

# Aboriginal Participation Bulletin

**Stories showcasing how the Transport Portfolio collaborates with Aboriginal communities and businesses; and embraces culture to create sustainable jobs and engagement opportunities.**

The Transport 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.

## Kimberley Industry Forums a huge success

In December 2024, the Main Roads Kimberley Region Leadership team travelled the region visiting Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kununurra to meet contractors, suppliers and interested community members.

With 80 attendees across 5 locations and 20 participants in our virtual session, local staff met with current and potential future providers to present Main Roads' latest project achievements, major and minor works programs planned for the next two years, Maintenance In-House Transition and opportunities for local and Aboriginal businesses.

Representatives from the Kimberley Development Commission and Broome Chamber of Commerce were also in attendance to offer support and promote a new Kimberley-based business network platform linking contractors with industries for upcoming projects across the Kimberley.

Aboriginal engagement statistics continue to be a key focus across the region.



Belinda Gibbon (Local Content Advisor - Kimberley Development Commission) presenting at the Kununurra forum.

Aboriginal participation targets for the Kimberley region are set at 40% with the 2023/24 financial year results achieving the following outcomes.

	Overall	Aboriginal Engagement	Percentage
Hours worked (hrs)	366,107	153,956	42%
Business engagement	75 contractors	34 contractors	45%
Business spend (\$)	160,728,552.14	23,559,769.07	15%

## Student collaboration

Fremantle Bridges Alliance, delivering the Main Roads [Swan River Crossings Project Fremantle Traffic Bridge](#), has recently launched a new Alliance logo and branding, masterfully crafted by the talented students from John Curtin College of the Arts' First Nations student group, Maali Mia.



Elder Reference Group members meeting the John Curtin College of the Arts students at the river for a smoking ceremony with the project team. Left to right: Herb Bropho, Freda Ogilvie, Barb Bynder, Farley Garlett, Trevor Walley.

Under the guidance of the project design team, local Elder Freda Ogilvie and Karrda Consultancy, the students developed concepts inspired by their own connection to the area along with the Alliance values and project's cultural narrative which was developed by the project's Elder Reference Group.



Meg Buckley (John Curtin College of the Arts teacher), Freda Ogilvie (Elder Reference Group member) and Nicky Croudace (Swan River Crossings Landscape Architect)

The partnership involved students visiting the project site, meeting the team and meeting with Elder Reference Group members. The students confidently presented their patterns to the Alliance board in late 2024 and designs were then incorporated into the project.



Fremantle Bridges Alliance project team members with the featured design. Left to right: Katelyn Thompson, Remi Cousin, Rachel Sillery, Craig Macey and Aidan Brannan.

Along with digital logos, building signage, wall stickers and pull up banners have been since been developed and printed by local Aboriginal businesses.

“Our team was so pleased to be able to find new ways of embedding Noongar culture into the project along with providing local students with the opportunity to create a real-life work example in design, exposing students to the construction industry and career pathways. During all group activities and site visits, the students demonstrated enthusiasm, engagement in the tasks and talent in the creation of amazing patterns and designs.”  
Amanda Inman, Senior Indigenous Affairs and Social Inclusion Advisor.

Fremantle Bridges Alliance is looking forward to continuing their engagement with the Maali Mia students in 2025 by providing them with more opportunities to collaborate and participate in the iconic New Fremantle Traffic Bridge project



## Early collaboration leads to innovative approach for heritage approval at Bandy Creek Boat Harbour project

Early collaboration recently resulted in a different approach to heritage approvals for a jetty upgrade undertaken by the Department of Transport (DoT) at Bandy Creek Boat Harbour near Esperance.

As a registered Aboriginal Heritage site, the replacement of the old, narrow, timber finger jetty with a safer, longer, modern, floating jetty, approval was a key part of the project planning and DoT took a proactive approach.

Early discussions about the planned works with the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC), well before submitting the project for formal consideration, nurtured a productive dialogue with the ETNTAC Circle of Elders.

The Elders supported the project but, rather than following the regular model of monitoring being a condition of approval, they suggested that those involved receive special training to understand the cultural values of the place and help them identify material heritage that may be unearthed. This was particularly important for this area as the banks of the creek were once a burial site.



ETNTAC's Community Engagement Team Manager Jennell Reynolds conducts the training at Bandy Creek Boat Harbour.

Before work started, DoT officers and the contractor undertook ETNTAC's cultural induction and heritage identification training. The group was presented with an archive of artefacts to inspect so they could be identified on site and help reduce the risk of heritage impact during works. This was followed by a walk through the area so that participants could better understand the cultural landscape they were about to work in.

Reflecting on the training, the group agreed the training had been very informative, not only covering ETNTAC's cultural values of the place but also provided an understanding of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage process, its purpose and DoT's obligations.



Officers from DoT and contractor, Ventia, participating in the training.

The jetty replacement was completed in late February 2025, providing launch ramp users with a significantly improved, safer jetty and on this occasion those who worked on the project don't only have the satisfaction of completing works with a community benefit, but also enhanced cultural heritage awareness that can be applied to their other projects.

More information about the Bandy Creek Boat Harbour can be found [here](#).

## Constructing a new career path

Cordell Green began his construction journey as a labourer on the Main Roads [New Brooking Channel Bridge project](#) in Fitzroy Crossing, where he completed a Certificate II in Construction. While working alongside site engineers, he developed a strong interest in engineering and sought opportunities to expand his learning.

To gain experience, Cordell shadowed engineers and led the delivery of several community projects which formed part of the project's community partnerships program, which was aimed at giving back to the Fitzroy Valley community. He played a key role in delivering three basketball half-courts in remote Aboriginal communities, managing the project planning, resource allocation and execution to ensure a high-quality outcome.

With Brooking Channel Bridge now complete, Cordell has relocated to Perth to undertake a Certificate III in Technical Engineering as part of Main Roads WA's Aboriginal Pathways Program. His goal is to complete his studies and eventually return to the Kimberley, where he hopes to work on future infrastructure projects and inspire other young people to consider careers in engineering.



Cordell and Kesha conducting a community site inspection in Fitzroy Crossing.

## Djeran and Beeloo riding series

From March to May 2025, new, novice and rusty riders are invited to come together to explore the beauty of Western Australia, enjoying slow-paced bike rides along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River), Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River) and our city's iconic green heart, Kings Park.



Beeloo Riding Series host Joe Collard sharing cultural insights.

The Djeran Riding Series and Beeloo Riding Series are being hosted by Wadjuk Traditional Owner, Olman Walley and Biboolmun Nyoongar man Joe Collard respectively. Olman and Joe will share their own stories and encourage participants to be more aware of Noongar culture in their surroundings.

These free family-friendly events are delivered by the Department of Transport in partnership with WestCycle and offer safe and enriching rides that invite the community to connect in culturally immersive experiences.

[Register now for the Djeran and Beeloo Riding Series.](#)



Beeloo Riding Series participants hearing from Joe Collard.



## Ernest set out to achieve a goal and succeeded

Ernest had a clear goal in mind when he walked into the Yulella Aboriginal Corporation office – to obtain his driver's licence to better support his family and explore new job opportunities.



Ernest proudly displaying his new P plates after passing the practical driving test.

Yulella Aboriginal Corporation receives funding from the Department of Transport's Driving Access and Equity Program to run the Yulella Driver Access & Equity Program in Cue, Meekatharra and Mount Magnet.

Ernest came with a bit of driving experience and over the course of 30 hours of instruction with driving supervisors, he proved that he had what it took to be behind the wheel.

Although Ernest struggled with the hazard perception test (HPT), he never gave up, spending plenty of time in the office to brush up on his skills, determined to get it right. The practice paid off and Ernest passed the HPT, ready to tackle the practical driving assessment.

When the day of the driving test came, Ernest approached it with a blend of nerves and excitement. When he finished and got the news that he had passed, he couldn't help but smile from ear to ear.

Ernest reached his goal and can now explore more opportunities with his driving independence.

## Brittney gains independence with her licence

Arriving at the WA Police and Community Youth Centre (PCYC) in Geraldton with her learner's permit, Brittney was on a mission to get her driver's licence.

The PCYC Drive to the Future program in Geraldton receives funding from the Department of Transport's Driving Access and Equity Program to help reduce barriers in the process of obtaining a driver's licence.

Following three driving lessons, Brittney had a newfound confidence in her driving abilities.

"I enjoyed completing my hours with PCYC and received extensive support and advice on my journey," Brittney said.

"I loved my driving mentors, they were so polite and consistent."

After passing her practical driving assessment, Brittney has become more independent with the ability to drive to and from work and pick up clients throughout the day.

**"I will forever be grateful for the support and assistance from PCYC's Drive to the Future program," Brittney said.**



Britney showcasing her newly acquired P plates following participation in the PCYC Drive to the Future program, funded by DoT's Driving Access and Equity Program

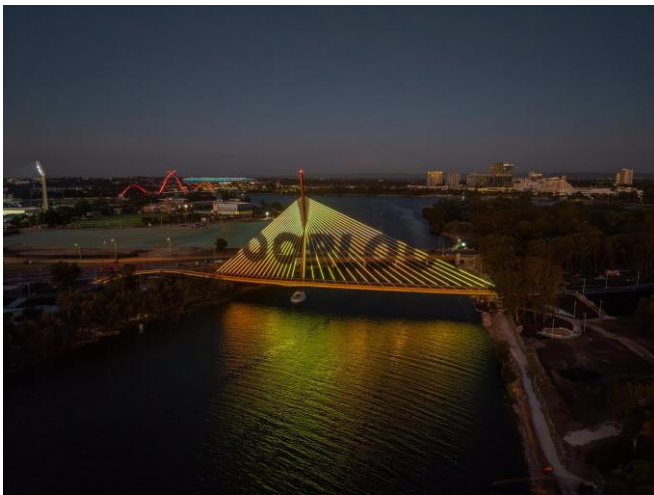
## Boorloo Bridge officially open

Boorloo Bridge officially opened to the public on Sunday 22 December 2024, creating a new and safer route for people to walk, wheel and ride between Victoria Park and East Perth via Matagarup (Heirisson Island) and enjoy the views across the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River).

The [Boorloo Bridge \(Causeway Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridges\) Project](#) created sustainable work opportunities and significant exposure to improving capabilities of businesses and workers on the Project.

Aboriginal participation and engagement across the Project included \$4.1M spent on Aboriginal businesses and 32.5K hours worked by Aboriginal persons. Significant work was completed by Aboriginal businesses on the Project in the areas of earthworks, steel fixing, concrete works for abutment walls and traffic control.

Boorloo Bridge is visually stunning both day and night with the design embedding Whadjuk Noongar cultural recognition through the contribution of four local Aboriginal artists to sculptures and artwork on bridge abutments, and the integration of feature lighting transforming the bridge into a living narrative of Noongar inspired stories and the Noongar seasons.



Boorloo Bridge lighting up the Perth skyline.

Extensive and ongoing engagement with local Traditional Custodians and Noongar community members was a vital part of the Project, with the Matagarup Elders Group (MEG) providing valuable cultural input and helped inform the design of the bridges and the pathway.

## Traineeships kickstart careers

Just as METRONET is connecting people across Perth, traineeships on METRONET projects are helping connect Aboriginal peoples to exciting job opportunities.

One individual who has made the most of these connections is Yawuru/Jabirr Jabirr woman, Saemah Wade, who completed a 12-month business administration traineeship on the [METRONET Byford Rail Extension Project](#) in December 2024 before securing a role as Project Administrator.

"Completing my traineeship feels like a huge achievement and I'm incredibly proud of what I've accomplished," Saemah said.

Saemah's dedication to her training and career was recognised with a 2024 Nudge Leadership Award, which celebrates the contributions of young people to the WA business community.



Saemah with her 2024 Nudge Leadership Award.

Traineeships delivered across METRONET projects support the METRONET Gnarla Biddi Aboriginal Engagement [Strategy](#) and a long-term commitment to present opportunities for Noongar and other Aboriginal peoples for direct employment and career development.



## Westport's collaboration with Noongar communities

Westport is the State Government's planning program to move container trade from Fremantle to Kwinana. This includes planning new port facilities, a connected road and rail freight system, and logistics operations.

This transformational program of major infrastructure aims to deliver long-term social and environmental benefits by future-proofing the WA economy and catering to the state's future trade needs. With a footprint extending into both Whadjuk and Gnaala Karla Booja Indigenous Land Use Agreements, it was essential for Westport to work with these communities early in the planning process to realise long-term benefits.

Westport established a community elected [Noongar Advisory Group](#) in 2021 to ensure the program was guided by Noongar perspectives and that cultural values were embedded in the business case and design optioneering process.



Westport's Noongar Advisory Group and staff.

Co-created with the Noongar Advisory Group, the Westport Noongar Opportunities Strategy and Action Plan were developed in 2022. The Strategy outlines ambitious targets for the next 10-15 years, aiming to set a new standard in Aboriginal participation and engagement in infrastructure delivery and operations.

Westport started this work early, to inform the business case process, setting the program up for success in future stages. Through collaboration with the Noongar Advisory Group, Westport has:

- Committed to a shared vision, strategy and ambitious Action Plan for Westport and the Noongar Community.
- Completed Cultural and Spiritual Values Mapping within Cockburn Sound and the surrounding area to inform the multi-criteria analysis (MCA) process to determine the preferred design option.
- Implemented bespoke cultural awareness training for all Westport staff.
- Facilitated an inter-agency workshop to learn from previous initiatives to boost Aboriginal participation and employment in the delivery of major infrastructure projects.
- Developed an Environmental and Social Resilience Strategy that has been influenced by the Cultural and Spiritual Values Mapping project.
- Ensured the Westport Business Case, preferred design and other key program initiatives were reviewed by Noongar people with the authority to provide cultural advice to Westport.

These actions have laid the foundation for success in the next stage of Westport – Definition and Delivery – to progress to a shared vision for Noongar opportunities:



## Aboriginal artwork welcoming travellers

Several public art pieces designed by Aboriginal artists have been recently installed in stations across Perth.

Emerging public artist Emily Rose completed a mural, *Kep Bidi (Water Pathways)*, at Bull Creek Station in mid-February. The mural is amongst the first of nine commissions being delivered through the PTA's Urban Art Program 2024/25.

"*Kep Bidi (Water Pathways)* is a mural that reflects the deep cultural and ecological significance of Djarl-gar-ra (Canning River) and its surrounding waterways. The design embodies the seen and unseen connections of water—flowing above and beneath the land — symbolizing healing, renewal, and the movement of people. Inspired by the local landscape and community, the artwork incorporates elements such as the Biboolboorn (paperbark tree), Cujong (acacia), Maali (black swan), and Woordawort/Kaalitj (dragonfly), all of which hold significance in Noongar culture," says artist, Emily Rose.



*Kep Bidi (Water Pathways)* mural by Emily Rose, Bull Creek Station.

*Alija Djinda Mia: The Stars Will Take Us Home*, a digitally printed mural by Justin Martin, Susan Milne and Greg Stonehouse is the last of three new public art commissions for Perth Station Forecourt.

The mural design was installed in December and makes a creative link between the rail network and the constellations of the night sky.

The artwork celebrates Noongar ancient mapping of the night sky and the significance of the stars for Noongar people's sense of orientation culturally and on Country. It features totemic animals and symbols representing the Noongar moieties and connected with different parts of Noongar Country serviced by the Transperth rail network. The designs appearing in the mural extend into the station and appear on the column collars on each of the platforms.



*Alija Djinda Mia: The Stars Will Take Us Home* mural by Justin Martin, Susan Milne and Greg Stonehouse.



## Community collaboration for Midland Station shade canopies

As part of the [Midland Station](#) redevelopment project being delivered by METRONET, laser cut artwork panels are to be incorporated into the shade canopies for either end of the new Bus Interchange.

The designs for these panels have been collaboratively developed by members of two Aboriginal community groups that meet at Indigo Junction in Midland.

40 people from these two groups participated in workshops in November and December 2024.

The men's group, Moorditj Mamaan, have developed a design for the Western end features the river, and tells the story of a day in the life of Noongar hunters on country. It features the hand-prints of the artists involved in creating the design.

The women's group, Maali Deadly Yorgas, have developed a design that journeys from the hills to the plains, and features the river and waterholes as meeting places and places of birthing, where families are made and supported.

The laser cut artwork will present these stories on the ground in the form of shadows and will be visible people passing through or waiting under the shade canopies.



Midland Station Bus Interchange Shade Canopies Project with Indigo Junction Community Groups, Maali Deadly Yorgas (left) and the Moorditj Mamaan (right).

## Tanami Road Upgrade Project showcases capacity and capabilities of Kimberley Region workers and businesses

Work on the [Main Roads Tanami Road Upgrade Project](#) has resulted in the first 25 kilometres of Tanami Road now sealed and open to traffic.

The capacity and capabilities of businesses and workers in the Kimberley region has been praised by Project Manager Neville Walters.

**"I am really proud of what this team has achieved to date, and how our local work force and businesses have embraced this challenging project" Neville said.**

Engagement of Aboriginal businesses and workers on the Project has exceeded initial targets with 46% of the workforce identifying as Aboriginal peoples of which 53% of these hours was by local Aboriginal workers.

Additionally, 31% of overall business spend was on Aboriginal businesses spend with 64% being local Aboriginal businesses.

More works are planned for 2025 through the Hills Section and Ruby Plains Section.