AFN WINNER'S EDITION 2026

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS



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We are incredibly proud to sponsor the All First Nations Awards through the in-kind printing of this magazine.
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As a proud First Nations-focused social enterprise and Supply Nation member, we're committed to using our business to create positive social impact through employment pathways, opportunities, partnerships and community connection.

Thank you for supporting an event that celebrates First Nations excellence, leadership, innovation, and achievement.















Cover Model - Taylah Okely - Kamilaroi. Photographer -Lori Cicchini (LORIANA|fotografia). Hair - Julie Okely MUA - Lauren Cataldo

Our actions acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we are based and all the First Nation lands in Australia, where we trade. We appreciate and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first peoples and traditional owners of this country. We pay our respects to Elders- past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this land. We acknowledge and value the rich, diverse cultures and the long history connected to this beautiful country through Aboriginal Australians. We understand the important role of maintaining cultures and the ongoing relationship with the land and its peoples. We choose to be an equal opportunity employer and support this through our actions.

All articles are written with AI support.

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Yaama!

And welcome to our AFN AWARDS WINNERS ISSUE of the All First Nations Magazine.

AFN magazine is part of our extensive platform to bring attention to our recipients and authentic Indigenous providers.

AFN is very different to its very humble beginnings, and it has changed a lot over its time - as we have flipped the system, and focused our lens on Indigenous providers, suppliers and significant leaders in our communities from a grassroots perspective. The good news is that we are an 100% Indigenous owned and run platform, and our focus is to help our Indigenous community members realize their true potential - and be recognised for it.

All articles were collated and produced through AI,using an aggregator-style sourcing process. We swept the internet and asked it about the recipient that we featured in this Award issue.

Please be kind. Enjoy, and celebrate.

From Julie



PROGRAM DIRECTOR & ENTREPRENEUR

Julie Okely

From her home base in ACT, Julie Okely spends her working life connecting programs to partners—pairing an Indigenous wellbeing curriculum, a faith-based amenities brand, a CRM platform, and a highly successful art and beauty brand DILKARA, under one bridge-building approach.

WORDS: AFN MAGAZINE · PORTFOLIO: JULIEOKELY.COM.AU

Julie Okely builds bridges.

Across education, faith, technology and Indigenous enterprise, her work follows one thread: finding where a good program and the right partner should meet, and making the introduction. She works in a partnership and reseller capacity — pitching co-brand proposals to organisations, connecting programs to one another, and helping smaller initiatives find the institutions and audiences that can carry them further.

That approach shows up most clearly in Standing Strong, a culturally informed wellbeing and life-skills curriculum for Years 5 to 8, built across ten modules covering confidence, resilience, identity and safe choices.

A companion program, Brave Little Me, carries the same framework to children aged five to eight, giving schools an early-intervention option alongside the core curriculum.

Alongside the education work sits Temple Water, a premium, faith- based Australian spring water brand.
Its co-branded cans are built to direct profit and proceeds to partner organisations' own programs, extending into sibling lines in coffee and food under the Our Temple name — a model built for churches, charities and community groups looking for a product that carries their own mission alongside it.

Her role is less about running any one venture day to day, and more about connecting them.

On the technology side, YarnIt CRM gives schools, galleries and Indigenous enterprises a client relationship management platform built around an Indigenous art aesthetic, styled to the tagline "Connect. Cultivate. Empower."

It sits alongside DILKARA - art and beauty.
An Indigenous Australian brand described as starting "with a touch of Kamilaroi spirit and love." Julie as a proud Kamilaroi woman, and reconnecting with that cultural background — including her mother's Aboriginal identity and her grandfather's WWI service as one of the first Aboriginal Australians to represent the country — was the trigger for launching Dilkara.

The word Dilkara means "rainbow,"
The range covers hair, hygiene and skincare products, built from ancient Indigenous botanicals and organic elements from the Australian bush.
Beyond products, Dilkara frames its mission around reconciliation — bridging cultures by sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

More recently, Vanity Group launched DILKARA as a Global hotel amenities collection built on the same brand, with a signature "Bamal Collection" featuring extracts like Kakadu plum, lemon myrtle and sandalwood, and donating 5% of profits to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

Taken together, the ventures read less like a diversified business and more like a single conviction, applied four ways: that culturally grounded programs do better with the right partner beside them, and that someone has to do the work of making the introduction. Outside the portfolio, Julie's own interest in Australian Aboriginal languages — including Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay — runs quietly through that same conviction, a reminder that the connecting work starts with genuine cultural grounding, not just good deal-making.

YarnIt
CONNECT. CULTIVATE. EMPOWER.
AN INDIGENOUS CRM PLATFORM

THE PORTFOLIO

RECOGNITION

AFN Awards

National Awards Program for First Nations in multiple categories.

EDUCATION

Standing Strong

Culturally informed wellbeing and life-skills curriculum, Years 5–8, across ten modules — plus Brave Little Me for ages 5–8.

FAITH & PRODUCT

Temple Water

Premium faith-based Australian spring water, sold in co-branded cans that direct proceeds to partner programs.

TECHNOLOGY

YarnIt CRM

CRM platform for schools, galleries and Indigenous enterprises.
"Connect. Cultivate. Empower."

MARKETPLACE

DILKARA

A Global hotel amenities collection built on the same brand, with a signature "Bamal Collection" featuring extracts like Kakadu plum, lemon myrtle and sandalwood, and donating 5% of profits to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

BEYOND THE PORTFOLIO

Julie has a*n ongoing interest in Travel + Spanish and Aboriginal languages, including Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay.*

JULIEOKELY.COM.AU

INAUGURAL

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

2024

#allfirstnationsawards

#afn



Advance Tree Works

Advance Tree Works

List of Recipients 2024

AFN Elder of the Year – Male (Uncle) 2024 - Dr Uncle Paul Collis

AFN Elder of the Year – Female (Aunty) 2024 - Aunty Trisha Frail

AFN Lifetime Achievement In Sport Award 2024 - Patty Mills

AFN Lifetime Achievement In The Performing Arts Award 2024 - Don Christopher

AFN Lifetime Achievement In Leadership Award 2024 - Dr Aunty Tjanara Goreng Goreng

AFN Golden Alumni Award 2024 - Jeff Fenech

AFN Individual Of the Year 2024 - Jenni Walke

AFN Emerging Star of the Year Award 2024 - Beth Cooper

AFN Volunteer Excellence Award 2024 - Kartika Medcraft-Smith

AFN Young Leader of the Year Award 2024 - Savannah Yesil

AFN Most Promising New Talent In Music Award 2024 - Stewart Fleming

AFN Actor Of The Year - Female Award 2024 - Leah Purcell

AFN Film of The Year 2024 - The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson

AFN Sports Ignite Award 2024 - Alex Winwood

AFN Outstanding Achievement in Health Award 2024 - Dr Tom Calma

AFN Deadly Recruitment Business Award 2024 - OnPoint365

AFN Outstanding Achievement in Employment Award 2024 - Pipeline Talent

Excellence In Health Through The Promotion Of Healthy and Smoke Free Lifestyles

- Julie Tongs OAM - CEO Winnunga Nimmityjah AH&CS

AFN Supplier of the Year Award 2024 - Muru Office Supplies

AFN Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice Award 2024 - Douglas Fernando

AFN Events Business Award 2024 - Patrice Soward

AFN Fashion Creative Award 2024 - Kristie Peters

AFN Business Pivot Award 2024 - Adam Williams

AFN Sustainable Product Award 2024 - Cassie Fisher Patterson

AFN Cultural Immersion Award 2024 - Lee Couch

AFN Food & Beverage Award 2024 - My Dilly Bag

AFN Digital Innovation/Tech Award 2024 - Brett Leavy – Virtual Songlines

AFN Accelerate Award 2024 - Jahna Lugnan

AFN Service Business Award 2024 - Erin Woolford

AFN Brand of the Year Award 2024 - Yaala Sparkling

AFN Julie's Choice Business Award 2024 - Deb Munson - Baagi Milaygiin

AFN High Profile Venue led by Indigenous Management Award 2024 - Scott Sadler AM

AFN Next Generation Education Award 2024 - Kylie Captain

AFN Cultural Confidence Award 2024 - Bernice Hookey

Property Management and Engagement 2024 - EvolveFM

AFN Female Led, Social Enterprise Business Award 2024 - Sara Stuart - Printing with Purpose

Health Worker Of The Year 2024 - Skynan Fernando

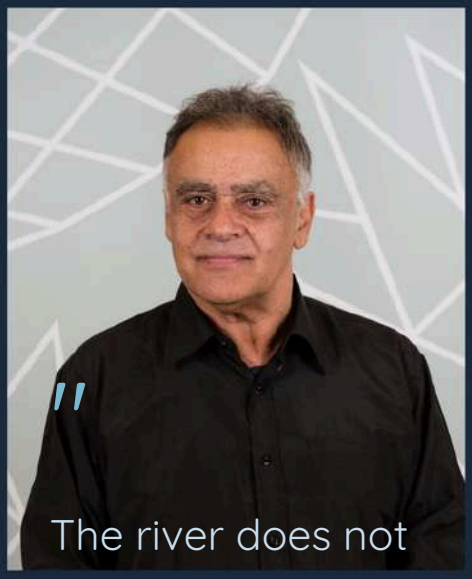
***Featured artlcles/recipients/participants were chosen in random for this publication.**

AFN ELDER OF THE YEAR MALE

2024

(Uncle) DR Paul Collins

POET · AUTHOR
ACADEMIC LEADER
CULTURAL CUSTODIAN



"The river does not ask permission to flow. It knows its country, and it moves with purpose.

— DR PAUL COLLIS

AFN Elder of the Year
Male · Uncle · 2024
AUSTRALIANFIRSTNATIONS.ORG.AU

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2024

THE ELDER

Uncle Dr Paul Collis is a Barkindji man of deep learning and deeper soul. A poet, novelist, academic, and Elder whose life has been shaped by the same forces that shape the Baaka — the Darling River of his Country: persistent, patient, and profoundly connected to the land it flows through.

"To know Country is to know yourself. To share that knowledge is to give the greatest gift."
— DR PAUL COLLIS

SCHOLAR & STORY TELLER

Dr Collis has built a remarkable career at the intersection of First Nations literature, creative writing, and cultural scholarship. His poetry and prose give voice to the Barkindji experience with a precision and beauty that demands attention - works that have enriched Australian literature while insisting on the sovereignty of Indigenous story and place.

COUNTRY	VOCATION	HONOUR
Baaka Darling River, Barkindji Nation	Dr Academic, Poet, Author	AFN Elder of the Year Male · 2024

I Academic Leadership
Championing First Nations knowledge systems within Australian universities and research institutions

II Literary Voice
Poetry, fiction, and essays that place First Nations experience at the centre of Australian literary culture

III Cultural Custodianship
Holding and transmitting Barkindji lore, language, and relationship to Country across generations

IV Elder Wisdom
Guiding community, students, and leaders with patience, integrity, and deep cultural authority

V River Country Advocacy
Speaking for the Baaka and the living rights of Country, water, and Barkindji sovereignty

With honour and gratitude, we recognise Uncle Dr Paul Collis — Barkindji man, scholar, poet, and Elder of rare depth and grace. Thank you — All First Nations Awards

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP

AFN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP AWARD · 2024

Dr

Tjanara Goreng Goreng

Leader Academic Activist Elder Role Model

2024
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AFN

"Leadership for First Nationspeople means carrying the wisdom of those who came beforeand lighting the path for those who come after."

— Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng

A LIFE IN SERVICE

Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng is one of Australia's most distinguished First Nations leaders — a Wakka Wakka Wulli Wulli traditional owner from Central Queensland, whose life's work spans the academy, the public service, the arts, and the tireless pursuit of justice for her people.

Her career is a testament to what it means to lead not from ambition, but from deep cultural obligation and love.

30+	Dr	AFN
Years of leadership	Academic distinction	Lifetime award

PILLARS OF CONTRIBUTION

- **First Nations Governance** — Pioneering research on Indigenous leadership and self-determination
- **Academic Leadership** — Advancing First Nations scholarship in Australian universities
- **Cultural Healing** — Integrating ancestral knowledge into wellbeing and policy frameworks
- **Rights & Advocacy** — Decades of activism for sovereignty and First Nations rights

SCHOLARSHIP & PRACTICE

A pioneering academic and researcher, Dr Goreng Goreng has dedicated her scholarly life to First Nations governance, healing, and leadership theory. Her work draws on Indigenous knowledge systems to challenge and enrich mainstream understandings of leadership, governance, and wellbeing — bringing Country and community into spaces where they had longbeen absent.

VOICE & VISION

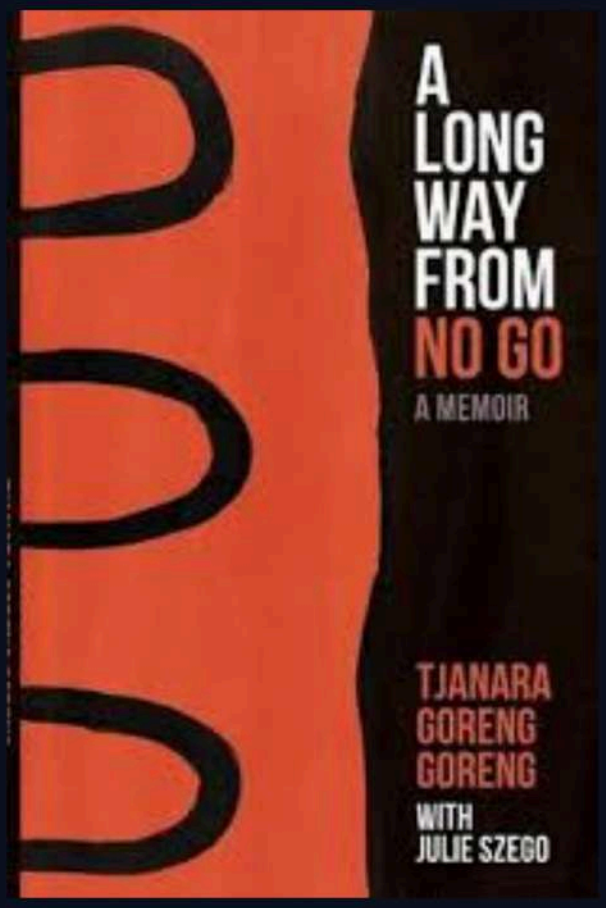
As an activist, author, and policy advocate, Dr Goreng Goreng has shaped debate on First Nations rights, sovereignty, and self-determination across decades. Her voice — grounded in lived experience, rigorous scholarship, and ancestral wisdom — carries a moral authority that few can match, and fewer still have earned.

◆ Mentorship

Shaping the next generation of First Nations leaders and thinkers

ON HER LEGACY

"She does not just occupy leadership — she redefines what leadership can mean for a nation still coming to terms with itself."





AFN Lifetime Achievement in Leadership Award

Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng · 2024

Healer · Scholar · Leader · Elder

We honour a life of extraordinary service, courage, and wisdom. Dr Goreng Goreng, your legacy belongs to all of us.

WITH GRATITUDE — ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

(Aunty)

AFN ELDER OF THE YEAR 2024 · FEMALE

Trish Frail

Community *Heart*

AFN ELDER OF THE YEAR AWARD · FEMALE CATEGORY · 2024

Elder · Keeper of Knowledge · Community Matriarch · Cultural Guardian · Healer

THE ELDER

Aunty Trish Frail is a woman whose presence carries the warmth of Country itself. An Elder of rare grace and strength, Aunty Trish has spent a lifetime in service to her people — holding culture, holding family, holding community through seasons of challenge and seasons of celebration alike.

> ""An Elder does not choose her role — she grows into it, one and she answers."
> — AUNTY TRISH FRAIL

KEEPER OF CULTURE

As a keeper of cultural knowledge and ancestral stories, Aunty Trish has worked quietly and consistently to ensure that the traditions, ceremonies, and languages of her people remain alive. She understands, as all Elders do, that culture is not an artefact to be preserved behind glass — it is a living, breathing practice that must be passed on in the warmth of human relationship.

Elder AFN

Wisdom & Authority

GIFTS TO COMMUNITY

Cultural Custodianship Preserving ceremonies, language, and ancestral stories for future generations

Healing Presence Providing guidance, comfort and wisdom to those navigating hardship Youth Mentorship Walking alongside young First Nations people with patience and care Ceremony & Lore Holding and conducting ceremony with integrity and deep reverence.

HEART OF COMMUNITY

Whether sitting with a young person in crisis, leading ceremony, mentoring community leaders, or simply being present when presence is all that is needed — Aunty Trish gives herself to her community with an open heart. She has been the steady, loving centre around which so many lives have found their bearings.

- Intergenerational Bridge Connecting the wisdom of ancestors with the needs of today

ON AUNTY TRISH

"She is the kind of Elder who makes you feel seen — truly seen — and that is the rarest and most precious gift of all."

RECOGNISED FOR

- Lifelong service to First Nations community wellbeing
- Cultural preservation and active transmission of lore
- Extraordinary compassion and community leadership



Elder - Keeper of Knowledge - Community Matriarch

AFN Elder of the Year 2024 — Female

Aunty Trish Frail

With deep love and gratitude, we honour Aunty Trish. *Thank you for everything you carry, and everything you give.*

THANK YOU from
ALL FIRST NATIONS

ALL FIRST NATIONS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

A Voice That Carries *Country*

Don Christopher — baritone, educator, and proud Gunggari man — on the stage, the community, and the art of bridging worlds

Surf Lifesaving Australia National Titles - Soloist, National Anthem
NRL - Soloist, National Anthem
NRL State of Origin - Soloist, National Anthem
AFL - Soloist, Welcome to Country
Short Black Opera - Lead role, Pecan Summer
Opera Australia - Main Stage, Chorus
OZ Opera Victorian Schools Company - Lead role, The Magic Flute
The Street Theatre - Lead role, From a Black Sky
State Opera of South Australia - Lead role, Cloudstreet
Short Black Opera Company - Soloist, Eumeralla
Victorian Opera - Lead role, Parrwang lifts the Sky
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra - Soloist, Seasons: Vivaldi and more
Recording Artist - ABC and Independent Label.
AFN Lifetime Achievement in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Performing Arts Award
Baritone - writer - board director - proud Gunggari man



Don Christopher, a proud Gunggari man and acclaimed baritone, has left an indelible mark on the Australian performing arts scene. His operatic journey began with Short Black Opera in 2010, where he starred as James in Deborah Cheetham's pioneering opera *Pecan Summer* — a role he would reprise to critical acclaim in 2011.

"Using the arts to bridge generational gaps — that is the mission, and the privilege."

Following his Bachelor of Music Performance from the Victorian College of Arts, Don debuted with Opera Australia in *Turandot* and captivated audiences as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* with Oz Opera.

Don completed the Observership Program under the mentoring of esteemed musicologist and linguist Malcolm Gilles AM FAHA, is a Graduate of AICD's Company Directors Course and is a Director on the Board of Musica Viva Australia.



Don Christopher - baritone, writer, board director and proud Gunggari man - on the stage, the community, and the art of bridging worlds.

Throughout his 14-year career, Don has graced the stage with leading Australian companies and orchestras in remarkable productions — including *From a Black Sky* for The Street Theatre and the role of Bob Crab in the world premiere of *Cloudstreet* with State Opera of South Australia.

He also served as the baritone soloist in the historic on-country performance of Cheetham's *Eumeralla*, a war requiem for peace — a moment that resonated far beyond the concert hall.

Published Author
Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia
edited by Anita Heiss

Beyond the stage, Don's **passion for the arts and his commitment to First Nations communities** have driven his work with Kooemba Jdarra, Youth Arts Queensland, and Short Black Opera, mentoring young Aboriginal artists.

His dedication extends into First Nations education, where he champions language revitalisation and literacy, using the arts to bridge generational gaps. Now an Executive in the Australian Government, Don combines his arts background with expertise in public sector management to support policy and initiatives for First Nations communities.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AFN Lifetime Achievement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Performing Arts Award

Congratulations Don — we recognise your passion for the arts and your commitment to our First Nations communities.

AFN ARTIST OF THE YEAR AWARD · 2024

Julie Ruttley

Painter · Storyteller · Cultural Guardian

FIRST NATIONS ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2024

2024
AFN ARTIST OF THE YEAR

THE ARTIST

Julie Ruttley is a celebrated First Nations artist whose work pulses with the deep memory of Country. Drawing on generations of knowledge passed down through story, song, and ceremony, Julie's paintings translate the invisible architecture of the land into vivid, breathing colour — canvases that speak before they are read.

> "Every mark I make on canvas is a conversation with my ancestors. I am just holding the brush — the story already exists."
>
> — JULIE RUTTLEY

THE WORK

Over more than two decades, Julie has built a body of work that defies easy categorisation. Her paintings move fluidly between the ceremonial narrative and sweeping cosmological vision. She works primarily in ochres, charcoals, and earth pigments — materials that carry the literal substance of Country into her compositions.

THE LEGACY

Julie's practice extends well beyond the studio. She is a passionate educator and community leader, running workshops for young First Nations artists and working to ensure that traditional painting methods, pigment knowledge, and the stories encoded within them are passed to the next generation. Her works are held in major public and private collections across

Julie measures her success not in gallery walls but in the faces of young artists who have found their voice through her mentorship — in the continued life of stories that might otherwise have fallen silent.

PRACTICE & MEDIUM

- Natural ochre and earth pigments on canvas and bark
- Ceremonial dot and line work
- Large-scale community murals
- Works on paper — charcoal and ash
- Collaborative intergenerational pieces

RECOGNITION & REACH

20+
PRACTICE & CULTURAL TEACHING

3
MAJOR NATIONAL GALLERY COLLECTIONS

100s

YOUNG ARTISTS MENTORED ACROSS COMMUNITY

ON HER CALLING

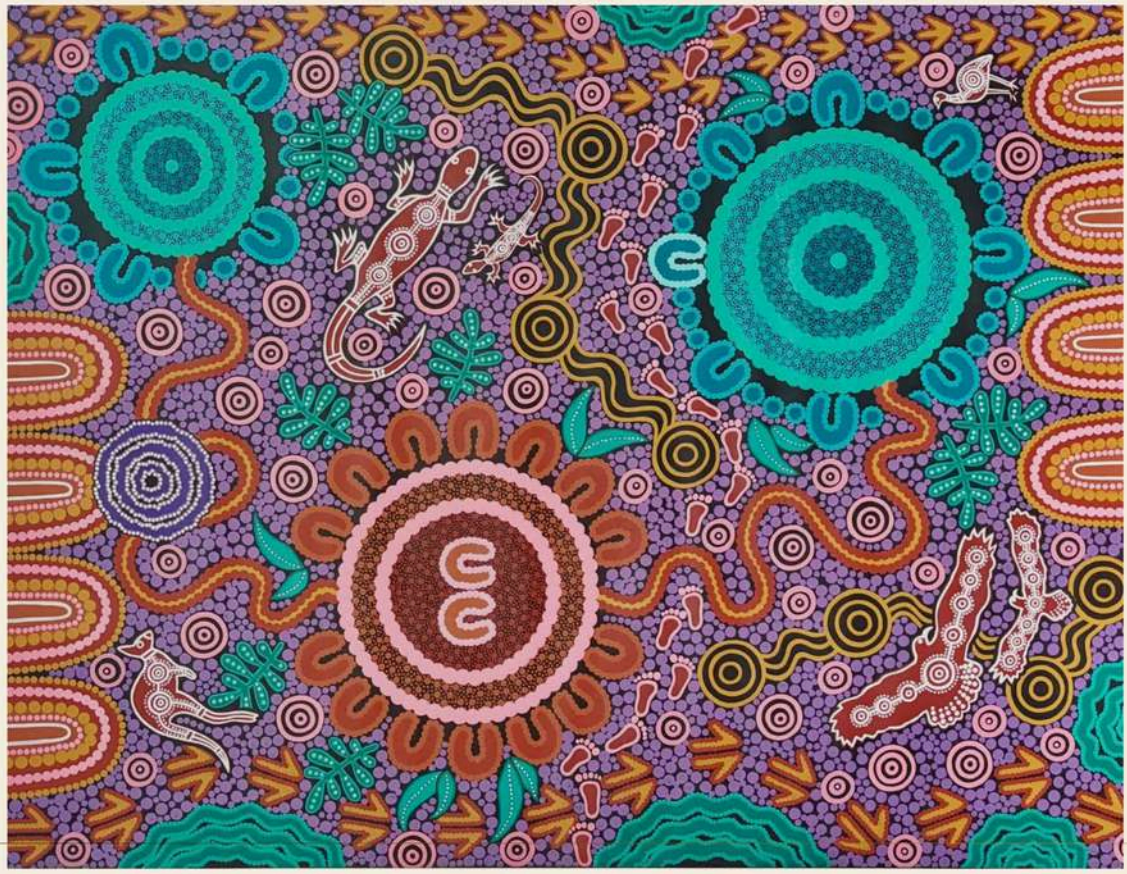
"Art is not separate from life — it is how we remember who we are and where we come from."

JULIE RUTTLEY · AFN INTERVIEW, 2024



COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

- Language and cultural revitalisation through art
- Youth workshops in remote communities
- Collaborations with schools and cultural centres
- Advocacy for First Nations IP in the arts sector



CONGRATULATIONS JULIE — WE CELEBRATE YOUR EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION TO FIRST NATIONS ARTS AND CULTURE. THANK YOU — AFN

AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL AWARD RECIPIENT

AFN Artist of the Year — Julie Ruttley · 2024

AFN ACCELERATE AWARD · MODEL AWARD 2024

Jahna Lugnan

CULTURAL

TRAILBLAZERVOICE

AFN ACCELERATE

INDUSTRY MILESTONES

> "When I walk, I carry every woman in my community with me. The runway is not just mine — it belongs to all of us."
>
> — JAHNA LUGNAN, 2024

AFN AWARD

Accelerate 2024

FIRST NATIONS

THE TRAILBLAZER

Jahna Lugnan is redefining what it means to be a First Nations model in Australia. With a presence that commands attention and an identity rooted in cultural pride, Jahna has moved through the fashion industry on her own terms — transforming every runway, campaign, and editorial into an act of visibility and sovereignty.



NIT - image

MODEL · FIRST NATIONS FASHION · 2024

THE JOURNEY

Jahna entered the industry at a time when First Nations faces were rarely seen in mainstream fashion. Rather than assimilate, she insisted on bringing her culture forward — wearing designs that honour her heritage, collaborating with First Nations designers, and speaking openly about the importance of authentic representation.

Her work spans editorial fashion, commercial campaigns, and advocacy — building a portfolio that is as politically conscious as it is visually striking. Jahna does not simply model clothing; she models what it looks like for a First Nations woman to occupy space with power and grace.

THE IMPACT

Off the runway, Jahna actively mentors young First Nations women navigating the fashion and creative industries, breaking down barriers that she herself had to overcome.

Her advocacy for industry-wide change — in casting, in creative direction, in the stories fashion chooses to tell — has made her one of the most significant voices in Australian fashion today.

- ***National campaigns***

representing First Nations culture in mainstream fashion

- ***Runway appearances***

major Australian fashion events

- ***Collaborations***

with Indigenous designers and labels

- ***Editorial features***

in leading Australian publications

- ***Brand ambassador***

cultural pride and authentic representation

"Fashion is a language. Jahna speaks it with her whole culture."

— INDUSTRY RECOGNITION, AFN

& ADVOCACY MENTORSHIP

- Mentoring First Nations youth in the fashion industry
- Pushing for authentic casting and inclusive creative direction
- Speaking publicly on sovereignty and representation
- Championing First Nations designers in commercial spaces



Lugnan Jahna wearing garments by artist Sarrita King x Edition. (Image: Lauren Campbell)

ALL FIRST NATIONS OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

AFN Accelerate Award —Jahna Lugnan

Congratulations ***Jahna*** — we honour your courage, your vision, and your unstoppable voice.


pulse8
strategies

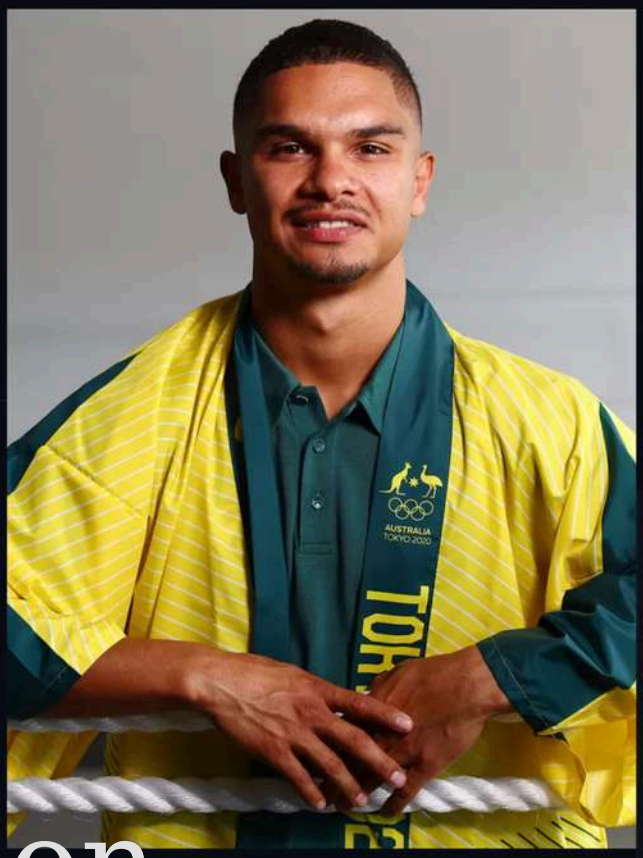

pulse8
strategies


pulse8
strategies

● AFN SPORTS IGNITE AWARD 2024 ●

Youth Sport

Alex Winwood



Igniting the next generation

ATHLETE · MENTOR · COMMUNITY CHAMPION

AWARD YEAR
2024
Sports Ignite

IMPACT
First Nations

RECOGNITION
AFN

HIGHLIGHTS

- National Representation
  Competed atnational level representing First Nations athletes with distinction.
- Youth Mentorship
  Personally mentored dozens of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes.
- Cultural Leadership
  Championed cultural identity and pride within sporting programs and competitions.
- Community Programs
  Led grassroots initiatives ensuring sport accessibility across remote and regional areas.
- Sporting Excellence
  A role model whose discipline inspires peers and younger athletes to reach their fullest potential.

THE STORY

Alex Winwood embodies what it means to lead with heart. A proud First Nations athlete whose journey on and off the field has left a lasting mark on the communities he calls home, Alex has dedicated himself not only to his own excellence but to lifting those around him.

"Sport is the language that crosses every boundary — it's how we bring our kids home to who they are."

From junior leagues to national representation, Alex has carried the torch for First Nations athletes with pride, discipline, and generosity of spirit. His dedication to mentoring young Indigenous athletes has opened pathways where few existed, building confidence and cultural identity hand in hand.

Off the field, Alex works tirelessly with community programs to ensure sport remains accessible — a tool for healing, belonging, and ambition for the next generation of First Nations youth across Australia.

His story is one of quiet leadership and extraordinary impact; of a man who could have been satisfied with his own achievements but chose instead to become a bridge — between generations, between cultures, between what is and what can be.

AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

AFN Sports Ignite Award — Alex Winwood · 2024

Congratulations Alex — we honour your dedication to sport, community, and the future of First Nations youth.



AFN Awards 2026

EXCLUSIVE RAP PARTNER

ETHAN INDIGENOUS

- **Outstanding Performance** — Excellence across all aspects of the traineeship program
- **Cultural Pride** — Brings First Nations identity and values into the professional environment
- **Community Commitment** — Strong connection to community while growing professionally
- **Resilience** — Navigated challenges with maturity and determination beyond his years
- **Leadership Potential** — Already mentoring peers and giving back to those who follow

AFN Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice Award

Douglas Fernando · 2024

FIRST NATIONS · CAREER EXCELLENCE · FUTURE LEADER

2024

TRAINEE · CADET · APPRENTICE

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice Award

FIRST NATIONS CAREER EXCELLENCE · 2024

ON DOUGLAS
"He doesn't just meet the standard — he raises it for everyone around him."

PRESENTED TO

Douglas Fernando

TRAINEE | FIRST NATIONS | FUTURE LEADER

THE ACHIEVER

Douglas Fernando represents the very best of what can happen when opportunity meets determination. As a First Nations trainee, Douglas has demonstrated the drive, resilience, and character that marks someone not just as a high performer in their current role — but as a future leader for their community and profession.

> *"The path isn't always straight — but if you keep walking with purpose, you build the road beneath your feet."*
> — DOUGLAS FERNANDO · 2024

Douglas's traineeship is not simply a professional milestone — it is a statement about what is possible for young First Nations people entering the workforce. In taking up this pathway, Douglas has shown that the barriers which have historically excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from professional opportunities can be broken, one determined step at a time.

Outstanding Performance
Demonstrated excellence across all aspects of the traineeship program
Cultural Pride
Brings First Nations identity and values into the professional environment
Community Commitment
Maintains strong connection to community while growing professionally

BY EXCELLING IN HIS TRAINEESHIP, DOUGLAS BECOMES A SIGNAL TO THE NEXT GENERATION — PROOF THAT FIRST NATIONS YOUNG PEOPLE BELONG IN EVERY PROFESSION, EVERY WORKPLACE, AND EVERY BOARDROOM IN THIS COUNTRY. HIS ACHIEVEMENT TODAY PLANTS A SEED FOR TOMORROW'S LEADERS.

THE JOURNEY & THE IMPACT

Pathway Milestones

01 — Accepted into Program
Selected for the First Nations traineeship — a competitive and prestigious pathway into professional life

02 — Excelled in Training
Demonstrated outstanding capability, commitment, and professional growth across every aspect of the program

03 — AFN Recognition
Awarded Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice of the Year — All First Nations Awards 2024

04 — The Future
A career of leadership, achievement, and community impact ahead — the beginning, not the end

THE EXAMPLE HE SETS

A signal to the next generation
Proof that First Nations young people belong in every profession and every boardroom

Breaking barriers
Showing that historical exclusions can be overcome, one determined step at a time

Mentoring peers

Planting seeds



Congratulations Douglas — your achievement inspires the next generation of First Nations professionals. The future is yours.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION · 2024

AFN VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE AWARD · 2024

Kartika Medcraft-Smith

Canberra, ACT · Ngunnawal Country

AFN AWARD
Volunteer Excellence
2024

Volunteer · *Community Builder* · *Connector* · *FirstNations Advocate*

THE VOLUNTEER

Kartika Medcraft-Smith is the kind of person who shows up. Not when it is convenient, not when it is recognised, and not because anyone asked — but because she understands, in her bones, that community is built one act of care at a time. Based on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra, Kartika has become an indispensable force in the First Nations community across the ACT.

ACT REGION · EXCELLENCE AWARD · 2024 AFN

> "Volunteering is not something you add to your life — it is how you choose to live it. Every hour given freely is a gift to the future."

THE COMMITMENT

Kartika's volunteer work spans community events, cultural programs, youth support, and First Nations advocacy — a breadth that reflects not a scattered energy but a deep and focused commitment to the wellbeing of her community. She gives her time, her skills, and her heart with equal generosity.

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Cultural Events** — Organising and supporting First Nations cultural gatherings across Canberra
- **Youth Programs** — Supporting young First Nations peoples in Canberra with mentorship and activities
- **Community Advocacy** — Amplifying First Nations voices in the ACT's unique policy and civic landscape

THE IMPACT

In Canberra — Australia's capital, a city with its own distinct First Nations community and unique advocacy landscape — Kartika has helped build the connective tissue that holds people together. Her presence at events, her follow-through on commitments, and her genuine care for people have made her a trusted and beloved figure in the community.

- Connection & Belonging Welcoming new community members and building lasting networks of support
- Network Support Contributing to the ACT First Nations NAIDOC Awards vision, mission and reach.

ON KARTIKA

"She is the first to arrive and the last to leave — always asking what else she can do."

WHY THIS AWARD MATTERS

- Volunteers are the invisible backbone of every strong community
- Kartika's work demonstrates that generosity is a form of leadership
- Recognising volunteers ensures their work is seen, valued and continued



Taken by Belle Photography

AFN Volunteer Excellence Award

KartikaMedcraft-Smith · 2024

THANK YOU KARTIKA FOR YOUR EXTRAORDINARY GENEROSITY, YOUR DEDICATION, AND YOUR BEAUTIFUL COMMITMENTTOCOMMUNITY.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

CANBERRA · NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY·ACT

Enterprise & Innovation · Awards 2024

2024

AFN AWARD

Sara Stuart

PRINTING WITH PURPOSE

Social Enterprise 2024

FOUNDER | SOCIAL ENTERPRISE | FIRST NATIONS | FEMALE LED

THE FOUNDER

Sara Stuart founded Printing with Purpose with a vision that goes far beyond printing. As a First Nations woman and entrepreneur, Sara understood that a business could be a vehicle not just for commerce, but for community transformation — and she built one that proves it every day.

> "Every job printed is a story told — and every story belongs to someone who deserves to be seen."
>
> — SARA STUART, PRINTING WITH PURPOSE

THE ENTERPRISE

Printing with Purpose is a social enterprise with a clear mission: to use the power of print to amplify First Nations voices, support community organisations, and create meaningful employment and training pathways for First Nations people. It is a business built on values, run with excellence, and measured by impact.

THE IMPACT

Under Sara's leadership, Printing with Purpose has grown into a respected enterprise that serves clients across the community, government, and corporate sectors — while never losing sight of its founding purpose. Sara leads by example: a First Nations woman showing what is possible when entrepreneurial skill meets social conviction.

PWP — PRINTING WITH PURPOSE

FLB — FEMALE LED BUSINESS

ENTERPRISE PILLARS

Social Mission
Print as a tool for community visibility and First Nations storytelling

Female Leadership
A First Nations woman building and scal ing a purpose-driven enterprise

Employment Pathways
Creating jobs and training opportunities for First Nations people in print

Community Clients
Partnering with First Nations organisations to amplify their work

Commercial Viability

Proving social enterprise and business excellence are not opposites

ON SARA & PRINTING WITH PURPOSE

"She built a business that prints more than ink — it prints possibility into the lives of her community."

WHY THIS AWARD

- **Female-Led Excellence** Demonstrates the power and leadership of First Nations women in business
- **Social Innovation** Redefines enterprise as a vehicle for community transformation
- **Inspiring Others** Sara's example opens the door for the next generation of First Nations entrepreneurs



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

AFN Female Led Social Enterprise Business Award · Sara Stuart

PRINTING WITH PURPOSE

First Nations · Female Led · Social Enterprise · 2024

Congratulations Sara — your vision, leadership and purpose-driven enterprise inspire us all.Keep printing what matters.

WITH PRIDE — ALL FIRST NATIONS

AFN DEADLY RECRUITMENT BUSINESS AWARD · 2024

AWARD RECIPIENT

OnPoint365

AFN AWARD DEADLY 2024

RECRUITMENT | FIRST NATIONS | BUSINESS EXCELLENCE | AFN 2024

THE BUSINESS

OnPoint365 is redefining what First Nations recruitment looks like in Australia. Built on the principle that connecting the right people with the right opportunities should be a daily commitment — not a one-off initiative — OnPoint365 has become a trusted and dynamic force in First Nations workforce development and employment solutions.

> "Being on point means showing up — every day, for every candidate, for every community we serve."
>
> — ONPOINT365

THE MISSION

OnPoint365 operates with a clear, dual mission: to create genuine employment pathways for First Nations people across all industries, and to help organisations build meaningful, authentic, and sustained First Nations workforce strategies. Every placement is a partnership; every candidate is a person with a story, strengths, and a future.

THE IMPACT

In a sector where tokenism can often masquerade as inclusion, OnPoint365 stands apart through genuine cultural understanding, rigorous professional standards, and relentless follow-through. The business doesn't just fill roles — it builds careers, transforms workplaces, and contributes to long-term economic empowerment for First Nations communities.

365 DAYS A YEAR, ON POINT

FN FIRST NATIONS LED& FOCUSED

AFN AWARD 2024

DEADLY BUSINESS

WHAT SETS ONPOINT365 APART

- → Cultural Intelligence — Deep First Nations knowledge embedded in every client and candidate engagement
- → 365-Day Commitment — Ongoing support and follow-through — not placement and disappear

→ **Sector Breadth**
Connecting First Nations talent across government, corporate, and community sectors

→ **Employer Partnerships**
Building genuine reconciliation action and Indigenous employment strategies

→ **Community Roots**
Accountable to First Nations communities — not just to clients and KPIs

ON ONPOINT365

"They don't just recruit — they advocate, they champion, and they deliver."

AWARD RECOGNITION

→ Excellence in First Nations business leadership and workforce innovation

→ Demonstrated commercial success with strong community impact

→ Setting the standard for ethical, effective

Services Provided to Job Seekers

- ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES
- CAREER GUIDANCE
- RESUME AND INTERVIEW PREP
- CONFIDENTIALITY
- TIME SAVINGS
- FEEDBACK AND IMPROVEMENT

Our Services



PERMANENT RECRUITMENT



TEMPORARY & LABOUR HIRE



PAYROLL SERVICES



SCRIBE SERVICES

Our Industries

- ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE
- ADMINISTRATION
- COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING
- COMPLIANCE AND REGULATION
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
- DATA AND RESEARCH
- POLICY
- PROJECT AND PROGRAMS
- EXECUTIVE SUPPORT
- CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT
- TECHNOLOGY

EvolveFM

AFN AWARD
Property & Engagement
2024

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
FMProperty Management & Community Engagement
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
FIRST NATIONS
AWARD 2024

THE COMPANY

FN
FIRST NATIONS LED

EvolveFM is a First Nations property management and community engagement business that has redefined what it means to manage, maintain, and r g. row meaningful connections between properties and the people who inhabit them. With an approach that centres First Nations knowledge, relationships, and values, EvolveFM delivers property solutions that genuinely evolve the sector.

"Effective property management isn't just about buildings — it's about belonging, community, and the relationships that make a place a home."

— EVOLVEFM

EvolveFM brings a distinctly First Nations lens to property management— understanding that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, places carry deep cultural, spiritual, and social significance. Their engagement model goes far beyond maintenance schedules and lease agreements: it builds genuine relationships,sustains community trust, and creates environments where people thrive.

THE NAME SAYS IT ALL.

SERVICE PILLARS

- Property Management
  End-to -end management with cultural sensitivity and community focus
- Community Engagement
  Deep,sustained relationships with First Nations communities and stakeholders
- Facilities Management
  Maintaining spaces that support community wellbeing and cultural practice

- **Cultural Custodianship** Honouring obligations to Country in every property decision
- **Workforce Development** Creating First Nations employment through property sector pathways

ON EVOLVEFM

"They don't just manage properties — they strengthen the places communities that call them home."

WHY THIS AWARD

- **Sector Innovation** Transforming property management through a First Nations lens
- **Community Impact** Measurable benefit to First Nations communities through property services
- **Business Excellence** Commercial success built on cultural integrity genuine and engagement.

evolve FM

making places work for people

EvolveFM was founded on the belief that the property management sector must evolve — to include First Nations voices, to honour cultural obligations to Country, and to build business models that deliver lasting community benefit alongside commercial excellence.

CONGRATULATIONS EVOLVEFM ON YOUR WELL DESERVED NOMINATION AND AFN AWARD - ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2024.

INNOVATION

EXCELLENCE

IMPACT

AFN MOST PROMISING NEW TALENT IN MUSIC · 2024

Stewart Barton

AFN AWARD
New Talent in Music
2024

MUSICIAN | FIRST NATIONS | EMERGING ARTIST

NEW TALENT | AFN 2024 | ♪ ♪

THE ARTIST

Stewart Barton is a First Nations musician whose voice carries the stories, spirit, and heartbeat of his people into thecontemporary music landscape.A natural gift that has turned heads across the in dustry, Stewart represents themost exciting new talent to emerge from First Nations music in 2024 — raw, authentic, and entirely his own.

"Music is how I remember where I come from—and how I show the world where we're going."

— STEWART BARTON

THE SOUND

Stewart's music blends the deep resonance of First Nations tradition with the pulse of contemporary Australian musical sound. His songwriting draws on Country, community, and personal experience — creating music that feels both ancient and urgently present. It is music that asks to be felt before it is heard.

THE JOURNEY

Stewart's path into music is shaped by connection —to his community, to the land, and to the long tradition of First Nations storytelling through song. He has honed his craft not in isolation but in the midst of family and Country — and that groundedness shows in every performance.

WHAT MAKES STEWART

- → **Authentic Voice** Rooted in lived First Nations experience
- → **Cultural Depth** Honours ancestry while speaking to now
- → **Natural Talent** A gift that cannot be taught — only celebrated
- → **Promise** A career arc pointing unmistakably upward

ON STEWART

"He doesn't just perform — he transforms the room."

Stewart Barton

AFN MOST PROMISING NEW TALENT IN MUSIC · 2024

Receiving this award is not the culmination of Stewart Barton's story — it is the opening note. With recognition from All First Nations Awards, Stewart carries the pride of his people and the confidence of a musician who knows exactly who he is and what he has to say. The stage is his.

> "First Nations music carries a frequency the world is finally tuning in to — and Stewart is broadcasting loud and clear."
>
> — ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS, 2024

THE PROMISE



MUSICAL STRENGTHS

Songwriting
Original compositions from First Nations tradition

Performance
Stage presence that creates genuine connection

Cultural Integrity
Honouring heritage without compromise

Community Roots
Music made for and from his community

FUTURE POTENTIAL

National Profile
Ready for national stages and festivals

Cultural Ambassador
Carrying First Nations music to new audiences

Next Generation
Already inspiring younger First Nations artists

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Stewart Barton

AFN MOST PROMISING NEW TALENT IN MUSIC AWARD · 2024

Congratulations Stewart — your music is a gift to your community and to all who hear it. The stage is yours.

WITH PRIDE — ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

· 2024

BRAND & BUSINESS

AFN BRAND OF THE YEAR

Yaala Sparkling

BRAND OF THE YEAR | FIRST NATIONS | SPARKLING WATER

AFN AWARD

Brand of the Year 2024

FN OWNED | AFN THE YEAR | 2024 YEAR

THE BRAND

Yaala Sparkling is a multi-award-winning Australian beverage brand crafting healthy drinks from the country's most extraordinary native botanicals. Completely natural, sugar-free, and low-calorie, these sparkling waters taste exactly as nature intended.

Yaala translates to ‘the present moment’ in Wiradjuri language.

In a growing native food industry where Indigenous representation remains disproportionately low, Yaala is changing the script. By sourcing from local suppliers and honouring the Ancestral knowledge behind their ingredients, they elevate Indigenous artists, harvesters, and storytellers.



BRAND PILLARS

- ***First Nations Ownership*** PFemale First Nations founded and lead
- ***Premium Quality*** Competes with any brand in the market
- ***Locally Sourced*** Real plants, sourced from around Australia
- ***Economic Empowerment*** Building an authentic brand the mainstream

ON YAALA SPARKLING

"A brand that leads with culture and delivers on quality."



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

AFN Brand of the Year — Yaala Sparkling · 2024

Congratulations ***Yaala Sparkling*** a brand that shows Australia this way.

Yaala Sparkling

THE IMPACT

Yaala has built a ***nationally recognised consumer brand*** in one of Australia's most competitive categories, achieving shelf presence in major retail and hospitality venues, proving First Nations brands can stand anywhere.

> "Every time someone reaches for a Yaala, they are choosing to celebrate our local Australian flavours."
>
> — YAALA SPARKLING

THE VISION

Yaala's vision extends beyond the bottle, to grow First Nations business in consumer goods and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs to build brands that carry culture proudly. Yaala Sparkling is a movement, a model, and a milestone for First Nations business in Australia.









WHY THIS AWARD

- ***Market Breakthrough***
  Genuine retail presence in a competitive category
- ***Cultural Leadership***
  First Nations identity in the mainstream market
- ***Brand Excellence***
  Quality and identity that stands on its own merits
- ***Inspiration***
  A model for First Nations entrepreneurs everywhere

RECOGNITION

"Yaala Sparkling is not just brand of the year, it is a brand for the present & future."

CONGRATULATIONS

We honour Yaala Sparkling's extraordinary achievement in building a First Nations brand Australia is proud to celebrate.

Thank you for showing the way, for every First Nations business that follows.



FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS · JULIE'S CHOICE BUSINESS AWARD 2024

Deb Munson

GOMEROI & DHARUG WOMAN

FOUNDER · BAAGIMILAYGIIN GRANDMOTHERS SPIRIT·BIRIPI COUNTRY, NSW

> Nana Smith said in the 70s — we have to keep our knowledge alive trading, like our Old people did.
>
> — DEB MUNSON FOUNDER BAAGIMILAYGIIN

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · JULIE'S CHOICE BUSINESS AWARD 2024

HONOURING EXTRAORDINARY FIRST NATIONS ENTERPRISE, ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE IN COMMERCE, AND THE HEALING SPIRIT OF GRANDMOTHERS PASSED FORWARD

Grandmother's Spirit — Ancient Knowledge, Modern Healing

Deb Munson is a proud Gomeroi and Dharug woman from Coonabarabran, now living on Biripi Country near Port Macquarie - and the founder of Baagi Milaygiin Grandmothers Spirit, an Aboriginal-owned bush beauty and wellness business rooted in generations of ancestral healing knowledge.

The name Baagi Milaygiin means "Grandmother's Spirit" in Gomeroi language— a direct tribute to the two women whose knowledge forms the foundation of everything Deb creates: Nana Leslie, a proud Gomeroi woman, and Nana Smith, a proud Dharug woman. Their healing wisdom was passed to Deb's mother, then to Deb, and now flows on to Deb's three daughters. A living, breathing songline of knowledge.

Deb's professional foundation is equally deep: more than 42 years in hair and beauty, including owning and operating two salons, mentoring staff, and working with Aboriginal women and girls. In 2015 she formalised her bush knowledge by completing a Certificate III in Bush Tucker Horticulture at TAFE Wollongbar — drawing together decades of practice and inherited wisdom into a single, purposeful enterprise.

When COVID hit, the sign Deb had been waiting for arrived. She went full-time with Baagi Milaygiin — "burnt out from the 9 to 5 life" but lit up by the freedom and purpose of building something that truly mattered.

42+	32	3
HEALTH & BEAUTY PRODUCTS	BUSH MEDICINE TREES HARVESTED	GENERATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE



Bush Medicine, Wellbeing Workshops — Keeping Knowledge Alive

THE PRODUCTS & HEALING PRACTICE

From Country to Skin— Therapeutic Bush Beauty

Baagi Milaygiin's product range is a direct expression of ancestral knowledge brought into modern form. Bush oils blend Emu Bush, Gumbi Gumbi, and Tick Bush (Kunzea). Wild Harvest Manuka products join clay masks, balms, scrubs, body wash, bubble bath, sun spray, and skincare — all made from native Australian botanicals, preservative free, ethically produced, and locally manufactured on Biripi land.

Deb's approach is holistic — the products are not just cosmetic. They are therapeutic, healing, and spiritually grounded. She incorporates them into a mobile Aboriginal day spa offering, weaving ancient healing techniques — including touch therapy with bush essence and smoke — into contemporary wellness experiences for both community and corporate clients.

Spiritual practice sits at the heart of Baagi Milaygiin's healing framework. "Our spiritual based practices are used to benefit the mind, body and soul," Deb explains. "Using a combination of ancient healing techniques and remedies that have been passed down through generations."

WORKSHOPS & COMMUNITY

Empowering Women, Building for the Future

Beyond the product range,Deb runs well being workshops that place Indigenous women's self-care and mental wellness at the centre. The workshops are a mobile day spa experience — using bush tucker products and ochre to teach self-care while honouring culture. Online options are available for remote community groups. Corporate wellbeing sessions help leaders in high-pressure workplaces alleviate mental stress through culturally grounded self-care practice.

Deb also works alongside community groups focusing on mental health awareness in workplaces — bringing Baagi Milaygiin products as practical tools within a broader framework of healing and advocacy. Her vision extends to employment: she hopes to create manufacturing jobs on Biripi land, building economic self-determination for local mob.

The same words her Nana Smith spoke in the 1970s — about keeping knowledge alive and returning to community-based trading — are now being lived out in every product Deb makes and every workshop she runs.

I'm building this business for my grandkids, for their future," Deb has said. "I want to build this business smarter."

BAAGI MILAYGIIN — PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Bush Oils
EmuBush, Gumbi Gumbi & Kunzea blends — traditional medicines in therapeutic modern form

Clay Masks
Native clay formulations to cleanse, smooth and brighten — eliminating impurities with ancestral ingredients

Balms & Skincare
Nourishing and protective balms and skincare using native botanicals for healing, calming and hydrating

Wild Harvest Manuka
Sustainably harvested Manuka products — therapeutic and wellness-focused from Biripi Country

Wellbeing Workshops
Mobileday spa workshops for Indigenous women — self-care, bush products, ochre and mental wellness

Corporate Wellbeing
Culturallygrounded sessions for high-pressure workplaces — mental health, self-care and community connection

Touch Therapy
Ancestral healing ritual using bush essence, smoke, and healing hands — mind, body and soul restoration

Supply Nation Certified
Verified ·
Trading Blak member · wholesale and retail across Australia

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · AWARD · 2024
JULIE'S CHOICE BUSINESS







CONGRATULATIONS DEB MUNSON — FOR CARRYING THE GRANDMOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE FORWARD, FOR HEALING YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH COUNTRY, AND FOR BUILDING A BUSINESS THAT HONOURS EVERY ANCESTOR WHO CAME BEFORE YOU.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

DEB MUNSON · BAAGI MILAYGIIN · 2024

BAAGI MILAYGIIN
baagimilaygiin.com.au
Biripi Country · Port Macquarie, NSW
Supply Nation Certified

FIRST NATIONS CULTURE & HERITAGE

My Dilly. Bag

AUNTY DALE CHAPMAN

YUWAALARAA Y KOOMA WOMAN
GUBBI GUBBI COUNTRY, QUEENSLAND

"It is through sharing delicious Australian native foods, yarning and learning about traditional knowledge that we honour our past and build respect into our future.

— AUNTY DALE CHAPMAN, FOUNDER



THE STORY

Country to Table — A Vision 25 Years in the Making

For over a quarter of a century, Aunty Dale Chapman has been doing something quietly extraordinary: bringing Australia's most ancient foods back to the table and into the hearts of a nation.

Born in Dirranbandi on Yuwaalaraay and Kooma tribal lands in south- west Queensland, Aunty Dale has called Gubbi Gubbi Country — the Sunshine Coast — home since 1976. Her totems, the emu from her father's line and the possum through her mother's, speak to the depth of connection that flows through everything she creates.

My Dilly Bag was born from that connection. Named for the traditional woven bag used by Aboriginal women for tens of thousands of years to gather food from Country, it is at once a business, a cultural bridge, and an act of sovereignty. Aunty Dale launched the business in 2000 with a singular dream: to achieve true equality for all Australians through the shared joy of food.

25+	60+	∞
OPERATION	INGREDIENTS	GENERATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · 2024 RECOGNITION

★ ***AFN Food + Beverage*** Award — celebrating excellence in First Nations cultural food and beverages.

*Today, My Dilly Bag is a celebrated, **award-winning** enterprise operating from its Kurrajong Building home in Forest Glen. It works hand-in-hand with Aboriginal communities across Australia, sustainably growing and harvesting Australian Sovereign Foods and Botanicals — creating livelihoods, preserving tradition, and delivering remarkable flavours to kitchens everywhere.*

MY DILLY BAG · IMPACT & VISION

Food Sovereignty, Culture & Community



Coo-ee Cuisine Cookbook

THE MISSION

Empowering Communities Through Food

At the heart of My Dilly Bag is a commitment that goes far beyond commerce. By partnering with Aboriginal communities to grow, harvest, and bring their sovereign foods to market, the business creates genuine income streams while ensuring the knowledge and pride of those communities is honoured and sustained.

Aunty Dale is an Adjunct Senior Fellow in the School of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the University of Queensland — a role that reflects the rigour and depth of her research. She is also a member of the Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and Slow Food International, and serves as Chair of Stepping Black Indigenous Australia.

WORKSHOPS & EDUCATION

Learning Country, One Flavour at a Time

Her work as a celebrated chef, cookbook author, public speaker, television personality, and lecturer has taken the story of Australian native foods to audiences across the country and around the world —always with warmth,generosity,and an invitation to the table.

My Dilly Bag's education and workshop programs are among its most powerful expressions of purpose. From early learning centres and primary schools through to university faculties, corporate teams, and professional kitchens, Aunty Dale brings a hands-on, yarn-driven approach to learning about Country.

Participants leave not just with new tastes and recipes but with a richer understanding of the world's oldest living culture — its knowledge systems, its relationship with land, and its enduring contribution to Australian life. For Aunty Dale, this is the most direct path to reconciliation: sharing a meal, hearing a story, and discovering a flavour together.

FROM THE RANGE — AUSTR ALIAN SOVEREIGN FOODS & BOTANICALS

Wattleseed
Roasted & ground, rich coffee- chocolate notes;a pantrystapleof extraordinary depth

Lemon Myrtle
Bright,citrus-forwardnative herb; versatileinbothsweetand savoury cooking

Desert Lime
Intenselytangy small lime native to arid Australia; vibrant in dressings and preserves

Tasmanian Pepper
Bold, warming spice withlingering heat; a remarkable native alternative to black pepper

Old Man Saltbush
Salty, mineral leaves;extraordinary with lamb and as a natural seasoning

Anise Myrtle
Sweet aniseedfragrance; beloved in baking, teas, and native spice blends

Bush Brews
Nativeherbalteasand infusions honouring traditional botanical knowledge

Hampers & Gifts
Curated collections bringing the full story of Country to table, as a gift

Dale's goal has always been twofold — to introduce native ingredients to new audiences and to re-introduce her own People to the bush tucker that sustained generations before them, seeing it as a vital tool in the fight against preventable illness in communities.



Congratulations Aunty Dale and the My Dilly Bag family — thank you for carrying Country's knowledge forward, one flavour at a time.

FIND MY DILLY BAG

MY DILLY BAG · AUNTY DALE CHAPMAN · 2024

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION · 2024

mydillybag.com.au

DIGITAL INNOVATION / TECH AWARD 2024

Kooma Nation, Western Queensland

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

DIGITAL INNOVATION / TECH AWARD

"Songlines have always mapped our world. Virtual Songlines simply gives that map a new dimension."
— BRETT LEAVY

Bilbie Virtual Labs

Virtual Songlines



ON BRETT LEAVY

Brett built a bridge between the ancient and the future, and First Nations communities own both ends."

THE VIRTUAL HERITAGE JEDI

Brett Leavy

CATEGORY WINNER

Virtual Songlines

Brett Leavy is a First Nations technologist, creator and cultural visionary whose work sits at the intersection of ancient knowledge and digital technology. As founder of Bilbie Virtual Labs and creator of Virtual Songlines, he has built a sovereign spatial platform that brings First Nations cultural heritage to life in immersive 3D environments, letting a new generation encounter Country the way their old people described it.

A Kooma man from Western Queensland, Brett has spent three decades chasing one idea: a working time machine built from geo-spatial data, 3D modelling and community knowledge rather than steel. In 2024 that vision earned him the AFN Digital Innovation/Tech Award.

"Communicating cultural heritage effectively means embracing technology while staying grounded in what communities actually need," Brett explains, describing the philosophy behind every environment Bilbie Virtual Labs builds.

KOOMA	XR · VR · AR	2024
Nation & Country	Core technology	Award year

WHAT VIRTUAL SONGLINES DOES

- **Spatial Mapping** — Places cultural knowledge onto sovereign digital Country
- **Cultural Preservation** — Captures and protects stories, sites and heritage
- **Community Sovereignty** — Communities own and control their own cultural data
- **Immersive Experience** — Brings Country and culture to life digitally

BRETT LEAVY · VIRTUAL SONGLINES · AFN AWARDS · 2024





ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
THE JOURNEY

1972
Draws stories and games on paper as a schoolboy — the first spark of Virtual Songlines.

Radio & media
Decades in radio, documentary and community media, helping build First Nations communications pathways.

Bilbie Virtual Labs
Founds Bilbie Virtual Labs to turn 3D geo-spatial research into a working cultural heritage toolkit.

National rollout
Virtual Songlines reaches schools, galleries and cultural centres across Australia, localised to Country.









BILBIE VIRTUAL LABS
virtualsonglines.com

Brett Leavy

AFN DIGITAL INNOVATION / TECH AWARD

THE SIGNIFICANCE

In a world where digital technology has too often extracted and exploited First Nations cultural knowledge, Virtual Songlines represents a radical alternative — technology designed from the ground up to serve community sovereignty. The communities whose stories are held within the platform are the ones who control them.

> ***"This is not technology about First Nations people — it is technology by and for First Nations people, on our terms."***
>
> **— BRETT LEAVY**

THE LEGACY

Virtual Songlines has opened a path for First Nations digital sovereignty that will outlast any single platform. By demonstrating that ancient cultural knowledge and frontier technology are not opposites, Brett Leavy has changed what is possible for communities, educators and Australia's understanding of its own heritage.

WHY THIS AWARD?

Genuine Innovation
A platform with no precedent, built from First Nations knowledge out

Sovereignty First
Communities control their own cultural data at every level

Educational Impact
Bundled into school offerings, reaching the next generation

National Significance
Reframes Australia's relationship to First Nations heritage

Community-Led
Every environment built in consultation with Traditional Owners and Elders

Cultural Continuity
A bridge between ancient knowledge and frontier technology

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Congratulations Brett Leavy, for mapping new digital Country.

VIRTUAL SONGLINES · FIRST NATIONS TECHNOLOGY · CULTURAL HERITAGE





FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS · WORKPLACE SUPPLY

Muru Office Supplies

NATIONAL

MITCHELL ROSS · CEO & FOUNDER

MAJORITY FIRST NATIONS-OWNED
SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED · EST. 2014

> Commercial strength and cultural integrity are not intension. At Muru, they are the everything
>
> MITCHELL ROSS, CEO, MURU OFFICE

11 Distribution Centres Australia-Wide

Building a National Business on Discipline, Integrity & Purpose

When Mitchell Ross founded Muru Group in 2012, his vision was clear: prove that a First Nations-owned business could compete — and lead — at a national commercial scale. Muru Office Supplies is the fulfilment of that vision.

Established in 2014 as a joint venture between Muru Group and Complete Office Supplies (COS), Muru Office Supplies (MOS) has grown to become Australia's largest Indigenous workplace supply company. Operating nine distribution centres across the country with next-day delivery capability, MOS serves major government departments, leading ASX-listed firms, and mission-driven organisations alike.

The business is built on a principle that sets it apart: long-term structured partnerships over transactional bidding cycles. Clients benefit from dedicated account management, seamless ERP integration, e-invoicing, and procurement reporting that supports RAP, ESG, and supplier diversity goals — without adding administrative burden.

In 2023, MOS was named Certified Supplier of the Year at the Supply Nation Connect Awards — one of the most prestigious recognitions in Indigenous procurement.

Being honoured again in 2024 with the All First Nations Supplier of the Year Award. Each accolade is a testament to the commercial rigour and cultural integrity that define Muru Office Supplies.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR 2024

★ Recognising national excellence in Indigenous business, procurement leadership, and measurable community impact

Supply Across the Entire Workplace

MOS supports procurement across every area of the modern workplace — from office supplies and kitchen consumables to bathroom and cleaning, warehouse operations, packaging, safety, and facilities. Whether your team works at desks, in breakrooms, or on the warehouse floor, we supply the products that keep operations running.





MURU OFFICE SUPPLIES · IMPACT & COMMUNITY

Commercial Discipline, Community Investment



THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Structured for the Long Term

Muru Office Supplies rejects the short-cycle procurement model that has traditionally limited First Nations businesses to one-off contracts. partnerships — providing management, national infrastructure of a major supplier. Instead, consistent MOS reporting builds clients with cadences, structured, and dedicated the long-term account full National infrastructure of a major supplier.

Every dollar spent with Muru counts as 100% Indigenous spend for procurement purposes, supporting clients' Reconciliation Action Plans and ESG reporting obligations. Integration with existing ERP systems and e-invoicing platforms ensures transitions are seamless and ongoing management is low- friction.

Major partners include KPMG — for whom MOS secured Australia's first national preferred supplier appointment to an Aboriginal office supplies company by any professional services or finance-based firm — alongside Bank Australia, and numerous government agencies nationwide.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

20% of Profits, Invested in People

Profit at Muru is not simply a business outcome — it is a mechanism for change. MOS commits 20% of all profits to education, employment, and health and wellbeing initiatives supporting Indigenous communities across regional and remote Australia.

Partners include Deadly Science, which delivers STEM resources and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth — with Muru's support enabling the employment of a dedicated First Nations team member to expand these programs nationally. Native plant nurseries, early childhood literacy programs, and employment pathway initiatives round out the community investment portfolio.

The vision, as Mitchell Ross has articulated it, is generational: to create pathways for future Indigenous Australians through commercial success, sustained employment, and community investment that compounds over time — not a one-off, but a permanent committment built into the business donation model.

NATIONAL SUPPLY CAPABILITY — PRODUCTS & CATEGORIES

Office Products
Stationery, filing, archive, desk essentials and everyday workplace consumables

Technology
Devices, accessories, toner & ink for modern connected workplaces

Kitchen & Facilities
Breakroom,bathroom, cleaninga nd facilitiesmanagement supplies

Safety & First Aid
PPE, firstaidkits, workwearand WHS compliance products

Furniture
Office and workplace furniture delivered and installed nationally

Mailroom & Packaging
Packaging, mailroom logistics, and copy paper across all formats

Print & Promotional
Branded print, promotionalitems, and education supplies

RAP Reporting
Transparent Indigenous spend reporting built into every account

Trusted by Australia's leading brands.

QANTAS · Telstra · KPMG · Commonwealth Bank · Fortescue · BORAL

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR · 2024

MURU OFFICE SUPPLIES · MITCHELL ROSS · 2024

Congratulations

Muru Office Supplies — a business that proves First Nations enterprise can lead the nation in commercial scale, governance, and community purpose.

FIND MURU OFFICE SUPPLIES

muruoffice.com.au

Supply Nation Certified

11 Distribution Centres Australia-Wide



FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS · BUSINESS PIVOT AWARD 2024

Adam Williams & Bunji Enterprises

WONGAIBO N & WIRADJURI MAN
CEO · SUPPLYAUS HOLDINGS
MEANJIN (BRISBANE), QUEENSLAND

> "We started with $800 and a decision to change the paradigm of what people thought an Indigenous business was."
>
> —ADAM WILLIAMS, CEO, SUPPLYAUS

THE STORY

From $800 and a Vision to a National Indigenous Business Empire

In 2018, Adam Williams and co-founder Shawn Andrews Started SupplyAus Holdings with $800, a firm conviction, and a determination to prove that an Indigenous business could deliver — without needing to partner with a larger non- Indigenous corporate to do it.

A proud Wongaibon and Wiradjuri man based in Brisbane, Adam has spent his career building bridges — between Indigenous communities and the wider economy, between cultural authenticity and commercial ambition. As Chairman of the Murri Chamber of Commerce and a Harvard Business School alumnus, he has become one of the most prominent voices in Indigenous enterprise in Australia.

The pivot that defines Adam's story is audacious in its scale. SupplyAus began in supply chain and procurement, delivering PPE, workwear, office supplies, and medical consumables to corporate and government clients. When COVID struck, the business was tested — and it delivered. Among its standout moments: landing 120 tonnes of hand sanitiser for Woolworths in just four days, at a time when larger corporates had nothing to offer.

That reputation for delivery opened a door that would change everything. DHUWA Coffee — meaning "to feel alive" in Bidjara language

2018	900+	47 yr
WITH $800	STORES · DHUWA	ACQUIRED

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · BUSINESS PIVOT AWARD 2024

★ Recognising extraordinary strategic reinvention, bold growth, and enduring impact in Indigenous enterprise





ADAM WILLIAMS · SUPPLYAUS HOLDINGS · IMPACT & BRANDS

The Pivot That Changed Indigenous Business



THE ACQUISITION

Buying Queensland's Oldest Coffee Brand

In 2022, SupplyAus Holdings made history —acquiring Aromas Coffee Roasters, Queensland's most iconic coffee brand with 47 years of heritage and 300+ wholesale customers, in a deal backed by the largest loan ever approved to an Indigenous business by Westpac.

It was the first time an Aboriginal business had purchased a non-Indigenous legacy brand in Australian history.

"Purchasing a legacy brand like Aromas demonstrates to Indigenous children and youth that even the largest brands are within reach," Adam said.

The acquisition gave SupplyAus a premium wholesale platform alongside DHUWA's national retail presence — a pivot from B2B supply solutions to a diversified consumer and procurement empire built to last.

COMMUNITY & LEGITIMACY

Fighting for a Seat — & Expanding the Table

Adam Williams is unflinchingabout operatingat scale. "Every day, we have to fight for our legitimacy and our seat at the table," he has said — and it is this clarity that drives everything SupplyAus does.

Through Jingeri Office National, SupplyAus provides school supply packs to around 1,500 Indigenous children each year. SupplyAus Medical runs community health initiatives. DHUWA Coffee profits fund Indigenous employment programs.

As Chairman of the Murri Chamber of Commerce — built by frustrated Queensland Aboriginal business people tired of going interstate for support — Adam is constructing the infrastructure the next generation of Indigenous entrepreneurs will inherit.

THE SUPPLYAUS HOLDINGS BRAND FAMILY

DHUWA Coffee
"Feel alive" inBidjara language.
Premium Indigenous coffee in 900+ Woolworths stores nationally

SupplyAusMedical
Hand sanitiser, masks, gloves and medical consumables; delivered 120 tonnes in 4 days for Woolworths

Aromas Coffee
Queensland'soldest coffee brand, 47 years of heritage, 300+ wholesale customers across the state

Murri Chamber
Queensland's peakIndigenous business body, chaired by Adam — built for mob, by mob

Bunji Workwear
High-quality PPE, workwear and uniforms for construction, mining and healthcare industries

Epica Café
Brisbane's Aboriginal food experience — bringing DHUWA and Aromas to a flagship café setting

Jingeri Office
Complete office supply solutions,
supporting Indigenous school pack programs and employment

Global Ambition
DHUWA showcased atIFE London 2025; Aromas earmarked for national and international expansion







Congratulations Adam Williams and the entire SupplyAus Holdings family — the pivot that began with $800 is now rewriting what's possible for Indigenous enterprise in Australia.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS ADAM WILLIAMS · SUPPLYAUS HOLDINGS · 2024

FIND BUNJI ENTERPRISES

bunjienterprises.com.au
dhuwacoffee.com.au
Meanjin (Brisbane), Queensland



Leah Purcell

AM

GOA-GUNGGARI-WAKKAWAKKA MURRI

ACTRESS · DIRECTOR·WRITER · PRODUCER
MURGON, QUEENSLAND

Indigenous stories written by Indigenous people engage "because they come from a place of truth not a political agenda, but personal experience.

• ***LEAH PURCELL AM***

FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

THE STORY

Actor, Author, Director — A Force Redefining Australian Storytelling

Leah Purcell AM is one of the most extraordinary creative forces Australia has produced — a proud Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman from Murgon, Queensland, whose work as an actor, Australian stories can look and feel like. writer, director, and producer has reshaped what Australian stories can look and feel like.

Born in 1970, the youngest of seven children, Leah's early life was shaped by hardship — caring for her ailing mother, the loss of her mum in her late teens, and a difficult adolescence in Murgon. It was community theatre in Brisbane that gave her a path forward, and she never looked back. By the 1990s she was on stage at the Sydney Opera House, by 1999 at the Edinburgh Festival, and by 2000 performing at London's Barbican Theatre.

Her co-written play Box the Pony became a landmark of Australian Indigenous theatre. Her documentary Black Chicks Talking won an Inside Film award. She appeared in celebrated Australian films — Lantana, Somersault, The Proposition, Jindabyne — earning her a reputation as one of the country's finest screen performers.

Then came Wentworth, where her portrayal of Rita Connors across three seasons brought her to a massive national audience, earning Logie nominations and cementing her place as a household name. But it was.

3	11+	AM
FORMS OF ONE MASTERWORK	***WON***	***MEMBER OF ORDER OF AUSTRALIA***

LEAH PURCELL AM · ACTOR OF THE YEAR FEMALE 2024

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ACTOR OF THE YEAR — FEMALE 2024

Honouring a lifetime of extraordinary performance, courageous storytelling, and unparalleled contribution to Indigenous Australian arts

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS





LEAH PURCELL AM ·

Playwright, Novelist, Director — The Legend of Molly Johnson

THE DROVER'S WIFE & BEYOND



THE DROVER'S WIFE

One Story. Three Forms. Eleven Awards.

In 2016, Leah wrote and starred in a stage adaptation of Henry Lawson's 1892 short story — reimagined through an Indigenous feminist lens, giving the nameless protagonist her name: Molly Johnson.

The play premiered at Belvoir and swept the Sydney Theatre Awards and the 2017 Helpmanns, winning Best New Australian Work, Best Play, Best Director, and Best Actress.

In 2019, Penguin published her bestselling novel. Then in 2021 her feature directorial debut premiered at SXSW and screened at Cannes Directors' Fortnight — written, directed, produced, and starring Leah.

She became the first individual nominated across Best Direction, Best Screenplay, and Best Lead Actress at the AACTAs simultaneously. The film won the 2022 AACTA Award for Best Lead Actress in Film, the Asia Pacific Screen Awards Jury Grand Prize, and the Australian Directors' Guild Award for Best Direction in a Feature Film.

LEGACY & ADVOCACY

Writing Roles Into Existence

Leah began writing her own roles because others didn't know how to cast a fair-skinned Aboriginal woman — and because only an Indigenous writer can tell the truth of an Indigenous story. "I've seen my mother cry about issues, I've seen my grandmother go through pain — it comes from a place of truth."

Her production company Oombarra Productions, co-founded with partner Bain Stewart, has financed and produced First Nations stories for stage and screen. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the performing arts, to First Nations youth, and to women.

She has since starred in The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart alongside Sigourney Weaver, and Foxtel/Binge drama High Country — earning a 2025 AACTA nomination — continuing to command screen and stage with the fierce authenticity that has defined 30 years of work.

SELECTED WORKS & ACCOLADES

Box the Pony
Co-written stage play · Edinburgh Festival 1999 · Barbican London 2000 · NIDA audition monologue

Lantana · Jindabyne
Criticallyacclaimed Australianfilms · Film Critics Circle of Australia nomination

Wentworth
Rita Connors · Foxtel Series 6–8 · Logie nomination Most Outstanding Actress 2019

The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart
AmazonPrime · starring opposite Sigourney Weaver · 2024 Logie nomination

The Drover's Wife
Play2016 · Novel 2019 · Film 2021 · AACTA Best Lead Actress · Asia Pacific Screen Awards Grand Prize

High Country
Foxtel/Binge drama series 2024 · 2025 AACTA nomination Best Lead Actress in a Drama

Redfern Now
2013 AACTA Award— Best Lead Actress in a Television Drama

Oombarra Productions
Production company championing First Nations stories for stage and screen

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ACTOR OF THE YEAR — FEMALE · 2024

FILM OF THE YEAR: THE DROVER'S WIFE THE LEGEND OF MOLLY JOHNSON

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS LEAH PURCELL AM · FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

OOMBARRA PRODUCTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS LEAH PURCELL AM — FOR THREE DECADES OF FEARLESS TRUTH-TELLING ON STAGE, PAGE, AND SCREEN, AND FOR MAKING SPACE FOR EVERY INDIGENOUS STORY THAT FOLLOWS.

Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri
Member of the Order of Australia
(AM) Helpmann · AACTA · Asia Pacific Screen Awards



FIRST NATIONS FASHION · AWARD 2024

Kristie Peters

YARRUDHAMARR A CREATIONS
BLAKLABEL DREAMING·NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY, ACT

> Fashion and textiles help keep culture strong — they hold so much meaning. For me, they are so important to keep the stories alive.

— KRISTIE PETERS

Yarrudhamarra Creations



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

From Dream to Runway — A Promise Kept in Colour and Culture

Kristie Pete rsis a proud Wiradjuri womanfrom central-west NSW, an artist, fashion designer, and community builder whose creative journey is rooted in love, loss, and an unbreakable promise to never waste her talent.

Growing up as one of 15 siblings, Kristie and her twin brother BJ were the only Indigenous kids at their school — finding belonging through art and, later, fashion. As teenagers, the inseparable pair enrolled together in Fashion and Aboriginal Art at Canberra Institute of Technology's Yurauna Centre. They loved it so much they did the course twice. When life and family commitments intervened, fashion was set aside — but never forgotten.

BJ passed away several years ago. Kristie, who has since raised his three sons alongside her own six boys — a family of ten — channelled her grief into purpose. She had made a promise to her stepfather too, before he passed: she would not waste her talent. Yarrudhamarra Creations was born from that promise. In Wiradjuri language, Yarrudhamarra means "dream".

Her art — bold, contemporary, and deeply personal — became a medium for healing intergenerational trauma. Murals went up across Canberra. A hand-painted dress was selected for a special runway - and that moment changed her path.

CREATIVE

2021	BLD	10
ACT NAIDOC ARTIST OF THE YEAR	DREAM	BOYS · FAMILY BUILT ON LOVE

★ ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · CREATIVE AWARD 2024
Honouring extraordinary creative vision, cultural storytelling through fashion, and a trailblazing commitment to First Nations design





KRISTIE PETERS ·FASHION CREATIVE AWARD 2024

Launching a Label, Leading a Movement

BLAKLABEL DREAMING

A Brand Born from Grief and Guided by Purpose

In October 2023, Kristie launched Blaklabel Dreaming at the inaugural Canberra Indigenous Fashion Show, held at Canberra Centre — the city's luxury retail precinct that had championed her from the beginning, commissioning murals and sponsoring her attendance at the National Indigenous Fashion Awards (NIFA) in Darwin.

The launch runway was a community affair — her husband Tim Mutton, their children, elders, and first-time models all came together to bring the collection to life. BLD stands for Believe in yourself, Live your dream, and Dream big — the three values her twin brother BJ embodied, now woven into every stitch. Her Yarrudhamarra collection, shown at Country to Couture 2024, drew directly on the Wiradjuri word for "dream" — representing love for family, community resilience, and the strength found in navigating life's challenges while staying true to oneself.

PATHWAYS & COMMUNITY

Opening Doors for the Next Generation



Ms Peters with her painted work on Ngali Australia's design. (Images: supplied)

MILESTONES & CREATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Yarrudhamarra Creations
Art business spanning original paintings, prints, clothing and homewares — all rooted in Wiradjuri storytelling

Blaklabel Dreaming
Fashion label launched October 2023 at Canberra's inaugural Indigenous Fashion Show — Believe, Live, Dream

Melbourne Fashion Week
2022 — hand-painted Ngali dress selected as the opening garment for a special Indigenous runway

NAIDOC Artist of the Year
2021 ACT NAIDOC Artist of the Year — recognising her impact across Ngunnawal Country

Country to Couture 2024
Yarrudhamarra collection shown at NIFA's Country to Couture runway — Darwin, August 2024

Canberra Centre Murals
Permanentcustom muralsinstalled at Canberra's premier shopping centre celebrating First Nations culture

Bared Footwear · Ngali
Stencilledhand art on Chelsea boots; hand-painted dress for Ngali's NAIDOC Week fundraising runway

NIFA · IFP · DAAFF
Active partner across national Indigenous fashion bodies, representing the ACT on a national stage

Kristie's ambition has always extended beyond her own label. From the outset, she has used her platform to create pathways for other First Nations people in Canberra to enter the fashion industry — an industry where Indigenous voices from the ACT had been largely absent at a national level. Working with the University of Canberra, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), and Indigenous Fashion Projects (IFP), she helped coordinate the first-ever Canberra entry for the National Indigenous Fashion Awards. She collaborated with Ngali Australia to hand-paint a dress selected for Melbourne Fashion Week 2022, and contributed painted designs to Bared Footwear's NAIDOC Week fundraising auction. “Believe in yourself and believe in your dreams," she tells aspiring designers. "Surround yourself with positive people. Now I'm finally creating my dreams into reality — and this will hopefully inspire other people to live their dreams as well."

Congratulations Kristie Peters — for turning a twin brother's dream into a living, breathing fashion movement, and for opening the door so that every First Nations designer in Canberra can walk through it.

FIND KRISTIE PETERS

Yarrudhamarra Creations

Blaklabel Dreaming

Ngunnawal Country · Canberra, ACT

All First Nations Awards



FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

THE STORY

More Than 25 Years Building Strong Health for Country

Julie Tongs OAM

is one of Australia's most respected advocates for Indigenous health — a Wiradjuri woman whose more than 30 years of tireless service have transformed healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and beyond.

Her journey began at Canberra Hospital, where she initiated a liaison service to bridge the gap between Indigenous patients and hospital staff — work that revealed the urgent need for a culturally safe alternative.

In 1998 she became CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, a role she has held ever since, steering the organisation from a grassroots service into one of the most celebrated Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in the nation.

Winnunga — meaning "Strong Health" in Wiradjuri language — was founded in 1988 by local Aboriginal people, with Olive Brown as a trailblazing founding figure.

Under Julie's leadership it has grown to serve around 8,000 clients from 324 suburbs, delivering more than 92,000 occasions of care in a single financial year.

The service runs health clinics, allied health programs, social support, youth diversion, and a dedicated health clinic inside Canberra's Alexander Maconochie Centre prison.

WIRADJUR I WOMAN
CEO · WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH ABORIGINAL HEALTH&COMMUNITY SERVICES · ACT

“ People come to us because they feel safe here and they are not judged. That is what Winnunga has always been a place of safety and strength. ”

-JULIE TONGS OAM

NIMMITYJAH

35+	8,000	92k+
YEARS OF SERVICE TO COUNTRY	ANNUALLY	CARE PER YEAR

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2024 · EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH — HEALTHY & SMOKE FREE LIFESTYLES

★ Recognising extraordinary dedication to Aboriginal health promotion, holistic wellbeing, and smoke-free community leadership

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH · EXCELLENCE HEALTHY & SMOKE FREE LIVING

Julie Tongs OAM

WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH
ABORIGINAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

JULIE TONGS OAM · WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH · 2024

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Strong Health, Smoke-Free Lives — A Community Transformed

HEALTH PROMOTION

Holistic Care at the Heart of Every Program

Winnunga's approach to health has never been narrowly clinical. Under Julie's leadership the service has championed a whole-of-life model that addresses the social, emotional, and cultural determinants of health alongside medical care — recognising that wellbeing cannot be separated from culture, family, and Country.

Smoke-free living is a cornerstone of Winnunga's health promotion work. The service marks World No Tobacco Day each year with targeted community activities and education, while its Social Health Team runs ongoing campaigns promoting healthy lifestyles across all ages.

Holistic health days, the annual NAIDOC event, the Sorry Day Bridge Walk, and the Children's Christmas Party all integrate health messaging with cultural celebration.

Julie has been a national leader in quality improvement within the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector — driving best-practice standards in governance, clinical care, and preventive health that have become benchmarks for services across Australia.

ADVOCACY & RECOGNITION

A Voice That Has Never Stopped Fighting

Julie Tongs is more than a health administrator — sheis oneof the ACT's most powerful and unflinching advocates for Indigenous rights. She has fought publicly against co-payments that would widen health inequality, against underfunding of community controlled services, and for a long-overdue inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody at Canberra's Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Her accolades reflect the breadth of her impact: the ACT Governor General's Centenary Medal, the ACT Indigenous Person of the Year, the ACT Local Hero Award within the 2012 Australian of the Year Awards, and the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) — each a testament to a career built not on ambition, but on love for community.

She also established life-skills programs extending well beyond health — a youth diversion program, a boxing club, and a home maintenance program — understanding that true health requires safety, purpose, and belonging for the whole person.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH — SMOKE FREE LIFESTYLES · 2024

WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH AHCS

WINNUNGA PROGRAMS & SERVICES — STRONG HEALTH ACROSS EVERY DOMAIN

GP & Allied Health
GPs, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, podiatrists, physiotherapists, dieticians and optometry on site

Smoke-Free Programs
World No Tobacco Day events, cessation support and ongoing healthy lifestyle promotion across the community

Social Health Team
Cultural pride campaigns, holistic health days, NAIDOC events and community wellbeing activities year-round

Prison Health Clinic
Dedicated clinic inside the Alexander Maconochie Centre — care and advocacy for incarcerated First Nations people

Youth Diversion
Keeping young people out of the justice system through support, connection, and early intervention programs

Boxing Club
Life skills,discipline, and healthy lifestyle pathways for Aboriginal youth through sport and community

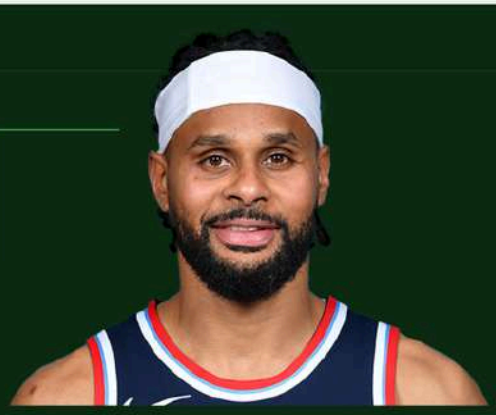
Drug & Alcohol Support
Treatment and counselling addressing alcohol and drug dependency as a pathway to avoiding incarceration

NACCHO Leadership
Long-standing member and national quality improvement leader — setting the standard for ACCH services Australia-wide

CONGRATULATIONS JULIE TONGS OAM AND ALL AT WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH — FOR MORE THAN 35 YEARS OF STRONG HEALTH, FOR A COMMUNITY THAT COMES FIRST, AND FOR A SMOKE-FREE FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR.



63 Boolimba Crescent,
Narrabundah
ACT
(02) 6284 6222
winnunga.org.au



FIRST NATIONS SPORT · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2024

Patty Mills AM

KOKATH A·NAGHIRALGAL · DUAUREB-MERIAM MAN
NBACHAMPION·OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDALLIST
5 OLYMPICS · 1,000+ NBA GAMES · CANBERRA

Keep your culture alive and celebrate Indigenous excellence. Never be ashamed of who you are - really own your identity and proud of it.

— PATTY MILLS AM

From The Shadows to the NBA — A Legend Forged in Culture and Court

Patty Mills AM is the most important basketball player Australia has ever produced — not measured in scoring averages, but in what he represents: a proud Kokatha, Naghiralgal and Duaureb-Meriam man who carried his culture, his community, and his country to the highest stages in world sport.

Born in Canberra in 1988 to a Torres Strait Islander father from Muralag and a Kokatha Aboriginal mother, Patty grew up deeply connected to his heritage. He first picked up a basketball at age four at The Shadows — an Indigenous junior club his parents established. His uncle, Danny Morseu, was a two-time Olympian. From the beginning, this was a family for whom sport and culture were inseparable.

After attending Marist College and the Australian Institute of Sport — forgoing a promising AFL career to focus on basketball — Patty earned a scholarship to Saint Mary's College in California, where he broke freshman records and announced himself to the world. The Portland Trail Blazers drafted him 55th overall in 2009. In 2012, he signed with the San Antonio Spurs under legendary coach Gregg Popovich. Two years later, he was an NBA Champion.

Over 16 NBA seasons — spanning Portland, San Antonio, Brooklyn, Atlanta, Miami, the Clippers and Utah Jazz — Patty became the first.

1,000	+5	42
FIRST AUSTRALIAN	OLYMPIC GAMES	OLYMPIC RECORD POINTS · TOKYO



Mills is coming off a productive Olympics (Photo by Christina Pahnke - sampics/Getty Images)

Mills last played for the Miami Heat (Photo by Megan Briggs/Getty Images)



1 of 4 | Australia's Patty Mills, left, and other teammembers celebrate after scoring during a men's quarterfinal game against Serbia at Bercy Arena at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024, in Paris, France. (AP Photo/Michael Conroy)

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT 2024

Honouring an extraordinary career of sporting excellence, cultural pride, and transformative advocacy for Indigenous Australian communities

PATTY MILLS AM · OLYMPICS, COMMUNITY & LEGACY

Flag Bearer, Record Breaker — A Legacy Beyond the Court

OLYMPIC LEGACY

42 Points, Bronze Glory & a Historic Flag

Patty Mills represented Australia at five Olympics —2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2024 — becoming one of the most decorated Australian Olympic basketball players of all time and the 5th highest scorer in Olympic basketball history with 567 career points.

At the Tokyo 2020 Games he made history twice. First, as the first Indigenous Australian to carry the Australian flag at an Olympic opening ceremony — alongside swimmer Cate Campbell — a moment that moved a nation. Then, in the bronze medal game against Slovenia, he scored an Olympic record 42 points in a single medal-round game, delivering the Boomers their first-ever Olympic medal.

Often called "FIBA Patty" for the way he elevates his game on the international stage, Mills embodied everything Australia believes about itself when the pressure is highest — composed, creative, and absolutely relentless.

COMMUNITY & ADVOCACY

Building the Pathway for the Next Generation

Off the court, Patty's impactis equally profound. In 2021 he founded Indigenous Basketball Australia (IBA) — delivering programs to First Nations youth across the country, creating pathways from community courts to American colleges to the NBA, and ensuring young Indigenous kids see their culture and their dreams as one and the same thing.

He has travelled over 13,000 kilometres to support bushfire-affected communities on the New South Wales south coast, used his platform to advocate for Indigenous rights and environmental justice, and founded the Team Mills Foundation to give back to communities in need. Each action is an extension of the same belief: that sport, culture, and extraordinary life.

In 2022 Patty was named Australian of the Year — the nation's highest civic honour. In 2025 he was appointed General Manager of the University of Hawai'i men's basketball program, extending his role as mentor, leader, and bridge-builder into the next chapter of his journey.

CAREER MILESTONES & HONOURS

NBA Champion
2014 NBA Championship with the San Antonio Spurs — clutch shooting in the Finals against Miami

Olympic Bronze
Tokyo 2020 — 42 points in the bronze medal game, an Olympic record for a medal-round game

Olympic Flag Bearer
First Indigenous Australian to carry the flag at an Olympic opening ceremony — Tokyo 2021

1,000 NBA Games
First Australian in NBA history to reach 1,000 career games — across 16 seasons and 7 franchises

Australian of the Year
2022 Australian of the Year— recognised for sporting excellence and Indigenous advocacy

Indigenous Basketball Australia
Founded 2021— creating pathways from community to college to the NBA for First Nations youth

Team Mills Foundation
Community investment and giving — supporting those who need it most across Australia

Member of Order of Australia
AM—for services to basketball,to Indigenous communities, and to Australian sporting culture

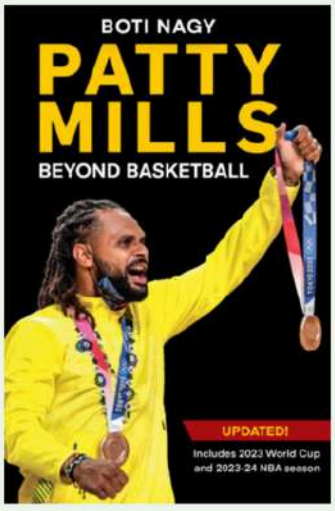
ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT · 2024

PATTY MILLS AM

Kokatha · Naghiralgal · Duaureb-Meriam Indigenous Basketball Australia Team Mills Foundation

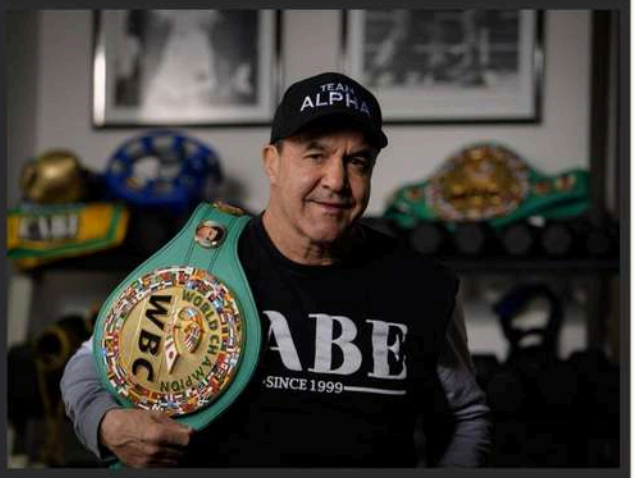






CONGRATULATIONS PATTY MILLS AM — FOR CARRYING THE FLAG, SCORING THE RECORD, WINNING THE CHAMPIONSHIP, AND SHOWING EVERY FIRST NATIONS CHILD THAT THEIR CULTURE IS THEIR GREATEST STRENGTH.

All First Nations Awards



GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD · ALL FIRST NATIONS 2024

Jeff Fenech

THE MARRICKVILLE MAULER

4 X WORLD BOXING CHAMPION
INTERNATIONALBOXINGHALLOF FAME

> Boxing doesn't just build champions in the ring — it builds champions in life. That's what the sport gave me, and that I what I want to give back.
>
> • JEFF FENECH

THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

From Marrickville to the World — Australia's Greatest Boxing Champion

Jeff Fenech is widely regarded as the greatest boxer Australia has ever produced — a four-time world champion whose explosive power, relentless courage, and community-first heart made him a national icon and an inspirationtogenerations of young Australians, including countless First Nations fighters who followed the trail he blazed.

Born in 1964 in the working-class Sydney suburb of Marrickville — a neighbourhood he carried on his back and in his nickname — Jeff was heading toward trouble as a teenager. It was the Newtown Police Citizens Youth Club and its legendary trainer Johnny Lewis who redirected his aggression into purpose. From that first session in a boxing gym, Jeff never lost a fight with Lewis in his corner.

His amateur career was dazzling: twice Oceania flyweight champion, medals at the 1983 World Championships and Commonwealth Games, and captain of the Australian boxing team at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Robbed by a controversially overturned decision in the quarterfinals, Jeff returned to Australia and turned professional — and he was just getting started.

What followed was one of the most stunning championship runs in boxing history. In only his seventh professional fight — just six months after turning pro — he defeated Satoshi Shingaki to win the IBF Bantamweight world title. Then the WBC Super Bantamweight. Then the WBC Featherweight. Three divisions, three world titles, 24 consecutive victories, and a 1991 bout later retroactively awarded as a fourth world title.

Australia had never seen anything like it.

4	24	2002
WORLD TITLES 4 DIVISIONS	CONSECUTIVE VICTORIES	HALL OF FAME

JEFF FENECH · GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD 2024

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD 2024

Honouring a lifetime of sporting greatness, community mentorship, and an enduring legacy that has inspired First Nations boxers and youth across Australia





Champion in the Ring, Champion in the Community

THE HALL OF FAME CAREER

A Champion Who Rose from the Streets

Jeff Fenech's professional record stands as one of the most remarkable in Australian boxing history: 29 wins, 3 losses, and a career that spanned three decades and four weight divisions. His 1985 bantamweight title win was his seventh professional bout — making him the third-fastest boxer in history to win a world championship. His aggressive, high-volume style — all pressure, no pause — earned him the name the Marrickville Mauler and the admiration of boxing fans worldwide.

His trilogy with Ghanaian legend Azumah Nelson defined his era: a controversial 1991 draw that many scored for Fenech, a 1992 rematch defeat that Ring Magazine named Upset of the Year, and a 2008 redemption victory at age 43 that closed a chapter and opened a new one. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2002, the Australian National Boxing Hall of Fame in 2003, and elevated to Legend status in 2013. He went on to train fighters at the highest level — including working with Mike Tyson — proving that his understanding of the sport was as exceptional as his performance in it.

COMMUNITY & MENTORSHIP

Giving Back Through the Sport That Saved Him

Boxing gave Jeff Fenech a path outofa tough upbringing, and he has never forgotten that debt. In his post-ringyears he has dedicated himself to ensuring the next generation — particularly young Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds, including First Nations youth — have access to the same lifeline he was given at the Newtown Police Boys Club.

Through youth development programs, advisory roles with the Australian Sports Commission, and involvement in amateur boxing pathways, Jeff has remained a fixture in the community gym — a mentor, a storyteller, and living proof that sport can redirect a life.

In 2025 he launched the **Giving Back Hope** project — partnering with community leaders to expand youth boxing programs across Sydney gyms, keeping young people away from drugs and crime. The story that began at the Newtown PCYC continues, one young fighter at a time.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD · 2024

CAREER HONOURS & LEGACY MILESTONES

IBF Bantamweight
World Champion 1985— 7th professional fight; third-fastest world champion in boxing history

WBC Super Bantam
World Champion 1987 —added a second world title in a different weight division

WBC Featherweight
World Champion 1988 —third title in three divisions; 24 consecutive professional victories

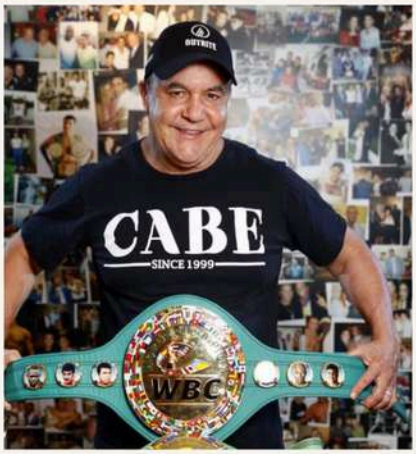
4th World Title
1991bouts. Azumah Nelson retroactively awarded — making Jeff a four-division world champion

Int'l Boxing Hall of Fame
Inducted2002— Canastota, New York; considered one of the finest native-born Australian boxers ever

Legend Status
Australian National Boxing Hall of Fame — Legend, 2013; only the 4th fighter elevated to this status

Trainer & Mentor
Trained Mike Tyson, Vic Darchinyan, Sakio Bika; advisor to the Australian Sports Commission

Giving Back Hope
2025 community boxing initiative — expanding youth programs across Sydney for at-risk young Australians





JEFF FENECH

Marrickville, Sydney, NSW International Boxing Hall of Fame Australian National Boxing Hall of Fame — Legend

CONGRATULATIONS JEFF FENECH — FOR FOUR WORLD TITLES, A HALL OF FAME CAREER, AND DECADES OF GIVING BACK TO THE YOUNG AUSTRALIANS WHO NEED WHAT BOXING GAVE YOU MOST: A REASON TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.



BUSINESS AWARD 2024

Patrice Soward

We are dedicated to empowering everyday people to make their "dreams become their reality — every day we are doing our part to give back.

PATRICE SOWARD - CEO SOWARD MANAGEMENT



THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

Events, Talent & Community — Built on Culture, Driven by Purpose

Patrice Soward is a strong, proud Wiradjuri woman born and raised on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra, ACT — and the driving force behin d Soward Management, one of the ACT's most dynamic Aboriginal-owned event and talent management businesses.

With close to two decades of experience in the event coordination and talent management industry, Patrice has built Soward Management from the ground up into a Supply Nation certified, community-first enterprise that serves some of the most prominent clients and organisations in the capital. Her approach is rooted in innovation, cultural integrity, and a genuine commitment to opening doors for First Nations artists, athletes, and communities.

Soward Management's reach spans the full event and talent spectrum: from meticulously coordinated corporate gatherings and special celebrations to the annual NAIDOC Gala — one of Canberra's most anticipated events celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture — through to bespoke artist development programs, professional sports management, and an art leasing service that places work by emerging Indigenous visual artists into commercial and office spaces across the ACT.

FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS EVENTS
20+	6+	∞
YEARS IN EVENTS & TALENT	MAJOR CLIENT PARTNERS	DOORS OPENED FOR COMMUNITY

WIRADJURIWOMAN·CANBERRA, ACT
CEO · SOWARD MANAGEMENT
SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · EVENTS BUSINESS AWARD 2024

Recognising excellence in Aboriginal-owned events enterprise, community leadership, and the creation of pathways for First Nations events, business, artists and athletes.

SOWARD MANAGEMENT

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

PATRICE SOWARD · SOWARD MANAGEMENT · EVENTS BUSINESS AWARD 2024

PATRICE SOWARD · COMMUNITY, ARTISTS & PATHWAYS

Creating Pathways, Celebrating Culture, Empowering People

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

The NAIDOC Gala & First Nations Artist Advocacy

At the heart of Soward Management's identity is an unwavering commitment to community. The annual NAIDOC Gala is the company's flag ship community event — a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture that brings Canberra's First Nations community, pride, governemt and inustry together in a shared space of perfomance and purpose.

Patrice's Art Leasing program for commercial and office spaces is a quiet but powerful act of advocacy: curating and promoting the work of emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists, placing their stories directly into the everyday environments of businesses and government agencies across the ACT and beyond.

In partnership with MusicACT, Patrice and her daughter Tahalianna delivered a free workshop in 2025 on connecting with First Nations artists — equipping venue operators, promoters, and music industry and practical professionals with the cultural protocols, knowledge, frameworks to engage with Indigenous artists safely, properly, and with genuine respect.

TALENT & PATHWAYS

Raising the Next Generation of First Nations Stars

Patrice has always understood that great talent management is personal. Her artist programs are built around mentorship, skill development, confidence building, and genuine collaboration — creatingthe environment where First Nations artists and athletes can grow without having to navigate the industry alone.

Her number one client is her own daughter Tahalianna Soward-Mahanga — a performer who has featured in numerous productions and dance troupes, and who auditioned for and appeared on The Voice Australia in 2022. Tahalianna's journey is itself a testament to what happens when a young First Nations artist has world-class management, cultural backing, and a mother who believes completely in her potential.

Soward Management's sports programs extend this same ethos to athletes — tailored development programs, mentorship from professionals, and a focus on personal growth alongside performance. Patrice's vision is simple and ambitious: empower everyday people to make their dreams become reality, and always bring the community together.

SOWARD MANAGEMENT — SERVICES & SPECIALTIES

Event Management
Design, coordination, logistics, vendor management, on-site delivery and tech support for all event types

NAIDOC Gala
Annual flagship gala celebrating First Nations culture and excellence in the ACT — a signature Canberra event

Artist Programs
Mentorship, workshops, skill development and network building for First Nations creative and performing artists

Talent Management
Full representation for arts and sports — handling admin, strategy, and client service so talent can focus on their craft

Industry Workshops
Cultural protocols and First Nations engagement training for music, events, and entertainment industry professionals

Sports Programs
Custom athletic development programs with professional mentors focused on personal growth and performance

Art Leasing
Curating and promoting emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists in commercial spaces

Sponsorships
Managing individual and major sponsorships to empower people, give back to community, and create meaningful change

SOWARD MANAGEMENT ·ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · EVENTS BUSINESS AWARD · 2024



sowardmanagement.com
Supply Nation Certified
Ngunnawal Country · Canberra, ACT

CONGRATULATIONS PATRICE SOWARD — FOR BUILDING A BUSINESS THAT OPENS EVERY DOOR IT WALKS THROUGH, FOR LIFTING FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS AND ATHLETES, AND FOR MAKING CANBERRA'S CULTURAL LIFE RICHER FOR EVERYONE.



WIRADJURI & YORTA YORTA WOMAN

2024 IMP GRADUATE · TCS NYC MARATHON CANBERRA, ACT

EMERGING STAR OF THE YEAR · FIRST NATIONS 2024

Beth Cooper

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS ·EMERGING STAR OF THE YEAR 2024

Recognising a young Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman whose courage, determination, and leadership inspire communities across Australia.

THE STORY

42.2 Kilometres — A Journey of Healing, Leadership and Community

Beth Cooper is a proud Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman from Canberra, ACT, whose journey to the start line of the 2024 TCS New York City Marathon is a story not just about running — but about resilience, purpose, and the transformative power of choosing to do hard things.

Beth first applied for the Indigenous Marathon Project (IMP) in 2022, inspired after meeting IMP Graduate and now Head Coach Hope Davison. Hearing Hope's journey, Beth recognised that the values of the Indigenous Marathon Foundation and her own were deeply aligned. She was shortlisted but not selected.

Rather than walk away, she used the setback as fuel — continuing her journey of self-discovery and healing until she was ready to try again.

In 2024, Beth was selected as one of just 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people chosen from hundreds of applicants across Australia to join the IMP squad — part of the program's 15th anniversary year.

She represented Canberra alongside fellow ACT runner Jye Murray, training across five intensive national camps, completing a 30km test event in Alice Springs, and earning nationally recognised qualifications in leadership, health promotion, and first aid.

NYC MARATHON	ANNIVERSARY YEAR	SELECTED FROM HUNDREDS
42.2	2024	12



BETH COOPER · IMP 2024 · LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Finish Line Is Just the Start Line

HEALTH, PURPOSE & ADVOCACY

Running for Community — and for Healing

Beth's decision to pursue the IMP was never just about running. As a woman who has navigated deep personal challenges — including her mental health journey — she understood instinctively what the program offered: structure, purpose, community, and the lived experience of proving to yourself that you are capable of far more than you imagined.

In her professional life, Beth works for the Australian Government's Department of Health in the First Nations Health Division — a role in which she advocates for, empowers, and supports First Nations families every day. The parallel between her work and her IMP journey is clear: in both, she is running toward a better, healthier future for her people.

The IMP program is recognised for addressing eight of the 17 Closing the Gap targets. For Beth, those statistics are personal — every step she ran in New York was run on behalf of a community that deserves longer, healthier, prouder lives.

" It was challenging, but I used this as motivation to continue on with my journey of self-discovery and healing."

— BETH COOPER, IMP GRADUATE 2024

THE IMP PROGRAM & LEGACY

Six Months That Change a Life — and a Community

The Indigenous Marathon Project selects 12 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people each year — aged 18 to 30 — to undertake a six-month program of intensive training, national camps, and formal education, culminating in the TCS New York City Marathon. Most begin with little or no running experience.

Alongside the physical challenge, participants earn nationally recognised qualifications: leadership, health promotion, coaching, public speaking, and first aid. The IMP is explicit about its motto — the finish line is just the start line. More than 85 per cent of graduates remain engaged with the IMF after completing the program, returning to their communities as leaders, role models, and changemakers.

Beth joins 167 graduates who have completed an international marathon since the program launched in 2010, each carrying their journey home to inspire the next generation of First Nations people to back themselves, choose health, and lead from the front.

BETH COOPER & THE IMP — PROGRAM MILESTONES

First Application
Applied in 2022 after meeting IMP Head Coach Hope Davison — shortlisted, not selected; used it as motivation

2024 IMP Squad
Selected from hundreds of applicants — one of 12 across Australia for IMP's 15th anniversary year

Alice Springs 30km
Completed the gruelling 30km test run in Alice Springs — qualifying for New York City

NYC Marathon 2024
Crossed the finish line of the TCS New York City Marathon — 42.195km through the boroughs of New York

Leadership Quals
Earned nationally recognised qualifications in leadership, health promotion, coaching, and first aid

Dept of Health
Works for the Australian Government in the First Nations Health Division — advocating for First Nations families

C losing the Gap
Gap targets — Beth's run directly contributes to that mission

IMP addresses 8of 17 Closing the

Forever a Marathoner
IMP Graduate#156 — part of a growing community of 167+ First Nations marathon finishers

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · EMERGING STAR OF THE YEAR · 2024



BETH COOPER
Wiradjuri & Yorta Yorta Woman
Indigenous Marathon Foundation · IMP Graduate 2024 imf.org.au

CONGRATULATIONS BETH COOPER — FOR EVERY STEP OF THE JOURNEY, FOR TURNING SETBACK INTO STRENGTH, AND FOR CARRYING YOUR COMMUNITY WITH YOU ALL THE WAY TO NEW YORK.



YOUNG LEADER OF THE YEAR
ALL FIRST NATIONS 2024

Savannah Yesil

BUNDJALUNG WOMAN· SYDNEY,NSW
CO-FOUNDER & ARTIST ·DOLLIESTRIBE & CO + SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED

"Aboriginality is not defined by our eyes. It lives deep within our hearts and souls of generations that came before us.

- SAVANNAH YESIL CO-FOUNDER, DOLLIES TRIBE



SAVANNAH YESIL DOLLIES TRIBE YOUNG LEADER OF THE YEAR 2024

THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2024

Started at 13 — The Young Artist Making Every Child Feel Seen

Savannah Yesil is a proud Bundjalung woman, a hand-painting artist, and one of the most inspiring young entrepreneurs in Australia — the creative force behind Dollies Tribe & Co, a Supply Nation certified Indigenous business she co-founded with her mother Maryanne at just 13 years old.

The story of Dollies Tribe begins with a journey. When Savannah and Maryanne visited Baryugil — the birthplace of Savannah's grandmother Granny Peggy — a spark was lit. Granny Peggy's nickname for Savannah was "Dollie", and the Bundjalung word for child is "Jarjum". From those two words, and from a deep desire to ensure every First Nations child could see themselves in a toy they held, a business was born.

The motivation was also personal.

When Savannah was born, her Aboriginal great-grandmother gave her a golliwog. Rather than dwell in that history, Savannah chose to make something better — dolls that celebrate the true diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, reflecting that Aboriginality comes in every skin tone, every hair colour, every eye colour. Her own story speaks to this: a fair- skinned, blue-eyed young woman with Bundjalung and Turkish heritage, who is every bit as proud and connected to her Aboriginal identity as any person could be.

∞	2021	13
CHILDREN MADE TO FEEL SEEN	FOUNDED	AGE WHEN BUSINESS BEGAN



YOUNG LEADER OF THE YEAR 2024

RECOGNISING AN EXTRAORDINARY YOUNG BUNDJALUNG WOMAN WHOSE VISION, ARTISTRY, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT ARE CHANGING THE WAY CHILDREN SEE THEMSELVES

SAVANNAH YESIL · DOLLIES TRIBE · REPRESENTATION & IMPACT

Loving, Caring, Beautiful — Every Child Deserves to Feel Seen

REPRESENTATION & IDENTITY

Showing the World What Aboriginality Really Looks Like

One of the most powerful statements Dollies Tribe makes is simple: not all Aboriginal Australians look the same, and that truth deserves to be celebrated. Savannah's own story — a fair-skinned, blue-eyed young woman whose Bundjalung identity is deep, proud, and unshakeable — is woven into every doll she creates.

Each doll is designed to reflect the genuine diversity of First Nations peoples, from remote communities to city streets — different skin tones, hair textures, eye colours, and features — because representation is only meaningful when it shows the full picture.

Savannah doesn't limit her dot painting to traditional colours either, incorporating soft pinks, golds, and contemporary palettes alongside classic designs so the dolls speak to every person's story — Indigenous and non- Indigenous alike.

COMMUNITY & IMPACT

A Mumma-Daughter Business Built on Love and Culture

Dollies Tribe was renamed from "Jarjum Dollies" to better reflect the inclusive spirit at its heart — a Tribe for every child, every family, every identity. The name carries Granny Peggy's love, the Bundjalung language, and a vision that reaches far beyond a single community.

Family daycare educators report that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children love the dolls equally. Indigenous children see themselves reflected and celebrated. Non-Indigenous children see another beautiful child to play with. That is the power of what Savannah has built.

Custom painting is available for families who want a doll designed specifically for their child. Each doll arrives in a beautiful gift box with a certificate and an art stencil — and at the heart of it all is Savannah, a teenager who built something extraordinary in honour of a grandmother who called her "Dollie."

DOLLIES TRIBE — THE COLLECTION & WHAT MAKES EACH ONE SPECIAL

Tillie Dollie
The bestseller — vibrant pink charm, most loved by customers and gifted widely across Australia

Jarjum Dollies
The original range — "jarjum" meaning child in Bundjalung language; the name that started it all

Diverse Skin Tones
Every doll designed with different features reflecting the full diversity of First Nations peoples

Hand-Painted Dot Art
Every doll personally painted by Savannah — intricate Indigenous designs in traditional and contemporary colours

Mini-Me Sets
Matching outfits for doll and child — celebrating culture through play, dress-up, and connection

Custom Dolls
Bespoke dolls designed for individual children — painted to reflect each child's unique features and identity

Gift Packaging
Each doll arrives beautifully boxed with a certificate and an art stencil inviting children to create their own designs

Supply Nation Certified
Verified Indigenous women's small business — every purchase supports First Nations enterprise and cultural pride







ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · YOUNG LEADER OF THE YEAR · 2024

CONGRATULATIONS SAVANNAH YESIL — FOR STARTING AT 13 WITH A PAINTBRUSH AND A PURPOSE, AND FOR MAKING EVERY CHILD WHO HOLDS ONE OF YOUR DOLLS FEEL EXACTLY AS BEAUTIFUL AND SEEN AS THEY TRULY ARE.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
DOLLIES TRIBE & CO

dolliestribe.com.au @dolliestribe Supply Nation Certified · Sydney, NSW



FIRST NATIONS PERFORMANCE · MUSIC 2024

James Williams

WAKA WAKA MAN · MELBOURNE, VIC

SINGER · GUITARIST · SONGWRITER · ACTOR
35+ YEARS IN MUSIC

James' originals have a bit of a Murri flavour — because James is a proud Waka Waka man, and that pride runs through every note he plays.

★ JAMES WILLIAMS, WAKA WAKA MAN · MELBOURNE

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · PERFORMANCE - MUSIC 2024

CELEBRATING A LIFETIME OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE, CULTURAL EXPRESSION THROUGH MUSIC, AND ENDURING COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS PERFORMANCE.

35+	Nat'l	Jazz
PERFORMER	THEATRE TOUR	BEYOND

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

More Than 35 Years on Stage — A Life Lived Through Music and Culture

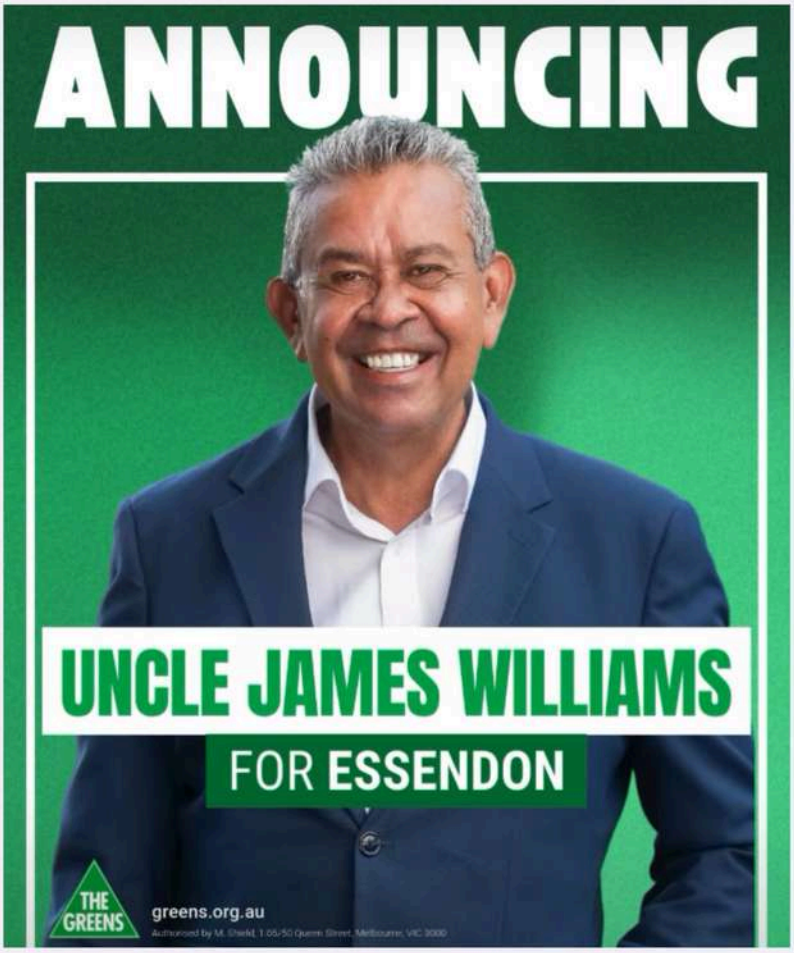
James Williams is a proud Waka Waka man from the south- eastern part of Queensland, a seasoned performer, singer- songwriter, guitarist,and actor whose love of music has been the constant thread running through more than three decades of remarkable artistic life.

James began playing guitar at age 12 in Rockhampton and has never really stopped. Through his apprenticeship as a watchmaker and a move to Brisbane, music was always the parallel track.

At 26, he left his day job behind entirely, becoming a full-time professional musician as lead vocalist and bass player — performing across Queensland and NSW on the same pub circuits as a young Keith Urban from Caboolture.

He also stepped into theatre, spending two years as an actor and writing the full musical score for the play MurriTime — a production that toured nationally from Adelaide to Sydney, Brisbane, and the Northern Territory, bringing an Indigenous story to life with music carrying Waka Waka spirit through every scene.

After years in Brisbane and Sydney, Melbourne became home — and another chapter of reinvention. James built a new performing life through Westside Talent and joined the **JazzCats**, a Melbourne jazz ensemble that recorded a full album of classics. Through every stage and every genre, he has always brought culture into sound.



JAMES WILLIAMS · MELBOURNE · CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC

From Rockhampton to Melbourne - A Waka Waka Voice on Every Stage

MELBOURNE & BEYOND

A Muso Who Brought Country to the City

After years in Brisbane and Sydney — where James balanced an IT career with ongoing work as a solo artist for booking agencies across Sydney, Newcastle, and Wollongong — Melbourne became home. And Melbourne became another chapter of artistic reinvention.

Based in Melbourne's west through Westside Talent, James built a full-band live sound using acoustic guitar, Fender Stratocaster, and expertly programmed MIDI backing — with a high-quality PA and modern multi- function light show. Professional, road-tested, and always delivering.

He also joined the Melbourne JazzCats — a sophisticated ensemble where James played guitar and harmonies alongside a standout lead vocalist, double bass, drums, keys, and saxophone. The group recorded a full album of jazz classics, testament to James's versatility across every genre he touches.

CULTURAL IDENTITY & ORIGINAL MUSIC

Pride in Country, Purpose in Every Song

At the heart of James's music is a clear and proud cultural identity. As a W aka Waka man, his original songwriting carries a distinctly Murri flavour — reflecting who he is, where he comes from, and the stories of his people. Music for James has always been more than entertainment. It is expression, identity, and connection to Country.

His two years writing the musical score for MurriTime proved that cultural grounding translates into powerful, nationally toured artistic work — Indigenous stories carried to stages across Australia on the strength of his original compositions.

James has spoken of returning to the studio to record an album of original material — music with that Waka Waka spirit, drawing on decades of professional performance and deep, unshakeable pride in who he is and where he comes from.

PERFORMANCE CAREER — HIGHLIGHTS & MILESTONES

Rockhampton Beginnings
Started guitar 12yr — performing live from his teens through clubs, hotels, and community venues in central Queensland

Professional Musician
Turned full-time pro at 26 — lead singer and bass player in a Brisbane touring band on the same circuit as Keith Urban

MurriTime Score
Wrote the full musical score for the play MurriTime — toured nationally from Adelaide to Sydney, Brisbane, and NT

Actor & Playwright
Two years in theatre as actor and composer — bringing First Nations stories to Australian stages through music and performance

Jazz & The JazzCats
Guitarist and vocalist with the Melbourne JazzCats — recorded a full album of jazz classics in a full ensemble setting

Solo Performance
Westside Talent artist in Melbourne's west — full-band live sound with acoustic, electric guitar, and MIDI backing

Waka Waka Originals
Original songwriting with a proud Murri flavour — reflecting Country, culture, and the Waka Waka spirit of south-east Queensland

35+ Years On Stage
From school bands and country clubs to jazz ensembles and national theatre — a complete life in Australian music

JAMESWILLIAMS.COM.AU



JAMES WILLIAMS MUSIC

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · PERFORMANCE MUSIC · 2024

JAMES WILLIAMS

Congratulations James Williams — for more than 35 years of putting Waka Waka pride on every stage, in every note, and in every song that carries the spirit of Country.

Waka Waka Man
Melbourne, Victoria
jameswilliams.com.au


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MGM
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First Nations Leadership Biz
Sustainable Food & Water


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EveryMan

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Your generous support makes the All First Nations Awards possible.

Together we celebrate, honour and amplify First Nations excellence across Australia.

Second Annual All First Nations Award Ceremony · 2025

allfirstnations.com.au



List of Recipients 2025

AFN Lifetime Achievement In Leadership Award 2025 – Jenny Ockwell

AFN Golden Alumni Award (Valued Supporter) 2025 - Cal Bruton

AFN Lifetime Achievement In Sport Award 2025 – Jonathon Thurston

AFN Land Council of the Year 2025 - Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council

AFN Person of the Year Award 2025 - Carol Vale

AFN Financial Services Award 2025 – Indigenous Business Australia

AFN Health Worker of the Year 2025 – Uncle Charlie Knight

AFN Elder of the Year – Female (Aunty) 2025 – Violet Sheridan

AFN Elder of the Year – Male (Uncle) 2025 – Uncle Paul Newman

AFN Legacy of the Year Award 2025 - Mel Armstrong - A Journey to Country ~ Baagii's Memories

Award AFN Contributor to Community 2025 - ARA Indigenous Services

AFN Deadly Award 2025 - Michael McLeod

AFN Cultural Confidence Award 2025 – Coomara Munro

AFN Star of the Year 2025 - JT Academy

AFN Children's Empowerment Award 2025 - Emma Laverty - Project Dust

AFN Health and Wellbeing Award 2025 - AJ Williams-Tchen

AFN Grassroots to Growth Award 2025 – McCleod's Angels Catering

AFN Non-Profit Excellence Award 2025 - ATSIVA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association

AFN Eco and Sustainable Award 2025 – South Coast Seaweed

AFN Food & Beverage Award 2025 – Fiona Harrison

AFN Broadcaster of the Year Award 2025 - Aboriginal Broadcaster 3KND (Victoria)

AFN Events and Media Award 2025 – Dr Donna Odegaard

AFN Indigenous Business Growth Award 2025 – Yara co

AFN Business & Finance Award 2025 - First Nations Co.

AFN Achievement in Indigenous Employment Award 2025 – Mallard Contracting

AFN Overall Business of the Year Award 2025 - Dreamtime Entertainment - Warren Foster

AFN Indigenous Dance Group of the Year 2025 - Yukkumbruk Women's Dreaming

AFN Retail Business Award 2025 - Melissa 'Liss' Cowan

AFN Working with Vulnerable People Award 2025 - Cyndy Newman-Piromalli

AFN Achievement in Mental Health Inclusion Award 2025 – Kristen Franks

AFN Health and Wellbeing Award 2025 - AJ Williams-Tchen

AFN Artist of the Year Award – Megan Cain

AFN Multi-talented Award 2025 - Brodie Murray

AFN Accelerate Award 2025 – Naomi Howlett

AFN Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice Award 2025 – Officer Cadet Shae O'Neill

AFN Administration Support Award 2025 - Sophia Tsuei

AFN One to Watch Award 2025 - Ash Tchen

AFN AFL Legend of the Year 2025 - Michael O'Loughlin

AFN Rugby Union Player of the Year 2025 - Andy Muirhead

AFN Sports Ignite Award 2025 – Allan Brookman

AFN Female Sportsperson of the Year Award 2025 - Bianca Booth

AFN Most Promising Female Talent In Sport Award 2025 – Telaya Blacksmith

AFN Most Promising Male Talent In Sport Award + AFN Sports Ignite Award 2025 – Allan Brookman

AFN Product Design Award 2025 – Thomas Coen Jewellery

AFN Remote Product (location) Award 2025 - Indigenous Healing Remedies | Bush Medijina®

AFN B2B Award 2025 - Kirra Services

*__Featured artlcles/recipients/participants were chosen in random for this publication.__

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP

Jenny Ockwell

CEO & Public Health Expert

WURUNDJERI WOMAN BORN ON COUNTRY · HEALESVILLE,VIC CEO, DDACL — DANDENONG & DISTRICT ABORIGINES CO-OPERATIVE MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH · UNIMELB



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP 2025

HONOURING EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP, RESILIENCE AND DECADES OF TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Nearly Five Decades of Service — One Community, One Life's Work

Jenny Ockwell has given her life to one purpose: ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Melbourne's south-east have access to health care, housing and support that is culturally safe, community-controlled and genuinely theirs. Since 1977, she has been the constant at the heart of the DDACL — and the community has never stopped being her reason why.

A proud Wurundjeri woman born on Country in Healesville, Victoria, Jenny joined the Dandenong and Districts Aborigines Co-operative Limited (DDACL) as a member in 1977 — and has never left. Over nearly five decades she held administration roles throughout the organisation, rising to Manager of Aboriginal Health Services in January 2017 and more recently to CEO. Along the way she completed a Diploma in Practice Management and a Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne — not as a stepping stone elsewhere, but as tools to serve her community better.

The DDACL, established in 1975, is one of the oldest Aboriginal-run health services in Australia. Under Jenny's leadership it has become a genuine one-stop-shop: housing support, aged care, youth programs, maternal health, social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and the adjoining Bunurong Aboriginal Health Service. She has guided the organisation through decades of underfunding and crumbling infrastructure — including a recent evacuation from an asbestos-riddled building — while never losing sight of the community members at the door each day.

In 2025, after decades of advocacy, Jenny helped secure the DDACL's first-ever infrastructure funding: $12.3 million to fit out new accommodation at the Monash Health Integrated Care Centre in Cranbourne — a transformational milestone that will serve the community for generations to come.

> ***"My dedication to Aboriginal health is borne of witnessing the demise of many loved ones — passings which could have been avoided had knowledge and education been available to our community."***
>
> ***— JENNY OCKWELL***

1977	$12.3M	1975
DDACL MEMBER SINCE	INFRASTRUCTURE WIN 2025	DDACL ESTABLISHED



JENNY OCKWELL · DDACL · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP AWARD 2025

CEO, DDACL · DANDENONG, VICTORIA

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP

All First Nations Awards

The Ockwell Legacy

1975

DDACLestablished on Stud Road, Dandenong

1977

Jenny joins DDACL as a community member

Late 1970s+

Decades of administration roles across the Co-operative

Jan 2017

Appointed Manager, Aboriginal Health Services

2020s

Promoted to CEO; Master of Public Health completed, Uni of Melbourne

May 2025

$12.3M infrastructure funding secured — first ever at Monash Health ICC

Sept 2025

Advocates for DDACL under Victoria's Treaty Bill

FIND DDACL

ddacl.org.au

Bunurong Aboriginal Health Service

Dandenong & Cranbourne, Victoria



JENNY OCKWELL · DDACL · DANDENONG, VICTORIA · 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

A Community-Controlled Legacy — Built One Decade at a Time

ADVOCACY&INFRASTRUCTURE

Winning the Resources the Community Deserves

The DDACL building on Stud Road was established in 1975 and was still standing — barely — decades later. Dating to the early 1950s–60s, the structure was crumbling, asbestos-exposed, and entirely inadequate for the range of services the community needed. Jenny was among those who spoke publicly about the conditions: "The facility is just crumbling," she told the ABC — voicing what the community had known for years. Her persistent advocacy delivered results in May 2025 when the organisation secured $12.3 million — its first-ever dedicated infrastructure funding — to fit out new accommodation at the Monash Health Integrated Care Centre in Cranbourne, with a five-year lease secured. It is a milestone that will serve generations to come.

COMMUNITY, CULTURE & KINSHIP

A Grandmother's Heart at the Centre of Everything

Jenny's commitment to Indigenous health is deeply personal. She has spoken about how her dedication was forged by witnessing preventable deaths among loved ones — people who lacked access to timely, culturally safe health information and care. That grief became her mission. A mother of four and proud grandmother of seven, she carries the community's future in everything she does — tending native gardens, preserving oral histories, and leading the organisation that holds Dandenong's Aboriginal community together.

Jenny's leadership has been exercised through Victoria's Treaty process, where the DDACL has engaged actively with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to secure ongoing recognition and funding for community-controlled organisations. Her view is clear: the work of organisations like DDACL — built by and for mob — must be protected, resourced and led by the community itself. After nearly five decades at the Co-operative, that vision has never wavered.



JENNY OCKWELL · DDACL · KEY SERVICES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Bunurong Aboriginal Health Service
DDACL's adjoining primary health clinic providing culturally safe care

Housing & Aged Care
Support services spanning housing, aged care and social wellbeing programs

Youth & Maternal Health
Youth programs, maternal health and early childhood services for families

$12.3M Infrastructure Win
First-ever capital funding; new home at Monash Health Integrated Care Centre, 2025

Mental Health & Wellbeing
Social emotional wellbeing, mental health programs and community support services

Treaty & Advocacy
Active engagement with First Peoples' Assembly; advocating for mob-led services

CONGRATULATIONS JENNY OCKWELL — NEARLY FIFTY YEARS OF DEDICATION TO THE DANDENONG ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IS A LEGACY THAT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. THE FAMILIES WHO WALKED THROUGH THOSE DOORS, THE BUILDING THAT FINALLY STANDS, AND THE ORGANISATION THAT ENDURES: ALL OF IT CARRIES YOUR NAME.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN LEADERSHIP · 2025

FIRST NATIONS VALUED SUPPORTER - GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD 2025

Calvin Bruton OAM

NBL HALL OF FAME · BRUTON BASKETBALL FOUNDATION

NBL Legend · Foundation Founder

BORN: QUEENS,NEW YORK
PROUD AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN
NBL HALL OF FAME MEMBER
DIRECTOR, CAPITAL BASKETBALL
FOUNDER, BRUTON BASKETBALL FOUNDATION

" Basketball changed my life and gave me experiences I never expected. Now I want to return the favour and help change the lives of kids across Australia."

— CAL BRUTON

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
Recognising extraordinary support, dedication and service to First Nations communities

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD 2025

From the Concrete Courts of Queens to Every Corner of Australia

Calvin Bruton OAM arrived in Australia in 1979 with a basketball and a burning will to prove himself. He became an NBL legend, a champion, a Hall of Famer and a naturalised Australian. Then he did something rarer still — he gave it all back, choosing to spend his retirement running clinics in remote communities for kids who remind him of the boy he once was.

Cal Bruton OAM grew up in Queens, New York, in some of the hardest circumstances imaginable.

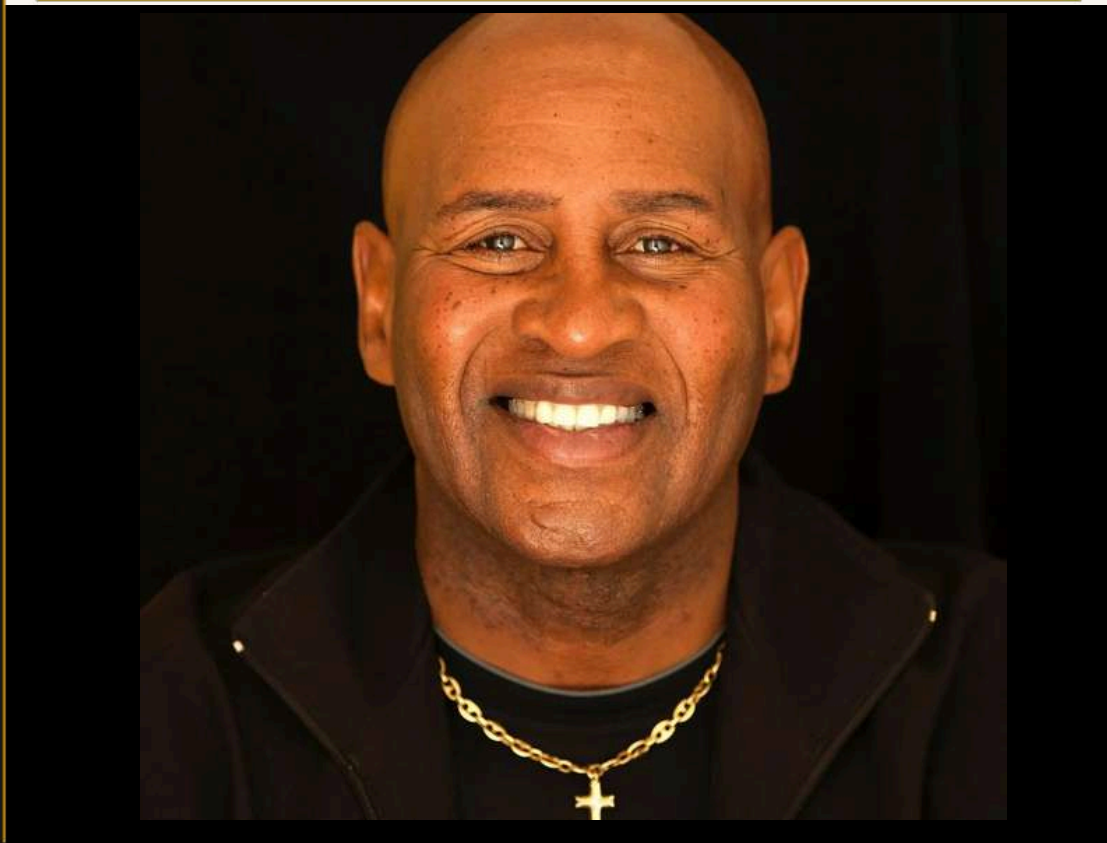
His father was stabbed to death in an armed robbery when Cal was just seven, leaving his mother — who struggled with addiction — to raise the family alone. He looked after his younger sisters, including one who was intellectually disabled and albino, in a neighbourhood where racial tensions ran high. Sport was his lifeline: "My mum wanted me to stay out of trouble and sport provided that avenue," he has said. He played baseball, gridiron and basketball on the concrete courts of Queens — sometimes with cardboard in his shoes.

He took that grit to Wichita State University, briefly to the NBA with the San Antonio Spurs, and then to Australia for the inaugural NBL season in 1979 — where he immediately led all scorers with an average of 33.2 points per game. Over 250-plus NBL games as player and coach he won championships with the Brisbane Bullets (1985) and Perth Wildcats (1990), was named coach of the year in 1982, became the first naturalised Australian to play in the NBL, and represented the Australian Boomers. His son CJ — who captained the Boomers at the Olympics — followed him into the game.

But it was in 1983 that the thread connecting Cal to First Nations Australia was first woven. He met an Indigenous family and — as he puts it — fell in love with their culture. By 1988 he was running basketball clinics in remote Western Australian communities. That calling has never left him.

CAL BRUTON OAM · NBL HALL OF FAME · BRUTON BASKETBALL FOUNDATION

250+	1979	1988
NBL GAMES	ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA	FIRST INDIGENOUS CLINIC



FIRST NATIONS VALUED SUPPORTER

The Bruton Legacy

1979
Arrives in Australia; leads NBL scoring 33.2 ppg

1982
NBLCoach of the Year as player-coach

1983
Meets First Nations family; fallsin love with culture

1985
NBLChampionship — Brisbane Bullets

1988
First Indigenous basketball clinic, remote WA

1990
NBL Championship — Perth Wildcats; first naturalisedAust. in NBL

2000s+
Coaches Patty Mills at16; Boomers rep

Recent
Bruton Basketball Foundation; SWAG workshops; Senior Aust. of Year nominee (ACT) at age 71



THE BRUTON BASKETBALL FOUNDATION — POWERED BY GAMEABOVE SPORTS IS A REGISTERED, NOT-FOR-PROFIT CHARITY, DEDICATED TO THE JOURNEY OF CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WORLDWIDE.

FIND CAL BRUTON OAM

brutonbasketballfoundation.com.au

NBL Hall of Fame · Capital Basketball Canberra, ACT

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Shooting for the Stars — A Foundation Built on SWAG

THE BRUTONB ASKETBALL FOUNDATION

Using Basketball as a Vehicle for Life

The Bruton Basketball Foundation started small — the first camp had just four kids — but has grown into a national program reaching every state and territory of Australia, including the most remote communities. At its heart is Cal's SWAG framework: **S**kill set, **W**ork ethic, **A**ttitude and **G**oals. These are the four qualities he teaches on the court and off it, helping young people — particularly disengaged First Nations youth — build the resilience, confidence and teamwork that translate into education and employment. The Foundation's Basketball Lessons 4Life program offers mentoring for disadvantaged high school students, with employers attending final-day celebrations so young people can make connections in a fun, culturally safe way. As Cal puts it: "Sport enabled me to stay out of trouble. I want to use sport to help kids do the same."



RECONCILIATION & ADVOCACY

Building Bridges Through Basketball

Cal Bruton has served as a member of the NBL's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, representing the NBL Hall of Fame and Capital Basketball. He coached Patty Mills when Mills was just 16 years old and has championed Indigenous talent throughout his career. "I met an Indigenous family back in 1983 and fell in love with them, with their culture," he says. "They gave me a great history lesson in Indigenous culture and I want to help."

Since 1988 he has run clinics from Tasmania to Alice Springs, Darwin to Halls Creek.

In 2025, at 71 years of age, Cal was nominated as one of the ACT's nominees for Senior Australian of the Year — recognition of a lifetime spent not just playing the game, but transforming lives through it. He shows no signs of stopping.

As he says: "Retiring isn't in my vocabulary." His name, as he teaches kids, spells out its own values: **B**e kind · **R**espect your Elders · **U**se your manners · **T**rust · **O**wn your mistakes · **N**ever give up.

CALBRUTON: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & INITIATIVES

NBL Hall of Fame
NBL icon: 250+ games; championships 1985 & 1990; coach of the year 1982

Bruton Basketball Foundation
National program reaching every state & territory; First Nations youth focus

SWAG Framework
Skill set · Work ethic Attitude · Goals — life and basketball curriculum

NBL RAP Working Group
Memberof NBL Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group; advocating for Indigenous pathways

Patty Mills Mentor
Coached Patty Mills at 16; championed Indigenous talent throughout career

Senior Australian of Year Nominee
ACT nominee at age 71; honoured for Foundation work with Indigenous youth

CONGRATULATIONS CAL BRUTON OAM — A KID FROM QUEENS WHO BECAME AN AUSTRALIAN LEGEND, AND THEN DID SOMETHING HARDER: HE USED THAT PLATFORM TO OPEN DOORS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FIRST NATIONS KIDS. NEVER GIVE UP. THAT'S NOT JUST YOUR MOTTO. IT'S YOUR LIFE.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · GOLDEN ALUMNI AWARD (VALUED SUPPORTER) · 2025

All First Nations Awards

ALL FIRST NATIONS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Carol Vale

DUNGHUTTI / GUMBAINGIRRWOMAN
DESCENDANT OF FRANKARCHIBALD
CO-FOUNDER & CEO, MURAWIN
SUPPLY NATION INDIGENOUS BUSINESSWOMAN OF THE YEAR 2024

I came back to Armidale to launch Murawin because I wanted to show other Indigenous kids — if a mission kid could do it, so can anyone.

— CAROL VALE

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, MURAWIN

CEO, Murawin · Tidda · Trailblazer

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
PERSON OF THE YEAR
2025

Recognising outstanding vision, leadership and impact across First Nations communities nationally

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2025

From a Mission to National Leader — Building a Consultancy for Country

Carol Vale is a proud Dunghutti and Gumbaingirr woman and a descendant of Frank Archibald — and she has spent nearly three decades doing what mission kids were told they couldn't: building a nationally recognised Indigenous consultancy that reaches communities from Australia to the Pacific, Canada and beyond.

With a career spanning almost four decades across government and the business sector, Carol has worked across the full spectrum of social and public policy — Aboriginal affairs, housing, education, child protection, research and evaluation, social enterprise and international development. She has represented Australia on global platforms including the Sankalp Business Forum in India, the Social Enterprise World Forum in the Netherlands, and Australia–New Zealand forums. Her qualifications span Indigenous studies, community development, public administration, sociology and politics — most recently an MBA journey to sharpen her business leadership.

In 2014, Carol and the late Greg McKenzie co-founded Murawin — a national, Indigenous-owned consultancy rooted in intercultural collaboration, Country, Culture and community. The name itself carries meaning. Built on the Barri Marruma methodology, Murawin specialises in Social Impact and Engagement, Research and Evaluation, and Place Strategy. Over a decade it has grown into
a nationally respected practice working with corporate, government, private and non-profit sectors — with impact reaching the Pacific, Canada and New Zealand. In 2024, at Murawin's tenth anniversary, Carol was recognised as **Supply Nation's Indigenous Businesswoman of the Year**.

When Greg McKenzie passed away in February 2023 — the same year the Voice referendum was defeated — it was Carol's leadership that held the business together. "Through strong leadership, determination and empathy from our networks, Murawin continued to grow," the team wrote. His legacy lives on in every project Murawin delivers.

10+	226+	30+
YEARS OF MURAWIN	TIDDAS IN BUSINESS	YEARS IN SERVICE



CAROL VALE · MURAWIN · AFN PERSON OF THE YEAR 2025

FIRST NATIONS PERSON OF THE YEAR 2025

The Vale Legacy

1990s
Begins career in government; Aboriginal affairs, housing and child protection

2000s
International representation: Sankalp Forum India, Soc.Enterprise World Forum NL

2014
Co-founds Murawin with GregMcKenzie — Armidale, NSW

2018
Launches Tiddas in Business; self-funded, supporting First Nationswomen into enterprise

2023
Greg McKenzie passes away; Carol leads Murawin through most challenging year

2024
Murawin's 10th anniversary; Supply Nation Indigenous Businesswoman of the Year

2024
Tiddasin Business reaches 226+ First Nations female entrepreneurs nationally

2025
Inaugural Batiba Guwiyal Conference on child sexual assault in communities



FIND CAROL VALE & MURAWIN

murawin.com.au
Tiddas in Business
Batiba Guwiyal
Brisbane, Queensland

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Bringing Tiddas Along

A Legacy Built on Country and Community

TIDDAS IN BUSINESS&WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Opening the Door for Every Tidda Behind Her

In 2018, Carol launched Tiddas in Business — entirely self-funded — to give First Nations women the mentorship, entrepreneurial skills and business networks they deserved but had rarely been offered. The program has since supported more than 226 First Nations female entrepreneurs across Australia, delivering culturally appropriate leadership, wellbeing and business development support. Carol's philosophy has always been generous: for every five or ten per cent that came into Murawin, she would set aside funds in what she called the Morning Sky Initiative — small grants and loans for women starting their own businesses. "I've always tried to bring other women along — Indigenous women first and foremost — but other women too," she has said. The program was later supported by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Murawin has partnered with Coralus (SheEO) to offer Activation Scholarships exclusively to First Nations women leaders and entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH, POLICY & PLACEMAKING

Country, Culture and Knowledge at the Centre

Murawin's work spans research and evaluation, public policy, social entrepreneurialism, Indigenous governance and placemaking. Carol has applied her Barri Marruma methodology — built on deep listening and intercultural collaboration — to projects ranging from foster care research with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, to urban design and planning projects embedding First Nations knowledge into infrastructure across Australia.

In 2025, Carol convened the inaugural **Batiba Guwiyal Conference** in Brisbane — a national gathering tackling the impacts of child sexual assault on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. The conference reflected Carol's longstanding commitment to the most difficult and most necessary conversations in Indigenous affairs — the ones that others step away from, and that she steps towards.

murawin

CAROL VALE · MURAWIN · KEY INITIATIVES & IMPACT

Murawin Consultancy
NationalIndigenous-led firm; Social Impact, Research & Place Strategy since 2014

Tiddas in Business
226+First Nations female entrepreneurs supported; self-funded from 2018

Morning Sky Initiative
Internal micro-grants and loans to support women-led Indigenous businesses

Batiba Guwiyal Conference 2025
Inauguralnationalconference on child sexual assault in Indigenous communities

Supply Nation Award 2024
Indigenous Businesswoman of the Year — 10 years of Murawin recognised

Global Reach
Workin Australia, Pacific, Canada and New Zealand; Sankalp, SheEO, World Forum

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · PERSON OF THE YEAR · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS CAROL VALE — A MISSION KID WHO CAME HOME TO BUILD SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY, AND WHO HAS NEVER STOPPED BRINGING OTHERS WITH HER. MURAWIN IS YOUR STORY, AND SO IS EVERY TIDDA YOU HAVE LIFTED, EVERY COMMUNITY YOU HAVE LISTENED TO, AND EVERY PIECE OF COUNTRY YOU HAVE HONOURED ALONG THE WAY.

FIRST NATIONS LAND COUNCIL OF THE YEAR

Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council

Giving Life to Country
GAMILARAAY / GAMILAROI COUNTRY
COONABARABRAN, NSW
CEO: BRANDON NIXON
REGIONAL COUNCILLOR: CR CHARLES LYNCH
EST. 1984 · WIRADJURI REGION, NSWALC

“““

Murrunmala Dhawun — giving life to Country. It's very important that we live not only on the land, but we live through the land.
— BRANDON NIXON, CEO

COONABARABRAN LALC

Recognising outstanding contribution to Country, community and economic self-determination

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS LAND COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Many Mobs, One Community — Building a Future on Gamilaraay Country

On Gamilaraay Country in north-western New South Wales, the Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council has spent decades quietly doing what Land Councils exist to do: reclaiming Country, building economic independence, caring for land and culture, and creating the conditions for future generations to thrive.

Established in 1984 under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the Coonabarabran LALC has grown from a small organisation serving a regional community into a model of Indigenous economic self-determination. The LALC serves Gamilaraay Country — home to one of the largest Aboriginal language groups in Australia — and the surrounding region, where multiple mobs have come together under one community Land Council. The area carries deep history: Coonabarabran means "inquisitive person" in the local language, and the land itself holds the story of the Cain family's Burra Bee Dee reserve — won in the 1890s, a beacon of Aboriginal self-determination that still resonates today.

When the LALC moved into the main street of Coonabarabran, it did more than open an office. Guided by a clear Community Land and Business Plan, the LALC's leadership — including joint CEO Sherrin Whale — identified a large building for sale and, having paid off all debts and built up savings, secured a commercial loan to purchase it outright. They became landlords, renting space to government agencies and local businesses. That investment created jobs, delivered Centrelink agency services directly to community members, and set in motion a cycle of economic growth the LALC describes as "the start of something bigger and better."

A series of successful land claims has run alongside this economic vision — returning Country to community, step by step, in accordance with the purpose for which the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was created.

1984	Burra Bee Dee	Gamilaraay
ESTABLISHED UNDER ALRA	HISTORIC SIT E PROTECTED	COUNTRY CARED FOR



COONABARABRAN LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL · LAND COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2025

All First Nations Awards

The LALC Timeline

FIRST NATIONS LAND COUNCIL OF THE YEAR

1892
Mary Jane Cain secures Forky Mountain — 400 acres for Burra Bee Dee community

1984
Coonabarabran LALC established under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act

2010s
Commercial property purchased on main street; Centrelink agency delivered

2020s
Successful series of land claims lodged; Housing and land management funding secured

2024
Murrunmala Dhawun Rangers program launched — Gamilaraay for "giving life to Country"

June 2025
Inaugural Aboriginal Ranger Gathering attended; plans to expand to women and junior ranger teams

Murrunmala Dhawun — Giving Life to Country

A Rangers Program Coonabarabran Has Never Had Before

In the Gamilaraay language, Murrunmala Dhawun means "giving life to Country" — and that is exactly what the Coonabarabran LALC's new Ranger Program is doing. Launched approximately a year before the LALC attended the inaugural Aboriginal Ranger Gathering at Trelawney Station near Tamworth in June 2025, the program has brought something entirely new to Gamilaraay Country: a dedicated, paid ranger workforce where previously the community had relied on volunteers alone. "We've always relied on community involvement and volunteers so to have our Ranger Program up and running for the last 12 months has been pretty special," says CEO Brandon Nixon. The rangers' custom vehicle carries artwork by Uncle Keith Hinton that depicts a meeting place where rangers collaborate with Elders and community — its larger circles representing the traditional lands of the Gamilaraay people, and a special blue circle for Forky Mountain, the site of the historic Burra Bee Dee mission. The LALC is now actively pursuing additional funding to expand into a women's ranger team and a junior ranger program.

LAND, HOUSING & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Protecting Country and Building Economic Independence

The LALC has secured funding for housing, rangers, land management and community programs — building on successful land claims that have returned Country to community. The NSWALC Community Fund supported boundary fencing at **Burra Bee Dee Mission** and the Happy Valley Fringe Camp — sites of deep cultural and historical significance. Burra Bee Dee was the Aboriginal reserve won by Gomeroi matriarch Mary Jane Cain in the 1890s and is a touchstone of community identity and intergenerational resilience.

The LALC's commercial building purchase on main street Coonabarabran now generates rental income from government and business tenants, funds Centrelink agency services for community members, and demonstrates that a Land Council with clear vision and financial discipline can create lasting economic foundations. Regional Councillor Cr Charles Lynch and youth representative Latrell Allan are part of a leadership structure committed to carrying this vision forward for generations to come.



COONABARABRAN LALC · KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRAMS

Murrunmala Dhawun Ranger Program
"Givinglife to Country" in Gamilaraay — first ever paid ranger team

Commercial Property Ownership
Main street building purchased; landlord to govt and business tenants

Centrelink Agency
LALCdelivers Centrelink services directly to community — new jobs created

Land Claims & Returns
Successful series of claims returning Country; Burra Bee Dee fencing funded

Housing & Land Management
NSWALC-funded housing, land management and community programs delivered

Ranger Expansion Plans
Women's rangerteamand junior ranger program in active development

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · LAND COUNCIL OF THE YEAR · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS COONABARABRAN LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL — FROM BURRA BEE DEE TO MURRUNMALA DHAWUN, YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT LIVING THROUGH THE LAND IS THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY LIVE ON IT.

COUNTRY IS SAFE IN YOUR HANDS.

COONABARABRAN LALC · GAMILARAAY COUNTRY · 2025

FIND COONABARABRAN LALC
30 John Street,
Coonabarabran NSW 2357
Murrunmala Dhawun Rangers
Gamilaraay Country,
Wiradjuri Region NSWALC

All First Nations Awards

Johnathan Thurston

AM

FIRST NATIONS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT

"JT" — Gunggari Man

NORTH QUEENSLAND COWBOYS

· NRL HALL OF FAME

GUNGGARI & MAORI HERITAGE
HALFBACK · NORTH QLD COWBOYS
NRL HALL OF FAME · SPORT AUST. HOF
4× DALLY M MEDALLIST
QLD AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2017

"That's the power of sport — it has the power for social change. I'm in a privileged position where I can use my status in the game to help with social change.

— JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
IN SPORT 2025

Honouring the greatest to ever lace a boot — on and off the field

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Too Small to Play — Too Great to Ignore

Every NRL club said the same thing: too small. Johnathan Thurston was a supermarket butcher and a car wash attendant, dismissed at every audition. Then Canterbury took a chance — on a nil playing fee — and one of the greatest careers in rugby league history began.

Born in Brisbane to a Gunggari mother and a New Zealand Maori father, Johnathan Thurston grew up on the city's southside watching his dad play and earning a dollar a game as a ball boy, dreaming of the Brisbane Broncos. Despite starring at St. Mary's College, Toowoomba, scouts dismissed him as too light, too small, a defensive liability. He briefly considered quitting. Instead he kept going — washing cars, working the butcher's counter, refusing to believe the verdict. Canterbury-Bankstown finally signed him in 2001 on a nil playing fee, and by 2004 he was coming off the bench in a grand final win.

He moved to North Queensland in 2005 and the rest is the most decorated individual career the NRL has ever seen. A record **four Dally M Medals** (2005, 2007, 2014, 2015). A record **three Golden Boot Awards** for the world's best player. The **Clive Churchill Medal** in the 2015 grand final — won by a golden-point field goal after he had hit the post with a sideline conversion attempt in the dying seconds. Thirty-seven State of Origin appearances including **eight consecutive series wins** for Queensland, and 38 Tests in the green and gold of Australia. A club-record **294 games** for the Cowboys. A total of **2,222 NRL premiership points** — fifth highest of all time.

In 2023, he was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. His Wikipedia awards list carries an extraordinary disclaimer: "Due to the vast amount of accolades won by Thurston, this is just a summary of his major award wins."

294	4×	2,222
COWBOYS GAMES	DALLY M MEDALS	NRL CAREER POINTS



FIRST NATIONS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT

The Thurston Legacy

2002
NRL debut, Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs

2004
NRL Premiership — Canterbury Bulldogs

2005
Joins Cowboys; 1st Dally M Medal; Origindebut

2006–13
Eight consecutive State of Origin series wins for QLD

2013
Rugby League World Cup winner, Australia

2015
NRL Premiership — Cowboys; Clive Churchill Medal; 4th Dally M Medal; 3rd Golden Boot Award

2017
Cowboys House launched; Aust. Human Rights Medal; QLD Australian of the Year

2018
Retirement — 294 Cowboys

games;#1 selling autobiography

2023
Sport Australia Hall of Fame induction



FIND JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM
jtacademy.com.au
NRL Hall of Fame · Cowboys House
Townsville, North Queensland

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2026

More Than a Game
JT's Legacy Off the Field

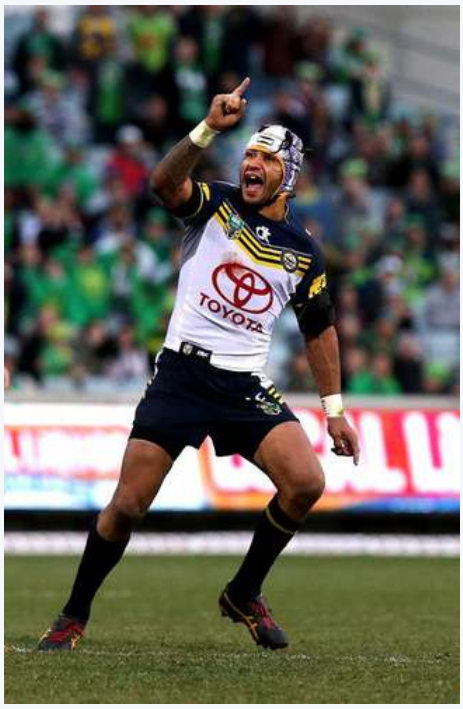
COMMUNITY & EDUCATION

Cowboys House and the Power of Sport for Social Change

In 2017, Thurston helped launch the $9.5 million NRL Cowboys House — a boarding facility providing 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote north Queensland communities like Normanton and Doomadgee with a safe, culturally grounded environment to complete their secondary education in Townsville. It was a project deeply personal to him. As an ARTIE (Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education) ambassador and Queensland Reconciliation Award ambassador — appointed at the request of the Queensland Premier — he had spent years using his platform to advocate for Indigenous education and health outcomes. "Indigenous culture is dying on average ten years before non-Indigenous Australians," he said. "I'm in a privileged position to use my status in the game to help with social change." That same year, he won the Australian Human Rights Commission Medal and was named Queensland's Australian of the Year.

THE JT ACADEMY & BUSINESSLEADERSHIP

Building Pathways Beyond Football
After retirement in 2018, Thurston launched the **Johnathan Thurston Academy** — a national education, employment and community engagement platform using storytelling and mentoring to help young people, especially Indigenous youth, build confidence and secure meaningful employment. He also co-owns **Skytrans**, an aviation business servicing Indigenous communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands — a business that grew from seven to 136 staff within a year of his involvement.
His autobiography became **Australia's highest-selling autobiography of 2018**. He joined the Queensland Tourism and Events Board, took a Channel Nine commentary role, received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from James Cook University, the NRL's Ken Stephen Medal, and was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). In 2023 he was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame — recognition that his legacy stretches far beyond the boundary line.



JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM · KEY HONOURS & IMPACT

4× Dally M Medallist
First ever four-time winner; NRL season's best player 2005, 2007, 2014, 2015

3× Golden Boot Award
First ever three-time winner; world's best rugby league player — global recognition

2015 NRL Premiership
Cowboys'maiden title; Clive Churchill Medal; golden-point field goal hero

Cowboys House (2017)
$9.5M facility; 50 Indigenous students from remote QLD; cultural education hub

QLD Aust. of the Year 2017
Aust. Human Rights Commission Medal; ARTIE ambassador; Reconciliation ambassador

Sport Aust. Hall of Fame 2023
Inducted for contribution to rugby league and service to Indigenous communities

CONGRATULATIONS JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM — YOU WERE TOLD YOU WERE TOO SMALL, TOO LIGHT, NOT GOOD ENOUGH. YOU BECAME THE GREATEST. THEN, WHEN THE CHEERING STOPPED, YOU PROVED THE GREATEST CHAPTER WAS STILL TO COME. NORTH QUEENSLAND'S FAVOURITE SON. ALWAYS.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT · 2025

JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM · NORTH QLD COWBOYS · 2025

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH WORKER OF THE YEAR

Uncle Charlie Knight

HealthWorker · Survivor · Advocate

NGARRINDJERI MAN
STOLEN GENERATIONS SURVIVOR
BENDIGO & DISTRICT ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE (BDAC)
BENDIGO, VICTORIA

“““

My journey isn't over and neither is anybody else's journey over until this government truly understands the trauma and post-traumatic stress we carry. We lose our culture, our identity, our dignity — but we never stop healing.

— UNCLE CHARLIE KNIGHT

HEALTH WORKER · BDAC · BENDIGO

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

HEALTH WORKER OF THE YEAR 2025

★

Honouring courage, compassion and a lifetime dedicated to healing

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2025

Taken at One and a Half — Healing a Community for a Lifetime

Uncle Charlie Knight is a Ngarrindjeri man who was taken from his parents at just eighteen months old. He grew up not knowing he had siblings. He was told his parents were dead. Despite carrying that weight every single day, he chose a life of service — and has spent years helping others heal from the very same wounds he still tends to himself.

Uncle Charlie was removed from his family under the policies of the Stolen Generations and placed, with his brother, in Campbell House Farm School in South Australia. From there, he passed through a series of foster homes. He was told his parents had died — a lie that shaped the early decades of his life. It was only later that he discovered the truth: he was the oldest of seventeen children. His brother, who shared that childhood with him, is now deceased. So is his sister. Both passed away at an early age — lives shortened by the same intergenerational trauma that Uncle Charlie speaks about with clarity and without bitterness, but with an unflinching insistence that the truth be acknowledged.

Today Uncle Charlie works as a health worker at the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) — a community-controlled organisation in central Victoria that provides holistic health, wellbeing, child safety, cultural support and family services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the region. He has sought help through psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors over the years, and continues to do so. That willingness to seek help and to speak openly about mental health — for a man of his generation and background — is itself an act of profound leadership.

In October 2018, Uncle Charlie was one of four Indigenous people from Bendigo who travelled to Canberra to attend the National Apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse — an apology he called a step forward, while insisting that the journey was far from over.

1.5	17	2018
AGE TAKEN FROM FAMILY	SIBLINGS HE DIDN'T KNOW	NATIONAL APOLOGY, CANBERRA

UNCLE CHARLIE KNIGHT · BDAC BENDIGO · HEALTH WORKER OF THE YEAR 2025



FIRST NATIONS HEALTH WORKER OF THE YEAR

Uncle Charlie's Journey

18 months
Removed from family under Stolen Generations policies

Childhood
Campbell House Farm School, SA — then a series of foster homes

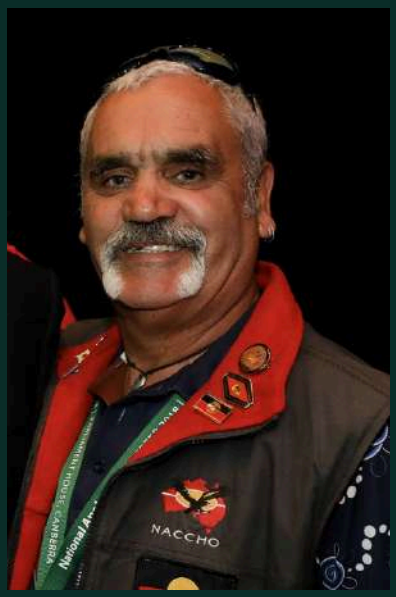
Childhood
Told his parents were deceased; grew up not knowing he had siblings

Adult life
Discovers he isthe oldest of 17 children; brother and sister later pass away

Ongoing
Seeks help through psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors

BDAC
Health worker at Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative — using his experience to serve

Oct 2018
Travels to Canberra for National Apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse



BDAC — BENDIGO & DISTRICT
bdac.com.au
Dja Dja Wurrung Country
North Bendigo, Victoria

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Healing Through Truth — Advocacy That Never Stops

TRAUMA, TRUTH & THE NATIONAL APOLOGY

One of Bendigo's Four — Bearing Witness in Canberra

In October 2018, Uncle Charlie Knight made the journey from Bendigo to Canberra to attend the National Apology to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse — delivered by Prime Minister Scott Morrison. He was one of four Indigenous people from Bendigo who travelled together to bear witness to that moment. For Uncle Charlie, the apology was meaningful — to be believed, after a childhood in which he and others were told they were telling lies, was itself a form of healing. Both Morrison's and opposition leader Bill Shorten's words resonated with him deeply. "It's a part of the healing for us so that we in our lives can continue on," he said. "But our memories will be there all the time." He left Canberra still calling for the government to take real, concrete action on redress
— and to protect children who may currently be experiencing abuse. For Uncle Charlie, an apology without action is only the beginning of the work.

HEALTHWORK&LIVEDEXPERIENCE

Using His Own Story to Help Others Heal

What makes Uncle Charlie's work as a health worker at BDAC extraordinary is what he brings to it: not just professional training, but the lived wisdom of a man who has navigated the deepest trauma — family separation, false grief, institutional abuse, the slow discovery of siblings he never knew — and who continues, still, to seek help and to heal. His openness about his own mental health journey — the psychologists, the psychiatrists, the counsellors he still sees — models for community members that seeking help is strength, not weakness.

BDAC, where Uncle Charlie works, provides a wide range of community health and wellbeing services on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in central Victoria, including child safety, cultural support, family healing and response, and community health programs. The organisation is community-controlled — built by mob, for mob — and Uncle Charlie's presence within it reflects its core purpose: that First Nations people supporting each other through the hardest chapters is both the service and the healing.



UNCLE CHARLIE KNIGHT·CONTRIBUTION & IMPACT

Stolen Generations Survivor
Ngarrindjeri man removed at 18 months; one of 17 children — told parents deceased

BDAC Health Worker
Serving community on Dja Dja Wurrung Country; health, wellbeing & advocacy

Mental Health Advocate
Openly seeks counselling; models help-seeking as strength for mob

National Apology 2018
Travelled Bendigo to Canberra to bear witness; called for action on redress

Trauma Education
Speaks publicly about post-traumatic stress and intergenerational trauma

Community Leadership
Decades oflived experience shaping culturally safe health support for mob

CONGRATULATIONS UNCLE CHARLIE KNIGHT — YOU WERE TAKEN BEFORE YOU COULD WALK, AND YET YOU HAVE SPENT A LIFETIME STANDING UP. FOR YOURSELF, FOR THE PEOPLE WHO WERE STOLEN ALONGSIDE YOU, AND FOR EVERY COMMUNITY MEMBER WHO WALKS THROUGH BDAC'S DOORS CARRYING WOUNDS THEY WERE NEVER MEANT TO CARRY ALONE.

ELDER OF THE YEAR — FEMALE (AUNTY)

Aunty Violet Sheridan

Ngunnawal Elder · Canberra

NGUNNAWAL WOMAN
TRADITIONAL CUSTODIAN OF THE ACT
WELCOME TO COUNTRY ELDER
DIRECTOR, YERRABI YURWANG
GUNGAHLIN, CANBERRA ACT

“““

Today I speak to you not just as a Ngunnawal Elder, but as someone who has witnessed the changes in our land, our peoples over the years. Our roots here in Canberra are deep and our connections to this land are unbreakable.

— AUNTY VIOLET SHERIDAN

WALK FOR YES · CANBERRA · 2023



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS ELDER OF THE YEAR — FEMALE (AUNTY) 2025

Honouring a lifetime of Welcome, wisdom and dedication to Ngunnawal Country

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

The Heart of Ngunnawal Country — Welcoming All to the Capital

Aunty Violet Sheridan is one of Canberra's most beloved and recognisable Elders — a Ngunnawal woman who has spent decades generously opening the doors of her Country to all who come, and who has never stopped advocating for the rights, dignity and future of First Nations people.

As a Ngunnawal Traditional Custodian of the Australian Capital Territory — the land on which the nation's capital stands — Aunty Violet carries a responsibility that is both ancient and immediate. She is among the Elders who deliver Welcome to Country ceremonies at major events across Canberra, from national conferences to community gatherings, from the Australian Institute of International Affairs to the AIATSIS. Her Welcomes are not ceremonial formality: they are acts of cultural teaching, of connection, and of the profound relationship between Ngunnawal people and the land that has been theirs since time immemorial.

Aunty Violet is described by the Australian Institute of International Affairs as "a pillar of the community in Canberra and the region" who "generously donates her time at events, schools, and for a broad range of organisations — in a bid to bring all Australians together." She serves as a Director of Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, contributing her Eldership and cultural authority to the governance of one of the ACT's key Aboriginal community organisations. She lives in Gungahlin, in the northern suburbs of the city, surrounded by the Country her family has always called home — and her grandson Noah Allan, a Ngunnawal and Kamilaroi man, is continuing the tradition of community leadership she has modelled throughout her life.

She has great grandchildren. Her vision for them is clear and uncompromising: "I want by the time they have their great grandchildren that there be no more racism." That is the horizon she has always worked toward — not just for her family, but for everyone who calls Ngunnawal Country home.

ACT	5,000+	60%+
NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY	WALK FOR YES CROWD	ACT VOTED YES 2023



AUNTY VIOLET SHERIDAN · NGUNNAWAL ELDER · ELDER OF THE YEAR 2025

ELDER OF THE YEAR — FEMALE (AUNTY)

Aunty Violet's Legacy

Decades

Welcome to Country ceremonies across Canberra and the ACT region

Community

Cultural knowledge shared at schools, events and organisations across Australia

Board role

Director, Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, ACT

May 2022

Reconciliation Day address at National Arboretum — calls for national Rec. Day

Sept 2023

Welcomed 5,000 people to Ngunnawal Country at Walk for Yes, Canberra

Oct 2023

Led Voice to Parliament advocacy in Canberra; called on ACT Government to act on Yes mandate

2024

Considered independent candidacy in ACT Legislative Assembly, Yerrabi — standing for all Canberrans



NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY

Yerrabi Yurwang · yerrabi.org.au Gungahlin, Canberra ACT Australian Capital Territory

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2025

Voice, Treaty, Truth — A Ngunnawal Elder Never Stops

THE VOICE REFERENDUM & BEYOND

Standing Outside Parliament House — Right to the End

In the weeks before the October 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum, Aunty Violet Sheridan stood outside Parliament House in Canberra and pleaded with non-Indigenous Australia. She was 68 years old, and the polling data was pointing to a No result. Her words were clear and devastating: a rejection would take First Nations people back "65,000 years, because things are not gonna change for us." She spoke of the life expectancy gap, of over-incarceration, of a granddaughter who was just a baby. "We need to unite all Australians and work on this together, and move forward with reconciliation," she said. A month earlier, she had Welcomed up to 5,000 Canberrans to Ngunnawal Country at the Walk for Yes rally, before the crowd marched to Parliament House. When the No result came in, Aunty Violet was back within days — calling on the ACT Government to honour the territory's strong 60% Yes vote, and to pursue Voice, Treaty and Truth as the framework for progress in the capital.

RECONCILIATION&THENEXTGENERATION

Working With Young People, Thinking Seven Generations Ahead

At the 2022 Reconciliation Day event at the National Arboretum, Aunty Violet said reconciliation was "at a standstill" — but her hope was as clear as her frustration. "We need to work with the next generations," she said. She has called for Reconciliation Day to be made a national public holiday, noting that the ACT is the only jurisdiction with that recognition. She urged all Australians to go back to the Uluru Statement from the Heart — to understand why mob wants their support, and what is truly at stake for communities across Australia.

Her grandson Noah Allan — Ngunnawal and Kamilaroi man — spoke at the Walk for Yes rally, carrying forward the tradition of advocacy she has modelled. In 2024, Aunty Violet considered standing as an independent candidate for the ACT Legislative Assembly in Yerrabi, making clear that her vision extended beyond First Nations issues alone: housing affordability, families being left behind, genuine community representation. "Nobody's going to solve First Nations people's problems but ourselves," she said. "Give us a chance."

AUNTY VIOLET SHERIDAN · KEY ROLES & CONTRIBUTIONS

Welcome to Country Elder
Delivers Welcome to Country at major Canberra events; AAIAS, AIIA, national gigs

Cultural Education
Shares Ngunnawal knowledge at schools, universities and community organisations

Yerrabi Yurwang Director
Board Director,Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation; Ngunnawal cultural authority

Voice Advocacy 2023
Led Walk for Yes Welcome; stood outside Parliament House to the final day

Reconciliation Champion
Called for national Rec. Day public holiday; active at ACT Rec. Day since 2022

ACT Leadership
Considered independent candidacy in Yerrabi 2024; voice for all Canberrans

CONGRATULATIONS AUNTY VIOLET SHERIDAN — CANBERRA IS BUILT ON NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY, AND YOU HAVE SPENT A LIFETIME MAKING SURE EVERYONE WHO COMES HERE KNOWS IT. YOUR WELCOME HAS OPENED MORE DOORS THAN YOU WILL EVER BE CREDITED FOR. YOUR COUNTRY IS IN STRONG, GENEROUS HANDS.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ELDER OF THE YEAR — FEMALE (AUNTY)

ELDER OF THE YEAR — MALE (UNCLE)

Uncle Paul Newman

Elder · Advisor · Reconciliation Champion

WIRADJURI · GADIGAL WAILWAN · KAMILAROI HERITAGE

FORMER CHAIR, NSW RECONCILIATION COUNCIL

BOARD, LEAD PDA · COMMUNITAS

“““

Indigenous rights and community empowerment are not just causes to advocate for — they are the foundation on which a fair and mature Australia must be built. That work is never finished.

— UNCLE PAUL NEWMAN



ELDER · TRADITIONAL OWNER

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Four Nations, Four Decades A Life Spent Building Bridges

Uncle Paul Newman carries four great nations within him — Wiradjuri, Gadigal, Wailwan and Kamilaroi — and has spent more than four decades putting that heritage to work: in community economic development, in corporate boardrooms, in the national reconciliation movement, and in the formation of the next generation of Indigenous leaders.

Paul Newman is a proud Elder and Traditional Owner whose heritage spans four of the most significant First Nations of south-eastern Australia. Over a career of more than forty years across community, government and corporate sectors — particularly in Aboriginal affairs at a national level — he has built a reputation as one of the most experienced and respected Indigenous leaders in the country. He has held senior roles in community economic development, project management and senior executive positions, bringing both cultural authority and professional rigour to every table he sits at.

Among his most significant contributions was his leadership as **Chairperson of the NSW Reconciliation Council** — now Reconciliation NSW — where he helped shape the state's approach to reconciliation at a peak body level. He also served as **First Nations Senior Business Advisor at World Vision Australia**, bringing an Indigenous economic development lens to one of Australia's largest humanitarian organisations. Paul holds a **Bachelor of Business (B.Bus)** and a **Master of Arts (MA) in Communications and Cultural Studies**, and his commitment to adult education and professional development has shaped his approach to empowering community throughout his career.

Today Paul serves on the Board of the **LEAD Professional Development Association Inc.** and as Board Member and **Chairperson of Communitas Volunteers Australia** — continuing a lifetime of governance, mentorship and strategic leadership in service of community.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

ELDER OF THE YEAR — MALE (UNCLE) 2025

40+	4	B.Bus MA
YEARS OF SERVICE	NATIONS HERITAGE	QUALIFICATIONS



RECOGNISING FORTY YEARS OF LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

ELDER OF THE YEAR — MALE (UNCLE)

Uncle Paul's Journey

Heritage
Wiradjuri, Gadigal, Wailwan and Kamilaroi nations — Elder and Traditional Owner

Career
Senior executive roles across community, government and corporate sectors

World Vision
First Nations Senior Business Advisor — national level Indigenous community economic development

NSW Rec. Council
Chairperson, NSW Reconciliation Council — peak body leadership for state-wide reconciliation

Education
Bachelor of Business (B.Bus)
Master of Arts in Communications & Cultural Studies

LEAD PDA
Board Member, LEAD Professional Development Association Inc.

Communitas
Board Member & Chairperson, Communitas Volunteers Australia



FIND PAUL NEWMAN
leadpda.org.au
LEAD PDA · Communitas Volunteers NSW, Australia

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Governance, Knowledge, Community — A Leader Across Every Sector

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & RECONCILIATION

Forty Years Bridging Community, Government and Corporate Worlds

What distinguishes Uncle Paul Newman's contribution is not just the breadth of his experience, but the consistency of his purpose across every setting he has worked in. Whether advising World Vision Australia on First Nations business strategy, chairing the NSW Reconciliation Council at peak body level, or sitting on corporate boards as a company director, Paul has brought the same lens to every role: that Indigenous rights and community empowerment are not peripheral to the work of governance and economic development, but central to it. His career spans more than forty years and reaches across the community sector, government agencies, and the corporate world — making him one of the few Indigenous leaders with deep credibility and networks in all three. His academic qualifications — a Bachelor of Business and a Master of Arts in Communications and Cultural Studies — underpin a practice that combines cultural authority with technical expertise across community economic development, project management and adult education.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP

Investing in the Next Generation of Indigenous Leaders

On the Board of LEAD Professional Development Association Inc., Paul contributes to an organisation that delivers workforce development, Aboriginal employment programs, digital literacy and professional training across New South Wales. LEAD works particularly with Aboriginal and disadvantaged communities, and Paul's Eldership and four-decade career bring a weight of authority and lived knowledge to its governance. His passion for adult education and professional development is a thread that runs through every chapter of his career.

As Board Member and Chairperson of Communitas Volunteers Australia, Paul has extended his contribution to volunteer management and community development governance. His multiple corporate company director roles across different sectors reflect not just expertise, but a deliberate strategy: to ensure Aboriginal voices and perspectives are embedded at the highest levels of institutional decision-making, where policies and investments are shaped that affect Indigenous communities for generations.

CONGRATULATIONS UNCLE PAUL NEWMAN — WIRADJURI, GADIGAL, WAILWAN AND KAMILAROI MAN, FORTY YEARS OF SERVICE ACROSS EVERY SECTOR THAT MATTERS. YOU HAVE CARRIED YOUR NATIONS WITH YOU INTO EVERY ROOM YOU HAVE ENTERED, AND LEFT EACH ONE BETTER FOR IT.

UNCLE PAUL NEWMAN · KEY ROLES & ACHIEVEMENTS

NSW Reconciliation Council Chair
Led peak body for reconciliation in NSW; advanced Indigenous rights

World Vision Senior Advisor
First Nations Senior Business Advisor — Indigenous community economic development

Bachelor of Business & MA
B.Bus and MA in Communications & Cultural Studies — theory meets practice

LEAD PDA Board Member
Professional development and Aboriginal workforce programs across NSW

Communitas Chairperson
Board Member & Chair, Communitas Volunteers Australia — community governance

Corporate Director Roles
Multiple company director roles embedding Indigenous perspectives at board level

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ELDER OF THE YEAR — MALE (UNCLE) 2025

UNCLE PAUL NEWMAN · WIRADJURI · GADIGAL · WAILWAN · KAMILAROI · 2025

FIRST NATIONS LEGACY OF THE YEAR

Mel Armstrong

Author · Healer · Advocate

GOMEROI WOMAN · CHINESE HERITAGE
HUNTER REGION, NSW
FOUNDER, WARRANGGAL DREAMING
INTERNATIONAL BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
17+ YEARS MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

“““

We invite you to take a walk with us on A Journey to Country, and experience the path through Baagii's memories.
— MEL ARMSTRONG

A JOURNEY TO COUNTRY: BAAGII'S MEMORIES

The book was featured on ABC Radio National's AWAYE! in March 2025, bringing Mel's story — and Baagii's memories — to a national audience.

29 years
RECONNECTION JOURNEY

17+ years
HEALTH & WELLNESS

400K+
AUSTRALIANS WITH DEMENTIA

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS LEGACY OF THE YEAR 2025

Honouring a work that will endure — healing, memory and culture preserved

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THESTORY

Walking in Two Worlds — A Gomeroi Woman's 29-Year Journey to Country

Mel Armstrong is a proud Gomeroi woman with Chinese heritage who was introduced to her family of origin in her early twenties. What followed was a twenty-nine-year journey of reconnection to Country, language and culture — and out of that journey came one of the most profoundly original contributions to Indigenous publishing in recent years.

A descendant of the Kim family from Uralla, Armidale, Tamworth, Walcha and Taree, Mel has spent more than seventeen years working in the Mental Health, Health and Wellness industry — running alongside the same span of time in spiritual tuition and the development of holistic practice. She is the Founder and Director of Warranggal Dreaming, through which she works as a healer, mentor, advocate and Facilitator of Traditional First Nations Women's Spiritual Teachings. Her journey has included learning the Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay and Yuwaalayaay languages, walking Country, sitting with Elders and Aunts and Uncles, and being taught by her Elder, Teacher and Friend Minmia — Wiradjuri Senior Law Woman, Medicine Woman, Healer and Teacher.

Her book ***A Journey to Country: Baagii's Memories*** — where "Baagii" means grandmother in language — is the centrepiece of this award. Published through Warranggal Dreaming, it is a holistically focused story describing the journey of dementia experienced through an Aboriginal lens. It brings together the Dreaming, spiritual healing and mainstream practice to tell the story of what it means to walk in two worlds at once: the world of clinical diagnosis and the world of Country, culture and ancestral memory. In a nation where more than 400,000 people live with dementia — a number predicted to double within a decade — Mel has given First Nations communities a story that is unmistakably and beautifully their own.



MEL ARMSTRONG · WARRANGGAL DREAMING · LEGACY OF THE YEAR 2025

FIRST NATIONS LEGACY OF THE YEAR

Mel's Journey

Early 20s

Introduced tofamily of origin — begins 29-year journey of reconnection

17+ years

Mental Health,Health & Wellness industry alongside spiritual development

Learning

Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay & Yuwaalayaay language certificates (3 completed)

Teaching

Taughtby Elder Minmia — Wiradjuri Senior Law Woman, Medicine Woman & Healer

2022

National Indigenous Social & Emotional Wellbeing Forum, Darwin — guest panelist

2022

Children's Book Council of Australia presentation; Yellah Fellah exhibition,

ManningRegional Gallery

Published

A Journey to Country: Baagii's Memories
Star Dreaming
Innovation Secrets
Inside Story

March 2025

ABC Radio National AWAYE! podcast feature

FIND MEL ARMSTRONG

warranggaldreaming.com.au
mel@warranggaldreaming.com.au
Hunter Region, NSW



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Baagii's Memories — A Story That Will Outlast Us All

DEMENTIA, LANGUAGE & THE DREAMING

Giving Community a Story That Is Unmistakably Their Own

A Journey to Country: Baagii's Memories addresses a gap that has never been properly filled in Australian publishing: dementia as experienced from within an Aboriginal family, narrated through the lens of culture, Country, language and spirit. As Mel writes: "it's rare to find professionals versed in both worlds that can truly combine holistic practice in conjunction with mainstream care in a culturally safe way, with the focus and intention of proper inclusion regarding culture, spiritual needs and family as part of the whole equation." This book does exactly that. It describes the journey of dementia — the healing that occurs, the strength and simultaneous gentleness of culture, and the vastness and depth of traditional language — as a path into the Dreaming while walking in two worlds. Featured on ABC Radio National's AWAYE! in March 2025, it has reached audiences far beyond its community of origin and opened conversations about culturally safe aged care that Australia urgently needs to have.

HEALING, WOMEN'S TEACHINGS & CULTURAL SAFETY

Walking With Women, Sharing What Was Given

Through Warranggal Dreaming, Mel offers healing and mentoring, guest speaking, Women's Teachings and Gatherings, and the "Walking with Women" program. She is an Accredited Cultural Awareness Training Facilitator who has presented to national forums, art galleries and the Children's Book Council of Australia. Her work integrates trauma care, cultural safety, inclusive practice, wellness and recovery — always from a strength-based perspective rooted in lived experience and deep cultural knowledge.

In 2023, Mel completed her third certificate in Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay and Yuwaalayaay Languages and Culture — a milestone in a journey of language reclamation that has always been central to her reconnection with Country. She has been guided by her Elder and teacher Minmia, and carries those teachings forward in her writing, her healing practice and her published works including ***Star Dreaming***, ***Innovation Secrets*** and ***Inside Story***.







MEL ARMSTRONG · KEY WORKS & CONTRIBUTIONS

A Journey to Country: Baagii's Memories
Dementia through an Aboriginal lens — healing, language and the Dreaming

Warranggal Dreaming
Healing, mentoring, Women's Teachings, Walking with Women programs

Language Reclamation
Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay & Yuwaalayaay — 3 certificates completed; language in books

AWAYE! ABC March 2025
Featured on ABCRadio National — dementia from an Aboriginal perspective

Cultural Awareness
Accredited facilitator; National SEWB Forum; Children's Book Council

Yellah Fellah Exhibition 2022
Family story exhibited at Manning Regional Gallery cross-cultural show

CONGRATULATIONS MEL ARMSTRONG — YOU TOOK THE MOST PRIVATE OF JOURNEYS, SITTING WITH YOUR BAAGII THROUGH HER MEMORIES AND HER COUNTRY, AND YOU TURNED IT INTO SOMETHING THAT WILL HELP THOUSANDS OF ABORIGINAL FAMILIES FEEL SEEN, UNDERSTOOD AND HELD. THAT IS THE DEFINITION OF LEGACY.

FIRST NATIONS CONTRIBUTOR TO COMMUNITY

ARA Indigenous Services

Rewrite the Playbook

INDIGENOUS OWNED & OPERATED

FOUNDED 2015 (AS CMC INDIGENOUS) CO-FOUNDERS: MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN & PAUL McCANN

SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED

51% INDIGENOUS OWNERSHIP

"Our vision is to create a First Nations lead business, creating skilled, long-term careers for our people and a place where everyone can thrive.

— ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES



indigenous.aragroup.com.au

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS CONTRIBUTOR TO COMMUNITY 2025

Recognising outstanding contribution to Indigenous employment, business and community empowerment

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Rewriting the Playbook — From the Field to First Nations Business

ARA Indigenous Services was born from a simple but radical idea: that Indigenous Australians deserved not just employment, but ownership, leadership and generational change. A decade on, that idea has become one of the most compelling Indigenous business stories in Australia.

ARA Indigenous Services was founded in 2015 by AFL legend and Kaurna, Ngarrindjeri and Narungga man **Michael O'Loughlin** and business partner **Paul McCann**, initially as CMC Indigenous Services. The business started by delivering integrated property maintenance — contract cleaning, maintenance, soft services and waste management — and has since expanded into a comprehensive range of industrial services across fire, electrical, security, building, mechanical and products. In 2017, CMC Indigenous Services formed a partnership with the ARA Group, becoming ARA Indigenous Services and gaining access to ARA's national network of more than 100 locations and 4,000-plus employees across Australia and New Zealand. The business is **Supply Nation certified** with 51% Indigenous ownership — a structural commitment to genuine First Nations economic control.

At the heart of ARA Indigenous Services is the belief that Indigenous employment and Indigenous business ownership are not just social good — they are powerful economic drivers. The company actively mentors all of ARA's divisions to meet engagement and employment objectives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, integrating First Nations perspectives across the entire ARA Group rather than siloing them in a separate entity. Its flagship **Wiimali Program** offers a structured employment pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, supporting them through the ARA Indigenous Services team with processes, mentoring and career development.

ARA Indigenous employees speak passionately about their personal journeys. The company calls it generational change — because that is precisely what it is aiming to deliver.

ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES · CONTRIBUTOR TO COMMUNITY 2025

2015	51%	100+
FOUNDED	INDIGENOUS OWNERSHIP	ARA LOCATIONS NATIONAL



FIRST NATIONS CONTRIBUTOR TO COMMUNITY

ARA Indigenous Services Timeline

2015
Founded as CMC Indigenous Services by Michael O'Loughlin and Paul McCann

2017
Partnership formed with the ARA Group — expanding across national network

Services
Property Services, Fire, Electrical, Security, Building & Mechanical

Wiimali Program
Employment pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Community
GO Foundation, NIDA scholarships, ARA First Nations Foundations sporting program

RAP
Reconciliation Action Plan across all ARA divisions — embedding Indigenous engagement group-wide

Supply Nation
Certified with 51% Indigenous ownership — structural First Nations economic control



FIND ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES

indigenous.aragroup.com.au

Supply Nation Certified

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Generational Change Through Business, Employment & Community

WIIMALI PROGRAM & INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES · COMMUNITY IMPACT & PROGRAMS

Creating Skilled, Long-Term Careers for Our People

The Wiimali Program is ARA Indigenous Services' structured employment pathway, designed to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into meaningful, skilled work across ARA's national operations. Beyond job placement, it provides mentoring, professional development training and a supportive team environment designed to build long-term, sustainable careers. ARA's Indigenous employees speak about their personal journeys with genuine passion — and the company describes the result simply as "generational change." Across ARA's network of more than 100 locations and 4,000-plus employees, the integration of ARA Indigenous Services into the broader ARA Group means that First Nations engagement is not a corporate footnote: it is embedded across fire, security, electrical, building, mechanical, and property services divisions, mentored from the inside by Indigenous leadership.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & ENDOWMENT FUND

Investing in the Next Generation — Education, Sport and Culture

Through the ARA Endowment Fund, the company reaches far beyond its service operations into the social fabric of Indigenous communities. The Fund supports the **GO Foundation** — co-founded by Michael O'Loughlin and Adam Goodes — providing scholarships and resources for young Indigenous Australians from school through university and into the workforce. It also supports **NIDA scholarships** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drama students, the **Indigenous Literacy Foundation** for first-language publishing, the **Gadigal Centre** at the University of Sydney, and the **David Lynch Foundation**'s trauma recovery programs.

The **ARA First Nations Foundations** is a 10-week sporting program increasing First Nations participation across all levels of sport — from playing to coaching and administration — and identifying future high-performing athletes. ARA's Reconciliation Action Plan spans the entire group, with a steering committee that includes majority senior management and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation.

Partnerships with Airservices Australia and other major organisations reflect ARA Indigenous Services' role as a trusted vehicle for meaningful Indigenous engagement nationally.

ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES

ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES · KEY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

Wiimali Employment Program
Structured Indigenous pathway — mentoring, training and long careers

GO Foundation Support
Scholarships fromschool to university into the workforce for mob

NIDA Scholarships
3 scholarships annually for Aboriginal & TSI drama students

ARA First Nations Foundations
10-week sportingprogram; First Nations participation in sport at all levels

Indigenous Literacy Foundation
First-language publishing; cultural books for Indigenous children

Reconciliation Action Plan
Group-wide RAP;majority Indigenous steering committee representation

CONGRATULATIONS ARA INDIGENOUS SERVICES — YOU HAVE SHOWN THAT INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION ARE NOT SEPARATE THINGS. EVERY CONTRACT WON, EVERY CAREER LAUNCHED, EVERY SCHOLARSHIP FUNDED AND EVERY YOUNG PERSON PUT IN FRONT OF AN OPPORTUNITY: THAT IS WHAT REWRITING THE PLAYBOOK ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · CONTRIBUTOR TO COMMUNITY · 2025

All First Nations Awards

FIRST NATIONS DEADLY AWARD

Michael McLeod

Entrepreneur · Change Maker

NGARRINDJERI MONARO MAN
STOLEN GENERATIONS SURVIVOR CO-FOUNDER,
SUPPLY NATION CO-FOUNDER,
MESSAGE STICK COMMS FOUNDER,
MESSAGE STICK FOUNDATION

"""

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE THE TYPICAL ABORIGINAL MAN, DEPENDENT ON GOVERNMENT HANDOUTS. I REFUSED WELFARE AND CHOSE TO DO IT THE HARD WAY — I STARTED MY OWN BUSINESS.

— MICHAEL McLEOD

CO-FOUNDER, SUPPLY NATION & MESSAGE STICK

From the Streets of Sydney to Reshaping Indigenous Australia's Economy

Michael McLeod is a Ngarrindjeri Monaro man and Stolen Generations survivor who went from homelessness and addiction to co-founding Supply Nation — one of the most transformative organisations in the history of Indigenous economic development in Australia. He has been described by a Deputy Prime Minister as "one of Australia's most valuable sons."

Michael was born in 1961, the youngest of six children. At just two years old he and his siblings were removed from their parents, becoming wards of the state of NSW — never to be reunited as a family. He grew up in state ward homes and foster homes. He first met his mother at his father's funeral. By his mid-twenties he was a chronic alcoholic and heroin addict. By his early thirties, he was homeless and living on the streets of Sydney. A successful rehabilitation program brought him back. Clean and sober, he made a decision: he would not be welfare-dependent. He refused employment benefits, Aboriginal housing benefits, grants and handouts — and started his own niche telecommunications business in the Illawarra in the early 1990s: Australia's first Indigenous-owned Internet Service Provider.

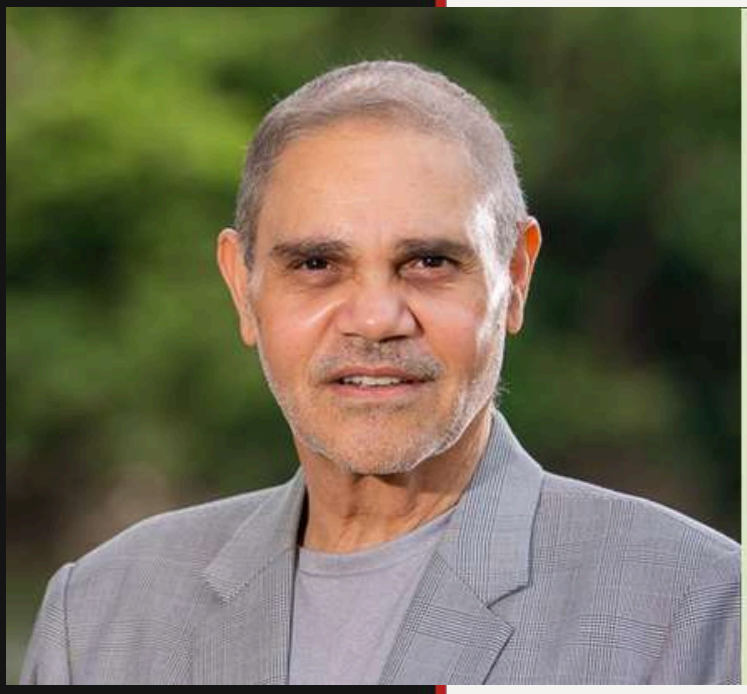
In 2003, Michael and business partner Dug Russell co-founded **Message Stick Communications** — starting with a modest $29 invoice for audiovisual work at Sydney City Council. Over the next two decades, Message Stick grew into Australia's pre-eminent Indigenous-owned ICT managed service provider, delivering cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure, digital transformation and managed services to public and private sector clients across Australia. The firm sought no sponsorship, no donations, no social grants — only the opportunity to be treated as worthy business partners.

And then, in 2009, Michael and Dug did something even bigger: they co-founded the **Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council** — now known as **Supply Nation**. What started with 13 Indigenous-owned businesses has become a directory of more than 5,000 suppliers across every state, territory and sector of the Australian economy.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS DEADLY AWARD 2025

Recognising exceptional, outstanding and extraordinary First Nations achievement

5,000+	$42.6B	2009
SUPPLY NATION BUSINESSES	SOCIAL VALUE / YEAR	SUPPLY NATION FOUNDED



MESSAGESTICK

"I acknowledge the extraordinary history of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have called for us to have a seat at the table."

Michael McLeod, Co-Founder & Chair

FIRST NATIONS DEADLY AWARD

The McLeod Journey

1961
Born Ngarrindjeri Monaro; removed from family at age 2 — Stolen Generations

Early 30s
Homeless onstreets of Sydney; chronic addiction; successful rehabilitation

Early 90s
Founded Australia's first Indigenous-owned ISP in the Illawarra, NSW

2003
Co-founded Message Stick Communications with Dug Russell— $29 first invoice

2009
Co-founded Supply Nation (AIMSC) — 13 businesses; now 5,000+; $42.6B social value/year

Policy
Lobbied Government to establish Indigenous Procurement Policy

2009+
Inaugural Chair, Career Trackers — Indigenous uni students through internships

2023
Founded Message Stick Foundation — empowering First Nations youth

2024
Appointed inaugural Patron, Supply Nation

FIND MICHAEL McLEOD

messagestick.com.au
messagestickfoundation.com.au
supplynation.org.au



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Supply Nation, the Foundation and a Movement Still in Progress

SUPPLYNATION&ECONOMICSELF-DETERMINATION

Rewriting the Rules of Indigenous Economic Participation

Supply Nation — co-founded by Michael McLeod and Dug Russell in 2009 with $3 million in government support they had lobbied hard to secure — is now Australia's leading supplier diversity organisation. It started with 13 certified Indigenous-owned businesses. Today its Indigenous Business Directory lists more than 5,000 suppliers across every state, territory and sector of the Australian economy, with over 800 corporate, government and non-profit members committed to Indigenous procurement. The organisation has generated an estimated **$42.6 billion of social value annually**. Michael also successfully lobbied the Australian Government to establish the **Indigenous Procurement Policy**, creating a federal framework for prioritising Indigenous suppliers in government contracts. He served as **inaugural Chair of Career Trackers**, which supports First Nations university students through structured corporate internships and mentoring. In 2024 he was appointed Supply Nation's inaugural Patron — recognition of a founding contribution that has helped reshape how corporate Australia does business.

MESSAGESTICKFOUNDATION&YOUTHEMPOWERMENT

"I Can't Rest on My Legacy — There's Still Too Much Work to Do"

In 2023, Michael founded the **Message Stick Foundation** — a national not-for-profit dedicated to empowering First Nations youth to build their lives and claim hope for their futures. The Foundation creates culturally safe, purpose-built youth centres providing emergency accommodation, resources and culturally informed healing programs, starting in the ACT. "Our youth are falling through the cracks at alarming rates," he has said. "They have incredible potential and are our future leaders. We owe it to them to provide a safe space, support to heal, mentoring and life skills."

Every year, Michael convenes the **National Apology to the Stolen Generations Breakfast** in the Great Hall of Parliament House — an event he has maintained as a sponsor and convenor, ensuring the moment is never forgotten and the conversation is never allowed to go quiet. It is a profoundly personal act for a man who lived the Stolen Generations, and a reminder that his extraordinary business achievements are inseparable from the deeper purpose that has always driven him.



Supply Nation (2009)
Co-founded with13 businesses; now 5,000+ suppliers; $42.6B social value/year

Message Stick Communications
Australia's premier Indigenous-owned ICT MSP; 20+ years; founded 2003 for $29

Indigenous Procurement Policy
Successfully lobbiedFederal Government to establish IPP framework

Career Trackers (Inaugural Chair)
Pioneering Indigenous university student internship and mentoring program

Message Stick Foundation (2023)
National NFP; culturally safe youth centres; healing, education and life skills

Annual Apology Breakfast
Parliament HouseGreat Hall; honours Stolen Generations; held each year since Apology

MICHAELMcLEOD·KEYACHIEVEMENTS&INITIATIVES

CONGRATULATIONS MICHAEL MCLEOD — FROM THE STREETS OF SYDNEY TO THE GREAT HALL OF PARLIAMENT HOUSE. YOU REFUSED EVERY HANDOUT THEY OFFERED, BUILT SOMETHING NO-ONE HAD BUILT BEFORE, AND THEN TURNED AROUND AND MADE SURE THE DOOR WAS OPEN FOR FIVE THOUSAND MORE. THAT IS DEADLY.

FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AWARD

Coomara Munro

Flight Lieutenant · RAAF

GUMBAYNGGIRR PEOPLES
MID-NORTH COAST NSW
PERSONNEL CAPABILITY OFFICER
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
SERVING SINCE 2003

“““

My service to country has taught me that the ability to freely connect with country and kin without fear of persecution or conflict is so rare and special. This is the vision of my ancestors.
— COOMARA MUNRO

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT · RAAF

HONOURING PRIDE, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL STRENGTH IN SERVICE TO COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AWARD 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

Serving Country — Gumbaynggirr Heritage in Australian Blue

When Coomara Munro was six years old, his grandmother gave him a pair of camouflage fatigues. He didn't stop until he had the whole kit. Since 2003, he has served in the Middle East, Pakistan and East Timor as a proud Gumbaynggirr man — one of a family tradition of service that stretches back four generations.

Coomara Munro is a descendant of the Gumbaynggirr peoples of the mid-north coast of NSW, with close family ties to mob all the way up the Macleay Valley from South West Rocks through to Armidale and across to Tingha — incorporating Dunghutti, Anaiwan and Kamilaroi peoples. His decision to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force was shaped by a remarkable family legacy. His grandfather's two sisters — his great-aunts — both served in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) during World War II: CPL Gwendoline Munro as a Telephonist in Sydney, and
ACW Wilga Williams (née Munro) as a Telephone Operator at RAAF Edinburgh. His mother, ACW Liza Jane Munro, served as a Steward in Wagga in the early 1980s. And his father — a non-Indigenous Aircraft Technician who reached the rank of Sergeant — passed away from health issues linked to the F111 reseal/deseal incident.
As a young child visiting his great-grandmother in Tamworth, Coomara heard the stories of that service — and asked himself: "Surely serving in the Air Force is something I can do?" He joined the RAAF and has since deployed to Iraq (2003 and as part of ICAT), Timor-Leste and Pakistan. He earned the Commander Task Group 633.2 Commendation and holds multiple service medals across three theatres of operation. He has also received the Air Force NAIDOC Award and two OTS Leadership and Military Qualities Awards — recognition not just of operational excellence, but of the character and values he brings to service.

"It wasn't soon after I joined that I realised I was part of another family, an extended family that was even bigger than my own," he has said. "I wanted to be part of that legacy and create a legacy for myself and the future generations of Indigenous Australians."

2003	4	3
SERVING SINCE	FAMILY GENERATIONS OF SERVICE	OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS



COOMARA MUNRO · GUMBAYNGGIRR PEOPLES · CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AWARD 2025

FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AWARD

The Munro Family Legacy

WWII

Great-Aunts serve in WAAAF:
CPL Gwendoline Munro &
ACW Wilga Williams (Munro)

1960s–80s

AuntyWilga tours Australia
with Harry Williams &
The Country Outcasts
(KooriCountry Music)

1980s

Mother ACW Liza Jane
Munro serves as RAAF
Steward, Wagga

Age 6

Grandmother gives Coomara
a set of fatigues —
"I wanted the whole kit"

2003

Deploys to Iraq —
begins active service
career in RAAF

2003–now

Iraq, Timor-Leste,Pakistan;
Personnel Capability Officer;
Flight Lieutenant

2021

Delivers commemorative
address at Blue Mountains
Hospital — Aboriginal
WWI soldiers memorial

SERVING COUNTRY EXHIBITION

servingcountry.com.au
Royal Australian Air Force
Gumbaynggirr Country, NSW



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AWARD · 2025

Culture as Armour — Gumbaynggirr Identity in Uniform

CULTURAL CONFIDENCE & INDIGENOUS MILITARY HERITAGE

Honouring the Ancestors Who Served — and Those Still Serving

In April 2021, Flight Lieutenant Coomara Munro delivered the commemorative address at Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital, as plaques were unveiled honouring 35 Darug and Gundungurra Aboriginal soldiers who had served in World War I — men whose names had been left off the original tribute boards erected in 1927. The ceremony included a Welcome to Country by Elder Aunty Carol Cooper and a smoking ceremony — bringing together the deepest threads of First Nations culture and Australian military service. For Coomara, it was not an abstract ceremony. It was personal. Aboriginal soldiers have served in every major conflict Australia has been part of, often without recognition. His family — his great-aunts, his mother, his father — are part of that living history. In choosing to serve himself, and in speaking publicly about what that service means through the lens of his Gumbaynggirr identity, Coomara embodies cultural confidence: the ability to walk fully as who you are in every space you enter.

SERVING COUNTRY — A VISION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

"Connect With Country and Kin Without Fear"

Coomara's story is also a story about what gets passed down. His grandmother's gift of a small set of fatigues when he was six years old. His mother's pride in her own brief service. The stories of his great-aunts serving in the WAAAF during WWII — and of Aunty Wilga going on to tour Australia with Harry Williams and The Country Outcasts, the celebrated Koori Country Music band of the 1960s–1980s. Every generation of the Munro family has found a way to serve — in uniform and in culture — and Coomara carries that forward.

His profile in the ***Serving Country*** exhibition — a photographic record of Indigenous Australians serving in the ADF — captures his portrait and his medals alongside his own words about what service means. "What I hope my children will continue to fight for as leaders and descendants of Gumbaynggirr mob," he writes. The Cultural Confidence Award recognises a man who has worn his identity with pride on every deployment, in every role, and in every commemoration — and who has never once needed to choose between Country and country.





Iraq 2003 & ICAT
Australian Active Service Medal; Iraq Medal; first deployment overseas

Timor-Leste Service
Australian Service Medal; TL Solidarity Medal; peacekeeping operations

Pakistan Humanitarian
Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal — Clasp Pakistan II

OTS Leadership Awards x2
Officer Training School Leadership & Military Qualities Award (twice)

Air Force NAIDOC Award
Recognised for Indigenous excellence and contribution within the RAAF

CTG 633.2 Commendation
Commander Task Group commendation — operational excellence on deployment

COOMARA MUNRO · MEDALS, AWARDS & DEPLOYMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS COOMARA MUNRO — YOUR GRANDMOTHER GAVE YOU FATIGUES AT SIX YEARS OLD AND YOU NEVER STOPPED. YOU HAVE WORN YOUR GUMBAYNGGIRR HERITAGE WITH THE SAME PRIDE AS YOUR WINGS, AND YOU CARRY FOUR GENERATIONS OF YOUR FAMILY'S SERVICE — IN UNIFORM AND IN CULTURE — INTO EVERYTHING YOU DO.

COOMARA MUNRO · GUMBAYNGGIRR PEOPLES · RAAF · 2025
ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

FIRST NATIONS STAR OF THE YEAR

Johnathan Thurston
Academy

Confidence · Courage · Self-Belief

MANAGING DIRECTOR:
JOHNATHAN THURSTON AM

HEAD OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE:
ULETA MILLER

LAUNCHED FEBRUARY 2018
GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND

“““

Our mission is to boost and empower our nation's youth with increased self-belief, confidence and courage — because every young person deserves to know they've got this.
— JT ACADEMY

3
FLAGSHIP PROGRAMS

2018
LAUNCHED

Qld & beyond
REACH ACROSS AUSTRALIA

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

STAR OF THE YEAR 2025

RECOGNISING A SHINING BEACON OF LEADERSHIP, POSITIVE CHANGE AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

jtacademy.com.au

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THESTORY

You Be the Difference — JT Academy Lighting the Way for Australia's Youth

When Johnathan Thurston AM retired from rugby league in 2018, he was already one of the greatest players the game had ever seen. Then he launched the Johnathan Thurston Academy — and proved that the greatest chapter of his career was still to come.

The Johnathan Thurston Academy (JTA) was launched in February 2018 as a national provider of employment, community and education engagement programs. Led by JT as Managing Director and major shareholder, and driven by a team that includes Uleta Miller as Head of Indigenous Culture, the Academy has grown into one of Australia's leading youth empowerment organisations. Its mission is simple but powerful: to boost young Australians — especially First Nations young people in regional and remote communities — with self-belief, confidence and courage. As JT says: "You be the difference." The Academy's work is built on storytelling, mentorship and the lived conviction that every young person, regardless of where they start, can build a future that reflects their own potential.

At the All First Nations Awards 2025 in Canberra, JT Academy was named **Star of the Year** — on the same evening that Johnathan Thurston received the Lifetime Achievement in Sport Award. It was, as the team described it, "an unforgettable evening celebrating leadership, resilience, and the strength of community." Uleta Miller delivered an inspiring acceptance speech on behalf of the entire Academy team. The double recognition underscores what JTA has built: not just a platform for JT's profile, but a genuine national movement for First Nations youth.

The Academy runs programs across Queensland and beyond — from Gold Coast to Cairns, Townsville to Mount Isa, Cape York to Central Queensland — reaching thousands of young Australians in communities that have often been left behind.







JOHNATHAN THURSTON ACADEMY · STAR OF THE YEAR 2025

FIRST NATIONS STAR OF THE YEAR

JT Academy Journey

Feb 2018

JT Academy launched;
Managing Director Johnathan Thurston AM

Programs

JTYouGotThis – Supports high-risk young people with resilience, wellbeing, emotional regulation and re-engagement.

JTLeadLikeAGirl – Empowers young women through confidence, courage, leadership and healthy relationships.

**JTBelieve -
Builds confidence, leadership, teamwork and resilience through school engagement.**

JTSucceed – Employment readiness, resumes, interview skills and pathways to employment.

JTBelieve2Succeed – Combines personal development with employment readiness for successful transitions beyond school.

Partners

Coles • Durack Civil • Metro Mining • Mediscrubs • A1 Evolution • Madison Sport • Brisbane Airport Corporation • Fraser Coast Mates • Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre

AFN 2025

Star of the Year —
All First Nations Awards, Canberra; Uleta Miller delivers acceptance speech

FIND JT ACADEMY

jtacademy.com.au

Suite 12, 17 Karp Court,

Bundall Gold Coast,

Queensland





ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

JOHNATHAN THURSTON ACADEMY

JT ACADEMY · PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS & PEOPLE

ReachingYoungAustraliansWhereTheyAre—Regional,Remote and Read

JTYouGotThis is JTA's flagship employment readiness program, designed specifically for young people in regional and remote communities. Youth-led and strengths-based, it builds confidence, courage, self-belief and resilience — and connects participants with practical, sustainable work-ready training and job outcomes. Active in Mount Isa, Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast and beyond, it is a program that meets young people at the exact point where the system has most often failed them: the gap between school and meaningful employment. **JTLeadLikeAGirl** delivers weekly online and in-person workshops for young women, empowering them with leadership, teamwork and confidence skills. Backed by a major partnership with NBN Co., the program has extended into remote communities including Bamaga, with JT regularly joining sessions to yarn directly with participants. **JTBelieve** is a 10-week school-based program built around JT's story and the philosophy that belief drives behaviour — building social and emotional skills in young Australians who are the future leaders of their communities.

STORYTELLING, MENTORSHIP & GENERATIONAL CHANGE

A Community of Learning — Sharing Experience Across Generations

JTA describes itself as "a community of learning where personal growth and experiences are shared through storytelling across generations." Participants don't just experience personal growth — they learn to inspire others to achieve the same. That ripple effect is by design. From a Mount Isa young man resolving a conflict using "cool thoughts instead of fiery thoughts," to a Charters Towers graduate stepping up as a young leader, to a group of Dysart High girls discovering leadership skills they never knew they had — the Academy is full of these moments.

The Academy's reach extends from school programs to Cape York community tours, from online NAIDOC Week sessions to industry days connecting young people with real employers. Partnerships with corporations including Evolution Mining and Johnson Controls bring tradies, engineers and executives into the rooms where JTA's young participants are building their futures. As JTA puts it: "Indigenous youth don't need saving. They need backing. They need belief. They need opportunity." That is exactly what the Star of the Year is for.

JT Academy empowers young Australians through confidence, courage and self-belief. We create measurable outcomes through education, wellbeing and employment, ensuring every young person has the opportunity to thrive in school, community and the workforce. JT Academy delivers school engagement programs, programs for high-risk youth and employment pathway programs. Through our partnership with NBN, our online programs now reach communities across Queensland, New South Wales and Darwin. We also deliver face-to-face programs throughout Mount Isa, Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Hervey Bay

Mediscrubs Partnership

Mediscrubs has partnered with JT Academy to develop a unique range of Indigenous-designed medical scrubs, with proceeds helping support programs that empower young Australians through education, wellbeing and employment pathways.

JTYouGotThis – Supports high-risk young people with resilience, wellbeing, emotional regulation and re-engagement.

JTLeadLikeAGirl – Empowers young women through confidence, courage, leadership and healthy relationships.

JTBelieve - Builds confidence, leadership, teamwork and resilience through school engagement.

JTSucceed – Employment readiness, resumes, interview skills and pathways to employment.

JTBelieve2Succeed – Combines personal development with employment readiness for successful transitions beyond school.

Current Partners
Coles • Durack Civil • Metro Mining • Mediscrubs • A1 Evolution • Madison Sport • Brisbane Airport Corporation • Fraser Coast Mates • Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre

JTACADEMY·PROGRAMS,PARTNERS&REGIONS

CONGRATULATIONS JT ACADEMY — TO JOHNATHAN, ULETA AND EVERY FACILITATOR, MENTOR AND YOUNG PERSON WHO HAS WALKED THROUGH A JTA PROGRAM AND LEFT BELIEVING IN THEMSELVES A LITTLE MORE. STAR OF THE YEAR, BECAUSE THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE TO EVERY YOUNG PERSON WHOSE LIFE YOU HAVE TOUCHED.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · STAR OF THE YEAR · 2025

FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT AWARD

Emma Laverty

Project Dust
BOOROOBERONGAL CLANSWOMAN
DARUG TRIBE
LIVING ON NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY
DIRECTOR, PROJECT DUST
CANBERRA, ACT

“““

BECAUSE IT'S A CULTURAL SPACE AND WE START IN THE SPACE TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, IT ALLOWS THEM TO BUILD THEIR CONFIDENCE. I LIKE TO SHOW MY CULTURE THROUGH DANCING.

— EMMA LAVERTY & NOAH (PARTICIPANT)





Image credit: O&J Wikner Photography
Project Dust rehearsal at "Country" at Canberra Theatre Centre, 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT AWARD
2025

THE STORY

Born in Lockdown — A Dance Group That Brought the Mob Together

When COVID-19 closed school doors and cut off Emma Laverty's mentoring work, she watched the cultural connections she had spent years building slowly start to unwind. Her response was to create something that could reach young people outside the school system — and what emerged was Project Dust: a First Nations contemporary dance and community group that has been bringing Canberra's young mob together ever since.

Emma Laverty is a proud Boorooberongal Clanswoman of the Darug Tribe, now living on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra. A dancer, choreographer, cultural engagement specialist and consultant, she has dedicated her career to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and their carers in Aboriginal contemporary dance, language and history — delivering workshops and performances across ACT schools. When COVID lockdowns cut off her access to those schools, she recognised the urgency: "I thought, 'OK, I need something outside of that space to be able to reach these young people.' So that's where this came from."

Project Dust is a First Nations contemporary dance community group that brings together people from many Tribes who live off Country to dance, build skills, share stories and perform. There is no skill prerequisite — only an invitation to step into a culturally safe space together and discover what community feels like. The group is co-mentored by Emma Laverty (Darug) and Tammi Gissell (Muruwarri-Wiradjuri), and ranges from babies in slings to high school students pursuing Certificate III qualifications in dance teaching. The core design is intergenerational: older children mentor younger ones, building their own leadership and employment-readiness skills in the process.

In April 2025, Project Dust presented ***COUNTRY*** — a collaborative new work exploring what Country means in everyday lives — at the Canberra Theatre Centre as part of its First Nations Artist in Residence program. The work was supported by ArtsACT and Dr Aunty Caroline Hughes OAM.

PROJECT DUST · CANBERRA ACT

HONOURING DANCE, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY — BRINGING YOUNG MOB UP STRONG

Many Tribes	No Prereq.	COUNTRY 2025
ONE COMMUNITY	OPEN TO ALL	CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE



NEWS

Project Dust dancers Shaunda, Miley and Lakeya. (Image: Jess Whaler)

FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT AWARD

Project Dust Timeline

COVID Lockdowns
School mentoring disrupted; Emma creates Project Dust to reach young people outside the schoolsystem

Founded
First Nations contemporary dance group — many Tribes, one community on Ngunnawal Country

Design
No skill prerequisite; cultural space for all ages; babies to high school mentors

Mentors
Emma Laverty (Darug) & Tammi Gissell (Muruwarri-Wiradjuri) co-mentor the group

Schools
Workshops &performances across ACT schools; cultural engagement in dance, language & history

2024
Performed at Liz Lea's A Stellar Lineup — including babies in slings

April 2025
COUNTRY performed at Canberra Theatre Centre Courtyard Studio; ArtsACT supported

FIND PROJECT DUST

@projectdust_ on Instagram

facebook.com/emmalavertydance Ngunnawal Country, Canberra ACT





Image credit: O&J Wikner Photography
Project Dust rehearsal of "Country" at Canberra Theatre Centre, 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

COUNTRY — A New Work for Canberra Theatre Centre

FIRST NATIONS ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM 2025

Exploring What Country Means in Our Everyday Lives

COUNTRY is a collaborative work by the mentors and participants of Project Dust, presented at the Canberra Theatre Centre Courtyard Studio on 26 and 27 April 2025 as part of the First Nations Artist in Residence program — a 10-month artist-led residency with fortnightly mentoring and a new work for presentation. The work explores what Country means in everyday lives: how community grows together with Country, and the connection to Country wherever we tread. Although Project Dust gathers on Ngunnawal Country, its community comes from many different Tribes — and the work gives voice to the appreciation of the land they share. Choreography was inspired by Emma Laverty (Darug) and Tammi Gissell (Muruwarri-Wiradjuri), with input from all Project Dust participants. COUNTRY was supported by the ArtsACT Cultural Arts Fund and the Canberra Theatre Centre New Works Program, with rehearsal space provided by Canberra Dance Collective, Dance Edge School of Performing Arts, West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, and Dark Carnival. The work was also guided by local Ngunnawal Elder Dr Aunty Caroline Hughes OAM. The artwork "Connection" (2025) by Zoe Stevenson (Darug) accompanied the work: "No matter how far away you are from your roots, you are always connected to Country by the land, the water, the sky, and the people."

EMPLOYMENTPATHWAYS&INTERGENERATIONALLEADERSHIP

Closing the Gap Through Culture — Dance as a Work Pathway

Emma's vision for Project Dust has always extended beyond the dance floor. By designing the program so that older children mentor younger ones, she creates a space where high school students develop leadership skills, confidence, and a sense of responsibility for their community. One participant is already studying for a Certificate III in assistant dance teaching — creating a direct pathway from Project Dust into employment. "If we're going to look at closing the gap and help build better statistical outcomes in terms of employment," Emma says, "I think projects like this will be able to do that."

Project Dust has performed at community events across Canberra, including Liz Lea's 2024 ***A Stellar Lineup*** — where even the youngest members of the group, carried in slings, performed alongside older dancers in a joyful expression of what it means to grow up in culture. Supported by the Dance Arts Alliance and endorsed by Ngunnawal Elder Dr Aunty Caroline Hughes OAM, Project Dust is exactly what the Children's Empowerment Award exists to recognise — a space where young mob come up strong in their culture and confident in themselves.



COUNTRY April 2025
New work at Canberra Theatre Centre; ArtsACT and CTC New Works Program

Intergenerational Mentorship
High school students mentor younger children; leadership + confidence

Employment Pathways
Certificate III in dance teaching; closing the gap through cultural employment

School Workshops
Cultural engagement across ACT schools; dance, language and history

Elder Endorsement
Guided by Dr Aunty Caroline Hughes OAM — Indigenous Elder, Canberra

Community Performance
A Stellar Line up 2024; Dance Arts Alliance; many Tribes, one community

PROJECT DUST·KEY FEATURES & SUPPORT

CONGRATULATIONS EMMA LAVERTY AND PROJECT DUST — YOU TURNED A LOCKDOWN INTO A LEGACY. IN A CULTURAL SPACE WHERE EVERY CHILD IS WELCOMED EXACTLY AS THEY ARE, WITH NO PREREQUISITE EXCEPT A WILLINGNESS TO SHOW UP, YOU HAVE BUILT SOMETHING THAT WILL OUTLAST ANY STAGE AND ECHO ACROSS GENERATIONS.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT AWARD · 2025

AJ Williams-Tchen

Leader of Thought Change

WIRADJURI & WOTJOBALUKMAN SOCIAL WORKER · CULTURAL MENTOR MHFA MASTER INSTRUCTOR
NAARM (MELBOURNE), VICTORIA

> ***The community should not be afraid of recognising mental illness for what it is — common, and with the right knowledge, something we can all help with.***
>
> ***— AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN***
> *FOUNDER, GIRRAWAY GANYI CONSULTANCY*



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS HEALTH & WELLBEING AWARD 2025

Recognising transformative impact on First Nations mental health and community wellbeing

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

FEATURED PROFILE · 2025

Thirty Years of Yarning, Healing and Breaking Down Barriers

AJ Williams-Tchen describes himself as a Leader of Thought Change. Over more than three decades, he has been doing exactly that — dismantling the stigma around mental illness in Aboriginal communities, one yarn, one workshop and one community at a time.

A proud Wiradjuri and Wotjobaluk man, AJ built one of the most comprehensive professional toolkits in Australian Indigenous health. Qualified as a nurse, youth worker, social worker, community development worker, career counsellor and Mental Health First Aid Master Instructor, he brought every discipline to bear on a single mission: ensuring First Nations people feel culturally safe seeking mental health support, and that all Australians are equipped to offer it.

In 2005, AJ founded Girraway Ganyi Consultancy — an Aboriginal-owned vehicle for transformation that has delivered over 600 cultural appreciation workshops to more than 200 Victorian community, health and hospital settings. As National Coordinator of the Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Program he trained instructors nationwide. To date he has personally trained over 10,500 Mental Health First Aiders and worked with more than 400 organisations to build culturally safe workplaces.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AJ created a YouTube channel 'Black Yarns' as a culturally safe space for Aboriginal voices. He then launched the podcast series ***YarninBlak*** (2023 and 2024), ***BlackChatz*** and ***Deadly Definitions*** (2024) — reaching audiences who might never set foot inside a clinic or seminar room.



10,400+	180+	30+
FIRST AIDERS TRAINED	ORGANISATIONS SERVED	YEARS IN SERVICE

AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN · GIRRAWAY GANYI CONSULTANCY · HEALTH & WELLBEING AWARD 2025

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH & WELLBEING

The Williams-Tchen Legacy

2005
Founded Girraway Ganyi Consultancy, Naarm

2008
Become a MHFA Instructor

2020
Mudigang dhulyarra Elder films; cultural YouTube channel

2021
Inaugural AASW Aboriginal Social Worker of the Year

2022
Allied Health COVID Champion; Swinburne & VU Alumni Awards;

2023
YarninBlak podcast launched; Allied Health Awards Social Worker of the Year

2025
Humanist of the Year (AHOY); AFN Health & Wellbeing Award
Fellow of AASW (FAASW)

2026
National and Victorian Suicide Prevention Life Awards

- *AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN*
- *KEY INITIATIVES & IMPACT*

Girraway Ganyi Consultancy
Aboriginal-owned consultancy for cultural safety and mental health literacy since 2008

Cultural Awareness
600+ workshops across 200+ Victorian health, community and hospital settings

Mental Health First Aid
Nearly 6,000 First Aiders trained; 400+organisations; 700th course delivered

Mudigang dhulyarra
Elder short films and YouTube channel; culturally safe space launched during COVID-19

YarninBlak Podcast
Exploring First Nations lives across Australia; Series 1

Awards & Recognition
(2023) &Series 2 (2024) AASW ATSI Social Worker of Year; COVID Champion; AHOY Humanist of Year 2025



FIND AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN

girrawayganyi.com

YarninBlak · BlackChatz · Deadly Definitions Naarm (Melbourne), Victoria

Healing Across the Gap — Culture, Community and Change

RECONCILIATION & CULTURAL SAFETY

Building Bridges, One Conversation at a Time

At the heart of AJ's work is a belief that healing and reconciliation are inseparable. As a Fellow of the Australian Association of Social Workers (2025), he has delivered professionally endorsed national Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Cultural Competence programs, and served as Cultural Consultant to beyondblue, the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Eating Disorders, the National Eating Disorder Collaboration, and the AASW. His ***Mudigang dhulyarra — Elders speaking truthfully*** film series, launched in 2020, gave Elders a platform to share stories of culture and history with audiences across Australia.









MENTORING & YOUTH

Investing in the Next Generation

AJ developed and runs cultural mentoring programs for Aboriginal young people across five independent Melbourne schools, including the **Ngarrugu Terru-galk** mentoring program and **Deadly Thinking** Youth and Adult programs — building identity, resilience and belonging in Aboriginal students.

Named the inaugural AASW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Social Worker of the Year in 2021 and Allied Health Awards Social Worker of the Year (2023), AJ was praised for his trauma-informed and culturally aware practice. In 2025 he was also honoured as Australian Humanist of the Year (AHOY) for his decades of First Nations mental health work.

MHFA - 10,500 MHFAiders trained - 925+ MHFA courses delivered

Legacy -YarninBlak Series 4 (2026)

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN — THIRTY YEARS OF YARNING, MENTORING AND HEALING HAVE QUIETLY TRANSFORMED THE LANDSCAPE OF FIRST NATIONS MENTAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA. THE COMMUNITY YOU HAVE BUILT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · HEALTH & WELLBEING AWARD · 2025

AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN · GIRRAWAY GANYI CONSULTANCY · 2025

McCleod's Angels Catering

Indigenous · Community · Catering

INDIGENOUS-OWNED CATERING BUSINESS
NSW/ACT, AUSTRALIA
COMMUNITY EVENTS & NAIDOC WEEK
GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH AWARD 2025

> ***From humble beginnings to a name the community knows — McCleod's Angels Catering has grown by showing up for mob, one meal at a time.***
> ***— McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING***

FIRST NATIONS GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH 2025

The All First Nations Awards 2025 Grassroots to Growth Award recognises McCleod's Angels Catering for exactly that journey: from small beginnings to a growing community presence, on their own terms, in their own way.



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH AWARD 2025

Recognising Indigenous enterprise built from community, culture and determination

Fed by Community, Grown by Determination — A Grassroots Catering Story

The Grassroots to Growth Award exists for businesses like McCleod's Angels Catering — Indigenous enterprises that do not start in a boardroom or with investor capital, but in community kitchens, at local events and NAIDOC celebrations, built on passion, skill and the determination to create something that is genuinely owned by and for mob.

McCleod's Angels Catering is an Indigenous-owned catering business operating in New South Wales. The business has built its reputation the grassroots way — showing up for community events, serving NAIDOC Week celebrations and catering for local organisations including community housing providers. In a sector where First Nations businesses are still growing their presence, McCleod's Angels represents exactly the kind of community-connected enterprise that the Grassroots to Growth Award is designed to celebrate: a business that started from the ground up, guided by cultural values, and has expanded its reach through quality, reliability and genuine community engagement.

The name says it all — "Angels" speaks to the spirit of care and generosity that underpins the business. Food is one of the most powerful ways to gather community, to share culture and to mark important occasions. For McCleod's Angels, every event catered is an opportunity to bring people together around a table, to represent First Nations business excellence, and to demonstrate that Indigenous enterprise belongs at the heart of the local economy — not at its margins. From NAIDOC Week bookings to housing community events, the business has proven that grassroots enterprise, when rooted in community, has the power to grow.



NSW + ACT	NAIDOC Week	2025
BASED IN	COMMUNITY EVENTS SERVED	AFN AWARD WINNER



McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING · GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH AWARD 2025

FIRST NATIONS GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH AWARD

What Grassroots Growth Looks Like

Origins

Indigenous-owned catering business built from community connections and cultural values

Community First

NAIDOC Week celebrations; local event catering; community housing organisation bookings

Growth

Expanding community profile through quality, reliability and genuine cultural engagement

Recognition

All First Nations Awards 2025 — Grassroots to Growth Award winner

Vision

First Nations food business representing Indigenous enterprise at the heart of community

FIND McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING

McLeod's Angels Catering on Facebook

First Nations Community Catering







ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Why the Grassroots to Growth Award Matters

FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS & ECONOMIC SELF-DETERMINATION

Every Community Business Is the Next Story of Growth

The Grassroots to Growth Award recognises something essential and often overlooked in the story of First Nations economic empowerment: that the most powerful businesses are not always the largest, the most funded, or the most visible. They are often the ones that are most embedded in community — the catering business that shows up for NAIDOC Week when the community needs to celebrate, that feeds the gathering at the housing event, that serves a plate of food with genuine pride and cultural connection. McCleod's Angels Catering is one of these businesses. Built without the advantages that come with capital, networks or corporate backing, it has grown through something harder to acquire and more valuable to hold: trust, community connection and a commitment to doing quality work for the people it serves. The Indigenous business sector in Australia is growing at more than eight per cent per year — faster than any other business sector. Every McCleod's Angels is part of that story. Every community catering booking placed with an Indigenous business is a vote for economic self-determination.

McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING · COMMUNITY, CULTURE & GROWTH

FOOD AS CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Gathering Mob Around the Table

For First Nations communities, food has always been more than sustenance. It is ceremony, it is gathering, it is the expression of Country and culture and kinship. When an Indigenous catering business serves a NAIDOC Week celebration or a community housing event, it is not simply providing a service — it is participating in culture, in community, in the ongoing story of what it means to be First Nations in contemporary Australia. McCleod's Angels Catering understands this. The name itself carries the spirit of care — "Angels" — and that spirit is what the community returns to, booking after booking.

The All First Nations Awards Grassroots to Growth Award is for businesses like this: those that have not yet attracted national media attention, that may not appear on supplier diversity databases, that have not yet scaled to dozens of employees — but that are doing something just as important. They are proving, every day in their community, that Indigenous-owned enterprise works. That it serves with pride. That it grows with integrity. And that the journey from grassroots to growth is one being walked, right now, one event at a time.

McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING

· WHAT THE BUSINESS REPRESENTS

Indigenous Ownership
First Nations owned and operated catering business in NSW, Australia

NAIDOC Week Catering
Serving First Nations celebrations and community events with pride

Community Partners
Catering for housing organisations and community events across NSW

Grassroots Ethos
Builtfrom community connection, not capital; quality and cultural pride

Economic Self-Determination
First Nations business contributing to growing Indigenous economy

Growth Potential
Fromlocal events to a growing community presence and reputation

CONGRATULATIONS McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING — FOR PROVING THAT THE BEST WAY TO GROW AN INDIGENOUS BUSINESS IS TO START BY SERVING COMMUNITY FAITHFULLY. THE GRASSROOTS ARE WHERE THE STRONGEST ROOTS GROW. KEEP FEEDING THE MOB.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · GRASSROOTS TO GROWTH AWARD · 2025

McCLEOD'S ANGELS CATERING · NSW · 2025

FIRST NATIONS ECO AND SUSTAINABLE AWARD

South Coast
Seaweed

James & Sarah Thomas

YUIN SALTWATER COUNTRY

EUROBODALLA — BATEMANS BAY TO NAROOMA FOUNDED MARCH 2020
FIRST NATIONS-OWNED FAMILY BUSINESS

“““

My wife and I started this initiative to reconnect with our culture and create an industry on the South Coast that is sustainable for the future of our marine life and the next generation.
— JAMES THOMAS

CO-FOUNDER · SOUTH COAST SEAWEED



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
ECO AND SUSTAINABLE AWARD 2025

REVITALISING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO CREATE MODERN RESOURCES USING SEAWEED

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Na-noo-ma — 65,000 Years of Seaweed Knowledge, Revived for the Future

The Yuin Saltwater People of the far south coast of NSW have known the power of seaweed — Na-noo-ma — for tens of thousands of years. James and Sarah Thomas have spent the years since March 2020 bringing that knowledge back to life, building a First Nations family business that is at once a cultural reclamation, an environmental mission and a genuine commercial enterprise.

South Coast Seaweed is a small, family-owned Indigenous business founded in March 2020 by James and Sarah Thomas, located on Yuin Saltwater Country along the NSW South Coast between Batemans Bay and Narooma in the Eurobodalla region. Using traditional knowledge and harvesting methods, they hand-collect organic Sea Kelp from the pristine beaches of the Great Southern Reef to create 100% natural, environmentally friendly and biodegradable products — seaweed flakes, granules and powders for food, health, cosmetics, gardening and beyond. No pesticides, no toxins, no artificial anything. Just ancient practice applied with modern purpose.

The business was born from Sarah's involvement in marine habitat restoration with OzFish Unlimited — she helped establish the OzFish Eurobodalla chapter and serves as its Vice-President. Water quality monitoring after the devastating 2020 summer bushfires led to seagrass restoration work, which led James and Sarah to reconnect the dots between their cultural heritage and their marine environment. More than **85% of Australia's seagrass meadows have disappeared**. Kelp forests off the NSW South Coast have **declined by more than 70%**. This represents hundreds of thousands of hectares of vital habitat — and the Thomases know that First Nations knowledge holds part of the answer to restoring it.

BOTH JAMES (NSILP 2020) AND SARAH (NSILP 2021) HAVE BEEN PARTICIPANTS IN THE FRDC'S NATIONAL SEAFOOD INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM — CONFIRMING THEIR PATHWAY INTO ESTABLISHING A COMMERCIAL FIRST NATIONS-LED AQUACULTURE OPERATION.

March 2020	70%+	65,000 yrs
FOUNDED	KELP FOREST DECLINE NSW	YUIN SEA COUNTRY KNOWLEDGE



FIRST NATIONS ECO AND SUSTAINABLE AWARD

The South Coast Seaweed Journey

2020 Bushfires
Sarahjoins OzFish
Eurobodalla — water quality monitoring post-fires; becomes Vice-President

March 2020
South Coast Seaweed founded by James and Sarah Thomas, Eurobodalla

NSILP
James (2020) and Sarah (2021) complete FRDC National Seafood Industry

Leadership Program

Macquarie University
Partnership to develop educational resources on customary significance of seaweed

NISP
NationalIndigenous Science Education Program — First Nations marine science for young leaders

Taste of Eurobodalla
3 workshops & dinners (Batemans Bay, Moruya, Narooma) with Eurobodalla Shire Council

Cultural Tours
Seaweed identification tours — 65,000 yrs of Yuin knowledge shared on Sea Country

FIND SOUTH COAST SEAWEED
southcoastseaweed.com.au Eurobodalla, NSW South Coast - Yuin Saltwater Country



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Science, Culture and Sea Country — A Vision for First Nations Aquaculture

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MEETS MODERN SCIENCE

Taste of Eurobodalla — 65,000 Years on the Plate

The **Taste of Eurobodalla** food experience workshops — developed by South Coast Seaweed in partnership with Eurobodalla Shire Council — brought the depth of Yuin Sea Country knowledge to the table, literally. Three events held at Batemans Bay, Moruya and Narooma showcased the finest seafood the South Coast has to offer alongside 65,000 years of cultural heritage sustainability. Menus featured Native Oysters (***Ostrea angasi***) with spiced pickled seaweed, seaweed bliss balls, lemongrass and kelp tea. The events were held in partnership with Muladha Gamara and represent exactly the kind of cultural-commercial intersection South Coast Seaweed has built its vision on. In partnership with **Macquarie University**, James and Sarah have also developed educational resources around the customary significance of seaweed, and are proud participants in the **National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISP)** — showcasing First Nations marine science with the next generation of young Indigenous leaders. Their seaweed identification tours take participants through scenic bush tracks to the beaches of the South Coast, sharing 65,000 years of Yuin knowledge about living on Saltwater Country.

FIRST NATIONS AQUA CULTURE & HABITAT RESTORATION

"Get Our People Back onto Sea Country"

The Thomases' ultimate vision is the establishment of **First Nations-led aquaculture farms** to cultivate and harvest sea kelp naturally — creating jobs on Sea Country, restoring critical marine habitat, and reconnecting Indigenous people with cultural practices that sustained communities for millennia. "Our goal is to create First Nations opportunities in aquaculture," Sarah explains. "We want to start doing more research, growing different species and bringing those opportunities for Indigenous people to get back out onto Sea Country." This vision aligns directly with global science: seaweed aquaculture is now recognised as one of the most effective tools for reducing ocean acidification, restoring biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Sarah is a tireless advocate for habitat restoration. As Vice-President of OzFish Eurobodalla, she is actively restoring seagrasses along local estuaries and shorelines, and hopes seaweed aquaculture technology will support the restoration of native kelp forests across the Great Southern Reef. She works collaboratively with local government, not-for-profits, commercial fishers and community members to build a sustainable future on Sea Country. South Coast Seaweed is not just a product. It is proof that traditional knowledge, rigorously applied and shared with modern science, is one of the most powerful tools we have for the planet's future.

SOUTH COAST SEAWEED·KEY PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

Taste of Eurobodalla Food events; Batemans Bay, Moruya, Narooma; native oysters & kelp tea	**Macquarie University** Customary seaweed educational resources; First Nations marine science	**National Science (NISP)** Indigenous Science Education Program; young First Nations leaders
OzFish Eurobodalla Sarah — Vice-President; seagrass restoration; habitat monitoring	**FRDC NSILP** James (2020) & Sarah (2021) — National Seafood Industry Leaders Program	**Cultural Tours** Seaweed ID tours; bush tracks to beach; 65,000 yrs of Yuin knowledge

CONGRATULATIONS JAMES AND SARAH THOMAS — YOU TOOK A LANGUAGE WORD, NA-NOO-MA, AND BUILT IT INTO A LIVING BRIDGE BETWEEN 65,000 YEARS OF YUIN SEA COUNTRY KNOWLEDGE AND THE URGENT ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE OF TODAY. THE OCEAN IS BETTER FOR IT. SO IS THE COMMUNITY.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ECO AND SUSTAINABLE AWARD · 2025

SOUTH COAST SEAWEED · EUROBODALLA NSW · YUIN SALTWATER COUNTRY · 2025

FIRST NATIONS NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARD

ATSIVA

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association

Veterans Supporting Veterans

CEO: DR JOSEPH WEST (MURRAWARRI)
MANUKA, CANBERRA ACT
INDIGENOUS CORPORATION
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST NATIONAL ATSI VETERANS ORGANISATION

> *I was asked what support services were making a positive impact for Indigenous veterans, and the question stumped me. It was then I realised there were no active organisations at the national level.*
>
> *— DR JOSEPH WEST, CEO*
> *FOUNDER & CEO · ATSIVA*

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARD 2025

HONOURING AUSTRALIA'S FIRST NATIONAL DEDICATED SUPPORT BODY FOR INDIGENOUS VETERANS

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

The Question That Started It All — Building the Organisation That Should Have Existed

When Dr Joseph West, a proud Murrawarri man and former Australian Army officer, was asked to give evidence at the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, he was asked a simple question: what support services were making a positive impact for Indigenous veterans? He could not name one. Within months, he had founded ATSIVA to fill the gap himself.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association (ATSIVA) is Australia's **first national organisation dedicated to supporting Indigenous veterans in isolated, remote and rural locations**. There has never before been an ex-service organisation (ESO) run by ATSI veterans, for ATSI veterans, at a national level. ATSIVA was founded by Dr Joseph West — a proud Murrawarri man who grew up north of Bourke and served in the Australian Army for more than twenty years, including deployment to Afghanistan — after realising that no such organisation existed and that thousands of Indigenous veterans across the country were unconnected, unsupported and unable to access the services and entitlements they had earned.

The scale of the need is significant. Australia-wide, there could be as many as **7,000 to 10,000 Indigenous veterans** who could benefit from connecting with ATSIVA. Many live in remote or isolated communities where internet access is unreliable, physical services are absent, and the sense of community that veterans need to thrive is hard to find. ATSIVA has built its model specifically for this reality — a fully virtual membership and support network combined with face-to-face touch points, designed to reach the most isolated veterans and connect them to the services, entitlements and camaraderie they deserve.

In the first six months after the website went live, several veterans in distress reached out and were connected to vital services. As Joe says: "Without ATSIVA acting as a trusted point of contact, those veterans may not have received that support at all."

7,000– 10,000	20+ years	First
INDIGENOUS VETERANS POTENTIAL REACH	DR WEST'S ARMY SERVICE	NATIONAL ATSI VETERANS ESO IN AUSTRALIA



FIRST NATIONS NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARD

ATSIVA - Our Mission

Founded
Dr Joseph West (Murrawarri) and mates establish ATSIVA — spurred by Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Team
CEO: Dr Joseph West
Secretary/Director: CB McGarrity
Directors: Fasheena Young, Rachael Hopkins, Garth O'Connell

Connect
Fully virtual membership; face-to-face touch points; reaching isolated veterans across Australia







Support
Connecting veterans to DVA entitlements; bridging gaps in existing support services

Advance
Career and personal development support; in-service and post-service aspirations

AWM
ATSIVA members at Australian War Memorial — Indigenous commemorative ceremony, Garth O'Connell

Impact
Six months after launch: veterans in crisis reached out; connected to vital services who may otherwise have none

FIND ATSIVA

atsiva.au

Suite 250, 11 Palmerston Lane Manuka ACT 2603

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

For Country, For Mob — Honoured and Now Finally Supported

INDIGENOUS MILITARY HERITAGE & VETERAN WELLBEING

A Debt Long Owed — A Service Finally Delivered

Indigenous Australians have served in every conflict Australia has been involved in since the Boer War of 1899. At least 1,000 First Nations people served in the First World War — 13 are known to have been killed at Gallipoli. In the Second World War, an estimated 3,000–4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served; the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion was formed specifically to defend the Torres Strait. In proportion to population, no community in Australia contributed more to the war effort than the Torres Strait Islander people. Approximately 300 served in Vietnam. And yet, for generations, these veterans returned to face discrimination, dispossession and an absence of the services and recognition available to non-Indigenous veterans. ATSIVA exists to change that. Its three pillars — Connect, Support, Advance — are designed to meet Indigenous veterans where they are: in remote communities, on country, in cities, wherever they live after service. The organisation provides a culturally safe, trusted point of contact that links veterans to DVA entitlements and ESO services they may never have known they were entitled to.

WHY ATSIVA MATTERS—SUICIDE, ISOLATION & COMMUNITY

No Active Organisation at National Level — Until Now

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (2021–2024) examined 1,600 known cases of defence and veteran suicide between 1997 and 2020. Indigenous veterans — already more likely to live in remote areas, already more likely to face barriers to service access — are among the most vulnerable in this cohort. When Joe West could not name a single support service making a positive impact for Indigenous veterans, it was not a failure of memory. It was an accurate assessment of a national gap. ATSIVA is that gap, filled.

ATSIVA's reach is explicitly designed for the most isolated: fully virtual membership, virtual community catch-ups, and advocacy support by phone and email for veterans who can't access physical services. As Joe says: "If you're an Indigenous veteran living in a city, or a non-Indigenous veteran in an isolated community, ATSIVA will happily welcome you to the mob." ATSIVA is supported by donations including from Calleo (a second year of substantial operational funding) and the ACT Veterans Rugby Union Association. It is building the future one veteran at a time.



Connect Veterans
Fully virtual membership; face-to-face touch points; reaching remote & isolated mob

Support Veterans
DVA entitlements; existing ESO and government service referrals; crisis support

Advance Veterans
Career and personal growth; in-service and post-service; cultural connection

Royal Commission
Founded in response to gap identified at RC into Defence and Veteran Suicide

National Reach
7,000–10,000 potential beneficiaries; every state and territory of Australia

AWM Commemoration
ATSIVA members at Australian War Memorial; Indigenous service honoured

ATSIVA · SERVICES, PILLARS & COMMUNITY REACH

CONGRATULATIONS ATSIVA — TO DR JOSEPH WEST AND EVERY MEMBER OF THE TEAM WHO HAS GIVEN THEIR OWN TIME TO BUILD WHAT SHOULD HAVE EXISTED LONG AGO. OUR INDIGENOUS VETERANS SERVED FOR COUNTRY WITHOUT QUESTION. ATSIVA IS THE ORGANISATION THAT FINALLY, UNRESERVEDLY, SERVES THEM BACK.

ATSIVA · ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VETERANS ASSOCIATION · 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARD · 2025

FIRST NATIONS FOOD & BEVERAGE AWARD

Fiona Harrison

Chocolate On Purpose

WIRADJURI WOMAN OF THE GALARI (LACHLAN RIVER)
working on Gundungurra Country in the Southern Highlands NSW

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS-OWNED CHOCOLATE COMPANY (FOUNDED 2012)

“““

My vision is to deepen respect for ancient Indigenous wisdom and culture through storytelling with chocolate. It is our mission to return sovereignty to Indigenous people by making successful enterprises for our own self-determination.

— FIONA HARRISON
CEO · CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
FOOD & BEVERAGE AWARD 2025

Yindyamarra — respect, honour & go slowly to do it properly

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Healing Through Botanicals — How Trauma Became Australia's First Indigenous Chocolate Company

Fiona Harrison is a proud Wiradjuri woman of the Galari (Lachlan River) who was removed from her father's Wiradjuri family as a child, denied her heritage and culture, and later suffered complex PTSD. Out of that journey of pain and healing, she built Australia's first 100% Indigenous-owned chocolate company — and a business model that is rewriting the economics of the native botanical supply chain.

The origins of Chocolate On Purpose are inseparable from Fiona's personal journey. After experiencing complex PTSD following an armed hold-up and hostage situation, she found relief through essential oils — and became intensely curious about how botanical essences could heal. She studied Aromatic Medicine and then the Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage program at Charles Sturt University, reconnecting with the ancestral knowledge that had been denied to her in childhood. She trained as a chocolatier at the Savour Chocolate & Patisserie School, and in 2012 founded Chocolate On Purpose on Wiradjuri Country at the source of the Bila Bula (Belubula River) in Millthorpe, Central Tablelands NSW.

The concept is deceptively elegant: fuse Belgian couverture chocolate with Australian native botanicals — Garal (Wattleseed), Boombera (Macadamia Nut), Gulalung (Finger Limes), Wyrrung (Wild Rosella) — sourced from Indigenous growers in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory. Then use that platform of flavour and delight to tell the stories of culture, healing and the ancient wisdom of Australia's First Peoples. "I use a smooth blend of chocolate familiar to everyone's palates so that Australian native botanical plants stand out to the taste buds and create the conversation around Indigenous issues," Fiona says. The products are fair trade certified, palm oil free and Vegan Australia certified.

Fiona was awarded the Charles Sturt Distinguished Alumni of the Year — First Nations Excellence (2024) and won Champion in the Social Enterprise Business category at the 2025 Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards.

<1%	2012	1st
INDIGENOUS OWNERSHIP IN NATIVE BOTANICAL SUPPLY CHAIN	FOUNDED IN MILLTHORPE NSW	INDIGENOUS CHOCOLATE COMPANY



· CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE · FOOD & BEVERAGE AWARD 2025

FIRST NATIONS FOOD & BEVERAGE AWARD

Chocolate On Purpose Journey

Removed
Removed from Wiradjuri family as child; hidden Aboriginality; cultural denial and intergenerational trauma

Healing
Complex PTSD from armed hold-up; relief through essential oils; studied Aromatic Medicine

Reconnect
Wiradjuri Language, Culture & Heritage at CSU; reconnecting with ancestral knowledge and country

2012
Chocolate On Purpose founded — Millthorpe, Bila Bula (Belubula River), Central Tablelands NSW

Supply Chain
Sourcing from Indigenous growers (NSW, Qld, Vic, NT); coca from fair-trade farmers — Ivory Coast, Ghana, Ecuador

QANTAS
Chocolate available in Qantas Member Lounges during NAIDOC Week

Awards

MrChilli Chocolate Competition — 1st place (twice); CSU Distinguished Alumni First Nations Excellence 2024

2025
Champion, Social Enterprise Business
Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards







CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE

chocolateonpurpose.com.au

Moss Vale, Southern Highlands NSW

Less Than One Per Cent

Reclaiming What Was Always Ours

SUPPLY CHAIN SOVEREIGNTY & THE NGUNGGILANHA PROJECT

Built on Indigenous Knowledge — Returning Value to Indigenous Hands

The statistic that drives Fiona Harrison's entire commercial strategy is this: **less than 1% of the Australian native botanical and bush food supply chain is owned by Indigenous people** — despite the entire industry being built on tens of thousands of years of Indigenous knowledge, cultural intellectual property and ecological practice with little return to community. Fiona's response was to build Chocolate On Purpose as both a product and a structural intervention: sourcing exclusively from Indigenous growers wherever possible, increasing their participation and economic return, and using the platform of chocolate to tell the cultural stories that the supply chain has long extracted without attribution or payment. Her corporate client list — Qantas, KPMG, Clayton Utz, OzHarvest, Healthscope, UTS — demonstrates that premium product quality and ethical First Nations sourcing are not in tension. They are, in fact, a proposition that corporate Australia is hungry for.

NGUNGGILANHA PROJECT & ABORIGINAL WOMEN 45+

"Every Employment Opportunity Is an Act of Self-Determination"

Funded by a **NSW Government Aboriginal Economic Development Grant**, the Ngunggilanha Project is Chocolate On Purpose's most powerful community initiative. It creates employment pathways specifically for **Aboriginal women aged 45+** — a demographic that is the fastest-growing cohort of homelessness in Australia. The project includes a **native botanical sensory garden** that serves as a site of cultural knowledge transfer, horticulture skills development and economic empowerment. "The Ngunggilanha Project represents our commitment to addressing intergenerational trauma, economic marginalisation and Cultural preservation simultaneously," Fiona says.

Fiona's chocolate also carries culture in its design: the owl shape honours Elders' wisdom; the "Walking On Country" bar speaks of deep connection to land. The Wiradjuri principle of **Yindyamarra** — "respect, honour and go slowly to do it properly" — underpins every business decision, from supply chain to sensory design.

She is a member of the **First Nations Bushfood and Botanical Alliance Australia**, a participant in iAccelerate (UOW) and the Global Sisters network, and holds an **Indigenous Tourism Fund grant** to build a cultural chocolate tasting experience. It's important to to ask ourselves, "What sort of ancestor do I want to be for the seven generations looking up at us, waiting their turn to emerge?"

CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE · PRODUCTS, PARTNERS & AWARDS

Bush Food Chocolate
Garal(Wattleseed), Boombera (Macadamia), Gulalung (Finger Limes), Wyrrung (Wild Rosella)

Supply Chain Ethics
Fairtrade, palm oil free; Indigenous grower-sourced; cacao — Ivory Coast, Ghana, Ecuador

Ngunggilanha Project
NSW Gov. grant; Aboriginal women 45+ employment; native botanical sensory garden

Corporate Clients
Qantas,KPMG, Clayton Utz, OzHarvest, Healthscope, UTS, Universal Studios/NBC

Awards 2024–25
CSU Distinguished Alumni
First Nations Excellence;
Women's Small Business Champion

Qantas NAIDOC
Chocolate on Purpose available in Qantas Member Lounges during NAIDOC Week

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · FOOD & BEVERAGE AWARD · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS FIONA HARRISON — YOU TOOK THE MOST PAINFUL CHAPTERS OF YOUR LIFE, THE DENIAL OF YOUR CULTURE, THE TRAUMA, THE HEALING, AND YOU TURNED THEM INTO SOMETHING THAT FEEDS THE SPIRIT, CHALLENGES THE SUPPLY CHAIN, AND ASKS THE QUESTION EVERY BUSINESS SHOULD ASK: WHAT SORT OF ANCESTOR DO I WANT TO BE?

Fiona Harrison ⚫ Chocolate On Purpose ⚫ Gundungurra Country ⚫ 2025

FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR

3KND

Kool 'N' Deadly

Voice of Indigenous Victoria

1503 AM · DAB+ · ONLINE STREAMING BUNDOORA, MELBOURNE VIC
FIRST BROADCAST JUNE 2003
MELBOURNE'S FIRST & ONLY ATSI RADIO STATION — 24/7

“““

Wominjeka. A strong, Indigenous, confident community is what we advocate and create. 3KND recognises, represents and relays First Nations voices.
— 3KND KOOL 'N' DEADLY

VOICE OF INDIGENOUS VICTORIA · 1503 AM



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR 2025

Honouring Melbourne's voice of Indigenous Victoria since 2003

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

FEATURED PROFILE · 2025

Wominjeka — Welcome to Melbourne's Voice of Indigenous Victoria

For more than twenty years, 3KND Kool 'N' Deadly has been the sound of Indigenous Victoria — the only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio station serving Melbourne and beyond, broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across AM, DAB+ digital and online streaming to audiences across Australia and around the world.

3KND first broadcast in June 2003 and received its permanent broadcasting licence in 2004, hitting Melbourne's airwaves at 1503 AM — a frequency previously vacated by 3AK. Test broadcasts had begun as early as 1998 as part of the lead-up to the granting of additional community licences for Melbourne. In 2011, 3KND added DAB+ digital broadcasting, extending its reach to listeners with digital receivers across greater Melbourne. Today the station is operated by **First Australians Media Enterprises (FAME)**, formerly the South Eastern Indigenous Media Association (SEIMA), and is based at Bundoora — on the northern fringe of Melbourne, on Wurundjeri Country. It is a member of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) and First Nations Media Australia (FNMA).

3KND's purpose is as clear as it is essential: to provide a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, arts, culture and politics in Melbourne and Victoria; to train Indigenous community broadcasters; to give First Nations musicians and community members access to state-of-the-art studio production facilities; and to deliver news, sport, weather and current affairs that reflects Indigenous lives and perspectives. It is independent, not-for-profit and described simply and powerfully as the **"Voice of Indigenous Victoria."** No other broadcaster in Victoria does what 3KND does. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Melbourne and regional Victoria, it is not simply a radio station — it is infrastructure for culture, community and self-determination.

3KND'S NATIONAL RADIO NETWORK PARTNERS SPAN THE COUNTRY — FROM RADIO LARRAKIA IN DARWIN TO PAW MEDIA IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA TO NGMEDIA IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA — CONNECTING INDIGENOUS VOICES FROM BUNDOORA TO THE VERY HEART OF FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTING ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

2003	24/7	Only
ON-AIR SINCE	1503 AM + DAB+ + ONLINE	ATSI RADIO STATION IN MELBOURNE







3KND KOOL 'N' DEADLY · 1503 AM · BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR 2025

FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTER OF THE YEAR

3KND Timeline

1998
First test broadcasts; part of community licensing process forMelbourne

June 2003
First regular broadcast on 1503 AM — Melbourne's first ATSI radio station

2004
Permanent broadcasting licence granted

2011
DAB+ digital broadcasting added — 24/7 reach across greater Melbourne

Programs
The VAN Hour (Charles Pakana)
Midday Rush (Aden Hitchins)
The Rock Show (Elijah Augustine)
Grant Hansen

MOBCAST
Deadly & Proud;
Balit Dhumba - Treaty (Strong Talk);
Standing Strong Together

Treaty
Dedicated Treaty coverage: Balit Dhumba weekly show by Grant Hansen, Treaty Correspondent for 3KND

Projects
On Track Project; Prevention of Cycle of Family Violence; studio hire & music production

3KND 1503am & DIGITAL KOOL N DEADLY

FIND 3KND

3knd.org.au · 1503 AM Melbourne 35 Copernicus Cres, Bundoora VIC

@3KND1503 · @3kndradio

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Programs, People and Purpose — More Than a Radio Station

PROGRAMS, TRAINING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building Indigenous Broadcasters and Amplifying Indigenous Voices

3KND's programming is as diverse as the communities it serves.

The VAN Hour with Charles Pakana delivers the Victorian Aboriginal News, keeping community informed on Indigenous affairs, politics and events. **The Midday Rush with Aden Hitchins** brings energy and music to the middle of the day. **The Rock Show with Elijah Augustine** amplifies the deep tradition of Indigenous rock music, and **Grant Hansen** hosts both a regular program and the station's dedicated Treaty coverage. Beyond scheduled programming, 3KND has developed **MOBCAST** — a suite of podcast and digital content including ***Deadly & Proud***, ***Standing Strong Together***, and the landmark ***Balit Dhumba — Treaty*** (Strong Talk).

This weekly program, produced and researched by Grant Hansen as Treaty Correspondent, provides dedicated coverage of the Victorian Aboriginal Treaty negotiations — a conversation that matters profoundly to First Nations communities in Victoria and across Australia, and which no other commercial or public broadcaster covers with the depth and cultural authority that 3KND brings to it.

TRAINING, NETWORKS & NATIONAL REACH

Developing the Next Generation of First Nations Broadcasters

One of 3KND's core commitments is training. The station is dedicated to providing specialist training in radio and media broadcasting to Indigenous community members, giving volunteer broadcasters the skills, confidence and platform they need to develop into professional media practitioners. Studio recording hire and music production services give Indigenous musicians and creators access to state-of-the-art facilities that would otherwise be inaccessible. 3KND is a member of the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) — connecting its programming into a national network that reaches communities across the continent.

3KND's national radio network partnerships span the full breadth of First Nations broadcasting in Australia: Radio Larrakia (Darwin), TEABBA (Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting, Darwin), QRAM-Blackstar (Queensland Remote Aboriginal Media), PAW Media (Pintupi-Anmatjere-Walpiri, Central Australia), PY Media (Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, SA/NT) and NGMedia (Ngaanyatjarra, WA). From Bundoora to the red centre — 3KND is woven into the fabric of Indigenous broadcasting across the nation. That is the reach of a station that began with a test signal in 1998 and has never stopped broadcasting.

3KND KEY PROGRAMS, PROJECTS & PARTNERS

VAN Hour Charles Pakana
Victorian Aboriginal News Hour — Indigenous affairs, politics and community

Balit Dhumba Treaty
Weekly Treaty coverage; Grant Hansen Treaty Correspondent — Balit Dhumba

MOBCAST Podcasts
Deadly & Proud; Standing Strong Together; Balit Dhumba — Strong Talk

Indigenous Training
Specialist radio & media broadcaster training for Indigenous community members

Studio Services
Recording hire; music production; multimedia training — open & affordable

National Network
NIRS member; Radio Larrakia, TEABBA, QRAM, PAW, PY Media, NG Media

CONGRATULATIONS 3KND KOOL 'N' DEADLY — FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS YOU HAVE KEPT THE DIAL TURNED TO INDIGENOUS VICTORIA. YOU HAVE TRAINED BROADCASTERS, AMPLIFIED MUSICIANS, COVERED TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WITH AUTHORITY AND COMMITMENT, AND PROVED THAT A COMMUNITY RADIO STATION CAN BE BOTH A CULTURAL TREASURE AND A POLITICAL FORCE. WOMINJEKA.

FIRST NATIONS EVENTS AND MEDIA AWARD

DR Donna Ordegaard AM

Larrakia Gulumirgin · Dangalabba Clan
DARWIN, NT
CEO, FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTING AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED INDIGENOUS MEDIA NETWORK
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA 2016

“““

To make a positive difference for our people for generations to come, and hopefully open the way forward for a younger generation of leaders to follow in the footsteps of our First Nations legacy leaders before us.

— DR DONNA ODEGAARD AM
LARRAKIA ELDER · DARWIN NT



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS EVENTS AND MEDIA AWARD 2025

Honouring 40+ years of leadership in Indigenous media, broadcasting and cultural heritage

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

Larrakia Elder, Nation Builder — Australia's Largest Indigenous Media Empire

Dr Donna Odegaard AM is one of the most consequential Indigenous media leaders Australia has produced — a Larrakia Gulumirgin Dangalabba Clan woman from Darwin who has spent more than forty years building media infrastructure, asserting cultural sovereignty, advancing Treaty and earning recognition at the very highest levels of Australian public life.

Dr Odegaard is the founder and CEO of **First Nations Broadcasting Australia** — the largest privately owned Indigenous media network in the country, broadcasting in more than 30 languages across four television channels and four radio stations with a full production capability. From Radio Larrakia 94.5FM Darwin, which she restructured and redeveloped as the "Voice of Larrakia" after becoming CEO in 2005, she has built a media empire that spans television, radio, digital, production and education — including Larrakia TV, Australian Indigenous Radio, the Indigenous College of Business and Media Australia, InDiGiTel, and Sea Eagle Productions. She has also been central to the development of cultural protocols and ethics that underpin Indigenous broadcasting across the country.

Her academic achievements match her professional reach. Dr Odegaard holds a **Master's degree on Aboriginal Land Rights** and a **PhD on the Larrakia Treaty** from the University of Newcastle — the latter drawing on her work with more than 26 international Treaty Tribes and focused on the trajectory of Australia's Treaty debate and the significant Treaty petitions of the Northern Territory. She was also awarded an **Honorary Doctor of Letters** for her lifelong commitment to First Nations peoples. In 2016 she received the **Order of Australia (AM)** for significant service to Indigenous cultural heritage, broadcast media, education and training, and Reconciliation. In 2018 she became the **first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman** to receive the Institute of Managers and Leaders **Sir John Storey Lifetime Award for Leadership**.

Donna was also appointed Naming Lady and Commissioning Lady of HMAS Larrakia — a profound recognition of her standing as a Larrakia Elder and national leader.

40+ years	30+	AM
EXPERIENCE IN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS	LANGUAGES BROADCAST IN	ORDER OF AUSTRALIA 2016

DR DONNA ODEGAARD AM · LARRAKIA ELDER · EVENTS & MEDIA AWARD 2025



FIRST NATIONS EVENTS AND MEDIA AWARD

Dr Donna's Journey

UoN
Master's on Aboriginal Land Rights; PhD on Larrakia Treaty — University of Newcastle

2005
CEO Radio Larrakia 94.5FM; restructured as "Voice of Larrakia"; founds Larrakia TV

2011
PhD on Larrakia Treaty Petitions — research with 26+ international Treaty Tribes

2016
Orderof Australia (AM)

for Indigenous cultural heritage, broadcast media, education & Reconciliation

2018
Sir John Storey Lifetime Award for Leadership — first Aboriginal woman toreceive this honour

2019
Co-Chair, National Co-design Group Voice to Government; Historic Treaty Production Series for NAIDOC 2019

2022
Founded AMRA — Aboriginal Mining Remediation Australia; first Indigenous-led environmental remediationcompany

HMAS Larrakia
Naming Lady & Commissioning Lady HMAS Larrakia



FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTING AUSTRALIA
firstnationsproductions.com.au
Darwin, Northern Territory
Radio Larrakia 94.5 FM

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Governance, Treaty and a Media Network Built for Country

GOVERNANCELEADERSHIP&NATIONALADVISORYROLES

DR DONNA ODEGAARD AM · GOVERNANCE, TREATY & FIRST NATIONS MEDIA

Shaping Policy at the Highest Levels of Australian Public Life

Dr Odegaard's influence extends far beyond the broadcast tower. In 2017 she became a Director of the **Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation** and a senior Indigenous leader on the Ministerial Forum Indigenous Reference Group for Developing Northern Australia. In 2019 she was appointed **Co-Chair of the National Co-design Group Voice to Government and Parliament** — a role at the very centre of the national conversation on Indigenous self-determination — and Co-Chair of the **Australia and New Zealand Leadership Forum for the Indigenous Business Sector Group** and the **Indigenous Women's Business Network**. In 2020 she joined the **Indigenous Advisory Committee, Department of Agriculture, Water and Heritage**. In 2022 she founded **AMRA — Aboriginal Mining Remediation Australia**, the first Indigenous-led environmental remediation and restoration company working on Indigenous land and sea Country in Australia. She is a sought-after speaker on Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurship, Policy Reform, and Indigenous Women in Leadership.

TREATYWORK&FIRSTNATIONSPRODUCTIONS

Building Media Infrastructure for Indigenous Self-Determination

In 2019, Dr Odegaard produced and directed the first-ever Treaty Production Series in Aboriginal languages — created by the Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia media team, Aboriginal TV First Nations Broadcasting Australia today comprises four television channels, four radio stations and a full production network broadcasting in over 30 languages — an infrastructure for cultural sovereignty that no other single Indigenous-owned media entity in Australia matches. Dr Odegaard's vision remains unchanged from the beginning: "To make a positive difference for our people for generations to come, and hopefully open the way forward for a younger generation of leaders to follow in the footsteps of our First Nations legacy leaders before us."

Channel 4, Larrakia Radio, Australian Indigenous Radio and Sea Eagle Productions. Drawing on historic film footage and the NAIDOC 2019 theme of Voice, Treaty, Truth, the series brought the urgency of Treaty to First Nations audiences in language — a landmark in both media production and political advocacy. Her PhD research with more than 26 international Treaty Tribes underpins this work with deep scholarship and lived authority.

DR DONNA ODEGAARDAM·HONOURS,ROLES & FOUNDATIONS

Order of Australia AM
For Indigenous cultural heritage, broadcast media, education & Reconciliation 2016

Sir John Storey Lifetime Award
First Aboriginal woman; Institute of Managers and Leaders 2018

PhD — Larrakia Treaty
26+international Treaty Tribes; NT Treaty Petition trajectory, UoN 2011

HMAS Larrakia
Naming Lady and Commissioning Lady — royal naval recognition of Larrakia

AMRA 2022
Aboriginal Mining Remediation Australia — first Indigenous-led environmental remediation company in Australia

Voice Co-Chair 2019
National Co-design Group Voice to Government and Parliament — Co-Chair

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · EVENTS AND MEDIA AWARD · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS DR DONNA ODEGAARD AM — LARRAKIA ELDER, NATION BUILDER, MEDIA PIONEER. YOU BUILT BROADCAST INFRASTRUCTURE WHEN THERE WAS NONE, YOU ARGUED TREATY WHEN FEW WOULD, YOU SHAPED POLICY AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, AND YOU NAMED A WARSHIP FOR YOUR PEOPLE. YOU HAVE OPENED DOORS THAT WILL NEVER CLOSE AGAIN.

DR DONNA ODEGAARD AM · LARRAKIA GULUMIRGIN · DARWIN NT · 2025

FIRST NATIONS PRODUCT DESIGN AWARD

Thomas Coen
Jewellery

Thomas Coen Bonson

JAWOYN ANDKALALAGAWYAMAN
DICKSON, CANBERRA
ACT STUDIO FOUNDED
2020
100% FIRST NATIONS
OWNED HIGH-END
BESPOKE JEWELLERY

“““

I LOVE THE IDEA OF TELLING A STORY WITH MY PIECES, WITH A CONCEPT OF COUNTRY IN MIND, OF HERITAGE IN MIND, TYING ME BACK TO FAMILY WHILE TAKING IT IN MY OWN DIRECTION. MY HERITAGE IS THE SOLE REASON BEHIND GOING INTO MY OWN BUSINESS.

— THOMAS COEN BONSON



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS PRODUCT DESIGN AWARD 2025

Honouring wearable art that carries culture — Country, family and story in precious metal

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

From a Nan's Jewellery Box to Australia's Only High-End Blak Jeweller

Thomas Coen Bonson is a proud Jawoyn and Kala Lagaw Ya man who grew up on a small Aboriginal community near Darwin, where his father was the hunter-gatherer of the community. He is now one of the only high-end handmade manufacturing jewellers of First Nations heritage in Australia — working in gold, silver, diamonds and opals from his studio in Canberra, and crafting pieces worn on red carpets by Jessica Mauboy and Deborah Mailman.

The seeds of Thomas's craft were planted at age nine, when he would sit with his grandmother and she would show him her small but treasured jewellery collection — a gold nugget on a chain she won in a raffle at bingo, a ring gifted by her father, a little cross from her mother. "She lit up when she spoke about it and how she won it," Thomas says. "It's like her pieces of jewellery each held a memory, reminding her of a time and place in her life." Years later, as a teenager, his football coach — himself a jeweller — offered Thomas two weeks of work experience. He excelled so completely that the trial became the beginning of a trade. He went on to complete his manufacturing jewellery apprenticeship at the **Adelaide College of Arts in 2008**, training at Mark McAskill's — then the largest manufacturing jeweller in the Southern Hemisphere.

After more than a decade working across Adelaide, Darwin and Canberra, Thomas took a leap of faith in **2020** — during COVID lockdowns, from a studio in Harrison built around a secondhand workbench he and his now-wife Renee drove two days to collect — and launched his own business. **Thomas Coen Jewellery** is 100% First Nations owned and works across bespoke engagement rings, wedding bands, eternity rings, earrings, pendants and necklaces, alongside the **Coen Collection** — a line of contemporary Indigenous jewellery fusing high-end aesthetics with First Nations cultural heritage, wearable by all. In **2024** he was awarded the **Rising Star Award at the inaugural Australian Jewellery Industry Awards**.

In July 2025, during NAIDOC Week, Thomas unveiled ***Elegance in Heritage: First Nations Jewellery Unveiled*** — his debut solo exhibition at ANCA Gallery in Dickson ACT.

2008	2020	2024
QUALIFICATIONS ADELAIDE COLLEGE OF ARTS	LAUNCHED OWN STUDIO CANBERRA	RISING STAR AUST. JEWELLERY INDUSTRY AWARDS



FIRST NATIONS PRODUCT DESIGN AWARD

The Thomas Coen Journey

Childhood
Small Aboriginal community near Darwin; father the hunter-gatherer & fisherman; Nan's jewellery collection

Age 9
Grandmother's jewellery collection ignites passion — each piece a memory - a story,a place

Teens
Football coach/jeweller offers 2-week work experience — trade begins immediately

2008
Manufacturing Jewellery apprentice completed, Adelaide College of Arts Mark McAskill's

2008–20
Worked across Adelaide, Darwin and Canberra; building expertise in gold, silver, opals, diamonds

2020
Launches own studio in Harrison, Canberra; built around a second-hand workbench — COVID leap of faith

2024
RisingStar Award — inaugural Australian Jewellery Industry Awards

July 2025
Elegance in Heritage: First Nations Jewellery Unveiled — ANCA Gallery, Dickson ACT; artsACT supported

THOMAS COEN JEWELLERY
thomascoenjewellery.com.au
@thomascoenjewellery
Dickson, Canberra ACT



CULTURE, BESPOKE CRAFT&THE RED CARPET

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

The Coen Collection — Culture Worn Close to the Skin

Wearable Art That Carries Country, Family and Story

The **Coen Collection** is Thomas's signature line of contemporary First Nations inspired jewellery — pieces that are more than adornments. As Thomas writes: "The Coen Collection pieces are expressions of history, resilience, and identity. Every design is a fusion of high-end contemporary aesthetics with the rich traditions of First Nations heritage." Crucially, Thomas has designed the collection to be **inclusive for all people and cultures**: "I was raised in a culture that believes sharing information and love is the way to move forward. Having more understanding of the Indigenous culture within the wider communities will only help our mission even more. Awareness is essential for proper representation." That philosophy has brought his work to the highest visibility in Australian culture: **Jessica Mauboy** wore his bold coral ring at the National Indigenous Music Awards, and **Deborah Mailman** has been seen wearing his statement pieces on the red carpet.
His Aboriginal flag necklace is among his most recognised pieces. Each commission begins with a story — and ends as an heirloom.

PIONEERINGASPACE&BUILDINGAPATHWAY

"I'm the Only One — I Could Use Some Company"

Thomas is one of the only Indigenous jewellers working at the high end of the bespoke manufacturing trade — a field he describes as "cliquey, very expensive to start and very expensive to run" and "dominated by 5th and 6th generation jewellers." The barriers to entry are real: the materials outweigh the labour costs, the trust economy of the trade is hard to break into, and there is almost no community of First Nations peers to call on. "It's lonely right now," he says. "I want mob to call up and bounce ideas off when it comes to our designs and our art." His vision is to make the path he has blazed into one that others can walk too.

Thomas aspires to create a platform where First Nations artists and apprentices can flourish in jewellery — to build a "Blak team" in a trade that has never had one. He wants to create large-scale designer pieces in collaboration with rural Indigenous communities, with Elders' permission and guidance, to tell their stories in precious metal. He dreams of a beautiful shopfront — full of Indigenous high-end jewellery.

THOMAS COEN JEWELLERY · THE COEN COLLECTION & CULTURAL VISION

His NAIDOC 2025 exhibition ***Elegance in Heritage*** at ANCA Gallery is a step on that road: First Nations jewellery, in a gallery, telling stories of culture and Country. Wearable. For everyone.

THOMAS COEN·KEYWORKS,MOMENTS & ASPIRATIONS

Coen Collection
Contemporary First Nations jewellery — inclusive for all; culture, resilience, identity

Jessica Mauboy
Coral ring worn at National Indigenous Music Awards — red carpet

Deborah Mailman
Statement pieces worn on the red carpet; Aboriginal flag necklace

NAIDOC 2025 Exhibition
Elegance in Heritage: First Nations Jewellery Unveiled — ANCA Gallery Dickson

Rising Star 2024
Inaugural Australian Jewellery Industry Awards; recognition of a pioneer

Future Vision
Platform for First Nations jewellers & apprentices; community collaboration with Elders

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · PRODUCT DESIGN AWARD · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS THOMAS COEN BONSON — YOU LEARNED YOUR CRAFT FROM A FOOTY COACH, BUILT YOUR STUDIO AROUND A SECONDHAND WORKBENCH, AND PUT FIRST NATIONS JEWELLERY ON RED CARPET SHOULDERS. YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S JEWELLERY BOX STARTED THIS. YOU ARE TURNING IT INTO A LEGACY.

THOMAS COEN BONSON · THOMAS COEN JEWELLERY · CANBERRA ACT · 2025

FIRST NATIONS REMOTE PRODUCT AWARD

Indigenous Healing Remedies

Bush Medijina®

Anindilyakwa Women's Social Enterprise

GROOTE EYLANDT, NORTHERN TERRITORY
ANINDILYAKWA SERVICES ABORIGINAL CORP.
FOUNDED FEBRUARY 2016
100% PROFITS TO COMMUNITY

> *"We are First Nation people having a go at walking in two worlds to share our traditional knowledge and heal people, not just physically but through relationships. We are One People with One Voice.*
>
> *— BUSH MEDIJINA®*
> *ANINDILYAKWA WOMEN · GROOTE EYLANDT NT*

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS REMOTE PRODUCT AWARD 2025

Honouring ancient Anindilyakwa healing knowledge transformed into modern products from the bush

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

From a Shed on Groote Eylandt — Women's Knowledge Becomes Healing for the World

In February 2016, two Indigenous staff members of the Anindilyakwa Services Aboriginal Corporation on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory began experimenting with bush recipes in a small shed. They were driven by a simple but urgent purpose: to support Anindilyakwa women, preserve ancient healing knowledge, and help their elderly who could no longer go out on Country. That shed became Bush Medijina®.

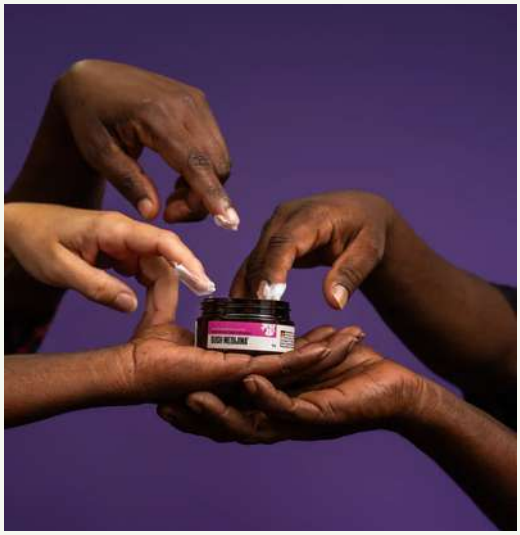
Groote Eylandt sits in the Gulf of Carpentaria, around 640 kilometres east of Darwin — one of Australia's most remote communities. The Anindilyakwa people are the Traditional Custodians of Groote Eylandt and surrounding islands, with a living culture of extraordinary depth. Bush Medijina is an all-women social enterprise that harvests traditionally used bush botanicals — learned from mothers, aunties and grandmothers — and combines them with natural, sustainably sourced ingredients to create handcrafted modern skincare products. The idea grew from the need to help their own people, especially their elderly who could no longer travel on Country to collect bush medicine themselves. "The idea of starting a business using our cultural knowledge grew from the need to help our own people," the team says. "There also wasn't much opportunity for us to come together to work in a way that brought our knowledge and culture together."

The botanicals at the heart of Bush Medijina's products carry the weight of generations: **Dumburumba** (Native Sandalwood) — used by Elders to soothe skin inflammation and support spiritual healing; **Mamarra** (Small Leaved Paperbark) — leaves traditionally thrown onto fires to inhale for colds, now the hero of the Breathe Easy Balm; **Merrika** (Broad Leaved Wattle) — the multi-award-winning Miracle Balm; **Dingadilyenjirkka** (Weeping Tea Tree) — traditionally used by Warningakalina women to grow strong, long hair; **Mamaburra** (Wild Peach Tree); and **Mawilyaburna** (Liniment Tree). Each plant is harvested on Country, in the same places ancestors walked, by women who carry both the knowledge and the responsibility.

100% of profits go to doing good in the community. The business is led and run by women, providing meaningful employment and a safe community space — and is supported by the community members.

2016	100%	Groote Eylandt
FOUNDED IN A SMALL SHED	PROFITS TO COMMUNITY	GULF OF CARPENTARIA, NT

BUSH MEDIJINA®





BUSH MEDIJINA® · ANINDILYAKWA WOMEN · REMOTE PRODUCT AWARD 2025

FIRST NATIONS REMOTE PRODUCT AWARD

Bush Medijina® Journey

Origins
Helping elderly unable to go on Country; bringing women together around cultural knowledge

Feb 2016
Founded byAnindilyakwa Services Aboriginal Corp staff in a small shed; all-women social enterprise

Products
SkinSoothe Balm,
Breathe Easy Balm, Miracle Balm,
Happy Hair Oils —hand crafted

Botanicals
Dumburumba, Mamarra, Merrika, Dingadilyenjirkka, Mamaburra, Mawilyaburna

—harvested on Country

Purpose
100%profits to community; meaningful employment for women; cultural knowledge preservation

Impact
Addressing domestic violence, chronic disease, youth suicide — community healing through enterprise

Growth
Scaling to meet demand; exporting overseas; TGA barriers remain a challenge for all Indigenous bush medicine businesses

BUSH MEDIJINA®

bushmedijina.com.au

Groote Eylandt, Northern Territory

Anindilyakwa Services Aboriginal Corp.







Winner: Deadly Dressed - Cultural

Walking in Two Worlds — Ancient Knowledge, Modern Healing

Healing the Body, the Community and the Spirit — Together

The women of Bush Medijina are frank about the challenges their community faces: domestic violence, chronic disease, youth suicide, substance abuse, illiteracy. Their life expectancy is around 48 years. They attend family funerals every two to three weeks on average. And yet in the face of all of this, they have built something that brings joy and pride to every woman who comes to work. "Every time the ladies come to work they feel pride and joy. Everything we do, we share and do it as a team," says Serena. "We are always happy; that's what the community like about us." This is not just skincare. This is economic self-determination on one of Australia's most remote islands, where the act of harvesting bush medicine together, making products together and selling them to Australia and the world is simultaneously an act of cultural reclamation, community healing and commercial enterprise. Bush Medijina is governed by an all-Indigenous women's board that "never gave up" even through funding struggles in the early years — and whose faith eventually brought others to believe in the vision as much as they did.

THE BOTANICALS OF GROOTE EYLANDT & TGA BARRIERS

Ancient Science, Modern Obstacles — and Undeniable Impact

Each botanical in the Bush Medijina range carries thousands of years of accumulated knowledge: Merrika, whose blooming marks tern nesting season, now understood to be rich in antioxidants and anti-ageing compounds — confirming what Elders always knew. Mamarra, whose leaves were thrown on fires for healing smoke, now eases colds and soothe muscles in the Breathe Easy Balm. Dumburumba, for skin and spiritual calm. Modern science is arriving at the same destination that ancient Anindilyakwa knowledge has occupied for millennia. Yet no Indigenous bush medicine business has ever successfully registered products under Australia's Therapeutic Goods Act — a barrier that remains both costly and unjust.

Despite these structural barriers, Bush Medijina products are sold across Australia and the business is actively planning to scale and export overseas. The Remote Product Award from the All First Nations Awards recognises what it actually takes to build an enterprise from Groote Eylandt: the logistics of remote supply chains, the challenge of reaching customers across the country from an island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the extraordinary commitment required to sustain an all-women business that gives every dollar of profit back to community. That is what remote product excellence looks like.

BUSH MEDIJINA® · PRODUCTS, BOTANICALS & IMPACT
COMMUNITY HEALING, CULTURE & ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Miracle Balm (Merrika)
Multi-award-winning; Broad Leaved Wattle; anti-ageing & antioxidant

Breathe Easy Balm (Mamarra)
Small Leaved Paperbark; traditionally inhaled for colds & blockages

Skin Soothe Balm (Dumburumba)
Native Sandalwood; anti-inflammatory; spiritual & skin healing

Happy Hair Oils
Dingadilyenjirkka — Weeping Tea Tree; used by Warningakalina women

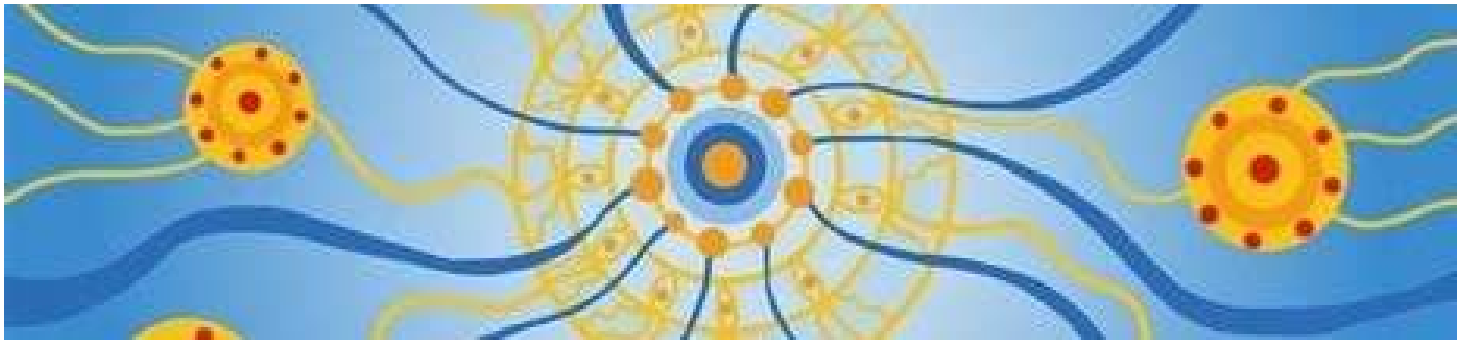
100% Women-Led & Governed
All-Indigenous women's board; meaningful remote employment & cultural pride

Remote Challenge
Groote Eylandt, Gulf of Carpentaria; ships across Australia; scaling for overseas export

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · REMOTE PRODUCT AWARD · 2025

Congratulations Bush Medijina® — to the Anindilyakwa women who began in a small shed with a big dream and have never stopped. You are harvesting the same plants your ancestors harvested, in the same places they walked, and sending that healing out to the world. That is extraordinary from anywhere. From Groote Eylandt, it is remarkable.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
BUSH MEDIJINA® · ANINDILYAKWA WOMEN · GROOTE EYLANDT NT · 2025



FIRST NATIONS THERAPY SERVICES

A 100% First Nations-owned and operated service, co-founded by three First Nations women. We support individuals, families and communities across Queanbeyan/ACT, Brewarrina and Dubbo NSW.

HOW WE CAN SUPPORT YOU

THERAPY & RECOVERY

Free or low-cost long-term psychotherapy for childhood and adult sexual abuse/assault, trauma recovery and family dysfunction, including Non-Shaming Therapy,EMDR and psychotherapy.

COUNSELLING & FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Therapeutic support for people navigating family violence processes involving police,courtsandthe legal/justicesystem.

DEPENDENCY SUPPORT

Support for alcohol and other drugs,gambling,co-dependency, and sex, love and romance addictions.

SOCIAL WORK & REFERRALS

Support and follow-up for housing,disability,employment, community services, cultural safety, parenting and family needs.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

1-hour,3-hourand full-dayprograms exploring intergenerational family and communityimpacts of colonisation.

ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S BUSINESS

Cultural retreats and workshops supporting pride, knowledge, women's business and the restoration of cultural roots and community connection.

CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng PhD

Wakka Wakka / WulliWulli Traditional custodian and Elder; psychotherapist, social worker and certified Leadership Circle coach.

Trish Frail

Nyemba Elder, local Councillor, senior cultural mentor and certified Leadership Circle coach based in Brewarrina.

Kerrie Shepherd

Kamilaroi woman, certified Wyappa Practitioner with extensive experience in human resources and First Nations business growth.

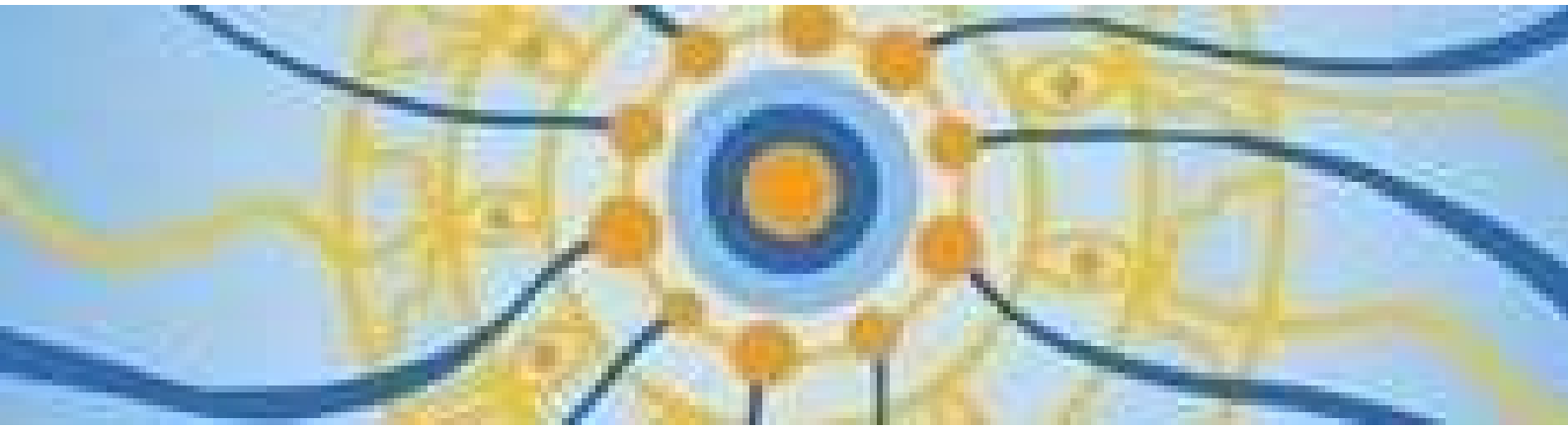
COMMUNITY-BASED CULTURALLY INFORMED EXPERIENCED

READY TO TALK? CONTACT DR TJANARA

P: +61458 239480 • E nationalconvenor@firda.online

W: www.firda.online • www.firda.com.au

First Nations Therapy Services • Incorporating Aboriginal Women's BusinessInc. •ABN 28 186 524 639



AFN Retail Business Award 2025 -

Melissa 'Liss' Cowan



AFN Trainee, Cadet or Apprentice Award 2025

Officer Cadet Shae O'Neill



DILKARA VANITY · AMENITIES RANGE

Native botanical care, bottled for your guests.

The DILKARA Vanity amenities collection brings Australia's native ingredients — Kakadu Plum, Lemon Myrtle and Sandalwood — to hotels, retreats and stockists who care about every detail.

BECOME A STOCKIST

EXPLORE THE RANGE





THE BAMAL COLLECTION

One considered range, head to toe.

Created by Julie Okely for the DILKARA Vanity label, the Bamal collection is designed for refillable in-room amenities and guest gifting — clean formulations with a warm, grounding scent profile.

- Made in Australia with native botanical extracts
- Sulphate & paraben free, vegan friendly
- Available in 500ml pumps, soap bars and bulk pump options
- Custom stockist pricing for hospitality & retail

WHY DILKARA

Rooted in country, crafted with care.

Ingredients are sourced from local Indigenous communities, supporting authentic supply chains and the people behind them.

Native Botanicals

Kakadu Plum, Lilly Pilly, Lemon Myrtle & Sandalwood.

Australian Made

Formulated and bottled locally in small batches.

Guest Ready

Designed for hotels, retreats, salons and gifting.

Community First

Sourced to support Indigenous growers and harvesters.

FIRST NATIONS B2B AWARD

KIRRA Services

Kirra=Leaf · Connection to Country

FOUNDER: BRAD NAGLE (BUNDJALUNG MAN) TURNER, CANBERRA ACT

FOUNDED 2017

SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED

MAJORITY INDIGENOUS OWNED

“““

OUR MISSION IS TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE, HIGH-QUALITY, GREAT-VALUE ICT BUSINESS THAT OFFERS INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN THE ICT INDUSTRY. AT KIRRA SERVICES WE HAVE A COMMUNITY-FIRST APPROACH TO OUR WORK.

— BRAD NAGLE, MANAGING DIRECTOR

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS B2B AWARD 2025

KIRRA SERVICES
· BUNDJALUNG
· CANBERRA ACT
· B2B AWARD 2025

Recognising Indigenous excellence in B2B — community-first ICT for government and enterprise

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THESTORY

Kirra — Leaf, Country, Community — Australia's Award-Winning Indigenous ICT Company

Brad Nagle is a proud Bundjalung man with cultural connections to Fingal Head, a small township on the far north coast of NSW.

In 2017, from Canberra, Brad founded Kirra Services — named for the beautiful beach where his grandfather spent time, and for the word "kirra" meaning "leaf" in the local language: a symbol of connection to land and Country. Seven years later, Kirra Services is an award-winning national ICT provider and one of Australia's most recognised Indigenous B2B businesses.

Kirra Services is a majority-owned, Supply Nation Certified Indigenous ICT service provider based in Turner, Canberra — specialising in hardware and software procurement, cloud services (AWS, Azure and the 100% Australian-owned AU Cloud), cybersecurity, digital transformation, IT project management, e-waste management and recruitment for IT and APS roles. The company has built a strong national presence with particular depth supporting federal and state government departments, and holds partnerships with Tier 1 technology vendors that give clients access to the latest solutions and buying power. Kirra Services is also recognised as **Australia's only Indigenous iPhone reseller** — a distinction that reflects both its Apple partnership and its presence at the sharpest end of consumer technology procurement.

Brad's community commitment is not a tagline. He and his wife spent 2018 and much of 2020–21 living in the remote Anindilyakwa community of **Gapuwiyak in East Arnhem Land**, where his wife taught at the local school and Brad worked to build First Nations opportunities in the region. The Kirra Services team reflects this community-first approach: the business proudly employs Indigenous people and has a team that includes former Supply Nation representatives and Indigenous consultants. Its client engagements are designed specifically to help government agencies and corporate partners achieve their Indigenous procurement, employment and supplier diversity goals — embedding First Nations economic participation at the heart of public sector technology decisions.

2017	Only	Supply Nation
FOUNDED IN CANBERRA	INDIGENOUS iPHONE RESELLER IN AUSTRALIA	CERTIFIED INDIGENOUS BUSINESS

In 2025, Kirra Services was named **VMware Professional Services Partner.**





kirra services

FIRST NATIONS B2B AWARD

Kirra Services Journey

2017
Founded by Brad Nagle (Bundjalung man) in Canberra; majority Indigenous owned; Supply Nation certified

2018
Brad and family live in Gapuwiyak, East Arnhem Land — building First Nations remote opportunities

Services
IThardware & software;cloud (AWS, Azure, AU Cloud); cybersecurity; e-waste; recruitment & labour hire

iPhone Reseller
Only Indigenous Apple iPhone reseller in Australia — Tier 1 vendor partnerships for government & enterprise

Government
Strong national presence with federal and state government departments; APS recruitment

2025
VMware Professional Services Partner; Ironbark IT partnership for Indigenous employment pathways

Boots Program
Contributing to Boots for Indigenous — sporting goods and boots to remote communities

KIRRA SERVICES · BUNDJALUNG · TURNER, CANBERRA ACT · 2025

FIND KIRRA SERVICES

kirraservices.com.au
Turner, Canberra ACT
Supply Nation Certified · VMware Partner

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · B2B AWARD · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS KIRRA SERVICES AND BRAD NAGLE — YOU TOOK THE NAME OF A BEACH WHERE YOUR GRANDFATHER WALKED, AND THE WORD FOR LEAF THAT TIES YOU TO COUNTRY, AND BUILT AN ICT COMPANY THAT COMPETES WITH THE BIGGEST PLAYERS IN GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY. COMMUNITY-FIRST, BUNDJALUNG-PROUD, AND UNDENIABLY EXCELLENT.

Community-First ICT —

Technology in Service of People and Country

Proving That Indigenous-Owned ICT Belongs at the Highest Tables

The B2B Award recognises businesses that have demonstrated excellence in delivering value to other organisations — and Kirra Services has done this in one of the most competitive and technically demanding sectors in the country. Technology procurement for government is not a space that easily accommodates new entrants, let alone Indigenous-owned newcomers. The barriers are real: Tier 1 vendor relationships take years to build; government procurement panels require accreditations and references; the technical expertise demanded is deep and wide. Kirra Services has cleared every one of these bars. Its portfolio now spans IT hardware and software supply, cloud infrastructure (AWS, Azure and AU Cloud), cybersecurity and digital transformation, IT project management, audio-visual installation, e-waste and buyback, and APS and IT recruitment — including roles requiring security clearance. For every client engagement, Kirra's value proposition is both commercial and purposeful: great-value ICT that also advances Indigenous procurement commitments, supports RAP outcomes and creates genuine pathways for First Nations people into the technology sector.

INDIGENOUSPARTICIPATIONINICT&COMMUNITYGIVING

"We Want to Build Strong Business Partnerships"

Kirra Services is actively committed to increasing Indigenous representation in the ICT sector — one of Australia's fastest-growing industries, and one in which First Nations participation remains strikingly low. The business provides a model: an Indigenous-owned ICT company that competes on technical merit and commercial value while explicitly advancing procurement, employment and supplier diversity goals for its clients. Its team includes Indigenous employees, Indigenous consultants with deep government networks, and mentors who support business development, credit and vendor management.

Beyond the business, Kirra Services contributes to the Boots for Indigenous national programme — providing sporting goods and boots to remote communities through its commercial registrations and events. Brad's own connection to remote Australia — years spent in Gapuwiyak, his wife's work in Arnhem Land schools — means that the "community-first" language at Kirra is backed by lived experience. Technology, deployed with purpose, for the benefit of First Nations people and communities across Australia. That is Kirra Services.

INDIGENOUSPROCUREMENT,EMPLOYMENT&B2BLEADERSHIP

Cloud & Infrastructure AWS · Azure · AUCloud; cloud cost optimisation; FinOps governance	**IT Hardware & Software** Tier1 vendor partnerships; Apple iPhone reseller; end-user to enterprise	**Cybersecurity & Projects** Digital transformation; IT project management; AV install & support
Recruitment & Labour Hire IT&APS roles;security clearance support; Indigenous candidate pipeline	**VMware Partner 2025** Named VMware Professional Services Partner; Ironbark IT partnership	**Community Giving** Boots for Indigenous national programme; remote community support

KIRRASERVICES·CAPABILITIES,PARTNERS&AWARDS

Supply Nation
CERTIFIED INDIGENOUS SERVICE PROVIDER

YARA
Civil Construction

IN GOOD COMPANY
INDIGENOUS-OWNED & OPERATED
CANBERRA, ACT
PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR
GOVERNMENT · DEFENCE · TIER 1 PARTNERS

“““

YARA IS PROVING IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO GREAT BUSINESS WHILST ALSO DOING SOCIAL GOOD. WE BUILD BRIDGES OF EQUALITY, EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF GENERATIONS TO COME.
— YARA



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS INDIGENOUS BUSINESS GROWTH AWARD 2025

Recognising outstanding growth of an Indigenous business delivering national-scale infrastructure

Building Bridges of Equality — First Nations Construction at National Scale

YARA is an Indigenous-owned and operated civil construction and engineering company that has grown into one of the most significant First Nations infrastructure businesses in Australia — a Principal Contractor delivering high-quality projects with Government, Defence and Tier 1 partners, while building long-term careers and skills for First Nations Australians on every job it takes on.

YARA operates across civil engineering, construction, engineering consultancy and design, facilities and asset management, labour and plant hire, and remediation — covering rail, roads, airports, marine infrastructure, hydraulics, renewable energy and licensed construction and refurbishment. Its client and partner list includes Downer, ACT Government, Australian Defence, the National Capital Authority (NCA), BGIS, Kane, Barpa, Brema, SMEC, Shepherd and Canberra Airport — a roster that reflects the scale and trust YARA has built in the national infrastructure market. As a values-led construction business that can deliver at scale as a Principal Contractor, YARA is "proving it is possible to do great business whilst also doing social good."

Central to YARA's model is a commitment to building a sustainable First Nations workforce — through mentoring, training, apprenticeships and traineeship pathways that convert construction projects into long-term career opportunities. "Opportunity grows when communities are empowered," the team says. "YARA creates meaningful pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through employment, training and long-term career development." Every project is an investment in both infrastructure and people — and in the community context in which that infrastructure sits.

OFF THE JOB SITE, YARA SUPPORTS THE ACT BRUMBIES PATHWAYS PROGRAM AND GAME DAY 23, SPONSORS LOCAL RUGBY AND SPORTING CLUBS, AND BACKS COMMUNITY EVENTS — LIVING THE "COMMUNITY IS OUR FOUNDATION" ETHOS THROUGH SPORT, SPONSORSHIP AND CONNECTION.

Principal Contractor	Defence & Gov.	In Good Company
NATIONAL DELIVERY SCALE	KEY CLIENT SECTORS	YARA TEAM MOTTO

YARA INDIGENOUS-OWNED CIVIL CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS GROWTH AWARD 2025



FIRST NATIONS INDIGENOUS BUSINESS GROWTH AWARD

YARA
Key Projects

Jacka 2 Stage 1B
Civil engineering & landscape construction; 109 suburban blocks & 3 multi-unit developments, Jacka ACT

Budjan Galindji
Nature reserverevitalisation; habitat rehabilitation, stormwater drainage, pathway construction — ecological & cultural connection

Namarag Reserve
40 hectares of disused land (sewerage ponds & bomb range) transformed into Ngunnawal cultural education reserve; ordnance removal, habitat creation, pondcapping

Defence
Projects with Australian Defence — high-security, high-standard delivery

Workforce
Apprenticeships, traineeships & career pathways for First Nations Australians in civil construction

Brumbies Pathways
Sponsor of ACT Brumbies Pathways Program; Game Day 23; local rugby & sporting clubs

FIND YARA

yaraco.com.au

hr@yaraco.com.au

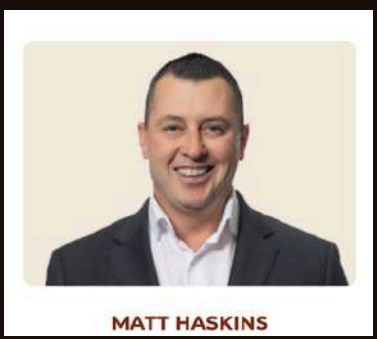
Canberra, ACT



ANDREW MUIRHEAD



LACH HASKINS



MATT HASKINS

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Namarag — From Bomb Range to Ngunnawal Cultural Reserve

FEATUREDPROJECT·NAMARAGNATURERESERVE

Transforming 40 Hectares of Disused Land Into Cultural Heritage

The Namarag project stands as one of YARA's most extraordinary achievements — and one of the most compelling examples of what it means for an Indigenous construction company to work with purpose on Country. The site had been used as sewerage ponds and a bomb disposal range. YARA undertook ordnance removal, pollution prevention, pond capping and the creation of an endangered species habitat — transforming 40 hectares of contaminated, disused land into a feature reserve that is now an educational space where families, students and visitors can learn about Ngunnawal land, traditional foods and cultural heritage. It is infrastructure in the truest sense: not just physical, but cultural. The Budjan Galindji Nature Reserve project told a similar story — landscape remediation and enhancement focused on habitat rehabilitation, stormwater drainage and pathway construction using on-site materials, with sustainability, ecological preservation and cultural connection as its guiding principles. These are not standard earthmoving contracts. They are acts of Country-keeping, executed with the technical precision of a national-scale construction company.

FIRST NATIONS WORKFORCE & NATIONAL GROWTH

Building a National Footprint, One First Nations Career at a Time

YARA's growth is intentional and accelerating. The business is building a national footprint through projects with Government, Defence and Tier 1 partners across Australia — and on every project, it brings a commitment to building the First Nations workforce that the construction industry has historically failed to cultivate. Apprenticeships, traineeships, mentoring and training programs are embedded in YARA's project delivery model and those values that are built everyday, and this also builds careers, and the careers built today build communities. First Nations applicants are strongly encouraged to apply to every role.

YARA is actively courting collaboration with the Riverina and other communities to bring First Nations people into civil construction through information sessions and training pathways. Through the Brumbies Pathways Program and Game Day 23 sponsorship, YARA connects sport, community and business — creating a platform that is visible, inclusive and genuinely invested in the next generation. "As our projects grow — the infrastructure grows, the value we bring, and so does our team."

YARA

This is what Indigenous business growth looks like: not just revenue, not just headcount — but the deliberate expansion of a First Nations presence at the very core of how Australia builds itself.

Civil Engineering
Rail, roads, airports, marine, hydraulics, renewable energy — national scale

Construction & Remediation
Licensed construction; waterproofing, steelwork, coatings, joint restoration

Facilities & Asset Mgmt
Operational support; 24/7 emergency response; day-to-day management

Namarag Reserve
40ha: Ngunnawal cultural & education reserve

Budjan Galindji
Nature reserve revitalisation; habitat, drainage, pathways; ecological & cultural focus

Tier 1 Partners
Downer, Defence, ACT Gov, NCA, BGIS, Kane, Barpa, Brema, SMEC, Shepherd

YARA·SERVICES,PARTNERS&PROJECTS

Congratulations YARA — you have turned contaminated ground into Ngunnawal cultural heritage, built essential infrastructure across the ACT and beyond, and put First Nations people at the front of every project you take on. In good company, indeed.

FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS & FINANCE AWARD

First Nations Co.

First Nations Finance

One loan can change the lives of many

AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS NON-BANK LENDER WHOLLY FIRST NATIONS-OWNED
SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED
PART OF THE NALLAWILLI GROUP
LOANS UP TO $100M

“““

Have you ever considered that where you procure your funding from can have a ripple effect on a larger scale? Our business loans not only support your business but generate a wide-reaching positive social impact.

— FIRST NATIONS FINANCE
firstnations.co



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS BUSINESS & FINANCE AWARD 2025

Honouring Indigenous innovation in finance — purpose and profit, together

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Rewriting the Rules of Business Finance — With Purpose Built In

First Nations Co. — operating as First Nations Finance at firstnations.co — is Australia's only wholly First Nations-owned non-bank business lender. It is a Supply Nation Certified company that provides finance to all Australian businesses, while directing 70% of its profits to a foundation supporting mental health, entrepreneurship, education and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. One loan can change the lives of many.

First Nations Finance was built on a genuinely disruptive premise: that the source of business finance matters. When an Australian business chooses First Nations Finance for its capital needs, it is not just accessing a competitive loan — it is contributing to Indigenous Procurement Policy targets, supporting Reconciliation Action Plan commitments, and participating in a financial ecosystem designed to generate long-term social impact for First Nations Australians.

The business offers a comprehensive suite of lending solutions — from business loans and receivables finance through to equipment, vehicle and insurance premium finance, and all the way up to leveraged buyouts, corporate bonds, mezzanine loans, project finance and real estate loans with tailored facilities available up to **$100 million**. It provides these solutions to sole traders, SMEs, publicly listed companies and government organisations across Australia, at highly competitive rates and with personalised service from lending specialists who understand both commercial finance and the First Nations business context.

The company sits within the **Nallawilli Group** — an Indigenous group of companies that also includes **Gamarada Technology** (workplace technology, security, productivity and collaboration), **BunjilView** (rapid asset capture via drones and intuitive software for asset and land management), and **Mandura** (office supplies in collaboration with Winc). Together these businesses form a vertically integrated First Nations enterprise that spans finance, technology, spatial services and procurement — building economic scale and self-determination across multiple sectors.

Capital + **Remara** provide First Nations Finance with a direct line to prominent domestic resources.

$100M	70%	40%
MAX LOAN FACILITY	PROFITS TO FOUNDATION	FIRST NATIONS EMPLOYMENT TARGET





FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS & FINANCE AWARD

First Nations Finance At a Glance

Mission
Australia's only wholly First Nations-owned non-bank business lender; Supply Nation certified

Lending
Business, receivables, equipment, vehicle, insurance, project finance; up to $100M

Enterprise
Leveraged buyouts, corporate bonds, mezzanine loans, real estate loans, corporate finance

Social Impact
70% profits to Foundation; 40% First Nations employment target; IPP & RAP commitments for clients

Foundation
Western Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health; Clontarf Foundation; employment & education

Nallawilli Group
Gamarada Technology; Bunjil View (drone assets); Mandura (office supplies with Winc)

Partners
Remara— capital partner
direct line to domestic & international banks

FIRST NATIONS CO.
firstnations.co
info@firstnations.co
Supply Nation Certified

CONGRATULATIONS FIRST NATIONS CO. — FOR PROVING THAT PURPOSE AND PROFIT ARE NOT OPPOSITES IN FINANCE, BUT PARTNERS. YOU HAVE BUILT THE LOAN PRODUCT THAT CORPORATE AUSTRALIA NEEDED WITHOUT KNOWING IT: COMPETITIVE, CREDIBLE, AND CAPABLE OF CHANGING FIRST NATIONS LIVES EVERY TIME THE MONEY MOVES.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · BUSINESS & FINANCE AWARD · 2025

firstnations.co · BUSINESS & FINANCE AWARD 2025
ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Where You Borrow From Matters — Finance as a Force for Indigenous Good

PURPOSE, PROFIT AND INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC SELF-DETERMINATION

Competitive Finance That Generates Lasting Social Impact

The insight at the heart of First Nations Finance is elegantly simple: most Australian businesses need to borrow money at some point, and most have very little say in where that capital comes from — or what it does in the world. First Nations Finance changes that calculation. By choosing First Nations Finance, a business accesses competitive rates and expert service while simultaneously advancing its Indigenous Procurement Policy commitments, contributing to its Reconciliation Action Plan, and directing a significant share of the lending margin towards a foundation that funds Indigenous mental health, entrepreneurship, education and employment pathways. The ripple effect is real. A single corporate loan can contribute to the Western Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health, or the Clontarf Foundation, or employment pathways for young First Nations Australians entering the workforce. "One loan can change the lives of many" is not marketing copy. It is the structural logic of how First Nations Finance has been built.

THE NALLAWILLI GROUP—A FIRST NATIONS ENTERPRISE ECOSYSTEM

Building Self-Determination Across Finance, Technology and Procurement

The Nallawilli Group positions First Nations Finance as part of a broader First Nations enterprise ecosystem. Where the finance arm provides capital, Gamarada Technology delivers the workplace infrastructure — security, productivity, collaboration — that businesses built with that capital need to operate. BunjilView brings drone-based asset capture and land management software to the environmental and infrastructure sectors. Mandura brings Indigenous supply chain access to office procurement through its collaboration with Winc. Together they represent a vision of First Nations economic self-determination that operates across multiple business verticals — each reinforcing the others, each creating employment and wealth within community.

First Nations Finance's 40% First Nations employment target is not an aspiration — it is a structural commitment embedded in how the business recruits and develops its team. Talent pathways are built to bring young First Nations Australians into the financial services sector — one of the most lucrative and least diversified sectors in the Australian economy. Combined with the 70% profit distribution to the Foundation, this means that First Nations Finance is not just a lending business with Indigenous ownership. It is a model of what Indigenous-controlled capital can build when the structure is designed with community benefit at the core.

Business Lending Loans,receivables, payables, equipment, vehicle, insurance; sole traders to ASX-listed	**Enterprise Finance** Leveraged buyouts, bonds, mezzanine, project finance, real estate, corporate loans	**Social Impact 70% Profits** Western Jilya Mental Health; Clontarf Foundation; employment & education pathways
Gamarada Technology Workplace tech,security, productivity & collaboration (Nallawilli Group)	**BunjilView Drones** Rapid asset capture; intuitive software for asset & land management	**IPP & RAP Targets** Every loan can contribute to client IPP targets and RAP commitments

First Nations FINANCE

ACHIEVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT AWARD

Mallard Contracting

CEO: Robby Mallard
WAJARRI-NANDA MAN · YAMATJICOUNTRY 100% ABORIGINAL-OWNED
OSBORNE PARK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA FOUNDED 2011 · 60+ EMPLOYEES
TOP 20 ABORIGINAL BUSINESSES IN WA

“““

We will be judged not by how much money we make but by how many lives we change for the better.

— ROBBY MALLARD
CEO · MALLARD CONTRACTING

MALLARD CONTRACTING

Honouring 30+ years of building careers for Aboriginal Australians across the Pilbara

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS ACHIEVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT 2025

MALLARD CONTRACTING · OSBORNE PARK WA· INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT AWARD 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THE STORY

"Desert Meets Sea" — Building Careers for Country Across the Pilbara

Robby Mallard is a Wajarri-Nanda man — "Desert meets Sea" — from Yamatji Country in Western Australia. After twenty years in construction, mining and resources, he founded Mallard Contracting in 2011 with a vision that was always as much about people as projects: to use a successful construction business as an incubator for Aboriginal employment, apprenticeships and career pathways across the Pilbara and beyond.

Mallard Contracting is a proudly 100% Aboriginal-owned contracting company providing turnkey solutions across construction, mining and resources — hydraulics, installations, concrete and civil, communications, high voltage electrical, plumbing and carpentry. With bases in Perth, Karratha, Tom Price and Carnarvon, the company operates across the remote Pilbara region, delivering projects for the biggest names in Australian resources: BHP, Fortescue Metals Group (FMG), and others. Key projects have included the FMG Eliwana Mine Site — design, construction and installation of the aerodrome, laboratory, ANFO facility and administrative buildings — as well as BHP Newman Housing and Village Security upgrades, and the construction and refurbishment of mine camp accommodation across the Pilbara. Mallard Deemey, a joint venture with PKKP member Donna Meyer, further expands the company's reach and its commitment to working with Country communities on their own terms.

In 2022, Robby Mallard won the **Ethnic Business Awards "Indigenous in Business" category** — one of Australia's longest-running business award programs, founded in 1988. At the time, Mallard Contracting employed over 60 people and had grown into one of the **Top 20 Aboriginal businesses in Western Australia**. A company built from 30+ years of industry experience, with a safety record so strong that over a five-year period it recorded only a single reportable injury — all while working in one of Australia's most demanding environments.

Mallard Contracting holds a Builders Licence, Electrical Licence and Plumbing and Gas Licence — the full suite of trade credentials required to deliver complex, multi-discipline projects as a principal contractor in the resources sector.

"Opportunity and Choice for Fellow Aboriginal Australians"

2011	60+	Top 20
FOUNDED BY ROBBY MALLARD	EMPLOYEES	ABORIGINAL BUSINESSES IN WA



ACHIEVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT AWARD

Mallard Contracting Journey

Robby Mallard

Wajarri-Nanda man—
"Desert meets Sea"; Yamatji Country WA; 20 years industry before founding

2011

Mallard Contracting founded; 100% Aboriginal-owned; Perth base;
Pilbara operations

Projects

FMG Eliwana (aerodrome, lab, ANFO, admin);
BHP Newman Housing; Brockman Village refurb;
Yangibana camp

Bases

Perth · Karratha
Tom Price · Carnarvon — full Pilbara coverage; client-embedded teams

Workforce

Apprenticeships, traineeships & mentoring; licensed trades — builders, plumbers, electricians

Safety

One recordable injury in five years (FY16–FY20); exemplary safety record in remote mining

2022

Ethnic Business Awards: Indigenous in Business category winner;
Top 20 Aboriginal businesses in WA

MALLARD CONTRACTING
· WAJARRI-NANDA
· OSBORNE PARK WA
· 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ACHIEVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS ROBBY MALLARD AND MALLARD CONTRACTING — FOR 30+ YEARS OF BUILDING ON COUNTRY, FOR THE APPRENTICES WHO BECAME TRADESPEOPLE, FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES CHANGED ON A PILBARA WORKSITE, AND FOR KNOWING FROM THE START THAT THE MEASURE OF A BUSINESS IS ITS PEOPLE.

MALLARD CONTRACTING
mallardcontracting.com.au
Osborne Park, WA 6017
robby@mallardcontracting.com.au

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

An Incubator for Lives Changed — Aboriginal Employment as Company Philosophy

OPPORTUNITY, CHOICE & INTERGENERATIONAL CHANGE

The Achievement in Indigenous Employment Award exists to recognise the businesses that have made First Nations employment not a box to tick but a founding purpose — and Mallard Contracting has done exactly that since the day it was established. Robby Mallard's philosophy is explicit and unchanged: the business exists to create **"opportunity and choice for fellow Aboriginal Australians."** That means employing Aboriginal Australians wherever possible. It means providing formal traineeships and apprenticeships under licensed builders, plumbers and electricians — trade qualifications that change the trajectory of a young person's life and that of their family and community. It means pairing those trainees with highly skilled, experienced trade personnel who mentor them on the job, in some of the most demanding worksites in Australia. And it means building a company culture — across remote Pilbara mine sites, from Karratha to Tom Price to Carnarvon — where Aboriginal Australians are not the exception but the core of the workforce. The retention strategies and incentives Mallard Contracting has developed to keep its Aboriginal workforce stable and growing are a direct response to the real challenges of remote employment: the distance from family and community, the isolation, the cultural load. Mallard has built a model that takes those realities seriously.

COMMUNITY ROOTS & THE WAJARRI CONNECTION

Serving Country, Working With Country, Building for Country

Robby Mallard is not only building a construction business — he is serving the communities on whose Country his projects are delivered. Mallard Contracting pays its respects to the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which it operates across the Pilbara, and has formalised that commitment through **Mallard Deemey** — a joint venture with Donna Meyer, a PKKP (Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura) member — ensuring that the company's work on PKKP Country directly benefits and includes PKKP people. As a director of Winja Wajarri Barna Limited, Robby is also active in Wajarri community governance and development — a leader in the fullest sense.

The 2022 Ethnic Business Awards recognised Robby's achievement publicly, but the real measure is simpler: how many Aboriginal Australians have started a trade apprenticeship through Mallard Contracting? How many have completed it? How many have gone on to further their careers? How many families are stronger because a young person from their community got a start on a Mallard worksite in the Pilbara? These are the numbers Robby Mallard cares about. "We will be judged not by how much money we make but by how many lives we change for the better." That is both the standard he has set — and the one he is meeting.

MALLARD CONTRACTING · SERVICES, PROJECTS & IMPACT

Trades & Licences
Builders · Electrical · Plumbing & Gas licences; multi-discipline turnkey

Resources Clients
BHP · FMG Eliwana; mine camp construction, infrastructure, maintenance

Pilbara Bases
Perth · Karratha
Tom Price · Carnarvon; remote site operations

Indigenous Employment
Core philosophy: Aboriginal employment wherever possible; retention strategies & support

Apprenticeship Incubator
Formal traineeships; apprenticeship completions; trade mentoring from senior licensed personnel

2022 EBA Winner
Ethnic Business Awards: Indigenous in Business; Top 20 Aboriginal businesses in WA



★ OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR ★

Dreamtime Entertainment

Warren Ngarrae Foster
DJIRINGANJ YUIN ELDER
WALLAGA LAKE, NSW SOUTH COAST
STORYTELLER · DANCER · MUSICIAN
CULTURAL EDUCATOR · TOUR GUIDE

“““

If we know where we're coming from, we know where we're going. As long as we keep telling these stories we know that our culture is alive and running strong through our veins.
— WARREN NGARRAE FOSTER

DJIRINGANJ ELDER · WALLAGA LAKE NSW



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR 2025

The highest honour — to a life lived entirely in service of Culture, Country and Community

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Warren Ngarrae Foster — Storyteller of the Yuin Nation, Keeper of Country

Warren Ngarrae Foster is a Djiringanj Yuin Elder from Wallaga Lake on the far south coast of New South Wales — a cultural knowledge holder, storyteller, dancer, musician, filmmaker, cultural educator and community leader whose enterprise, Dreamtime Entertainment, has spent decades carrying the ancient knowledge of the Yuin Nation to new generations, new audiences and new stages around Australia and the world.

Warren has spent most of his life on Country at Wallaga Lake, at the feet of Minga Gulaga — the sacred Mother Mountain of the Yuin Nation. Gulaga Mountain is the sacred birthplace of the Yuin people, and its stories — of creation, of Country, of the relationship between land, people and sky — are at the heart of everything Warren does.

He is a founding member and leader of the **Gulaga Dancers**, a traditional men's dance group that has performed nationally and internationally for more than twenty years, carrying Djiringanj tradition and honouring the land through dance and artistic connection across generations.

He has worked for many years as a **Cultural Teacher and Tour Guide** in South East NSW, sharing Yuin knowledge, Dreamtime stories and connection to Country with schools, communities and visitors.

Warren has written **fifteen traditional Dreamtime stories** about Yuin Country — an extraordinary body of cultural recording that preserves in text what has been carried orally for tens of thousands of years.

In 2008, Warren released his debut hip-hop CD "Dreamtime" as **WZA** — blending the ancient and the contemporary to connect First Nations youth to their own culture. "A lot of the young ones are into hip-hop, but it's a new culture from another country. We're the world's oldest living culture, so I blended the two to help our youth connect to their own country," he said.

He has appeared in ABC television productions **CLEVERMAN** and the web series ***Black As***, writes and records music for screen, and has presented Dreamtime stories at national literary events including the Giiyong Writers' Forum at Eden.

In late 2019, as bushfires raged along the NSW coast, Warren organised a Bunaan — a Corroboree — at the feet of Gulaga Mountain, with scores of people dancing to **heal Country**.

20+ years	15	4+ years
GULAGA DANCERS NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL	YUIN DREAMTIME STORIES WRITTEN	UNSW ADVISOR & COLLEGUE



WARREN NGARRAE FOSTER · DREAMTIME ENTERTAINMENT · OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR 2025

★ OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR ★

Warren's Journey

Wallaga Lake
Born and raised on Yuin Country; Djiringanj man; Gulaga the sacred Mother Mountain — sacred birthplace

1990s
Founding member of the Gulaga Dancers — trained by Elders at Doonooch Dance Company

Stories
15 traditional Dreamtime stories written — Yuin Country; Gulaga, Toonkoo & Ngaardi, the Red Waratah, Boomerang

2008
" Debut hip-hop CD Dreamtime" as WZA — blending ancient culture with contemporary music

2019
Organised Bunaan at Gulaga Mountain — dancing to heal Country while bushfires raged on the coast

2023+
Legend Award (emmedia & events / Artback NT); continues cultural tours, storytelling & community leadership at Wallaga Lake

ABC TV - CLEVERMAN 1/2 SEASONS APPEARANCE

Current -
Facilitating a clinical trial on cultural health and well being.
From 2022 worked with the UNSW Cultural health, social and emotional wellbeing

PUBLISHED IN THE LANCET MEDICAL JOURNAL

Wallaga Lake, NSW South Coast
Yuin Nation · Djiringanj Country
Gulaga Mountain — Sacred Country
DREAMTIME ENTERTAINMENT



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

2025 · ★ OVERALL BUSINESS

OF THE YEAR ★ · 2025

WARREN NGARRAE FOSTER
DREAMTIME ENTERTAINMENT
YUIN NATION
WALLAGA LAKE NSW

Culture is the Business

The World's Oldest Living Tradition

WHY THE OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025

When a Life's Work and a Business Are the Same Thing

The Overall Business of the Year Award is not given to the biggest revenue or the highest growth rate. It is given to the business that, across every dimension of what a First Nations enterprise can be, represents excellence — in purpose, in practice, in community, in cultural integrity and in longevity. By every one of those measures, Warren Ngarrae Foster and Dreamtime Entertainment is that business. Warren has built an enterprise around the single most valuable asset First Nations Australia possesses: its living culture.

The stories of the Yuin Nation — of Gulaga Mountain, of the Black Duck people, of Whale Dreaming and of Country — have survived for tens of thousands of years because people like Warren committed their lives to carrying them forward. That is not heritage preservation. That is a living enterprise: school performances, cultural tours, dance, music, film, writing, community healing and a corroboree at the foot of the sacred mountain while fire raged across the landscape. The business is the culture. The culture is the business.

That is what makes Dreamtime Entertainment the Overall Business of the Year.

GULAGA, THE YUIN NATION & THE NEXT GENERATION

"As I Get Older, I Am Passing It Down to the Next Generation"

Warren's approach to intergenerational cultural transfer is direct and practical. He tells his children about Whale Dreaming and the Black Duck people. He teaches young people in schools through cultural tours and workshops. He participated in the Regenerate Regional Leadership Program for Eurobodalla. "When some of the young fellas here look like they're headed for trouble, I'll talk with them about their responsibility to themselves and their families. They've gotta learn how to take control of their own bus. And once they learn stories and culture, then they start respecting everyone else."

Warren is a member of the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council — deeply embedded in Yuin community governance and self-determination. He is a Legend Award winner. He performed at the University of Wollongong launch. He presented at the Giiyong Writers' Forum.

Through Dreamtime Entertainment, he has taken the knowledge of the Yuin Nation to audiences who would otherwise never have heard it — and he has done it without compromise, without diminishment, and with the full weight of cultural authority that only a Knowledge Keeper of his standing can carry. This is the Overall Business of the Year.

Currently, Warren is continuing his work with the University of N.S.W in cultural health and social and emotional wellbeing for the last 4 years and he is published in the Lancet Medical Journal. Warren is also running a clinical trial on cultural health and well being.

WARREN NGARRAE FOSTER·A LIFE IN CULTURE & COMMUNITY

Gulaga Dancers Founder; 20+ years; national & international performances; Djiringanj tradition honoured	**15 Dreamtime Stories** Written: Yuin Country; Gulaga, Toonkoo & Ngaardi; the Red Waratah; Boomerang origins	**Musician WZA** Debut CD"Dreamtime" (2008); hip-hop meets ancient Yuin culture; youth engagement
Screen & Media ABC television; Black As (web series); film & music production; Giiyong Writers' Forum	**Bunaan 2019** Corroboree at Gulaga Mountain — healing Country while bushfires raged; scores dance for Country	**COP27 Egypt** Climate disaster survivor advocate; First Nations bushfire stories to the world's climate summit

Part of the development of Dark Emu Production with Bangarra Dance Company

WARREN NGARRAE FOSTER — YOU HAVE SPENT YOUR LIFE IN THE OLDEST BUSINESS ON EARTH: CARRYING THE STORIES OF THE YUIN NATION FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT, IN DANCE, IN MUSIC, IN FILM, IN WORD AND IN CEREMONY. THE DREAMTIME IS NOT THE PAST. YOU HAVE PROVED IT IS A LIVING ENTERPRISE. CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING THE ALL FIRST NATIONS OVERALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR 2025.

FIRST NATIONS INDIGENOUS DANCE GROUP OF THE YEAR

Yukkumbruk Women's Dreaming

Yukkumbruk = Crow, Ngunnawal language

NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY · CANBERRA ACT FOUNDED 2011 LED BY ELDER AUNTY SERENA WILLIAMS NEARLY 30 MEMBERS · 3 MONTHS TO 55 YRS

“““

We are revitalising our dances to continue our history. I'm very proud to be lead dancer of Yukkumbruk Dreaming. It's a way that I honour my culture, especially my father.

— SERENA WILLIAMS & TIANA HOUSE

YUKKUMBRUK DREAMING · NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY

“Yukkumbruk Dreaming Dance Group is a self-determined Aboriginal dance group.
We are 100% self-funded, community led, and independent.
We are not associated, affiliated, or connected with any other dance groups in the ACT region.
Our culture, our stories, our way — guided by our own mob, on our own terms.
We stand in pride, integrity, and sovereignty, doing the work for culture and community without outside influence.
Thank you to everyone who supports Yukkumbruk Dreaming and respects who we are and how we operate.”

YUKKUMBRUK WOMEN'S DREAMING · NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY · DANCE GROUP OF THE YEAR 2025

THESTORY

Born in Canberra — The Ngunnawal Cultural Revival That Grew to Nearly 30

Yukkumbruk means "Crow" in the Ngunnawal language — named in honour of Harold "Crow" Williams, a respected Ngunnawal cultural knowledge holder, warrior, teacher and Aboriginal rights activist. In 2011, his daughter Serena started a cultural revival.

Ngunnawal Elder Aunty Serena Williams is a proud Ngunnawal-Wiradjuri woman who has lived on Ngunnawal Country all her life. Her father Harold "Crow" Williams — from whom the group takes its name — was recognised as the first of the Ngunnawal nation to return to the ACT after being removed as a child, and spent his life as a cultural knowledge holder, warrior, teacher and rights activist. Serena reclaimed something that had been suppressed — revitalising Ngunnawal dance traditions and carrying the legacy of Harold Crow forward in movement, song and story.

Today the Yukkumbruk Dancers Dreaming Group has grown to **nearly 30 members** — primarily women and children aged from **three months to 55 years**. The group reflects the rich diversity of First Nations families living on Ngunnawal Country, with cultural ties to the Ngunnawal, Wiradjuri, Gadigal, Yaegl, Bundjalung, Gamilaroi/Kamilaroi, Yuin, Weilwan, Bidjara, Lama Lama and Kombumerri peoples. Cultural guidance is provided by Elders and family members led by Serena Williams.

In August 2023, supported by the AIATSIS Songs of Australia Fund, the Yukkumbruk Dancers travelled to the **Mutawintji Cultural Festival** in western NSW — sharing revitalised Ngunnawal dance traditions with other First Nations communities and igniting new connections across Country.

ALL FIRST NATIONS
AWARDS
INDIGENOUS DANCE GROUP
OF THE YEAR 2025

2011	~30	11
FOUNDED IN A LOUNGE ROOM	MEMBERS · 3 MONTHS TO 55 YEARS	FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES REPRESENTED



FIRST NATIONS INDIGENOUS DANCE GROUP OF THE YEAR

Yukkumbruk Journey

Legacy
Harold "Crow" Williams — Ngunnawal cultural knowledge holder, warrior, teacher & rights activist. First Ngunnawal to return to ACT after removal

2011
AuntySerena Williams gathers with brother Billy T Tompkins and niece Minnie Tompkins - loungeroom becomes birthplace

Grown
Nearly 30 members; women and children 3 months to 55 years; 11 First Nations peoples represented

Music
Billy T Tompkins — Traditional Ngunnawal song man; composes songs, sings & provides accompaniment

Mutawintji 2023
AIATSIS Songs of Australia Fund supports travel to Mutawintji Cultural Festival; Ngunnawal dances shared with other First Nations

2025
Welcome to Country: Science Meets Parliament; Ausdance ACT Dance Week; International Dance Day

YUKKUMBRUK DREAMING
Ngunnawal Country, Canberra ACT
AIATSIS Songs of Australia Fund
Led by Elder Aunty Serena Williams





INDIGENOUS DANCE GROUP OF THE YEAR · 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Revitalising Ngunnawal Song and Dance

The Next Generation Carries the Legacy

CULTURAL REVIVAL, MEMORY AND INTERGENERATIONAL LOVE

Honouring Crow, Healing Country — Dancing What Was Almost Lost

The Yukkumbruk Dancers are doing something that is at once profoundly personal and deeply political: they are revitalising Ngunnawal song and dance traditions that were suppressed by colonisation and the policies of removal, assimilation and cultural erasure. The name itself is an act of honouring — Yukkumbruk, Crow, for Harold Crow Williams, who was taken from his Country as a child and spent his life fighting to return to it, to know it, and to teach it. When his daughter Serena gathered in her lounge room in 2011 to sing and dance, she was completing something her father had started. Every performance since has been an act of continuation. Serina speaks for many when she says: "I'm very proud to be lead dancer of Yukkumbruk Dreaming. It's a way that I honour my culture. Every time I dance with my nieces and family, I feel an overwhelming sense of pride and love."

COMMUNITY,CONNECTION AND A DREAM FOR CORROBOREE

From an idea to Mutawintji — Building Across Country

The Mutawintji Cultural Festival in August 2023 marked a turning point for Yukkumbruk. With support from the AIATSIS Songs of Australia Fund, they travelled from Ngunnawal Country to western NSW to share their revitalised dances with other First Nations communities — and returned with new connections, new energy and a new dream. Serena Williams envisions hosting a

Corroboree on Ngunnawal Country — an event that could become a cornerstone of cultural tourism, showcasing the richness of Aboriginal traditions and strengthening bonds between First Nations communities across the country. AIATSIS describes this vision simply and powerfully: it's about "more than preservation."

In 2025, the Yukkumbruk Dancers have been visible across Canberra's cultural and civic life — providing Welcome to Country for Science Meets Parliament, for Ausdance ACT Dance Week and International Dance Day, and continuing to perform at events that connect mob and community. Aunty Serena Williams is recognised across Canberra as a Ngunnawal Elder who welcomes international visitors, heads the Harold "Crow" Williams Memorial Rugby League Knockout Association, and has been involved in the Ngambri Aboriginal Land Council, Munjuwa Aboriginal Corporation for Housing and Health, and Burringiri Aboriginal Corporation for Cultural and Arts.

Aunty Serena Williams
Ngunnawal Elder & founder; Ngunnawal–Wiradjuri woman; lifelong Ngunnawal Country custodian

Leadership
Traditional Ngunnawal song and dance - led by Serena

Mutawintji Festival 2023
AIATSIS Songs of Australia Fund; shared Ngunnawal dance with other First Nations

Membership
Nearly 30 members; 3 months to 55 years; 11 First Nations peoples

Science Meets Parliament 2025
Welcome to Country & Yukkumbruk Dreaming dancers; Canberra national events

Vision
Corroboree on Ngunnawal Country — cultural tourism and inter-community bonds

YUKKUMBRUK·MEMBERS,EVENTS & CULTURAL PURPOSE

CONGRATULATIONS YUKKUMBRUK WOMEN'S DREAMING — TO AUNTY SERENA, ND TO EVERY CHILD WHO HAS DANCED FOR THEIR ELDERS, THEIR FAMILY AND THEIR COUNTRY. YOU STARTED IN 2011 AND YOU ARE STILL DANCING. HAROLD CROW WOULD BE PROUD.

YUKKUMBRUK WOMEN'S DREAMING · NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY · CANBERRA ACT · 2025

Allan Brookman

AFN Sports Ignite Award 2025

AFN Most Promising Male Talent in Sport Award 2025



2025	ACT	FOOTBALL
AWARD YEAR	TERRITORY	

> *"Representing his mob on the field is everything — every game is played with Country in his heart."*
>
> — AFN AWARDS 2025 CITATION

Allan Brookman is a young man who carries the pride of his Taribelang and Butchulla heritage onto every football field he graces. Raised on sport was never just sport — it was connection, identity, and a living expression of culture.

His mother, Wendy Brookman — proud Butchulla and Badjala woman, educator, and tireless community leader — has long championed the importance of First Nations young people stepping into spaces that truly honour who they are. Allan embodies exactly that spirit every single day.

HERITAGE

Taribelang & Butchulla Nations
Ngunnawal Country
Canberra, ACT

On the Canberra football scene, Allan has distinguished himself not only through his natural ability and work ethic, but through the way he plays — with purpose, with resilience, and with a quiet determination that speaks to something far deeper than results alone.

The All First Nations Most Promising Male Talent in Sport Award recognises an emerging athlete who demonstrates exceptional potential, character, and cultural pride. In 2025, that recognition belongs to Allan Brookman — well earned and warmly celebrated by his family, community, and the entire AFN family.

SPORT · 2025 EDITION



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARD





THE STORY BEHIND THE AWARD

A Future Written in Country

For a young First Nations athlete growing up in Canberra, the path is never without its challenges. Yet Allan Brookman has met those always known him to carry. On Ngunnawal Country, he has carved out a name for himself as one of football's brightest emerging talents.

Allan's development as a footballer has been shaped by family, culture, and a deep sense of belonging. The values instilled by his mother Wendy — a respected community figure, educator, and advocate for First Nations people — are visible in the way he conducts himself on and off the field. Respect, discipline, and pride in who he is.

AFN Most Promising Male Talent in Sport Award
Presented at the All First Nations Awards · CANBERRA · 2025

KEY MILESTONES

- **Football · Canberra, ACT**
  Rising through the ranks of Canberra's football community, Allan has demonstrated talent and leadership well beyond his years.
- **Cultural Pride on the Field**
  Every performance is underpinned by a deep connection to his GubbiGubbi and Butchulla heritage — representing his mob with distinction.
- **Community Role Model**
  Recognised not only for athletic promise but for his character — a young man who inspires others in his community to aim high.
- **AFN Award Winner · 2025**
  Named All First Nations Most Promising Male Talent in Sport — the culmination of years of dedication, growth, and cultural pride.



AWARDS

- AFN Most Promising Male Talent In Sport Award 2025
- AFN Sports Ignite Award 2025

SPORT

Football — Canberra, ACT

HERITAGE

Taribelang & Butchulla Nation
Ngunnawal Country

FAMILY

Son of Wendy Brookman - Butchulla & Badjala woman, educator & community leader
Son of Al Brookman - Taribelang man.

PRESENTED BY

All First Nations Awards 2025

Congratulations, Allan — we celebrate your talent, your culture, and your bright future ahead.

Allan Brookman

WATCHING MY SON GROW INTO WHO HE IS BECOMING IS SOMETHING I CAN'T QUITE PUT INTO WORDS. AS HIS FATHER, THERE'S A DEEP PRIDE IN SEEING HIM PUSH HIMSELF, ACHIEVE THINGS, AND HANDLE LIFE IN HIS OWN WAY. EVERY MILESTONE, BIG OR SMALL, REMINDS ME JUST HOW FAR HE'S COME.

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE HIS MENTOR TO GUIDE HIM, SUPPORT HIM, AND HELP SHAPE HIS PATH. BUT THE TRUTH IS, HE TEACHES ME JUST AS MUCH. HIS STRENGTH, HIS PERSPECTIVE, AND THE WAY HE APPROACHES THE WORLD GIVE ME SOMETHING TO LEARN FROM EVERY SINGLE DAY.

BEING HIS DAD ISN'T JUST ABOUT LEADING THE WAY IT'S ABOUT WALKING BESIDE HIM, GROWING TOGETHER, AND APPRECIATING THE PERSON HE IS BECOMING. I COULDN'T BE PROUDER.

- AL BROOKMAN - DAD.



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Telaya Blacksmith

First Nations Sportswoman

Award Winner · 2025
All First Nations Awards

"Every time I compete, I carry my people with me. Knowing that gives me strength I can't find anywhere else."

— TELAYA BLACKSMITH

The Story

A First Nations Sportswoman AFN Award Recipient
Rare - Promise - Spirit

Telaya Blacksmith is the embodiment of what happens when talent, identity, and an unbreakable spirit collide — a young woman who competes with the full weight of her culture, her Country, and her community behind her. As a young First Nations sportswoman, Telaya has announced herself on the national stage not simply as an athlete of rare ability, but as a leader in the making.

Recognising extraordinary athletic potential, cultural pride, and enduring promise in First Nations women's sport

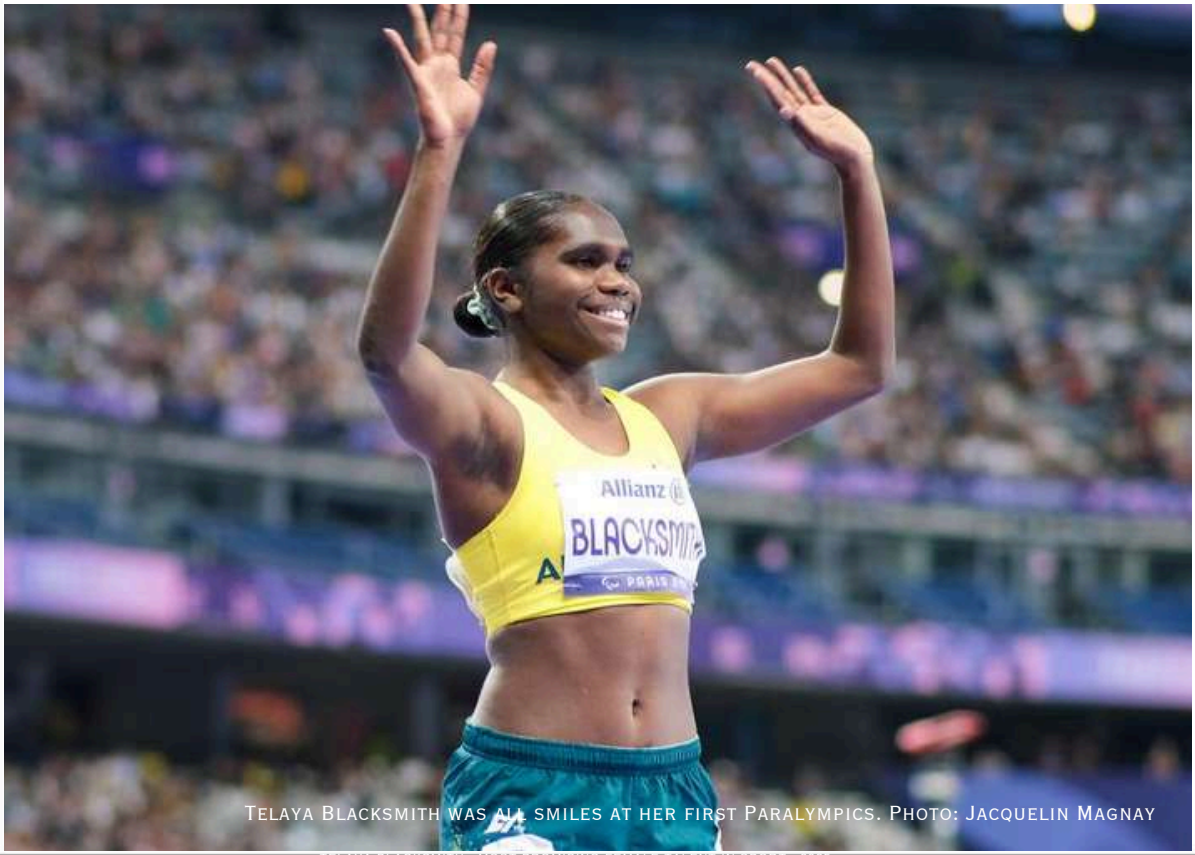
2025	No. 1	Next
YEAR	FEMALE	LEADER

★ **ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · MOST PROMISING FEMALE TALENT IN SPORT · 2025**

Shaped by the values of her family and grounded in her First Nations heritage, she has developed not just as a competitor but as a person of exceptional character — navigating the pressures of elite sport with maturity and grace well beyond her years.

Her journey is a testament to what is possible when young First Nations women are given — and seize — their moment. By excelling in her sport, Telaya becomes a signal to the next generation: proof that First Nations young women belong on every field, in every competition, and in every spotlight this country has to offer.

The All First Nations Awards recognise in Telaya not only what she has already achieved, but what she represents for every young First Nations girl watching from the sideline, daring to dream of more.



Telaya Blacksmith was all smiles at her first Paralympics. Photo: Jacquelin Magnay

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · ALLFIRSTNATIONS.COM.AU

A Champion Rising —
A First Nations Voice on Every Field

THE JOURNEY

Competing with Country Behind Her

Telaya's path has not been without challenge — but it is precisely how she has met those challenges that defines her.
From her earliest days in sport, she has carried the weight and honour of her First Nations heritage into every competition, transforming that identity from something to be navigated into something to be celebrated.

Her commitment to developing her craft has been total — building skill, fitness, and competitive intelligence not just through natural ability, but through sustained dedication. Coaches and peers alike speak of an athlete who leads by example long before the whistle blows.

Standing out as one of Australia's most promising young First Nations sportswomen, Telaya has demonstrated the drive and resilience that marks someone not just as a high performer — but as a future leader for her community and her people.

THE EXAMPLE

Fighting for a Seat — and Expanding the Table

Telaya Blacksmith does not simply compete — she represents. Every performance is a statement: that First Nations young women belong in elite sport, that their stories deserve to be told, and that the next generation of Indigenous athletes will find a path already widened by those who came before them.

Through her connection to Country and community, Telaya maintains the grounding that makes her remarkable not just as a sportswoman but as a human being. Her achievement today plants a seed for tomorrow's leaders — the girls watching from the sideline who now know that they, too, can reach every height.

The All First Nations Awards are proud to recognise her as the embodiment of what First Nations sport can be — powerful, proud, and full of promise.





QUALITIES OF EXCELLENCE — TELAYA BLACKSMITH · 2025

Outstanding Performance
Demonstrated excellence across all aspects of sporting development and competition

Cultural Pride
Brings First Nations identity and values into every single performance

Resilience
Navigated challenges with maturity and determination well beyond her years

Leadership Potential
Already inspiring peers and serving as a role model for the next generation

CONGRATULATIONS TELAYA BLACKSMITH — YOUR ACHIEVEMENT INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION OF FIRST NATIONS WOMEN IN SPORT ACROSS THIS COUNTRY. THE FUTURE IS YOURS.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · MOST PROMISING FEMALE TALENT IN SPORT · 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Telaya Blacksmith

MOST PROMISING FEMALE TALENT IN SPORT · 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS · SPORT EXCELLENCE · FUTURE LEADER

TELAYA BLACKSMITH · MOST PROMISING FEMALE TALENT IN SPORT · 2024

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Female Sportsperson of the Year Award

FIRST NATIONS SPORT & ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE · 2025

PRESENTED TO

Bianca Booth



- Sporting Excellence
  Exemplary performance & achievement on the national stage
- First Nations Pride
  Competing with cultural identity at the forefront
- Community Inspiration
  Role model for young First Nations women in sport
- Resilience & Courage
  Overcoming barriers with grace and determination
- Trailblazer
  Paving the way for the next generation of First Nations female athletes

FEMALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR · BIANCA BOOTH

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

2025

THANK YOU, BIANCA · 2025

ATHLETE

FIRST NATIONS

2025

TRAILBLAZER

Sporting Excellence
Exemplary performance & achievement on the national stage

First Nations Pride
Competing with cultural identity at the forefront

Resilience & Courage
Role model for young First Nations women in sport

THE CHAMPION

Bianca Booth represents everything extraordinary about First Nations women in sport. With cultural pride, Bianca has competed at the highest levels — carrying her identity as simply as her athletic; it is an act of sovereignty, visibility, and belonging.

THE JOURNEY & THE LEGACY

Competing with Country Behind Her

Bianca Booth has not simply excelled in sport — she has transformed what it means to be a First Nations woman on the national sporting stage. Through dedication, sacrifice, and an unwavering connection to her culture, Bianca has shown that athletic greatness and cultural identity are inseparable. Off the field, her mentorship and advocacy for young First Nations girls in sport is as significant as any podium she has stood on.



Hurricanes Netball Club players Emma Flick-Booth, Laycie Kowalick, Bianca Booth, Gloria Pupi Pesefea and Sophie Hines are excited the club have been awarded a $2000 grant from Woolworths. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

WHAT BIANCA STANDS FOR

Representing Country

Carrying the pride of her community and culture into every competition she enters

Inspiring the Next Generation

A living example to young First Nations girls that their dreams on the field are valid and achievable

Advocacy & Visibility

Using her platform to champion First Nations representation in sport and beyond

Breaking Barriers

Proving First Nations women belong at the highest levels of Australian sport

· LEGACY · STRENGTH · PRIDE

BIANCA BOOTH · FEMALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR 2025

THANK YOU — ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · OFFICIAL RECOGNITION · 2025

CONGRATULATIONS BIANCA — WE HONOUR YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR SPIRIT, AND THE TRAIL YOU BLAZE FOR EVERY GIRL WHO IS FOLLOWING IN YOUR STEPS OF SUCCESS.

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Real Change.

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AFN ONE TO WATCH AWARD – ASH TCHEN




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ALL FIRST NATIONS

SPORT· RUGBY UNION

Andy Muirhead

BARUNGGAMMAN

WING · ACT BRUMBIES
NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY (CANBERRA), ACT

> ***If we get more Aboriginal men playing Super Rugby, the game will flourish.***
>
> *— ANDY MUIRHEAD, WING, ACT BRUMBIES*





Images: Andy Muirhead wore the inaugural Brumbies' Indigenous jersey with pride for the clash against the Queensland Reds. Picture: Karleen Minney
Andy Muirhead in action in February this year. Image: Lukas Coch (AAP)

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · RUGBY UNION

PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2025

HONOURING EXCELLENCE, COURAGE AND COMMUNITY ON AND OFF THE FIELD

THE STORY

From a Holden Ute to a Hundred Caps — and a Movement

Andy Muirhead drove his Holden Ute from Brisbane to Canberra on a $250-a-week training deal and a single stubborn belief: that he could play Super Rugby. Eight years later, he has 100 caps, a Lions scalp, and a mission to change Australian rugby forever.

A proud Barunggam man born in Brisbane in 1993, Muirhead attended Brisbane State High School and honed his game at Souths Rugby Club in the Queensland Premier Rugby competition. Despite winning a Premier Rugby title with Souths in 2015 and earning time in New Zealand with Counties Manukau, the representative doors he deserved never fully opened at home. So he created his own door — driving south to Canberra and presenting himself at Brumbies training.

He debuted in 2017 against the Southern Kings in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and scored twice in his very next match against the Jaguares in Buenos Aires. That electric early form earned him a permanent contract — and Muirhead has never looked back. Playing predominantly on the right wing, he built a reputation for raw courage: beating Taniela Tupou, Branden Paenga-Amosa and Filipo Dangunu in a single carry to set up the 2020 Super Rugby AU final victory is the stuff of Brumbies legend.

In April 2025, Muirhead reached his 100th Super Rugby cap for the Brumbies against his hometown club, the Queensland Reds at Suncorp Stadium — surrounded by family, old school mates and a sea of Brumbies gold. His former coach, Brumbies captain Allan Alaalatoa said simply: "He's a special man. He's a great leader and everyone respects him."

100+	2017	2025
SUPER RUGBY CAPS	BRUMBIES DEBUT	LIONS MATCH



ANDY MUIRHEAD · ACT BRUMBIES · RUGBY UNION PLAYER OF THE YEAR

FIRST NATIONS SPORT · RUGBY UNION

The Muirhead Legacy

2017

Brumbies debut, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

100+

Super Rugby Pacific caps for the Brumbies

2020

Super Rugby AU Final championship victory

2024

Two tries — QF win vs Highlanders

2025

First Nations & Pasifika XV vs Lions

2025

Yara Construction — Indigenous pathway

FIND ANDY MUIRHEAD

brumbies.rugby
rugby.com.au
Ngunnawal Country (Canberra), ACT

The Pivot That Changed Indigenous Rugby

THE JOURNEY

A Hundred Caps for the Mob

When Muirhead scored his 100th try — well, reached his 100th cap — for the Brumbies in Brisbane in April 2025, the stadium erupted not just for a milestone, but for a story. His former school friends, his family and the wider Indigenous community watched a man who once trained for free rise to become one of the longest-serving and most respected players in Super Rugby Pacific history. "These are my best mates from school that turned up to remind me who I am," Muirhead told commentators with a grin.

COMMUNITY & LEGACY

Building the Path Behind Him

Muirhead's ambitions have always stretched beyond the try line. A passionate voice for First Nations participation in rugby union, he was among the first five players named in the historic First Nations and Pasifika XV that faced the British and Irish Lions in Melbourne in July 2025 — a match he described as a once-in-a-generation platform to showcase Indigenous and Pasifika culture to the world.

"Participation needs to grow for our Indigenous kids," he said at the team launch. "Having a game like this — where young boys and girls see Indigenous and Pasifika players come together — I think it might motivate them to say 'I want to play in one of those games one day'."

Off the field, Muirhead co-founded Yara — a civil construction company dedicated to placing Indigenous Australians not just in labouring roles, but in certificate and engineering pathways across federal and defence projects nationally. He has also played a central role in the Brumbies' First Nations Pathway Program, designed to ensure talented young Indigenous players are not lost between the cracks of the rugby union system.

His vision is audacious: double and triple the number of Aboriginal players in Super Rugby, launch an All Stars game in rugby union, and build the infrastructure the next generation of First Nations players will inherit.

ANDY MUIRHEAD · KEY MILESTONES & INITIATIVES

ACT Brumbies
100+Super RugbyPacific caps; flagship of Indigenous representation in Australian rugby

Lloyd McDermott Program
TheAboriginal& Torres Strait Islander pathway that gave Muirhead his first rugby structure

First Nations & Pasifika XV
Historic matchvs British & Irish

Lions, Melbourne July 2025; Muirhead named from the outset

Yara Construction
Civil constructioncompany creating Indigenous pathways in federal and defence projects nationally

Brumbies First Nations Pathway Program
Identifying and nurturing Indigenous talent that might otherwise slip through the cracks

Global Ambition
Dream: an Indigenous All Stars game in rugby union; doubling Aboriginal Super Rugby players



Congratulations Andy Muirhead and the entire Brumbies family — the journey that began with a Holden Ute and a $250-a-week dream is now rewriting what is possible for First Nations Athletes across Australia.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · RUGBY UNION PLAYER OF THE YEAR · 2025

Michael O'Loughlin

"MAGIC"

KAURNA, NGARRINDJERI & NARUNGGAMAN

SWANS HALL OF FAME · AFL HALL OF FAME

FORWARD · SYDNEY SWANS 1995–2009

TARNTANYA (ADELAIDE), SOUTH AUSTRALIA

"

When you come to a footy club, you're only passing through. You've got to leave it in a better place than you found it.

— MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · AFL LEGEND OF THE YEAR 2025

★

Honouring a lifetime of excellence, leadership and community pride.

From Salisbury North to the SCG — a Legend Forged in Red and White

Michael O'Loughlin grew up kicking a footy in the mornings, afternoons, lunch breaks and recesses of Salisbury North, Adelaide. He arrived in Sydney at 18 with barely a senior game behind him — and left 15 years later as a Premiership player, an AFL legend, and one of the greatest First Nations footballers Australia has ever seen.

A proud Kaurna, Ngarrindjeri and Narungga man born on 20 February 1977, O'Loughlin was shaped by his uncle Wilbur Wilson — a 171-game Central District SANFL hero — and by his mother Muriel, who ensured homework and chores always came before football. Selected in the third round of the 1994 National Draft, he debuted in Round 5 of 1995, kicking three goals, and was quickly nicknamed "Magic" by teammates who could barely believe what they were watching.

Over 303 games and 521 goals — the latter tally placing him second on the Swans' all-time goalkicking list — O'Loughlin became the club's games record holder before his cousin Adam Goodes surpassed the mark. He was twice named All-Australian (1997 and 2000), won the Best and Fairest in 1998, led the Swans goalkicking in 2000 and 2001, and in 2005 earned the crowning glory of his playing career: a Premiership flag with Sydney. That same year, he was named at full-forward in the AFL's Indigenous Team of the Century.

His 2006 qualifying final moment — sprinting through an open goal at Subiaco and wheeling to roar at the Eagles crowd — was immortalised in Jamie Cooper's painting ***The Game That Made Australia***, commissioned by the AFL to mark 150 years of the sport. He retired in 2009, the first Swan ever to play 300 senior games, awarded the AFLPA's Madden Medal for on and off-field excellence.

303	521	2005
AFL GAMES	CAREER GOALS	PREMIERSHIP



FIRST NATIONS SPORT · AFL

The O'Loughlin Legacy

1994	Drafted—Sydney Swans 3rd round National Draft
1997	First All-Australian; Intl Rules representative
2005	AFLPremiership winner; Indigenous Team of Century
2009	Madden Medal; 303rd game; co-founds GO Foundation
2011	Sydney Swans Hal lof Fame
2015	AF LHall of Fame; founds ARA Indigenous Services
2021	Elected to Sydney Swans Board of Directors
2025	Chair of Selectors, Indigenous All-Stars

CONGRATULATIONS MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN — 'MAGIC' ON THE FIELD, A FORCE FOR CHANGE OFF IT. YOUR LEGACY IS NOT ONLY WRITTEN IN GOALS AND PREMIERSHIPS, BUT IN EVERY FIRST NATIONS CHILD WHO SEES THE DOOR YOU OPENED AND WALKS THROUGH IT.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

· AFL LEGEND OF THE YEAR · 2025

FIND MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

go-foundation.org

araindig.com.au

Tarntanya (Adelaide) & Gadigal Country (Sydney)



ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Beyond the Game — A Legacy Built for the Mob

THEGOFOUNDATION

Education as the Great Equaliser

In September 2009 — the same year he retired from football — O'Loughlin co-founded the Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) with his cousin and former Swans teammate Adam Goodes. Launched in Dareton, New South Wales, the Foundation began with a handful of scholarships and a conviction that education was the most powerful tool available to Indigenous Australians.

By 2021, GO had expanded into 26 predominantly public schools and five universities, empowering Indigenous youth through scholarships, mentoring, employment pathways and leadership programs. Founding partners include the Sydney Swans, Allens Linklaters, QBE Insurance and KPMG Australia — a coalition that reflects how O'Loughlin has always built bridges between Indigenous communities and the broader Australian economy.

BUSINESS&BOARD

From the Field to the Boardroom

In 2015, O'Loughlin founded CMC Indigenous Services — now rebranded as **ARA Indigenous Services** — creating meaningful employment and enterprise pathways for First Nations Australians across corporate and government sectors. In 2021, he was elected to the Sydney Swans Board of Directors, becoming one of the most influential First Nations voices at the governance level of Australian professional sport.

In 2025, O'Loughlin was appointed Chair of Selectors for the AFL's Indigenous All-Stars match — a role that brings his journey full circle. From being mentored by his uncle Wilbur Wilson on the SANFL terraces of Salisbury North, to shaping the next generation of Indigenous footballers from the selection table, his impact on the game spans every possible level.

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

·KEY LEGACY INITIATIVES

Sydney Swans
303 games, 521 goals; club games record holder; 2005 Premiership; Swans Hall of Fame 2011

AFL Hall of Fame 2015
Inducted for on-field brilliance and exemplary service to the Indigenous community

Indigenous Team of the Century
Named at full-forward in the AFL's 2005 all-time greatest Indigenous XV

GO Foundation
Co-founded with Adam Goodes; 26 schools, 5 universities; Indigenous education & mentorship

ARA Indigenous Services
Employment and enterprise pathways for First Nations Australians nationally

All-Stars 2025
Chair of Selectors — shaping the next generation of Indigenous AFL stars



MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN · SYDNEY SWANS · 2025

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Providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to own their home, start or grow a business, and invest in their future.

1800 107 107 **iba.gov.au**

The design of our brand was inspired by artwork from Gamilaraay/Gomeroi artist Penny Evans.

All First Nations Awards

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL SERVICES

IBA Journey

1968

Indigenous Business Development Program started

1975

Indigenous Home Ownership Program begins

1990

Investment program commences

2005

IBA established under the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Act 2005

2025

Landmark reform as legislative change approved and IBA launched Strategy Towards 2030

2026

Announced the Office of the Indigenous Economy

FIND INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AUSTRALIA

iba.gov.au

1800 107 107

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

NATIONAL REACH ACROSS AUSTRALIA

A Watershed Moment IBA's Strategy Towards 2030

OUR PURPOSE & VISION

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AUSTRALIA · IMPACT & STRATEGY

Invested in First Nations Success

IBA's vision is for a nation in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are economically independent and an integral part of the economy. It was created to assist and enhance the economic development opportunities of First Nations people across Australia. IBA provides services to own a home, start or grow a business, and invest in the future.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM & CAPITAL MARKETS

Building a Stronger Indigenous-Led Economy

The 2025 expansion of IBA's legislative authority was a watershed moment in Australian economic policy. Parliament empowered IBA to access capital markets, make direct investments and deploy specialist financial products – signaling a new maturity in Australia's approach to Indigenous economic inclusion.

With a $2 billion asset base and a *Strategy Towards 2030*, IBA has committed to mobilising substantial capital over the next five years – targeting housing and construction, clean energy and renewables, mining and critical minerals, government services, agriculture and the care economy.



INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AUSTRALIA KEY PROGRAMS

Home Ownership - Business Support - Investment Management - Asset Management

Home Ownership
22,000+families supported since 1975; over $4b in home loans approved

Business Support
Start-up & growth finance; capability support services; hundreds of millions deployed

Investment & Asset Management
Indigenous Prosperity Funds; Real Estate Investment Trust; direct investments nationally

2025 Legislative Reform
Capital markets access; $2b asset base leveraged; new products in development

Office of the Indigenous Economy
Monitor and track the value and shape of Australia's Indigenous-led economic activity

Strategy Towards 2030
Substantial capital to be mobilised; 6 priority sectors; evolving to a development finance bank

CONGRATULATIONS INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AUSTRALIA — FIFTY YEARS OF STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE HAS BUILT THE FOUNDATION FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY NEXT CHAPTER. THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS, HOMEOWNERS AND INVESTORS WILL BUILD THEIR FUTURES ON THE PLATFORM IBA IS CREATING.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · FINANCIAL SERVICES AWARD · 2025

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL SERVICES

Indigenous Business Australia

IBA

CORPORATE COMMONWEALTH ENTITY

NATIONAL REACH ACROSS AUSTRALIA

“

Unlocking new possibilities for Indigenous people by connecting them with capital, capability, and opportunity.

— DAVID KNIGHTS, IBA CEO

STRATEGY TOWARDS 2030 LAUNCH

Recognising outstanding contribution to First Nations economic independence and financial empowerment

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

FINANCIAL SERVICES AWARD 2025

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

THESTORY

From Concessional Lender to Capital Markets Powerhouse

For more than 50 years, IBA has been the financial backbone of First Nations economic participation. In 2025, landmark legislative reform transformed IBA from a concessional lender into a full capital markets participant.

Operating as a corporate Commonwealth entity under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005, IBA is accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy. Its mission: advance the economic self-sufficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and build a substantial capital asset in service of that goal.

Since the Indigenous Home Ownership Program launched in 1975, IBA has helped more than 22,000 First Nations families into home ownership, approving more than $4 billion in home loans. Its business support program has delivered hundreds of millions in business finance and capability support to Indigenous entrepreneurs. IBA also manages the Indigenous Prosperity Funds, an Indigenous Real Estate Investment Trust, and specialised property investment vehicles – building intergenerational wealth for communities nationwide.

In February 2025, Parliament passed landmark reforms removing restrictions on IBA's ability to borrow and raise capital from financial markets. With a $2 billion asset base now unlocked, IBA has been repositioned as Australia's first Indigenous development finance institution – able to access capital markets and deploy specialist financial products at a scale never before possible.

22,000+	$4B+	50+
FAMILIES INTO HOME OWNERSHIP	IN HOME LOANS APPROVED	YEARS OF SERVICE





PODCAST – APP – WEBSITE – SISTAS

AFN Administration Support Award 2025 - Sophia Tsuei



All First Nations Awards

FIRST NATIONS ARTS & CULTURE

Brodie Murray

Playwright · Actor · Storyteller

WAMBA WAMBA & NGARRINDJERI MAN

SCOTTISH-AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE, BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (THEATRE) VCA, NAARM (MELBOURNE)

> "BEING ABLE TO EXPRESS MY WAMBA WAMBA AND SCOTTISH HERITAGE THROUGH MY WRITING — THAT'S HOW I MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD."
>
> *— BRODIE MURRAY*

PLAYWRIGHT & PERFORMER

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS MULTI-TALENTED AWARD 2025

RECOGNISING EXTRAORDINARY CREATIVE RANGE, COURAGE AND CULTURAL STORYTELLING ACROSS MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

Stories from the Campfire — a Voice for Country, Culture and Survival

FEATURED PROFILE · 2025

Brodie Murray grew up hearing stories around the campfire — his grandfather Bes Murray's Wamba Wamba wisdom, his grandmother Lorraine's Ngarrindjeri resilience, and his father Ron's didgeridoo music drifting through the Central Victorian night. Today, those stories are on stage across Australia, written and performed by one of the most compelling young First Nations voices in the country.

A proud Wamba Wamba and Ngarrindjeri man of Scottish-Australian heritage, Brodie grew up near Castlemaine on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in a family steeped in performance. His father Ron Murray is a respected Wamba Wamba cultural educator, storyteller and didgeridoo musician; his mother Sarah James a fiddler, vocalist and educator; his uncle, celebrated actor David James; and his grandfather Sholto James, an actor himself in Melbourne's Union Theatre in the 1950s. Creativity runs deep in Brodie's blood on both sides of Country.

It was the MTC First Peoples Young Artists Program (Deadly Creatives) in 2019 during his VCE year, that lit the fuse. The following year he travelled to Perth to study Aboriginal Performance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts WAAPA, a decision that grounded him in First Nations art, literature and politics, and gave him the craft to match his ambition. Having collaborated with Arrernte playwright and multidisciplinary artist Declan Furber Gillick, Brodie made his debut as a playwright at the 2021 Yirramboi First Nations Arts Festival with ***Soul of Possum*** — a first-contact thriller set on Wamba Wamba Country, drawing on stories from his grandfather and father. The play, directed by Beng Oh sold out at Castlemaine State Festival and Yirramboi, returning to the stage at Fortyfivedownstairs in Melbourne in December 2025.

In 2022, Brodie was accepted into the Victorian College of the Arts. He is part of the VCA Theatre Company 2025. His second play ***Billy's Choice*** — an autobiographical work about the choices young First Nations people face living between two worlds — debuted at Melbourne Fringe 2021 directed by Rachael Maza, winning both the Best Emerging Indigenous Artist Award and the Young Creatives Award. His third play ***The Whisper***, inspired by his Nan Lorraine's secret Ngarrindjeri family journey across Country in the 1940s, followed at Melbourne Fringe 2022 (directed by Maryanne Sam) and was staged again at Fortyfivedownstairs in 2024.

3	2021–26	2022
PRODUCED PLAYS	CAREER TO DATE	Creative Australia Award



Photo: Performers Brodie Murray and Wimiya Woodley. Photographer- Darren Gill

The Murray Timeline

2019

MTC First Peoples Young Artists Program

2020

Aboriginal Performance graduate, WAAPA

May 2021

Soul of Possum premieres at Yirramboi Festival

Oct 2021

Billy's Choice, Melbourne Fringe Festival

Best Emerging Indigenous Artist & Young Creatives Award

2022

The Whisper, Melbourne Fringe Festival

Deadly Fringe Commission

MTC First Stage

May 2022

Creative Australia First Nations Emerging Career Development Award

2023

Mr Vic NAIDOC

National NAIDOC Youth of the Year Finalist

Dec 2025

Soul of Possum returns to fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne

VCA Theatre Company 2025



FIND BRODIE MURRAY

VCA, Fortyfivedownstairs

VIC NAIDOC, Playlab Theatre

Melbourne Fringe Festival

Yirramboi Festival

A Performing Family, a Playwright's Mission

Brodie Murray's artistic identity is inseparable from his cultural inheritance. His grandfather Bes Murray — respected Wamba Wamba Elder and author of ***Bes: The Best of Two Worlds*** — passed away shortly after his book launch, a loss that deepened Brodie's commitment to carrying those stories forward. His grandmother Lorraine Murray's secret Ngarrindjeri family journey across Country in the 1940s — by horse and cart, under cover of night to evade the welfare — became the heart of ***The Whisper*** (2022). In everything he writes, Brodie reaches back into family and Country to pull living stories into the present. In 2026, ***Soul of Possum*** was published by Playlab Theatre. The rights to the play are managed by David Spicer Productions. He was a 2026 Finalist in the Australian Theatre Festival NYC New Play Award for his play in development, ***Wiran's Dream.***

On Stage and On Screen

As an actor, Brodie has performed in ***Soul of Possum*** (as young warrior Dindi), in ***Billy's Choice*** (as Billy), in ***The Whisper*** (as Riley) and in Glenn Shea's ***Some Secrets Should Be Kept Secret*** at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne. He is a 2026 Ilbijerri Ensemble member. He has performed in several devised works with the MTC Deadly Creatives Program including 'One Day' directed by Nathan Maynard, demonstrating rare fluency across writing, performing and devising.

Brodie graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre) at the VCA in 2025. His theatre mentors include Maryanne Sam, Glenn Shea, Greg Fryer, Balla Neba, David James and Declan Furber Gillick. Named **Mr Vic NAIDOC 2023** at the Victorian NAIDOC Awards and a National NAIDOC Yourh of the Year Finalist, he is one of the most decorated young First Nations arts practitioners working in Australia today.



BRODIEMURRAY·KEYWORKS&ACHIEVEMENTS

Soul of Possum (2021, 2025)
First contact thriller on Wamba Wamba Country; premiered at Yirramboi; returned Dec 2025, Published by **Playlab Theatre**

Billy's Choice (2021)
Autobiographical play-turned-film; Melbourne Fringe; Best Emerging Indigenous Artist Award and Young Creatives Award

The Whisper (2022 and 2024)
Inspired by Nan Lorraine's Ngarrindjeri journey; Melbourne Fringe Festival 2022 and Fortyfivedownstairs 2024

Creative Australia Award (2022)
First Nations Emerging Career Development Award — a prestigious Australian Arts Award.

Mr Vic NAIDOC and Young Achievers Arts Award VIC (2023)
Named Mr Victorian NAIDOC, National NAIDOC Award finalist and VIC Young Achievers Arts Award winner in the same year

VCA & MTC Programs
Theatre graduate VCA 2025
MTC First Peoples Young Artists Program (Deadly Creatives) alumni

CONGRATULATIONS BRODIE MURRAY — STORIES FROM THE CAMPFIRE ARE NOW ON STAGES ACROSS AUSTRALIA. YOUR GRANDFATHER'S WISDOM, YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S COURAGE AND YOUR FAMILY'S CREATIVITY LIVE ON IN EVERY PLAY YOU WRITE, EVERY CHARACTER YOU INHABIT, AND EVERY AUDIENCE YOU MOVE.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · MULTI-TALENTED AWARD · 2025

BRODIE MURRAY · PLAYWRIGHT & PERFORMER · 2025

EveryMan

Our Story

From Canberra Men's Centre to EveryMan

EveryMan began in 1992 as a twice-weekly drop-in space in a small upstairs room in St John's church in Reid (Canberra). Our original name was Murringu and we provided men with access to some support and advice from volunteers who led weekly men's group meetings, and later from a small counselling service. These early days gave men opportunities to meet up and explore personal issues and circumstances. It provided them with a support network and useful experiences with counselling.



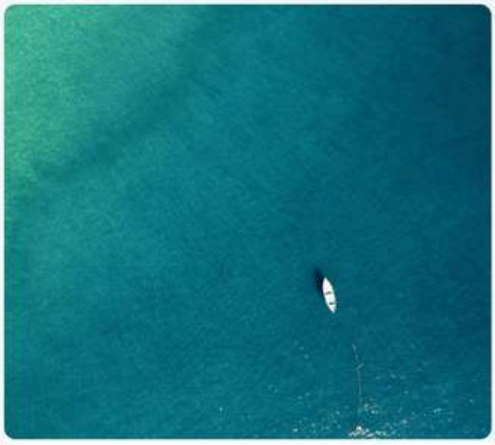
By 1999 we had evolved into a small community service provider with dedicated staff - case managers and counsellors. We changed our name to Canberra Men's Centre and expanded our services. This allowed us to reach men with a broader range of issues. With the greater flexibility, we developed a stronger focus on working with men who live with significant life challenges.

In 2015 we became EveryMan Australia. This new name is distinctive and makes us immediately recognisable to the regional NSW community as well as people living in the ACT. This is important, as we have stepped up as thought leaders who advocate and educate about contemporary men's issues nationally as well. Now we can use our experience and understanding to speak out for men's issues across Australia.



Accommodated Support & Outreach

for men who are at risk of homelessness.



EveryMan Private

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Violence Prevention

Programs to provide tools and support for men and others using or experiencing violence.



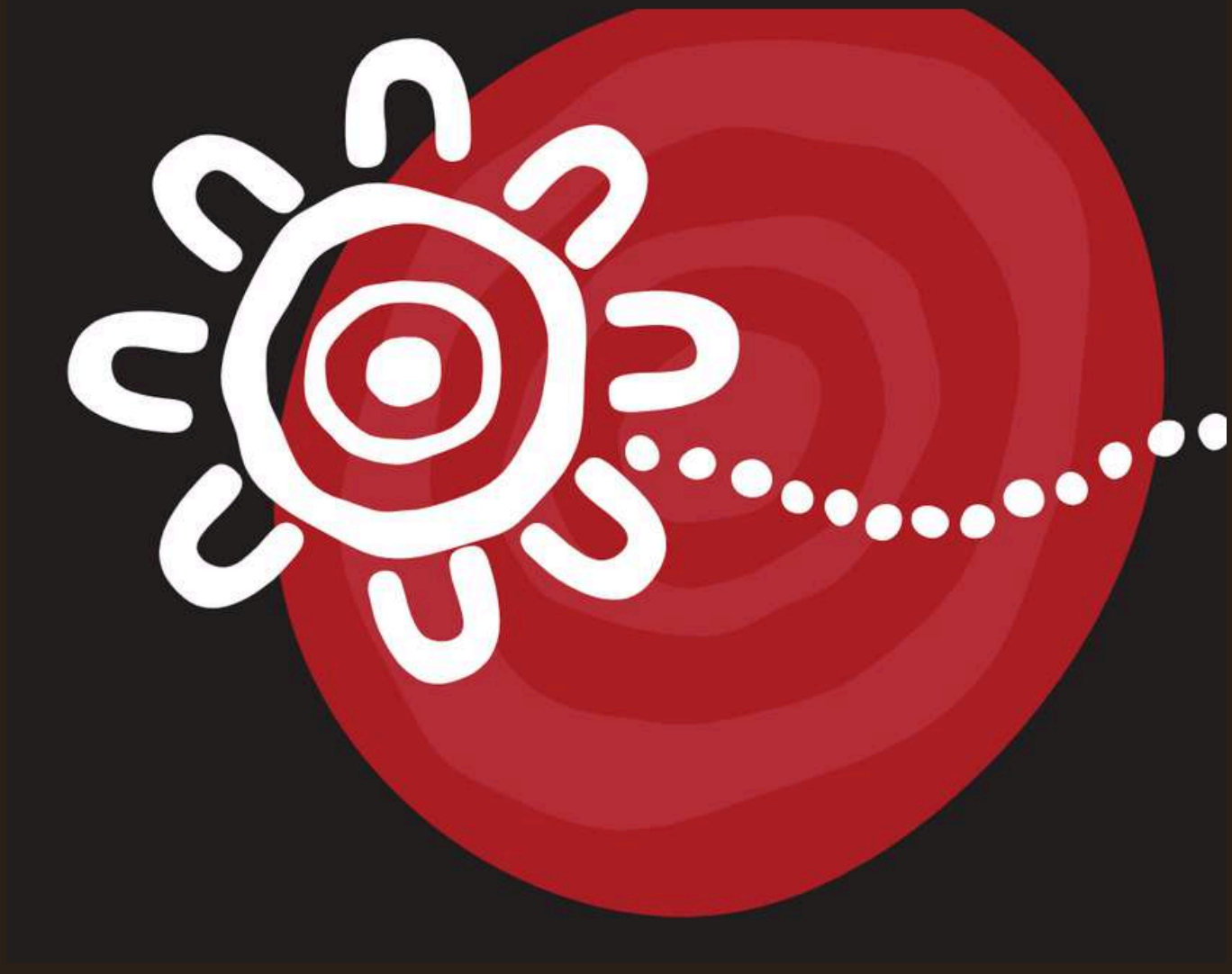
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AFN Accelerate Award 2025 – Naomi Howlett



WOLLONGONG STRATA

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

AFN Artist of the Year Award — Megan Cain



All First Nations Awards

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY SERVICE

Cyndy Newman-Piromalli

WIRADJURI WOMAN(KALARE)

Family Liaison Officer

" Art is a powerful form of storytelling and self-expression — and every young person deserves to know their culture and feel proud of who they are. "

— CYNDY NEWMAN-PIROMALLI

GRIFFITH & CONDOBOLIN COUNTRY
GUGAN GULWAN YOUTH ABORIGINAL CORP.
NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY (CANBERRA), ACT

FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER · GUGAN GULWAN

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS
WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE 2025

RECOGNISING DEDICATION, COMPASSION AND CULTURALLY SAFE SERVICE TO FIRST NATIONS YOUTH AND FAMILIES

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS

From the Classroom to the Community — A Life of Culturally Safe Service

Cyndy Newman-Piromalli is a proud Wiradjuri woman from Griffith and Condobolin Country who has spent her career walking alongside some of the most vulnerable young people and families in Canberra — always leading with culture, always with compassion.

Raised on Wiradjuri Country in western New South Wales, Cyndy built a career grounded in education, community development and cultural connection. Her early pathway took her through early childhood education — becoming a Centre Director at Goodstart Early Learning — before moving to the Canberra Institute of Technology as a Teacher, bringing Indigenous perspectives
and cultural knowledge into every classroom she entered. She also founded the Facebook group "Indigenous Perspectives & Cultural Knowledge," creating a grassroots platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood educators across the country.

As an Indigenous Project Officer at Northside Community Service, Cyndy deepened her commitment to working directly with families in need. Now as Family Liaison Officer at Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation — meaning "Younger Brother, Younger Sister" — she sits at the heart of one of Canberra's most important Aboriginal community organisations. Established in 1992, Gugan Gulwan supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 0 to 25 and their families across the ACT, running programs spanning drug and alcohol support, mental health, child and family services, youth outreach, education and cultural connection.

In her role, Cyndy is the bridge between vulnerable families and the services they need — navigating systems, building trust and ensuring every young person who comes through Gugan Gulwan's doors feels seen, safe and connected to their culture. She is also a practising artist, having painted since Year 11, and brings her creative practice to her work with young people as a tool for cultural expression and healing.

0–25	1992	ACT
YOUTH AGES SUPPORTED	GUGAN GULWAN EST.	NGUNNAWAL COUNTRY



FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY SERVICE

Cyndy's Journey

1996

Begins painting in Year 11

Visual Arts — a creative practice thatcontinues to this day

Early 2000s

Centre Director, Goodstart Early Learning — leading cultural earlychildhood programs

Mid career

Teacher,Canberra Institute of Technology — embedding Indigenous perspectives in education

2010s

Founded "Indigenous Perspectives & Cultural Knowledge" Facebook groupfor educatorsnationally

2010s–now

Indigenous ProjectOfficer, Northside Community Service — familyand community support

Current

Family Liaison Officer, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, Canberra ACT



FIND GUGAN GULWAN

gugan-gulwan.com.au

Ngunnawal Country (Canberra), ACT

Gugan Gulwan — Younger Sister, Always at the Centre

CULTURE & FAMILY SUPPORT

A Bridge Between Families and the Services They Need

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation has been at the heart of Canberra's Aboriginal community since 1992. Its name, meaning "Younger Brother, Younger Sister" in language, captures its core purpose: to nurture the next generation from birth to adulthood. Cyndy's role as Family Liaison Officer places her at the critical interface between vulnerable young people, their families and the full suite of Gugan Gulwan's programs — including the StreetBeat Youth Outreach Program, the Parenting Our Way (POW) program, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health support, a Child and Youth Family Support Program, the Reconnect Program, Education Support, and a culturally grounded School Holiday Program. In each setting, Cyndy draws on her deep roots in Wiradjuri culture, her decades in education, and her personal practice as an artist to meet young people and their families where they are.

ART AS HEALING & CULTURAL CONNECTION

Creativity, Culture and Community

Cyndy's artistic identity has always been woven into her professional life. Inspired by Arrernte watercolourist Albert Namatjira, Yorta Yorta artist Lin Onus and Larrakia woman Louise Numina Napananka, she uses painting, murals and workshops as culturally safe entry points for young people who may struggle to engage through traditional services. Her "Indigenous Perspectives & Cultural Knowledge" platform continues to connect educators and community members across Australia.

Cyndy's career reflects the understanding that working with vulnerable people requires more than professional training — it requires lived cultural knowledge, deep community trust and the patience to walk alongside people through their hardest chapters. From early childhood centres to youth outreach streets, she has spent decades proving that culturally safe, family-centred service changes lives.



CYNDY NEWMAN-PIROMALLI · KEY ROLES & IMPACT

Gugan Gulwan Family Liaison
Bridge between vulnerable families and culturally safe programs across the ACT

Goodstart Early Learning
Centre Director —embedding Indigenous perspectives in early childhood education

Canberra Institute of Tech.
Teacher— cultural knowledge and Indigenous perspectives in vocational education

Northside Comm. Service
Indigenous Project Officer — community development and family support programs

Indigenous Perspectives Group
Facebook community founded by Cyndy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators

Artist & Cultural Mentor
Wiradjuri painter since 1996; art workshops for youth; murals and cultural education

CONGRATULATIONS CYNDY NEWMAN-PIROMALLI — YOUR DECADES OF CULTURALLY GROUNDED SERVICE TO CANBERRA'S MOST VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES EMBODY EVERYTHING THE GUGAN GULWAN SPIRIT STANDS FOR. YOU ARE THE YOUNGER SISTER WHO NEVER STOPS SHOWING UP.

ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS · WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE · 2025

Profit for Purpose —
Closing the Digital Divide Through Procurement

Trusted by Australia's Biggest Names — From Woolworths to Ashurst

Ethan Indigenous has built a client and partner list that spans the country and the economy. **Woolworths**, Australia's largest retailer, added Ethan Indigenous as a supplier. **Ashurst**, one of Australia's largest law firms, entered a preferred supplier arrangement. **Sydney Trains** signed a five-year agreement with Ethan Indigenous for the OCDN network upgrade, underpinning operational technology and train signalling. **Transport for NSW** partnered to connect Australians "in more meaningful ways than ever." **Taronga Zoo** worked with Ethan Indigenous to develop an app monitoring animals in bushfire recovery. **7News** reported on Ethan's technology platform powering NQ Spark's simulation initiatives. Government and corporate Australia are choosing Ethan Indigenous not as a token gesture but because the technology delivers — backed by elite vendor relationships with Microsoft, Cisco, Dell, HP, Palo Alto Networks, Fortinet and Blancco, and panel positions with the NSW Government and Local Government Procurement nationally. Every one of these contracts also channels funding directly into Indigenous digital literacy and youth employment.

DIGITAL LITERACY, CADETSHIPS & GENDER EQUITY

From the Digital Divide to a Career in Technology

The challenge Ethan Indigenous was built to solve is well documented: a "digital divide" of technology competence and literacy that compounds disadvantage for Indigenous youth, particularly where access to devices and training is limited. The Laptops for Indigenous Program addresses access directly — more than 1,000 laptops donated to students, schools, colleges and youth detention centres who would not otherwise have one. The Technology Cadet program goes further, training young Indigenous Australians as full-time Cadets in installation, refurbishment and device preparation — turning a donation program into a genuine skills and employment pathway, now running across multiple states.

In 2025, Ethan Indigenous turned its attention to gender equity within the Indigenous ICT sector, appointing Rachelle Towart OAM, the **first female Indigenous chair in the ICT industry** and partnering with the **Lyrebird Foundation** for a landmark International Women's Day T20 cricket match, putting the spotlight on women in sport and technology alike. The newly launched **Indigenous University Scholarship Program** extends the model beyond cadetships into tertiary education — ensuring the pathway from laptop donation to technology career to leadership is complete. With 60,000+ hours of Indigenous employment delivered and 4,000+ students reached, the numbers tell the story David Liddiard set out to write in 2017.

ETHAN INDIGENOUS · SERVICES, PROGRAMS & PARTNERS

ICT Services IT, cloud & telco; cybersecurity; hardware procurement via Ethan Store	**Vendor Partners** Microsoft · Cisco · Dell · HP Palo Alto · Fortinet · Blancco	**Laptops for Indigenous** 1,000+ laptops donated; schools, colleges, youth detention centres nationally
Technology Cadets Multi-state Cadet program; device refurb & installation training; real employment	**Government Panels** NSW Government panel; all LGP contracts nationally; Woolworths, Sydney Trains, Ashurst	**2025 and beyond** First female Indigenous ICT chairman; Lyrebird Foundation; University Scholarship Program

ETHAN INDIGENOUS

WE DO MORE

ETHAN INDIGENOUS

Ethan Indigenous Timeline

2017

Ethan & David Liddiard Group partner
Ethan Indigenous founded
Australia's first Indigenous- led IT provider
Supply Nation certified

Launch

Laptops for Indigenous Program launched
Technology Cadet program begins

Growth

1,000+ laptops donated
First Indigenous cloud platform launched, Townsville

Panels

NSW Government panel participation secured
appointed to all LGP contracts nationally

Westbourne College

50 laptops donated via Supply Nation connection
benefits 200+ ATSI students annually

2025

Firstfemale Indigenous chairman in ICT industry appointed; Lyrebird Foundation partnership
University Scholarship Program launched

Recognition

2023 Ethnic & Indigenous Business Awards
Ethan named 2025 APAC Rising Star Partner (Arctic Wolf)

Ethan Indigenous shows what "profit for purpose" can look like at national scale — elite technology, delivered by a Supply Nation Certified business, funding laptops, cadetships and scholarships for the next generation of Indigenous Australians in IT. Procurement with a purpose, technology that does more.

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INDIGENOUS-LED ICT PROVIDER

ETHAN
Indigenous

FOUNDER: DAVID LIDDIARD OAM NGARABAL MAN, NORTHERN NSW FOUNDED 2017 SUPPLY NATION CERTIFIED AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST GROWING INDIGENOUS-LED ICT PROVIDER

WE DO MORE

" We can play a role in the solution to the current disparity in economic outcomes and socioeconomic factors between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. "

— DAVID LIDDIARD OAM
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR · ETHAN INDIGENOUS

"We can proudly say that Rachelle Towart OAM is the 1st ever female chair of any Indigenous ICT business in Australia. Rachelle Towart OAM at the Helm (with her heritage & achievements) is driving the business to realise David Liddiard's vision" Troy Thorne - Ethan Indigenous

ETHANINDIGENOUS.COM.AU

PROFIT FOR PURPOSE IN ICT

Technology procurement that funds digital literacy for Indigenous youth across Australia

ETHAN INDIGENOUS

WE DO MORE

Turning Corporate IT Spend Into Indigenous Opportunity

Ethan Indigenous is Australia's first and fastest growing Indigenous-led ICT provider — a Supply Nation Certified business built on a simple but powerful model: every laptop, every cloud subscription, every cybersecurity contract a client signs helps fund digital literacy, technology cadetships and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth across Australia.

Founded in 2017 through a strategic partnership between global IT company Ethan and the David Liddiard Group, Ethan Indigenous was built around a dual purpose from day one: harness elite vendor relationships with Microsoft, Cisco, Dell, HP, Palo Alto Networks, Fortinet, Blancco and others to deliver superior pricing and first-rate IT services to clients, while channelling the commercial success of the business directly into social impact for Indigenous communities. The model is structured as **"profit for purpose"** — clients purchasing through the Ethan Store or Ethan Indigenous's bespoke procurement process ensure that a portion of every transaction funds Indigenous education, training and employment, embedding social responsibility directly into corporate IT procurement strategy.

David Liddiard OAM, a Ngarabal man from northern NSW whose journey from celebrated NRL sportsman to Indigenous advocate spans more than three decades — including significant contributions through the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy and Dare to Lead. Ethan Indigenous launched its flagship **Laptops for Indigenous Program** and Technology Cadet program in its founding years, training young Indigenous Australians in operating system installation, hardware refurbishment and device preparation.

The business has since launched the first Indigenous-owned cloud platform in Townsville, secured panel participation with the NSW Government, and been appointed to all LGP (Local Government Procurement) contracts nationally.

WHERE IS ETHAN INDIGENOUS NOW?

HOURS EMPLOYED TO INDIGENOUS RESOURCES	INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT GROWTH ANNUALLY	INDIGENOUS STUDENTS PROVIDED WITH TECH
60,000+	**100%**	**4,000+**

Currently, under the strategic leadership of Rachelle Towart OAM, a proud Aboriginal woman and nationally recognised Indigenous business leader, ETHAN Indigenous is continuing to realise David Liddiard OAM's vision of creating meaningful employment and education pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through technology. To date, ETHAN Indigenous has provided more than 4,000 laptops to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, communities and Indigenous businesses, delivered almost 60,000 hoursof professional Indigenous employment, and supported cadets to achieve more than 20 industry certifications, creating lasting opportunities for the next generation of Indigenous ICT professionals.

ETHAN INDIGENOUS



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ALL FIRST NATIONS AWARDS




3RD ANNUAL
AFN AWARD CEREMONY
2026
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SEPTEMBER, 2026
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AWARD CATEGORIES 2026

Community & Support -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Community Broadcaster of the Year
Business Support (VA or PA) Award

Media & Innovation -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Podcast Award
Digital Innovation Award
Media Story of the Year

Children & Education -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Children's Engagement Award
Children's Education Award

Business Sustainability & Global -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Global Brand Award
Sustainable Innovation Award

Business & Services -
PRESENTED BY GOLD **SPONSOR**
Financial Services Business Award
Digital Technology Award
Business Excellence Award
Professional Services Business Award
Female-led, Social Enterprise Award
Property Management, Building + Construction Award
Service Business Award
Retail Business Award
Business Leader Award

Culture & Identity -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Young Leader/Trainee/Apprentice Award
LGBTQIA+ Business Excellence Award
Nonprofit Excellence Award
Cultural Advancement Award

Creative, Arts & Innovation -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Dancer or Dance Group Award
Artist of the Year Award
Visual Artist of the Year Award
New Talent in Music Award
Product Design/Innovation Award

Healing & Identity -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Health Worker of the Year
Working with Vulnerable People Award
Health & Wellbeing Business Award

Community Achievement -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
Outstanding Achievement in Cultural Advancement
Outstanding Achievement in Employment
Outstanding Achievement in Science
AFN Julie's Choice Award

Sport -
PRESENTED BY **GOLD SPONSOR**
AFN Lifetime Achievement In Sport Award
Most Promising New Talent in Sport – Female
Most Promising New Talent in Sport – Male
Female Sportsperson of the Year
Male Sportsperson of the Year

AFN Deadly Awards -
PRESENTED BY **AFN Judging Panel**
Deadly Dressed - Gala Luxury
Deadly Dressed - Cultural
Deadly Dressed – Fashion

Hall Of Fame -
PRESENTED BY
PLATINUM SPONSOR -
ETHAN INDIGENOUS
Gavin Jones Deadly Lifetime Leadership & Community Award
AFN Achievement in Health Support Award
AFN Elder of the Year – Female (Aunty)
AFN Elder of the Year – Male (Uncle)
AFN Golden Alumni Award (non-Indigenous)
AFN Lifetime Achievement In Sport Award
AFN Lifetime Achievement in Education
AFN Lifetime Achievement In The Performing Arts Award

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