

**Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways  
Small Grants Program  
2024-25 EOFY Impact Report**



## Program Overview

Each year, the Highways and Byways Small Grants Program supports small and emerging community organisations working to address disadvantage and exclusion, with a particular focus on rural and remote Australia.

The Program focuses on key aspects of rural and remote disadvantage where modest funding can deliver significant impact. Designed with flexibility, it responds to the most current and pressing issues facing rural and remote communities.

In FY2024-25, the Program's theme '*Valuing Community Connections in an Ancient Land*' acknowledged Australia's deep First Nations cultural heritage, and recent challenges including natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this funding we supported projects that strengthened social bonds, reduced isolation, built new skills and promoted sustainable land management. We also celebrated the wisdom and culture of First Nations communities.

In the 2024-25 grants round there were 33 projects supported across Australia. Their achievements are outlined below.

# COMPLETED PROJECTS

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### **1. RDK All Rounder Program: “RDK All Rounder Land Care & Recycling Program”, Alice Springs, NT (Arerrnte Country) - \$4,000**

The RDK All Rounder program was run on Country, making a significant difference in the lives of 10 young people (five females and five males aged 16 to 20) who participated in the *Land Care and Recycling Program* where they developed work skills in a number of areas:

- Leadership and teamwork
- Machinery operation (e.g. backhoe) and Work Health and Safety protocols
- Fence construction, including laying out lines, digging post holes and setting posts

The project faced a number of challenges with extreme heat experienced over Summer in Alice Springs extending the timeline of the project as well as excavation of the dump site creating machinery issues due to rocky terrain and quartz boulders being present in the soil.

Valuable lessons were learnt through these experiences, and the program has led to several of the young participants gaining employment with a local Indigenous business building cattle yards in remote areas of Western and Central Australia.

Many of the participants were keen to share what this program has meant to them:

*“This project has given me great opportunity to be out on Country” – Byron*

*“When I came out to RDK Outstation and work, it’s fun getting on the shovel and removing the buffalo grass” – Jezariah*

*“This experience... labouring gives me work experience, I’m hoping to get a job in the same field” – Trenton*

*“I’ve had a lot of fun on the tools... especially using string line and measurements” – Dekaysha*

*“I’ve enjoyed working together, supporting the team and getting the job done” – Doryell*



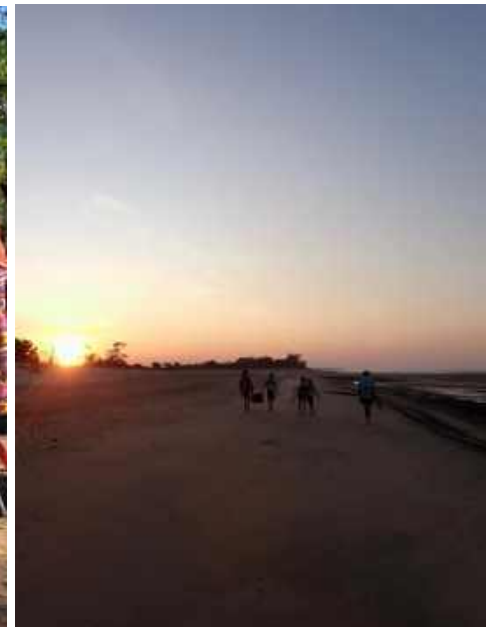
## **2. Tarntipi Homelands Aboriginal Corporation: “Tiwi Songs & Stories Alive & Shared”, Bathurst Island, NT (Tiwi Islands) - \$3,800**

Tiwi families gathered on Country at Tarntipi Bush Camp on Bathurst Island to hear dreamtime stories and learn traditional songs led by Tiwi Elders. Through the four camp days the campsite provided a central learning space where Tiwi people could connect with each other and with Country and share tucker and healthy activities while learning about Tiwi culture and history around the fire.

This project enabled Aboriginal families who would otherwise be isolated to connect and so made an important difference. There were over 52 Aboriginal Tiwi Islander participants at the camp. A strong focus was on Elders passing on cultural knowledge to children and young people through song and storytelling thereby honouring the enduring strength of First Nations culture.

The project also strengthened community partnerships with CatholicCare NT and the Red Cross helping to plan and deliver the program. Funding from Highways and Byways was used for catering, Elder participation fees, travel and resources.

*“Our country, our spiritual connection and culture are our communities’ greatest assets. As Elders with ancestral knowledge this is what we want to pass onto our children... we must keep connection to land and spirit strong.” - Tarntipi Chairperson / Elder, Teddy Portaminni.*



## QUEENSLAND

### **3. North Burnett Community Service: “Eidsvold Garden Community Connect”, Eidsvold, QLD (Wakka Wakka Country) - \$3,500**

North Burnett Community Service held a series of culturally informed gardening and land care activities designed to bring the local community together and promote Indigenous knowledge. Over a 12-month period they conducted four workshops for the Eidsvold Garden Club and local community, facilitated four volunteer days, and officially opened the bush tucker garden and yarning circle at the North Burnett Community Service Eidsvold Office.

The workshops deepened community understanding of bush tucker, native plants and traditional land care practices, leading to a greater respect for First Nations knowledge and cultural heritage in a practical, hands-on way. By bringing people together to learn and share their experiences, stronger community connections were formed and participants reported feeling more involved in local life. The yarning circle and garden now form a permanent, culturally significant space for the community to gather, learn and share stories, ensuring the project’s benefits continue well beyond the grant period.

*“Thank you for such a great project for our community. It’s benefitted our community by bringing people together and provided a sense of identity and ownership. The sense of community in sharing a common goal and the teamwork of all working together for that goal has helped to combat people’s social isolation and improve their mental health” - Lillian*





#### **4. Mungindi Hospital Auxiliary: “Community Bus”, Mungindi, QLD (Kamilaroi/Bigumbal Country) - \$1,200**

This grant supported a fortnightly community bus service for isolated residents, helping bridge a transport gap and improving access to essential amenities and services. The bus service enabled community members who otherwise would not have been able, to attend shopping trips and social activities out of town.

Shopping trips were held twice a month, with an additional monthly outing to the movies for seniors. Between three and seven people used the bus on each occasion.

Grant funds were used to cover fuel costs for the vehicle.

*“The support of this venture gave access to social events, shopping etc. for older and/or disabled people. Greatly appreciated. Thank you!”*

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### **5. The Returning Indigenous Corporation: “Bundjalung Bush Food Youth Program”, Alstonville, NSW (Bundjalung Country) - \$4,000**

Funding from Highways and Byways supported the delivery of the Doobai Bundjalung Bush Food Program – a pilot youth program for Indigenous high school girls who were disengaged or at-risk of disengaging from school. *Doobai* means younger sister or girl in the Bundjalung language.

The eight-week, 100% Indigenous-led program was run by *The Returning Indigenous Corporation* in collaboration with Namabunda Farm who provided the program venue.

10 Indigenous female high school students on weekly excursions to Namabunda Farm created their own garden plots from scratch, learning to plant, harvest and cook traditional bush foods alongside Western or European crops. The girls also participated in workshops with local community members which included beekeeping, mushroom ecology, cooking with bush foods, and making natural skincare products from native plants, while fostering a deeper connection to culture, Country and community.

Participating students reported feeling more empowered as young Indigenous girls, with increased knowledge about Country, traditional bush foods and culture. They also felt more connected to their Indigenous peers and local Indigenous community. Participating teachers and Aboriginal Liaisons observed greater engagement and participation by the girls back at school on non-program days, including improved attendance. Schools participating in the program were highly impressed by it and will continue partnering with *The Returning* in beyond this year.

Participating students reported:

- Increased self-confidence
- Stronger connection to their culture, community and Country
- Greater knowledge of and connection to traditional bush foods, including how to plant, grow, harvest and cook them
- Stronger peer connections, resulting in less social isolation at school
- Increased interest in attending school
- Greater awareness of and interest in further education and training opportunities

Participating teachers reported:

- Improved engagement from students in regular classes, with increased confidence in activities such as answering questions in front of class
- Increased school attendance outside of the program days
- Increased connection between the participating students

*“I love coming to this program, I get to learn about my culture, be in the sun and I have fun at all the sessions.” – Maddison, Year 9*

*“I like coming to the program because I get to hang out with the girls from other years including my sister and we get to learn things about bees and mushrooms that we didn’t know before.” – Tansy, Year 10*



**6. Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprise Precinct (BISEP): “The Valley Hub – On Country”, Nambucca Valley, NSW (Gumbaynggirr Country) - \$4,000**

This grant supported the Precinct to work in partnership with Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation and emerging Elders to curate monthly content for *The Valley Hub* website. Over the 12-month period, 10 feature articles and regular content were produced consistently across BISEP’s social media platforms and e-newsletters. The content and stories have gained attention from a wide audience throughout Gumbaynggirr Country as well as statewide and inter-state. A content bank has also been created for use in celebrating Southern Gumbaynggirr Country on the Mid North Coast of NSW.

Through showcasing these incredible stories from Gumbaynggirr Country, the Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprise Precinct has strengthened their partnership with Mujaay Ganma Foundation Aboriginal Corporation and hope to work on other collaborative projects together in the future.

BISEP is currently working with local businesses to continue funding the stories and content.

*“The Highways and Byways Project provided the opportunity for Mujaay Ganma to share stories relating to cultural ways of seeing Country, with the wider Nambucca Valley community. It also encouraged us to interview Elders and so record a few stories from their lives, to help inform us all today” – Aunty Ruth Ballnagarry*

*“It became noticeable that more people were benefiting from the articles as the interest in Aboriginal perspectives seemed to increase during the time these were being published” – Janette Blainey*

## **7. Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council: “Improved Knowledge-Sharing Amenities at Boundary Rock”, Daruka, NSW (Gamilaroi/Gomeroi Country) - \$4,000**

Tamworth LALC's Aboriginal Ranger team undertook work at Boundary Rock, a significant rock art site managed by the LALC, to increase the size of the yarning circle with timber log seating and resurface the dance circle at the inner entrance. The old log-seating that comprised the yarning circle was relocated along the walking track to the Rock site to provide additional seating for visitors. This would enable visitors to sit, hear about the importance of the site to the local Aboriginal community and watch demonstrations and performances associated with the site's cultural heritage.

A consultation session with local Elders was undertaken in the lead-up to this project, to confirm that proposed works were in-line with community aspirations for the site. Elders were able to endorse the planned works as part of the consultation day which was important for the Rangers in order to proceed with the work.

The Ranger team collaborated with Telfer Rural, a local agricultural business who supported the project with equipment hire including for site levelling, delivery of materials, and track upgrades due to erosion. Alongside the trackwork provided by Telfer Rural, the Rangers embedded coir logs to assist with preventing future erosion.

Grant funding from Highways and Byways was used to purchase materials such as sandstone blocks and cover equipment hire.

*“It's been a great opportunity to have those upgrades. The site will now hold more cultural events and it's more spacious with seating available for any groups that come up for educational purposes, and activities that might be running up there. It seems more open and spacious now and that demonstrates how we look after Country as well. In that way the upgrades give us a good feel of the areas. It makes us feel good to be looking after our places and our Country” – Bareki Knox, Walaaybaa Ranger.*

*“The site feels a lot tidier, and it feels nicer being there with comfortable seats now. The paths are easier to walk on. Feels like a safe place. When you're in the space it feels like your mind is a lot clearer now and more comfortable dancing ground. Visitors will be able to have a seat and a better view of us when we dance and do our presentations” – Zac Spreadborough, Walaaybaa Ranger.*



## **8. Home-Start Cowra, Canowindra, Weddin: “Yarning Place Bush Tucker Garden”, Caragabal, NSW (Wiradjuri Country) - \$4,000**

Over 3 weeks Home-Start engaged with all the children and staff at Caragabal Public School and the local community including businesses in Weddin Shire to build a Bush Tucker Garden in the school grounds. Local Aboriginal Elder, Aunty Julie Ferguson shared her knowledge, skills and stories of using bush tucker plants, and also Wiradjuri art, language, dance and culture with all the children, staff and some community members.

Caragabal is historically significant as part of the Wiradjuri nation, with a scar tree on the school grounds and a history of traditional pathways through the area. Through this project, the kids learned about Wiradjuri totems and symbols and painted the raised beds with their own designs. They learnt dances of Kangaroo, Emu, Goana and Echidna. The kids were very hands-on, actively participating in various aspects of the project - moving soil, choosing where to plant, and watering in the plants.

There have been many positive outcomes from this community effort, with the garden becoming a part of the school’s plan for NAIDOC Week in 2025 and teachers including the garden in daily lessons. In addition, children are teaching their parents and community members about the plants and their uses, and about Wiradjuri culture, language and dance. Finally, parents and local community members come to the school garden fence to chat about the garden. It has become a lovely focal point for this small community.





*“Since this project, talking about First Nations culture has become a familiar part of the kids’ learning every day now. Conversations are popping up all the time, about gardening, bush food, dance, Wiradjuri language and stories.” – Mr Pat Jones, Principal, Caragabal Public School.*

## **9. Garby Elders Aboriginal Corporation: “Sharing Seafood Stories on Garby Country”, Red Rock, NSW (Gumbaygnirr Country) - \$4,000**

Garby Elders worked in partnership with Professor Kirsten Benkendorf of the National Marine Science Centre, Southern Cross University (Coffs Harbour) to raise awareness of the damage done to local estuaries on Gumbaygnirr Country due to a lack of proper drainage and filtration systems. Local waterways have become contaminated and unsafe for use through the leakage of sewage and chemicals leading to faecal bacteria, coliforms and dissolved nutrients being present in culturally significant estuaries of the Garby people.

Through this workshop Garby Elders were able to highlight what was and is still happening within their community and to their way of life. The report produced by Professor Benkendorf’s findings has been published and is available as an important resource for the community to source at the local City Council.

This project has also led to the possibility of a future venture being undertaken within the local Pipeclay Lake area to clean up the vegetation and weeds around the lake and plant bush tucker plants instead, thereby restoring this culturally significant area so that the community will be able to access traditional food sources like seafood and native plants in a safe way.

This sentiment was echoed in the observation of a participant who shared that:

*“As Elders and Members of the Garby Elders this project provided us with the opportunity to showcase our story to raise the importance of how life was compared to now, with all the effects of the many new developments and local Blueberry farms in particular that are within our area and have devastating effects with chemicals, as found in the study on Country. [This] affects our waterways and also our way of life in being able to maintain sustainability and live healthy on Country”.*





## VICTORIA

### **10. Friends of David Winterbottom Park: “Bringing Back the Birds”, Wodonga, VIC (Waveroo Country) - \$4,000**

This project sought to connect Wodonga Urban Landcare Network staff, Wodonga Council, Landcare volunteers, Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation (DDAC), Birdlife Australia and the broader community through surveys of the bird life.

The grant funded two “Bringing Back the Birds” events/surveys. Birdlife Australia staff and volunteers assisted event participants to undertake surveys and monitor bird life present using citizen science apps to record the results. The data has helped create a baseline survey for *Friends of David Winterbottom Park* (FoDWP) and *Friends of Susan Campbell and Kent McKoy Reserves* (FoSCKM). In the long term this will assist volunteers to gauge the impact of their work. Elders for DDAC, FoDWP and FoSCKM volunteers connected with each other and with the broader community to share stories about their land management goals and techniques, achievements and future aspirations.

An evaluation of presenters and participants in this project has shown:

- Increased understanding and respect for Traditional Owner land management practices and use of and connection to the land.
- Increased understanding of the work of Landcare volunteers and the role of Wodonga Council in supporting that work.
- Challenged thinking about landscape restoration of riparian and hilltop sites to encourage bird diversity.
- Improved knowledge and use of citizen science app “ebird” as well as binocular use and birdwatching and identification tips and tricks.

*“We just need to keep walking, talking, learning, and sharing.” – Uncle Phil Murray*





**11. Waminda Community House: “Bush Tucker Garden & Seasonal Story”, Benalla, VIC (Yorta Yorta Country) - \$4,000**

Waminda Community House successfully collaborated with local Elders Aunty Cheryl Cooper and Aunty Carol Alliman, Kiley Walkerdon from VACCA and Heidi Perry from *Tomorrow Today*, together with local Aboriginal children to design and deliver a story mural and booklet that shares a “Seasonal Bush Tucker Story” about the plants in the Community House garden.

The local Aboriginal children are part of the Anganya program which is an Aboriginal educational support program run by *Tomorrow Today*. The Bush Tucker Garden project connected the children with Elders who passed on their knowledge about traditional plants, seasons and painting. It is hoped this mural will be a legacy for all the participants who will be able to bring their friends and relatives to Waminda to view the work and share the stories.

The project also supported the creation of a community mural which came alive with the painting and handprints of many of the people, young and old, who attended the launch of the Seasonal and Community murals, including a local Councillor, Manager of Community from Council, and the families of the Aboriginal children who helped paint the mural. There were 80 attendees.

In January, another Elder has offered to teach participants how to complete the community mural with gumnut circles and gum leaf art. This mural celebrates all of Waminda’s community as one.

As *Leeane* Waminda Community House’s Manager shared, *“we are nestled in a social housing area, [and] this brings a special togetherness and celebration of the community”*.





## **12. Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater: “Helmeted Honeyeater School Planting Program”, Yellingbo, VIC (Woiworung Country) - \$3,910.80**

This program educates students about the plight of the critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater, its populations, habitat and the conservation efforts at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area and Healesville Sanctuary.

Schools participated through the Ambassador Program, with students attending multiple events alongside the Friends Group and also visiting Healesville Sanctuary.

Funding from Highways and Byways was used to purchase Hamilton Tree Planters which students used to plant a variety of species in Burrungma Biik which is part of the Yellingbo Conservation Area. The planters also enabled *Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater* to host larger groups and run more extensive planting events, making events more effective. The new planters have already been used at several planting days with the Weeds and Seeds Team (adult environmental volunteers), school groups, and corporate and community groups. To date, the program has engaged over 200 people and planted 2,000 plants which were mainly low to mid-storey including Mellaleuca, Leptospermum and Acacia. The plants are spaced close together to create the preferred habitat for the Helmeted Honeyeater.

Due to the unseasonal dry weather in May, native plants purchased with the grant funding could not be planted as Parks Victoria cancelled all planting within Yellingbo Conservation Area until the weather improves. They have advised that at least 10 days of solid rain is needed if the Planters are to be used for digging the ground as well as for the plants to survive. All native plants have been sourced from the local Indigenous Plant Nursery.

*“Our school has been involved with the Helmeted Honeyeater Ambassador Program for a few years now. Over the years the program has engaged our students and provided an opportunity for the ambassadors to learn about the critically endangered species, how important the protection of habitat and food source is for the bird, as well as how we can all make a difference to our impact on the environment. Our students have loved visiting Yellingbo to learn about the bird and view it in the wild, plant seeds and seedlings to promote habitat, learn about the breeding program and go behind the scenes at Healesville Sanctuary to have a more in-depth understanding of the life cycle and needs of the Helmeted Honeyeater.”* – Sandra McCrum, Assistant Principal at Berwick Lodge Primary School



**13. Warrigunya Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation:  
“Warrigunya’s Veggie Garden”, Darriman, VIC (Gunaikurnai Country) -  
\$4,000**

Warrigunya Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation began constructing a vegetable garden at Warrigunya in Darriman, Victoria using the grant funds. They purchased four corrugated iron veggie garden beds, 8m of topsoil, seeds, a hose and reel, gardening tools, frames to protect the veggies from wildlife and four fruit trees.

The fruit trees – apple, nectarine, lemon and cherry – have been planted and the soil and seeds are ready to go for when the garden beds arrive. There has been an unforeseen delay in the delivery of the beds.

Warrigunya provides affordable, stable housing and on-site support for Indigenous men after their release from prison. The garden’s development will be informed by the knowledge and insight of Indigenous Elders and managed longer-term by the residents.

The vegetable garden offers fresh produce, purpose, and a space for connection, the building of skills, as well as the confidence of its participants.

#### **14. Corinella & District Community Centre: “Corinella Youth Group”, Corinella, VIC (Bunurong Country) - \$3,750**

The original project plan was to run a youth group for the Waterline communities on the Bass Coast. However, Corinella & District Community Centre (CDCC) soon realised that they did not have enough community buy-in to make the project viable, so they asked the community what they wanted and changed to running a series of workshops that celebrated local Indigenous flora and fauna. Permission was sought from Mary MacKillop Today to use the funds for this new project.

The grant funding enabled CDCC to run five stand-alone workshops that educated their community and celebrated the rich and diverse natural world on the waterline of the Bass Coast, Gippsland. Participants enjoyed several positive outcomes:

- They learned how to grow edible native plants that also attracted native bees and butterflies. All plants chosen were suitable for the local environment and are endemic to the waterline area. Amongst the natives planted were warrigal greens, native thyme, muntrie berries, coastal rosemary, hibbertia and native daisies.
- They learned how to cook with bush tucker ingredients.
- Participants also learned how to grow and nurture a SLOW (seasonal, local, organic whole) garden.
- They learned about koalas, their habitat, and the threats faced by predators, climate change and encroaching development.
- Participants were encouraged to plant native plants in their own gardens and took tube stock home to plant.

Additional benefits for the community saw new friendships being formed at the workshops and community connections made. Also, CDCC developed an on-going relationship with several local educators at Bass Valley Landcare as local experts were employed to deliver the programs. They hope to continue this relationship and plan further workshops as funding allows.

Participant numbers varied but were considered good overall:

Hieke’s Garden tour – 7 participants

Phillip Island nature parks Tour – 18 participants

Planting to attract Wildlife – 5 participants

Backyard Botanicals – 11 participants

Mauru Native Animal Park – 20 participants

Muffins made with Muntrie Berries at Backyard Botany Native Cooking Experience



Planting to attract wildlife to your garden. Educator Lisa Wangman from Bass Coast Landcare showing what to plant to attract butterflies and native bees

Sleepy koala at the Mauru Island and Animal Park

*“The Koala Sanctuary was a pleasant surprise. It was very well set out and easy to navigate. The rangers made sure there were at least two koalas to view in their own enclosures and Shane, our guide, was very informative as to their lifestyle and preferred habitat. The rangers and volunteers are very dedicated and work hard to support the koalas to keep them healthy and disease-free and to closely replicate their natural habitat. Feral koalas on both Phillip and French Islands suffer from mange, chlamydia and starvation due to over-population so the work done at the Sanctuary is vital to their existence.” - Julie*



**15. Whittlesea Community Connections: “Nugal Biik Rangers Garden”, Wollert, VIC (Wurundjeri/Woi Wurrung Country) - \$4,000**

The Nugal Biik Rangers Bush Food Garden Project has laid the foundation for a long-term culturally significant learning space. Whittlesea Community Connections has successfully commenced the establishment of wicking beds which has allowed them to begin cultivating native plants and embedding the bush food garden within the Nugal Biik Rangers program. This garden is suitable for children of all abilities.

While construction delays at the Wollert Community farm site postponed full implementation and the garden is not yet fully operational, the project has already made a difference by creating excitement and engagement among the rangers and the wider community. It has reinforced cultural learning, built anticipation for hands-on activities, and demonstrated the value of bush food knowledge in healing Country and community.

Once the garden is fully functional, Whittlesea Community Connections anticipate involving all 40 Junior Rangers and 60 Mini Rangers in future workshops. These young participants already take part in regular landcare and environmental stewardship activities, and the bush food garden will become a central feature of their cultural and ecological education.

The project is also strengthening connections between the local schools, the Aboriginal community and Wollert Community Farm. By placing the bush food garden at the heart of the farm, a space has been created that encourages interaction, curiosity, and collaboration. As the garden grows, further partnerships are envisioned with educators, community members and Traditional Owners to share knowledge and strengthen cultural identity.

*“We are incredibly grateful for this funding, which has given us the opportunity to begin creating a permanent bush food garden that will serve as a cultural and educational asset for years to come. Thank you for your generous support and patience as we continue to bring this vision to life.” – Whittlesea Community Connections*

## **16. Neighbourhood Collective: “Community Gardening Together”, Bendigo, VIC (Djadawurung Country) - \$2,930**

This project was inspired by concerns from community members especially individuals with disabilities and their carers about social isolation, mental health challenges and limited access to meaningful activities. In response, Neighbourhood Collective ran a series of gardening workshops and working bees at their community centre, the Old Church on the Hill.

A diverse group of participants including people with disabilities, carers and young people engaged in several workshops with positive outcomes. 10 workshops and/or working bees were organised and each activity had between 12 to 35 participants. Outcomes were positive and many, with participants learning more gardening and food production skills, increased interest in planting local natives to encourage biodiversity, better social connections for carers and people with a disability, together with an increase in local food production at the Old Church on the Hill.

As part of this project, Neighbourhood Collective turned grass verges into native garden plantings. 10 metres of native vegetation was created while 90 native and 4 non-native deciduous trees were also planted.

The project also fostered partnerships with Bendigo Special Development School and Bendigo South East College whose students participated in these activities.

*“Gardening and being outdoors is good for my heart. I have so many good memories of gardening back home when I was a girl, but I haven’t done it since coming to Australia. Now I garden at the Old Church every week and maybe taking one or two things home to cook. I also like getting to know other mothers here. They’ve gone from being strangers, to friends, to family. I call them my sisters and my aunties.” – Participant from a multicultural background who is a carer to a son with a disability.*





### **17. Atisha Centre: “Community Kitchen Garden”, Bendigo, VIC (Djadawurung Country) - \$3,820**

The Atisha Centre, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation centre on the outskirts of Bendigo, developed a community kitchen garden by revitalising neglected land adjacent to its current kitchen and dining facilities.

The garden is designed to be a vibrant community hub, where the community can come together to enhance their knowledge of sustainable gardening techniques, including composting, wicking beds, and water efficiency. The Centre also hosts cooking workshops using produce harvested directly from the garden such as fresh herbs, salad greens, strawberries, and edible flowers. Tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers and more have been planted and are coming along nicely.

Sustainability is a core principle informing much of what is done at the Centre. Using a combination of new posts and wire with recycled bed springs and timbers, Centre staff have been able to construct a 70-metre fence around the garden with three separate gated entries to protect the produce from native wildlife. With money saved, they have recovered an old tunnel house with greenhouse plastic for growing seedlings and bought two more corrugated wicking beds.

The greenhouse is an exciting addition to the space, as it not only affords an opportunity for growing from seed, but also allows for cuttings of natives and non-Indigenous shrubs to replenish and extend the larger garden grounds of Atisha at low cost.





*“It is a pleasure to witness the positive effect our garden is having on both our resident community and visitors to the Centre. The garden invites activity and participation. It’s lovely when passers-by feel compelled to join in. I am excited by possibilities flowing from our Kitchen Garden Project and am hopeful to build connection with other community gardeners in the area” - Volunteer*

## 18. Maryborough Community House: “Community Cultural Yarning Circle”, Maryborough, VIC (Djadjawurung Country) - \$4,000

Maryborough House created a community yarning circle in the town’s park featuring a central gathering space, surrounded by a network of pathways, vegetation, and smaller meeting points. This design encourages people from all walks of life to come together in an accessible and welcoming environment. The community yarning circle provides a dedicated open-air venue for community events, strengthening social connectedness and cultural exchange. For example, it hosted the Maryborough Community House NAIDOC Community Family Day, showcasing its value as a gathering hub. Following this, inhouse programs such as tai chi classes now also use the space as a tranquil meeting place.

Several meaningful partnerships were formed between MCH and local Council, community organisations and local businesses. These partnerships were essential in guiding the project from its conception stage to reality, ensuring the space is culturally respectful, community owned, ecologically beneficial and widely supported.

*“Our yarning circle and revegetation project was able to come to life. Without your support, this meaningful community space would simply not exist. Your grant empowered us to build a culturally rich and welcoming 6m x 6m yarning circle, complete with native plants, pathways, and gathering spots. The result is a place of safety, respect, and beauty – one that invites the whole community to share stories, celebrate culture, and connect with the environment.”*



## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### 19. Hills Environment Centre: “Kurna Kardla”, Lenswood, SA (Kurna Country), \$4,000

This project focused on strengthening cultural knowledge and community connections through hands-on experiences in Indigenous practices. A guided cultural burning tour educated participants on traditional fire practices, ecological benefits, and the importance of cultural fire in land management. It deepened understanding of Indigenous stewardship and incorporating traditional practices into caring for Country.

The weaving, native foods and cultural arts workshops all provided hands-on opportunities for community members to engage with Indigenous culture through traditional practices, storytelling, symbolism and connection to the land while handing down skills in a traditional manner.

The project made a meaningful difference by reconnecting people with traditional knowledge, skills, and cultural practices. It empowered participants to take pride in intergenerational learning, and deepened respect for Country. There were several First Nations attendees who were seeking opportunities to reconnect with traditional practices after being disconnected from them.

Several partnership opportunities arose from this event with the Hills Environment Centre developing a relationship with the Strathalbyn Aboriginal Resource Reference Group, while Landcare groups attending the cultural burn walking tour were able to engage in discussions with relevant Aboriginal Organisations about the possibility of undertaking a cultural burn on their land management sites.



*“The facilitators were fun, knowledgeable and happy to help and share information. The two activities [weaving and native foods] worked well together and preparing the dishes ourselves is a great way to better understand native foods. It would be great to see more of this type of workshop spread around the regions. It’s a necessary education to help people be more aware of the native plants and the action we can each take to care for them.” – Simone, Traditional Weaving and Native Foods Workshop participant*

**20. Gawler Environment Centre: “Australian Native Plants & Foods: A Community Knowledge Building Project”, Gawler SA (Kurna Country) - \$4,000**

This grant funded two workshops with Auntie Leanne Williams of *Cultural Plant Uses* – one about bushfoods and the other about weaving with spiny flat sedge (*Cyperus gymocaulos*).

Auntie Leanne is a Buandig/Booandik First Nations woman who works as a horticultural assistant at TAFESA Urrbrae campus. This work together with her cultural background have given Auntie Leanne a wealth of knowledge about Australian native plants which she is eager to share.

During the bushfoods workshop, Auntie Leanne provided information about Australian native food plants, their uses, and how to propagate and grow them. She led a tour through the bush food garden, explaining about each different plant. Samples of a variety of different foods were passed around for attendees to try. Auntie Leanne together with her partner prepared an amazing morning tea, including wattle seed and lemon myrtle scones with quandong jam, quandong cake, a variety of dips flavoured with wattle seed, lemon myrtle, and quandong. Wattle seed coffee, lemon myrtle and emu bush teas were provided to encourage attendees to taste and learn about bushfood in an interactive and tangible way. 12 people attended the workshop, learning about the benefits of native plants not only as bushfood, but also for bio-diversity, and as attractive, useful garden plants.

There were 20 attendees at the weaving workshop who learnt the basics of weaving with spiny flat sedge and heard about the cultural history of the plants and weaving practices, together with how to grow and care for them. Auntie Leanne picked and prepared spiny flat sedge for participants to use which is a lengthy process. This however enabled attendees to have an authentic weaving experience and appreciation for the amount of preparation that goes into weaving even before you begin.

The project made a difference by engaging community members from Gawler and surrounds about the importance of Australian native plants for culture and biodiversity, and the variety of uses they can be put to in our everyday lives.

*“This was a well-run and informative workshop which allowed plenty of time for the activity (a factor which added to the sense of communal creativity). Auntie Leanne was a great communicator and Sanjay an excellent co-host. I especially appreciated how organised they were, bringing along pre-made starters for us to use so we could focus on achieving quality weaving style.” – Weaving workshop participant*



## **21. Kapunda Gallery: “Lakun Mara Weaving Workshops”, Kapunda, SA (Ngadjuri Country) - \$2,500**

Two workshops by Sonya Rankine from *Lakun Mara* were funded through the Highways and Byways grant. *Lakun Mara* was chosen to represent the connection to Sonya’s Ngarrindjeri heritage and culture of the lower Murray, Coorong and Lakes area of South Australia. On advice by Sonya one workshop was held at Kapunda High School and the other at the Kapunda Gallery. The decision to approach Kapunda High School and offer the workshop proved to be the correct one as the young women who participated not only heard for the first time some honest truths about the history of the land, but it also gave them the opportunity to experience weaving in a hands-on way. 12 students and four staff participated in the Kapunda HS workshop while at Kapunda Gallery there were 10 attendees.

Participants at the two weaving workshops learnt about the local Indigenous history - who lived on the lands, why and where they were moved to and the long-term impact of sovereignty never ceded. Sonya talked about weaving, materials and where they grow, her journey as an Indigenous artist, and then proceeded to assist participants in starting their own piece that could become a small basket or mat.

There was strong engagement from all who attended the two workshops and this project has done much to rebuild the relationship the Gallery had with the High School. It is hoped that this will be the start of further conversations within the community.

*“This was an amazing experience for our students. It was excellent to see our learners engaged in a hands-on art learning experience that focused on the traditional craft practices of South Australian First Nations Peoples. The students were highly engaged with the learning activity and went away with a useful item that is a positive reminder of the experience. Kapunda High is very grateful to the Kapunda Gallery for organising this experience for us. We will be looking to host similar experiences in the future. Thank you so much.” – Scott Durand, Kapunda High Aboriginal Education Teacher*



## **22. Dinahline Community Inc.: “Environmental & Ecological Rehabilitation & Training Project”, Ceduna, SA (Kokatha, Mirning and Wirangu Country) - \$4,000**

Dinahline Community Inc commenced the environmental and ecological rehabilitation of its 1,700-acre mixed-use property through a small-scale, localised regeneration activity.

The project focuses on a part of the property where community members can actively participate in the establishment of the natural ecosystems that existed before the area was impacted by farming. Learnings and observations will inform the larger program of future regeneration. It is anticipated that this regeneration area will become a place where local community members can connect with Country and find peace and healing.

In line with the learning and observation objectives members of the community attended a quandong festival which takes a deep dive into bush food and ecology to help generate ideas around native vegetation. The festival provided valuable insights through a Cultural burning presentation, wattle seed roasting, propagation of quandongs, a guided quorn flora reserve walk, and compost and worm farming to enrich the soil.

Grant funding was used to purchase fencing to ensure the area where the regeneration activity was taking place, specifically the re-introduction of native plants, would be protected. This enabled a natural safe space to be created. Grant funding was to be used for the purchase of tools and equipment, but Dinahline was able to access this as in-kind support, and approval to use these funds to purchase fencing instead was sought and approved by Highways and Byways.

This project has fostered a strong sense of belonging within the community, creating spaces where individuals feel connected and valued such as the playground and cultural safe space for young people and families. It has also deepened local knowledge around native plants. This has not only encouraged sustainable practices and stewardship of the land but also strengthened cultural ties.



**23. Betts Corner Inc: “Community Maintenance Program”, Ceduna, SA (Wirangu Country) - \$4,000**

This grant provided new tools, equipment and storage to enhance liveability at Betts Corner, an Indigenous community near Ceduna. Grant funding helped increase self-sufficiency within the community by having access to tools to address the concerns of property maintenance and security. As there are only two homes on the property and one rent payer, this grant has lowered costs associated with external services and contractors, reducing financial stress on the community, and ensuring community members have safe and secure housing.

#### **24. Charity Bounce: “Bounce Club”, Indulkana, SA (Anangu, Pitjantjatjara Country) - \$4,000**

Charity Bounce delivered a weekly basketball resiliency program for youth in Indulkana, a remote Aboriginal community of about 400 people in north-west South Australia.

302 young people participated in these sessions (45% female and 55% male), and four youth coaches were trained and employed from within the community. The program was fostered through a partnership between Charity Bounce, the local school and community leaders.

The program has been well received and is set to expand to more communities across the APY Lands (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara).

*One youth coach shared this highlight: “Seeing the excitement from young students when programs were run, they would go straight from the classroom to line up at the basketball court as the end of school bell sounded.”*



## **25. Flaxley Woven: “Flaxley Woven – Cultural Weaving”, Flaxley, SA (Peramangk Country) - \$4,000**

Around 30 women engaged in the Flaxley Woven cultural weaving event with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, some travelling over 50 kilometres to take part, eager to learn and connect. Participants engaged deeply with the weaving process, creating beautiful small Arrernte pieces and taking great pride in their work. The event fostered a safe and supportive environment which encouraged the learning of new skills, connections, and a deeper appreciation of Aboriginal culture.

While originally Flaxley Woven had obtained permission to share the cultural practices of the nearby Ngarrindjeri, the traditional custodians of the lower Murray River, Fleurieu Peninsula, and Coorong regions, they were unable to engage a Ngarrindjeri Elder to do so. However, they connected with Rebecca Kimlin an Arrernte weaver living locally who shared her deep cultural knowledge, personal journey and weaving skills, creating a meaningful experience for participants. This experience was deepened further by facilitator Ros Cameron sharing her experiences as a member of the Stolen Generation and her connection to the town where the event was held.

Participants enjoyed many positive outcomes through this event namely:

- The opportunity to try something new with the bush tucker catering, sparking curiosity and conversation.
- The opportunity to host a NAIDOC sensory playgroup at the venue, providing a welcoming space for local mothers to continue engaging with culture and community.
- An opportunity to have permanent signage in the community garden in Flaxley about local Aboriginal history which one of the participants completed for the group.

Part of the learning for *Flaxley Woven* as an organisation was that the event booked out very quickly and there was a waitlist of women eager to attend, which highlighted the strong need for a larger space or additional sessions in the future.

As one participant shared:

*"I really enjoyed the Flaxley Aboriginal Weaving Workshop ...a friendly environment with plenty of space in the hall. Well organised with a variety of raffia colours and needle provided for each person who attended [and] an offering of marvellous tasty snacks and drinks. The instructor was very helpful with easy-to-follow instructions. Offered insight into Aboriginal Craft and was a lovely meditative and productive experience." Anita*



## TASMANIA

### **26. Okines Community House: “T. Politus – Plight of the Red Hand Fish”, Dodges Ferry, TAS (Paredarerme Country) - \$3,800**

On 21 June 2024, Okines Community House hosted its annual Winter Solstice Lantern Parade with the theme of *T Politus – Red Hand Fish*, and a *Welcome to Country* opening ceremony by local Aboriginal community storytellers and dancers.

In creative partnership with Dodges Ferry Primary School and local artists, as well as a marine biologist from the red hand fish conservation team, Okines Community House delivered a number of creative workshops and provided information to the community on conservation practices and the importance of protecting the rarest fish in the world who are found in only two small reefs globally, both in Tasmania.

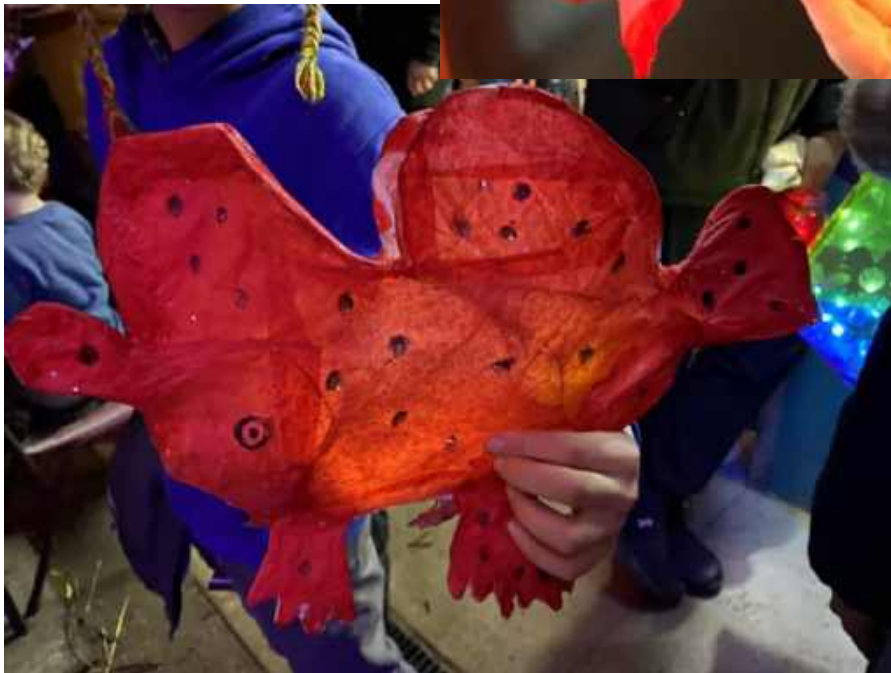
For 10 weeks leading up to the event, children in grade 4 at the local school worked on creating a large scale mascot lantern of the Red Hand Fish, along with a number of smaller lanterns. The local homeschool group also ran a series of workshops to create Red Hand Fish lanterns. In total, Okines Community House ran two full days of lantern making workshops that provided hundreds of children from the school the opportunity to learn about the plight of the Red Hand fish and make a lantern of their own.

The event attracted over 600 people who all participated in the parade and learned valuable information on how they as a community can be aware of and care for their waterways. They heard directly from the Aboriginal community on the importance of custodianship, connection to Country, land and sea, and ongoing cultural practices and recognition.

Since this event, the broader community have gathered on the local beach in honour of the Red Hand Fish in crowds of over 2,000 people.

Funding from Highways and Byways was used to cover the cost of the Welcome to Country/Opening ceremony, artist fees for lantern making workshops, and entertainer and storytelling fees.

*“Having recently moved to the area I was pleased to attend my first Okines lantern parade. I really enjoyed the ‘Welcome to Country’ and the community spirit was amazing. So many families coming together in support of the theme ‘Red Hand Fish’. The information was very informative as I did not know anything about the Red Hand Fish until the lantern parade.” – Michelle*



**27. West Winds Community Centre Inc.: “Cultural Roots: Uniting Communities Through a Bush Foods Arts Trail”, Woodbridge, TAS (Nueronne Country) - \$4,000**

Funding for this project was to support West Winds Community Centre to develop a bush foods cultural trail linking Woodbridge School with Silverwater Park in Woodbridge, Tasmania. The project features a variety of activities including the construction of pathways, the creation of native botanical gardens, mosaic and art workshops, storytelling sessions, bark hut construction, and the development of displays showcasing cultural relics.

While physical installation of the trail has been delayed due to Kinborough Council’s broader capital works at Silverwater Park, significant groundwork has been achieved including community engagement, cultural design, and inter-agency planning.

The co-design process has been a catalyst for cultural exchange, community collaboration, and reconciliation. The project has been shaped through strong partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and continues to grow through shared ownership and engagement from across the Southern Channel region. With permission and guidance from Elder Uncle Rodney Dillon, and led by Merlukerdee artists Bron Englert and James Shaw, the Bush Foods Arts Trail interprets and celebrates the Parrabah (Whale) creation story of the Channel.

*“Being part of this project has been deeply meaningful. It’s brought our community together, created space for cultural sharing, and given us all a stronger connection to Country. I can’t wait to see it come to life in the park.” – Bron Englert, Cultural Educator, Artist, SETAC (South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation)*



## NATIONAL

### **28. Farmers for Climate Action: “Creating Accessible Learning Opportunities for Farmers”, National - \$4,000**

As a result of funding from Highways and Byways, *Farmers for Climate Action* (FCA) were able to support the redesign of the digital Climate Smart Agriculture Toolkit - from the old digital resource hub that was hard to navigate and had incredibly outdated information, to an information hub that farmers can use to access research and resources on farming in a future climate. It collates contemporary research applicable to all industry sectors and provides an easy directory to other organisations, research, and articles. Half a dozen farmers participated in the co-design of the website which ensured the design was peer-led and useable for farmers of all backgrounds.

The re-designed high functioning website allows farmers to search by commodity or topic, and the interface works from farmers’ phones in the paddock through to their desktop computer. The toolkit has had 2,750 users since its launch, with farmers able to access a host of information about emerging practices (including hosting energy infrastructure) and confusing practices (for example carbon markets) - <https://farmersforclimateaction.org.au/climate-smart-farming-toolkit/>

To further enhance this website’s functionality, FCA sought approval from Highways and Byways to use grant funding to include an introductory page for the toolkit that provided farmers an insight into the agricultural practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This aspect of the project had not been included in the original funding proposal and was made possible by negotiating a lower rate with the Toolkit website developer.

Funding from Highways and Byways was used to pay for the cost of the website contractor and consultation.

*“I think the toolkit is important for farmers to find information. My experience is farmers don’t know where to start to gather relevant information and this toolkit is a great resource and I am sure will only be built on as time progresses.” – Jamie*

*“I’m so pleased to see it keep being updated and shared and equally the commitment to keeping it live with updates and feedback. I look forward to exploring it... I feel confident it will be a great resource. – Rebecca*

# Climate Smart Farming Toolkit

Farmers are stewards of the land and manage it carefully. As an industry, agriculture is facing increasing challenges due to extreme weather like, flooding, bushfire, drought and extreme heat.

In many cases, farmers and peak bodies are already well progressed on the road to climate resilience and emissions reduction. To keep farming forever, farmers need access to tools and resources which will help make sure their business and our industry can thrive in the face of continued climate challenges.



Use our popular filters to find the resource you need from our handpicked tools.

[Take me there now](#)



Unsure about what you're looking for? Use our friendly search feature to find the information you need.

[Take me there now](#)

## Farm baselining: Emissions and Natural Capital

Step one in taking on farm climate action is to work out your emissions baseline, or carbon footprint.

[Learn more about it](#)

[Search for tools](#)

### Baseline your farm

- Identify your farm's emissions by comparing it to industry benchmarks.
- Identify areas where you can reduce emissions, such as energy efficiency, water efficiency, and soil health.
- Use the Farm Emissions and Natural Capital Calculator to help you understand your farm's emissions and natural capital.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Management Practices

Ways of knowing, being and doing for the land.

[Learn more about it](#)

[Search for tools](#)

Indigenous farming can incorporate more different techniques that reduce the impact of farming on the landscape. It can also provide opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change and its impact on agricultural production.

Given the deep relationship that First Nations people have with Country, there is a great opportunity to learn from indigenous farming techniques that have been developed on these lands over the last 60,000 years. First Nations knowledge and practices offer valuable guidance for farmers to understand how to better connect with landscapes, farm sustainably and adapt to the impacts of climate change.



### Which calculator should I use to baseline my farm?

This calculator helps you choose the most appropriate calculator for your farm. The calculator will help you choose the most appropriate calculator for your farm.

Calculator	Description
The Farm Emissions and Natural Capital Calculator	Calculates the farm's emissions and natural capital based on the farm's production and inputs. It also provides a breakdown of the farm's emissions and natural capital by activity.
The Farm Emissions and Natural Capital Calculator (with a focus on emissions)	This calculator focuses on the farm's emissions and provides a breakdown of the farm's emissions by activity. It also provides a breakdown of the farm's emissions by activity.
The Farm Emissions and Natural Capital Calculator (with a focus on natural capital)	This calculator focuses on the farm's natural capital and provides a breakdown of the farm's natural capital by activity. It also provides a breakdown of the farm's natural capital by activity.
Baseline your emissions	Provides a breakdown of the farm's emissions and natural capital. It also provides a breakdown of the farm's emissions and natural capital by activity.

### Historical Snapshot

For over 60,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were able to sustain significant populations through the development of sustainable farming practices and food systems. This approach built resilience through farming systems, ensuring indigenous people could always access food across their respective habitats. Many of these farming practices were sustainable, informed by the unique qualities of the land, founded on respectful relationships between people and Country. Practices included planting and harvesting crops, clearing paddocks and setting aquatic traps.

These practices were disrupted and disrupted through colonisation, often for agricultural production. But through the enduring resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ecological and agricultural knowledge continues to be passed down through generations.

Indigenous people also used this knowledge to work with non-indigenous pastoralists in the development of modern farming systems over the last 200+ years, with references of Indigenous people guiding farmers to water, looking cattle to the best pastures in a district and managing wild land or knowledge to manage livestock effectively.

## GRANTEES STILL TO SUBMIT A FINAL REPORT

WENLOCK CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP: “NAIDOC – Keep the Fire Burning”, Old Mapoon, QLD (Awnghim / Yupangathi Country) \$4,000

*A week-long event during NAIDOC week bringing together eight Indigenous tribes along the Wenlock Catchment River to celebrate Indigenous culture.*

NIPALUNA NURSING INC: “Healing Country – Rehabilitating Wind Song”, Little Swanport, TAS (Luntaytamiriliyuyna Country) \$4,000

*Facilitate a field day for ecological restoration at Wind Song, an Indigenous-owned property in Little Swanport together with cultural learning and healing.*

DURRAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION: “Murramarang History Project”, South Durras, NSW (Murramarang Country) \$1,000

*Establish a permanent public display showcasing the Indigenous history of South Durras and Murramarang National Park region, near Bateman’s Bay.*

COBRAM-BAROOGA BUSINESS & TOURISM: “Scar Tree Re-Location Program”, Barooga, NSW (Bangarang Country) \$4,000

*Relocate two fallen scar trees to an area of the soon-to-be-opened Bullanginya Daborra Dunggalla Walk on the Murray River at Barooga.*

## EXTENSION GRANTED

FRIENDS OF YOUNGHUSBAND RIVER CARE: “Younghusband River Front Reserve Rejuvenation Project”, Younghusband, SA (Ngarrindjeri Country) \$2,598

*Repair and rejuvenation works at Younghusband River Front Reserve to address the impact of flooding that caused significant damage to infrastructure, native vegetation, and wildlife habitats in 2023.*

*Request is to complete the planting when the weather is more favourable and volunteers are available to complete the work required.*