

Tereesa outside Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Western Sydney.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

## Watch Tereesa's Story

Tereesa, 27, a proud Gamilaroi woman, grew up in Western Sydney, born and raised on Darug land. A mother of four young children, she found it hard to find a stable home and provide for them on her own.

Tereesa's high school education was cut short when she became pregnant at 16. As a single mother, she was unable to afford rental properties for her family of four children. Her family frequently moved from one temporary accommodation to another, without a stable environment.

**"I was homeless. I didn't have a place to call home...my kids never had a connection to the community." Tereesa said.**

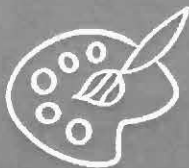
Determined to create a better future for her children, Tereesa discovered the Young Mums and Bubs Group at Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, supported by Caritas Australia. Baabayn (which means 'Ancestral Woman' in Gumbaynggirr language) was founded by five elders and aims to support its community to heal from the past and nurture their sense of confidence and pride in the future.

"Baabayn is a place where people can come and gather. It's a belonging place. It's a place of culture, finding out about who your mobs are," said Auntie Jenny, one of the founders of Baabayn.

The Young Mums and Bubs Group supports young mothers to learn skills such as arts and craft, collective income-generation projects, parenting and financial literacy skills, as well as psychological support and connecting mums with government support services.

Baabayn also runs a Homework Club (which Tereesa's children participate in), a Yarn Circle, a Jarjums (children) Club and a Youth Group.

# TEREESA'S STORY AUSTRALIA



With the help of Baabayn, Tereesa was able to access services such as psychological and housing support and driving lessons. Her family now have their own accommodation and a stable environment they can call home.

Growing up, Tereesa never had the opportunity to learn about First Nations Australian culture. But through Baabayn, she was able to hear stories from Indigenous Elders and reconnect with her culture.

Already an aspiring artist, Tereesa was able to flourish at Baabayn as she learnt Indigenous artwork and symbols. Her art was displayed and sold at local markets, and she is now working to start her own art business.

**"I'm relaxed, very relaxed when I'm painting. It helps me calm. I've been through a storm per se and painting, I just feel at peace. When I paint, every painting has a story. And my story is very long."**

Tereesa's artwork was recognised at the 2022 Vivid Light festival in Sydney. Vivid Light illuminates the city with art projected onto the city landscape. Four of Tereesa's artworks – *Crow Totem*, *Connections of Both Land & Water Tribes*, *Yinaar Miyaay (Women's Business)* and *Goanna Totem* – were projected onto the Wulugul Walk at Barangaroo.

"I've never been to Vivid and to have my artwork displayed is over the moon amazing. I never thought in a million years that this was something that would happen to me," Tereesa said.

Today, Tereesa is studying a certificate in Community Services so that she can strengthen her skills and give back to her community.

**"I've been a full-time mum since I was 16, but I had no qualifications and that's something I really wanted," Tereesa said.**

After volunteering at Baabayn, Tereesa was offered paid employment with the Youth Group. A few months later, she was also offered the role of assistant to the Mums and Bubs group.

Tereesa's children now produce their own artwork and are eager to learn more about First Nations Australian culture, history, and symbols.

**"I want my children to continue learning about their culture," Tereesa said. "I want them to have an involvement with the community. The community has your back. It's good to have that to lean on and I want my kids to realise that as well."**

With your support, the work of Baabayn can continue so that young mothers like Tereesa can keep their culture strong for future generations.

