

Media Release

8 July 2022

Emerging regional artists and arts workers supported to reach the Next Level

Eight young emerging regional artists and arts workers across WA have each received \$7,500 through Regional Arts WA's career kick-starter grants program, the Next Level Regional Grants.

Next Level Regional Grants are part of the State Government's Regional Arts and Culture Investment Program and are presented by Healthway Drug Aware. This year, an additional grant has been made possible with thanks to the KingKira Group.

The successful recipients of the Next Level Regional Grants are multidisciplinary theatre maker Emily Burton (19), circus director Georgia Deguara (26), country folk singer songwriter Savanah Solomon (25), illustrator Mio Angela Gadon (25), filmmaker Abby Garratt (22), rapper Jacob Gregory (22), textile artist and educator Leah Vlatko (26), and emerging curator Joo Tan (24).

Each recipient will embark on 12 months of professional creative development, building their skills and experience to further develop an arts career in regional WA.

Activities supported by the Next Level Regional Grants include:

- **Emily Burton** (Mandurah) will receive mentorship from storytelling theatre company, Whiskey and Boots. Under the mentorship, Emily will develop and present a performance of their own contemporary theatre show, which will be based on stories collected from the public.
- **Georgia Deguara** (Broome) will collaborate with Perth web and digital design agency, Start Digital to learn how to better showcase her current work online. Georgia hopes to upskill her online knowledge to benefit future projects, become a better arts worker, and to increase her scope as an artist.
- **Savanah Solomon** (Woodbridge) will record, release and promote an EP of her original songs. The release will be launched with a free community event in the Wheatbelt.

- **Mio Angela Gadon** (Exmouth) will develop a solo exhibition of her illustrations, exploring the theme of a quarter life crisis, from her perspective of being a migrant from the Philippines.
- **Abby Garratt** (Manjimup) will write, direct and produce her second short film titled Paradise Valley, a feminist western set in the late 19th century and filmed on location at heritage buildings around her hometown of Manjimup.
- **Jacob Gregory** (Broome), will work with Scott Griffiths of Downsyde to further refine his skills in writing, recording and producing hip hop music. Together, they will collaborate on five new tracks which will be launched at a performance at Goolarri Media's Gimme Club.
- **Leah Vlatko** (Geraldton) will create a body of work for her first solo exhibition, an exploration of fungi through the medium of crochet. She will further develop her skills and experience as a textile artist, learning from mentors and experienced artists across the Mid West region.
- **Joo Tan** (Port Hedland) is the recipient of the inaugural KingKira Next Level Grant. Joo will be mentored by established curator Anna Louise Richardson, where she will develop skills to curate her first exhibition working with Pilbara youth groups as part of the Open Borders project.

Regional Arts WA CEO Paul MacPhail says continued support for young and emerging artists and arts workers is key to long-term arts and culture careers in the regions.

"We are delighted to announce that this year we can support eight outstanding young artists and arts workers through the Next Level Regional Grants. These grants will enable the recipients to develop their arts practice, build their networks and grow their careers.

We are sadly seeing a reduction in future grants targeted at young artists and youth arts, so it is especially satisfying to be able to give these emerging artists and arts workers a jumpstart, allowing them to further develop themselves as professionals in their fields."

Media Contact

Weng-Si Cheang, Program Manager, Regional Arts WA

P: 08 9200 6202 | Regional Freecall: 1800 811 883

E: wcheang@regionalartswa.org.au



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development



L1 King Street Arts Centre
357 Murray St Perth WA 6000

PO Box 7012
Cloisters Sq WA 6850

P 08 9200 6200
Regional Freecall 1800 811 883

W regionalartswa.org.au
ABN 81 165 913 876

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SUPPORT MATERIAL - Biographies

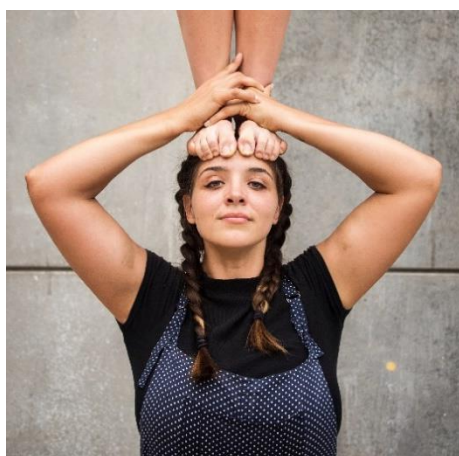
Emily Burton | Mandurah



*Image: Emily Burton on stage at Mandurah Performing Arts Centre.
Photo by George Burton.*

Emily Burton is an emerging multidisciplinary creative, published poet, and theatre maker with a passion for storytelling. Since 2019, Emily has been involved with theatre companies including Mandurah's Riptide Youth Theatre Company, where they took on many roles including actor, deviser, lighting-technician, and sound-designer. This is also where they wrote their first play titled *Potluck at Nine*. Emily was a co-director of *All the Ways Theatre*, a contemporary theatre company that blended poetry, music, photography, and film into theatrical experiences. As a producer and playwright, Emily is hoping to further build their career as an independent artist, with a vision to provide professional opportunities to other Mandurah theatre makers.

Georgia Deguara | Broome



*Image: Georgia Deguara.
Photo by Emmaline Creative.*

Georgia Deguara is a Director of West Australian all-female performance company, YUCK Circus. YUCK is a multi-award winning, internationally touring production company keen on championing the female voice across live performance. Georgia grew up in Broome, beginning her training at Theatre Kimberley's Sandfly Circus at the age of 11. When not touring with YUCK, Georgia works with Theatre Kimberley in producing, performing, and mentoring roles. Specialising in outreach programs, she tours to isolated Indigenous communities providing circus as a tool of creative expression. Whether in front of an audience of 3000+ in Edinburgh Playhouse, or to a town of a total 30 people, community is at the forefront of Georgia's work. Currently with four touring works, and as an independent producer for other organisations and artists, Georgia strives to create exciting work in the industry and to use her knowledge to inspire the next generation of artists.

Savanah Solomon | Woodbridge



*Image: Savanah Solomon.
Photo by Renae Harvey Photography.*

Savanah Solomon is a singer/songwriter from Moore River Western Australia, who's country upbringing and deep passion for storytelling has led her to become a rising songwriter in Western Australia's music scene. Her country blues rock band Savanah and The Strays has performed across WA, including at WAMFEST, Boyup Brook Country Music Festival and Harvey Dickson's Rodeo. After a four-year tenure with the band, Savanah is now establishing herself as a solo artist with the release of her two singles *Lost in Love* and *Rainbow*, as well as the development of her new EP.

Mio Angela Gadon | Exmouth



*Image: Mio Angela Gadon.
Photo by Exclusive Photography, Perth.*

Mio Angela Gadon is an emerging visual artist and graphic designer based in Exmouth. Mio grew up in the Philippines, where she developed her love of art, design and photography. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Graphics Design and Multimedia in 2017 and soon after relocated to Exmouth. In the five years she has been living in Exmouth, she has been an active volunteer at the Exmouth Culture Arts Centre. This has led to her employment there as Art Gallery Manager. Mio's work is primarily in the digital space however she is also developing her skills in watercolour, acrylic, charcoal and ink.

Abby Garratt | Manjimup



*Image: Abby Garratt self-portrait.
Photo by Abby Garratt.*

Abby Garratt is a scriptwriter and filmmaker, born and raised in the South West of Western Australia. Much of her work is influenced by a rural upbringing and focuses on nature as a setting and story driver. In 2021, Abby completed a Bachelor of Media and Communications, majoring in Film, at Edith Cowan University in Perth. During her studies, Abby wrote and directed her first narrative short film *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* which is currently in post-production. She has also After graduating, Abby returned to her hometown to pursue her hopes to make films in the region.

Jacob Gregory | Broome



*Image: Jacob Gregory performing
at the Headspace Follow Your
Instincts event. Photo by Emily Cole,
courtesy of Headspace.*

Jacob Gregory is a First Nations and CALD rapper based in the Kimberley region. Over the past nine years, he has performed at key cultural events across Broome, including Shinju Matsuri, Taste of Broome and the Town Beach Redevelopment reveal. Jacob has also opened for artists Downsyde and Savage, and notably held the stage when internationally acclaimed rapper T-Pain didn't turn up to his Broome show. Jacob's main motivation is to set a good example for other young people, something he hopes to achieve through his lyrics which address topics such as mental health and discrimination. He believes "we can all be a voice for something, it's a matter of choosing to speak up about what is important to you".

Leah Vlatko | Geraldton



*Image: Leah Vlatko in her studio.
Photo by Nirrimi Firebrace.*

Leah Vlatko is a textile artist who has been living and working in Jambinu (Geraldton) on Amangu country for over two years. Her work plays with traditional understandings of 'craft' and incorporates crochet, embroidery, weaving, and community practice. In 2021, Leah received the Bowman-Bright Award at the Mid West Art Prize for her work titled *Study of Banksias*. Her practice has also led her to undertake a four-week residency at Vancouver Arts Centre in 2019, and to be exhibited in the City of Fremantle's 25 Under 25 exhibition. Alongside her artistic practice, Leah is also an educator with a Master's Degree in Secondary Teaching (Professional Practice) with over two years' experience working in a regional school.

Joo Tan | Port Hedland



Image: Joo Tan installing an exhibition at Courthouse Gallery+Studio, Port Hedland. Works pictured by Rachel Taylor. Photo by Melanie Neville, courtesy of The Junction Co.

Joo Tan is a recent Arts Management graduate from WAAPA, who has a tertiary background in business management, communications and creative development. She is currently the Exhibition Coordinator at the Courthouse Gallery+Studio in Port Hedland. Being part of the youth community and coming from a CALD background, Joo is looking to explore the reflections and impacts brought by the challenges and opportunities that comes with living regionally as well as in a pandemic. At the end of 2021, Joo led the Hedland Creative Youth Leadership Group in bringing about a Youth Art Project Space. In 2022, Joo led and organised The Jury Art Prize, showcasing 49 works from all over regional WA. In addition to exhibitions, Joo has led the COMPASS short course, a program focused on artistic excellence for regional practitioners.

About Regional Arts WA

Regional Arts WA is the State's only service organisation delivering a multi-arts program to strengthen and celebrate our powerful regional arts sector. We are a regionally governed, not-for-profit organisation looking after the regional arts sector, meaning every artist, arts worker, arts and cultural organisation, and group with regional programs.

<https://regionalartswa.org.au>

About Regional Arts and Culture Investment Program

The Regional Arts and Culture Investment Program is supported by the State Government's Royalties for Regions Program. The purpose of the program is to drive the creation of jobs, drive economic development and tourism and improve social cohesion by supporting the creative and cultural industries in regional Western Australia. Through strategic investments, the program aims to build capacity in the regions and contribute to liveability and vibrancy of regional communities.

<https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/culture-and-the-arts/regional-arts>

About KingKira Group

KingKira Group is a 100% Aboriginal female owned and operated business providing a range of safe, innovative services and solutions across the mining and resources sectors in Western Australia.

<https://kingkira.com.au>