

Aboriginal Participation Bulletin No 15

Sharing stories on how the Transport Portfolio is embracing Aboriginal cultures, working with Aboriginal peoples and businesses to provide sustainable employment and engagement opportunities.

Celebrating new business opportunities

Lena McGinty is a proud Gooniyandi mother of three with ties to Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek. Having previously worked with a number of organisations including Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation, Lena joined the [New Fitzroy River Bridge](#) project as a traffic controller.

Throughout the project, Lena demonstrated reliability and leadership, providing mentorship and support for her team.

Her distinctive pink PPE made her a recognisable figure on the project site, even inspiring a young girl who dressed in pink to emulate Lena.



Image: Lena McGinty (in pink PPE) demonstrates reliability and leadership on site

Motivated by her experience on the project, Lena is looking to the future as she works with a small business consultant to establish her own business, specialising in traffic management services across the Kimberley region.

Lena will combine her passion for work with her connections across the Kimberley to create opportunities for herself, her family and others.

Bright future for emerging business

Kamus Green and Jamal McCarthy, founders of K&J Civil and Drainage Solutions (K&J), are young leaders in the Fitzroy Valley community. They have strong ties to their Bunuba heritage, with Kamus serving as a director on the board of the Bunuba Aboriginal Corporation.

The duo first joined the [New Fitzroy River Bridge project](#) as machine operators in April 2023, forming part of the first team on site and seeing the project through to completion in December 2023.

Kamus and Jamal worked with the project team and Kee Bundu (Kimberley-based contracting company) to develop K&J into a business. The pair initially leased equipment and are intending to eventually purchase their own.

K&J were awarded their first contract on the Fitzroy River Bridge project, installing street lighting on the bridge deck. Hoping to build on this success, Kamus and Jamal are now scoping future works for K&J, including road and carpark repairs in national parks and a sub-contract through Kee Bundu at Warburton.



Image: Kamus Green and Jamal McCarthy of K&J Civil and Drainage Solutions

Recognising Dampier Peninsula's first driving instructor

Recent driving instructor training held in Broome through the Department of Transport's [Driving Access and Equity Program](#) (DAEP) has helped Natasha secure paid employment as the first licensed driving instructor in Ardyaloon, also known as One Arm Point, on the Dampier Peninsula.

[Kullarri Regional Communities Indigenous Corporation](#) (KRCIC) nominated Natasha to take part in the training and is one of 23 organisations in regional and remote Western Australia supported by a DAEP grant. The grants support projects that increase access to suitable vehicles, driving instruction and supervision to help people obtain their driver's licence and become safe, employable drivers.

Natasha was incredibly grateful for the training opportunity which has helped her secure her new driving instructor career and is looking forward to empowering people with the skills and confidence needed to navigate the roads safely.

"There are a lot of people in my community that I can now help with gaining their driver's licence as we have often struggled to find someone to help us learn to drive, or find a car that we can use to learn to drive in. I am sure I will be kept very busy," she said.

Duane Tang, KRCIC's Chief Executive Officer, said Natasha's success story was an inspiration to others and showcased the transformative power of education and mentorship.

To date, DAEP driving instructor training has resulted in 44 people becoming licensed driving instructors. This initiative is helping to increase the diversity and number of licensed driving instructors in regional and remote areas where there are limited or no professionals available to support learner drivers.

Terrance inspires his local mob

Terrance Warrie, a proud Yindjibarndi man and Yurra employee for the past 10 years, is an inspiring and very popular member of the Yurra team.

"Terrance is the definition of what Yurra are trying to achieve with Yindjibarndi engagement long term. Yurra have provided Terrance with multiple opportunities, challenges and training and he has excelled at all with a beaming smile and an amazing attitude towards the entire team," Stephen Rogers, CEO Yurra said.

"We are so proud of his efforts and what he has achieved in helping us grow the business over the past 10 years".

Yurra, a Pilbara business, is majority owned by all Yindjibarndi people, and part of its community's strategy for sustainability and self-determination, providing services in the mining, oil and gas and infrastructure market sectors.



Image: Terrance Warrie, has an amazing attitude

Yurra recently formed a Joint Venture with Garli and Hicks Civil and Mining, to target Stage 4 of the Manuwarra Red Dog Highway – Coolawanyah Section for Main Roads. The name of the Joint Venture is Yirdiya which is the Yindjibarndi word for "making a road or track".

Yirdiya brings together the expertise and capabilities of three Pilbara Indigenous businesses from the Yindjibarndi, Kariyarra (Garli) and Ngarluma (Hicks Civil and Mining) nations.

"This Project offers Yirdiya a robust opportunity to employ and train local people from the Roebourne / Karratha area with specific emphasis on Indigenous content," Stephen said.

Aboriginal Rangers in the Wheatbelt

Main Roads is collaborating with Aboriginal Rangers from the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Group to undertake crucial revegetation activities in the Wheatbelt Region, and recently produced a short video to demonstrate the work. [Click here to watch](#)



Image: Aboriginal Rangers with Main Roads' Wheatbelt staff

Colleen Fulford, Main Roads' Revegetation Manager Wheatbelt said the initiative had successfully onboarded a full team of Aboriginal youth Rangers.

"Their dedication and enthusiasm has been exemplary and it has helped the Wheatbelt Region to regain management of the revegetation sites to make them visually appealing," Colleen said.

The initiative is part of a broader program to provide meaningful employment to unskilled youth – providing them with skills, confidence and a sense of self-worth.

Sammy Wyborn, Aboriginal Stakeholder Engagement Advisor Wheatbelt said: "We hope that the positive impacts of the project will extend beyond Main Roads contracts and into other services such as conservation".

Alstom Aboriginal Apprentices celebrated

The purpose-built Bellevue Railcar Manufacturing and Maintenance Facility, operated by Alstom Australia, enables Aboriginal apprentices to adapt well to employment conditions, shift work and workplace requirements.

The team's Aboriginal manager supports apprentices by holding regular check-ins with supervisors and leading hands to encourage cultural understanding, ways of working and communicating with Aboriginal apprentices.



Image: Apprentices with Alstom busy on site

Apprentices have contributed to the work on numerous rail cars, fitting parts and feeding cables, as well as a rotation to the Nowergup site to support the project since commencing employment in 2022.

2024 saw the recent sign up and transition of the project's female trade assistant (TA) into an apprenticeship. Leah had originally worked at the Dandenong site and was referred by GOAL Indigenous Services for a TA position. Alstom then provided support for Leah to transfer back to Noongar country to work at Bellevue.



Image: Leah on site in her apprenticeship, Alstom

New pathway created on MELConnx

Prior to Jeremiah Trumper coming to the MELConnx (Morley-Ellenbrook line, METRONET) project in June 2022 he was in a position of unstable living conditions and unemployment, but knew he had to make a change to benefit himself and his two young children. A family member shared with him a Nudge job advertisement for a traineeship in Certificate II in Civil Construction with Laing O'Rourke.

Not knowing his personal circumstances at the time, Jeremiah stunned the room with his drive and passion to be successful in the civil industry and make his children proud of him, knowing that Dad helped build that train line they would be using, as he was living within the Swan Valley region.

Like many, Jeremiah was balancing the pressures of life which had started to affect the input towards his work and led to time off to ensure his ability to be fit for work. Supported by the People Team (Human Resources) to maintain his passion to be successful, Jeremiah returned to work and completed his Cert. II Civil Construction within months.

To build on his success, the team supported Jeremiah's ambitions to upskill by furthering his studies in Cert. III in Civil Construction.

Jeremiah has one unit to complete with an additional nine machine tickets and 19 core units specific to the construction industry.

"Working on a project such as the Morley to Ellenbrook Line has given me the confidence and skills I need to develop future employment opportunities," Jeremiah said.

Matagarup Elders Group influences design

The [Causeway Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridges](#)' Matagarup Elders Group (MEG) recently had the opportunity to see their input come to life, during

a visit to the Civec Heavy Engineering Facility in Henderson.

The site for this project has deep cultural significance to Aboriginal people and the MEG has been integral to informing the design of the bridges and pathways, by sharing their invaluable cultural knowledge and stories.



Image: MEG Members and project team representatives visited the Civec Heavy Engineering Facility in Henderson

The MEG viewed the bridge deck segments that were being built to link to MaCallum Park, as well as the first of three culturally inspired bridge pylons that have started fabrication.

Drawing from the inspiration and knowledge of the MEG, this project will showcase the shape of *wannas* (digging sticks) and a *koylie* (boomerang), in the form of bridge pylons.

The symbolism of *wannas* represent the resilience of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel, a remarkable woman who fought to maintain her rights to Country. The third pylon is being designed to represent a *koylie* (boomerang).

The project is deeply grateful for the MEG’s guidance and partnership on this project.

Recognising Aboriginal history on Tonkin Gap

“Mooro-Beeloo Bridge” the new name for the Redcliffe Bridge, was announced by the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti in December 2023.

The Mooro-Beeloo bridge was upgraded as part of the [Tonkin Gap Project](#), with the name acknowledging the two Noongar groups who lived on either side of the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) prior to colonisation.

The northern side of the river in Bayswater was known as Mooro Country while the southern side in Belmont was known as Beeloo Country. The Traditional Owners recommended the bridge name, to acknowledge both communities linked by the bridge. In further recognition of the Aboriginal cultural significance of the area, the project opened an interpretation node on the Belmont side of the river which forms part of the [Department of Biodiversity and Attractions River Journeys program](#).

Heritage surveys conducted prior to construction identified two sites of Aboriginal cultural significance within the works area. This includes the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and two River Gum trees, each with a single cultural scar.

The signage acknowledges both the scar trees and the river and has seating for passers-by to pause and reflect, while travelling through the area. The project sincerely thanks the Traditional Owners for their valuable input and sharing their family stories.



Image: Some Tonkin Gap Traditional Owners and Aboriginal artists: (L-R) Dellas Bennell, Reginald Yarran, Noel Morich, Korrine Bennell-Yarra and Dallas Yarran

Pedestrian underpasses come to life

Local Noongar artists, Korrine Bennell-Yarran and Dellas Bennell, from Karrak Designs have brought the Great Eastern Highway underpass to life with colour artwork representing the six Noongar seasons – Birak, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba and Kambarang.

The artwork showcases the different seasons along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and the connection between Aboriginal people, the river, and its ecosystems.

Bold colours were used to highlight the uniqueness of each season while the linework represents the *bidi* (pathways) of how people travelled. The artwork also includes native animals that are significant to the area with a strong meaning to the Whadjuk people.



Image: Artist Kayley Emery with her completed artwork

Two new pedestrian underpasses at Guildford Road were also recently completed with Aboriginal artwork.

Artwork on the northern underpass focuses on the *maali* Black Swan – a WA native animal and the official bird emblem of WA (pictured above).

The artist, Kayley Emery drew inspiration from stories told by the Traditional Owners of the area. In Noongar culture, the *Maali* represents the strength of family and community.

Artwork on the southern underpass focuses on *boyi* Longneck Turtles. The artist, Peter Farmer Junior, was inspired by *Boyi* nests nearby. The artist shared that Noongars believe that when there are *Boyi* in a section of a river, that it is healthy and filled with life and a strong spirit.

Apprentices placed on Smart Freeways

Last September, the Intelligent Freeways Alliance (IFA), delivering the [Smart Freeway Mitchell Southbound project](#) (Reid Highway to Vincent Street), offered a unique opportunity to three young Aboriginal apprentices from ARRA Group.

Over the past year, Aaron Kearing, Rajjab Baluch and Walid Bagdadi have taken part in a program designed to raise their competency in all things electrical.

The Alliance said they are giving these young apprentices an opportunity to both upskill and cross-skill.

Without the program, these apprentices could be losing a valuable opportunity to be exposed to the electrical industry.

So far, this program has been a great success with the students having received amazing feedback on their progression, competency and participation.

Aaron, Rajjab and Walid's hard work in this program has been commended.

IFA is currently looking to expand the program to ensure more trainees are given the same opportunities.



Members of the IFA project team with Aboriginal Apprentices from ARRA Group