

Talk

August 2026

Young minds embrace culture through NAIDOC Week at Mallee Minors

For Children at Mallee Track Health and Community Service's Mallee Minors Early Years Centre in Ouyen have been exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through a week of hands-on learning, storytelling, and creativity as part of NAIDOC Week.

From colourful dot paintings and Indigenous puzzles to Dreaming stories, music and imaginative play, the activities encouraged children to develop an appreciation of Australia's First Nations cultures while learning the importance of kindness, respect and caring for Country.

Early Years Manager Kyra Nathan said the celebrations were designed to be respectful, authentic, and engaging for children of all ages.

"NAIDOC Week celebrations were respectful, authentic and fun for the children at Mallee Minors," Kyra Nathan said.

"Room Leader Lisa Bursill created meaningful activities including dot paintings, animal prints in playdough, Indigenous puzzles and imaginative play with animal capes. Activities also included sharing the Tiddalik Dreaming story, which was a big hit with the children."

"Rich learning was embedded throughout the week about the significance of Caring for Country and having respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history."

Children in the Sunshine Room, aged from birth to two-and-a-half years, were captivated by the traditional Dreaming story of Tiddalik the Frog, which teaches the importance of sharing natural resources and caring for the environment.

Children's Services Educator Lisa Bursill said the story sparked curiosity and meaningful conversations.

"The children loved the story. They found it really interesting and enjoyed pointing out all of the different animals," Lisa Bursill said.

"It gave us the opportunity to talk about the importance of our waterways and why they are so significant."

Throughout the week, children also created artwork inspired by Aboriginal symbols and colours, participated in daily Acknowledgements of Country, enjoyed Aboriginal music, explored Indigenous-themed puzzles, and dressed as native Australian animals.



Image: Lisa Bursill shows us artwork completed by Mallee Track Early Years kids and their families for NAIDOC Week Celebrations.

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For Lisa Bursill, introducing children to Aboriginal culture is an important part of helping them grow into respectful and compassionate members of the community.

"A child is like a blank canvas," she said.

"They're like a sponge and take everything in, so it's important we teach them that everyone deserves respect and empathy. It doesn't matter what colour your skin is, what language you speak or where you come from, we're all human and we all need to accept one another."

The learning extended beyond the classroom, with families invited to share what reconciliation means to them. Responses highlighted themes of kindness, acceptance, understanding and allowing people to express themselves.

Parent and Mallee Track staff member Caitlin Vine said she was delighted to see the children embracing the activities.

"It was really lovely to receive a message from childcare and see Tommy and all the other children getting involved in NAIDOC Week," Caitlin Vine said.

"They had some really cool artwork, costumes and activities, and it was wonderful to see them learning about culture in such a positive and engaging way."

Caitlin Vine said the breadth of experiences offered through Mallee Minors was something families deeply appreciated.

"I'm always blown away by the childcare and everything the Early Years team provides. The children are exposed to so much variety and they're learning about diversity and culture from such a young age. I think that's fantastic."

MTHCS Director of Community Services Lyndal Munro said the project reflected the organisation's commitment to inclusion and belonging.

"Our Early Years Services NAIDOC Week artwork project celebrated culture, diversity and connection, reflecting MTHCS's value of Compassion and our commitment to building a thriving community where everyone feels welcomed, respected and included," Lyndal Munro said.

"By celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through engaging activities, we are strengthening understanding, belonging and kindness, while ensuring all children and families feel valued and connected."

The activities form part of Mallee Minors' ongoing commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into everyday learning, helping children build understanding, respect, and appreciation for the world's oldest continuing cultures from the very beginning of their educational journey.



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LAUNCH OF
**MALLEE
TRACK**
2026 TO 2029
STRATEGIC PLAN



RSVP to smaloney@mthcs.vic.gov.au
or call 0411 104 598

4 August	Ouyen	"Meet and Eat" at Ouyen Club 12 - 1pm	Dr Frances Peart Rosemary Cattanech
6 August	Speed	PAG Group - Golf Club 10:30 - 11:30am	Dr Frances Peart Sharon Maloney
11 August	Underbool	"Meet and Eat" at Football Clubrooms 12 - 1pm	Dr Frances Peart Sharon Maloney
12 August	Woomelang	PAG Group - Multipurpose Centre (next to General Store) 10:30 - 11:30am	Lyndal Munro Sharon Maloney
13 August	Sea Lake	POSTPONED	Rosemary Cattanech Sharon Maloney
17 August	Patchewollock	Community Meal - Community Hall 12 - 1pm	Dr Frances Peart
18 August	Culgoa	Morning tea - Community Hall 10:30 - 11:30am	Pennie Wisneske Sharon Maloney
21 August	Berriwillock	Morning tea - Community Centre 10am - 11am	Dr Frances Peart Sharon Maloney
25 August	Murrayville	Murrayville NHH - PAG rooms 10:30 - 11:30am	Lyndal Munro Rosemary Cattanech