

NIT

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

Cutting edge

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STYLE UP
STARTS PAGE 9



STAND AGAINST TIDE OF HATE

Racism is becoming normalised, inquiry told

DECHLAN BRENNAN

Warnings that racism towards First Nations people has become increasingly normalised since the Voice referendum, alongside evidence of co-ordinated online abuse targeting children, have dominated the latest hearings of the Federal Parliamentary inquiry into racism, hate and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Hearings this month in Boorloo / Perth, Darwin and Mparntwe / Alice Springs saw witnesses urging governments to confront racism as systemic failures rather than isolated incidents.

"Racism is not merely a social problem," former Federal Indigenous affairs minister Ken Wyatt said.

"It is a governance problem, it is a public policy problem, it is a human rights problem and ultimately, it is a question of national leadership."

One of the most contentious moments came during the Alice Springs hearings, where the Northern Territory Government failed to appear despite the widespread accusations of racism across the Territory.

The absence drew widespread criticism from members of the committee, with Gunnai, Gunditjmarra and Djab Wurring woman Senator Lidia Thorpe telling reporters: "I haven't heard any excuses or apologies for not attending. They just haven't shown. They're a complete no-show."



Demonstrators march at the Invasion Day rally in Sydney this year. Picture: Dean Lewins/AAP

Inquiry chair and Mutthi Mutthi and Wamba Wamba woman Senator Jana Stewart said the NT Government had not explained why it would not appear.

"With almost 30 per cent of the Northern Territory's population being First Nations people, the NT Government's participation is particularly important," she said.

The committee heard evidence that the failed Voice referendum marked a turning point in public expressions of racism.

Witnesses described a noticeable increase in openly racist behaviour following the referendum, saying views that had previously remained on the

“
I am flooded with comments that tell us that Aboriginal people deserve to die.
”

Leanne Dijilandi Dolby

fringes had become normalised in public debate and online spaces. "For many, the referendum process did not simply reflect differing views on constitutional change; it also

created a platform in which narratives questioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights, legitimacy, and recognition were amplified," Mr Wyatt argued.

On the increase of online racism, National Indigenous Times Group's social media and marketing officer Leanne Dijilandi Dolby highlighted the toll it took on workers in Indigenous spaces.

"I log into social media, delete comments and despite the hundreds of comments I delete and the accounts I block, I often refresh the page and I am flooded with comments that tell us that Aboriginal people deserve to die, that racial discrimina-

tion is justified," the Noongar, Yamatji Naaguja Nanda, and Bardi, Gija, Gooniyandi and Yawuru jarndu (woman) said.

Social media comments read aloud by Barb Shaw from the Central Land Council included posts urging authorities to "bring back public flogging", whilst Graeme Smith from Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation said people "follow us around at two or three in the morning with their phones just waiting for an incident to capture us and put it up live".

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory chair Rob McPhee told the

CONTINUED PAGE 3

Two islands handed back

JARRED CROSS

Traditional Owners in the central Torres Strait were officially handed back two of their islands this month.

The Queensland Government confirmed Iama and Tudu peoples' ownership of Zagai and Mukar (Jeaka Island and Cap Isle), two small uninhabited islands south of Sabai Island and north-east of Thursday Island. The Iama and Tudu peoples' native title rights to the islands were recognised by the state in 2004.

Deeds were received at a ceremony in Cairns on July 9 by Magani Lagaugal (Torres Strait Islanders) Corporation, a recognised native title body corporate.

Magani Lagaugal are the prescribed body corporate and trustee for Iama and Tudu native title holders. They will now oversee the exclusive native title rights of the Zagai and Mukar, as well as ownership, on behalf of the Iama and Tudu peoples.

"The transfer of ownership from the State to the PBC com-



Satrick Baluz, Wilson David and Magani Lagaugal members with the deeds.

pletes the picture for Zagai and Mukar," Magani Lagaugal chair Ned David said.

"Recognising native title rights is one part. Receiving legal title under Queensland's tenure system is the second part. All uninhabited and inhabited islands should be

owned by Traditional Owners." Gur A Baradharaw Kod Sea and Land Council Torres Strait Islander Corporation (GBK) said the handback was a "major milestone".

Queensland's Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional

and Rural Development facilitated the hand back. Iama and Tudu man Satrick Baluz took possession of the deeds on the day. Magani Lagaugal is slated to continue its work on the return of Iama (Yam Island) to its "rightful owners", GBK said. Iama, which sits between

Zagai and Mukar, has a small community shy of 300 people.

Earlier in the month, GBK secured Federal Government funding to deliver a community-led language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy project across the Torres and Endeavour straits.

Education's big night

Next month, leading Indigenous scholarship organisation Madalah will hold its night of nights at Perth Convention Centre in Boorloo.

Madalah chief executive officer Casey Jo Drummond said the Madalah Ball is "one of the most important nights on our calendar".

"It brings together a community that believes in the strength of education," she said. "On the 8th August more than 800 guests will come together for Western Australia's

largest Indigenous fundraising event, a night that is critical to sustaining Madalah's work and expanding opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Every contribution helps us close the gap in access to quality education, empowering young people to achieve true self-determination and shape their own futures.

"We are deeply grateful to our partners, supporters, and the broader community whose commitment makes this work possible."

Congress board ruling takes stance on domestic violence

NICOLE BROWN

Corporation members of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress this month endorsed a change to the organisation's rulebook which strengthens its stance against domestic and family violence.

The amendment, approved by a vote earlier this year, introduces new eligibility requirements for serving as a director on the Congress board.

Under the advised rules, any person who has a domestic and family violence conviction recorded in the past 10 years, or has had a domestic violence order issued against them within the previous five years, is ineligible to serve as a director.

Congress director Ebony Abbott-McCormack said the vote demonstrated the strength of Aboriginal community control and the important role members play in shaping the future of their organisation.

"Congress members have exercised their power as members of an Aboriginal community-controlled health service to deliver a strong message about domestic and family violence," Ms Abbott-McCormack said.

"As a powerful advocate against domestic and family violence, and a service that provides care for people impacted by it, Congress must be strong and consistent with its mes-



A march through Mparntwe / Alice Springs against domestic violence.

saging, including about who leads the organisation."

Ms Abbott-McCormack said the decision belonged to the membership and reflected the expectations Aboriginal communities have of their leaders. "As an Aboriginal community-controlled service, this was a matter for members to decide, and the corporation members have said loudly that they do not tolerate domestic and family violence," she said. "We thank them for their leadership and direction."

The move comes as Congress strengthens its commitment to broader national action. The organisation is in the process of joining Our Ways Strong Together, the

newly established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Peak Body for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence. The peak body has been set up to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices lead national conversations and policy responses on family, domestic and sexual violence, recognising that communities themselves are best placed to drive lasting solutions.

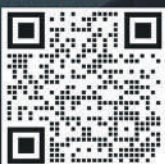
Interim chair of Our Ways Strong Together, Donnell Mills, said the decision was an important example of Aboriginal-led leadership.

"Leadership from the community-controlled sector about domestic and family violence is essential for progress to be made," Ms Mills said.

Madalah Ball 2026

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Child laws pass despite widespread criticism

DECHLAN BRENNAN

The Northern Territory Government has pushed through sweeping changes to the Territory's child protection laws, after months of criticism from Aboriginal organisations, legal experts and child advocates who warned the reforms risk weakening protections for First Nations children.

The amendments to the Care and Protection of Children Act passed last week after the Country Liberal Party Government argued the changes were needed to put child safety at the centre of the system.

It introduces a new "universal principle", which the government says will ensure the best interests of every child are the primary consideration regardless of background. The reforms also alter the operation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), which was established to ensure Aboriginal children removed from their families maintain connections to family, community, culture and Country.

Before the bill passed, a CLP-led Parliamentary inquiry

received 150 submissions, with the overwhelming majority calling for the legislation to be scrapped or significantly amended. Child safety experts, Aboriginal organisations and legal groups argued the Government had moved too quickly and failed to properly consult with Aboriginal communities.

Catherine Liddle, chief executive of SNAICC — National Voice for our Children, said she felt "deeply ashamed" as a "proud Territorian" about how the Government is "treating some of the most vulnerable children and families across the State".

"If the NT Government truly cared about the safety of children," Ms Liddle said, "they would be doing what the evidence and the sector has been calling for — investing in family supports and early interventions, before families are in crisis and children are removed."

"We all agree that children do best when they grow up with family, loved and safe, knowing who they are and where they belong."

NT Child Protection Minister Robyn Cahill, pictured, defended the

reforms, rejecting claims the changes weakened protections for Aboriginal children.

"Absolutely not," she told the ABC's 7.30 program when asked if the Bill made it more likely Aboriginal children would be removed from their families.

"There has been zero lowering of the threshold. In actual fact, what it will do is make a

department more accountable to the work they have to do to keep those families connected and together."

Opponents of the reforms maintained that the ATSICPP was not a barrier to child safety but a framework designed from decades of evidence about the importance of family and cultural connection.

National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Sue-Anne Hunter said the new laws will have "negative impacts on the care, safety and protection of First Nations children in the NT".

"Any politician, voice or commentator that says otherwise is incorrect," she said. "The Northern Territory Government has undoubtedly misled the public, at the expense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people."

The passage of the legislation saw the resignation of two prominent Aboriginal leadership positions in protest:

Rob McPhee, the chair of the Aboriginal Tripartite Forum; and Shahleena Musk, the NT Child Commissioner. The resignations highlighted concerns from Aboriginal leaders that they were being excluded from decisions affecting First Nations children and families, and followed months of criticism that the Government failed to meaningfully engage with Aboriginal organisations and experts before introducing the reforms.

Independent MP Yiniya Guyula told Parliament both the Government and the Bill were "wrong". "This is a government that thinks it knows what is best for Aboriginal people," he said.

"They are not experts. They are not Aboriginal people. They have not consulted experts or Aboriginal communities, but they think they know what is best."

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy and Labor's envoy for remote communities Marion Scrymgeour criticised the process behind the legislation, arguing it "serves only to intensify the distrust and division between First Nations families and the CLP government".



Inquiry is told about real-life impact of racism

FROM PAGE 1

inquiry racism created an environment where people were less inclined or able to look after themselves.

"It affects the way you make decisions about the food you eat, the alcohol you drink, your behaviour, all becomes impacted from the way you perceive yourself," he said.

The inquiry was launched in the wake of the alleged January 26 terror attack in Boorloo, with witnesses describing the fear and long-term trauma that has come since.

"I understand no one died (in Perth). I get that, but (if the device had detonated as intended) I shouldn't be sitting here and talking to you today," Renae Isaacs-Guthridge told the inquiry. "I and my girls and mum and my sister, we should be dead because it landed right in front of us."

Ms Dolby said the event, and the WA Police response — which was heavily criticised by some Elders and Indigenous community leaders — left her fearing that "one day I will die

at the hands of a racist while I am working".

Justice was another major focus of the hearings, with the NT Government coming under sustained criticism for lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 10.

"Scum of the earth locking up 10-year-old kids," Larrakia

man and community leader Eric Fejo told the inquiry in Darwin. "What type of person does that?"

The committee heard the NT continues to imprison people at among the highest rates in the world, with witnesses arguing the criminal justice system is only furthering disadvantage.

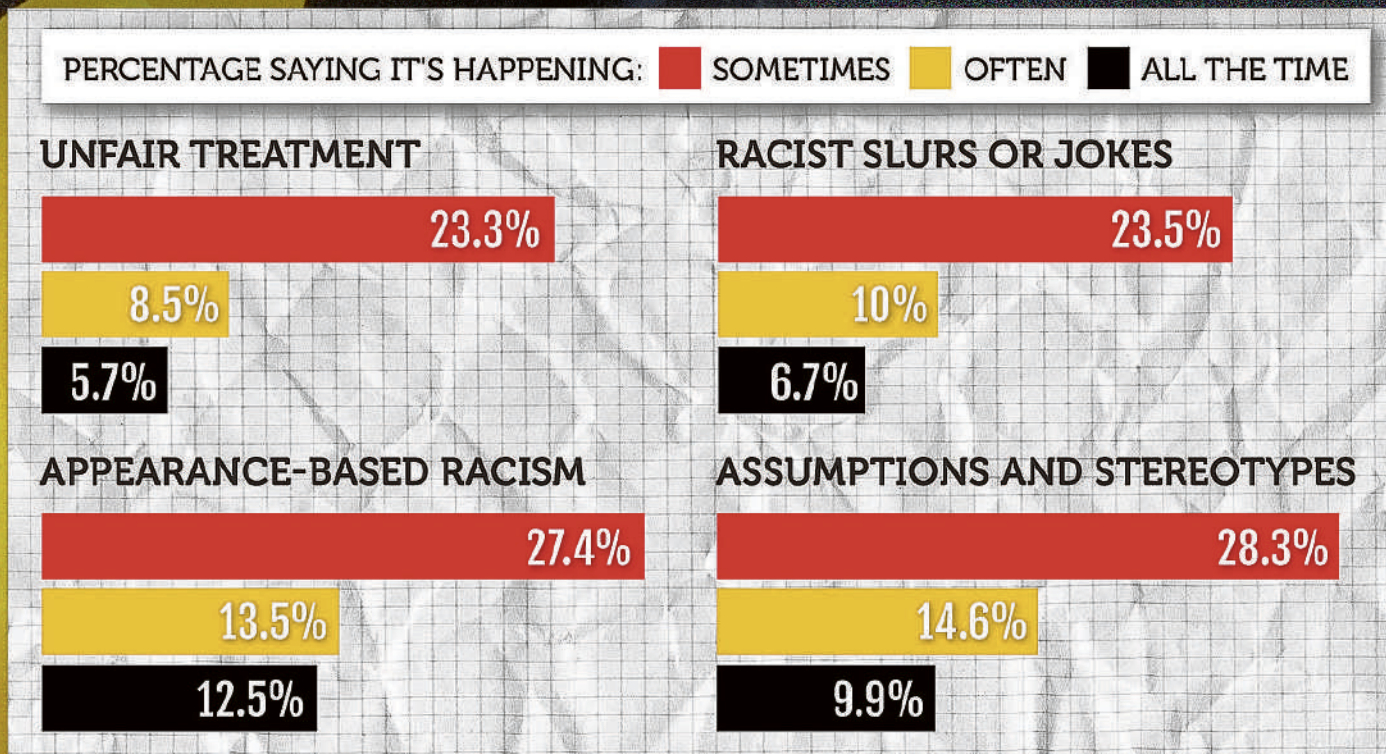
"Make no mistake, this legal system up here now has become ... a jailing machine," long-time NT barrister John Lawrence said. Mr Fejo said it was the third Senate inquiry he had appeared before, arguing that those with the power to make change preferred to live in an illusion. "I know what you mob

get paid. You mob need to do your job," he said.

The inquiry has had hundreds of submissions from organisations, academics, governments and community members, with evidence gathered through public hearings expected to inform recommendations to Parliament later this year. **with AAP**

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

How common is racism towards Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers?



SOURCE: A SURVEY OF 1100 INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES — UTS JUMBUNNA INSTITUTE FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, UTS BUSINESS SCHOOL

Graphic: Joanna Kordina/AAP

Indigenous focus on ethics in health

DECHLAN BRENNAN

The first Aboriginal-led human research ethics committee in Victoria has officially begun operations, marking a significant step in strengthening cultural oversight of medical research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Delivered by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and

funded by the Victorian Government, the Aboriginal Human Research Ethics Committee will oversee medical research involving First Nations people to ensure projects are culturally safe, ethically conducted and deliver meaningful benefits for First Peoples.

On July 17, Deputy Premier and Minister for Medical Research Ben Carroll announced the appointment of the inaugural members of

the HREC, which forms part of marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri — the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord, an initiative aimed at creating an ethical and culturally safe research sector.

The new HREC “fills a gap and provides a rigorous, culturally embedded review process that finally puts Aboriginal research back where it belongs — in Aboriginal

hands,” acting VACCHO CEO Jim O’Shea said.

Built around the Research Accord’s principles — at least 80 per cent Aboriginal representation; a sole focus on reviewing Aboriginal health and wellbeing research; fast turnaround times; user-friendly processes; and 24/7 availability — the committee is independent and not “just best practice,” he said, but a “mark of responsible research”.

Family call for a public apology

NATASHA CLARK

The family of a First Nations woman left in a northern Boorloo/Perth backyard for seven hours is demanding a public apology from WA Police Commissioner Col Blanch.

Jamie Lee Garlett, 37, died suddenly at a relative’s home in the northern suburb of Kallaroo on May 26.

Family members say she began gasping for breath and convulsing about 4.15pm.

Her sister-in-law dialled triple-0 and performed CPR until paramedics arrived about 10 minutes later.

Despite efforts to revive her, Ms Garlett was pronounced dead at 5.06pm.

Her family said paramedics contacted police because the sudden death was reportable to the Coroner, but officers did not arrive at the home until 10.10pm.

Ms Garlett’s body was finally removed around midnight, nearly seven hours after her death was confirmed.

Children and teenagers were among those left waiting at the property, her relatives said.

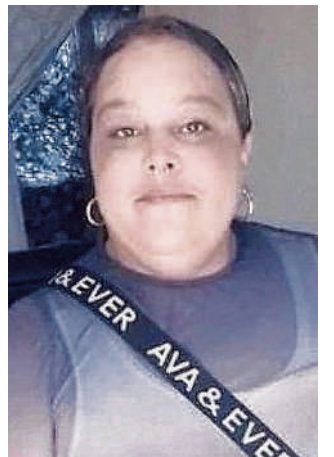
WA Police said officers had been told the death was not suspicious and attendance was prioritised alongside other urgent incidents.

Jamie Lee’s cousin Tamara Lee Gartlett told National Indigenous Times family members met several WA Police officers this month at the Daydawn Advocacy Centre, which supports Aboriginal people navigating legal and government systems.

Advocate Betsy Buchanan also attended.

“They (WA police) handed us an apology letter from Commissioner Col Blanch,” Tamara explained.

In the letter seen by the National Indigenous Times, Mr Blanch writes an extensive review into the police response to the call to remove Jamie Lee Gartlett’s body “found that the delay became prolonged without sufficient escalation or interven-



Jamie Lee Gartlett

tion”. “The review identified a number of shortcomings in our organisational response, including insufficient supervision, missed opportunities to co-ordinate resources and inadequate recognition of the impact on the family,” Mr Blanch wrote.

Mr Blanch reinforced his position by stating he accepted “that our service to your family that evening did not meet those standards”.

“For that, I offer my sincere and unreserved apology,” he said.

But for Tamara, the meeting and letter fall short after what she calls a dehumanising ordeal for her cousin, even in death.

She wants Mr Blanch to apologise publicly and show what changes WA Police will make to emergency responses, so no other family faces the same ordeal.

“We want him to do a public apology and to announce what changes they’ve made, so not just for us, just so the public are aware that those changes are in place,” Tamara said.

Her push for public police accountability and systemic change remains unwavering.

“I’m not going to stop,” she said.

“I’ll go until the end until we get actual change and for them to acknowledge publicly that they were in the wrong.”

The National Indigenous Times contacted WA Police, which said: “WA Police are engaging with the family directly.”

“We have nothing further to provide at this time.”

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SNAICC in call to get children on track

DECHLAN BRENNAN

Governments across the country need to turn increased participation in First Nations early childhood education into better developmental outcomes, the peak body for Indigenous children says.

The latest Report on Government Services, released this month, revealed a rise in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending child care subsidy-funded early childhood education and care — from 3.4 per cent in 2021 to 5.3 per cent in 2025.

Despite this, the latest Closing the Gap data showed the proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track had declined.

SNAICC — National Voice for our Children said the increase in ECEC participation showed reforms such as the Government's removal of the activity test were working. SNAICC chief executive Catherine Liddle said First Nations families had long faced barriers to accessing ECEC, but current reforms were not the full picture.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track across all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census is at 33.9 per cent, down from 35.2 per cent in 2018, and more than 20 percentage points below non-Indigenous children.

In remote areas, this figure drops to just 16.5 per cent.

Ms Liddle highlighted the success of Aboriginal community-controlled early learning services, saying they were “culturally safe, trusted, and designed around the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities”.

“These services don't just provide early learning,” she said.

“They support children's development, strengthen culture and identity, and connect families with the services they need.

“The missing piece isn't more evidence, time or a new strategy — it's investment from government in culturally safe services.”



Justice Erin Longbottom and the Nganjuwarr applicants. Picture: Natasha Clark

Nganjuwarr land rights recognised

NATASHA CLARK

Traditional Owners have secured formal recognition of their rights across 961sqkm of rugged East Kimberley country in Western Australia, under the Nganjuwarr consent determination.

Federal Court Justice Erin Longbottom delivered the consent determination on Country last Wednesday, watched by Traditional Owners, Kimberley cultural leaders, government officials and local families. The decision marked the culmination of negotiations between Nganjuwarr applicants, represented by the Kimberley Land Council, and the State Government.

A consent determination is made when the parties agree native title exists, avoiding the need for a contested court trial.

The claim was lodged with the Federal Court in September 2024 and added to the National Native Title Tribunal's register in January 2025.

Kija and Ngarinyin Traditional Owners, including



The crowd gathered on Country to hear the determination being delivered.

Raphael Sampi, Phillip Speewah, Carol Juli, Lucilla Martin, Edward Muckarie, Jacqueline Gallagher, Ivan Morgan and Joseph Bedford, led the claim.

Mr Sampi said the day brought relief and peace to him after years of negotiations.

“We have finally achieved our goal and got our Country back,” he said.

WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Don Punch supported Mr Sampi's statement. “This is

beautiful country, and it's yours. It's yours by virtue of the traditions, the culture, the laws that you have followed continuously,” he told Traditional Owners.

KLC deputy chief executive Sarah Parriman said the Nganjuwarr consent determination could open doors for Traditional Owners in a range of areas.

“Native Title can play a really important role in strengthening our communities. People

can leverage their own rights in multiple ways, including economic opportunities, social cohesion and caring for Country,” she said.

The Giliwinggin Aboriginal Corporation will act as the prescribed body corporate, managing native title rights for the Nganjuwarr people.

The corporation will represent Native Title holders in decisions and negotiations shaping their Country's future.

NT Shelter's closure could leave many homeless

DECHLAN BRENNAN

Hundreds of people in the Northern Territory could be at risk of homelessness after the shock closure of an Aboriginal corporation's shelter.

On July 14, NT News reported the NT Government had given Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation 90 days to vacate its short-stay accommodation premises.

There are 230 adults and 160 children — many from remote communities — at the shelter

on Batten Road in Marrara, and there is no certainty they will have a place to go.

Opposition Leader Selena Uibo said the decision had been made “with no clear plan for thousands of Territorians who rely on it each year”.

“These are families travelling in from remote communities for medical treatment and to access other essential services who will now be left without accommodation when they come to Darwin,” she said.

It was reported the “short-

sighted decision” would also affect 25 staff. NT Children and Families Minister Robin Cahill said a transition plan was in place, telling reporters on July 15 the Government “offered a fair market price in an effort to be able to continue to function at that site” to the owners of the facility's infrastructure, but it was rejected.

“Let's just say that their response was far from fair and far from conducive to a good, smart economic decision, so we will have to transition those people

out,” she said. “We're not reducing services; it will simply be a realigning of services to other areas.”

Ms Uibo claimed the minister's priorities were “completely backwards”.

The NT has the highest rate of homelessness in Australia, at about 12 times the national average. Indigenous people comprise 87 per cent of the homeless population in the NT.

Delivering the keynote address to the Aboriginal Housing and Homelands Conference

in Darwin in May, independent senator Lidia Thorpe accused the NT Government of racism and launching a “direct assault” on First Nations people.

She argued inadequate, overcrowded, unsafe and insecure housing was at the root of many of the problems Indigenous people were experiencing.

“It leads to preventable disease, lower life expectancy, higher absentee levels in schools and limited job opportunities, just to name a few,” she said.

A life-changing gift

GIOVANNI TORRE

Running a first marathon is hard enough, but Jingili woman Joanne Bathern has more on her mind than blisters.

When she lines up for the Melbourne Marathon this October, she'll be doing it with someone else's kidney — a few years after a life-changing transplant.

"I have to be really careful, because running that distance puts a huge strain on anyone's kidneys, so for me there's that increased risk I'll be managing through the race," Ms Bathern, 51, said.

"I'll only be doing it once, but it's also important to show that I am living a really positive life, and I appreciate my organ donor so much."

Ms Bathern, born in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) but now living in Darwin on Larrakia country, was diagnosed with kidney failure while pregnant with her second daughter, Sienna, now 15.

It's a genetic condition; her mother fought kidney disease too. She spent years juggling daily medications before a gruelling, four times a day dialysis schedule while waiting for a transplant. On holiday in 2022 with partner Warren, Sienna and firstborn Sierra, a call came that changed her life. "My

doctor rang to say, 'quick, get ready to fly to Adelaide, there's a kidney transplant waiting for you,'" Ms Bathern said. "I said, 'I should have told you, I'm actually on holiday here right now, so I'll just jump in a taxi.'"

The transplant let Ms Bathern return to the life of sport and fitness she'd always loved.

Now a run leader with the Darwin Deadlies, the public servant is sharing her story for DonateLife Week to raise awareness of organ donation.

"Aboriginal people, we need to consider becoming organ donors, considering a lot of us do need kidney transplants," she said.

"We need to think about it and talk to family about it, too."

Associate Professor Helen Opdam, national medical director of Australia's Organ and Tissue Authority, said Ms Bathern's story shows the life-changing power of donation.

"Blood and tissue types need to match for a transplant to be successful. An organ donated by a First Nations person is more likely to benefit another First Nations person."

DonateLife Week runs until August 2 and is Australia's public awareness week to encourage more Australians to sign up and support organ and tissue donation. Sign up at donatelife.gov.au or through Medicare.



Joanne Bathern after a run.

Jail death adds to the year's toll

DECHLAN BRENNAN

An Aboriginal man died at a privately run prison in NSW this month, sparking renewed warnings of a "deaths in custody crisis".

The 21-year-old died at the Clarence Correctional Centre near Grafton, which is operated by British multinational Serco. His death is being investigated by NSW Police and Serco.

The man is the 20th Indigenous person to die in custody this year, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology's real-time dashboard.

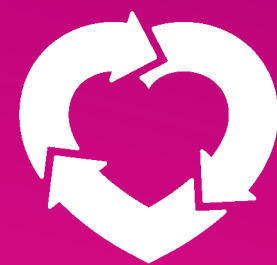
Serco referred to a statement from a Clarence Correctional Centre spokesperson, who said they are "aware a 21-year-old Aboriginal man died at Clarence Correctional Centre on Wednesday 15 July". "Serco extends our sympathies to the family, and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community," the statement said.

Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT acting chief executive, Sharif Deen, said the organisation is "deeply saddened and distressed to learn of another Aboriginal death in custody, and we extend our condolences to this young man's family and community". "We are in the midst of a deaths in custody crisis," Mr Deen said.

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KC HAD A HEART TRANSPLANT

Netball helps girls gain sense of pride

ALSWA's Old Ways New Ways is scoring goals

GIOVANNI TORRE

The Old Ways New Ways program has had a remarkable impact on the lives of young Indigenous people in WA, and this month achieved an important new milestone.

The program, run by the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, works with children and youth at risk of contact with the justice system and has a strong focus on well-being, education, culture and friendship.

In 2025, Old Ways New Ways dreamed of a project that would give participating children a chance “to belong, to grow, and to proudly represent their culture on a larger stage”.

Through conversations with program participants from the northern Boorloo/Perth suburb of Balga cohort, it became clear 12 young women shared that vision and were eager to challenge themselves by competing in the 2026 NAIDOC Netball Boorloo Competition — the first Old Ways New Ways Netball Team was born.

In July, the young women aged 12-17 stepped on to the courts at Gold Netball Stadium.

For many of them, it was the culmination of months of commitment, courage, and determination.

Every Friday afternoon, these young women chose to attend training sessions and activity days, developing their skills, building confidence, and learning the value of teamwork under the guidance of coach, Kenneale Simpson-Lewis and team manager Ashlee James.

“This has just been an absolute milestone for us,” Ms Simpson-Lewis told the National Indigenous Times.

“The girls planted the seed in our hearts and said, ‘we’d love to get into NAIDOC netball’, and so me and Ash, we put our two heads together and we made that dream a reality, and it’s just been absolutely wonderful.”

Ms James worked tirelessly to turn the dream into reality.

Through her leadership and passion, the team was equipped for competition and given a uniform that told a story.

The netball dresses featured



United they stand, and top, An Old Ways New Ways netball team uniform and the artwork that inspired it. Picture: Giovanni Torre

artwork created by the players under the guidance of respected local Indigenous Elder Linda Loo, ensuring they wore a design that reflected their identity, culture, and collective journey.

ALSWA said the wider community’s support had been “extraordinary”. Through community engagement and advocacy, donations were secured to provide every participant with a new pair of netball shoes, Nike undershorts, water bottles, and equipment.

Additional donated shoes have been set aside with a vision for the future in which where young women from the Armadale cohort — in Boorloo’s south-east — will also get the chance to form a team and experience that sense of pride, belonging, and achievement.

“It honestly means everything to them,” Ms Simpson-Lewis said.

“We really wanted them to feel like they belong in the community, which they do.”

The young women have developed friendships, resilience, self-belief, and a profound connection to one another, their community, and their culture.

They have learnt success is

“We have a lot of young people that have those really developed relationships that you don’t get to see across other areas that work within the justice system.”

Ashlee James

not measured only on the scoreboard, but by showing up for each other, working together, and having the courage to step outside their comfort zones.

For many of these girls, the competition was their first opportunity to stand on a competitive stage and showcase their talents.

It was also an opportunity to proudly represent their families, communities, cultures, and heritage. They discovered their own strength, found a sense of belonging, and have

become role models for the younger girls.

Ms Simpson-Lewis noted the Old Ways New Ways activity days more broadly “are crucial for our young people”.

“That allows our young people to come into a safe space, a relaxed area where our girls can come together with their other sister girls and engage with staff in a relaxed setting . . . they can come and just be themselves,” she said.

“It also gives Old Ways New Ways an opportunity to share educational activities and programs with our girls, and also talk about social emotional wellbeing.”

Ms James noted the consistency of Old Ways New Ways was a great strength.

“It helps develop that trust and rapport with the young people,” she said.

“It’s the constant faces that they’re seeing all the time, and it’s the genuine care from the workers and the genuine trust that’s built with the young people.”

“We have a lot of young people that have those really developed relationships that you don’t get to see across other areas that work within the justice

system.” Ms Simpson-Lewis said the sincere dedication of the program staff connected with the young people involved.

“I think for our young Indigenous, Aboriginal kids, the one thing that we look for is the genuineness. If we can see that you’re genuinely in our corner, we’ll run with you. We’ll meet you. We’ll meet you halfway,” she said.

“That’s my experience too, and what I’m seeing with our young people here. And that’s one thing I enjoy about being in the Old Ways New Ways team is the staff and the colleagues. We’re all here for one goal, and that’s to help our young people do the best and look for a better future.”

Ms Simpson-Lewis said the program’s success had seen more and more people keen to get involved.

“We’ve got young people knocking on the door. We’ve got stakeholders knocking on the door. We’ve got community people knocking on the door, saying, ‘Oh, can my kid join? Can my young person join? Can we be a part of the Old Ways New Ways program?’ because of the deadly work that we’re able to do,” she said.

Hayes family deliver letter calling for closure of Pine Gap

CALLAN MORSE

A letter penned by a Traditional Owner family was delivered to Pine Gap, the joint Australian-US satellite communications and signals intelligence surveillance base near Mparntwe/Alice Springs, this month demanding the return of the area’s sacred lands.

Its delivery came after hundreds converged in Mparntwe demanding the facility’s closure.

The letter was written by the Hayes family, Arrernte traditional owners for Kuyunba — the land Pine Gap occupies.

“There was never consent for the Australian and US governments to put that base on our

sacred land,” the letter states.

“Our old people were working on their Country until the base took over. Our elders, the elders of this Country, did not know anything about Pine Gap.”

The three-day gathering in Mparntwe marked the 60th anniversary of the agreement between Canberra and Wash-

ington which paved the way for Pine Gap.

The Hayes family said before making the agreement, the Federal Government “didn’t know who was responsible for that Country”. “They didn’t know it was Hayes family Country,” they said.

“They didn’t know there were songlines. They didn’t know it

was a sacred place. They just went and marked the place up, put the pegs down, and started digging underground.”

A delegation including the Hayes family, Barb Shaw, Senator David Shoebridge, and Nour Salman negotiated their way through police lines to present the letter to a Pine Gap representative.



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STYLEUP

FASHION, BEAUTY & LIFESTYLE

Fair go

Fashion parade part of celebration of art, culture and community at The Cutaway

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ALSO INSIDE

Festival revamped to give music more bite **P10**
Indigenous art goes on the road **P14**

Billie-Jean Hamlet wears a Nagula Jarndu dress. Styling by Oriana De Luca, hair by Alan White, make-up by Molly Warkentin. Picture: Joel Foreman

Celebration of music's power

JOSEPH GUENZLER

BIGSOUND's Goolwal Goolwal program will return in 2026 with a new home and a conference program placing First Nations artists, industry leaders and community voices at the centre of the festival's 25th anniversary.

The program will run throughout BIGSOUND in Fortitude Valley, Magandjin (Brisbane), from September 1 to 4, alongside 12 Indigenous acts selected for the BIGSOUND 100.

The showcase line-up includes Bala rontu, Djawarray and Mayi Wunba Dancers, Jem Cassar-Daley, JJ Vacant, Kyla Belle, Say True God? Zipporah and many more, continuing the event's focus on Indigenous and Pasifika talent.

Goolwal Goolwal will also bring Indigenous-led discussions, networking sessions and creative work into the wider industry conference.

QMusic's First Nations project officer, Birri, Kabi

Kabi, Byelee and South Sea Islander woman Natalie Lingwoodock, described the program as a celebration of First Nations contributions to Australian music.

"The 2026 Goolwal Goolwal Program is all about celebrating, elevating, and being proud of what mob have contributed to the music industry here in Australia," Ms Lingwoodock said.

Trials, a Ngarrindjeri artist and producer, will join the Artists in Conversation series and exhibit his visual work in the Goolwal Gallery at Hey Chica.

Rappers Kobie Dee and Tasman Keith will discuss how they use their individual careers to support collective change in their communities.

The conference program will also explore regional connections, youth empowerment and the relationship between storytelling and music synchronisation opportunities.

Delegates will meet First Nations industry representatives from Australia

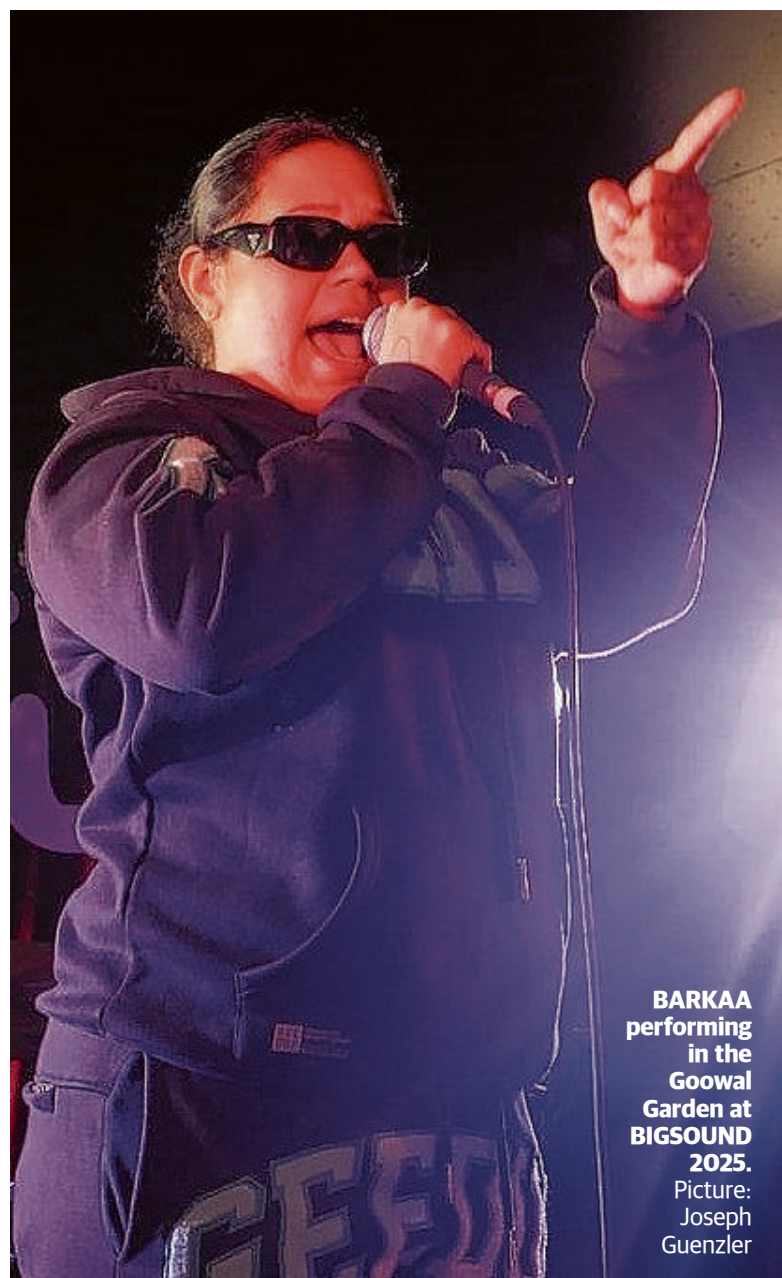
and overseas through the Sharing Songlines series. The series will include Support Act's First Nations team and discussion of the First Nations Music Industry Review.

"We're proud to welcome Ngarrindjeri artist and producer trials, who joins us to share his wisdom and knowledge as part of the Artists in Conversation series, and to showcase his artwork in the Goolwal Gallery in Hey Chica," Ms Lingwoodock said.

"BIGSOUND delegates will also get to hear Kobie Dee and Tasman Keith share how they drive collective change in their communities, while forging their own individual paths as MCs."

The program was curated by the Goolwal Goolwal Advisory, which includes Elder in Residence Uncle Joe Geia and representatives from every State and Territory.

BIGSOUND 2026 will feature 100 artists across 15 venues over three nights, with the conference running under the theme Creatives in Conversation.



BARKAA
performing
in the
Goolwal
Garden at
BIGSOUND
2025.
Picture:
Joseph
Guenzler

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Vibrancy and flair make art fair shine



CIAF opening night.

PHOEBE BLOGG

The 17th Cairns Indigenous Art Fair delivered four vibrant days of art, fashion, performance and cultural exchange this month, with thousands converging on Tanks Arts Centre and satellite venues across Gimuy/Cairns for the fair's most expansive program to date.

Presented under the theme Reclamation & Regeneration, it featured the largest art and artisans' showcase in the fair's history, alongside expanded fashion, theatre, talks, music, dance, Elders and family programming.

This year's program marked a milestone year for CIAF, including the 10th anniversary of the CIAF Art Awards and the inaugural CIAF Fashion: Textile & Design Awards, further expanding the fair's platform for artistic recognition and professional opportunities.

Artistic director Teho Ropeyarn said the response to

this year's program demonstrated the growing impact and significance of the fair nationally and internationally.

"CIAF 2026 has been a powerful celebration of resurgence, creativity and cultural authority," Mr Ropeyarn said. "Across four days we witnessed artists, designers, performers and communities come together to share stories grounded in culture while pushing contemporary practice into exciting new territory."

"Reclamation & Regeneration was about honouring where we come from while creating space for where we are going. The response from audiences, artists and visitors has been extraordinary."

The fair attracted more than 17,100 visits across Tanks Arts Centre and The Mill, a nearly 15 per cent increase on 2025, with attendance at satellite exhibitions across Gimuy/Cairns still to be finalised upon closure of the

city-wide program. Early figures also indicate strong art sales and outcomes such as commercial gallery representation and commission opportunities, showing strong collector confidence across established art centres and the growing cohort of independent artists.

Independent artists accounted for almost 60 per cent of exhibitors in the Art Fair Showcase, signalling a major shift in Queensland's First Nations arts sector as more artists invest in building sustainable independent practices beyond traditional art centre representation.

The artisans' showcase had more than 130 artists across 36 stalls and the art showcase presented more than 90 artists through art centres, galleries and independent practices. Professional development and international engagement also expanded. The On Country Program welcomed 65 delegates, its biggest VIP group, including representatives from Art

Central Hong Kong and the Biennale of Sydney, as well as artists from Taiwan, Hong Kong and New York, who took part in masterclasses and the fashion program.

Chair Bianca Beetson said the fair's continued growth reflected the strength and diversity of Queensland First Nations creativity and CIAF's important role as a cultural and economic platform. The digital campaign also reached new audiences, generating more than two million social media impressions.

The 2026 CIAF Art Awards recognised outstanding achievement across contemporary First Nations visual arts. Proud Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal artist Douglas Tamwoy, from Bamaga with bloodlines to Badu and Erub Islands, claimed the People's Choice Award with artwork Trade Wind (the Canoes) for the second time following his previous win in 2023.

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will return 8-11 July, 2027.

New album a timely approach to present

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Filipino and Murrawarri composer, rapper, producer and drummer DOBBY is set to release his second album, MARSHMALLOW.

The concept rap album follows his ARIA Award-winning debut WARRANGU; River Story, which built a sonic archive around Indigenous land knowledge, environmental justice and the river systems affecting Brewarrina and surrounding communities. The new album shifts to a personal story.

"WARRANGU was a community-based album . . . But this one here is an inward journey into my inner child," DOBBY said.

The album is built around a time-travel story that takes DOBBY back to 2009, when he was a younger artist with an unreleased project called The Royal Flame.

He meets that younger version of himself, takes the unreleased album and brings it into the present. The process forced him to look at the distance between childhood and adulthood, and the things that shape a young person's sense of self. It became a way to examine childhood, self-doubt and repair.

"This young kid that I go back in time to 2009 to confront, he was very different," DOBBY said.

"He didn't have to worry about taxes or parking fines or rent. All he cared about was hip hop music, Missy Elliott, listening to Eminem and Black Eyed Peas."

MARSHMALLOW draws its title from the Stanford University marshmallow experiment, which studied delayed gratification and willpower in children.

The idea of waiting for a higher reward became a way to understand regret, discipline and the long process of releasing work he had left behind.

The album also looks at mental health, racism and staying connected to passion while carrying the pressures of the world. It moves through social and political pressures, with DOBBY imagining what it means to tell his younger self about the world after 2009.

MARSHMALLOW leans into jazz, funk and hip hop, with live drumming and samples and will be released on Friday July 31.

Project reunites Elders with landmark works

NATASHA CLARK

Senior Warlpiri Elders were reunited this month with two landmark paintings crafted nearly 40 years ago in Yuendumu, a remote community 290km north-west of Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

On July 14 the Elders viewed the works during a visit backed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The Warlpiri Project says the paintings were traded for a government-owned four-wheel-drive in 1986, giving the artists a way home.

Now known as Toyota Dreaming, the works were

painted by Paddy Jupurrurla Nelson, Paddy Japaljarri Sims, Larry Jungarrayi Spencer, Paddy Japaljarri Stewart and Towser Jakamarra Walker.

The Warlpiri Project said the artists were among those who painted the Yuendumu school doors, a defining project in the development of contemporary Warlpiri art. Senior men painted the doors in the early 1980s to teach children about Jukurrpa, the law, culture and ancestral stories of Warlpiri life.

Warlpiri Project senior Elder, Robin Japanangka Granites, said the two paintings continued that work of sharing cultural knowledge. "The



Senior Warlpiri men have been reunited with works known as Toyota Dreaming, which were painted in Yuendumu nearly 40 years ago. Picture: The Warlpiri Project

paintings were done by the same artists who painted the Yuendumu doors," he said. "They painted these masterpieces to help educate the broader community about our Jukurrpa, just as they did

with the painting of the Yuendumu school doors for their children way back."

Researcher Eric Michaels, working with the Warlpiri at Yuendumu, helped broker the exchange, the Warlpiri Project

says. Yuendumu now stands as an internationally recognised hub of Central Desert art. The Warlpiri Project thanked AIATSIS for its ongoing support and care of the paintings.



PHOEBE BLOGG

The National Indigenous Art Fair transformed The Cutaway at Barangaroo this month into a vibrant celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, culture and community.

Kicking off NAIDOC Week, the fair ran from July 3-5.

It presented almost 30 Indigenous art centres from across Australia and brought together more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

With the inaugural cultural event hosted at The Cutaway following its major transformation, NIAF is the largest presentation of First Nations art and culture at the venue.

The program was shaped by a team of First Nations curators.

Miah Madden (Bundjalung) curated The Living Room exhibition showcasing highlight works from the participating art centres; Matt Poll (South Sea and Torres Strait Island) curated the talks program; Kaleena Briggs (Wiradjuri/Yorta Yorta) curated the music program; and Billie-Jean Hamlet (Walmajarri/Yamatji) curated the fashion parade.

NIAF was supported by First Nations ambassadors Rachel Perkins (Arrernte/Kalkadoon), Dennis Golding (Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay), Alison Page (Dharawal/Yuin), Jazz Money (Wiradjuri), Sebastian Goldspink (Burramattagal), and Daniel Browning (Bundjalung/Kullilli).

This year's fair was the first to hold an opening night event, offering exclusive early access.

One of Australia's leading fashion figures, Hamlet has appeared in Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Marie Claire and RUSSH, and fronted campaigns for Country Road.

Grounded in storytelling, cultural expression and connection, the fashion parade showcased pieces from

Merrepen Arts, Bula'bula Arts, and designers including MAARA Collective, Mimmim, Miimi & Jiinda, Clair Helen, Lillardia Briggs-Houston and Jarawee.

"For 65,000 years, Aboriginal culture has thrived through our connection to Country, tradition, storytelling and art. Creative directing and curating Indigenous culture for National Indigenous Art Fair is something I'll carry with me forever," Hamlet said.

"Fashion has become one of the ways I get to honour my ancestors, continue our tradition of storytelling and proudly represent my culture.

"These images are only a glimpse into the atmosphere we created that night. The energy in the room was electric.

"To every designer, model and creative who trusted me and believed in my vision, thank you.

"I'm forever grateful."

NIAF's music program which opened on Friday, July 3, featured performances by rising Darumbal and Tongan R&B vocalist Mi-Kaisha, intergenerational Yuin choir Djinama Yilaga, and Mawambul, a Wiradjuri and Dharug dance work choreographed by Jo Clancy and Stuart McMinn.

The program continued the

following day with performances by Gawura Cultural Immersions and pop-folk-jazz duo Microwave Jenny, while Sunday, July 5 featured the Wagana Dancers and rising R&B singer-songwriter Riah.

The fair's marketplace also offered visitors an opportunity to buy artworks directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from remote, community-owned art centres across the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia.

Guided by a mission to support economic development in remote Indigenous communities and strengthen the world's oldest continuous living culture, NIAF charged no commission or stall fees, with 100 per cent of profits going directly to the art centres.

This year's fair showcased the breadth of Indigenous art making, with highlights including works by Kieren Karripul from Merrepen Arts, Karen Rogers from Ngukurr Arts, Agnes Donnelly from Warnayaka Art and Cultural Aboriginal Corporation, and many more artists.

NIAF 2026 also featured an installation program showcasing the breadth and diversity of contemporary First Nations artistic practice.

Culture meets craft at The Cutaway

presentation of First Nations art and culture within the venue."

Placemaking NSW chief executive Susan Lee said the organisation was "proud to have partnered with the National Indigenous Art Fair to host the first Indigenous event at The Cutaway".

"This iconic art fair showcases the latest award-winning ideas and innovations from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, designers, and makers from around the country," she said.

The National Indigenous Art Fair was presented by Sydney-based First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corporation, in proud partnership with Destination NSW, the University of Technology Sydney, the City of Sydney, the Macquarie Group Foundation, Gilbert + Tobin, Barangaroo, and the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program.





Photo Haylee Rivers
Brands Maara Collective dress,
Bula'Bula Art x Maara
Collective hat

TOP LEFT: Photos Joel Foreman **Make-up** Molly Warkentin **Hair** Alan White **Styling** Oriana De Luca **Dress** by Nagula Jarndu **Model** Billie Jean Hamlet.
TOP CENTRE: Photo Shay-Leah Wanganeen **Brand** Miimi and Jinda. **LEFT: Photo** Shaneiva Chatfield **Brand** Miimi and Jinda.

Tour begins for national art

JOSEPH GUENZLER

The 5th National Indigenous Art Triennial opened on the Gold Coast this month as the first stop on its national tour outside Kamberri (Canberra).

Home of the Arts unveiled After The Rain on the eve of the 50th anniversary of NAIDOC Week. The free National Gallery Touring Exhibition has transformed two levels of HOTA Gallery with 10 installations exploring First Nations stories, resilience and intergenerational cultural legacies.

Girramay, Yidinji and Kuku-Yalanji artist Tony Albert is the exhibition's artistic director. The exhibition explores renewal and cultural continuity through newly commissioned works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

Mr Albert said the exhibition placed First Nations creativity at the centre of the national conversation. "After the Rain positions the creative brilliance of First Nations artists at the centre of national conversation, offering a restorative and forward-looking exploration of Country and culture," he said.

"After the rain, the land is cleansed, seeds begin to sprout, and new life emerges.

"I am excited to welcome visitors to the HOTA to



After The Rain installation featuring art by Dylan Mooney. Picture: Joe Ruckli

celebrate the strength and beauty of what is flourishing."

Queensland artists featured in the exhibition include Alair Pam began, Blaklash, Dylan Mooney and Warraba Weatherall.

Their works appear alongside projects by Aretha Brown, The Hermannsburg Potters, Iltja Ntjarra Art Centre and Vincent Namatjira, Jimmy John Thaiday, Naminapu Maymuru-White, Thea

Anamara Perkins, Yarrenyty Arltere Artists and Grace Kemarre Robinya.

The triennial was developed by the National Gallery of Australia to provide a national platform for First Nations artists and practices.

Its fifth edition focuses on identity, Country, history and the experiences of First Nations communities.

National Gallery director Nick Mitzevich said the

exhibition would tour Australia for the next three years with support from the Australian Government through Visions of Australia and the gallery's First Nations Arts Partner, Wesfarmers Arts.

HOTA Gallery general manager David Don said hosting the exhibition was an important moment for the Gold Coast.

"As the first stop on the exhibition's national tour

outside Canberra, After The Rain gives audiences the opportunity to engage with powerful First Nations stories at a time when those voices continue to shape Australia's cultural conversation," Mr Don said.

After the Rain will be displayed across galleries two and three at HOTA until September 27.

The exhibition is open daily from 10am to 4pm. Entry is free.

Scarborough 4D M1 Marine Seismic Survey 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.

Scarborough 4D M1 (Monitor 1) Marine Seismic Survey Environment Plan

Woodside plans to undertake a 4D (time-lapse) monitor marine seismic survey as part of reservoir surveillance for the Scarborough and Jupiter gas fields, approximately 245 km north-west of Onslow. The EP covers seismic data acquisition using a survey vessel towing an acoustic source array and receiver cables (streamers). A small part of the survey area will also use ocean bottom nodes. Survey operations will be assisted by a support vessel, chase vessel, and subsea support vessel equipped with a remotely operated vehicle for ocean bottom node placement and retrieval.

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The EMBA is the largest geographic area where an unplanned event could potentially have an environmental consequence. In the highly unlikely event a hydrocarbon release does occur, the whole EMBA would not be affected.

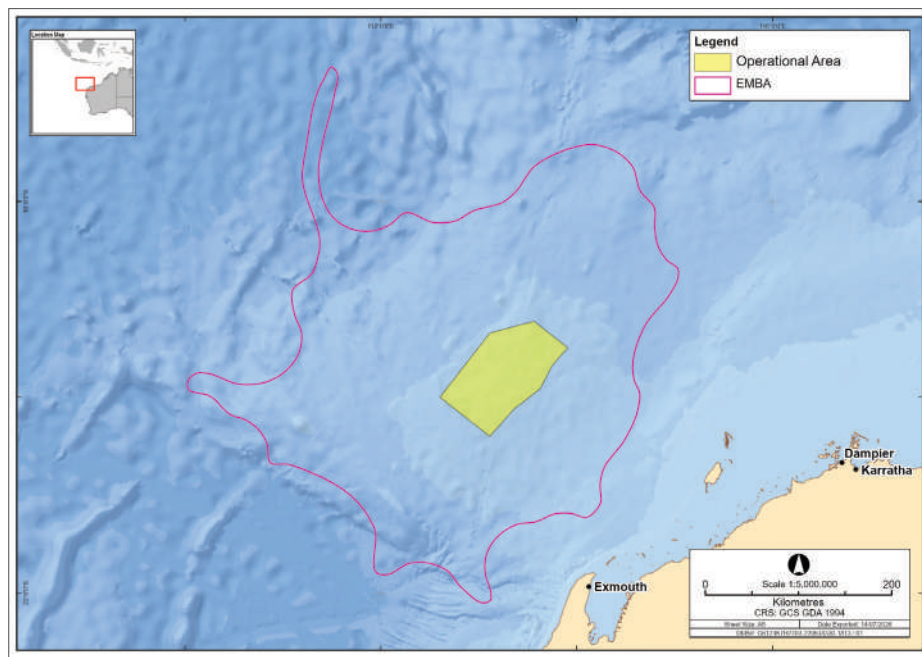
We would like to hear from you

If you are an individual, organisation or community group and believe your functions, interests or activities may be impacted by the activities under this Environment Plan, we would like to hear your feedback by **10 September 2026**.

To find out more go to:

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Finalists announced for 2026 NIMAs

JOSEPH GUENZLER

The 2026 National Indigenous Music Awards nominees were announced this month, with 24 acts recognised across six categories ahead of the ceremony in Garramilla (Darwin).

The awards will return to Darwin Amphitheatre on Saturday, August 8, bringing together First Nations music, storytelling and live performance on Larrakia Country.

Nominees have been named for Artist of the Year, Best New Talent, Album of the Year, Film Clip of the Year, Community Clip of the Year and Song of the Year.

Birdz and Fred Leone lead this year's nominations with four, including Artist of the Year and Album of the Year for GIRA.

Their track Wanya Nyin Yanmanj has also been nominated for Song of the Year and Film Clip of the Year.

Pertame Mirning woman and Music NT's Catherine Satour said the nominees reflected the range of First Nations music being produced across the country.

"2026 National Indigenous Music Awards nominees represent an extraordinary diverse showcase of the incredible talent shaping First Nations music today," Ms Satour said.

"This year's list is one of our strongest yet, celebrating artists who are pushing creative boundaries, sharing powerful stories and

continuing to inspire audiences across this country.

"Congratulations to every finalist, looking forward to honouring your achievements together on Larrakia Country in August."

Artist of the Year

Seven acts have been nominated for Artist of the Year.

South Summit is among the finalists following the release of its second album *Run It Back* and will also perform at this year's ceremony.

Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Kalkadoon and Yirendali artist Miss Kaninna has been nominated as she prepares to release her upcoming mixtape *BLACKPRINT*.

Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung singer-songwriter Jem Cassar-Daley returns to the awards after winning New Talent of the Year in 2021.

Baker Boy, Bumpy and 3% complete the category alongside Birdz and Fred Leone.

The nominees are: 3%, Baker Boy, Birdz and Fred Leone, Bumpy, Jem Cassar-Daley, Miss Kaninna and South Summit.

Best New Talent

Six acts have been shortlisted for Best New Talent.

North-east Arnhem Land group Drifting Clouds has been nominated for Bawuypawuy, which blends songlines with



Birdz and Fred Leone lead this year's nominations with four. Inset below, Miss Kaninna.

synth-pop, rock and country.

Zipporah is recognised for *Some Typa Way*, while Waanyi and Manandjanji rapper Say True God? and emerging singer-songwriter Jet Cameron are also among the finalists.

Noongar Wongi rapper Inkabee has been nominated after becoming the youngest artist to appear on triple j's *Like A Version*, where he performed a cover of the Black Eyed Peas track *Where Is The Love?*.

Dallas Woods, Nooky, Fred Leone, RIAH and Soju Gang complete the category with their collaboration *Voices of Resistance*.

The nominees are: Drifting Clouds, Inkabee, Jet Cameron, Say True God?, Dallas Woods, Nooky, Fred Leone, RIAH and Soju Gang and Zipporah.

Album of the Year

Six releases have been nominated for Album of the Year.

Baker Boy is in contention for *Djandjay*, while Birdz and Fred Leone have been recognised for *GIRA*.

Emma Donovan has been nominated for *Take Me To The River* and *Say True God?* is shortlisted for *BLAK*.

Crossroads by Stiff Gins and *Hendle* by Trials complete the category.

The nominees are: Baker Boy, Birdz and Fred Leone, Emma Donovan, Say True God?, Stiff Gins and Trials.

Film Clip of the Year

Six music videos are in the running for Film Clip of the Year.

The category includes *Our Greats* by 3% and Baker Boy's *THICK SKIN*, featuring Thelma Plum, Emma Donovan, Kee'ahn and Jada Weazel.

Birdz and Fred Leone are nominated for *Wanya Nyin Yanmanj*, while *Drifting Clouds* has been recognised for *Bawuypawuy*.

Kobie Dee's *Aim For The Stars* and South Summit's *Top of the Hill* complete the list.

The nominees are: 3%, Baker Boy, Emma Donovan, Kee'ahn and Jada Weazel Birdz and Fred Leone, *Drifting Clouds*, Kobie Dee and South Summit.

Community Clip of the Year

Seven community-led projects have been nominated for Community Clip of the Year.

The category highlights the use of music and video to share language, culture, health messages and community stories.

Bulman School and Community has been nominated for *LOK LOK MAH BURARR*, meaning Lizard and Goanna.

Geraldton TIS is recognised for *Barndi Yarraly*, which carries the message *Vaping is vicious, not delicious*.

K2 the B and CJR are nominated for *Barunga*, while Mossman Gorge is shortlisted for *Yundu Bama Yalada*.

Mossman Mob's *Still Believing*, Northern Peninsula Area's *All The Way From The NPA* and Wujal Wujal's *Rainforest To The Sea* complete the category.

The nominees are: Bulman School and Community, Geraldton TIS, K2 the B and CJR, Mossman

Gorge, Mossman Mob, Northern Peninsula Area and Wujal Wujal.

Song of the Year

Six tracks have been nominated for Song of the Year.

Baker Boy's *THICK SKIN*, featuring Thelma Plum, Emma Donovan, Kee'ahn and Jada Weazel, is among the finalists.

Birdz and Fred Leone are nominated for *Wanya Nyin Yanmanj*, while *Drifting Clouds* is recognised for *Bawuypawuy*.

Jem Cassar-Daley has received a nomination for *Front Left Pocket*, alongside Yung Maynie for *Always Was* and Zipporah for *Some Typa Way*.

The nominees are: Baker Boy, Birdz and Fred Leone, *Drifting Clouds*, Jem Cassar-Daley, Yung Maynie and Zipporah.

Live performance line-up

South Summit has been added to the live performance lineup after receiving nominations for Artist of the Year and Film Clip of the Year.

The Boorloo-based reggae band joins Baker Boy, BIG NOTER, Bumpy, Casii Williams, Electric Fields, Stiff Gins and Zipporah.

More performers are expected to be announced before the ceremony.

The NIMAs will form part of a week-long program of First Nations arts and culture events in Garramilla/Darwin from August 5 to 11. It will include the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and National Indigenous Fashion Awards.



Indigenous writers in the running for book awards

GIOVANNI TORRE

The 2026 WA Premier's Book Awards shortlist was announced this month, with three leading First Nations writers among the contenders.

Presented by the State Library of WA, the awards recognise excellence in writing across eight categories.

After a judging process by an independent panel including writers, industry professionals and readers from across Australia, and chaired

by previous winner Gerard McCann, this year's shortlist highlights the range of stories, perspectives and experiences emerging from WA.

Among the shortlisted authors is Yamatji writer Mabel Gibson (25), recognised in the emerging writer category for *CryBaby*, her debut collection of micro memoirs reflecting on life, identity and belonging.

Also shortlisted is Tasma Walton for *I Am Nannertgarrook*, a powerful

historical novel based on her ancestor. The acclaimed work has already been recognised nationally, including a shortlisting for the Stella Prize and a win in the 2025 ARA Historical Novel Prize.

In the non-fiction category, Dr Elizabeth Marrkilyi Ellis and Jan Turner have been shortlisted for *Tjukurrpa Kurranyu*, *Tjukurrpa In The Front: The Yarnangu Foundation For Joint Management In The Pila Nature Reserve*. The book

documents the historic "we will do it together" settlement, which led to the Gibson Desert being renamed and jointly vested, preserving important cultural and environmental knowledge.

The awards cover fiction, non-fiction, emerging writing, poetry, young adult, children's literature, book of the year, and the Daisy Utemorrah Award for unpublished Indigenous junior and YA fiction. Winners of the 2026 awards will be announced in

September, to share in a total prize pool of \$120,000.

State librarian Catherine Clark said the awards were about championing WA writers while also galvanising the community to read more.

In the lead up to the awards, the State Library of WA will present *Stories From The West*, a one-day literary festival on Saturday, August 8, in Boorloo/Perth, featuring author talks, panel discussions and opportunities for readers to meet shortlisted writers.



Pictures: Row Lily Ahern and Catherine Jane Hardinge



Connection and opportunity

PHOEBE BLOGG

Sewn by MOB, founded in 2025 by proud Latje Latje woman Jade Leaman, is already making waves in First Nations fashion.

“Sewn by MOB is a fashion initiative I founded with the aim of it becoming a platform for creative mob to connect with each other on photo shoots and create a community that supports the vision of creating more Indigenous representation within fashion,” Leaman told Style Up.

“Sewn by MOB started with

my first idea of wanting to create fashion workshops for youth, but then I began to lean towards what I had always loved doing, which was photo shoots.”

The second-year fashion student at the University of Technology Sydney is working towards becoming a creative director in the fashion industry, and said Sewn by MOB had a particular focus on “the Indigenous talented designers and creatives within the fashion industry (who) haven’t had the opportunity to collaborate within a photo

shoot space”. “I think it is incredibly important and essential to have diversity within the fashion industry,” Leaman said.

“I personally always believe there is always more we can do, and the fashion industry is far from perfect. I believe Indigenous designers can be placed in this invisible but very real box.

“That predetermines how we must design and create in order to be considered Indigenous designers.”

Leaman aims to grow Sewn By MOB’s presence in the

fashion industry as well as online.

“I’m so passionate about photo shoots, and creating photo shoots that mean something, and create positive change for the fashion industry,” she said.

“Art, culture and connection is what makes us human, and I want to be in a career that intertwines both culture and fashion.

“I want to continue sharing our story and projects through fashion magazines and media, showing First Nations people that there is a space for us on

the main runways and main stages of the fashion industry.”

Leaman is also passionate about exploring her own culture and heritage.

“I am on a journey of learning more about my Aboriginal culture, as I grew up extremely disconnected and have always felt a part of my identity missing,” she said.

“It’s always so fulfilling working alongside incredible First Nations talent; I always feel so honoured when people give up the time to help Sewn by MOB’s visions come to life.”



Create shared value with Indigenous Peoples globally.

Challenge accepted.

The Tlingit story of the Box of Daylight tells of Raven, who brought light to a world once shrouded in darkness. By releasing the sun, moon and stars, Raven made it possible for people to see and for life to flourish.

This powerful story is reimagined in the artwork (pictured left) by Alaskan Tlingit and Athabaskan artist Crystal Worl.

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.

Trump cuts sacred areas

JOSEPH GUENZLER

First Nations leaders have condemned US President Donald Trump's decision to cut protections for two national monuments in southern Utah by about 90 per cent, including lands sacred to several tribal nations.

Mr Trump signed proclamations on July 13 reducing Bears Ears National Monument from about 1.36 million acres (550,000 ha) to 121,096 acres (49,000ha) and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument from about 1.87 million acres to 181,500 acres.

The changes removed protections from almost three million acres of public land and went further than reductions made during Mr Trump's first term.

The national monument status of the areas restricted mining, drilling and new construction across protected areas, while allowing hunting, fishing, camping and walking under existing regulations.

The Bears Ears decision also ordered the termination of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Commission, which gave representatives of five tribal nations a formal role in managing the monument.

National Indigenous Times reported in 2023 on a co-management agreement which gave five tribal nations a role in Bears Ears and allowed Indigenous knowledge to guide its long-term management. Mr Trump's order scraps the commission and its formal role in that arrangement.

About 1.24 million acres removed from Bears Ears will become eligible for mineral leasing, mining claims and other public land uses 60 days after the order was signed.

Davina Smith-Idjesa, a Navajo Nation citizen and co-chair of

the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, told news service ICT the monument was central to culture and ceremony.

"From a Navajo perspective, Bears Ears is not simply a piece of Federal public land," Ms Smith-Idjesa said.

"This is a living cultural site that holds our histories, our ceremonies, our traditional foods and medicines and our ancestors' footprints."

The landscape contains ancestral villages, ceremonial and burial sites, cliff dwellings, rock art and medicinal plants, along with uranium and other mineral deposits. Bears Ears was created in 2016 following years of advocacy by the Navajo nation, Hopi tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, Ute Indian tribe and Ute Mountain Ute tribe.

Tribal leaders said they had expected changes after Mr Trump returned to office but were not consulted about the scale of the reductions.

ICT reports Anthony Sanchez Jr, a Pueblo of Zuni Tribal Council member and Bears Ears Commission co-chair, said the decision continued a wider struggle over Indigenous lands and sovereignty.

"When you look at the reduction of Bears Ears, it represents another chapter in the ongoing struggle we have to protect our Indigenous lands, cultural resources, and the sovereignty of tribal nations," Mr Sanchez said.

"A 90 per cent reduction in all these lands is uncalled for, especially when it's involving Bears Ears and Grand Staircase."

Mr Trump argued the monument boundaries were larger than necessary and said the changes returned land to public use. The Native American Rights Fund said it would challenge the Bears Ears decision in



An image is projected on to the US Department of the Interior headquarters as a protest. Picture: AP

court on behalf of the Hopi tribe, Pueblo of Zuni and Ute Mountain Ute tribe.

The organisation argued the Antiquities Act of 1906 allowed presidents to establish national monuments but did not give them authority to revoke or substantially reduce existing monuments.

NARF deputy director Matthew L. Campbell said the decision and termination of the commission were unlawful.

"We will pursue every available legal course of action to stop

these illegal attacks on Native homelands, culture, and people," Mr Campbell said.

"Tribal Nations have protected these lands for generations and they won't stop now."

Mr Trump reduced both monuments during his first term in 2017, prompting lawsuits from tribal nations and conservation groups. Former president Joe Biden restored their boundaries in 2021.

The latest reductions are expected to reopen legal questions over presidential powers

under the Antiquities Act and federal consultation obligations to tribal nations.

Northern Ute youth representative Emerson Hackford told ICT the decision had created grief among communities connected to the monuments.

"I'm scared I'll never be able to get to go out there and speak my prayers in my language again," Mr Hackford said.

Tribal leaders and legal advocates said they would continue efforts to restore protections to cultural and sacred sites.

Decades on, workers finally get compensated for labour

REBEKAH RASMUSSEN

Former Vatukoula gold mine workers and their families received compensation this month, more than three decades after a strike over poor pay and working conditions began Fiji's longest-running industrial dispute.

The strike started in 1991 and continued for 33 years, with 190 workers dying before a settlement was reached in 2024 and a \$9.2 million government compensation program set up.

Fiji's Permanent Secretary for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations, Jone Maritino Nemani, handed over a further 13 compensation envelopes, with seven beneficiaries receiving payments and another six to be paid in the new financial year. The latest payments recognise the decades-

long wait endured by affected workers and families.

"For many of these families, this has been a journey spanning more than three decades," Mr Nemani said.

"No compensation can restore the years they have lost, but today's payments represent Government's commitment to honouring that history and ensuring those affected receive the recognition they deserve."

Workers at the Vatukoula Gold Mine began the strike on February 27, 1991.

The dispute affected generations of workers and their families, many of whom waited decades for their grievances to be formally acknowledged.

The 2024 agreement provided compensation to surviving workers and eligible beneficiaries while affirming the role of international labour standards

in resolving the dispute. Each eligible worker or beneficiary is entitled to receive \$25,000 under the compensation program.

A total of \$7.485 million has been paid so far, with 298 beneficiaries receiving their full entitlement. Five other beneficiaries received an initial payment of \$10,000 before they died. The remaining \$15,000 owed in each of those cases will be paid to their estates once probate proceedings are finished.

A further \$1.515 million remains to be distributed to 63 beneficiaries.

That includes 58 beneficiaries awaiting their full \$25,000 payment and five estates awaiting the remaining \$15,000.

The outstanding payments are subject to probate processes before money can be released to the estates of beneficiaries who have died. The compensation



Former Vatukoula mine workers and beneficiaries at the compensation handover. Picture: Fiji Government

program is intended to recognise the sacrifices made by Vatukoula gold mine workers and provide closure for families who waited decades for the dispute to be resolved.

Each completed payment brings the program closer to resolving the remaining cases.

Mr Nemani linked the handovers to the experiences of the families behind each claim.

"Standing with these families today is a powerful reminder that behind every payment is a story of resilience, perseverance and hope," he said.

"We remain committed to ensuring every eligible beneficiary receives what they are entitled to, so this long chapter in our nation's industrial history can finally be brought to a dignified close."

Test ahead on Wadjemup

HANNAH MCGLADE

The Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Act will be put to the test, with a review recently announced into Wadjemup, also known as Rottnest Island, off the coast of Western Australia.

The Act has typically not protected Aboriginal heritage sites, and reforms — promised after the destruction of Juukan Gorge by Rio Tinto — are yet to materialise.

Noongar people believe Wadjemup is a place of significant heritage, both culturally and historically, and the Federal review is welcomed.

The application for the review was lodged four years ago by Rottnest Island Deaths Group, and the announcement coincides with recent media attention created after human remains, confirmed as Aboriginal, were disturbed during development on the island.

Wadjemup is also a premier West Australian tourist location, with five-star accommodation launched in 2025 that would rival exclusive resorts in Bali.

It is well established that from 1838-1931, at least 4000 Aboriginal men were sent to Wadjemup in cruel, inhumane conditions, not long after the Swan River colony was established in 1828.

At Wadjemup they laboured in quarries to build the Quod, or prison, which housed them, and holiday island facilities including the Governor's house used by British colonists and gentry.

Aboriginal men were also paroled out of Wadjemup to serve on pastoral stations and in the pearling industry as divers. It's estimated hundreds of Aboriginal men died on the island, and at least 400 died from execution, disease and illnesses, but the true number of men and boys who died there is unknown.

These men and boys were



The remains of an Aboriginal ancestor found on Wadjemup were laid to rest in May. Picture: Ronan O'Connell

incarcerated through racist colonial laws, including ones that forced them under "assignment" to work for British landowners, often in the pastoral industry.

Slavery was key to the expansion of the British empire and lawful until the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, and this ideology also prevailed in the Swan River colony that forced Aboriginal people into unpaid work.

Any resistance was criminalised and punished, particularly by way of incarceration at Wadjemup. The Roundhouse prison in Fremantle and the Wadjemup Quod prison are architecturally unique 12-sided buildings resembling slave buildings on the west coast of Africa.

Aboriginal activists, Noongar people, protested at the island in the late 1980s, forming the Rottnest Island Deaths Group and organising Statewide meetings of cultural Elders in 1990 and 1994. They said Wadjemup was a death camp

that should be returned to Aboriginal people. The Burial site must be closed off, the Quod should be a museum of remembrance, and land should be set aside for Aboriginal people for cultural purposes.

These calls were rejected even though former premier Richard Court acknowledged the Wadjemup Aboriginal burial site as the largest mass burial site in Australia. And still, this shocking history was hidden as the burial site was used as a tourist camping ground known as Tentland and the Quod was converted into hotel accommodation, with plans for a luxury resort ignoring the building's cruel history.

In recent years we saw a State commitment to Truth-telling at Wadjemup. In 2018 the State agreed the Quod would no longer be used for accommodation and its heritage would be recognised.

In 2024 a Truth-telling process culminated in a ceremony where the Premier

apologised for the history of incarceration at the island.

Notwithstanding, the Aboriginal heritage of the Island remains at risk and in need of protection. Further, the calls from the 1994 Statewide meeting remain outstanding.

This year the Rottnest Island Authority launched a "Stretch" reconciliation plan, assisted by an Aboriginal advisory group, but avoided Aboriginal calls for World Heritage listing that would ensure stricter heritage measures were put in place.

The Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation, positioned as a key partner in land heritage through an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, has alleged governance issues which have drawn the attention of national regulator the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations. Furthermore, responsibility for Wadjemup is wider than WAC and extends to all Noongar people and Aboriginal people across the State who experienced the impacts of colonial genocide



Aboriginal men held prisoner on Wadjemup in 1889. Picture: State Library of WA

associated with Wadjemup.

Wadjemup and the Quod building can be compared to the Fremantle prison, which in 2010 became the first building in WA to be included on the World Heritage List as part of a nomination with other Australian convict sites. It's also recognised on the National Heritage list.

While most members of the RIDG have now passed on, their families met at the island recently with the federally appointed reviewer and saw first-hand the considerable developments at Wadjemup that lacked any apparent Aboriginal agreement, management and oversight.

This was concerning, and highlights that Aboriginal heritage at Wadjemup needs greater protection and Aboriginal governance.

The Rottnest Island Authority and the State purport a commitment to Reconciliation and Truth-telling, but at the same time are failing to ensure Wadjemup's cultural heritage significance is properly protected, in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people — thus highlighting the conundrum with this dual process of Reconciliation and Truth-telling, used in such a way as to effectively negate Aboriginal rights, and assuage white guilt without substantive engagement or systemic reform needed to effect genuine and real change.

Dr Hannah McGlade is a Kurin Minang human rights expert and law academic

Group urges First Nations education

This is a statement from the Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Education Network Forum

Utyerre Apanpe brought together more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, cultural leaders, knowledge holders and academics from 36 Nations on Arrernte Country.

Across all our Nations, First Nations education systems continue to live. We are working to protect, revive and strengthen these systems so our children can access high-quality education that reflects who they are and grows them strong in culture, language and Country.

We walk in the footsteps of our ancestors and recognise the urgency of this work while

our Elders are still with us and as we carry responsibility for future generations.

Our educators include Elders, cultural knowledge holders, teachers, Rangers, traditional healers and those with cultural authority for land, language and lore.

The evidence is clear: the mainstream education system is failing our children.

Our communities are calling for real reform, not changes, to the mainstream system.

They are calling for the establishment of a national First Nations education system, led and governed by our people and grounded in



Attendees at the 2026 Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Education Network Forum. Picture: Children's Ground

each Nation's right to design and deliver education for their children. Language is central to our identity and must be fully supported, especially as we move through the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Our curriculum must be determined by our communities, grounded in First Nations culture, language, lore and knowledge, alongside English and global

knowledge. Utyerre Apanpe is a national network that welcomes all First Nations educators, cultural leaders, knowledge holders, organisations and communities. It is an open invitation to others who share this vision to walk alongside us as we strengthen First Nations education.

We cannot wait for another generation of children to be failed or another generation of

Elders to pass. We have presented a Roadmap for Reform, and call on the minister for education and the minister for Indigenous Australians to meet with us urgently to progress a self-determined First Nations education system for Australia.

This statement was prepared by the Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Education Network Forum, July 3 2026, Mparntwe / Alice Springs.

NAB deal a boon for projects

DAVID PRESTIPINO

Arnhem Land Fire Abatement NT has struck a major deal with National Australia Bank, which executed its biggest single purchase of Australian carbon credit units this month.

The carbon transaction presents a long-term commercial commitment to First Nations-led land management and support for Traditional Owners and rangers to combine cultural knowledge with modern tools in five Arnhem Land fire projects.

The agreement gives NAB access to about 150,000 high-quality ACCUs until 2031, reducing its reliance on annual spot market purchases.

Krista Baetens of NAB's executive markets team said the transaction would benefit both

parties at a time when demand for carbon credits was rising.

"This agreement directs long-term demand toward Indigenous-generated credits and gives greater certainty to projects delivering environmental, cultural and economic benefits on Country," she said.

"The partnership with ALFA NT enables us to work with a First Nations-owned organisation delivering projects that combine cultural knowledge, land management, emissions reduction and economic empowerment."

Ms Baetens said strengthening NAB's supply of premium ACCUs would improve its management of carbon exposure.

"Australia's carbon market has continued to evolve in recent years, with increased spot



Arnhem Land Fire Abatement NT's sale of carbon credits to NAB helps fund many of its ranger programs. Picture: ALFA NT.

liquidity and the development of more active forward and options markets," she said.

ALFA NT uses revenue from Indigenous savanna burning ACCUs to operate six Arnhem Land fire management projects led by Traditional Owners and rangers, combining customary knowledge with modern tools.

Indigenous savanna burning ACCUs involve planned, low-intensity burning early in the dry season, preventing unplanned high-emissions wildfires later in the season.

ALFA NT chief commercial officer Adrian Enright said the NAB partnership was critical to long-term certainty for the organisation's activities.

"Every dollar from the sale of ACCUs is reinvested into land and cultural management,

employing over 300 Indigenous rangers, training and community priorities," Mr Enright said.

"As Australia's carbon market continues to mature, organisations are increasingly seeking long-term partnerships that deliver certainty, integrity and enduring impact.

"Together with NAB, we've created a partnership that provides long-term supply certainty through one of Australia's most trusted sources of high-integrity carbon credits, while creating enduring environmental, cultural and economic outcomes across Arnhem Land."

The transaction contributes to demand for Indigenous-generated carbon credits and supports continued investment in projects led by Traditional Owners.

Changes to policy aim to empower businesses

GIOVANNI TORRE

The Federal Government has moved to strengthen the eligibility requirements of the Indigenous Procurement Policy to "help ensure economic benefits are flowing to First Nations people as intended", Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy announced this month.

Under the updated eligibility criteria, businesses wanting to access Commonwealth contracts under the IPP will need to be 51 per cent or more First Nations-owned and controlled (up from 50 per cent); or registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations.

A transition period began on July 1 to support businesses to understand the eligibility changes, review their arrangements, and take the necessary steps to ensure they align with the new requirements.

Also as of July 1, the target for the Commonwealth and portfolios to buy from First Nations businesses has increased to 3.25 per cent. It will continue to rise by 0.25 per cent each year until it reaches 4 per cent by 2030. Senator McCarthy said strengthening the policy "is about ensuring First Nations people are not just participating, but genuinely leading and benefiting from the success of IPP contracts".

"By moving to a 51 per cent ownership and control requirement, we are backing First Nations entrepreneurs to exercise full authority over their businesses," she said.

Since 2015, the IPP has seen more than 91,000 Federal contracts worth more than \$14.2 billion awarded to more than 4900 First Nations businesses.

However, some Indigenous businesses and business peak bodies have voiced doubts regarding other Federal "economic empowerment" measures and the pace of reform.

Last August the Australian National Audit Office found between 2016 and 2023 the majority of large Federal contracts designed to support Indigenous employment and enterprise had failed to comply with core requirements of the IPP. The Federal Government said the new changes would help ensure First Nations people are "empowered to run their businesses and exercise their rights as majority owners, supporting economic self-determination".



Rowena Backlar, Marley Bowden, Maribeth Sexby, Miranda Kelly, Arabella Douglas, and Rebecca King. Picture: Kate Nutt Photography

Program gives women entrepreneurship skills

CALLAN MORSE

A program is empowering Aboriginal women to establish businesses and lead environmental and cultural heritage protection on Country on New South Wales' North Coast.

Currie Country Social Change's Empowering Women for Country: Building Skills in Cultural and Heritage Protection pilot program is equipping 16 Aboriginal women with skills in leadership, and business and communications, as well as providing certifications in cultural heritage, drone operation, first aid and 4WD safety.

The women receive wraparound support including ongoing mentoring, cultural connection

and intergenerational knowledge transfer to help them launch and sustain their businesses.

They also receive training and guidance to establish micro-businesses delivering environmental management and cultural heritage services grounded in Aboriginal knowledge.

The program is supported by a more than \$148,000 investment from the NSW Government.

Currie Country Social Change CEO Arabella Douglas said the State Government's funding was "helping build a First Nations women-led ecosystem of environmental, cultural and community enterprises that support one another to grow, lead

and respond to the long-term challenges of climate, community resilience and caring for Country".

"The program recognises that women are already leading in environmental management, regeneration, community care and cultural education, and it simply backs their leadership and creates pathways for long-term economic independence and impact," she said.

NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris said the Government was committed to closing the gap by supporting culture and Aboriginal-led businesses across the State.

"Programs like this will help equip Aboriginal women with the tools they need to boost their

local economies and preserve their culture now and into the future," he said.

NSW Minister for Women, Jodie Harrison said Currie Country Social Change's pilot "is an innovative, culturally grounded initiative that draws on intergenerational Aboriginal knowledge to equip women with additional skills to protect Country and cultural heritage".

The pilot is part of the State Government's wider support of women's participation and advancement which includes supporting women in business grants, investing in women grants and the Women-Owned Enterprises Australia Supplier Network.

Inspiring great outcomes

GIOVANNI TORRE

Three new members were appointed to the board of Indigenous Business Australia this month, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise.

The new board members — who will all serve as directors — are Jessica Bulger, Bronwyn Dodd and Krista Dunstan.

Ms Dodd told National Indigenous Times she sees listening and learning as vital aspects of the job.

The Ngarrindjeri woman from South Australia has more than 20 years of leadership experience across banking, housing, health and community services.

“I have had the privilege of leading across banking, government and the not-for-profit sector, always with a focus on creating better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” Ms Dodd said.

“Throughout that journey, I have seen the transformative impact that economic participation can have for individuals, families and communities.”

Ms Dodd said as a new IBA director, her “priority is to listen, learn and contribute thoughtfully alongside the chair, my fellow directors and management”.

“I am particularly focused on supporting IBA’s strategy execution, drawing on my experience across banking,



New IBA directors Bronwyn Dodd, Jessica Bulger and Krista Dunstan. Picture: IBA

government and governance to help strengthen opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through business, home ownership and investment,” she said.

“My role is to provide strong governance, strategic oversight and constructive challenge, while supporting IBA to deliver meaningful and lasting economic outcomes for the communities it serves.”

Ms Dodd said “economic empowerment is one of the most powerful drivers of self-determination”.

Ms Bulger, a Wiradjuri woman from NSW, is a senior fellow in the practice of man-

agement at the Australian National University’s College of Business and Economics.

She said she would like to see the narrative around Indigenous business continue to shift to one that focuses on excellence. “We are so used to conversations being about disadvantage and deficit, when the reality is that we’ve always participated in economies and built businesses,” she said.

“In the course that I teach at ANU... we start with economies before European contact. We look at trade between northern Australia and Indonesia, and the evidence of commodities exchange, value addition, and

sustainable resource management. It’s to establish that we were always participants in trade, who understood economy and value, and we always understood governance. I’d like us to be seen not just as participants but as owners, employers, investors, innovators, intellectual equals and institution builders capable of teaching the broader system a thing or two. It’s clear that Indigenous businesses are some of the fastest-growing and most community-connected businesses in the world.”

Ms Bulger said she and many others had been inspired by the generations before them.

Ms Dunstan, a Noongar woman from Western Australia, has more than 15 years’ experience in law, governance and public policy.

She is currently chief executive officer of Port Hedland Industries Council and has held senior roles in government and the corporate sector and has extensive board and strategic leadership experience across Aboriginal affairs and energy transition sectors.

“I have always been passionate about creating opportunities where Aboriginal people can genuinely participate in, influence and benefit from Australia’s economy,” Ms Dunstan said, adding that the appointment is “a tremendous honour”.

“I’ve been fortunate to work across law, government, international trade and investment, major industry, infrastructure and Aboriginal governance, and each of those experiences has reinforced the same lesson: lasting economic outcomes are achieved when First Nations people are owners and partners in decision-making, not simply participants in consultation,” she said.

“My priority is ensuring IBA continues to be an organisation that creates practical pathways to economic independence, with an expanded reach.”

The directors will serve on the board on a part-time basis for a period of four years.

Partnership puts beef on miners’ dinner tables

GIOVANNI TORRE

Premium Kimberley beef is on the menu at remote mining villages in Western Australia thanks to a partnership between Kimberley Agricultural and Pastoral Company (KAPCO) and Sodexo Australia.

The 100 per cent Indigenous-owned and managed cattle enterprise runs 40,000 head of cattle at its four pastoral stations in the Kimberley.

Since coming on board as a Sodexo supplier, demand for KAPCO beef has grown. It is now served at remote mining

villages in WA and the Northern Territory, bringing the “paddock to plate” story directly to resource workers, while helping embed KAPCO in a complex food services environment.

“After reading about KAPCO just over a year ago we reached out to them and, within days, were exploring how their beef could become part of our supply chain,” said Adrian Lorenzin, Sodexo Australia senior director, tech, supply and services.

Mr Lorenzin said the partnership reaffirmed Sodexo’s commitment to strengthen Indigenous participation across

its food supply chain, while supporting economic activity across regional Australia.

“The beef is a very popular item on the menu at our villages’ cook-to-order grill service. It’s a great example of how Indigenous business participation can be integrated into everyday operations as part of a long-term supply chain strategy, all while creating meaningful impact.”

The beef is processed at Rum Jungle Meatworks in the NT, close to KAPCO’s pastoral stations. It means cattle are processed close to their point of origin, reducing time and freight

costs and delivering fresher, more affordable beef locally.

For KAPCO, the relationship has created greater supply certainty and opened new pathways for growth through broader industry connections. The partnership also went beyond direct procurement. Sodexo introduced KAPCO to Thomas Foods International, Sodexo’s primary meat processor and supplier, creating access to a larger customer network.

KAPCO director Robert Watson said Sodexo’s support is “an important milestone as it has helped build commercial part-

nerships that are creating genuine opportunities”.

“KAPCO Beef stands on the quality and flavour of the product, but having partners like Sodexo and Thomas Foods behind us makes a real difference,” Mr Watson said.

Sodexo Australia said its vision for reconciliation is to “create lasting, positive change by embedding those values into every aspect of our work, from how we hire and partner, to how we learn and lead”.

Note: KAPCO chair Wayne Bergmann is a co-owner of the National Indigenous Times.

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Procurement issues revealed

GIOVANNI TORRE

The NSW Ombudsman's report on the NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy published this month found some progress, but also inconsistent implementation across agencies, limited transparency, concerns around compliance by agencies and head contractors, and concerns of Black cladding.

NSW Treasury data indicates the total spend by agency groups to Aboriginal businesses under the APP consistently exceeded the one per cent addressable spend target between July 2021 and June 2025.

In that time, the cumulative target was about \$868 million, and the actual spend reached \$1.6 billion.

The key objectives are to support employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and promote sustainable growth of Aboriginal businesses by driving demand via NSW Government procurement of goods, services and construction.

In compiling the NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy: Implementation Assessment report, the NSW Ombudsman consulted with the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, NSW Coalition of

Aboriginal Regional Alliances, the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, Supply Nation, NSW Yarpa Hub and the NSW Aboriginal Business Taskforce.

"There is widespread support among stakeholders we engaged with for the intent and objectives of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, providing a foundation of trust and goodwill to build upon," NSW Ombudsman, Paul Miller said.

"The policy is viewed by stakeholders as an integral lever for supporting the growth of Aboriginal businesses, employment opportunities, and encouraging economic prosperity within Aboriginal communities."

However, while stakeholders expressed strong support for the APP and spoke positively about the NSW Treasury's 2023 review of it, the report found its impact was "constrained by inconsistent implementation across agencies, limited transparency, and concerns around compliance by agencies and head contractors".

The report noted NSW Treasury failed to deliver on its commitment to publish a revised APP within the expected time frame after the 2023 review.

NSW Treasury advised the timing for the release of an updated APP was guided by

broader government priorities, including the development of the Local Jobs First Bill 2026.

Issues highlighted in the Ombudsman's report included inconsistency in implementation, capability and access gaps, limited cultural capability among procurement officers, and insufficient regional engagement.

Additionally, there remained perceptions among stakeholders of compliance and integrity risks, including Black cladding — a term for disingenuous or unlawful conduct aimed at taking advantage of Aboriginal businesses and people or misleading buyers.

The NSW Ombudsman has made recommendations across four key reform areas to strengthen and sustain the APP's impact.

Recommendations include publishing information on a revised APP that adopts targets that are both ambitious and achievable, with an indicative time line for implementation.

The Ombudsman has also recommended strengthening reporting and transparency of Aboriginal procurement, enhanced auditing processes, and mechanisms to address Black cladding and other forms of misconduct.



Driver and support officer, Travis Alice, facilitator Elizabeth McMillan, and lead facilitator Rose Pondi at the hub.

Education on Country

DECHLAN BRENNAN

The first of seven remote training hubs planned across Central Australia opened in the remote community of Santa Teresa / Ltyentye Apurte this month.

Part of the Federal Government's \$30 million initiative to expand access to education and employment pathways for First Nations people, the hub will provide on-Country education and skills training for residents of Santa Teresa and nearby Aputula (Finke), Titjikala and Amooinguna.

The Government said the network of seven hubs would address longstanding barriers preventing people in remote communities from accessing training, including distance, travel costs and caring responsibilities, by delivering accredited courses closer to home through a community-led, culturally

appropriate model. Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy said delivering training on Country would make education more accessible.

"Remote training hubs will help break down those barriers by bringing training on Country, making it easier for people to build skills and take up employment opportunities in their communities," she said.

The hub will offer accredited training pathways alongside foundation education in language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills, with cultural mentoring embedded throughout the program.

Federal Member for Lingiari Marion Scrymgour said access to training should not depend on where people live.

"We want to see people get access to the training they need to secure real jobs and meaningful employment," she said.

Skin protection blends with traditional knowledge

CALLAN MORSE

Queensland's Binda Botanicals is producing high-quality, ethically made sunscreen which combines traditional Indigenous knowledge with modern manufacturing methods.

The Magandjin/Brisbane-based Indigenous-owned business has developed a vegan sunscreen range produced using 100 per cent organic Australian ingredients.

SPF50 certified and dermatologically tested, Binda's products provide broad-spectrum ultraviolet protection while remaining reef-safe to help safeguard marine ecosystems from harmful chemicals.

Binda Botanicals managing director and founder Wade Krueger said sun safety was important for everyone and all skin types.

"I know and appreciate the health disparities experienced by First Nations people, and Binda is my commitment towards better health outcomes," he said.

"There have been significant consumer concerns recently as to the validity of sunscreen SPF ratings.

"It's very important that Binda maintains our commitment to the highest quality standards and appropriate certification."

Mr Krueger said Binda Botanicals is the result of the values he learned from his adopted family and the culture he reconnected with through his Ma:Mu heritage.

"Swimming and days at the



Indigenous-owned Binda Botanicals produces high-quality, ethically-made sunscreen products.

beach were a big part of my childhood growing up in Redcliffe," he said.

"Mum would absolutely cover my brother, sister and me with sunscreen, without fail.

"She would put it on us but forget about herself.

"If our products help protect families from the experiences my mum went through while creating opportunities for First

Nations communities, then we're achieving exactly what we set out to do."

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with an estimated 17,000 Australians diagnosed with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, in 2025.

More than two in three Australians are expected to be diagnosed with some form of skin

cancer during their lifetime.

Supporting communities is another cornerstone of the business, regularly donating products to First Nations organisations, community events and sporting activities to help people stay protected.

Binda Botanicals' ingredients are not animal-derived, and the business opposes animal testing, ethically sources materials,

and uses recyclable packaging.

Through a partnership with Seven Clean Seas, Binda Botanicals also contributes to the removal of plastic waste from the world's oceans.

The range includes sunscreen products for babies and children, face and body sunscreen enriched with native Kakadu plum, and mosquito protection products.

Men’s health partnership

Aboriginal men in Hedland will have greater access to culturally safe health and wellbeing support through a new partnership between Fortescue and Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation.

The two-year, \$200,000 partnership will support Wirraka Maya to develop and deliver a men’s health program shaped by local needs, cultural values and community leadership.

Wirraka Maya is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation providing culturally appropriate primary healthcare services across Port Hedland, South Hedland and surrounding communities.

The program will support Aboriginal men to connect with health promotion, wellbeing and support services in a culturally safe setting.

It will also support the engagement of a male liaison officer to lead program development and delivery, and progress work towards establishing a men’s drop-in centre.

Local male Elders will be consulted as the program is developed to help ensure it reflects community priori-

ties and is grounded in cultural knowledge and local leadership.

Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation CEO June Councilor said the program would provide an important space for support to be accessed in a culturally safe way.

“We can build on our existing work and continue to respond to local needs, strengthen social and emotional wellbeing, and support better outcomes for Aboriginal men and their families,” she said.

Fortescue director of approvals, communities and services Rosli Wheelock noted Wirraka Maya was “trusted by the local community because it understands what works and what people need”.

“We’re proud to support a program that’s being designed by the community, for the community,” he said.

“By backing local leadership and culturally safe care, we hope more Aboriginal men feel comfortable seeking support, looking after their health, and staying connected to their community.”

This report was produced with the support of Fortescue.



Fortescue’s superintendent community Laura Hawes with Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation CEO June Councilor.



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	15/2176	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	3BL	34.9km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 15' S Long: 121° 4' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2182	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	2BL	58.3km SW'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 15' S Long: 120° 40' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2183	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	2BL	59.3km SW'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 18' S Long: 120° 42' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2184	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	16BL	41km SW'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 11' S Long: 120° 50' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2185	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	1BL	38.8km W'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 30° 56' S Long: 120° 45' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2186	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	1BL	37.2km W'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 30° 57' S Long: 120° 46' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	15/2187	BULLABULLING OPERATIONS PTY LTD	3BL	40.4km W'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 30° 58' S Long: 120° 44' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	20/1107	ODYSSEY GOLD (WA) PTY LTD	4BL	42.1km NE'ly of Cue	Lat: 27° 5' S Long: 118° 5' E	CUE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	45/7310	MINING EQUITIES PTY LTD	48BL	61.3km S'ly of Telfer	Lat: 22° 15' S Long: 122° 12' E	EAST PILBARA SHIRE
Exploration Licence	57/1494	NORMANDY MINERALS PTY LTD	7BL	125.3km S'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 29° 5' S Long: 118° 59' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	57/1495	NORMANDY MINERALS PTY LTD	12BL	117.5km S'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 28° 59' S Long: 118° 53' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3368	KARROUN HILL RESOURCES PTY LTD	18BL	116.1km NE'ly of Mukinbudin	Lat: 30° 0' S Long: 118° 49' E	YILGARN SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3369	KARROUN HILL RESOURCES PTY LTD	6BL	133.1km NE'ly of Mukinbudin	Lat: 29° 52' S Long: 118° 54' E	YILGARN SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3370	KARROUN HILL RESOURCES PTY LTD	56BL	131.7km E'ly of Paynes Find	Lat: 29° 36' S Long: 118° 59' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3371	KARROUN HILL RESOURCES PTY LTD	56BL	135.3km SE'ly of Paynes Find	Lat: 29° 43' S Long: 118° 58' E	MENZIES SHIRE, YILGARN SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	26/4865	FLEMING, Leo Glenn	199.50HA	27km SE'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 57' S Long: 121° 37' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	77/4704	GEKO EXPLORE PTY LTD	139.87HA	6.8km N'ly of Marvel Loch	Lat: 31° 24' S Long: 119° 28' E	YILGARN 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 exploration licences, which authorises the applicant to explore for minerals for a term of 5 years from the date of grant. **Notification day: 29 July 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 **29 October 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. 29 November 2026**), 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



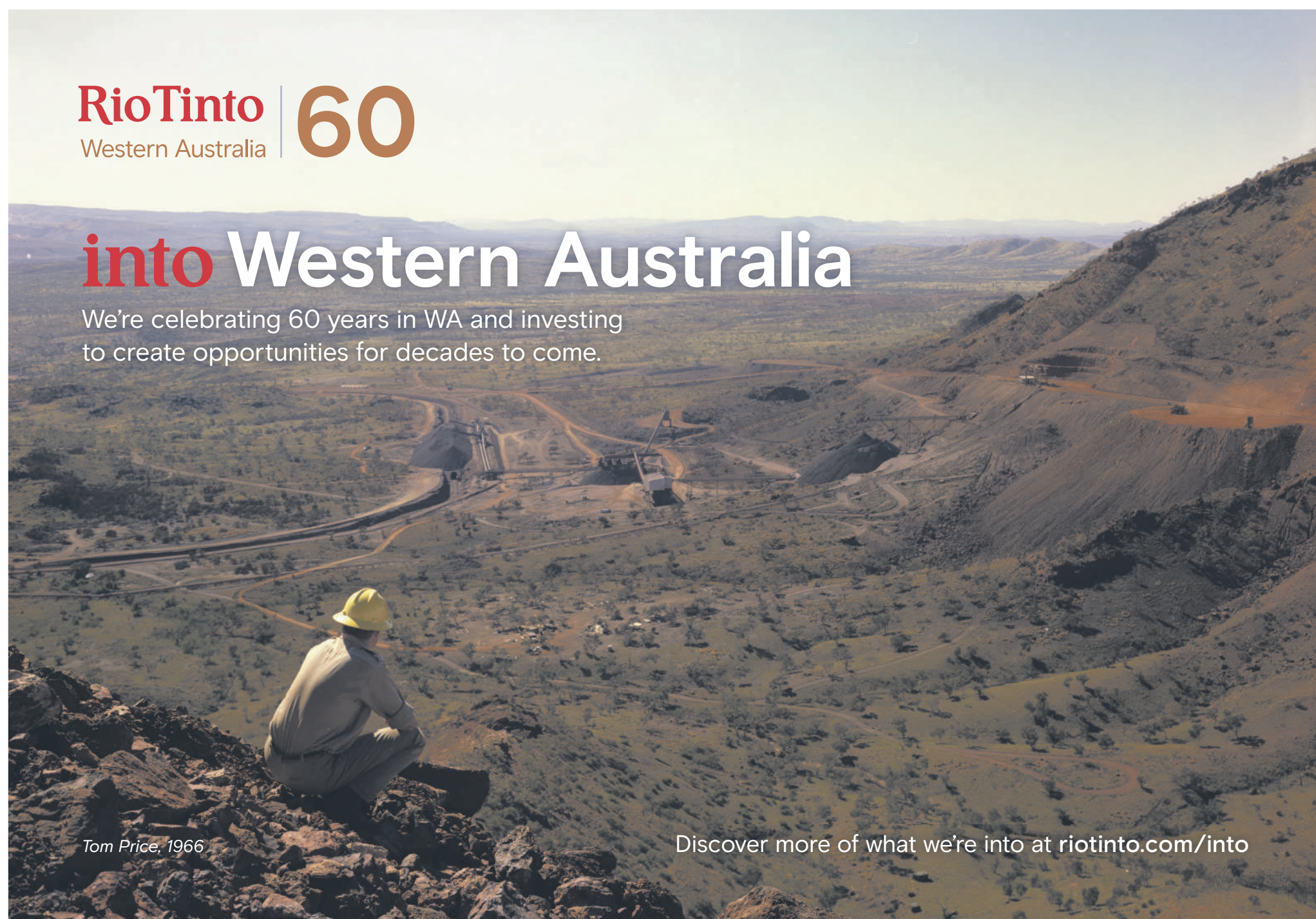
NOTICE TO GRANT MINING TENEMENTS

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
Mining Lease	16/602	GREENSTONE RESOURCES PTY LIMITED	121.17HA	24.2km SW'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 33' S Long: 120° 56' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Mining Lease	16/603	GREENSTONE RESOURCES PTY LIMITED	122.09HA	23.7km SW'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 33' S Long: 120° 56' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Mining Lease	24/1027	RICCIARDELLO, Kenneth	10.36HA	3.4km N'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 20' S Long: 121° 2' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Mining Lease	29/465	AURENNE MIT PTY LTD	319.98HA	76.1km NW'ly of Menzies	Lat: 29° 9' S Long: 120° 32' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Mining Lease	38/1331	REGIS RESOURCES LIMITED	861.50HA	71.2km N'ly of Laverton	Lat: 27° 58' S Long: 122° 21' E	LAVERTON SHIRE
Mining Lease	38/1332	REGIS RESOURCES LIMITED	2942.47HA	112km N'ly of Laverton	Lat: 27° 40' S Long: 122° 1' E	LAVERTON SHIRE
Mining Lease	38/1333	HANNA, James Samuel	74.28HA	21.4km NW'ly of Laverton	Lat: 28° 27' S Long: 122° 17' E	LAVERTON SHIRE

Nature of the act: Grant of mining leases, which authorises the applicant to mine for minerals for a term of 21 years from notification of grant and a right of renewal for 21 years. **Notification day: 29 July 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 **29 October 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. The mining tenements may be granted if, by the end of the period of 4 months after the notification day (**i.e. 29 November 2026**), there is no native title party under section 30 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) in relation to the area of the mining tenements. 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.



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SPORT

Boxing project reveals healing powers

NATASHA CLARK

Elijah Murray can name friends from the Fitzroy Valley in Western Australia's Kimberley region who he believes should still be alive.

After losing them to suicide and addiction, he created a boxing gym where local men can train, talk and find support before crisis hits.

"Growing up here in the Fitzroy Valley, you experience a lot," Murray, a proud Walmarjarri and Gooniyandi man, told National Indigenous Times. "You might not be able to make your bed in the morning, or brush your teeth at night, but you can come in here and do boxing, and it just shows you it's possible to do something that will help you get outside of yourself."

The free boxing gym called Hot Box'n, which will offer seven-days-a-week access and classes taught by Murray in Fitzroy Crossing, was born from his own mental health struggles and what he witnessed among young men in the region. At 18, Mr Murray was on track for a football career, climbing the ranks at Clare-

mont colts in Perth and tipped for higher honours. Injuries derailed his ambitions, leaving him isolated in the city, drinking and struggling with his mental and physical health.

"I was an 18-year-old boy who had moved away from home thinking his footy was going to work out, but it didn't. I ended up drinking and getting overweight," Murray said.

"But when I found boxing, it really helped me. I quit drinking and got fit and felt better."

Now 26, Murray claimed a unanimous win in his debut at Dragon Fire Boxing's Thunderdome 54 in Perth. He faces Mike Clash at the next Thunderdome event on August 28.

Murray also works as a men's empowerment program officer at the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre.

KALACC funded the gym and equipment, while the Fitzroy Valley men's shed, Gurama Yani U, supplied the space.

WA Health and Mental Health Minister Meredith Hammat welcomed Murray's project, saying community-led programs were important in supporting cultural safety and wellbeing.



Elijah Murray in his Hot Box'n gym in Fitzroy Crossing. Picture: Natasha Clark

"The connection between physical health and mental health is vital, and access to active spaces for play, physical activity and exercise is important in supporting that connection," she said.

Men's Shed chairperson Ishmael Croft, a senior support worker at Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, said exercise and human connection could help break cycles of addiction and poor mental health.

"My uncle had this metaphor which I apply to my work: addiction is like a whirlpool. You stop finding belonging or purpose, and then that lifestyle sucks you down and strips you of your potential," Mr Croft said.

Supporting men in the Fitzroy Valley is personal for Mr

Croft. "In 2006, we lost almost 60 people in the Fitzroy Valley to either suicide or drug and alcohol-related deaths," he said.

"People died from things that could have been prevented if they had the right education, proper support and access to the right services."

The Australian Human Rights Commission later reported 55 funerals in the Fitzroy Valley in a single year, 13 of them suicides. Community leaders called for a coronial inquiry, and in 2008 then-WA State coroner Alastair Hope handed down findings into 22 Aboriginal deaths in Fitzroy Crossing and elsewhere in the Kimberley, many linked to self-harm, alcohol and drug use.

More than a decade after the Hope inquest, another coronial inquiry examined the deaths of

13 Aboriginal children and young people across the Kimberley between 2012 and 2016. The findings, delivered in 2019, determined 12 had died by suicide, while an open finding was made in the remaining case.

Murray says substance abuse in the Fitzroy Valley is often fuelled by pressure to fit in. "In some young people, there is a pressure in Fitzroy Crossing to be drinking on the weekend, smoking ganja every day, always having a cigarette," he said. "When truly, that's not our culture. It's just developed recently in Fitzroy Crossing."

He sees the gym as a place for men to heal. "This is a safe place for men to come and speak their mind, to let us know what's happening in their life, and to find a boxing bag," Murray said. "You'll feel better after."

Six talented athletes making their Games debut

JARRED CROSS

Within Australia's contingent at Glasgow are six First Nations athletes, all making their Commonwealth Games debut.

15-year-old Gumbaynggirr and Gamilaraay rising star Lexie Brown is set to become Australia's youngest-ever track and field competitor at the games in the T47 100m Para Athletics. She is joined by Bri-

seis Brittain, Layla Sharp and Thomas McGough in making their debut in athletics. Brown has several national age records, having claimed bronze in the 4x100 mixed relay at the 2025 World Championships.

Ganalbingu and Ndjebana para-athlete Brittain, 18, started her journey in the remote Arnhem Land community of Ramingining. She's an All-Schools event and Nationals

gold medallist, and is competing in the women's 200m T38. Sharp, 18, joined Brittain in the New Delhi 2025 T38 400m final in her Australian team debut, and has since made the shift to long jump. The Biripi and Darug woman leaped 4.86m to set a national T38 long jump record in the lead up to competing in the event from next week.

15-year-old Palawa sprinter Thomas McGough is the second

youngest male to compete for the country in track and field at the Commonwealth Games in close to 100 years. He'll race in the men's 100m T38.

Paris Olympian and Wakka Wakka man Calab Law makes his Commonwealth debut in the men's 200m sprint and men's 4x100m Relay. Law took home bronze in the men's 200m final at the Australian Athletics Championships earlier this

year. He was one of 11 Indigenous athletes who represented Australia at the Paris Olympics two years ago.

Ngarigo man Lachlan Lawson, 22, will hope to build on a round of 16 finish at last year's amateur boxing World Championships in Liverpool. Lawson is a multi-time national champion and moves up to the heavy-weight (90kg) class for his Commonwealth Games debut.