

Media Release

10 September 2025

Vivid artwork of Cockburn artist and Aboriginal Elder Neta Knapp promotes reconciliation in City

The vivid blue and teal waters of the ocean and wetlands of Beeliar Boodjar are depicted in a design by respected Cockburn artist and Aboriginal Elder Neta Knapp which now adorns staff uniforms and Spearwood reception foyer at the City of Cockburn.

Called 'Footprints on the Waters: Boodja to Kep – healing through spiritual connection', Aunty Neta's vibrant artwork was chosen to symbolise how the Cockburn community is embracing reconciliation, increasing equity and listening to First Nations voices.

Its use also meets an action in the City's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 to promote reconciliation through the City's many spheres of influence.

City of Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett said embracing Aunty Neta's eye-catching artwork reflected the equity, cohesion and shared identity that were hallmarks of the City of Cockburn.

"The City of Cockburn's vision for reconciliation is to create an inclusive community with strong relationships across cultures based on mutual respect and understanding," Mayor Howlett said.

"Our actions will contribute to the goal of closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians with respect to equitable access to services, inclusion in decision making and to employment and business opportunities, so that all people can be valued and participate fully in the Cockburn community."

City of Cockburn Acting Chief Executive Officer Carissa Bywater said Aunty Neta's design was among a variety of artworks purchased by the City for its collection during the City's annual community Show Off Exhibition in 2024.

"Aunty Neta is not only a highly respected artist and Elder, she is an active member of the City's Aboriginal Reference Group established in 2002. It's a privilege to have her artwork on display for everyone to appreciate."

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“We are proud to have and promote this fantastic reciprocal relationship with Cockburn’s Nyungar community.”

Aunty Neta said she had dedicated her life to using her art to depict the resilience and power of the stories passed on to her by her Elders.

“The artwork is a legacy and that was my vision. I and my people were under a government policy that denied who we are, our language and culture on our land,” she said.

“Having my art displayed by government in their buildings demonstrates that Aboriginal people are accepted in Cockburn.”

Aunty Neta is from the Goring/Kepacurl/Nyungar groups and was born in Gnowangerup in the state’s South West. A member of the Stolen Generations, she was raised at the Roelands Mission.

She is an inaugural member of the City’s Arts Hall of fame announced in June this year and has been painting for many years.

Her work is on display in many locations including Government House, St John of God Hospital Subiaco, and MercyCare. She is an Artist in Residence at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle where she is on three boards.

“Art is a daily practice for me,” Aunty Neta said.

“After I’ve spent time with everybody else, I come back to who I am, to relax and nourish my spiritual connection with the land. I do that every day through my art practice.”

She said the different shades of blue in the artwork related to the waters of the Beeliam wetlands and Derbal Nara (Cockburn Sound) linked by the green aquatic grasses that provide the vital food and shelter that sustains life.



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