

Aboriginal Participation Bulletin

This bi-monthly newsletter features stories showcasing how the Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio collaborates with Aboriginal communities and businesses; and embraces culture to create sustainable jobs and engagement opportunities.

The Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

MJA Cultural Immersive Program

The Cultural Immersive Program delivered by the [METRONET New Midland Station Project](#) alliance contractor, Midland Junction Alliance (MJA) has successfully engaged 200 team members, delivering an authentic and impactful Aboriginal cultural learning experience.

Facilitated by Kamarang Services, the program goes beyond compliance training by incorporating storytelling and knowledge sharing. To conclude the session, participants were treated to a traditional meal of kangaroo stew and damper, creating a memorable and meaningful experience. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value of this approach in deepening cultural understanding with the on-site teams participating enthusiastically throughout the program.

This initiative reflects MJA's ongoing commitment to fostering a culturally safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace.



[Participants at the MJA Cultural Immersive Program](#)

New Brooking Channel Bridge

Over 12 months on from the completion of the [Main Roads New Brooking Channel Bridge Project](#) in the Kimberley, an independent economic report by consultancy firm Pracsys has confirmed the importance of the project in boosting the local economy and providing life-changing skills.

Through a dedicated traineeship and skills development program, the project engaged over 120 local Aboriginal workers, 47 of whom participated in structured training programs.



[View of the New Brooking Channel Bridge](#)

26 of these trainees have gone on to find other employment, both in Fitzroy Crossing and across Australia. 30 Aboriginal-owned businesses were engaged on the project, 25 of which were Kimberley based and 18 were Fitzroy Valley based.

These exceptional outcomes, achieved in just over nine months, contributed a total indirect output of \$8.1 million to the local economy.

From apprenticeship to mentoring future apprentices

Alstom employee Angus recently completed a Certificate III in Engineering – Mechanical Trade (Fitting) while working on [METRONET's WA Railcar Program](#) with lead contractor Alstom. He began his apprenticeship in February 2022 after realising that school wasn't working out for him and he was keen to find a job.



[Angus presenting to staff at a NAIDOC Week event](#)

During his apprenticeship, Angus worked on the project's C-series and Australind trains and on the maintenance and service of both B and C-series trains at Nowergup Depot. He was able to work on a range of tasks such as forklift operations, shunt operator duties, working with automatic mechanisms and rigging, providing him with a wide exposure to the type of work available across the rail and transport industry.

Angus was as a guest speaker at the 2024 & 2025 NAIDOC events which gave him the opportunity to develop his public speaking skills. Angus is from the Birpai language group and has learned about his culture and connections through his nana, who shared her knowledge and stories with him.

Since completing his apprenticeship, Angus has become a full time Alstom staff member and will assist in mentoring and supporting upcoming Aboriginal and project apprentices.

Ash Garlett, Alstom Aboriginal Engagement Lead enjoyed watching Angus develop his skillset and confidence throughout his apprenticeship.

"Angus has grown and developed into a hardworking, proud young Aboriginal apprentice. I wish him well in his career and look forward to Angus being a great role model and mentor for future apprentices. Good work Angus."

When asked what advice he would give to people considering undertaking an apprenticeship, Angus shared what he had learned.

"My time as an apprentice taught me that you don't need to know everything from day one. By asking questions, following good processes, and learning from experienced tradespeople who offered constant support, I gained the confidence to step up, make mistakes, and grow both personally and professionally."

Portfolio focused on growing cultural competency across the workforce

A new panel services contract has been awarded to provide Aboriginal cultural competency development across the Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio. The first of its kind across the Portfolio, the twelve-month contract was developed to serve the immediate needs for transport agency staff who require training in cultural awareness or development of cultural competencies.

This approach demonstrates the Portfolio's commitment to cultivating consistent cultural competencies in our workplaces including project site offices and regional areas.

This panel contract comprises training providers who will deliver initial training and resources to empower our workforce with the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and skills necessary to effectively engage with people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in a respectful way, enhancing our overall cultural intelligence and positioning our agencies as employers of choice.

Regionally specific training modules will be available to deepen our understanding of local Aboriginal cultures, histories and protocols relevant to specific areas across Western Australia.

TPAE host Supply Nation’s First Step training

TPAE and Main Roads were proud to host Supply Nation’s recent First Step training at their Victoria Avenue office, Bidi Katadjin (‘pathway to knowledge’ in Noongar language).

First Step reflects the journey and growth of supplier diversity in Australia and includes a framework for building an effective and successful supplier diversity program. The training outlined the history of supplier diversity with a specific focus on Australian best practice and research.

Dennis Kicket, Director Aboriginal Engagement, welcomed attendees to the training session by delivering an Acknowledgement of Country and sharing some key learnings with organisation participants for successful Aboriginal engagement and participation.

Attendees of the program walked away with:

- A deeper understanding of supplier diversity including the rationale and benefits
- An understanding of the key elements of supplier diversity best practice and how to apply these in their organisations
- An understanding of the key activities necessary in an effective supplier diversity program, and
- Made connections with other supplier diversity leaders.



[Program participants learning how to grow supplier diversity in their organisations and agencies](#)

Building stronger relationships across the Kimberley Region

Main Roads Kimberley recently hosted interested contractors, vendors and suppliers at its annual Regional Industry Forums roadshow, sharing information on upcoming works and required services across the region's projects.

Over a 2-week period, the Kimberley Leadership team travelled to Derby, Broome, Halls Creek and Kununurra to provide updates on recent project milestones, opportunities for the 2026 construction season work program, future minor and major works, contracting requirements, and Main Roads' Aboriginal Engagement policy. The team also outlined future projects currently in development stage or subject to funding.

More than 100 contractors, suppliers and community members attended the sessions, taking the opportunity to engage directly with Main Roads staff. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with several contractors expressing their appreciation for the opportunity and noting that the information provided was highly valuable to their business planning.

Aboriginal and local business engagement and participation continue to be key priorities for Main Roads and the Kimberley Region, with ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with local communities and businesses.



[Local businesses at the Kimberley Industry Forum](#)

Key points shared with local businesses:

- Total Aboriginal business spend has grown by over 200 per cent over the last 7 years.
- 86 businesses were engaged in 2024/25.
- Plant Panel spend in 2025 construction season was approximately \$50 million, utilising 43 contractors.

Growing local capability on the Tanami Road Upgrade project

Binboonoo Pty Ltd, an Aboriginal community-owned business, established in 2022 to gain work on the [Main Roads Tanami Road Upgrade Project](#), has grown from a small labour-hire operation into a capable provider of both labour and plant hire.

Located at Yiyili community west of Halls Creek, this business employs four local people, and continues to build skills, confidence and long-term capability as a direct outcome of its participation in the project.

On the Tanami, the labour-hire team carries out smaller civil tasks requiring semi-skilled labourers.

Through the project, they received hands-on training in telehandler operations and the safe use of small power tools, gradually building both confidence and technical skills.

These opportunities have helped workers to be more equipped, valued, and confident in taking on new challenges.



Brothers from the Tanami Road Project building culverts on Country at Yiyili community, Joseph Cox (foreground), Thomas Cox (holding staff rod) and Paul Dean Cox (holding trowel) all from Yiyili community

In November 2025, the team applied this training to successfully complete the installation of a culvert on the community access road while working under the guidance of the Tanami culvert crew supervisor and its trainer. This has been a meaningful milestone for the business and the community.

It demonstrates how the training and on-the-job experience gained on the Tanami can translate into real capability on their own Country. This civil works team with supervision, is now capable to deliver critical infrastructure.

The culvert installation was completed to a high standard, providing the team with valuable experience, strengthening their work history and showing that they are ready for more complex tasks in the future.

Community leaders and residents expressed strong feelings of pride and ownership after seeing their uncles/brothers undertake these works.

Community resident and worker Jason shared how he is more confident to use hand tools to cut out mesh shapes to reinforce the cement apron and do formworks without supervision.

Business owner Paul Cox said he is “pretty proud of the boys and it turned out to be a great job they did for the community. It’s good for the community as the improved floodway will allow for access for outlying communities into the community shop and school bus run.”

“The guys picked up a fair bit of experience on the tools and I am pretty comfortable with the boys – Jason, Thomas, Joseph, Terrence and Dean – out here without supervision doing the culverts. The [school] bus run came through this way and they were excited to see [the boys] working here. In the end, the community and myself are 100 per cent happy with the job they did”.

Leading discussions on First Nations community engagement at AusRAIL Plus 2025

Representatives from Alstom, lead contractor for [METRONET's WA Railcar Program](#) and one of the alliance partners on the [Public Transport Authority's High Capacity Signalling Project](#), attended AusRAIL Plus 2025, described as the premier event of the Australian rail industry calendar, in Naarm (Melbourne) late last year.

Ash Garlett, Alstom Aboriginal Engagement Lead, had the opportunity to speak as a panel member in a discussion on the topic of 'First Nations community engagement in major rail projects'.



[Ash Garlett sharing his insights at AusRAIL 2025](#)

Expert insights were shared and encouraged by Ash and fellow panel guests with discussions around:

- Best practices, challenges, and opportunities in First Nations community engagement within major rail projects.
- Community engagement approaches in major rail projects, organisational strategies, best practice examples, and observations on evolving engagement methods as well as understanding the importance of free, prior, and informed consent.
- Opportunities and challenges in First Nations engagement and employment within industry. What works, what doesn't, and entry level pathways.
- Incorporating cultural design and Reconciliation Action Plans into the workplace, RAP tiers and cultural safety elements.

- Building on employment and procurement opportunities for First Nations peoples, the importance of making these pathways accessible and supporting both current and future generations.
- Reviewing and impacting company policies and procedures to make it easier for First Nations peoples and businesses to access opportunities in the rail sector, including employment, training, and business engagement.

Ash shared his insights on the importance of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“Genuine partnership and culturally safe practices are vital in shaping better outcomes for our communities and for the rail sector as a whole. This is something we strive to achieve by engaging with local traditional owner groups and teams on the journey to provide sustainable outcomes for the future.”

Swan River Crossings team marks major project milestone

The [Main Roads Swan River Crossings Fremantle Project](#) team came together early morning on 2 February 2026 to mark a significant milestone in the project's journey.

The morning began with a Welcome to Country delivered by Elder Freda Ogilvie, followed by a Smoking Ceremony led by Elder Herbert Bropho, creating a meaningful cultural foundation for the day's activities.



[Project staff greeting Whadjuk Elder Herbert Bropho](#)

A prestart BBQ breakfast brought everyone together in a relaxed setting before demolition work commenced.

The gathering recognised the achievement of a major project milestone: the closure of the existing Fremantle Traffic Bridge on 1 February 2026.

This closure paves the way for the next phase of works throughout 2026, including the removal of the old bridge, installation of the new bridge deck, and construction of the new road alignment.

Members of the Elder Reference Group were in attendance, offering an opportunity for the construction team to connect with the cultural leaders who have played a vital role in shaping the new bridge design. The event also served as a moment to farewell the old structure, acknowledging its long-standing presence in Walyalup (Fremantle).

The morning brought together a broad cross-section of project partners, including Alliance Board members, representatives from the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement branch, Laing O'Rourke's Head of Indigenous Affairs Mark Beetson, and Garlett Enterprises, a Noongar-owned business joining the project in the coming weeks.



The rigging trainees on their first day working at the Fremantle project site

The event also coincided with an exciting milestone for three of the project's Rigging Trainees, Zach, Trejhane and Lachlan, who commenced their first day on the Fremantle site. After completing their initial training at the Hazelmere precast facility, the trio were eager to join the wider Rigging trainee cohort working on the new structure.

All trainees continue to progress strongly in both their practical skills and formal studies, remaining on track to complete their Certificate III in Rigging in 2026.

The Fremantle Bridges Alliance is proud to be delivering an asset of such significance for Walyalup and the broader community. The project continues to be shaped through close collaboration with Noongar Elders and by engaging a diverse range of Noongar businesses across the supply chain.



Call out for stories

If you would like to share an achievement or update about Aboriginal business engagement or employment on a Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio project or operations, please contact TPAE Communications with a story or summary by emailing:

AboriginalEngagement@mainroads.wa.gov.au

