

December 2025

DWECH news

NGATA!

Welcome to the first (and last) edition for 2025 of the DWECH Community Newsletter.

Each month, we'll share updates, stories, and upcoming events from across our programs. As we head into the festive season, we celebrate our achievements and look forward to an exciting year ahead. Thank you for walking alongside us in health and wellbeing.



Remember to get your Health Check

And get a pair of deadly
crocs like Uncle Theo!

Contact our Medical clinic
and book yourself in today!



What's On

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS PARTY

Portland Leisure & Aquatic Centre

18th December -
11-2pm



MON

Bingo - Wellington Rd
11:00AM - 1:00PM

TUE

Playgroup - Wellington Rd
10:00AM - 1:00PM

WED

Women's Group - Julia St
10:00AM - 1:00PM

THU

Mob Bingo - Julia St
10:00AM - 1:00PM

**Every second Thursday*

FRI

Community Lunch - Wellington Rd
12:00PM - 1:30PM

**Every second Friday*

Contact Us

Main office & Medical Clinic
14-18 Wellington Road, Portland VIC 3305
(03) 5521 7535

Ngootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre
90 Julia Street, Portland VIC 3305
4504 2511

www.dwech.com.au





**Dhauwurd-Wurrung
Elderly & Community
Health Services Inc.**

FOOD AND TOY DRIVE

Help brighten someone's holiday—
donate a Christmas Cheer pack today!

What to donate

- ✦ Unwrapped gifts for children
- ✦ Non-perishable/long shelf life food items

Where to drop off

- ✦ 18 Wellington Rd - Reception
- ✦ 90 Julia St - Reception

Deadline

We will be accepting donations & applications to receive Christmas Cheer packs until:

Friday 5th December

Delivery Week

Christmas Cheer packs will be available to collect on the week of:

8-12th December

If you wish to have them delivered, please contact us.

Need some extra help this Christmas?

We're here to help—get in touch to receive a gift or food pack.

Contact us directly or speak with your support worker.

*Please note this is only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Social & Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB)

Our programs have continued to expand, including Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) support, harm reduction and overdose prevention education, and peer mentoring through lived experience workers. The Well Women and Children's Health program empowered women and families to access holistic health care, with 24 participants engaged through the Tannumbora Women's Group. Our Playgroup program delivered 52 sessions for 25 enrolled children, creating safe spaces for learning and social development.

This year, SEWB delivered 8,382 contact hours and supported 7,104 client contacts.

One of the highlights of the year was our Family Camp, which brought families together to share stories, strengthen relationships, and build community connections.

We also celebrated the success of the Stoked Surf Therapy Indigenous Surf Program, which received an award for its outstanding contribution to wellbeing and cultural engagement.





Ngootyoong Mental Wellness Event

On Friday, 14th November, over 80 community members of all ages gathered at the Nootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre for an afternoon dedicated to mental health and wellbeing.

Braydon Saunders welcomed everyone with a smoking ceremony and encouraged reflection on the last time we used smoke to cleanse, highlighting the importance of traditional healing ceremonies, self-care, and keeping our community strong.

The event featured a vibrant mix of activities, including blending healing essential oils using traditional native plants with expert advice from Elisha, creating a leaf for the gratitude tree, reading a reflection poem from by Richard, connecting with the amazing volunteers - both human and animal - from the Portland District therapy dogs, taking photos with our possum skin cloak, and exploring creativity by decorating a pot to plant with a flower, vegetable, or herb to take home. Raffle tickets were handed out at the completion of each activity, adding to the excitement of the final prize draw.

Attendees also enjoyed nutritious smoothies, a BBQ dinner, and Auntie Milly's delicious salads.

Participants brought along their Wellbeing Passports, which they had worked on in the month prior to the event, for a chance to win exciting raffle and door prizes, culminating in the announcement of major prize winners.

Thanks to our staff and volunteers for making the day a huge success, reminding us of the power of self-care, community connection, and the importance of checking in on ourselves and each other.





YOU'RE INVITED TO
DHAUWURD-WURRUNG'S

Christmas POOL PARTY

Fun and games in and out of the water

A visit from Santa and friends /
Live Music / BBQ / Games

THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER
11AM - 2PM

**PORTLAND LEISURE AND
AQUATIC CENTRE**
22 BENTINCK ST, PORTLAND

DON'T FORGET YOUR
TOWEL & A CHANGE
OF CLOTHES





Women's Group

Our Women's Group enjoyed an exciting first trip to Melbourne, visiting the Koori Heritage Trust to see Auntie Connie's beautiful weaving display- a truly inspiring experience.

Looking ahead, our final Women's Group gathering for the year will be on 10th December, so mark your calendars!

Our Family Camp is coming in January, so stay tuned for more details.

Please note WWATCH and Family Services are now based at our Wellington Road site



Family Services Symposium 2025

Earlier this month, Rose represented us at the Family Services Symposium at The Glasshouse in Melbourne, where she presented the WWATCH (Well Women and Their Children) program. Rose described the event as "amazing and very empowering," and we're proud of her contribution.

LivingWorks SafeYARN

Suicide Prevention Skills Training

- Monday 15th December
- 10:00am - 2:30pm
- Ngootyoong Cultural Healing Centre
90 Julia Street Portland

Register via Eventbrite



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members only



Playgroup

November has been a month full of fun and learning for our playgroup! We've enjoyed connecting with Windamara's Heywood Playgroup and sharing lots of exciting experiences. The children sang along with Uncle Jayden, learning language through music in a way that was both joyful and educational. We had some magical visits from Buzz Lightyear and Poppy from Trolls, which brought plenty of smiles and laughter.

We've also rolled up our sleeves to start our very own veggie garden—sparking curiosity about nature and healthy eating. It's been a wonderful month of creativity, culture, and community spirit!



Halloween was a highlight with trick-or-treating at DWECH.



Health Promotion



Our health promotion initiatives have continued to grow, empowering community members to take charge of their health. This year, we delivered fluoride varnish applications for children, ear and eye health services, and a range of community education events focused on healthy living.

We are proud to have secured Tackling Indigenous Smoking and Vaping positions across the region, ensuring local knowledge and culturally appropriate strategies are at the forefront of this important work. These initiatives reflect our commitment to prevention and early intervention, helping our community live longer, healthier lives.

Home & Community Care (HACC)

Changes - Support at Home

From 1 November 2025, the current Home Care Package (HCP) program will transition to the new Support at Home model.

Existing clients will automatically move to the new program with no changes to funding or contributions. Services will continue without interruption, but all clients will have updated service agreements and care plans under the new Aged Care Act.

The Act also introduces a Statement of Rights, ensuring safe, respectful, and culturally appropriate care.

For more details, visit myagedcare.gov.au or contact your Package Coordinator.



DWECH Meals

Home-style meals are available for purchase weekly on a 6-week rotating menu open to all community.

- Home Care Package holders may be eligible for partial funding—check with your provider.
- Pickup or delivery available (Portland area only)

Download our menu & read more: dwech.com.au/catering-portland

Mob Bingo for Elders

We have had another very successful Mob Bingo for Elders this year with Elders from Portland, Heywood and Hamilton attending. Every fortnight we enjoyed being together at the Ngootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre yarning, catching up, and of course playing to win lovely prizes. We usual play 14 games with a break in between for lunch and catch up.

Many thanks to Auntie Millie for the beautiful morning teas and lunches. If you are Indigenous and over 50 years old, we would love you to join us.

Please contact Michelle on 0491 491 591 or Genaya at Julia Street reception if you would like more information for 2026.



New Pathology service at Medical

As of the 17th November, 4Cyte Pathology will be operating out of our clinic. They will be available to anyone with a referral and are fully bulk-billed.

Clinic build

Infrastructure upgrades have also been a priority. Stage 1 of our new medical clinic wing is complete, creating a modern and welcoming space for patients. Stage 2 is planned for 2026. We are excited to announce that pathology services commenced onsite in November 2025, improving convenience and reducing wait times for results.




Scan the QR or go to the link below:
forms.office.com/r/2rPZFW1Z0K

Dental Health service survey

WDAC (Western District ACCO Collective) are working to improve access to dental health services across the Western District, and your feedback is essential. By completing this short survey, you'll help us understand the challenges families face and the support you need. It only takes a few minutes, and your insights will guide advocacy for better, culturally safe dental care in our region.

DWECH Medical

 (03) 5521 7535

 medical@dwech.com.au

- Fully bulk-billing clinic
- Walk-in appointments available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community
- Visiting allied health clinicians
- Referrals available for our specialist clinics and allied health by booking an appointment

Western District ACCO Collective (WDAC)

Update: September – November 2025

Advocacy and Governance

WDAC has had an active few months, strengthening regional governance and advancing self-determination through key meetings, workshops, and advocacy efforts.

Key Highlights

- WDAC 20-Year Community Strengthening Plan
- Launched in Melbourne and Canberra, this plan sets a long-term vision for holistic, place-based solutions across housing, health, education, and family strengthening.
- Parliamentary Engagements
- WDAC met with Victorian and Federal Ministers to advocate for:
 - ACCO-led housing models and Elders' residential care.
 - Early Years Learning Centres and youth leadership initiatives.
 - Whole-of-government investment in prevention and family strengthening. Ministers expressed strong interest in visiting Western District ACCOs in 2026.
- Funding and Policy Opportunities
 - WDAC will seek to redirect \$0.5m DFFH underspend for regional projects.
 - Advocacy for equitable housing and homelessness funding under the Housing Australia Future Fund.
 - Engagement with DSS for new prevention and early intervention funding streams.
- Governance and Treaty Focus
- WDAC continues to strengthen partnerships with the First Peoples Assembly and Treaty Authority, preparing for upcoming governance developments.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 2nd December 2025 (Online, 1–3pm)
Focus: Treaty and ACCO Governance.
For more details, visit www.wdac.com.au



DWECH's Role

Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service (DWECH) has been a strong voice in these discussions. Tamika Holt, our CEO, represented DWECH at key WDAC meetings, including the November online session reflecting on Parliamentary visits. Tamika's leadership ensured that health priorities, Elders' care, and culturally safe housing models remain central to WDAC's advocacy. Her contributions also supported WDAC's push for equitable funding and ACCO-led solutions for family strengthening and early intervention.

Upcoming Priorities

- March–April 2026: Meetings with Victorian Department Secretaries and Ministers.
- August–September 2026: Federal Ministerial visits.
- Development of initiative briefs aligned to the WDAC 20-Year Plan, including housing, early years, youth engagement, and foster care models.

Some of the new faces to DWECH



Jane
SEWB Coordinator



Charley
People & Culture
Administrator



leesha
SaH Worker



Jade
SEWB Worker



Kelly
SaH Worker



Jodie
Medical Receptionist



Anna
SEWB WWATCH Worker

Celebrating Staff Development



(L-R) Anna, Karla and Sarah completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)



Kylie recently completed her Certificate III in Community Services

December

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
1 	2	3	4 Yarn Smart @ Nootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre, 11am	5 *Food & Toy Drive- Applications Close*  Playgroup- On country, Christmas Party with Heywood Playgroup	6	7
8   Collection of Food & Toy Hampers to commence	9  Playgroup- Strawberry picking & BBQ	10	11  Mob Bingo- Christmas Breakup Yarn Smart @ Ngootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre, 11am	12  LAST Community Lunch for 2025  Playgroup- Christmas Arts & Crafts	13	14
15  SafeYARN @ Ngootyoong Mara Cultural Healing Centre, 10am 	16  LAST Playgroup for 2025- Graduation and Santa Visit	17  Cut off day for 1st meal delivery for 2026	18  COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS PARTY 	19 NO Playgroup	20	21
22	23  Closing from 12pm- Reopening Monday 12th January 2026	24	25  Merry Christmas	26  Boxing Day	27	28
29	30	31  NEW YEAR'S EVE				

As the festive season approaches, DWECH extends warm wishes to all community members for a safe and joyful Christmas and New Year.

Thank you for your continued support.
We look forward to walking together in health and wellbeing in 2026.

