Launch hears of vital links between our health and the environment

By Glenn Ellard

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Key people in developing the Yuin Healing Trail celebrate its launch. Picture by Glenn Ellard.

The Yuin Healing Train has been launched, with the aim of using Indigenous knowledge and practices to help restore health to the region and its residents.

It's being held on the weekend of October 13 to 15, with a range of activities

and events being organised between Durras and Kangaroo Valley. At the centre of it is Uncle Paul McLeod, who has spent much of his life helping people reconnect to to the land and nature.

He said the land held the key to people's physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Dr Dimity Williams addresses the Yuin Healing Trail launch. Picture by Lloyd Anderson.

This was backed up by Dr Dimity Williams, author of the book Nature Our Medicine, who said a growing number of doctors were prescribing time in nature to help cure physical and metal ailments that could be classified as "lifestyle diseases".

She said the numbers of people, and particularly children, suffering from problems including obesity and depression had exploded in the nearly 30 years she had been working as a general practitioner.

That followed the lifestyle shift of people spending more time indoors, looking at screens, Dr Williams said.

"Spending time out in nature changes our body physically - we have a lowering of blood pressure, a slowing of our heart rate, a reduction in the hormone cortisol which is the stress hormone in our body, we have an

improvement in our mood, improvement in concentration, a lowering of anxiety," Dr Williams said.
"It's really quite incredible all the benefits from spending time in nature."

Uncle Paul McLeod is joined by Cate Peterson as he addresses the 120 people attending the Yuin Healing Trail launch. Picture by Lloyd Anderson.

"The natural world provides us with fresh water to drink, provides us with clean air to breathe, healthy soils provide all our food, the pollinators, the birds, the bees, other insects, they sustain our food security by keeping our crops healthy, and trees on earth or kelp forests and seagrass meadows in the sea draw down carbon dioxide and have enabled us to have a stable climate for thousands and thousands of years, which is what we needed to evolve."

One of the trail's organisers, Cate Peterson, said it was aimed at "shining a light on the incredible custodianship and the the knowledge that has always been in these hills and these plains and this coast".

And she wanted it to foster "a deep understanding that we are all in the community together".
Ms Peterson said her aim was to "make the Shoalhaven synonymous with healing".