



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Ngiyani Yindyamali Aboriginal Mayiny Murrubandha Mayinny galangga Australia Ngangaagi

***We respect Aboriginal peoples as the first peoples
and custodians of Australia.***

We would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| About Western Riverina Arts..... | 4 |
| Member Councils and Funding Partners..... | 4 |
| 2020 Staff and Board Members..... | 5 |
| Message from the Chair..... | 6 |
| Message from the Executive Director..... | 7 |
| Communications..... | 8 |
| Pathways and Support For Artists..... | 10 |
| Artist of the Month..... | 11 |
| Projects..... | 16 |
| Professional Development..... | 24 |
| Out and About..... | 26 |
| Financial Report..... | 33 |

ABOUT WESTERN RIVERINA ARTS

Western Riverina Arts (WRA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works in partnership with our member councils: Narrandera Shire Council, Leeton Shire Council, Griffith City Council and Murrumbidgee Council to support, develop and promote arts and culture in the Western Riverina. Formally launched in 2011, WRA is part of a network of 14 Regional Arts Boards in NSW that link through to Regional Arts NSW. Western Riverina Arts is funded by the NSW State Government through Create NSW, and through contributions from its Member Councils.

With a population of over 50,000 people and several high profile artists the Western Riverina has an active, diverse and rich cultural life. Western Riverina Arts is the peak arts conduit organisation in the region and aims to support the needs and culture of our communities, acting to ensure the vitality and sustainability of arts and culture by:

- Developing audiences
- Encouraging community capacity
- Developing pathways for artists and creative communities
- Promoting cultural events
- Initiating project activity
- Strengthening regional cultural development
- Connecting creative communities

MEMBER COUNCILS AND FUNDING PARTNERS

- Griffith City Council
- Leeton Shire Council
- Murrumbidgee Council
- Narrandera Shire Council
- Create NSW – Core Funding Partner
- Regional Arts NSW – Peak Regional Arts Body

2020 STAFF

Aanya Whitehead – Executive Director

Camille Whitehead – Projects and Communications Officer

2020 BOARD MEMBERS

Susan Carey Killham - Narrandera Shire Council Representative, Chair

Julie Briggs - Narrandera Community Representative, Vice Chair

Faith Bryce - Murrumbidgee Council Representative

Melanie Toscan - Murrumbidgee Community Representative

Anne Napoli - Griffith City Council Representative

Oumi Karenga-Hewitt - Griffith Community Representative

Suesann Vos - Leeton Shire Council Representative

Anthony Morton - Griffith Co-opted Member, Treasurer

CONTACT US

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

2020 was both a very challenging and also transformative year for the Arts. On the negative side venues were closed, exhibitions cancelled, opportunities limited and artists isolated and existing in straightened circumstances. On the positive side there was adaptation, outreach and re-invention.

Western Riverina Arts has experienced a very BIG year, one in which growth and engagement have been front and centre on our agenda. Our staff have spent this year going out into our communities and engaging first hand with artists, artisans and arts organisations to promote and grow the importance and prominence of the Arts within the Western Riverina. This has been particularly evident with the amount of work our staff have been undertaking in the area of grant administration.



At the end of 2020, Regional Arts Development Organisations across the State were tasked with distributing Restart in 2021. Restart was quick turnaround stimulus funding from the NSW Government provided to stimulate arts activity in regional NSW. The whole project had a very quick turnaround with Executive Directors being asked to deliver a plan for the distribution of the funds in record time. The WRA plan included funding to a range of arts practitioners, both groups and individuals, who had already been in consultation with the organisation in 2020 and were highly impacted by the Pandemic. In addition Western Riverina Arts set aside some of these funds for quick turnaround micro grants.

Western Riverina Arts responded to the first stage of the review by Create NSW into the Regional Arts Development Network which resulted in a necessary increase in the core funding, but also included the surprise defunding of Regional Arts NSW. The next stages of the Review will be ongoing throughout 2021.

For the year ahead, we will be contributing to the next stage of the Review, and focussing on more of the same. Our team will be working with and for our regional arts community. We will continue with our focus of direct engagement and support with and for artists, artisans, arts organisations and our constituent Councils as well as looking at ways in which to partner with other organisations, including other RADO's, to share resources and obtain the best arts and cultural outcomes for our region.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I started at Western Riverina Arts (WRA) in January 2020, the area was in chronic drought then Covid-19 severely impacted the economy with lockdowns and shutdowns. From the beginning, local arts and culture was impacted the most. In response, WRA concentrated on two priority areas:

1) Communication and Connection, and 2) Funding and Economic Resources. The aim was to benefit the arts and cultural community by supporting self-determined activities in order to engage the wider community. This ran parallel with WRA's aims and objectives, a priority being First Nations led Arts and Culture.



Throughout 2020 Communications Officer Camille Whitehead's work was a mainstay being a home point for the wider community to connect with arts and culture. One of the first decisions I made on the job was to enhance the online newsletter feature of 'Artist of the Month'. Through the extensive editorial work by Camille, this has become an in-depth article that explores real stories of the region in a poignant and celebratory way, and has received a wide response. Camille has kept this feature editorial of high quality and consistent in tone; it is regularly picked up by regional newspapers, ABC Radio, and shared widely on Social Media. As an Executive Director, I feel fortunate to have Camille as a team member who is dedicated to the arts across this region, and whose work is highly skilled, thoughtful and conscientious.

The impact of Covid was severely felt. WRA had engagement with artists and cultural practitioners who had lost entire businesses, audiences and patrons, so we applied resources to take up funding opportunities. In 2020, WRA was involved in \$1.4 million worth of funding applications across the region. There was a 39% success rate on those with a total of \$550,000. The leveraged income associated with this imported funding was 97%, meaning that a round figure of just under \$1 million was generated in the local economy across the region. This leveraging will continue to flow into 2021. However, because of the Pandemic, there was a lot of extra grant funding from both Federal and State Governments not otherwise available. In a 'normal' year I estimate between 15-30% return on funding submission applications, whether direct and/or supported or partnered.

The year of 2020 was 'push-me pull-me' for arts and culture in the Western Riverina. Artists adapted quickly to the virtual spaces and pioneered ways that people could work and engage in arts and culture within lockdown situations. Just as quickly in the third quarter of the year the industry was expected to activate itself at a moment's notice. Grant funding flowed across NSW into many industry sectors to cover the Summer of 20/21 in order to get people spending again. Some of this was tasked to the arts and cultural sector through the Regional Arts Development network. Work began in earnest with the community planning events and launching projects. It was arduous for some arts workers and practitioners who had lost so much during the year. WRA used its resources to assist accessing and disseminating these funding sources, that will also flow into 2021.

Yet WRA had a very active year. With so much original art happening across the region, it was equally important that Wiradjuri Culture was promoted as necessary and foundational to everyone that has the privilege to live and work on this unceded Wiradjuri land.

COMMUNICATIONS

2020 saw a change of staff, with Camille Whitehead covering a maternity leave contract for the Projects and Communications Officer role in January, which became a permanent position later in the year.

It wasn't quite Communications as usual in 2020. With an emerging global pandemic, we closed the physical office in March to work from home due to the Covid-19 national jurisdictional response. With the full scope of COVID-19's dangers still not clear, Camille relocated to Wagga Wagga for family health reasons.



As live events and public gatherings were cancelled from April, in-person projects took a backseat to communications and keeping in touch online. Communication Officers from across the Regional Arts NSW network met online for monthly zoom meetings. They pivoted to promoting the various online arts groups, competitions and activities that emerged as a response to the new restrictions, which in our region included the Leeton Art Society's online weekly challenge group, Narrandera Arts Virtual Bunting Project, Social Distan-Sing Project from Griffith, Narrandera Shire Council weekly photography comp and Griffith Regional Art Gallery online Community Photographic Portrait Exhibition, Up Close.

The world lived online for several months, which gave us more opportunities to focus on connecting in the digital space and telling regional stories. In 2020 there were 1,009 posts distributed on our social media channels, resulting in a 350.4% increase on the previous year. The Western Riverina Arts social media followers total saw a 15.5% increase on the previous year, with 687 new followers joining us across our various platforms.

Operations started to return to a new normal in July when we reopened the office for scheduled meetings and travelled to meet artists (albeit with sanitiser and facemasks on hand).

Image: Camille stands inside a large shelter tree during a Sandhills Artefacts Cultural Tour led by Michael Lyons.

2020 STATS

24 projects in 2020

36 letters of support

\$1,422,417 worth of grants applied for

\$550,357 worth of grants brought into the region

15.5% growth in our social media following

1,009 posts were shared on social media

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

Youtube

Official Website 10,034 page views

Email Newsletter 429 (up 27.3%)

Facebook 2,432 (up 18.9%)

Instagram 1,431 (up 16.1%)

Twitter 806 (up 2%)

LinkedIn (New) 23

As at December 2020

PATHWAYS & SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

36 official Letters of Support to arts practitioners and venues were issued in support of projects across the Western Riverina region.

Five CASP projects from the Western Riverina region were successful, with funding of **\$16,788.00**.

St Joseph's Parents and Friends Association Our Place (**\$3,000**)

The project will involve an artist with input from the students creating a contemporary art piece on the school grounds in Jerilderie representing the local area and what the region represents to them.

Leeton Shire Council Beak Technique (**\$2,875**)

This project will develop free all-ages resources for identifying common native birds. Working with the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists, regional artists will design worksheets that educate how the shape of a bird's beak provides insights into their diet and habitat.

Narrandera Arts & Creative Network Waybarra (Weaving) Works Project (**\$3,000**)

Wiradjuri artist Nioka Dupond and textile designer Lillardia Houston Briggs will work with a group of Wiradjuri women to pass on cultural knowledge around Indigenous plant use and language and share skills in weaving a range of decorative and utilitarian items using Wiradjuri plant matter collected by participants.

The Cad Factory Political Women, Public Programs (**\$3,000**)

'Political Women' is an exhibition that brings together 15 artists from diverse cultural, generational, personal and artistic perspectives to illustrate and celebrate the complexity of contemporary feminist art. To compliment the exhibition, we will run a series of workshops for community and school students, along with creating a promotional video.

Leeton Shire Council Music for The Lost World (**\$2,875**)

Leeton-based artist and musician Jason Richardson will develop a public projection event. This will include developing projections as well as composing and recording an original soundtrack to accompany a screening of The Lost World (1925), a film from the public domain available for reinterpretation.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Following on from the initiative created by former Communications Officer Lillardia Briggs-Houston in late 2019, we continued the Artist of the Month project, developing it throughout the year to become **an in-depth study of artists and an online resource able to be used in various applications**. This meet and greet project proved to be a great way to form strong ongoing relationships with the artists in our region.

Outcomes from these projects included radio interviews with ABC Riverina Radio and increased awareness of artists due to combined social media posts reaching audiences as high as 7,000 views per project.

FEBRUARY: THE CAD FACTORY

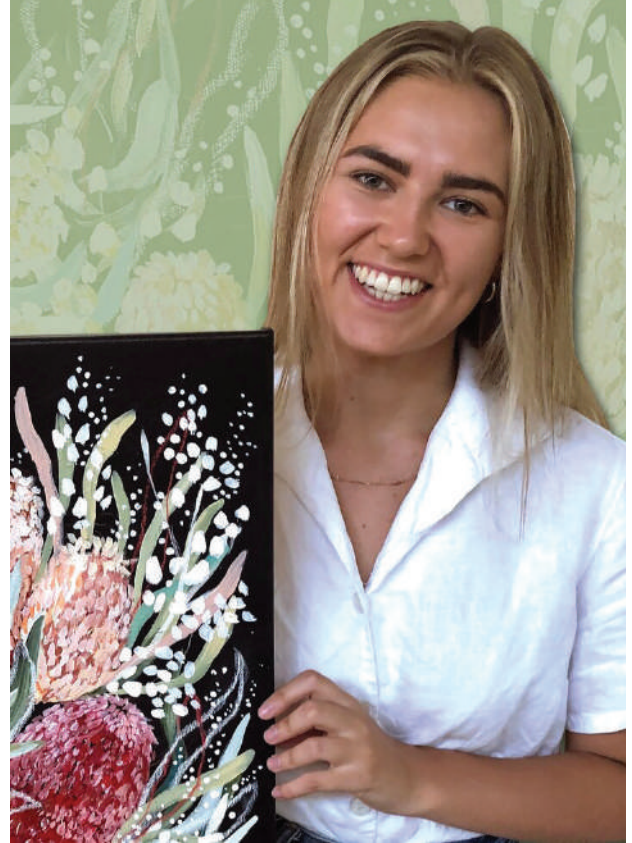
Our February artist spotlight was on the multi-disciplinary organisation, The Cad Factory. We ventured out past Narrandera to meet its creators, Artistic Director Vic McEwan and Creative Producer Sarah McEwan. The Cad Factory's current iteration takes the form of a rural property, formerly a school built in 1886 which is a cultural and artistic hub that hosts many public events and programs that center around inclusivity.



MARCH: SOPHIE CHAUNCEY

Our March artist of the month was Coleambally/Darlington Point artist Sophie Chauncy. Sophie has exhibited extensively within the Riverina, studied art at the National Art School in Sydney, and was at that time finishing her Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of Wollongong. Sophie's work reveals a strong influence of bush landscapes and a fascination with Australian wildlife conservation.

Image supplied by artist.



APRIL: HAPE KIDDLE

Our April artist of the month was Griffith based sculptor, teacher, goldsmith and jade carver, Hape Kiddle. His beautiful hand-crafted pieces are strongly influenced by his deep connection to the natural world which we all are a part of. Hape shares his skills via carving workshops which he moved to an online during COVID-19.



MAY: VERONICA COLLINS

Our May artist of the month was Griffith-born artist Veronica Collins, a 'Traditional Contemporary Fine Artist' who is a leading Wiradjuri artist in our region. Her work is held in private collections and has been exhibited throughout Australia, at galleries such as at the now closed Hogarth Gallery in Sydney, alongside her contemporaries Sally Morgan and Bronwyn Bancroft. After a long creative hiatus, Veronica returned in 2020 with many projects.



JUNE: SARAH TIFFEN

June's artist spotlight focused on Sarah Tiffen a Leeton-based poet, playwright, a university lecturer, and a speechwriter for Australian politicians. Through her business Sarah Tiffen Writing Services, she caters to all writing needs, offering services in creative writing, writing for small business, grants, marketing copy, media releases, articles, op-eds, research reports and books. Sarah Tiffen was the 2020 Historic Hydro Writer In Residence, during this time she founded the Leeton Writers' Group which flourished despite the pandemic.



JULY: PAUL BARLOW

Our July artist of the month was the well-travelled and multi-talented violinist, tutor and Vice President of the Murrumbidgee Regional Conservatorium of Music, Paul Barlow. Paul was part of the working group that started the momentous task of forming and legalising a music Conservatorium in Griffith, which was finalised in 2018. Paul has between 40 and 60 students at any one time, which he teaches as he travels around the Riverina visiting schools and homes.



AUGUST: KERRY JOHNSON

Our August Artist of the Month was the visionary Dancer and Choreographer, Kerry Johnson - an artist who both stems from and creates out of Griffith. Kerry's combined education of studying dance at Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern and at NAISDA influenced her style of choreography which led to her choreographing artists like Jessica Mauboy, Casey Donovan, Christine Anu and Shakaya. Kerry was Artistic Director of the 2020 Yarruwala Wiradjuri Cultural Festival which featured performances by her company, Burrundi Theatre for Performing Arts.



SEPTEMBER: SHARON DE VALENTIN

Our September Artist of the Month was the multi-talented student of ancient techniques - Encaustic Artist Sharon De Valentin. Sharon is an emerging artist who has dedicated her time to learning the craft of fire and wax, supported by an international network of artists. Sharon's art practice favours all-natural ingredients and art supplies, carefully considering the artistic process from the moment she builds her hand-made substrates to making natural inks from walnuts and avocado seeds.



DECEMBER: MICHAEL LYONS

The December spotlight was Artist, Craftsman and Didgeridoo Player Michael Lyons, a Wiradjuri Elder whose iconic Sandhills Artefacts Gallery and Workshop has been an essential stop for tourists exploring our region for over 30 years. Michael harnesses his extensive knowledge of Culture passed on from his father to create didgeridoos, bull roarers, clapsticks, coolamons, boomerangs and more in the Traditional ways. Michael's beautifully detailed paintings with frames crafted locally in Narrandera, utilise a burning technique that is distinctive to his style.

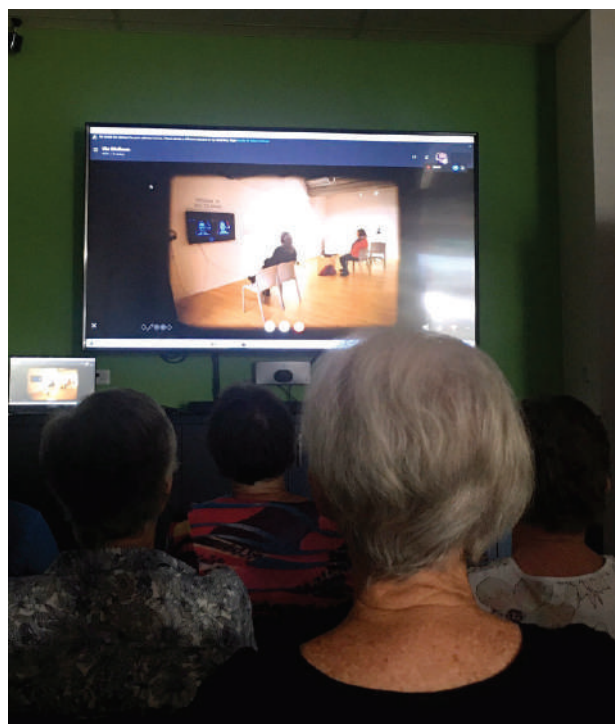


PROJECTS

We were still able to come together during 2020 via COVID- safe events and video conferences. These are the projects we presented, partnered on and supported.

THE RIVERINA LECTURES: VIC MCEWAN

In 2020 we introduced the Riverina Lectures, a roving lecture series promoting diverse storytelling and the voices of artists and cultural leaders. The lectures are recorded as a free long-term resource. Our first lecture featured Vic McEwan of the Cad Factory who streamed in live from the Tate Liverpool during his residency. Guests enjoyed a complimentary breakfast while Vic delved into his fascinating projects combining art and cutting edge science.



GRIFFITH BUSHFIRE BENEFIT CONCERT

This event presented by Griffith City Council, Murrumbidgee Regional Conservatorium of Music and Western Riverina Arts came together as a response to the devastating bushfire crisis. It was a family evening of great local music, local wine and food. Performers included Happy Avenue, Ben Ceccato and Ali Ratcliff, Jorja Dalton, Anastasia Comarin, jazz ensemble Little Big Band and Griffith City Band. \$6857.25 was raised for FRRR and WIRES Australian Wildlife Rescue.

Image: Anya Whitehead



VIDEO PROJECT: THE ROUND ROOM – INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION BY KERRI WEYMOUTH

A 2020 short film by Camille Whitehead for Western Riverina Arts documented The Round Room: Patterns, Fabric and the Love of Life by Kerri Weymouth. This interactive installation was shown at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery as part of the Each for Equal exhibition for International Women's Day. In the film Kerri takes the viewer through a guided tour of the installation and delves into issues of body image and identity as well as the influences of her Uncles Ross Weymouth and John Claringbold.



CREATIVE RIVERINA

Established by Eastern Riverina Arts, Creative Riverina is the go-to online directory and database for artists, creatives and arts organisations of all types from the Riverina NSW as well as an online community on Facebook. In 2020 Western Riverina partnered with ERA to expand these platforms across our regional footprint.



JOYCE SPENCER TEXTILES FELLOWSHIP

The Joyce Spencer Fellowship's aim is to support a regional NSW textile artist or collective to deliver a new artwork or exhibition. Named after textile artist Joyce Spencer (1928 – 2019), the fellowship is made possible with funds from the Spencer family and Western Riverina Arts, in partnership with the Cad Factory. Dr Trehna Hamm was awarded the 2020 inaugural fellowship of \$4,000. In 2022, Trehna will present new work at Burraja Gallery (Albury), Griffith Regional Art Gallery and the Narrandera Arts and Community Centre.

Image: James T Farley



THE RIVERINA LECTURES: ANTHEA DA SILVA

The Inaugural Darling Portrait Prize winner and Griffith Regional Art Gallery Public Programs Officer Anthea da Silva joined us for the second instalment of the Riverina Lectures. Anthea unpacked some of the highs and lows of her creative ventures, chatted about the 'Prize' and how it fits within a broader arts spectrum.

Image: Anya Whitehead



YARRUWALA WIRADJURI CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Griffith City Council and the Wiradjuri Community, with partners Burrundi Theatre for Performing Arts and Western Riverina Arts presented the 2020 Yarruwala Wiradjuri Cultural Festival (YWCF). The festival celebrated Wiradjuri heritage and culture with over 20 events across the Western Riverina including performances, exhibitions, workshops, films, shared culture and digital experiences. WRA designed the website for the festival which acted as an information hub and portal for ticketing.



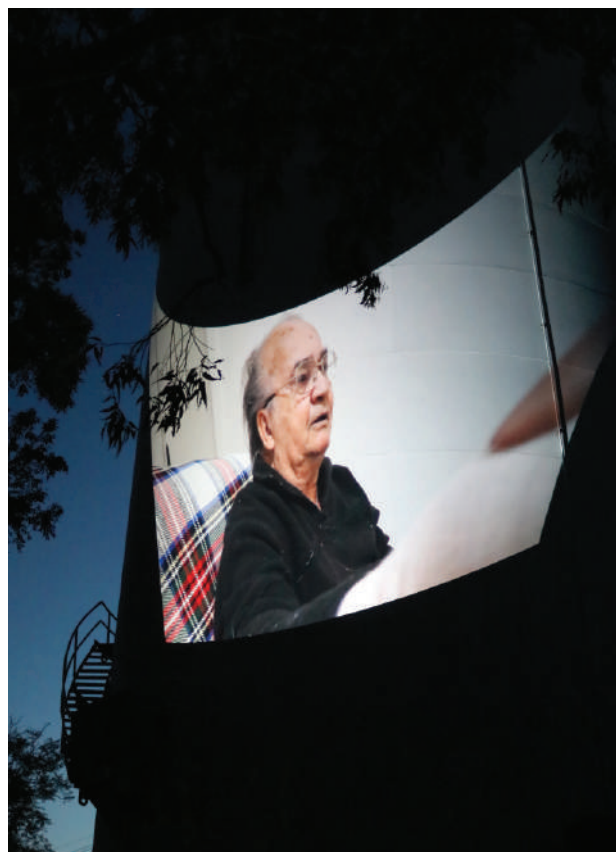
YWCF: ONE NIGHT AT WARANGESDA

This special music theatre performance took audiences back in time tracing the story of Warangesda from 1880, bringing it forward into living history. The theatre was preceded by Traditional food, music performances, video compilation of local dances from local school children, First Nations runway fashion show and oral histories from Elders. One Night at Warangesda – Music Theatre and Site Tour was presented by Burrundi Theatre for Performing Arts and Western Riverina Arts. The event was supported by Create NSW and Regional Arts NSW.



YWCF: REMEMBERING WATTLE HILL PROJECTIONS

In his nineties, Wiradjuri Elder Clary Higgins relates his story growing up at The Sandhills and moving to Wattle Hill in Leeton as a young boy. This oral history project was told through pre-recorded sound recordings and film that were projected onto the water tower at Wattle Hill Park.



YWCF: STORY & SCRIPTWRITING WORKSHOP WITH ANDREA JAMES

Participants explored concepts of family and developed ideas for their own short stories and scripts with Sunshine Super Girl Writer-Director Andrea James.

Image: Derek Motion for Western Riverina Arts



YWCF: WIRADJURI SANDHILLS BBQ PICNIC CULTURAL TOUR

Wiradjuri Elder Michael Lyons ran cultural tours through Wiradjuri Country in Narrandera exploring Koori Beach, the bushland of the Murrumbidgee River and hidden places of cultural significance to see Traditional Rock Art, shelter and canoe trees, birthing stones and more. Participants were treated to a bush tucker lunch. This event was presented by Western Riverina Arts.



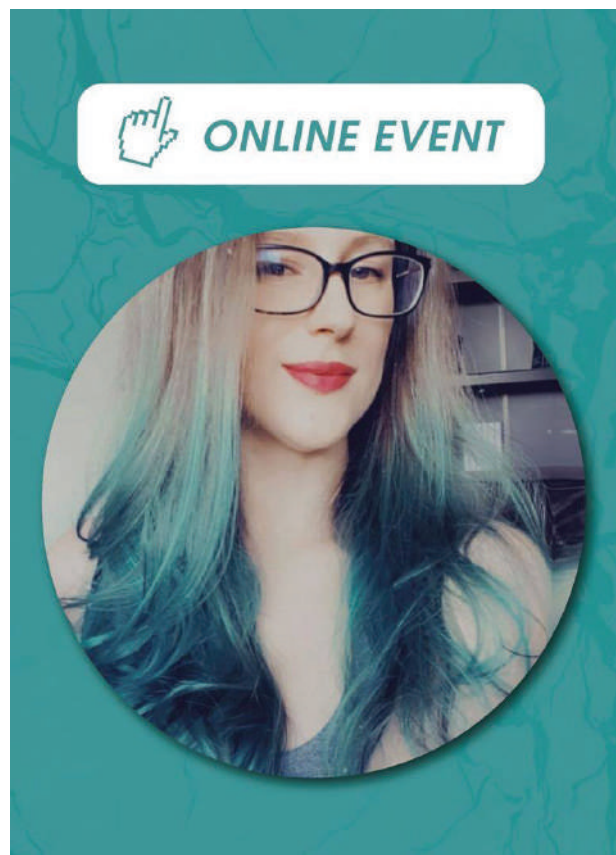
YWCF: WETLANDS & SURROUNDS WIRADJURI CULTURAL TOUR

Participants took a walk with Wiradjuri Custodian William Ingram around the life-giving wetlands of Leeton. They learnt about the significance of ancient natural waterways to Wiradjuri Culture and how these special places have remained intact for time immemorial. William touched on Leeton's Wiradjuri language, culture, food, nature and tradition. This event was presented by Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council and Western Riverina Arts.



Q&A INFORMATION SESSION ON CREATIVE WRITING & SELF-PUBLISHING WITH KAYDENCE SNOW

International Bestselling author Kaydence Snow joined Western Riverina Arts for a free online Q&A information session to answer questions about creative writing and self publishing, as well as navigating the world of e-books. Kaydence was interviewed by local artist Hilary Manning which resulted in two hours worth of invaluable advice which is now available via our Youtube channel.



LEETON WRITERS' COLLECTIVE CHAPBOOK VOL. I

Leeton Writers Collective launched their first collection of poetry and stories at the Leeton Museum and Gallery. The Collective formed in 2020 have achieved many goals in their first year including performing public readings, writing their first poems, attending writing retreats, a regular column in the Irrigator and with the professional assistance of Sarah Tiffen, two member's poetry manuscripts have been accepted for publication. The chapbook's printing and design was supported by Western Riverina Arts.



NETWORKING CHRISTMAS EVENT

A coming together event was very much needed at the end of 2020. 53 people registered their attendance for our networking event. Feedback included *"It was the culmination of all the goodwill WRA had been cultivating throughout 2020"*. A non-arts attendee said they didn't realise that the Western Riverina had such a dedicated and substantial arts community. We also received the following via email *"I really enjoyed the evening. It was an elegant and engaging evening with lots of 'networking' and a brilliant photographic display. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to attend. Western Riverina Arts is really focused and working to ensure Leeton emerges as a centrepiece of the Arts in the Riverina. Well done!"* and *"Thanks so much for inviting me to your networking event last Friday. It was great to meet so many people I would not have otherwise seen, and make new contacts."*



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the start of March Aanya attended an invaluable workshop on managing and curating museum collections. Vanessa Thorne, curator of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), travelled to Narrandera to teach audiences about object selection, documentation fundamentals, cataloguing and acquisition processes.



In October Camille attended workshops ran by WRA board member and Marketing and Cultural Services Coordinator for Leeton Shire Council, Sues Vos. Audiences learnt Insights Into Digital Marketing delivered as part of Small business Week.



In December Camille attended a Leeton Connect Donation and Fundraising workshop 'emPOWER Your Mission'. The workshop was facilitated by FRRR as part of the Leeton Connect project, thanks to VFFF's support of the Investing in Rural Communities (IRCF) program. The workshop was delivered by Scott Lockie from the Australian Charity Guide and covered topics such as governance, marketing strategies, and fundraising techniques.

Image: Leeton Connect



Executive Director Aanya Whitehead also undertook the following professional development throughout 2020:

- Webinar, Institute of Community Directors Australia: How To Connect with Under-Represented Communities - Thursday 9th July 2020
- Webinar, Regional Arts NSW: Grant Writing Workshop with Monica Davidson - Thursday 23 July 2020
- Online Course, Charles Sturt University: Indigenous Australian Histories - July to October 2020
- Online Course, Charles Sturt University: Contemporary Indigenous Australian Realities - November 2020 to February 2021

WESTERN RIVERINA ARTS OUT AND ABOUT

Despite COVID-19, 2020 was a year of the new Western Riverina Arts team getting out and about and familiarising ourselves with the artistic landscape. This included a lot of studio visits, venue tours, club attendance and documenting various launches and events big and small. Here are some of the moments we snapped and promoted while being social!



Western Riverina Arts first trip of the year was to Coleambally where we met with Alison Hayes and Therese Chauncy of Coleambally Irrigation. The beautiful landcare themed work adorning the walls is by local artist Kerri Weymouth.



We visited Murrumbidgee Shire Council where artist Roslyn Lockhart talked us through some of the meanings present in what could be described as Jerilderie's (or Australia's) best hidden art gem. 'Yo-thuning-yuna Ngarratya' (Coming Together) is a 8x4m painting by Barundji/Barkindji artists Elsie Black, Gertrude Gittins, Eileen Ballangarry and Sos Hawkins. It is thought to be the largest Traditional Aboriginal dot painting in the world! The painting hung in Parliament House for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.



The Cad Factory 2020 Program Launch was held at the Narrandera Arts Centre. The pre-COVID program proposed would export our local artists overseas, activate public spaces in innovative ways, work with VR technology programs to explore politics and gender, offer solar panel building workshops and create new fellowships for textile artists.



We dropped in on the Leeton Art Society's first Tuesday Morning Casual Art gathering for the year, at the Leeton Multipurpose Community Centre. Members enjoy a cuppa and a chat while they get creative on Tuesday mornings and night.



Mackay Ave in Griffith changed before our eyes with vibrant new art that emerged over several months. Local artist and owner of the Green Gecko Garden Centre Lisa Taliano, along with artists Di Tarr and Romina Tappi's creative efforts resulted in a massive 90m long mural.



Some public areas were still open for exercise during Covid-19. We visited Grong Grong's community garden put together by many enthusiastic and creative volunteers from the historic town of Grong Grong.



We took a trip out to Tirkandi Inaburra to discuss future arts projects and the fabulous programs they have which focus on Arts and Culture. We also admired the murals on site, including a new work by artist Sandon Gibbs-O'Neill which "tells a story of Tirkandi Inaburra, the community and the boys journey while at Tirkandi."



Artist Kerri Weymouth collaborated with fashion historian Tom McEvoy on a Masters project based on her two Uncles, award-winning fashion designers Ross Weymouth and John Claringbold. Many of their works are held in a large collection by the Griffith Regional Art Gallery who are also assisting with this project.



Western Riverina Arts travelled over to Wagga Wagga to attend the 2020 Artstate program launch. We heard about the fantastic line up of events envisioned by Arts Program Director Scott Howie planned for the final Artstate in Wagga Wagga.



We snapped Barellan artist Brad Wilson while he applied some finishing touches on one of his works for the Inside Cinema vs Parallel Universe Exhibition held at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery. Brad was one of 13 artists whose work was exhibited.



We dropped by Sue Fordham's studio in Griffith to check out her Wheel Throwing Pottery Classes for adults, where students can get one-on-one training.



The inaugural Leeton Writers Group Weekend Writing Retreat was held at the Historic Hydro Hotel. Eight members used the retreat to focus on their writing practice, to share discussions with their fellow group members and to explore their individual imaginative processes.



Helen Dalton MP stopped by the Griffith Regional Theatre to see Veronica Collins' brand new mural 'Charcoal Reign'. We were there to snap some photos as they discussed grassroots community issues affecting people in the Western Riverina.



WRA assisted in invigilation of the Arts Hub during the Yarruwala Wiradjuri Cultural Festival. Artists Allan McKenzie Snr and Carolyn Williams brought in some fantastic pieces for sale. Allan is pictured with 'Life' and 'Spiritual Reflections' and Carolyn displayed her works 'Colourful Waters' and 'Mob Connection'.



Western Riverina Arts staff invigilated the exhibition space at Narrandera Arts Centre and attended the launch of Regional artist Robert Sherwood Duffield's exhibit 'Works'.



The Hon. Don Harwin MLC, Minister for the Arts, dropped by the WCIC building to discuss all things arts and culture in our region with staff and board members of Western Riverina Arts. The minister also got a quick tour of Yanco Public School's 'To Walk In Someone Else's Shoes' that was exhibited at LMAG.



Members of the Historic Hydro Writers Collective performed at their first Open Mic Night at The Historic Hydro Hotel. They shared examples of their writing with a warm crowd and enjoyed some rousing acoustic guitar sets by group member Chris Dawe.



Griffith Regional Art Gallery hosted a celebratory NAIDOC Week family fun event on Sunday 8th Nov at their Griffin Plaza Arts Hub, with a talk by Wiradjuri Artist Veronica Collins, accompanied by singer Damian Thorne. Veronica announced her quest to repatriate a very special bark painting to Groote Eylandt.



Western Riverina Arts staff and members of the board attended Artstate, a four-year project by Regional Arts NSW that shone a light on excellence in arts practice in the regions. This year's event was held in Wagga Wagga in partnership with Eastern Riverina Arts. Several artists from our region who were also involved.



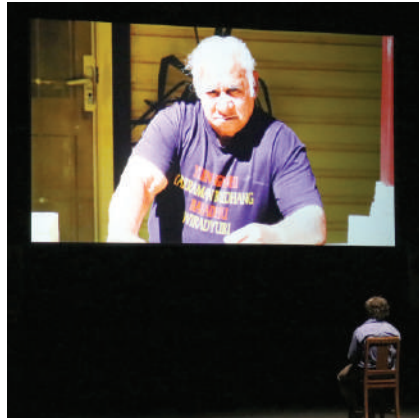
Creative Journeys Panel Talk. Three Aboriginal artists shared their stories of building their careers in the arts. Lillardia Briggs-Houston of Ngarru Miimi spoke of her dream of a future where the next generation of her local community could thrive in their chosen creative field while living on Country. Lillardia shared the stage with comedian Dane Simpson and dancer Joel Bray.



Vic McEwan, Artistic Director of the Cad Factory, led One for Sorrow, Two for Joy, a performative exploration of the complexities involved in working with community around issues of suicide and grief. The presentation including a video by Clive Parkinson from the U.K. and the retelling of Auntie Lorraine Tye's experiences of loss from a young age.



Ash Dust Air was launched at Artstate, an anthology of works from regional youth responding to these unprecedented times, curated by Gabrielle Tozer. We snapped Leeton students Jessica Wells, Jana Deaton and Madeline Irvin as they celebrated their first publication!



The Artstate Opening Ceremony featured Uncle Stan Grant Senior who set the record straight on the meaning of 'Wagga Wagga'. Though Wagga does have quite a few crows, the Wiradjuri term Wagga Wagga means dancing, celebrating - the truth of which Uncle Stan has been advocating for decades.



Horizons Made Wide was a treasure hunt art trail exhibition presented by Eastern Riverina Arts during Artstate. Leeton Art Society Inc President Jacqui Herrmann and local artists Kate Smith and Hape Kiddle's artworks were displayed along Fitzmaurice Street, in Wagga.



Animator and Artist Bernard Higgins was on the fascinating Multi-disciplinary Co-Creation: Combining Creative Arts & Science Panel. A Wiradjuri man from Leeton, Higgins is at Charles Sturt University exploring skill, trade and Culture through animation and science.



Something To Say was co-curated by Julie Montgarrett and Sarah McEwan featuring 13 artists was shown at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery.



Local artist Jason Richardson was one of the many creatives working on The (un)Usual: when the Familiar becomes Strange, which also included artists from Real Art Works, Navigate Arts and the Art Factory. This was an immersive experience like no other, which completely transformed the Civic Theatre Precinct and the foreshore of the Wollundry Lagoon into an unfamiliar world.



Former Leetonian, Animation Artist Alice Peacock was one of the artists collaborating on the project 8 Doors. The studio doors were exhibited on the Civic Centre Exterior Wall with interactive QR codes. This project was the result of a partnership between Parramatta Artists' Studios, Eastern Riverina Arts and Charles Sturt University.



It was fabulous to immerse ourselves in Sigh during Artstate, a moment of magical tranquility in an unlikely setting - as one attendee put it "It was like a thousand little meditations." Sigh was a collaboration between Blacksmith, John Wood and musician Vic McEwan.



The team from WRA listened and learned and participated in the landscape of creativity that stems from our regional areas. The arts program was diverse and fascinating with some big announcements made by NSW Minister for the Arts Don Harwin.



We attended the launch of the 2020 National Contemporary Jewellery Awards at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery where winner Halie Rubenis with their work 'White Bread' was celebrated. Their necklace repurposed discarded bread, compressing and hand cutting hundreds of bread clip shaped pieces.



We visited Hape Kiddle at his beautiful Bidgee Studio & scenic gardens in Griffith. Hape showed us many beautiful works and gave us a tour.



There was a fantastic turnout at the Greengecko Garden & Craft Market in December. Lisa Taliano ran a fantastic event that showcased the works of creatives such as Di Tarr, Romina Tappi, Kristy-Lee Agresta, Kim Gibbs, Anne Morshead, Isis Ronan, Sue Fordham and Jorja Belle.



Kerri Weymouth and Julie Montgarrett's 'Bidgee Bunyips' textile project with artists from Darlington Point and Coleambally saw one-of-a-kind bunyips exhibited at the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery Shop. The project was supported by The Cad Factory and Murrumbidgee Council.



WRA attended the opening of the Narrandera Walk in Art Exhibition which came about from the hard work of Tracey Lewis with a team of staff and 40+ artists. Over 350 people visited the exhibition over the opening weekend. These pieces formed part of an extensive Art Trail in Narrandera local businesses to promote tourism.



Leeton Writers Collective launched their first collection of poetry and stories late December at the Leeton Museum and Gallery. WRA attended the launch. The chapbook's printing and design was supported by Western Riverina Arts.



Michael Lyons Snr, Owen Lyons, Dexter Briggs and Andrea Briggs gifted three newly commissioned artworks that share memories of Life on the Sandhills to the Narrandera Shire Library. Coleambally artist Kerri Weymouth headed the project as Local Producer for the Cad Factory.



We met up with Jake Speer, the Director and Lead of Henry V to learn about and help promote his planned 2021 theatre project. The project offered mentorship programs for people interested in Acting, Set Building, Costume Making, Sound & Lighting and Stage Management and Production.



Griffith City Council put on a fabulous show in December with unique Christmas lights that activated Memorial Park at night. Pictured are some of the #Glow2680 organisers, Nathan Beer and a Western Riverina Arts board member Oumi Karenga-Hewitt.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2020, Western Riverina Arts Inc. maintained its core funding from Create NSW as well as LGA member contributions from Griffith, Leeton, Murrumbidgee and Narrandera. Grants for project funding were up, as well as other income sources from a range of activities. The Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 were reviewed by Treasurer Anthony Morton. Western Riverina Arts is in a stable position. The 2020 Income Statement showed a surplus of \$26,572.

| <u>Income</u> | <u>\$ 2020</u> | <u>\$ Budget</u> | <u>\$ Difference</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Grants | 247,899 | 187,000 | 60,899 | 1) |
| Other Income | 13,570 | 600 | 12,970 | 2) |
| Interest | 946 | 1,500 | (554) | |
| Total Income | 262,415 | 189,100 | 73,315 | |
| | | | | |
| <u>Expenses</u> | | | | |
| Program and Project Costs | 49,473 | 6,050 | 43,423 | 3) |
| Operating Costs | 59,581 | 54,000 | 5,581 | 4) |
| Salaries and Wages | 126,789 | 123,000 | 3,789 | 5) |
| Total Expenses | 235,843 | 183,050 | 52,793 | |
| | | | | |
| <i>Surplus</i> | <i>26,572</i> | <i>6,050</i> | <i>20,522</i> | 6) |

Notes:

- 1) More grant funding applied for in 2020, including additional Covid grants targeted to the region.
- 2) More GBO through funded project activity.
- 3) More grant funding expended as per funded projects.
- 4) New car lease in 2020 with additional repair and changeover costs.
- 5) Additional wage add-ons payable on employee changeovers.
- 6) A majority of the surplus is for auspiced grants paid in 2020 for outcomes in 2021.



Western Riverina Arts is supported by



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