

MEDIA RELEASE

***Waralungku* launches at Woodford Folk Festival**

A group of women from the remote Gulf of Carpentaria have rallied for their critically endangered languages to preserve them through an album of new songs created with Dr Shellie Morris AO.

Waralungku is an album of 10 songs in Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gudanji and Marra and written by women dedicated to reclaiming their languages for future generations, preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

It is a heartfelt honouring of community, family, Country, the old ways and the way of life in Borrooloola today by Dinah Norman, Isa McDinny, Nancy McDinny, Mavis Timothy, Annie Taylor, Marlene Karkadoo, Maria Pyro, Rachel McDinny, Selma Hoosan, Deandra McDinny and Dr Shellie Morris AO.

This album follows the ARIA-nominated release *Ngambala Wiji li-Wunungu* by Shellie Morris and the Borrooloola Songwomen in 2013. This landmark album was the first of its kind that elevated female voices in traditional languages and was celebrated internationally.

Waralungku by Arrkula Yinbayarra will be officially launched at Woodford Folk Festival, celebrating 10 years since many of the ladies took to the stage and shared the first album. This was a double album of songs written by Shellie Morris and translated into Yanyuwa and then a second album of traditional Yanyuwa, Marra, Garrwa and Gudanji songs.

The community has experienced the loss of some of the original women from that album, but passionate local Marlene Karkadoo has always wanted to come together again and create a new set of songs in the four languages of the region written entirely by a group of women.

“Some of the ladies had never sung before, none of us have had a career like Shellie,” Marlene said.

“We wanted to come together and shine a spotlight on these languages, they are dying out and we want the young people and the world to hear them and our stories.

“To sing at Woodford and honour those of us that are no longer here and to sing out loud our songs in our languages with our group will be amazing for our young people to see.”

Dr Shellie Morris AO travelled to Borroloola in October to record the 10 songs. Over two weeks and with temperatures reaching 37 degrees celsius, the women gathered each morning and evening to rehearse, record and translate the work in the Rumburriya Hall.

In the face of linguistic endangerment, Arrkula Yinbayarra has created not just an album but a cultural legacy.

“Being able to work with my grandmothers and aunties to realise this album has been a real honour,” Dr Morris said.

“I am always learning, always discovering more about my Yanyuwa language and family and to be able to work so closely with my family to create this album has been amazing.”

Through this musical journey, the women aim to raise awareness about the urgency of preserving First languages and honoring the rich cultural tapestry of the Borroloola community.

The album was engineered and co-produced by award-winning music producer James Mangohig (Kuya James) and mixed by five-time ARIA nominee Tony Espie (Paul Kelly, The Avalanches, Kate Miller-Heidke) and mastered by Matthew Cunliffe (Marine Boy).

Artback NT is a key collaborator in this project, supporting the development and vision of the ladies over three years and securing funding through Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts, through the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program.

ENDS://

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Pronunciations

[LINK](#)

Music

MP3s [LINK](#)

WAV [LINK](#)

Approved Images

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More in-depth statics, references and information: [LINK](#)

About Arrkula Yinbayarra

- Arrkula Yinbayarra is a passionate collective of women from the Borroloola community dedicated to preserving and celebrating the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gudanji, and Marra languages.
- Arkkula Yinbayarra is comprised of Dr Shellie Morris AO, Dinah Norman, Isa McDinny, Nancy McDinny, Mavis Timothy, Annie Taylor, Marlene Karkadoo, Maria Pyro, Rachel McDinny, Selma Hoosan and Deandra McDinny.
- The album also features local Marra man Barnabas Timothy who has supported the ladies throughout the project, lending his voice and musical skills. He is also a collaborator on the Malandarri Festival with Marlene Karkadoo.
- Artback NT is the Northern Territory's leading arts development and touring agency working across the performing and visual arts. Artback NT works to support and promote Northern Territory creatives to national and international audiences, as well as audiences in some of the most geographically remote locations of Australia.
- For 10 years, Artback NT has produced the Malandarri Festival that takes place on Yanyuwa Country, in Borroloola with the artistic direction of Borroloola song woman, Marlene Karkadoo.
- According to Dr John Bradley, Associate Professor Monash Indigenous Studies Centre, there are only six fluent Yanyuwa speakers left in the world, 9 Garrwa, 4 Gudanji and 1 Marra. He has a four-decade long relationship with the community and has safeguarded the Yanyuwa language through a dictionary over this time with the community.
- Dr Shellie Morris was acknowledged on the King's Birthday Honours list in 2023 for her decades-long commitment to elevating First languages.
- Dr Shellie Morris AO was recognised in the Legend category at the Northern Territory Performing Arts Award in 2023.

Em Events acknowledges First Peoples as the custodians of lands we live and work on, as the knowledge keepers, leaders and creators – paying deep respects to their continuing connection to Country, animals, water, resources and communities.