

## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### MDAS Announces Revised Vision for Community Café

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) has announced a revised vision for its Community Café, realigning the space to better reflect its original purpose as a safe, welcoming place for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community.

This decision was made following careful consideration by the MDAS Executive team, reflecting our responsibility as a Child Safe Organisation to provide an environment that is supportive, caring, nurturing, and safe.

MDAS Catering & Events Manager, Ms. Jo-Ann Murray, said the decision follows careful reflection on the Café's current model and its long-term sustainability.

"The Café was always intended to be a safe space for families — a place for a yarn, a feed, and connection," Ms. Murray said.

"Over time, we identified that the model was no longer meeting that purpose, which is why we've taken steps to realign and strengthen it."

The revised approach includes a stronger focus on external catering, with profits reinvested into MDAS programs and community initiatives, including NAIDOC activities and Member-led ventures.

Ms. Murray said the Café had operated without any external funding for five years, relying solely on internal resources to remain open.

"This model wasn't sustainable, which is why we worked to secure funding through the *Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program* to upgrade the space and create new employment and training opportunities," she said.

"We're working closely with other MDAS programs, including residential and workplace initiatives, to support pathways into training and employment."

MDAS confirmed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients will continue to be supported, including through food vouchers and referrals across other MDAS programs in accessing services.

To ensure continued community access, MDAS is also working closely with *The Salvation Army* to increase meals available to our community, with many regular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients already engaged through *The Salvation Army*.

Ms. Murray said pricing incentives for MDAS members are also being developed, with profits reinvested gradually into Member benefits and community outcomes.

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Aboriginal communities, throughout the Mallee Region.*

“Our long-term vision is to support our Indigenous communities, and to offer a safe place, meaningful work opportunities, and a Café that truly serves the correct purpose,” she said.

MDAS anticipates reopening of the Community Café in mid to late February, following its Annual General Meeting and final operational checks.

**ENDS**

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