

MEDIA RELEASE

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Country Arts WA provides springboard to young regional artists

Four emerging regional artists from across WA will receive funding to kick-start or advance their creative careers thanks to Country Arts WA's innovative Next Level YCulture Regional program.

The program is delivered on behalf of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, under the State Government's \$24 million Creative Regions investment into arts and culture across WA.

Albany circus teacher and performer Cassandra Turner (24), Bunbury-based singer songwriter Mitchell Martin (21), aspiring producer Minna Hilton (19) from Geraldton and Narrogin-based visual artist Casey Thornton (26) have been announced as recipients of grants to undertake artistic and professional development opportunities, including having studio-time, mentoring and undertaking specialist training courses.

The Next Level YCulture Regional program, presented by Country Arts WA and Drug Aware, provides emerging Western Australian artists and arts workers aged 18 to 26 years with grants of up to \$5,000 to pursue opportunities, gain relevant experiences and build professional networks early in their career.

Country Arts WA Executive Director Paul MacPhail emphasised the value gained by championing early-career artists from WA's regional towns and remote communities.

"These young artists are expressing the stories of regional WA through their chosen art forms and are looking to share both their skills and the joy their art brings to wider audiences. It's a win-win situation – by supporting the professional growth of talented young people we create an opportunity for them to thrive and improve access to art in their local communities."

Mr MacPhail said it was pleasing to see an increase in the number of applications received by the regional arts sector this year. The diversity of projects showcased by the grant recipients reflects the appetite for creative pursuits by young regional artists.

In addition to funds to support professional development, Cassandra, Mitchell, Minna and Casey will attend Artlands Victoria (10-14 October), a prestigious biennial event where regional artists from across Australia come together to attend workshops, build valuable networks and contribute their voices to the national arts and culture conversation.

NEXT LEVEL YCULTURE REGIONAL – 2018 SUCCESSFUL RECIPIENTS:

Cassandra Turner | Circus teacher training | \$4,500 | Albany

Albany circus performer Cassandra Turner (24) will attend a Circus Training Australia course in Melbourne at the beginning of October.

Upon returning to Albany, she will conduct a series of workshops to put into practice and share the skills and knowledge gained.

Cassandra fell in love with circus performing at the age of five after attending Southern Edge Arts – the only circus-based program within the Great Southern. She currently coordinates the program and teaches more than 120 students aged from five to 25.

Quotes:

- “There are very few formal trainings for circus performers and teachers, in regional WA let alone nationally, and so getting my Certificate IV in Circus Arts was pretty much the highest I could go... until now.”
- “This [Next Level YCulture Program] was definitely an opportunity worth jumping at – it’s going to allow me to further educate young people in the Great Southern region on the arts, and circus performing in particular, which is such a niche.”
- “To have the opportunity provided by Country Arts [WA] to attend a six-day course is just amazing. This has been the best thing to happen to me all year!”

Mitchell Martin | Studio time to record an album | \$5,000 | Bunbury

Bunbury-based singer songwriter Mitchell Martin (21) will work with award-winning sound engineer James Newhouse at Real2Real studio in Bunbury. The multi-instrumentalist will record six new tracks to form his second album. The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) student has been performing live for more than five years and has more than 2,500 subscribers to [his YouTube channel](#) where he regularly shares covers and his own original songs.

Quotes:

- “This [Next Level YCulture] will be a huge help with my second album - I’ll be able to record it in less than two weeks, it took three years to do the first one.”
- “It will be pretty full on to do all that recording at once, but it will be nice to do this one all at once and to have the opportunity to work with James on it, in my hometown.”
- “I like to keep my music real. I play guitar primarily as well as singing and a bit of keys, bass and drums, so the album will feature a bit of all that as well as a session drummer who will come in.”

Minna Hilton | Arts management courses and mentorship | \$4,700 | Geraldton

Emerging arts manager Minna (19) accidentally stumbled across her passion for producing and managing when she helped produce her school’s play four years ago. The Geraldton-based teenager is now looking to turn that passion into a lasting career. Under the guidance of an experienced mentor, she will participate in four training courses focusing on different areas of arts management in WA and Adelaide as well as gain firsthand experience by shadowing festival producers at two upcoming events - Side Splitter in Cockburn (Nov 18), and Funtavia, Geraldton’s own FringeWorld hub (Feb 19).

Quotes:

- “The most important and exciting thing for me about this is that there are so many great stories in Geraldton and regional towns and my aim is to be able to bring those stories to life as a producer and give them a platform they deserve – I just need to be able to do it well!”
- “I’m a young capable woman.... [this] training to help develop my skillset and become a producer who can benefit artists as well as presenters.”

Casey Thornton | Arts mentorship and exhibition support | \$5,000 | Narrogin

Narrogin-based visual artist Casey Thornton (26) will put her skills under a new level of pressure as she works towards her first solo exhibition. She will work closely with Karen Keeley, an experienced visual artist, educator and mentor to prepare and host a 30-piece exhibition at Narrogin Exhibition Space (NEXIS) in May 2019.

Quotes:

- “The exhibition will mostly be oil paintings, but I do plan on using other experiential mediums such as 3D printing, projection and animation.”
- “This [Next Level YCulture Regional] grant will be a great stepping stone and a push in the right direction to have a career in the arts.”
- “If it wasn’t for the grant it would take me a lot longer to get a whole portfolio of work together which I will present in Narrogin. I’m really hoping it also presents future opportunities too.”

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About Country Arts WA

Country Arts WA’s is the State’s only arts body with a 100 per cent regional focus. Its purpose is to improve the creativity, connection and capacity of regional communities to further develop WA’s regional arts sector. Through its work, greater diversity, sustainability, relevance, and celebration will be achieved. Country Arts WA is an independent, membership-based, not-for-profit organisation supported by State and Federal Government funding.

About Next Level YCulture Regional

Launched in 2017, Next Level YCulture Regional is an annual funding round designed to provide emerging artists and arts workers aged 18-26 with an opportunity to develop their creative careers. This program is supported by the State Government of WA and Country Arts WA, and presented by Drug Aware.

For media enquiries please contact:

Kate Zappa

[T] 9421 3600 / 0450 668 048 | [E] katez@millswilson.com.au