



**MARGARET RIVER
BUSSELTON
TOURISM
ASSOCIATION**

Media Release

9 February 2024

Margaret River Welcomes Workers from Around the World for Vintage 2024

Last night, the local community gathered to celebrate Vintage 2024 and welcome seasonal workers, including those from Timor Leste, Fiji and Tonga, who are in the Margaret River Wine Region to work vintage in our vineyards, wineries and in tourism.

The gathering of over 250 people began with a warm Welcome to Wadandi Boodja, with lots of heart, was performed by Wadandi Pibulum Elder, Dr. Wayne Webb and custodian Zac Webb. This was followed by a Smoking Ceremony, to cleanse and purify the spirit, body, and soul, and signifying the beginning of something new.

While another quality vintage is already underway in Margaret River, the Pioneer Park Amphitheatre in Cowaramup was a perfect central and shady location for locals to bring a picnic blanket and immerse themselves in the cultural diversity that make the region truly special at vintage time, beginning with soulful music by local musicians, The Nomadics.

The Nomadics also played their wonderful song, 'Wadandi Boodja', which was nominated for a WAM Song of the Year award in the folk category in 2021, whilst the community body painted ochre and bathed in the smoke.

With the support of Wadandi Elders and Cultural Custodians, this song has become an anthem in Woodichup Bilya / the Margaret River, with each line sung in both Wadandi and English. It is a fabulous offering to strengthen language and love/koorda for boodja/country.

Representing the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Community Connections Program, Tika Baxter invited attendees to make the PALM workers feel welcome through sports and cultural activities, as they often spend many years away from their families.

The crowds were blessed with a traditional dance and song by over twenty workers from Timor Leste, employed by South West Labour Solutions over the last nine months, who have been actively involved in all aspects of the Margaret River viticulture industry.

Mr Martinho represented the group and presented Wayne, Toni and Zac with a traditional tais, a cloth from East Timor, as a sign of respect to Dr Webb and his family for allowing them to dance on their country.

The evening concluded with two traditional songs, a Fijian dance performed by a crew of Fijian workers, and a presentation of a Salusalu, Fijian garland to Wayne, Toni and Zac.

The Fijian workers are also employed by South West Labour Solutions, working at Pullman Resort Bunker Bay in many aspects of the hospitality industry, including Food & Beverage, Housekeeping and Spa Treatments.

MRWA CEO Amanda Whiteland said, *“Seasonal Workers are critical in our region, particularly in viticulture, and we really appreciate the workers who are here through the PALM scheme. It can be really hard to be separated from family and live so far away in a foreign culture. It was so beautiful to see the performances by the crews from Timor Leste and Fiji, as they shared some of their culture with us tonight.”*

MRBTA CEO Sharna Kearney said, *“We were thrilled that local community members and regional stakeholders came out to offer such a warm welcome to our seasonal workers. We thank Dr. Wayne Webb and Zac Webb and the Undalup Association for their enriching and informative cultural ceremony.”*

2024 marks the second year this event has been held.

The event was organised by Margaret River Wine Association (MRWA) and Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association (MRBTA) and supported by the Shire of Augusta Margaret River through their Community Development and Event Grant program.

-Ends-

Downloads

2024 Vintage Smoking Ceremony images [here](#)

Photography credit: Ovis Creative

Jobseekers

Jobseekers looking to join the Margaret River Wine Region workforce can find information at www.margaretriver.wine/work.

For further information, please contact:

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