



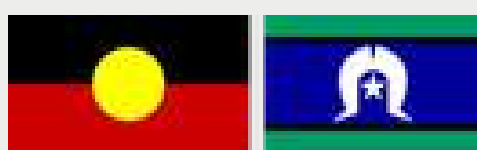
**ABORIGINAL  
COMMUNITY  
ELDERS  
SERVICES INC.**

# NEWSLETTER

Volume 1



2025



**ACES acknowledges and pay respects to all the Elders of the Traditional Owners of this land now known as Victoria.**

**Our service is based on the banks of the Merri Creek in Brunswick East on the lands of the proud Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.**







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# The Latest at ACES

Welcome to our newsletter!

Stay tuned for more updates in the future.

ACES is proud to announce the completion of the Aunty Fay Carter Administration Building, which includes the renovation of our Reception, Administration, and Social Support building. We celebrated the official opening in February, with a special ceremony. The event was attended by ACES Elders, Families, the Community, Minister Ingrid Stitt, Commissioner Andrea Kelly, ACCO CEOs, and local councilors.

We just wrapped up our Easter Lunch here at ACES, and what a celebration it was! With a fantastic Jimmy Barnes impersonator serenading us with the classics, the Elders and staff had so much fun singing and eating a beautiful lunch made and served by our lovely kitchen staff, Darren and Yupin.

It was a truly memorable afternoon of music, laughter, and connection.





# ACES Upcoming Events and Developments

## Stage Two of Our Refurbishment:

### Exciting Upgrades Underway!



We are excited to share that Stage Two of our refurbishment project is now underway, thanks to the generous funding commitment from the Albanese Labor Government in 2022. This funding is enabling us to enhance our two hostel buildings with the following upgrades:

- Creation of five new aged care standard double rooms, including one palliative care room
- Connecting the two hostel buildings under one roof
- A new nurse's station
- Additional facility improvements

As construction progresses, we ask that visitors, Elders and Staff in the construction area take extra care. Please also be mindful of increased traffic around the car park and entrance to ACES.

The project is expected to be completed within the next 6 months.

Thank you for your understanding and support during this exciting transformation!

# Aunty Iris Lovett Gardiner Administration Building Launch





# Elder Spotlight



*Aunt's totem is the Black Red-Tailed Cockatoo (Willan)*



## **Aunty Frances** **Gunditjmara Woman** **ACES Resident**

### **Early Life**

From the 1960s, Aunty Frances dedicated her life to standing up for Aboriginal rights and supporting her community. Witnessing discrimination in Melbourne's workplaces, she refused to stay silent, advocating for fairness and justice.

As Aboriginal community-controlled services grew in Victoria during the 1970s and 1980s, Aunt worked in Aboriginal hostels, providing refuge for women and children facing violence and homelessness. She believed in fostering dignity and pride, rather than imposing rigid, outdated systems on Aboriginal Victorians. Committed to improving health services, Frances was among the first students at Koorie Kollij in 1982, training as an Aboriginal Community Health worker. Later, she played a key role in the Broadmeadows Koorie Court, supporting offenders by reinforcing cultural identity and responsibility.

Passionate about Elders' welfare, she helped establish Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES) and later secured a dedicated space for Elders to gather, launching *Elders Making a Difference* in 2014.

### **Later Life**

In her eighties, Frances pursued her love of art, earning a Diploma in Visual Arts from RMIT and showcasing her work in exhibitions.

Now in her nineties, Aunty Frances continues to embrace life with enthusiasm. She regularly participates in games, live entertainment, and art sessions. She is a passionate choir member and is always keen on a yarn. Aunt has contributed so much and has recently received an award for these outstanding contributions to the community.





# Staff Spotlight



*Mollie's totem is Dhinawan the Emu (Ngurrui).*

## **Mollie M** **Ngemba Woman** **Project Officer & Fleet Manager, ACES**

### **How long have you been with ACES?**

*I have been with ACES for exactly 1 year now!*

### **What do you enjoy the most about working with and around the Elders?**

*My favourite part is having a yarn with the Elders and learning about their lives. I also really enjoy the aspects of my role where I get to assist in the greater scheme of providing Elders the best quality of care, particularly if it's hands on!*

### **Can you tell us about your cultural background?**

*I am proud to be built on generations of resilient, hard working, kind and caring Ngemba women, from the banks of Brewarrina, NSW.*

### **What was your dream job as a child?**

*I really wanted to be a Veterinarian! I practiced putting band-aids on my stuffed animals and used to help bugs find food in the garden as practice.*

### **What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?**

*I write and play music, I make silver jewellery, sew, enjoy all types of design, gardening, and working with clay! Creativity is my biggest outlet*

### **Can you share a key moment that has influenced your life?**

*Moving away from my family and friends who are all currently in Canberra has been a huge reality check in terms of building my own Community. It's important to create meaningful, positive relationships.*



# Elder Care Engagement Support Services

## Residential Care

Residential Care provides services including regular medical care by doctors, emergency on-call support, fortnightly podiatry, weekly physiotherapy and occupational therapy, access to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), organized medical appointments with transport assistance, a registered nurse on every shift, and a culturally safe environment.

## Outreach

ACES outreach supports older people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds living in and around metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. We aim to assist Elders to remain living safely and independently in the comfort of their own homes and communities. Each Elder's services are coordinated and monitored by an individually allocated case manager, and the needs of Elders are assessed and regularly reviewed in consultation with the Elder, relevant family members, carers, and other service providers.

## Social Support

### Social Support Group Key Features:

- Social contact through group and community activities.
- Activities tailored to cultural, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs.
- Support for caregivers, providing them with a break.
- Priority given to Indigenous people assessed as suitable participants.
- Transport pick-up service within our catchment area.
- Daily morning tea and lunch for all participants.

## Eligibility

You may be eligible for ACES' services if you are 45 or older, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, have a current Aged Care Assessment, have an aging-related illness, are frail or less independent, and do not have a home care provider.





# Residential Care



## Director of Nursing: Janelle Hodgson

At ACES, our residential care program offers a culturally safe, supportive home for Aboriginal Elders. We provide 24/7 personalised care, nutritious meals, and cultural activities that nurture wellbeing and connection to community. Our dedicated team ensures Elders feel valued, respected, and at home.



Last November Elders from Residential care had fun participating in some of the Merri-Bek City Council Senior's Festival events, enjoying the theme of 'Explore. Engage. Evolve.'

The Elvis Forever concert advertised as 'ENGAGE in the classic rock hits of singing swooner Elvis Presley, performed by the talented tribute artist Damian Mullins.' was attended by Aunty Frances, Uncle Graham and Uncle Craig – who had an absolute ball, singing along and enjoying 'Elvis' signature moves!

Uncle Craig then attended the EXPLORE Flora and Fauna walk and luncheon which was a beautiful morning joining the team from the agewell team and the Merri-Bek Open Space Conservation Programs Officer Charlotte, for a short 1.5km loop walk from Coburg Lake around Edgars Creek Wetlands. Learning about the flora and fauna thriving in Merri-bek and receiving a copy of their Gardens for Wildlife book.







## Manager

Tarryn Conway

## Community Engagement

Rhonda Watson

## Metro Case Managers

Norma Bamblett

Brent Budin

Thobeka Archer

## Regional Care Managers

Kwaii Sinclair

Sunseria Ducat

Shae Parsons

Cecelia Atkinson

The ACES Outreach team, led by our dedicated manager Tarryn, consists of six committed staff members who provide essential support to 83 Elders across both regional and metropolitan areas. Our mission is to ensure the well-being of our Elders through regular engagement and personalised care.



We stay connected with our Elders through weekly phone calls and regular in-person visits, sharing time over a cup of tea or coffee to foster companionship. We assist with medical appointments; organising and attending when needed - to ensure they receive proper care. Additionally, we coordinate social activities that promote connection, engagement, and a strong sense of community. Our ongoing support ensures our Elders feel valued, respected, and well cared for.





# Social Support



## A Busy and Exciting Start to the Year!

It's been a very exciting couple of months for the social support group! Our Elders and clients have been actively participating in a variety of activities, including:

**Arts & Crafts | Hydrotherapy | Bingo | Pottery & Mosaics**

These activities encourage creativity and mobility. Digital Literacy Sessions on Wednesdays are also helping Elders navigate technology and stay connected with loved ones. Being back onsite this month has brought much excitement, and everyone feels like they have finally come home again, to a shiny new building!



## A Time for Reflection

Sadly, one of our respected and much-loved Elders passed into the Dreaming this month. Many ACES staff and Elders attended his celebration of life, which was a beautiful send-off. His presence will be deeply missed.



## What Happened in April?

In addition to our usual activities, we had two exciting outings:

- **Collingwood Children's Farm**
- **Werribee Zoo**

These locations were chosen by Elders and clients during yarning sessions with ACES staff. All social support activities are based on their choices and interests.

## Join Our Social Support Group!

We currently have vacancies in the group and would love to hear from anyone who would like to join. If you or someone you know is interested, please reach out to ACES for more information.

**Amanda McDonough**

Ph: 0417 510 954

Email: [amandam@acesinc.org.au](mailto:amandam@acesinc.org.au)





# Leadership Reflections

## James Atkinson, CEO

James brings over 30 years of experience in Aboriginal services and government leadership, guided by the wisdom of his Elders and a deep commitment to cultural preservation and community advancement. With a strong background in business and policy, he continues to advocate for sustainable, culturally safe aged care that meets the needs of his Elders.



## Janelle, Director of Nursing

Janelle, our dedicated Director of Nursing, has supported Elders at ACES for many years with compassion and care. As the Elders' home is about to undergo exciting improvements, she continues to adapt and lead, supporting the Elders and staff through this transition period. Despite the many changes, Janelle remains a steady presence, ensuring Elders receive the high-quality care they deserve.

## Tarryn, Outreach Manager

*"We're thrilled to welcome two new team members!"*

**Aunty Cilla Atkinson** joins us with 8+ years' experience as a Social Emotional Wellbeing Officer on Cummera, bringing strong community and elder connections. **Shae Parsons** joins our regional case management team with elder care qualifications and a passion for supporting elders. As Manager of the Elder Care Urban and Outreach Teams, I'm excited for the year ahead and our continued commitment to quality elder care."



## Amanda, Social Support Manager

*"It's been a joy to return to our beautiful new space after a year offsite. Seeing the improvements and, most importantly, watching the Elders reconnect, share meals, do crafts, and enjoy each other's company has been truly special."*



# Fish Stew

## Ingredients:

- 1 kg firm white fish (like barramundi or snapper), cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or native macadamia oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 small zucchini, sliced
- 1 cup pumpkin, cubed
- 2 medium potatoes, diced
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 4 cups fish stock (or water)
- 1 tablespoon lemon myrtle leaves (or zest of a lemon)
- 1 tablespoon ground wattleseed
- 1 tablespoon fresh bush tomato paste (or tomato paste)
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme or native thyme (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Juice of 1 finger lime (or a regular lime)
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish



## Instructions:

1. Cut the fish fillets into chunks and set aside. Make sure to remove any bones.
2. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger, and cook until softened and fragrant (around 3 minutes).
3. Add the red bell pepper, zucchini, pumpkin, and potatoes. Sauté for another 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Add the fish stock (or water) and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are nearly tender.
5. Add the fish chunks to the pot, followed by the coconut milk, lemon myrtle (or lemon zest), wattleseed, and bush tomato paste. Stir gently to combine.
6. Simmer for another 10 minutes until the fish is cooked through and flakes easily.
7. Season the stew with salt and pepper to taste. Add the juice of the finger lime (or lime) for a fresh citrusy kick.
8. Ladle the stew into bowls and garnish with fresh coriander leaves.
9. Serve with traditional bush bread or over steamed rice.

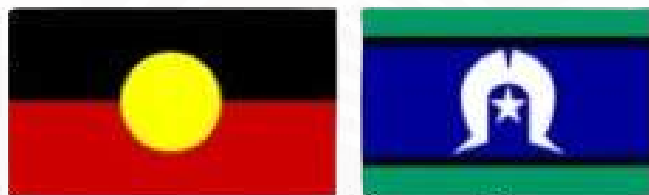








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