

NIT

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES



COUNTRY TO COUTURE

Top designs in the
Top End Pages 12-13

PROMISES, PROMISES

Will Labor walk the walk on economic empowerment?

GIOVANNI TORRE

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance have announced the establishment of a First Nations Economic Partnership.

The Coalition of Peaks said the agreement aimed to “advance economic empowerment and lasting economic security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations”.

It said it was a clear example of holding the Government “to account for its commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap . . . to share power, centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and fundamentally change the way governments work with our communities”.

Lead convenor Pat Turner said the partnership was a chance to shift the balance from government to communities driving economic development.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been clear for decades that our community-controlled organisations are the best employers of our people, providing the foundation for our economic development,” Ms Turner said.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy said “economic empowerment is about self-determination and creating opportunities”.

“Prescribed bodies corporate are critical partners for Traditional Owners, the first point of contact in commercial negotiations and strong vehicles for First Nations economic empowerment,” she said in regards



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Treasurer Jim Chalmers at the economic round table in Canberra. Picture: Mick Tsikas

to Federal funding announced for the bodies.

The Federal Government also announced \$31 million for 12 mobile TAFE services in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, States and Territories to deliver training on Country, with a focus on skills for jobs in construction, maintenance, health care, hospitality, resources and renewable energy.

While welcoming the agreement, the Coalition of Peaks noted “they know from experience everything depends on it being implemented properly”.

“The National Agreement (on Closing the Gap) has not had the impact it should have

because many jurisdictions are not implementing it properly and not fulfilling their commitments. The Peaks will do their utmost to make sure all the partners to this agreement are held accountable,” the coalition said.

AN EXERCISE IN OPTICS

Independent Victorian senator Lidia Thorpe slammed the PM’s “annual excursion to Garma” as having become “an exercise in optics”.

The Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung senator said “cash for the corporations and a few utes are crumbs on the table while so many of our people are dying in custody, and governments continue to steal

and jail our children at record rates”.

Indigenous businessman Wayne Bergmann warned the Government’s vow to pursue economic empowerment is “nothing new” and could prove to be an “empty promise”.

Mr Bergmann, co-owner and executive chair of the National Indigenous Times, noted that “successive governments — Labor and Liberal — have promised this, but failed to institutionally implement change to make a difference”.

“The Government’s commitment . . . could be implemented through the Native Title Act by enshrining in law minimum standards for agreement making; providing guidelines for

compensation, training, employment and meaningful participation,” he said.

Mr Bergmann said that as chairman of the COAG working group on Aboriginal Economic Development and Land Tenure reform in 2014, it was clear to him there was no consistent model for agreement-making in Native Title or land rights.

Mr Bergmann, a former chief executive of the Kimberley Land Council, said public funds were being handed over to developers, including for projects that primarily benefit foreign-owned entities, with only a request they make “best endeavours” to engage with

CONTINUED PAGE 3

Still off track for many Closing the Gap targets

GIOVANNI TORRE, CALLAN MORSE & JOSEPH GUENZLER

A new Productivity Commission report has found the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is on track to meet only four of 19 targets, reigniting calls for structural reform and greater power-sharing with Indigenous communities.

Commissioner Selwyn Button said the Annual Data Compilation Report revealed “the limited progress of governments in collectively acting on the priority reforms: sharing decision-making and data with communities; strengthening the Aboriginal community controlled sector; and changing the way governments operate”.

“The recently released independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review of the Agreement and the PC’s 2024 Review both show that the transformational change that governments committed to is falling well short of what has been promised,” he said.

Key data

The commission was able to assess progress for nine targets since the last ADCR.

Outcomes are continuing to worsen in four targets: adult imprisonment; children in out-of-home care; suicide; and children developmentally on track (in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census).

Outcomes are improving but targets are not on track to be met in six targets: life expectancy; healthy birthweights; year 12 or equivalent qualifications; tertiary qualifications; youth engagement; and appropriately sized housing.

Outcomes are improving and targets are on track in four targets: preschool program enrolments; employment; and land mass and sea country subject to legal rights and interests. Outcomes for one target were assessed as having no change from the baseline year: youth justice.

The commission said it was still unable to assess progress against four targets: access to essential services; family violence; number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken; and digital inclusion.

Performances varied among the States and Territories. Every State and the ACT recorded “improvement for most targets” while the Northern Territory showed “improvement for some targets”. Victoria was going backwards on one target, NSW on two, WA, South Australia, and Queensland on three, Tasmania on four, and the NT was worsening on eight targets.



Picture: Mick Tsikas

Reactions

Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, said the reports are an important transparency mechanism and “drive accountability”. “I am pleased that nationally we are seeing improvements in 10 of the 15 targets with data,” she said.

“However, it is very concerning that we are still seeing outcomes worsening for incarceration rates, children in out-of-home care and suicide. That’s why I’m working through Joint Council to drive greater action and effort by all governments, in partnership with First Nations people, to turn these targets around.”

Senator McCarthy said it was “important that State and Territory governments all back in their commitments under the National Agreement with actions that will help improve outcomes for First Nations people”.

Shadow minister for Indigenous policy, Senator Kerryne Liddle, said the report “paints a stark picture of no meaningful positive change to the lives of Indigenous Australians”.

“The gap is widening, not closing . . . The four targets going in the wrong direction in 2024 — incarceration, suicide, children in out-of-home care and children commencing school developmentally on track — are still going backwards,” she said. “Data is too often missing. For four targets, including family

safety, the numbers are unreliable and outdated. Only 10 of the targets had updated figures.”

The senator said the Federal Government “has no credible strategy and no obvious pathway to close the gap”.

“To improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we need greater emphasis on transparency, accountability and outcomes,” she said.

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory expressed “deep concern” at the outcomes in the NT.

“This report serves as a stark reminder that the current approach isn’t working for the Northern Territory, and it is not delivering the change our communities need, particularly for the next generation,” AMSANT chief executive Dr John Paterson said.

Dr Paterson said across the board, whether in health, education, housing, or other critical areas, governments had to ensure all action reflects the values of sharing power and giving Aboriginal people a voice, as demanded by the National Agreement.

SNAICC — National Voice for Our Children chief executive Catherine Liddle said the results point to “a lack of government follow-through, not a lack of solutions”.

“The update makes it clear that these results are not the failings of our children, families or communities. They are the fail-

ings of governments who continue to fall short on their obligations under the National Agreement,” she said.

“The update shows that when governments work in true partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we see real change. Progress in areas like land rights and employment shows what’s possible when communities are empowered and governments step up. These improvements . . . have been driven through governments working directly with our communities and backing Aboriginal-led solutions.”

The National Indigenous Health Leadership Alliance said the latest data “confirm what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long said: governments are not doing enough to meet their own commitments, and the gap is growing — not closing — across many critical areas”.

“We are seeing the consequences of government inaction; the data speaks for itself,” NIHLA chair Karl Briscoe said.

“The evidence is clear: the failure is not with our communities, but with the lack of systemic change. We cannot wait any longer. Structural reform, cultural safety, and shared decision-making must become the default, not the exception.”

Calls for greater commitment from all governments

Queensland Aboriginal and

Islander Health Council chief executive Paula Arnol said the data “continues to demonstrate a lack of focus on delivering priority reforms, and the need for local practical solutions to the challenges of Closing the Gap”.

“If we commit to these priority reforms, improvement in the targets will follow.”

NT-based First Nations organisation Children’s Ground said the data adds to growing evidence indicating the National Agreement was falling short of delivering structural reform.

“This reality is killing our people and our culture. Our children continue to be locked up and our families put under enormous stress,” Children’s Ground chair William Tilmouth said.

“We are years into this agreement, and the pattern is clear. Governments are choosing to maintain systems that harm our children and families . . . While this inaction continues, children are being taken away and young people are being locked up.”

Mr Tilmouth called for government to show more trust in community-led solutions “grounded in evidence and already demonstrating impact”.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service chief executive Jake Smith said more needs to be done to support Aboriginal youth who come into contact with the child protection and youth justice systems.

SALES CONTACT

Ads Manager:
adsmanager@nit.com.au
0408 638 138
Print ads must be confirmed by Tuesday prior to print

EDITORIAL CONTACT

Editor:
Giovanni Torre,
editor@nit.com.au, 0437 989 411
Business Editor:
Reece Harley, reece@nit.com.au
Lifestyle: styleup@nit.com.au

CIRCULATION

Distributed on the last Tuesday of each month in The West Australian in WA, and the last Wednesday of each month in The Courier-Mail, The Daily Telegraph, Adelaide Advertiser, NT News, The Mercury and The Herald Sun.





Malarndirri McCarthy and Lia Finocchiaro. Picture: Mick Tsikas and (A)manda Parkinson

Justice policy slammed

DECLAN BRENNAN

A mounting chorus of Indigenous leaders, legal advocates, and families is calling for urgent reforms in the Northern Territory's justice system, as punitive youth justice policies fuel a growing incarceration crisis.

The family of the late NT Supreme Court Justice James Henry Muirhead — a key figure in the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody — this month wrote to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, urging him to override the Territory's "regressive actions".

They condemned policies enacted since the Country Liberals came to power, including lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 10, reinstating

spit hoods, and expanding mandatory sentencing. "They punish the vulnerable, fuel cycles of trauma and recidivism, and ignore decades of research into what actually works to build safer communities," the family's statement read.

"Despite knowing full well that punitive measures alone will fail, the NT Government is responding to public fears by adopting policies that can only be about optics rather than outcomes."

It mirrored comments by National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss, who criticised the overhaul of the Youth Justice Act, warning its punitive reforms would further traumatise vulnerable children

and entrench cycles of disadvantage. "We should not be further damaging young people and any hope they may have for a better future by introducing harsher measures that don't actually make communities safer," Commissioner Kiss said.

NT Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro has defended her Government's policies, saying she makes "no apologies" for toughening up a "broken system", arguing she expected "the usual offender apologists to criticise our efforts".

Community Justice Not Jails has protested outside the overcrowded Palmerston and Alice Springs watchhouses, labelling conditions there "Third World". Detainees, mostly Indigenous, have endured cramped cells (up to 17 people), no showers, inadequate sanita-

tion, and been deprived access to basic facilities for days.

A JNJ spokesperson said NT prisons were "so overcrowded that sentenced prisoners are being crammed into the Alice Springs Watchhouse, which is a facility never meant for long-term detention".

The First Peoples Disability Network denounced the policy of reviving spit hoods in youth detention as "a dehumanising policy of torture", especially for children with disabilities.

"Reintroducing the very instrument that symbolised the horrors of Don Dale is deeply disturbing . . . This is the continuation of the criminalisation of disability, compounded by racism."

FPDN warned the changes directly contravene national and international protections

including Closing the Gap targets and UN conventions.

"These children are being punished for the State's own neglect . . . Our children need healing and disability support, not more cuffs, hoods and concrete walls."

Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Malarndirri McCarthy has indicated the Commonwealth may consider using its funding leverage — nearly 80 per cent of the NT budget — to push for changes.

"The balance of incarceration is far outweighing efforts to keep the community safe," she told Sky News.

"In Alice Springs, nearly half the prison population is on remand, many of them children who haven't even had a chance to face court. That is a human rights issue we cannot ignore."

Fears new agreement will be 'the past repeated'

FROM PAGE 1

Traditional Owners. "It is smoke and mirrors to say companies have an Indigenous engagement strategy when there are no consequences for not achieving fairer and more equitable outcomes," he said.

Mr Bergmann said he had seen it all before. "Traditional Owners were engaged at the end of the business development proposal when Wesfarmers was looking at a large-scale irrigation project in the East Kimberley. The failure to have the meaningful conversations at the front end of the due diligence meant the project was delayed for years and wound up in the High Court . . . Resulting in key parcels of land that were central to the development

ending up with exclusive possession Native Title," he said. "These promises feel like a repeat of the past. First Nations people whose lands have been used to extract minerals that have built the national and global economy are not at the table with the Prime Minister and Treasurer."

Mr Bergmann noted procurement targets and other minimum standards for Indigenous engagement were missing from "large parts" of Federal contracts and programs.

In June it was revealed an Audit Office probe of Federal contracts since 2016 found Indigenous employment rules were dropped in two-thirds of cases, translating to \$70 billion worth of contracts not

being required to meet the minimum requirements. Shadow minister for Indigenous Australians Senator Kerryne Liddle called for a full review of the policy, including how Indigenous businesses are defined for procurement purposes.

ECONOMIC ROUND TABLES

Federal authorities held meetings this month on economic policy, including in Naarm/Melbourne, Boorloo/Perth and Darwin on Larrakia Country, with, in the Government's words, "Traditional Owners, leaders from the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, business figures, academics, and entrepreneurs".

The Federal Government said the aim of the First Nations round tables

was to have Indigenous perspectives inform the national economic reform round table in Canberra on August 19-21. Concerns were raised regarding how meaningful the engagement was at the highest level.

"A large part of Australia's economic wealth is derived by industries operating on Indigenous land — land on which there is Native Title, land rights, an Aboriginal interest. To increase productivity and do development . . . it requires Traditional Owners' land. You can't create productivity in some of the major growth sectors without the conversation about Indigenous interests," Mr Bergmann said.

However, on Thursday, at the end of the three-day round table hosted in Canberra, Treasurer Jim Chalmers

spoke on issues raised at the event, but made no mention of Indigenous business, land rights or Native Title.

A MAMMOTH CHALLENGE

Mr Bergmann said more than 200 years of excluding Indigenous people from the broader economy had created a "mammoth challenge".

"The Prime Minister's words at Garma were welcome, but in the next step the Government has failed to engage Aboriginal people and businesses as part of the real conversation about the economy, compounding the legacy of more than 200 years of exclusion," he said.

National Indigenous Times contacted Dr Chalmers' office for comment.



BILLION OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Last financial year, we spent \$975 million
with First Nations businesses.

**\$111,000 PER HOUR,
EVERY HOUR,
FOR 365 DAYS.
THAT ADDS UP.**

That's Billion Opportunities.
Lean more here



fortescue.com

Data shows First Nations women face the largest pay gap

ALEXANDRA GIORGIANNI

A study by Jobs and Skills Australia published this month revealed First Nations women have the largest gender pay gap in the country, with Indigenous women earning 65¢ for every dollar earned by men in the general population.

New Perspectives On Old Problems is the first of three papers in JSA's Gender Economic Equality Study. It found that regardless of the pay gap measure or benchmark used, First Nations women have the highest gender pay gaps nationwide.

Measured over 10 years, the pay gap for Indigenous women was 38.1 per cent — more than 7 per cent bigger than for women generally. The report explained this statistic was born from the intersection of gendered and racial discrimination, which combine to create large barriers to economic equality.

"Intersectional insights show nuanced policy actions are needed to address significant sources of compounding gendered and racial discrimination in the world of work, education and training — particularly for First Nations females in this country," the report reads.

Professor Nareen Young is the director of the University of Technology Sydney's Centre for Indigenous People and Work, and collaborated with JSA on the study. She reinforced the importance of data-driven action.

"We have long called for intersectional pay gap data like this to be collected and monitored because metrics matter as 'what gets measured gets done'," she said.

Professor Young said the concentration of First Nations women in female-dominated fields perpetuates the pay gap.

"And we know that female-dominated occupations often pay less than male-dominated occupations," she said.

Professor Young said the pay gap has a flow-on effect on First Nations' social and economic well-being, impacting their economic independence and self-determination. "It impacts on the ability of First Nations women to access decent housing, provide for their children's education and give their families the best start in life," she said.

Professor Young said the issue is rooted in the historic mistreatment of First Nations women. "The forced labour, stolen wages and indentured work ... is linked to their culturally specific skills in Aboriginal communities being undervalued when it comes to wages," she said.

Despite this, some progress has been made by First Nations women. "Increasingly, our women are breaking through the glass ceilings into commercial leadership, working in non-traditional roles or starting their own businesses," she said.



First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria co-chairs Ngarra Murray and Rueben Berg alongside Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan.

Treaty draws near to final completion

DECHLAN BRENNAN

Victoria is moving closer to finalising Australia's first State-wide Treaty, a landmark agreement which would formally recognise and embed shared decision-making with First Peoples.

After years of consultation, community engagement and negotiations, the wording of the draft agreement is near completion, marking one of the final steps in a process that has taken nearly a decade.

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria — the democratically elected body leading the State's Treaty process — and the Victorian Government gave an update this month, confirming the Treaty Bill will be introduced to Parliament once talks are complete. It is understood the draft Bill could be pres-

ented to Parliament in coming days; however, the timeline is not locked in and will depend on approval from both the First Peoples' Assembly and Cabinet. Victorian Parliament resumed sitting on August 26.

The latest negotiations included plans to set up a First Peoples Institute to build leadership capacity, improve public understanding of Treaty, enable sharing and trading of existing water entitlements between First Peoples, and consider traditional place names for some geographic features.

"Treaty is a pathway to acknowledging the past and making real, practical change to achieve better outcomes for First Peoples in Victoria and close the gap," a joint statement said. Assembly co-chair Ngarra Murray has said Treaty is about "making sure Aboriginal

communities right across this State always have the ability to come up with and deliver practical solutions at their local level".

"That's why we've been holding negotiations across Victoria, so we can bring communities into these big conversations and make sure they are grounded in local knowledge," the Dja Dja Wurrung, Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta and Dhudhuroa woman said.

The joint statement cited the latest Productivity Commission report, which found governments had underestimated the work needed to close the gap, urged shared decision-making with First Peoples, and praised Victoria's Treaty process. "These developments in negotiations are the latest on a long and steady path that Victo-

ria has been walking for nearly a decade towards achieving Australia's first Treaty," the statement read.

This year, the Victorian Government confirmed plans to establish the First Peoples' Assembly as a statutory corporation and permanent body "to provide advice to government and make decisions over matters that affect First Peoples".

Former Treaty commissioner Aunty Jill Gallagher welcomed the move, telling the Herald Sun at the time: "The most important thing is we have an independent voice, which can start making and monitoring government policies and hold them to account."

Shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs Melina Bath said: "We do not support a treaty, (nor) a Victorian version of a Voice to Parliament."

Family distress as dying man restrained

GIOVANNI TORRE

This report contains the name and image of a person who has died.

The family of Noongar man Darryl Patrick Riley, who died in custody aged 52, two weeks after being diagnosed with cancer, are asking why his condition was detected so late, and why he was kept in shackles even when on his deathbed in Albany Health Campus, having been transferred from Albany Regional Prison.

Mr Riley's aunt, Jennifer Riley, told National Indigenous Times he called her on July 15 to tell her about the diagnosis he'd just received.

"I asked him what was wrong and he told me they had told him he had cancer," she said. His cousin Cheryl Riley said she drove more than 270km to Albany with Jennifer and another aunt to see him.



Jennifer Riley said Mr Riley, pictured, was distressed about being in restraints: "He was complaining about it all the time. They had

them on his legs as well, and he asked if they can take them off — but they said no, it was up to the prison system.

"They said we could not take it off him because he was still walking a bit, to the toilet and back. They had to have the shackles still on him," Cheryl Riley said. "The only time they would take them off him was when he couldn't move off that bed; more or less unconscious."

Cheryl Riley said their last visit with Mr Riley when he was conscious was on July 28.

"We went there from 10-12. We had a couple hours with him. He was sitting up with us yarning and laughing. Then in the afternoon we went back at 6pm, that night, he was down. He was not responding at all. And they still had him cuffed to the bed, until we got a phone call, around 9.30, 10 o'clock, we got a phone call to say 'remove the cuffs'."

Mr Riley's relatives visited him again the following day and he was still unresponsive. He was then put into hospice care and died in the early hours of July 30.

"The main thing now is the duty of care of the prison. How come they didn't pick this up?" Cheryl Riley asked. "Don't they have tests in jail for anything medical?"

"The duty of care was lacking. The inmates reported his health condition was changing.

Cheryl Riley said "a lot of things

(need to change)" in the prison system. "They should be more alert about people when they're sick — not just ignoring it," she said.

"It is happening too many times, deaths in custody ... If this had been detected in the early stages, he might be still alive."

Mr Riley's family said they wanted him to be remembered as a person, not a statistic.

"He was a loving person, from a little fella up to being a man. He got on with people and he loved his family," Cheryl Riley said.

The WA Department of Justice said Mr Riley suffered a medical episode on July 20 and was taken to the hospital, where he died on July 30. A spokesperson said the department did not comment on circumstances surrounding a matter that was subject to a coronial inquest.

DECHLAN BRENNAN

Indigenous justice advocates have condemned new laws proposed in South Australia this month, warning they will criminalise children and make communities less safe.

The State, which currently records some of the lowest crime rates in the country, is expected to debate the legislation in the upcoming parliamentary sitting.

The Government says the laws are aimed at gangs and recidivist young offenders.

Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement chief executive Klynton Wanganeen said the laws would unnecessarily funnel more children into the justice system, in which Indigenous kids are over-represented.

He argued that the Government was pursuing “extreme legislation that will not prevent crime and will harm our children”, despite South Australia’s low crime rate.

“The South Australian Government is focusing on political point-scoring, and Aboriginal children will suffer as a result,” Mr Wanganeen said.

The Narungga and Ngarindjeri man said the Bill would “overturn core legal protections”, including the presumption of innocence, incarceration as a last resort, and the right to bail. He said it would also allow “police control orders for children as young as 10 years old based on what they wear, who they associate with,

Concern new SA laws will criminalise young people

or even based on allegations that haven’t been proven”.

“This sounds like a free pass for our kids to be racially profiled and targeted,” he said.

“The Bill will lead to more Aboriginal children being thrown into jail. Not only is this damaging for the child, but it actually increases the risk of them cycling in and out of detention, both as a child and as an adult. So it harms children and makes the community less safe.”

The State Government has defended the proposal, saying it is narrowly targeted. A spokes-

person told InDaily in July the laws “only apply to gangs that exist for the purpose of committing serious criminal offences”.

“There is no legislation being proposed in South Australia which would criminalise the wearing of the Aboriginal colours,” the spokesperson said.

“We are particularly concerned about a reported trend of adults recruiting children to become involved in criminal activity. This is why the draft Bill includes a specific offence for recruiting another person to become a member of a street gang.” National Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Legal Services general manager Melissa Clarke said South Australia had joined other States in harmful lawmaking, ignoring evidence, and the voices of Indigenous communities.

She said the State had entered the “race to the bottom”.

“The evidence is clear; investing in support that prevents children from interacting with the justice system in the first place is the answer,” Ms Clarke said.

“The South Australian Government must work with Aboriginal leaders and com-

“

The South Australian Government is focusing on political point-scoring, and Aboriginal children will suffer as a result.

Klynton Wanganeen

munities, and child, medical and legal experts to design youth justice responses that value care, support and prevention over control to ensure the best outcomes for our kids and communities.”

SA Attorney-General Kyam Maher has previously said the laws were developed in consultation with police.

“These reforms are all about cracking down on street gangs by giving police greater powers, similar to what they have for outlaw motorcycle gangs, to keep the South Australian community safe,” he said.

The Government’s Young Offender Plan notes in 2023–24, just 20 young people were responsible for 11 per cent of all charges in the Youth Court.

It has also pledged \$3 million over three years through the Justice Rehabilitation Fund for specialised initiatives designed to “target recidivism amongst the cohort of serious repeat young offenders and provide effective diversions from the criminal justice system”.

Julimar-Brunello Plug & Abandonment (P&A) 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.

Julimar-Brunello Plug & Abandonment (P&A) Environment Plan

Woodside proposes to undertake activities to permanently plug and abandon (P&A) a number of subsea exploration wells in permit area WA-49-L, including:

- Permanent P&A of three wells using a Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU).
- Remediation (i.e. removal or isolation) of Non-Water-Based-Mud (NWBM) in the annulus of one additional well.
- Vessel-based preparation and support activities (e.g. wellhead cleaning and inspections, pre-laying of moorings and blowout preventer (BOP) tethering equipment, recovery of moorings and tethering equipment).
- Cutting and recovery of wellhead infrastructure at or below the mudline following P&A or recovery by vessel at a later date.

Environment that May Be Affected (EMBA)

The EMBA is the largest geographic area where unplanned activities could potentially have an environmental consequence. The whole EMBA will not be affected.

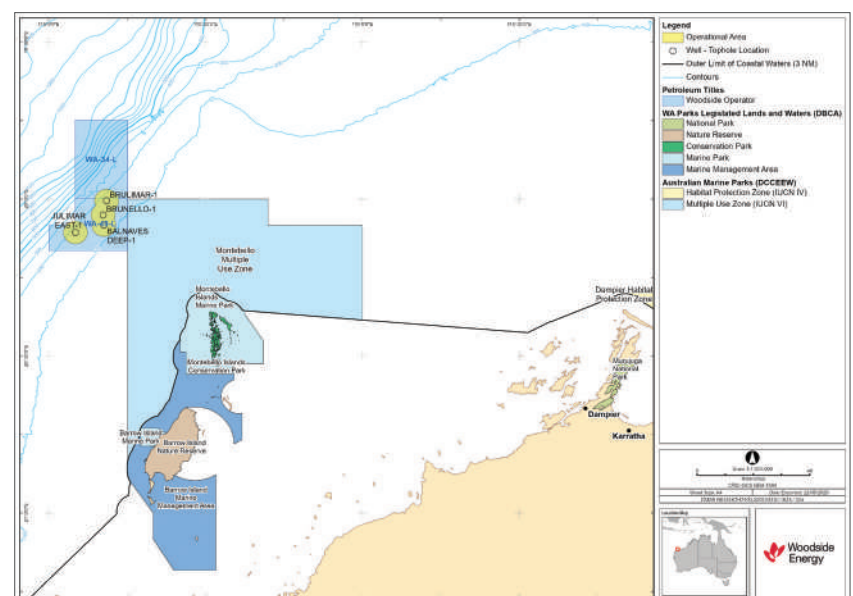
We would like to hear from you

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 want to hear from you by **8 September 2025**.

To find out more go to:

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

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



consultation@feedback.woodside.com

Toll free: 1800 442 977

woodside.com

Tributes flow for Wiradjuri champion

JARRED CROSS

Friends and family of Wiradjuri Elder, land rights hero, Tent Embassy figure and Aboriginal Legal Service founder, the late Paul Coe, honoured his legacy and memory at his funeral on August 14.

Mr Coe died aged 76 on July 29. More than a dozen loved ones spoke at his funeral across a two-hour service.

The legacy was celebrated and memories were shared of a “true Wiradjuri warrior”, “giant” amongst Aboriginal heroes, and “fierce”, “proud” and “strong” father, uncle, grandfather and friend.

Delivering the eulogy, Paul Coe Jr spoke of his father’s early years, born in a time of discriminatory policies, journeys across stock routes in Eastern Australia “away from an oversight of mission management and the various churches who sought to indoctrinate Wiradjuri” and deepening of his understanding of country, culture and lore.

Mr Coe was born in 1949 at Erambie Mission in Cowra to his parents, staunch Aboriginal

rights and land rights activists Les and Agnes.

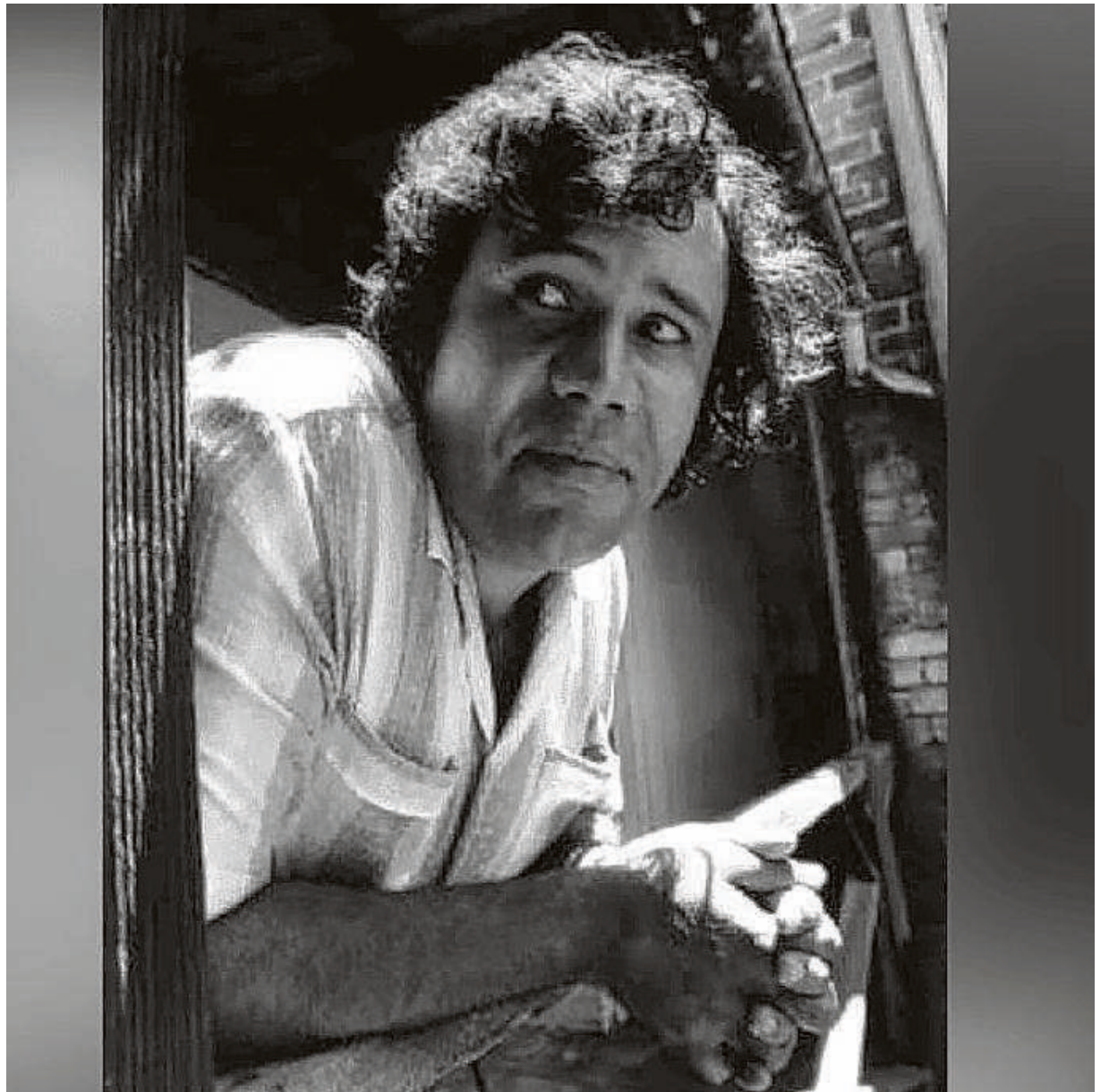
His funeral was held on Country at the site of the mission.

He was the first Aboriginal scholar at Cowra High School to not only pass the Higher School Certificate, but also be elected a prefect, and later, one of the first Aboriginal barristers in Australia’s history after being the first Indigenous person to study law at UNSW.

While at high school, Mr Coe joined the cadets — later leaving after seeing his uncles denied entry to an RSL club.

Paul Jr also spoke of his father’s beginnings in the fight for Aboriginal rights in a time when “Aboriginal populations were voiceless”, like his father, and subjected to violence, and his involvement in the Black Power movement. The impact and legacy he had on the Redfern community after moving to Sydney was remembered.

Mr Coe’s legal action lodged against the Commonwealth for the dispossession of land from the Wiradjuri people and establishment of the Aboriginal Legal Service were also spoken of.



Paul Coe Picture: NSW Aboriginal Land Council

While the case was dismissed, it laid the foundation for the successful 1992 Mabo judgment that recognised and overturned the terra nullius status.

“We remember Paul as fearless in the face of a system that had taken so much from those he held dear in the fight for Aboriginal self-determination and sovereignty,” Paul Jr said.

“He was unwavering, a true Wiradjuri warrior. He chal-

lenged systemic racism head on.”

Mr Coe was also remembered as a talented sportsman, an inspiration and a loving man.

“He was fierce and he was proud and he was strong, but more than that, he was warm and he was loving. He was kind and he was generous,” his son Liam Coe said.

Auntie Jenny Munro said he was “a giant among the heroes”.

Author and academic Irene Watson detailed her work with Mr Coe. “He was all the things that I loved in all of my old people,” Professor Watson said.

She added Mr Coe’s legal work against the colonial claim of terra nullius, is a “task many of us continue with to this day, and it is one of his greatest legacies”.

Mr Coe’s granddaughter said “you have changed the trajectory for our people forever”.

Outrage at ‘dangerous’ bail laws

DECHLAN BRENNAN

The Victorian Government’s second tranche of new bail laws has been criticised by legal and Aboriginal groups, who warn the changes will push more vulnerable people into prison.

The Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 expands earlier changes with a “second strike” rule for those who reoffend while on bail and a tougher test, and will apply to both adults and children.

Critics say the Bill creates a form of “automatic pre-trial detention”, forcing even those accused of non-violent offences to clear a higher bar than people charged with murder or rape.

“This Bill is irresponsible in the context of escalating remand numbers, deplorable prison conditions and a corrections system at breaking point,” a coalition of Aboriginal and legal organisations said in a joint statement. The coalition, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Human Rights Law



A protest against the proposed bail changes. Picture: Jarred Cross

Centre, Koorie Youth Council and others, labelled the new laws a “disaster waiting to happen”. They said the changes replicated NSW’s high-denial model, where over 90 per cent of Aboriginal children are refused bail, and ignore the root causes of offending.

VALS chief executive Nerita Waight called the reforms “bad, ill-informed, (and) dangerous”, warning they risk Aboriginal lives for political gain.

Koorie Youth Council chief executive Bonnie Dukakis said children would be hit the hardest.

“The number of Aboriginal children and young people behind bars has skyrocketed since the last piece of poorly thought-out bail reform,” she said. Human Rights

Law Centre First Nations director Maggie Munn called the laws “dangerous” and “discriminatory”.

Meanwhile, the corrections system is buckling under pressure. The Dame Phyllis Frost Centre women’s prison has faced lockdowns amid staff shortages and recorded multiple suicide attempts. The Government argues the laws reflect community concern about repeat offending.

But critics say harsher bail laws won’t make communities safer.

“Reactive and punitive responses are only likely to further entrench young people in the criminal justice system rather than keep the community safe,” Law Institute of Victoria criminal law co-chair Jarrod Behan said.

Deep concerns raised over Alcoa expansion

GIOVANNI TORRE

Bibbul Ngarma Aboriginal Association sounded the alarm this month over what it called “the continued expansion of mining by Alcoa and others in the jarrah forests of Noongar Boodja”, especially in the Mundaring Weir drinking water catchment.

Last Thursday the BNAA said “community and scientists alike have serious concerns” about Alcoa’s activities relating to drinking water, health and “the irreplaceable loss of environmental, cultural and social values”. “Our forest is the only jarrah forest in the world. We have already lost over 50 per cent of it in less than 200 years, and the remainder is under enormous pressure,” it said.

“We know that in 2023-2024, Alcoa contributed 0.4 per cent of WA’s government revenue and 0.3 per cent of WA jobs.

“However, we cannot find any independent cost benefit analysis that properly considers all of the environmental, cultural and social losses as well as the economic gains of Alcoa’s continued expansion.” The BNAA said Alcoa had cleared 280sqkm of forest in the past 60 years, and

now wanted to clear another 110sqkm.

Association chairperson and Noongar Elder Walter McGuire said Noongar people “have lived here in this land for millennia, drinking from all the freshwater streams, rivers and creeks”.

“Now in 2025, no one can drink safely from our rivers without treatment,” he said. “We are also deeply concerned about impacts to archaeological and cultural heritage sites and their likely damage and destruction.”

A spokesperson for Alcoa told National Indigenous Times the company “acknowledges the cultural significance of Noongar and historic heritage in the areas where we operate and we are committed to protecting cultural heritage” across its operations. “While Alcoa has indicated that some low-impact exploration could potentially take place within the Shire of Mundaring, this does not indicate an intention to mine in the area,” they said. “Since commencing mining operations in WA in 1963, Alcoa has carried out rehabilitation works, guided by government requirements of the day, on more than 75 per cent of areas cleared for mining.”

GIOVANNI TORRE

The Federal Government this month appointed Australia's first permanent National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.

Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy and Social Services Minister Tanya Plibersek announced Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter will take on the role, commencing later this year.

A proud Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman, Professor Hunter brings more than 20 years of experience in the family services sector, including senior roles at SNAICC – National Voice of Our Children, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and as a social worker. She was a commissioner and deputy chair of Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission; Australia's first truth-telling commission.

Professor Hunter will replace Lil Gordon who has performed the role of Acting Commissioner since January.

The interim role was established after a long campaign by advocates and experts calling for its creation to better represent the interests and wellbeing of Indigenous children nationwide.

Professor Hunter said: "I am honoured to accept this appointment ... with the responsibility to ensure our systems are working to protect the wellbeing, rights and interests

Kids aren't just statistics, says leader

of children and young people." "I recognise that we are at risk of losing another generation to systems that fail them, to removal, out-of-home-care detention and a bleak future," she said.

"The work is urgent and the statistics are grim. But our children are not statistics, they are our future. This role will elevate their voices and their concerns. They will be at the centre of everything I do."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more than 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care compared to non-Indigenous children and are 27 times more likely to be in youth detention.

Recent releases from the Productivity Commission show Closing the Gap Target 12 — to

reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care — is not on track to be met and is getting worse.

The Federal Government described the status quo as "clearly unacceptable" and vowed to work with States and Territories to "make sure children have the best start in life".

The Federal Government said it is working in partnership with State and Territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to deliver Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031.

Senator McCarthy said Professor Hunter will be "a fierce advocate for First Nations chil-

dren and young people as Commissioner, and I look forward to working with her".

"The number of First Nations children in out-of-home care and youth detention is deeply distressing and will take a collective effort to turn the figures around," she said.

"Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap all governments have committed to reducing these rates, and States and Territories must redouble their efforts.

"I commend SNAICC for their lengthy advocacy for the establishment of a commissioner position to ensure First Nations children's rights are respected and protected. I also thank Lil Gordon for her work as Acting Commissioner."

SNAICC chief executive

Catherine Liddle said the new Commissioner brings direct experience of the child and family sector to the role.

"We know she will bring a strong and fearless voice as National Commissioner," Ms Liddle said.

"Having this announcement as we celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (August 4) highlights the importance of having our voices, especially the voices of our children, front and centre if we are to close the gap. The (National) Agreement (on Closing the Gap) gave us the levers to get the long-held aspiration for a National Commissioner committed to by the Federal Government. This is real system-change.

"Commissioner Hunter now needs to be supported by strong legislation that will empower her to help reverse increasing trends of our children entering out-of-home care and youth justice systems. It's time we all get serious about protecting, not further punishing, some of the most vulnerable children in the country."

SNAICC chair Muriel Bamblett said Ms Hunter has an "outstanding record" of standing up for the rights of children and families.

"She held a leadership role at SNAICC where she advocated strongly for the National Commissioner position, so to see her appointed to a role she worked hard to make a reality is especially gratifying," Ms Bamblett said.

BHP

BMA

BHP Mitsubishi Alliance

"Giving them someone to look up to.
To me that's big!"

Discover how the Clontarf Foundation is helping mentor young Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander men to become the best versions of themselves.



STYLEUP

FASHION, BEAUTY & LIFESTYLE

Shakiah and Jaminey
Weatherall wear items
by designer Rowena
Morgan of Nangarri
Designs. Picture:
Marley Morgan

First Nations fashion, art and music celebrated on Larrakia Country

Country to Couture and
Indigenous Fashion
Awards — Pages 12-13
National Indigenous
Music Awards — Page 11
NATSIAAs — Page 15

Light shines on group designs

PHOEBE BLOGG

Bula'bula Arts Centre collaborated with Black Cat Couture this month on a new collection showcased on the Country to Couture runway.

Art Centre manager Mel George and Black Cat Couture designer Marcia Russell spoke glowingly of the collection, the artists, and how their relationship has creatively developed.

"Marcia has built upon a stronger, more trusting relationship with Yolngu artists, allowing for bolder ideas and greater risk-taking. Together, we've refined our approach to better honour the artists' voices and talents, resulting in a collection that is both grounded in tradition and completely unique," George told Style Up.

She said more than 20 artists were involved in either the hand painting or weaving components. "Coming into the collaboration with a strong concept — Garkambarryirri (Daybreak) — and a clearer understanding of one another has allowed space for more playful, creative expression.

"While Bula'bula Arts is

known as a deeply traditional art centre, the silhouettes in this collection are bold, playful, and full of character; pushing boundaries while remaining grounded in the integrity and richness of Yolngu culture."

Russell said the theme and collection name came from the Bula'bula artists. "Each outfit incorporates at least one panel that is hand painted by an artist, or artists, consistent with the theme. The collection starts with the concept of dark to light — daybreak and the promise and anticipation of a new day," she said.

"There is sparkle, beautiful embellishments, and we have some really special accessories too. The clothes are designed to be worn, but they are completely bespoke and would be impossible to replicate."

"As a designer/dressmaker the creative challenge has been coming up with clothing designs that incorporate 'panels' suitable to showcase each artist's work. Many of these panels have taken several days to paint; they are exquisite and I've had to consider the time that it takes each artist to create work on a panel. From a design perspective this has

added complexities I've not had to consider before."

Russell said she "absolutely loved spending extended time out on country working alongside the artists.

"I know they have really enjoyed seeing their art evolve into something that can be worn and showcased in a three-dimensional way," she said. "The opportunity to collaborate with the incredibly talented First Nations artists at Bula'bula Arts and incorporate their work with my skills and creativity is an absolute privilege. It's been really positive to build upon our first collection experience and be able to be more adventurous — for example some of our garments incorporate the artwork of several artists which has resulted in some really dynamic and exciting pieces."

Russell noted that Country to Couture has evolved from a grass-roots local runway show to a world-class fashion event.

She would love to see more collaboration on the Country to Couture runway, as it provides exposure and opportunities for remote artists, art centres and designers.



From the 'Garkambarryirri' (Daybreak) collection. Picture: Dylan Buckee

HANCOCK IRON ORE

Atlas Iron and Roy Hill
coming together as one.

Building on a legacy of collaboration,
determination, and resilience.
Carrying forward a shared ambition to be
the best mining company for Australia.

HANCOCK
IRON ORE

FOR AUSTRALIA

NIMAs celebrate Blak music

NICOLE BROWN

On Larrakia Country, the big season winds of gurrulwa guligi moved softly through the Darwin Amphitheatre on the night of August 9 as Indigenous music's brightest stars were recognised at the National Indigenous Music Awards.

Emily Wurramara (artist of the year), Andrew Gurruwiwi Band (best new talent), and Barkaa (album of the year for *Big Tidda*) were among the luminaries honoured with awards, and Jessica Mauboy was inducted into the NIMAs Hall of Fame.

It was the grand finale of a week in which Darwin became the beating heart of Blak creative excellence in this country.

For days, the city was alive with the vibrancy of the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, the Indigenous Fashion Awards, and the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. The 2025 NIMAs, presented by YouTube, brought it all home.

The night began with the deep hum of the yidaki and the graceful movements of the Larrakia dancers. A smoking ceremony swirled over the crowd, grounding everyone in place and time.

Hosts, Elaine Crombie and Ben Graetz, brought warmth and humour to proceedings.

Wurramara's win as artist of the year was greeted with a roar. Her songs, sung in both Anindilyakwa and English, hold the tides and the spirit of her island home.

"There's nothing like coming back home and being here and playing for mob and playing for the people," the Garramilla/Darwin-born Warnindhilyagwa singer said. "Because the music is about the people. The music is freedom. Free Palestine, free Congo and free all Indigenous peoples around the world from their oppressors. It always was, always will be Indigenous land."

Later in the evening, she returned to accept the film clip of the year gong for her piece *Lordy Lordy*. In addition to



First Nations musician Emily Wurramara. Picture: Tony Mott

their best new talent award, the Andrew Gurruwiwi Band had the crowd swaying during an earlier performance of their Yolnu funk tunes.

By the time they came back to accept song of the year for *Once Upon A Time*, their place in people's hearts felt certain.

Album of the year *Big Tidda* is a fierce, unapologetic body of work that speaks to strength, truth, and survival, and Barkaa's live performance was a moment to remember, the amphitheatre alive with her voice and her fire.

In one heartfelt moment, community clip of the year went to Bulman School and Community for Crocodile Style.

The performances throughout the night created a journey of sound and story.

Miss Kaninna brought a raw and powerful energy, Velvet Trip painted the evening in

psychedelic soul, and Emma Donovan's voice wrapped the crowd in something rich and comforting.

When Mauboy stepped on to the stage on her Larrakia homeland, there was a stillness in the crowd that spoke louder than applause.

Her set was both a homecoming and a celebration of the path she has walked from Darwin to the world.

Troy Cassar-Daley closed the night with songs that felt like they belonged to the land and the air around him.

His voice and guitar seemed to travel with the wind, carrying the final notes into the trees and beyond.

As people began to leave, the cool air still moved gently through the palms and the night felt full, as if it was holding on to every note, every



Andrew Gurruwiwi Band. Picture: Instagram @andrewgurruwiwiband

cheer, and every shared smile.

This was a week in which Darwin stood at the centre of the nation's cultural map — a place where Blak excellence was not just seen but celebrated.

The NIMAs was the

perfect ending: a reminder that our stories, our art, our fashion, and our music are treasures that will continue to echo far beyond this week, carried on the big season winds of Larrakia Country.



Kyle Shilling and Lily Cornish during their final performance.

Shilling reflects on Mirrorball

ALEXANDRA GIORGIANNI

Kyle Shilling became the first Indigenous competitor to take home the Mirrorball Trophy at the *Dancing with the Stars* grand finale this month.

The proud Bundjalung man has cemented himself as a triple threat in the Australian entertainment scene as a hip-hop musician known as BLACKX, an actor who plays Mali Hudson in *Home And Away*, and as a dancer following win alongside dance partner Lily Cornish.

Shilling is determined to keep paving the way for greater First Nations representation.

"It's such an honour to be able to represent my people and our people in such a positive way," he

said. "I just find that I'm pushing so much and I'm kicking these goals, but it just never feels like enough. So, I'm going to continue to do as much as I can for our people, and on a bigger stage and in front of a bigger audience."

Shilling described the victory as a "rewarding" resolution to weeks of intense practice.

"It was a lot tougher than I thought it was going to be. It was gruelling hours, six to seven hours a day, rehearsal for five weeks straight, no days off," he said.

"When I found out that I'd won, it was just — I mean, I'm still speechless about it, as it hasn't even sunk in yet."

The pair scored a perfect 40 for their final performance to

Mo'ju's Native Tongue, with a live didgeridoo performance by Shilling, who credits his cultural heritage as the heart of the powerful piece.

To mark the victory, Shilling was awarded \$20,000 for his chosen charity, The Indigenous Literacy Foundation:

"I've been to communities where the education system doesn't have enough. I've been to communities where English isn't their first language — they speak up to three different Aboriginal dialects, and then they learn English at a later date," he explained.

"So, they're struggling in these classrooms because it's run by English-speaking teachers, and these kids feel a big disconnect."

Big events draw fashionistas



Cindy Rostron, recipient of the Cecilia Cubillo young achiever award, in a design by Simone Arrol. Picture: Marley Morgan



Design by Miimi and Jiinda. Picture: Michael Jalaru Torres (JALARU)

PHOEBE BLOGG

This month's Country to Couture runway event marked its 10th anniversary, drawing the leading lights of Australian fashion to the Top End.

Indigenous Fashion Projects, established by the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation, founded Country to Couture to provide a platform for First Nations designers to showcase their creative excellence through works inspired by Country, community and culture.

"It's been exciting and inspiring to watch the team work together this year," IFP projects manager Michelle Maynard said.

This year there were 10 new designers, alongside returning art centres and designers, including Nagula Jarndu Designs and Yarrabah Arts & Cultural Precinct.

First Nations creative Lindyn Rowland took on the role of head stylist alongside returning assistant stylist Jake Powers and model mentor Cassie Puruntatameri, under the guidance of Karinda Mutabazi.

"Through close collaboration with artists, I've developed an eye for blending traditional elements with contemporary fashion, ensuring that authenticity is at the forefront of every presentation," Rowland said.

"I feel a deep sense of responsibility to uplift, empower and amplify Indigenous voices in the fashion industry. I'm committed to these artists, designers, and creators. Each garment tells a story. We're here to celebrate excellence."

This year's milestone also marked a decade on Larrakia country, delivering the largest and most diverse representation of First Nations fashion.

The 2025 runway event featured 20 collections representing 25 brands, and welcomed more than 80 artists, art centres, independent designers and brands.

While Show No.1, Threads of Country, honoured the deep connection between First Nations people and their land, No.2, Rising Colours: The BLAK Party, celebrated a decade of Country to Couture.

The event featured a high-energy performance by First Nations musician Barkaa.

DAAF Foundation executive director, Claire Summers, reflected on event's significance.

"Tonight's show was an exhilarating celebration of how First Nations designers and artists master traditional practices to inform contemporary design," she said after the event.

"This evening's milestone represents more than just a decade of runway shows, it embodies a cultural revolution that continues to redefine Australian fashion.

"It's incredible to see how Country to Couture has evolved from a showcase celebrating Indigenous textiles into the nation's premier platform for First Nations fashion innovation."

Also bringing fashion enthusiasts to Darwin this month were the annual National Indigenous

Fashion Awards. The NIFAs were established to celebrate and recognise the strength and innovation of First Nations designers working in fashion and textiles, presenting a platform to showcase talented creatives by championing their innovation, diversity and ethical practices.

The seven category winners — Rhonda Sharpe; Rena Ngalinggama Guyula; Cleonie Quayle; Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association x Tiwi Artists; Miimi & Jiinda — Melissa Greenwood; Clair Helen Parker; and Cindy Rostron — were selected from a shortlist of 38 finalists.

Winner were selected in recognition of their creativity, talent and business contribution to the Australian fashion industry.

Winners spanned a range of categories including young achiever, fashion designer, wearable art, textile design and traditional adornment, through to business achievement and community collaboration.

Ms Maynard, said the awards night was "another intimate celebration of this year's NIFA winners and nominees".

"It's wonderful to shine the light on the design skill and talent across our communities, and to nurture the vitality of our creative sector," she said.

"NIFA is such an incredibly important evening to be part of. You get to share in the discovery and awe of the vibrant design landscape, the beautiful and diverse designers, artists, and their stories.

"You really get to feel the depth of cultural connection and belonging being articulated through textiles and fashion, whilst witnessing



Tjarlirli & Kaltukatjara Art, Pirriya, at Country to Couture 2025. Picture: Dylan Buckee



s to the Top End

the impact of the awards, as the winners share the emotion of what it means to them.”

This year’s judging panel included Yatu Widders-Hunt, Lisa Waupalongside, and head of design for accessories at Country Road Jessica Poynter.

Winners will have access to industry partnerships, experience and financial support from fashion industry leaders.

Parker, as the winner of the fashion designer award, will be able to undergo a 12-month mentorship with Country Road, tailored specifically to her desired focus areas and covering aspects such as marketing, product development, sales, finance and sustainability.

Poynter applauded Clair Helen’s selection.

“Clair Helen’s connection to Indigenous elements and the transformative nature of wearable art radiates through every piece she creates,” she said.

“Her powerful statement describing her designs as a means of cultural expression really resonated with me.

“That sentiment carries through in the textiles, stories, and spirit of her work, reminding us that fashion can be a living canvas of identity and heritage.”

Parker said it was an honour to be named the winner.

“I’m honoured to receive this award. Over the past decade, I’ve dedicated myself to mastering my

craft to share my culture and create pieces that express identity and lift people’s spirits,” she said.

“Fashion is a powerful vessel for change, and while I’m still on my journey, this recognition feels like the start of something bigger, a step toward sparking change and empowering others through creativity and community.”

The Canberra Centre is hosting a showcase of NIFA award-winning designs, presented in partnership with the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation.

The exhibition will also travel to Eastland (Melbourne) in June 2026 for Reconciliation Week.

Clockwise from right: Nangarri Designs, by Rowena Morgan, Connection to Taam (Country), Country to Couture, 2025. Picture: Dylan Buckee;

Yanggurdi by designer Cassie Leatham. Picture: Marley Morgan

Tjarlirli & Kaltukatjara Art, Pirriya, Country to Couture, 2025. Picture: Dylan Buckee

Mimmim x TATIA, by Mim Cole and Tatiana Hoffmann, Sunset Healing, Country to Couture, 2025. Picture: Dylan Buckee

A piece from Nagula Jarndu Designs' Jarndunil/Saheli Yagarramaganjin (women/friends are creating together) collection. Picture: Marley Morgan



Win provides a springboard

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Gomeri singer-songwriter Kyla-Bell Roberts was announced as winner of the 2025 triple j Unearthed High Indigenous Initiative with her single *Myself* this month.

The annual competition runs alongside Triple J's Unearthed High, which searches for the best high school-aged artists from across Australia.

For the past decade, the Indigenous Initiative has highlighted outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent, with past winners including Becca Hatch, KAYPS, Tia Gostelow, Inkabee, and 2024's winner, RIAH.

The 16-year-old from Moree performs a mix of alt-country and RnB-infused country, and has been steadily building her profile with performances across northern NSW.

Roberts told National Indigenous Times she began singing at four years old and grew up surrounded by music.

"My parents were in a band, so I always remember going down to the Vic, which was a pub in Moree, and singing one song and getting like fifty bucks for it," she said. "It used to be my highlight of the week."

As part of her prize, Roberts' next track will be mixed and mastered by acclaimed producer Konstantin Kersting, whose credits include Tones and I, Mallrat, Spacey Jane,



Kyla-Belle Roberts performs with her family.

Budjerah and Peach PRC. She will also receive career mentoring from Triple J Blak Out host and artist Nooky.

By the age of 12 Roberts was performing regular gigs.

Her first release came after attending the Junior Academy of Country Music in Tamworth, where she co-wrote a song with David Carter from Carter & Carter.

A year later, a message from manager David Caplice led to her first studio experience with producers Fabian and Don.

Her music now includes four main songs: *Myself*, *Took A Turn*, *Scars* and *Sweetheart*.

Myself is the centrepiece of her upcoming debut EP *Took A Turn*, which she wrote in full this year while collaborating with producers in Sydney.

Roberts draws inspiration

from personal experiences and from artists she admires.

"It's so hard for me to write a song about normal things, I think it just really needs to be an experience," she said.

"I've always looked up to Thelma Plum ... she's been a very big inspiration for me."

She also credits country artists Loren Ryan and Buddy Knox for offering guidance and opportunities in her early career.

Her track *Scars*, a soft and melodic RnB-country song, will also feature in the EP and will be performed at this year's NSW School Spectacular, where Roberts is a featured soloist.

She continues to appear at the Tamworth Country Music Festival, performing on the Toyota stage with the Bushwackers and singing part



Gomeri singer Kyla-Bell Roberts has her sights set high.

of *I Am Australian* in language.

Her father, Shane Roberts, said the past six months have been especially busy.

"With school spec, releasing a second single, entering Unearthed High, and getting her songs played on Triple J, it's been pretty full-on in our household. But we all love

music, and I think that's how we get through it," he said.

Looking ahead, Roberts wants to take her music as far as she can.

"I honestly do want to be at the top," she said.

"I really want to get my music out there ... and be up there with all the greats."

Invest in First Nations leadership.

Challenge accepted.

Alishia and Eddie recently completed the Executive Indigenous Leadership Program, delivered by the UNSW Business School and the Australian Graduate School of Management AGSM.

The six-month course combined academic learning with cultural connection - building leadership skills, confidence, and strategic insight.

It's part of Woodside's commitment to supporting First Nations careers, at every stage.



Scan the QR code to hear their stories.



Ancestral figure key focus of winning artwork

Artist Gaypalani Wanambi and her artwork *Burwu, blossom*, right.

GIOVANNI TORRE

The winners of the prestigious National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards were announced this month by The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Gaypalani Wanambi from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, received the \$100,000 Telstra Art Award for her monumental etched metal work, *Burwu, blossom*.

Wanambi is the eldest daughter of renowned artist Wukun Wanambi (1962–2022), whom she assisted as she was growing up.

Before her father's sudden death in 2022, Wanambi had begun to produce work in her own right, under her name.

After her father's passing, cultural protocol required her to avoid using his designs.

Instead, Wanambi began to create artwork from the epic song poetry relating to the journeys of Wuyal, the ancestral honey hunter.

Wuyal is an important ancestor of the Marrakulu clan, and *Burwu, blossom* is about him.

Wuyal was the first man to look for a homeland for the Marrakulu people.

He felled the ancestral Wanambi tree, causing a river of honey, and thus founded the Marrakulu clan homeland at Gurka'wuy.

The Marrakulu dance as bees in their ceremony, elbows extended, hands clutching stringybark leaves, which vibrate as wings.

"This is what my father taught me to paint," the emerging artist said before claiming the award.

The judging panel, Stephen Gilchrist, Gail Mabo and Brian Martin, described *Burwu, blossom* as "an exceptional work that visually and materially explores different relationships to and understandings of Country".

"Presenting two worlds with two sides, the epic ancestral journeys of Wuyal are delicately engraved on to the silvery surfaces of discarded road signs. Each time the viewer moves, the work responds accordingly, revealing and concealing the undulations and intangible lifeforces of Country," they said.

"Each jewel-like panel shimmers with exquisitely rendered designs that are deeply anchored to Yolngu philosophies."

Museum director Adam Worrall said the gallery was delighted to celebrate Wanambi.

"Gaypalani's work about Wuyal, the ancestral honey hunter, is a testament to her exceptional talent and deep connection to the stories of the Marrakulu clan homeland at Gurka'wuy," he said.

"I would like to extend my congratulations to the other category winners and to all 71 finalists who entered their works and shared their stories. In 2025, we proudly highlight the significant participation of female artists, with 42 of this year's artworks created by women.

"The artworks shared through Telstra NATSIAA provide inspiration that captivates audiences both near and afar and showcases the tremendous diversity and depth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic



and cultural expression found across Australia."

The other winners, who received \$15,000 prizes, were:

■ Telstra general painting award — Iluwanti Ken, a Pitjantjatjara speaking woman who lives in Amata community, for *Walawuru Tjurkpa* (Eagle story).

■ Wandjuk Marika memorial 3D award (sponsored by Telstra) — Owen Yalandja, a Kuninjku speaker from Maningrida, for *Ngalkodjek Yawkyawk*.

■ Telstra bark painting award — Lucy Yarawanga, Gurr-goni language, also from Maningrida, for *Bawaiba & Ngalyod*.

■ Telstra work on paper award — Naomi Hobson, Southern Kaantju and Umpila languages, from Coen, Cape York, for *Present & Beyond*.

■ Telstra multimedia award — Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis, Pitta Pitta language, who lives in Naarm (Melbourne), for *Pitta Pitta (Extracted)* and *Pitta Pitta (Google's Gaze)*.

■ Telstra emerging artist award — Sonia Gurrpulan

Guyula, a Djambarrpuyngu speaker from Dhondji Homeland, NT, for *Mat*.

The NATSIAA are Australia's longest-running and most prestigious art awards of their kind, presented on Larrakia Country (Darwin) by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and principal partner Telstra.

Now in their 42nd year, the Telstra NATSIAA feature Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from across the nation, sharing works reflecting the strength of cultures, responses to current affairs, and unerring connections to Country.

This year, 71 finalists from across Australia were selected from 216 entries.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards were established by MAGNT in 1984 to recognise and promote appreciation and understanding of the quality and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art throughout Australia.

Bold way to sing the songlines of water

GIOVANNI TORRE

"Flowing seamlessly between past and present", the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra will perform Handel's *Water Music* masterpiece alongside the world premiere of an original composition by Arnhem Land ocean and waterway custodian Rawun Maymuru and acclaimed contemporary composer Nick Wales.

A meditation on the spiritual, cultural and environmental significance of water, the concert series marks the first time the orchestra performs alongside a soloist in Yolngu language, and will take place at the Melbourne Recital Centre from October 9 to 12 and Sydney's City Recital Hall from October 14 to 18.

The lead singer of Aboriginal rock band *East Journey*, Rawun Maymuru comes from a longline of Yolngu songmen from Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land, and is the grandson of Dr Yunupingu, the original frontman of the iconic musical group *Yothu Yindi*. Singing in both English and Yolngu Mata, Maymuru's music reflects a deep connection to country and culture, as well as his distinct perspective on the modern world.

Maymuru has previously collaborated with Wales, a celebrated composer, on the songs *Yolngu* and *Nyapillilngu* (*Spirit Lady*), blending ancestral songlines with electronic and classical sound worlds. Wales' textural compositions traverse dance, film, theatre and visual art, with credits including *ab* [*intra*] for *Sydney Dance Company*, the feature film score for *True Spirit*, and collaborations with artists including Sarah Blasko, Ngaiire and Paul Mac.

In a genre-defying program, artistic director Paul Dyer explores the significance of water as an essential life force, inviting audiences to experience the convergence of ancient and contemporary musical traditions.

At its heart is Handel's exuberant *Water Music*, a celebration of abundance and grandeur, alongside the newly commissioned *Water* by Maymuru and Wales. Seasoned collaborators, Wales and Maymuru's new orchestral work is a powerful ode to water that bridges songlines of Arnhem Land with modern instruments.

Maymuru will perform the piece in Yolngu language live on stage with the Brandenburg, marking his first performance with an orchestra. Maymuru's voice, both ethereal and grounded, embodies the richness of Yolngu tradition and country.

Maymuru said the Yolngu people "have been travelling and caring for the oceans and waterways for an eternity".

"We sing when the water is calm, when it's rough, clear or when it turns brackish. We have names and songs for each of those elements and the creatures they contain. We know the boundaries of our waterways and those that belong to other clans," he said.

"Nick's ability to tune into the spirit of this songline and compose this classical composition feels like a cosmic connection — a blessing from my ancestral spirits. We look forward to sharing these stories with you."



Left: Naomi Hobson, *Present & Beyond 2025*, pigment print on archival cotton rag paper. Far left: *Mat* by Sonia Guyula.

Tourism
Australia



G'day Australia.

Earlier this month, we launched the next chapter of our global advertising campaign, *Come and Say G'day*, encouraging travellers to discover Australia's communities, First Nations cultures, land and spirit, in all their wonder.

Inviting the world down under is a big responsibility. Because our tourism industry allows us to share Australians' knowledge, pride, and deep care for Country by creating experiences visitors remember for life.

That's why we've created a campaign that's unmistakably Australian. A tribute to the incredible characters, creatures, and Country that make Australian travel stories the kind you retell again and again. And of course, we recruited a few iconic locals to be a part of it.

It's an invitation to the world, and every Australian can join in. Because when our overseas friends arrive, we'll give them what we promised. A warm welcome. From mob and from mates. It all starts with...

G'day



Youth delegates visit UN

JARRED CROSS

The Uluru Youth Dialogue recently took its pursuit of reform and recognition for Australia's First Peoples to the United Nations.

"It's our futures on the line, and we want a change in our lifetime," Youth Dialogue co-chair Allira Davis told National Indigenous Times.

The Youth Dialogue represents younger Indigenous people's aspirations and views under the Statement from the Heart representative authority, the Uluru Dialogue.

Ms Davis and co-chair Bridget Cama led a delegation of five to the 18th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva in July.

Each member spoke to representatives from across the globe during presentations, concept notes, draft studies and reports.

Established in 2007 by, and with the purpose of providing advice to, the UN's Human Rights Council, EMRIP assists member States to achieve the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Uluru Dialogue is continuing its focus on the journey towards structural reform and recognition. Youth delegates took the opportunity to learn about similar action taken by Indigenous peoples around the world, Ms Davis said.

Giving young people that platform was crucial, she said, "but also making sure that we make enough noise so people are hearing us, especially on an international scale, since it's very hard domestically".

Ms Davis also attended 2024's session.

"I think there's a common ground and commonality between Indigenous peoples all around the world. I think we have this commonality of systemic oppression, the systems



Uluru Youth Dialogue delegates to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' 18th session Bridget Cama, Sonjah Stewart, Dwayne Coulthard, Brydie Zorz and Allira Davis. Picture: Statement from the Heart

failing us as people . . . that was definitely an eye-opener, especially last year," she said.

"There are a lot of countries that have it a lot harder than us . . . we still suffer as well.

"Standing in solidarity, especially with our Pacific nations, will be very valuable for us, and we just have to continue that journey."

The Youth Dialogue also hosted a side session in Geneva on the right to political participation, in respect to articles 18 and 19 of UNDRIP: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect 16

their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions; and States shall consult and co-operate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

The delegates alongside Ms Davis and Ms Cama were Brydie Zorz, Sonjah Stewart, and

Dwayne Coulthard. Mr Coulthard is a signatory of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Ms Stewart told EMRIP "Australia has made little to no progress in improving outcomes for our First Peoples" on the "key" national policy — Closing the Gap.

"Only 14 of the 19 targets are being met," Ms Davis told National Indigenous Times.

"I think speaking on an international level, it's super significant for us to ensure that the Australian Government does listen to us, and we do have connections over there," she said.

She hopes with the Labor

Federal Government's substantial election win earlier this year "we can move forward with those steps of structural reform".

"A referendum shouldn't be a once in a lifetime thing. It needs to be a consistent thing, and the Constitution is meant to change," Ms Davis said.

"Going on that journey is what we need to do, and we'll continue to do that."

Ms Davis acknowledged Auntie Pat Anderson and Professor Megan Davis for their leadership, guidance, support and belief in the Youth Dialogue.

Study on racial profiling to play part in Canadian case

GIOVANNI TORRE

The Heiltsuk Nation released an expert report on August 14 on Indigenous Consumer Racial Profiling as part of filings for a British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal complaint against department store Canadian Tire that will be heard in Vancouver in late October.

Last October, Richard and Dawn Wilson, father and daughter, announced they had filed a BC Human Rights Commission complaint against Canadian Tire Corporation and Blackbird Security Inc., for incidents of alleged racial profiling and racism they experienced at a store in Coquitlam while shopping in January 2020.

Authored by two of Canada's leading human rights experts, Lorne Foster of York University and Les Jacobs of Ontario Tech

University, the new report — Indigenous Consumer Racial Profiling in Canada: A Neglected Human Rights Issue — identifies individual and collective harms of Indigenous consumer racial profiling, and makes recommendations for Indigenous-specific remedies such as healing ceremonies, cultural safety training, and systemic data collection reforms, as well as noting the need for further human rights-based study in the area.

"Consumer racial profiling against Indigenous peoples in Canada is a critically important human rights issue that exacerbates intergenerational trauma and undermines reconciliation efforts," Drs Foster and Jacobs wrote. "Corporations like Canadian Tire must advance anti-racist practices in commercial settings and participate in Indigenous-specific remedies

such as healing ceremonies when racist incidents do occur, if they are to meet their obligations under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Chief of the Heiltsuk Nation, Marilyn Slett, thanked Dr Foster and Dr Jacobs "for identifying the harms of consumer racial profiling that Indigenous people experience every day, but rarely report". "As a Nation that strongly defends the individual and collective human rights of our members, we will hold Canadian Tire and Blackbird Security to account," she said.

"Ultimately, we hope they will participate in a healing ceremony with our Nation as a form of positive and culturally appropriate restorative justice so that we can turn things around and make them right again."



Chief Marilyn Slett. Picture: Heiltsuk Tribal Council

In 2020, Bank of Montreal executives took part in a Heiltsuk healing ceremony, known as a washing ceremony, in the Big House in Bella Bella, following an incident that made headlines when Heiltsuk members Maxwell Johnson and his granddaughter were arrested and detained by Vancouver Police

Department constables after a bank employee doubted the validity of their status cards and called 911.

After the washing ceremony, Mr Johnson, a renowned Heiltsuk artist, gifted a painting to BMO and visited the bank to meet with their staff to talk about his artwork.

Cultural heritage at risk of AI theft

REECE HARLEY

The Federal Government is being asked to make a decision that will shape the future of First Nations stories, art, music and journalism in Australia.

The Productivity Commission is considering whether to allow tech companies to use copyrighted material, including books, songs, articles, photography and visual artworks, to train artificial intelligence systems without permission and without payment to the creators.

If adopted, this proposal would give global tech giants the green light to scrape massive amounts of creative work from across the internet to feed their algorithms. That includes the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, much of which already exists in public online spaces, on media platforms, in archives and in digital galleries.

This is being sold as a matter of productivity and innovation. What is really on the table is the unpaid and unconsented use of intellectual and cultural property, particularly that of First Nations people.

There is no shortage of warning signs. Earlier this year, National Indigenous Times reported on Adobe's Firefly AI platform generating fake images of Aboriginal people and artworks. They

were inaccurate and culturally offensive. These images were produced without any consultation, cultural authority or permission. The backlash from First Nations creators and cultural leaders was swift and justified.

As Wuthathi, Yadhaigana, and Meriam lawyer and leading intellectual property expert Dr Terri Janke explained: "It's not just about the advancement of technology. It's about whether these advancements empower our cultures or simply turn them into commodities."

Creative work in Indigenous communities is more than content. It is cultural practice, identity, storytelling and connection. It carries obligations. It connects people to Country, kinship and law. It cannot be separated from its origins, and it cannot be reduced to training material for AI tools that have no cultural understanding.

The risk here is not hypothetical. Without strong legal protections, AI developers could absorb and replicate First Nations knowledge, symbols, language, music and imagery, then commercialise those outputs without a cent going back to the people and communities from which they came.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators, who already face systemic barriers in accessing opportunities in



An AI image of a fake "family". Picture: AI generated

publishing, media and the arts, this would be a significant setback. It would deny income, strip away attribution and undermine cultural sovereignty.

These are not abstract concerns.

Even among the most successful and recognised First Nations designers and artists, financial pressures are constant.

Many struggle to fund travel, accommodation, and business costs to exhibit and grow their creative enterprises.

The fact nationally significant institutions and artists must crowdfund to participate in their own industry's most important events speaks volumes.

Now imagine the added threat of seeing their work mined by AI systems without consent or payment. It would further exploit creative communities that are already doing more with less.

The Federal Government must not allow this to happen.

Any change to copyright law must uphold three core

principles: consent, control and compensation.

There should be no exceptions in copyright law that allow AI systems to use protected works without permission. If companies want to use Indigenous creative works, they must seek permission and enter into fair agreements that reflect the cultural significance of what is being used.

Revenue models must also be established to ensure compensation flows directly to creators and communities. This could include statutory licensing, collective rights management or culturally governed agreements that reflect the unique nature of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

Above all, any system must be Indigenous-led, culturally safe and responsive to the values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The tools of the future must not be built on the unpaid labour of First Nations people. If AI is to have a place in a just and inclusive digital economy,

it must operate on a foundation of respect, transparency and accountability. Australia has a chance to get this right. The Attorney-General's Department is reviewing copyright law in the context of AI. The Office for the Arts is investing in First Nations creative industries. The government has re-committed to supporting Indigenous economic development at last week's Garma Festival.

But now is the time to move beyond commitments and ensure the laws reflect those values.

The message is simple: no AI system should be trained using Indigenous work without permission, attribution and fair reward. To ignore this would be to repeat past mistakes in a new digital form.

Indigenous creativity has shaped Australian culture for generations. It deserves protection, respect and a voice in how it is used in the technologies of tomorrow.

Reece Harley, managing director, National Indigenous Times

Feds need to act on States' harmful bail policies

DECLAN BRENNAN

Recent comments from State and Territory governments should be a wake-up call for the Federal Government: these jurisdictions are not taking the National Agreement on Closing the Gap seriously.

The meeting of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General in Sydney this month descended into tension after Federal Attorney-General Michelle Rowland pressed States and Territories on soaring Indigenous incarceration rates. The Australian reported.

Queensland's Attorney-General, Deb Frecklington, reportedly responded that the LNP Government "won't be changing anything" when it came to reforming bail laws. This, from a State that has suspended the Human Rights

Act three times in 24 months, allows children as young as 10 to be housed in adult watch houses for weeks at a time, and permits children to be sentenced to life in prison for some crimes.

The Northern Territory government has argued that Closing the Gap cannot come at the expense of community safety, and has enacted policies which have led to an extraordinary number of people — mostly Aboriginal — being locked up, many on remand. There is no evidence that Closing the Gap and community safety are oppositional goals.

On the contrary, programs proved to reduce incarceration at the source — diversionary pathways, education, and community-led support — are recognised as key drivers of safer communities and closing the gap.

If the comments from these two governments are not proof enough that the Closing the Gap agreement is worth little more than the paper it is written on, what will be?

Queensland, Tasmania and the NT are the only conservative-led jurisdictions, but are not alone in using harmful approaches. NSW's Labor Government now has bail laws that have greatly increased the number of Aboriginal children on remand. Victoria has pushed through what it boasted were the country's "toughest" bail laws.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy, is largely respected across the political spectrum; but there is only so much one minister can do. The Federal Government issues stern rebukes to the States and the NT, but there are no consequences. The States

hold significant power, as the pandemic reminded us. But the NT is different. Here, the Commonwealth has leverage: nearly 80 per cent of the NT Budget is federally funded.

Senator McCarthy has previously hinted funding strings could be used to push change, noting, "the balance of incarceration is far outweighing efforts to keep the community safe". It is an approach also urged by Independent senator Lidia Thorpe and legal organisations.

"We don't need more reviews, reports or inquiries — we need action. Governments already know the solutions because our people have been telling them for decades. What's missing is the political will to act," Senator Thorpe said this month.

Also this month, the family of the late NT Supreme Court Justice James Henry Muirhead

urged the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to intervene, describing the CLP's measures as "regressive".

The word "intervention" carries deep trauma for many Aboriginal people in the NT, given the devastating legacy of John Howard's 2007 policies. But a modern intervention need not be punitive. It could simply mean ensuring Aboriginal people are afforded the same respect, rights and dignity as every other Australian citizen — something which seems to be increasingly lacking in the Territory, where almost 90 per cent of people behind bars are Aboriginal.

The Commonwealth's strong words are no longer enough. States have just rolled their eyes and carried on. It is time for concrete action.

Declan Brennan, senior reporter, National Indigenous Times

Chambers mean business

REECE HARLEY

Indigenous business chambers from across the country met in Redfern last Wednesday to establish the National Indigenous Business Chambers Alliance.

Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network chief executive Naomi Anstess was elected chair, with NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce head Deb Barwick as deputy.

Attendees included NTIBN chair Raymond Pratt, Kinaway chair Trent Bickle, Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry chair Gordon Cole, NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce deputy chair Narelle Anderson, Murri Chamber of Commerce chair Adam Williams, and Adjunct Professor Kieran Hynes — chair of the Canberra Indigenous Business Network.

Part of NIBCA's role will be to give governments and corporates a single Indigenous-controlled partner for procurement. It will hold government policy, funding and rules to account. It will speak as the national voice for Indigenous business while keeping authority grounded in Country through the State, Territory and regional chambers.

The alliance will move immediately on two priorities: an Indigenous-controlled national members' database, verified through chambers, to give buyers and potential partners confidence they are dealing with genuine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses; and formalising the alliance as a peak advocacy body to press for urgent reforms and faster delivery on the ground.

On the same day as the NIBCA launch, Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy's spoke at Supply Nation's Connect conference, also in Sydney.

She thanked Indigenous businesses "for all you do to drive Indigenous business growth and create opportunities", and said the Federal Government was "deeply committed to working in partnership with First Nations people to support economic



Adam Williams, Trent Bickle, Naomi Anstess, Deb Barwick, Gordon Cole, and Kieran Hynes. Picture: Reece Harley

empowerment and self-determination". She described the agenda as "unlocking opportunity and building prosperity", noting recent First Nations round tables and the new First Nations Economic Partnership as the framework to leverage land and Native Title, build skills, create jobs and back businesses.

"We must ensure businesses benefiting are genuinely Indigenous owned and controlled... because integrity matters and because every contract awarded under the IPP should be a contract that builds real capability and long-term success," Senator McCarthy said.

A recent investigation by this publication found that UK birth and migration records contradict a CEO's public claim to Aboriginal identity. Despite a formal complaint from members of his family—including a categorical statement from the man's father that he is not Indig-

enous — the company remains listed as a "certified supplier" on Supply Nation's directory.

The minister confirmed work was under way to tighten eligibility under the Indigenous Procurement Policy, lift Commonwealth purchasing targets and make it easier to report Blak-cladding.

Ms Anstess said "the NIBCA is the movement that will change the face of the conversations about the Blak economy and empowerment for our people".

"Born from the grass roots of our jurisdictions, we are the place-based, Blak-led solution, and Blak voice. We belong at the table alongside the Coalition of the Peaks to drive the Blak-led Aboriginal economic development narrative that will truly impact for mob.

"Economic development can't just be a new title for the same stuff. NIBCA is well placed in industry, in capability, in service

delivery and in the lift-up of the Aboriginal economy to partner with the community-controlled and social services sectors."

Leaders explained why chambers must be central to the next phase. "We're the leading Indigenous business body in WA," Mr Cole said. "We have over 600 members. We foster trade, build capacity, advocate and create wealth — underpinned by our culture and community."

From Victoria, Mr Bickle highlighted scale and partnership. "Kinaway has 330-plus member businesses and around 300 corporate partners. Chambers change lives through economic prosperity. We'll back anything that helps our members grow," he said.

Mr Williams focused on representation that reflects Country.

"We can directly represent Aboriginal businesses and give them the advocacy they want," he said, urging corporates to

update RAP clauses so words "drive outcomes, not just intent".

From the ACT, Professor Hynes tied legitimacy to locality.

Ms Barwick underscored the evidence base. "We're the only Indigenous membership organisations focused on business. We know where the sector is strong, where it needs help and what's changing," she said.

The alliance's immediate asks are clear. From the Commonwealth: stable funding for chambers and the alliance, a formal seat for NIBCA in IPP reform and macro-economic forums alongside the Coalition of Peaks, and transparent reporting on procurement performance.

From corporates: active engagement with chambers and the alliance, clear RAP procurement targets tied to executive accountability, and a commitment to purchase from genuine Aboriginal businesses.

Forum plans way ahead for clean energy transition

GIOVANNI TORRE

Demonstrating the growing interest in renewable energy opportunities among Indigenous businesses, communities and organisations, the First Nations Clean Energy Symposium on Kabi Kabi Country this month sold out.

More than 450 people attended the Sunshine Coast symposium to highlight renewable energy breakthroughs and what's needed next in self-determined energy transition.

The growing leadership of First Nations communities in driving Australia's clean energy transition, including over 20 First Nations clean energy project partnerships in development, was in the spotlight.

The symposium, the third of its kind, also focused on the



Karrina Nolan

drive for collaborative progress in energy transition and to ensure First Nations peoples were leading the way in creating "sustainable, self-determined futures". As part of this conversation, First Nations

leaders reinforced the need for a just, equitable and community-led approach to renewable energy development.

Hosted by the First Nations Clean Energy Network and supported by the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, the forum brought together First Nations leaders, Traditional Owners, community members, government and industry representatives, unions and academics to discuss strategies for accelerating the transition.

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation chief executive Joe Morrison said the symposium was "about shifting from participation to genuine leadership, and making sure clean energy delivers lasting benefits for First Nations communities".

First Nations Clean Energy

Network co-chair Karrina Nolan said First Nations consent, genuine partnership, and participation is needed for Australia's energy transition to happen at the scale and pace required to address climate change. "We must be at the centre of this shift; our leadership must guide the transition to renewable energy if it is to be truly just," she said.

"The Government must address the urgent energy needs of our communities; including those on homelands and in social housing and rental properties. We need more community-led projects, backed with financial and policy support to ensure no one is left behind."

Ms Nolan said First Nations communities want "stable, long-term revenues and greater

decision-making power over projects impacting their land and waters".

"Our communities want to own, co-own, and actively participate in the economic opportunities the clean energy transition offers," she said.

"Industry is beginning to recognise the strengths and increased certainty that First Nations ownership and co-ownership can bring to these projects.

"Now is the time to invest in First Nations communities and support access to capital and the resources needed."

Minister for Climate Change and energy, Chris Bowen, used the forum to announce the Government was working with the South Australian Government on microgrid funding for three remote communities.

Consent a key to future growth

NICOLE BROWN

At the recent Developing Northern Australia Conference held on Gimuy Walubarra Yidinji and Yirrganydji Country in Cairns, Darren Godwell, chairman of Indigenous Business Australia, spoke on transforming the economic future of First Nations communities through strategic investment and reform.

Mr Godwell, a fellow of the Australian Institute For International Affairs, presented a case for expanding the First Nations economy: one built on capital, capability, and co-investment.

IBA's portfolio now spans \$2.3 billion in assets, including \$1.3 billion in home lending, \$100 million in business finance, and nearly \$280 million in Indigenous co-investments. From construction and mining to housing and defence, First Nations businesses are becoming key players in the region's economic landscape.

"IBA has supported around 56 per cent of the recent growth in First Nations business ownership," Mr Godwell shared, citing internal analysis of ABS data from 2006 to 2021. "And now, thanks to legislative reforms, we're in a position to supercharge that impact."

Legislation introduced by the Federal Government gives IBA greater flexibility to invest in high-growth sectors and respond faster to market opportunities.

Importantly, it centres First Nations people in decision-making from planning to execution, ensuring that communities aren't just beneficiaries but architects of their own futures.

Mr Godwell also outlined IBA's shared prosperity investment model, which brings Traditional Owners, sovereign and private investors together in co-owned enterprises that build, lease, and operate assets with full free, prior, and informed consent. It is a model that respects sovereignty while building wealth.

"Economic empowerment is about more than money," he said. "It's about self-determination, long-term opportunity, and social licence. It's about rewriting the story of how business is done on Country."

Mr Godwell said Indigenous businesses will play a "transformative" role in the future of defence sustainment and infrastructure across the Northern Territory. "With the sector growing by 50 per cent between 2016 and 2021, Indigenous businesses — due to

their proximity, ambition and capability — are well-positioned to deliver within this sector," he said.

The IBA chairman said the organisation has supported more than 5,500 Indigenous businesses in recent years, delivering \$100m in business finance and \$278.9m in Indigenous co-investments.

"Recent legislative reforms have expanded IBA's remit, allowing it to borrow and raise capital. This unlocks billions in private investment to support infrastructure and enterprise development on Country," he said.

Mr Godwell was clear that engagement needs to shift beyond box-ticking.

"Consultation must evolve into co-design and co-ownership. First Nations communities can ensure direct benefit by asserting free, prior and informed consent as a foundational principle for all defence-related developments on Indigenous land," he said.

"Australia has never attempted a truly comprehensive Indigenous economic policy until now," he added.

Darren Godwell



Banks urged to address failings on vulnerable clients

DAVID PRESTIPINO

First Nations Foundation managing director Leah Bennett says it is incumbent upon banks to rapidly scale up their investment in initiatives that reduce harm and improve outcomes for vulnerable customers.

Ms Bennett made the call for reform earlier this month after a damning report by Australia's financial corporate watchdog.

The Australian Securities and Investment Commission warned its monitoring of all banks would continue, with further action not ruled out, after revealing banking customers unfairly charged high fees were



Leah Bennett

owed refunds totalling \$60 million. ASIC's Expanding Better Banking Outcomes report highlighted in detail the harm caused by dishonour fees, overdrawn account charges, and other pen-

alty related costs, with these fees disproportionately affecting people who can least afford them, including from banks with a large First Nations customer base.

Ms Bennett — a former financial crime analyst for some banks included in the report — noted: "Australian banks are among the most profitable in the world.

"The big four banks have averaged a combined profit of roughly \$30 billion in each of the last three financial years," she said.

"It is deeply concerning a portion of these profits have come at the expense of some of our most vulnerable communities."

ASIC's review of 21 banks found 800,000 customers were eligible for refunds, a figure set to rise as some refunds are eligible from more than a decade ago, with ASIC finding the banks had incorrectly charged low-income earners who receive Centrelink payments, such as JobSeeker and Age and Disability Support payments.

The report comes 12 months after the regulator found four of the country's banks with a large cohort of First Nations customers had caused "financial distress".

ASIC found that the Commonwealth Bank, Westpac, Bendigo Bank and ANZ kept more than

150,000 Indigenous customers in high-fee accounts, despite them qualifying for an account with minimal charges.

The 2024 report led to a promise of \$33 million in refunds and Ms Bennett said although some banks have taken steps and are continuing to address these issues, their "overall reactive nature of these responses" was disappointing.

"Rather than proactively identifying and mitigating risks, many institutions only take corrective action once harm is already evident," she said.

"What's most troubling is this is not a case of one or two banks failing, it's a systemic issue."

NIT

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

Explore our jobs board to discover exciting new career opportunities

www.nit.com.au/jobs



Partners enter a new era

CALLAN MORSE

New South Wales' Wellington Aboriginal community has secured a commercial partnership with AMPYR Australia and an equity stake in the \$340 million Wellington battery project.

Celebrated with a ceremony held on site this month, the equity right gives Wambal Bila (a Wiradjuri word for mountain-river) the option to take a 5 per cent equity stake in the project.

Wambal Bila is a new community-led corporation led by Wiradjuri people accountable to its membership, which is open to the Wellington Aboriginal community.

The equity stake includes both a right to a preferred, fixed annual return and a share of ongoing equity returns alongside other investors.

The equity arrangement has been developed between Wambal Bila and AMPYR Australia under a set of agreements between the parties, which see AMPYR Australia provide up to \$300,000 to support Wambal Bila



A ceremony was held to mark the Bulabul Battery partnership between Wambal Bila and AMPYR Australia.

establish its initial operations.

Wambal Bila says the share could deliver \$20million-\$30m in revenue to the community over the 25-year lifespan, with revenue to be invested in the future of the Wellington Aboriginal community.

As part of the partnership, Wambal Bila and AMPYR Australia have agreed to rename the

project the Bulabul Battery.

Bulabul means "two acting together" in Wiradjuri, representing the powerful partnership between the community and the project.

This also reflects the meeting of the Bell and Macquarie rivers at Wellington, an important landmark of the town.

"The creation of Wambal Bila

is a testament to a new era of partnership and empowerment within the energy sector," Wambal Bila director Keiyana Guihot said. "It ensures that the benefits of the Bulabul Battery project flow directly back to our community, enabling us to invest in our cultural heritage, create economic opportunities, and support the wellbeing of our

people for generations to come. "We believe this model will inspire similar collaborations across the industry."

The arrangement is the first equity partnership in a developer-led project where the local First Nations community has no native title or related legal rights, or other pre-existing economic base.

Wamal Bila said it sets a new precedent for the energy industry which could be extended to other renewable energy developments across Australia.

AMPYR Australia says it is committed to exploring equity partnerships with local First Nations communities in its pipeline of upcoming projects.

The company's chief executive Alex Wonhas said the Bulabul Battery is a "major turning point" for energy projects.

"At AMPYR, we're extremely proud to work alongside Wambal Bila to shift the focus from short-term regional construction jobs to empowering communities through long-term ownership and sustained benefit," Mr Wonhas said.

Research training aim is to improve heritage guidance

CALLAN MORSE

An Australian research council training centre announced this month is aiming to transform cultural heritage management in the resources sector.

Based at Flinders University in collaboration with the University of Queensland and Southern Cross University, the ARC Training Centre for Advancing Archaeology in the Resources Sector will for the first time bring together Traditional Owners, resources companies, archaeologists and cultural and heritage experts, as well as the peak body for mining professionals; AusIMM.

Together they are set to train a new generation of cultural heritage professionals and create new approaches to safeguard Indigenous cultural heritage, while advancing sustainable, culturally informed resources management.

The centre's three Traditional Owner partner organisations, the PKKP Aboriginal Corporation, Palyku-Jartayi Aboriginal Corporation and Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Traditional Land Owners, will be contributing extensive knowledge and guidance to the centre's activities and time of their rangers, Elders and infrastructure in research projects.

Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Traditional Land Owners chairperson, Rob Singleton, said as partnering stakeholders, YITLOAC have felt the effects of mining and exploration in their country for 60 years.

"This significant impact on our culture and heritage continues to this day," Mr Singleton said. "We are committed to improved ways of doing busi-

ness and are very excited to be a partner in this initiative."

A spokesperson from the PKKP Aboriginal Corporation said PKKP was proud to be a partner institution in this Training Centre.

"PKKP cultural heritage is regularly at risk from mining, and we have had to learn the hard way about how to get good outcomes for our community and our Country," they said.

"We look forward to sharing our knowledge with the researchers and students, and learning from them in return."

Centre Director and Flinders University archaeologist Liam Brady says there is a long history of tension between Traditional Owners and mining operators around the protection and management of cultural heritage in Australia and overseas.

"We urgently need new approaches to address this situation," he said. "Having industry partners who are open and dedicated to working together to train a new generation of highly skilled professionals who can navigate these challenges is both unique and exciting."

The program will also aim to address the under-representation of Traditional Owners working in the cultural heritage management industry by creating training courses co-designed with industry partners. Each trainee will gain experience by doing a 12-month placement with the partner organisations.

Major resources companies including Rio Tinto, BHP, South32, Newmont and MMG have also pledged significant cash and in-kind support of professionals in their social performance, Indigenous engagement and cultural heritage portfolios.



IBM founders Mayrah Sonter, Dr Michelle Evans and Leesa Watego. Picture: Joseph Mayers

Celebration focuses on collaboration

DECLAN BRENNAN

The 11th annual Indigenous Business Month — a national, community-led celebration of the strength, talent and resilience of First Nations businesses — will take place this October under the theme "Strength through Collaboration".

From partnerships grounded in Country, culture and global networks, to local businesses working together to meet community needs, Indigenous Business Month 2025 highlights the power of unity; within communities and with allies.

Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous Business Leadership director and co-founder of IBM, Michelle Evans, said the focus would spotlight collaborative work in action. "With community, corporations, government, and

not-for-profit organisations, but most significantly, with grassroots Indigenous groups and individuals," she said.

"Respectful and shared decision-making is the epitome of Indigenous ways of being. 'Strength through collaboration' of the very genuine kind, will see us through to an economically powerful Indigenous Australia."

Indigenous Business Month co-founder and Iscarlot Media director, Leesa Watego, said the next decade of IBM offers a compelling vision of how Indigenous businesses "are working together, with each other and with a wide range of organisations, to continue building and supporting communities".

"This year's theme is a testament to the journey of the sector so far, and a vision for

what lies ahead," she said. "Few of us could build a business without collaboration. Whether it's with other business owners, our customers, or our suppliers, these relationships are foundational. They help us create meaningful businesses that serve and uplift our communities."

Fellow IBM co-founder and 33 Creative director Mayrah Sonter said when IBM began over a decade ago it was built on a belief in the "strength and potential of our people to balance business success with responsibility to our communities".

As part of this year's celebrations, nominations are open for the IBM Awards, which recognise excellence in Indigenous business leadership, innovation and collaboration.

Nominations, which close on August 31, can be made online.



MADALAH students visiting Fortescue operations in Port Hedland. Picture: Fortescue

Students on right track

A group of 10 aspiring young leaders from MADALAH recently had the opportunity to step inside the heart of Fortescue's port and rail operations in Port Hedland.

MADALAH, a long-standing community partner of Fortescue, is a not-for-profit organisation offering secondary and tertiary education scholarships for First Nations students in Western Australia. Many of the students involved in the visit come from communities in which Fortescue operates.

The visiting group included a mix of Year's 11 and 12 students, including members of MADALAH's student council.

During the tour, the students explored Fortescue's concentrate handling facility, climbed atop a ship loader as it loaded a bulk carrier vessel with iron ore, watched a train unloader, and learnt about the rolling stock maintenance yard. They also attended presentations from Fortescue's First Nations team members who shared their career journeys and experiences

working within the mining industry.

MADALAH student Alyssa Latham said she and fellow students "got a glimpse into what life could be like working for Fortescue and got to see different things across Fortescue's port and rail operations".

"While I knew mining, I never truly comprehended just how diverse the mining community is, in both people and jobs, without seeing it firsthand," she said.

Fortescue's director of approvals - communities and envi-

ronment, Warren Fish, said the goal was to create opportunities that inspire students.

"By opening our doors and sharing our people's stories, we hope to spark ambition and show that a career in mining can be both rewarding and achievable," he said. "Partnerships like this are about listening, learning and working together to create opportunities that reflect the aspirations of First Nations communities."

MADALAH's general manager Casey Jo Drummond thanked

Fortescue for its ongoing support and the tour.

"We are grateful to our corporate partners that enable these site visits and provide an opportunity for our scholars to experience what it would be like to work in the various sectors," she said. "This trip was an incredible demonstration of the diversity of roles within the mining sector and definitely opened the eyes of many of the scholars who were able to attend."

This report was produced with the support of Fortescue.



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	15/2123	SPARGOVILLE MINERALS PTY LTD	1BL	22.9km SW'ly of Kambalda	Lat: 31° 19' S Long: 121° 28' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	16/668	GTRG RESOURCES PTY LTD	2BL	35.1km S'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 40' S Long: 120° 58' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Exploration Licence	29/1304	BENZAI PTY LTD	10BL	118.1km NW'ly of Menzies	Lat: 29° 5' S Long: 120° 1' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Exploration Licence	30/589	ADMIRAL GOLD PTY LTD	2BL	54.8km NW'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 3' S Long: 120° 37' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Exploration Licence	77/3108	PARNELL, Steven William Bernard	2BL	50.4km S'ly of Marvel Loch	Lat: 31° 53' S Long: 119° 41' E	YILGARN SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	15/6975	EASTERN COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS PTY LTD	115.44HA	8.9km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 2' S Long: 121° 9' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	15/6976	EASTERN COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS PTY LTD	121.39HA	9.8km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 2' S Long: 121° 9' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	15/6977	EASTERN COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS PTY LTD	120.29HA	8.3km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 1' S Long: 121° 9' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	15/6978	EASTERN COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS PTY LTD	120.13HA	9.2km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 2' S Long: 121° 10' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	15/6979	EASTERN COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS PTY LTD	119.90HA	7.6km S'ly of Coolgardie	Lat: 31° 1' S Long: 121° 10' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	16/3540	NORTON GOLD FIELDS PTY LTD	199.97HA	11.1km S'ly of Ora Banda	Lat: 30° 28' S Long: 121° 4' E	COOLGARDIE SHIRE, KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	24/5889	MORRIS, Jamie Robert	87.57HA	7.6km N'ly of Broad Arrow	Lat: 30° 22' S Long: 121° 19' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	24/5891	NORTON GOLD FIELDS PTY LTD	140.29HA	17.2km S'ly of Broad Arrow	Lat: 30° 35' S Long: 121° 18' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	26/4838	BELRES PTY LTD FLEMING, Sean David	197.85HA	10km S'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 50' S Long: 121° 28' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Prospecting Licence	29/2697	DEGRUSSA, Kevin Ronald	167.33HA	70.4km NW'ly of Menzies	Lat: 29° 13' S Long: 120° 32' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	29/2698	DEGRUSSA, Kevin Ronald	198.51HA	72.5km NW'ly of Menzies	Lat: 29° 12' S Long: 120° 31' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	29/2699	DEGRUSSA, Kevin Ronald	158.70HA	71.3km NW'ly of Menzies	Lat: 29° 13' S Long: 120° 32' E	MENZIES SHIRE
Prospecting Licence	57/1553	LYONS, David Maxwell	21.60HA	5.3km W'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 27° 58' S Long: 119° 14' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE

Nature of the act: Grant of prospecting licences which authorises the applicant to prospect for minerals for a term of 4 years from date of grant. Grant of exploration licences, which authorises the applicant to explore for minerals for a term of 5 years from the date of grant. **Notification day: 27 August 2025.** **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 **27 November 2025**. 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. **27 December 2025**), 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	27/527	VAN BLITTERSWYK, Wayne Craig	560.76HA	23.1km NE'ly of Kalgoorlie	Lat: 30° 33' S Long: 121° 34' E	KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY
Mining Lease	57/673	GEMLAB AUSTRALIA PTY LTD	28.60HA	5.6km NW'ly of Sandstone	Lat: 27° 56' S Long: 119° 16' E	SANDSTONE SHIRE
Mining Lease	77/1323	MOORE, Christopher David	10.71HA	27.9km NW'ly of Southern Cross	Lat: 31° 1' S Long: 119° 9' E	YILGARN 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: 27 August 2025.** **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 **27 November 2025**. 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. **27 December 2025**), 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.

Emily shines on big stage



The Northern Territory under 12 girls' team.

NICOLE BROWN

Eleven-year-old Emily Pilakui from the Tiwi Islands proudly represented the Northern Territory at the School Sport Australia National U12 AFL Championships, held in Maroochydore, Queensland, earlier this month.

The daughter of Wayne Pilakui and Angelina Tipungwuti, Emily is a Grade 5 student from Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island. She was the youngest player in the NT side but played with the confidence and composure of a veteran.

The championships marked a series of firsts for the talented young footballer, from travelling on a "big aeroplane" to pulling on football boots for the first time.

Before the team left for Queensland, they were presented with their NT guernseys by perhaps the most famous Tiwi Islands footballer of all — AFL and Hawks legend Cyril Rioli. "It felt different running in boots, but I was proud to wear the NT col-

ours and play for my community," Emily said. "I loved playing with my teammates and made many new friends."

Emily was a stand-out player across the week, frequently finding her teammates and the goals.

Her parents said they were "so proud" to see their daughter wearing the NT jumper and playing with such determination and joy on the national stage.

One of Emily's teammates, Jada Jeffrey, is the niece of Joel and Jy, the niece of former NTFL and VFLW player Lateesha Jeffrey, and granddaughter of former St Kilda player and AFLNT Hall of Famer Russell Jeffrey.

The NT girls had plenty to celebrate, winning the battle of the Territories and taking the shield against the ACT.

In their final match, they faced the powerhouse Victorian team, who were undefeated for the entire event and an imposing opposition.

But the NT girls held Victoria to just two goals after half-time, and in the final moments, Emily



Emily Pilakui at the School Sport Australia National U12 AFL Championships. Picture: Deoin Menzies

kicked a goal after the siren to finish the carnival on a high. Off the field, the young players had some unforgettable experiences. They attended a Brisbane Lions training session thanks to former AFL player and Territorian

Anthony Corrie, now the Indigenous welfare manager at the Lions, and later watched the Lions take on the Sydney Swans at the Gabba in front of 30,000 fans — an eye-opening moment for the team and especially for Emily,

given the population of the Tiwi Islands is about 3000.

They were also visited by Gold Coast Suns stars Joel Jeffrey, Jy Farrer and Mac Andrew, who delivered a pre-game speech and cheered the girls on.

Narkle grateful for having his AFL 'dream come true'

JARRED CROSS

Quinton Narkle called time on his AFL career this month after 59 games at three clubs, finishing as a Dockers.

Pick 60 in the 2016 national draft, Narkle, 27, has played two senior games at Fremantle since arriving back in his home State ahead of the 2025 season.

Drafted from WAFL club Perth, he made 41 senior AFL appearances for Geelong — including a career-high 16 games during 2021 — before revitalising his career via Essendon's VFL setup after being delisted at the Cats at the end of 2022.

Narkle, pictured, played 16 games for Port Adelaide across 2023 and 2024 after being picked up as a mid-season recruit.

"I'm feeling quite content with the decision and I'm looking forward to what's ahead in a place that's very special to us," he said.

"I'm very grateful that I've played AFL for so long and I'd like to thank the three clubs that gave me a chance. I feel so lucky that I got to be a part of strong clubs with winning cultures.

"I got to play with great players and people I'll be friends with for the rest of my life."

It was a "dream come true" to

play with Wesley College classmates and WA 18s teammates Sam Powell-Pepper and Shai Bolton during his stints at Port and Freo, Narkle said, ahead of plans to relocate to Darwin with his young family.

"I never got all the way to an AFL grand final, but I played in two preliminary finals and it's those big finals games that I'll remember forever," he said.

"My AFL career has definitely had some ups and downs, and I'd like to thank my mum, my siblings, my partner Taylah, and our girls, for riding the wave with me."

Narkle kicked two majors on debut with the Cats against the Bulldogs midway through the 2018 season.

He played all three of Geelong's finals in 2019, equalling that effort with the

Power last year. "Nine years in the AFL system is an amazing achievement," Dockers footy general manager Joe Brierty said.

"The club thanks Quinton for his time at Fremantle and we wish Quinton, his partner Taylah, and their young family, all the best starting their next chapter in Darwin."

Narkle made a strong contribution to Freo's WAFL affiliate Peel Thunder during 2025, averaging 23 touches per game.



Rankine commits to be better after suspension

JARRED CROSS

Izak Rankine won't be available for next month's grand final if the Crows progress without losing a home final after receiving a four-week ban for a "highly offensive homophobic slur".

The AFL handed down the sanction on Thursday after finding Rankine breached AFL player conduct rules with the slur directed towards a Collingwood player the previous weekend. Rankine said he was sorry and he regretted using the slur.

In similar instances from the previous two seasons, players have received sanctions from three-to-six weeks.

St Kilda youngster Lance Collard received a six-week ban for multiple homophobic slurs said during a VFL match last year. Last month, West Coast's Jack Graham received a four-week ban for a similar breach, while Gold Coast player Wil Powell was ruled out for five matches.

The league noted Rankine called the Magpies player to apologise at the weekend and fully cooperated with integrity unit investigations this week, where he admitted to the slur and was "remorseful

for it". In a statement via the club on Thursday, Rankine said: "I regret using the word and I am very sorry for doing so, and that type of language has no place in football or the community."

"It was a mistake and I have apologised to the Collingwood player, and what happened does not reflect my values or those of the club," he said.

"I'm committed to educating myself and being better." AFL general counsel Stephen Meade said the language used was offensive, hurtful and highly inappropriate.

"Our players have a very clear understanding of what is acceptable on the football field. Importantly, in this instance it was called out by players and acknowledged by Izak himself as wrong — and that reflects the standards we expect and demand in our game," he said.

"Izak has said he knew it was not acceptable.

"Homophobia has no place in football. The suspension is significant, but stamping out vilification in our game is incredibly important.

"Everyone in football understands the rules, and there are consequences of breaching them."

SPORT

Champ on & off field



Sam Backo celebrates an Origin win. Picture: NRL

Backo's legacy extends further than football

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Warrgamay and South Sea Islander man Sam Backo is being remembered by his family not only as a legendary footballer, but as a devoted big brother, cultural leader and proud advocate for his community.

Backo played seven Origins for the Maroons between 1988 and 1990, having a remarkable impact. In his rookie season, he became the first front-rower to be named man of the match in two straight Origins. He played six Tests for Australia in 1988 and 1989, and in 2008 was named in the Indigenous Team of the Century. Backo, who passed away aged 64 in Cairns this month, was celebrated for his achievements on the field, but his sister Charmaene says his legacy runs far deeper.

In a joint statement, Backo's sisters — Dolores, Charmaene, Kathrine and Jewel — said their brother was more than a footballer. Speaking with National Indigenous Times, Charmaene shared memories of her brother.

"We always did things as a very tight-knit group, the four sisters and Sam," she said.

"Of course, because he was the oldest, he also got to pull rank a lot of the time, which comes with being the big brother and the only brother."

Growing up with his grandparents Melba and Ishmael Backo in Ingham, Backo spent his early years in the Herbert River district, including Cordelia and Halifax, with his big extended family.

Charmaene recalled their upbringing, where the five siblings shared chores, bike rides and long days playing in their cubby house. She said their disciplined childhood helped shape the values Sam carried through life.

"He got a good dose of the good old-fashioned discipline," she said. "We saw that, and he did too, as character building. It made us into the responsible adults we are today."

Backo's strong sense of identity was deeply influenced by their mother, the late Dr Evelyn Scott AO, a renowned Aboriginal rights activist who played



Sam Backo, pictured with his sisters, is remembered as a proud Warrgamay man, devoted brother and champion for his people.

a central role in the 1967 referendum. He was raised in a household where education, activism and cultural responsibility were part of everyday life.

"Our mother instilled in all five of us the need to read and get a good education because she believed that knowledge was power," Charmaene said.

"She had a wall in the house that had a lot of little sayings on it and Sam always remembered the one that said: 'We all belong to the one race, the human race.'" These lessons stayed with Backo throughout his life.

He became a regular presence at native title meetings and helped lead the Warrgamay People's 2021 native title deter-

mination, securing land and sea rights to more than 185,000 hectares. "He was just so proud of that achievement," Charmaene said.

"He always proudly walked on Country and was proud of giving back to community."

Backo remained active in the struggle for Indigenous rights long after retiring from rugby league, including his work supporting Aboriginal men transitioning out of the prison system. "He felt a very strong need to always give back and to step up, and he did it every time," Charmaene said.

"He did it very proudly and with his head held high."

She said his leadership in

family settings was just as strong. Known affectionately as "the big fella", Backo was a central figure among cousins, uncles, aunts and siblings.

"Whenever family gave him a call, he always stepped up," she said. "He loved that. With all of his cousins, he was the oldest, like the tallest tree in their forest. And now he's gone."

Despite his fame, Charmaene said her brother never let football alone define him.

"We were very proud of his footy achievements, but there was so much more to my brother." The family also expressed gratitude for the outpouring of tributes and support from the football community.

NRL summit aims to develop community leaders

CALLAN MORSE

Coinciding with NRL Indigenous Round this month, First Nations students nominated by League clubs gathered on the Central Coast to participate in a range of workshops.

The NRL Indigenous Youth Summit on Darkinjung Country focused on cultural experiences, developing leadership and promoting wellbeing.

A four-day intensive camp, the Summit aimed to equip the 68 Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Maori Year 11 students to be changemakers in their



The NRL Youth Summit Top 20 students. Picture: Taylor Kelly/ NRL

communities. Representing the Melbourne Storm, Meerah Sehgal spoke about respect and advocating for more opportunities for Indigenous people to connect with culture.

"It feels like such an unreal, surreal experience, I feel incredibly grateful and lucky," said Ms Sehgal, who is Yorta Yorta.

"I learnt so much from every other leader that was there, and I

am who I am now and what I'm going to do in the future because of everyone there at this camp and what they've all taught me.

"I feel like I've gained so much confidence. I really came out of my shell."

Brisbane Broncos representative Kane Munt, from Mabuyag (Mabuyag) in the Torres Strait, shared his desire to address the issue of young Indigenous people in out-of-home care, and to increase their opportunity to connect to culture.

"The week was really important; it was good to come out the country, come out and connect

with everyone, connect with people that I've never met," Mr Munt said. "There was no shame. There was no judgment. Everyone supported each other. They cared for each other."

The young leaders spent time on Country to visit cultural sites including the heritage-listed Baiame Cave and Finchley Aboriginal Area in Yengo National Park. A trip to Newcastle for the Newcastle Knights v Penrith Panthers Indigenous Round clash concluded the Summit, where participant Yaegan Faulkner performed as part of the pre-game ceremony.