

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.

From barista to trailblazing trainee

When Laurissa Attwell first thought about taking on a traineeship in business administration, she never imagined it would lead her to a job with one of Western Australia's most significant rail infrastructure projects. However, taking a 'training leap of faith' has paid off and Laurissa has gone from making coffee to making her mark on the [METRONET Byford Rail Extension Project](#) - proving that with the right support, determination and mindset, anything is possible.



In March 2025, Laurissa proudly completed a Certificate III in Business Administration traineeship on the Byford Rail Extension Project - an important milestone not only for her, but for the Project's commitment to training and employment opportunities.

A proud descendant of the Gnaala Karla Booja and Mineng peoples, Laurissa has had a diverse career with experience as a barista, outdoor youth educator and machine operator. Her decision to step into construction came through a local partnership with an employment service provider, where she was offered the opportunity to start a traineeship.

Laurissa completed her formal training through North Metropolitan TAFE, supported by external mentoring from not-for-profit organisation, Nudge. With their guidance, she made the leap into the rail construction industry - taking on her first administrative role in April 2024 with the health and safety team on the Project.

While she didn't have an administrative background, Laurissa brought a strong work ethic, a willingness to learn and a deep sense of community to the role. Her adaptability and resilience quickly made her a valued part of the team and her commitment to personal and professional growth stood out in every task she undertook.

"Over the past year, being a young woman in construction, I have felt empowered and confident as I move forward in my career. Thank you to my team who has supported me throughout this journey," Laurissa said.

Laurissa's story is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when opportunity meets drive. It also reinforces the value of inclusive training pathways and ongoing mentoring in shaping future careers.

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.

Connecting business and culture

The Tonkin Extension Alliance team, which is delivering the [Main Roads Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade project](#), continues to build strong connections with local communities, with a focus on increasing Aboriginal business participation throughout the delivery of the project.

The Alliance was recently invited to attend the Business Builder Mandjoogoordap event hosted by the Waalitj Hub, an organisation dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who want to launch, grow or sustain their business. The event brought together approximately 20 Aboriginal business owners, community representatives and project partners to explore involvement opportunities.

The Alliance shared upcoming work package opportunities, procurement guidance and community engagement, generating a lot of interest from the attendees, many expressing appreciation for the transparency and information provided.

In addition, to mark the upcoming commencement of more impactful works on the Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade project, a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony was held on 15 July at the location of the future site office situated in Mundijong.



Noongar Elder Trevor Walley welcomed the team onto Country and shared his cultural knowledge of the local area, providing the team valuable insights and grounding for the works to begin.

With a shared commitment to increasing Aboriginal participation and acknowledging culture and Country, the Alliance will continue to work closely with the Waalitj Hub and local Aboriginal businesses.

Together, they aim to build respectful partnerships and create real pathways for Aboriginal business involvement.

Transport Portfolio Aboriginal engagement and participation

The Transport Portfolio has exceeded both Aboriginal participation and engagement targets originally set by the State Government in 2021, which were expected to be achieved by 2026.

As at 30 June 2025, Aboriginal businesses have undertaken \$923.5 million of work against a target of \$700 million and Aboriginal peoples have worked 3.7 million work hours against a target of 3.5 million hours.



Hours worked

Target: 3.5M

Actual: 3.7M



Work undertaken

Target: \$700M

Actual: \$923.5M

Radio Systems Replacement project team attend National Reconciliation Week event

On Thursday 29 May, Public Transport Authority's [Radio Systems Replacement project](#) team, and members of the Safety team from PTA Project Delivery, attended a special Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony at the Guildford Training Centre during National Reconciliation Week.



The ceremony was hosted by the project's construction contractor, UGL, and featured Noongar Elder Tina Hayden and UGL's Aboriginal Engagement Manager Wanita Bartholomeusz who shared personal stories and valuable insights into reconciliation, connection to country and belonging. More than 30 PTA and UGL employees attended as an opportunity to learn about their shared history and celebrate the wealth of experience that the different teams bring to the project.

A splash of colour on Stephenson Avenue Extension project artwork

Colour has now been added to the first of Main Roads' [Stephenson Avenue Extension project's](#) artwork, featuring designs by Noongar artists David Jones and Kamsani Bin Salleh.

The artwork in the image below is inspired by stories from Elders of their lived experiences and interaction with the lake systems and waterways in the area.

Designs will be painted on each of the 9 metre high, 200-metre-long noise walls, located on both sides of the Mitchell Freeway.



Over the coming weeks you will see more of the project's infrastructure display colour as the painters move onto the bridge abutments of the new Stephenson Avenue Bridge where patterns of the kooyar (frog) are a key feature.

Main Roads staff acknowledge National Reconciliation Week

The National Reconciliation Week event held at Don Aitken Centre for Main Roads' staff was successful in bringing personnel together to listen, learn and reflect. The event was opened by Gecko Chalker, Aboriginal Employment and Diversity Advisor, who reflected on the theme, 'Bridging Now to Next' and its relevance to our lives.

Main Roads' Managing Director John Erceg spoke about the organisation's recognition of the significance of National Reconciliation Week and the progress being made in its reconciliation actions, initiatives, and projects. He also highlighted the ongoing programs and efforts to strengthen engagement with Aboriginal peoples. This was followed by guest speaker Uncle Kim Collard, CEO of Kulbardi and a Balladong/Wadjuk Elder of the Noongar Nation, who shared inspiring stories of his leadership journey, including the founding of the Bibbulmun Fund. See photo overleaf on page 9.

Transport Portfolio hosts Federal Government delegates

The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement (TPAE) branch was pleased to recently host delegates from the Federal Government's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts.

The First Nations Employment and Procurement – Land Transport Infrastructure Division travelled to WA to engage with Aboriginal peoples and businesses and the Transport Portfolio to guide the redesign of the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework, which applies to new road and rail construction projects. This Framework sets out a whole-of-government approach to increase opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and business participation in the delivery of Australian Government-funded land transport infrastructure projects.



During their visit, the Canberra delegates met with several Aboriginal businesses to understand their perspectives and experiences. They then learned more about TPAAE and presented on the Framework, including the journey to its current version and recent review which led to several recommendations for restructuring the Framework. Further meetings occurred over several days with Transport Portfolio leadership and executives including Director General Transport, Peter Woronzow.



Their final day in Perth was spent visiting a number of stations on the METRONET Morley-Ellenbrook Line to better understand the METRONET Gnarla Biddi Strategy and how it was applied to the overall project and individual stations including Bayswater Station, Whiteman Park Station and Ellenbrook Station.

Wheatbelt Region's inaugural NAIDOC Week celebrations

The preparation for Main Roads' Wheatbelt Region's first NAIDOC Week celebration was a collaborative effort led by Aboriginal Stakeholder Engagement Advisor Samantha (Sammy) Wyborn, with the support of her colleagues, in two events held at the Northam and Narrogin offices. The Main Roads staff's collective enthusiasm and support were palpable, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering greater understanding and respect for Indigenous heritage.

Sammy Wyborn opened the ceremony at both locations with an inspiring speech that resonated deeply, sparking reflection and contemplation among the audience.

At the Northam office, Elder Aunty Pat Davis proceeded with a warm Welcome to Country followed by Community leader Jermaine Davis' smoking ceremony and explained why we practice smoking ceremonies and that different plants are used within different tribes – for the Ballardong peoples, Jermaine used Jam Wattle. At the Narrogin office, Elder, community leader and language specialist Ross Story Welcomed staff to Country in Noongar language followed by the smoking ceremony where he used Sheoak and Marri for the Wiilman peoples.



The legacy of the Wheatbelt's inaugural NAIDOC Week events will be felt for years to come. The celebrations fostered a stronger sense of unity and appreciation, encouraging ongoing efforts to promote Indigenous culture and history. The event has also inspired other regions to organise similar celebrations, contributing to a nationwide movement of recognition and respect for Indigenous heritage.

"This was a very good event for me as I have never participated in one before. It was great to highlight the culture and learning about the ceremony was very enjoyable. Listening to the Elders talk was also interesting and educational." Main Roads' employee at Wheatbelt NAIDOC Week celebration.

Acknowledging National Reconciliation Week

In recognition of National Reconciliation Week, the EastRail Joint Venture, Public Transport Authority (PTA) and Alstom, as part of the [WA Railcar Program](#), proudly hosted a joint celebration to honour the rich cultures, histories, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The event commenced with an Acknowledgement of Country delivered by the Alstom Aboriginal Engagement Lead, followed by a panel of guest speakers, including ADCO apprentice Aaliyah Nestoridis, a proud Whadjuk Nyoongar Yorga woman, who shared personal reflections on this year's theme, Bridging Now to Next, and what reconciliation means to them.

Attendees were then treated to a powerful cultural performance by the Binar Dance Group, followed by the opportunity to enjoy kangaroo stew and freshly made damper.

This event provided an important moment to reflect on the progress made toward reconciliation, to recognise the journey still ahead, and to reaffirm the project's commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable future for all.



Creating meaningful connections with Aboriginal businesses

Building genuine relationships with Aboriginal businesses and embedding supplier diversity across Georgiou, which is delivering the Main Roads' [Fiona Stanley Hospital Precinct Western Carpark project](#), is a key focus of their operations and a central commitment of their Reconciliation Action Plan.

The team on the project, located on Noongar Country in WA, has been actively working alongside the Waalitj Hub to ensure Aboriginal businesses have every opportunity to be involved in the project.

Recently, the team hosted an Indigenous Business Open House at the Waalitj Foundation, where they connected with more than 25 local businesses. The Waalitj Hub provides a culturally safe space and assists emerging Indigenous businesses in understanding tender processes, developing capability statements, websites and more.

This Open House session provided Aboriginal businesses with an opportunity to speak with the project team and package leads, to ask questions and explore opportunities to tender for upcoming works. The project's team is committed to working closely with these businesses to ensure they have every opportunity to contribute to the project and will support these businesses throughout the tender process.



METRONET Thornlie-Cockburn Line opening day draws a crowd

On Sunday, 8 June around 20,000 people celebrated the opening of the new METRONET [Thornlie-Cockburn Line](#) and stations at Thornlie, Nicholson Road and Ranford Road. Festivities were held across the three stations with METRONET Noongar Reference Group (MNRG) member Aunty Marion enjoying riding the new line with other train enthusiasts and attending the celebrations at the Ranford Road station.

During her visit to Ranford Road station, Aunty Marion admired an artwork by Alexander Knox and Eliza Hutchison which was approved by MNRG.

The artwork embodying the movement of emus in the landscape is featured at the station entrance. A mountain range is depicted in the background with a mass of emus travelling across country with varied visibility on perforated and printed panels. The emus form mountain-like shapes and meandering footprints trace pathways through the environment, echoing movement and an impression of the landscape.



The MNRG was also involved in the place naming of the three new METRONET stations as part of the Noongar Place Names Initiative.

- Nicholson Road Station – Waitj-biddi, 'The emu tracks'
- Ranford Road Station – Mandjakarlup, 'The place to come together'
- Thornlie Station – Giljeeup, 'Place of the Freshwater Crayfish'

Learning day at Swan River Crossings

A group of Aboriginal trainees, interns, and emerging professionals from alliance partners Laing O'Rourke, WSP and ARUP came together in July for a special Learning Day at the Hazelmere Precast Facility, part of the Main Roads [Swan River Crossings Project](#).

The visit included five Rigging Trainees from the project, an Engineering Intern from CareerTrackers and Design Trainees from WSP working on the Main Roads Engineer Technical Services Panel.

Welcomed by project team members Steve Jopson, David Williams, and Colin Blighe, the group toured the facility, learned about precast design, and experienced a virtual reality walkthrough of the bridge worksite.



"The event was a great opportunity to connect our five rigging trainees who normally work across two sites. They really enjoyed sharing their learning journey and the work they're doing," said Steve Jopson, Precast Manager.

The Rigging Traineeship Program has grown from two to five participants, with four being Aboriginal young peoples. All are progressing well toward completing their Certificate III in Rigging within the next nine months.

"I could not be happier with their enthusiasm, commitment, and energy. They're learning every day and it's wonderful to see their growth," Steve added.

Senior Indigenous Affairs and Social Inclusion Advisor Amanda Inman also highlighted the importance of diverse pathways.



"It was wonderful to welcome the WSP Design Trainees and our CareerTrackers intern into our project trainee cohort. We're proud to offer a broad range of Aboriginal training pathways on the project, including design and engineering. I thank the Swan River Crossings team for their commitment to our trainees and our project board for championing learning days like these to bring our people together."

Celebrating NAIDOC Week across the Transport Portfolio

In addition to the many NAIDOC Week events held by individual projects and teams across the Transport Portfolio, internal corporate events were well attended by staff and are showcased over the following pages.

Bidi Katadjin based staff have a yarn with Waaltij Foundation

The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement (TPAE) branch invited representatives from Waaltij Foundation and Waalitj Hub to have a yarn during NAIDOC Week with staff based at the Bidi Katadjin office in Perth. Presenters from Waalitj Foundation were Troy Cook, a Yamatji man and the General Manager of Community Development at the Waalitj Foundation and Gohar Rind, a Badimaya Yamatji man and General Manager of Waalitj Hub.



Troy and Gohar provided the audience, which included staff from TPAAE, Transport Portfolio Land and Property Services branch, and Main Roads' Road Safety team, with an overview of the Waalitj Foundation and the work they do to support and provide opportunities in education, employment, justice and business for First Nations peoples.

Discussion occurred around the importance of knowing the right people to speak with and whose Country staff are working on or visiting. Gohar highlighted how every \$1 spent on a First Nations business generated an average of \$4.41 in social and economic value and that this might look like food on the table, being able to send kids to school, or setting up the next generation to work or own a business. They noted the 462 plus businesses supported by Waalitj Foundation to date and shared a story about an engineering worker who was able to establish a business using his working knowledge. Gohar spoke about how Aboriginal businesses are working to build business acumen but also need to be considered for opportunities.

“There’s opportunity in every level of the supply chain.” Gohar Rind, noting that organisations need to identify and enable opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

Troy and Gohar finished up their presentation with some tips for best practice in engaging Aboriginal businesses by industry leaders – collaborating, partnering, setting hard targets and stressed the importance of organisations shifting from ‘awareness’ to ‘embedding’.

OMTID celebrates NAIDOC Week with a series of interactive events

A series of events were held at the Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery (OMTID) to celebrate NAIDOC Week. The week began with a special performance by Corroboree for Life, showcasing traditional song and dance which included 3 dancers who were Aboriginal youth from local schools. This was an engaging and well enjoyed event that saw a number of leaders and staff participating in one of the dances. Attendees learned about the meaning behind the songs and dances, including what the body paint represents on performers and how it might differ depending on locations.



The next event was a panel discussion with OMTID and TPAAE staff exploring key learnings and perspectives on successful Aboriginal participation and engagement, which shared practical takeaways staff can apply in their everyday work. A mini market

featuring several local Aboriginal-owned businesses was the final event, which provided staff the opportunity to shop from the businesses on the day. As part of this event, OMTID was excited to welcome Taynan, a year 6 student, who offered ochre painting experiences for staff as well as collected unwanted goods donated by staff, for him to send to remote communities as part of his school citizenship project.

Main Roads launches new Stretch RAP

It was a time to celebrate at Main Roads' Don Aitken Centre with a very special NAIDOC Week event. The event not only celebrated their Aboriginal workforce but was also the launch of their new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The new RAP maps out how Main Roads as an organisation will be moving forward in their partnership with Aboriginal peoples over the next five years and beyond.

The event MC was Main Roads' Aboriginal Employment and Diversity Advisor, Gecko Chalker. Main Roads' Managing Director John Erceg and Executive Director Finance and Commercial Services, Phil D'Souza also talked about the inroads being made to building the organisation's Aboriginal workforce.

A special guest was Reconciliation WA CEO Jody Nunn, who maintains the strong stakeholder networks across the reconciliation community prioritising Aboriginal voices. The event was also attended by A/Director General Transport Ashley Vincent and Judd Harris from the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Business and Employment Advisory Group. The Stretch RAP will be available to view in the near future.



NAIDOC Week celebrated by PTA staff

On Thursday 10 July, Public Transport Authority staff proudly celebrated NAIDOC Week, which marked its 50th anniversary with the theme: 'The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy'. This year's focus aims to honour achievements of the past while looking ahead to a vibrant future shaped by emerging leaders.

The event began with a Welcome to Country by Nick Abraham, followed by a special presentation from Alstom Aboriginal engagement lead Ashley Garlett. Ashley shared an exciting preview of the artwork selected for the new Australind diesel multiple units (DMUs), which Alstom Transport ANZ is currently building as part of the WA Railcar Program. These designs celebrate Aboriginal culture and connection to Country.