

Aboriginal Participation Bulletin No 14

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

Graduate launches career in the Kimberley

Having just completed his Certificate III in Civil Construction, new recruit Arnold Congoo-Roe is excited to embark on the next stage of his career as an apprentice with Main Roads.

Whilst undertaking the Certificate III with Kimberley Group Training, Arnold was engaged by Main Roads and placed on a project to seal the Warmun Community runway, located in the East Kimberley.



Arnold Congoo-Roe working at Frog Hollow Creek

Arnold, who has traditional ties to Jaru Country, has enjoyed the experience and exposure to various works across the region.

"I've loved all of it – being out on Country, travelling to places I haven't been in a while like Halls Creek and the Gibb River Road and working alongside a really good crew of people," Arnold said.

Funding for the newly sealed runway was provided by Department of Transport (DoT), enabling the community to receive critical year-round daytime health clinic and emergency flights.

New Warmun traffic controllers

Eight Warmun community members recently completed a traffic controller training course as part of Main Roads' [Halls Creek to Kununurra Brides project](#).

They received tickets in Basic Worksite Traffic Management (BWTM) and Traffic Control (TC), followed by on-the-job training. All eight trainees have chosen to join the project team.



Two of Warmun Community's new traffic controllers

Local Aboriginal Participation Mentor, Keith Wynne supports Indigenous employees on the project and helped guide the trainees. Keith plays an important role in liaising with the two nearby communities, Frog Hollow Creek and Warmun.

The project engaged two local Aboriginal businesses to recruit trainees, building skills and capacity to enable their sustained employment beyond completion of the project.

One of the trainees then enrolled in an electrical testing and tagging course for the project, and can continue using these skills into the future.

Aboriginal businesses to deliver highway upgrade works

The second stage of the Wiluna Meekatharra Road Project commenced on 2 October to upgrade a 4.8km section of Great Northern Highway and the Goldfields Highway (\$7.6m).

Two Aboriginal business, Maali Group and Maarli Bidli Traffic Services, have been engaged to deliver the works for an estimated value of \$2.48 million (33% of the project budget).

A ground-breaking ceremony took place on Country, after which all project personnel participated in a one-day cultural awareness training program delivered by Martu facilitators.



Ground breaking ceremony at Wiluna Meekatharra Road

Following the success of a pilot project employing local Aboriginal people in 2020 to seal 5 km of the road immediately west of Wiluna, the project received an additional allocation of \$20 million to extend the seal from Wiluna towards Meekatharra.

Three local Martu participants from Wiluna are returning to the project, with an additional two participants who recently completed training and are ready to join the project.

Further, a pilot program developed in collaboration with DoT will formalise a conditional license for participants.

The program is a game changer for people who do not hold a current driver's license, which is a key barrier to gaining meaningful employment particularly in remote Aboriginal communities. The results of the pilot will facilitate the rollout of this program across WA.

Aboriginal traineeship achievements

Currently delivering the Morley-Ellenbrook line for METRONET, the MELconnx Alliance celebrated several traineeship milestones recently.

The current cohort at MELconnx includes five Indigenous trainees from the local area.

In June a business trainee completed a Certificate III in Business Administration, and in October three Civil Construction trainees completed their certificates.

"My crew from Laing O'Rourke is the reason why I am here today. Without the support of them I probably wouldn't have completed my training and have learnt new things with them every day," Civil Construction trainee, Simone Phillips said.

"My biggest gratitude goes to Terika, the Aboriginal Participation Advisor for supporting and helping my challenges. The training process was absolutely amazing."

In recognition of their success, all four trainees who completed their studies have progressed into full-time employment with Laing O'Rourke.



*Top L-R: Tyrrell Mitchell, Simone Phillips.
Bottom L-R: Lachlan Scanlan, Katelyn Thomson*

Aboriginal journey ways for children

The children's version of the Aboriginal Journey Ways: How Ancient Trails Shaped Our Roads book, was launched on 2 August 2023, at West Leederville Primary School.

Led by Dr Noel Nannup OAM and Dr Francesca Robertson, the original book, "Aboriginal Journey Ways – How Ancient Trails Shaped Our Roads," looked at the traditional cultural meanings of selected Aboriginal journey ways and their links to the roads and bridges that we have today.



Director General Transport, Deputy Premier, school staff and students with Dr Noel Nannup and Dr Francesca Robertson at Leederville Primary School

It was so well received that it was adapted into a children's book to share the stories of Aboriginal peoples and their ancient journey ways, with younger readers.

In addition to providing copies to primary schools and public libraries around the state, Main Roads has worked with the State Library to provide copies with [Little Fulla Yarns](#) reading packs. Part of the Better Beginnings program, Little Fulla Yarns reading packs support Aboriginal families living in remote communities to read, yarn, sing, draw and play every day.

To learn more, head to Main Roads' [Aboriginal Engagement](#) page where one of the journey ways, Waarkarl Woonya Bidi (Albany Highway) has been uploaded as a StoryMap.

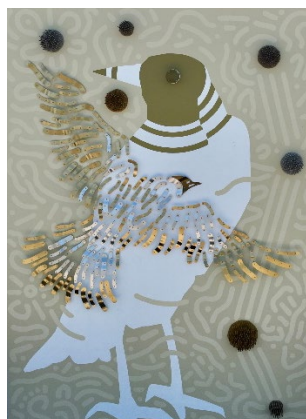
Artwork takes flight at the new Public Transport Operations Control Centre

Those travelling past the Public Transport Authority's (PTA) East Perth Station can now see birds in flight, with artwork on the east side of the under-construction Public Transport Operational Control Centre recently completed.

Titled "Kulbardi Season," the art depicts a magpie and was installed by Aboriginal Artist Kamsani Bin

Salleh in collaboration with local Artists Chris Nixon, Luke Davey.

The design responds to the Kulbardi's significance in Noongar culture as a protective and watchful presence over Country, which resonates with the control centre's role in watching over Perth's public transport network.



There are two magpies in the design:

The watching Kulbardi in the painted background; and

The sculptural Kulbardi in flight, representing journeys across Country and the rail network.

The design incorporates stylised Poolgarla (banksia) blooms positioned to reference the Seven Sisters (Pleiades) constellation which is important to Noongar people and represents the rail network.

New Midland Station Smoking Ceremony

Construction has begun on METRONET's New Midland Station Project, with a Smoking Ceremony performed by Bibbulmun man John Mogridge on 2nd August, 2023 to cleanse the site and ward off bad spirits.

Preliminary designs for the new station were released earlier this year and will be a landmark for Midland, featuring a contemporary design that reflects the local Noongar culture and landscape against the industrial backdrop of the historic Midland Railway Workshops.

The project held an Aboriginal business forum prior to construction to engage local businesses, with more than 25 businesses in attendance.



The Smoking Ceremony at METRONET's New Midland Station

NAIDOC Week celebrations

Many events have been held across the Transport Portfolio's projects, branches and offices State-wide, to mark the significance of NAIDOC Week.

The theme, "For our Elders" provided opportunities to invite Traditional Custodians to interactive sessions on story telling, knowledge sharing and reflection activities, further embedding cultural recognition in the way we work.

PTA's event included a Welcome to Country from Tina Hayden and a presentation by Annette Panaia while traditional dance and didgeridoo was provided by Corroboree for Life's Ngalak Nidja group, led by Ash Penfold.

Local artist Kamsani Bin Salleh also discussed his Kulbaradi collaborative canvas, with staff given the opportunity to add their mark. The artwork, created as part of the Public Transport Operations Control Centre project, complements the Kulbaradi's on display on the eastern side of the new building.



Aboriginal Artist Kamsani Bin Salleh shares his artwork story

Westport map cultural and spiritual values

Cockburn Sound, or *Derbal Nara*, and the surrounding area is rich in cultural knowledge, stories and songlines of the Whadjuk and Gnaala Karla Booja Noongar Peoples.

In April 2023, Westport partnered with Winyama, an Indigenous-owned and operated business specialising in location intelligence, to capture and map the cultural and spiritual values.

Winyama interviewed knowledge holders identified by Westport's Noongar Advisory Group to document sites of significance and the stories

connected to them. Findings were then provided to the Noongar Advisory Group.

Westport's team was given permission to use this data to inform Westport Stage 3 so that locations of cultural significance can be considered through the design process.

Westport is using this information to consider design, particularly of roads, and to identify opportunities for enhancing places of value through projects that deliver dual benefits for environment and culture.

Westport artwork developed

The journey between Westport and the Noongar Community has been depicted through a series of commissioned artworks by well-known Noongar Artist, Peter Farmer.

The multi-panel piece tells a story of the Whadjuk and Gnaala Karla Booja Noongar lands and waters on which Westport is planning the port and freight network. Peter describes the artwork:

"The three lines through the artwork represent our journey together through the past, present and future. It includes strong Noongar Totems for each of the canvasses. This includes the Yonga (Grey Kangaroo) for resilience and tenacity. It also includes the special Noongar Ocean Totems that are of great significance to the region and the Noongar people."



A panel from Aboriginal Artist Peter Farmer's artwork

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Participation in South Metro TAFE Forum

Representatives from the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement (TPAE) Team were invited to participate in the recent *Kadadjiny Mia Aboriginal Employment Forum* hosted by South Metropolitan TAFE.

The TPAE team presented at the Forum, explaining how they can assist Aboriginal peoples who are seeking training and employment opportunities across the Transport Portfolio.

The team also hosted an exhibition booth to showcase the opportunities.

The outcome has seen several interested candidates seeking assistance in training/ development positions across the Portfolio.



The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement Team at the South Metropolitan TAFE Forum

How is the Transport Portfolio tracking?

The Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement Team facilitates the State Government's Aboriginal Participation targets for the Transport Portfolio, being \$700 million expenditure on Aboriginal businesses and 3.5 million worked hours by Aboriginal peoples, from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2026.

See how the Transport Portfolio is tracking against those targets:

\$373.6 million
spent on Aboriginal
businesses from
1 July 2021
to 31 October 2023

1.859 million
hours worked by
Aboriginal peoples
from 1 July 2021
to 31 October 2023

6.5%
Total Portfolio
expenditure on
Aboriginal
businesses from
1 July 2021
to 31 October 2023

This demonstrates that 47% time has elapsed since the targets were set; and the Transport Portfolio is 53% towards achieving both targets - just over halfway there already!

We will continue to work closely with key stakeholders to support the upskilling of Aboriginal businesses and people, to assist them in building economic capacity and capability across their communities, State-wide.

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Meet the Buyer and Supplier Forum

The Transport Portfolio Meet the Buyer and Supplier Event, held on 14 November, provided an energetic and diverse networking opportunity for Aboriginal businesses to meet Portfolio agency representatives and their major contractors.

Led by MC Adrian Barich, the event commenced with a moving Welcome to Country delivered by Barry Winmar, a Whadjuk Noongar man with connections to the Ballardong region.



Dignitaries: Barry Winmar, Adrian Barich, Darren Lundberg, Tracey Dennis, John Erceg, Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, Iain Cameron, Andy Graham, Ashley Vincent, Nicole Walton

Keynote speaker, Hon Rita Saffioti, Deputy Premier reflected on her announcement of Aboriginal Participation targets for the Transport Portfolio at the previous Meet the Buyer and Supplier Event held in October 2021 and explained the progress being made across the Portfolio to date, highlighting several success stories,

John Erceg, Managing Director Main Roads provided a key note speech on behalf of Peter Woronzow, Director General Transport – providing an overview of the Portfolio's delivery programs and pathways to engage with the agencies and its contractors.

A business collaboration was showcased, marking the ten year anniversary of Main Roads' contracting relationship with Kulbardi. You can view the video here: [Main Roads and Kulbardi journey](#)

A Q&A Panel provoked many insightful queries from the audience of 400 participants, who were keen to understand aspects of working with the Transport sector from the panel of industry experts.

This was followed by an exhibition forum, in which 35 Buyers (Contractors) and three Aboriginal business support organisations hosted exhibition booths, providing an opportunity for the more than 300 Aboriginal business representatives to meet the Buyers and talk through their business capabilities and potential alignment for works packages.



Exhibition in full swing at the Meet the Buyer and Supplier Forum

Designed to provide a networking opportunity for Aboriginal businesses to meet contractors within the Transport sector, to understand their needs and seek to align their capabilities for the future pipeline of work, the event was considered very successful by participants on the day.

We extend our appreciation to all participants, who made the day a success, and to our industry partners who we work with to create sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal peoples across WA.