

Leo Kelly OAM Arts and Culture Awards

Arts and Cultural Project

Category Winner

Division A

Council Name

Central Darling Shire Council

Project Name

Central Darling Shire and Baaka Cultural Centre collaboration

Population

1,749



Project Summary

Wilcannia's \$9.5 million Baaka Cultural Centre was completed in 2024. It was funded by the Australian and NSW governments. It will be a keeping place for important Baakantji artefacts and a place for artists to display their works. It includes a language lab to help to preserve local dialects. A range of strategic objectives include employment and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The project would not have been possible without community engagement, support from Central Darling Shire and other key stakeholders including Regional Development Australia Orana. The centre is operated and managed by community through an elected board.

Key Learnings/Results

Aboriginal tourism is a community priority in Central Darling planning documents including the Operational Plan 2023-24. Council supports new and existing Aboriginal tourism businesses and highlights the Baaka Cultural Centre as a strategic initiative. The Centre addresses goals in local planning documents, including youth services, skills development, and tourism growth.

Operated by an elected community board with Council representation, it fosters collaboration with schools, artists, and cultural groups. Activities include workshops, exhibitions, job creation, and heritage preservation. Located on the historic Knox and Downs site, the Centre promotes Barkintji/Paakantji culture through a Language Nest, Keeping Place, and community art initiatives.

