

Tyapa Kurra Kahl

Bush Tucker Garden Project - Case Study

Background

The October to December 2022 floods impacted 44 per cent of the Gannawarra Shire. As part of the recovery from the flood event, Emergency Recovery Victoria provided Council with funds to support Aboriginal self-determined flood recovery priorities. The Kerang Elders and Leaders Group prioritised the establishment of a bush tucker garden - a dedicated culturally safe space that could facilitate cultural learning, connection with Country, Yarn Ups and family gatherings.

The area adjacent to the Kerang Aboriginal gathering place, Kiranyuk (meaning 'Kerang'), was recognised as an ideal location for the development of the bush tucker garden. Approval for the project by Emergency Recovery Victoria included support for Council to engage an Aboriginal Knowledge Consultant through Northern District Community Health (NDCH).

A governance committee, facilitated by Council in partnership with NDCH and the Mallee District Aboriginal Service (MDAS), oversaw the project.

Works commenced in December 2024. The project was embraced by the community, with local residents participating in working bees to landscape the site, plant native species, create artworks, weed, mulch, and lay turf. The project culminated in the official opening of the Tyapa Kurra Kahl (meaning 'to plant on Country') bush tucker garden on 1 October 2025.

The project was made possible through partnerships and support from Council, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Northern District Community Health, Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), and the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) as part of the Gannawarra Community Flood Recovery Program.

Project Aims:

- Support the Aboriginal community to create a safe space to gather, yarn, celebrate cultural learning and strengthen connection to Country.
- Provide the opportunity to promote Aboriginal arts and culture throughout the community.
- Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.
- Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses for procurement of goods and services where possible.
- Provide opportunities for children and youth to learn about Country, language, stories and culture.

What did the project deliver?

- A landscaped indigenous bush tucker garden with seating areas, shade sail, firepit, raised garden beds, and native plantings.
- Two large Aboriginal murals.
- Engagement with the local Aboriginal community to guide the project and share and celebrate cultural knowledge.



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What did the project deliver? *continued*

- The planting of over 30 varieties of native plants from Barapa Barapa Country and across Australia valued for food, medicine, weaving and tool making.
- Interpretative signs highlighting food and medicinal uses and historical cultural information on plant species.
- An open turf lawn area and section of native lawn.
- A watering system for raised garden beds.
- A water pond and solar powered fountain to create a water-loving plant garden.
- Over 20 working bees, with community and agency staff working together to develop the garden.
- Support from a number of local small businesses and trades who contributed time, expertise, goods and services.
- Volunteer hours and donations by individuals and businesses.
- Collaboration of agencies with time, team members, resources and expertise.
- An official opening to celebrate the garden, storytelling, culture, artwork and community.
- Official opening featured:
 - Yidaki playing with Ganga Giri
 - Culture and artifacts with Colin Atkinson
 - Weaving and fish nets with Mel Lane
 - Bush tucker tastings
 - Bush tucker coffee and tea by Aboriginal youth involved in Sistas group
 - Smoking ceremony
 - Signing of a Partnership Agreement between Kerang Elders and Leaders Group and Gannawarra Local Agency Meeting (GLAM) partners.



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What did the project achieve?

- A landscaped indigenous bush tucker garden.
- A safe space for cultural learning, connection, storytelling and community gatherings.
- A new garden space utilised for additional Yarn Ups and family sessions.
- Naming of the garden, Tyapa Kurra Kahl, to increase connection to Barapa Wamba language.
- Plant interpretive signage to enhance cultural learning and practical guides for use.
- Plants to use as ingredients for catering at in-house events and activities including Yarn Ups.
- Raised timber garden beds to provide greater accessibility to edible plants.
- Sense of community pride by community coming together, connecting to Country, learning and developing cultural knowledge.
- Seating and shade areas and fire pit to provide areas to accommodate regular Yarn Ups and other cultural learning activities.
- Engagement of Aboriginal artists provided the opportunity for mentorship and guidance to children and youth in art design and application.
- Two large Aboriginal artwork murals created by young people with guidance and teaching from experienced local Aboriginal artists.
- The murals provide ongoing opportunities for storytelling and learning around art and culture.
- Sista's group large Tyapa Kurra Kahl mural was entered into the Kerang Rotary Easter Art Show competition.
- The Tyapa Kurra Kahl mural permanently installed at the entrance of the garden provides ongoing promotion of Aboriginal art.
- A turf lawn area provides an attractive play area for children.
- involvement of local small businesses and trades with time and expertise.
- Connection to the garden by local small businesses through donation of goods and services.
- An official opening attended by many Aboriginal community members.
- Aboriginal young people involved in ceremony and public speaking as part of the official opening.
- Aboriginal touring performer, Ganga Giri, engaged as part of the official opening and follow-up community cultural learning sessions.
- Food cultural knowledge shared with a local catering business providing ongoing sustainable opportunity for bush tucker tastings.

- Sista's group receiving barista training to support personal skill development, employability and ongoing events at the bush tucker garden.
- Sista's group confidently provided barista made coffee in a busy setting to attendees at the official opening.

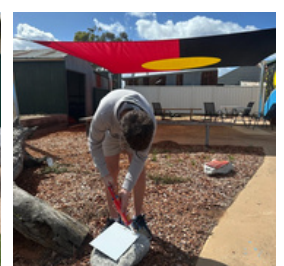


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Learnings:

1. The significant size of the space required a much larger effort than first anticipated and included the development of various different spaces and gardens such as edible plants, medical plants, water garden, separate seating areas, yarning circle, turf and lawned areas for children, large walls that required murals.
2. Involving many partners meant that more could be achieved and increased the sense of community pride in the project.
3. Restricted funding eligibility criteria meant that multiple funding sources were required to enable the project to deliver a diverse range of garden assets.
4. The development of the garden required specialised equipment and trades to achieve a high-quality result.
5. The bush tucker garden has provided benefits far beyond those anticipated, including a relaxed and safe space for gathering, learning, physical activity, storytelling, healthy eating and play.
6. To fulfill the obligations of funding agreements, a dedicated Council resource was required for the project duration to facilitate the partnership and governance, provide financial oversight, project management, engagement of trades, procurement, seeking and coordinating funding, marketing and promotion, and reporting requirements.
7. Engaging an Aboriginal Knowledge Consultant with expertise in the development of bush tucker gardens was essential to achieve the end result. The Aboriginal Knowledge Consultant provided:
 - A conduit for positive community engagement.
 - Developing and collating design ideas.
 - Inclusive communication of working bees and progress updates to encourage additional participation.
 - Networks for seeking additional support from businesses and trades.
 - Alternative sources of funding and donations.
 - Expertise in native plant choice and garden planting locations.
 - Knowledge for using plants in cultural cooking and substitutes to adapt western-style recipes.
 - Opportunities for sharing authentic cultural creative skills, techniques and storytelling.
 - Engagement of Elders, children and young people in all aspects of the project.
 - Respect for process and cultural sensitivities.



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Tyapa Kurra Kahl Official Opening: Wednesday, 1 October 2025



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