

**Mid West**

# **CREATIVE ECOLOGY**

## **SUMMIT**



6 February 2025  
Queens Park Theatre, Geraldton  
Yamatji Country, Jambinu

**REGIONAL  
ARTS WA**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Regional Arts WA honours and respects the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather and operate, acknowledging their enduring connection to country, culture, and spirituality.

We recognise the resilience and strength of First Nations peoples, their rich cultural heritage, and the ongoing importance of their knowledge and practices. We are committed to fostering cultural equity and understanding with First Nations people across WA.

We respectfully acknowledge the Yamatji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners and First People of the land on which this event takes place. The Nhanhagardi, Wilunyu, Naaguja.

*Yamatji Art, Regional Arts Summit 2017, Photography by Pixel Poetry*



## Why take time to gather here and now

The arts sector is a vibrant and evolving ecosystem, uniquely shaped by the diverse needs and aspirations of regional communities. At its heart, it exists to enrich the lives of people at every stage — children, adults, and seniors alike.

‘Place’ is often central to inspiring creative practice, and this is certainly true for the Mid West’s mosaic of communities, united by regional ties despite being scattered across a wide geographic expanse and fostering distinct local identities.

Hosting this event here and now is intentional, a step toward fostering a thriving regional arts sector that draws strength from the diversity of places, communities, and the profound contributions of First Nations peoples in this place. Together, these elements create a dynamic and distinctive creative ecology for the region.

Creative ecology is the interplay of people, ideas, resources, institutions, and spaces that sustain creativity, innovation, and cultural expression. It focuses on relationships and processes rather than infrastructure and industry.

We are all partners in nurturing the ecosystem and contribute to realising the Mid West’s immense potential as a dynamic place of creative collaboration.

Supporting creative and cultural activity in the Mid West and strengthening the fabric of the creative sector can foster avenues to address global challenges in the local context.

It can unlock new collaborations and ways of working that contribute to tourism, creative employment, investment attraction, and enhance the region’s appeal as an engaging and vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

The Creative Ecology Summit serves as a gathering point for the region’s creative community. It is a space to strengthen relationships, foster cross-sector learning, and delve into the unique elements that define the Mid West’s creative ecosystem. Through this summit, we aim to reflect on where we are, deepen our understanding of the people, practices, and stories that connect us, and collaboratively envision how we can shape a bright and dynamic future for the region.

Let’s embrace this unique chance to connect, inspire, and envision the Mid West’s boundless opportunities.



Dr Pilar Kasat  
CEO  
Regional Arts WA



Nils Hay  
CEO  
Mid West Development Commission

## Today's Program

8:45am	<b>Arrival</b>
9:00am	<b>Welcome to Country</b> Donna and David Ronan
9:10am	<b>MC Welcome</b> Rosie Sitorus
9:20am	<b>Representative of Minister for Culture and the Arts</b> Ms Lara Dalton MLA, Member for Geraldton
9:30am	<b>Introduction</b> Oliver Bazzani, Chairperson Regional Arts WA Nils Hay, CEO Mid West Development Commission
9:45am	<b>Keynote</b> <b>Creative Ecology Activation: A Midwest Transformative Yamaji Narrative</b> Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green
10:15am	<b>Presentation</b> <b>Creative Ecologies: Making More With a Metaphor</b> Dr Vahri McKenzie and Dr Christine Scoggin
10:35am	<b>Morning Break</b>
10:50am	<b>Country, Culture &amp; Connection</b> <b>Ancient Skies Linking us to Modern Times</b> Roni Kerley  <b>Aboriginal Acrobat - Lifting the Bar</b> Lucia Richardson  <b>Small Art Centre, Big Country: The Successes and Challenges of a Small Aboriginal Art Centre in WA's Mid West</b> Mauretta Drage, Colleen Drage & Marina Baker
11:30am	<b>In Conversation</b> <b>How can the Arts Help Address Our Biggest Challenges?</b> Moderator: Dr Pilar Kasat

12:20pm	<b>Places &amp; Creativity</b> <b>Wildflowers &amp; Wild Landscapes: An Artist's Life in Regional Western Australia</b> Helen Ansell  <b>Geraldton Open Studios &amp; Surrounds: A Catalyst For Arts &amp; Cultural Tourism in the Mid West</b> Emmaline James  <b>Why Geraldton &amp; the Mid West is a Great Place to Live and be Creative!</b> James Thompson
1:00pm	<b>Lunch Break</b> Catered lunch and refreshments in the foyer Screening First Lights Winthu Wangga in theatre
1:45pm	<b>Collaboration &amp; Resilience</b> <b>When Art and Life Collide: A Journey Through Creative Practice</b> Marianne Penberthy  <b>Auger Green Collective: Emergence &amp; Evolution</b> Erin O'Connor  <b>Our Museums, Galleries &amp; Collections: Story Keepers, Storytellers and Story Inspirers</b> Jane King
2:25pm	<b>Time to Chat</b> <b>Connection and Creative Conversations</b> Join us in the the foyer
3:00pm	<b>Afternoon Break</b>
3:15pm	<b>The Bigger Picture Workshop</b> Euphorium
4:45pm	<b>Reflections</b>
5:00pm	<b>End of event</b>
5:30-7:30pm	<b>Sundowner at Regional Sounds</b> Networking, food, refreshments and music



## Meet the people

### Welcome

#### Donna & David Ronan | Welcome to Country

Donna is a Wilunyu Nhanagardi Wajarri woman, with a deep connection to Country. On her father's side, her ties are to the Geraldton area, while on her mother's side, they are to Byro and Wooleen Country, northeast of Mullewa.

Her ancestral and cultural knowledge has been passed down by Elders of the Amangu Group, who have entrusted her with delivering the Welcome to Country in the local Wilunyu language. This language is at risk of being lost, making its preservation and transmission to future generations crucial.



#### Rosie Sitorus | MC Board Member, Regional Arts WA

Rosie Sitorus has lived regionally since moving to Geraldton in 2013, where she worked primarily with Aboriginal people in the Midwest-Gascoyne region to record and share languages for ten years. Now based in Karratha and working with the PKKP peoples to establish their languages program, she has made her life in regional Western Australia.

Rosie is an artist who has been building her regional practice and networks since attending the 2014 Regional Arts Australia summit. This led to collaborations, including the theatre-cabaret show *Fat Girls in Bike Shorts*. She is also a singer-songwriter and storyteller, working with Thiinma Elder Peter Salmon since 2017 to record his languages, write songs, and share his life story through their band Warralgurniya.





## Introduction

### Oliver Bazzani | Introduction Chairperson, Regional Arts WA

Oliver is a founder, director, and consultant, with almost a decade's experience working across innovation, strategy, and investment. On this journey, he's worn multiple hats spanning the not-for-profit, government, and corporate sectors.

Driven by a passion for the arts, Oliver has collaborated with hundreds of creatives across regional Australia. Notable projects include creating a Creative Arts Hub in the Peel Region, managing a leading youth arts festival, and developing a program for regional musicians to perform at a National Music Festival.



### Nils Hay | Introduction CEO, Mid West Development Commission

Nils Hay, CEO of the Mid West Development Commission, has dedicated more than a decade to regional development through senior roles in State and Local Government. Based in Geraldton, his work is driven by a desire to enhance the prosperity, vibrancy, and resilience of the Mid West.



## Keynote



### Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green Creative Ecology Activation: A Midwest Transformative Yamaji Narrative

Born in Eradu, Charmaine is a proud Wajarri, Badimaya and Wilunyu woman of the Yamaji Nation. A visual artist, author, poet, storyteller and social science researcher, she shares her cultural knowledge in many different spheres.

Charmaine has written five books, won several awards including the prestigious Australian Literary Society Gold Medal, and her poetry is studied as part of primary and school curriculum. Charmaine was awarded her PhD in 2022 through Edith Cowan University. She has been involved with the Yamatji Art Centre in Geraldton for over 22 years, she is currently their chairperson.

Charmaine was awarded the 2022 Magabala Fellowship and 2023 Red Room Poetry Fellowship and is a member of the national First Nation Aboriginal Writers Network and inductee into the WA Women's Hall of Fame.

## Creative Ecology

### Dr Vahri McKenzie & Dr Christine Scoggin Creative Ecologies: Making More With a Metaphor

Vahri is an educator, artist and scholar whose work frames creative engagement as a model of, and practice for, ways of being together in a complex world. She is WAAPA's Arts and Cultural Management Course Coordinator.

Chris is a community development professional with over 20 years' experience working with organisations to help them improve their social and economic standing through capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and leadership development. She manages WAAPA student work placements for ACM.



Dr Vahri McKenzie (left) and Dr Christine Scoggin (right)

## Country, Culture & Connection

### Roni Kerley Ancient Skies Linking us to Modern Times

Roni Kerley is a Menang Ngadju Noongar woman currently living in Geraldton. Roni was born in Wyndham, spent most her childhood in Port Hedland, before moving to Geraldton as teenager in the mid 90's. The last 8.5 years has seen Roni take on the role of Manager at Yamaji Art, leading the way in ensuring the organisation continues to grow and expand its footprint within the Aboriginal visual art sector across the Midwest.



### Lucia Richardson Aboriginal Acrobat - Lifting the Bar

Lucia Richardson is an Amangu young person from the Yamaji nation. At only 17 years old, the Jambinu raised teen already has extensive (and impressive) experience in the performing arts space. Within her first year of joining Australia's only National Youth Circus (Flying Fruit Fly Circus) she performed at the Sydney Opera House twice a day for two weeks for their 50th anniversary.

Of the 80 student cohort at the National Youth Circus, Lucia is the only Aboriginal student and feels the effects of cultural and familial isolation. Lucia is in her final year with the National Youth Circus and aims to train abroad in 2026 and to be the first Yamaji circus performer to be cast internationally.



### Mauretta Drage, Colleen Drage & Marina Baker Small Art Centre, Big Country: The Successes and Challenges of a Small Aboriginal Art Centre in WA's Mid West

Ku'arlu Mangga (Good Nest) is a regional Aboriginal Art centre based in Mooniemba/Northampton with an artists' workshop, art gallery and online shop. It is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation with AACHWA membership and local engagement.

Mauretta Drage is the Gallery Officer working with Gallery Manager Marina Baker to generate new artwork, organise workshops, and grow exhibition management, sales and developing opportunities for member artists.



Ku'arlu Mangga Team - Marina Baker (Gallery Manager), Mauretta Drage (Gallery Officer), Colleen Drage (NOSCI CEO)

## Places & Creativity

**Helen Ansell**

**Wildflowers & Wild Landscapes: An Artist's Life in Regional Western Australia**

Helen Ansell, based in Mullewa, Western Australia, is a celebrated artist known for her vibrant acrylic paintings inspired by the region's flora and fauna.

Raised in the remote Aboriginal community of Ululla, and influenced by her father, Don Miller, a passionate expert in Australian botany, her work reflects a deep connection to the desert landscapes and cultural heritage of central WA.

From her internationally acclaimed Studio Gallery in Mullewa, she showcases her art while contributing to the region through public projects and exhibitions.



**James Thompson**

**Why Geraldton & the Mid West is a Great Place to Live and be Creative!**

James Thompson is a Geraldton-based arts worker who became deeply involved in the local arts scene after arriving in 1997. He has played a key role in initiatives like the Nukara Music Festival, various community events, and promoting original live music. Alongside his arts contributions, James runs a gardening business and works part-time at the Museum of Geraldton, while supporting musicians through his role on the Regional Sounds board.



## Collaboration & Resilience

**Emmaline James**

**Geraldton Open Studios & Surrounds: A Catalyst For Arts & Cultural Tourism in the Mid West**

Emmaline is the Co-Founder and Project Manager of Geraldton Open Studios & Surrounds (GOSS), a cultural tourism initiative showcasing the talents of Mid West visual artists.

Since its 2023 pilot, GOSS has connected communities and visitors with the region's creative energy. With a background in arts project management, Emmaline is passionate about supporting regional artists and promoting cultural tourism.



**Marianne Penberthy**

**When Art and Life Collide: A Journey Through Creative Practice**

Marianne Penberthy is an award-winning textile artist living in Geraldton Western Australia. Born in Brisbane, Queensland in 1948, Marianne embarked on her artistic journey in the early eighties as a self-taught ceramicist.

Pursuing formal training at the Midwest TAFE and Edith Cowan University Perth, she completed her visual arts degree in 1996. Marianne's work has been showcased across Western Australia, interstate, and internationally, exhibiting in South Korea and Fibre Arts International USA.

Her work is deeply influenced by unique vegetation, remnants of habitation, mapping, and the language of the land she now calls home.





## Collaboration & Resilience cont.

**Erin O'Connor**

### **Auger Green Collective: Emergence & Evolution**

The Auger Green Collective is an informal group of artists and makers which emerged in response to the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery's (GRAG) call for group participation in the IOTA21 exhibition.

The members of the Collective are diverse in age and art practices. They had not previously worked together, and some had no exhibition experience. The common denominator was, and remains, a passion for making. All members are residents of Geraldton.



*Some of the members of the Auger Green Collective: Opening Night - Members Exhibition 2024 and INTERCO Codes in Parallel*

### **Jane King** **Our Museums, Galleries & Collections: Story Keepers, Storytellers and Story Inspirers**

Jane is the President of AMAGA WA branch and is the Co-Executive Chair of the North Midlands Project, and the Deputy Chair of Future Now, Creative Industries Training Council.

Until recently Jane was the Gallery Manager, Deputy Director and Interim Director of the John Curtin Gallery at Curtin University. Jane is passionate about the important role museums and galleries play in the health and wellbeing of our sector and our community.



## **Connection & Conversations**

## In Conversation

### Dr Pilar Kasat | Moderator

Pilar Kasat (PhD) is a Mestiza living on Whadjuk Noongar Country with 20 years' experience in creative engagement and intercultural dialogue with First Nations and People of Colour. Pilar is the CEO of Regional Arts WA and served as Chair of Art on the Move, Women of Colour Australia, and Deputy Chair of Diversity Arts Australia. Her work on art and social change has been published in academic journals and industry magazines.



## How can the Arts Help Address Our Biggest Challenges?

### Timika King | Meekatharra Youth Focus

Timika King is the Community Engagement Officer for Meekatharra Youth Focus and a proud mother of three beautiful girls. Timika is passionate about music, singing, and art. She enjoys spending time with her family, particularly on trips out bush.



### Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green | Author, Poet, Artist, Storyteller & Researcher

A Wajarri, Badimaya and Wilunyu woman of the Yamaji Nation, Charmaine is an author, poet, artist, storyteller, and social science researcher. She has written five books, won several awards including the prestigious Australian Literary Society Gold Medal, and her poetry is studied as part of school curricula.



### Pia Boschetti | Latitude Jewellers

Pia Boschetti, known as The Girl Who Grows the Pearl at the Abrolhos Islands, is a passionate pearl farmer and owner of Latitude Jewellers. She has dedicated her career to cultivating pearls that reflect the beauty of Western Australia. 14 years ago, Pia founded the Flotsam and Jetsam exhibition, a project that celebrates art created from marine debris collected at the Abrolhos Islands. This exhibition highlights the importance of environmental stewardship while showcasing the creative talent of local artists.



### Phil Doncon | Artist

Phil Doncon is the creator of Paint Storm, a dynamic performance that blends live painting with music, drama, and breakdancing. With a background in fine art and numerous solo exhibitions, Phil co-founded the popular Artworks Visual Arts Theatre in 1998, merging art, music, theatre, and dance.

After its closure in 2004, he focused on youth development, working as a Youth Development Officer to support young people's growth and opportunities. Phil is passionate about using the arts to help children and young people lead healthier, more purposeful lives.



## Time to chat

### Free time | In the foyer Connection and Creative Conversations

It's important to make time to connect with each other. This session in the foyer provides space to catch up with old friends or meet new people in a relaxed environment.

Take a moment to reflect on the day so far. Whether you're looking to share ideas, ask questions, or simply reconnect, it's a great chance to chat with presenters, funders, and peers while enjoying some casual, inspiring conversations.



## The Bigger Picture Workshop



### Workshop | Euphorium

End your day on a high with this interactive networking session that brings creative minds together to align, connect, and collaborate.

With a quick-fire presentation and engaging activities aimed at mapping the trajectory of creativity in the Midwest, this workshop will leave you inspired, energised, and ready to see the ecosystem in a whole new light.

## Sundowner 5:30 - 7:30pm

### Host | Regional Sounds Networking, Food, Drinks and Music

Regional Sounds Inc. is a new not-for-profit organisation based in Geraldton, Western Australia, dedicated to fostering growth and supporting pathways to help musicians grow.

They believe music can serve as a platform for positive social change, bringing together musicians and communities to foster inclusivity, vibrancy, and diversity in a thriving regional Western Australia.



**Regional Sounds is located at 246 Marine Terrace, Geraldton.**  
**See you there!**

## About Regional Arts WA

Regional Arts WA is the peak body for regional arts in Western Australia, supporting artists, arts organisations, creative workers, groups and stakeholders in regional communities statewide. We provide grants, lead advocacy efforts, seed initiatives and deliver capacity building activities and support services.

For 30 years, it has played a key role in shaping innovative and unique creative activities across regional WA and the Indian Ocean Territories.

The Summit is part of Regional Arts WA's strategy to amplify regional voices and foster local leadership and industry excellence, as outlined in its Thrive! Regional Arts, Culture, and Creativity Investment Framework 2025-29.

It is free to become a member of RAWA. Head to our website for more information on our work and funding opportunities that support arts, culture and creativity in regional WA.

*Alexia Parenzee, Regional Arts WA Artist of the Month, photo by Kym Jefferies*

## Funding Partners



Department of  
Local Government, Sport  
and Cultural Industries



## Event Partners & Collaborators

Thank you to the event partners and collaborators that have contributed to the Summit. In particular, Yamaji Art, North Midlands Project, The Geraldton Project, Museum of Geraldton and the City of Greater Geraldton.

Event Support: Emmaline James

Accommodation: The Gerald Apartments

Printing: Kick Solutions

Catering: Tarts & Co

Film & video: Dragonfly Media

Venues: Queens Park Theatre & Regional Sounds

Workshops: Euphorium





**Connected and creative regional communities**  
regionalartswa.org.au | @regionalartswa

