

What do participants do at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place?

At Wulgunggo Ngalu, participants can fulfil the requirements of their Community Correction Orders and connect, or further strengthen, with their culture.

Community Corrections works closely with management and staff at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place to ensure each participant's successful transition into and out of Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place. Staff also work to connect participants with the services they need in their home community.

Koori men at Wulgunggo Ngalu also participate in employment, education and life skills programs and comply with their community work obligations. Community work is usually done on site and involves maintaining the 65 hectare property, including the buildings and grounds. Where the local community requests assistance, participants may undertake community work off-site.

Participants are involved in local community activities, including a local Australian Rules football club and local community groups visit Wulgunggo Ngalu for various community activities. They also participate in community events such as the annual NAIDOC Week.

What are some of the features of Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place?

- Participants live on site for between three and six months
- Weekend leave – participants must live on site for the first 21 days including the first three weekends
- Participants return home each third weekend
- Family members can also stay at Wulgunggo Ngalu on weekends, by prior arrangement
- Programs combine cultural healing with the development of skills to promote a positive and healthy lifestyle

- Relevant community based programs
- Staff are on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Drug and alcohol free environment
- Participants learn to live as part of a community in a culturally safe environment
- Focus on leading a law abiding lifestyle
- Safe environment for staff, participants, visitors and the local community.

How are Koori Elders/Respected Persons involved in the program?

Koori Elders regularly visit Wulgunggo Ngalu, communicating traditional cultural values and acting as role models and mentors for the participants.

Specific cultural activities and practices are a regular feature of the program, and all participants are involved and expected to respect the beliefs, culture, values and identity of others living and working at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place.

Elders and Respected Persons attend Wulgunggo Ngalu on a regular basis to provide staff and participants with support in relation to cultural issues and learnings. They have no managerial or program responsibilities.

Community work

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place has in place a range of Community Work Programs that participants undertake as part of their Community Correction Orders. The community work programs complement the life skills programs and cultural learning experiences at WNLP.

Transition to home community

Transition planning for each participant at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is critical. Supportive arrangements are made by Community Corrections and Wulgunggo Ngalu staff for each person exiting the program.

If a participant wishes to leave prior to completing the program, an appropriate exit plan is developed and worked through with the participant.

International Award Winner

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place won the prestigious community corrections category of the 2010 International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA) awards. Presented at the Association's annual conference in Belgium in November 2010, Wulgunggo Ngalu was acknowledged at the ceremony as a leader in its field.

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Wulgunggo Ngalu
Learning Place





Left to right: Common room/kitchen area with firepit in foreground; (above top) external view of residential unit; (above) lounge area central to bedrooms at either end of unit; (centre top) a workshop where participants learn wood working skills; (centre) horticulture area where participants learn to grow indigenous plants; (above right) full size replica of the 2010 International Corrections and Prisons Association award, built by participants; (above) participants and staff both use the gym facilities; (right) dance circle surrounded by totems made by participants. In the background are the administration and common room/kitchen areas of the facility.

What is Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place?

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place provides Koori men, on a Community Correction Order, with an important opportunity to learn new skills, reconnect with, or further strengthen, their culture and participate in programs and activities to help them address their offending behaviour. It was officially opened in September 2008.

Participation in the program is voluntary and involves living at Wulgunggo Ngalu, in Gippsland, for between three to six months.

There are three program areas in which each resident must participate:

- Community Correction Order
- education component, which also involves living skills
- cultural component, which strengthens their cultural identity.

Wulgunggo Ngalu, in the Gunai Kurnai language, means 'which way together'.

It is a statewide, culturally appropriate residential diversion program for up to 18 Koori adult males at any one time who have been sentenced by the court to a Community Correction Order. It provides an environment that is relevant and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal men.

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is a key initiative of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, a partnership agreement between the Victorian State Government and the Koori community established in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Who is eligible for the program?

To be eligible to participate in Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place the participants must be:

- Male
- aged 18 years and over
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- on a Community Correction Order.

Where appropriate, participants must have completed an appropriate withdrawal process before attending the program.

Referrals

Community Correctional Services may refer Koori men on Community Correction Orders to Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place at any time during the course of their Order.

A court may also request both an assessment for a Community Correction Order and placement at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, in which case an adjournment is sought while the assessment is undertaken by Community Corrections and WNLP staff.

Koori men on Community Correction Orders participate in the program on a voluntary basis. This may be provided for by inclusion of a condition that requires assessment for programs designed to reduce re-offending and participation in programs as directed by Community Corrections staff can then negotiate with participants about what conditions may be satisfied if the individual chooses to go to WNLP.

How long does it take to get there?

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is located 12 kilometres from Yarram in Central Gippsland, approximately two and a half hours east of Melbourne by car. Transport to and from the program site can be arranged for participants by Community Corrections or Wulgunggo Ngalu. There is public transport (bus service) from Southern Cross Station in Melbourne direct to Yarram. Participants can then be collected from there by prior arrangement with WNLP.

Wulgunggo