

Spring 2026 *Issue 03*

NEWSLETTER

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation



YYNAC CEO John Patrick Kerr

Welcome to the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Newsletter, where we will provide you with updates on what's going on behind the scenes, upcoming events, announcements and business opportunities.

In this, our third edition, we will share with you:

- CEO UPDATE - Looking Ahead
- Gellung Warl Reserve Seat Holder Update
- Council of Elders & Family Groups Update
- The Cultural Connection Centre
- Strengthening Partnerships
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- Woka Walla - A Front Row Seat!
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YYNAC CEO Update

The doors to Dharnya officially open!

This year's NAIDOC Week theme, 50 Years of Deadly, is a reminder of the strength and determination that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have shown over generations.
For Yorta Yorta people, that story continues with the reopening of Dharnya. Seeing so many people come together for Dharnya Day was a proud moment for our community and a fitting way to celebrate the beginning of a new chapter.
In this edition, we've shared some of our favourite photos from the day. They capture the people who made it so special and the excitement of seeing Dharnya open its doors once again. You'll also find updates from across the organisation, highlighting the work that's been happening in our programs, on Country and in the community over recent months.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this milestone possible. Your commitment and belief in Dharnya have brought this place back to life, and I look forward to seeing what we build together next.

I hope you enjoy this edition and take a moment to celebrate everything we've achieved together, while looking ahead to what's still to come.

Gellung Warl
Reserve Seat Holder Update

Dear Board Members, Council of Elders, Family Groups, Staff and YYNAC Community,

The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) Board informs its Elders, Family Groups and Members that Gellung Warl Reserve Seat holder **Mr Graham Briggs** has tendered his resignation to the Gellung Warl assembly.

YYNAC Board is saddened by this outcome as Mr Briggs brought great energy and effort to the role. His ongoing commitment to the betterment of the Yorta Yorta Nation people and the implementation of Treaty is without question. The Board thanks Graham for his commitment to our community and for his work as a leader for Aboriginal rights.



Graham Briggs tenders resignationn Gellung Warl Reserve Seat

The YYNAC Board has a high standard of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all involved in every aspect of Aboriginal Cultural, Social and economic development and will continue to act as an advocate for the safety of all through any community forum or program. Mr Briggs will maintain his role as a Board Member with YYNAC. Under the election rules of the Gellung Warl, when a Reserve Seat is vacated the Traditional Owner group has the right to temporarily fill the vacancy created.

YYNAC Board announces that **Mr Travis Morgan**, will now act as the Yorta Yorta Reserve Seat Holder for the Gellung Warl. This is a temporary appointment, up to 6 months, the Board will commence a process of engagement and consultation with Elders, Family Groups and is membership on the next steps in finalising a permanent seat holder.



Travis Morgan, will temporarily act as the Yorta Yorta Reserve Seat Holder for the Gellung Warl.

Council of Elders & Family Groups Update





We're pleased to welcome **Taleah Briggs** to YYNAC as our new Community Engagement Assistant. Taleah will work alongside Roxanne Atkinson, supporting the Council of Elders and Family Group gatherings.

A proud Yorta Yorta woman from the Maggie Toodles Family Group, Taleah is Dhulanyagan of the Ulupna Clan and comes from a strong line of Yorta Yorta men and women through her great-grandparents, OAM Geraldine Rose Briggs and Selwyn Briggs.

Taleah will be a key contact for Family Groups, helping bring families together to yarn, share ideas and have a say in gatherings, activities and events.

The Council of Elders currently has 10 Elders representing the following Family Groups:

Aaron Atkinson/Louisa Frost – **Leon Atkinson**
Annabella Howard – **Lee Joachim**
Robert Cooper – **Thelma Nicholson**
Ada Cooper – **Greg James**
Alf Morgan – **Robert Russell**
Bagot Morgan – **Desmond Morgan**
Maggie Toodles – **Ron Briggs**
Fred Walker – **Hilda Stewart**
Jenny Charles – **Ralph Hume**
Elizabeth Atkinson – **Ross Morgan**

The remaining six Family Groups currently without representation on the Council of Elders are:

Jack Cooper | Maggie Stone | Edgar Atkinson | William Cooper | John Atkinson | Tommy McCrae

The Council meets monthly to discuss YYNAC business and share important information back through Family Groups. Most of our 16 Family Groups are now meeting regularly, providing an important opportunity for families to come together, yarn and stay connected.

Time Capsule & Board Nominations

The Council of Elders encourages all Family Groups to contribute to the YYNAC Time Capsule, with letters, photographs, books, family trees or other items that tell their family's story for future generations. The Time Capsule will be opened in 50 years.

The Council is also encouraging YYNAC members to nominate someone from their Family Group for the YYNAC Board. Nomination forms are available through Roxanne or Taleah.

If you have moved or changed your contact details, please let us know so you don't miss important YYNAC and Family Group updates.

Contact: **Taleah Briggs**
taleah.b@yynac.com.au | 0428 046 173
Wednesday to Friday, 9am–5pm

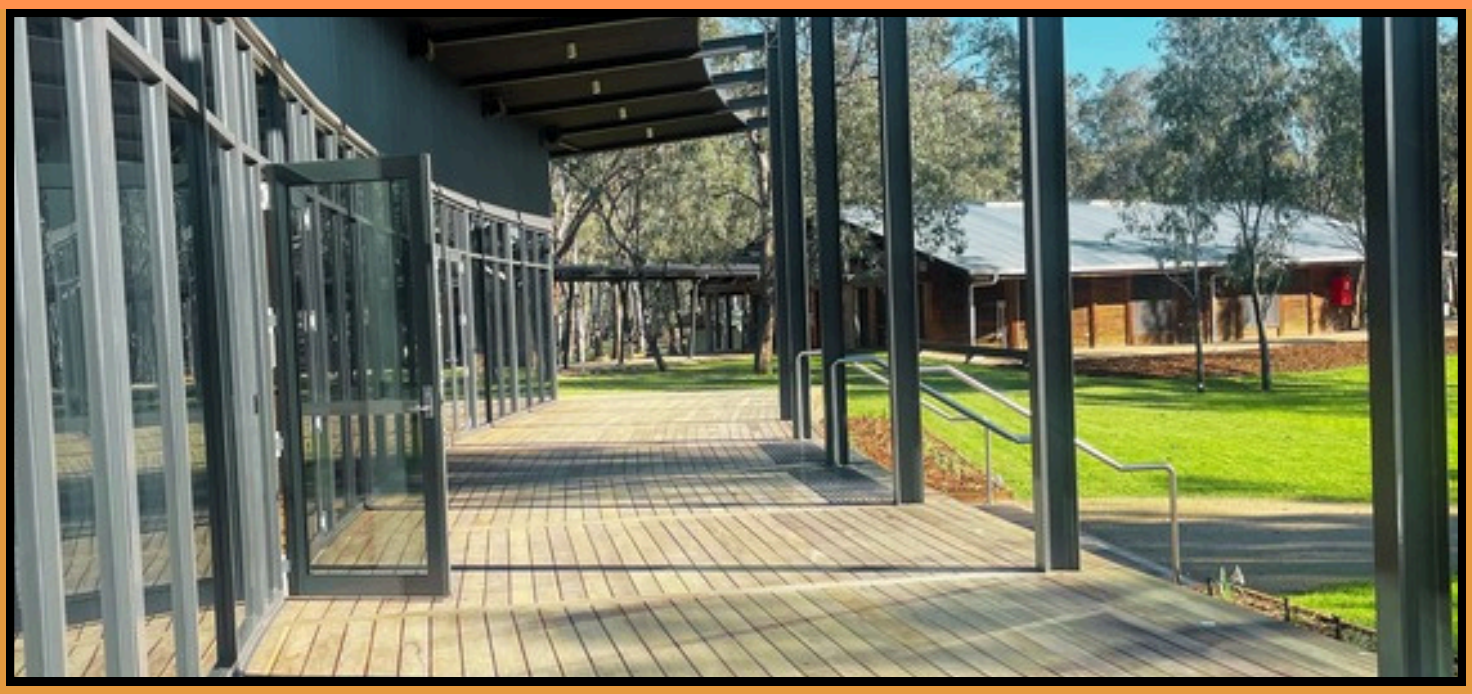
The Cultural Connection Centre

The Cultural Connection Centre has really taken shape over the past month, with works continuing to progress well.
Plastering is now complete and internal painting is about to begin, while more than half of the external painting has also been completed. Specialised equipment for the archive rooms has been installed, along with the air-conditioning units.
Over the coming weeks, works will include sanding and sealing the timber floorboards, fitting out the meeting rooms, offices and kitchen, and beginning work on the feature meeting circle outside.
With no major construction delays anticipated, the Cultural Connection Centre is expected to be completed in late December.



Another exciting milestone for the Stage Two Cultural Connection Centre in Barmah!
The stunning Murray pine flooring is now in, giving a real sense of the warmth and scale of this incredible space.
A huge shout out to Tact Constructions and everyone on site for the outstanding workmanship and dedication that's bringing this vision to life. We can't wait to share what's next!

YYNAC and Moira Shire Council Strengthen Partnership







Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) and **Moira Shire Council** have formally signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at Dharnya, strengthening the partnership between the two organisations.

The MOU reflects a shared commitment to reconciliation, self-determination and greater recognition and understanding of Yorta Yorta culture, Cultural Heritage and knowledge of Country. It also provides a framework for ongoing collaboration, including opportunities to increase Aboriginal participation in decision-making, employment and procurement, and to work together to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes for Yorta Yorta People and the wider Moira Shire community.



YYNAC CEO John Kerr and Moira Shire Council CEO Matthew Morgan

RAP FORUM











Dharnya Centre recently welcomed RAP representatives for a multi-day forum on Yorta Yorta Country, providing a wonderful opportunity to showcase the Centre and its facilities in action.

Dharnya provided the setting for three days of conversation and connection to Country. Guests were welcomed with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony before experiencing the surrounding landscape through guided walks and a Kingfisher boat cruise.

The forum itself brought together a range of presentations and discussions, including updates from the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, YYNAC's Cultural Heritage team, Cultural Fire and Dharnya education, along with an opportunity for guests to hear from Professor Uncle Wayne Atkinson.

For us, it was also an important opportunity to see the Centre fulfil its purpose, bringing people together on Country to listen, learn, share knowledge and build relationships.

Hosting a multi-day forum was a great test of our new facilities and an exciting glimpse of what Dharnya can offer future groups and organisations wanting a meaningful On Country experience.









Woka Walla – A Front Row Seat!









One of the unexpected highlights of our recent RAP Forum was having a front-row view of Woka Walla at work, landscaping the grounds of Dharnya.

While it wasn't part of the planned program, it became a fitting backdrop to the day watching Traditional Owners working on Country and helping shape the landscape around a place that holds such significance for our people.

There was something particularly special about being able to see that work happening firsthand. It was a proud reminder that Dharnya is not only a place that tells our stories and celebrates our culture, but one that has been built and shaped by Yorta Yorta people.

Seeing Woka Walla bringing the landscape to life was something our RAP Forum guests were fortunate to witness and something we were incredibly proud to share.

Winyarr Bidja Gathering

On 27th June, we hosted the Winyarr Bidja Gathering, bringing Yorta Yorta Winyarr together to connect, share knowledge, and discuss our vision for future cultural burning on Country.

The gathering created a space for women to talk about the importance of cultural burning and why it is vital that Yorta Yorta women are actively involved and take a leading role in these practices. Bidja (Fire) is an important part of healing Country for our people. We believe that healthy Country means healthy people, and by caring for Country through cultural practices, we strengthen the wellbeing of our People.

An important part of the day was the participation of our Burrai (babies). Bringing our Burrai to the gathering allowed them to be surrounded by culture from an early age, ensuring that knowledge, stories, and cultural practices are passed down through the generations. Investing in our young ones today helps keep our culture strong.

Together, the Winyarr (Woman) created a beautiful collaborative artwork, which is now proudly displayed at the Eco Hub. The artwork reflects the theme of Bidja and represents the connection between women, Country, healing, and the responsibility of caring for our lands. It stands as a lasting reminder of the strength of Yorta Yorta women and our shared commitment to protecting and healing Country.

The Winyarr Bidja Gathering was a powerful day of connection, learning, and cultural strengthening, reinforcing the vital role that women play in caring for Country and ensuring that our cultural knowledge continues to be passed on to future generations.











Sampling the Goods









The Ulunja crew are a talented mob. Not only farming but as you may have seen on Dharnya Day a very impressive side hustle of Johnny Cake making. And why wouldn't they, it proved to be the perfect base to sample the goods. Delicious Ulunja honey, did you get to try some?

Gemmill Swamp Sandhills Day on Country









On Monday, 10 August, YYNAC staff joined representatives from Greater Shepparton City Council and RiverConnect for a day on Country, planting 100 trees at Gemmill Swamp Sandhills. The day provided a valuable opportunity to come together as a team, strengthen relationships across YYNAC, deepen our connection to Country, and give back to the land through the restoration of our woka.

A variety of native species were planted, including Murray Pine and wattle bushes, which play an important role in supporting local biodiversity and restoring the natural landscape. Murray Pine provides habitat and shelter for native wildlife, while wattles contribute to soil health, attract pollinators, and are culturally significant plants that have long been used and valued by First Nations peoples. Together, these species will help strengthen the health and resilience of the area for future generations.

Team members from the Dharnya Cultural Centre, Cultural Heritage Unit, Ulunja Farm, Economics Hub, and Woka Walla Crew all took part in the planting day. Caring for Country was at the heart of the event, with a strong sense of culture, connection, and shared purpose evident throughout the day. The initiative highlighted the importance of working together to support environmental restoration while strengthening community and cultural connections. Through activities such as tree planting, participants were able to actively contribute to the protection and regeneration of Country while fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural and environmental significance of the landscape.

Amazing Grace!



A big congratulations to **Grace Atkinson**, who was named a High Achiever Finalist in the 2026 Victorian Top Tour Guide Awards.

Grace has worked incredibly hard since joining YYNAC, building her knowledge alongside Yorta Yorta Elders and sharing Yorta Yorta culture and connection to Country with visitors through her tours at the Dharnya Centre

Last year, she completed more than 100 hours of supervised Coxswain training to become a qualified skipper of the Kingfisher, and has also been completing her Certificate III in Tourism.

Anyone who has been on one of Grace's tours will know how naturally she connects with people and makes them feel welcome.

We're incredibly proud to see all that hard work recognised.

Well done, Grace!



Opening All Our Doors

YYNAC was pleased to welcome Victorian Minister for Small Business and Employment, Natalie Suleyman, to the YYNAC Economic Hub in Shepparton.
The visit provided an opportunity to share firsthand how YYNAC is working to strengthen employment, support business development and create sustainable economic opportunities across Yorta Yorta Country.

The YYNAC Economic Hub plays an important role in connecting community, business and government, while supporting local economic participation and creating pathways for Yorta Yorta people and businesses to thrive.
During the visit, YYNAC shared its vision for growing economic outcomes across the region, including opportunities to support employment pathways, strengthen local businesses, encourage entrepreneurship and build greater economic self-determination.
We thank Minister Suleyman for taking the time to visit the Economic Hub, meet with the YYNAC team and hear directly about the work underway to build a strong and sustainable economic future for Yorta Yorta Country.



Pictured LtoR: Uncle Lee Joachim, Minsiter Natalie Suleyman, YYNAC CEO John Kerr opening the Shepparton Eco Hub

Protecting Country



With growing awareness of avian influenza (bird flu) across Australia, YYNAC is taking a proactive approach to ensuring our staff and community are informed and prepared.

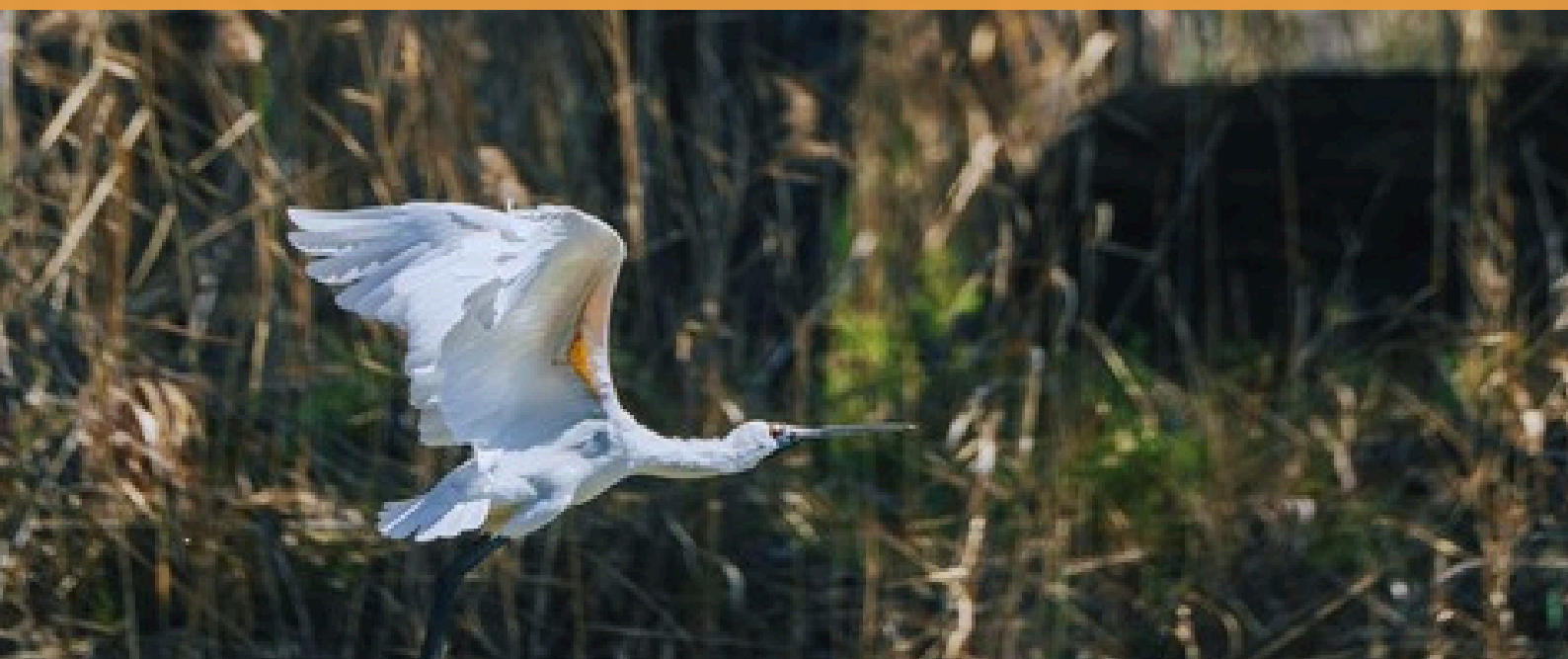
With Yorta Yorta Country home to significant birdlife, including migratory species, YYNAC is working with relevant agencies and the University of Melbourne to strengthen awareness and preparedness, particularly for our people working on Country.

If you come across sick or dead birds:

- Do not touch them – keep your distance and avoid contact with sick or dead wildlife.
- Record the location – note the time, date and location of the sighting.
- Take photos or video – if it is safe to do so, record what you have observed.
- Report it – contact the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888.**
- Follow further advice – local animal health authorities may provide additional instructions.

Early reporting of unusual behaviour, sick birds or increased bird deaths can assist authorities in detecting and understanding potential disease spread.

By staying informed, working with the appropriate bodies and sharing practical information, YYNAC is helping ensure our people are prepared and Country is cared for.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Are you looking for work but finding it difficult to get a job?
Are there things getting in the way of starting or staying in employment?



WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE REAL BARRIERS PEOPLE ARE FACING

YOUR FEEDBACK WILL HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY AND WHAT SUPPORT, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WE'RE ASKING THE COMMUNITY TO HAVE A CHAT WITH US ABOUT EMPLOYMENT



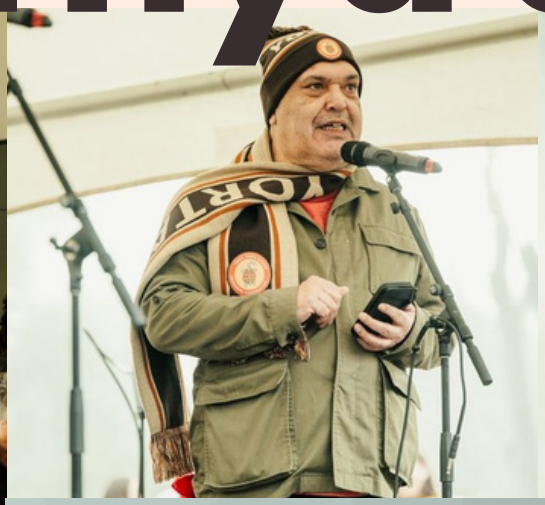
HAVE YOUR SAY. HELP US UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS. HELP SHAPE BETTER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

ALL EXPERIENCES ARE WELCOME. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

Please send your **Name** and **mobile number** to the email address below, and we will contact you shortly.

Email: Berniece.j@yynac.com .au

dharnya day









in pictures





















dharnya day













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