



THEATRE KIMBERLEY



Annual Report | 2025



Theatre Kimberley acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the many lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future, and thank them for sharing their culture, knowledge and stories.

We recognise First Nations peoples' continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful region, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this publication may contain the images and names of people who have passed away.



Balangarra Rangers and Big Country Puppets artists pose at the end of Big Country Puppets' five week residency in Wyndham. Photo by Landi Bradshaw.

Cover - Balangarra Rangers pose with Unggud, the Rainbow Serpent, a collaboratively built giant puppet made during Big Country Puppets' project in Wyndham, February-March 2025. Photo by Landi Bradshaw.

Our Work

Theatre Kimberley creates high-quality arts opportunities with and for Kimberley communities.

We work in a highly collaborative and responsive way, with community connections and engagement key to the design and delivery of our programs and performances.

Our Vision

Thriving, creative, connected Kimberley communities.

Our Purpose

To create high-quality arts opportunities that contribute to local stories and culture, increase skills and employment, improve wellbeing, and strengthen communities.

Our Priorities

Our Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026 identifies four priorities:

Vibrant arts experiences and skills development

Reach and accessibility

Strong relationships and partnerships

Sustainable, socially and culturally responsible organisation

We are guided by our commitment to:

Artistic and organisational excellence
Community, creativity and connection
Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility



Briefs Factory circus artists teach speciality classes at the Sandfly Circus during their 2025 Mardi Gras residency. Photo by Meredith Bell.

Our Team

Theatre Kimberley Board of Directors

Board Executive

Chair, Justine Johnston
Vice Chair, Lily Chin
Co-Secretaries,
Georgia Deguara & Rebecca Youdale
Treasurer, Wendy Burton

Board Members

Chris Hill
Lesley Marsh
Robyn Stacey
Naomi Brown



Chris Hill and Wendy Burton stepped down from the Board at the April 2025 AGM.

Theatre Kimberley gratefully acknowledges Chris Hill's extraordinary contribution as a founding Board member who served continuously for 30 years.

Theatre Kimberley Team

TK Leadership

Artistic Director, Meredith Bell

Executive Officer Business, Jael Johnson

TK Staff

Julie Borsboom
Cathi Rigby
Franque Batty
Will Tredinnick
Kath White

Teen Trainers

Molly Bell
Frances Anstey
Aella Westlake
Elliot Beurteaux
Anna Gatt
Zoey Richardson
Ellie Kelly
Evie Meaney

Key Contractors

Chris Hill	Eduardo Maher	Hannah Richards
Lesley Marsh	Jacob Gregory	Shona Conacher
Georgia Deguara	Ben Kotovski-Steele	Crystal Stacey
Tracy Lowe	Isaac Salter	Chelsea Quail
Claudia Alessi	Jacky Cheng	Sandy McKendrick
Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman	Brooke Duckworth	

A massive THANK YOU to all our amazing volunteers.

Theatre Kimberley's success is only possible because of your generosity, skills and commitment.



Justine Johnston, Chair

Celebrating Our Theatre Kimberley Community: Gratitude, Achievements, and Looking Ahead



Dear Members of Theatre Kimberley, I hope you are all well. I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing passion, creativity, and dedication to our vibrant arts community. Theatre Kimberley thrives because of the energy, commitment, and camaraderie each of you brings to our productions, workshops, and events. I remember

my first encounter with Gwen Knox in 2007, little did I know then, that the 'volunteering' I would do for *Ship of Dreams*, *Worn Art* and the Sandfly Circus Show would be such a profound experience that this wonderful arts community would forever captivate me and include me, as it absolutely does to everyone.

Once again, 2025 has been a year of remarkable achievements, from successful performances to engaging community programs and arts outreach. My sincere thanks to our entire TK team — our dedicated staff, board, and volunteers—and especially to our fearless co-leaders, Artistic Director Meredith Bell and Executive Officer Jael Johnson, for their leadership and commitment.

Your willingness to collaborate, support one another, and embrace new challenges is what makes our organisation utterly unique and respected in the arts scene across the Kimberley region and beyond.

Looking ahead to 2026, we have an exciting season planned, with new productions, creative workshops, and opportunities to connect with audiences both young and old. Your feedback, ideas, and involvement are invaluable as we continue to shape the direction of Theatre Kimberley. Whether you are performing on stage, helping behind the scenes, or supporting events, your contribution is vital and deeply appreciated.

If you have any thoughts, suggestions or would like to get more involved in upcoming activities, please do not hesitate to reach out. The strength of our community lies in the open sharing of ideas and the collective spirit that unites us all.

Thank you once again for your enthusiasm and commitment. I look forward to seeing you at our next gathering and to another season filled with creativity, laughter, and memorable moments.

Best wishes,

Justine Johnston

Jael Johnson, Executive Officer Business

Grateful to have played a part - with real excitement for what comes next



2025 marks Theatre Kimberley's 30th anniversary — a milestone we look forward to celebrating with you as soon as we get the chance!

To be part of this historic moment, and this organisation generally, has been a privilege. Thirty years of community arts is a remarkable achievement, made even more incredible by the 2,300 km between

Broome and Perth. Delivering arts across the remote, vast, Kimberley (which is increasingly experiencing weather extremes) is complex and expensive. That TK has continued to connect, share stories, and work alongside Kimberley's diverse communities to provide unique accessible arts opportunities is a testament to everyone's commitment and tenacity over the past 30 years.

None of it happens without the community and the dedication, talent and support of so many people over so many years. Special shout out to all our extraordinary volunteers — the child wranglers, the box office legends, the stage crew, the performers, the costume makers, the bar staff — you ARE Theatre Kimberley, and you are the reason we thrive.

And since TK began, it has remained steadfastly community-led while also insisting and ensuring that Kimberley residents and visitors are able to access high-quality arts opportunities, both as participants and audiences. To be able to come together reliably to collectively and collaboratively transform creative ideas into something tangible, real and shared, is powerful and magical.

This is made possible thanks to the incredible efforts of TK's exceptional team of staff, artists, volunteers, and board. This year we farewell the incomparable Chris Hill from the TK Board, after 30 continuous years. THANK YOU CHRIS!!! We also sincerely thank Wendy Burton, who served as TK's Treasurer for the past two years and performed in *Worn Art*!

Financially, meeting our operational reserves target in 2024 meant that — for the first time since Meredith and I started — we weren't required to secure one in 2025. We increased staff capacity to support our growing artistic program, particularly our outreach residencies, and achieved a small surplus. 2025 was only our

second year of Arts Organisation Investment Program (AOIP) operational funding from the WA Government, and its impact cannot be overstated. We remain deeply grateful for the ongoing support of all our funders, large and small, whose belief and investment in our work makes it possible.

To our audiences, members, and donors — thank you. Every show attended, membership paid, and donation made - makes a difference. Your support really does matter!

The Kimberley is one of the most incredible places on earth. I have been extraordinarily lucky to spend the last 17 years living here, and for the past decade, work alongside people who pour themselves into funding, organising, and delivering joyful, inclusive arts experiences that genuinely change lives.

As many of you know, I'm leaving Theatre Kimberley, but will continue to support TK part-time until mid-2026. I am very proud of what Theatre Kimberley creates and what it means to this community. I feel especially appreciative for the opportunity to learn from local First Nations people about Kimberley Culture - thank you.

Personal highlights include TK's remote outreach projects - the excitement, colour, creativity (and chaos!) are totally unforgettable. As are (but for entirely different reasons) countless *Bust Out Cabaret* moments, the incredible and spectacular *Worn Art* extravaganzas, *The Shorebird Quest*, and *Winthali* for the Yajilarra Festival.

I'm pleased to have contributed over the last 10 years (and nine Annual Reports!), in particular, to have assisted TK to navigate COVID, to have represented TK at sector events and forums, and to have led our successful 2024-2027 AOIP funding. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity. Thank you Gwen for initially involving me in TK.

TK's trajectory is exciting - I can't wait to see what the next 30 years bring. TK is in the safest of hands with Meredith leading the way. Meredith, I have immense respect and appreciation for what you bring to your role, and all that you hold, as TK's Artistic Director. You are formidable. It's been a privilege to work alongside you, and Julie, who I've loved working with since 2016. And of course, many other wonderful TK staff and artists, and board members too.

Thank you to ALL the awesome people I have worked with over the last decade! Wishing TK - and all of us - an exciting and inspiring next chapter.

Artistic Program 2025



Meredith Bell, Artistic Director



My first contact with Theatre Kimberley was attending a Worn Art Show as a new Broome resident. Having a background in the arts and gymnastics, I was thrilled to see aerials performed. Afterwards, I was excited. I rang TK about attending circus class, and Artistic Director Gwen Knox answered my call. She confirmed that adults could participate. When

I rocked up for class, I was the only adult amongst 20+ kids! Fortunately for me, I didn't mind. I started hanging out with a teenage Rowan Thomas and a friendly tween called Crystal Stacey, amazing kids who have since forged international circus careers.

Since that time in 2007, I've been a trainer, a board member, Sandfly Circus coordinator and after Gwen's departure, artistic director. There are times when the work is overwhelming, stressful and exhausting. But it's also fabulous, breathtaking and rewarding.

I wanted to reflect on why I'm here, nearly 20 years later. The highlight of my job is having the opportunities to create space for groups of creative, highly skilled, passionate

people and see what results. This includes professional artists like tightwire walkers and brilliant musicians, but also other communities of people giving their all to the work – technicians, production staff, bookkeepers and Indigenous rangers. Importantly, this also includes children and adults who come to us as eager participants and volunteers - who want to sing in a Shorebird Quest Choir, build a giant puppet, or soar on a circus trapeze. Maybe because they're newly arrived to the Kimberley, and a little lost, and they see that this could be possible for them.

What's exciting about this combination of people and contributions is that you never know in advance what the results will look like, and always for me, the result is better than I ever imagined. I'm not sure why that is, or if others experience this, but I think it's a demonstration of the adage of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Existing in a space where you can see that this is true is a pretty good space to exist in. Especially in these crazy times.

Before we ever met in person, Gwen said to me, *You can*. And she kept saying it. Many times! And I guess the reason I'm still here is that I enjoy saying it too. To the professionals as well as the amateurs, who show up to try something entirely new. *You can* and *We will*.

Sandfly Circus



Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus program

In its 19th year, the Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus continued to run weekly general circus classes for young people aged kindy to Year 12 during all school terms. As always, we offered a huge variety of circus skills including juggling, acrobatics, hula hoops, unicycling, clowning, aerials, and more!

In addition to the major program activities described in the sections that follow, 2025 also included:

- Speciality courses in unicycle, aerials, partner acrobatics and diabolo.
- A new performance troupe show development, including performances at Shinju Matsuri's Opening Ceremony, the Broome Turf Club, and Broome Courthouse Markets.
- Participatory 'pick up & play' sessions and commissioned roving performances at public and ticketed events.
- A new 10-week circus program at Broome PCYC.
- Presentation of YUCK Circus's multi-award-winning show, *Deadset*.
- A unicycle hockey event, free for all unicycle riders and spectators.
- Masterclass circus sessions with YUCK Circus, Briefs Factory, Simon Wood, Isaac Salter, and Nao Kubo.
- Five end-of-year circus showcases, involving all current students performing their original, self-directed acts.



Sandfly Circus stilt walkers join WA Premier Roger Cook and Member for the Kimberley Divina D'Anna in celebrating the opening of the Cable Beach Development. Praying mantis costume design by Lesley Marsh. Photo by Quentide Creative.



Sandfly emerging artist, Jae Kingsley performs rope in Briefs *Brats Carnival*. Photo by Abby Murray Photography.

Briefs Residency & Broome Pride Collaboration | February-March

TK was privileged to kick off the year with some industry matchmaking that led to a fantastic collaboration for Broome Pride's 2025 Mardi Gras! Brisbane-based Briefs Factory originally got in touch about a Briefs/Sandfly collaboration as part of their national Backtrack Tour. When we realised they were available around Mardi Gras, we organised a 3-way conversation. Broome Pride immediately jumped on board, booking Briefs for two cabaret shows as part of their festival program.

Our three organisations co-presented Briefs' all-ages cabaret, *Brats Carnival*, which included acts from emerging Sandfly artists. Jae Kingsley, Molly Bell, Frances Anstey and Ellie Varela-Kelly developed and performed their acts with support from Sandfly coaches and the Briefs team. They were thrilled to perform for the first time as part of a professional ensemble. The inclusion of new Briefs cast member Rowan Thomas made their experience even more special. Rowan is a Sandfly graduate known to our youth as a Sandfly show director. *Brats Carnival* saw more families than ever join Mardi Gras' celebration of gender diversity while cheering our Sandfly performers on a 'bigger' stage. It was a sell out!

The residency also had a big focus on learning and training. Briefs artists led our annual Train-the-Trainer weekend. TK also programmed 16 circus and dance workshops with Briefs for children, teens and adults, including a free session for nearly 70 youth at PCYC.

Focus areas included tumbling, Cyr wheel, handstands, partner acrobatics and trapeze. Remarkably, this was all achieved in just an eight day visit!



Sandfly Circus and Briefs performers pose with TK Artistic Director Meredith Bell after *Brats Carnival*. Photo by Abby Murray Photography.

"From the moment the tent lights lifted, we knew we were in expert hands—polished acts, seamless transitions, and a warm, community-minded vibe that welcomed everyone in."



Young barneys emerge from their newly broken egg in the Sandfly Circus production of *Sandstorm*. Photo by Queentide Creative.

Sandstorm by the Act Belong Commit Sandfly Circus | September

This year's major Sandfly Circus production was written and directed by hometown circus favourite Georgia Deguara and her team from YUCK Circus. In true Kimberley spirit, the show told a tale about what Kimberley kids love - great adventures out bush!

Cleverly crafted by the YUCK team, the adventures of *Sandstorm* resonated with the young and young of heart. Not long into their bush trip, our cast of campers loses their intrepid camp leader (played by Franque Batty) to a rogue storm. The adventurers must redirect their energies to find him. Along the way, they have all sorts of wild encounters – including unicycling brumbies, larger than life barneys (lizards) and even a UFO! The show quickly sold out its two-night season, with over 800 guests in attendance.

In addition to Georgia, the YUCK team of women directors included Hannah Richards, Brooke Duckworth and Shona Conacher. The production team included Meredith Bell, producer; Will Tredinnick, production manager; Isaac Salter, head rigger; Chris Hill, sets, props and puppet designer; additional puppetry by Gwen Knox. Luisa Pearce led hair and make-up design; Tracy Lowe, Lesley Marsh, Diana Oliver, Luisa Pearce and many volunteers supported costume design. Unbound Sound provided fantastic lighting and sound. Kath White managed box office, communications and volunteer coordination. Supporting circus trainers included Crystal Stacey, Nao Kubo, Chelsea Quail, and the entire Sandfly Circus teaching team.

So many kids, trainers, crew, volunteers and parents contributed to make this fantastic show happen! Follow the link below to see our digital show program Follow [this link*](#) to our digital show program.

*Or copy & paste this into your web browser:

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/U__z6dwwFSE



Sandfly students and parent volunteers make scout badges during *Sandstorm* rehearsals. Photo by Meredith Bell.



A band of unicycling brumbies gather in the bush in *Sandstorm*. Photo by Queentide Creative.



Muster dogs round up hapless campers in the Sandfly Circus Broome production of *Sandstorm*. Photo by Queentide Creative.



Sandstorm directors and coaches observe an aerial rehearsal with the newly-installed UFO prop. Photo by Meredith Bell.



Sandstorm by the Sandfly Circus, performed at La Grange Remote Community School in Bidadanga. Photo by Matthew Beetson.

Sandstorm West Kimberley tour to Djarindjin-Lombadina and Bidadanga | October

Conversations with one of our Dragonfly outreach partners revealed a challenge remote schools face: they often struggle to take students to town for excursions to offer them the kind of enriching opportunities that most Australian children take for granted. *But*, could we bring a show to them instead? This conversation sparked the idea to tour a version of our major Sandfly production. How exciting for remote communities, and what a fantastic opportunity for our emerging Sandfly performers, to be able to offer an entertaining show performed *by* young people, *for* young people!

Our YUCK directors adapted their large-scale Broome show for touring. Georgia worked with tour directors, Meredith Bell and Will Tredinnick, to choose a cast of mature and committed high school performers. Chelsea Quail, recent Flying Fruit Fly Circus graduate, and experienced touring performer, was well positioned to support the project. She assisted with rehearsals and accompanied the tour as a coach, assistant director and performer. Kath White joined us as crew and ran sound. Chris Hill adapted sets for the tour.

Two generous and talented parent chaperones provided invaluable support. Mat Beetson joined us as driver and photographer. His show images were fantastic, and our cast couldn't wait to see and share them. Mat even volunteered to help pack up after shows. Pip Kelly volunteered as bus driver, camp cook and tour mum, providing incredible care for the team. After the tour, she also organised a celebration for all of our cast and crew.

Sandstorm toured to two remote communities, Djarindjin-Lombadina and Bidadanga, with performances held at the schools during school hours.

Each 45-minute show was followed by a short Q & A and circus and puppetry workshops, so students could investigate props and equipment used in the show.

All community members were welcome, and it was fantastic to see all ages involved and entertained.

Our Sandfly youth rose to this challenge and exceeded every expectation. They worked incredibly hard to re-mount this work with only 5 days of rehearsal, supporting each other fully in a new performance environment. They embraced the opportunity to meet community members of all ages and to share their skills. They experienced life on the road, learning what it means to live and work together as a team. Our only complaint? Even now they keep asking us, "*so when can we tour again?!*"



The touring cast and crew of *Sandstorm* pose for a photo in Bidadanga on the last day of their tour. Photo by Matthew Beetson.

Dragonfly Outreach

Act Belong Commit Dragonfly Outreach Program

Our youth-focused Dragonfly Outreach Program offers performing arts residencies in remote communities, usually partnering with schools and ending with a finale performance for the whole community. The format varies to suit each community, but what's at heart always remains the same - celebrating kids' achievements! Demand for our outreach activities remained high this year, and with increased funding and staff capacity, we reached more residency locations than ever.

June | Karratha & Roebourne | June

Originally serving only Kimberley communities, Dragonfly Outreach visited Pilbara communities for the fourth time in 2025, connecting with youth through several grassroots organisations supporting youth at-risk. Yaandina Community Centre, PCYC Roebourne and the City of Karratha's Youth Shed hosted us for a week of afternoon and evening circus activities. Will Tredinnick and Perth-based circus artist Ella Norton worked across all three locations to maximise circus opportunities for local kids.



Children at Yaandina Community Centre in Roebourne learn tightwire with TK teaching artist, Will Tredinnick. Photo courtesy of Yaandina Community Services.



Fitzroy Crossing | June

A residency at Fitzroy Valley District High School was our second annual return to the school, continuing an engagement begun with the *Winthali* project, a Bunuba dreaming story performed at the 2023 Yajilarra Festival. Project lead Claudia Alessi coordinated teaching artists across several disciplines including puppetry, music, storytelling and movement. Artists included senior puppetry artist and theatre maker Karen Hethey, Bunuba cultural adviser and visual artist Kaylene Marr and Kimberley hip hop artist, Jacob Gregory. The thematic focus was local birds, as important connectors of the land, sky and water.

In a two-way science exercise, students learned about local birds from cultural and Western science perspectives. They made bird puppets and learned an original rap. As a project finale, students performed their bird puppets on country, along the banks of the Martuwarra, or Fitzroy River. Fortuitously, Goolarri Media staff and Bunuba trainees filmed the puppetry as a part of their training. Big thanks to Goolarri for their support!

Bidyadanga | July

The circus returned to Bidyadanga's La Grange Remote Community School for the fourth consecutive year with a two week-residency led by Will Tredinnick and Bunbury circus dynamos Isaac Salter and Michèle Lainé. Michèle, an aerialist with over 30 years of international performance and teaching experience, also offered afterschool aerials classes for staff! These hard working teachers loved it! In remote communities, it's not only kids who can suffer from limited opportunities and boredom.

The finale evening show at the Women's Centre was a great success, with the arrival from Broome of face paint, theatre lights and curtains meeting the rush of kids' energy! Students impressed audiences with hula hoops, plate spinning, tumbling and stilt walking, but as usual, the minitramp was the favourite on the night. Even babies and pups couldn't be kept offstage!



"The most valuable aspect of the project was seeing the kids be happy and proud at the show, where they are usually reluctant to perform."

Teaching artist Michèle Lainé (right) supports La Grange Remote Community School students performing plate spinning as part of the finale show of Theatre Kimberley's Dragonfly Outreach project in Bidyadanga. Photo by Feral Films.

Beagle Bay | July-August

We returned to Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community for our annual three-week residency at Sacred Heart School, our seventh consecutive year! Returning project artists, Will Tredinnick and Chelsea Quail, Flying Fruit Fly Circus graduate, were joined by former Sandfly, Crystal Stacey.

The finale week saw additional support from SAE University College student, Indianna Hynam, and Sandfly Circus trainee trainers, Evie Meaney and Aella Westlake. Indianna documented the project as part of her final university placement while Year 9 students, Evie and Aella, joined to provide more trainer support for the finale show. Once again, Sacred Heart kids produced a high energy performance to the cheers and laughter of the Beagle Bay community.

Alongside the circus mayhem, TK was pleased to welcome Jens Altheimer back from Melbourne and support his concurrent film project, *Stories in Motion*. Nearly 15 years ago, Jens directed two Sandfly shows and several outreach projects on the Dampier Peninsula. TK re-connected Jens with Sacred Heart School as his new project aligned well with students' circus tuition. A screening of *Stories in Motion* was included at our circus show evening. The film was a great opener for the night, with the comedic use of greenscreen and student-directed interviews leaving audiences in stitches.



Dragonfly Outreach Program trainers prepare young students as the show begins at Beagle Bay's Sacred Heart School. Photo by Meredith Bell.

Bayulu | Septembert

At the end of Term 3, Dragonfly Outreach visited Bayulu Community for the first time in over ten years. Isaac Salter returned to lead the two-week circus project with Perth artist Simon Wood. Will and Meredith visited to assist and strengthen connections with Bayulu Remote Community School.



Greg Nichols and Jacky Cheng pose with student design work before the Yiramalay Studio School exhibition. Photo by Meredith Bell.

Yiramalay | July, August, November

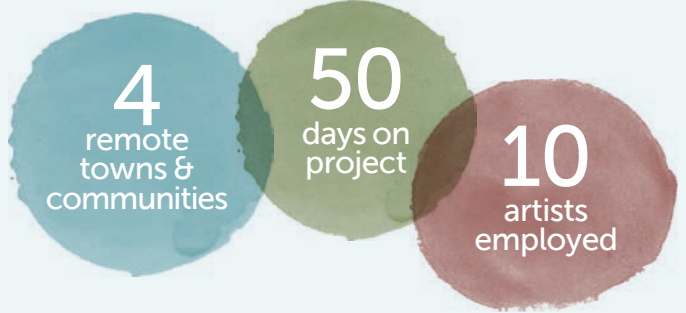
In 2025, we delivered a different project format with longstanding partner, Yiramalay Studio School in the Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges, 80km from Fitzroy Crossing. Broome-based artist Jacky Cheng led a three-part residency following on from her overwhelming success with Yiramalay students on previous TK projects.

The idea was to teach the students artmaking processes with multiple materials, technical variations, and numerous applications, to give students real choice about their processes and finished products. This Year 10-12 cohort printed shirts, serviettes, tablecloths, cards and notebooks, learning that many creative products can originate from a single original work. Yiramalay staff and students enjoyed the finale exhibition night in November, which showcased completed works to the school community.

Big Country Puppets



Big Country Puppets residencies incorporate many creative elements - storytelling, First Nations languages, puppetry, theatre and music - to celebrate local cultural stories and explore important environmental issues. Theatre specialists co-create each project collaboratively with local Aboriginal Ranger groups and Elders, usually in very remote locations. Local and external linguists, schools, students, and community members also contribute. The program is led by multi-disciplinary artist and theatre maker, Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman.



In Wyndham with Balanggarra Rangers | February-March

The Big Country Puppets team started a huge year with a five-week residency in the East Kimberley working with the Balanggarra Rangers. The project built on a two day creative development in late 2024, which drew on written archival and oral stories from the area. Development of the resulting theatre work, *A River is Born*, continued in Wyndham in early February. Project artists Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, Eduardo Maher and Sandy McKendrick travelled from Broome and Perth, with Jacob Gregory joining mid-project to lead musical development. Rangers chose different giant puppets to work on - brolga, jabiru, bush turkey and Unggud (Rainbow Serpent).

The project and finale show was a great success involving a deep level of engagement from numerous partner organisations and individuals. Balanggarra Ranger, Miranda Johnstone reported that the performance was very moving and affirming for the community, particularly for people from Oombulgurri, where the show's three creation stories

originate. Oombulgurri Community was forcibly closed by the WA government in 2011; remaining residents relocated to Wyndham.

The Wyndham community was grateful to be chosen for the project, as the town has few cultural events. The involvement of Balanggarra Rangers at St. Joseph's Primary School and Wyndham District High School was greatly valued, especially the rangers' presentations about their work on country. Soon after project completion, the Ord Valley Muster invited the Rangers and students to perform with the puppets. The Wyndham performers entertained hundreds at this popular Kununurra festival.

See ABC's coverage of the project here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-05/a-river-is-born-puppet-show-tells-dreamtime-stories-wyndham/105105470>



Joe Evans (bush turkey) and Grace Grant (jabiru), puppet makers and performers from the Junior Balanggarra Ranger group, Wyndham. Photo by Landi Bradshaw.



Twenty puppeteers operate a collaboratively built armed anemone puppet in *Emergence*. Photo by Jalaru Photography.

Emergence at Yinara/Entrance Point with the Broome community | April-May

Emergence brought Big Country Puppets to Broome with a celebration of the remarkable coastal life of Yinara, known by many as Entrance Point. Yinara is currently under threat of industrialisation which is an ongoing concern for many of the Broome community.

The creative development was led by Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman and a cultural advisory committee - Michael Jalaru Torres, Yisah Bin Omar, Jaala Ozies along with citizen scientist Dianne Bennett. The central performance piece of *Emergence* was a collaboratively built giant *Dofleinia Armata* puppet, a rare anemone, recently discovered in the area. Twenty puppeteers were needed to operate the glowing 40-tentacle creature.

The project gathered interviews with local community members whose concerns for Yinara relate to cultural, familial and environmental connections. The breathtaking soundscape by Petris Jinunjili Torres blended the audio interviews with original music. Several hundred community members watched the free performance from the beach and surrounding rock formations.

See a short film from the performance here:

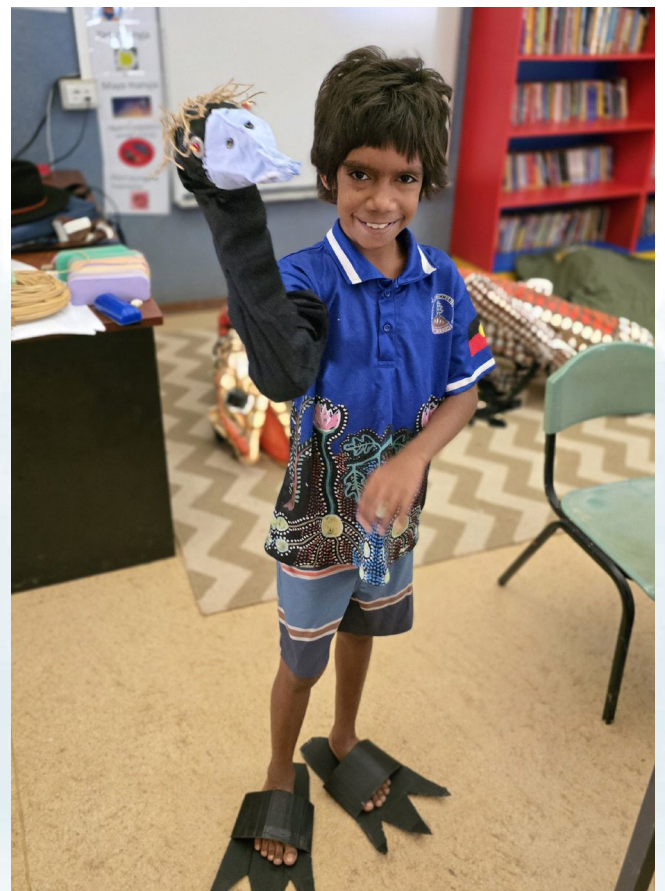
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7632Ex2WLk>

In Kadjina Community with Ngurrara Rangers | October

Following a 2024 cancellation, Big Country Puppets finally rescheduled a second collaboration with Ngurrara Rangers to re-tell the story of *Jilji the Skink*, originally developed in 2022 with the rangers, Walmajarri Elders and Yakanarra Community School. Artists Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, Jacob Gregory and Jerilee Jeffery traveled to Wulungarra Community School, working first with school staff to prepare them for the project.

Rangers presented a fire management workshop to the school as a foundation for the story. Afterwards the ranger/

artist team taught students Jilji's story, an important lesson about right-way/wrong-way burning. Hip hop artist, Jacob Gregory (aka Lyrical Instinct), taught the students a related rap. The adult-sized Jilji puppet came out of storage for the show, alongside new props and puppets made by students, artists and rangers. The show was a great success for the tiny community, with Elders suggesting that future performances take place in other nearby communities.



Puppet smiles abound at Wulungarra Community School during the Big Country Puppets / Ngurrara Rangers project. Photo by Jerilee Jeffery.

Bust Out Cabaret | July

TK turned 30 in 2025, and while the busyness of the dry season postponed our birthday party, the Bust Out team still found time to pause, share cake with friends, and celebrate this significant milestone.

Once again the house was abuzz with a fantastic array of talent, serving up a cheeky and sensational night like no other. Crystal Stacey, Bust Out's first MC back in 2013, returned to the mic once again, dazzling audiences with acts on trapeze and hula hoops. Nao Kubo returned from Japan for the show, leaving audiences in awe of his acrobatic juggling feats. Emerging artist Chelsea Quail

made her Bust Out debut with two dynamite circus acts. Local favourites Lyrical Instinct, Audrey Heartburn, Bex Youdale, Studio 34, and Sarah Jayne kept audiences guessing with stage offerings ranging from the quirky to the sublime.

And the birthday cake? Thankfully we have theatre-chefs on call. Our favourite set designer, Chris Hill, cooked us up a larger-than-life cake prop with lighting candles that only just fit down the aisle. Meanwhile Chef Franque and his backpacker friend Nils made enough mess with flour and milk that we all felt like we had baked it ourselves!



Acrobatic baking by Nils and Chef Franque at *Bust Out Cabaret*. Photo by Meredith Bell.



New South Wales based artist, Chelsea Quail performs hula hoops in her debut *Bust Out Cabaret*. Photo by Queentide Creative.



Crystal Stacey pays homage to the Condom Tree, a Broome cultural icon, in *Bust Out Cabaret*. Photo by Queentide Creative.

My TK Experience

Naoyuki Kubo

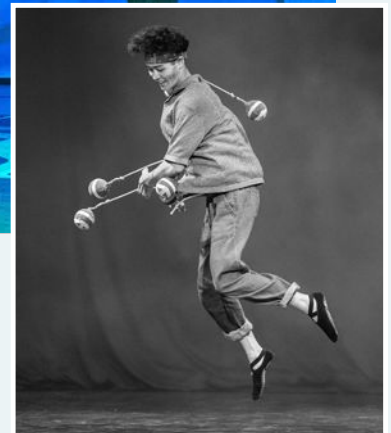
International Circus Artist - Sandfly Circus Trainer 2024 & 2025



Above: Nao Kubo (left) performs with his first Sandfly students on stage in *Small But Spectacular*. Photo by Robak Photography.

Right: Nao performs meteor juggling in his second Bust Out season. Photo by Queentide Creative.

Left: Sandfly students greet Nao on his return to Broome. Photo by Ellie Kelly.



My name is Nao Kubo. I am from Nagano, Japan, and I grew up in a child welfare institution from early childhood until I was eighteen. I first encountered circus at fifteen, when a circus artist visited the institution. He told me about circus schools, and that moment opened a new path in my life.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled in Sori International Circus School in the mountain village of Sori, in Midori City, Gunma Prefecture. I spent three years training, performing, and gaining stage experience, and one of the most valuable moments was creating a diabolo duo act with a close friend who specialised in the discipline.

The reason I came to Australia was my partner, Naruha. During my third year at circus school, she was accepted into NICA in Melbourne and left Japan. Her determination inspired me to look beyond my comfort zone. I have always been a cautious person, and the idea of moving overseas alone felt overwhelming. But I strongly wanted to see more of the world and overcome the barriers I felt within myself. With her support, I moved to Melbourne and started a new life - I even began busking as a juggler. I learned about Broome and Theatre Kimberley through Naruha. She had heard about it from one of her NICA trainers and immediately began planning to move there. I didn't hesitate—I booked a flight and joined her in Broome.

When I first visited Theatre Kimberley, I spoke very little English, yet Meredith welcomed me warmly and showed

me around. I want to express my deepest gratitude to the trainers, the parents, and above all, the children who attended my classes and did their best to understand my teaching despite my limited language skills.

My time as a trainer with Sandfly Circus was incredibly meaningful. As a first-time trainer, I felt both excitement and anxiety, often wondering how to communicate what I knew in the clearest way. Even when I struggled, the children always listened earnestly and tried to learn. Those days were truly special and filled with happiness.

I was also fortunate to perform in Bust Out Cabaret in 2024 and 2025, which became an invaluable learning experience. Broome was where I encountered cabaret style for the first time. Performers are often expected to adapt to different needs, but Theatre Kimberley always respected the style of expression I wanted to pursue. And by my second year, I had more capacity to support other performers. Being able to witness their ideas, intentions, and creative process up close was a gift, and I am deeply grateful to everyone who understood my tentative expressions and supported me instantly and kindly.

In my second year, I came to Broome alone without Naruha, yet the Sandfly children and the trainers welcomed me warmly. That meant more to me than I can express.

Language is still a challenge for me, but my time in Broome made me want to work hard so that one day I can share the stage with the Sandfly kids again.

Thank you for everything, Nao

Artist in Profile

Georgia Deguara



Bust Out Cabaret. Photo by Robak Photography.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you're up to now?

I'm a local Broome artist, and Director of YUCK Circus, a WA all-female performance company. Since starting the company in 2018 at 22 years old, it's grown into a multi-award-winning, internationally touring production company that champions the female voice across live performance and employs artists year-round across a range of roles and disciplines.

When not on tour, I'm home in Broome, using my skills to serve my community wherever needed - teaching the next generation of performers with Theatre Kimberley (TK) and BPAC, helping out in the office, or organising events for the Shire. It's good to be home and be part of our thriving arts community.

When did you first become involved in the Arts?

Does it count if, at age five, you force your mum to watch your living room magic shows—ticketed entry, of course?

TK and the Sandfly Circus were the real catalysts for my career, but thinking back, art has always played a big part in my life.

Dance, music and visual arts all contributed to a skillset that now lets me work across every level of production—props, costumes, sound, lighting, directing, producing, even finances (those early ticket sales were clearly good practice!)

Why do you love the arts and what inspires you?

Whether I'm performing to 3000+ in Edinburgh Playhouse, or a crowd of 30 in a remote community 8 hours drive away, community is always at the forefront.

I strive to create exciting work and use what I know to inspire the next generation—both on stage and through teaching, especially in regional communities and through Theatre Kimberley's Dragonfly Outreach program.

I'm just as stoked seeing one of my students finally nail a skill they've been practicing as I am performing for a crowd of thousands. That moment of breakthrough—that's what it's all about.

Tell us about your involvement with TK?

I grew up in Broome, and began training with the Sandfly Circus at the age of 11. Circus was the perfect blend of creativity and physical skill, and throughout high school TK gave me opportunities to teach, mentor, direct, perform, as well as develop the skills that make me good at what I do today.

Even after leaving town to study, TK always welcomed me back like I was coming back home to my mob. I could jump straight back in, like I'd never left. That easy accessibility kept me connected through my young adulthood. Now that I'm back living in Broome, I work with TK across various roles and projects and support the organisation as co-secretary of the board.



YUCK Circus at Fremantle International Street Arts Festival, 2024. Photo by Tashi Hall.

What has been your most memorable project with TK?

After more than half my life with TK, there are plenty. Being invited back to direct the Sandfly Circus shows *Ahoy!* and *Sandstorm* was a real full-circle moment. Standing on stage at the end of *Ahoy!*, watching what an incredible show the students and team had created, I felt this huge sense of joy. From starting out as an 11-year-old student to now directing the show - it definitely made me cry!.

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?

Funding is a constant challenge across the arts. Creating work that inspires and serves communities while trying to make it financially viable is really difficult, and the pressure can lead to burnout. Finding that balance is critical.

How did you overcome it, and what lessons did you learn?

I'm not sure if I've overcome it, but I'm working on it! A big part of it is making tough choices — sometimes saying no to projects you love that would have great impact because the resources just aren't there. That's hard, but necessary.

Yet if COVID taught us anything, it's how essential the arts are—music, film, performance, creativity—for society. They're what got us through the tough times. Things still seem tough, which is why we need stronger support for the arts generally.

What has been your favourite arts project and why?

I have no favourites. I get to build a career supporting women in the arts - creating fun, exciting, high-skilled work that has genuine impact. It's about making safe, empowering creative spaces for performers, and showing femme-identifying audiences what's possible - women being loud, strong, funny, and unapologetically taking up space.

An audience member once said: *"This show made me laugh so hard my face hurt and made me feel like I could fight a bear (and possibly win)."* That pretty much sums it up.

Where is the most exciting place that work has taken you?

Stacks of exciting places. We've performed at major festivals like Glastonbury, Sziget, Wilderness and Latitude alongside artists like Kylie Minogue, Post Malone, Fatboy Slim, Chappell Roan, Sean Paul and Sting.

We've created work internationally, including a National Theatre production in Taiwan in collaboration with Eye Catching Circus for the Weiwuying Circus Platform. We've toured extensively across regional WA, spending months in remote communities, and this year we're touring every WA region for the first time.

We've also headlined major Fringe festivals—Edinburgh, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney—and directed youth productions with groups like Sandfly Circus and Spaghetti Circus. The scale and quality of Sandfly productions is incredible—I don't know any other community circus doing what they do.

What are your hopes and dreams for the arts going forward?

Let's just keep doing it! And look after the people who are doing it. Art leaders are pillars in communities like ours. They work hard to create opportunities that give everyone a chance, and if I'm anything to go by, it works. We just need to make sure they don't burn out!

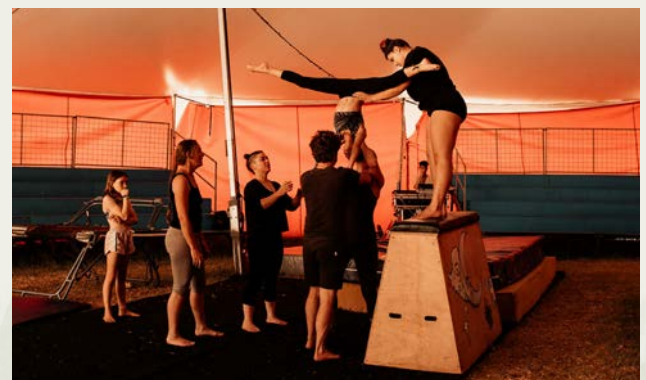
If you could give your younger self some advice or words of encouragement, what would they be?

Trust yourself. Don't compare yourself, or listen too closely to others expectations of what a 'successful' artist is. Keep doing what you're doing and you'll get there - you'll smash it!

Also, maybe say no to the teenage side fringe, it took ages to grow out!



Georgia (centre) teaching circus in Djarindjin-Lombadina as a junior trainer for the Dragonfly Outreach Program, 2011. Photo by Meredith Bell.



Teaching circus at the WA Circus Festival and International Training Project, Karnidale, 2022. Photo by Rachel Collier-Bondenstaff.



YUCK Circus at Latitude Music Festival UK, 2025. Photo by Abbie Shipperley.

Financial Summary 2025



Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	646,240	438,734
Trade & Other Receivables	11,151	18,971
	657,391	457,705
Non-current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	25,734	33,132
Total Assets	683,125	490,837
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	89,022	72,560
Provision for employee entitlements	28,488	27,142
Unexpended funds	265,683	118,188
Total Current Liabilities	383,148	217,890
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provision for employee benefits	26,137	23,910
Total Liabilities	409,285	241,800
Net Assets	273,840	249,037
Equity		
Accumulated Surplus	173,840	149,037
Operations Reserve	100,000	100,000
Total Equity	273,840	249,037

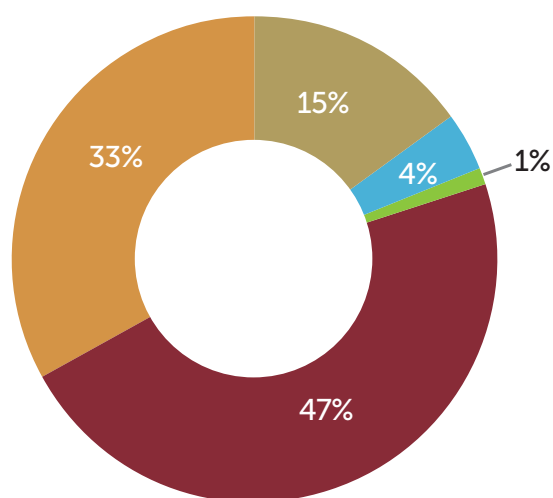
Statement of Operations

For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Operating Revenue (box office, class and client fees, fundraising)	191,129	142,450
Funding		
Government income - grants	499,128	434,658
Philanthropy	35,000	64,873
Other Income		
Interest	3,341	4,590
Sponsorship and donations	9,624	10,405
Membership fees	2,695	2,754
Other	27,585	7,641
Total Income	768,502	667,371
EXPENSES		
Production costs	111,885	83,241
Operating costs	30,612	31,847
Depreciation	6,509	8,828
Employment costs	346,597	369,520
Professional Fees	248,095	161,310
Total Expenses	743,698	654,746
Surplus from operations	24,803	12,625

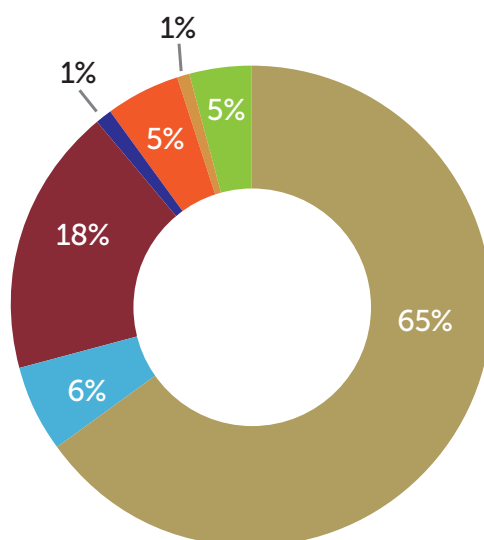
Theatre Kimberley's audited financial statements are available on request.

TK Expenses 2025



- Production Costs
- Operating Costs
- Depreciation
- Employment Costs
- Professional Fees

TK Income 2025



- Grants
- Box Office
- Class & Client Fees
- Fundraising
- Philanthropy
- Sponsorship & Donations
- Other

NB 'Employment costs' include fees paid to TK teaching artists and casual project contractors.

2025 Outcomes



Total participants
TK projects and shows:

1478



Total remote community
workshops:

238



Total paid
artists/artworkers:

53



Total engaged Aboriginal
artists/artworkers:

25



Total volunteer
hours:

892



Total number of
volunteers

141



Total Aboriginal people
engaged
(participants and audience):

1940



Total audience
number:

5598

Following each arts activity, we tally numbers of participants, artists, artworkers, and volunteers. Audience numbers and demographics are estimated.

A Thriving Creative Future for WA

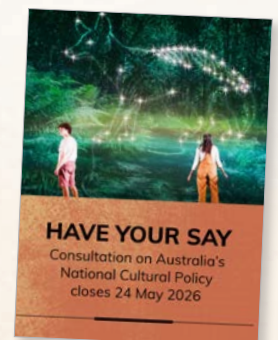
In 2026, Creative Australia will be engaging the arts sector to ask for contributions to shape the next phase of Australia's National Cultural Policy, building on the 2023 policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*.

Revive is a five-year framework (2023–2027) designed to strengthen the arts sector after the pandemic, with a strong focus on First Nations leadership, supporting artists as workers, cultural infrastructure, and audience engagement. The current review and Senate inquiry (reporting in mid-2026) is looking at how well these priorities are working in practice, and what needs to shift in the next policy iteration.

From a regional perspective, this review is a valuable opportunity to highlight ongoing gaps. While *Revive* set a positive national vision, many small and regional organisations continue to face workforce shortages, fragile funding, and limited access to infrastructure. There is also increasing attention on new challenges—particularly artificial intelligence and sector sustainability—which are being actively explored through submissions.

One area that remains notably underdeveloped is climate action. Despite growing pressure across the arts sector to respond to environmental impacts and support sustainable practice, there has been limited concrete policy direction or resourcing in this space. For regional organisations already dealing with climate realities, this is a critical gap the 2026 review could address.

Overall, the review signals a willingness to listen and adapt. The key question for many in the sector—especially outside metropolitan centres—is whether the next version of national cultural policy will translate its ambitions into practical, place-based support.



Our Supporters

Theatre Kimberley is generously supported by



Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts





Theatre Kimberley 2026

Celebrating stories across the Kimberley - we hope you can join us at one of our exciting shows or projects soon - wherever it might be!

Dragonfly Outreach Residencies

Theatre Kimberley's Dragonfly Outreach Program travels to community schools to work intensively to teach performance skills that are showcased in an end-of-project performance for the whole community.

Big Country Puppets

Big Country Puppets arts residencies in remote Kimberley communities celebrate First Nations' language and culture and the local environment. TK artists work with Aboriginal Rangers and local schools to co-create theatre shows, incorporating local knowledge and languages, and giant and small puppets.

We Live Here with Flipside Circus

In August, Queensland's leading youth circus will travel to Broome with their award-winning production, *We Live Here*. Their residency with Sandfly Circus youth will involve a skills share and performance exchange.

Sandfly Circus Show

We look forward to welcoming Broome locals and visitors of all ages to our next dynamite production to be directed by Ben Kotovski-Steele and Piri Goodman. Get ready for this impressive youth and community effort to bring you high-flying feats and thrilling circus antics by 100 of our most talented young people!

Bust Out Cabaret

One of Broome's best nights out – for performers and audiences alike – *Bust Out Cabaret* sees local community performers join visiting artists for two nights of adults-only music, circus, dance, comedy and more!

Donations and memberships are always appreciated.

TK has tax-deductible status.

Flipside Circus Collaboration

We Live Here
August

Dragonfly Outreach Residencies

Djarindjin-Lombadina
4 - 15 May

Bidyadanga
22 June - 3 July

Beagle Bay
27 July - 14 August

Derby
19 - 30 Oct

Roebourne, Karratha,
Bayulu, Derby
Dates TBC

Big Country Puppets

Bidyadanga with
Nyangumarta Rangers
February - March

Additional projects
depending on funding

Sandfly Circus Show

11 & 12 September

Bust Out Cabaret

7 & 8 August

THEATRE
KIMBERLEY



Tel: +61 8 9193 5658

PO Box 2890 Broome WA 6725

Office 6 Lotteries House

Cable Beach Road Broome WA 6726



theatrekimberley

www.theatrekimberley.org.au