



Pictured: L-R - Uncle Rob Saunders (VAEAI/Njernda); Wade Austin (VAEAI/Njernda); Luke Egan (KESO); Nicole Cooper (Njernda); Joyce Ward (KESO); Carlie Jones (Echuca College Inclusion Support Leader); Jessica Sargeant (Echuca College Principal); Sean Irving (Echuca College Assistant Principal)

NJERNDABORIGINAL CORPORATION
FEBRUARY 2025

NJERNDABORIGINAL CORPORATION

NEWS

ALSO INSIDE

CEO APPOINTED - PAGE 2
BEAUTIFUL SHAWLS - PAGE 4
WORK WITH US - PAGE 12



Njernda
Aboriginal Corporation

GROUP GATHERS TO SUPPORT OUR KIDS

It was a privilege to have Njernda staff and local community leaders take part in the First Nations Stakeholders Meeting.

As part of these meetings we will be sharing knowledge on how to support our children, and advise on how to educate them, and connect as First Nations children.

“Our Stakeholder Meetings are an opportunity to share strategies of support for the First Nations students within our school. It ensures that the First Nations Student Leadership Team’s voice is heard by both community and the school,” Carlie Jones, Echuca College’s Inclusion Support Leader says.

• Continued on Page 5.

The Njernda Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of John Mitchell as our Chief Executive Officer.

He brings a wealth of experience in the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, is an active member of the Aboriginal community in Echuca and has extensive understanding of Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and the programs/services we deliver.

We look forward to working in collaboration with John in his capacity as CEO to lead the organisation into the future.

John commenced his new role as of Monday 24 February.



**WELCOME BACK,
JOHNNY!**



WADE STEPS UP TO TAKE ON BOARD LEADERSHIP ROLE

We are pleased to confirm Wade Austin has been elected as chairperson of the Njernda Board of Directors.

Wade is a proud Wiradjuri and Gunditjmara man who has lived and worked in the Echuca area for 25 years, dedicated to promoting Aboriginal education and community engagement in Victoria.

Wade's extensive experience includes 10 years at Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, where he held multiple roles that demonstrated his commitment to community support and youth development.

Wade is joined by fellow Directors Luke Egan, Simone Ronnan, Gordon Johnson and Clinton Atkinson to make up the current Njernda Board.



YOUTH TEAM BRINGS THE FUN FOR KIDS

It was a busy January, for our Youth Team and our kids, with the School Holiday Program plus our Young Men's Camp taking place.

Holiday program activities included a movie day; Aqua Island; Gravity Shack; Escape, Smash & Play in Shepparton; and Funfields in Whittlesea.

We also opened up the Echuca and Moama pools for the Koorie Community to access during January and early February.



Twelve boys attended the Youth Camp held at Barmah Lakes - an exciting experience focused on being out on Country. The boys took part in fishing, honing their patience and learning new skills.

Water activities such as boating and swimming added a fun and adventurous element while also building confidence. The camp emphasized environmental education, teaching the boys about nature and conservation. The boys bonded around the fire at night and engaged in meaningful conversations with all staff, developing new friendships and growing already existing relationships.

Overall, the camp was a really good experience! Special thanks to Auntie Belinda Day, who brought out big feed of curried sausages and pasta for the boys to indulge in.



Meanwhile, domestic basketball competition has returned we have five Warma teams playing in the local leagues throughout the week. On Mondays you can see Under 18s boys play at 6.50pm, on Tuesday nights our C grade men play usually play at 7.40pm. On Thursdays we have Under 12s boys at 4.20pm, Under 12s girls at 6pm and Under 14s girls at 6.50pm. Come along and support our local sport stars! Go Warma!

We are so thrilled to announce the Beautiful Shawl initiative will be returning to Echuca in March!

The BreastScreen Victoria bus will be at the Njernda Youth Hub on Annesley Street from March 11-14, providing free breast cancer screening to women aged 40 and above - there are more details on our flyer, on page 11 of this edition of Njernda News.

Now in its seventh year, the project - a partnership between BreastScreen Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and dozens of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) - provides customised shawls that are culturally appropriate, familiar and beautiful to wear during screenings.

Depicting culture and Country, the shawls are designed by talented women Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and are given as gifts for the clients to keep after the screening. The project is already having a significant, positive impact with the number of screenings among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women 39.5 per cent higher in 2023/24 than in the previous year - 406 screenings were completed through the initiative during this period.

Since the Beautiful Shawl Project started in 2018, 1,342 breast screens have been conducted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The project works with ACCOs and Aboriginal-led services to provide free breast screening on Country - offering a culturally safe and responsive alternative to traditional testing. It won the Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Award at the 2024 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards for its progress in increasing access to breast screens across Victoria.

The Victorian Budget 2024/25 has delivered more than \$70 million in funding for initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians, such as the Beautiful Shawl Project. Part of this funding is supporting the development and implementation of VACCHO's Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy 2023-2028, an expanded statewide Culture and Kinship program and a culturally safe framework to boost participation in cancer clinical trials.

The Labor Government is working to improve the cancer survival rate across Victoria through the recently launched Victorian Cancer Plan 2024-2028, which identifies ways to prevent cancer and boost access to care, treatment and support for all Victorians.

The new plan is made up of nine medium- and long-term goals, including increasing the one- and five-year survival rates, halving the proportion of people diagnosed with preventable cancers, boosting the proportion of women who rescreen for breast cancer and increasing clinical trial enrolments in regional and rural Victoria.

BEAUTIFUL SHAWLS RETURNING TO REGION



NYINI GYM REOPENS AFTER BRIEF HIATUS

Great News! Nyini Gym has reopened to members, as of Monday 10 February.

Thank you for your patience, while we ensured your facility was safe for you to enjoy this space!



STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETS AT ECHUCA COLLEGE

- From Page 1

“The meetings also foster connections with the wider community to promote partnerships and celebrate success. With the knowledge and experience of our community Elders including representatives from LAECG, VAEAI and Njernda it ensures that the College continues to support and promote Indigenous perspectives in a safe and genuine manner.”

We are thrilled to see this group carrying out such important work for our kids.

We're also really pleased to confirm Nicole Cooper has returned to the Koori Kids Engagement Officer position here at Njernda.

She is based in our Corporate Services building, ready to support our young people and families.



HELP TO QUIT SMOKING OR VAPING

If you want to quit smoking or vaping, there is some great help available online!

Vaping is on the rise in our communities, putting our friends, family and us at risk of nicotine addiction.

Find out about the facts our mob need to know on vaping and where to get support to quit.

Visit the campaign website:
health.gov.au/give-up-for-good

FIGHT GOES ON TO CLOSE THE GAP

National Close the Gap Day 2025 is on Thursday 20 March and this year's theme is 'Agency, Leadership, Reform'.

From its humble beginnings, the third Thursday of March each year has seen NCTGD grow into a significant national day in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

This National Close the Gap Day, we have an opportunity to send our governments a clear message that Australians value health equality as a fundamental right for all.

20 MARCH 2025



National CLOSE THE GAP Day

Agency,
Leadership,
Reform



MOSQUITO VIRUS RISK FOR OUR REGION



In late 2024 and early 2025, the Department of Health's routine mosquito monitoring program detected JE virus in two mosquito pools from the Moira Shire in far northern Victoria.

These findings confirm, for the first time this summer, that JE virus is circulating in the region. These events are timely reminders to protect yourself against mosquitoes this summer:

- Mosquitoes can bite through tight clothing. Cover up – wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing.
- Use mosquito repellents containing active ingredients like DEET or Picaridin. Apply evenly to all exposed skin and clothing.
- Limit outdoor activity if lots of mosquitoes are about.
- Remove stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed around your home or campsite.

YOUR HEALTH IS IN YOUR HANDS.

HAVE YOU HAD YOUR 715 HEALTH CHECK?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages can get their free 715 health check at:

[Njernda Health and Ageing - 84 Hare Street](#) or call 5481 0600

This health check helps identify whether someone is at risk of illnesses or chronic conditions as well as keeping your health records up to date and ensure you lead a healthier lifestyle.

[Make an appointment today to begin your health journey.](#)

BUSH KINDER LAUNCHES FOR 2025

The team at our Berrimba childcare centre is excited to have started Gurranyin Bush Kinder for 2025.

The children have all had a positive start to the year.

We all look forward to seeing the kinder children learn and grow this year under the guidance of our fantastic group of educators.



HAVE YOU SEEN OUR FOSTER CARE CAMPAIGN BILLBOARD?

Great stuff from our team, getting the message out there that we are looking for more people to help us deliver culturally safe foster care.

Becoming a carer is a great way to support our next generation, helping them to grow while connected to our community and Country.



JAMIE JOINS OUR FOSTER CARE TEAM



Our Foster Care Case Manager here at Njernda is a Queenslander who moved down south a little over a decade ago and has a background in hospitality services.

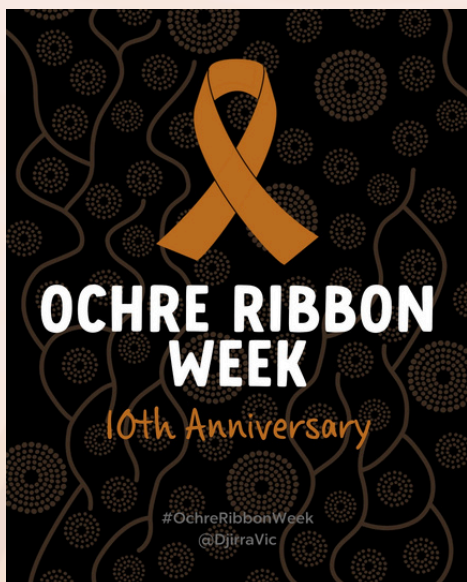
"Social work and community services have been on my radar for the past six or so years. I'm glad I finally took the leap because I absolutely love it!"

Jamie is hoping to support carers to keep our kids on Country, connected to Culture and family until they can be reunited with their family.

"There are so many young people needing a safe and supportive home while they can't be with their own family.

"I think it's so important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are being supported by local Aboriginal organisations, so they can provide the best, culturally appropriate services, and the knowledge community holds is invaluable. I feel especially grateful to have the professional guidance of incredibly insightful and strong women."

Welcome Jamie and congratulations on your appointment!




TACKLING FAMILY VIOLENCE CRISIS WITH OCHRE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Ochre Ribbon Week, an Aboriginal-led campaign to raise awareness about the devastating and ongoing crisis of violence towards Aboriginal women and children, was marked during February.

Chief Executive of Djirra, Ms. Antoinette Braybrook AM, says that each year organisations and community unite to call for action, championing self-determined solutions that will see Aboriginal women and their children thrive and live free from violence and despite this, nothing has changed. Learn more about the campaign at djirra.org.au/ochre-ribbon-2025

3RD MARCH - 8TH SEPTEMBER
2025

YANHA YAKOA - WALK THE CAMPASPE



JOIN US AND WALK TO THE
CAMPASPE WALKING TRACK
EVERY MONDAY
9:30AM - 10:30AM

OPEN TO ALL COMMUNITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL LILLY 0477 688 634

THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & WELLBEING UNIT

(Dunyuk Woka)
To fish on Country



**NJERND A MEN'S
FISHING
GROUP**

When & Where?

We will be fishing around the back
of our land at **BAROONA FARM**
every second Friday at **10am-2pm**,
all participants are welcome to make
their way to Baroona, or transport
will also be provided.
Be sure to contact the day before if
you need transport.

Our group will include a lunch
and cold drinks.

VISION:

We would like to see this group
grow and continue to be a safe
space for generations of our Men

Njernda's Wellbeing Unit have
been working on creating our
own Men's Fishing Group.

We will gather on a Friday every
fortnight to yarn, laugh and try
catch some fish.

The purpose of this group is to
connect together as strong
Aboriginal Men on our Country,
something that we've been
missing for some time.

Fishing equipment and other
necessary items will be
supplied by Njernda,
participants are welcome to
bring along their own gear.

Transport will be provided

Contact: Dylan Gordon
0418 731 523



Njernda

**NJERND A - TO
KNOW OUR
LIVING CULTURE**

**Baroona
Day
Program**

Starts on 10th of Feb

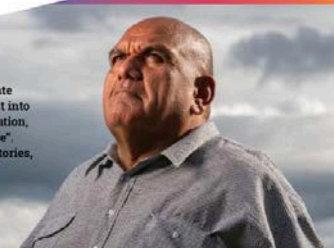
Baroona day
program is a
preventive
program aimed at
our youth who are
at risk of or are a
part of the justice
system. our aim to
is to provide life
skills and a space
for our youth to
grow and connect.

DamaarH@njernda.com.au
PH:0427 381 047

programs

- workshop/tool
- knowledge
- cooking
- class/budgeting
- Behavior change
- group session
- Fishing and
- connecting to
- culture.

**Anglicare
Victoria**



Perkins-Kemp-Berger, an Arrernte
man, says gambling was brought into
his community through colonisation,
but "it became part of our culture".
"Besides the language and the stories,
you learnt how to gamble."

Photograph: Stuart Walmsley/The
Guardian

Press Press-ure

A gambling harm lived experience performance by Aaron Perkins-Kemp-Berger with a
facilitated Q&A session. Please note that this performance has a strong language warning.
Please be advised the film contains a picture of a deceased person.

About Aaron: Aaron spent most of his life betting. His first reckoning with the idea that gambling might be bad for him came one day when he found himself turning the house upside down in search of loose change - not for pokies, but for essentials. "I found the money, but I had to look. And this happened in private, but the humiliation, the degradation and shame of trying to scrounge money - I looked in the couch, the cushions, on the floors, under the bed, in the laundry. It was humiliating. And that was when I put a limit on it."

Quitting had a physical effect on him - it took months before he was able to stop dry-heaving when the topic of pokies came up in conversation or was able to walk into a venue containing slot machines without panicking. Aaron says he has gone beyond that hurdle.


"I might have been ashamed before, but I'm not now," he says. "I'm ready to spread the word. If I've got to face consequences for that, well, it is fair for them to make addicts of us? Bring it on."

DATE: Tuesday 4th March


TIME: 11.00am to 12.30pm

**WHERE: Njernda Family Services
103-107 Hare Street Echuca Vic 3564**

**RSVP: Family Services reception
(03) 5461 0620 or email Ashley Wickham
ashleyw@njernda.com.au**



Njernda
Aboriginal Corporation



**Gambler's
Help**
1800 858 858

THREE SIDES OF THE COIN PROJECT
Using theatre to create change.

**BETTER
TOMORROWS**

Helping Victorians with their legal problems.



LEGAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE DURING VLA VISTS

We are pleased to confirm our regular visits from Victoria Legal Aid will be continuing this year, with opportunities to seek support March 19.

Two VLA lawyers will be available at Njernda Family Services from 10am to discuss issues such as child protection, family law and criminal justice.

These are great opportunities to get sound legal advice if you are in need of support.



Dunguludja
Mulana Winyarr

"Strong Spirited Women"

WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH ECHUCA WAR MEMORIAL AQUATIC CENTRE, WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER 4 SESSIONS OF EACH PROGRAM BELOW.

LET'S WORK ON HAVING HEALTHY BODIES SO WE CAN LIVE WITH HEALTHY MINDS.

Water Aerobics

Water Aerobics is a good cardiovascular workout, perfect way to improve your heart health. It's a gentle form of exercise to strengthen and tone muscles.

Women's Gym Group

Lets come get together and motivate each other while supported by a Female Personal Trainer. We can work on a program that is suitable and safe for you to do.

Group Fitness classes

Group fitness classes are a great way to get fit in a fun, exciting and energetic environment. It's a perfect way to boost your mood, the vibe helps you keep up with the momentum of the class. You will have so much fun you will forget you are working out.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

To put your name on the list, please contact
Tegan Wanganeen: 0458725422



BEAUTIFUL SHAWLS PROJECT

Breast Cancer Screening
March 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th

THE BEAUTIFUL SHAWLS PROJECT HELPS TO PROMOTE BREAST CANCER AWARENESS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SCREENING FOR INDIGENEOUS WOMEN 40+.

The best prevention is early detection
IF YOU ARE 40+ AND NEVER HAD A BREAST SCREEN OR YOU ARE DUE FOR ONE.

CALL MEDICAL RECEPTION ON 5481 0610
OR DROP INTO NJERENDA HEALTH AND AGEING
84 HARE STREET ECHUCA

Every Indigenous woman 40+ who books an appointment and attends their breast screening will receive a complementary gift bag.

We will have the BreastScreen Victoria bus located at the Youth Hub in Annesley Street

DUNGULUDJA MULANA (STRONG SPIRIT) - ALKINA EDWARDS



This artwork represents women empowerment, resilience, and strong spirits. Within the background I have placed symbols that represent our beautiful countries and women gatherings. Showing the physical and spiritual connection we have with the land and each other.

At the front of the design, I have visual figures of women. This is to depict women supporting, empowering, and leaning on each other through these experiences while creating cultural safe spaces for women to express themselves and share their stories.

WORK WITH US HERE AT NJERND!

We encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, but unless stated, our jobs are available to all qualified applicants.

If you're interested in any of our listed jobs, or want to know more about what it's like to work at Njernda, have a yarn with our HR Team. Get all the details of all our jobs and apply on our website HR Team.

Get all the details of all our jobs and apply on our website, njernda.com.au

JOIN THE TEAM HERE AT NJERND!

We are hiring some great roles!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE

- ✓ Full and part time roles
- ✓ Supportive culture
- ✓ Innovative organisation
- ✓ Serving community

Corporate centre
51-55 Heygarth Street, Echuca
Phone: (03) 5481 0610
njernda.com.au



CONTACT US

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
51 - 55 Heygarth Street Echuca
(Corporate Office)
Phone: (03) 5481 0610
www.njernda.com.au

SOCIAL MEDIA

