

to know our living culture



We respectfully inform readers that this newsletter contains images of individuals who are now deceased. These images may cause sadness or emotional discomfort for some readers.

UPCOMING DATES

Keeping you upto date with all of our events to put into your calendar as we commence 2026.

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FAREWELL AUNTY HAZEL AND JIPPA MURRAY

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, local schools, regional partners and NSW.

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BACK TO SCHOOL WITH VAEAI

VAEAI and Njernda came together to start the school year with information and educational products.

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Celebrating Leadership!

We are pleased to share an update on recent leadership appointments across Njernda Aboriginal Corporation. These new changes reflect strength, experience and dedication from our team, and our ongoing commitment to strong leadership within our services.

Please join us in congratulating Nadine Wright on her appointment as Youth and Well-being Manager, Tracey Morrison as Yakapna Healing Centre Manager, and Jessica Smith as Family Safety Unit Coordinator. With each bringing valuable skills and insight to their new role.

We look forward to their continued leadership and contributions across the organisation.

Growing Futures

Njernda are proud to acknowledge several of our staff members who are currently studying the Diploma of Community Services through Bendigo TAFE, strengthening their skills in areas such as person-centred support, advocacy and community development. Their commitment to learning reflects a deep dedication to supporting individuals, families and community wellbeing, while bringing fresh knowledge and best practice back into our services. We celebrate their efforts and encourage community members who are passionate about helping others to consider pathways like the Diploma of Community Services as a meaningful way to create positive change in our community.

- Alkira Wilson (Hearn)
- Amie Pump
- Cathleen Andrews
- Dylan Gordan
- Khayla Wanganeen
- Kristie Hearn
- Kylie Goddard
- Laura Hudson
- Montana Handy
- Warren Stevens

LUNCHEON WITH COMMUNITY ELDERS

Leona and Jade from Njernda Family Services have been meeting with the Yorta Yorta Nation Council of Elders to discuss opportunities for strengthening children and families cultural connections. We hosted the Council of Elders for their meeting in August and then caught up with them again at their December meeting.

On Friday 6th February we collaborated with Njernda Medical and hosted a special luncheon for community elders at Njernda Family Services Kitchen, to seek their guidance and support with programs for 2026. They enjoyed a delicious lasagne and salad with apple sponge cake for dessert.

We are extremely grateful for our elders guidance, support and contribution and we look forward to working more closely together in delivering programs for our children and families.



ONE HEADSPACE, MANY COMMUNITIES

We are proud to share highlights from the official unveiling of our community art project, **'One headspace, many communities'**, held late last year on Friday 5th of December, in partnership with Echuca headspace.

The project began at the start of 2025 and brought together an incredible group of young people over a six-week Koori Kids engagement program. Throughout the program, participants showed creativity, commitment and pride in their work, and the finished artwork is a powerful reflection of their voices, stories and community connections.

We would like to sincerely thank Bunnings, Donchi's and Anita from Echuca Engineering for their generous contributions, as well as Njernda Family Services for their support in making this project possible.

UPCOMING DATES

FEB 10 Women's Art Class
(Tuesdays, 12 weeks)

FEB 13 Warma Basketball
Training (3 weeks)

FEB 18 Winyanboga Program
(Women's, 10 weeks)

MAR 7 VACSAL Basketball
(3 day event)

MAR 27 Brain Hub Bus at
Family Services

AUSTRALIAN OPEN WITH RICK AND MARLEY

Every year at the Australian Open, one of the world's great sporting events, there's a dedicated celebration of First Nations culture that brings Indigenous identity, pride and community to Melbourne Park's global stage. In 2026, this celebration was held on Evonne Goolagong Cawley Day, the Australian Open's Indigenous Day, named to honour one of Australia's greatest tennis champions and a proud Aboriginal woman whose legacy stretches far beyond her achievements on court.

Evonne Goolagong Cawley Day (formerly known simply as First Nations Day) takes place and is designed to highlight Indigenous history, culture and community connection through a range of activities for fans and players alike. Indigenous art, live performances, traditional Welcome to Country ceremonies, dance groups, didgeridoo musicians and First Nations ball kids all contribute to a vibrant day that celebrates both the sport and the rich cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The 2026 Indigenous Day program was packed with meaningful experiences: a smoking ceremony at Margaret Court Arena, weaving demonstrations, Indigenous soundscapes and storytelling, and special appearances by performers and respected Elders. Across the precinct, installations of Indigenous art and cultural markers infused the site with layers of deep significance and beauty, drawing attention to the ongoing presence and contribution of Australia's First Peoples.

This year's celebrations were even more special for two of our local mob - Rick Ronnan and Marley Day. As part of the Deadly Choices campaign, they had earned the opportunity to attend the Australian Open for two days. Deadly Choices is a preventative health initiative encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make healthy decisions, including completing their annual 715 health check. Participants who engaged in this program were entered into a competition where winners received flights, accommodation and tickets to attend the event and be part of the Indigenous Day festivities.

Rick and Marley had both taken part in a local Deadly Choices health check earlier in the year as part of this campaign, and their names were drawn

as winners of the competition. When they arrived in Naarm (Melbourne) for the Australian Open, the excitement was unmistakable - not just at being at one of the biggest sporting events in the world, but at being part of something that truly resonated with their identity and community.

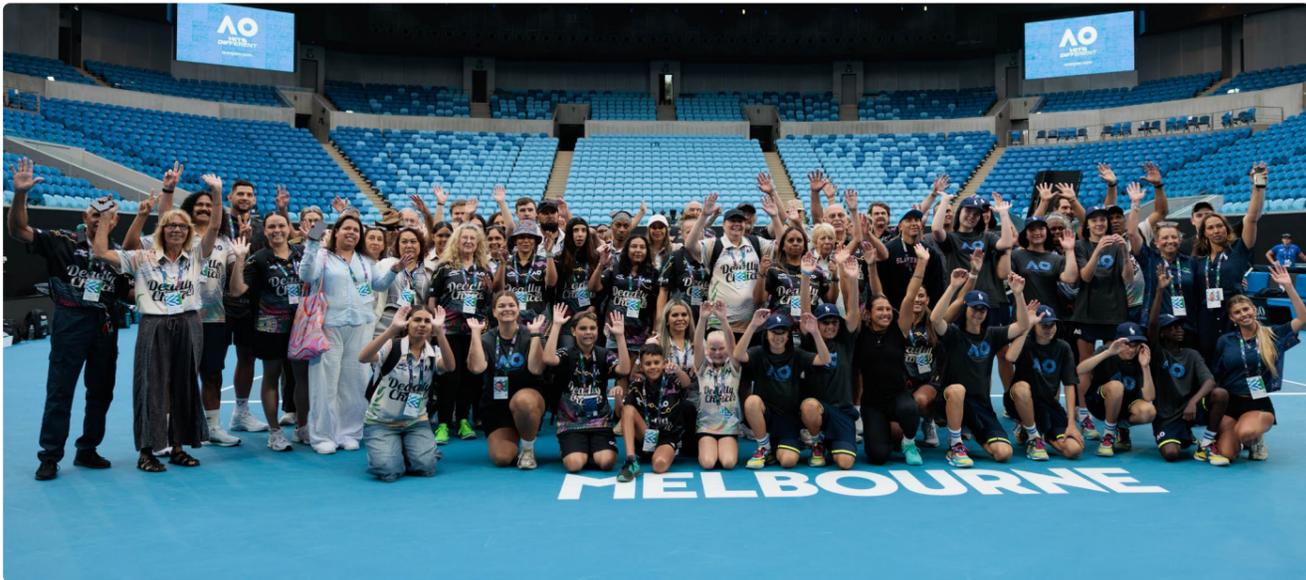
Over the two days they attended, they soaked up the atmosphere, watched high-level tennis, and shared yarns with other mob who'd also won the competition. On Indigenous Day itself, they were able to be part of the cultural celebrations, walk through the grounds adorned with First Nations artworks, witness the Welcome to Country, enjoy Indigenous music, and soak up the pride of seeing their culture honoured on such a significant international stage.

For Rick and Marley, it wasn't just about tennis - it was about connection, culture and recognition in a space where their voices and stories were centre stage. Moments like these are testament to how sport can become a bridge to celebrate country, culture, and community wellbeing for Indigenous Australians.

GET YOUR HEALTH CHECK

CALL US ON 03 5481 0600

Njernda
Aboriginal Corporation



FAREWELL TO AUNTY HAZEL AND JIPPA MURRAY

Last year we sadly said goodbye to Hazel Hudson as our Family Services Executive Director. We thank Hazel for all the work she has done for the family services unit while working at Njernda.

We've seen the unit develop from a few staff at Ivy house, move to Annesley Street with more staff and programs to now have two teams, and over 10 different programs and settled in to the old 208 building in Hare street.

Hazel was a strong advocate for children and families in our community representing Njernda on local regional and state level and strengthening our relationship with the Department of Families Fairness and Housing.

Hazel will be dearly missed, the team would like to thank her for her mentoring and support and wish her all the best for the future.

Jippa Murray has also finished up with us as the Out of Home Care Manager. Jippa has worked across a number of different programs at Njernda Family Services to develop her skills and knowledge but most importantly in the Wala Yarka Program (Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care - Section 18) and out of home care space.

Jippa has also been a strong advocate for our children and families in community strengthening programs and developing cultural resources to ensure they can remain connected to country, culture and community.

Jippa has been integral in redeveloping our cultural support plans, yarning tools and setting up our annual Yarka Yakapna Corroboree. The team will miss you Jippa, we wish you all the best for the future.



NJERENDA CHRISTMAS

As we wrapped up 2025, our Njernda staff came together to celebrate connection, laughter and the hard work that goes on every day across our services. It was great to see staff come together in a relaxed setting, sharing smiles, good food and plenty of festive cheer.

The day was about togetherness and staff taking a well-earned moment to unwind. The energy reflected the strong relationships and sense of community that sit at the heart of everything we do. These moments matter, and they remind us why connection is so important.

As we look back on the year that was, the party was a chance to pause, celebrate achievements and say thank you to everyone around us that contribute to our great community.



SEWB WOMEN'S SPACE

Our Women's End of Year Lunch was a special occasion, giving us the chance to come together, reflect, and celebrate the women who have engaged with and supported our wellbeing programs throughout 2025. It was a time to pause, share stories, and acknowledge the strength, resilience, and commitment of the women in our community. The lunch provided a safe, welcoming space for women to connect, enjoy each other's company, and take a moment to focus on their wellbeing.

The day was filled with laughter, meaningful conversation, and delicious food. Yarning together allowed women to share their experiences from the year, exchange ideas, and build stronger connections with one another. In total, 21 women, including staff members, joined us for the lunch, making it a vibrant and inclusive gathering. Many took the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions for 2026, sharing their thoughts on programs and activities they would love to see in the future. This input is incredibly valuable and will help guide the planning and development of our programs to ensure they continue to meet the needs and interests of the women we support.

We're also excited to share some of what's coming up in the new year. Our Women's Art Class will be starting again on 10 February 2026, running for 12 weeks every Tuesday from 11:30am – 1:00pm. This program offers a relaxed, supportive environment to yarn, unwind, and explore creativity alongside our talented art teacher, Narges. Additionally, we hosted a Women's Fishing Day on 13 February 2026 at the Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery, a wonderful opportunity to spend time on Country, connect with others, and enjoy the outdoors. We can't wait to share more about these experiences in our upcoming newsletters.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us at the lunch and to all the women who continue to be part of our programs throughout the year. Your engagement, feedback, and commitment to wellbeing help make our community stronger, more connected, and more resilient. We look forward to another year filled with learning, connection, and positive experiences together in 2026.



THE WOMAN'S ART CLASS IS BACK!!

AND THIS TIME FOR 12 WEEKS, STARTING 10/02/2026!



Our Women's Art Class is back every Tuesday. Come along and enjoy a safe, relaxed space to yarn, unwind, and get creative together with our lovely art teacher, Narges.

 **EVERY TUESDAY**
LUNCH IS PROVIDED

 **TIMES**
11.30am - 1.00pm

 **YOUTH AND WELLBEING UNIT**
59 MCMILLAN ROAD, ECHUCA

CONTACT DETAILS

Alkira Hearn - 0457 975 150

Montana Handy - 0409636235

Jameena Jackson - 0419 280 349



THIS PROGRAM IS AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL ABORIGINAL WOMEN AGED 16 YEARS AND OVER

BACK TO SCHOOL WITH VAEAI

On Tuesday 20th January, Njernda partnered with VAEAI to host a 'Back to School' event at the Echuca Aquatic Centre.

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) is the peak Aboriginal community-controlled organisation advocating for the rights, voice and educational outcomes of Aboriginal children and young people across Victoria.

VAEAI works in partnership with community, families, schools and government to support culturally strong, safe and inclusive education.

This event saw both primary and secondary students receive back-to-school products and information on education.

Thank you to Nicole Cooper and our guest speakers Aunty Denise Morgan-Bulled, Uncle Des Morgan, Wade Austin and Uncle Col Walker, who shared stories about their education journey, and the importance of accepting the opportunities available to Aboriginal youth now, that they didn't have.

Thank you to all those who attended, and to VAEAI and Treaty for your setup on the day.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR DEADLY BRAIN

We're excited to announce that the Brain Hub Bus will be visiting Family Services on **Friday 27th March** for a special community wellbeing day. The morning will kick off at 10:00am with a cuppa and morning tea, followed by informative sessions about looking after your "deadly brain". This is a relaxed, supportive event designed to raise awareness about brain health, including dementia, without being scary, and to share practical ways to stay healthy, connected, and empowered.

We'll hear from a range of experts, including representatives from Dementia Australia, Country Hearing, Nutrition & Diet, Elders Rights Advocacy,

and the Safe Home Program. The Brain Hub Bus will also offer hearing tests and health checks, while lunch will be provided and there will be giveaways throughout the day. The event will take place in the Kookaburra Room at Family Services, and all community members are welcome to attend.

This event is part of our ongoing Social Support Groups under CHSP & HACCC services. For more information, please contact Vicki Walker (03 5481 0600). We hope you'll join us for a day of learning, connection, and caring for your brain - because taking care of your health can be enjoyable, social, and empowering.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS TRAINING UNDERWAY

Today our Health & Safety Representatives (HSRs) kicked off their training, taking an important step in helping keep our workplace safe, healthy, and supportive for everyone.

Our HSRs are there to listen, have conversations with staff, and raise any health and safety concerns

so they can be worked through together. They play a big role in strengthening our workplace culture and making sure everyone feels heard and supported.

A big thank you to our HSRs for putting their hand up for this role and for their commitment to looking after our people and our community.



BAROONA YOUTH HEALING – PLANNING PERMIT APPROVED

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation is proud to share an important milestone in the Baroona Youth Healing Place redevelopment journey - the planning permit has now been officially approved! This marks a significant step forward in bringing the community's vision for Baroona closer to life.

The approval was celebrated alongside key project partners, with representatives from Njernda, Fontic, Public Realm and Barpa coming together to acknowledge the collective effort behind this achievement. It reflects months of careful planning, collaboration and commitment to ensuring the redevelopment is respectful of Country, community-led and grounded in cultural values.

Securing the planning permit confirms that the vision shaped by our Elders and community members can now move into the next phase. It reinforces that Baroona will continue as a place of healing, safety and belonging for young people - a space that feels like home while supporting wellbeing, connection to culture and future opportunities.

This milestone represents more than a regulatory approval; it is a recognition of strong partnerships

and shared purpose. Each organisation involved has played a vital role in supporting a design that honours Yorta Yorta Country and places young people at the heart of every decision.

With this approval in place, the Baroona redevelopment continues to move steadily forward. Njernda thanks everyone involved for their dedication and looks forward to sharing further updates as the project progresses. Together, we are building a future-focused healing place shaped by community, for community.



WARMA BASKETBALL TRAINING!

FOR UPCOMING CARNIVAL




WARMA

Every Friday
13th-27th Feb | 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Echuca Basketball Stadium

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
PLEASE CONTACT YOUTH SERVICES ON:
54810 630




VACSAL STATEWIDE ABORIGINAL BASKETBALL CLASSIC 2026

Saturday 07 - Monday 09
March 2026

Beyond Bank
20 Crows Rd, Belmont

Geelong Arena
110 Victoria Street, North Geelong

AGE GROUPS

U8's Mixed (2019/2022)	C Grade Men
U10 Boys (2017/18)	C Grade Women
U10 Girls (2017/18)	B Grade Men
U12 Boys (2015/16)	B Grade Women
U12 Girls (2015/16)	A Grade Men
U14 Boys (2013/14)	A Grade Women
U14 Girls (2013/14)	
U16 Boys (2011/12)	
U16 Girls (2011/12)	
U18 Boys (2009/10)	
U18 Girls (2009/10)	

In partnership with






Extreme heat is dangerous

-  Always have a plan to stay cool
-  Stay hydrated on hot days
-  Stay up to date with weather forecasts in your area
-  Check in with family, friends and neighbours




2026 UNIFORM PACKAGES

State Schools' Relief provides support to any Victorian student attending a government school (primary, secondary or specialist), with application assistance of their school.

Schools can submit an application directly, via their online portal, whenever they believe there is a need to support a student whose family/ carers are facing difficulty in providing the appropriate uniform, footwear or educational items for attending school.

Contact your school today for further information, or visit our website
www.stateschoolsrelief.org.au

Njernda

Aboriginal Corporation

Keeping our community strong

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

If you're feeling no good or need some extra support, yarning about how you're feeling with someone you trust can help.

You and your loved ones can also find support through your local Aboriginal Medical Service or one of these crisis and support services:

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Aboriginal Medical Services in each state and territory.
naccho.org.au

<p>WellMob wellmob.org.au</p> <p>Brother to Brother 24-hour Crisis Line for Aboriginal Men 1800 435 799</p> <p>Suicide Call Back Service (24/7) 1300 659 467 suicidecallbackservice.org.au</p>	<p>Kids Helpline (24/7) (For 5-25 yrs) 1800 55 1 800 kidshelp.com.au</p> <p>Lifeline (24/7) 13 11 14 lifeline.org.au</p> <p>Mensline (24/7) 1300 78 99 78 mensline.org.au</p>	<p>Headspace (for 12-25 yrs) 1800 650 890 headspace.org.au</p> <p>13YARN (24/7) 13 92 76 www.13yarn.org.au</p> <p>Beyond Blue (24/7) 1300 224 636 beyondblue.org.au</p>
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help our children DREAM BIG!

Donations are now being accepted through our website to help fund additional resources for the Berrimba Childcare Centre. Your support will help create the strong start our children deserve and dream of.



Help us continue the 'forever learning' journey for our community-led education.

www.njernda.com.au/youth-children-community/berrimba-childcare-donation

Winyanboga

"Group for Women"

Our Winyanboga Program is **coming back**, and we are changing our day of gathering!

We are running the next 10-week program every **Wednesday**. Starting again from **February 18th**. **10am until 2pm** at Family Services.

Transport is available, please contact Neva at Family Services: 54810 620

OUR WAYS - STRONG WAYS - OUR VOICES

On 10 February 2026, the Australian Government launched *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036*.

Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices is the first national standalone plan of its kind, developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure it reflects their voices, leadership and priorities.

The plan aims to create long-term, community-led change that strengthens safety, healing and wellbeing. Over the next 10 years, it will guide governments, communities and organisations to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families live free from violence. *Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices* weaves together 5 threads, each essential on its own but stronger when woven together:

1. Centring voice, self-determination and agency
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that are strengths-based, preventative & healing
3. Reforming institutions and systems that impact safety
4. Strengthening evidence, research and data, embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty
5. Breaking the cycle through strengthened housing and financial security.

Ending family, domestic and sexual violence requires collective action across governments and communities. Together, we can create a safer and more equal Australia.

Learn more and access resources: dss.gov.au/our-ways-strong-ways-our-voices

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices A national plan for change



How to spot and avoid scams

- Stop**
Scammers pressure you to act quickly. This is because they don't want you to take your time and think things through. They might make threats that something bad will happen if you don't act fast or offer you a limited opportunity to get a great deal – but none of it is real.
- Check**
Could the message or call be fake? Never click a link in a text message or email. Only contact businesses or the government using contact information that you find yourself from their official website or secure app. If you're not sure, say 'no', hang up or delete.
- Protect**
Act quickly if something feels wrong. Contact your bank if you notice unusual activity or if a scammer gets your money or information. Seek help and report the scam to Scamwatch. When you report scams, you help us stop the scam and warn others.



We are hiring

- Foster Care Recruitment and Assessment Worker
- Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response Practitioner
- Barooka Youth Healing Centre Manager
- Intensive Support Practitioner



CURRENT VACANCIES

Find all our current vacancies on our website or via the Seek website.

Njernda
Aboriginal Corporation

Medical Centre - 03 5481 0600

Youth & Wellbeing - 03 5481 0630

Corporate Services - 03 5481 0610

Family Services - 03 5481 0620

Berrimba Childcare - 03 5481 0640

Corporate Office:
51-55 Heygarth St, Echuca

www.njernda.com.au

