

SPOTLIGHT

Joining forces with Jawun

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The Firm is playing an active role in supporting the development and sustainability of Indigenous communities in Australia through our collaboration with Jawun.

Jawun (an indigenous word meaning friend or family) is a not-for-profit organization that connects corporate, government and Indigenous Australians to share skills and knowledge and, ultimately, create real and lasting change.

Jawun places secondees from corporate and government organizations into Indigenous-led organizations in 10 regions across Australia. Their partnership model emphasises working with Indigenous people on the ground, rather than simply providing services to them. One of Jawun's aims is to increase the capacity of Indigenous communities to achieve their own development goals.

Jawun's work is part of the ongoing drive of Australia's reconciliation program to redress past wrongs against Indigenous Australians following decades of inequality, mistrust and discrimination.

Melbourne Partner Tim Power, who heads the Australian Reconciliation Working Group, says: "As an Australian organization we feel a responsibility towards aiding reconciliation. We set up our Reconciliation working group in 2019 to lead this response and find ways that the Firm in Australia could have a meaningful impact."

"We identified Jawun as a great organization to support and have been building a relationship with them over the past 18 months, most recently with their secondment program."


The first two secondees from the Firm to take part in the pro bono program were Business Development Manager Emily Courtis and Associate Emily Moreton, who were placed into Indigenous organizations in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia for six weeks.





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TIM POWER, PARTNER, MELBOURNE




Emily Courtis worked with the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre (Marnin) in Fitzroy Crossing (four hours inland from Broome in Western Australia).

Marnin supports Fitzroy Valley women and their families by encouraging wellbeing and fostering leadership and financial independence.

Emily explains: "One of my main projects was to assist Marnin with applying for government funding and preparing business cases to explain what the funds would be used for."

Marnin offers activities, mentoring, support, access to culturally sensitive and respectful services, and advocacy.

Emily explains: "It is one of the smaller organizations to partner with Jawun and has around 25 staff members. But, in their words, they definitely punch above their weight, as they are doing some incredibly impactful work with very little funding in a low socio-economic area."




"What they are achieving isn't easy. They serve nine communities covering five different language groups and it's immediately obvious how needed their work is."

As well as a 24-hour women's shelter, Marnin has an art studio and early education center. It also offers community support and awareness related to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and trauma in the Fitzroy Valley.

Emily believes that her secondment has benefited her and the Firm as well as Marnin.

She says: "For me, this secondment was wonderful, not only because I was able to play a small part in helping a really worthwhile cause, but also due to the shared learning. I quickly found that there was no substitute for seeing things first hand and gaining a greater understanding of the background and challenges that Marnin are facing as well as the amazing impact that they have."

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EMILY COURTIS, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, SYDNEY

Associate Emily Moreton's secondment was based in Broome, Western Australia.

She worked at the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), which is a not-for-profit organization that has been successful at securing native title rights for Kimberley Aboriginal people, with about 97 percent of the region designated as native titled land originally owned by native people.

KLC works with about 25 native title groups to maintain their natural surroundings on land and sea, and to manage cultural and environmental issues with a greater focus on economic development to build a sustainable future.

Emily explains: “I worked with KLC’s finance team to review and update their finance policies and procedures. They predominately rely on 1-2-year funding grants, which presents many challenges, so increasing their financial sustainability is a key objective over the next few years.

“More generally, there are many exciting projects at the KLC which are improving the overall wellbeing of Kimberley Aboriginal people.”



Emily enjoyed the secondment and can also see the value that the Jawun program creates for both Indigenous communities and the Firm.

She says: “The secondment was an amazing opportunity to help and advance reconciliation, but also to hear stories directly from Indigenous leaders and people in Broome and to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges they have faced and continue to face, as well as the strength and resilience of Indigenous Australians.”

Although her six-week secondment was short, Emily can see the value it brings.

She says: “It’s hard to measure individually, but the impact of each project adds up over time. I was able to see how reconciliation is taking place, which includes truth telling, learning about Indigenous cultures and building respect. The secondment provided a unique and special experience.”

Our first volunteers returned from their secondments in December 2022, but the Firm has plans to send more this year.

Emily Courtis says: “My experience has only increased my awareness of the importance of reconciliation. The secondment provided a great opportunity to play a part in such a vital effort.”

A woman with long brown hair, Emily Moreton, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a dark blazer. The background is a desert landscape with red soil, sparse yellowish-brown shrubs, and a clear blue sky. In the distance, there are low hills.

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EMILY MORETON, ASSOCIATE, MELBOURNE



For more information on Jawun, visit its website at www.jawun.org