

2025 – 2027 Cultural Grants Program

Aboriginal Affairs NSW

1 October 2025



Image Credit: Luke Currie-Richardson (Kuku Yalanji, Djabugay, Munaldjali, Butchulla, Meriam)

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Aboriginal
Affairs

Grant Program Details	
Year 1 Key Dates (2025)	Opening Period: 10 November 2025 – 31 March 2026 Project Delivery: 23 January 2026 – 31 December 2026
Year 2 Key Dates (2026)	Opening Period: 01 October 2026 - 31 March 2027 Project Delivery: 01 January 2027 – 31 December 2027
Year 3 Key Dates (2027)	Opening Period: 01 October 2027 – 31 March 2028 Project Delivery: 01 January 2028 – 31 December 2028
Application outcome date	A minimum 8 weeks from application date
Evaluation timeframe (for successful applications)	June – August of each project delivery year
Decision-maker	Deputy Secretary Aboriginal Affairs NSW
NSW Government Agency	Aboriginal Affairs NSW (Premiers Department)
Type of grant opportunity	Open, non-competitive
Grant value (total available funding for the grant and the available individual grant amounts, excluding GST)	\$1.5 million per year is allocated to the Cultural Grants Program Applicants can apply for between \$1000 - \$20,000
Enquiries	For enquiries, contact your nearest regional office (please see section 3.3) or the AANSW Community Investments Team on 1800 019 998 or email grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au



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1

Overview of 2025-2027 Cultural Grants program

1 Overview of 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program

Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) 2025-2027 Cultural Grants is a rolling program:

- Applicants can apply at any time during the opening period via the online SmartyGrants platform.
- The Program will open be open for up to 6 months each year, unless funding is exhausted sooner.
- Organisations can receive one grant, per year.
- An organisation may additionally act as an auspice for a maximum of two projects per year.

This is a non-competitive program where applications will be assessed in the order they are received.

Applications will be accepted at any time during the opening period and the assessment panel will meet monthly to assess the applications

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program aims to support Aboriginal community organisations and groups across NSW to celebrate Aboriginal culture and hold key cultural events and activities.

Program Objectives

The AANSW Cultural Grants program objectives are to:

- Support Aboriginal communities to strengthen, protect and maintain traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture
 - Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events and activities
 - Contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing through the use of Aboriginal culture and community connection
 - Facilitate sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills between generations.
-

1.2 Grant value

Detail:

- A total of \$4,500,000 has been allocated to the AANSW 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program over three years
- \$1,500,00 is allocated to each year of the Program
- Applicants can apply for between \$1000 and \$20,000.

2

Selection criteria



2 Selection criteria

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be one of the following:

1. A not-for-profit organisation, and one of the following:
 - a. An Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)
 - b. An Aboriginal not-for-profit organisation
2. An unincorporated Aboriginal community group with an eligible Auspice
3. An Aboriginal Sole Trader or Business whose primary business activity relates to cultural expression or revitalisation

Applicants or their Auspice must also:

1. Be a legal entity located in NSW or in a bordering community that delivers services to Aboriginal communities in NSW
2. Propose a project to be delivered in NSW
3. Have public liability of at least \$10 million per claim (or be willing to purchase as part of the application to support the project)
4. Have no outstanding requirements relating to previous funding from AANSW

For more detailed information on eligible applicant definitions, please refer to section 6.4

Who can't apply

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- An individual (unless you are an Aboriginal sole trader whose primary business activity relates to cultural expression or revitalisation)
- Non-Aboriginal groups or organisations (except for eligible auspice organisations auspicing an unincorporated Aboriginal community group)
- Incorporated not-for-profit organisations not controlled or operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Federal and State Government agencies and bodies, including NSW public schools and hospitals
- Unincorporated organisations or groups without an eligible auspicing organisation
- Organisations that have not met project requirements, including acquitting and reporting for any grant funding received from Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) in the previous two years.
- Organisations with redress sanctions as described in the National Redress Scheme.

2.2 Project costs

Funding can be used for:

- Consumables – such as catering, equipment items and materials for activities (excluding alcohol) – for the purposes of the project or event
- Hiring equipment to be used for the period of the project or event

- Engaging contractors such as facilitators, trainers and teachers
- Eligible costs associated with holding key state-wide and/or regional Aboriginal sporting and cultural events
- Purchasing minor equipment for event activities up to the value of \$5000 (please refer to the FAQ for guidance on minor equipment)
- Administering the project, with up to 10 percent of the requested AANSW funding amount being able to be used for this task or as auspice fees where there is an auspicing arrangement
- Eligible sole trader/business applicants may include up to 10 percent of the requested AANSW funding amount to cover remuneration costs. Refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for more information.
- Purchasing merchandise such hats, t-shirts, trophies, medals etc up to 10% of the requested AANSW funding amount.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Costs for sports teams or cultural groups to attend competitions or events (E.G entry fees to sport and dance competitions)
- Capital costs – any type of building, construction, major equipment, or capital works including renovations to a building, housing related costs or the purchase of land
- Purchase of vehicles
- Wages and salaries and on-costs for ongoing staff
- Wages, salaries and remuneration for sole traders or consultants
- Sitting fees, travel allowance or costs associated with membership of boards/councils
- Activities that may create an ongoing dependency on cultural grant funding, such as funding that is required over multiple years
- Costs that are not directly associated with the delivery of the project
- Activities related to NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout or NAIDOC week events which has a separate funding program
- Retrospective funding for activities and events that have already been held • International travel costs (proposals for domestic travel costs need to demonstrate the benefits of travel to the project, organisation, and community)
- Operational and business as usual costs.
- any gift vouchers or petrol vouchers etc.

Ticketed Events:

Projected income from the sale of tickets to events must be spent on the same event. The information on income generated from the sale of tickets and spent on budget items must be included in the program budget table in the application form.

Sporting Events:

Eligible costs associated with holding key state-wide and/or regional Aboriginal sporting and cultural events must align with at least one of the objectives of the Cultural Grants program and contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing.

Grant funding cannot be used to cover the costs of teams or groups to attend/participate in competitions (E.G entry fees to a competition/event, sponsorships etc.)

Annual/Recurring Events:

Applications for annual or recurring events must meet all assessment criteria, there is no guarantee of funding based on a previous year's successful grant application.

2.3 Assessment criteria

This is a non-competitive program where applications are assessed individually against the assessment criteria without reference to the comparative merits of other applications.

Criteria	What we are looking for:
<p>Alignment with Cultural Grants Program Objectives</p> <p>The proposed application is clearly aligned with the objectives of the Cultural Grant Program</p>	<p>The application should clearly detail how your project will support any one of the Cultural Grants objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Aboriginal communities to strengthen, protect and maintain traditional and contemporary expressions of Aboriginal culture • Support key contemporary Aboriginal cultural events and activities • Contribute to Aboriginal community wellbeing and healing through the use of Aboriginal culture and community connection • Facilitate sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills between generations.
<p>Community Impact</p> <p>The benefit of the project to Aboriginal people and community, including community engagement and positive contributions to the cultural health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.</p>	<p>The application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly detail the positive impacts and/or benefits your project will have for Aboriginal people and community • Details community engagement and involvement in the project
<p>Organisation's capacity to deliver the project</p> <p>The ability of the organisation to deliver the project objectives based on experience and resources, community supports such as partnerships with other organisations and participation in other community projects</p>	<p>The application should show that the organisation has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some experience managing previous projects and/or grant funding successfully, and the outcomes achieved, or first-time applicants, demonstrate how you will deliver the project and manage grant funding • The resources to deliver the project and/or the relevant training and experience of staff/ community members involved • The capacity to assess risk and create mitigation plans. For example, if there are any potential risks associated with funding and
<p>Value for money</p> <p>How the implementation of the project/event/activity will achieve high quality outcomes for Aboriginal communities in a cost-effective way</p>	<p>You can show this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining how the project represents good value for money • Clearly demonstrating how budget items contribute to the project outcomes. • Building a budget that is reasonable and realistic • Including any quotes to support budget line items • Submitting a detailed budget aligned with the project activities and plan • Showing a plan with an explanation of what the funding will do and how it will be spent

3

Application process

3 Application process

3.1 How to apply

- Log on to AANSW Smarty Grants Platform to submit your application - (<https://aboriginalaffairs.smartygrants.com.au/>).
- Review the below Application Timeline and ensure your application is submitted by the required date, in order to receive funding on time to deliver your project should you be successful
- Review the Supporting Documents list provided below before submitting your application
- Visit the AANSW website to access our Applicant Toolkit, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Contact your nearest AANSW Regional Office to discuss your project.
- Note, AANSW staff can be contacted at any time by applicants to seek clarity or further information

Video Response to Application questions

Applicants can choose to submit a video response to application questions on project objectives and outcomes. AANSW regional staff are available to support applicants with recording and preparing a file for upload if required.

3.2 Application Timeline

Project Year	Applications must be submitted by:	For project delivery from:
2025	23 November 2025	23 January 2026
	11 January 2026	02 March 2026
	15 February 2026	06 April 2026
	31 March 2026	01 June 2026

Project Year	Applications must be submitted by:	For project delivery from:
2026	01 November 2026	01 January 2027
	11 January 2027	05 March 2027
	15 February 2027	10 April 2027
	31 March 2027	01 June 2027

Project Year	Applications must be submitted by:	For project delivery from:
2027	01 November 2027	01 January 2028
	11 January 2028	05 March 2028
	15 February 2028	10 April 2028
	31 March 2028	01 June 2028

3.3 Supporting documents

Before you submit your application, please ensure you review the below supporting documents.

Requirement	Details	Documents (example)
Mandatory	<p>Minimum \$10million per claim</p> <p>Must be current at time of application</p>	<p>Supporting documents include one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Liability Insurance (Certificate of Currency) Inclusion of purchase of Public Liability in the grant application
Mandatory (unless you're a Local Aboriginal Land Council)	<p>Supporting evidence to confirm your eligibility as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an Aboriginal Organisation <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) 	<p>Supporting documents include one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of ORIC Registration ORIC registration number Constitution or rule book indicating governance structure Registration with NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce NSWICC)
Recommended	<p>Evidence of costs of goods and services to support budget items such as venue hire, accommodation, catering, hiring and/or purchase of equipment.</p>	<p>Supporting documents include one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quotes Screenshots of options available online

Requirement	Details	Documents (example)
	(*evidence of cultural components /services is not required)	
Recommended	Evidence of local Aboriginal community support	<p>Supporting documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter(s) of support from local Aboriginal community members or organisations Letter(s) of support from an Alliance or consortium, including the backing of its membership base <p>Note: letters must be current and specific to the project</p>

3.4 Support available to applicants

For questions regarding the Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) Cultural Grants Program, please contact your nearest AANSW Regional Office on the phone numbers below or email the Community Investments team at grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Region/Office	Phone Number
Binaal Billa - Dubbo	02 8575 1518
Greater Northern - Coffs Harbour	02 9566 8318
Greater Sydney - Mascot	02 8229 2389
Hunter Central Coast - Newcastle	02 9228 3465
Illawarra Southern - Batemans Bay	02 9228 5575
Murdi Paaki - Broken Hill	02 9372 8675
New England North-West - Tamworth	02 8575 1172

While AANSW regional staff will be pleased to answer questions about the application process, they cannot comment on the content of the application

Late Applications

Late applications will not be considered unless AANSW determines, at its sole discretion, that it is in the interest of fairness of the Program to accept the late application. The late application must have been substantially started by the applicant prior to the closing date and time, in order for the acceptance of the application to be considered. A request for a late application to be considered for

acceptance must also be received by AANSW no later than one hour after the application closing date and time.

4

Assessment process



4 Assessment process

4.1 Assessment of grant applications

Applications will be assessed in the order they are received, and only applicants meeting all minimum assessment criteria will be recommended for funding.

All applications will be screened for eligibility by AANSW staff. Eligible applications will be further reviewed by regional teams and assessed by AANSW Staff Assessors and Grant Assessment Panel against the assessment criteria.

The Deputy Secretary is the final decision maker who will consider the recommendations of the Grant Assessment Panel (GAP).

AANSW may request additional information and/or clarification from applicants at any time during the assessment process.

Some applicants may be offered partial funding where budget includes ineligible items.

Independent probity advisors will provide guidance on issues concerning integrity, fairness, and accountability that may arise throughout grant administration processes.

4.2 Notification of application outcome

All applicants will be notified on the outcome of their application through the AANSW online grant portal, SmartyGrants.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Applicants who are determined unsuccessful may reapply for funding at any time during the program opening period.

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered a feedback session if requested and may reapply under the program at any time during the open period.

If an applicant wishes to seek feedback about an unsuccessful application, they should contact the Community Investments team at grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au within 2 months of the application outcome date.

*There is no appeal process under the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program.

4.3 Publication of grants information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published in relation to grants awarded no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the Guide and Appendix A to the Guide). This information is also open access information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA Act), which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

In accordance with these requirements, relevant information about the grants awarded will be made available on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the grant funding is approved or declined.

All records in relation to this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 (NSW).

5

Successful grant applications



5 Successful grant applications

5.1 Grant agreement

Funding arrangements and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Enter into a Funding Agreement with AANSW within four weeks of the offer being made.
- Start and complete funded activities and events by the dates specified in the Funding Agreement.
- Notify AANSW of any proposed changes to your funded activity and complete a project variation request.
- Complete reporting requirements, including final reports, as detailed in the Funding Agreement
- Acknowledge the support of AANSW in accordance with the Funding Acknowledgement Guidelines

5.2 Grant payment

- All payments will be made after executing the Funding Agreement.
- Some applicants may be offered partial funding where budget includes ineligible items, and as recommended by the grant assessment panel.
- A signed and witnessed Funding Agreement and Tax Invoice must be submitted via the acceptance of offer form in SmartyGrants before payment will be made.

5.3 Variations

Any variations to the project including, activity dates, funded items or scope of the project, must be requested in writing using the Smarty Grants platform.

You may request a variation to change the project delivery date, provided the date is eligible under the Program Guidelines and aligns with the scope of the approved project.

Variations must be sought before the changes are implemented.

For more information on Variations, please see section 6.4 and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

5.4 Unspent funds

If a grant recipient's project is completed and there are unspent funds remaining, these must be returned to Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW), Premier's Department within one (1) month of completion of the funded event/activity.

Unspent funds can be returned via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

Contact your regional office or the Community Investments team to obtain the bank details.

5.5 Indicative reporting and acquittal requirements

The recipient will provide AANSW with a “Final Report and Acquittal” by submitting a form in Smarty Grants within one (1) month of the Project unless otherwise agreed to by AANSW.

The Final Report and Acquittal form will be reviewed and evaluated by AANSW. AANSW may ask for invoices and/or receipts, financial statements or other evidence that the project was successful and benefited local community as outlined in the application form.

AANSW will email the recipient details on how to access the Final Report and Acquittal form on SmartyGrants at least 1 month before the Project completion date.

All acquittals will be reviewed by AANSW in line with the original funding agreement.

AANSW reserves the right to ask for additional information to support the Final Report and Acquittal.

Supporting evidence can be uploaded in SmartyGrants and must include itemised project budget expenditure. Other option items are photos, social media coverage and links to video clips where relevant.

Where the recipient does not satisfactorily acquit their project, this may affect eligibility for future AANSW grant funding.

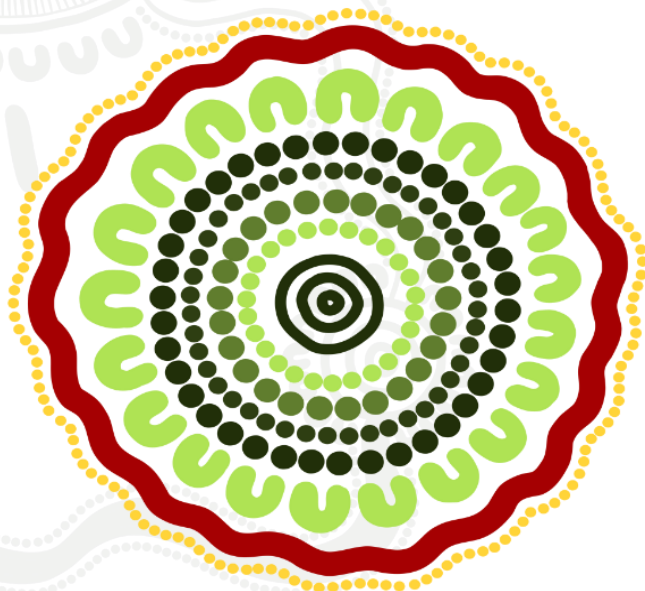
5.6 Evaluation

AANSW will undertake a Process and Outcomes evaluation for each year of the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program.

The process evaluation will include a detailed review on the grant administration processes to determine the success of providing the grants and any improvements for future grant programs.

The outcomes evaluation will include a review of original applications and final reports provided by recipients as well as optional case studies, to determine how projects are contributing the overall Cultural Grants Program objectives.

These evaluations will be undertaken by Aboriginal Affairs NSW and not an external provider.





6

Additional information and
resources

6 Additional information and resources

6.1 Complaint handling

Any complaints should be sent in writing to grants@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

6.2 Access to information

The GIPA Act provides for the proactive release of government information by agencies and gives members of the public an enforceable right to access government information held by an agency (which includes Ministerial offices). Access to government information is only to be restricted if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

The NSW Legislative Council has the power to order the production of State papers by the Executive Government. Standing Order 52 provides that the House may order documents to be tabled by the Government in the House. The Cabinet Office coordinates the preparation of the papers – that is, the return to order. The return to order may contain privileged and public documents. Privileged documents are available only to members of the Legislative Council.

Note that documents submitted as part of a grant application may be subject to an application under the GIPA Act or an order for papers under Standing Order 52.

6.3 Ethical conduct

Conflict of interest management

The following procedures are put in place to manage any conflicts of interest between AANSW and applicants:

- Conflict of Interest declarations are to be signed by all persons involved in performing functions related to the assessment process.
- Regional project officers who assist an applicant with an application will not be involved in assessment for that grant program.

Confidentiality

Information relating to the successful applications will be included in:

- public media releases
- an announcement on the Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) website
- NSW Grants finder website
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) social media.

This information may include the name of the applicant and their business, a description of the funded project and the funding amount.

Applicants should be aware that information provided to AANSW may be made publicly available under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).

Information may also be made publicly available as a result of an order for papers made by the NSW Legislative Council under Standing Order 52. Before information is released in response to an application under the GIPA Act, there will be an assessment of the public interest

considerations in favour of and against disclosure of that information and there may be consultation requirements that apply.

Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP)

Aboriginal Affairs NSW has developed an Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP) Protocol that aims to build awareness and respect for Aboriginal culture. The Protocol sets a standard for how Aboriginal Affairs NSW engages with Aboriginal people and communities regarding their cultural and intellectual property and what we expect from the organisations we fund.

Any Aboriginal Cultural or Intellectual Property submitted in a grant application to Aboriginal Affairs NSW remains the property of the relevant community organisation or Aboriginal person. Aboriginal Affairs NSW will not distribute or communicate any ACIP contained in SmartyGrants and agrees to respect the cultural protocols of Aboriginal people which it may apply to.

6.4 Definitions

Aboriginal Organisation

For the purpose of this grant, an Aboriginal Organisation is considered to be a not-for-profit organisation, incorporated under Commonwealth, state or territory legislation, that has at least 51% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ownership and/or directorship and is operated for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO)

For the purpose of this grant, an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation working with Aboriginal communities in NSW delivers services that build the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people is:

- Incorporated under relevant legislation
- Not-for-profit
- Controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Connected to the community or communities in which they deliver the services and
- Governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Applicants are encouraged to provide documentation with the application to support the status of the organisation. Where this information isn't provided, the eligibility check conducted by AANSW staff will be based on the publicly available information and deemed as final.

Please see Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for more information.

Unincorporated Aboriginal Groups

Unincorporated Aboriginal Groups must be Aboriginal community groups – that is, they must be led by Aboriginal people.

If an unincorporated Aboriginal group wishes to apply under the 2025-2027 Cultural Grants Program, they will need to partner with a not-for-profit organisation as an auspice to receive and administer the funding.

An eligible auspice organisation may only act as an auspice for two applicants in addition to their own application.

Eligible Auspice Organisations

An auspice organisation can be a non-Aboriginal organisation. An auspice organisation must be a not-for profit organisation of one of the following:

- an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Corporation registered under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth)

- a company incorporated in Australia under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)
- a Local Aboriginal Land Council under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW) • an Incorporated Association (incorporated under state legislation, typically has 'Association' or 'Incorporated' or 'Inc' in their legal name)
- an Incorporated Cooperative (incorporated under state legislation, typically has have 'Cooperative' in their legal name)
- an incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust

Variations

A variation is a change to the project that requires an amendment to the Funding Deed. Project variations may be accepted where the requested change aligns with the Program Guidelines and the original intent of the approved project.

Examples of Minor Variations	Examples of Major Variations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the approved budget Minor adjustments within the budget table due to increase/decrease in price. • Change the project delivery date (within the Guidelines) The new proposed project delivery date must be under the timeline mentioned in the Program Guidelines and within the scope of the approved project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional budget line items To add or remove any of the approved budget items from the budget table. • Change in project activities Alter any of the approved project activities. • Change in location Change to the project delivery location.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that this publication is free from error and/or omission at the date of publication. None of those involved in the preparation of this publication are responsible for the outcome of applications that are based on the information contained in these guidelines.



Image Credit: Luke Currie-Richardson (Kuku Yalanji, Djabugay, Munaldjali, Butchulla, Meriam)