would be very difficult to connect individuals, families and the community to the right services they need at the right time.”

Sustainable – “The commitment by and approach of the Board and the model of operation have changed a serious, unstable and fragmented community situation to one that provides ongoing positive community-level impacts.”

And has a high level of **Impact** – “The main impact of PICC for Palm Island is that there is a stable organisation sufficiently equipped to support rapid growth in Indigenous employment and, as a result, in culturally appropriate service delivery.”

Although the report was very positive about PICC, it found areas that it recommended be improved or changed. These include:

- Eventual transition to a community-controlled organisation.
- A “flexible pooled-funding modality” from government.
- Better communication and transparency from PICC to the community and staff about what PICC does and how it works, including changing misconceptions and a mixed reputation.
- Building on the “persona” of PICC as a connecting organisation.

- Strengthen support and training for staff, including expanding middle management.
- Better data collection and performance measurement, including establishing a “community dashboard” of quantitative and qualitative data from the community to learn from and improve practice and service delivery.

Most of the recommendations in the evaluation are already being implemented or are planned to be implemented. Notably, the evaluation has been delivered to the Queensland Government, whose decision is key to whether or not PICC can become a fully community-controlled organisation.

The complete evaluation report and a summary version can be found on the PICC website. Printed copies of both are also available.



CHILDREN AND FAMILY CENTRE AND MEDICAL PRACTICE

The last twelve months have seen much activity at the Children and Family Centre. It continues to increase in popularity, with more than two thousand patients registered at the integrated Medical Practice. The Centre has been given a new model to better integrate new services, meet emerging needs and provide improved outcomes in early childhood education and health.

Most changes in the last year have occurred in the Centre's early childhood work. With a change in funding from April 2019, the early childhood component has evolved to have a greater focus on education and formal therapeutic work, which provides better health and education outcomes for children on Palm Island than before. To assist this changed focus, a new position was created, the Early Childhood Teacher, that requires a tertiary qualification in education. The play group and child care continue for children under eight years old – through which the new services above are delivered – and, if required, children can access services from medical specialists, such as the speech therapist and occupational therapist who visit regularly.

The Medical Practice includes General Practitioners, Aboriginal Health Workers, a Nurse and reception staff. Specialist services are attached to the Practice for conditions endemic on Palm Island, such as for the treatment of diabetes and ocular health. The

focus of the Practice is on child and maternal health, but through the provision of added services it also ensures that all Palm Islanders have access a locally tailored and culturally sensitive general practice medical clinic. The Practice can also refer patients to medical services in Townsville. While there, patients can be transported to their appointments in a PICC transfer bus. A partnership has been developed with Griffith and James Cook Universities to give registrar training at the Centre to medical students.

The Centre and PICC are also negotiating with Queensland Health to establish a fully community-controlled Aboriginal health centre on Palm Island. The Primary Health Care Centre opened to Queensland Health operations in April 2019, and several PICC medical services will be located there when the Centre is made available to PICC.

The new Domestic Violence Specialist Service is based at the Centre.

The Centre ended its participation in the Ready Together program in 2018 because of a change in funding.



COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

The community enterprises operated by PICC – the Community Store, the Bakery, and the Fuel Station and Mechanic – have seen much improved conditions in the last year.

Serving the community with second-hand clothing and household items at low prices was the main objective of the Community Store in years past. The community feedback has been for new products, so this year it has expanded its store range to include new homewares, appliances and apparel for the whole family. It continues to connect the community with a range of mobile devices and other tech accessories. To further enhance the store experience, the team has expanded with two new retail assistants this year. Apart from the products to buy in the store, it offers a curtain-making and sewing repairs service, and assistance with setting up phones.

The Bakery now sells bread, rolls, cakes and other products baked fresh on the Island daily, as well as other foods and snacks. Baking products on Palm Island has long been an ambition of the Bakery, as these products are often stale by the time they are shipped from the mainland, and usually more expensive than locally made goods.

The Fuel Station and Mechanic provides vehicle maintenance and repair that is unavailable elsewhere on Palm Island, saving the community the expense of

shipping their vehicles to the mainland, as well as a choice of fuel retailers. The Mechanic also now has a workshop in Townsville for Palm Islanders on the mainland and others who would like

to support a Palm Island business.



DiVERSIONARY SERVICES

The Diversionary Centre provides support and cultural activities for Palm Island community members, particularly for those at risk of alcohol and substance misuse. The support delivered may vary when dealing with individual clients who have certain issues that require a particular support from the experienced staff.

The Centre's programs include:

- The Men's Gathering, which delivers programs that enable clients to engage in meaningful discussions with staff and experienced stakeholders who provide guidance. These discussions sometimes vary depending on topics that are affecting the community, and include community issues raised in view of finding solutions, group discussions to support men's issues, and general support for DV referrals. The Gathering includes the participation of stakeholders such as Ferdy's Haven, the Palm Island Men's Group, the Joyce Palmer Health Service, the local sexual health service and ATODS.
- The Four-Week Health and Fitness Program, which runs general assessments with clients on their health and fitness, and then provides a four-week health and fitness plan. The activity allows men to enhance their overall health and fitness while engaging in the Centre's programs, which include

mental and emotional health support from qualified staff, healthy eating advice, DV referrals, health and fitness support, and "715" health checks to identify issues that may need a referral to a GP.

- The Bush Tucker and Walking Track, which was initially formed to reopen the old timber cutters' track, once used to transport timber down to the old sawmill at the Mill area. Many in the Palm Island community had fathers and grandfathers who used the track as loggers and timber-cutters in the 1950s. The track has a beautiful view overlooking the bays and shoreline of the Island, and so is used by locals and non-locals for bush walking. The track also gives access to the Island's many local bush tucker plants that can be used for everyday cooking and medicinal purposes; staff and clients have been propagating these plants and are now growing them with the help of the local Bwgcolman school children. The project also supports rejuvenation of the timber cutters' track and source bush tucker plants, identifying bush plants for consumption and medicine, and mentoring and history lessons by Elders, who assist with the reformation of the track.

The new Domestic Violence Specialist Service delivers some programs and services at the Centre.

WOMEN'S SERVICE

The Women's Service provides safe, temporary accommodation and support services to women and their children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence. The Service also provides several related programs and services, such as outreach programs and home visits for clients, the Ladies' Lounge and hosting an office of the Aboriginal and Islander Women's Legal Service.

The new Domestic Violence Specialist Service delivers some programs and services at the Women's Service.



SAFE HOUSE

The Safe House provides placements for up to six children and young people who are subject to ongoing intervention by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. Typically, resident children are on Child Protection Orders and are referred by the Department.

As part of the focus of PICC on reducing domestic violence and its effects, the Safe House is one of the service areas that received particular attention in the last year. It has received a new operating and staff model to further enhance the standard of care provided to children in need. The Safe House has also had its contract renewed, with funding now provided to March 2022. The Safe House is working with Child Safety Services to implement recent reforms by the Queensland Government to child protection regulations and standards of care.

FAMILY WELLBEING CENTRE

The Family Wellbeing Centre provides culturally appropriate advice and help to Palm Island families and their children who are in need of assistance to stay safe and together. The Centre provides support to families and their children through education programs, casework, workshops, referrals, information, and individual and group activities.

The Centre has continued to grow since it was established in 2017, and it now hosts several long-running PICC programs, including the Women's Yarning Circle and the Elders Advisory Group.

The Family Participation Program is also hosted at the Centre. It provides cultural advice on child protection and support to families who are at risk or subject to a Child Protection Order from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. The Family Participation Program replaced the Recognised Entity program in November 2018.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE GROUP

The Community Justice Group develops strategies within the community for dealing with justice-related issues aimed at decreasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' contact with the justice system.

The Group supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and offenders at all stages of the legal process, including the provision of sentencing submissions to court, attendance at court and visits to prisons and detention centres. The Centre also provides mediation and referrals to other relevant organisations on Palm Island.

The Coordinator of the Group plays a significant role in networking with these agencies to ensure that justice-related issues impacting on the Palm Island community are addressed collectively with a focus on the development of intervention programs.

The 2018-19 financial year saw new domestic violence support workers, who accompany victims and users of domestic and family violence to the Special Domestic Violence Court (which has recently opened on Palm Island) and provide advice and recommendations to Magistrates when requested. The Group also received funding for materials and advertising to discourage the use of sexual violence, which have been distributed across the Island.

SAFE HAVEN

The Safe Haven Service is designed to respond to domestic and family violence issues within the Palm Island community. It targets Palm Islanders aged under eighteen years old and families caring for children who have experienced or witnessed violence in their homes. The Safe Haven provides many activities and programs; the main provisions are the Night Café, the Youth Patrol, and family support and counselling services.

The Night Café is a popular and long-running program run by the Safe Haven. It provides a safe, social space in the evenings for children and young people who may experience, or be at risk of experiencing, violence or abuse in the home and others who may want or need somewhere safe to go in the evenings.

The Safe Haven also runs the Youth Patrol, which escorts children who are outdoors at night to a safe place or home and monitors children and young people outdoors at night without adult supervision.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPECIALIST SERVICE

The Domestic Violence Specialist Service began operating in 2019. It provides a single, dedicated team focussed on reducing the rate of domestic and family violence on Palm Island in a culturally appropriate manner.

It works with both victims and users of domestic violence. To victims of violence, it offers counselling and support for their experiences and pathways to healing. To users of violence, it offers anti-violence and reeducation programs to hold users accountable for their behaviour and to break cycles of violence. The Service also coordinates with the new Specialist Domestic Violence Court on Palm Island.

The Service is based at the Children and Family Centre. Locating the Service here provides a high level of discretion to its clients. The Service also sometimes delivers services and programs from other PICC facilities.



FAMILY PARTICIPATION STEPPED CARE PROGRAM SERVICE

The Family Participation Program was introduced in November 2018. It replaced the Recognised Entity program after a change in funding.

The Family Participation Program helps Palm Island families stay safe and together. Its target group is families subject to a Child Protection Order or at risk of being subject to an Order. It provides culturally appropriate advice and support to ensure that families going through the child protection system are kept informed and are fully involved in the processes of the child protection system and any decisions made about their child or family.

The Mental Health Team was established in April 2019 to provide some services in the new Stepped Care range. New funding helps PICC provide more care to Palm Islanders with mental health concerns than before. To its clients, the Team is a single point of contact for mental health concerns and services. The Team acts as a central coordinating body for all mental health treatment services and programs, and ensures that there are no gaps or overlaps in clients' treatment or referrals to other mental health services.

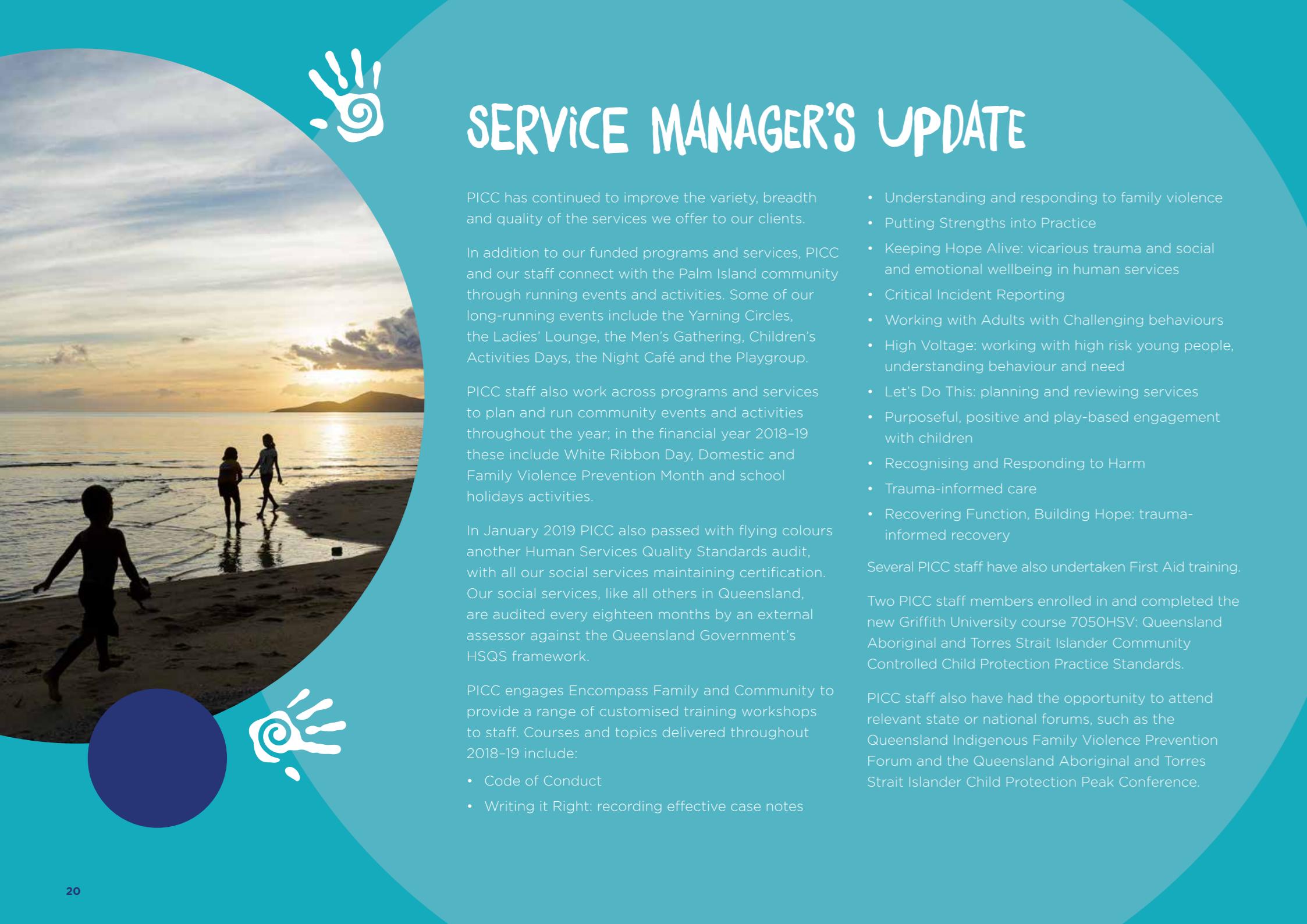
The Stepped Care Service suite began operating in July 2018. It provides a suite of services, including individual and group sessions, to help in culturally appropriate ways Palm Islanders with mental health concerns. New funding for the Service allows the employment of more staff and provision of more mental health services than was possible under previous funding arrangements.

The Mental Health Team and the Stepped Care Service are based at the Children and Family Centre, but will be moved to the new Primary Health Care Centre in the future.

NDIS CONNECTOR SERVICE

PICC has two part-time NDIS Community Connectors working with Palm Islanders providing information to help the community understand the NDIS pathway and assist potential participants to access the Scheme. The Connectors work closely with potential participants, their families and friends to complete paperwork, attend appointments and find service providers.





SERVICE MANAGER'S UPDATE

PICC has continued to improve the variety, breadth and quality of the services we offer to our clients.

In addition to our funded programs and services, PICC and our staff connect with the Palm Island community through running events and activities. Some of our long-running events include the Yarning Circles, the Ladies' Lounge, the Men's Gathering, Children's Activities Days, the Night Café and the Playgroup.

PICC staff also work across programs and services to plan and run community events and activities throughout the year; in the financial year 2018-19 these include White Ribbon Day, Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month and school holidays activities.

In January 2019 PICC also passed with flying colours another Human Services Quality Standards audit, with all our social services maintaining certification. Our social services, like all others in Queensland, are audited every eighteen months by an external assessor against the Queensland Government's HSQS framework.

PICC engages Encompass Family and Community to provide a range of customised training workshops to staff. Courses and topics delivered throughout 2018-19 include:

- Code of Conduct
- Writing it Right: recording effective case notes

- Understanding and responding to family violence
- Putting Strengths into Practice
- Keeping Hope Alive: vicarious trauma and social and emotional wellbeing in human services
- Critical Incident Reporting
- Working with Adults with Challenging behaviours
- High Voltage: working with high risk young people, understanding behaviour and need
- Let's Do This: planning and reviewing services
- Purposeful, positive and play-based engagement with children
- Recognising and Responding to Harm
- Trauma-informed care
- Recovering Function, Building Hope: trauma-informed recovery

Several PICC staff have also undertaken First Aid training.

Two PICC staff members enrolled in and completed the new Griffith University course 7050HSV: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Child Protection Practice Standards.

PICC staff also have had the opportunity to attend relevant state or national forums, such as the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Conference.

BOARD MEMBERS

Mislam Sam,
Chair

Allan Palm Island,
Traditional Owner

Harriet Hulthen,
Palm Island community nominee

Rhonda Phillips,
Queensland Government nominee

Mark Johnston,
Queensland Government nominee

Luella Bligh,
Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council nominee

Ian Jessup,
Company Secretary

PARTNERS

The partners of PICC include:

- Ed Mosby, Clinical Psychologist, Wakai Waian Healing
- Child Safety Services
- Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
- Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service
- National Disability Insurance Agency
- Michael Baker, Sensory Group
- Bwgcolman Community School
- Joyce Palmer Health Service
- Primary Health Network
- Jon & Jon Consultants
- Encompass Family & Community
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- Australian Government
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
- Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors
- Allens Linklaters Solicitors Brisbane

ACHIEVEMENTS

The financial year 2018–19 has seen much achieved at PICC. Amongst other things, in this time PICC has:

- Recruited our new chair, Mislam Sam, from the Palm Island community
- Established three new services: the Domestic Violence Specialist Service, the Stepped Care Service and the Family Participation Program
- Negotiated with state and Federal departments and other bodies for funding
- Stabilised the community shop and bakery
- Further integrated our internal structure
- Reviewed policies for all services
- Restructured the Children and Family Service to include new services and provide more effective early childhood education
- Had an unconditional financial audit
- Completed the corporate evaluation

FINANCIAL REPORT

At the 30 June 2019 the Company was in a strong financial position reporting a Balance Sheet with positive Net Assets. The financial performance of the company has resulted in a substantial surplus for the year ended 30 June 2019. The Funded Services and Programs have tracked according to budget, whilst at the same time the Social Enterprises have made financial performance improvements from the previous year. This positive financial performance and the resulting financial position of strength that the company has achieved, is greatly due to the good governance practices, and financial management by Board, CEO, and Senior Staff of the Company.



