

Media Release

The Hon Enver Erdogan MP
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Youth Justice
Minister for Victim Support



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AUSTRALIAN-FIRST ABORIGINAL HEALING UNIT IN A PRISON OPENS

In an Australian first, an Aboriginal Healing Unit has opened at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) providing new culturally safe, community-led and trauma-informed programs for Aboriginal women in custody.

Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan visited the Centre to open the new unit which includes specially designed accommodation alongside culturally appropriate spaces.

The Andrews Labor Government has invested \$8.8 million for the new unit and programs which will be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Elizabeth Morgan House.

The new facilities include a sensory room, activities room with facilities for art programs, a peaceful outdoor cultural area with art-inspired screening and native plantings, and a yarning circle featuring symbolic mosaics and a fire pit area.

Outdoor spaces feature traditional grasses for weaving, Aboriginal totems for various clan groups and a gum tree to provide leaves for cultural ceremonies.

Programs will focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal women within DPFC, and supporting reintegration in a respectful, therapeutic way, with mentoring from Elders and Respected Persons and support to build essential life skills in a safe space for those in both remand and sentenced custody.

Aboriginal women at DPFC and community members helped inform the design of the Aboriginal Healing Unit, ensuring the space and programs support the spiritual and cultural needs of Aboriginal women in custody.

Under Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, the department is working with Aboriginal communities to consider culturally appropriate, holistic health care models in prisons including the implementation of an Aboriginal Healing Unit.

This new unit also supports reforms to improve Aboriginal cultural safety for people in custody, stemming from recent coronial investigations and the Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan

"This is one small step towards making our justice system safer and more culturally appropriate."

"Reducing the over representation of Aboriginal people in custody is critical and the new Aboriginal Healing Unit will help to address the causes of offending and keep people from coming back into custody."