

Yarning Time



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions acknowledges all Aboriginal peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land and waters it manages, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples are advised that this newsletter may contain images, vision or names of people who are deceased.

Yarning is a term used by Aboriginal peoples that means talking and sharing stories. We are pleased to share news about Aboriginal engagement across Western Australia that showcases some of the important work being undertaken in partnership between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Traditional Owners.

Aboriginal engagement involves almost every aspect of the department's work, including reserve creation, science, recreation, tourism operations, conservation land management, fire management, wildlife management and heritage protection – much of which is enabled through formal and informal joint management and partnership initiatives.

Kaya everyone! Welcome to the new look Yarning Time, which has been rebranded to reflect the artwork on the department's new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024 – 2027 (RAP)!

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New RAP

The department has launched its second Stretch RAP, highlighting the significant strides being taken by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to achieve reconciliation.

The RAP provides a structured, tangible approach to advancing reconciliation to help protect Aboriginal culture and heritage, and provide employment, social and economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities.



The launch of the department's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024–2027

Reconciliation Australia awards [four different levels of RAPs](#) – and each reflects the stage an organisation is at in its reconciliation journey. The stages start at instilling foundations for change and implementing visions for reconciliation, and advance to embedding and championing reconciliation as ‘business as usual’.

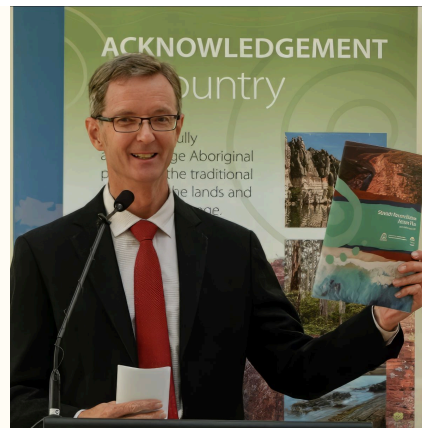
A ‘Stretch’ RAP applies to organisations that have established a strong approach to advancing reconciliation, by building reconciliation actions and measurable targets into their business strategies. **The department is proud to have achieved Stretch RAP status** by incorporating how it will engage with Aboriginal peoples to deliver meaningful change and create opportunities for advancement, into its everyday business practices. Some examples of actions contained in the new RAP include:

- the development of cultural protocols;
- the delivery of education programs;
- employment targets;
- strategies to inform Aboriginal businesses about procurement opportunities;
- the ongoing implementation of Closing the Gap; and
- cooperative management arrangements between the department and the six Noongar Regional Corporations, for the care and protection of the south-west conservation estate.

– to name just a few.

Thank you to Senior Whadjuk man Vaughn McGuire, Whadjuk Maan Alton Walley, the Middar Dance Group and Reconciliation WA Member and Partner Manager Chontelle Stone, for their contributions to the department's RAP launch event.





We encourage you to [read the department's RAP](#) and consider how you can also make a genuine contribution to delivering improved outcomes for Aboriginal peoples during the course of your work.

Reconciliation Week 2024

The national theme for Reconciliation Week 2024 was 'Now More Than Ever', as a reminder that now, more than ever, the journey of reconciliation needs to continue.

The department's central Reconciliation Week activities included sponsorship of a banner in the [Reconciliation Week Street Banner project](#), a display at its **Kensington** headquarters and a video of department employees reflecting on the importance of ongoing meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners in managing land and waters in Western Australia – now, more than ever.



Employees talk about the importance of ongoing meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners – now, more than ever.

The **Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority** held guided walks at Kaarta Koomba (Kings Park), to showcase Noongar culture, heritage and connection to the plants and animals endemic to Country, as well as a yarnning and mindful weaving session to engage in the Noongar cultural practice and yarn about reconciliation.

Reconciliation Week breakfasts were served on **Wadjemup** (Rottnest Island) and at the Rottnest Island Authority office in Fremantle, while **Perth Zoo** teams participated in a series of yarnning circles with Ingrid Ngoorlak Cumming, which celebrated

Whadjuk and wider Noongar knowledge and featured Boodjar (country and place names), Kadar mokiny (reptiles), Yonga mokiny (mammals) and Djerup (birds) themes.

In the regions and districts, the **Blackwood district** came together over morning tea, and the **South Coast region** sponsored two events in Albany – a screening of the movie ‘Sweet Country’ and an artist talk by local Menang First Nations artist Shandell Cummings.

Esperance district employees joined Dabungool Cultural Experiences for a walk on Country at Hellfire Bay in Cape Le Grand National Park to strengthen their cultural knowledge of the Kepa Kurl Wudjari people’s ancestral lands. They were also treated to bush tucker while sharing what reconciliation meant for them.

Department employees in the **South West region** were supported to attend the Bunbury walk for Reconciliation, the City of Busselton’s National Reconciliation Week Walk, Shire of Augusta Margaret River’s ‘Walking Together on Tallinup Boodja’ event and the Kwobba Koornt (Good Heart) event hosted by the Nala Boodja Eco Clan Aboriginal Corporation, while the **Wheatbelt** region took part in the Narrogin Reconciliation Week community event, which included art, produce, craft and food, while sharing the message of reconciliation.



Employees from the Esperance district on Country at Hellfire Bay in Cape Le Grand National Park with Dabungool Cultural Experiences during Reconciliation Week 2024

NAIDOC Week 2024

While **Reconciliation Week** focuses on reconciliation, **NAIDOC Week** is a time of celebration, and this year’s theme was *Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud*.

‘Keep the Fire Burning!’ being a nod to the vitality and endurance of culture and to connection with Country and community; ‘Blak, Loud and Proud’ representing an unapologetic celebration of identity – and fire in the artwork serving as a symbol of connection to Country, to each other, and to the rich tapestry of traditions that define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Celebrations were held across the department, with a **central** display that showcased some watershed historical moments and notable Aboriginal peoples, and an online quiz with a hand-dot painted serving platter awarded as a prize.

In the **Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands branch** celebrations included a morning tea featuring dishes made from traditional Bush Tucker ingredients such as damper with native Rosemary, Thyme and Salt Bush, Kangaroo sausages with Bush Tomato chutney and Lemon Myrtle and Macadamia baklava. The team also purchased native plants to harvest for future use as ingredients and in floral displays, and tried their hand at dot painting on the pots for their native plant garden.

The **Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority** kept the fire burning around the Kaarla (fire), sharing stories and cultural activities, while the department's **Esperance district** was involved in the opening celebration – Kepa Kurl Kids Day – for a series of local events led by Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, as well as the combined schools NAIDOC celebrations which included a popular 'make your own edible campfire' stall!

Perth Zoo held a daily Storytime and activity session with Alton Walley and performance by Ngalak Nidja dancers; the **South West region** hosted a display and morning tea of traditional foods and beautifully decorated treats; and **Wadjemup** (Rottnest Island) also came together over morning tea and a smoking ceremony, and will host additional events in November to coincide with other events such as the Wadjemup Cup football tournament with the Clontarf Foundation.

In the **Wheatbelt region**, employees from Narrogin, Katanning, Merredin and Northam attended a NAIDOC festival in Northam at Bilya Koort Boodja – the Centre for Aboriginal Culture and Environmental Knowledge, on Ballardong Country. They participated in song, dance, didgeridoo playing and yarning around a fire pit, exploring stalls and a tour of the impressive centre, which houses cultural artefacts. Attendees were able to meet community members, learn about Noongar history and celebrate Noongar culture.



In other news ...

The department's former Executive Director of Parks and Visitor Services, Peter Sharp, was among a number of Western Australians recognised for their contributions to the community in the King's Birthday Honours. He was awarded a Public Service Medal by the Governor General for his contribution to land management and engagement with Aboriginal peoples across Western Australia.

Peter's individual recognition is reflective of a sustained departmental effort involving many passionate and skilled public servants to support joint management and empower Traditional Owners.

Under Peter's leadership, World Heritage List status was secured for Purnululu National Park and the Ningaloo Coast.

Congratulations Peter!

Next month, November 2024, marks 10 years since the first edition of Yarning Time was produced!

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