

Yarning Time



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Issue 23 July 2026

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, knowledge and lived experiences, listening and learning together. In this spirit, we are proud to share stories of Aboriginal engagement from across Western Australia, highlighting strong partnerships between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and Traditional Owners.

Across Country, this work is grounded in connection, care and collaboration. From land, sea and fire management to wildlife protection, cultural heritage and visitor experiences, these efforts are guided by the knowledge and leadership of Traditional Owners, and strengthened through both formal and informal partnerships that support caring for Country now and into the future.

Kaya everyone! Welcome to the July 2026 issue of *Yarning Time*, centred around our theme “**All In**”.

IN THIS ISSUE:

This edition of *Yarning Time* brings together stories from across Western Australia that show what it really means to be “All In.” From important work happening on Wadjemup, to ranger projects, cultural partnerships and new ways of sharing knowledge, these stories highlight people working side by side, learning from each other, and caring for Country together. We hope you enjoy reading about the connections, collaborations and shared efforts making a difference across WA.

- [Construction of the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground memorialisation](#)
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Construction of the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground memorialisation



Image credit: Rottnest Island Authority

Content Warning:

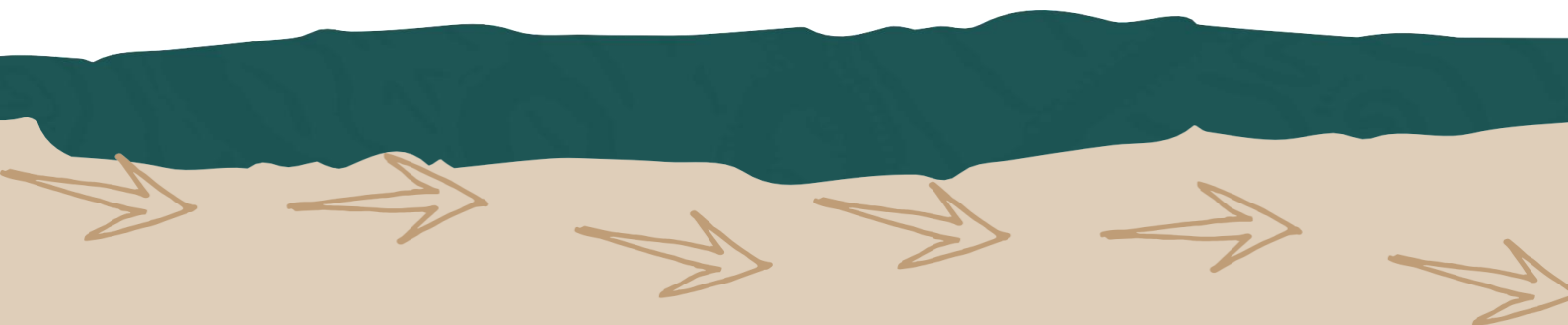
Readers are advised that this content contains historical material relating to the Wadjemup / Rottnest Island prison era. DBCA apologises for any distress this may cause.

Since being established in 2020, the State Government-funded, Aboriginal-led Wadjemup Project has been implementing truth-telling, ceremony and commemoration strategies to address the historical and ongoing impacts of Aboriginal incarceration on Wadjemup / Rottnest Island.

A key component of Stage Two of the project is the memorialisation of the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground (WABG).

This initiative will respectfully honour the Aboriginal men and boys who died in custody on Wadjemup between 1838 and 1931, as well as ensuring that the site's cultural and historical significance is acknowledged and protected.

The detailed design of the WABG memorial began in 2025, following extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities across WA and ground penetrating radar (GPR) surveys to confirm the Burial Ground's boundaries. GPR sends radio wave pulses underground and is a useful, non-invasive method of identifying utilities such as pipes and cables, and potential burials.



Confirming the boundary for the WABG marked a key milestone for the project. Aboriginal groups, Traditional Owners, State Government agencies and professional heritage practitioners had collaborated over many decades to determine the boundary with at least 10 other GPR surveys conducted.

The WABG memorialisation design includes a boardwalk, ceremonial spaces, areas for reflection, landscaping and interpretative features. Construction is now underway, led by Colgan Industries, with completion anticipated by the end of 2026.

The Aboriginal-led Wadjemup Project, which is facilitated by the Rottnest Island Authority and supported by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, is exemplifying how the government can unite with Aboriginal peoples to deliver reconciliation in action.

Aligned with the Rottnest Island Management Plan 2023-2028, the WABG memorial will provide a place where all Western Australians can reflect and pay their respects to those men and boys who were forcibly removed from Country and incarcerated on Wadjemup.

For more information on the project, visit the [Rottnest Island website](#).

Connections to Wadjemup exhibition



Image credit: Rottnest Island Authority

Content Warning

Aboriginal peoples are advised that elements in the Connections to Wadjemup exhibition may be upsetting. DBCA apologises for any distress this may cause. Aboriginal peoples should be aware that the exhibition contains artwork of deceased persons.

The Connections to Wadjemup exhibition launched in October 2025 and features a range of mixed media artwork from 50 Aboriginal artists across Western Australia, each sharing their personal connection to Wadjemup.

Reflecting Dreamtime stories, natural landscapes, story lines, and regional linkages or connections, all of the artworks are available for purchase. Forty-three pieces have been sold to date, with 100% of proceeds going back to the artists. Due to its overwhelming success, Connections to Wadjemup has been extended until mid-September, with a rehang scheduled in late April that introduced new works.

Curated by Emilia Galatis and supported by the Wadjemup Aboriginal Reference Group, this insightful exhibition provides an essential exploration of the diverse and enduring relationships that Aboriginal peoples hold with Wadjemup.

Each piece explores the complex relationships that Aboriginal communities have with the island, to reflect the cultural richness of Western Australia and the communities involved in the exhibition.

Once a sacred haven for the Whadjuk Noongar people, Wadjemup transformed into a place of sorrow and loss following colonisation. The establishment of the Aboriginal prison and incarceration of 3700 Aboriginal men and boys between 1838 and 1931, with at least 373 buried on the island, had far-reaching impacts on Aboriginal culture.

Encompassing pieces from both established and first-time artists, the exhibition provides an opportunity for diverse and deeply personal expressions of stories, memories and visions.

It was this diversity in artists that made for such a unique exhibition, said curator, Emilia Galiatis. "A lot of big-name artists in the art world wouldn't want to be next to someone who's just done their first painting."

However, it was this shared sense of community between the artists and their joy in being "all in this together" to tell the stories of Wadjemup that transcended any perceived barriers to entry.

A sense of urgency pulsed through the narratives within each painting, print, textile, photo and ceramic. As Emilia explained, "These are stories about resilience and survival – without assigning guilt to anyone – these are the stories of Australia that need to be told now."

By sharing these stories of Country, resilience, and culture, the Connections to Wadjemup exhibition has marked a purposeful step in the Rottnest Island Authority's commitment to reconciliation, to ensure that the full story of Wadjemup is told, respected, and remembered.

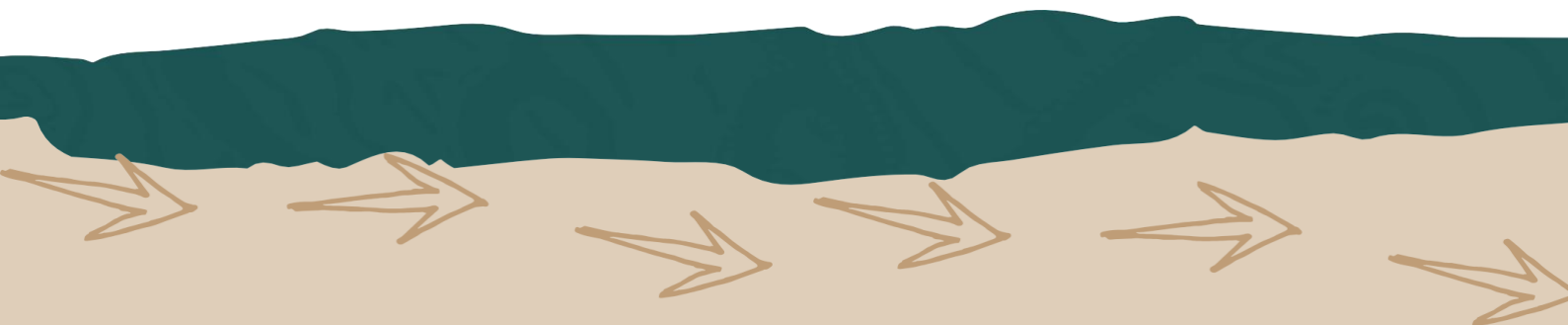
For more details on the works included, download the [exhibition guide](#).

Wagyl Kaip – Joint management and conservation efforts

Joint management of Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park

The Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park (MMMP) is jointly managed by the Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Aboriginal Corporation (WКСN) and DBCA. The park extends from east of Bremer Bay to Jerdacuttup Lakes along the south coast.

Recently, the MMMP joint management body (JMB) travelled to Hopetoun to take part in an underwater marine science project. In partnership with DBCA, members deployed 30 baited remote underwater video systems (BRUVs), used to film and monitor fish populations within the marine park.





JMB members on board the marine vessel from Hopetoun – left to right: Vaughn Chapple, Murray Hodgson, (crew member), Graeme Miniter, Stuart Roberts

The JMB includes Graeme Miniter (Chairperson), Deborah Woods, Murray Hodgson, Iris Woods, Stuart Roberts and Darryl Eades, alongside DBCA representatives from the Albany and South Coast regions.

During the visit, the group also inspected recently burned areas within Fitzgerald River National Park, and visited south coast estuaries and other cultural places.

Graeme Miniter noted the value of the experience, highlighting both the opportunity for Noongar members to learn marine science techniques and for DBCA staff to deepen their understanding of Noongar cultural values. This exchange supports ongoing collaboration between WКСN and DBCA.

Cooperative Management Committee

The Wagyl Kaip Cooperative Management Committee (CMC) continues to play a key role in supporting the cooperative management of conservation estate across the region. The committee consists of six Traditional Owners alongside DBCA representatives from the Wheatbelt, Warren and South Coast regions.

The committee provides advice on protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage, supports customary activities, contributes to policy development and joint management planning, and identifies priorities for joint management. It also helps guide employment and economic opportunities for Noongar people and oversees allocation of the Land Partnership Fund.

In 2025, the CMC nominated Stirling Range National Park to be the first jointly managed area within WКСN country.

Discussions cover topics such as tourism, implementation of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), leases and licences, and priority DBCA projects.

Current members include David Williams, Jeanice Krakouer, Craig McVee, Eliza Woods, Joe Mourish and Roni Gray-Forest.

In mid-2025, four subcommittees were established to focus on:

- Protecting environment and culture
- Fire management
- Joint management planning
- Employment and contracting.

These groups bring together WКСN representatives and DBCA specialists to collaboratively address complex issues.

South coast threatened species recovery programs

Aboriginal rangers are actively contributing to threatened species conservation across the south coast, supporting recovery actions for ngilkaat (Gilbert's potoroo), djimaalap (noisy scrub-bird) and kyloriny (western ground parrot). Ranger teams are supporting monitoring, translocations and habitat management across the region.

Ranger training and monitoring

Rangers have been trained in a range of different conservation monitoring and survey methods and are independently servicing passive acoustic and camera monitoring systems. DBCA provided hands-on training in small groups, building skills and confidence before transitioning to ranger-led operations. This has improved efficiency and expanded participation across ranger groups including Binalup, Southern Aboriginal Corporation, Gnowangerup, Wagyl Kaip and Nowanup.



DBCA – Jason Bolton and Larisse Ghislain

Djimaalap (noisy scrub-bird) translocation

Planning is underway for the second year of the current translocation and monitoring of djimaalap (noisy scrub-bird), with work scheduled throughout winter 2026. West Cape Howe was selected as the reintroduction site, with the first birds released in 2026. This work is being supported by WКСN and Aboriginal ranger teams.

In 2026, with the successful establishment of birds released in 2025, rangers are helping with surveys across Mermaid, Waychinicup and Two Peoples Bay, navigating challenging terrain to collect vital census data, which informed capture and release planning.

During translocation, rangers were involved in:

- Capturing birds
- Preparing temporary aviaries
- Managing food supplies
- Post-release radio tracking.

Broader conservation work

Rangers are also supporting:

- Cat trapping and predator monitoring programs in Stirling Range National Park, Corackerup and Peniup
- Installation and servicing of remote monitoring cameras to monitor ngilkaat in the Waychinicup enclosure
- Acoustic surveys for kyloriny and other threatened birds at Many Peaks, Waychinicup and Two Peoples Bay.

Walking together – Building a future for threatened species on the South Coast



Aboriginal ranger teams participating the the Fauna Management Course at Two Peoples Bay in 2005

On the south coast of Western Australia, a collaborative approach is strengthening the recovery of threatened species by embedding First Nations knowledge and values into conservation practices.

Key species include:

- **Kyloriny** (western ground parrot – Critically Endangered)
- **Ngilkaat** (Gilbert's potoroo – Critically Endangered)
- **Djimaalap** (noisy scrub-bird – Endangered)
- **Boordentj** (Australasian bittern – Endangered)

Conservation efforts are being led by DBCA and supported by partners such as BirdLife Australia, Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, South Coast NRM and several Aboriginal organisations including WKSAN Aboriginal Corporation.

Cultural knowledge and research partnership

In partnership with the University of Western Australia (Albany), DBCA's South Coast Region is working with Elders and knowledge holders from relevant language groups.

Through on-Country interviews at locations such as Two Peoples Bay, participants share cultural knowledge of species, perspectives on caring for Country, and guidance for conservation practices.



Aboriginal ranger teams participating in the Fauna Management Course at Two Peoples Bay in 2025

Co-designed recovery framework

Insights from these engagements are being used to develop a framework for co-designed species recovery. This approach ensures that:

- Conservation planning reflects cultural values
- Engagement processes are culturally appropriate
- First Nations participation is embedded in decision-making.
- Structured decision-making workshops for ngilkaat and kyloriny are helping to guide recovery efforts using a values-based, collaborative approach aligned with international conservation standards

Shared future for species recovery

By combining scientific research with Noongar knowledge (kaatidjin), this initiative strengthens both conservation outcomes and cultural connections to Country.

This collaborative model ensures that species at risk of extinction are protected through shared responsibility, mutual respect and long-term partnership—helping secure their future for generations to come.

Spotlight on a region – Goldfields upgrades and cultural relationships

Goldfields recreation upgrades and cultural relationships

In recent years, DBCA has collaborated with Traditional Owner groups across the Goldfields to enhance recreational infrastructure and visitor experiences. These partnerships vary in maturity, from long-established relationships to newly formed collaborations. Two projects completed in late 2025 demonstrate how tailored engagement approaches can successfully support on-ground outcomes while respecting cultural values.

Helena and Aurora Ranges – established partnership

The development of new camping facilities at the Helena and Aurora Ranges was delivered through a well-established partnership with Marlinyu Ghoorlie (MG). This enabled early alignment on project objectives, ensuring cultural, heritage, and conservation values were appropriately considered.

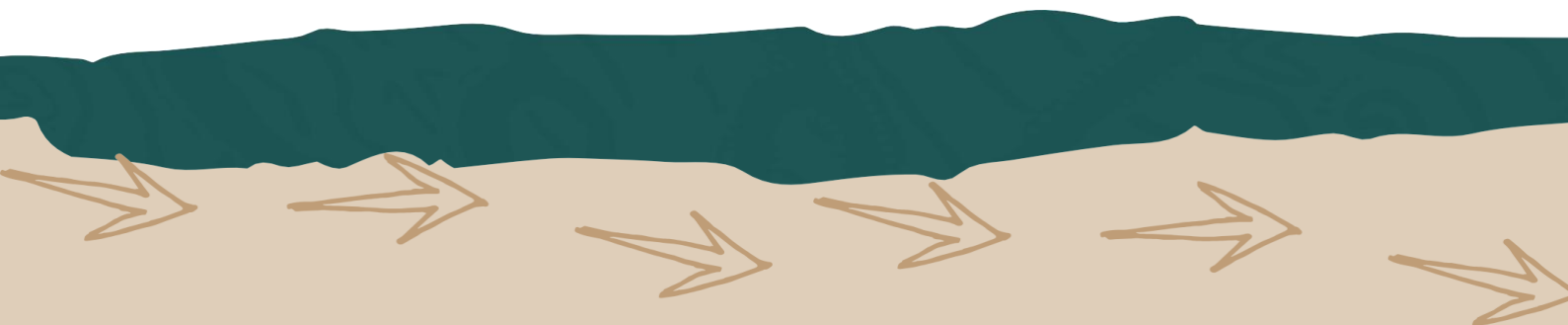


Camp site inspection by MG and DBCA staff (Oct 2024)

DBCA's Goldfields Joint Management and PVS teams worked closely with MG representatives and landscape architects to refine the campground design. A joint site assessment, supported by prior heritage knowledge, confirmed the suitability of proposed locations.

A formal heritage survey undertaken in May 2025 enabled the identification and approval of infrastructure sites. Cultural insights, including Aboriginal language associated with local flora, were also recorded. MG representatives participated in monitoring during toilet construction, contributing to a smooth delivery process with no heritage impacts identified. The project achieved completion in December 2025 and has since progressed to further site improvements.

This project reinforced an already strong partnership and supported the formalisation of the Area Agreement between MG and DBCA in November 2025.



Yeo Lake Homestead – Developing a new partnership



George Velickovic, Kim Tucker, Kalis Scott, Cindy Miller beside the toilet to be replaced, during the site survey (December 2023)

Upgrades at Yeo Lake Homestead, including the replacement of outdated facilities, provided an opportunity to establish a new working relationship with the Barra Parrapi Aboriginal Corporation (BPAC).

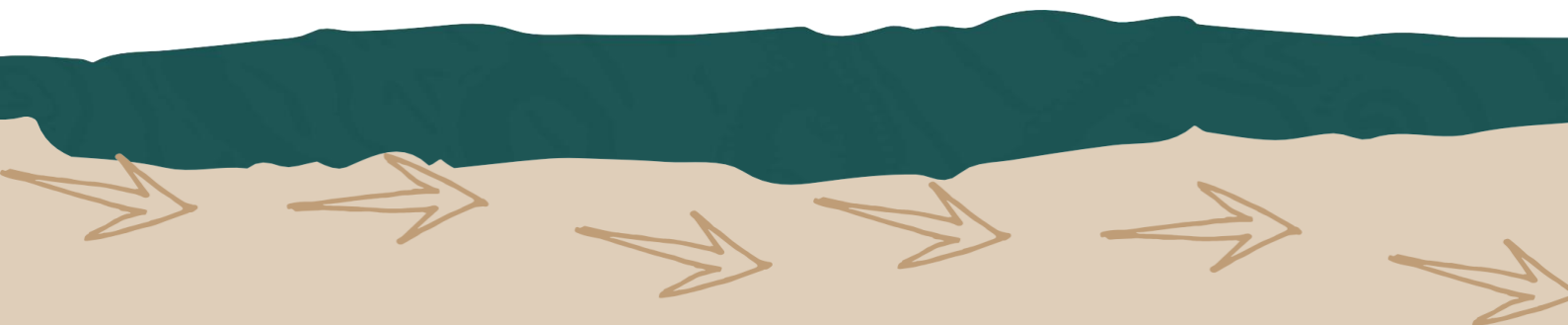
DBCA engaged early with BPAC to outline project requirements and cultural heritage considerations. A joint site visit involving BPAC, Native Title representatives, and DBCA staff facilitated both cultural assessment and relationship building.

During the survey, previously unrecorded artefacts were identified, leading to adjustments in project design. The team collaboratively established disturbance limits, contingency areas, and exclusion zones to protect cultural values.

Despite delays due to weather, works resumed in late 2025 with joint oversight of excavation activities. Knowledge exchange, including the use of visitor monitoring tools and cultural interpretation, strengthened mutual understanding and trust. Informal interactions throughout the project further supported relationship development.



Sonny Dixon and Kim Tucker monitoring the excavation (October 2025)



Different approaches, shared outcomes

While both projects involved similar infrastructure works, they reflect two distinct engagement models:

- Working within an established partnership, where processes and expectations are well understood.
- Building a new partnership, requiring investment in trust, communication, and shared practices.

Both approaches delivered positive outcomes, demonstrating DBCA's commitment to culturally respectful planning and genuine collaboration with Traditional Owners. These projects highlight the value of flexible, relationship-focused approaches in achieving sustainable infrastructure outcomes while strengthening long-term partnerships.

If you'd like your region to feature in a future 'Spotlight on a region' and showcase your team's work, email yarning.time@dbca.wa.gov.au.

A new lens on Country: an Aboriginal Ranger Program and Scitech collaboration



DBCA's [Aboriginal Ranger Program](#) (ARP) is bringing stories from Country into the spotlight through an exciting new partnership with Scitech.

Through ARP's Round 6 'Innovation Fund', [12 ranger groups](#) were funded to pursue creative, out-of-the-box ways to improve their project outcomes, with a commitment to share their learnings for the benefit of the wider Aboriginal ranger sector.

Led by a specially-appointed First Nations Creative Director, a film crew from Scitech has been travelling across WA using cutting-edge extended reality technology to capture each group's project. 'Extended reality' is an umbrella term that encompasses immersive technologies including augmented, virtual, and mixed reality, merging the physical and digital worlds to create engaging experiences.

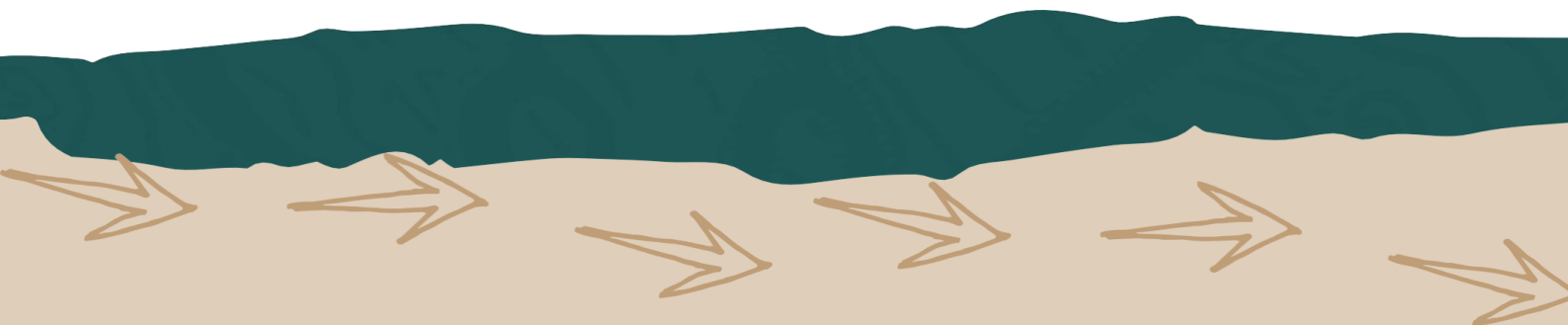
These powerful stories will be brought to life at an immersive full-dome showcase event at the Scitech Planetarium in early 2027, providing a unique opportunity for the ranger groups to exchange knowledge, celebrate innovation and learn from one another.

While the showcase event takes shape, DBCA and Scitech will investigate the development of additional immersive audiovisual products that the wider industry and general public can enjoy, offering new ways to learn from and connect with the incredible work of Aboriginal rangers across the state.

Keep an eye on the department's [Facebook page](#) for updates as the project progresses.



Ranger groups from Waroona and Harvey kicked off the Scitech filming project, with interviews and demonstrations on-Country describing their Round 6 work.



Bushfood recipe

In each issue of Yarning Time we'll share a recipe that uses bushfood.

This issue's recipe comes from recipes.com.au. However, we'd love to share your favourite recipes, so if you have one you'd like featured, please email it to Yarning.Time@dbca.wa.gov.au Thank you!

MILO & wattleseed bliss bites



**DBCA is not affiliated with and does not endorse or support any commercial activities on websites where recipes are sourced. However, a member of staff recently made this for a NAIDOC Week afternoon tea and it was delicious!*

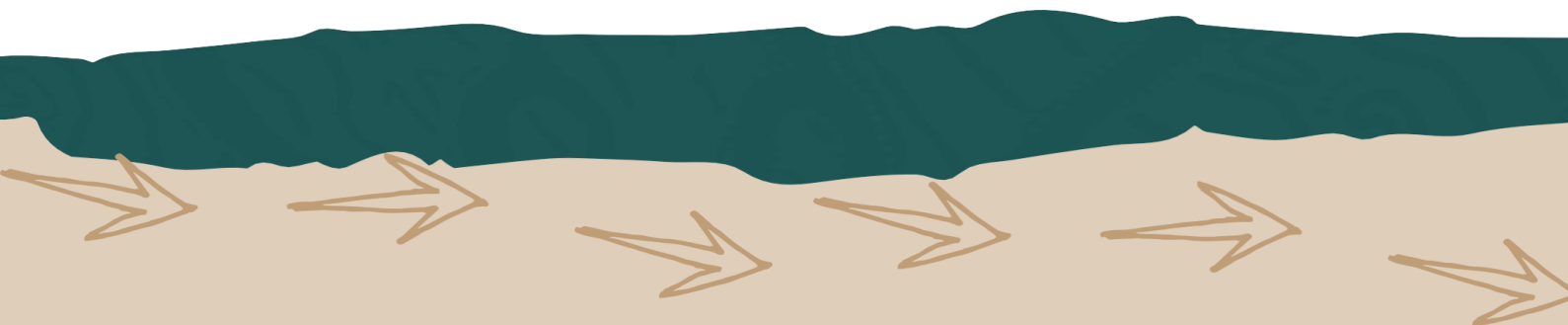
Ingredients for 12 servings:

- 1 1/4 cup hazelnuts
- 1 1/4 cup Milo 30% less added sugar
- 1 tbsp ground, roasted wattle seed
- 10 pitted fresh medjool dates
- 3/4 cup natural peanut butter, no added salt or sugar
- 4 cups hot water
- 1/4 cup desiccated coconut (for rolling)
- 1/4 cup Milo 30% less added sugar (for rolling)

Method

1. Place hazelnuts in a food processor and process until fine crumbs form. Add the Milo and wattle seed and process to combine.
2. Add dates and peanut butter, process until combined. Add enough water to bring the mixture together.
3. Using wet hands; roll heaped tablespoons of mixture into balls.
4. Roll half the balls in coconut and half the balls in the Milo.

Makes 12 bliss bites



In other news ...

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

DBCA's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) sets out a strong and practical framework to advance reconciliation across the department, with a focus on relationships, respect, opportunities and governance.

The department's RAP outlines clear and measurable actions to strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal communities, support joint management of land and waters, and embed cultural knowledge into decision-making and on-Country practices. It also prioritises increasing Aboriginal employment, supporting Aboriginal businesses, and building staff capability through cultural learning.

Across the department, teams are working towards targets such as expanding joint management agreements, improving participation in cultural awareness training, supporting NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week activities, and creating meaningful opportunities for engagement with Aboriginal partners.

Progress is tracked through regular reporting, including updates in Yarning Time, ensuring transparency, accountability and a continued focus on delivering positive outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities across Western Australia.

Wadjemup marks National Reconciliation Week

Wadjemup / Rottnest Island Authority recognised National Reconciliation Week in May 2026 through a series of events aligned to the theme "All In." Staff, visitors and community members came together to reflect, connect and engage in conversations about reconciliation.

Highlights included a livestream of the NRW breakfast on Thomson Lawn and a Cultural Yarns event, featuring yarning circles led by Aboriginal presenters exploring stories of Country, culture and community. A staff cultural yarning experience and stakeholder event were also held, supporting ongoing learning and strengthening connections to reconciliation on Wadjemup.

NAIDOC Week 2026

While National Reconciliation Week focuses on building respectful relationships, NAIDOC Week is a time to celebrate and enhance awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and achievements.

NAIDOC Week 2026 will take place from 6–13 July, with the theme '50 Years Deadly.' Visit the NAIDOC website [Home page | NAIDOC](#) for resources to help plan your celebrations.

Paint your own boomerang workshop – NAIDOC Week

As part of DBCA's NAIDOC Week celebrations, staff were invited to take part in a 'Paint your own boomerang' workshop.

This hands-on session offered a meaningful opportunity for cultural learning and reflection. Participants painted their own boomerangs while exploring Aboriginal symbols and developing personal stories inspired by these cultural elements.

More on this workshop will be featured in the next issue of *Yarning Time*.

