



MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations Dance, Music and Culture take centre stage at Apmerenge-ntyale Festival in Mparntwe BLATHERSKITE PARK 29-30 August 26

Travelling from as far north as the Torres Strait to the cold country of the Kulin Nation, First Nations dancers and musical performers will gather in Mparntwe this weekend for a free, family-friendly celebration of First Nations culture.

A powerhouse line-up of First Nations dancers, musicians, songmen and cultural practitioners from across the country will come together for the Apmerenge-ntyale Festival, presented by Children's Ground in partnership with Alice Springs Town Council and Lhere Artepe, bringing traditional and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to children, families and community.

The program spans sea Country to desert country, pairing internationally touring dance troupes and award-winning songmen with national and emerging contemporary performers. They all showcase the power of culture and language. With a special celebration of the strength of young people, the festival includes the Alice Kings, a crew of Alice Springs Hip Hop Artists many still at primary school, and Mulga Bore Hard Rock, a glam rock band that has opened for international superstars KISS.

Children's Ground Chairs, Mr Tilmouth and Evelyn Schaber, say the festival is about young, people, culture and the vision of Elders. It is about self-determination for First Nations children and families.

"Apmerenge-ntyale is about our culture, language and future. It is about recognising the power and strength of our people, from every Nation, and the songlines and ceremony that continue today, and celebrating this with all Australians. We want our children and families having every opportunity to be proud and stand strong in who they are, on our Country. When we bring culture, community and self-determination together like this, we're building the future we want for the next generation," said Mr Tilmouth and Ms Schaber, Chairs of Children's Ground.

Felicity Hayes, Mparntwe Traditional Owner and Co-Director for Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground Central Australia) invites people to share in this Festival.

"Come to our country. Bring your song, your dance, your stories and your families. Come and sit together, share Culture and be with one another," she said.

The program combines national and local performers with Fejo and the Cruizers, Cassi Williams and Kutcha Edwards taking centre stage.(The full program is attached)

“We invite everyone to come, gather, celebrate, dance and sing. This is a celebration of culture and language, and First Peoples and Nations across Australia. It is about self-determination and recognising the living knowledge, practice and learning that continues in every community every day. It is about showcasing the talent, of young people, the importance of Elders and the strength of community. We are honoured to feature outstanding national artists alongside so many local artists this year,” said Children's Ground CEO, Jane Vadiveloo.

Dance

Naygayiw Gigi (“Northern Thunder”) A cultural group from Bamaga and Seisia in the Torres Strait, Queensland, practising traditional Saibai Island dance since 2015. Naygayiw Gigi has performed internationally at the Festival of Pacific Arts (Guam) and the Enga and Mt Hagen Cultural Festivals (Papua New Guinea), and has won first prize in the National Indigenous Dance Rites Competition.

Murrundaya Yepengna Dance Troupe — Kulin Nations dancers directed and choreographed by Amos Roach, with family links to Gunditjmarra, Yorta Yorta, Mutthi Mutthi, Djab Wurrung, Wurundjeri and Bunurong Countries. “Murrundaya Yepengna” is Djab Wurrung for “Lively Dance,” and the troupe performs both traditional and contemporary interpretive work, including its original Neon Ngargee series.

Marrawanggan Dancers — An all-women Aboriginal-owned cultural arts group led by Yuin, Dharawal, Monaro and Gunai Kurnai woman Ashweeni Mason, based on Yuin Walbunja Country, Narooma NSW. Marrawanggan shares Yuin and Dharawal song, dance, language and storytelling, and will lead an interactive performance inviting festival-goers to join the Dhanga (seed) dance.

Deaf Indigenous Dance Group — A moving tribute to the late Elder Aunty Patricia Morris-Banjo and her Brolga dreamtime story, performed by a Deaf-led ensemble including lead dancer Nathaniel Fourmile, with didgeridoo accompaniment by Uncle Shaun and Auslan interpretation by Liz Temple.

Music

Kutch Edwards — Mutti Mutti, Yorta Yorta and Nari Nari songman Kutch Edwards is one of Australia’s most respected Indigenous singer-songwriters, with five solo albums, an Australia Council Fellowship and induction into the National Indigenous Music Awards Hall of Fame. His most recent album, *Circling Time*, reflects on his life journey as a survivor of the Stolen Generations.

Mulga Bore Hard Rock — A six-piece glam rock band of teenage brothers and cousins, aged 15 to 20, from the remote community of Akaye (Mulga Bore), Northern Territory, led by front man Alvin Manfong. MBHR sing in English and Anmatyerre, and opened for KISS on the band’s End of the Road farewell tour after winning the 2022 NT Battle of the Bands.

Fejo and the Cruizers — A newly formed band from Ntaria/Hermannsburg led by multi-lingual instrumentalist Jamie Fejo, singing in Western Aranda and Luritja. The band has taken out prizes at community football music competitions across Central Australia through 2025.

Alice Kings — A collective of young Indigenous MCs from Mparntwe/Alice Springs, aged 8 to 12, rapping about culture, community, sport and growing up in Alice. Alice Kings released their debut album, *Young Prodigies*, in November 2025 and have performed alongside First Nations supergroup 3% and at Parrtjima and the Alice Desert Festival.

Cultural workshops and activities

Alongside the main stage program, festival-goers can take part in hands-on cultural workshops and interactive experiences, including language and storytelling sessions and traditional weaving and cultural arts, tailored for children, families and schools. Supporting activities across both days include a children’s craft and activity area, a quiet family and Elders’ space, food and community stalls, cultural displays and exhibitions, supervised youth activities and games, and on-site first aid and wellbeing support.

Interview opportunities

The following artists and representatives are available for interview ahead of and during the festival:

- Amos Roach, director and choreographer, Murrundaya Yepengna Dance Troupe via Herding Cats Management, one.cat.herder@gmail.com / 0499 713 666
- Nathaniel Fourmile and members of the Deaf Indigenous Dance Group — available with Auslan interpretation via interpreter Liz Temple; please arrange in advance through the festival media contact below
- Ashweeni Mason, Marrawanggan Dancers — via the festival media contact below
- Kutcha Edwards — via the festival media contact below
- Jamie Fejo, Fejo and the Cruizers — managed by NARBZ MEDIA; via the festival media contact below
- Alvin Manfong and members of Mulga Bore Hard Rock — managed by Rebecca McLean, Sharp Film Productions; via the festival media contact below
- Alice Kings — as performers are minors (aged 8–12), interviews to be arranged with a guardian present via the festival media contact below

Photos of the featured music and dance groups, and further interview opportunities, are available on request.

About Children's Ground

Children's Ground is a national Aboriginal organisation led by First Nations communities in Central Australia and the Top End of the Northern Territory, creating long-term, community-driven change for children, families and communities. Children's Ground has a 25 year strategy to achieve generational change, in a whole of community approach that centres culture and language and justice in education, health and wellbeing, employment and family and community safety and wellbeing.

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