

MEDIA RELEASE

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Kimberley community reaps the benefits of legacy arts grants

Grassroots arts funding is improving the lives, education and wellbeing of people across the Kimberley, particularly those living in remote communities.

Three hands-on projects were the recipients of almost \$80,000 in State Government arts funding in 2017 and are successfully delivering significant and positive change for their communities.

The arts grants were managed by leading regional arts organisation Country Arts WA as part of its Regional Arts Legacy Grants (RALG) program, made possible by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development, under the State Government's \$24 million Creative Regions investment into arts and culture across WA.

Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC)

"An exceptional outpouring of pride" and "increased sense of cultural identity" is what the RALG initiative has delivered for 40 women of the Tjurabalan remote desert country in East Kimberley.

Wes Morris, KALACC Coordinator, said the women: "Developed an enormous sense of pride in themselves, pride in their culture and community and pride in their achievement of going and doing what they did – enhancing their knowledge of their own culture and sharing it."

KALACC received \$35,000 in RALG funding to run a series of culture camps in the remote region which centred on intergenerational transference of cultural knowledge and cultural performance through dance and song. The program culminated with the women travelling more than two full days to Lombadina on the Dampier Peninsula to perform in the 2017 KALACC Festival.

The women all came from four communities located 300km south of Halls Creek – the biggest and most well known of which is Balgo.

"The camps took place over several months and focused on the concept of 'wangga' which is a sharing of cultures," Mr Morris said. "To give you an idea, there are 30 language groups within five social blocks out there and while they are all extremely proud of their own culture, they are also very proud and interested in their cultural differences.

"These women come from a small, very isolated community so it is an absolutely enormous thing for them to be showcasing their culture at a major regional festival and performing in front of a thousand people from across the whole region."

"There are also some bad aspects to life in these communities. I have been made aware of the fact that there are around 12 young girls sniffing chemicals. They are so desperate in their situation this is what they are doing. This is the reality of their lives.

“If we can give them a purpose and a sense of identity, some sort of juxtaposition to the reality of their day-to-day lives through projects like this then that has to be a good thing.”

Puranyangu-Rangka Kerrem Aboriginal Radio (6-PRK)

Annabelle Cox, radio station manager 6-PRK, said the Regional Arts Legacy Grants funding had an extremely positive impact on the community of Halls Creek.

The station received \$20,500 in 2017 to bring a music producer to Halls Creek for a series of music events with local bands as the headline act. The bands’ performances were filmed and live audio tracks were produced.

“The funding came at a time when the town of Halls Creek required a stimulus for community cohesion, clean family fun and recreation,” Ms Cox said.

“The grant assisted with funding the performance of a talented local musical band on a monthly basis in the shire park, which attracted a local crowd of young and old.

It’s not very often that you see people dancing and rejoicing particularly the children of Halls Creek and coming out of their shyness – breaking barriers and dancing away.”

Ms Cox said the funding had “brought joy to our town. We only wish this could happen forever.”

“Bands are now interested in performing as it is a big thing for them showcasing their talent on a big stage for the whole night and then broadcasting their songs on radio.

We are then able to hand them a master CD of the performance which they can upload – including videos – to YouTube. It is a dream come true!”

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts

Three Aboriginal women artists from the highly remote Kira Kiro community of Kalumburu got to see firsthand original artworks created by their late relatives and community members for the first time when they visited the national collections in Canberra.

The trip was part of a unique and exciting professional development initiative conducted by Waringarri Aboriginal Arts and supported by \$23,960 in RALG funding.

A key part of the project was getting local Aboriginal artists from the community to view and study the early works from the Kalumburu region which are now held in national museums in Canberra.

Artists within the community first viewed the works via online portals and later three of them, Margaret Peurmora, Veronica Djanghara and Simone Oxtoby, travelled to Canberra to visit the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the National Gallery of Australia and the Australian National Museum.

Wangarri Aboriginal Arts Manager, Cathy Cummins, said “the opportunity to see the original art and artefacts of the past Kalumburu artists was a significant experience for the three artists.”

“The experience for the artists was incredibly exciting. Kalumburu is WA’s most remote community and experiences like this that enable artists to see the bigger picture, are really important contributions to their ability to expand their practice and know more about what is possible.”

“It was amazing for them to see the artworks of past family members and what they can achieve in terms of the art they are making. It really was a wonderful educational and professional development experience for these artists.”

Ms Cummins said the initiative also had far wider benefits for the remote community.

“The artists have brought back not only their experiences of the trip but also their enthusiasm for what they have learnt and there is a lot of positivity and inspiration that stems from that,” she said.

Regional Arts Legacy Grants

Country Arts WA Executive Director Paul MacPhail said since its inception in 2015, the RALG program had injected more than \$2 million dollars into regional organisations and projects, creating employment opportunities and building capacity and vibrancy across regional WA.

“This initiative has had a significant and very positive impact on life in the regions, contributing to community vibrancy, liveability and cohesion as well as providing opportunities for involvement in local arts and cultural activities, employment and professional development for regional artists.”

Mr MacPhail said RALG had benefited every region of WA with grants awarded to more than 30 individuals, arts organisations and projects from the Kimberley to Great Southern regions.

“There is a demonstrable need for continued and ongoing funding so we can continue to build on the great results achieved so far and further nurture the wealth of creativity within our regions.”

Mr MacPhail said initiatives like RALG were made possible through the Royalties for Regions funded Creative Regions program of which Country Arts WA delivers Scheme Four on behalf of State Government, through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

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