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NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

Fabric of society

Catwalk models wear clothes crafted in their community

STYLE UP SECTION
BEGINS PAGE 9

KIDS DESERVE MUCH BETTER

Call for action at urgent talks over child protection system

GIOVANNI TORRE
& CALLAN MORSE

Concerns long expressed by Aboriginal leaders about Western Australia's child protection system were thrust into the national spotlight this month, sparking a united call for change.

In early September reports in *The Australian* that up to 15 Indigenous children, including the children of the tenants, were allegedly being left in poor conditions unsupervised for days at a time in a State-owned Port Hedland home sparked an outcry.

On Friday the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, Sue-Anne Hunter, joined with Aboriginal leaders in calling for the establishment of a dedicated WA Commissioner for Indigenous children, and a First Nations children and families representative peak body in the State.

Ms Hunter, a Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illim Wurrung woman, met community leaders in Boorloo / Perth for a roundtable on the issue, having met with Elders in Port Hedland, in WA's Pilbara region, earlier in the week.

The roundtable came after calls for an urgent meeting from leaders including Kurin Minang human rights law and child protection expert Hannah McGlade.

Ms Hunter said the Port Hedland case was not an isolated one, with similar situations across the country.

"We are in fierce agreement that urgent attention is needed to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children," she said.

"This is not the responsibility of the child protection system alone. This requires a whole-of-government approach. This cannot continue to be siloed. We will continue to see the same



Hannah McGlade (second from left), Glenda Kickett, Chad Stewart (second row) and Commissioner Sue-Anne Hunter with other Aboriginal leaders calling for reform to the child protection system and a dedicated WA Commissioner for Indigenous children. Picture: Giovanni Torre

things happen again and again if urgent action is not taken."

Ms Hunter said the roundtable agreed on two urgent calls to action: for the WA Government to establish a Commissioner for Indigenous children with the appropriate powers and independence, and to establish an independent peak body representing Aboriginal children and families to address co-ordination and accountability across WA.

"These are urgent actions which we require to happen immediately," she said. "None of this is new, they have been ask-

ing for this for a very long time, they just haven't been heard."

Dr McGlade, a member of the Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council, said: "We are calling for our voices to be heard . . . The Aboriginal children's commissioner for WA was a recommendation of the Gordon inquiry 25 years ago that has been neglected to this day."

"We are talking about systems' failures and the lack of attention to the voices and concerns of Aboriginal women about what needs to change to keep our children and family

safe," she said. "We are thinking about the future generations. If we don't act now, this is incredibly dangerous to children. We have the commitment, we have the solutions, and we want to go forward and work closely with the state government on these issues."

Council of Aboriginal Services WA CEO, Chad Stewart, noted "many of the reports and recommendations over the past few years have talked about the needs in community when it comes to child protection, the needs around Aboriginal family safety".

"We shouldn't need the work of investigative journalists and the national commissioner to come over to put a spotlight in Western Australia. We need those mechanisms in place, a peak body as well as a State Aboriginal children's commissioner," he said.

Mr Stewart noted there are very few Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in WA providing child protection-related services or out-of-home care, contrasting it with 35 in Queensland.

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Anger on the rise in Northern Territory

ANALYSIS **DECHLAN BRENNAN**

Across the country, most people don't think about the Northern Territory.

And that is exactly how the Country Liberal Party government prefers it: out of sight, out of mind.

Any criticism of the party that swept to power in 2024 can be put down to southern politicians in their "ivory towers" coming to the NT and meddling in things they don't understand.

But what happens in the Territory has consequences well beyond its borders.

The NT is failing Aboriginal Territorians, according to the Closing the Gap agreement.

No jurisdiction is behind in more metrics. More than one per cent of the population is behind bars; less than 15 per cent of children removed from their families are placed with culture or kin. It has the country's highest rate of homelessness, at almost 12 times the national average.

Aboriginal people account for 87 per cent of that number.

This is despite the NT receiving close to four-fifths of its funding from the Commonwealth, and a GST distribution almost five times that of other States because of the chronic disadvantage.

"What happens here doesn't just impact on the Territory," first-term Independent Justine Davis told National Indigenous Times. "It impacts far beyond."

"The rest of Australia needs to pay attention, not just because they're paying for it, but because it's going to impact them."

When the CLP was elected on a "tough on crime" platform, many people anticipated its effects would be harsh.

However, for some who spoke to this publication, the "overly punitive" and "callous" changes and often blatant attacks on Aboriginal people have still taken them by surprise.

Lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 10 and toughening bail laws has seen an explosion in prison numbers, with nearly half of prisoners now held on remand.

Children can now have spit hoods placed on them in youth detention; people can be denied entry on buses because of their clothing; and Aboriginal organisations have been routinely ignored, or criticised, when they voice concerns about human rights.

Land Councils have been sidelined, and experts raising concerns around human rights issues have been lambasted.

"These are decisions about Aboriginal children, families, communities and their future," Opposition Leader Selena Uiobo said. "The CLP cannot say to Aboriginal Territorians that their voices matter, then shut them out when important decisions are being made about them."

Last month, Yinging Mark Guyula, a Yolngu man of the Djambarrpuynu clan, quit as an independent member of the NT Parliament, arguing he could no longer "sit opposite a government who are not willing to listen or form partnerships".

The CLP Government had "significantly failed Aboriginal people, and their ongoing actions are contributing to the breakdown of our culture and people, in what is now becoming a slow genocide," he told people at Garma.

He is one of four leading Aboriginal Territorians to quit their posts in the last three months, citing difficulties working alongside the government.

The Government has "pushed through decisions affecting Aboriginal Territorians while too often ignoring the voices of Aboriginal communities, organisations and frontline workers," Ms Uiobo told National Indigenous Times.

"Across justice, child protection, housing, sacred sites and Treaty, we have seen important avenues for Aboriginal Territorians, advocates and frontline workers to have a say removed or weakened."

In July, the passing of child protection changes — despite the protestations of Aboriginal organisations, human rights bodies, child protection experts and legal groups — led to the



Yinging Mark Guyula resigned from Parliament in protest at the NT Government's policies. Picture: AAP

resignations of Rob McPhee as the independent Aboriginal chair of the Tripartite Forum and Shahleena Musk as the Territory's Child Commissioner.

It had "become increasingly evident", Mr McPhee said at the time, that the Government was "not committed to genuine partnership with the forum on significant policy and legislative reform".

Ms Musk, a Larrakia woman and former Crown prosecutor, broke down in tears during the parliamentary hearings on the child protection changes, which a CLP-dominated committee recommended passing despite 120 of the 150 submissions opposing them.

"Public confidence in our institutions depends on openness, meaningful consultation and a willingness to test policy proposals against available evidence," she said in her resignation.

"Where these principles are diminished, the quality of decision-making and public trust are inevitably affected."

Child Protection Minister Robyn Cahill labelled Mr McPhee's resignation a "media stunt shrouded under the guise of a political resignation", comments one person told *National Indigenous Times* were "disgusting". Others have criticised Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for her public attitude towards criticism.

The government has used terms like "talk-fests" and "identity politics" when people note First Nations groups aren't being consulted on justice issues, or argued it's "hysteria" when experts warn new legislation will make things worse for children.

This month, Kalkadoon/Waanyi woman Leanne Caton resigned as Aboriginal Housing NT CEO, arguing decisions "are just handed down without any consultation". "The reason why I'm leaving," she told ABC

Radio, "it's just . . . every piece of legislation that gets put through has a negative impact directly on Aboriginal people, and it's killing my spirit . . . I just can't stand to see what's happening to Aboriginal Territorians in this environment at the moment."

Several people who spoke to this publication declined to go on the record, citing their employment at government-funded organisations. One person spoke of deep sadness that their role had been reduced to nothing, ignored from the top down, and was now a box-ticking exercise.

"I think a lot of people have said that this government is overtly racist," Ms Davis said.

"And that's absolutely the experience of many Aboriginal people who are saying it very loudly. The Chief Minister has said publicly many times, 'if you don't agree, you can leave,' and it's finally got to a point now, just at the two-year mark, where significant people are saying 'we can no longer work with this Government'."

Earlier this year, the Government quietly launched an Aboriginal affairs strategy, setting out its approach to the portfolio. Six priorities, tied to the Government's three main priorities for this term: reducing crime, rebuilding the economy, and restoring the Territory lifestyle.

These included creating safer communities; empowering bush communities; creating jobs and business on country; boosting health, wellbeing and culture; building community foundations; and developing skills for the future.

At the time, Ms Caton said it lacked detail, labelling it "disappointing".

"This is what you get when you have a document that is written by people who don't have the lived experience or don't want to consult with Aboriginal people," she told the

ABC. There is no shared decision-making with Aboriginal organisations according to many, despite it being a core Closing the Gap priority reform.

That approach has also been evident in decisions affecting Aboriginal-controlled organisations and services.

When the CLP chose to ignore Federal money and close down the Aboriginal-run YiSSA homeless shelter, moving it 100km south, Aboriginal organisations found out about it through the media.

When Federal politicians told the NT Government earlier this month they would give money directly to organisations to help close the gap since the Government was doing an appalling job, the CLP said the Commonwealth was spending money "where it should not be spent". "The Chief Minister refuses to liaise or consult with the Aboriginal community control sector, will have nothing to do with us, and she's been in two years now," Ms Caton told ABC Radio.

"This Government seems to be more interested in spending \$1.2 billion on building prisons, rather than looking at the government sectors or the community services sectors that are overloaded."

Ms Uiobo agrees. "What my team and I hear again and again is that Aboriginal Territorians are tired of having decisions made about them, without them," she says.

"Aboriginal families and communities are speaking up, raising concerns and sharing their lived experience, only to feel like the CLP Government has already made up its mind or just flat-out ignores them."

The CLP was asked by National Indigenous Times about accusations of racism, the lack of meaningful consultation, and what it is doing for Aboriginal Territorians. It did not respond.

Returning united after 100-year wait

JOSEPH GUENZLER

More than 250 Wuthathi people gathered on Country on the far north-eastern coast of Cape York Peninsula this month, marking the first time in more than 100 years families have come together there for a major celebration.

Families travelled from Lockhart River, the Northern Peninsula Area, Cairns, Townsville and other communities, with more than 100 campsites established for the gathering.

For many attending, it was their first time visiting Wuthathi Country. The event recognised generations of Wuthathi people who fought to return to Country after families were forcibly removed in the early 1900s, as well as those who continued the push for land rights, conservation and recognition.

Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC chair Keron Murray said the gathering reflected a vision carried across generations.

"Today we have celebrated and honoured a vision that was set years ago by our old people and followed through, from generation to generation," Mr Murray said.

"The goal was always to secure land, so it was a very long-standing fight for our country. Our fight has been long and hard."

The return follows decades of work by Wuthathi people, including attempts to reconnect with Country from the 1950s and later efforts involving the Land Council, land claims and cultural surveys.

Wuthathi Tribal Elders Council chair Johnson Chippendale said people had continued working towards returning despite the barriers they faced.

"In the early 1900s our people



Wuthathi Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC chair Keron Murray and Wuthathi Tribal Elders Council chair Johnson Chippendale.

were removed by force," Mr Chippendale said. "It was very hard for our people to get back on Country. We tried in the 1950s and again in the 1980s with the Land Council."

The Aboriginal flag was later planted on Country and anthropologists carried out surveys identifying sacred sites and recording the names of islands, bays and beaches. Those efforts contributed to the establishment of the original Wuthathi Land Trust, recognition of Native Title rights and

the creation of a dedicated Indigenous Protected Area.

Mr Chippendale said those developments had helped create opportunities for Wuthathi people to care for Country and strengthen their future.

"Today, we are celebrating our success, our strength, our survival as Wuthathi people," Mr Chippendale said.

"The journey continues and there is still justice to come. But today, we have much to celebrate."

Mr Murray said Wuthathi

people had spent years building governance structures and systems needed to manage Country and support future development.

"Getting Country back is not the end of the fight. It is the beginning of our responsibility. We want our children, and their children, and their children's children, to have jobs, education and opportunity," he said. Mr Murray also paid tribute to earlier generations who carried the fight for Country and those continuing that work.

Free help amid class action over removals

GIOVANNI TORRE

Shine Lawyers began free community information sessions across Western Australia this month as part of its WA First Nations Child Removal Class Action.

The sessions provide Indigenous families and communities information about the class action, eligibility and the registration process, as well as to facilitate discussions with local organisations and community leaders about how information can be shared appropriately within communities.

Caitlin Wilson, special counsel at Shine Lawyers, noted the firm filed a complaint in the Australian Human Rights Commission in March 2024 and filed in the Federal Court in November the same year.

"This case has been brought on behalf of First Nations families who allege they were subjected to unlawful racial discrimination by the Department of Communities in Western Australia on or after 5 March 1992," she said last week.

"The class action alleges the department engaged in unlawful discrimination of First Nations peoples through its conduct in investigating parents or carers, removing and placing children away from their families, kin and community, and failing to reunify children with their families."

Ms Wilson said the focus was the conduct of the department before and after the removal of a First Nations child from their family, including whether families were supported, consulted and given proper opportunities for children to remain connected to family, kin, community, Country and culture.

The WA community information session program began on Monday with a session in Bunbury and will continue this week in various locations.

Details are available on the Shine Lawyers website.

Aboriginal leaders want urgent action for kids

FROM PAGE 1

"The government's known for a long time what we need to do in this space... But until we have those Aboriginal community organisations who can help, who can get involved in the early intervention and family support end of the spectrum without waiting until a crisis, it makes it very hard for us, and we always seem to be coming in at the end when it's a crisis conversation," he said.

Dr Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, an Arrrente/Warramungu woman and Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, attended the meeting with Elders in Port Hedland with Ms Hunter earlier last week.

"Today's meeting with Elders

was about protecting our children and building systems that better protect and support them. It has reinforced that the way forward must start with listening to the people who know their community and children best," she told National Indigenous Times after the meeting.

"We need to turn that listening into practical action — with children's safety and wellbeing at the centre, and with governments and services working together to address the issues raised by community."

"We know these challenges cannot be solved through crisis responses alone. We need to invest earlier and listen better."

"The voices of Elders, children and young people must continue to be part of the decisions that affect their lives."

Earlier this month WA Child Protection Minister Jessica Stojkovski flew to the Pilbara to meet community leaders.

She told WA Today it was unacceptable for children to live in such conditions.

"No child should have their safety and wellbeing put at risk," she said.

"I am seeking urgent answers in relation to the children concerned and what actions are being taken. Child protection is a complex issue and the department is continuing to work with other agencies in South Hedland to support these vulnerable families so no child is left behind."

WA Premier Roger Cook rejected the suggestion fears of creating a new Stolen Generation had prevented or discour-

aged the removal of Aboriginal children from neglectful or unsafe homes.

"People do not make these decisions on whim... They do not make these decisions on the basis of a suspicion. They do so under the circumstances and the evidence that's before them," he told The West Australian.

The Premier said he understood "there are some circumstances" in the Port Hedland case "which appear to be completely unacceptable, and obviously the Department of Child Protection has a responsibility to be able to monitor and get on top of these situations".

A WA Government spokesperson told National Indigenous Times after the

roundtable on Friday the safety and wellbeing of children is "a top priority" for the government.

"The Premier would welcome the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of the roundtable with the National Commissioner and welcomes the rapid review," they said, noting that Ms Stojkovski met Elders and Aboriginal leaders in the Pilbara "to hear directly about the challenges facing children and families".

"She has committed to a targeted, multi agency response to help at-risk children and their families. These issues are complex and longstanding, and there is no simple fix. Real generational change will require all levels of government to work together."

New approach to health

GIOVANNI TORRE

Niyaparli people are leading a new approach to kidney health and wellbeing, grounded in Country, family, culture, and community.

The Niyaparli Health and Wellbeing Project, initiated by Karlka Niyaparli Aboriginal Corporation and funded by the Niyaparli Trust, is turning community priorities into practical action across the Pilbara and Boorloo/Perth.

The project, for which WAA-HEC Ethics Clearance was secured, responds to the experiences of Niyaparli people living with kidney disease and their families, including those who travel away from Country to access dialysis and other care.

It began by listening to Niyaparli people.

KNAC chief executive Cate Ballantyne said “from the first community yarns through to co-design, governance and implementation, one principle has remained at its centre: Niyaparli people leading decisions about

Niyaparli health”. The Niyaparli Health and Wellbeing Project Steering Committee, established as a governance body of KNAC to provide community leadership, cultural guidance, and project oversight, is key.

Its members bring a mix of knowledge and experience, including experience of kidney disease, supporting family members through illness, community leadership, and professional expertise in health, community services, and recruitment.

The steering committee has helped shape partnership agreements, co-designed the Health and Wellbeing Centre in Henley Brook and evaluation framework, guided kidney health education, and contributed to recruitment and communications, among other things.

“We are building something that is bigger than a program or a building,” steering committee chair Christina Stone said.

“This project is about healing, dignity, connection to Country, and creating stronger systems of support around our people.”

Over nine months, consultancy Grounded Impact worked with KNAC and Niyaparli members to understand people’s experiences of kidney health and health care, what was already working, where change was needed, and what Niyaparli people wanted for the future.

The first phase involved speaking with Niyaparli members, as well as health care and dialysis providers, kidney health experts, advocates, and potential partners.

Face-to-face yarns were held in Boorloo, Karratha, Hedland, and Panpatina/Newman, with members also participating via phone from Carnarvon, Geraldton, and Wickham and through an online survey. Niyaparli members identified opportunities to strengthen access to dialysis closer to Country, prevention and early intervention, culturally safe patient support, accommodation in Boorloo, health education, and partnerships with Aboriginal community-controlled and specialist health organisations as key.

The work resulted in six recommendations.

The first established a pathway for partnership with Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, strengthening primary healthcare, chronic disease prevention, screening, and culturally appropriate kidney care in the Pilbara.

The second established a Niyaparli health and wellbeing liaison officer.

The third established a partnership with Kidney Health Australia, bringing specialist kidney health expertise to service gap analysis, education, prevention, and referral pathways.

The fourth is the development of the Niyaparli Health and Wellbeing Centre in Perth, in partnership with the Foundation for Indigenous Sustainable Health. It will provide culturally safe accommodation and wrap-around support for Niyaparli people travelling to Perth for dialysis and other medical treatment.

The fifth recommendation established a partnership with Western Desert Nganampa

Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Purple House), drawing on its experience in culturally safe dialysis support.

The sixth established the governance, partnership management and evaluation structures needed to keep Niyaparli leadership at the centre of the project as it grows.

In September 2025, steering committee member Shikiara Stone co-presented the project at the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology conference. KNAC and the steering committee have also advocated directly with the WA health system, including corresponding with the director-general of the Department of Health.

A paper drawing on Niyaparli experiences of kidney health care has been submitted to the Medical Journal of Australia.

Shikiara Stone said these activities “build on the same foundation as the project itself: Niyaparli people identifying what matters, shaping the response and leading the way forward”.

PRE-1788 NUMBERS WERE VAST

GIOVANNI TORRE

Australia had a much larger Indigenous population before the arrival of Europeans than previously thought, and that population suffered heavy losses, according to new research.

The research, titled Large Size Of The Australian Indigenous Population Prior To Its Massive Decline Following Colonial Invasion, demonstrates much larger population losses than previously believed, with an estimated 93 per cent of the pre-European population lost to violence and disease introduced by colonists in less than 80 years following the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet.

Flinders University Professor of global ecology Corey Bradshaw, a chief investigator at the Australian Research Council’s Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CIEHF), is part of a national research group working with Indigenous partners to investigate Indigenous population sizes through time.

Using sophisticated computer modelling they calculated the Indigenous population was up to seven times larger than previously believed. “Understanding the size of Indigenous populations in Australia before European invasion in 1788 is essential to truth-telling and reconciliation,” Professor Bradshaw said.

The research team arrived at new population estimates by reviewing ethnographic observations, archaeological and genetic reconstructions, and modelling environmental carrying capacity across the continent.

Many previous estimates are based on an early attempt to



Rock art from a location known as Mawundaddja on Manilkarr Clan Estate, west Arnhem Land. Picture: Canberra Archaeological Society.

determine pre-colonisation populations by anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown in the 1930s, who put the figure at 250,000.

However, he acknowledged this did not account for the impact of lethal diseases, and frontier and structural violence. Increasingly, these impacts have been shown to be far more extensive than previously known.

The new research calculated a median pre-colonial Indigenous population of 2.22 million, or 0.29 people per square kilometre.

This new estimate allows calculation of the number of excess deaths in the post-1788 era.

To align with early census records, the model estimates 2.06

million excess deaths (an average of about 28,200 per year) occurred between 1788 and 1861.

These estimates show by 1861, only about 7 per cent of the estimated pre-colonial population survived.

“These devastating findings highlight the major impacts of invasion experienced by Indigenous Australians, and demonstrate their remarkable survival, resilience and recovery over the past century,” said lead author Associate Professor Alan Williams, a partner investigator in CIEHF representing EMM Consulting — also an Adjunct Research Fellow at James Cook University. Although the Indigenous population in Australia has grown since the 1950s, the 2021 census

shows it remains at about 37 per cent of the estimated median pre-colonial size. If current growth trends continue, parity with the 1788 Indigenous population will not be reached until about 2047.

“The findings highlight the scale of demographic catastrophe experienced by Indigenous Australians due to colonisation, with the implications being a heightened understanding of intergenerational trauma and to inform future policy that assists Indigenous people. In addition to recognising this intergenerational trauma and disadvantage, it is also time to recognise intergenerational privilege,” said co-author Distinguished Professor Lynette Russell of the Monash University

Indigenous Studies Centre and CIEHF.

“These research findings challenge us to rethink the scale of what happened after 1788. We are not talking about a marginal consequence of colonisation but a demographic catastrophe at the heart of the Australian story,” said Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO, chair of the CIEHF Centre Advisory Committee.

The research, published in Nature Human Behaviour, was funded by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures and the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage.

More action needed over unsafe drinking water

GIOVANNI TORRE

A new Water Services Association of Australia report published this month found more than 6,500 First Nations people in remote communities were supplied with water that did not meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines at least once over the past two years.

The Measuring the Gap: Water in First Nations Communities report found while more than \$500 million in capital investment and \$200m in operating investment over the next five years has been committed by State and Territory governments to improve water and wastewater services to First Nations communities, a further \$200m in capital investment and \$50m in

operating investment is needed over the same period to reduce the highest risks.

The report, which investigated drinking water test results from water utilities and government authorities from the most recently available public data, was released September 16 at the Voices from the Bush 2026 Conference in Mparntwe / Alice Springs.

It comes five years after the release of the Closing the Gap Framework, which introduced Target 9B covering essential services such as drinking water standards for First Nations people.

Water Services Association of Australia executive director Adam Lovell said after five years a consistent set of metrics for appropriate water quality covered under Target 9B had still not been

agreed to by governments and health and water authorities.

"Access to clean, healthy and safe drinking water is a basic human right for all communities in Australia, regardless of your location. The Australian Drinking Water Guideline is the starting point to achieve this," Mr Lovell said. "We used the metrics for microbiological and chemical water quality in the national guidelines to measure the gap in water services in First Nations and other communities."

"All Australians would expect that drinking water being supplied to communities should comply with the safety standards in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. This report shows that is not the case for all First Nations communities."

"Governments and the relevant health authorities need to consult with First Nations people and immediately agree on the right

metrics to measure and address water quality issues in their communities."

The Productivity Commission recently noted that no data was available for Target 9B as part of its consultation paper on its Closing the Gap Review 2026.

Target 9B in the Closing the Gap Framework states that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should be receiving essential services that meet or exceed the same standard provided in the local area or state. It is applied to communities of 50 people or more that are living in discrete First Nations communities or town based communities. The Water Services Association noted it did not cover the hundreds of communities with less than 50 people, "which creates a further gap in the understanding of drinking water quality for all First Nations people".

The Report found around 6,500

people from 1,929 households across 38 First Nations communities did not receive safe drinking water. This meant microbiological and chemical levels in drinking water in these communities did not meet the safe level in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for at least one water quality test result over the reporting period.

The report urged governments to immediately begin consultations with First Nations communities on the appropriate measures for the 9B targets to help close the gap in water services between First Nations people and other Australians.

A Federal Government spokesperson said it was investing more than \$193 million, through the National Water Grid, to support 43 First Nations water infrastructure projects across six States and Territories, helping more than 110 communities.



The Hume Dam in NSW.
Picture: Adrian Black/AAP

United call to fix youth justice woes

DECHLAN BRENNAN

A Liberal, an independent and a Greens senator united this month to call for the Commonwealth to mandate a minimum age of criminal responsibility across the country, even as government senators declined to do so.

The Senate Inquiry into Youth Justice, launched after the horrific deaths of two children in Western Australia's youth justice system, delivered its delayed report on September 18. It had heard from more than 120 witnesses, many of whom said the system is failing some of the country's most vulnerable children.

More than half of those in custody across the country on an average day in 2024-25 were Indigenous, while more than 80 per cent of children detained were unsentenced.

Witnesses noted many children in detention had an "unprecedented amount of

neurodisability and neurodevelopmental disorders, including fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and undiagnosed intellectual disability".

In the NT, 77 per cent of children under 14 detained in detention had unmet mental-health, cognitive-disability or health needs, the inquiry heard, while in WA, a study found nine in ten incarcerated young people had some form of neurodiversity.

The report was delivered amid widespread media reporting of allegedly growing youth crime, while State and Territory governments across the country — Labor and conservative — have enacted punitive policies.

"Current media coverage suggests that crime by children and young people in Australia is on the rise," the report said. "However, other statistics show a decrease in youth crime, suggesting there is no 'youth justice crisis' in Australia."

Legal, human rights and Indigenous groups have been outspoken about the need to reform the system, arguing punitive punishments both fail children and families and make communities less safe.

"If a tough-on-crime approach worked, the Territory would be the safest place in Australia, yet, as the data shows, a punitive response reinforces the very behaviour we seek to change and increases the chance of further offending," former NT child commissioner Shahleena Musk told the inquiry.

It costs more than a billion dollars a year to incarcerate children, with the system, according to Justice Reform Initiative executive director Mindy Sotiri, "failing children, failing taxpayers and failing communities".

"It is especially failing First Nations children and communities," Dr Sotiri said. "Children experiencing significant disad-

vantage are being funnelled into a justice system that causes harm and increases the likelihood of future offending."

One of the loudest calls has been for a minimum age of criminal responsibility — namely 14. Only two jurisdictions, Victoria (12) and the ACT (14), have raised the age above 10, while the NT lowered it back from 12 to 10 in 2024.

The inquiry made four recommendations, none of which called for the age to be raised.

They included a recommendation for the Attorney-General to work with her State and Territory counterparts to "take the necessary steps to introduce national minimum standards in relation to youth justice in Australia"; establish a cross-government national child and community safety task force; launch a public education campaign providing evidence-based information about youth crime and the benefits of alternatives to

incarceration; and have a committee investigate the factors contributing to youth incarceration.

NATSILS, the national peak body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, welcomed the call for minimum standards across the Commonwealth.

In the inquiry's final report, Liberal Senator Andrew McLachlan, Greens Senator David Shoebridge and independent senator Lidia Thorpe called for the age to be raised nationally.

Senator Thorpe also called for an end to children being held in adult facilities and for reform to bail and remand laws.

In their additional comments, Labor Senators Dorinda Cox and Jana Stewart — both First Nations women — argued the final recommendations did not adequately address the breadth of evidence, particularly the specific circumstances of First Nations children.

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Dr Mindy Sotiri

Gap in pay is laid bare

CALLAN MORSE

A landmark First Nations-led study has found Indigenous employees earn an average 16 per cent less per hour than the average Australian worker.

The Towards Indigenous Pay Parity report, released last Thursday by the UTS Centre for Indigenous People and Work and Indigenous Business Australia, found Indigenous workers earn an average 84 cents for every dollar earned by the average Australian worker.

Drawing on Australian Tax Office and Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the report found pay gaps across 75 per cent of nearly 230 specific occupations analysed.

It indicated the average annual Indigenous Pay Gap is 18 per cent, or around \$15,000 less earned by Indigenous Australians compared to all Australian workers on average.

CIPW director, Professor Nareen Young, said the disparity is costing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers billions of dollars in wages every year.

"Indigenous workers missed out on a combined three billion dollars in 2022-23 alone, and the pay gap could cost our mob around \$170 billion by 2050," Professor Young said. "For

individual workers, it's comparable to losing a lifetime of super payments, or working two months of each year for free.

"Lower average wages mean lower lifetime earnings, weaker super outcomes, and less inter-generational economic security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The repercussions flow on to families, communities, and the wider economy."

The report found Indigenous women face the steepest gap, earning an average \$41 an hour compared with \$52 for men overall, a gap of 21 per cent.

The largest Indigenous Pay Gaps by occupation group occur in the professionals and managers categories, with gaps of 19.5 per cent and 15.8 per cent respectively.

Professor Young said the research had explored the most common explanations for Indigenous pay inequality and found they do not stack up.

"For years we have been told this gap is due to education, experience, hours, and the typical jobs our mob end up in," she said. "But the pay gaps are greatest in highly qualified professional and managerial roles, and Indigenous workers at almost every level of education are earning less than other Australians.

“

What remains is the structural racism that keeps Indigenous workers' wages low, limits their career progression, and compounds disadvantage across their working lives.

Professor Nareen Young

"Age is not a major factor, and job type and hours worked account for less than 30 per cent of the average hourly pay gap.

"What remains is the structural racism that keeps Indigenous workers' wages low, limits their career progression, and compounds disadvantage across their working lives."

IBA chief economist, Siddharth Shirodkar, who leads the Office of the Indigenous Economy, said the report provided a much-needed quantification of the Indigenous pay gap, and has serious implications for Australia's economy at large.

"The report's findings will come as no surprise to many

Indigenous Australians, but critically provide an initial benchmark that quantifies the lived experience of many," Dr Shirodkar said. "The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is younger and growing faster than the rest of the country so, if nothing is done now, a growing share of Australia's future workforce will walk into a labour market that underpays it.

"That has consequences for Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, but also affects Australia's overall economic activity."

Dr Shirodkar said the sectors where Australia will most need workers over the next decade show sizeable pay gaps.

"Aged and disability care, nursing support, and technology are all facing shortages, and all of them underpay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. More worryingly, there is also evidence in the report to suggest that the Indigenous Pay Gap may have been widening over the last decade."

The research looked at independent data sources such as the Melbourne Institute's Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia dataset to corroborate results, which revealed the average pay gap may have grown from around

10 per cent in 2014 to 16 per cent by 2021 and remained there since.

Dr Shirodkar said lower wages across a working life mean lower superannuation balances and heavier reliance on the age pension. "Governments are investing heavily in Indigenous employment through Closing the Gap, and those employment targets are undercut if the people who do find work are paid less than their colleagues," he said. Professor Young said the report sets out key reforms to begin closing the pay gap.

"A positive duty for employers to prevent racial discrimination is key to addressing the structural barriers to pay parity. Legislating this would mean racial discrimination is treated the same way as sex discrimination in Australian workplaces," she said.

"Embedding Indigenous employment data collection and reporting into existing reporting requirements is essential, as is addressing the undervaluation of cultural skills in wage setting.

"This Indigenous-led report is the first of its kind, giving employers and governments something they have never had before: comprehensive baseline evidence, and a number they can be held to."

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Insidious disease 'must be tackled'

GIOVANNI TORRE

A serious health condition is quietly causing a major impact in Indigenous communities.

Huntington's disease is a genetic, degenerative, fatal neurological condition.

Huntington's Australia chief executive Lenni Duffield told National Indigenous Times that despite the seriousness of the condition, it has not received the national attention or research funding it needs.

She said Huntington's disease is "almost like a ticking time bomb" in Indigenous communities. "There's misdiagnosis, not willing to get diagnosed, not coming forward, or if HD was mentioned, Indigenous communities, individuals, families would not engage because they thought it was leprosy (Hansen's disease) and there was such a terrible connotation around that," she said. "This has been occurring in our regional or remote communities — a lack of

information, lack of education, lack of awareness, and lack of services — for 40 or 50 years, in reality up to 70 years."

Ms Duffield said a stigma around Huntington's disease also stemmed from an earlier idea it was a curse on families.

"At its core, the issue is one of inadequate communication, limited-service delivery, and a failure to meaningfully engage and work alongside Indigenous communities," she said.

Deadly Neuro Navigators founder and Indigenous health advocate Shenane Hogg said she and others are working with little funding to provide the care and information that is desperately needed in communities.

"When we go in . . . we provide culturally safe, appropriate care for mob, when they're dealing with such an insidious and sensitive disease," she said.

Ms Hogg said she had reached out to government departments and agencies, and met ministers and MPs to advocate for greater



Deadly Neuro Navigators and Huntington's Australia are working to raise awareness.

support to tackle the disease. "The Government just doesn't seem to want to put a commitment to it . . . at the moment we have to beg, borrow and steal to be able to make these clinics go ahead," she said.

"We don't know when we're going to go back up, so you know it leaves mob with the question of 'is this continuous care or is this just ad hoc care?'"

Ms Duffield said mapping of Huntington's Disease in communities began two decades ago and has recorded a significant growth in known cases.

"We were able to get some funding from the Department of Communities in WA because

what we found is post-COVID and through the work over the last eight years, we've gone from knowing of 70 individuals to over 800 now in the Indigenous population.

"There are over 30 regional and remote and very remote Aboriginal communities now where we have confirmed cases of Huntington's disease. We expect up to 2000 Indigenous people are impacted in Australia. That's around the same amount of people in Australia who have motor neurone disease now, and yet MND just recently got a commitment from the Government of \$40.2 million to look at work in the MND space."

Ms Duffield said Huntington's requires dedicated work. "We know that it needs continuity of care. Huntington's disease is a combination of MND, Parkinson's, dementia, and schizophrenia rolled into one," she said.

A Federal Health Department spokesperson said the Government was "committed to improving health equity and addressing disparities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

"The Government is providing funding of \$7.45 million over seven years from 2020-21 for implementation activities that align with the National Strategic Action Plan for Rare Diseases."

Gradings in on efforts to improve policy and lives

This is the second part in a series of reports on the performance of State and Territory governments on Indigenous policy since the Voice referendum

Tasmania C-

Four years after the State's Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty report was delivered the Tasmanian Government walked away from plans for a Treaty with Aboriginal people in mid-2025, instead opting for an Aboriginal Truth-telling and Healing Commission.

Arguing truth-telling should precede or replace a Treaty process, the Government — upon advice from the State's Aboriginal Advisory Group — allocated \$880,000 over two years in the May 2025 Budget for the appointment of commissioners, however they remain yet to be announced.

Aboriginal community groups including peak body TRACA — the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Corporations Alliance — supported the decision, while the Greens continue to advocate for both a Truth and Treaty process.

The Government is currently developing the Aboriginal Heritage Bill 2026, which intends to replace the dated 1975 Act.

Handling of the consultation process, which concluded in July, drew mixed responses from various Aboriginal community figures and groups.

TRACA, which represents seven of the State's Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, said consultation improved while the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, and Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre criticised the process, arguing Aboriginal people have been "completely shut out" of consultation discussions.

Land returns remain an ongoing issue for Aboriginal people in Tasmania, with the last government handback occurring in 2005 when Cape Barren Island and Clarke Island were returned to the ALCT.

In July the Hobart City Council gave in-principle support for nearly five hectares of public land at Queens Domain, north of the Hobart CBD, to be returned and developed as an Aboriginal cultural centre.

The move drew the support of the ALCT however community support was not unanimous, with the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation's Selina Maguire-Colgrave labelling the move "Hobart-centric" while highlighting the potential for handbacks in the State's north-west.

According to the Productivity Commission's latest Closing the Gap report, there has been an improvement in targets measuring birthweight, preschool enrolment, Year 12 or equivalent qualification, tertiary qualification, youth engagement, employment, and land mass subject to legal rights and interests in the State.

However, targets measuring childhood development, appropriate-sized housing, adult imprisonment, and children in out-of-home care worsened.

The report indicated the number of Indigenous adults incarcerated worsened year on year, increasing from 828.6 per 100,000 to 870.2 per 100,000, with Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service CEO, Jake Smith, saying the figures "represent the Tasmanian Government's lack of genuine commitment and meaningful action in reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal people held in prison".

Western Australia D+

As the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA recently noted, since March 2017 WA Labor has had "a generational opportunity to make change, to ensure that all West Australians are afforded basic human rights".

ALS chief executive Wayne Nannup commented this month: "You don't need to walk too far

before you see the hardship that families are facing. People living on the streets, in cars, young people languishing in detention or adult prison, children living in squalor, such as the case in Frisby Court, Port Hedland. Why do situations reach crisis point, before anyone sits up and takes notice? Is this the legacy that (Premier) Roger Cook wants to be remembered for?"

Indigenous people in Western Australia remain overpoliced and overincarcerated.

In June questions in Parliament from Greens MP Brad Pettitt revealed more than half of the people strip-searched by WA Police in 2025-26 were Indigenous, with almost two thirds of strip-searches carried out on women involving First Nations women, and a 44 per cent increase over the past seven years in strip-searches overall by WA Police.

Two boys have died in custody in WA over the past three years, including 16-year-old Cleveland Dodd. In December 2024, WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones expressed her disappointment with the State's response to her inquiry into the operating model of care in WA's troubled youth detention centres, in which First Nations youth are drastically overrepresented.

In May, a complaint was filed with the Australian Human Rights

Commission on behalf of roughly one hundred victims of alleged child sexual abuse in WA's juvenile detention system. Also this year, two Aboriginal women died in WA's Bandyup prison in the space of five weeks.

Indigenous human rights experts such as Dr Hannah McGlade have long called for reform, including the full implementation of all recommendations from the royal commission into Aboriginal Deaths in custody.

On the positive side of the ledger, the WA Government has invested in building the capacity of Aboriginal organisations to carry out heritage protection work. The State has also invested in expanding Indigenous ranger programs, strengthening the ability of Aboriginal organisations to protect the environment while also creating jobs.

The government has backed truth-telling projects planned for the Mogumber mission and Sister Kate's former sites, but there is no Statewide truth-telling body equivalent to Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission.

The WA Government also recently provided a one-off grant to support the ALS WA's highly effective youth engagement program Old Ways New Ways, and has supported Marra Worra Worra's successful Night Space youth centre in Fitzroy Crossing.



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I'm going to say what I feel

Miss Kaninna's
rapid rise inspires
her to be even
more outspoken

ALSO INSIDE

Rapper wins Aussie hearts
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Award celebrates Country
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Art show lauds heritage
P15

Voice win is one for the people

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Marranunggu rapper Yung Milla has won The Voice Australia 2026, taking out the public vote in Sunday night's Grand Finale.

The Northern Territory artist was crowned the winner of the show's 15th season ahead of fellow finalists Daisha Auda, Tommy Novak and The 60 Four. Yung Milla opened the Grand Finale with Tupac's Changes, a song he connected with because of its message.

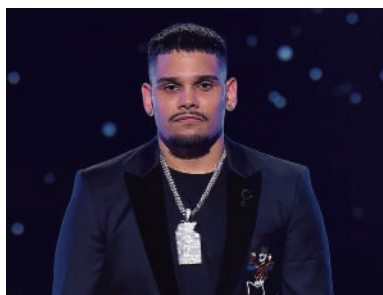
He explained why the track suited what he wanted to represent on the final night.

"That song is what I stand for morally," Yung Milla said.

"It's emotional but it's upbeat — it gets you moving."

Later, Yung Milla joined coach Mel C for a rendition of her 2000 single Never Be The Same Again, originally recorded with the late Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes.

He performed Lopes' rap verses during the duet before



reflecting on the unlikely path that had brought him to the stage.

"I'm a Black boy from Darwin and now I'm on The Voice grand finale singing with Melanie C," he said.

The win capped a run which began with Yung Milla turning all four coaches' chairs during his blind audition before eventually joining Team Mel C.

He performed Gangsta's Paradise during the Knockouts, Pray For Me in the quarterfinal and reworked Men At Work's Down Under for his semifinal performance.

The semifinal performance

combined didgeridoo, a choir, original rap verses and storytelling about his upbringing and family before Mel C selected him for the Grand Finale.

After host Sonia Kruger announced the result, Yung Milla thanked his coach and dedicated the win to his community.

"I can't believe it, I'm so grateful," he said.

"Thank you so much Mel, you've made me stronger as a person, as an artist."

"I'm just so proud and I'm doing it for my people."

Mel C praised the impact Yung Milla had made throughout the competition.

"You've affected me, everybody who's been in a room with you," she said.

Yung Milla's mother, Kylie, said: "To see him up there, to show his talent to the rest of Australia took my breath away. I'm just so proud he's made it this far."

Torres Strait Islander singer Auda also reached the Grand Finale after a competition run which included a four-chair turn, a coach change and a place on Team Kate Miller-Heidke.

The 15-year-old Logan singer performed Janet Jackson's Together Again during the final after becoming the first contestant on The Voice Australia to receive approval to perform one of Jackson's songs.

Jackson had previously declined the use of her songs on the program but approved Together Again after producers

sent her Auda's blind audition tape. Auda later joined Miller-Heidke for a duet of Sarah McLachlan's Angel.

Her Grand Finale appearance followed performances of Lizzo's Cuz I Love You in the blind auditions, At Last in the Knockouts, Janelle Monae's Tightrope in the quarterfinal and Andra Day's Rise Up in the semifinal. She became the first Torres Strait Islander artist to reach The Voice Australia Grand Finale.

New South Wales singer Novak and South Australian group The 60 Four completed the final four.

Yung Milla has received \$100,000 and a Hive Sound Studios recording and development package as the winner of the 2026 season.



Voice 2026 winner Yung Milla during the Grand Finale. Pictures: Seven Network

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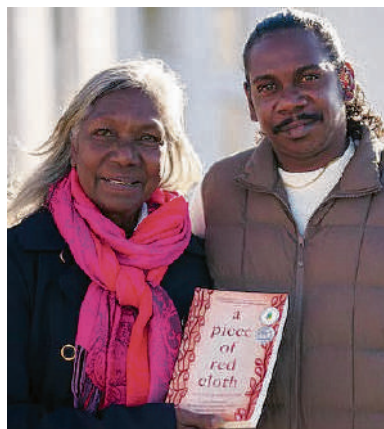
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Merrikiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs and Dima Burarrwanga accepted the award in Canberra.

Yolngu tale winner of award for best fiction

GIOVANNI TORRE

A Piece Of Red Cloth, a novel based on the oral history of Yolngu people from north-east Arnhem Land, won the best fiction prize at the Prime Minister's Literary Awards this month.

Co-authors Djawundil Maymuru, Merrikiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs, Djawa Burarrwanga and Leonie Norrington won the \$80,000 prize for the work, which tells the story of a grandmother's quest to protect her granddaughter from Macassan trepang fishermen during the 17th century.

The awards judges described the novel as a "landmark achievement in fiction" and "an urgent example of intercultural work, setting a high benchmark for collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers".

"It is a profound work of remembrance and re-imagination, fusing oral history, novelistic technique and deep cultural knowledge," they said.

Ganambarr-Stubbs previously told Radio National *A Piece Of Red Cloth* explored cultural traditions that were still apparent in modern communities while re-telling the story of how Yolngu people had been trading with countries overseas for centuries.

"We still live like this, like what's happening in the book today," she told the program in 2025.

"Even if we are modern people, we still go out bush, we still dig for the yams, for those roots, get it up, oysters, still live it, still eat it."

Dr Norrington told the ABC winning the award was a "recognition of history" and she hoped the book could be a driving force for action.

"Our history has been read by the Prime Minister of Australia, and now things can change," she said.

Another Northern Territory work, Kate Wild's *The Red House*, about the fatal shooting of Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu and the murder trial of police officer Zachary Rolfe, received the non-fiction Award.



Elizabeth Ngwarrae Bonney works on her VCAA winning work, *My Grandmother's Country*. Picture: Courtesy of Artists of Ampilatwatja

Country central theme of award-winning work

GIOVANNI TORRE

Elizabeth Ngwarrae Bonney of Artists of Ampilatwatja won the prestigious \$10,000 Vincent Lingiari Art Award this month, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act with her painting *My Grandmother's Country*.

For many years the traditional healer painted with her mother Eileen Bonney, one of the founders of Artists of Ampilatwatja and the last of the original claimants of the Wakaya Alyawarre land claim that was returned to Traditional Owners in 2025.

"My mother has been fighting for this land for 40 years, one of the longest-standing land claims in the Northern Territory, and now she is passing it over. So, we can pass it over to our children," Bonney said.

"My mother had to fight because this was her mother's country. My great-grandfather's country is Arlenkw. My grandfather's mother's country is Titjambara. My great-grandmother's country is Arene."

The winning landscape painting depicts country about 325km north-east of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) that holds stories and memories



Joseph Williams Jungarrayi's *Three Brothers*. Picture: Fiona Morrison, courtesy of Desart.

for the artist. "When I was young, I would go to this country with my mother," she said.

"I take my daughter and grandchildren to this country.

"This land holds stories and when we are there, we feel them.

"I paint to keep my country alive, so we can know and teach our young ones, our grandchildren."

This is the fourth time the Central Land Council and Desart have joined forces to present the award, and the first time two judges chose the winner among a record 56 entries.

Museum and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory curator Rebekah Raymond and the Strehlow Research Centre's Joel Liddle had the tough task of deciding which

entry best responded to this year's theme, *Our country, our culture: 50 years of land rights*.

"We chose the winning work because it so beautifully reflects a deep connection to country, a connection that is timeless and ever present," the judges said.

"We talked about how it felt like we could walk right into the artwork; the artist made it feel so true and that we could be there standing with them in their beautiful desert country.

"We were also moved by the story shared by the artist of how the fight for their land was intergenerational.

"The artist honoured their Elders — their grandmother and their mother who began the fight for their lands, which took 40 long years to succeed.

"This long-held fight for land, for culture, for our families, is one that so many of us know, and so many are still fighting."

Vincent Lingiari's granddaughter Rosie Smiler travelled to the opening of the Desert Mob event to announce the award winner.

In August she joined elected members of the Central Land Council at Kalkaringi as they voted for the \$2000 CLC delegates choice award, received by Tennant Creek's Joseph Williams Jungarrayi, a

cultural leader and Warumungu translator who works for the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, for his work *Three Brothers*.

The artist called his work "a reflection on country, memory and ancestral presence, expressed through the surface of a colonial mine map".

"By working directly on to this map, I reclaim it, transforming a document that once marked extraction and disruption into one that carries culture, story and identity," he said.

"Fifty years on from land rights, this work speaks to reclamation — of land, of narrative and of identity.

"It honours the enduring presence of ancestors and recognises that our stories are still embedded in country, no matter how it has been mapped, divided or used."

CLC chair Warren Williams congratulated the winners and thanked all the artists from across Central Australia and beyond who entered works.

"Our land rights and our art movements have challenged and changed this country for the better," he said.

The Vincent Lingiari Art Award exhibition at the Araluen Arts Centre in Mparntwe runs until October 18.

Miss Kaninna is only going



JOSEPH GUENZLER

The rise of music sensation Miss Kaninna has, in barely three years, already taken her from lutruwita/Tasmania to sold-out shows and festival stages across Australia, Europe and the UK.

The proud Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Kalkadoon and Yirendali Aboriginal sovereign woman was raised in lutruwita and is now based in Naarm (Melbourne), where she has built a career around music that does not separate identity from expression.

Before releasing music, Miss Kaninna was posting covers, performing around Tasmania and appearing on festival bills,

before her 2023 debut single *Blak Britney* established the voice and attitude that would shape what followed.

Independence has remained central to that approach.

"Being an independent artist means that I don't have anybody above me to tell me what I can and can't," Miss Kaninna said.

"But for me, I will release anything that I feel like it.

"F... it, I'm just going to say what I feel."

That attitude now sits at the centre of *BLACKPRINT*, her six-track debut mixtape released in August through Soul Has No Tempo and AWAL Recordings.

Built largely from freestyles,

the project moves through old-school hip-hop, funk, soul, R&B, rock, punk and club music, with appearances from Kobie Dee and Jamahl Yami.

MOB TIES and *HANDOUT* carry its hip-hop foundation, while *STOLEN WAGES* and the title track push further into rock and punk.

Miss Kaninna has described the project as both personal and collective.

"*BLACKPRINT* has been on my mind for a long time; it feels like a blueprint for my life," Miss Kaninna said.

"I feel Aboriginal people are the blueprint and have been robbed of that, that is the reality of my existence.

"Over time *BLACKPRINT*

g to get louder



On stage in Magandjin / Brisbane.
Pictures: Joseph Guenzler



became a vehicle to express anger and frustration.”

The mixtape adds to a run that includes six ARIA Award nominations, two AIR Award wins, a J Award nomination for Live Act of the Year and a 2026 National Indigenous Music Awards nomination for Artist of the Year.

She has also appeared on billboards in Times Square and been named an Amazon Global Artist To Watch.

Her live show has become just as important to that rise.

At The Brightside in Magandjin (Brisbane) earlier this month, Miss Kaninna played what was then the biggest show of the BLACKPRINT tour, moving

between rapping, singing and high-energy performance while keeping control of the room.

Between songs, she spoke about the stories behind the music and what it means to move through the industry as a proud Black woman in Australia.

The response to the new era has been clear from the stage.

“And I mean, I’m enjoying the music, and I enjoy playing it live,” Miss Kaninna said.

“The shows so far have been really energetic and people are really down for the theme and this new era.”

Her audience has also taken her overseas, including touring with Kneecap and appearances at Feile an Phobail in Belfast,

Sziget Festival and Boomtown in the UK, as well as a show before 80,000 people at Scotland’s OVO Hydro. Miss Kaninna has said those experiences gave her confidence to take more risks.

For an artist still early in her recording career, the scale of that growth is significant, but the through-line remains the same: Miss Kaninna knows who she wants to be.

She has also spoken about resisting pressure to change as her profile grows.

“I want to be the artist that I made up for myself when I was a little girl in the mirror of the bathroom. I want to be that person and nobody is going to f...ing stop me from being that.”



Picture:
Ellie Phan



Picture: @JAYYYSLAYS-43

Collections on the catwalk

Anna Reynolds shows off the Dadikwakwa-kwa Collection. Picture: Dylan Buckee



PHOEBE BLOGG

A thriving hub of creativity spanning the Groote Archipelago in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Anindilyakwa Arts is renowned nationally and around the world for its talented artists, who explore creative avenues through "old and new ways", drawing on deep knowledge of traditional practice and experimenting with contemporary art disciplines.

"The art centre brings a healthy kinship amongst us and is a safe place for us," lead art and culture officer Noeleen Lalara said.

"We are proud to be a part of the art centre. Here we can teach the young ones through our art so they can keep our culture strong into the future."

Anindilyakwa Arts has had several collections showcased at Country to Couture. The artists initially began developing their fashion and textile practice through the bush dye program, with their first collection presented at Country to Couture in 2017.

Since then, Anindilyakwa Arts has returned to the runway several times, using fashion to share their culture, stories and innovative textile practices with other people.

After a successful runway on the 2026 Country to Couture runway, Style Up caught up with the artists.

"This isn't my first time, I have done this before with Anna Reynolds a few times at the Country to Couture," senior

artist and arts and cultural officer from Angurugu Community, Annabell Amagula said.

"I have walked the runway before as well. I am here guiding Bernadette and Sylvia. I am proud to be here.

"I am happy we are here together for Anindilyakwa Arts."

Amagula explained: "Our Story and collection is from the Dadikwakwa-kwa story and when our family went to the Manchester to bring back the Dadikwakwa-kwa to Groote Eylandt."

"We remember the old lady E Mamarika and all the stories she used to tell us. We are proud to share this story and of our designs, it was powerful and we were very proud," she said.

The collection was inspired by the return of cultural material from Manchester Museum in 2023, including 70 Dadikwakwa-kwa. Their return helped revitalise the practice of making Dadikwakwa-kwa across the Angurugu and Umbakumba art centres.

The artists wanted to create a fashion collection honouring Dadikwakwa-kwa and its revitalisation.

The artists worked with Reynolds on the collection, where they experimented with new bush dye techniques, coming up with something that they termed "Black line".

Black line is made from bush dye, using plants to prepare the fabric so the artists can paint designs on the material with brushes.

Griffin Decommissioning and Field Management Environment Plan

Woodside has led the development of the LNG industry in Australia and today aims to thrive through the global energy transition. Woodside consults with relevant persons to gather feedback to inform its Commonwealth Environment Plans.

Griffin Decommissioning and Field Management Environment Plan (EP)

Woodside is planning to undertake the following decommissioning activities under a revision of the in-force Griffin Decommissioning and Field Management EP:

- Removal of ~ 33.4 km of subsea flexible flowlines and associated infrastructure, and management of residual contents within the flexible flowlines (via controlled flushing or controlled release).
- Field management activities including inspection, monitoring, sampling and environmental surveys during and following the removal activities.
- Assessment and management of iron ore ballast materials, including potential recovery and leave in situ activities.

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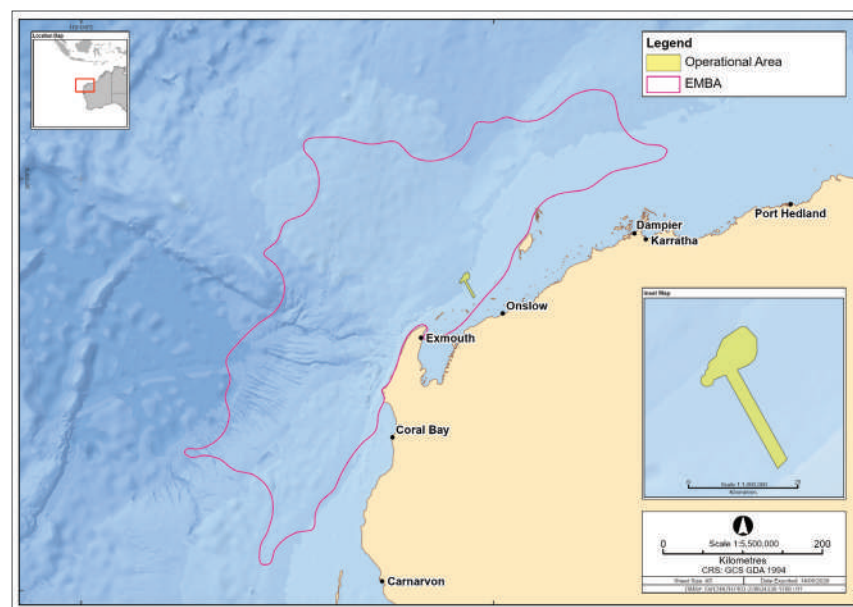
We would like to hear from you

If you are an individual, organisation or community group and believe your functions, interests or activities may be affected by the activities under this Environment Plan, we would like to hear from you by **30 October 2026**.

To find out more go to:

www.woodside.com/what-we-do/consultation-activities

You can also subscribe via our website to receive future information on proposed activities.



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Art show explores heritage



An untitled work by Daniel Boyd, 2020. Picture: Daniel Boyd

PHOEBE BLOGG

Ngununggula, the Southern Highlands' first regional art gallery, this month announced details of *Stories From A Small Country Town*, a major exhibition headlining its spring/summer season.

Featuring two of Australia's foremost First Nations artists, Archie Moore and Daniel Boyd, *Stories From A Small Country Town* is an exploration of memory and belonging, tracing the Odyssey-like journeys of both artists.

Presented from October 31-February 14, the exhibition explores heritage and belonging for Boyd, a Kudjala, Ghungalu, Wangerriburra, Wakka Wakka, Gubbi Gubbi, Kuku Yalanji, Bandjalung and Yuggera man with ni-Vanuatu heritage, and Moore, a Kamilaroi/Bigambul man.

"Ngununggula is delighted to announce *Stories From A Small Country Town*, which features three revered First Nations voices," Ngununggula assistant director Olivia Welch said. "Though their practices take very different forms, Moore and Boyd both contemplate personal and

cultural journeys. Conceived by Djon Mundine OAM almost two decades ago, we're thrilled to see this incredible exhibition realised at Ngununggula."

Curated by Mundine, a Bandjalung man and Southern Highlands resident, *Stories* from a small country town brings together reflections that explore cultural identity through deeply personal and sensory means rather than subjecting viewers to overt political statements.

Moore draws on key signifiers of identity in a diverse selection of portraits of himself and his father Stanley, spanning 20 years of practice, while Boyd recalls personal history to reframe colonial narratives.

"They're the two most deeply thinking Aboriginal artists in their practice — it's not just about ecstatic exclamations about injustices or anything else," Mundine said.

"They do it in a much more subtle way than that. In considering both artists, the question becomes, 'How do you create your own life in the end? How do you create your own identity?' . . . That's what I felt with both Daniel and Archie."

Mundine has long described both artists' life stories as a "meandering" journey away from, and back to, home and identity: Archie Moore's from the small Queensland town of Tara, and Daniel Boyd's connected to his Vanuatu ancestry and Queensland's sugar cane history.

Mundine draws a parallel with the structure of myth and literature, from *The Odyssey* to the magic realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Boyd will transform Ngununggula's gallery windows with a site-specific installation using his signature dot motif, applying black adhesive vinyl to the glass to create a filter effect. This extends the window installation technique he has used in works including *Untitled* and the window segment of his piece *Doan*. Boyd's lauded dot technique is emblematic of dark matter in the universe.

The presentation of works by Moore includes *Remnants Of My Father*, developed for the 2026 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: *Yield Strength* in collaboration with Australian precious metals group Pallion. *Remnants Of My*



Archie Moore, *Heart of Gold*, 2026, from *Remnants Of My Father*. Picture: Tim Robinson

Father is a portrait of Moore's father, Stanley. Rather than being presented with his father's likeness, audiences come to understand Stanley through the objects and papers he left behind: a hand-drawn map of a gold deposit, a licence to possess valuable minerals, a business advertisement, war medals, a bedside bucket of urine, and dentures with a gold cap. Moore has described the memories of his father as the golden thread running through the work, connecting eight forged objects and reproduced documents from his father's estate. "The work speaks to

(false) hope, (empty) promises, (thin) veneers and (pipe) dreams," he said.

The exhibition will also draw on works from Moore's *Mial* series (2022), alongside earlier works interrogating the language used to classify race: *Blood Fraction* (2015), a sliding colour scale of skin tones responding to public commentators who question Aboriginal people's authenticity, and a selection from Moore's early *Comic Paintings* (2005).

***Stories From A Small Country Town* will be presented at Ngununggula from October 31-February 14.**

Storytellers create a space for First Nations yarns to grow

PHOEBE BLOGG

Two of Australia's leading First Nations-owned literary organisations, Magabala Books, and Blak & Bright, launched *First Stories Collective* this month, a national network for Blak storytelling and publishing.

The collective will bring together writers, illustrators, editors, publishers, cultural leaders and other literary professionals to strengthen relationships, share knowledge, deliver advocacy and professional development, grow

culturally grounded pathways, and create long-term change in the literary sector.

Registration is now open for Blak creators from every corner of the country, across all genres and storytelling mediums, to join the collective.

"Story is more than a product," said Bebe Oliver, Blak & Bright chief executive and artistic director.

"It's a living relationship to Country, culture, community, ancestors and future generations.

"Through *First Stories Collective*, we have ambitious goals to nurture

the Blak creative ecosystem so that First Nations stories and storytellers are respected, properly supported and able to thrive on their own terms."

Magabala Books CEO Lilly Brown said "our vision is to futureproof the opportunities that exist for First Nations storytellers".

"We've created *First Stories Collective* to connect First Nations creators and publishing professionals to share knowledge and shape the future of the sector," she said.

"Through collective advocacy, we

seek to influence safer, fairer and more accountable publishing practices, and create a stronger future for First Nations voices and stories."

Funded by Creative Australia, *First Stories Collective*'s work will span four connected pillars: gathering and connection, opportunity and access, visibility and exchange, and leadership and sector change.

Supporters of the collective are encouraged to stand alongside Blak creatives through financial, in-kind and advocacy support to help build

the infrastructure First Nations literature deserves, provide Blak-led opportunities, and sustain long-term sector change.

Blak writers, creators and publishers are invited to join the collective to find out about upcoming activities and opportunities, with the first national gathering taking place in Maganjdin/Brisbane in November.

Members can share their needs and wants with the collective, and learn about future gatherings, development opportunities, funding and ways to contribute.

Fashion parade knits community

RONAN O'CONNELL

Indigenous models wore locally-designed clothes decorated by vivid colours and Aboriginal patterns during the SKUTTA '26 fashion parade in Fitzroy Crossing last week.

The young male and female models, many aged only in their teens, strutted a sand catwalk on the serene banks of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River, as the sun set on an appreciative crowd of several hundred people.

The community-led event, organised by Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation, also involved live music and pop-up stalls selling Indigenous-made accessories, clothes and artworks. It was part of a two-day event in Fitzroy Crossing, which concluded with the opening of its upgraded Night Space, the highly successful youth centre run by Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation.

The fashion show is called "Skutta", a word that means to carry yourself with confidence and show pride in your Indigenous heritage.

At SKUTTA, models wore garments created by a range of

local designers, schools and community programs, including MWW Night Space, Rukaji Designs, Muludja Remote Community School, Marninjarra, Marnin Studio, Manjali Studio School, Mangkaja x Gorman, John Prince Siddon, Jalayimiya and Fitzroy Valley District High School.

The MWW Night Space Girls Program also showcased its own collection, with girls spending months creating garments through workshops with Elders, mentors and fashion professionals including Lois Hazel and Marnin.

Nicola Angell, head of community programs at Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation, was behind the idea of bringing fashion to young people at Night Space, which led to SKUTTA.

"MWWAC initially became involved in fashion as a way to engage with girls but it has really become a beautiful way for the organisation to engage with the whole community. Indigenous fashion is such an exciting and empowering space," Ms Angell said.

Other local designers also took part in the fashion event,

including Jonian Nargoodah, who with her family runs Rukaji Designs, based out of the Jimbalakudunj Community near Fitzroy Crossing. The label hand-dyes scarves and sarongs, in particular, which are coloured not with chemicals, but traditional organic bush dyes.

Ms Nargoodah's foray into fashion design began with learning to make prints on linoleum. She said she retains a connection to Country through her work by foraging in the bush for natural dye ingredients, such as bark, leaves and plants. The patterns used by Rukajiblend tie-dye with motifs and symbols commonly seen in Indigenous art, including native animals.

Ms Nargoodah said being a First Nations fashion designer was a challenge due to the robust competition from the many other gifted Indigenous designers.

She hoped her work would inspire a new generation of young Indigenous people to express their creativity.

"I want them to be part of it, too," she said, encouraging Fitzroy Crossing kids to join the town's arts program.



SKUTTA models Kita Wallaby, Ravannah Lennard, Milly Banjo and Talithia James wearing MWW Night Space Collection.

Picture: Ronan O'Connell.

Create shared value with Indigenous Peoples globally.

Challenge accepted.

Aaron Nannup's artwork Maarbakoort Bilya (pictured below) reflects the meeting of river and sea on Wadandi Country, a place of deep cultural significance where freshwater and saltwater sustain life. It honours the enduring connection between people, water and Country.

At Woodside, we are inspired by stories that illuminate connection, culture and shared understanding. Woodside's Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2026-2030 reflects this commitment, setting a clear vision for respectful relationships, meaningful engagement and shared value wherever we operate.



Scan the QR code to explore the Strategy and learn more.

 **Woodside Energy**

Racist pseudoscience is still shaping our politics

MARCIA LANGTON

Pauline Hanson speaking about Aboriginal people on a podcast last year said: “They’re the most primitive race on Earth and we’re supposed to be holding them up and saying what they’ve achieved? They’ve achieved nothing.” She claimed the entire achievement of 65,000 years of our ancestral peoples was “A few . . . rock paintings”.

Some media outlets claim she gave a qualified apology but no apology is better than her incoherent nonsense about wanting to “unite” Australians. She claimed she was not talking “now”, which we are supposed to intuit means this was not directed towards present-day Indigenous Australians.

A truckie could drive a haul truck right through that.

Her record tells us otherwise.

The response to Hanson’s latest attack on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been muted. A handful of politicians refuted her vile comments, and none convincingly. Following the Steve Bannon textbook handed to US President Donald Trump before his first election win, she has done her best to “flood the zone with shit”. This is the distraction strategy.

First, after her social media animations calling SAS veteran and Member for Canning Andrew Hastie a “traitor” and “maggot” had been up for weeks, she refused to remove it or apologise. Then she attacked the Prime Minister’s late mother, who was crippled by arthritis, for living in public housing.

There has been far more outrage about these comments than her racism towards us.

Hanson built a 30-year political career on a single, durable proposition: that Australia is being changed for the worse by people who don’t look or worship like the imagined national “us”. Her 1996 maiden speech warned “mainstream Australians” were the victims of “reverse racism”.

“Present governments are encouraging separatism in Australia by providing opportunities, land, monies and facilities available only to Aboriginals,” she said. These are not just lies, but clever racist deceptions that cast whites as the victims of “them”. The last statement is false, as the Closing the Gap reports to Parliament tell us year after year.

She said Australians were “in danger of being swamped by Asians”. Two decades later she swapped the target to Muslims, and, more recently, to African migrants and “boat people”.

The vocabulary shifts; the mechanism doesn’t.

One Nation’s electoral support has fluctuated over time but its persistence is the real story: current polling shows almost a third of voters will give their first preferences to One Nation candidates. Australian voters have rewarded a politician

“Pauline Hanson is not alone in promoting pseudoscience and ancient racial hatreds.

whose signature product is grievance framed in racial and ethnic terms. Whatever the precise vote share in any given poll, the durability of that support is what makes Hanson’s project more than a personal eccentricity. It is evidence of a market.

The 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum exposed how large that market can be. Roughly six in 10 voters said No to a modest, non-binding constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We have been told repeatedly, especially by Senator Jacinta Jampijinpa Price, that our proposal was “racist” and would divide the country by “race”.

Researchers and pollsters offered competing explanations — misinformation about the Voice’s legal effect, a general distrust of politicians, small-c constitutional conservatism, and, for a significant minority, straightforwardly racialised hostility to Indigenous recognition.

Price and the Advance campaign advertisements made it clear they believe “race” is biologically real, and the right to recognition for Indigenous Australians was a threat to white Australia.

I have been told some No voters reject that idea. But post-referendum surveys, including work by the Australian Election Study and the Scanlon Foundation’s social cohesion research, suggest a substantial share of the electorate holds views consistent with treating racial and ethnic categories as fixed, meaningful, hierarchical facts about people rather than as social and historical constructions.

The underlying science is not contestable: genomics closed the case on biological race decades ago. What remains open is whether politics, media and the public can catch up.

The idea humanity divides into a number of discrete biological “races” — each with a package of inherited traits, including intelligence and temperament — was never good science, and the genomic revolution of the past three decades has dismantled what remained of its credibility.

The population geneticist Richard Lewontin showed as early as 1972 about 85 per cent of human genetic variation exists within traditionally defined racial groups, not between them.

Later genome-wide studies confirmed there is no genetic marker, or cluster of markers, that reliably sorts humans into the categories “Black”, “white”, “Asian” or similar. Human variation is clinal — it changes gradually across geography, shaped by migration, isolation

and admixture — not neatly boxed. Two people classified as the same “race” can be more genetically different from each other than either is from someone classified as a different “race”.

The geneticist and broadcaster Adam Rutherford has spent much of the last decade making this case in public: that race science and eugenics were never neutral biology, but political ideologies — rooted in colonialism and white supremacy — dressed up in the language of objective science.

His account traces the lineage carefully. Scientific racism was invented in the 17th and 18th centuries, in step with European expansion, to justify empire and plunder. Carl Linnaeus’ taxonomy of human “subspecies” placed white Europeans at the top of a hierarchy with no basis in biology. Evolutionary genetics itself, Rutherford argues, often developed *in the service of* these political structures rather than alongside them.

Out of that tradition came eugenics proper. Francis Galton coined the term and formalised the idea of controlled human breeding around explicitly white supremacist ideals. Far from being a fringe obsession, eugenics was mainstream across the political spectrum in Britain, North America and Europe through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It rested on bad science even by the standards of its day: early geneticists misapplied Mendelian inheritance, assuming complex behaviours and social outcomes — criminality, “feeble-mindedness”, and poverty — were controlled by single genes in the way pea-plant traits were.

The consequences were not confined to journals.

Eugenic policy produced state-coerced sterilisation programs in the US and Canada, targeting poor, disabled and racialised people.

Eugenic ideology supplied the direct intellectual scaffolding for nazi “racial hygiene” policy and the atrocities of the Holocaust.

In *Control: The Dark History And Troubling Present Of Eugenics*, Rutherford warns this is not simply a closed chapter: modern gene editing, embryo selection and biometric data collection carry the same risk of sliding back into eugenic logic if pursued without historical awareness of where that logic leads. His central point is not that race has no social reality — clearly it does, as lived experience and as the basis of discrimination — but that it has no coherent basis in biology, and that every serious attempt to



Professor Marcia Langton AO. Picture: James Henry

ground a racial hierarchy in genetics has collapsed under scrutiny once it left activist pamphlets and entered peer review.

Australia has its own, particularly ugly, chapter in this history.

The University of Melbourne’s anatomy department under Professor Richard Berry, from 1906, assembled a large collection of Aboriginal skeletal remains explicitly to support theories of white racial supremacy.

Financial records from 1914 show Berry advising the purchase of Tasmanian Aboriginal skulls, noting their price would rise because the “race” was believed to be extinct. This was not fringe activity; it was mainstream anatomical science, conducted inside a major university, and it fed directly into the policy architecture — protection boards, missions, the removal of children — that produced generations of trauma still measurable in health and justice statistics today.

None of this is in the past.

Genomic language is being recycled by a new generation of “race realists” who cite selectively from population genetics — pointing to real, clinal variation in allele frequencies and inflating it into claims about group intelligence or criminality that the data cannot support.

This is dangerous precisely because it borrows the authority of real science while discarding its rigour, and because modern platforms let it circulate faster and further than Berry’s journal articles ever could.

The persistence of racial hierarchy as an unspoken assumption shows up in more everyday ways too. When the British sociologist Jason Arday — who did not learn to read until he was eighteen and is autistic — was appointed one of the youngest Black professors in Cambridge’s history, he was accused of plagiarism by an American “philosopher of biology” and peddler of “race

realism”, Nathan Cofnas, who had been dismissed from Cambridge’s Emmanuel College in 2024 over controversial views on race, and later worked at Ghent University in Belgium, where he has now been put under investigation and disallowed from teaching.

Cofnas published a Substack post accusing Arday of lifting passages in his doctoral thesis and embellishing personal claims. Cambridge University investigated the claims and most were dismissed. The deluge of media coverage in Britain treated his achievement with a scepticism commentators argued would not have greeted an equivalent white academic’s record, implying his appointment must be explained by something other than the work itself. The relentless media attacks accused him of benefiting from diversity policies misapplied by Cambridge to increase the number of Black and coloured people. He was hounded to death by a media pile-on that is reserved for the people of colour who subvert racial supremacy with their high achievements.

Critics saw in that coverage a reflex, however unconscious, towards ranking credibility along racial lines — the same reflex, differently dressed, that put skulls in a university basement.

Pauline Hanson is not alone in promoting pseudoscience and ancient racial hatreds.

She is extraordinarily well served by the Australian media, whose ranks similarly hold the concept of “race” to be real despite being dismissed decades ago by an avalanche of scientific evidence to the contrary.

Her outrages are click-bait across all media and there’s still another two years before the next Federal election. Be afraid. It will get worse, as the late Professor Arday’s case tells us.

Laureate Professor Dr Marcia Langton AO is a Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor and the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies, Melbourne School of Public Health

PM has power to change life of kids in jail

NERITA WAIGHT

On election night in 2022, millions of Australians watched Prime Minister Anthony Albanese open his victory speech:

"I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. And on behalf of the Australian Labor Party, I commit to the Uluru Statement from the heart in full."

On election night in 2025, he made a similar promise: "We will be a government that supports reconciliation with First Nations people, because we will be a stronger nation when we close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians."

Even when the Voice referendum failed in 2023, Albanese called for a "new national purpose" to tackle Indigenous disadvantage.

But in 2026, when it comes to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — who are locked up in detention at unprecedented rates — the Prime Minister is nowhere to be seen.

This month, the findings and recommendations of the Youth Incarceration and Youth Justice Senate Inquiry were finally released.

The Inquiry Committee travelled around the country listening to hundreds of experts, and young people, on the youth justice crisis, and it examined what the Commonwealth should be doing in response.

Their findings? The Prime Minister has the responsibility to step up and take action to end the mass incarceration of our children, with one of the key recommendations that the Commonwealth introduces national minimum standards for the treatment of children in the youth justice system.

We welcome this recommendation and again offer our expertise and experience to make sure these minimum standards protect children and actually work to create safer communities.

State and Territory leaders have been doubling down on punitive policies and laws that do not work. Increasingly, they are locking up children, harming them and making the community less safe, all for the sake of perceived political

point-scoring. Which is why the Prime Minister must show national leadership to address this escalating crisis. This latest inquiry must not lead only to another inquiry. It's time for action.

And this is what I told the inquiry when I gave evidence. I told them how, right now, there are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people behind bars than ever before. How, last year, 62 per cent of detained children were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander — and in some jurisdictions that number is closer to 100 per cent. How the vast majority of Aboriginal children and young people who are locked up haven't even been found guilty of a crime.

I told them why the Prime Minister must call an emergency summit on youth justice — to listen to us, the experts, about how to keep our children from entering cycles of crime. Because catchy taglines like "Adult crime, adult time" and "Breach bail, go to jail" sell the public false comforts for their fears: pushing a narrative that we as voters must choose between community safety and children's rights. Decades of



evidence have shown that when we jail more kids, we get neither, because children who spend any time behind bars are far more likely to reoffend.

Last month, NATSILS went to Canberra to brief federal politicians on what they can and must do to address the youth justice crisis at a national level. The Prime Minister did not make himself available to attend.

The federal leaders who did attend heard from the President of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Dr Astha Tomar. She told them of the burden of mental health conditions found among the children and young people she works with in detention:

"These conditions . . . are important because these conditions can be identified, they can be treated and they can change someone's trajectory completely. And because by the time a ten, or eleven, or a twelve-year-old with significant mental health issues arrives in detention, we may have missed many opportunities to intervene. You cannot punish trauma out of a child."

The fact of the matter is

this: we know what works. Aboriginal-led programs that support children who have grown up in poverty and intergenerational trauma, and connect them with their culture, kin and community.

What I will not tolerate is debate on whether jail is an appropriate place for a 10-year-old. Whether children should be forced to wear spit hoods, spend weeks in solitary confinement or months in jail before they've even been found guilty of a crime. Whether violating their human rights, day in, day out, should be the norm.

So, Prime Minister, what do you want your legacy to be?

Do you want to be the leader who kept their promise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Or do you want to be the leader who wilfully presided over a nation that locked up our children for political gain?

This Inquiry is yet another clear message that you have the power to change the trajectory for our children and for the community. Don't waste it.

Nerita Waight is the Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

Children failed by system meant to protect them

SHEREE LOWE

Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child deserves the chance to grow up healthy, strong in identity and Culture, connected to family, Community and Country and surrounded by the people who know and love them.

For Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care, access to good healthcare is an essential part of that identity and connection.

Yet Victorian research tells us we are falling far short.

Research by McLean and colleagues found that less than one per cent of Aboriginal children entering out-of-home care in Victoria received all the recommended health services for a comprehensive health assessment within their first year in care. The national clinical guidance says they should receive it within the first three months.

Correction. We are not just falling short — we are failing these children.

Aboriginal children are vastly over-represented in the care system, making equitable access to comprehensive and

culturally safe health and wellbeing care an urgent priority.

Every missed health and wellbeing assessment is a missed opportunity — an opportunity to identify a child's health needs early, connect them with the right supports, strengthen their identity and their connection to Community and Culture, and prevent issues from becoming more serious.

This is unacceptable.

Earlier this month, I stood alongside my colleagues from the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Families Wellbeing at the Royal Children's Hospital Victorian Centre of Health Leadership for Children in Care's What's Next Symposium.

We had a clear message: everyone is responsible for supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children in care.

Government and mainstream health organisations have a vital responsibility to work

differently and to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. That means listening, learning and being curious. It means supporting Community-led solutions and building strong, accountable partnerships with ACCOs.

It also means being prepared to ask important questions about where decisions are made, who holds power, and where resources flow.

Culture is not an optional extra in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children. It is fundamental.

Aboriginal Communities and ACCOs have always known how to care for our children and families. Our services understand that health and wellbeing is holistic: physical health cannot be separated from social and emotional wellbeing, Culture, identity, family, Community and Country.

The ACCO-led Pathways to Good Health model brings this knowledge directly to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care,

providing culturally safe health and wellbeing assessments, care planning and connections to the broader supports children and their carers need.

Pathways to Good Health is a Statewide program, predominantly delivered through mainstream community health services.

Since 2025, an ACCO-led model has been operating in the Ovens Murray region through Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, and in metropolitan Melbourne through the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

In just one year, the ACCO-led model has reached more than 500 Aboriginal children.

Alongside this, VACCHO is delivering the Kinship Carer Health and Wellbeing model, recognising that the wellbeing of children is inseparable from the wellbeing of their families and carers.

We are seeing children and carers connect with ACCOs — in some cases for the first time — strengthening pathways not

only to healthcare, but to Culture, Community and ongoing support.

This is what ACCO-led care can do. But funding for the ACCO-led Pathways to Good Health model is due to end in 2027.

Aboriginal children in Victoria continue to enter out-of-home care at dramatically higher rates than non-Aboriginal children, so this model is needed now, more than ever.

Our ambition should be nothing less than 100 per cent.

All Aboriginal children entering out-of-home care in Victoria should receive all the recommended health services for a comprehensive health assessment within their first year of care.

Because every Aboriginal child deserves to be seen, supported, cared for and to grow up healthy, strong in Culture and connected to family, Community and Country.

Sheree Lowe is the Executive Director of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Families Wellbeing.

Big step for diesel project

GIOVANNI TORRE

Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation, Australian strategy and design firm Veyter and its Canadian parent Agilitas Advisory Corp announced this month a memorandum of understanding to explore the development of a renewable Agri-Diesel refinery near Geraldton in WA's Mid West.

The MOU was endorsed by the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation Board, and concept-stage work has started as the parties progress the project through feasibility. The plant would produce about 1.1 billion litres of Agri-Diesel a year, equivalent to 20,000 barrels a day or about 4 per cent of Australian diesel demand, from WA canola and tallow.

Agri-Diesel is a drop-in substitute for conventional diesel, requiring no blending or engine modification, and cutting lifecycle emissions by about 85 per cent. Output would be sold domestically into mining, agriculture, transport, aviation and defence markets.

The project is being progressed on the basis of 51 per cent First Nations ownership, giving Yamatji Traditional Owners a controlling interest. The remaining 49 per cent interest would be held by Veyter.

YSRC chief executive Luka Gray said "for Yamatji people, this is about moving beyond participation to genuine ownership of major industry on our Country".

"A project of this scale has the potential to create lasting economic opportunities for Yamatji



YSRC chief executive Luka Gray, YSRC chair Jarrad Oakley-Nicholls, and Veyter Strategy Designer Andi Csontos at the MOU signing.

people, Mid West growers and the broader region, while contributing to Australia's domestic fuel security," Ms Gray said.

In a joint statement, YSRC, Veyter and Agilitas Advisory Corp said a facility of this scale would carry indicative capital expenditure of about \$2.5 billion, including the refinery, an integrated oilseed crushing facility, and associated infrastructure.

"Confirming and refining that estimate will form part of the feasibility studies. Any decision to build would follow front-end engineering design and a final

investment decision," the joint statement said.

The statement noted diesel demand is growing at roughly 4 per cent a year in sectors with limited alternatives, including mining, freight, rail, ports, construction and defence, and Australia remains "heavily dependent" on imported refined fuels, with about 80 per cent of refined petroleum product consumption met by imports.

Oakajee Strategic Industrial Estate is being assessed as a location, alongside other sites within the Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement area.

YSRC, Veyter and Agilitas Advisory Corp said early estimates indicate it would create about 4000 construction jobs and 400 direct operating positions, alongside additional demand for Mid West grain growers.

"Projects like this get financed when the feedstock, the land, the power and the offtake market are already in place. In the Mid West they are," Ron Loborec, managing partner, Agilitas Advisory Corp, said.

"We have taken renewable fuel projects to FEED stage in Canada with First Nations partners holding the majority. That experience is what we bring here."

Australia has no commercial-scale renewable diesel production, and the project's viability depends on Federal policy now under development, in particular the demand-side mechanism for low carbon liquid fuels.

The parties have started a staged 12-month program to complete a full pre-FEED study by the third quarter of 2027.

YSRC and Veyter said subject to those results and a final investment decision, front-end engineering design would be under way in 2027 with first production targeted for 2032.

Five-year plan to build up Aboriginal business growth

GIOVANNI TORRE

The NSW Government launched its first NSW Aboriginal Business Strategy this month, a five-year plan with the aim of facilitating Aboriginal businesses and government working in partnership to drive growth and innovation across the sector.

The strategy, launched in Tamworth at the NSW Aboriginal Business Roundtable on September 10, recognises "the critical importance of Aboriginal self-determination in maintaining strong, sustainable business and employment opportunities", the NSW Government said.

The NSW Aboriginal Business Taskforce, industry leaders and business owners played a key role in developing the strategy through consultations over the past year. NSW is unique in having its own Closing the Gap Priority Reform (5) which is focused on Aboriginal business, economic participation and employment.

There are more registered Aboriginal businesses in NSW than any other State or Territory, with more than 940 businesses, representing more

than 31 per cent of First Nations businesses nationwide, according to last year's NSW Treasury Report.

Key initiatives of the strategy include: support for leadership and entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on Aboriginal women; building relationships with major banks to identify investment and funding opportunities for Aboriginal businesses; providing targeted support for Aboriginal businesses through a new Aboriginal specific business advisory service run by Service NSW; investment in further research and data to support better understanding of the size and impact of the sector; and continuation of the Delivering Better Outcomes grants and NSW Aboriginal Business Roundtables.

NSW Aboriginal Business Taskforce co-chair, Wiradjuri man Phil Usher, said: "Aboriginal people have creative and entrepreneurial minds. We just need to harness that and put it into ways to build businesses, and look after family and community in the process."

"Priority Reform 5 is about putting us in the position to

start building businesses and building wealth, and not just looking after this generation but the next six or seven generations," he said.

Yarpa Business Hub acting director Shannon Mallison, a Wiradjuri woman, said "we know that Aboriginal businesses are more likely to support local sporting and community groups through philanthropy and we know that when you spend with an Aboriginal business you get a much greater social return on investment".

"But Aboriginal businesses go way beyond the dollar value. It is the leadership and role modelling that makes a real difference. The Aboriginal business sector is self-determination in action," she said.

NSW Minister for Finance Courtney Houssos said the State Government was "committed to supporting Aboriginal businesses, which create jobs, drive innovation and strengthen communities across the State — in turn making a significant contribution to the NSW economy".

The NSW Aboriginal Business Strategy 2026-31 is available online.

Service takes Rise UP to a digital platform

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Aboriginal-owned consulting business Tanyah Nasir Consulting Service launched a digital version of its Rise UP leadership program this month after more than 14 years working alongside Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Rise UP Digital Learning launched in Darwin on September 16, expanding the Rise UP, Be Your Best, Own Your Future program to organisations across Australia. The launch also introduced a new one-year Rise UP workforce development program for organisations looking to support the development of staff, students and community members.

Garrawa, Djugun, and Tiwi woman and TNCS founder Tanyah Nasir said the digital platform was designed to make the program more accessible to Aboriginal people, including those living in regional and remote communities, while retaining the group-based approach behind Rise UP.

"For 14 years, we have learnt that before we build the worker, we need to build the person," Ms Nasir said.

"It's your own personal leadership learning journey for groups of employees that is built

around the philosophy that 'Rise UP' is learning together, and not learning alone."

Participants complete nine personal leadership modules through a process of learning, talking, reflecting, applying, sharing and growing.

The digital program combines online learning and videos with facilitated small-group conversations, workbooks, practical activities and ongoing support from TNCS.

The 12-month program is designed to strengthen identity, self-belief, confidence, resilience, self-leadership and future direction, with participants encouraged to apply its lessons in their everyday lives and workplaces.

Galiwin'ku Women's Space chairperson Bettina Danganbarr credited the program with helping bring lasting change to her life.

"My life changed. There was a small seed that got planted in me ... When I look back, and where I am now, I see big changes in my life," she said. "If it wasn't for the Rise UP program, I wouldn't be here where I am now."

The launch also marked more than 14 years since TNCS was established in 2012 as a 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned and led Northern Territory business.

Chance to eat Wild Foods

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Wild Foods has launched an online marketplace to bring food from remote First Nations producers to Magandjin/Brisbane customers.

The company marked its recent launch at Food Connect Shed in Salisbury, where guest chef Chris Jordan of Three Little Birds prepared wild-harvested food from Northern Australia.

Founded by Esparq in Far North Queensland, Wild Foods is building commercial systems to support Indigenous producers while supplying ethically caught, responsibly farmed and Indigenous-owned food.

Torres Strait Islander man and Esparq chief executive and founder Darryl Majid was born and raised in Gimuy/Cairns.

He described the company as an effort to strengthen the Indigenous food economy.

"Wild Foods is building a stronger, more connected Indigenous food economy, built on trust, provenance and shared systems," Mr Majid said.

"We're building a community around eating wild, where every product carries the story of where it came from, connecting you to Country and strengthening First Nations business."

Mr Majid described a lack of commercial infrastructure and difficulty securing fair prices as

ongoing barriers for remote Indigenous producers.

"Wild Foods is the sector enabler bringing together culture and commercial sustainability to create something genuinely new while uplifting the Indigenous food ecosystem," he said.

The company is the exclusive distributor for its first two producers and will provide logistics, food safety compliance, marketing and market access.

Its first products come from Bush Beef, operated by the Normanby Aboriginal Corporation on Balnggarrawarra Country in Cape York, and Salty Monkeys Seafoods, a Torres Strait Islander-owned enterprise based on Badu Island in Zenadth Kes, the Torres Strait.

Balnggarrawarra man Vince Harrigan, a Traditional Owner and managing director of the Normanby Aboriginal Corporation, described Bush Beef as an opportunity for Country and the local community.

"We're turning a cultural and environmental challenge into an opportunity for our land and community," he said.

"Cattle were introduced to Normanby Station over 100 years ago, and, in time, have impacted native vegetation and sensitive wetlands.

"Now, we're restoring the balance by turning wild cattle into an authentic paddock-to-plate experience, giving people



Dennis Fay, Vince Harrigan and Sharon Winsor at the Wild Foods launch event.

Australia-wide a wild food like no other."

Bush Beef is sourced from Normanby Station, where cattle graze native grasses in open savanna without grain or feedlots.

The range includes mince; beef pies using pepperberry, saltbush and bush tomato; and cuts for food service businesses.

Torres Strait Islander man Dennis Fay, the founder of Salty Monkeys Seafoods, described the enterprise as a way to recognise the skill, risk and ocean

knowledge held by local divers.

"Salty Monkeys Seafoods is a Torres Strait seafood venture built to connect local fishermen, premium Kaiar and customers who value provenance, quality and story," Mr Fay said.

"Our lobsters are hand-caught by local divers, handled with care, and brought to market through a pathway that recognises the skill, risk and value of the fishermen behind every Kaiar."

Salty Monkeys supplies hand-caught Kaiar, or tropical rock

lobster, from divers working with Traditional Owners in the Torres Strait.

Wild Foods will initially sell and deliver to customers and wholesalers in Brisbane and Sydney, with plans to expand nationally. Melbourne restaurant Attica, owned by chef Ben Shewry, is the first restaurant to add Bush Beef to its menu.

"We're always looking for delicious, unique, and sustainable ingredients to add to our menu, and Wild Beef is a perfect fit for us," Mr Shewry said.

Support for business graduates has ripple effect

OPINION
NICOLE BROWN

Behind every Aboriginal business is a story of someone who decided to back themselves. Someone who carried an idea through the doubt, setbacks and the hard work. Someone creating jobs, strengthening culture and opening doors for the next generation.

Seven Aboriginal entrepreneurs recently graduated from Impact North's 2026 Business Builder program at a ceremony held on Larrakia Country in Darwin.

The graduating businesses span native foods and catering, art and weaving, cultural engagement, language services, tourism,

construction, recruitment and training. Their reach stretches across the Northern Territory.

These are businesses with ambition, local knowledge and a clear understanding of what their communities need. What they require is the same thing every growing business needs: access to the right advice, strong networks and genuine opportunities.

For Shannon Motlop of Aboriginal Community Harvest in Darwin, growing a business has felt like building a home, "all the blood, sweat and tears". "You're proud of it. Same sort of feeling as building a business," he said.

That pride matters because Aboriginal entrepreneurs are often

carrying more than a commercial responsibility. Many are also responding to community need, creating culturally safe workplaces and navigating systems that were not designed with them in mind.

Business Builder is Impact North's annual program for established First Nations-owned businesses across the NT that are ready to take their next step.

It provides tailored support shaped around the needs and goals of each entrepreneur. Participants strengthen their capability in areas such as funding, marketing, accounting and business strategy, giving them practical tools they can continue using long after graduation.

Entrepreneurs backed by Impact North have created 188 job opportunities for First Nations people in remote communities. Those figures are important, but the impact reaches much further.

Impact North CEO Alexie Seller told guests at the graduation ceremony that backing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs is one of the most practical ways an organisation can support self-determination and long-term, community-led change.

"Their businesses create jobs and income, they innovate and bring new services to their communities, and they create locally led pathways for young people," she said. For this year's graduates, the

support looked different because every business has its own needs. Matthew Evans of MS-NT Contracting, which operates across Mparntwe / Alice Springs, Arnhem Land and Central Australia, said the coaching was invaluable to the growth of his business.

For Tearna Pearce of Country Home Arts and Weaving in Darwin, the yarning-based approach made the difference. Learning through yarns and having people genuinely believe in her gave her the confidence and support to grow.

Celebrating Aboriginal businesses is important. Giving them real work is better. Expressions of interest are now open for Impact North's 2027 Business Builder cohort.

NIT

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

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Nanna's Garden is growing knowledge

For Raylene Button, Nanna's Garden is more than a collection of native plants. It is a place where children, Elders and community members can connect with culture, share knowledge and learn about traditional medicines and bush foods.

The garden was created at Hedland House in South Hedland by Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation as part of the organisation's Safe Spaces environment.

Ms Button, a Kariyarra woman, is a director of Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation and co-chair of Hedland Aboriginal Strong Leaders. She said the idea for the garden came from the organisation's Elders, who wanted to create an interactive space for cultural learning.

"We wanted to include traditional medicines so we could teach our kids and have a place where the children can learn from the Elders," Ms Button said.

The garden includes raised beds planted with traditional medicines and bush foods. Elders selected the plants, while local children worked with artists to paint the garden beds.

Artwork created by Ms Button's mother is part of the garden, adding a personal connection. "When they blossom in season, we can show our kids what they are traditionally used for and how we still use them today," she said.

"It also teaches them what to look for if they are out on Country, so they can learn basic survival and practical skills."

The backyard had been overgrown with scrub, spinifex and weeds, and the project required ground preparation, reticulation, landscaping and careful selection of plants suited to the local environment. Support from Fortescue's Innovation Grants helped Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation bring the idea to life.

One of Ms Button's favourite plants in the garden is a medicinal plant traditionally used to help clean the ears during an ear infection. Ms Button likes its texture and smell, as well as its distinctive purple flowers.

The garden will continue to support cultural learning through activities led by Elders, with Julyardi also planning to open the space to the broader community through workshops and other activities. Fortescue's Innovation Grants provide opportunities for Pilbara community groups and organisations to seek funding for locally led initiatives.

This report was produced with the support of Fortescue.

Olympic goals part of tourism strategy

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Queensland has launched a new First Nations tourism strategy aimed at strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led tourism through to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Strategy 2026-2032 was developed by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, with support from the Queensland and Australian governments.

The strategy follows the Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020-2025 and sets out a community-led roadmap for the sector over the next seven years.

The previous plan led to initiatives including the Year of Indigenous Tourism, the establishment of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council, mentoring programs and business capability initiatives.

Gamilaroi man, former NRL player and artist George Rose highlighted the role that First Nations tourism can play in sharing culture, during QTIC's Destination IQ conference.

"Tourism is one of the most effective ways to connect people — it's storytelling, education



John-Paul Janke with George Rose during Tourism Week 2025.

and reconciliation in action," Mr Rose said.

"It was inspiring to see so many operators and community leaders united in exploring opportunities for First Nations people, that will deliver visitor experiences that reflect the richness and heart of Queensland."

QTIC chief executive Natassia Wheeler said the new strategy had been developed after consultation with First Nations communities across Queensland.

"Queensland is home to the world's oldest living cultures, and there is growing demand from visitors seeking authentic cultural experiences that connect them to Country, community and story," she said.

The strategy focuses on strengthening First Nations leadership and cultural authority, sustainable business growth, developing workforce pathways and increasing the presence of First Nations tourism through authentic storytelling.

It also aims to increase First Nations participation in tourism governance and improve the ability of businesses to meet visitor demand ahead of Brisbane 2032.

As well as consultations with First Nations communities, there were meetings with tourism operators and other stakeholders across Queensland, in locations including Mt Isa, Longreach, Thursday Island, Port Douglas, Bamaga, Townsville, Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Ms Wheeler said the strategy was intended to deliver benefits beyond increasing tourism.

"Importantly, this isn't simply about growing visitor numbers," she said.

"It's about creating long-term economic, cultural and social benefits for First Nations communities while protecting culture, strengthening businesses and ensuring cultural authority remains at the heart of tourism development," she said.

Brisbane 2032 will form a major part of the strategy, with Queensland preparing for an expected increase in international attention during the Games. Ms Wheeler said the Games provided an opportunity to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to an international audience.

"The Games will place Queensland on the world stage, and First Nations tourism will be central to telling the stories that make this State unlike anywhere else," she said.

"Our ambition is that by 2032, Queensland is internationally recognised for authentic, First Nations-led tourism that protects culture and Country while delivering lasting benefits for communities and future generations."

The Queensland First Nations Tourism Strategy 2026-2032 aligns with Destination 2045 and will guide future investment, policy development and industry collaboration.

A final publication is expected to be released in coming months detailing implementation timeframes, recommended actions and the organisations and partners responsible for progressing the strategy.



Miner and people sign a deal on Winu

CALLAN MORSE

Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation and Rio Tinto this month signed a project agreement for the proposed Winu copper-gold mine on Nyangumarta Country in north-west WA, marking a milestone in their partnership and the development of the project.

Building on the project planning agreement signed in 2023, the new co-designed agreement sets out how the Nyangumarta People and Rio Tinto will work together, and how Nyangumarta knowledge, priorities and perspectives will inform planning and implementation of activities on Country.

It includes how potential

impacts of the mine on the environment and Aboriginal cultural heritage will be avoided and minimised throughout planning and development.

Through the agreement, the Nyangumarta People have given their consent for the proposed Winu mine and associated infrastructure on Nyangumarta Country.

Nyangumarta Elder Margaret (Nyaparu) Rose said the decision had been a long time in the making, and carefully considered.

"We've spent more than five years at the table with Nyangumarta People and Rio Tinto to make sure every voice is heard and everyone has all the information they need to make an informed decision," she said.

"Making sure our Country and

culture are looked after has been at the heart of every conversation we've had about Winu."

Winu is anticipated to be the first mine developed on Nyangumarta Country, creating new pathways to training, employment and business participation. Nyangumarta Elder Charlie Wright said work would continue to making sure Nyangumarta People had a strong voice in the project.

"This agreement gives Nyangumarta People a seat at the table for the life of the project to ensure our culture, heritage, and Country is respected," he said.

"Through the opportunities with the project, we want to see our young people get jobs and training, our businesses get work, and our community sharing in the

benefits from development on our Country.

"We've worked hard to make sure our people were heard, and now the focus is on making sure these promises become a reality."

Rio Tinto said Winu was its most advanced near-term greenfield copper project, and an important part of the mining giant's strategy to grow its copper portfolio.

The project, in Western Australia's Great Sandy Desert, about 300km south of Broome, is a joint venture partnership with Sumitomo Metal Mining Co.

Rio Tinto holds a 70 per cent interest and SMM holds a 30 per cent interest. The project remains subject to regulatory and other required approvals, and a final investment decision.

KAPCO leader wins gong

GIOVANNI TORRE

One of the leaders at a 100 per cent Indigenous-owned beef company has been honoured with a major industry award.

Kimberley Agriculture and Pastoral Company executive officer Allison Dakin has received the WA women in agriculture award.

The Australian Agriculture Awards program was jointly launched by ACM Agri and the National Farmers' Federation in January.

Ms Dakin, and other State and Territory winners, are now in the running for the national awards, to be announced in Canberra in November.

"The reason I was nominated was because at KAPCO here I took the lead when we developed KAPCO Beef, which is the beef brand that we developed and launched, and has been going really well, and is continuing to go well and continue to grow," she told National Indigenous Times.

After many decades of Aboriginal stockmen and other Indigenous workers being the backbone of the pastoral sector in Australia, Ms Dakin said seeing Indigenous-owned pastoral companies thrive "closes that loop".

"You know KAPCO is 100 per



Allison Dakin of KAPCO is the recipient of the WA women in agriculture award. Pictures: KAPCO



cent Aboriginal-owned. It has that full control over the entire paddock to plate process," she said.

"Excitingly, we're also able to supply other Aboriginal businesses such as Fitzroy Crossing IGA or Sampi Mini Mart in Derby, and to expand even further.

"Not only can we now eat the meat that we produce, but we are able to supply communities that support and surround the properties over which KAPCO operates.

"Through that growth, you have great employment.

"KAPCO employs a workforce of about 80 per cent Aboriginal staff. That in itself has

this amazing domino effect of social benefits that flow throughout the communities."

Ms Dakin noted most people employed within KAPCO had "some kind of cultural connection to one or all of the properties over which KAPCO operates".

"There are great social benefits and social flow-on from the work that KAPCO does," she said.

"What KAPCO Beef has been able to accomplish is probably greater than anyone would be able to encapsulate within an award.

"It's not so much what we're able to do; it's the flow-on

effects, it's the fantastic social benefits, it's the employment opportunities.

"It's about growing futures for our employees as well . . . by being able to grow the business and grow those opportunities, there are opportunities for them personally, within their careers, to grow and expand and continue growing with KAPCO as well."

Ms Dakin thanked everyone at KAPCO for their support.

"While this award is recognition for being a strong female leader in the agricultural industry, it would not have been possible without the support and empowerment given to me

by everyone around me," she said.

"That includes the KAPCO board and chairman Wayne Bergmann who have the vision and foresight to take on a project like KAPCO Beef; my husband Greg who I work alongside; and all our staff at KAPCO."

With the support of Nutrien Ag Solutions and Westpac, the Australian Agriculture Awards celebrate farmers, leaders and agribusiness professionals, and will culminate in the naming of the Australian Agricultural Medallist at the national gala event in Canberra.

ACM Agri editorial director Penelope Arthur said the partnership between the NFF and the ACM Agri network elevated the Australian Agriculture Awards to create a truly national awards platform.

Ms Arthur said the awards "are about creating momentum to truly inspire primary producers and industry leaders to drive agriculture forward".

The award categories are women in agriculture; Nutrien NextGen leader; sustainability in agriculture; Westpac innovation in agriculture; and wellbeing and safety in agriculture.

Note: Wayne Bergmann is a co-owner of National Indigenous Times and The Indigenous Business Review.



NOTICE TO GRANT MINING TENEMENTS NATIVE TITLE ACT 1993 (CTH) SECTION 29

The State of Western Australia HEREBY GIVES NOTICE that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, C/- Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration, 100 Plain Street, East Perth WA 6004 may grant the following tenement applications under the *Mining Act 1978*:

Tenement Type	No.	Applicant	Area*	Locality	Centroid	Shire
Exploration Licence	16/674	BEACON MINING PTY LTD	3BL	34.5km SW'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 33' S Long: 120° 46' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	16/676	BEACON MINING PTY LTD	1BL	31km SW'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 31' S Long: 120° 47' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	47/5231	FE METALS PTY LTD	41BL	15km SE'ly of Pannawonica	Lat: 21° 41' S Long: 116° 27' E	ASHBURTON SHIRE
Exploration Licence	57/1502	MINING EQUITIES PTY LTD	2BL	89.2km SW'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 28° 36' S Long: 118° 43' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3268	HARBOUR EXPLORATION PTY LTD	2BL	105.6km N'ly of Southern Cross	Lat: 30° 16' S Long: 119° 21' E	YILGARN SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3269	HARBOUR EXPLORATION PTY LTD	1BL	103.9km N'ly of Southern Cross	Lat: 30° 17' S Long: 119° 22' E	YILGARN SHIRE
Exploration Licence	80/6254	ARCHER X PTY LTD	86BL	116.3km S'ly of Halls Creek	Lat: 19° 12' S Long: 127° 16' E	HALLS CREEK SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	16/3498	MURTAGH, Jason Lee	116.20HA	25.6km W'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 22' S Long: 120° 47' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	24/5938	BRADLEY, Joseph Robert	122.48HA	25.5km NE'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 10' S Long: 121° 12' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	24/6002	ANNEEN PTY LTD	113.18HA	24.7km NE'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 12' S Long: 121° 14' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	26/4871	COSTANZO, Patrick Natale	174.52HA	7.5km N'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 41' S Long: 121° 29' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	26/4872	COSTANZO, Patrick Natale	177.04HA	6.3km N'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 41' S Long: 121° 29' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	26/4873	COSTANZO, Patrick Natale	179.60HA	6.4km NE'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 41' S Long: 121° 30' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	57/1562-S	ALLISON, James David	8.57HA	13.4km SW'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 28° 3' S Long: 119° 11' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE

Nature of the act: Grant of prospecting licences which authorises the applicant to prospect for minerals for a term of 4 years from date of grant. Grant of Special Prospecting Licences, which authorises the applicant to prospect for minerals for a term up to 4 years from the date of grant. Grant of exploration licences, which authorises the applicant to explore for minerals for a term of 5 years from the date of grant.

Notification day: 23 September 2026

Native title parties: Under section 30 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), persons have until 3 months after the notification day to take certain steps to become native title parties in relation to applications. The 3 month period closes on **23 December 2026**. Any person who is, or becomes a native title party, is entitled to the negotiation and/or procedural rights provided in Part 2 Division 3 Subdivision P of *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). Enquiries in relation to filing a native title determination application to become a native title party should be directed to the Federal Court of Australia, 1 Victoria Avenue, Perth WA 6000, telephone (08) 9268 7100.

Expedited procedure: The State of Western Australia considers that these acts are acts attracting the expedited procedure. Each licence may be granted unless, within the period of 4 months after the notification day (i.e. **23 January 2027**), a native title party lodges an objection with the National Native Title Tribunal against the inclusion of the statement that the State considers the grant of the licence is an act attracting the expedited procedure. Enquiries in relation to lodging an objection should be directed to the National Native Title Tribunal, Level 5, 1 Victoria Avenue, Perth, or GPO Box 9973, Perth, WA 6848, telephone (08) 9425 1000.

For further information about the act (including extracts of plans showing the boundaries of the applications), contact the Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration, 100 Plain Street, East Perth WA 6004, or telephone (08) 9222 3518.

**Please note – Not all Intention to Grant notifications are published in the National Indigenous Times. For more information, please contact the Department above.

* – 1 Graticular Block = 2.8 km²

Queensland champions

JARRED CROSS

Queensland were crowned netball's First Nations national champions after a heart-stopping final in Naarm/Melbourne this month.

In the September 20 final, Queensland responded to a second-half resurgence by Western Australia, weathered a period in which they were down a player, and avoided two potential heartbreaks in the final moments for a whirlwind finish to the tournament.

At the elite under-23 First Nations Tournament, Queensland rallied late in the opening quarter to lead 10-6 before extending their lead to nine goals by the main break.

WA then set the scene with a scintillating third period to level the scores at 26-all by three-quarter-time, before a mostly goal-for-goal final period saw the game go down to the wire.

When national team player and Queensland goal keeper Brook Lacey was sent to the sideline for two minutes during the quarter, her side's hopes of lifting the trophy were thrown into serious doubt.

WA kept converting with the centre pass to maintain a two-goal buffer, before Queensland tied up the contest with 50 seconds on the clock.

Eventual player of the tournament Aaliyah Sheppard intercepted to retain possession with 30 seconds left after a turnover threatened to squish their chances.

Final MVP and shooter Makayla Cubby was clutch in the moment, sealing the result just before the buzzer.

It was Cubby's 21st goal of the game, and scored from a serious distance.

WA, after a fifth-place finish in 2025, gave everything to the contest.

"It's honestly nerve-racking. A lot of emotions are going through my head," Queensland

Pictures: Jarred Cross



Brook Lacey and Queensland captain Maryke Babia.

captain Maryke Babia said post-match, having missed last year's with injury.

Queensland coach and former Australian Diamond Sharon Finnan-White had returned home early for family reasons, and Babia said the team were "100 per cent," claiming the win for her.

"We definitely had her on our minds," she said.

WA had won the two sides' meeting in the round robin stages of the tournament 39-30.

Both finalists progressed

TEAM OF THE TOURNAMENT

Scarlet Jauncey (WA), Holly Stephens (VIC), Aaleya Turner (Yakanarna, SA), Mia Evans (NSW), Jayda Grant (NSW), Aaliyah Sheppard (Queensland), Tierrah Miller (WA).

with a 6-1 winning record throughout the week.

Earlier on September 20, defending champions New South Wales Waradas carried on with a half-time lead to take home bronze over Yakanarna (South Australia).

Victoria were too good for Lutruwita (Tasmania) in their game to decide fifth place.

Northern Territory capped their strongest showing at the tournament with a win over ACT in Sunday's opening game.

Seeing new faces get their opportunity at the elite level was a highlight of the tournament for Netball Australia general manager First Nations Ali Tucker-Munro.

"That's what it's about, if you

know we want to be an attractive space for our kids to come into and to be seen and to be celebrated," she said.

Some players are as young as 17, and getting their first opportunity to play in the high-performance space and in front of national selectors.

"You hear the off-court stories of just the kids that don't make something, or they've just missed out, or they're still chasing their dream, and yet they come out here and they just show their passion and love for netball and what they can do," Tucker-Munro said.

"My dream is to see a couple of these kids get picked up in Super Netball clubs on some level, whether it's a training partner or as a contracted player.

"It'll take time ... so we've got to start to continue to stimulate that pipeline and that pool of talent to come through.

"That's not just in playing,

obviously umpiring, coaching as well."

Super Netball Reserves and high-performance pathway players were featured throughout the tournament.

Players for Black Swans, the national Indigenous representative side, were also on the court.

WA's defender and World Youth Cup winner Scarlet Jauncey was in the defensive circle for WA.

Former Melbourne Diamond and UK Super League player Gabby Coffey was joined by sister and previous Yakanarna player Annie Coffey on NT's side for the first time.

Black Swan Kiera Heffernan returned home to represent the Territory.

Five of eight States and Territories had a selection in the team of the tournament

Tucker-Munro said the First Nations Tournament would be back for its fourth year in 2027.

Rookie spots to allow more First Nations players

JARRED CROSS

Additional playing spots for First Nations players will be included on AFL and AFLW lists next year.

The AFL confirmed the move last week following the endorsement of the league's commission and players' association.

Clubs will now have an additional rookie spot on their AFLW lists, and a Category B rookie spot on their AFL lists.

It's an optional addition for clubs.

More representation is a key aspect of the league's First Nations strategy announced earlier this year, AFL general manager First Nations engagement and inclusion Taryn Lee said.

"Our approach has been collaborative," she said.

"We have listened to our First Nations players whose experi-

ences have provided invaluable insight and an opportunity to ensure we set up our clubs and players for success."

At present, 66 First Nations players are on AFL club lists, and 22 on AFLW lists — 8 per cent and 4 per cent of the competitions, respectively.

"We are committed to increasing the number of First Nations players across the AFL and AFLW competition to 111 by 2030," Lee said.

"We know there is significant room for improvement and we see the additional First Nations list spots as a fantastic step forward."

In June, AFL boss Andrew Dillon admitted there was "work to do", on increasing representation, "but we've got targets in mind and big focus points".

The First Nations-designated list spots from 2027 are the

result of wide consultation, including with the AFL's First Nations Advisory Committee, with clubs, their Indigenous player development managers, Indigenous players and the AFL Players' Association.

Any draft-eligible and Next Generation Academy players can be selected, though they must have been nominated for the previous national drafts.

Current First Nations Category B rookies already at an AFL club can count as the addition.

Clubs cannot delist a First Nations player and immediately keep them on as a Category B rookie. A 12-month minimum gap would be required to do so.

For AFL lists, before making a signing, clubs can invite up to two First Nations players to train with them.

"The introduction of additional list spots occur in con-

junction with the development and implementation of industry standards on cultural capability," the AFL said in a statement on September 22.

"The industry standards will provide clubs with best practice guidance and support to continue to create culturally safe environments for First Nations players. The industry-wide support framework will be prioritised and delivered by the AFL's First Nations engagement team, in collaboration with the AFLPA, by March 2027 and will build on work already under way across the industry."

Previous seasons have seen just a handful of First Nations players arrive at clubs through the national drafts, across the AFL and AFLW.

AFLPA chief executive James Gallagher said "our game is richer for the contributions of First Nations players,

and we're committed to ensuring that our football environments support First Nations players to set them up for success at the elite level", adding the new list spots "will create more opportunities".

"Enhancing the cultural capability across the game through best-practice guidance and support is aimed at improving the career lengths and experiences of First Nations players," Gallagher said.

AFL football performance executive general manager Greg Swann called the move a mechanism which "will go a significant way to providing opportunity for more First Nations players to play at the highest level".

"The additional list spots have been well supported by clubs through the consultation process, and we thank everyone involved," Swann said.

SPORT

Stars shine bright

Three-goal Cameron leaves gallant Dockers heartbroken



Brisbane Lions head coach Chris Fagan embraces Alex Pearce.

JARRED CROSS

Indigenous stars played key roles as Brisbane roared to their third consecutive AFL premiership on Saturday.

The Lions stunned Fremantle with four straight goals at the death to claim an all-time classic 14.12 (96) to 12.17 (89).

Shai Bolton was a surprise Norm Smith Medal winner in a losing effort.

The Dockers triggered their Wharfie Time crowd rev-up with a 17-point buffer and just over four minutes remaining in the contest, before Charlie Cameron prompted his side's comeback by snapping his third major of the contest.

For much of the game, neither side extended their advantage beyond two goals, with more than a dozen lead changes in the seesawing contest.

Fremantle were without skipper Alex Pearce from just after half-time, as a cruel Achilles injury ended his afternoon.

Without him, Fremantle's depleted back line scrambled well under serious fire from the Lions' midfield after three-quarter-time.

Chasing their club's first flag after entering the competition over three decades ago, Fremantle's failures to convert allowed the Lions to claim a second three-peat this century in the dying moments.

Logan Morris, who had been Pearce's opponent, kicked the final two majors of the game.

Cameron, who opened his side's scoring, claimed his third premiership medal in as many seasons.

In a devastating loss, Bolton



Shai Bolton became the first Norm Smith medallist from a losing side in more than two decades. Pictures: AAP



Isaiah Dudley

was among Fremantle's best and most creative with the football, and judged the game's best after, while Isaiah Dudley was stripped of a fairytale in his first full season despite hitting the scoreboard with two goals



Charlie Cameron

of his own.

The two sides went into half time deadlocked at 6.7 (43).

Brisbane did most of their damage from distance, while Fremantle hit the scoreboard from deeper inside 50 through a

three-pronged tall attack.

The swaying advantage continued after the main break.

Fremantle got the jump in the third, including a special effort from Dudley, before Brisbane nabbed back the lead through Cameron, who finished with three majors.

It looked like the Dockers were heading towards a maiden flag when Hayden Young put the game on his back with two straight goals heading into the final change.

Leading by 10 at three-quarter-time, Fremantle's back line was holding out under the onslaught but the Dockers sprayed their opportunities at the other end.

In similar fashion to last year's run over Geelong, the Lions looked very capable of stealing things while the Dockers appeared to go into their shell.

Bolton kept accumulating,

was good by foot, and set up a number of goals for his team with a best-on-ground performance and a team-high 26 touches.

He became the first player to win the medal from a losing side since West Coast's Chris Judd in 2005. St Kilda's Lenny Hayes claimed it in 2010's draw.

Bolton joins the likes of Maurice Rioli, Peter Matera, Andrew McLeod, Byron Pickett, Cyril Rioli and Bobby Hill as First Nations Norm Smith winners.

Pearce was chasing another piece of history on the day. Had the Dockers held on, he would have become the first Indigenous premiership captain to lift the cup on grand final day in VFL/AFL history.

"That was a hell of a game today," Pearce said. "We'll be back. If there's one thing I love about this group and this club... we don't give up."