



Storm brewing over Warmun. Credit: Warmun Community Inc

Fuel crisis bites as Halls Creek families feel the strain

As impacts of the fuel crisis are increasingly felt around the country, residents in the Shire of Halls Creek say stress and strain as a result of the shortages have already settled on their families and way of life.

“Everything depends on fuel out here — power, lights, getting into town,” one local told Wat Na! “When it goes up, everything else goes up too.”

Another local resident said families are cutting back on travel altogether, including trips to Kununurra where bulk groceries are more affordable.

“People are staying home more because it’s just too expensive to drive anywhere.”

Some remote communities in the Shire who are reliant on diesel generators have said the high cost of fuel means they are having

to choose between travelling for medical appointments or buying food for their families. Others are turning their lights and appliances off as much as they can.

The human cost of the crisis is becoming increasingly clear as the months roll on, said Shire of Halls Creek CEO Sue Leonard.

“For remote communities like ours, fuel isn’t optional, or a luxury, it underpins everything from power to transport to essential services.” she said.

“When prices rise this quickly, the impact is immediate and widespread, and it’s our most vulnerable residents who feel it first. Please be assured we are aware of residents’ pain and are in talks with the State government to offer real assistance”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



COMMUNITY YARNS

PAGE 4



Sue-Anne Hunter steps into landmark role for First Nations children

NATIONAL NEWS

PAGE 20



Featured Artist: Imelda Gugaman

ART AND CULTURE

PAGE 23



Top ten Indigenous footy stars - with free poster!

SPORT

PAGE 30

Halls Creek Emergency Contacts

- Life-Threatening Emergency**
000 – Police, Fire, Ambulance
- State Emergency Service (SES)**
132 500 – Floods, storm damage, fallen trees, leaks
- Halls Creek Police Station**
9168 9777 (Use 000 for emergencies)
- Halls Creek Hospital**
9168 9222
- Fire and Rescue / DFES Kimberley**
000 – Emergencies
9168 6000 – General enquiries
- Main Roads WA**
138 138 – Road conditions and closures
- Shire of Halls Creek – After-Hours**
9168 6007
- Horizon Power**
13 23 51 – Power outages
- Water Corporation**
13 13 75 – Water and sewer issues

Editor's Note

For a few years now we've been unfortunate to suffer through a series of steamy and disappointing wet seasons. In recent years rain has started later in the season and fallen more lightly than we'd like. But that pattern was broken in 2026 with our entire annual average of 561mm falling in just three months. It hasn't been easy—the logistics of floods and freight have tested our resilience—but like the new grass on the Oval, we are coming out of this season stronger and greener than ever.

This edition features some stellar shots of Country before the dry starts to creep in again. While we'll miss the green streets, bush and rivers, the dry also means the start of social season. Holiday programmes kick off for schoolkids, festivals and concerts start drawing tourists to the North and best of all - footy is back!. The dry is a time of optimism, activity and fun, so we encourage you to enjoy all our lovely town and communities have to offer and embrace the chance for change and connection. Speaking of connection, shout out to the residents of Yura Yungi Menkawum Ngurra Elders Residence (formerly Frail Age), we hear you're big fans of the paper. We'd love to have more submissions from our Elders, so please get in touch to share your news - we're listening.

Community Grants and Support

The Shire of Halls Creek provides \$45,000 each year to support local events and community-led activities. See what's available below.

Facility Hire Waivers

Free or discounted hire of Shire facilities for community events. Pre-approved support includes NAIDOC Week and the Halls Creek Rodeo. Other events, including cultural activities and funerals, can apply.

Sponsorships

Funding for larger events that benefit the community. Pre-approved sponsorships include the Business Excellence Awards and East Kimberley Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

Small Community Grants (\$500–\$1,000)

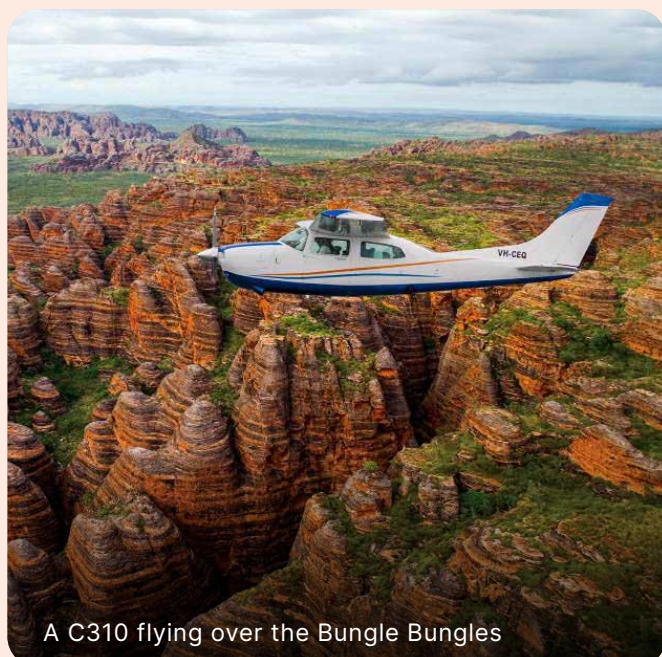
Cash grants for local projects such as community celebrations, youth programs and small improvement projects. Grants also support national and commemorative events, including ANZAC Day, Armistice Day, Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day. Funding is available on a rolling basis until funds are used.



Wat Na! is created and published by the Shire of Halls Creek with help from local contributors. Thank you to everyone who shared their stories, ideas and photographs.



Captured in the Shire of Halls Creek



A C310 flying over the Bungle Bungles



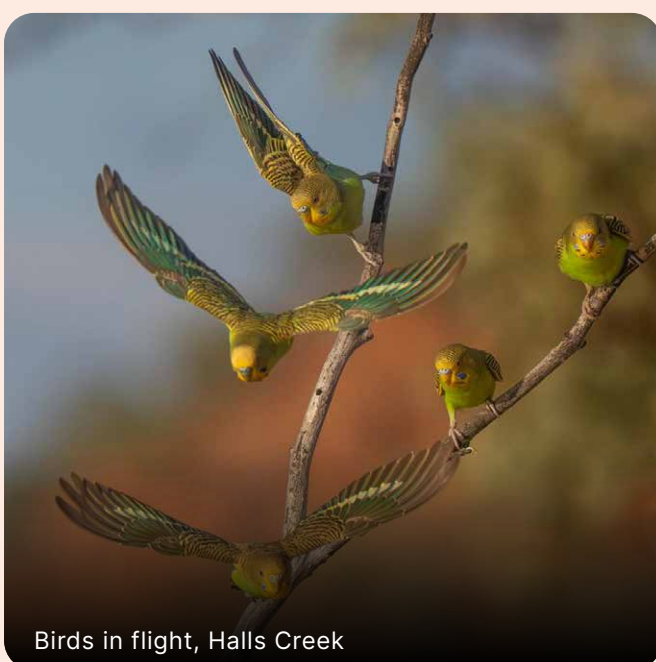
Kids by the pool in Halls Creek



Yarliyl Art Centre, Halls Creek



Halls Creek Splash Party



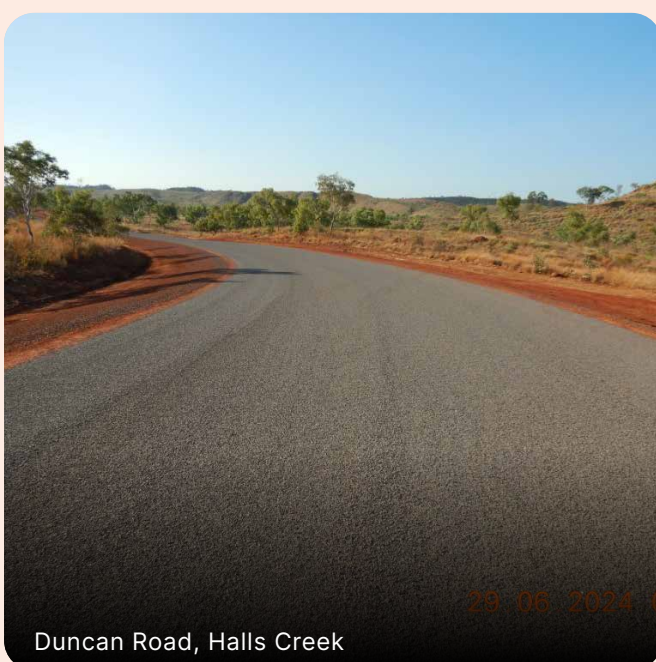
Birds in flight, Halls Creek



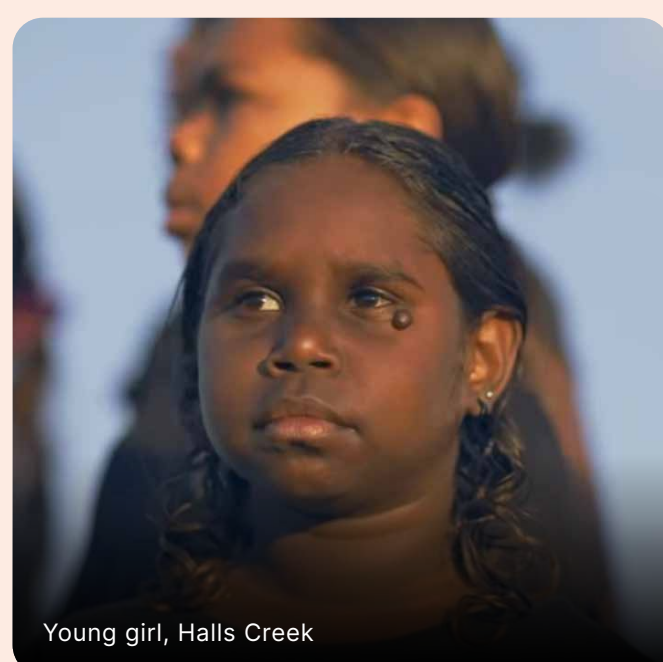
Women's Hub, Halls Creek



Yiyili school kids



Duncan Road, Halls Creek

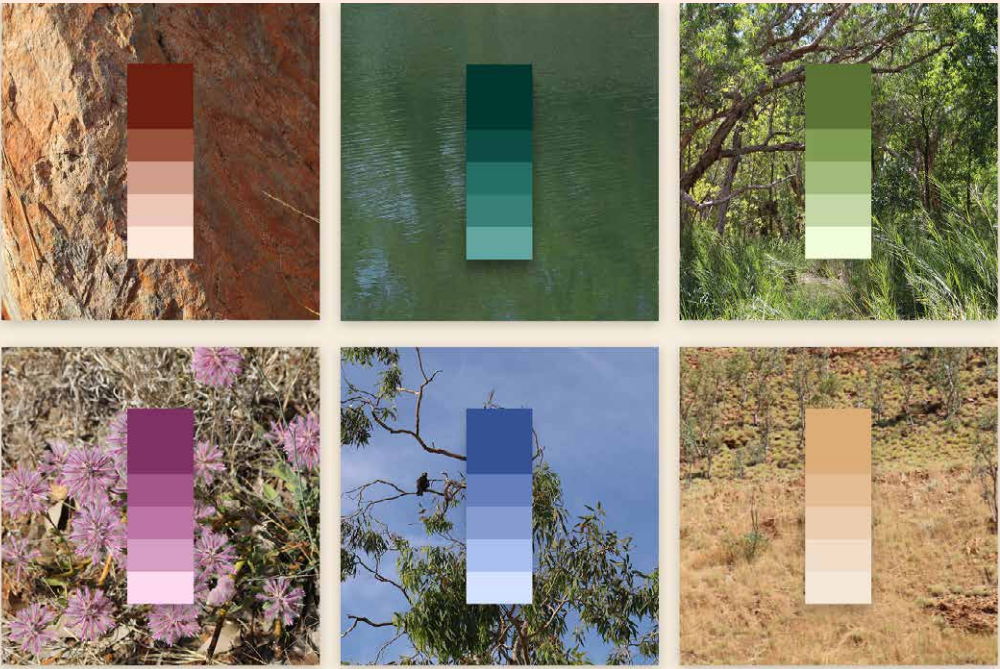


Young girl, Halls Creek

Share your adventures around the Shire of Halls Creek! Tag your posts with **#WatNaHallsCreek** on Instagram, or email your favourite shots to **watnanews@hcshire.wa.gov.au**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which the Shire operates and pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging; for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of First Nations peoples across the country and are instrumental in shaping our collective futures.



Halls Creek adopts new logo in fresh rebrand

The Shire of Halls Creek has adopted a new logo and brand identity, replacing a design that has been in circulation since the early 1980s.

The decision, made at the Shire’s March council meeting, is aimed at giving the Shire a more modern and consistent identity across signage, communications and tourism promotion.

Shire CEO Sue Leonard said the update reflects a district-focused refresh rather than a dramatic change in direction.

“This is about the Shire having a brand that feels like us today,” she said.

“We’re proud of where we’ve come from, but we also want something that better reflects our people, our culture and country and the direction our Shire is heading.”

The new design is based on a stylised hand gesture known locally as “Wat Na”, which Council says represents welcome, connection and gathering.

The abstract symbol bursting out of its frame demonstrates the Shire’s potential, energy and enthusiasm for the future.

A new colour palette has also been introduced, inspired by local flora, fauna and

geographical markers across the Shire, such as Mulla Mulla. Council says the “fresh” palette is also designed to stand out against the pindan red earth, highlighting a different side of the desert communities and ensuring the brand visually “pops” in communications and digital platforms.

The overall aim is to provide a clearer identity for the Shire, and strengthen how the district is represented externally.

“It’s a fresh and creative start for how we present the Shire, and signals a more modern and ambitious direction.” Shire CEO Sue Leonard said.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Endorsed by Council

Highlights of what was endorsed by Council in the March meeting.

Placemaking Plan for Halls Creek

Council has endorsed the Placemaking Plan 2025, which will see a Skatepark, Water Park and major upgrades to Pioneer Park (a four-page special on these changes will run in next month's edition)

New Brand and Logo for the Shire

Council has endorsed a new logo and new brand for the Shire, the first update in more than twenty years. (news story on page 4)

April deadline as fire risk mounts

Shire Rangers will launch a high-stakes inspection blitz across the district on April 14, with authorities warning that a record wet season has left the Kimberley facing a dangerous and "unprecedented" fuel load.

The mandatory inspections, conducted under the Bush Fires Act 1954, are designed to protect a community of 3,500 people from the escalating threat of dry season blazes. Following the April kick-off, a second round of inspections is scheduled for mid-September 2026 to ensure compliance remains uncompromising throughout the peak danger period.

The crackdown comes as the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) warns that Kimberley fires are becoming hotter, larger, and harder to contain in the last few years. With threat mounting across the region, officials say record-height spear grass and spinifex have created a

"tinderbox" environment as humidity drops and vegetation dries off.

New Rules for Town Blocks

For the first time, the Shire has provided specific, stringent requirements for residential town blocks (land under 2,001m²). To pass the April 14 inspection, owners of these blocks must:

- Mow and slash all grass to a height no greater than 50mm.
- Establish a Building Protection Zone, clearing all grasses and plants within five metres of any building.
- Prune all overhanging trees and remove all rubbish from the land.

Rural and Large Land Requirements

For larger holdings (land over 2,001m²), the three-metre rule remains in force. Owners must ensure a continuous three-metre wide firebreak is cleared around the entire

perimeter of the land, with a four-metre vertical clearance for emergency vehicle access.

Rangers have confirmed a zero-tolerance approach to properties that increase the risk to the township or surrounding Country. Failure to comply can result in an on-the-spot fine of \$250, while further non-compliance may lead to court action and fines of up to \$5,000.

"This is a matter of life and death for our community," a Shire spokesperson said. "One neglected block puts the entire street at risk. We are clearing the ground now so our residents remain safe through the dry."

Residents requiring clarification on their specific requirements are urged to contact the Shire of Halls Creek.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Bush fire and local volunteers for Halls Creek Fire and Emergency. Credit: VFES

Came for a holiday, stayed forever

Raymond Simpson was elected to council in 2024 and elected deputy president in late 2025. Now working at the high school, Raymond has held a variety of jobs in our Shire, including as a cook at the hotel and motel, for the Department of Communities and roles which took him to Balgo, Ringer Soak and Mulan.

I first came to Halls Creek 13 years ago, intending to stay for just three months on a working holiday. Like many others, something kept pulling at my heart strings. Over time, I've been welcomed by the community and have come to feel very much a part of it. Putting my hand up for Council was about giving something back.

One of the things I value most about this role is the day-to-day interaction with people. There wouldn't be a day that goes by where I'm not stopped at the shop or the servo and asked about something happening in town—whether it's the main street, the water park, or other projects. That's exactly what I'm here for. And if I don't have the answer, I'll find it and get back to you. I'm proud that people feel comfortable approaching me and having those conversations. I value being trusted in that way.

In my two years as a councillor, I have seen some really positive developments happening across the Shire. The oval is a great example—after a long time, we're now seeing real progress, with a green space taking shape and something the community can see and talk about. It's a positive step forward for everyone.

Town beautification is also important. We are starting to see the results of ongoing work—new footpaths, increasing bitumisation and planned upgrades to Pioneer Park. Longer term we'll see the skate park and the water park come to fruition. These are exciting projects that will continue to build on the town's liveability and create better, more liveable spaces for everyone to share.

At the same time, there are challenges we need to keep addressing. Water security is a major one. We are currently at capacity, and if we want to grow as a community, we need to ensure we have reliable and sustainable water sources. This means continuing to advocate strongly to government for funding and long-term solutions.

Overcrowding in our homes remains a real concern, and it also limits opportunities for organisations and businesses to bring new staff into the community to help service our needs. Without adequate housing, it is difficult to support growth or attract

investment. Continued advocacy in this space is critical.

I believe we are at an important point in the Shire. There is significant potential here, particularly given our location and the opportunities to develop as a regional hub. This flourishing, this growth, is something I am passionate about. But to realise that potential, we need the right infrastructure in place—water, housing and reliable road access. Those really are non-negotiables.

On a more micro level I have been pleased to fully support the successful tendering of the post office and the Shire café, which is now operating regularly and providing another food option for the community. These are small but meaningful steps that contribute to the overall wellbeing and vibrancy of the town, and let private businesses take a key role in the town's growth and prosperity.

Halls Creek is a place with strong community, resilience and opportunity. I am proud to call it home and to serve as a councillor. And if you spot me at the servo or shop please come up for a chat, I'm always keen to hear your thoughts, ideas and feedback.



**WORDS BY
RAYMOND SIMPSON**
Deputy President, Shire of Halls Creek



Raymond Simpson around Halls Creek. Supplied: Raymond Simpson



Party to celebrate renovations at the Yura Yungi aged care home. Credit: Shire of Halls Creek

Modern makeover for Halls Creek Elders residence

Residents at Yura Yungi Menkawum Ngurra Elders Residence are enjoying a fresh new look following the completion of a major facility refurbishment last month.

The milestone was marked with an open house lunch where Allied Health providers, residents, and local friends gathered to tour the upgraded 28-bed facility. The works have modernised the residence, which was formerly known as Frail Aged.

While the median age in Halls Creek is just 29 (compared to the national average of 38), there are roughly 230 residents aged 65 and over in the Shire, according to the last census.

The renovation focused on improving both comfort and clinical safety. Resident rooms now feature new flooring and custom artwork, alongside the installation of state-of-the-art electric elevator beds, disabled-handling equipment, and specialized patient

safety devices.

Operational areas also received a significant boost. The kitchen was fitted out with new cooking equipment, stainless steel food preparation surfaces, and hands-free wash basins. New flooring was also installed throughout the food preparation area to ensure the highest hygiene standards.

The project concluded with a community lunch prepared by the facility's own in-house catering team. The event served as a "thank you" to the residents and staff for their patience during the works and provided an opportunity for the community to see the modernised facilities firsthand.

The residence now stands as one of the most well-equipped aged-care facilities in the region.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Fuel crisis bites as Halls Creek families feel the strain

CONTINUED ON FROM PAGE 1

The pressure is expected to intensify following the State Government's declaration of a fuel supply emergency on April 1, introducing controls on fuel distribution across Western Australia. For remote shires like Halls Creek, the measures are likely to prioritise essential services, further limiting availability for everyday travel and community.

Locals say the impact of high fuel prices is being felt most by Elders and those needing medical care, with some missing appointments because they cannot afford the trip.

Meanwhile, the tourism sector, a key part of the dry season economy, has hit an immediate downturn.

Halls Creek Visitor Centre manager and long-time resident Shirley Little said visitor numbers had noticeably slowed, with some travellers cancelling their Kimberley trips altogether - especially grey nomads.

"We're seeing fewer tourists come through," she said. "The impact of fuel prices has skyrocketed and has affected all of our outlying communities and sub-divisions. This is causing more heartache for our people."

"We're doing it tough."

The crisis is being driven by global events far from the Kimberley. Conflict in the Middle East has disrupted oil supply through the Strait of Hormuz, a route that carries about 20 per cent of the world's oil.

Economists warn that if the conflict continues, fuel prices are likely to remain volatile or rise further, with flow-on effects for inflation and cost of living across Australia.

In remote locations such as the Shire of Halls Creek, those global pressures hit harder and faster than almost anywhere else.

"It's not just fuel," one resident said. "It's everything that comes with it."

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Murray Valley encephalitis virus detected in northern WA as wet mosquito risks rise

Residents in Halls Creek and across northern WA are being urged to take extra precautions against mosquito bites after WA Health confirmed the detection of several mosquito-borne viruses, including the potentially fatal Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) virus, in the Pilbara and Kimberley for the first time this wet season.

Department of Health Medical Entomologist, Dr Abbey Potter, said WA Health’s sentinel chicken and mosquito surveillance programs act as an early warning system for mosquito-borne disease activity.

“The potentially fatal MVE virus has been detected in mosquitoes in the Pilbara,” Dr Potter said.

“Flavivirus activity has also been detected in sentinel chickens in the east Kimberley, and further laboratory testing is required to identify which flavivirus is currently active.”

Dr Potter warned that flaviviruses such as MVE virus can cause serious injury and death. “The consequences of this virus can be devastating,” she said.

Mosquitoes in northern WA can also transmit Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus, for which a vaccine is available.

All Kimberley residents can currently access this vaccine free of charge. For all other mosquito-borne diseases, including MVE, the only way to prevent infection is to avoid mosquito bites.

Halls Creek residents are also facing heightened risk from Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus, which have been identified in mosquito samples across the Kimberley. While these viruses are not usually life-threatening, they can cause prolonged illness, including joint pain, fatigue, fever, muscle aches and rash, sometimes lasting weeks or months.

Shire of Halls Creek Head of Environmental Health Dean Graham said the wet season conditions this year were ideal for mosquito breeding.

“The wet season creates standing water across the region, which significantly increases mosquito numbers,” Mr Graham said.

“We’re encouraging everyone to take simple preventative steps now to reduce their risk and help limit mosquito breeding around homes and communities.”

Mosquito activity typically increases between December and June. Health authorities say reducing exposure to bites is the most effective way to prevent infection.

“Small actions, like clearing standing water and using repellent, can make a real difference in protecting yourself and your family,” Mr Graham said.

Residents experiencing symptoms after being bitten by mosquitoes are encouraged to seek medical advice. Further information is available through WA Health.

How to protect yourself and your family:

- Use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, particularly during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long, loose-fitting clothing when outdoors.
- Ensure homes, caravans, and accommodation have effective insect screens.
- Remove standing water from around your property, including buckets, tyres, and containers, to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Shire staff managing mosquitoes in the Shire. Supplied: Shire of Halls Creek



WEAR LONG, LOOSE-FITTING, CLOTHING & USE INSECT REPELLENT.



PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST MOSQUITOES WHEN CAMPING.

★ FIGHT *the* BITE ★



PROTECT YOURSELF

against

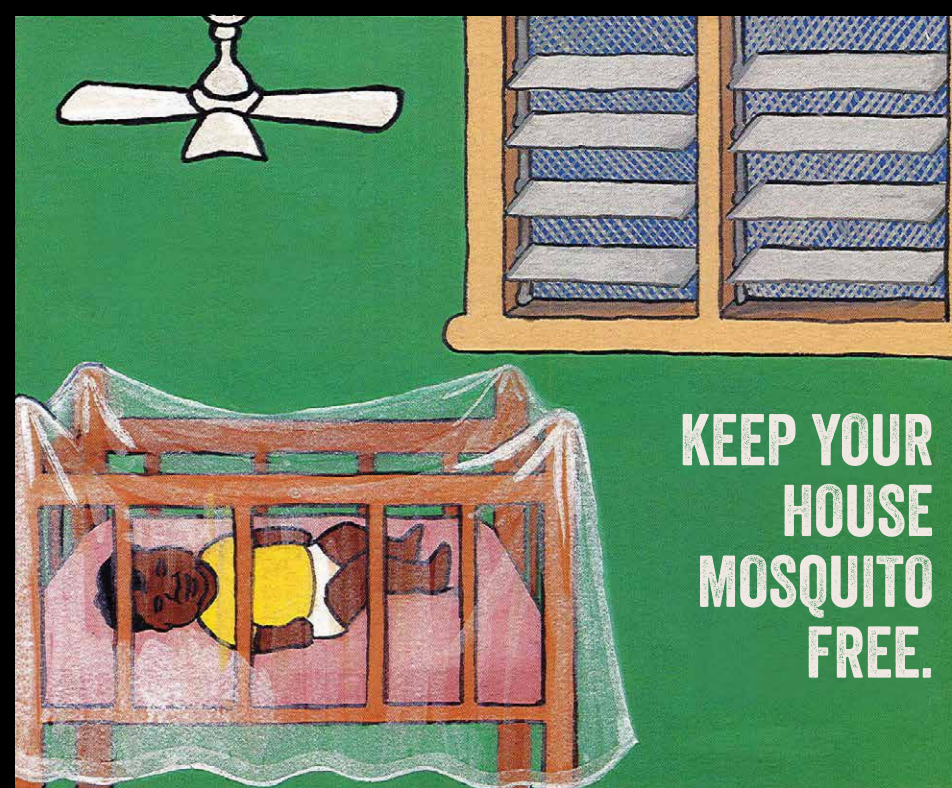
DISEASE-CARRYING MOSQUITOES



★ COVER UP. REPEL. CLEAN UP. ★



REMOVE THE WATER AND CONTAINERS MOSQUITOES BREED IN.



KEEP YOUR HOUSE MOSQUITO FREE.

For more information, contact the Kimberley Population Health Unit
9194 1630, your Community Health Clinic or Aboriginal Medical Service.

www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ **FIGHTTHEBITE**



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

This poster is supported by the WA Department of Health.
Fight the Bite is an initiative of the Government of South Australia.



Digital training taking place at Warmun Art Centre. Credit: Warmun Art Centre

Digital training helps Warmun team master everything from banking to TikTok

A unique digital literacy program is helping members of the Warmun Art Centre (WAC) team build confidence, strengthen workplace skills and find new ways to share their culture with the world.

Now well underway after launching last year, the training—delivered by VTS Training—has become a standout initiative, blending practical digital skills with creative and cultural learning tailored to the community.

People across the East Kimberley continue to face significant digital inequity, particularly older residents and Aboriginal communities, where access to reliable internet, devices and digital skills can be limited.

Led by dedicated trainers Vim and Maddie, the program has already completed three training blocks, with more scheduled in the coming months as momentum continues to build.

Each two-week block is intensive and hands-on, combining structured learning with creative exploration and two-way knowledge sharing. Participants include

WAC team members, artists, cultural leaders and Gija Elders, all working together to develop skills that support both everyday life and their roles within the community.

From navigating emails and online services to safely using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube, the training covers a wide range of practical tools increasingly essential in daily life. Participants are also building confidence in online banking, document handling, scanning and filing, and safe internet use—skills that strengthen independence and reduce barriers when accessing online services.

The program also places a strong focus on communication and workplace capability, with participants developing skills in presentations, customer service, sales and activity planning. The creation of visual “how-to” manuals and checklists has helped strengthen internal systems and support knowledge sharing across the team.

Creative digital storytelling has emerged as a key focus, with participants learning

photography, filming and editing, as well as cataloguing artworks and documenting artist biographies. The training is also supporting the recording and preservation of cultural knowledge, including Dreamtime stories and language.

Participants have been designing flyers and promotional materials, while developing interactive language resources that help protect and promote the Gija language and support meaningful cultural exchange.

What sets the program apart is its flexible, participant-led approach, allowing individuals to learn at their own pace in a supportive environment that respects culture and experience.

The results so far have been significant, WAC said, with growing confidence, stronger digital skills and new ways to document and share culture both within the community and beyond

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF, INFORMATION SUPPLIED/WARMUN ART CENTRE

More than half

of remote Aboriginal communities still have no mobile coverage

85%

of households in remote Aboriginal communities don't have a computer at home

55%

rely on a single mobile phone for internet access (vs 7% nationally)



Dogs recovering from desexing. Supplied: Shire of Halls Creek

Free dog desexing program returns to Shire of Halls Creek

The Shire of Halls Creek’ will be pitching in for a multi-agency dry season dog desexing program rolling out across the region again, giving pet owners more opportunities to have their dogs desexed for free.

Since desexing efforts stepped up in recent years the number of free-roaming dog packs has steadily declined, rangers report, with fewer reports of aggressive or nuisance dogs in town and across the Shire. This reduction in roaming animals has helped lower the number of attacks and incidents, making communities safer for residents and visitors.

Last year’s free desexing blitz was a huge success, with rangers and partners going door-to-door to collect and drop off animals for surgery as part of a months long effort that saw hundreds of animals sterilised.

This year’s dry season desexing schedule:

- 8–10 April – Warmun
- 28–30 April & 1 May – Yiyili
- 5–10 July – Halls Creek
- 13–17 July – Balgo, Mulan, Billiluna
- 6–7 August – Ringer Soak

The Shire encourages all dog owners in these communities to take up the free service.

Pet owners who want to register their dogs for desexing or learn more about the dry season program should contact the rangers or the Shire front desk.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



WE ARE HIRING

APPRENTICE ELECTRICIAN

HALLS CREEK

Submit your CV & Cover Letter
admin@visionpower.com.au

www.visionpower.com.au



Interested in working as an Aboriginal health officer?

Do you want to make a real difference in the health of our Shire communities? The Shire of Halls Creek is looking for dedicated people to join our team in this vital, permanent full-time role.

The Role:
This is a hands-on position where you'll work directly with our mob in town and remote communities like Balgo and Warmun. You will lead health workshops, manage environmental health plans, and empower residents to make healthy choices regarding food safety, hygiene, and housing .

What You'll Need:

- A deep respect for Aboriginal culture and experience working in community.
- A passion for public health and helping our people thrive.
- A current 'C' class driver's licence and a willingness to camp out on country.
- A Certificate II in Aboriginal Environmental Health, or the drive to earn one while you work.

CONTACT THE SHIRE TO APPLY

Northern Australia tipped to become backbone of nation’s mining future

Northern Australia is being positioned as the future backbone of the nation’s mining industry, with industry leaders pointing to vast untapped reserves and growing global demand for critical minerals.

A recent submission by the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) to a federal inquiry argues the region will become a key supplier of the materials needed for modern technologies, defence and the global energy transition.

Spanning Western Australia, the Northern Territory and northern Queensland, the region is increasingly being viewed as strategically important due to its rich geological resources and potential to support more secure global supply chains.

The north already underpins much of Australia’s resources sector, particularly through iron ore production, but large areas remain underdeveloped due to infrastructure constraints and limited investment.

Industry groups say unlocking further growth will depend heavily on infrastructure investment, with roads, rail and port access identified as key barriers to developing remote deposits.

“This increase in demand... can only be met if more mines are developed... especially in

the north,” the AMEC submission states.

Tania Constable, chief executive of the Minerals Council of Australia, said the stakes were high if development stalled.

“If we neglect the development...we will miss out on many opportunities to boost Australia’s economic future,” she said in a statement.

In the Kimberley, including the East Kimberley, the region’s mineral potential remains largely underdeveloped despite growing interest in exploration. Industry and government have identified northern Western Australia as a key frontier for future projects, but progress has been slowed by limited infrastructure, high costs and the complexities of working in remote areas. Any expansion is also expected to require close engagement with Traditional Owners, with cultural heritage, land access and long-term community benefit central to how new projects are assessed and delivered.

Around Halls Creek, mining activity has historically centred on gold, with the town marking the site of Western Australia’s first gold rush in 1885. Today, several projects remain in various stages of care, development and exploration. The Nicolsons Find and broader Halls Creek Project area

has previously produced significant gold and still holds an estimated resource of

more than 200,000 ounces, with further exploration targets identified.

There is also renewed exploration interest across the East Kimberley, with projects such as Butchers Creek and Ruby Plains targeting high-grade gold, while other tenements near Halls Creek are being explored for copper, zinc, rare earths and even tungsten.

Geologically, the region sits within the Halls Creek Orogen, a mineral-rich belt known to host gold, base metals and emerging critical minerals, with large areas still considered underexplored despite decades of intermittent activity.

Sue Leonard, Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Halls Creek, said the region’s mining history and future potential needed to be balanced with careful planning and community outcomes.

“We know the East Kimberley has significant potential, and mining has long been part of the Halls Creek story, but any future development needs to be done properly — with the right infrastructure, strong engagement with Traditional Owners, and clear benefits flowing back to local communities.”

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Kimberley Metals Group on site. Credit: Kimberley Metals Group



The former Pantoro gold mine near Halls Creek. Supplied: Pantoro



**North
Regional**

HALLS CREEK UPCOMING SKILL SETS 2026



IAE74 Traffic Management
Refresher Skill Set



AE820 Digital Literacy Skill Set



IAE41 White Card Skill Set



IAA31 CPR Skill Set



IAA16 First Aid - Childcare
Skill Set



AE875 First Aid Skill Set



IAA02 Chainsaw Skill Set



IAA21 4WD Training Skill Set



IAA19 Skid Steer Loader
Operations Skill Set



IAE73 Traffic Management
Skill Set

Important information on consumer rights including refunds, withdrawals, complaints, feedback and cancellation of courses can be found on the North Regional TAFE website or at your nearest campus. Please check this information prior to enrolling.



1300 996 573



info@nrtafe.wa.edu.au



www.northregionaltafe.wa.edu.au

RTO: 52788





Scenes from planning meetings across the Shire this past year. Supplied: Shire of Halls Creek

Why good governance matters more than ever in the Shire of Halls Creek

Many years ago, I wrote a little ditty to assist staff with understanding what governance was all about in my newly formed public sector directorate.

*The new world is here, it's arrived at last
And the changes are coming, thick and fast.
It's a world of performance, compliance,
reporting;
It's good governance you see, but it
shouldn't be daunting.
It's about personal behaviour and shared
responsibility,
Reputation, communication and credibility,
In a nutshell, it's integrity and accountability.
It's simply good business. That's the reality!!!*

That was in 2011.

In 2022, the Western Australia government commenced reforms to the Local Government Act 1995, marking the most substantial changes in over 25 years. These reforms are designed to enhance the effectiveness of local governments in serving their communities and are expected

to foster a more responsive and accountable local government system in Western Australia. By enhancing oversight and community engagement, the government aims to rebuild public trust in local councils and ensure they operate effectively in the best interests of their communities.

These reforms are now embedded in the Local Government Amendment Bill 2024 which recognises the criticality of good governance to the sustainability of local governments and their communities.

A major component of the Bill is the establishment of the new Local Government Inspector who will have greater powers to oversee local governments in Western Australia, with a focus on early intervention.

The Bill also overhauls the current system of complaints, providing a much wider range of tools to deal with complaints when a breach or contravention of the Local Government Act 1995 may have occurred.

These milestone reforms also:

- clarify the roles and responsibilities of mayors and presidents, councillors and local government CEOs;
- require councils to adopt a rates and revenue policy to facilitate better financial planning and increase public transparency about rate increases;
- widen the scope of audit, risk and improvement committees and ensure these committees have an independent Chairperson who can be shared between smaller local governments;
- require councils to document the reasons for closing part of a meeting to the public while reducing unnecessary instances of closed meetings;
- facilitate the shared employment of local government CEOs and senior employees;
- prevent council members who fail to complete mandatory training from receiving their allowances;



- prevent inappropriate expenditure of ratepayer funds on council members' personal legal expenses; and
- modernise several arrangements including enabling superannuation payments for council members and streamlining the making of local laws.

As you can well imagine these reforms have already resulted in the introduction of significant changes to Shire of Halls Creek Council policy. The appointment of an independent chair and deputy chair to the expanded Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee is a key milestone as is the establishment of a range of policies to guide performance and compliance especially in the area of Council complaints management. You can view the decisions made by Council to date under "council minutes" on our website. Soon, we will have the endorsed policies available in simplified form in Wat Na! and on our social accounts.

The introduction of these changes, coupled with progression of a wide range of complex and multi pronged Shire projects—including those identified below—means that the communities we serve will be better off and this local government will be enabled to operate more effectively and efficiently:

- developing the 2026–2036 Shire of Halls Creek strategic community plan
- establishing the Halls Creek Placemaking Plan
- establishing a Shire wide Public Health Plan
- delivering an expanded Aboriginal Environmental Health Program
- supporting communities to participate in the economic activation that will result from the sealing of the Tanami Road
- delivering an upgraded and integrated road network
- tendering for contractors to construct the Halls Creek Splash Pad and upgrade Pioneer Park
- working with community and stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to support our young people
- completing the upgrade of the Halls Creek Oval
- revitalising the Halls Creek town centre
- identifying a sustainable water solution
- assessing feasibility of a business park in Halls Creek.

However delivering these transformational changes will require a team effort not only within the Shire and Council, but across the communities.

We all need to work together to achieve shared outcomes for our beautiful district and we all need to remain strong and purposeful on the long journey especially when we are challenged by events that are outside our control such as the rising cost of living and access to fuel.



WORDS BY SUE LEONARD,
CEO, Shire of Halls Creek

Shire rangers are targeting littering

Due to some recent occurrences of litter being dumped within the Shire, Rangers will be conducting regular patrols to locate the litter and try to identify and catch the people doing this. People are reminded that any waste needs to be taken to the tip and disposed of correctly.

The tip hours are:
7.00am to 3.00pm Monday to Friday
8.00am to 12.00pm Saturdays
Closed Sundays



Request for Tender RFT DIA-06-25132 Town Centre Infrastructure Upgrade Work

The Shire of Halls Creek invites tenders for the design and construction of public infrastructure in the Halls Creek townsite, comprising a Splash Pad and upgrades to the existing Pioneer Park.

TENDER FORMS are only available from Tenderlink: <https://www.tenderlink.com/halls creek>

Tenders close **2.00 PM AWST WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2026.**

Council is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender. Canvassing of any Shire Councillor, Officer or the principal Consultant, Greenfield Technical Services, will disqualify Tenderers from consideration. Should Tenderers have questions with respect to accessing Tender documents or submitting a Tender, please contact the Shire on 08 9168 6007. Questions relating to the Tender document and/or specifications must be made via the forum on Tenderlink.

NO OTHER FORMAT OF SUBMISSION WILL BE ACCEPTED

Sue Leonard
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Halls Creek



Shire of Halls Creek Waste Managment Facility Fees

Type of Waste	Charge	GST
Disposal of domestic household refuse – trailer or ute loads only (garbage)	No Charge	
Disposal of green waste – commercial	\$15.00/m3	\$1.36
Contaminated green waste, ie mixed with plastics or other materials	\$25.00/m3	\$2.27
Disposal from commercial or industrial premises – separated	\$25.00/m3	\$2.27
Commercial waste mixed with white goods, metals, tyres etc.	\$40.00/m3	\$3.64
Construction & Demolition Waste		
Construction & Demolition Waste – mixed	\$110.00/m3	\$10.00
Construction & Demolition Waste – Separated eg; concrete, metals, wooden materials etc	\$40.00	\$3.64
Vehicle Bodies		
Per Car Body	\$20.00	\$1.82
Per Truck Body	\$30.00	\$2.73
Wooden Pallets / Furniture		
CHEP and LOSCAM pallets, in good condition	No Charge	
Dismantles pieces of pallets and furniture – per pallet or per piece	\$10.00	Exempt
Whole piece of pallets and furniture – per pallet or per unit	\$10.00	Exempt
White goods – must be degassed		
Fridges, stoves, air cons, TV's, computers etc – per unit	\$20.00	Exempt
Dead Animals		
Admin charge for each large animal disposed (eg; horse, camel, cattle, pigs etc)	\$35.00	\$3.18
Owner / disposer to bury animal at own expense		
Tyres – per tyre		
Car Tyre	\$10.00	\$0.91
Light truck tyre	\$10.00	\$0.91
Heavy truck tyre	\$20.00	\$1.82
Tractor and large machinery tyre	\$25.00	\$2.27
Battery – per battery		
Car Battery not mixed with other waste	No Charge	
Domestic batteries, not mixed with other waste	No Charge	
Liquid Waste		
Grease trap or septage waste – per 1000L or part thereof	\$100.00	\$9.09
Out of Halls Creek township – Grease trap or septage waster per 1000L	\$270.00	\$24.55
Cooking oil – per 20 Litres to a maximum of 200 litres	\$20.00	\$1.82
Out of Halls Creek Township Cooking oil – per 20 litres, to a maximum of 200 litres	\$90.00	\$8.18
The Shire Waste facility is not licenced to take motor oil		
Empty 205 litre drum (must be decontaminated)	\$15.00	\$1.36
Empty gas cylinders – less than 10kg	\$15.00	\$1.36
Empty gas cylinders – above 10kg	\$25.00	\$2.27
Other controlled waste – see waste facility supervisor		
Dry sludge from sewage works / m³	205.00	18.64
Contaminated waste - Hydrocarbons	215.00	19.55
Asbestos waste – per cubic metre	\$125.00	Exempt
Medical Waste – accepted on Tuesday and Friday at midday only	\$40.00	Exempt



Festival committee with event signage. Supplied: Ngayuru Waaringarrem Health & Wellbeing Festival

Health and Wellbeing Festival set to return in 2026

On the back of a record-breaking 2025 event that saw the Halls Creek recreation centre hit capacity, the Ngayuru Waaringarrem Health and Wellbeing Festival is officially returning to the calendar for 2026.

Last year’s event smashed expectations, drawing more than 600 locals in person and reaching a staggering 5,500 people online. The 2025 celebration was headlined by the King of the Kimberley basketball competition—where the Bulls and the Lady Shakers were crowned champions—and a massive community birthday party for the 35th anniversary of PRK Radio.

Organisers are now looking to build on that momentum for 2026. This year’s festival will

be held during NAIDOC Week, continuing its vital mission of celebrating art, culture, and community health in an alcohol-and-smoke-free environment.

The project is being co-ordinated by Lexie Trancollino from Yura Yungi and the Festival Committee. The team is currently calling for local legends to "back their town" by joining the committee, volunteering, or submitting fresh ideas to ensure the 2026 event is the biggest one yet.

Want to get involved? If you would like to join the festival committee or have ideas for this year’s event, please contact Lexie at lexi.trancollino@yyms.org.au

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Broome pearls now on sale at Halls Creek Visitor Centre

A new range of pearl jewellery sourced from Broome’s Staircase Designs is now available at the Halls Creek Visitor Centre.

The collection features cultured pearls, including freshwater varieties, which are grown off the coast of Broome. The range includes silver and gold electroplated designs, along with a variety of styles suited to everyday wear and more special occasions.

Prices cater to a broad range of budgets, with smaller stud earrings starting from around \$20 and other pieces ranging up to \$250 and under. The collection also includes elasticised pearl rings featuring freshwater pearls, as well as neoprene necklaces designed for those who prefer non-metal jewellery options.

Visitor Centre staff say the range has already attracted interest from both locals and travellers passing through town, offering an accessible way to purchase Kimberley-linked jewellery without needing to travel to the coast.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Visitor Centre display. Supplied: Shire of Halls Creek

Rural Road Program progresses alongside flood recovery works



Rural Road Program – works completed to date

Key works completed under the program include:

Duncan Road

- Line-of-sight safety improvements
- Floodway upgrades
- Approximately 3km sealed upgrade between Halls Creek and Old Town

These works are aimed at improving road safety, reliability, and year-round access for residents and freight operators.

Upcoming works, April – June 2026

The final phase of the current program will include:

Gordon Downs Road (near Kundat Djaru)

- Reforming and resheeting

Tanami Road (near Carranya Road intersection)

- Reforming and resheeting

Shire comment

Shire Infrastructure Director Josh Kirk said the Shire is balancing planned upgrades with urgent recovery works.

“We’ve made strong progress on this year’s rural road program, particularly on Duncan Road, however the recent wet season has caused significant damage across parts of the network. Our immediate priority is ensuring roads are safe and accessible, while we work through the funding process required to deliver permanent repairs.”

Flood damage impacts, January to March 2026

Multiple tropical lows between January and March 2026 caused significant damage across the Shire’s road network.

Key impacts include:

- Widespread flood damage across multiple road corridors
- Reduced surface condition and localized access impacts
- Increased maintenance pressure across the network

The Shire has submitted an application to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) for recognition under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA-WA).

Inspections and immediate response

The Shire will commence formal damage inspections in the coming weeks to assess the full extent and severity of impacts.

Following inspections, the Shire will:

- Undertake emergency “make-safe” works
- Restore roads to a trafficable standard where required
- Prioritise access for residents, freight, and essential services

Long-term repairs and funding

Permanent reconstruction works will be dependent on approval of DRFA-WA funding, which typically takes:

- 6 to 12 months for approval and delivery planning



**North
Regional**



State ID: AE871

Heavy Vehicle Driving Operations Skill Set

Units:

- TLIA1001 Secure cargo
- TLIB0002 Carry out vehicle inspection
- TLID0015 Load and unload goods/cargo
- TLIF0009 Ensure the safety of transport activities (Chain of Responsibility)
- TLIF0025 Follow work health and safety procedures
- TLIF2010 Apply fatigue management strategies
- TLILIC0003 Licence to operate a forklift truck
- TLIC3004 Drive heavy rigid vehicle

About:

This skill set is course fee-free for eligible students!
** Additional fees may apply for Department of Transport and WorkSafe licensing. **

Students will gain the theoretical knowledge and practical driving instruction required to operate a Heavy Rigid (HR) vehicle in WA. Training will be delivered in a variety of conditions and locations, guided by qualified, experienced instructors.

Upon successful completion of the skillset, students will be able to attempt their PDA to obtain their **HR-B licence**, allowing you to drive **HR vehicles with automatic or synchromesh gearboxes only**.

DATE

21 April - 21 May 2026

DURATION

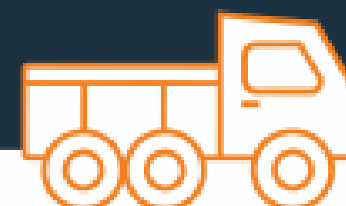
4 weeks plus driving lessons

LOCATION

North Regional TAFE - Halls Creek Campus, 1 Terone Street, Halls Creek WA 6770

FEE

\$175.00



**Scan QR code below to
enrol now!**



Important information on consumer rights including refunds, withdrawals, complaints, feedback and cancellation of courses can be found on the North Regional TAFE website or at your nearest campus. Please check this information prior to enrolling.

RTO: 52788



1300 996 573



info@nrtafe.wa.edu.au



www.northregionaltafe.wa.edu.au



Sue-Anne Hunter steps into landmark role for First Nations children

Sue-Anne Hunter says Australia’s systems are still failing Aboriginal children, with too many removed from family, culture and Country.

“Our kids are being removed, our kids are being locked up, our kids are dying from diseases they shouldn’t be — and that’s why we’re here.”

Speaking to The Guardian Australia, the Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman said there are still “too many children removed from family, from culture, from Country”, warning that once children enter these systems “it becomes incredibly difficult for them to ever come out the other side intact”.

Hunter has been appointed Australia’s first National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, a new federal role designed to independently monitor how governments are treating Indigenous children across child protection, youth justice and wider wellbeing systems.

It is the first time a national office has been established specifically to track outcomes for First Nations children.

Hunter has spent decades working across social work, child protection, research and Indigenous policy reform, with a focus on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care and detention systems.

In comments to The Guardian, she described a young boy she worked with in care who progressed to youth detention and eventually took his life. “That stays with you,” she said. “It’s not an abstract policy issue. These are children’s lives.”

Hunter’s own path into the role has been unconventional. She has spoken publicly about leaving school early (dyslexia held her back, she said) and later “fighting her way back too” adult education, including a master’s degree at Harvard.

National data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare continues to show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are significantly overrepresented in out-of-home care and youth detention, a pattern that has remained stubborn despite decades

of reviews and inquiries.

Hunter has argued that child protection outcomes cannot be separated from broader social conditions including housing, health and education, saying children’s experiences are shaped long before they enter formal systems.

The new commissioner role is intended to provide independent oversight of governments, report publicly on progress, and ensure the voices of First Nations children are reflected in decision-making.

It has been welcomed by Indigenous policy experts as long-overdue, following years of calls for dedicated national accountability for First Nations children.

For Hunter, the focus is now on turning decades of evidence and recommendations into action.

As she told The Guardian, the challenge is not knowing what is wrong, but changing it.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

What do the stats reveal?

12x

more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children

60% +

of children in youth detention are Indigenous

20x

higher youth detention rate than non-Indigenous young people

↑ Health Risk

of chronic health conditions and preventable hospitalisations among Indigenous children



Sue-Anne Hunter. Credit: National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Indigenous rock art reveals Tasmanian tiger lived later than thought

New research suggests the Tasmanian tiger may have survived on mainland Australia far more recently than previously believed, after being identified in Indigenous rock art in northern Australia.

The study, led by researchers analysing rock art sites across northern Australia, documents multiple animal depictions that appear to closely match the distinctive striped form of the thylacine.

Scientists say the images provide rare visual evidence that could challenge long-held assumptions about when the species disappeared from the mainland, and highlight the depth of ecological knowledge recorded in rock art traditions.

The thylacine is widely believed to have gone extinct on mainland Australia around 2,000–3,000 years ago, before surviving in Tasmania until the 20th century.

Researchers involved in the study say the rock art shows a level of detail that suggests careful observation of animals in the landscape, with species depicted that are consistent with known Australian fauna, including marsupial predators.

They add that Indigenous rock art should not be viewed only as cultural expression, but also as a long-term record of environmental change and species presence across Country.

The findings also point to the broader value of Indigenous cultural records, which preserve ecological knowledge not always captured in the fossil record or archaeological deposits.

While further scientific dating and analysis is needed to confirm the age of the artworks, researchers say the images open up new questions about how long the thylacine may have persisted in remote regions of the continent.

The Tasmanian tiger was last recorded in captivity in 1936 and remains one of Australia’s most iconic extinct species.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Thylacine cave painting in Arnhem Land. Supplied: Griffith University



A newly documented Tasmanian tiger rock-art image. Researchers used computer software to enhance its features. Credit: Craig Banggar

New research targets mental health gap for Indigenous Australians

New research from Flinders University is calling for a major shift in how mental health care is delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with communication identified as a critical missing link.

The study, published in The Lowitja Journal, argues that improving outcomes for First Nations people will require more than clinical treatment alone, with culturally safe communication at the centre of reform.

Researchers say current systems are not meeting the needs of Indigenous patients, pointing to ongoing disparities in mental health outcomes. National data shows

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly higher rates of suicide, self-harm and psychological distress than non-Indigenous Australians.

Researchers also found that some behaviours viewed as symptoms in Western medicine may not indicate mental illness in Aboriginal cultural contexts, highlighting the need for greater cultural awareness in diagnosis and care.

The research, led by Associate Professor Stuart Ekberg, reviewed dozens of studies to identify practical ways health professionals can improve how they engage with patients.

- These include:
- better understanding of culture and the impacts of colonisation
 - allowing time for trust-building through yarning and deep listening
 - involving family and community where appropriate
 - recognising that language and meaning around mental health can differ

The findings are now being tested in hospitals and health services in Queensland.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

ENTRIES NOW OPEN

CALLING ALL ARTISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS!



Entry forms close
Friday, 15 May 2026

Regional drop off between:
Monday 25 May-
Thursday 28 May 2026.

At: Shire of Halls Creek
Administration Office.

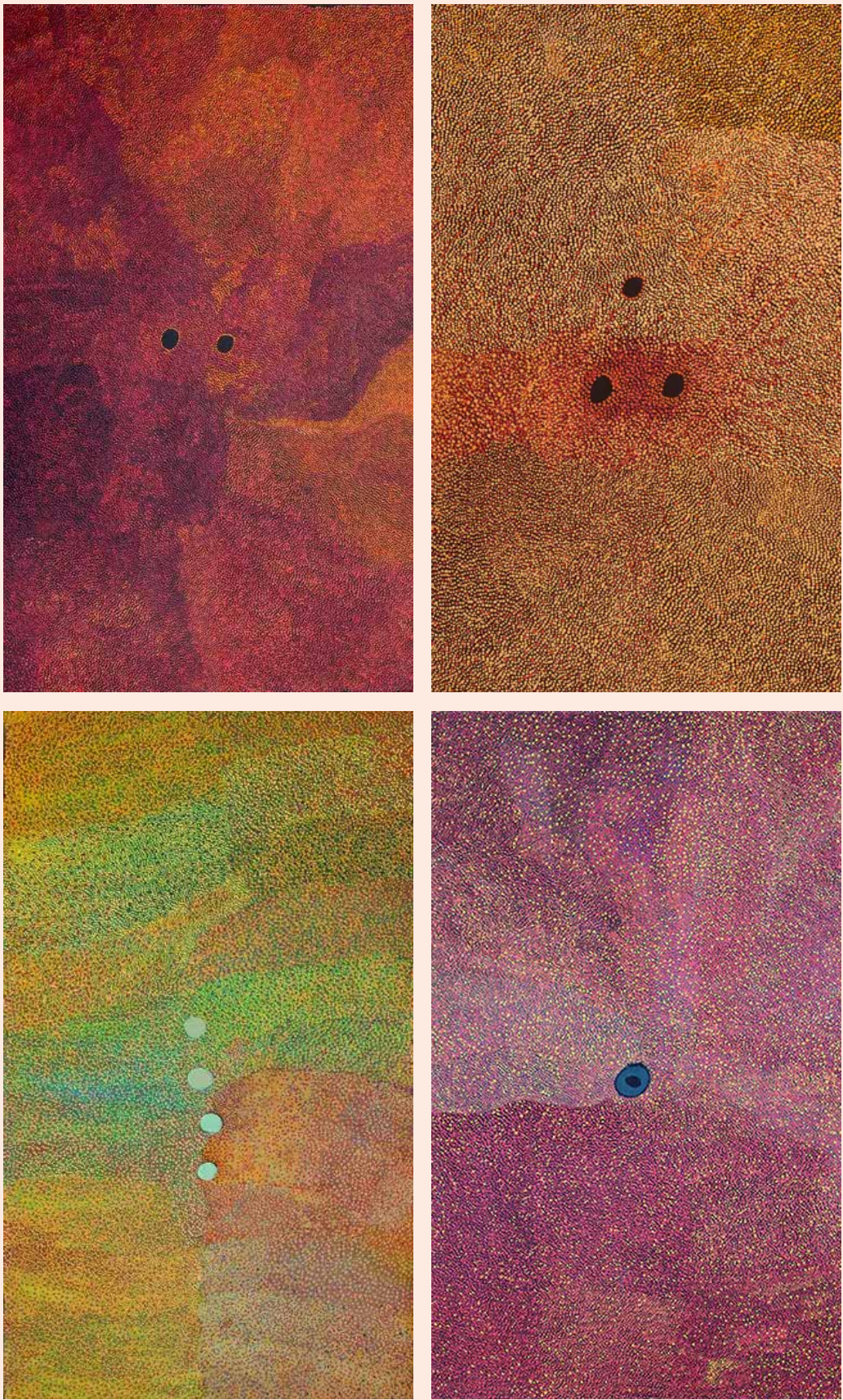
For more info:
(08) 9191 0999
www.kappawards.com.au
kimberleyartprize@sdwk.wa.gov.au



Kimberley
Art and
Photographic
Prize



Featured Artist



Featured Artist Imelda Gugaman (Pictured left). Credit: Warlayirti Artists

Imelda Gugaman various works. Credit: Japingka Aboriginal Art

Imelda Gugaman, Desert Gem

Imelda Gugaman is a senior artist at Warlayirti Artists and a leading figure in the Balgo community. As the eldest daughter of the late Lucy Yukenbarri and renowned artist Helicopter Tjungurrayi, her work is a direct link to the foundations of the contemporary desert art movement.

Her origin story is a significant piece of Kimberley history. Born around 1951 near Winpurpurla in the Great Sandy Desert, Imelda walked into the Old Balgo Mission as a small child in 1954 alongside her mother. She was raised in the mission dormitories and later lived in Beagle Bay before returning to Balgo to raise her family and begin her career at the art centre.

Imelda’s work focuses almost exclusively on her mother’s country at Winpurpurla. This site is defined by its "inta" or living water—a reliable soakage that was a vital survival point for Kukatja and Gija people travelling through the desert. Her paintings document the landscape and the traditional bush foods found there, including karnti (bush potato) and kumpupatja (bush tomato).

Her artistic style is defined by the "kinti-kinti" or fine-dotting technique. This method creates a sense of movement and texture on the canvas, representing the undulations of the sand dunes and the geological features of the desert. She spent decades painting alongside her mother, mastering

this intricate style while learning the cultural stories associated with the soakage sites.

Today, Imelda is recognized as an innovator who maintains deep respect for tradition. Her influences remain the teachings of her parents and her memories of the desert landscape. She continues to paint daily at Warlayirti Artists while serving as a Director on the organisation’s board, ensuring the stories of Winpurpurla are preserved for the next generation of Balgo artists.

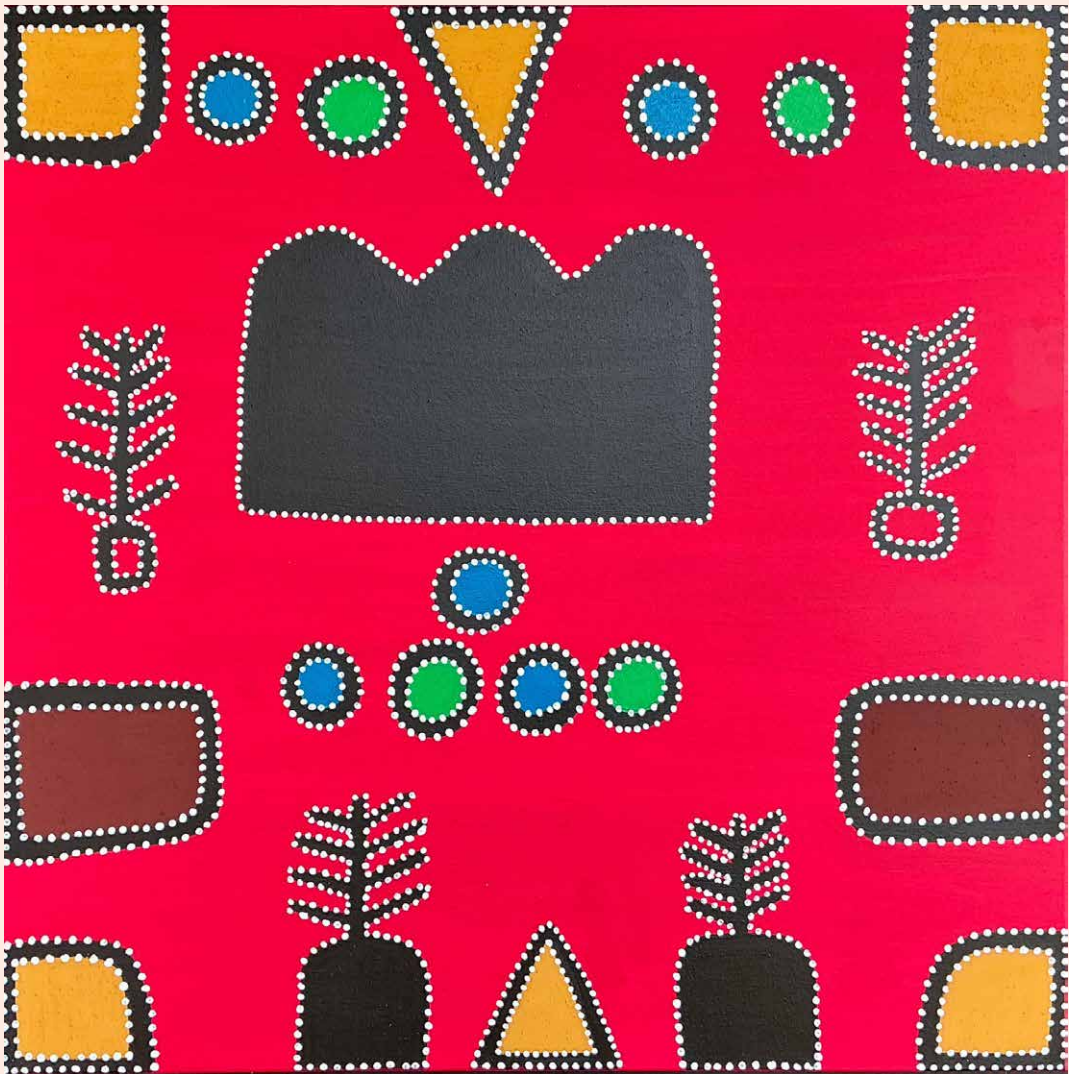
WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Warmun artist Monica Cann a finalist in national art award

Emerging artist Monica Cann from Warmun is a finalist in the prestigious Rockingham Art Award 2026. Selected from hundreds of entries across the country, the achievement marks a major milestone for the young Gija painter.

Ms Cann is a third-generation artist who is continuing a long family tradition of storytelling. Her work is recognized for its innovative style, using modern and vibrant techniques to share her family's stories.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Monica Cann's work that has been selected as a finalist in the Rockingham Art Prize 2026. Credit: Warmun Art Centre

Gija women lead bush medicine healing

Last month in Warmun senior Gija Elder Shirley Purdie led an “extraordinary” on-country experience to share the healing gifts of Gija Country with the next generation.

Joined by bush medicine experts Madeline Purdie and Cherylene Nocketta, also known as Moombie, the group guided

young learners through the collection and preparation of traditional bush oils and teas.

The session focused on two-way teaching which covered Gija plant names, seasonal cycles and the specific traditional uses of native plants.

Oils and teas made during the session were delivered directly to local Elders and

community members.

The initiative highlights the leadership of Gija women in keeping ancient knowledge alive while nurturing the strength of the community across generations, WAC said.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF WITH WARMUN ART CENTRE



???. Credit:





Rhoda Roberts remembered for reshaping Australia's cultural landscape

Australia's arts and cultural sector is mourning the loss of Bundjalung woman and cultural leader Rhoda Roberts, whose work over four decades helped redefine how the nation recognises First Nations culture. She was 66.

Roberts played a central role in bringing the term and practice of "Welcome to Country" into mainstream use, embedding it within major events, institutions and public life. While the ceremony itself is ancient, her work ensured it became a recognised and respected part of contemporary Australia.

Reflecting on its meaning, Roberts once said: "It's not ours. We live with it."

Her influence stretched far beyond ceremony. Roberts built a career that moved between grassroots cultural work and the highest levels of the national arts sector, becoming a powerful advocate for First Nations voices in spaces where they had long been excluded.

She was the first Aboriginal person to host a prime-time current affairs program and later held senior roles at the Sydney Opera House, where she led Indigenous programming and helped reshape how First Nations art was presented on one of the country's biggest stages.

In 1997, she founded the landmark Festival of the Dreaming, a defining moment for Indigenous arts in Australia. She also served as a cultural advisor for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture was visible on the world stage.

Her legacy is reflected not only in institutions and events, but in the generations of artists and cultural workers she mentored.

"Culture is not a costume. It's who we are, every day," Roberts said in a past interview, reflecting her lifelong commitment to authenticity and representation.

Those who worked alongside her describe a leader who combined authority with generosity, and who moved with ease between community and national platforms.

"She made space for us where there was none," said Wesley Enoch, an artistic director and playwright.

"Rhoda carried culture into places that had never made room for it before."

Roberts died on March 21 following a battle with a rare form of ovarian cancer.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

How Welcome to Country became part of modern Australia

Welcome to Country is an ancient cultural practice, traditionally performed by Aboriginal Elders to acknowledge visitors entering another group's Country, seeking permission, and ensuring respect, safety and cultural protocol. Its meaning is deeply rooted in sovereignty, connection to land and the authority of Traditional Owners.

In modern Australia, the practice began re-emerging more visibly in the late 20th century, alongside Indigenous land rights movements and cultural revival efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. Its prominence grew through major national cultural moments, including the Festival of the Dreaming in 1997 and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, where Indigenous ceremony was formally embedded in official programming at scale for the first time.

Since then, Welcome to Country has become a standard feature at public events across Australia, from government proceedings to arts and sporting fixtures. As academic and journalist Stan Grant has observed,

"Acknowledgement is not just symbolism — it is a recognition of the oldest continuing cultures on Earth."

While widely embraced, some cultural commentators have raised concerns about the growing frequency of its use, warning that overuse risks reducing its meaning from a meaningful cultural protocol into routine formality.

However, many Aboriginal Elders and cultural leaders say the practice is not overused, but rather "finally being respected and seen" in the way it always should have been. They argue that its growing visibility reflects recognition of First Nations authority on Country, rather than dilution of its meaning.



Professor Anne Poelina. Supplied: Anne Poelina

Cultural Heroes: Dr Anne Poelina

For Nyikina Warrwa Elder and academic Dr Anne Poelina, writing about water in the Kimberley is not just research. It is a relationship built on tens of thousands of years of reciprocal care.

Her work challenges a common assumption in environmental science and policy: that rivers are resources to be measured and managed. Instead, she argues they are living systems with knowledge, memory and authority in their own right.

Based in Broome, Poelina is a leading voice in Indigenous water governance and environmental justice. Her work spans community advocacy, academic research and international policy forums, with a focus on ensuring First Nations leadership is central to decisions about water and Country.

A key part of her philosophy is what she describes as “relational knowledge” — the idea that people, place and water cannot be separated. In this framework, rivers are not passive subjects of study but active participants in how knowledge is formed.

Recently, she even named the river as a “co-author” in one of her papers.

Her approach directly challenges Western academic traditions, which tend to separate humans from the environment and treat nature as something external to society.

In the Kimberley, where river systems are under increasing pressure from development proposals, climate impacts and competing land use, Poelina has consistently advocated for governance models that recognise Indigenous law and cultural responsibility to water.

Her work also links local river systems to broader global conversations about water security, biodiversity and climate resilience, positioning the Kimberley as both a cultural and ecological frontline - as well as a hotspot of cultural knowledge.

Rather than viewing water management as a technical issue alone, she frames it as a question of responsibility — who has authority to speak for water and communicate with water, and whose knowledge is recognised in decision-making that can effect the environment for decades to come.

For Poelina, the answer is clear. Indigenous custodianship is not supplementary to the water story. It is foundational.

The River is “a gift for all humanity to share, a precious and beautiful source of liberation and freedom,” she told Fremantle Press.

She has also stated the stakes plainly: “If [our] River Dies, We Die.”

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF

Jack Jugarie: walker, tracker, Elder, legend

Respected Jaru Elder Jack Jugarie lived a life shaped by hard work, cultural knowledge and service to the East Kimberley.

An accomplished artist, he also worked on night patrols at the local Alcohol Centre, alongside years spent as a police tracker, an orderly at the hospital and later as an Aboriginal Police aide. He worked for the Shire as a road worker and grave digger, and guided geologists from the Bureau of Mineral Resources across the region before roads were established.

In 1997, at more than 70 years of age, Mr Jugarie took part in the 350-kilometre ABC documentary The Human Race, travelling across the country from Halls Creek to Wyndham against two much younger competitors.

He completed the journey using only the stars and his knowledge of Country to navigate, sourcing food and water along the way.

But the run was not just about endurance.

Mr Jugarie described it as his “Walk Against Grog”, using the challenge to show his community that it was possible to achieve something huge without alcohol.

Mr Jugarie died on August 27, 1999. Today, his story is remembered in Halls Creek, where a statue in Pioneer Park stands as a tribute to his achievements.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Monument in Pioneer Park.
Credit: Shire of Halls Creek

JOHN MORIARTY FOOTBALL NATIONAL TALENT SHOWCASE



CALLING ALL TALENTED YOUNG INDIGENOUS FOOTBALLERS

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Life-changing opportunity in Sydney for talented female and male Indigenous footballers aged 12 to 16 years old, 30 - 31 May 2026.

- Be seen by the professional football community
- Mentoring by professional coaches and Indigenous athletes
- Travel and accommodation provided
- \$500 grant for football related costs
- 12 month JMF Scholarship opportunity



Provide players' name and details plus a video of them playing via the QR code or Whatsapp on 0482 707 870.

*Selection criteria applies



Slated June 20 for return of Halls Creek footy

The wait is almost over. Football is coming back to the Halls Creek town oval with completion of the oval due on June 20, marking a huge milestone for the community.

The Shire of Halls Creek has confirmed the mid-June return as work on the ground's major upgrade enters the home stretch. Shire CEO Sue Leonard said the project represents more than just a new green space for the town.

"This oval is the heart of Halls Creek, and seeing it come back to life is an incredible moment for all of us." Ms. Leonard said. "We aren't just fixing the grass; we are investing in our people. By having our local crews train alongside the experts, we are ensuring that the pride and the skills to look after this facility stay right here in our community."

Experts from NewGround have been on-site not just to fix the turf, but to train up a local crew in the skills needed to maintain the professional-standard surface for years to come. The Shire is currently in discussions with the SEKFL to finalise the season's progress, though officials have noted that the dates remain a "team effort" with Mother Nature. The lawn needs to be fully installed and the weather needs to be kind for the 20 deadline to stay firm.

WORDS BY SHIRE STAFF



Fan edit of Kendrick Davis. Credit: Getty Images

King of Kings: Kendrick Davis dethrones Bryce Cotton as King of the NBL

Kendric Davis has officially ascended the throne, leading the Sydney Kings to a dramatic 113–101 overtime victory against the Adelaide 36ers to clinch the NBL26 championship, with the best of five series ending 3-2. In front of a raucous crowd, Davis delivered an absolute masterclass with 35 points and 14 assists, securing the Larry Sengstock Trophy as Finals MVP.

The series saw the league's two best players face off, in Sydney's Davis and former Perth Wildcat, Adelaide's Bryce Cotton. Cotton,

who is widely regarded as the greatest player in NBL history, controversially claimed the regular-season MVP. This led to multiple moments between the pair throughout the championship. Ultimately, Davis dominated when it mattered most. He out-manouvered his veteran rival in game 5, ensuring the trophy returned to Sydney. With his Finals MVP and championship ring, Kendrick can rest on the throne as the undisputed King of the NBL... for now.

WORDS BY BILL LUCAS



Turf was laid on the Oval in March with plans on track for kick-off in June. Supplied: Shire of Halls Creeek



Kids enjoying the reopening of the Shire Pool after a four-month closure

To all our young people,

We want to talk straight with you mob. The Rec Centre and Pool are getting ready to open again soon. This place is for all of us – for sport, fun, family, and community.

We know some damage happened before. That kind of thing doesn't just hurt the building – it shuts everything down for months and takes it away from everyone in the community. We still have a lot to fix up, and some things we can't open yet. But we're starting fresh.

There will be no bans coming into this reopening. Everyone gets a fair go and a clean start. All we ask is this – respect the place, respect each other, and respect the staff.

If anything like that happens again, we will have to take it seriously, and bans will be put in place for a long time. We want this space to stay open for you, your family, and the whole community.

Respect the Rec. Respect the Pool. Respect your mob.

From Rec & Pool bosses: Aldo, Amanda & team

Deadly on the field: Top 10 Indigenous AFL stars of 2026 so far

Shai Bolton Fremantle Dockers

Key stats: 27 disposals, 1.3 goals

Arriving from Richmond as an All-Australian and dual premiership player, Shai Bolton certainly had an underwhelming first season in purple. He failed to place inside the top 10 of the club's Best and Fairest, and didn't have his usual game-breaking moments.

It's clear this didn't sit well with the mercurial forward. With an injury to Hayden Young, Shai moved to the midfield where his elite agility and creativity have flourished. If he continues this way, he will almost certainly collect his second All-Australian blazer, and may even push for a Brownlow.

Kysaiah Pickett Melbourne Demons

Key stats: 23 disposals, 1 goal

In his first full season after signing a record 7 year, \$12 million deal, Kozzy has continued playing in the same fashion that got him there. Leading a Melbourne team that many expected to fall down the ladder, he has been a dynamic and simply uncontainable force of nature. Round 3 saw him inspire his team to complete a 43 point comeback over Carlton.

Nasaih Wanganeen-Milera St Kilda Saints

Key stats: 23 disposals, 1 goal

The first \$2 million player, Nasiah has had a tough go to begin the 2026 season. Each round he has faced a tight tag, forcing coach Ross Lyon to play him in every position on the ground, desperately trying to shake the attention. Despite this, Nas' talent has shone through. He will look to figure out a consistent way to break the tag, which is sure to come most weeks for the next 10 years.

Charlie Cameron Brisbane Lions

Key stat: 13 disposals, 2.7 goals, 4.7 tackles

Coming off back-to-back premierships, the Lions started off the season with back-to-back losses. Despite his team's struggles, Cameron has starred by kicking nearly 3 goals a game and rediscovering his trademark agility and pressure. The Lions

will expect to return to the winners column, with Charlie should be a large part of the turnaround.

Isaiah Dudley Fremantle Dockers

Key stat: 12 disposals, 2.3 Goals, 7 score involvements

The shortest man in the AFL, Isaiah Dudley has a case for the most improved player across the first month of the season. A revelation last season, Dudley played 16 games despite being signed less than a month before the season started. While impressive, his fitness was a serious question mark. This year he looks a different man, able to run out games with serious impact. If the season ended today, Dudley would have a claim to a forward pocket in the All Australian team.

Joel Jefferey Gold Coast Suns

Key stat: 24 disposals, 7 marks

Jeffrey has evolved into a vital cog in Damien Hardwick's defensive machine, flourishing in a high-possession role across half-back. Averaging 24 touches and 7 marks, his ability to intercept and immediately trigger the Suns' "run and carry" style has made him a highlight-reel staple. In a month where the Gold Coast's ball movement has shredded opponents, Jeffrey's poise and precision from the back half have been the catalyst for their dangerous transition play.

Jarman Impey Hawthorn Hawks

Key stat: 20 touches, 6.7 marks

Experience counts, and Jarman Impey is proving it as the veteran anchor of a surging Hawthorn side. With the Hawks jumping to a 2-1 start, Impey's 20 touches and nearly seven marks a game have provided the cool head needed in Sam Mitchell's young backline. His rebounding brilliance was on full display in the opening rounds, ensuring the Hawks weren't just competitive, but winning the crucial moments.

Marcus Windhager St Kilda Saints

Key stat: 25.5 disposals 3.8 clearances

Toughness has always been part of the Windhager brand, but his start to 2026 has taken it to a new level. Despite playing through the pain of a broken hand, Marcus has been a beast in the Saints' engine room, averaging over 25 disposals and nearly four clearances a game. His ability to win the contested ball while restricted by a heavy guard has inspired his teammates and proved he is no longer just a defensive stopper, but a genuine ball-winning midfielder Ross Lyon can bank on.

Daniel Rioli Gold Coast Suns

Key stat: 17.0 disposals 3.0 tackles

Daniel Rioli does what Rioli's do, providing highlights and clean ball movement to the Suns' back half, in tandem with teammate Joel Jeffrey. In his second season at the Suns, he has helped to turn what has traditionally been an easy-beat into a juggernaut of the competition. Averaging 17 disposals and 3 tackles, Daniel has brought a premiership-winning edge to the Gold Coast, providing the leadership and elite pressure required to sustain their top-four form.

Bradley Hill St Kilda Saints

Key stat: 23.0 disposals per game 16.8 kicks per game

There is still nobody in the league who covers the turf quite like Bradley Hill. Recording 23 disposals a game – predominantly by foot with nearly 17 kicks – Hill has been the Saints' primary architect of play. His standout moment came in the Round 3 thriller against the Giants, where his relentless running and clinical ball use sparked a four-point victory. As the Saints navigate a tough 2026 fixture, Hill's veteran presence and running capacity remain a great asset on the outside.

WORDS BY BILL LUCAS



Free poster - Cut out the poster with scissors!

Deadly on the field: Top 10 Indigenous AFL stars of 2026 so far. Credit: AFL Photos





Desert Warriors with lightning carnival trophy. Credit: Aldean Macale

Desert Warriors crowned carnival champions

The Desert Warriors have claimed a strong victory at a football lightning carnival held in Kununurra last month, capping off an impressive performance built on determination, teamwork and community support.

With just two weeks to prepare, the side arrived ready to compete, playing with intensity and commitment across every match. Their efforts paid off, with the team holding their own from start to finish and ultimately taking out the carnival.

Despite the long journey to and from Kununurra, travel proved no obstacle. Players maintained a focused mindset throughout the trip, demonstrating resilience

and a shared commitment to representing their community with pride.

Veteran Clinton Cox was a standout both on and off the field, continuing to lead by example and guiding the team with experience and composure. His contribution was matched by rising talent Luke Bedford Jr, who delivered a stellar performance to earn best-on-ground honours for the team.

The win was the result of a collective effort, with every player contributing to the overall success. Team members and supporters alike have described the result as a proud moment for both the squad and the wider community.

The team also acknowledged the support that made the trip possible. Halls Creek Wunan, Job Pathways, Aunty Vick and their team were thanked for providing transport, ensuring the players travelled safely to and from the carnival. Additional appreciation was given to the local school for allowing access to training facilities in the lead-up, helping the players prepare in a short timeframe.

The victory highlights not only the talent within the Desert Warriors squad, but also the strength of community backing behind them.

WORDS BY ELDEAN MACALE