



THIRRILI

THIRRILI STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031

“We walk alongside families and communities in the aftermath of the loss of loved ones; supporting grief, honouring culture, and strengthening healing.”



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To the Bunuba people, Thirrili means power and strength. This meaning continues to guide who we are and how we work. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of this Country, and we recognise the continuing sovereignty, cultural authority, knowledge systems and responsibilities held by communities across Australia.

Thirrili acknowledges the deep grief carried by families and communities following suicide and other traumatic loss. We recognise that this grief is collective, cultural and ongoing, and that healing must be led in ways determined by community, grounded in culture, and respectful of local protocols.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present, and to the cultural leaders, families and communities who continue to hold strength, care and responsibility through very sorry times. We acknowledge those who have lost loved ones. Their lived experience is unique. Their voices matter. Their grief, strength and knowledge must be honoured in the work we do.

ADNYAMATHANHA COUNTRY
Ikara-Flinders Ranges, South Australia

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR AND BOARD MESSAGE

It is a privilege to reflect on the journey of Thirrili and to look ahead to the next chapter of our organisation.

Thirrili was established in 2017 because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities experiencing suicide and unexpected loss of loved ones needed a response that was culturally safe, grounded in community, informed by lived and living experience and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That same need remains at the heart of what Thirrili stands for.

What has evolved over the years, is the capability and ambition of Thirrili for the families, communities and organisations that we have worked with.

Thirrili has evolved from a national suicide postvention response service into an increasingly influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working across postvention, healing, social and emotional wellbeing, workforce capability, community development, advocacy and systems change. We have strengthened our national reach,

supported families and communities through some of their most difficult experiences, built partnerships, developed resources and training, and contributed our knowledge to national conversations about suicide prevention, postvention and wellbeing.

Thirrili are working beyond postvention. Whilst postvention work remains fundamental to the work of Thirrili, our responsibility is also to strengthen the factors that support healing, connection, cultural strength and community wellbeing.

The experience of grief and trauma does not end when an immediate response ends. Families and communities need sustained pathways to healing, and systems need to become better equipped to respond in ways that are culturally safe and effective.

This means strengthening the quality, consistency and reach of our postvention response. It also means building a strong and sustainable organisation. Our growth must be supported by sound governance, financial sustainability, strong workforce capability, effective systems and strategic partnerships. We will continue to diversify our revenue and partnerships in ways that are consistent with our purpose, values and ethical responsibilities, while maintaining government investment as an important foundation of our work.

Thirrili has an important role in contributing to best practice that recognises not only service outcomes, but also cultural connection, healing, trauma informed care and wellbeing.

The priorities ahead for Thirrili are clear: stronger services, stronger communities, stronger evidence, stronger partnerships and a stronger organisation.

As we move forward, we will remain guided by self-determination. Thirrili must continue to listen to communities, learn from lived and living experience and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are at the table when decisions are made.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Thirrili staff, families, communities, partners and supporters for the trust they place in Thirrili. Most importantly, I acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities who continue to share their stories, knowledge and experiences with us.

Dr Summer May Finlay
Chairperson





A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

The development of this Strategic Plan marks an important point in Thirrili's journey.

Sadly, we have seen the growing impact of suicide and traumatic loss across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, alongside increasing demand for culturally safe and responsive support. This reinforces both the importance of Thirrili's work and the responsibility we carry.

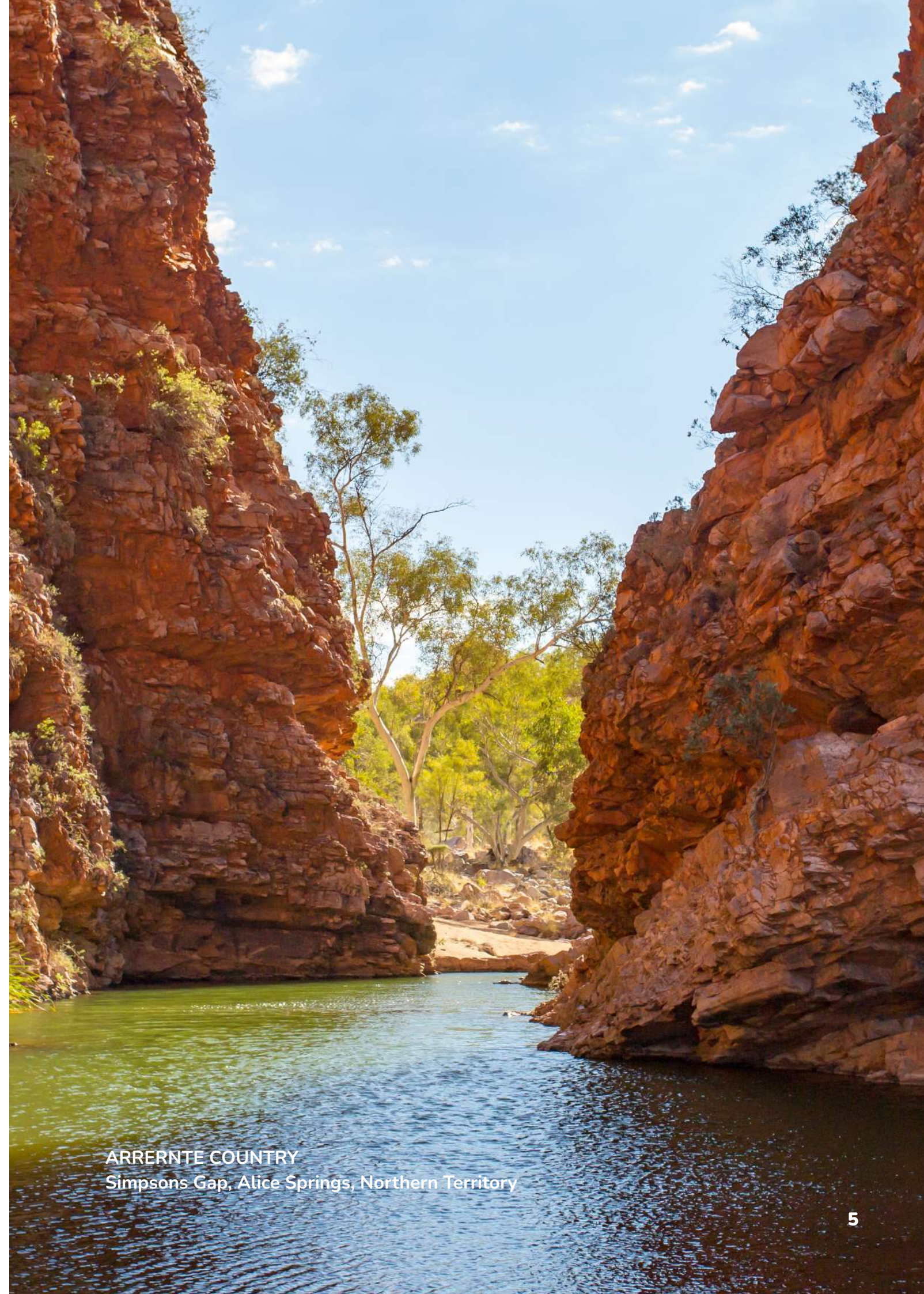
This Strategy sets a clear direction for our next phase. It reflects a shift from responding to immediate need alone, to strengthening how we support families and communities and organisations over time. Postvention is not only about crisis response; it is also about healing, building community capability and strengthening connected systems.

At the centre of this Strategy is our commitment to culturally informed and trauma informed care. We will continue to strengthen our model so it reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, and is informed by lived and living experience and best practice.

We will deepen our partnerships with communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and sector partners to deliver coordinated and culturally safe responses. We will also invest in our workforce, recognising that this deeply relational work requires a sustainable and culturally safe workforce to achieve lasting impact.

This Strategy provides the framework to deliver this work through strong governance, sustainable systems, accountability and a clear focus on impact. I acknowledge the Board for its leadership and guidance, and our workforce whose commitment, cultural knowledge and care underpin everything we do. It is a privilege to walk alongside you.

Tanja Hirvonen
Chief Executive Officer



ARRERENTE COUNTRY
Simpsons Gap, Alice Springs, Northern Territory



THE THIRRILI WAY

Our Vision

.....

That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are thriving.

Our Purpose

.....

We walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities bereaved by suicide and traumatic loss, providing culturally safe support and strengthened pathways to healing.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lived and living experience is central to who we are and how we work.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Our work is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

INFORMED PRACTICE

Our work is guided by evidence, practice-based knowledge and cultural understanding.

COLLABORATION

We work together; with communities, organisations and systems to deliver connected and coordinated responses.

TRUST

Trust is the foundation of our work.

SELF-DETERMINATION

We uphold the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead decisions that affect their lives, families and communities.

Our Values



STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Thirrili was established in response to the absence of culturally safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led postvention support available to families and communities impacted by suicide and traumatic loss.

Since its establishment in 2017, Thirrili has evolved from a national suicide postvention response service into a broader culturally grounded healing, wellbeing and systems leadership organisation. While suicide postvention remains central to Thirrili's role, the organisation's work now extends across community healing, capacity building, systems coordination, workforce support, advocacy, and policy influence.

This evolution reflects both increasing community need and a growing recognition of the importance of culturally safe responses to suicide, grief and trauma, while supporting social and emotional wellbeing.

Our Journey

2017 | Established

Thirrili was established to address the significant gap in culturally safe postvention support available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities following suicide and traumatic death

2019 | National Service Delivery

Thirrili commenced national delivery of Indigenous suicide postvention support, working alongside families, communities and service systems across Australia.

2021 | Community Capacity Building

The organisation expanded its focus to include community-led prevention and healing approaches, including place-based initiatives designed to strengthen local capability and cultural governance.

2024 | Strategic Partnerships and Systems Influence

Thirrili strengthened partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), government agencies, mental health services, and national stakeholders to improve coordination, accessibility and culturally safe responses.

Through this work, Thirrili has increasingly become recognised as a trusted national partner, contributor to policy and systems reform, and a source of expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander postvention, healing and culturally informed response approaches.

A Complex and Evolving Environment

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples continue to experience disproportionately high rates of suicide and traumatic loss, particularly in regional and remote communities.

These impacts extend beyond individuals and are experienced collectively by families, communities, organisations and workforces. They are often compounded by intergenerational trauma, racism, fragmented systems and limited access to culturally safe supports.

While working with communities impacted by suicide remains a core focus, communities are increasingly seeking support following other traumatic loss, critical incidents and community crises that impact collective wellbeing.

At the same time, demand for Thirrili's services continues to grow nationally, with increasing expectations around:

- sustained healing support
- workforce capability
- community-led responses; and
- culturally informed systems coordination.

Thirrili's Role

Thirrili provides culturally grounded support across the suicide and traumatic loss continuum, while strengthening community capability, workforce support and wellbeing, partnerships and system responses.

Thirrili works across families, communities, organisations and governments to improve coordination, strengthen culturally grounded practice, and contribute to broader wellbeing and healing approaches.

Postvention is prevention.

When families, communities and organisations receive culturally grounded support following suicide or traumatic loss, this can help people navigate the impacts of trauma, support healing and strengthen long-term wellbeing.

Looking Forward

This Strategic Plan reflects Thirrili's next phase of growth and maturity.

Over the next five years, Thirrili will continue to strengthen its model of care, deepen partnerships, support community-led healing and prevention approaches, build organisational and workforce capability, and contribute to stronger and more culturally responsive systems.

This is not only about responding to crisis.

It is about strengthening the long-term conditions for healing, connection, cultural continuity and community wellbeing.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thirrili is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation providing culturally grounded support across the suicide and traumatic loss continuum, working alongside families, communities and organisations through crisis response and healing.

Since its establishment, Thirrili has evolved beyond immediate postvention response to become a broader healing, wellbeing and systems leadership organisation. This evolution reflects both increasing community need and a growing recognition of the importance of culturally safe, holistic responses across the suicide prevention continuum.

This Strategy sets the direction for the next phase of Thirrili's work.

Over the next five years, Thirrili will strengthen its model of care, deepen community and sector partnerships, build organisational and workforce capability, and contribute to stronger and more responsive systems across Australia.

This work will be delivered through four strategic pillars:

1

Culturally Grounded Care and Practice

Strengthening Thirrili's model of care and supporting healing through culturally informed and trauma-aware approaches.

2

Partnership and Collaboration

Working with communities, ACCOs and partners to deliver coordinated responses.

3

Leadership and Governance

Building a sustainable, capable and culturally grounded organisation with the systems, workforce and leadership to deliver long-term impact.

4

Policy and System Transformation

Contributing to policy reform, systems improvement and national leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander postvention, healing and wellbeing.

Through these pillars, Thirrili will continue to strengthen its role as a trusted national partner, advocate and leader in postvention, supporting people and communities across the suicide and traumatic loss continuum, and advancing healing.

Success will be reflected in stronger support for families and communities, increased community capability, a sustainable and supported workforce, stronger evidence and learning, and systems that respond in more coordinated, culturally informed and community-led ways.

Implementation of this Strategy will be supported through continuous quality improvement, strengthened data and reporting capability, community, lived and living experience feedback, and ongoing organisational learning.

Through this Strategy, Thirrili will contribute to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are supported not only through times of crisis, but through long-term pathways of healing, connection and wellbeing.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Strategic Pillars set out the key areas of focus that will guide Thirrili's work over the life of this Strategy.

Together, they provide a framework for strengthening Thirrili's role in culturally grounded care, community-led healing, organisational capability, and systems change.

Each pillar reflects a core part of Thirrili's work, from walking alongside families and communities, to building the internal capability and external influence needed for long-term impact.

The pillars are supported by strategic priorities and key enablers that identify where Thirrili will focus effort, investment, systems and leadership.

While presented separately, the pillars are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Together, they support immediate response, sustained healing, and broader change across communities and systems.

PILLAR

1

Culturally Grounded Care and Practice

Strengthen and deliver a culturally informed, trauma-aware and community-responsive model of care that supports healing and long-term wellbeing.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Strengthen culturally informed prevention and postvention approaches that support long-term wellbeing.
- Strengthen the consistency and quality of service delivery.
- Integrate lived and living experience into care design and delivery.
- Expand service delivery from immediate response to ongoing healing and recovery.

KEY ENABLERS

1. Workforce capability in culturally informed and trauma-aware practice.
2. A clearly defined model of care supported by practice frameworks and guidance.
3. Data systems and evidence to support continuous improvement and quality assurance.
4. Sustainable and scalable service delivery systems.

PILLAR

2

Partnership and Collaboration

Strengthen partnerships to deliver coordinated, culturally safe and connected responses across communities, services and systems.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), ACCOs, government and non-government stakeholders.
- Improve coordination across health, social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), suicide prevention and postvention sectors.
- Position Thirrili as a trusted national partner and recognised leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander postvention across the suicide and traumatic loss continuum and healing.
- Strengthen referral pathways and service integration.

KEY ENABLERS

5. A structured and culturally informed stakeholder engagement approach.
6. Clear partnership frameworks, agreements and shared ways of working.
7. Trust, cultural integrity and accountability across all partnerships.
8. Systems and platforms that support coordination, communication, service integration, and the capture of real-time data to understand trends and inform responses.

PILLAR

3

Leadership and Governance

Build a strong, sustainable and culturally grounded organisation with the leadership, governance and capability to deliver national impact.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Strengthen governance frameworks and Board capability.
- Build a sustainable and supported workforce model.
- Strengthen organisational systems, processes and accountability.
- Improve financial sustainability and diversify revenue.
- Strengthen leadership capability and capacity across the organisation.

KEY ENABLERS

9. Workforce wellbeing, relief measures and sustainable workforce pipeline approaches that recognise the trauma-exposed work of Thirili.
10. Succession planning and leadership development across the organisation.
11. Strong financial systems and controls, supported by a clear funding and revenue approach.
12. Organisational policies, systems and infrastructure that enable effective and consistent delivery.
13. A culture of accountability, integrity and continuous improvement.

PILLAR

4

Policy and System Transformation

Influence and shape systems to ensure culturally safe, coordinated and effective responses to suicide and traumatic loss.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Strengthen Thirili's role in policy development and advocacy.
- Contribute to national and international reform in postvention and suicide response.
- Contribute to national and international reform to strengthen responses to suicide and traumatic loss.
- Elevate lived and living experience and community voice in system design.

KEY ENABLERS

14. Research and evidence capability to inform policy and system change.
15. Strategic partnerships with government, peak bodies and sector leaders.
16. Clear and consistent policy positions, that informs system responses.
17. Leverage real-time data, research, lived and living experience evidence to drive system reform.



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Success for Thirrili will be reflected in stronger families, connected communities, and systems that respond more effectively to suicide and traumatic loss.

Over the life of this Strategy, this will be demonstrated through:

- Communities and the sector have access to timely, culturally safe support across the suicide and traumatic loss continuum, including healing support.
- Increased community capability to respond to suicide, traumatic loss and critical incidents.
- A strong, sustainable organisation with the capability to contribute to national and international impact.
- More coordinated, accessible and culturally responsive systems.



IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

This Strategy will be delivered through a structured and phased approach that balances immediate service delivery with longer-term organisational and systems development.

Implementation will be supported by:

- Alignment between strategy, operational planning and reporting.
- Strong partnerships and collaboration with communities and stakeholders.
- Investment in organisational capability, systems and workforce.
- A commitment to continuous improvement and learning.

Governance and oversight will be maintained through regular reporting to the Board, with implementation aligned to organisational priorities, resources and capacity.



MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING

Thirrili will monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Strategy to support accountability, impact and continuous improvement.

Progress will be measured through:

- Monitoring service delivery, reach and responsiveness.
- Tracking outcomes for families, communities, workforces and systems.
- Strengthening data collection, reporting and real-time trend analysis.
- Incorporating community feedback and lived and living experience to inform improvement.

A Continuous Quality Improvement approach will guide ongoing learning, adaptation and refinement of services.



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Daintree National Park, Queensland

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