



## MEDIA RELEASE

---

2 June 2026

# Aboriginal Women to Gather on Gamilaraay Country to Speak for Water in Landmark River Festival

*Growing Up on the Mehi will bring together Elders and Aboriginal women from across the northern Murray–Darling Basin for a three-day gathering in Moree, 25–27 June 2026.*

In recognition of the ongoing, unceded possession by Aboriginal people of the natural waterways, a landmark three-day event led by and for Aboriginal women will take place in Moree, North West NSW, this June. It will mark a historic moment in the fight for First Nations water justice in Australia's largest river system.

*Growing Up on the Mehi* will bring together Aboriginal women from across the northern Murray–Darling Basin at Moree, to share river stories from Elders, hear from water experts, and produce a formal statement of intent to government on their demands for Country and water.

The event is hosted by the Mehi Centre, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, and the Murray–Darling Conservation Alliance.

### Quotes Attributed to Aunty Polly Cutmore, Gamilaraay Traditional Owner:

“It’s our time. For thousands of generations, Gamilaraay People have lived alongside, depended upon, and spoken for this river.

“Despite being the original custodians of Country and water, Aboriginal women have been systematically excluded from water planning and decision-making in the Murray–Darling Basin. That changes here.”

### Three Days on Country

The program runs across three days:

Thursday 25 June — Stories from Elders: Senior Elder women share living knowledge about growing up on the Mehi River.

Friday 26 June — Hear from the Experts: Non-government water experts answer community questions about rights and the future of the river.

Saturday 27 June - Open Market Day: A community celebration open to the public.

### What This Gathering Will Achieve

The gathering is designed to produce lasting, tangible outcomes:

**A United Voice:** A collective of Aboriginal women who speak for water on Country — a voice that can no longer be ignored by government.

**Cultural Rights Recognised:** Stories from senior Elder women about life on the river, spanning generations of cultural knowledge.

**Community Informed:** Clear, accessible information from water experts delivered directly to Aboriginal communities.

**A Statement of Intent:** A formal statement articulating what Aboriginal women of the northern basin demand for their water and Country.

## **About the Mehi River and Gamilaraay Country**

The Mehi River flows through the heart of Gamilaraay Country in Northwest NSW, a tributary of the Barwon–Darling within Australia's largest river basin. For thousands of generations, Gamilaraay People have lived alongside this river, it was the centre of life for many clans, reliant on the animal and plant products the river generated. But Aboriginal women are still excluded from the water planning and policy decision-making that determine its future.

The Murray–Darling Basin Plan is at a critical juncture. *Growing Up on the Mehi* asserts the rightful place of Aboriginal women as leaders with the cultural authority at that table to speak for water matters.

## **About the Organisers**

**Mehi Centre:** The Mehi Centre aims to empower the First Nation community by providing a shop where goods can be sold and a meeting and information exchange centre to promote cultural and educational projects.

**Murray–Darling Conservation Alliance:** A national voice speaking up for Australia's largest river system, led by conservation councils across Basin states and territories.

**Nature Conservation Council of NSW:** NSW's leading environmental advocacy organisation.

“ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LANDS”

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Polly Cutmore | 0438 767 906

*Mehi Centre*

[www.mehicentre.com](http://www.mehicentre.com)

— ENDS