



Media Release

Men Gather on Country as Big Fire Big Dream Forum Continues to Grow a Movement for Healing and Leadership

HOME VALLEY STATION, EAST KIMBERLEY

More than a men's forum, the Stronger In Our Way Men's Forums have become a growing movement bringing men together to heal, reconnect and strengthen their roles as fathers, leaders, mentors and community members.

This week Aboriginal men, community leaders, service providers and practitioners from across the Kimberley and northern Australia have gathered on Country at Home Valley Station for the 2026 Big Fire - Big Dream Men's Forum, hosted by Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC).

Now in its third year, the forum continues to evolve in response to what men themselves have said they need. Feedback from previous forums highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces where men can connect with each other, spend time on Country, share stories, learn from lived experience and explore pathways to healing.

This year's program has been deliberately designed around those reflections, creating space for men to slow down, connect, participate in workshops, hear from speakers with lived experience and build relationships that extend well beyond the two-day gathering.

KWAC Chief Executive Officer Adrian McCann said the forum demonstrates the power of listening to men and continuing the conversation year after year.

"One of the strongest messages we heard from previous forums was that men need opportunities to come together not just when things are going wrong," Mr McCann said.

"This year we've focused on creating that space. Time on Country, opportunities to yarn, practical workshops, cultural connection and hearing from men who have walked their own healing journeys."

"What makes this forum special is that it continues to be shaped by the men who attend. Each year we listen, learn, and build on what we've heard. The forum is evolving because the conversation is evolving."

"The forum is ultimately about strengthening men so they can strengthen families, communities and future generations."

The forum features presentations and workshops from leading voices in men's wellbeing, healing, trauma recovery and leadership, including Associate Professor Dr Clinton Schultz, First Nations psychologist and Director of First Nations Strategy and Research at the Black Dog Institute; Darryl Gardiner, founder of Rolling With The Punches; Jeremy Donovan, Director of the Jeremy Donovan Group and lead of the Northern Australian Aboriginal Men's Alliance (NAAMA); Troy Reardon from The Comeback Co.; and local facilitators and men's champions from Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service (OVAHS), Gawooleng Yawoodeng Aboriginal Corporation (GYAC) and KWAC's Men's Shed. The incredibly talented Salty One (Lowell Hunter) also ran a creative workshop with the men that will become artwork for future forums.

Alongside the formal program, the gathering provides valuable opportunities for men from different communities, organisations and backgrounds to build relationships, share experiences and explore how they can collectively support the next generation.

The forum also reflects the growing collaboration occurring across the men's sector, with local Kununurra services continuing conversations that have emerged through previous forums and a series of men's sector gatherings held throughout the year.

While the challenges facing many men are complex, the message emerging from the forum has been clear: solutions are most effective when they are shaped by men themselves, grounded in culture and supported by strong relationships. The forum has provided an important opportunity to listen, learn and continue building pathways that support men, families and communities to thrive.

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About Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation

Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation (KWAC) is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation (ACCO), led by community, for community. Based in Kununurra in Western Australia, we have proudly supported our people since 1979, and we are the 35th registered Indigenous Corporation in Australia.

We deliver culturally grounded, community-led programs that strengthen families, support children and young people, and respond to community needs. Our work is guided by culture, connection to Country, and the strength of local Aboriginal leadership – because strong communities are built from within.

Bio Associate Professor Clinton Schultz

Associate Professor Clinton Schultz is a Gamilaraay man, father of three, and registered psychologist with more than 15 years' experience in social and emotional wellbeing. He has a keen interest in lore, culture, planetary health, and holistic wellness, particularly the wellbeing of workers in health and community services. Clinton obtained his PhD from the Griffith University School of Medicine, titled *Winanga-li-gu (Higher order listening), Guwaa-li-gu (Higher order speaking), Maruma-li-gu (Higher order healing): Factors of holistic wellbeing for members of the Aboriginal health and community workforce*. Clinton received the award for academic excellence in a thesis from Griffith University for this work, previously been awarded IAHA Allied Health Professional of the year (2019), and Griffith University Indigenous Alumni of the year (2018). He is the Director of First Nations Strategy at the Black Dog Institute and a Senior Researcher with UNSW.

Bio Lowell Hunter

Lowell Hunter is a proud Nyul Nyul Saltwater man from the Kimberley's in Western Australia, who grew up on Gunditjmarra Country in Warrnambool, and now lives on Wathaurong Country, Geelong. Although far apart, each of these special places has kept Lowell strongly connected to the ocean his whole life.

Lowell is a multi-award winning artist who creates sand art and uses drone photography to capture the scale of his works within breathtaking landscapes, which all started simply, as a way for him to get out and connect with culture, Country and sea.

Using only his feet, Lowell carves stories into the sand using the same foot movements he was taught through Traditional dance movements his people have practiced for countless generations. Lowell's artwork tells stories of family, identity and connection.

Bio Troy Reardon

Troy Reardon is the founder of The Comeback Co. and a Sydney-based lived-experience mentor working in addiction recovery, men's wellbeing, and community-led healing.

Troy's life journey has been shaped by addiction, violence, and the long, deliberate work of finding his way back. He grew up in housing commission in Malabar, lost his father to addiction, and grew up with a mother who was also navigating addiction of her own. Troy has been given several chances in life. He was stabbed at 19 in an attack that almost took his life, and for the next five years lived through active addiction - using ice and compulsively gambling daily. At 24, after a friend refused to leave his side, Troy walked into rehab and began the slow, deliberate work of building a different life. He has now been sober and gamble-free for nine years.

Today, Troy mentors' men one-on-one through compulsive gambling, drug, and alcohol recovery, runs weekly community training programs at Maroubra Beach for young men doing it tough, and delivers lived experience talks across Australia. He works in partnership with organisations including the National Rugby League, councils, corporates, schools, and communities, and is supported by a partnering psychologist to ensure participants needing clinical care are referred safely.

Troy's approach is grounded in honesty, brotherhood, and the practical tools he uses himself to stay well: daily routines, training, accountability with other men, and the refusal to do recovery alone. He shares his story as an offering, not as authority, and his work is built on the belief that people don't need another expert - they need someone who has been where they're afraid of going, and who got out.

Bio Darryl Gardiner

Darryl Gardiner is the Founder of Rolling with the Punches (RWTP) and a trauma-informed practitioner working at the intersection of lived experience, healing and prevention. Darryl's life journey spans victim, offender and survivor — shaped by early exposure to violence beginning in utero, learning violence as a first language, progressing into addiction and criminal justice involvement, before undertaking a long and deliberate journey toward accountability, recovery and non-violence.

Today, Darryl delivers counselling-informed programs & workshops, trauma-responsive breathwork and keynotes across the mental health, AOD, justice, family violence and community sectors. He is regularly engaged as a lead consultant on projects across Australia, supporting organisations and communities to address trauma, promote healing, and create meaningful change in violent and harmful behaviours.

Darryl's work is grounded in culturally safe, strength-based practice, with a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, and breaking intergenerational cycles of harm. Blending honesty, compassion and professional insight, he offers a grounded and relatable approach that moves beyond labels and pathology, and toward understanding, responsibility and hope.

Bio Jeremy Donovan

Jeremy Donovan is a proud Kuku Yalanji and Gumbayngirr man, entrepreneur, cultural ambassador, artist and one of Australia's most sought-after keynote speakers.

Jeremy first came to national attention as the didgeridoo player who opened the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Since then, he has shared Aboriginal culture and leadership with audiences around the world, performing and presenting at Australian embassies, Buckingham Palace, the White House, Carnegie Hall and the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

A passionate advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Jeremy has addressed the United Nations in Geneva and New York and previously served as CEO of GenerationOne, leading initiatives to improve employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Today, through his consultancy Walking with Wisdom, he works with communities, governments and organisations to strengthen leadership, wellbeing, cultural understanding, and social impact.

In 2024, Jeremy became the first person to play the didgeridoo at Mount Everest, raising \$90,000 for the Black Dog Institute. His work spans leadership, business, culture, art and community development, with collaborations including major Australian brands and large-scale public art projects.

Having overcome significant personal challenges early in life, Jeremy brings authenticity, wisdom and lived experience to every audience. Whether speaking in remote communities, schools, conferences, or boardrooms, he is known for his ability to inspire meaningful change through powerful storytelling, cultural

insight, and practical leadership. Jeremy's work is guided by a belief that culture, connection and shared understanding can create stronger futures for all Australians.