

NSW Social Sector Transformation Fund Tranche 3 (SSTF T3) Advisory & Information Services

Unified support for a critical community service

Client story: Manning Valley Indigenous Community Support Services

This story was contributed by AbSec and is an excerpt from the [NCOSS SSTF Coordination Highlights and Outcomes Report, Dec 2022](#).

Prior to engagement with the SSTF project, Manning Valley Indigenous Community Support Services (MVICSS) was operating without any funding on a 100% volunteer basis (including executive officers), with the volunteers paying all operational expenses out-of-pocket due to the nature of the organisation's registration. Despite these difficult circumstances, MVICSS was providing critical services to approximately 200 active clients in their local community and, in recognition of the quality of the services, routinely being asked by key stakeholders within the community to expand their offerings.

With initial coordination from AbSec, a project team was assembled: this included Justice Connect, ACWA, and AbSec to offer a unified suite of advisory and resource services to support the organisation in rectifying their legal structure to enable eligibility in applying for funding, strengthening their Board, mentoring their executive team, and upgrading their technology.

What worked and didn't work?

- Relevant and practical legal guidance from Justice Connect supported MVICSS to choose an appropriate not-for-profit legal structure, create and refine their Rule Book, enable them to wind up their previous (incorrect) registrations and to prepare to register with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) and the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission (ACNC) with for-charitable status and important tax concessions, including endorsement as a DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient). This will provide MVICSS with a strong legal foundation and allows MVICSS to be eligible to apply for funding and service contracts. AbSec was able to supply governance training for board members, and to offer guidance around increasing and strengthening the Board. Mentoring from ACWA increased the skillsets of the highly enthusiastic executives and staff. AbSec has also assisted with creating community connections with aligning initiatives.
- Simple referrals of separate support services, without a coordinated approach, made little impact on the organisation.

What were the outcomes?

- The service was already providing a crucial service to the Aboriginal community in their under-served region; however, this joint support allowed the service to grow and to become sustainable in a way that would have been unattainable for the organisation prior to its engagement with the SSTF project.
- The Chief Executive Officer felt supported in their work and empowered to evolve the organisation in ways which had previously seemed out of reach. The work that the organisation was able to carry out in its own development was transformational.

What did we learn?

This support opportunity provided a clear picture of how the creation of a team of complementary support services, coordinated in a loose project management structure, was far more powerful than the involvement of disparate "siloed" services providing their own distinct support. This not only led to the organisation feeling supported throughout the project, but enabled service providers to share knowledge and expertise, and identify new areas of support to provide better outcomes for the organisation.

For queries about NCOSS SSTF Tranche 3 Coordination Project, please email: info@ncoss.org.au (ATTN: SSTF)