

MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday, 23 February 2024

New nature-space opens to patients, families, and staff at QEII Medical Centre

- Official opening of the \$4 million Greenspace upgrade project, with the new nature-space made possible with funding from Perth Children's Hospital Foundation (PCHF) and founding partner Rio Tinto
- New nature-space officially named Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja, meaning 'to heal' (Waalbiirniny) 'to play' (Waabiny) and 'on Country' (Boodja) in Noongar language

A new \$4 million nature-space at the QEII Medical Centre (QEIMC) campus officially opened today.

Located at the base of the Kids' Bridge next to Perth Children's Hospital, the upgraded nature-space provides much-needed respite for staff and patients – particularly frequent and long-term patients and families – as well as opportunities for play, learning and discovery.

The project, which took approximately six months to complete, was made possible thanks to funding from Perth Children's Hospital Foundation and founding partner Rio Tinto, major supporter BIG W and CDI Group, BGIS, Hassell, Soft Earth and QEIMC Trust.

Inspired by the healing energy of Country, the new nature-space incorporates traditional and contemporary cultural themes into its design. The name – Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja – was developed by Noongar cultural advisors, Soft Earth. In Noongar language, Waalbiirniny means 'to heal', Waabiny means 'to play' and Boodja means 'on Country'.

Featuring accessible play equipment and wide, flat accessible pathways throughout, Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja provides a rich, experiential space for play, recreation, relaxation, reflection, and respite that all users of the QEII Medical Centre (QEIMC) campus can enjoy.

In addition, Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja showcases a diverse range of plants native to the Kings Park area including banksia and eucalyptus, as well as native shrubs, grasses, groundcovers, mallees, and flowering plants.

Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja is split into four zones appreciative of Noongar culture and the local habitat, including:

- a nature-space providing a sense of fun and normality away from the clinical hospital environment
- a rest and relaxation space for patients, visitors, and staff
- a natural learning precinct offering educational opportunities on native flora, fauna, and Noongar culture
- an entertainment space for performers and outdoor events

The Noongar themes and storylines woven through the design include a discovery path called Koodjal Noorn (two snakes), shelter pods honouring the six Noongar

seasons, a cubby referencing Noongar mia-mias, an interactive play space incorporating animal sculptures and a climbing net depicting the web of the trapdoor spider, a unique Noongar story connected to Kings Park.

The QEII MC is the largest medical centre in the southern hemisphere and is home to 40 health-related organisations and facilities, including Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, with approximately 15,000 staff and visitors daily.

For more information visit pCHF.org.au/greenspace-upgrade/

Comments attributed to Health Minister the Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson:

"Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja is a welcome addition to the QEII Medical Centre precinct, which sees about 15,000 staff, patients, and visitors every day.

"It will provide an important recreation and respite patients and their families. Thank you to Perth Children's Hospital Foundation, their corporate partners, staff, and volunteers for delivering this space for WA kids and families."

Comments attributed to Perth Children's Hospital Foundation (PCHF) Chairman the Hon. Ian Campbell:

"Thanks to the generous support of founding partner Rio Tinto, Perth Children's Hospital Foundation is absolutely thrilled to officially open Waalbiirniny Waabiny Boodja after six months of construction works. This major project has transformed what was previously a bare, grassed space with limited shade and seating into a world-class, healing nature-space.

"There is strong evidence that nature is a powerful healer in kids and adults alike, helping to improve wellbeing and assisting in boosting recovery rates, so it's brilliant that WA patients and families now have a purpose-built space where they can be together outside of clinical settings, whilst still remaining close to care."

Comments attributed to Rio Tinto Chief Executive Simon Trott:

"Getting outside in the fresh air and connecting with nature is so important and we are proud to be a part of this project.

"We are always looking for ways to support healthy, thriving communities near our operations, which is why we are delighted this space will benefit children and families from all over WA.

"This world-class nature-space features accessible play equipment and gives kids the opportunity to learn about Noongar culture, providing them with a place where they can relax and play, away from the hospital environment."

Comments attributed to Soft Earth Cultural Advisor, Barry McGuire:

"The connection to Kings Park is because it's where our great, great, great grandfather's mother was born. There is a birthing ground up towards the top end of Kings Park, so our connection is strong in that way.



“The name of the upgraded Greenspace is Waalbiirniny, which means to heal, Waabiny, which means to play, and Boodja is the land itself.

“Having a Noongar name – or a Whadjuk language name – here is important because the spoken word is purely about healing. It's about finding your way through the land and finding a balance.”

ENDS

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Note to journalists/editors: Perth Children's Hospital Foundation is the official fundraiser for the Perth Children's Hospital. As these two organisations are separate entities, please do not shorten Perth Children's Hospital Foundation to PCH Foundation or PCH.

About Perth Children's Hospital Foundation – The foundation on the frontline

Perth Children's Hospital Foundation is the official and largest fundraiser of Perth Children's Hospital. We fuel the fight on the frontline, to help children get well and stay well.

By working closely with those on the frontline, the Foundation has an in-depth understanding of what clinicians, researchers and families need to ensure we make a tangible impact where it counts most. This knowledge guides the solutions we fund, ensuring sick children have access to world-class care through the most advanced equipment and technology, research, expertise and positive patient experiences. Help us fuel the fight on the frontline by donating at pchf.org.au/donate.