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Media Release:

Blackwater community gathered for NAIDOC celebrations

On 24 July, around 1,000 people came together in the Central Highlands to celebrate 50 Years of Deadly for NAIDOC Week 2026.

The Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) hosted the celebration to honour the strength, cultures, histories, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year's national NAIDOC theme, 50 Years of Deadly, marks five decades of NAIDOC Week and recognises the generations of Elders, organisers, artists, leaders and communities who have kept culture, connection and truth-telling at the heart of the movement.

CHRC Mayor Janice Moriarty said:

"NAIDOC Week provides an important opportunity for our communities to come together, celebrate culture, learn from one another and recognise the enduring contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the Central Highlands.

"It was wonderful to see people of all ages participating in the celebrations, particularly students from Blackwater State High School proudly embracing leadership opportunities and confidently delivering speeches during the official ceremony.

"The performances by the Ghungalu Dance Group and the involvement of local students highlighted the strength of culture being carried forward by future generations and reinforced the importance of creating opportunities for cultural learning and connection.

"Council sincerely thanks Yarrabee Coal for supporting this year's celebrations and helping deliver a meaningful event for the Blackwater community.

"The success of this event reflects the strong partnerships that exist across our region and our shared commitment to fostering understanding, respect and reconciliation."

The CHRC values cultural diversity in the region and views Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage as integral in a shared national identity. It has a strong commitment to building inclusive and vibrant communities.

Yarrabee Coal Operations Manager, Mike Priestly, was proud to support the event.

"We are pleased the Blackwater NAIDOC Celebration was a great success. It united our community and helped them learn more about First Nations cultures and histories.

"Thank you to the Central Highlands Regional Council for inviting us to play a part in the celebration," said Mike.

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