

Spreading Red Dust Healing: Implementation and Evaluation within an AOD NGO Service

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Background: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on wellbeing and approaches to healing are underrepresented in mainstream Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) services. Lives Lived Well (LLW) have implemented Red Dust Healing, a therapeutic program grounded in Aboriginal perspectives created by Tom Powell and Randall Ross. An organisation wide rollout commenced in 2025 following a pilot in November 2024.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: Developed from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective, Red Dust Healing empowers people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Red Dust Healing is strengths-based and centred on cultural identity, acceptance, and empowerment to address the impacts of colonisation and rejection to promote healing. The program is accessible and inclusive with learning through visual holistic tools and story, encouraging people to pursue their own solutions through positive choices.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: A comprehensive implementation and evaluation plan was complemented by a one-day training workshop, fortnightly community of practice, and resources including session outlines and materials. Feedback indicates high acceptability among facilitators and clients, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Facilitators endorsed the training and support reporting increased confidence and capability in culturally sensitive practice. Client feedback indicates increased cultural safety, empowerment, and overall service satisfaction.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Evaluation data indicates Red Dust Healing is well accepted and effective within a mainstream AOD setting. Sustainability involves continuing evaluation and revision based on facilitator and client feedback.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The implementation and evaluation of Red Dust Healing demonstrates the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to improve accessibility, effectiveness, and cultural competence within the AOD sector.

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