



MEDIA RELEASE

Our People, Culture and Healing: Yolngu Elder Gayili Marika recognised as State Finalist – Australia’s Local Hero 2017

North East Arnhem Land Yolngu Elder Gayili Marika was recognised yesterday as a State Finalist – Australia’s Local Hero 2017 for her outstanding leadership and tireless work to transform the lives of young people in her community.

In 2006 Gayili Marika’s community at Ski Beach had the highest suicide rate per capita in the world. After experiencing significant loss themselves, Gayili and her family formed the Galupa Marngarr Suicide Prevention Group and set about a community-led approach to giving healing and sharing culture.

From her house at Galupa, 15 km from Nhulunbuy in North East Arnhem Land, Gayili runs Galupa Safety House, which supports at-risk young people, women and children from local communities. Yudu Yudu Healing Camp, two hours drive from Nhulunbuy, is a community-led cultural healing camp also aimed at supporting at-risk young people.

Gayili says:

‘Walking Yudu Yudu and camping around Yudu Yudu is like giving [our young people] new life, a healthier life that we want to see our children live on, [rather] than to see our children being buried, young people being buried by older people’.

In the 10 years since 2006, there have been no suicides at Ski Beach and the rate has been significantly reduced in neighbouring communities. And yet Gayili and her family do not receive any funding – the program exists due solely to their tireless work and some in-kind support. But for Yudu Yudu Healing Camp to be sustainable into the future, it is critical that the program is funded. Gayili says:

‘We’d like to get our young people or put our hand [out to] our young people to guide them and to talk with them, and put discipline on them to make them see that they have still a life to journey on. And that’s our goal, to see our young people walk with us’.

Gayili and her community are calling on support so that their young people can not only survive, but thrive.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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