

Aboriginal Participation Bulletin

This 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.

Transport Portfolio comes together to celebrate 50 Years of Deadly

Staff from across the Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio came together on Friday 17 July to celebrate NAIDOC Week 2026 and this year's theme, *50 Years of Deadly*.

Held at 140 William Street, the cross-Portfolio event brought together representatives from Main Roads, Public Transport Authority, Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure, Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery, Office of Major Infrastructure Delivery, and Westport.

The event opened with a Welcome to Country by Whadjuk Elder Aunty Robyn Collard, joined by her grandson Tryse on didgeridoo. Their Welcome set a respectful and reflective tone for the morning, grounding the event in connection to Country, culture and intergenerational knowledge. The Director General Transport and Major Infrastructure Peter Woronzow and Director Aboriginal Engagement Dennis Kickett then reflected on the importance of NAIDOC Week, the national milestone of *50 Years of Deadly* and the Portfolio's shared responsibility to support Aboriginal participation, cultural respect and stronger relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Aunty Robyn's Welcome recognised the significance of meeting on Whadjuk Noongar Country and invited attendees to begin the event with respect for the continuing connection Aboriginal people have to land, waters, culture and community. Tryse's didgeridoo performance added a powerful cultural element to the opening,

creating a shared moment of listening and reflection for staff from across the Portfolio.

This year's theme recognised five decades of NAIDOC Week as a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, achievements, leadership and resilience. Speakers encouraged staff to carry the spirit of NAIDOC beyond the event by continuing to listen, learn, support Aboriginal voices and embed respectful engagement into everyday work.

Following the formal presentations, attendees took part in yarning circles focused on procurement, employment and reconciliation initiatives. The discussions created space for practical conversation, shared learning and reflection on how each agency can contribute to stronger Aboriginal participation outcomes across the Portfolio.



Representatives from across the Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio gathered to celebrate NAIDOC Week 2026 and this year's theme, *50 Years of Deadly*.

Supply Nation award recognises Portfolio leadership in Aboriginal business engagement

The Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio has been recognised nationally, with Main Roads and the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Engagement (TPAE) branch named *Government Member of the Year* at the 2026 Supply Nation Supplier Diversity Awards.

The award was announced during Supply Nation's Connect 2026 event in Boorloo (Perth) and recognises organisations demonstrating exceptional commitment to supplier diversity and creating opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

The win reflects the collaborative work being undertaken across the Portfolio to strengthen Aboriginal economic participation through procurement, employment and business development initiatives. Through partnerships with Aboriginal businesses, communities and industry, the Portfolio continues to create pathways that support sustainable economic outcomes and long-term opportunities for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.

The recognition acknowledges the contribution of staff across Main Roads, Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure, Public Transport Authority, Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery, Office of Major Infrastructure Delivery, Westport and TPAAE, who continue to embed Aboriginal participation into planning, procurement and project delivery

Director Aboriginal Engagement Dennis Kickett said the award was a reflection of the commitment and collaboration demonstrated across the Portfolio.

"I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. This recognition reflects the commitment of people right across the Portfolio who continue to create opportunities for Aboriginal businesses and workers, helping deliver positive outcomes that will benefit future generations."

The award is a significant acknowledgement of the Portfolio's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal economic empowerment and the strong partnerships being built with Aboriginal businesses throughout the State.



Members from the Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio celebrate after winning *Government Member of the Year* at the Supply Nation 2026 Supplier Diversity Awards

Tanami project welcomes remote community members for site orientation

Main Roads [Tanami Road Upgrade](#) project is creating more than a highway through desert Country — it is helping build long-term career pathways for people from nearby remote communities.

In mid-July, the project team hosted a three-day site orientation for six potential new workers from Mulan, Balgo and Billiluna. The group was welcomed to camp, introduced to site life and provided with practical support, including personal protective equipment, water bottles and crib bags through Job Pathways.



L-R: Michael Rae, Dennis Sambo, Sevastian Rockman, Nicholas Angie, Keifer Johns, Donald Padoon, Keenan Talbot

The orientation included a formal Welcome to Work session, road-building terminology training and a financial wellbeing session to help participants understand payslips, work dockets, saving and money management as they prepare to enter the workforce.

Participants also visited the active work site, where the project team explained earthworks, water dams and construction terminology. A highlight was the opportunity to get close to heavy machinery, speak with local Aboriginal business owner and operator Paul Cox, and hear from experienced Aboriginal dozer operator Jimmy Madden about his career and managing work-life balance.



Jimmy Madden talking about the dozer

The orientation has already helped map clear employment pathways for participants, with several men recommended for roles on the roller or culvert crews, and others supported toward future tickets and opportunities.

The initiative is a strong example of the project team working with local communities to reduce barriers, build confidence and support Aboriginal workforce capability.



L-R: Garreth Talyor (roller operator); Donald Padoon, Dennis Sambo, Keenan Talbot, Rob Christophers, Paul

Cox (business owner operator) Sevastian Rockman, Nicholas Angie, Keifer Johns.

PTA staff explore Noongar history through virtual reality

Public Transport Authority staff marked NAIDOC Week with an immersive virtual reality experience exploring the Noongar history of Galup, also known as Lake Monger.

Using VR headsets, staff took part in a 10-minute film followed by a guided discussion with facilitators to unpack the themes and stories shared through the experience.

Led by Noongar performer Ian Wilkes, the film shares stories of Country, culture and lived experience. It was developed with Noongar Elders, including an oral history from Elder Doolann-Leisha Eatts, alongside artist and filmmaker Poppy van Oorde-Grainger.

The experience was designed to build a deeper connection to place, history and each other, offering staff a personal and thought-provoking way to engage with local Noongar stories during NAIDOC Week.



Noongar performer Ian Wilkes, alongside artist and filmmaker Poppy van Oorde-Grainger

Premier visits Tonkin Highway Extension

The \$1 billion Main Roads [Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade](#) project recently welcomed Premier Hon Roger Cook MLA to site, providing an opportunity to showcase the progress being delivered by the project's diverse workforce.

During the visit, the Premier met with apprentices, graduates, cadets and supervisors who are building their careers in the construction industry. The conversations highlighted the important role major infrastructure projects can play in supporting local employment, skills development and long-term workforce pathways.

The Tonkin Extension Alliance currently supports seven apprentices and trainees, with five more trainees joining the project, along with 19 graduates and cadets working across a range of disciplines.

The project is also delivering strong Aboriginal participation outcomes. To date, more than 541,000 site hours have been completed, including 28,760 hours by Aboriginal workers, representing 5.3 per cent of total hours. The project has also generated \$9 million in spend with Aboriginal businesses, accounting for 6.66 per cent of total project expenditure.

The visit highlighted the scale of the project and the contribution being made by workers, suppliers and businesses across the region.



The Tonkin Extension Alliance is delivering strong Aboriginal participation outcomes through employment and Aboriginal business engagement.

Stirling Street staff come together to celebrate National Reconciliation Week

Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery (OMTID) and Office of Major Infrastructure Delivery (OMID) staff based at the Stirling Street office came together during National Reconciliation Week to reflect on this year's theme, *All In*, and the shared role we all play in

supporting reconciliation in workplaces and communities.

Hosted jointly by OMTID and OMID, the event opened with an address from OMID Deputy Director General Ashley Vincent before a Welcome to Country was delivered by Whadjuk Elder Aunty Robyn Collard, joined by her grandson Tryse on didgeridoo.

Aunty Robyn shared stories of Boorloo and traditional place names, reminding attendees of the importance of walking together and ensuring no one is left behind. Staff then took part in a smoking ceremony and continued conversations over morning tea about cultural respect, shared histories and practical action beyond National Reconciliation Week.



Preparing for the Smoking Ceremony

The gathering was a meaningful reminder that reconciliation is an ongoing commitment built through listening, learning and working together to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



OMTID and OMID staff participating in the Smoking Ceremony

Aboriginal-led riding activities open a world of discovery

More than 50 people took part in the Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure's (DTMI) gentle-paced rides, exploring scenic spaces along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River), and around Kaarta Koomba (Kings Park).

Guided by Joe Collard and Olman Walley, participants stopped at places of significance to learn about Noongar practices, language and stories while building confidence to ride along shared paths.

DTMI Manager Behaviour Change Helen Ginbey said the rides offered a fun, interactive and engaging way to learn more about shared history while travelling through Boorloo.

"The activities were a great lead-in to National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, allowing people of all backgrounds to learn about Noongar culture, our shared history and pay respect to the lands we're so lucky to call home".

The sessions formed part of DTMI's efforts to encourage more people to ride for short trips more often, supporting healthier, more affordable and enjoyable travel choices.



Members of the community join DTMI to learn about Noongar culture and build their confidence navigating shared paths

Where infrastructure meets culture

The Aboriginal public art delivered as part of the METRONET [Byford Rail Extension](#) project is creating a lasting expression of Noongar culture, connection and shared understanding across the project.

Created by Aboriginal artists Seantelle Walsh, Dellas Bennell and Nigel Chadd in partnership with Elders and the local community, the artworks celebrate Noongar cultural knowledge while inviting the wider community to learn more about the stories, history and identity of the Armadale and Byford region.

From murals beneath the Armadale viaduct depicting local flora, fauna and the six Noongar seasons, to pavement artworks at Byford and Armadale stations celebrating native species, movement and connection to Country, each artwork reflects the enduring relationship between people, place and culture.

By embedding Noongar culture into everyday public spaces, the project is helping ensure these stories remain visible, valued and experienced by thousands of commuters for generations to come.



Bibbulmun Noongar Elder and artist Nigel Chadd with his striking pavement artwork at Byford Station.

A creature feature for DTMI's bike fleet

Staff using DTMI's bike fleet are getting to know a few creature companions while travelling by bike for work trips.

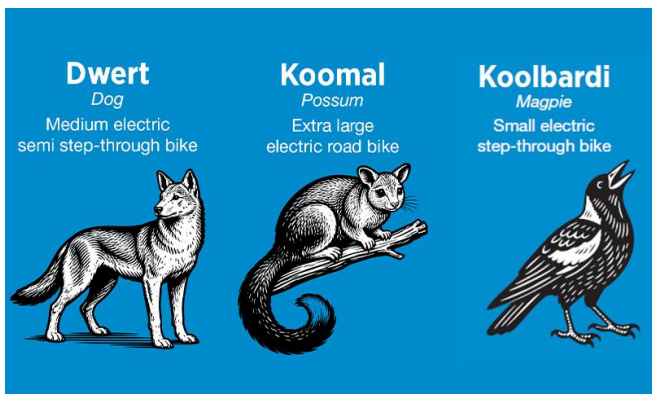
The fleet, used by staff at Boorloo (Perth), Walyalup (Fremantle) and Menang (Albany) offices, has been named using Noongar words for

local wildlife. Identification tags display the Noongar and English animal names, bike type and an image of the animal.

Urban Mobility Behaviour Change Coordinator Natasha Koekemoer said the initiative provides a simple and practical way to acknowledge Aboriginal culture.

“Naming the bike fleet in this way offers a chance for staff to learn something new and become familiar with our living Noongar culture,” Natasha said.

“Bike riding for short trips is a great way to stay active and gives people more opportunity to engage with nature — they might even see some of the animals our bikes are named after



DTMI's bike fleet has been named using Noongar words for local wildlife, creating a practical and engaging way for staff to learn more about Noongar language and culture

Connecting for success in the Mid-West Gascoyne

Aboriginal businesses, entrepreneurs and industry representatives recently came together for an Aboriginal Business Information Session hosted by Main Roads Mid West–Gascoyne Region in partnership with the Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Business Engagement branch.

Held across Geraldton and Carnarvon, with participants also joining online, the session helped attendees learn more about working with government agencies, upcoming opportunities and the support available to Aboriginal businesses.

Presenters shared practical information about procurement processes, supplier registration and opportunities to engage with Main Roads and wider Transport and Major Infrastructure Portfolio

projects. The session also created space for open discussion about opportunities and challenges for Aboriginal businesses across the region.

Strong attendance across both locations and online highlighted the growing interest in Aboriginal business development in the Mid West–Gascoyne, and the importance of creating practical opportunities for businesses to connect, ask questions and build relationships

Project teams celebrate NAIDOC Week through culture, connection and reflection

Project teams across Main Roads marked NAIDOC Week 2026 with activities that brought people together to recognise the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Main Roads [Reid Highway Interchanges](#) project team held an on-site celebration led by Danny Ford and Rose Walley from Kambarang Services. The morning began with kangaroo stew and damper, followed by reflection on NAIDOC Week and this year's theme, *50 Years of Deadly*.



The Reid Highway Interchanges team marked NAIDOC Week with an on-site celebration led by Danny Ford and Rose Walley from Kambarang Services.

Danny also led a toolbox talk, sharing his experiences, the changes he has seen over the past 50 years and his hopes for the future. The event gave the project team an opportunity to learn, reflect and celebrate together.

The Tonkin Extension Alliance, delivering Main Roads' [Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade](#), also marked NAIDOC Week with site barbecues, native-inspired catering, a children's colouring competition and a

collaborative art workshop. The activities encouraged participation across the workforce and created space for shared learning, reflection and connection.



Members of the Tonkin Extension Alliance participate in a collaborative art workshop as part of NAIDOC Week celebrations.

Together, the celebrations highlighted the value of practical and inclusive opportunities for teams to build understanding, recognise culture and strengthen respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Strengthening respectful connections through cultural learning

The Tonkin Extension Alliance, delivering Main Roads' [Tonkin Highway Extension and Thomas Road Upgrade](#) has taken a place-based approach to cultural awareness through a series of cultural training sessions led by respected Noongar Elder, Uncle George Walley from Mandjoogoordap Dreaming.

The sessions create space for open conversation, questions and shared learning, helping participants build cultural awareness, strengthen their connection to Country and deepen their understanding of the Aboriginal history of the project area.

By tailoring the training to the local landscape and cultural context, the Alliance is fostering meaningful engagement that goes beyond compliance and supports a workforce better equipped to work respectfully alongside Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners.

The training has been well received and reflects the Alliance's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal

participation, cultural learning and positive, lasting relationships with communities connected to the project.



The Tonkin Extension Alliance took part in place-based cultural awareness training led by Uncle George Walley from Mandjoogoordap Dreaming.

First Black Coffee Event held in Hedland

Staff from Main Roads Pilbara Region attended the very first Hedland Black Coffee event during National Reconciliation Week, held at the Wangka Maya Language Centre. The event provided an opportunity for staff to connect with community members and network with potential Aboriginal contractors in a welcoming and informal setting.

Black Coffee events are designed to create a space for people to come together, share ideas and support one another, while strengthening Aboriginal business and community networks in Hedland and across the Pilbara. For Main Roads, attending events such as this helps foster meaningful relationships and supports ongoing engagement with Aboriginal businesses in the region.

Attendees also enjoyed a selection of Indigenous foods that showcased native flavours and added to the sense of connection and shared experience throughout the morning. The menu included:

- Kangaroo patty sliders
- Fresh damper
- Wattle seed scones with jam and cream
- Bush-inspired morning tea treats

This event was arranged by Ms Sharon Todd, towards the Dreaming Funeral Services who thanked the Pilbara team for attending and taking

the time to connect with community members and local businesses.

Opportunities like Hedland Black Coffee play an important role in building stronger relationships across the region and creating pathways for future collaboration.



Pilbara staff with attendees at the Inaugural Port Hedland Black Coffee event



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

