

# STYLEUP

FASHION,  
BEAUTY &  
LIFESTYLE

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Luca Saunders  
modelling.  
Stylist: Charissa  
Trikos. Hair and  
make-up: Georgie  
Kelly. Picture:  
Lauren Schulz

# Shirts on for cancer research

## PHOEBE BLOGG

Witchery's White Shirt Campaign returns in 2026 with renewed purpose, bringing together some of Australia's most influential voices across fashion, media, entertainment and sport to raise vital funds for ovarian cancer research in partnership with the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation.

The campaign is supported by leading Indigenous models Billie Jean Hamlet and Samantha Harris.

"Ovarian cancer remains the most lethal gynaecological cancer, with a survival rate of just 49 per cent," Hamlet said.

"100 per cent of proceeds from every shirt go to the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation. So proud to be a part of this campaign."

Now in its 18th year, the campaign continues to demonstrate the impact of collective action.

Originally taking inspiration from the white coat worn by scientists in the lab, the campaign has grown into one of Australia's most recognised fashion-led philanthropic initiatives, raising much-needed funds for ovarian cancer research.

This year the campaign enters a new creative chapter. Designed in collaboration with Byron Bay-born label St. Agni,



Samantha Harris

the Witchery White Shirt has been reimaged through three modern silhouettes created by Lara Fells, co-founder and designer of St. Agni.

Captured against the natural beauty of the Australian coastline, this year's campaign reflects connection, community and the strength of women supporting women.

"It is hard to overstate the power and the impact The Witchery White Shirt Campaign continues to have. For 18 years, the campaign has played a fundamental role in driving awareness and raising critical funds for ovarian cancer research," OCRF chief executive Robin Penty said.

"Every year builds on the success of the last. Investing in medical research means you are in it for the long game and Witchery, along with the

amazing ambassadors who show up for us every year, and every person who buys a shirt, are walking the road alongside us."

The campaign brings together a collective of Australia's most recognised talent across television, media, fashion, sport and entertainment, including television personalities Abbey Gelmi, Anna Heinrich, Renee Bargh, Natalie Barr and Sarah Abo, alongside influential voices and social media stars including Ariana Tapsell, Indy Clinton, Lana Wilkinson, Nicole Warne, Olive Cooke, and Steph Claire Smith.

Together, the ambassadors represent Australia's creative and cultural influence, united in support of raising awareness and critical funding for ovarian cancer research.

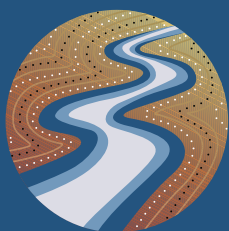
This year's Witchery White Shirts consist of three considered silhouettes, the Button Back Wrap Shirt, Halter Shirt and Longline Wrap Shirt.

For every White Shirt sold, Witchery will donate 100 per cent of gross proceeds to the OCRF, supporting researchers across Australia working to prevent, detect and better treat ovarian cancer.

The campaign will culminate with Witchery White Shirt Day and World Ovarian Cancer Day on Friday, May 8.



Billie Jean Hamlet for Witchery's 2026 White Shirt Campaign.



KAKURRKA  
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[steve@kakurrka.com.au](mailto:steve@kakurrka.com.au)

# Exhibition tells epic stories of the land

PHOEBE BLOGG

Ngura Pulka, an epic project in scale and scope led by senior First Nations artists and collectives from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Coober Pedy and Tarntanya/Adelaide, is now open at the National Gallery.

The exhibition, running until August 23, brings together 30 large-scale paintings depicting expansive Country while celebrating the powerful Tjukurpa (Anangu law/cultural stories) within, reinforcing the artists' deep connection to culture and place.

Through stories and distinctive designs, the featured artists continue to strengthen their cultural knowledge of their homelands.

Individual artists, as well as women's and men's collectives, bring their Tjukurpa to life on large canvases, sometimes through explosions of colour and sometimes in a muted palette.

Senior women artists, as Community leaders, described these major works as representing the ultimate

freedom of cultural expression, exploration and depiction of their Tjukurpa and Ngura (land).

"I love making paintings with my daughter Raylene. We've made many big canvases together; we send our paintings to exhibitions all over the place. When we're painting together, we talk about our lives and about our country and culture," Yankunytjatjara artist Betty Chimney said.

"Making paintings together is very special, the paintings are always exciting and interesting to make.

"It makes me so happy to work with my daughter, we are teaching the next generation about how important our culture is."

Head curator, First Nations Art, National Gallery Tina Baum (Gulumirrgin (Larrakia) / Wardaman / Karajarri peoples) said: "From the beginning of the APY art movement, these artists have embraced the opportunity to celebrate and share their stories through monumental works of art."



Naomi Kantjuriny, Pitjantjatjara people, and Mona Mitakiki Shepherd, Pitjantjatjara people at Tjala Arts, Amata, SA, the artists / Tjala Arts / APY Art Centre Collective. Pic: Rhett Hammerton (courtesy of Tjala Arts)

"By bringing together some of their most ambitious works to date, Ngura Pulka offers audiences the opportunity to experience the strength and beauty of the artistic practices coming out of the Central Desert."

Ngura Pulka was to open in 2023 but was postponed for the National Gallery's independent review into the authorship of works after allegations raised in the media. This review validated the authorship of the works.

The National Gallery has worked closely with the artists to evolve the exhibition for its first public display. As a continuing community project, the artists will present six new large-scale works.

Presented alongside Ngura Pulka are 13 works by APY artists drawn from the national

collection. The National Gallery has a proud history of supporting and celebrating artist-led projects by First Nations artists.

"Ngura Pulka is one of the most ambitious First Nations community-driven art projects and the National Gallery is proud to stand by the artists and share it with our audience," National Gallery director Nick Mitzevich said.

"After a long journey, we invite everyone to visit the exhibition, to celebrate the work of these remarkable artists and witness the power of cultural storytelling through art," he said.

Sandra Pumani, Yankunytjatjara artist and chairperson of the APY Art Centre Collective, said Ngura Pulka was a project that had been a long time coming, but

"we always knew we would get here because of the strength and resilience of our artists, our artworks, and our culture".

"We stand by these artworks together as one, and we are proud to share them with Australia."

Ngura Pulka—Epic Country is presented in partnership with APY Art Centre Collective, with the support of Art Centres; Tjala Arts, Mimili Maku Arts, Umoona Arts, Iwantja Arts, Kaltjiti Arts, Collective Art Centre Adelaide, as well as artists from Ernabella and Pipalyatjara.

The National Gallery said it was grateful to all Ngura Pulka—Epic Country supporters including Major Partner CreateSA and donors to the 2022 collective giving campaign.

## Professor enters hall of fame

PHOEBE BLOGG

One of Australia's most influential design thinkers, Boonwurrung Elder Professor N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs AM, was inducted into the Design Institute of Australia's Hall of Fame this month.

Professor Briggs was recognised for her decades-long work bringing First Peoples' knowledge into design practice across Australia, including in architecture, urban planning, landscape design and public infrastructure.

Based at the Wominjeka Djeembana Research Lab within Monash Art, Design and Architecture, she is a pioneer of Indigenous-led research.

Her work includes advocating for the cultural return of a century-old thulu (tree) from Switzerland to Australia, and exploring how Indigenous knowledge systems can reshape urban water design.

Professor Briggs is the Elder-in-residence behind Kindred People, Monash University's new Indigenous-led festival celebrating First Nations arts, knowledge, and community, which will run from September 1-5.

She is also the Elder-in-residence for the Master of



Professor N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs AM. Picture: Tobias Titz

Indigenous Business Leadership course at Monash Business School.

Professor Briggs said she was honoured by the induction.

"This honour belongs to the community. Everything I have been able to contribute has come from working alongside Elders, creatives and knowledge holders who have generously shared their wisdom," she said.

"I have been inspired by strong Aboriginal leaders, including Louisa Briggs, Michael Mansell, Hyllus Maris and Charles Perkins, and I hope this award helps open doors for the next generation and encourages young Indigenous

people to be confident in their voices.

"I am grateful to my family for the strength and courage they have provided me, including my late mother Carrie, sister Eva, and brothers Fred and John.

"I would also like to acknowledge Elizabeth Tunstall, who was at the time the first Black dean of a faculty of design in the world, and who gave me the courage to pursue my PhD."

Professor Briggs was one of five inductees honoured at an event held at the National Gallery of Victoria, alongside Paul Charlwood, Paul Huxtable, Geraldine Maher and Cal Swann.

Monash University deputy vice-chancellor (Indigenous) and senior vice-president, Professor Tristan Kennedy, congratulated Professor Briggs on her achievement.

"We are incredibly proud to work alongside a strong Indigenous Elder with the calibre of Professor N'arwee't Aunty Carolyn," he said.

"I remain ever grateful for her contributions to our Monash community and for her generous cultural and intellectual guidance for the next generation of Indigenous leaders and knowledge holders."

## Nunga Screen returns with more great films

GIOVANNI TORRE

Country Arts SA's award-winning First Nations film showcase Nunga Screen returns in 2026 for its 15th year of sharing history, humour, culture and Country through powerful storytelling.

Presented annually between Reconciliation Week (May 27 to June 3) and NAI-DOC Week (July 5 to 12), a mix of short films from emerging and established creators are screened regionally at free community events, and available for organisations to buy and stream internally.

Nunga Screen programmer and Ngarrindjeri man Joshua Trevorror said the second half of the program delves into social and cultural issues, creating space to reflect on timely and complex topics.

"Nunga Screen is a chance to listen deeply and to come together in recognition of First Nations voices and stories," he said. "We are extremely proud of how far this program has come over 15 years, to the point where we now are able to remunerate

featured filmmakers and invest in more First Nations arts projects with funds raised through the Nunga Screen corporate campaign."

The program includes plenty for family audiences: the fast-paced adventures of Red Dirt Riders; the gentle tale of The Fix-It Man And The Fix-It Woman; and a music video with hip hop group DEM MOB and Fregon Anangu School.

There are moving documentaries such as Anangu Way and Blakprint For Success, and dramas like Catchin' Mumoo, The Secret and False Narrative bring raw emotional depth, exploring the complexities of family, truth, shame and healing.

Wongutha filmmaker Travis Akbar, whose film False Narrative is part of the 2026 program, said it is a "fantastic showcase of First Nations filmmaking talent".

Program and screening details are at the Country Arts SA website. People and groups interested in hosting a free community screening can go to [www.countryarts.org.au/book-nunga-screen](http://www.countryarts.org.au/book-nunga-screen).



Luca Saunders is a proud Biripi woman. Stylist Charissa Trikos, hair and make-up Georgie Kelly. Pictures: Lauren Schulz

# Emerging star's career skyro



Luca Saunders with her parents Deb and Andy.

## PHOEBE BLOGG

From growing up in a small beachside town to shooting on the shores of Byron Bay, Luca Saunders is one of the many emerging First Nations models building their careers from the ground up.

Style Up spoke with the rising star to learn more about how her career and presence in the fashion and creative industry has grown.

"I'm a proud Biripi woman who grew up on Biripi Country in a very small beach town outside of Taree, NSW," she said.

"I'm a Saunders, so I'm from a huge family and community.

"I never would have thought I'd be modelling until I was scouted from a quick photo snapped of me at Saltwater Freshwater Festival and shared on social media.

"That happened when I was 16. I was signed immediately."

Saunders' love for fashion arose from her passion for self-expression.

"I love being able to express myself through fashion and I love dressing up," she said.

"It's amazing having my make-up and hair done, and I love everything to do with the creative process of a shoot."

Saunders said her career had had many "pinch me" moments.

"One of my modelling highlights would be shooting Miimi and Jiinda's first fashion campaign in Byron Bay," she said. "Another highlight

happened in my first year of modelling when I walked the Indigenous Fashion Projects runway at Australian Fashion Week wearing Ihraa Swim.

"There is a very magical energy working with mob, from the models to the stylist and photographers, everyone has a strong unspoken connection.

"There's a lot of laughter, support, acceptance and understanding for one another."

Saunders said she would love to see greater representation of Indigenous people across all creative industries.

"We definitely need greater representation of Indigenous people in every space, especially in mainstream media," she said.

"In Australia there is so much room for more representation.

"Recently seeing Tatyana Perry, Em Stenberg and Latahla Hickling on the cover of Vogue and getting the recognition they deserve was a huge highlight for me.

"It's hard to make space when the media is constructed for, and by, non-Indigenous people.

"I hope that soon all First Nations people in every corner are recognised and valued equally, without the added burden of having to work harder for the same opportunities."

The talented model has also gained attention off the runway thanks to her impressive voice.

"I recently performed at Yabun on the acoustic stage



# uckets



Luca Saunders modelling at the Melbourne Fashion Festival, and left, fronting her band. Main picture: Dan Castano

which was extremely special," she said.

"I grew up around music and dancing, and have always loved performing.

"My goal is to move back to Sydney eventually, but for now my music and my band Luella Deville are playing gigs between Sydney and the Gold Coast often, just to throw another geographical challenge in there, and I'm so happy to be spending time with very creative and extremely talented musicians

and to be able to say they're my band.

"Having my band is extending my creative range and I'm learning so much, even drums."

"I'll definitely be releasing music under my name and under Luella Deville this year."

Saunders said she was grateful to have the support of a loving and creative family

"They have supported me through absolutely everything unconditionally," she said.

"My dad was in an amazing grunge band called Circle of Fate in the 90s with some of his cousins and friends. He is a professional stand-up comedian, so I grew up surrounded by creativity, performance and art.

"Dad did it for a living, so we had boxes of wigs, costumes, and hats at home. One day we'd be heading off with a camera

crew while he was dressed as a shark, and the next week would be in Melbourne mentoring up-and-coming Indigenous comedians.

"My mum is also incredibly creative, with a strong sense of direction and vision in everything she does. She has a way of grounding all our amazing big ideas and shaping them into something real."

Saunders continues to work all over Australia, regularly travelling back and forth from Taree. "I have recently moved back home to beautiful Biripi Country," she said. "I love it here, and the older I get I understand why my dad is so connected to Country and never wants to leave.

"It's a spiritual connection.

"Home is a seven-hour round trip to Sydney. I'm very happy to be home but it can be challenging travelling so often for my work opportunities.

"Now that I'm home I really

want to join our cultural dance group again. I danced all through school up until I moved to Sydney."

Looking ahead, Saunders is eager to grow her presence in the industry, further pursue her music career, and show emerging First Nations creatives remaining true to yourself and embracing your authenticity will always make you stand out.

"I'm so grateful for every modelling opportunity, and for the amazing people who help create each job from the ground up," she said.

"There's a huge amount of work and talent behind the scenes that often goes unnoticed. It really does take a great team.

"The best advice I ever received is to have tunnel vision... Do not compare yourself to anyone, and life isn't practice, it's performance — so go all in on it."

“

There is a very magical energy working with mob, from the models to the stylist and photographers, everyone has a strong unspoken connection.

Luca Saunders

# Singer's career takes a turn

JOSEPH GUENZLER

Gomeri country music star Kyla-Bell Roberts has released her latest single Took A Turn featuring Nooky, with the track debuting on triple j Unearthed in late March.

The 17-year-old from Moree's rise continues after winning the 2025 triple j Unearthed High Indigenous Initiative with her single Myself, which led to mentoring with Nooky.

Roberts wrote Took A Turn several years ago, but decided to take the track in a new direction by pairing her country sound with rap.

She said the collaboration with Nooky came together after her Unearthed win opened the door to working with the Yuin and Thunghutti rapper.

"We knew we were going to release Took A Turn, but we thought that we'd do something different with it just because we've done the country stuff," Roberts told National Indigenous Times.

"Why don't we add a rapper to it? Then I ended up winning the Indigenous Initiative section of triple j Unearthed, and Nooky's name came up."

The session gave Roberts the chance to watch an established artist build a verse in real time.

She said the studio process quickly became one of the standout parts of the release.

"It was an amazing

experience in the studio," she said. "Just getting to watch him actively write the rap, like he wrote the rap in front of us all.

"It was just crazy and just getting to see how he works in the studio."

The song is grounded in Roberts' own life.

"The song is really about coming from hard times and coming out of it," she said.

"My life took a turn for the better. "So, I just use music as a way to tell that story."

Roberts is balancing her growing music career with school, using weekdays for classes and assessments, and keeping weekends for practice and performance.

She said her teachers had supported her music journey.

"I really took music into mind when I thought about what I wanted to do for my subjects this year," Roberts said.

Roberts said this year was focused on releasing more songs, securing gigs, and building her audience.

The message she wants listeners to take from Took a Turn is one of perspective and resilience.

"I really just hope people kind of use their bad times and look at it more in a positive sense of where they're at now."

'Took a Turn' featuring Nooky is available now on all major streaming platforms.



Nooky and Kyla-Bell Roberts have collaborated on new song Took A Turn. Picture: Rahim Bakar

## CK4 and LH3 Well Intervention Environment Plan

Woodside has led the development of the LNG industry in Australia and today aims to thrive through the global energy transition. Woodside consults with relevant persons to gather feedback to inform its Commonwealth Environment Plans.

### CK4 & LH3 Well Intervention Environment Plan

Woodside plans to do light well intervention activities on the CK4 (Cossack-4H) and LH3 (Lambert-3) wells to remediate the wells using a light well intervention vessel and other support vessels. The two wells produce oil and gas through the Okha Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) facility which commenced production from the fields in 2011.

### Environment that May Be Affected (EMBA)

The EMBA is the largest geographic area where an unplanned event could potentially have an environmental consequence. In the highly unlikely event a hydrocarbon release does occur, the whole EMBA would not be affected.

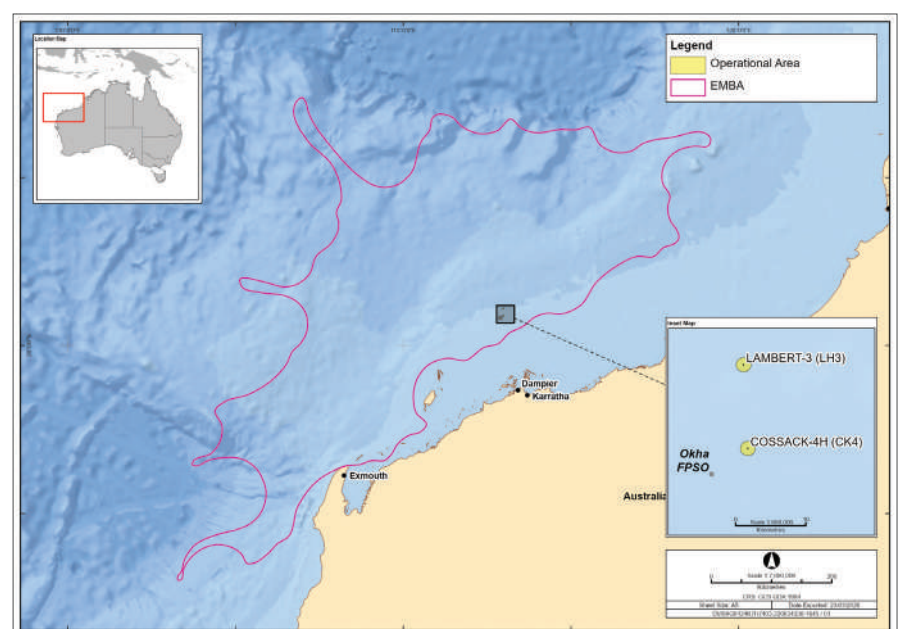
### We would like to hear from you

If you are an individual, organisation or community group and believe your functions, interests or activities may be impacted by the activities under this Environment Plan, we would like to hear from you by **18 May 2026**.

### To find out more go to:

[www.woodside.com/what-we-do/consultation-activities](http://www.woodside.com/what-we-do/consultation-activities)

You can also subscribe via our website to receive future information on upcoming activities.



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Toll free: 1800 442 977  
woodside.com



Models wearing Nagula Jarndu backstage at Country to Couture 2024. Picture: Marley Morgan

## Country to Couture line-up

### PHOEBE BLOGG

The highly anticipated Country to Couture event has revealed its 2026 line-up, presented in partnership with Indigenous Fashion Projects.

The runways will return to the Top End this August for the event's 11th year.

Presenting the country's largest showcase of First Nations fashion, the event will be a two-day showcase — its largest presentation yet.

The runway event will also move outdoors, set against the Darwin landscape.

From remote community art centres and artists, to independent designers and exciting community collaborations, this year's line-up showcases emerging and established creatives.

The 2026 line-up brings First Nations textiles, fashion and art together in a vibrant runway showcase, celebrating contemporary design rooted in more than 60,000 years of culture.

Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation executive director Claire Summers, described the most recent Country to Couture as “an exhilarating

### SHOW 1, ON AUGUST 2, WILL FEATURE:

Anindilyakwa Arts x Anna Reynolds (Groote Eylandt) - NT  
 Babbarra Women's Centre (Maningrida, Manayingkarirra) - NT  
 Badu Art Centre (Badu Island, Wakaid) - Qld  
 Bobbi Lockyer x Skye Lockyer x Mali Isabel (Kariyarra, Ngarluma, Nyul Nyul, Yawuru, Arabana and Kokatha) - NT  
 Jaymee-Lee Chaquebor (Bidyadanga Community) - WA  
 LULUJARU (Kununurra, Goonoonoorang) - WA  
 MumRed (Geelong, Wathawurrung) - VIC  
 Nagula Jarndu (Rubibi, Broome) - WA  
 Off The Plantation (Naarm, Melbourne) - VIC  
 Waringarri Aboriginal Arts (Miriwoong) - WA

celebration of how First Nations designers and artists master traditional practices to inform contemporary design”.

Ms Summers said Country to Couture “embodies a cultural revolution that continues to redefine

Women of the Rivers - Arts Northern Rivers (Bundjalung) - NSW

### SHOW 2, ON AUGUST 3, WILL FEATURE:

Corella & Crow (Wiradyuri, Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal) - ACT  
 Goompi's Girl - Qld  
 Jina-Jina - Yinjaa-Barni Art (Ieramugadu, Roebourne) - WA  
 Kuku Bulkaway Arts (Archer Point, Wujal Wujal, Cooktown and Cape York) - Qld  
 Lucas Schober (Garramilla, Darwin) - NT  
 Marayn Menswear (Wallabadah, Thalababuri) - NSW  
 Marnin Studio (Kimberley Region) - WA  
 Ngaire Pakai (Awabakal Country/Newcastle) - NSW  
 Noongar Arts Fashion - Bunbury Regional Art Gallery (Wardandi Country, Bunbury) - WA  
 Yarrenynty Arltere (Mpwantwe) - NT

Australian fashion”. “It's incredible to see how Country to Couture has evolved from a showcase celebrating Indigenous textiles into the nation's premier platform for First Nations fashion innovation,” she said.

# Festival to platform four new art works

### PHOEBE BLOGG

YIRRAMBOI unveiled four major new commissions this month, marking the next chapter for a festival that has become a leading platform for First Nations evolutionary and experimental arts.

Spanning experimental sound, street theatre, movement, language rematriation, film and installation — each work, such as Jemma Atkinson-Costa's *Withewa*, a poetic film work honouring unsung Aboriginal Elders, is developed from early concept through to full realisation, culminating in world premieres across Naarm/Melbourne during the 2027 festival.

Now in its sixth iteration, the YIRRAMBOI Commissions Program sits at the heart of the festival, laying the foundation for the broader program and offering a glimpse of what's to come. The program centres Victorian First Nations artists providing resources to premiere ambitious new works rooted in community and creative sovereignty.

“There is nothing more powerful than backing our artists to create on their own terms, to play, to explore, to take risks and to speak their truths,” said co-lead/artistic lead of YIRRAMBOI Festival, Sherene Stewart.

“That is where the most urgent and pivotal work is born. We're deeply honoured to be entrusted with new works by senior artists, cultural leaders and the next generation of First Nations creatives.

“Artists who helped shape past festivals now return as pillars of the 2027 program, leading ambitious new work that reflect the strength and continuity of this platform.”

Co-lead/executive lead of YIRRAMBOI festival Emily Wells, said in 2026, YIRRAMBOI will continue to create and push for further opportunities for First Nations



Artist Jemma Atkinson-Costa. Picture: Joshua Scott

peoples. “At a time of uncertainty across the arts sector, YIRRAMBOI doubles down on ambitious, self-determined commissioning,” she said.

“As a First Nations festival, resilience is not new to us. We have always created within constraints. We will continue to push, to carve out opportunity, and to honour our responsibility as a vital and enduring platform for First Nations practice.”

The festival platforms the interconnectedness and diversity of First Nations creatives. Deeply rooted locally, traversing nationally and internationally, YIRRAMBOI creates space for expressions of culture, identity, unity and truth through evolutionary and experimental practices.

“We're proud to support First Nations artists to create work that is grounded in culture, community and truth-telling,” Naarm / Melbourne Lord Mayor Nick Reece said.

“YIRRAMBOI demonstrates what is possible when cities invest in the creativity of its people.”

## Arts centre recognised for excellence at Kimberley awards

### NATASHA CLARK

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts, an Aboriginal-owned art centre in WA's East Kimberley region, has been recognised for its work strengthening culture and community with a major regional business award.

The centre, based in Kununurra on Miriwoong Country, was on March 28

awarded the Indigenous excellence gong at the East Kimberley Business Excellence Awards.

One of the State's longest-running Aboriginal art centres, Waringarri supports local artists through studio space, exhibitions and cultural programs.

In a statement, the organisation said the award

reflected the purpose behind its work.

“We are incredibly proud and honoured to have received the 2026 East Kimberley business excellence award for Indigenous excellence,” the organisation said.

“This achievement means so much to our team and community. It reflects the mission at the heart of

everything we do at Waringarri Arts — to preserve and strengthen cultural knowledge for current and future generations.”

The award was presented by Kimberley Ports Authority at the East Kimberley Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Shining Stars gala.

Waringarri said its work was guided by Elders and a local

Indigenous board, keeping cultural integrity at the centre of its decisions.

The organisation acknowledged support from across the community, including businesses, sponsors and Kimberley MLA Divina D'Anna. The recognition reflects the growing presence of Aboriginal-led organisations in the region.

# Creativity gets a new design hub

## PHOEBE BLOGG

First Nations Fashion + Design has opened a new community hub in Gimuy/Cairns, Far North Queensland.

FNFD founder, Meriam Mer Samsep artist and designer Grace Lillian Lee, said she wanted to create a safe place for mob to connect, learn and share. "It's creating that place that inspires and ignites ideas," she said.

"I hope this becomes a pathway and a stepping stone for people and especially mob so they can come here, feel safe.

"Come in, share the space and connect with the community . . . this community that I definitely didn't have when I was growing up."

Opened in late March, the space — at the TAFE in Westcourt — is air-conditioned, with industrial sewing machines, design resources, free wi-fi and a lounge and tea area.

Ms Lee said FNFD had become a powerhouse in the industry, leading showcases at Australian Fashion Week and overseas, and wanted to empower First Nations fashion at home.

"We have an all-Indigenous team that is working within this hub," she said.

"It's really about giving the opportunity to (mob) to be seen and given the opportunity to have leadership roles within this space.

"I'm tired of us always just being a cultural program or always having to focus on a 'First Nations element'."

FNFD program manager, Daurareb, Wuthathi and Yadhaykenu woman Perina Drummond, said that growing up on Waiben, Thursday Island, she was surrounded by fashion.

"I was fortunate to have my akas and my aunts and my mum — they all knew how to sew — they all had trunks of fabric in their house," she said.



Grace Lillian Lee at the opening of First Nations Fashion + Design new community hub.

"They knew how to bead (and) the fabric paints back then were the little tubes that you can't find anymore. The sewing machines were the old singers. . . I remember playing on them."

As Ms Drummond's love of fashion began to lead her into the mainstream fashion industry, she realised Indigenous representation in those spaces was lacking.

"I had to really look far and wide to put together three designers, whereas now there is an absolute influx," she said.

FNFD has partnered with EPSON printers to utilise their facilities and bring on two experienced screen printers in residence to the hub.

Students from the nearby high school — Trinity Bay — attended the hub opening. Through a program with FNFD, they'd been working on techniques to create their own fashion designs.

Torres Strait Islander student, Jahnesta Nona, said she wanted to learn more about her culture and found fashion and textiles was a nice way to explore that.

"I was thinking about water because I like anything in the ocean (and the) crocodile which is my totem, and I really like my totem," she said of the inspiration behind her latest piece. "I was trying to go for something leaning towards Torres Strait culture."

Torres Strait Islander student from Bamaga, Tassiana Riordan, said she enjoyed learning about opportunities in the industry and techniques for fashion creation. Her work featured a traditional Torres Strait Islander cultural headdress and traditional language. "It's inspired by my older brother who is a dancer," she said.

Some of the design was also inspired by her father's Irish heritage. "In a lot of Irish or Celtic artwork they include the spirals," she said.

Ms Nona and Ms Riordan were both thrilled that through FNFD, their work would be showcased at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

# BHP

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