Colourful start to 10 days of healing country and people

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By Glenn Ellard
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To mark the start of the Yila Healing Trail, a Corroboree was held on Friday, October 11 at Paringa Park, Nowra.

The gentle, rhythmic sound of a pulse echoed over the Shoalhaven River on Friday, October 11.
It came from Amanda Jane Reynolds drumming on a possum skin to replicate a heartbeat, signalling the start of the Yila Healing Trail.

Indigenous dancers perform during the Yila Healing Trail's opening corroboree. Picture by Glenn Ellard.

State Member for South Coast, Liza Butler, encouraged people to take part in as many events as possible "and gain a new understanding so we can all walk forward together to make this land a better land".

She said the healing trail had a simple but important goal.
"The vision is a healed country in which people understand the reciprocal nature of giving and receiving with nature, and see themselves as part of the rich tapestry of the lands, the waterways, the seas, the skies, and all creatures," Ms Butler said.
"When we have that understanding, and we use that to guide how we make decisions for our community, we will be in the right spot.

Ash Mac performs her song Never Letting Go during the corroboree. Picture by Glenn Ellard.

"The more we can walk together on country and understand each other's culture, the better we will be in the future," she said.

Federal Member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, said healing could be "very, very difficult", but the focus on moving forward together was "one of the beautiful things about tonight".
She said the healing trail also celebrated the "amazing people in our community".

Newly-elected Shoalhaven Mayor Patricia White attended the event, giving her first speech since being sworn in as mayor earlier in the day.
She said the healing trail offered 10 days " filled with events that will fill our cultural cups [and] connect us to community and country".

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She encouraged people to "go and see as many events as you can".

Cr White was presented with a redgum coolamon, carved from a tree burnt in the Black Summer bushfires.
One of the healing trail's organisers, Cate Peterson, offered help and advice from the region's Indigenous elders.

"We're here to help you care for country, Patricia," Ms Peterson said.
She explained she had benefitted from seeking guidance from elders, as "everything we do, we seek cultural understanding to ensure we're walking the right way".

The Yila Healing Trail continues until Sunday, October 20, finishing with a closing ceremony and picnic on the Ulladulla Civic Centre lawn.