

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Galuma-li: A New Heart for Walgett Community**

Walgett, NSW – 23/7/2025 – The Dharriwaa Elders Group proudly announces the official opening of Galuma-li, a vibrant, community-led space meaning ‘Care for’ in the Gamilaraay language. This holistic hub will serve as a central point for community connection, support, and cultural enrichment in Walgett.

Galuma-li houses five key programs:

- Dealing with Fines Team: Assisting community members in managing and clearing outstanding fines.
- Walgett Youth Wellbeing Service: Nurturing the wellbeing of young people through various programs and support.
- Community Troubleshooting Program: Initiatives which provide systemic and individual advocacy on issues such as electricity bills, housing and community-led emergency responses.
- Food and Water for Life: Providing food and water security responses tailored to the Walgett Aboriginal Community.
- Dharriwaa Elders Group River Rangers: Engaging youth in environmental stewardship and cultural learning on Country.

“Here at Galuma-li, we have a holistic model. This means our teams work together,” said Vanessa Hickey, Community Response Lead at Dharriwaa Elders Group. “For example, the Rangers are involved in the Youth Wellbeing Service and work with young people on Country. Some past participants in the Dealing with Fines Team are now employed with the Rangers.”

Sandra Suey-Thorne, Speaker and Chairperson of the Dharriwaa Elders Group, said, “Galuma-li means ‘Care for’ in Gamilaraay, and the services that operate here have been designed to care for children and their families – the beginnings of a Youth Wellbeing Service, reducing fine debt in the Dealing with Fines service and the Community Responses program to support Walgett Aboriginal families day to day.”

A student from Walgett Community College Primary School, 11-year-old-Richard Dennis, made a speech on how important Galuma-li is to him. He said “If we are having hard times we come here, and if we are feeling sad, we like to come here, and the staff will take care of us. Every afternoon when I come to Galuma-li, we’re always doing activities. Making things and learning new things about our culture. And when we are having our ups and downs, we come here and when we are going home, we be happy. I’m so thankful that Aunty Nessa and Aunty Loretta have been doing wonderful things at Galuma-li”.

Building on Years of Commitment

The launch of Galuma-li marks a significant milestone in the Dharriwaa Elder’s Group’s long-term vision for the wellbeing of children and young people in Walgett, supported by its Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership with UNSW. This vision was further solidified at the Walgett Youth Justice Forum in 2018, where community members, service providers, and government agencies came together to address concerns and identify action.

Galuma-li represents the tangible outcome of years of dedicated effort, collaborative planning, and unwavering commitment to creating positive change in the community.

Galuma-li represents the culmination of generations of dedication from the Dharriwaa Elders Group and the Walgett Aboriginal community. "Some of our initiatives we now run at Galuma-li have been called for by the Walgett Aboriginal Community for a long time, and now we can deliver" said Vanessa Hickey.

The Dealing with Fines Team has achieved remarkable results, clearing \$173,000 of fine debt through Work and Development Orders (WDOs) and writing off \$345,000 of fine debt in partnership with the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT for legal assistance in its 3 years of operation.

Galuma-li embodies the spirit of the Dharriwaa Elders Group, creating a welcoming space where everyone is offered support and connection. The facility will host educational sessions and activities that promote cultural learning and community growth.

"Here at Galuma-li, we are showing governments the programs that need their investment. We hope we can rely on all here to support us to obtain the funds we need for the full Two River Pathway to Change model, including the Youth Wellbeing Service in the not-too-distant future. I'm very proud to launch Galuma-li and thank the Galuma-li team led by Loretta Weatherall and Vanessa Hickey who have worked so hard bringing everyone together in this celebration today" said Sandra Suey-Thorne at yesterday's launch.

"Connection and belonging for all parts of our community is what we're building at Galuma-li," said Hickey.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group expressed deep gratitude to their partners and funders for their unwavering support in bringing this vision to life.

About the Dharriwaa Elders Group: The Dharriwaa Elders Group is an Aboriginal and Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) and charitable incorporated association of Walgett Aboriginal Elders from different Aboriginal Nations who work together for the local community they live in. www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au

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