

Media release

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Story of water and Country: artwork launched at MI

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) welcomed Wiradjuri artist, Shelby-Rae Lyons, to its Hanwood office this week, for the official launch of her impressive artwork.

Earlier this year, MI commissioned Shelby to create a piece that reflects the essence of the MI system as it winds through Wiradjuri Country. Her design combines traditional Aboriginal knowledge systems with modern irrigation infrastructure, weaving a powerful story of water, Country, culture, and connection.

“At the heart of the piece flows the Murrumbidgee River, in rich shades of blue, symbolising its strength as the spiritual and physical lifeline of the land,” Shelby-Rae explained.

“From the Murrumbidgee River, fine linework extends outwards, representing the channels and irrigation systems that now feed the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, a modern network layered over ancient Country.

“Surrounding towns and communities, including Gunbar, Narrandera, Leeton, and Griffith, are marked as meeting places, shown as circular symbols that represent these towns where people gather. These symbols reflect both current towns and traditional campsites, showing how past and present intersect across Wiradjuri Country.

“A main travelling line traces the journey from Gunbar to Narrandera, winding across the artwork in white and green hues, symbolising the modern pathway of people, trade, and cultural exchange.

“Surrounding the main traveling line and Irrigation Way are paths that echo the songlines, trade routes, and footprints of the Wiradjuri People, who moved with the seasons and the flow of the rivers.

“Throughout the piece, dot work and linework highlight the abundance of food sources, campsites, and places of cultural practice, acknowledging the deep, spiritual and physical relationship that Traditional Owners, The Wiradjuri People, have with the land and its waterways.”

MI CEO, Philip Holliday, said the theme of connection resonates strongly with the organisation’s values.

“We are proud to be a values-led business that builds connection through relationships and fosters an environment of honesty, openness, and improvement,” he said.

“We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waterways on which we operate, and we recognise the importance of reconciliation.”

Shelby-Rae is a proud Wiradjuri woman, mother of four, and founder of Marara Designs. Born on Wiradjuri Country in Narrandera, NSW, she spent over 20 years growing up in Griffith and now calls Wagga Wagga home.

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