Annual Report

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ARDS
ABORIGINAL
CORPORATION

LANGUAGE CENTRE - YOLŊU RADIO - COMMUNITY CONTROL

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Front cover: Minay Wunuŋmurra, Wutpurrŋu Wunuŋmurra and Veronica Wunuŋmurra from the ARDS Gapuwiyak team

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In all our work, Yolŋu dhukarr ŋurruŋu – start with the Yolŋu way first.

Snapshot 2025-2026

72%
of all **staff** employed across ARDS are **Yolŋu**

Organisation & Reach

- Introduced **Co-CEO position**
- Provided language support for Dhuwal (Djapu and Djambarrpuyŋu), Dhuwala (Gumatj and Gupapuyŋu), Dhaŋu (Gälpu), Yan-nhaŋu, Djinaŋ', Wägilak, Ritharrŋu, Djaŋu and Dhay'yi languages
- **Broadcast live** commentary in Yolŋu languages from the **AFL** in Darwin and Melbourne
- Launched our **new website and branding**

Resources & Training

729 people participated in ARDS Cultural Competency Training (CCT)

20 staff completed restorative justice training

Developed new resources in Yolŋu languages and English, including culturally safe resources to improve understanding about the NDIS

Released **five episodes of Bluey** in Dhuwaya', Djambarrpuyŋu and Dhaŋu

Programs & Services

Three staff achieved National Mediation Accreditation, including the first Yolŋu Nationally Accredited Mediator

Supported establishment of Gapuwiyak child protection leadership group: Goŋ-yothumirriw Mulka Warraw'

Began a Yolŋu-led Program for Youth Diversion, founded in gurruṯu

Secured funding to establish Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala Yolŋu Language Centre in Yurrwi

800+ engagements with Yolŋu as part of our peacemaking and mediation work

Chairperson Report

It has been a sad year for ARDS and for Yolŋu right across Northeast Arnhem Land following the passing of our former ARDS Chairperson Dr Waṉambi. Dr Waṉambi served on the ARDS Board from 2016 and was appointed to the Executive Chair position in 2018. Unfortunately, he had to resign from the position due to ill-health in June 2026.

We extend our sincere thanks to Dr Waṉambi for everything he has done for ARDS and Yolŋu communities across Northeast Arnhem Land. As a Senior Law Man and Marraŋu leader, he provided cultural authority, guidance and advice and has led ARDS to be where it is today – a highly respected and well-regarded Aboriginal-controlled, non-profit community organisation whose purpose is to increase Yolŋu control of all aspects of Yolŋu life. He helped to build an organisation that recognises Yolŋu Rom (law) and Balanda law as equal systems, with a deep commitment to working in both worlds.

Dr Waṉambi had a strong vision for ARDS to build a robust dhukarr (path) for Yolŋu mala (people) towards self-determination and to keep Yolŋu Rom strong so it can be passed to the next generation. Dr Waṉambi's legacy, and the strength of the dhukarr he built, will remain with us for many years to come.

ARDS has been led by interim chairpersons since the passing of Dr Waṉambi and will elect a new chairperson at the AGM in November 2026. We thank Ḏipililŋa Marika and Gwen Warmbirrirr for taking turns acting in the role and for keeping ARDS strong in its commitment to Yolŋu leadership and self-determination in line with the ARDS Strategic Plan.



ARDS Board. Dr Waṉambi's family has given ARDS permission to use this photo.



Julia Wormer and Ḏipililŋa Marika



Warmbirrirr Ganamberr

CEO & Co-CEO Report





Julia Wormer



Sylvia Ŋulpinditj

The 2025–2026 financial year was a year of leadership transition, reflection and significant progress for ARDS. Throughout the year, ARDS remained focused on strengthening Yolŋu languages and Rom (law), sharing stories of Yolŋu strength and identity, and increasing Yolŋu control over the decisions that affect Yolŋu lives.

During the year, we farewelled former CEO Ben Grimes, and I (Julia) commenced in the role in February 2026. We thank Ben for his leadership and commitment to ensuring ARDS remains a strong, respected and genuinely Yolŋu-led organisation.
We remain committed to listening deeply, walking softly and ensuring ARDS continues to be guided by Yolŋu authority, knowledge and decision-making.

This year was also marked by great sadness with the passing of our Executive Chair and Co-CEO Dr Waŋambi and former Board Director Dianne B. Gondarra. Both leaders made extraordinary contributions to ARDS and their vision, wisdom and commitment to Yolŋu leadership continue to guide our work.

In February, ARDS introduced the Co-CEO position. The purpose of the Co-CEO is to support the Board, CEO, djägamirr and staff to implement the ARDS-ku buyu' (our values and how we work), to partner with the CEO in key decisions, to deputise for the CEO when appropriate and to ensure that ARDS functions as a 'both-ways' organisation, in keeping with our vision.

Dr Waŋambi was appointed as ARDS's first Co-CEO, providing cultural guidance, authority and advice. Sylvia Ŋulpinditj acted in the Co-CEO position from February to June 2026. I would like to acknowledge and thank both Dr Waŋambi and Sylvia for supporting me in my role as CEO and for acting as my bämara'. The Co-CEO role is an important position that demonstrates our commitment to working in both worlds, to recognising Yolŋu Rom and Balanda law as equal systems allowing us to work in true partnership.

A major achievement during the year was the launch of the ARDS Strategic Plan 2025–2029. The Plan reinforces our commitment to self-determination and to beginning with the Yolŋu way first, or Yolŋu dhukarr ŋurruŋu. It sets out four key priorities: extending the work ARDS does, supporting and developing staff, strengthening governance and sustainability, and advancing social change priorities.

We also launched a new ARDS logo and websites for ARDS and Yolŋu Radio, providing a refreshed identity that reflects the organisation's history, values and connection across Darwin and the five traditional Yolŋu regions. The woven mat at the centre of the logo symbolises connection, sharing, family and collective strength. We thank longstanding ARDS Board Member Gwen Warmbirrirr from Yurrwi for creating the artwork for this important new logo.

Throughout the 2025-2026 financial year, ARDS successfully managed more than 31 grant agreements and over 10 fee-for-service projects, reflecting the organisation's continued growth, strong partnerships and capacity to deliver a diverse range of programs and services across Northeast Arnhem Land.

A significant achievement of the Community Development team was supporting the establishment of the Gapuwiyak child protection leadership group, Goŋ-yothumirriw Mulka Warraw' (Holding the Children in the Safe Shelter of Our Hands). This important initiative brought together respected community leaders to provide local advice and guidance on child protection matters affecting children and families to government.

This year, the Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala Yolŋu Language Centre secured additional funding to strengthen and expand its work, including a 3-year funding contract by Aboriginal Investment NT to establish the Yurrwi Language Centre, and recruiting additional language workers and linguists across Northeast Arnhem Land. The team is helping keep Yolŋu languages strong, active and accessible, while supporting Yolŋu to access information and take part in decision-making in their first language.

A major achievement for the Yolŋu Radio and Creative Media team was the completion of the production of five Bluey episodes in Yolŋu languages. The project demonstrated the power of media to promote language revitalisation while creating meaningful employment and national recognition for Yolŋu languages and culture. The team also facilitated music workshops at Yirrkala School, supporting young people to develop their skills and express themselves through music and media.

As the flagship service for peacemaking and mediation work in the NT, the Law & Justice team continued to support Yolŋu peacemakers and mediators across five major communities in Northeast Arnhem Land, as well as many surrounding homelands. Through culturally grounded approaches based on gurruṯu (kinship) and Rom, the team supported families and communities to resolve disputes, strengthen relationships and improve wellbeing.

ARDS continued to build strong relationships with community leaders, government, Aboriginal organisations, universities, and service partners. These relationships strengthen our work while ensuring ARDS remains accountable to Yolŋu, responsive to local priorities and grounded in the shared leadership of the CEO and Co-CEO.

We also continued growing our fee-for-service work, including Cultural Competency Training (CCT) and the development of engaging resources in Yolŋu languages. This work increases access to information and supports ARDS to generate flexible income that can be directed towards our strategic priorities. Consistent demand for CCT continued throughout the 2025–2026 financial year, reflecting the growing recognition of the importance of genuine two-way learning between Yolŋu and Balanda.

Our staff are at the heart of everything ARDS does. Our workforce continued to grow throughout the year, with Yolŋu staff representing 72% of our workforce. We remain committed to supporting staff development, leadership and wellbeing, ensuring our people have the skills, confidence and support to thrive in their roles.

We thank all ARDS staff for their dedication, commitment and care in working across both Yolŋu and Balanda worlds. We also acknowledge and thank the staff we farewelled during 2025–2026 for their important contributions to ARDS. Guided by our values and ways of working through ARDS-ku buyu', our staff play a critical role in ensuring that everything we do is grounded in Yolŋu knowledge, culture and aspirations.

ARDS finished the year in a strong financial position and continues to build a sustainable future through strong partnerships, diversified funding and strategic growth.

We thank our Board, partners, funders and communities for their trust, guidance and support. As we move into 2026–2027, we remain committed to strengthening Yolŋu languages, Rom, culture, leadership and community control, advancing Yolŋu self-determination and building a strong foundation for future generations.

Julia Wormer
Chief Executive Officer

Sylvia Ŋulpinditj
Interim Co-Chief Executive Officer

Yolŋu dhukarr ŋurruŋu
Start With the Yolŋu Way First

Nhaku Ŋalimurr ga djäma - Our purpose

- **Yolŋu languages,** including all clan languages, are strong and passed on from each generation to the next
- **Yolŋu rom** is strong, passed to the next generation, and respected by Balanda systems
- Celebrate and share stories of **Yolŋu strength and identity**
- Increase **Yolŋu control** of all aspects of Yolŋu life, through through equal and genuine access to information, resources and decision-making

Napurruŋ djäma - Our work

- **Community development & empowerment** – Under the guidance of local ŋaḻapaḻ, we work across health, law, governance, healing and trauma and many other areas of life to build local capacity, confidence and control.
- **Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala, Yolŋu Language Centre** – Our team supports local language custodians in keeping language strong. This includes through intergenerational language transmission activities, resource development, language documentation, translation, training and language advocacy.
- **Yolŋu Radio** – Broadcasts in Yolŋu communities and homelands. We create a range of creative media products and activities that celebrate Yolŋu identity and strength and provide access to crucial information and stories in people's first languages.
- **Peacemaking & Mediation** - Our team work in Yolŋu-led, culturally grounded ways to strengthen peace in Yolŋu communities. We work within and along dominant (balanda) justice systems to support Yolŋu having greater control over justice outcomes in their communities.

ARDS-ku buyu'
Our Values and How We Work.

Gurruṯu, gurrpanmirr & bunydjunmirr
We are connected and we recognise and value each other because of our gurruṯu connections. We value healthy relationships.

Makmakthunawauy rom
We respect each other. We respect ARDS as an organisation.

Ŋaḻapaḻwal
We value and respect the authority of Yolŋu elders. We seek their guidance and authorisation, according to Yolŋu rom, and we work within the trust that we earn.

Bala-räli guŋga'yunmirr
We work in reciprocal ways where everyone benefits and becomes strong. This includes both-ways learning - we are always learning from each other.

Napuŋga'wuy / burapuy
We are neutral and in the middle. We do work that is good for all Yolŋu. We do not create division or tension between Yolŋu. We value neutrality and fairness.

Räl-manapanmirr, yaka l̤iya-gäna
Yolŋu and Balanda work together as respected equals. We think and make decisions together as a group. We don't work in isolation.

Ralpa
We are reliable and committed to the work we do. We are observant and learning from what is happening around us.

Dharaŋanawuy rom
We recognise and accept people for who they are. We look for people's strengths.

ARDS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
LANGUAGE CENTRE - YOLŊU RADIO - COMMUNITY CONTROL

STRATEGIC PLAN
2025 -2029

Djalkiri - Foundations

1. **We recognise Yolŋu rom and Balanda law as equal systems and we are committed to working in both worlds**
2. **We are committed to Aboriginal self-determination**
3. **We are informed by the faith and spiritual authority of our ŋaḻapaḻ and acknowledge our gurruṯu connection to the Uniting Church**

Nhälil ŋanapurr ga mar'yun ga nhä mala gämurru' nhäma
Focus area and Goals

Extend the work ARDS does

- Grow our work in in health education, creative media, advocacy & service design.
- Increase training delivery, especially cultural competency training and training for Yolŋu staff in other organisations.
- Monitor and Measure the impact of ARDS work, so that we can demonstrate the benefits of working in good ways.
- Strengthen the Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala, Yolŋu Language Centre, including models of working with and supporting language custodians living on country.
- Establish a financially sustainable way for distributing ARDS products and resources, to both Yolŋu and Balanda audiences.

Support and develop ARDS staff

- Support and grow Yolŋu leadership within ARDS.
- Increase Yolŋu employment within ARDS at all levels of the organisation.
- Increase employment and work of community-based staff, especially for people living in homelands.
- Develop and improve our people development processes, ensuring processes are accessible and suitable for Yolŋu staff and staff living in remote areas.
- Embed internal training in Yolŋu languages, Yolŋu Rom and ARDS methodology.
- Grow the ability of all staff in project and resource management.

Grow ARDS Governance, Systems, Processes and Finances

- Ensure strong governance and increase the ability of the ARDS Board to engage in strategic planning and advocacy work.
- Strengthen financial management and internal systems.
- Engage young people in the work and governance of ARDS.
- Implement a comprehensive policy framework that incorporates risk management practices.
- Develop and implement a marketing and branding plan for both Yolŋu and Balanda audiences.
- Increase multi-year funding agreements covering core areas of ARDS work.
- Increase ARDS' fee-for-service income.

Social change priorities

- Support the growth and development of Yolŋu leadership and decision-making, including leadership in homelands.
- Support Yolŋu homelands and the ability of Yolŋu to live and work on homelands.
- Advocate for and support the integration and recognition of Yolŋu rom, authority and decision-making in service delivery across Northeast Arnhem Land.
- Develop employment models and pathways that are responsive to Yolŋu ways of life and strengths, whilst also providing strong opportunities for professional learning and career development.



Community Development Djägamirr

Community Development

A message from Rärriwuy Marika, Mayalil Marika & Samantha Muller, Community Development Djägamirr

We have had an exciting year as the Community Development team, and as our work has expanded and grown stronger. We are proud of our strong Yolŋu-led teams in Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku, Nhulunbuy and Darwin. We received many grants this financial year and our work has expanded to include projects responding to community leaders' concerns and aspirations for wellbeing work; child protection; alcohol and kava consultations; domestic, family and sexual violence prevention work; delivering respectful relationships workshops; family healing programs; and resource development on topics of mental health, National Disability Insurance Scheme, and specifically for families and children. It has been a big year getting all these projects underway!

We are so proud to always work through ARDS values as outlined in our Strategic Plan, ensuring our work is always Yolŋu-led, done through Yolŋu frameworks of gurruṯu (kinship) and Rom (law), in Yolŋu languages and in ways that bring both Yolŋu and Balanda worlds together in harmony. Our work focuses on healing and supporting families in our communities, always through strengthening Yolŋu frameworks to ensure that people who are feeling lost, hurt or confused, or who are getting in trouble, can find their place back to belonging in the Yolŋu system of care and support.

Our teams bring together senior Yolŋu leaders and elders who are working to mentor our younger Yolŋu staff. Our teams have a strong focus on ensuring our work is done through ARDS Yolŋu-led monitoring and evaluation approaches, so that our work is always based on Yolŋu worldviews and bringing people into Yolŋu frameworks of safety and connection.

We would like to recognise and honour the passing of our late Chairperson/Co-CEO Dr Waṉambi this year. We pass our respects to his family, community and his many colleagues. We have appreciated his guidance and leadership in all our work. He is greatly missed. We are proud to be building on his legacy with the work of the Gapuwiyak community and surrounding homelands in developing their Local Decision-Making agreement in 2024. We have been working with the community to establish a leadership group for child protection decision-making, as we share later in this report. We are proud to bring this project to fruition and want to honour the work of Dr Waṉambi in all that we do. We also honour the inspiring work of Ms W. Marika who passed this year. She was a driving force of our Nhulunbuy ARDS team, leading from the heart and touching the hearts of all that she met. We miss her dearly and carry on our work to honour her.

We are so proud of the hard work from our teams in all regions and thank you for your djäma (work).

We hope you enjoy reading some of the highlights from our team this year.


Rärriwuy Marika


Mayalil Marika


Samantha Muller



ARDS Gapuwiyak Child Protection project planning meeting

Gapuwiyak Child Protection Project

The Gapuwiyak community and surrounding homelands went through a Local Decision-Making (LDM) process that culminated in 2024 with the signing of a Statement of Commitment, recognising that the community wants to have control over child protection decisions. The leaders call for:

a. recognition of the role of clan leaders within Yolŋu Rom and gurruṯu in respect of the care and protection of their children. This is a role they have fulfilled with pride for thousands of years;

b. to share decision-making about the care and protection of Yolŋu children and families from Gapuwiyak and surrounding communities with government delegates, as a pathway to transitioning these decisions to the control of Gapuwiyak and surrounding communities' leaders.

With the change of government in the Northern Territory, the LDM processes ended. ARDS was awarded funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services Innovation Fund to continue to support the leaders and elders from Gapuwiyak in their aspirations. In this financial year, ARDS supported the establishment of the Gapuwiyak leadership group for child protection decision-making. The group has decided on the name Goŋ-yothumirriw Mulka Warraw' (Holding the Children in the Safe Shelter of Our Hands). The group consists of members from Goŋ-Ḏäl Aboriginal Corporation and Milindji Aboriginal Corporation, who were identified by the community as the right people to lead this work.

The group met in November 2025 and in April 2026 to confirm leadership of the group and develop a theory of change – monitoring and evaluation approach – for the project.

The leadership group's overarching goal for the project is that "All decisions about Gapuwiyak children are made by Gapuwiyak mala leaders". The project will develop a framework about how control for child protection can be transitioned to the group, including making agreements with the Department of Children and Families.

In June 2026, ARDS staff worked with Gapuwiyak elders and leaders to prepare a submission and present to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on the "Every Child Matters" Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

Ḏälkum Yolŋu Gurruṯu Project

Ḏälkum Yolŋu Gurruṯu means "strengthening Yolŋu kinship". This Yolŋu-led domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) prevention project is grounded in the belief that strong gurruṯu can address the underlying drivers of DFSV, while also acting as a protective framework for safety, accountability, respect and healing. ARDS received funding from the Department of Children and Families Aboriginal-Led DFSV Prevention grant to carry out this project.

The project is guided by ŋaḻapaḻ (elders) and emerging leaders from Galiwin'ku. It uses Yolŋu Rom, Yolŋu languages, and intergenerational conversations to explore how DFSV has emerged in the community and how the strengths of gurruṯu can support healthier, safer and more respectful relationships.

This year, the project established strong foundations in Yolŋu ownership, governance, and community and stakeholder engagement. The team developed a Yolŋu-led theory of change, guided by Yolŋu Rom, to support project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The theory of change is also being used as a peacebuilding tool with families to support conversations about conflict, safety and healthy relationships. Its main objective is Yolŋu Riyawarray Ḏämbu-ḻupthun Yirralka/wäŋa (a state where violence is settled through buŋgul – ceremony – and Yolŋu can rest in clear water and experience healing). It uses Yolŋu concepts and laws to explain the process of maintaining and restoring healthy relationships:

1. Ṉapuŋga'wuy – mediator/middle person
2. Mägaya Dhukarr – peacemaking, sit with them and connect
3. Ḏayaŋu-mulkakum – feeling of peace/safety
4. Ḻiya-gulinybunhamirr – own choices, accountability and responsibilities
5. Räl-manapanmirr – teamwork
6. Gaŋgayunmirr bala räli – helping each other, communicating, caring, sharing the load

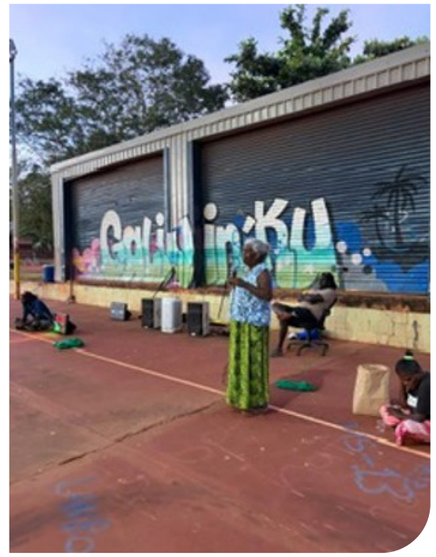
The team have engaged men, women and young people in planning meetings, workshops and on-country activities in Yolŋu languages. In total there have been 735 engagements with Yolŋu community members. In particular, the team have developed trust with a growing group of young boys and men, who are involved in activities to support them with healthy relationships. The team also partnered with the Cultural Competency Training team to deliver workshops with non-Yolŋu in the community about Yolŋu Rom, its strengths and how we can work together, respecting a two-worlds approach.



Rhoda Dhurrkay and Helen Nyomba Gandaŋu sharing their work with other First Nations leaders at the Commonthreads conference in Adelaide



Rhoda Dhurrkay presenting at the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Community of Practice Forum by Ourwatch in Darwin



Project lead Helen Nyomba Gandaŋu sharing about ARDS and working through gurruṯu to the community in Galiwin'ku


Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu evening workshops

Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu

Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu is an ARDS-led social and emotional wellbeing program for young people in Yirrkala. The work emerged in response to concerns raised by senior Yolŋu leaders about young people who are disengaged and are out in community late at night. We have developed after-hours engagement and support sessions at spaces where young people were already gathering.

Since March 2026, the ARDS team has facilitated eight early evening workshops, with approximately 20-40 children aged 5-17 attending each session. The sessions are led by senior Yolŋu community leaders, ARDS staff, educators and community members. Through shared meals, fire cooking, storytelling, painting, games, songs and movement, the team have created a culturally-grounded and trauma-informed space where children can feel safe, connected and heard. Senior leaders share messages about care, belonging, school, kinship, the impacts of sniffing, trauma and respectful relationships using Yolŋu languages, dhäwu (stories) and culturally meaningful examples.

The program's key strength is its gurruṯu-centred approach: trusted community leaders and family members guide the work, enabling young people to engage voluntarily and, in some cases, disclose safety concerns. Follow-up support is provided with cultural guidance, including engagement with stakeholders where appropriate.

ARDS gave a presentation about this project at the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) Social and Emotional Wellbeing conference. The presentation was well received, and provided a good opportunity for staff to develop confidence and talk about their work in their own languages.

Collecting mud mussels for Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu project


Presenting Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu at the AMSANT Social and Emotional Wellbeing conference


Painting activities at Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu


Sharing important messages at Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu


Djamarrkuḻiwu' Walu evening workshops

NDIS Project

In early 2026, ARDS finalised the Nhaltjan yurru NDIS-dhu guŋga'yun nhuna ga nhuŋu gurruṯumirrinh (How to make the NDIS work for Yolŋu families) project, funded by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

This work aimed to empower Yolŋu NDIS participants and their families by co-designing culturally safe resources grounded in gurruṯu and collective decision-making to improve understanding about the NDIS, and support service providers to work in more culturally safe and respectful ways. The suite of resources includes:

- Two Dhuwaya' language animations with English subtitles introducing: the NDIS; participant rights; what good, safe service looks like; and complaints pathways.
- A provider workbook, using the gunga (pandanus) spiral metaphor to support service delivery.
- A set of emotion cards designed for use alongside the workbook.
- A resource introduction webinar for service providers, recorded in Gumatj and English.

All resources are freely available through the ARDS website and on the Yolŋu Radio YouTube channel.








Planning workshop for Yolŋu-led kava and alcohol consultations

Yolŋu-led Kava and Alcohol Consultations

This year, we commenced work on Buku-ḻuŋmaram Yolŋuny rom-ḻakaranhaminyaraw buḻuŋgaw ga ŋänitjiw dhäwuw (Yolŋu-led kava and alcohol consultations), a project funded by the Northern Territory Government aiming to gather Yolŋu views on how alcohol and kava should be managed in Yolŋu communities and homelands.

The ARDS team have developed resources to support informed discussion throughout the consultation process. Available on the ARDS website and Yolŋu Radio YouTube, these resources include:

- A Gumatj voiceover for an existing animation on kava in Northeast Arnhem Land, originally developed by Edith Cowan University.
- A series of recorded interviews exploring the history of kava in Northeast Arnhem Land, different perspectives on kava use, and the impacts of the black market.
- Fact sheets on kava and alcohol use, the history of regulation in Northeast Arnhem Land, and options for future management.

Consultations have now commenced: a team of cross-cultural facilitators will speak to Yolŋu leaders, organisations and community members to listen and document Yolŋu perspectives and experiences with kava and alcohol, potential harm-minimisation strategies, and ideas for the future of regulation.



Law & Justice

A message from Rärriwuy Marika, Mayalil Marika & Elly Connop, Law & Justice Djägamirr


Rärriwuy Marika


Mayalil Marika


Elly Connop



Seven Law & Justice staff completed the Community Justice Centre mediation training in 2026

2025-2026 was a big year for the Law & Justice Team!

The team worked bala-räli, strong together, and achieved amazing results over the year across all our locations. Our Yolŋu-led peacemaking work is having big impacts across Northeast Arnhem Land for Yolŋu, and ARDS has supported ŋaḻapaḻ (elders) across communities to work together to address conflict. Supporting ŋaḻapaḻ in their ŋapuŋga'wuy djäma (mediation work) has been a core goal of our work, instilling the authority and knowledge of ŋaḻapaḻ in gurruṯu (kinship) and Rom (law). We continue to receive an overwhelming number of direct referrals from Yolŋu, which tells us that Yolŋu want and rely on our service and ways of working.

We have seen great results with our work in advocacy and bringing Yolŋu worldview into the Balanda justice system. In one matter in Galiwin'ku, after an ARDS mediation took place and a letter was provided to the court explaining Yolŋu gurruṯu and Rom, the court dropped charges which were only causing further harm. In our youth justice work, ARDS mediators have been working with young people and their families to get them back onto a manymak dhukarr (good pathway) through our youth diversion and restorative justice conferencing work. One judge told us he feels “immense relief” when he receives letters and reports from ARDS, knowing there will be cultural knowledge and outcomes for the court to consider.

Three of our staff achieved National Mediation Accreditation this year. A big congratulations to Elly Connop and Samantha Muller, and especially Noelene Marika who is the first Yolŋu to become fully accredited as a nationally recognised mediator! Seven more Law & Justice staff completed the Community Justice Centre mediation training this year, and four more staff are on the way to attaining national accreditation. This is in addition to our ongoing two-way learning in Balanda and Yolŋu laws, languages and cultures. Around 20 of our staff also completed restorative justice conferencing training this year.

There have been many changes in our team over the last 12 months. Some incredible staff had to leave due to moving interstate, including our co-djägamirr Georgia Hagias and youth projects lead Tashi Klose. However, we have welcomed new amazing Yolŋu and Balanda staff to the team, bringing different knowledge and expertise with them. We also finalised our pilot project in First Nations Family Dispute Resolution, but welcomed new projects in Youth Diversion and the Sexual Assault Legal Service, where ARDS will work as a restorative justice partner for Yolŋu. Our projects change over time, however our ways of working – Yolŋu-led, through gurruṯu and Rom to support Yolŋu families – remains the same.

We also want to acknowledge the passing of Dr Waŋambi and Ms W. Marika in the last few months. They are important leaders and founders of the ARDS Law & Justice work and started this service from the ground up. We would not be the team we are today without them and all their incredible work.





Nyomba Gandaŋu, Lulu Guyula, Noelene Marika and Ted Gondarra speaking at the National Mediation Conference



The BDM office in Ramingiṉiṉ

Conferences and Inquiries

In September 2025, four Yolŋu and one Balanda staff attended the National Mediation Conference in Sydney. ARDS presented on Yolŋu mediation methods and how we provide culturally competent dispute resolution through a Yolŋu-led framework. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to connect with others in the field, hear different presentations and learn from a range of mediation practices.

In April 2026, ARDS staff presented at the Language and the Law Conference in Darwin. This was an amazing conference highlighting the misunderstandings that happen in the court system every day due to language barriers. The ARDS presentation related to Yolŋu experiences of the court system and how easily Yolŋu concepts and law can be overlooked, misinterpreted and misunderstood by that system. We spoke about our mediation work and how we make it culturally accessible using Yolŋu methods, speaking in Yolŋu languages and plain English, and working in culturally appropriate ways.

In May 2026, Law & Justice staff presented to the Federal Senate Inquiry into Youth Justice and Incarceration, speaking about Yolŋu Rom and how Yolŋu and Balanda can work together to support young people. Balanda ways are always spoken about, but we asked for Yolŋu ways to be respected and recognised too.

> "Those kids are our future leaders. As Yolŋu people, we have our own ability to heal and revive."
>
> - Rhoda Goluŋ Dhurrkay (ARDS Yolŋu Peacemaker)

Youth Justice

In the last financial year, ARDS took on a new project as a Ministerially Approved Program for Youth Diversion, in addition to our ongoing project as a Youth Restorative Justice Conference provider. Our Galiwin'ku and Gapuwiyak teams have been working hard with many referrals under these projects and achieving incredible results for Yolŋu young people and their families. The team have been working with families and elders to get young people back onto homelands, leading activities such as fishing, hunting, cultural object making and education in Yolŋu Rom. ARDS has a unique Yolŋu-led, cross-cultural approach to youth diversion, connecting young people to gurruṯu and Rom in a foundationally restorative manner. Through this work ARDS has been building relationships with other stakeholders including NT Police and the Department of Corrections to achieve meaningful Yolŋu-led outcomes in the youth justice space.

An example of our youth justice work involved a restorative conference that took place in early 2026. The court referral involved a young person with serious charges who wanted to take part in a Yolŋu-led restorative conference with the appropriate family and elders. Over a period of months, ARDS senior Yolŋu staff were able to engage the young person and their family, to explain in Yolŋu languages the ARDS approach, Balanda legal process, and to re-connect the victim, offender and their families through gurruṯu. ARDS staff were able to facilitate a conference on the right homeland, in Yolŋu languages, with the right family and elders present to give support and connection in a culturally led and safe approach. ARDS then wrote a report for the court, explaining the cultural nuances and approaches that would otherwise not be considered in sentencing for a young person.

Update on the Ramingining Biṉipiliṉgmirriṉ Djagagiṉiṉ Mala Law and Justice Elders Group (BDM)

ARDS continued our work auspicing the Biṉipiliṉgmirriṉ Djagagiṉiṉ Mala Law and Justice Elders Group (BDM). The BDM has gone from strength to strength in the last 12 months, influencing the justice system in a transformative way and bridging the knowledge gap between Yolŋu and Balanda law.

> "If this [BDM] keeps going, I think reliance on police will reduce"
>
> – Ramingiṉiṉ police officer

BDM has consistently participated in the Ramingiṉiṉ Community Court, providing cultural sentencing advice on an increasing number of referrals, all of which have resulted in community-based sentences. BDM members have also continued participating in some Local and Supreme Court cases, providing letters to the court containing cultural information to inform bail and sentencing decisions.

Beyond the courts, BDM members have expanded their peacemaking work, working proactively to mediate disputes before they escalate, contributing to community stability.

In February, BDM attended the inaugural Law and Justice Group Forum – collaborating and sharing ideas about ways to improve justice outcomes across the Northern Territory. The forum was attended by four of the five funded Law and Justice groups, leaders from other communities across the Top End and stakeholders in mediation and justice system services.

In April, BDM and the ARDS evaluation team undertook an internal evaluation to better understand the impact of BDM's work in Ramingiṉiṉ. As part of this process, BDM members reflected on their role as cultural leaders, their experiences working within the Balanda legal system, and the impact of their work on Yolŋu in contact with the justice system, along with the wider community.

The BDM evaluation is available to read on the ARDS website.

> "Our job is to protect our community. We are helping in the court. We are helping people behave themselves. When they get bail, we keep an eye on them. When there is a big fight, we stand there. When they see us, they calm down. [Our work] is about Yolŋu and Balanda working together"
>
> - BDM member

Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala Yolŋu Language Centre



Co-djägamirr Salome Harris and Dikuḻ Baker

A message from Salome Harris, Dikuḻ Baker & Interim Djägamirr Melissan Peters about the Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala Yolŋu Language Centre

‘Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala’ means Language Caretakers, and this is the new name we coined this year for our team.

This year was a time of growth for the Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala Yolŋu Language Centre. Our long-term goal is to have a permanent base and regular language staff in each community, and this year we made headway in making this dream a reality. We were successful in our application for funding to establish a language centre at Yurrwi (Miliŋinbi), which has allowed us to have a regular team based there. We established a small team of language workers at Ramingiṉiŋ, and started a language planning process for the Miwatj and Miyarrka region in partnership with Djalkiri Foundation and other community members.

The expansion of the Yolŋu Language Centre this year has changed the way we work. Our Language Team meetings now take place online, with djämamirr (staff members) joining from across Northeast Arnhem Land. These regular online meetings allow us to support each other and to know we are part of a bigger project of celebrating and looking after Yolŋu languages. We run our meetings in Yolŋu languages as much as possible, as part of our general practice of making sure Yolŋu languages are used in every part of life. This helps ensure Yolŋu leadership in decision-making and helps keep our languages strong.

Professional development for our team and for all ARDS staff has continued to be a major part of our work. Our team meets regularly for own-language literacy classes, and it is great to see our team growing in strength in this part of the work. Yolŋu language classes in Djambarrpuyŋu and Gälpu are run on a regular basis in the Darwin office, in Gumatj and Dhaŋu (Rirratjiŋu) in Nhulunbuy, and occasional classes in Ganalbiŋu in Ramingiṉiŋ. These classes intrinsically incorporate Yolŋu Rom (law) and gurruṯu (kinship) since these are inseparable from Yolŋu languages. We observe Yolŋu Rom and gurruṯu in our work so that Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu in our organisation are supported to carry out their work in respectful and culturally affirming ways.



Co-djägamirr Salome Harris and Melissan Peters. Melissan has been acting in this role while Dikuḻ Baker is on leave

We continue to create new resources in Yolŋu languages. This year, Roslyn Malŋumba Guyula released her book *Goyurr ŋayi Ḻiya-wolmamirr ŋaku Ḏaymirri (Baḏaypaḏay): This is the Journey of the Ḻiya-wolmamirr Canoe Ḏaymirri (Baḏaypaḏay)*. This book is for teaching Milkarri (ceremonial crying songs) to young people and includes a QR code where you can hear Malŋumba cry the Milkarri. The team also played a big part in the development of Bluey episodes in Yolŋu languages, which you can read about in the Yolŋu Radio and Creative Media report. As well as creating our own resources, we continue to provide fee-for-service translation and concept mapping support to help other organisations with their communication needs, and support other teams within ARDS with their language and translation needs.

As well as setting up bases in the Gaṯṯjirrk region this year at Miliŋinbi and Ramingiṉiŋ, we met with Yolŋu across the Miwatj and Miyarrka regions, including across Laynhapuy Homelands, Yirrkala, Gunyaŋara, Nhulunbuy, Gapuwiyak and Donydji. We supported various Dhay'yi language projects this year, including Djalkiri Foundation’s work on a Dhaḻwaŋu dictionary. We are also implementing Dhuwaya'-specific literacy support for ARDS team members who work in the Miwatj region. We provided language support in small and large ways for the following languages: Dhuwal (Djapu and Djambarrpuyŋu), Dhuwala (Gumatj and Gupapuyŋu), Dhaŋu (Gälpu), Yan-nhaŋu, Djinaŋ', Wägilak and Ritharrŋu, Djaŋu and Dhay'yi. The need for the work always far exceeds what we can do as a small language centre serving a huge area, but we are heartened by the commitment of our growing team and the establishment of new community bases.

‘Dhäruk Djägamirr Mala’ means Language Caretakers, and this is the new name we coined this year for our team.

We grieve the loss of our Chairperson Dr Waṉambi who was a strong advocate for his Marraŋu language. We will continue his legacy by continuing work on his language. We follow in the footsteps of all the ŋaḻapaḻ, our ancestors, and honour them by upholding Yolŋu values in everything we do.



Judith Ganyawu, Judy Ɗalambirra and Jessie Murarrgirarrgi (the three elders pictured) have been advocating for years for space to do their language work. Here they are with younger members of our team. Everyone is so happy about the Yurrwi Language Centre's new beginnings

Yurrwi Language Centre

This year we received notice that our application for three-year funding to establish a language centre at Yurrwi had been successful. This chain of events has only been possible because of the generous offer by the Uniting Church to rent a house. Until now, we have relied on the generosity of organisations at Yurrwi to allow us to use their shared spaces, or finding a shady tree to work under.

In September we held a community meeting over shared food to hear about what the funding means, and to begin to set some priorities. Three ŋaḻapaḻ (see photo) have now joined the team to work with Banbaṉiwuy on a regular basis and are looking forward to welcoming in workers from all the clans to work on all the languages.

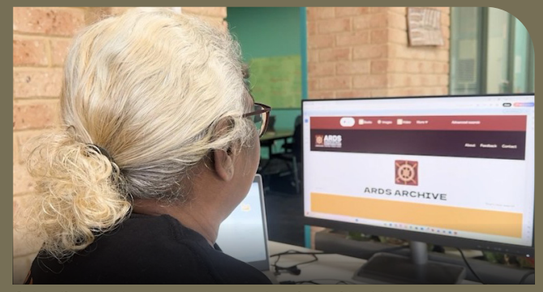
We are excited to be establishing this branch of the Yolŋu Language Centre at Yurrwi, after extensive community consultation and planning.

Yolŋu Language and Culture Archive

The development of our Yolŋu Language and Culture Archive is well underway. Since the inception of the project, Yolŋu advisors have provided clear direction on the protocols, permissions and community control required for safekeeping of language and cultural materials held at ARDS.

With Yolŋu guidance we are currently sorting and cataloguing thousands of files. This includes collections of Manikay and Milkarri (songlines and crying songs), ancestral stories, and a wide-ranging collection of publications on health, legal, history, and educational topics. There are almost 300 recordings about gurraŋay matha (ancestral language), where elders talk about words that have fallen out of regular use.

The archive team attended a workshop in Nhulunbuy this year, which showcased the progress of the archive design and functionality, and sought feedback and approval. The group reviewed the access protocols and gave very positive feedback about the way that community control and access is integrated into the archive. At present, access will only be available for Yolŋu communities and ARDS staff.



Sylvia Ɗulpinditj testing out the user interface of the Yolŋu Language and Culture Archive



In August people came together from six communities to check and approve progress on our Yolŋu Language and Culture Archive

We are fortunate to have a great team of knowledgeable elders and rälpa (motivated) support people: Andrew Gurruwiwi, Kathrin Dixon and Sylvia Dulpinditj



The archive is being co-designed with Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA). The data scientists from LDaCA have taken great care to ensure their work is founded in careful listening and respect, including by updating their software to meet Yolŋu requirements, instead of relying on their pre-existing model. ARDS has also contracted a cyber security company to establish a centrally located database which is backed up by a secure, robust system.

All Yolŋu advisors working on this project have identified that the archive is an important resource for future generations. ARDS continues to collaborate with Yolŋu communities to create language and cultural materials, and these will also continue to be added to the archive.

New Djämamirr

Our team is growing, and we were excited to welcome many new djämamirr this year.

Hear from a member of our team!

My name is Banbaṉiwuy Garrawirrtja. I am from Miliṉinbi. I am Gupapuyŋu-Birrkili Yolŋu, from Luŋgutja. I have recently started as a Miliṉinbi Language Worker – dhäruk djägamirr.

My djäma, my job, is with translating Yolŋu Matha, and recording as well. Getting dhäwu, the stories, from the community, from people who are interested in telling their stories about their land, their culture, about their songlines. And then put them in the archive for future generations, for the family or anyone who would like to get access of rirrakay, all the recordings. Or the children who want to listen to their grandparents – their grandmother's or grandfather's stories. That is what I do.

My favourite part of working at ARDS is when I go out and meet with people. It's a good feeling to hear a story of the community. Because some stories we may not hear from anyone, but it should be that we can get a story from other people, about all the stories that have been hidden, you know? Like nobody knows their story. That's my favourite part of doing work. Interacting with the communities and the families as well.

Recently I recorded two ḏirramu, two men, and they were telling me a story that I'd never heard about. This one ḏirramu was telling me a story about a songline, his songline, and all that story is linked to my country. And it's the first time I heard it, and it got me really interested in doing that recording stuff.

My mum inspired me to do language djäma. She used to be a literacy worker here at Milingimbi School, when I was young, still doing schoolwork here at Miliṉinbi. And when I grew up, I started working as a literacy worker with another linguist from Darwin, who was coming in to help us out to produce resources for the school, in Yolŋu Matha. She passed away a long time ago. She was a good teacher.

I'm looking forward to doing other djäma at Miliṉinbi, because I believe that we'll be doing really great djäma here. Very excited. And there's not just Yolŋu Matha we'll be teaching, there's Yan-nhaŋu dhäruk, Burarra, Djinaŋ', and other languages they use here at Miliṉinbi and right across at Ramingiṉiṉ. Because some people from Ramingiṉiṉ come here, and from Maningrida they come here. And I am really interested in learning other languages as well, especially Yan-nhaŋu language, because it's also a common language here at Miliṉinbi, just like Djambarrpuyŋu.

Photo: Gwendoline Banbaṉiwuy from Yurrwi joined our team this year and has been supporting elders at Yurrwi to do language work.

Yolŋu Radio and Creative Media

Ready to broadcast from Garma Festival

A message from Sylvia Ŋulpinditj and Will Porter, Yolŋu Radio and Creative Media Djägamirr

From humble foundations to the bright lights, this past year has been one of extraordinary growth for the Yolŋu Radio and Creative Media team, with Yolŋu languages, voices and stories reaching audiences across Australia and around the world.

For more than 20 years, Yolŋu Radio has been grounded in a simple purpose: connecting our communities and sharing Yolŋu stories, in Yolŋu languages. While that purpose has not changed, the platforms and audiences we can reach certainly have.

While radio remains at the heart of what we do, our work now stretches well beyond the broadcast studio. Over the past 12 months, our team has brought Yolŋu languages to one of Australia's most loved children's programs, broadcast from some of the country's biggest sporting and cultural events, expanded our work in film and digital storytelling, and continued strengthening our connection with Yolŋu communities and homelands across Northeast Arnhem Land.

Last year, we wrote that we hoped *Gumurr-Ḏäl* would be the first of many high-quality screen productions to come from our team. This year, that ambition has begun to take shape.

Perhaps the clearest example is *Bluey in Yolŋu Matha*. Working alongside the ABC and Ludo Studio, our team translated, adapted and recorded five episodes of Bluey, using Dhuwaya', Djambarrpuyŋu and Dhaŋu, and creating an opportunity for Yolŋu children and families to experience this much-loved program in their own languages.

For us, projects like this represent something bigger. They show what is possible when Yolŋu languages, cultural knowledge and creative leadership are combined with the skills and platforms of the contemporary media industry. Our role is increasingly not only to broadcast for our communities, but to build the capability for Yolŋu to tell our own stories, in our own languages, and take those stories wherever they need to go.

This stylistic approach applies beyond our marquee projects. As always, our team captured and highlighted some fantastic community events right across the region. One highlight was the Dhaḏalal' Festival in Gäŋgaŋ. Our team ran radio workshops with Makarrata Laynhapuy Homelands School, an outside broadcast for two nights and a huge amount of video interviews across the festival. Beyond this, Yolŋu Radio supported community events such as Yarrapay Festival, Garma and the Gove AFL Grand Final. Yolŋu Radio also conducted multiple radio shows utilising both the Darwin and Nhulunbuy studios at the same time, showing a growth in our technical capacity.

Our team has put a huge amount of work into supporting our most remote broadcast sites. We'd like to give a special thank you to Adrian Schmidt-Mumm and the staff in the Nhulunbuy office, who regularly travel to homelands to ensure our network's viability.

Finally, we'd like to thank our ŋaḻapaḻ. Those who are still with us, and those who have now left. You continue to guide us in our work and give us strength to carry forward.



Sylvia Ḏulpinditj



Will Porter

Bluey in Yolŋu Matha

We were so proud and excited to announce the release of five episodes of *Bluey in Yolŋu Matha*, in partnership with ABC Australia and Ludo Studio. This project has been years in the making, and was the result of much hard work, from concept design, to translation, casting and recording.

The episodes were recorded in the Yolŋu Radio studios in Nhulunbuy, and drew from the strengths from all ARDS teams in the translation and creation stages. Will Porter, Sylvia Ḏulpinditj and Andrew Gurruwiwi led and directed the project, and several Yolŋu Radio team members starred as voice actors.

These five episodes were specifically chosen because of the relevant themes of family, kinship and having the support of surrounding community. Each episode features a blend of Dhuwaya', Djambarrpuyŋu and Dhaŋu languages, with each cast member performing in their own language. The episodes are a celebration of the strength and richness of Yolŋu languages, represented for audiences across Northeast Arnhem Land and the rest of Australia.

We were able to hold multiple special public screenings of the episodes across the Northern Territory. At the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair screening, Yolŋu Radio team members were part of a panel discussion on the ‘Evolution of Storytelling’, where they were able to talk about the importance of this project for communities across Arnhem Land. One of the biggest highlights was attending Garma Festival, where our CEO, Co-CEO and the Yolŋu Radio team were joined by Bluey herself and the ABC team for a special screening and meet-and-greet.

Every major screening was met with reactions of excitement from Yolŋu audiences, demonstrating the importance of this project in connecting to audiences and encouraging a sense of pride in Yolŋu languages.

One of our talented Bluey voice actors in the recording booth



The Bluey cast and crew with ABC Chair Kim Williams at Garma Festival



The Bluey cast and crew



Screening Bluey under the stars at Garma Festival









AFL:
Sir Doug Nicholls Round

The Yolŋu Radio team hit it out of the park with a return to live AFL broadcasts in Yolŋu languages for the first time in three years. We provided commentary for two games in the Sir Doug Nicholls Round, where the AFL focuses on the strengths of First Nations people, moments, connections and stories in their contribution to the sport.

Yolŋu Radio stars Sylvia Ḏulpinditj and William Gumbula gave excellent commentary for the first game in Darwin, between the Gold Coast Suns and Port Adelaide Power. William also joined BJ Mununggurr and first-time commentator Gawukawu Gurruwiwi to travel to Melbourne for the Dreamtime at the ‘G match, between Richmond Tigers and Essendon Bombers.

The team called the match live on Yolŋu Radio in front of a crowd of more than 78,000 fans at the MCG stadium. They also spoke to media about the importance for communities in Northeast Arnhem Land of hearing broadcasts of major footy games in their first languages. These broadcasts highlight how Yolŋu languages are thriving in every aspect of life. AFL is one of the most popular sports in Arnhem Land, and these broadcasts provide valuable connection for communities to national sporting moments, while celebrating the excellence and talents of the Yolŋu Radio commentary team.

We would like to thank the AFL for their collaboration and support to continue broadcasting major events in Yolŋu languages to audiences across Northeast Arnhem Land.

> **“AFL is one of the most popular sports in Arnhem Land, and these broadcasts provide valuable connection for communities to national sporting moments, while celebrating the excellence and talents of the Yolŋu Radio commentary team.”**



CCT workshop

Cultural Competency Training

The Cultural Competency Training (CCT) we deliver is grounded in Yolŋu perspectives and focuses on the resilience and ongoing vibrancy of Yolŋu culture. We are proud to help organisations engage with Yolŋu on Yolŋu terms, building real relationships and tangible, positive outcomes for everyone involved. Cross-cultural communication shouldn't be a burden Yolŋu carry alone.

This year at a glance:

- 12 face-to-face workshops delivered
- 4 online workshops
- 1 online Cultural Competency term (8 weeks)
- 68 participants in Plain English training
- 729 people took part in CCT overall

A highlight this year was delivering our first-ever workshop in Galiwin'ku, opening the door for more workshops there in future. Online delivery has continued to grow too, including a full eight-week online Cultural Competency term. The online delivery format is a great way to increase accessibility for participants in remote locations and those who can't attend in-person sessions.

A highlight this year was delivering our first-ever workshop in Galiwin'ku, opening the door for more workshops there in future.

Our tailored workshops continue to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback. We build these workshops around the specific needs of those in the room, taking their context and responsibilities into account. This ensures they leave with something they can directly apply to their own work.

This year, the demand for Plain English training has continued to grow. Plain English is about adapting language so it's accessible to a wide range of people. It's especially valuable for communication with people who speak English as an additional language - but the benefits go well beyond that. It is useful training for anyone communicating complex information in any context. Delivered by our expert linguists, Plain English training is essential for good communication.

We have two new projects underway: one with Bula'bula Arts, and one with Milindji Aboriginal Corporation. Both projects are about developing unique CCT courses for these organisations to deliver themselves. We will be travelling to both communities (Raminginiŋ and Gapuwiyak) to find out what elders want included in a training course specific to them and their community. We will focus on training and building the capacity of the staff to deliver the course themselves. The Milindji project also involves making a beautiful short film about Gapuwiyak. We are excited to see these come to life.

We'd like to thank everyone who took part in ARDS CCT this year, and the Yolŋu and Balanda staff who so generously shared their knowledge and expertise to make it happen.



Outback Spirit Tours

The ARDS Outback Spirit Tours team have led another fantastic season, sharing Yolŋu culture with tourists to Wirrwawuy beach, near Nhulunbuy. The team is primarily led by Gälpu clan members, but also includes djämamirr (staff members) from Gumatj, Rirratjiŋu and Wangurri clans.

This year, the team of clan leaders, songmen, yiḏaki players, interpreters and dancers delivered 56 Welcome to Country ceremonies, and 56 Women's Healing and Bush Medicine presentations.

As children also join in the delivery of the events, this becomes a way to keep passing on Manikay and buŋgul (ceremony) to the next generation. This project also has been a good and consistent way to create paid work for over 45 Yolŋu for the dry season, through valuable work based on Yolŋu strengths and ways of working.

It is also an empowering demonstration and celebration of the strengths and richness of Yolŋu culture to a broader Australian audience visiting Yolŋu country. Through this project, understanding and respect is built as visitors experience and witness the ongoing vibrancy of Yolŋu culture.

Latju djäma (great work)!







David Alexander

Corporate Services

A message from David Alexander, Corporate Services Djägamirr

In 2025-2026, with a very stable and highly capable team in the Corporate Services department, we have been able to make positive strides in providing quality support to the delivery teams across the organisation, to the CEO, Co-CEO and Board, with a focus on a strong policy environment to enable consistent and efficient service delivery in regional and very remote areas.

Corporate Services manages all finances and administration of the organisation, including HR; information and technology; financial management; vehicles; properties; work health safety; and grant management.

The Corporate Services team grew during 2025-2026 through the employment of a new Staff Training & Development Lead to drive commitments under the Commonwealth Government's Remote Jobs and Economic Development funding agreement, with an additional seven staff employed and supported through this program, with more growth expected in the next 12 months. ARDS also employed an Engagement and Communications Lead within the Corporate Services team to drive internal and external communications and position ARDS to seek philanthropic funding.

Through cautious management we have been given a clean bill of health again by the auditors, with financial administration shared across all areas of the department and overseen by the Corporate Services team, together with Open Road Accounting.

A stable and well-administered IT environment is critical to an effective organisation, especially an organisation spread across the very remote communities of Northeast Arnhem Land. With the support of Emerge IT, ARDS has been able to provide staff with solid access to systems required to deliver quality services.

During the year, we launched a new ARDS website, together with a new Yolŋu Radio website, following months of website design and development and content delivery. The new website provides a much better user experience and highlights both the work ARDS delivers and the resources and merchandise available for sale or download.

ARDS provided a new look for all our staff as well during the year, with the purchase of new staff uniforms featuring our new logo and corporate colours.

The policy environment that the organisation works within is important to the overall organisational governance, as it is important that staff understand the expectations placed on them and know how the organisation helps support staff. Where policy gaps have been identified, the Corporate Services team has responded with the writing of plain English policies to drive consistency.

As we move into 2026-2027 financial year, the organisation will continue to closely monitor any potential financial and administration challenges, and the Corporate Services team will continue to ensure the organisation operates safely and efficiently.



Financial Statements

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income
for The Year Ended 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 $	2025 $
Trading Income			
Sale of goods	2A	5,221	2,630
Cost of goods sold	3A	1,245	11,590
Gross (loss) / Profit		3,976	(8,960)
Revenue from grants and contributions	2B	7,043,917	4,617,062
Interest	2C	207,560	42,402
Other income	2D	1,648,689	1,196,504
Total other revenue		8,900,166	5,855,968
Total income		**8,904,142**	**5,847,008**
Expenses			
Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment		2,501	-
Employee benefit expense	3B	4,492,684	3,824,119
Depreciation	3C	94,952	100,530
Other expenses	3D	2,534,980	1,752,766
Total expenses		**7,125,117**	**5,677,415**
Surplus from operations		1,779,025*	169,593
Other comprehensive income / (loss)		-	-
Total comprehensive income / (deficit) for the year		**1,779,025***	**169,593**

* an amount of $1,386,889 relating to work due to be completed in FY26-27 is included in "Surplus from operations" and "Net Assets"

Statement of Financial Position
As at 30 June 2026

	Note	2026 $	2025 $
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	5,465,266	4,706,325
Trade and other receivables	5	252,649	470,750
Other currrent assets	6	21,969	47,848
Total current assets		**5,739,884**	**5,224,923**
Non-currrent assets			
Property, plant and equipment	7	430,985	492,128
Total non-current assets		430,985	492,128
Total Assets		**6,170,869**	**5,717,051**
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	8	656,022	583,942
Contract liabilities	9	783,100	2,283,101
Provisions	10	245,344	167,725
Total current liabilities		**1,684,466**	**3,034,768**
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	10	45,605	20,510
Total non-current liabilities		45,605	20,510
Total Liabilities		1,730,071	3,055,278
Net Assets		**4,440,798***	**2,661,773**
Equity			
Retained earnings		4,440,798	2,661,773
Total Equity		**4,440,798**	**2,661,773**

Independent Auditor's Report

to the members of Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation (the Corporation), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements including a summary of material accounting policy information and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Corporation has been prepared in accordance with the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (the Acts), including:

(i) giving a true and fair view of the Corporation's financial position as at 30 June 2026 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
(ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards, the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Regulations 2017 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Corporation in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report

The Directors of the Corporation are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards, the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and for such internal controls as the Directors determine are necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Corporation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Corporation or to cease operation, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Directors are also responsible for overseeing the Corporation's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website *(http://www.auasb.gov.au/Home.aspx)* at: *http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf*. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

LOWRYS AUDIT



Colin James, FCA
Registered Company Auditor

Darwin
Dated: 2 October 2026

Supporters, Donors and Sponsors

ARDS would not be able to do our work without the support and contributions from many government departments, organisations and agencies. We thank everyone who supported and contributed to our work in 2025-2026, including:

Aboriginal Investment NT (AINT)
aboriginalinvestment.org.au

Anglicare NT
anglicare-nt.org.au

Arafura Swamp Rangers Aboriginal Corporation (ASRAC)
asrac.org.au

Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)
alpa.asn.au

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)
abc.net.au

Australian Football League (AFL)
afl.com.au

Australian Government Attorney-General's Department
ag.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Sport and the Arts; Indigenous Languages and Arts
arts.gov.au

Australian Government Department of Social Services
dss.gov.au

Bula'bula Arts
bulabula.com.au

Charles Darwin University
www.cdu.edu.au

Community Broadcasting Foundation
cbf.org.au

Community Justice Centre NT
nt.gov.au/law/processes/mediation/contact-the-community-justice-centre

Creative Australia
creative.gov.au

Developing East Arnhem Limited (DEAL)
developingeastarnhem.com.au

East Arnhem Real Estate
eare.com.au

East Arnhem Regional Council
eastarnhem.nt.gov.au

First Nations Media
Firstnationsmedia.org.au

Galiwin'ku Women's Space
galiwinkuwomenspace.com

Goŋ- Ḏäl Aboriginal Corporation
gongdal.com.au

Language Data Commons of Australia
ldaca.edu.au

Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation
laynhapuy.com.au

Living Languages
livinglanguages.org.au

Milindji Aboriginal Corporation

Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation
miwatj.com.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission
ndiscommission.gov.au

National Indigenous Australians Agency
niaa.gov.au

Northern Synod, Uniting Church in Australia
ns.uca.org.au

Northern Territory Attorney General's Department
agd.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet
cmc.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory Department of Children and Families
families.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory Department of Corrections
corrections.nt.gov.au

Northern Territory Government Screen Territory
screenterritory.nt.gov.au

NT Health
health.nt.gov.au

NT Primary Health Network (NT PHN)
ntphn.org.au

Outback Spirit Tours
outbackspirittours.com.au

Rirratjiŋu Aboriginal Corporation
rirratjingu.com

Top End Women's Legal Service
tewls.org.au

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Phone (08) 8984 4174
PO Box 36921, Winnellie NT 0821

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