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THE FOOD+TRAVEL EDITION

TOUR

VICTORIA

CAFE CULTURE

A Bright business is offering a brighter future for its Indigenous staff, writes **Elsbeth Callender**.

It's a sunny spring day when I first find my way to Dumu. The popular town of Bright in Victoria's High Country is packed with cafes, but only one takes up a balcony at the leaf level of trees lining Ireland Street. Wait staff with warm smiles deliver food and drinks to other tables. A tall guy named Jerry Bitting brings me a cappuccino.

Like almost everyone preparing, cooking and serving food at Dumu Balcony Cafe, he's from a place about 3000 kilometres to the north-west.

Wadeye, pronounced wad-AIR, is the Northern Territory's largest Aboriginal community and the administrative centre of the Thamarrurr Region.

The town is a five-hour drive south-west of Darwin, when the roads aren't flooding. Wadeye and Bright have similar population sizes of a few thousand people, but "when you compare the services and opportunities

available, it's chalk and cheese," says Rebecca Crawley – a Dumu owner and Bright school teacher.

Crawley and her family moved from Bright up to Wadeye in 2008 when her partner, Justin, got a job as a PE teacher. "We went there with our three young boys," Crawley says. "It was a bit of an adventure. Something for us to learn a little bit more about Aboriginal Australia."

After two stints in Wadeye, the family returned home to Bright in 2008 intending to further strengthen its ties with the Wadeye community.

Dumu, pronounced DOO-moo, is a training cafe that opened in 2014. It's just one component of a larger leadership program – a partnership between Bright and an Indigenous corporation called Thamarrurr Youth – that sees young people from Wadeye put forward by their



community to attend high school in Bright and work at Dumu and have all sorts of other new experiences. Being a social enterprise, any profits go back into the partnership's other programs that, in turn, support people in Wadeye.

The cafe is now 50 per cent Aboriginal-owned by Jacinta Alliang, a Wadeye teacher and health worker, who currently has two

sons at school in Bright. For Alliang, "Dumu teaches young people how to cook, make coffee, clean, customer service, hygiene, confidence and practise their English."

The main language spoken in Wadeye is Murrinh-patha. "The reason we chose the cafe," says Crawley, "is because hospitality gives you a good overall approach to work, for work-readiness".

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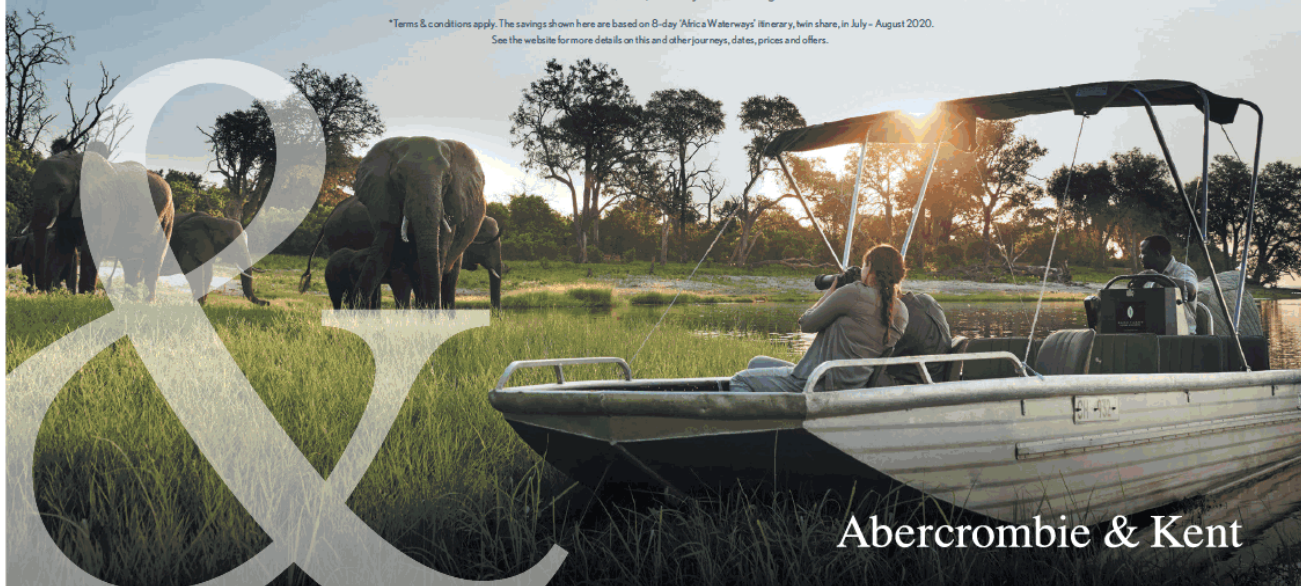
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STAY

Try the Kilnhouses for architecturally designed self-contained accommodation from \$350 a night. See kilnhouse.com.au

EAT

Dumu Balcony Cafe is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm. See facebook.com/dumubalconycafe

MORE

traveller.com.au/victoria;
victoriahighcountry.com.au;
deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au

Elspeth Callender travelled as a guest of Tourism North East.

Clockwise from main: Dumu Balcony Cafe trainees Bernice Bitting and Geraldine Bunduck; serving coffee; autumn colours in Bright.

Bernice Bitting, Jerry's sister, is also at Dumu today. "Bright people are very supportive," she tells me and says the cafe has many regular customers and is often invited to cater for local events. Dumu sources as much regional, seasonal and Indigenous bush foods as possible. The name means "black duck" in the Dhudhuroo language of north-eastern Victoria.

"So far we've had about 70 participants," says Crawley. Well over 80 per cent of Dumu trainees, she tells me, have gone directly into further education or employment. And although the program was set up to benefit the people of Wadeye, "the impact we've had on the Bright community has been even more significant for the cross-cultural learning and understanding".

Locals having coffee or a meal at Dumu will practise their Murrinh-patha.

During the recent school holidays, there were 20 kids from Bright, including Crawley's sons, up in Wadeye.

Trainee Benedict Mullumbuk has been hugely inspired by his Dumu experience.

"He's really loved it," says Crawley.

"He'll cook all day then go home and make

a chocolate cake." Mullumbuk has created the world's first cooking show presented in Murrinh-patha and English: *Cooking with Benny*.

By the second episode of season one, which is available on Vimeo, Mullumbuk is demonstrating how to make scrambled eggs and bacon on toast wearing a Cooking with Benny T-shirt. ①

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