

# 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.

## Traineeship leads to winning statewide industry award

Cordell Green, Main Roads Technical Trainee, was recently named Aboriginal Apprentice or Trainee of the Year at the 2025 WA Civil Construction Industry and Training Awards. Cordell was recognised for his exceptional commitment, leadership and attitude during his traineeship with the Fitzroy Bridge Alliance on the Main Roads [New Brooking Channel Bridge](#) project.

Cordell excelled in his traineeship, demonstrating commitment, leadership and a strong work ethic. His hands-on experience and community contributions fuelled his passion for engineering. Upon completion of his traineeship, he joined Main Roads WA as a Technical Trainee where he is undertaking a Certificate III in Technical Engineering and working on the Main Roads [Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade](#) project.



Cordell at the award ceremony following announcement of his win in the Aboriginal Apprentice or Trainee of the Year category.

## Local businesses driving positive social impact

Since the METRONET [Byford Rail Extension Project](#) started, over \$35 million in contracts has been awarded across local Aboriginal-owned and or operated businesses, driving economic growth and fostering community initiatives that support education, health, and culture.

The benefits of working with these businesses extend beyond the provision of services for the project. Many of these companies give back to their communities by creating jobs, providing training and supporting culture and education.

One such business, Wilco Electrical, partners with the Foundation for Indigenous Sustainable Health to run programs that improve life skills, education, and health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Wilco has also set up a fund to help Aboriginal apprentices with tools, living expenses and other needs - dedicating 10 per cent of their profits to this initiative. They also sponsor Aboriginal-led clubs and organisations to promote local leadership and growth.



Kulbardi, another participating business, created the Bibbulmun Fund to support projects focused on education, entrepreneurship and cultural preservation.

Their programs range from scholarships to youth programs and cultural courses that help reconnect people with their heritage.

By working with local Aboriginal-owned businesses, the METRONET Byford Rail Extension Project demonstrates how large rail infrastructure projects can drive positive social change and not only boost the local economy but also support initiatives that strengthen communities.

### Building connections with Aboriginal businesses

The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement branch (TPAE) has already met with 25 Aboriginal businesses this year to date, with more meetings in the process of being scheduled.

This is a massive growth compared to a total of 28 introductory meetings with Aboriginal businesses last year and demonstrates the growth in capacity and capability of Aboriginal businesses across WA.

These meetings allow TP AE to learn more about the businesses and to share information and advice on how Aboriginal businesses can register and work with the Transport Portfolio.

The Aboriginal businesses which TP AE has connected with this year provided insight to the wide range of products and services they can deliver including recruitment, labour hire, commercial cleaning, ICT, civil construction materials, survey and mapping, gas supply, plant and equipment hire, PPE, power engineering, formwork, concreting, cultural awareness, civil engineering, asphalt, and crane hire.



## Eden's licence helps family business

Turning up to Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation (MWWAC) full of confidence, Eden quickly realised he had built up some bad driving habits that he needed to shake if he wanted to pass his test.

The MWWAC Drive Ahead program in Fitzroy Crossing 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.

Building his road rules knowledge, driving skills and confidence back up through driving lessons, Eden passed his practical driving assessment on his second go.

Working in the family business, Eden has taken on more responsibilities since getting his driver's licence.

"I wanted to get my licence so I could help my dad build his business," Eden said. "I got a pay increase from my dad as I now have more responsibilities and can travel for work."

Eden is excited about the opportunities having a licence will bring him.



## Kayti's licence gives her freedom and independence



With a family too busy to teach her how to drive and a lack of a reliable vehicle, Kayti called on the help of Kununurra Group Training (KGT) Employment's Road Ready program.

KGT receives funding from the Department of Transport's [Driving Access and Equity Program](#) to run the Road Ready Program in Kununurra and Wyndham in the Kimberley region.

Kayti was amazed at how quickly she picked up the road rules and driving skills necessary to be a safe road user.

After passing her practical driving assessment and obtaining her licence, Kayti's grandpa gifted her a car that had been in their community.

Having a licence and a reliable car has seen Kayti go on to find part time employment and can now drive her elderly grandmother to appointments without having to rely on taxis, public transport and other family.

She is looking forward to not having any more lessons and having the freedom to drive around town and catch up with friends.

"My bike will now collect cobwebs," Kayti said, following successfully getting her driver's licence.

## Building connections and learning local Noongar traditions

A Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony was recently performed at the Public Transport Authority [Nowergup Depot Railcar Modification Shed](#) project site.

The ceremony was led by Whadjuk Ballardong Yorga Elder Robyn Collard Rioli, Sheldon Rioli, and Tryse Rioli from Cultural Services PO, who shared stories of cultural significance and performed a powerful didgeridoo piece connecting people, land, and spirit, specifically for the Nowergup project site.

Nowergup holds the Aboriginal meaning 'Place of Sweet Water,' a name that reflects its rich cultural and historical significance.



Following the Welcome, a traditional Smoking Ceremony took place using native plants and smouldering leaves. Participants walked through the cleansing smoke which serves to ward off bad spirits, promote healing, and invite positive energy.

The Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony was an opportunity for contractor DT Infrastructure and Public Transport Authority representatives to come together and learn more about local Whadjuk Noongar traditions.

### Main Roads' in-house maintenance transition increases Aboriginal business opportunities

Following the final transition to in-house maintenance in the Kimberley region in late 2024, more than 115 Aboriginal businesses are now part of the Main Roads' panel contracts for in-house maintenance.

Following a review in 2021, the decision was made to transition road maintenance contracts and some minor works to an in-house delivery model.

This was identified as an approach to help boost local economies by creating sustainable, long-term jobs in our communities.

The transition to in-house delivery began in 2022 in the Wheatbelt region, followed by Mid West-Gascoyne, Goldfields-Esperance, Perth metro, Pilbara, Great Southern, South West, and finally the Kimberley region late last year. The Incident Response Services contract also transitioned to in-house during this period.

More than 550 new permanent positions were filled, with more than 420 of those roles filled by employees previously working for contractors.

Not only has the transition to in-house delivery provided more stability to employees in these roles, it has also allowed Main Roads to build staff skills and knowledge and become a more informed purchaser for the delivery of road maintenance and minor works.

Learn more about the journey returning to in-house maintenance directly from the workers [here](#).

## Supply Nation membership across Transport Portfolio

Main Roads' Supply Nation membership is soon to expand to Transport Portfolio wide, which will cover each agency within the Portfolio.

This will benefit Aboriginal businesses by increasing supplier diversity and enabling more economic opportunities across WA, with the Portfolio agencies soon to have direct access to the Aboriginal Business Database that Main Roads established.



## MEBD supporting young basketballers



The [Mandurah Estuary Bridge Duplication](#) project (MEBD) sponsored the Bloodline Training Academy and provided brand new uniforms to compete in this year's South West Djeran Basketball Carnival held last month.

Bloodline Training Academy was established to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with opportunities to enjoy basketball, build confidence, and form lasting friendships through sport.

This year marked a significant milestone for the Academy, with five teams participating in the carnival, the highest number since its inception.

As part of the sponsorship, MEBD contributed to the purchase of new uniforms for the players and coaching staff - uniforms that will continue to be worn proudly at future events.

Helen Walley-Stack, Bloodline's Carnivals Coordinator, shared her gratitude explaining, "The kids loved their new shirts and wore them every day with pride. It was also the first time our coaching staff had matching shirts, which made our club look more official—so thank you for making this possible."

The team on the Mandurah Estuary Bridge Duplication project is proud to play a small role in supporting the next generation of young athletes and strengthening community connections through sport.

## Supporting apprentices in completing their studies

Arnold is one of [Main Roads' valued Civil Construction Apprentices](#) based in Kununurra in the north Kimberley.

Before starting with Main Roads in June 2023, Arnold was already in the midst of completing his Certificate III in Civil Construction but had struggled to get access to the required training for completion of his apprenticeship.

Main Roads was eager to support Arnold, who flew all the way from Kununurra to Perth to get the final units of his apprenticeship completed at Down to Earth Training and Assessing in Rockingham.

During his time with Main Roads, Arnold has been very busy assisting the team and gaining knowledge and experience while impressing his fellow workers and managers with his willingness to learn. Arnold has been instrumental in the close out works at Tickalara Creek and Frog Hollow Creek and has also assisted with supervision on the Ord North Reconstruction Project.



Arnold and the team from Down to Earth Training & Assessing. (L-R) Peter Jones (Trainer), Arnold, Kim Brunswick (Owner) and Ami Davis (General Manager).

Richard Brown-Fleming, Maintenance Manager in the Kimberley says, "Arnold has been a vital member of the team in the Kimberley and has been gaining lots of valuable experience on a number of projects".

## Cultural riding series a hit!

The Department of Transport's annual cultural bike riding series again proved popular with families across Boorloo (Perth).

Over 160 people put their bike wheels in motion to explore scenic spaces around Kings Park, along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Dhagarro (Canning River) – a record number of participants!



Djeran riding series participants on a roll alongside the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River)

The Djeran riding series, led by Wadjuk Traditional Owner Olman Walley, involved cultural stories, sounds and insights aligned with the Noongar season of Djeran, highlighting the deep connections between people, place and nature.

The Beeloo riding series, led by Biboolmirn Nyoongar Joe Collard, offered centuries-old Noongar knowledge about sacred sites, fishing and hunting zones, local flora and fauna and Dreamtime stories.

This fostered a sense of curiosity and connection among the many families who took part.

For the first time this year, Boorloo Bridge featured as part of activities. People of all ages and abilities explored Perth's stunning waterfront and cityscape while completing fun, self-guided bike rides that crossed the new bridge.

Participants discovered new parts of the city, learned about Noongar culture and engaged with local stories, artwork and landmarks in a playful and meaningful way.



Pausing to appreciate the wildlife

These events continue to be a highlight on the Department's calendar; they whet the appetite for bike riding activities in the lead up to our state's flagship celebration of WA Bike Month, which occurs in October each year.



Boorloo Bridge was a highlight for this year's activities



## Transport Portfolio exceeds Aboriginal engagement and participation targets

The Transport Portfolio recently achieved the State Government's second major target developed to positively impact social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal peoples across Western Australia.

In 2021 the Transport Portfolio committed to a target of awarding \$700 million of contracts to Aboriginal businesses and 3.5 million hours worked by Aboriginal peoples on the State's transport infrastructure program.

Both targets have now been exceeded more than 12 months ahead of schedule with more than 3.6 million hours worked by direct and indirect Aboriginal workers, representing almost 8% of all hours worked.

The target for work undertaken by Aboriginal businesses was met in late 2024, almost 18 months ahead of the expected timeframe.

We'll continue to prioritise building capacity and capability of all employees including identifying and providing employment pathways for the local and Aboriginal peoples on projects across the state.

## Trio of Aboriginal businesses get the job done

Three Aboriginal businesses from Derby continues to install gabion mattresses as part of completing the remaining drainage reinstatement works on the Great Northern Highway Willare section. The trio is made up of Kimberley Smith Contracting, Winun Ngari Aboriginal Corporation and Walyarra Enterprises.

Kimberley Smith of Kimberley Smith Contracting provides on-site supervision of the workers.

Winun Ngari Aboriginal Corporation provides up to 10 local Aboriginal labourers to assist with laying the matting, wire mattresses, and placement of stones within the wire structure. These labourers double as traffic controllers to ensure the traffic management plan is implemented while working on-site.

Walyarra Enterprises provides equipment such as a digger, operated by owner Trent Haewera, and a loader.

Gabion works commenced in late 2024, with then site project engineer, Mr Zaghun Pervaz overseeing the works.

"I haven't seen a more hard-working supervisor, than Kimberley. We had to slow him down a bit because it was too hot, and the other workers were getting drained," Zaghun shared.

In 2025, twelve workers returned to site and all are local Aboriginal men except for the loader operator and the Main Roads' site supervisor.

This small roadworks crew consists of 85% Aboriginal workers and 100% work packages awarded to Aboriginal businesses.

The benefits from these works will flow back into local Aboriginal families and into the town of Derby.

Main Roads' commitment to Aboriginal participation continues to meet the Region's set targets.



The three Aboriginal businesses and their employees working together to install gabion mattresses along Great Northern Highway