

KEEP YOUR SPIRIT STRONG



The healing power of horses

Using the healing power of horses, Yawardani Jan-ga helps young Aboriginal people to build self-confidence and become empowered. The program relies on the wisdom of these animals who support people with their calming and accepting nature by providing non-verbal insights into their behaviours.

Yawardani Jan-ga or the 'Helping Horses' program is an innovative equine therapy, being piloted in the mid-west region of Western Australia. Led by Professor Juli Coffin, head of Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Young People at Telethon Kids, the program has taken years of research to provide an evidence-based approach to the long-term healing of young Aboriginal people.

The horses have helped kids and youth to develop valuable insights and life skills. It has also helped them manage obstacles in a safe and exciting environment that feels natural to young people. The program supports positive relationship building through self-awareness and management.

"When training to run equine-assisted learning, I found it wasn't very Aboriginal friendly. The training process was very clinical. This program delivers this support from the perspective of Aboriginal world view and run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people" says Professor Coffin.

Everyone is encouraged to enter the program no matter where they have come from or what has happened to them in the past. Kids participating in the program don't need to fill out forms. Instead, they agree to be videoed and photographed. These resources help evaluating their progress which shows the practical value of the program.

After a few sessions, the team talks with the kid's parents and carers. This sometimes also includes Headspace, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Local Aboriginal Medical Service.

"The community support and acceptance of Yawardani Jan-ga is fantastic. It's amazing how many people have simply heard of it and wanted their kids to participate. Or are interested in training. This proves that the program can make genuine change in these participants' lives," said Professor Coffin.



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