

# Community Justice Centre 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Community Justice Centre acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country on which we work and live. We pay our respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the NT, and to Elders past and present. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and seas, and their rich contributions to our community.

We recognise and stand alongside Aboriginal Elders, community leaders and mediators who are working for peace in their families and communities.

## **Interpreter Services**

The Northern Territory Government is committed to providing accessible services for Territorians. If language is a barrier to understanding this annual report, you can contact us on 1800 000 473 and we will arrange an interpreter to assist you.

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## Director's Message

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Community Justice Centre (CJC, or "the Centre") for the year ended 30 June 2023.

The 2022/23 financial year has been a time of reflection, expansion and learning by doing. We have moved forward with opportunities identified in the *Community Justice Centre 2021 Review* and have extended our service scope to community justice initiatives outside what the CJC has traditionally delivered. I am indebted to the CJC's staff and sessional mediators whose expertise and commitment to the Northern Territory is what has allowed us to test new ground and expand our practice approach. We have had long, hard and exciting conversations about where and how we can have the greatest service impact, and have been developing a strong vision for future service delivery. We have also created new partnerships that have prompted growth and allowed us to extend our service footprint.

A major highlight this year was establishing a physical presence in Alice Springs through a co-location arrangement at the Alice Springs Local Court, and splitting the Practice Manager role into a job-share arrangement between Alice Springs and Darwin. We also delivered four accredited mediation courses as part of a strategy to rebuild our panel and increase diversity on our mediator panel, and coordinated a substantial increase in assessments among training graduates interested in becoming accredited mediators.

Other highlights include delivering an online restorative practices course to increase our internal capability for restorative conferencing, and managing two restorative justice cases in a practice-based trial. In the last quarter of the reporting period, ABC Radio Darwin hosted a five part mediation series with the CJC to raise awareness of mediation and promote our services. We also started working with families involved in coronial inquests to increase understanding, engagement and participation in the process, and to offer affected parties the option of a restorative process for reparation and healing. At the same time, we maintained high quality mediation services and managed an increased number of cases. Our agreement rate has remained stable and strong, and client feedback overall was extremely positive.

I am proud of what we have achieved this year and am immensely grateful to the team (staff and mediators) for their skills, big hearts and willingness to go 'above and beyond' to make a difference in people's lives.

Yours sincerely,



Melinda Tew  
Director

## The Community Justice Centre

The Community Justice Centre (CJC or 'the Centre') has promoted and provided dispute resolution services in the Northern Territory since 2003. The CJC started a pilot program and later became a statutory body operating under the *Community Justice Centre Act 2005*. The Centre was set up to provide mediation services that take pressure off other justice services and achieve greater harmony in the community<sup>1</sup>. The CJC has since assisted thousands of Territorians to resolve their own disputes and become a community hub for dispute resolution.

The CJC is a Recognised Mediator Accreditation Body (RMAB) under the National Mediator Accreditation System (NMAS) and provides training and accreditation services across the Territory. We are the longest serving RMAB in the Territory.

### Community Justice Centre Services

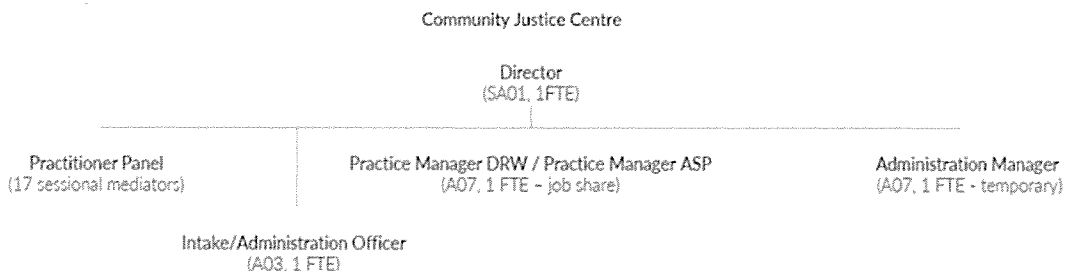
The longstanding mission of the Centre has been to provide fair, accessible and effective dispute resolution services that meet the diverse needs of Territorians. Our services include:

- mediation services
- national mediator training, assessment and accreditation
- community peacemaking
- restorative services, and
- adjudication pursuant to the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act 2004*.

### Organisational Structure

The CJC is a business unit in the Justice Services division of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. As a community centre, we are often mistaken as a non-government organisation. A small staff team manage day-to-day operations and a panel of accredited practitioners provide mediation and training services on a sessional basis.

Figure 1. CJC Business Unit Structure as at 30 June 2023<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Department of the Attorney-General and Justice 2014, Review of the Community Justice Centre Act Discussion Paper

<sup>2</sup> A Family Engagement Coordinator commenced on a temporary contract on 28 June 2023. The position has not been included in the chart as project activity relates to the 2023/24 reporting period.

## Interim Plan

In July 2022, we developed an interim plan to guide service development following confirmation that CJC services would continue and the Centre would remain open. The Plan focuses on establishing solid foundations for Territory-wide service delivery and includes a working vision, purpose and set of guiding concepts. It sets out a series of actions under five priority areas:

- A strong, thriving and service-driven organisation
- Territory-wide partnerships and referral pathways
- Skilled and diverse practitioners across the Territory
- New service models and initiatives; and
- Service promotion and relaunch

The Interim Plan will guide CJC activity until we are able to undertake a formal strategic planning process. This report shows there has been progress in each of the priority areas.

## Achievements 2022/2023

Highlights this reporting period include:

- establishing a physical presence in the Alice Springs Local Court
- maintaining an agreement rate of 75% for civil matters for the third consecutive year
- achieving a 93% client satisfaction score from mediation participants consistent with the past three years
- managing an increase in mediation cases to prior years
- delivering four accredited mediation courses across the NT
- managing accreditation assessments for 25 training graduates
- expanding and strengthening our partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to support on-country peacemaking
- designing and delivering an online restorative practices course that has built internal capability for restorative conferencing
- delivering two restorative justice conferences with positive outcomes and feedback
- developing two specialist coronial projects that engage and support families involved in coronial inquests and respond to related community conflicts
- raising awareness of mediation and CJC services through a five-part series on ABC Radio Darwin

## Service Limitations

The ongoing challenge facing the CJC is how to deliver NT-wide services within our current budget and staffing structure. The CJC has three permanent full time positions and while there are 17 mediators on the panel, they are engaged on a sessional basis and can have limited availability. Progressing cases through to mediation requires substantial work from CJC staff who also carry a heavy workload in relation to training and accreditation services and our other service development activity. Throughout the year, the team managed extended periods without an Intake and Administration Officer due to issues that emerged in

the role and a decision to initiate a job evaluation process. While there were internal transfers of two Administration Managers in the year, their placements were temporary, making it difficult to complete business projects.

## Dispute Assistance

The CJC manages enquiries through an information line, emails and a drop-in centre. In 2022/23, we responded to 194 enquiries for dispute assistance, consistent with 2021/22. During these initial contacts, we discuss the nature of the dispute and explain the fundamentals of mediation and our service approach. We also explore options for resolution outside of the mediation process, assist people to navigate the justice system and actively link people to support services. Some enquiries are brief, referral-based interventions and others involve multiple contacts to assist callers in finding a resolution.

Table 1. Enquiries by dispute type

Dispute types	No. of Enquiries
Antisocial Behaviour	8
Court matters	8
Family / Interpersonal	36
Business/Consumer	11
Minor Civil Disputes	23
Neighbourhood / Community	72
Organisational / Association	4
Burial Disputes / Remote Community Conflict	12
Workplace / Contractors	4
Tenancy/Body Corporate	16
	<b>Total</b>
	<b>194</b>

## SupportLink Referrals

We also received and responded to 113 police referrals via SupportLink. On receiving the referral, we contact the client to determine their interest in initiating a mediation process. These calls often relate to high conflict situations and involve active referrals to other services. The team established contact with 66 referred clients and referred 24 cases to a more appropriate service before attempting contact.

## Enquiry case note

Participant \* called to say that her flatmate had reduced the invoice and she had paid the balance. She said she was grateful for the help and support she received from the CJC and said it gave her the confidence to sort out the issue.

Table 2. NT Police referrals via SupportLink

Referral outcome	2022/23
Established Contact	66
Referred to Another Service	24
Attempted Contact	23
	<b>Total</b>
	<b>113</b>

Of the enquiries and SupportLink calls above, 32 converted to open cases.

## Mediation Services

The CJC delivers two distinct streams of mediation services: court-annexed and a general stream. The dispute types within both streams are very broad. Regardless of the stream, mediation is voluntary, confidential and impartial. Services are for all Territorians and are free<sup>3</sup>.

## Case Management

The Centre managed 170 cases over the reporting period, up from 166 cases in 2021-22 and 151 cases the year prior. Of these, 59 were for court-annexed mediation services and 111 were for general matters. Cases can involve a dispute between two participants or can be disputes with co-parties and/or multiple parties.

The CJC receives referrals from the NT Local Court, NT Police, local councils, legal services and a range of government departments and community organisations. Clients also self-refer. The table below shows a breakdown of cases by referral source.

Table 3. Opened cases by referral source

Referral source	2022/23
NT Police	16
Courts and Tribunals <sup>4</sup>	62
Local Council	11
Legal Services	12
Government Departments	15
Self-Referred	48
Other	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

## Dispute Types

The CJC recognises that conflict can arise in any area of life and provides mediation for a broad range of dispute contexts. The table below provides a breakdown of cases by dispute type.

Table 4. All cases by dispute type

Dispute types	No. of Cases
Antisocial Behaviour	7
Court Annexed	59
Family	9
Business/Consumer	8

<sup>3</sup> The only exception to this in the reporting period were NTG workplace mediations.

<sup>4</sup> The CJC received 88 referrals under the PVRO Act 2016; however, only 59 cases were opened as 29 referrals were either cross-applications or for a related matter. Two referrals were in relation to a Noise Abatement Order.

Minor Civil Disputes	17
Neighbourhood / Community	37
Organisational / Association / Schools	4
Burial Disputes / Remote Community Conflict <sup>5</sup>	10
Workplace / Contractors	10
Tenancy/Body Corporate	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

## Court-Annexed Stream

The CJC provides mediation in accordance with section 14 of the *Personal Violence Restraining Orders (PVRO) Act 2016*. The Centre received and accepted 88 referrals, making up 59 cases. Referrals can travel in bundles involving multiple parties and cross-applications.

The table below shows a breakdown of court-annexed mediation disputes by sub-type.

Table 5. Court annexed dispute sub-types

Dispute types	No. of Cases
Antisocial Behaviour	15
Interpersonal Relationships	16
Business/Consumer	5
Minor Civil Disputes	1
Neighbourhood	10
Organisation / Association	4
Workplace / Contractor	3
Tenancy/Body Corporate	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

Across the year, we met with the Local Court to strengthen the referral process for personal violence cases, and started working on a joint resource for applicants. The co-location arrangement in the Alice Springs Local Court created regular dialogue with the Court, and helped to identify new referral opportunities and opportunities for service development.

<sup>5</sup> Mediation cases supported by the CJC during multiple trips to Yuendumu are not included.

### Case study 1: Court-annexed mediation - Territory Housing residents

There can be a significant improvement in mediation outcomes by conducting more than one mediation and allowing time between sessions. In this case, there were five participants with interrelated Personal Violence Restraining Order applications. All participants were elderly and long-term residents of Territory Housing. They were fearful that non-agreement would result in a forced change of residence to a less favourable location and the loss of significant friendships. Over a period of three years, the residents had been in conflict over dog noise, car parking, litter and security. The biggest issue was ongoing change in friendships due to what they called gossip. Over the course of three mediations, they heard each other's stories without interruption for the first time and were able to recall positive times of care for one another that helped shift them from blame and accusation. For two participants they decided that keeping their distance would help them live peacefully. Four of the participants dropped their related applications, repaired friendships and made commitments for ongoing support and renewed friendships.

## General Mediation Stream

The general mediation stream is particularly broad and covers all disputes outside of the court-annexed stream (see Table 4 above).

### Neighbourhood disputes

Neighbourhood disputes represent 22% of mediations under the general stream and 17% of personal violence matters (see Table 5) showing how unresolved neighbourhood conflict can end up in court. Our practice experience suggests that neighbourhood cases over the year have been less about the fence, and more about abuse and have required careful assessment and preparation to create a safe and effective process.

The following table provides a breakdown of neighbourhood dispute types in the general mediation stream.

Table 6. Neighbourhood dispute sub-types

Dispute sub-type	2022/23
Dogs / Animals	7
Fence / Boundary	6
Noise	6
Nuisance	6
Trees / Overhanging Branches	11
Water / Drainage	1

### Burial disputes

In 2022/23, the CJC managed eight cases that related to a burial dispute. These cases generally involve large family groups and are highly sensitive to manage. In all but one of the cases, the dispute was between Aboriginal family members and involved complex cultural matters. Multiple cases involved the suicide death of a family member and required extensive service advocacy and liaison to ensure appropriate supports were in place to reduce suicide risk among others in the family. Three of the cases involved family members or family groups

from interstate, which presented additional challenges in setting up a joint process including finding host organisations and hiring venues with video conferencing facilities. It can be extremely difficult for families to find a resolution that genuinely meets the wishes of both family groups given the dispute is about two different places to lay their loved one to rest. A number of the cases involved multiple joint sessions and lengthy phone shuttle processes to assist families to reach an agreement.

## Mediated Cases

Forty-seven (47) cases progressed to mediation with 60 mediation sessions held. The agreement rate for civil or 'general' mediation matters has remained stable over the past three years with 75% of cases resulting in an agreement. The agreement rate for court-annexed matters increased to 57%, up from 41% in 2021/22. The overall agreement rate for all mediated cases was 66%.

Table 8. Three-year comparison of mediation agreement rates

Case type	2022/23	2021-22	2020-21
Civil Mediation	75%	78%	75%
Court Annexed	57%	41%	65%

### Case Study 2: Family conflict

For the eight years after the marriage separation, high conflict had erupted between a mother of teenage children and their stepmother. The conflict was affecting the mental health of the children and their relationships with their parents and stepmother, to the degree that the children could not invite all of their parents to significant milestone events. The mother and stepmother came to mediation to try to establish a direct line of communication that did not include the children. Both participants were able to share the pain and impact of the past and then create a plan for communication that removed the children from any conflict and supported all of their family to share in significant events. This was not a Family Dispute Resolution process, and did not include care arrangements for children, but the outcome was likely to have a significant improvement on the children's wellbeing.

There are many reasons why cases do not progress to mediation. As Table 9 below shows, some cases are resolved before they reach a joint session. This can be due to coaching and support by staff or there are cases where engaging the CJC as a third party can be enough to trigger a resolution. In other cases, a participant may withdraw late in the process where there are signs that a resolution may be possible outside of mediation, or where circumstances have changed and they no longer see mediation as necessary or fruitful. Many participants are managing multiple vulnerabilities that can affect their readiness to mediate and we must constantly assess whether a case is suitable and stop the process if we believe mediation may cause harm or be counterproductive. In all cases except those listed as declined there has been substantial intake work with participants, including referrals and liaison with support services.

Table 9. All case outcomes

Case type	Mediated cases	Centre assisted	Currently Open	No response	Declined	Unsuitable	Withdrawn	Scheduling issues
Civil Mediation	24	20	10	18	18	1	18	2
Court Annexed	23	0	14	7	6	4	4	1

## Case Complexity

We assess each case against a range of criteria to determine a complexity score. Criteria include the volatility of the dispute and vulnerability of participants, the need for support person or interpreters, remoteness, cultural factors, the need for specialised mediators and the number of people involved in the dispute.

Almost half of the cases managed during the reporting were 'moderate' or 'complex'.

Table 10. Complexity of opened cases

Level of complexity	2022/23
Minor	52%
Moderate	40.5%
High	7.5%

The current CJC Client Management System restricts the quality of data that we are able to collect. We are currently unable to provide demographic data, participant numbers or details about client vulnerabilities that would provide a richer data set about case complexity. Embedded in the 'general mediations' are cases like the burial disputes referenced above, other remote cases and two multi-party cases that were referred by the Information Commission and the Anti-Discrimination Commission who sought a more holistic response than can be offered under their legislation. These cases involved community members, legal teams, government representatives and a number of support services, and were protracted matters involving multiple stages and interventions.

## Case Time

Time spent on a case can provide an indication of case complexity, and while there has been some attempt to capture time, the data is not reliable which means that a substantial amount of CJC activity continues to go unreported. Noting that time is usually underreported as it is easy to miss the time field, some cases recorded hours of between 20 and 30 hours outside of mediation hours, and at least 50% of cases recorded over three hours outside of mediation hours.

## Regions

While a majority of mediation cases were from Darwin, there was a small increase in cases in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine to previous years.

Table 7. All cases by NT region

Region	2022/23
Alice Springs	16
Central Australia	2
Darwin	132
Katherine	10
Tennant Creek	6
Top End	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

## Client Satisfaction – Mediation Services

The CJC is committed to high quality services, and seeks feedback through client surveys. In 2022/23, the Centre received 102 surveys and achieved an overall client satisfaction score of 92.7%.

Consistent with the feedback in 2021/22, the most highly ranked indicators were that the mediators were impartial and that staff were helpful and proficient at explaining the steps of mediation. Over 90% either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the service to others with a similar issue, or would return if another issue arose.

As with other years, locating the CJC in Casuarina remained the primary issue identified for improvement. The CJC's signage at the CASCOM Centre is poor, but plans to change the CJC logo has stalled action on this. There were also flags against 'the CJC was easy to contact', and 'my dispute was processed in a timely manner', which largely relates to being a small team and lengthy periods of the year without an Intake and Administration Officer. Managing consistent coverage in a small staff team is problematic and there were numerous periods where there was no option but to leave the phones unattended when the only available staff were with a client or in a meeting.

Table 11. Client survey outcomes

Survey questions 2022/23	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	%
The staff were helpful in processing my dispute	78	21	1	2		94.3
The CJC was easy to contact	75	20	3	2	2	92.1
The CJC was easy to locate	58	24	11	8	1	85.5
I was treated fairly throughout the process	79	20	2	1		94.7
My dispute was processed in a timely manner	71	22	4	5		91.2
The staff were proficient at explaining the steps of mediation	85	14		1	2	95.1
The service has been beneficial for me	69	22	9	1		90.8
The mediators were impartial	85	14	3			96.1
I would recommend this service to others who have a similar issue	76	20	4	1	1	93.1
I am now aware of the process of raising a dispute with the CJC	76	22	3	1		93.9
I will be in contact with the CJC if any other issues arise	76	18	6	1	1	92.7
<b>Overall satisfaction score:</b>						<b>92.70%</b>

### Participant feedback - strengths

A lot more informal than a Court Room

Thank you so much mediators! For listening and just being present. Very happy

The mediator and CJC staff were extremely professional and polite. I felt very safe with them

CJC staff were really professional and understanding. They were so calm during the process

Mediation services at CJC. A safe place to hold mediation. A neutral environment to bring forward ideas, thoughts, plans and discuss issues openly.

Much appreciation for your efficient process and professional services. A great experience.

The process was not as painful as I expected. The mediators were supportive and empathic through the process

Am very happy with the process and patience of the mediator

Very good experience

The matter was complex and required skills and expertise that both of the mediators exhibited in spades. It was their professionalism that resulted in the matter settling to all parties' satisfaction.

### Participant feedback - areas for improvement

Need more staff

Too much time spent explaining the process

Really hard to contact and find office. You are understaffed

Some aspects of mediation directions were repeated (un-necessary) - otherwise mediation was conducted in a respectful, unbiased manner

Felt intimidated when seeing other parties. Better vicinity for shuttled mediation. Better signs on directions

Difficult to find - staff did come and get me though

## Complaints

There was one formal complaint during the reporting period. The CJC treats complaints seriously and uses feedback to the Centre to review and improve CJC services.

## Adjudication

Section 11(A) of the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act 2004* interacts with Part 4 of the *CJC Act 2005* that provides for adjudication of a payment dispute by written application to the Director of the CJC. There was one application in the reporting period that was finalised with a determination. The application was the first in several years and prompted an update of CJC processes and a review NTG web content.

## Community Peacemaking

We believe strong partnerships will support the growth and coordination of community peacemaking in the NT and have taken time to strengthen our ties with Aboriginal

Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Throughout 2022/23 we met regularly with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) to explore options for an NT-wide Framework that recognises, supports and remunerates Aboriginal peacemakers and that creates clear referral mechanisms. In May 2023, we supported NAAJA's delivery of a Peacemaker's Gathering that brought Aboriginal mediators from across the Territory together to talk about how peacemaking works in their communities, and to share ideas about the future of peacemaking in the NT. The gathering supported important cross-community conversations and resulted in plans to establish a community committee to drive the expansion of peacemaking in the NT.

In early 2023, we finalised and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ARDS Aboriginal Corporation to increase the availability and quality of peacemaking services provided with and for the Yolŋu people of Arnhem Land. Under the MoU, the CJC refers all cases from Arnhem Land to ARDS and works alongside Yolŋu mediators in a joint process when requested by the ARDS team. ARDS also assists with CJC cases involving Yolŋu participants and throughout the year, we held a number of meetings with participants seeking mediation in relation to land rights matters. These cases were pending at the end of the reporting period.

Over the year, our Lead Trainer Justine Davis, worked with Tangentyere Council to develop a proposal for training and an intercultural model of peacemaking support for Town Campers. The co-design process involved multiple planning sessions in Alice Springs and several workshops with staff and community groups on managing conflict. Towards the end of the reporting period, we began working on a MoU to formalise the partnership and progress a joint project to develop peacemaking mechanisms in Town Camps. Justine also worked with Thamarrurr Development Corporation (TDC) in Wadeye at intervals throughout the year, with discussions about conflict resolution training and support for peacemakers continuing at the end of the reporting period.

Over the year, we had the opportunity to strengthen what has been a longstanding connection between Warlpiri mediators from the Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC) and the CJC. As reported below, our team spent substantial time in Yuendumu in relation to Kumanjayi Walker's inquest and worked alongside STKIC to plan and support mediation processes. The frequency and length of the trips created an opportunity for deeper engagement and reflective practice, and established a platform for further collaboration. The trips highlighted the value of a two-way training model based on current conflicts.

We also met regularly with the NT Correctional Services Elders Visiting Program (EVP) to assess remote referrals and are continuing to explore opportunities to engage EVP representatives in peacemaking processes under an NT Peacemaking Framework.

## Restorative Services

Restorative justice (RJ) conferences offer people who have been harmed a meaningful and empowering justice alternative, and can create an opportunity for the person who has caused harm to set things right. Adult RJ services at the CJC were discontinued a number of years ago which has left the NT out of step with other states and territories where there has been increased investment. During the reporting period, we were referred two cases that required an RJ process instead of a mediation. The first was in relation to a sexual offence that resulted in an agreement and the CJC received positive feedback from

the victim-survivor, offender and justice system stakeholders. The Parole Board referred the second case that was between a parole applicant and a family member they had harmed. The CJC arranged the conference in their home community, and worked with NT Correctional Services and NAAFLS to arrange a day release from prison and to vary a full non-contact order. The process resulted in an agreement between the participants and a recommendation to release the parole applicant who was welcome to return home. These cases highlight the value of a victim-centred RJ conference as an alternative justice response for victim-survivors, and the potential for RJ to restore community relationships, reduce periods of incarceration and create safer communities.

### **Restorative Practices Course**

In December 2022, we started an online restorative practice course for CJC panel members to build our internal capacity for restorative conferencing and create a collaborative forum for service design. ARDS mediators also joined the course as part of our service partnership. CJC mediator and experienced RJ convenor, Clair Berman-Robinson and CJC Lead Trainer, Justine Davis designed and led what became a deep learning process for the team. Sessions blended conceptual and practical content and focused on guiding principles and skills that support convenors to design processes in a flexible and responsive way.

### **Restorative Alice Springs/Mparntwe | *Report from Penny Johnston, CJC Representative***

In early 2023, the CJC worked with the Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) to hold a series of community meetings to explore interest in Alice Springs/Mparntwe becoming a restorative community. There is a growing movement across the world to create cities and communities that use restorative principles to address past harms, build positive futures and create community-owned change. Restorative communities aim to build social cohesion and healthy communities and to build relationships based on respect, accountability and support. Between 15 and 20 individuals and representatives from local services and organisations attended each of the meetings, and heard from representatives from the Restorative City networks in Canberra and Newcastle. The meetings led to the formation of a community-based working group to develop the network and guide future activity.

### **Kumanjaji Walker's Inquest – A Restorative Approach**

The CJC has been working in the background of Kumanjaji Walker's coronial inquest to engage and support family members in the coronial process, and to identify ways to defuse tensions, repair relationships and provide a platform for healing conversations. The CJC worked closely with family members, community leaders, local stakeholders, the legal teams and counsel assisting to improve communication and address barriers to participation. In the lead up and early stages of the coronial, the CJC coordinated multiple community meetings that brought the community and local services together with counsel assisting to increase understanding of the inquest process and assisted with the dissemination of an education package. CJC senior mediator, Joshua Ingrames, travelled regularly to Yuendumu throughout the year and worked alongside Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation (STKIC) mediators to support their peacemaking work and explore restorative conferencing options following the inquest. This work demonstrated the value of an accredited mediator working in the 'middle space' between families and

the justice system, and of the CJC applying mediation principles and processes in a broader scope of community justice initiatives.

## Family Inclusion in Coronial Inquests

Our work in Kumanjayi Walker's inquest led to a creation of a second coronial project at the end of the reporting period. In late June 2023, the CJC employed a Family Engagement Coordinator to engage and support all families involved in the block of DV inquests, and to support community-led peacemaking processes. The project recognises the importance of a coordinated approach to improve understanding and participation in the inquest process and reduce the risk of conflict among families.

## Training, Accreditation and Professional Pathways

The CJC is a Recognised Mediator Accreditation Body (RMAB) that delivers nationally recognised training and accreditation for mediators in accordance with the National Mediator Accreditation System (NMAS). The CJC is the NT's only local accreditation service.

### Mediation Training | *Report from Justine Davis, Lead Trainer*

Over the past year, the CJC continued its strong history of providing mediation training to Territorians. The Practical Mediation Skills course is an intensive five-day course that attracts a wide range of participants from community, government, business and non-government organisations. The course is a first step for those who are interested in becoming a mediator, but many people participate to add to their skill set in their workspace and community. The CJC delivered two public courses in Darwin, a public course in Alice Springs and an in-house course in Alice Springs for the Central Land Council. Eighty-eight (88) participants completed the course.

In response to many requests, we trialled a split delivery of the course in Alice Springs, with a two-day 'Introduction to Mediation' course, and a follow up three-day course for those wishing to gain deeper skill and practice and go on to mediation accreditation. The feedback was this was the right approach for Alice Springs.

There is ongoing demand for high quality training that is relevant to the NT context. The CJC is fortunate to have highly experienced local trainers and coaches who have extensive practice experience in the Territory and who are skilling up experienced CJC mediators in all aspects of training coordination and delivery through a train-the-trainer program. Our courses have also included guest presentations from ARDS mediators who have provided insight into a gurrutu-centred approach to working with conflict in Yolŋu communities and supported discussions about intercultural mediation.

### Participant feedback

"Wow! What a week! Fantastic facilitation, content, process and learning. A large group, very inclusive."

"10/10 Brilliant"

"Inspiring, fun, meaningful"

"Excellent. Easy to understand. Interesting subject matter. Excellent resources and materials."

"The overall training was amazing. I learnt a lot of skills which will be useful not only for mediation but for life in general."

"Excellent. Amazing...Life changing"

"I can see how these skills will benefit my professional roles in this space."

## Scholarships

We believe it is important for the CJC panel to be representative of the NT community and offered scholarship places on our courses to Aboriginal Territorians and people from other culturally and linguistically diverse communities as a pathway to the CJC panel. While three Aboriginal participants accepted scholarships, we need to go further to reduce the barriers to participation and plans are underway to deliver a tailored course in 2023/24.



## Assessment of Candidates for National Accreditation

Training graduates must competently complete a simulated mediation as the mediator before applying for national accreditation. The CJC coordinates practice groups and arranges online assessments via Teams. Assessments are video recorded and sent to an external assessor for marking.

There was a spike in the number of candidates completing accreditation assessments this reporting period with twenty-five (25) people registering for assessment, up from eight the year prior. Nineteen (19) of the candidates were found competent.

In March, the CJC held a moderation session with assessors to review common issues, update assessment resources and create a set of 'non-negotiables' when marking. The Centre also offered coaching sessions for candidates preparing for assessment or reassessment with two small group sessions held in the reporting period.

## National Accreditation

The CJC assesses applicants for accreditation and reaccreditation under the NMAS Approval Standards, and maintains a register of accredited members.

Table 12. Number of accreditations by application type

Application type	2022/23
New Accreditation	10
Reaccreditation	6
Existing (not due for renewal in reporting period)	15
<b>Total as at 30 June 2023</b>	<b>31</b>

While there is some crossover between the CJC register and CJC sessional mediator panel, there are a number of mediators on the register who provide mediation services for other organisations and mediator panels. The administrative load of managing accreditation applications and the related issues that can arise triggered a review of the CJC's RMAB status that remains ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

### Practitioner Panel

CJC mediators bring expertise from a range of fields including education, law, policing, social work, family dispute resolution, HR, construction and community development. Many panel members are long-term Territory residents with solid practice experience in the Territory and all are committed to mediation as a process that can help to create a more peaceful NT community.

A major motivation for delivering multiple accredited courses over the year was to increase the pool of mediators across the Territory, and rebuild our panel outside of Darwin. In 2022/23, five experienced and two entry-level mediators joined the panel with applications from other entry-level mediators under review at the end of the reporting period.

Table 13. CJC Practitioner Panel

Location	Total
Alice Springs	3
Katherine	1
Darwin	13
<b>Total as at 30 June 2023</b>	
	<b>17</b>

### Ongoing Professional Development

The CJC offers group supervision for panel members and staff as a forum for practice reflection, debriefing and peer support. Justine Davis facilitated seven sessions over the reporting period that involved de-identified case presentations, review of the mediation model used by the CJC and reflections on specific mediation tools and approaches.

The CJC also offered two Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions for CJC panel members, training graduates, mediators on the CJC register and people with an interest in mediation. CPD sessions are a forum for ADR practitioners to meet one another, reflect on their practice and accrue points required to maintain their accreditation status. Clair Berman-Robinson delivered the first session restorative justice conferencing and CJC mediators Claire Cowen and Sarah Katz delivered the second session on non-violent communication.

## **ABC Darwin Radio Series | Report from Andrew Warton and Claire Cowen, CJC Mediators and Series Presenters**



This year the CJC worked in partnership with ABC Radio Darwin to produce and deliver a short series of live radio episodes about mediation and conflict resolution. The purpose of the series was to provide an alternative means of public education covering the purpose, methodology and practical application of mediation, and to raise public awareness about CJC services. The CJC ran five episodes with Adam Steer that explained key mediation principles and processes, and delved into some of the origins of conflict in personal, family and workplace settings. The series included de-identified case studies, an interview with a former CJC client who was involved in a successful mediation, and a range of soft skills and tips for listeners to apply in their own lives to assist in preventing and managing conflict. Feedback about the series was positive leading to plans to convert the audio recordings of each episode into a community education resource.

ABC Radio Darwin – Mornings with Adam Steer, 15 June 2023

### **Live Participant Interview with “Jane”**

“It was a conflict we couldn’t resolve on our own... In the beginning, I was quite emotional and it was not something I felt I could deal with alone...When we had the mediation it was awesome, we were about to talk about it and we were able to see the situations from both sides and realise it was a big miscommunication....

Before going into mediation, I didn’t think we were going to resolve it, I thought there was no way to get past it... By the end of the mediation it was so beautiful, our support people were praying. It was a really great outcome... it is an experience I will remember forever and it also gave me tools to deal with situations in my life a little bit better.”