

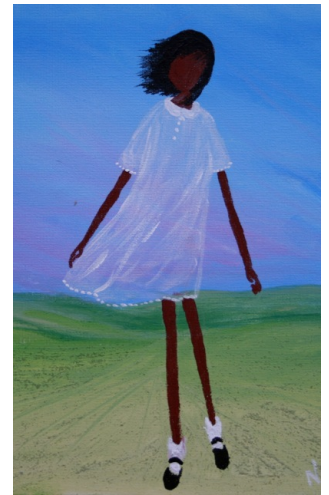
Statement of Significance.

To whom it may concern.

I am Nyree Reynolds, a proud Wiradjuri Elder who has lived in Blayney for 33 years. I am an award winning visual artist and author whose work is in Government and private collections in Australia, Germany, USA, Switzerland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Canada and the UK. I teach art and Wiradjuri language in schools and share my love of my Aboriginal Culture and Heritage through stories within my art. I was appointed Blayney Woman of the Year for 2018.

I call the lovely area where I live the valley of the Bilabula, which is the Wiradjuri way of naming our river. The entire Cultural landscape of this area is in my soul and in the soul of all Wiradjuri people and the wider community who are here now and have always been. You don't need to have First Nation's blood flowing through your veins to have a soul connection to where you live. My paintings are all based on this beautiful part of Wiradjuri Country. I can't bear to think of the desecration of this land and its ancient heritage if the McPhillamy proposal were to go ahead.

This painting was a NSW Parliamentary Aboriginal Art Award Finalist and I call it 'Reclaiming her'. She is a proud Wiradjuri girl walking through the Blayney landscape. She is not proud about the proposal to potentially destroy her Country. Once again she will lose what belongs and has always belonged to her people. History is being repeated. She is a Stolen Generations child, now her land and her water is being ravaged. It, too, is being stolen.



It is an area of huge Cultural significance and for many, many years I have used the Ochre site to obtain the Ochre to use with the children I work with in dance and art. I use the Ochre in my paintings which links my art to its place of origin. I am following on from the practices of our ancestors over many thousands of years.

Our beloved Bilabula rises near the Ochre site, it wends its way through the valley to eventually join the Bila Galari (Lachlan River), the Bila Marrambidya (Murrumbidgee River) then on to the Murray and ultimately to the sea. It may be tiny to start with but it is part of a very significant river system and many Dreaming stories follow its path and no one has the right to destroy this. No one. The salinity that could be caused by the 15 million litres of contaminated water Per Day will not help this river system. The Bilabula is like an artery through our land as shown by this painting I did to be permanently displayed in Blayney Hospital. I have used Wiradjuri symbols to tell the story of the Bilabula. The river is the life blood



to animals along the way and to the people who grow food and use it for recreation. This river sustains life. It will not sustain life if the headwaters are poisoned, and that is not acceptable in any sense of fairness.

I have written a small childrens' story set in Carcoar in the 1820's where a Wiradjuri girl and an English girl meet on the banks of the Bilabula as it flowed through Carcoar. The river sustained life then as it should be allowed to do now.

As aforementioned I strongly oppose the development of the proposed McPhillamy's Gold mine due to the irreversible damage it will do to our river especially, and to the Aboriginal Cultural History that is part of us all here in Wiradjuri Country.

In 2007 I was a Finalist in the Drawing Together Art Award in Canberra. The title of the painting was The Spirits are Leaving the Land and it told a small part of the Murray / Darling Basin story. Malcolm Turnbull bought the painting when he was Minister for the Environment. The painting spoke to him as art can do.

This painting tells the story of the Spirits of the Land, our Ancestors, who are saying this country belongs to us all, to nurture, to care for it as it cares for us. Please listen to our submissions, they are all heartfelt, they are important and they need to be heard and understood.



Yours sincerely,

Nyree Reynolds