

Recognition of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

Built on Ngunnawal country, the Dhulwa mental health unit incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in its design.

Throughout the facility's development, the ACT Government worked with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to recognise the culture of the traditional custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people.

A name with meaning

The United Ngunnawal Elders Council gifted the facility's name—Dhulwa—a Ngunnawal word meaning 'honeysuckle', a native plant with healing properties.

To highlight the environmentally sustainable design features of the building, the three wings of the facility have been named after native plants—Lomandra (green), Mallee (purple), and Cassia (yellow).

A special cultural acknowledgement

The Cassia wing (rehabilitation wing) yarning circle has also been crafted with a special acknowledgement of the cultural sensitivity and history of the site.

Following the demolition of the former Quamby Youth Detention Centre, a traditional smoking ceremony cleansed the land. The ashes from this smoking ceremony were respectfully placed under the centre of the yarning circle.

The Coolamon used during the ceremony is displayed near the front entrance.

Welcome to Country rock garden

Members of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council selected rocks from the site to create a Welcome to Country bush garden at the entrance of the facility, to welcome visitors to the site on behalf of the traditional owners of the land.

Yarning circle artwork

A bogong moth design—created by local Indigenous artist, Lynnice Keane—is the centrepiece of the visitor's courtyard yarning circle.

Bogong moths are common in the Canberra region, and provided an important food source to the local Aboriginal community.

Lynnice's intricate design has been stamped into concrete, to add depth and variety to the layout of the artwork.

Wall artwork

Eight wall artworks by Canberra Indigenous artists Annie Trevillian and Daniel Maginnity are displayed both inside and outside of the facility.

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