

THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

FEDERATION OPENS WARULUNG ‘PLACE OF BEING’ TO CONNECT TO GUNAIKURNAI COUNTRY

A new outdoor space at Federation University Australia’s Gippsland Campus will provide a safe and welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, and community members to connect to country and celebrate culture.

‘Warulung’, meaning ‘Our place’ in the Gunaikurnai language, was officially launched this week as part of the Place of Being project by the Aboriginal Education Centre at Federation and the University’s Property and Infrastructure team, in partnership with an advisory committee made up of Traditional Owners and community leaders.

It will support spiritual and cultural practices, dances, smoking ceremonies, and events throughout the year, enabling students, staff, and the wider community to learn, reflect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ connection to country.

The site features a semi-circle of five steel shields, signifying the five clans of the Gunaikurnai: Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Brabralung, Tatungalung and Krauatungalung.

Warulung’s spherical fire pit was designed by Gunaikurnai artist Ronald Edwards-Pepper and complements the site’s original stone fire pit designed by Gunaikurnai elder, Uncle Wayne Thorpe.

The shields and garden were installed by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, with design input from Gunaikurnai and Indigenous artists.

‘Places of Being’ have also been established at Federation campuses in the Wimmera and Ballarat, with another to be launched in 2025 in Berwick.

Quotes attributable to Federation University Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Duncan Bentley

“The Place of Being projects provide a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and the wider community to connect to country.”

“We hope this amazing space at the Gippsland campus can be a central place for community to come together to celebrate the rich culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

Quotes attributable to Federation University Aboriginal Education Centre Senior Manager, Katrina Beer

“We have students and staff who come from many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who need a culturally safe place to connect spiritually.”

“We hope Warulung can create that sense of belonging, like a home away from home.”

Quotes attributable to Warulung advisory committee member, Aunty Christine Johnson

“Country is everything. It’s family, it is life, the connection of belonging, a space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, communities and families, whereby we listen to yarn, share stories, reflect and celebrate with the wider community.”

Photo caption: Federation University’s Aboriginal Student Success Officer Nicholas Johnson, Federation University Council Member Aunty Dr Doris Paton, Federation University’s Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Reconciliation Professor Andrew Gunstone, Warulung advisory committee member Aunty Christine Johnson and Federation University’s Physical Works Project Manager Patrick Au at Warulung.

About Federation University Australia
With a history spanning over 150 years, Federation University Australia is Victoria’s premier regional dual-sector university with campuses located in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland and Wimmera. From 2018 to 2023 Federation ranked number one in Australia for first-generation student enrolments. In a first for Australia, the globally recognised co-operative education model will be embedded across all Federation programs from 2026.