



Artback NT

Malandrarri Festival Artistic Report

17 - 18 June 2022



David Spry and Barnabas Timothy



Child being painted in ochre

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The Northern Territory –
our stories, our art, our place –
expanding the Australian narrative

Artback NT acknowledges the Traditional Owners
of all the lands on which we live and work.

The Northern Territory is home to the world's oldest
living culture – the first artists and storytellers.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Supported by



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Front cover:
Wandangula dancers

INTRODUCTION

The Malandarri Festival is a community-led event, held annually in remote Borroloola. It celebrates the creative and cultural practices of four language groups in the region – the Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gurdanji and Mara people – through traditional dance, song and stories alongside a contemporary perspective.

Established as Dance Site in 2013, the Malandarri Festival is held over 2 nights, and includes people from surrounding outstations as well as invited groups from other NT First Nations communities to showcase their own creative practices and join in cross-cultural sharing. It is the climax of Artback NT's and the community's range of ongoing artistic, mentorship and professional development opportunities throughout the year based in Borroloola and the wider Gulf of Carpentaria region.

These activities are all part of Artback NT's Indigenous Traditional Dance Program (ITDP), which supports the NT's artistic and cultural practices through inter-generational learning, strengthening relationships between Elders and young people, and encouraging cultural leadership.

The ITDP program also works with the community of Numbulwar (since 2016, for the Numburindi Festival), has presented Dance Site events in Alice Springs (2009) and Tennant Creek (2010 – 2012), and is now in discussion with other NT communities about establishing festivals with them. In each, there is a distinct engagement model, in response to specific community culture and needs.

The ITDP works with remote NT communities in three key ways.

- Assists in the coordination of an annual event that celebrates the diversity of traditional Indigenous dance, music and song providing an exciting cross-cultural platform for audience and performance development.
- Delivers remote community support that facilitates opportunities for arts and cultural performance and skills development within the region through a series of projects, rehearsals, workshops and events each year.
- Provides further Territory, national and international performance opportunities where appropriate for the hosting community to establish business and professional development pathways.



Yanyuwa dancers



Wandangula dancers



Gangalidda Dancers from Doomadgee

MALANDARRI FESTIVAL 2022

The 2022 Festival was held on the nights of 17 and 18 June, and this year it was singing and language that took centre stage, headlined by Borrooloola's very exciting newly-formed women's cultural song group, *Arrkula Yinbayarra* – 'Together We Sing'.

In a change-up from the traditional programming of dance the first night and bands the second, both nights presented a range of local performers showcasing the singing and dancing of their clans as well as the talents of their bands. Many of the musicians displayed increased skills and confidence gained from participating in the Borrooloola Music Program – a 12-month trial project supported by McArthur River Mines Community Benefits Trust, that stimulated culture and music practice, social and community development, job creation and enterprise.

With the end of covid travel limitations in the NT, performers travelled from distant communities, including: Tiwi Islands, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, and Darwin – and even from Doomadgee in Queensland.

As always, Festival operations utilised a primarily local workforce, providing employment income and skills-development opportunities, alongside the highly experienced ITDP and Festival teams.

Generous in-kind contributions were made by local stakeholder organisations, which in-turn increased employment for other local community members through additional duties required to support the Festival.

The Festival was bolstered by a very full week of activities in the lead-up. It was the biggest pre-Festival calendar for Malandarri to date, contributing to the visitor numbers, sense of anticipation and to the Festival events themselves.

Off-stage Festival activities included a much-awaited ground oven of locally hunted bush tucker and stalls throughout the event, providing the opportunity for local artisans and entrepreneurs to sell art, food and bush medicine.

“ This was a very special one: we had dancing and singing, both traditional and contemporary and the debut performance by our new women's cultural song group. It created a great festival atmosphere. This year was a big Festival with two visiting groups and was very special to have Tiwi Islands there, who are a great inspiration to us. We welcomed back Doomadgee, who come every year, and the Borrooloola School kids performing in three languages English, Yanyuwa and Garrwa. Was great to have a nice big Festival again after years of covid and to celebrate together with people from all over. It's awesome to end the night with our talented local musicians performing at their best and having the crowd up on their feet”

Marlene Timothy Karkadoo,
Malandarri Festival Director

FESTIVAL LEAD-UP ACTIVITIES

This year, in particular, the full week of activities that happened in the lead-up to the Malandarri Festival made an invaluable contribution to the atmosphere, anticipation and excitement for the Festival and to the quality of the programming.

THE BORROLOOLA WOMEN'S CULTURAL SONG PROJECT

Dr Shellie Morris, who has Yanyuwa heritage herself, has been leading this growing group of women as director of *Arrkula Yinbayarra* for the past 10 months, and has written new songs with them. She has been absolutely critical to the establishment and success of this new song group.

In the lead-up to the Festival, 28 women (plus facilitators) from mixed language groups came together to write music, share stories and culture and spend time with each other on Yanyuwa Country. It brought 13 women from Tiwi Islands to mentor, encourage and to collaborate alongside the Borroloola group for 5 days of workshops. Workshops were held at multiple locations across Borroloola: the Mabunji women's safe house, down on the banks of the McArthur River at the local boat ramp, and at Rumburriya Hall. Participants shared stories and language, learned each other's songs, danced and played music. Meaningful new relationships were formed. It has been a really special journey for everyone involved to see the progression of capability, confidence and community over the past year.

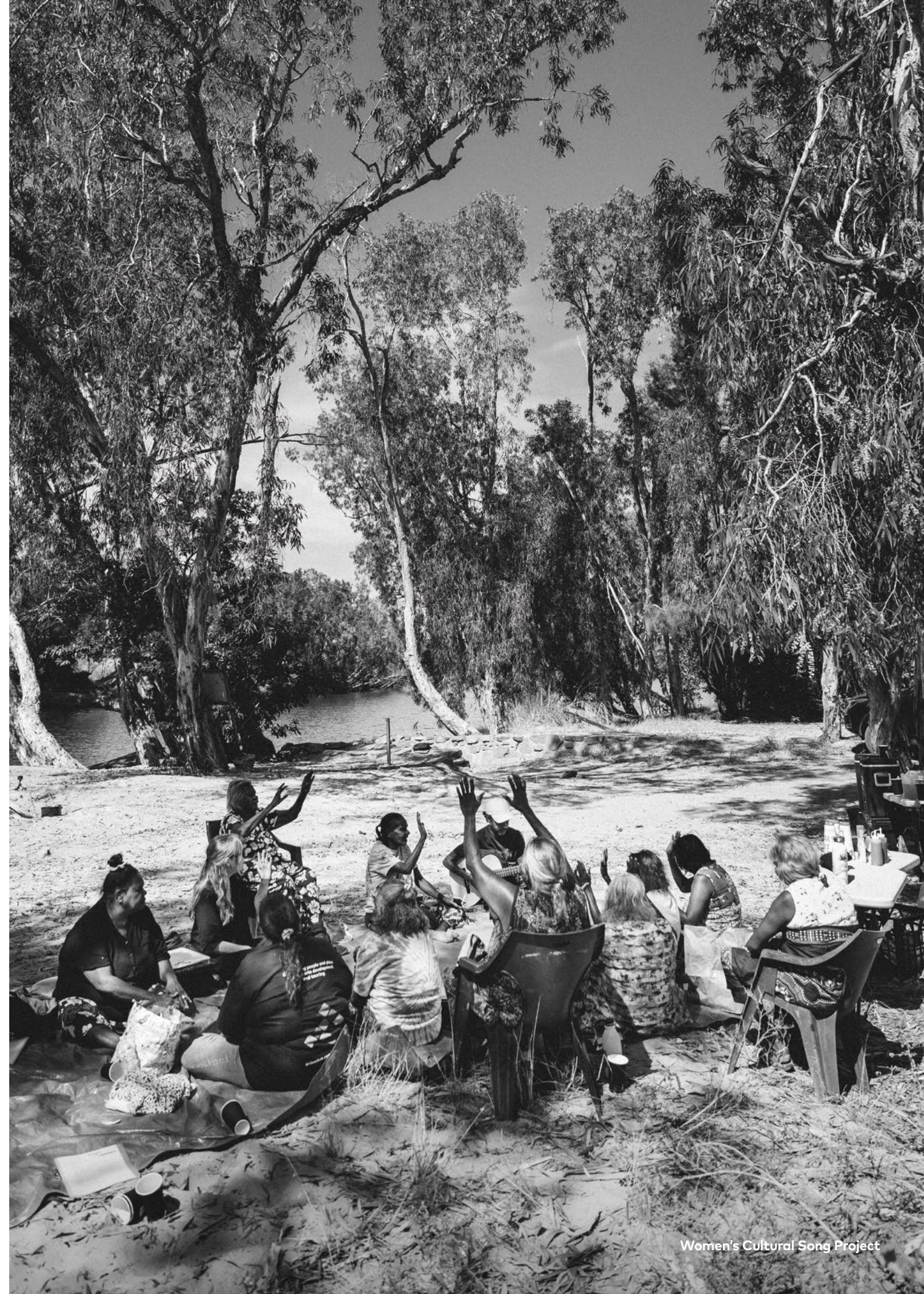
Also fundamental to the project's Malandarri performance was the inclusion and contribution of Dr Genevieve Campbell, who has been part of and touring with the Tiwi Choir for 15 years, and who travelled from Sydney to support the Tiwi women.

Eve Pawlick, who has worked on the Malandarri Festival over many years, also assisted the project in the lead-up week.

The work put in by everyone climaxed in a stunning performance on the closing night of the 2022 Malandarri Festival. It was a highlight of the weekend, and made it clear this is just the beginning of an artistic and cultural connection between the two song groups.

Many senior female song custodians have passed away in Borroloola in the past years, and this has been a comforting way to have a strong female presence at Malandarri and to help put it back on the main festival circuit, with its first 'open to the public' program since the start of the pandemic.

The Borroloola Women's Cultural Song Project was supported by Festivals Australia.



MUSIC MENTOR PROGRAM

The second element of Artback NT's 12-month trial project was the Music Mentor Program of regular workshops (including by renowned musician David Spry) and jam sessions that has boosted the skills and confidence of several of the Malandarri Festival performers, and others.

Borroloola local Barnabas Timothy has led the program, facilitating two workshops weekly: one for experienced musicians, focusing on developing music skills, creating new music, band practice, and training to be future facilitators; the other for youth to learn and jam with local musicians.

Festival lead-up workshops were hosted in the Rumburriya Hall. Sound technician, Bradley Fawcett supported with production, set-up and pack-down skills, offering the opportunity for men to update their knowledge and learn about the tech equipment, and providing training to those who wanted to assist with tech during the Festival.

“Was great learning more about tech and set up with Bradley – was good having him there”

Barnabas Timothy,
Music Program Officer Artback NT

SONG AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Also part of the project, the Song and Language Program program saw popular songs translated into Yanyuwa and Garrwa and taught to students at Borroloola school by teachers and teachers' aides. This addition to the curriculum has been a huge hit and has made a vital contribution to language and cultural maintenance.

The children rehearsed well in the lead-up and were thrilled with their performance of songs in language at the Malandarri Festival.

Artback NT gratefully acknowledges that the Borroloola Music Program trial was supported by the McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust, in addition to their support of our ITDP and the Remote Arts and Culture Program.

“The kids enjoy having Barnabas and Marlene come to work with us with the song and language. They like having community come in and be part of their learning and being involved with the school. They love singing in their languages”

Daphne Mawson, Borroloola School



Song and Language program
at Borroloola School



Borroloola Primary
School performance



Screen printing at Borroloola School



Screen printing at Borroloola School. Photo: Tarzan JungleQueen

COSTUME-MAKING

This year, Borroloola School provided a space for community members to come and make skirts, headbands and other dancing attire, with Artback NT facilitator Kate McGreal assisting. The school provided the Learning on Country classroom, open to the public each afternoon for open workshops. Artback NT provided sewing machines, material and other essentials for making costumes.

One afternoon, the workshop went down to the river where women sat together hand-sewing skirts for their performances on the weekend.

Uniforms were custom-made for the song groups for their Festival performances. This was done at the school, giving the students the opportunity to learn sewing skills in textiles workshops.

Waralungku Arts were instrumental in assisting Artback NT with licencing some artworks by Dinah Norman through a copyright agency, specifically for the *Arrkula Yinbayarra* uniforms. This was the first time a design by Dinah has been licenced, and having them showcased in skirts and scarves was a mark of respect to the senior artist and member of the song group.

SCREEN-PRINTING

We were thrilled to have the very talented Tarzan JungleQueen facilitating screen-printing workshops at Borroloola School in the week leading up to the Festival. Students of all ages and classes were taught basic skills and encouraged to print their very own Festival t-shirt or tote bag for themselves and family members. The t-shirt featured a special design by Festival Director and Borroloola artist Marlene Karkadoo symbolising the coming together of people to celebrate. It also listed the performances on the 2022 line up. Tarzan is a multi-disciplinary queer artist based in Darwin, who has been involved with the Artist on Tour initiative with Artback NT for many years.

HUNTING

Nicholas Fitzpatrick and his team spent the week hunting for the traditional ground oven prepared at the Festival. They also hunted for and presented a beautiful feast for the Tiwi visitors where the ground oven was prepared onsite down by the river as part of the welcome dinner for the special guests and newly arrived Festival crew.



FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES

ARRKULA YINBAYARRA ('TOGETHER WE SING') – THE BORROLOOLA CULTURAL SONG GROUP

This was the debut public performance for these women from mixed language groups residing in Borrooloola. Many have been developing their skills and repertoire over many months; others joined during rehearsals and workshops in the week leading up to the Festival, with numbers jumping from the original 8, to 15.

Before each song, a different performer explained the meaning and story of it, really adding to the beauty and value of knowledge-sharing and cultural exchange and giving insight into the song writing process.

Dr Shellie Morris who has been the facilitator for the group throughout the past 10 months supported this performance and later disclosed that it was her first ever public performance on keys (so another special debut for Malandarri Festival).

The performers' costumes were a specially-printed and licensed combination of two artworks by Dinah Norman, a decision made by the women as a way of honouring her as the most senior member of the song group. Adding to their outfits was the beautiful jewellery designed, made and hand-painted by local artist and group member Annie Mc Dinny. The women looked show-stopping... and were!

NGARUKURUWALA ('WE SING SONGS') – THE TIWI STRONG WOMEN'S CHOIR

The guest performance by this renowned choir, who were the inspiration for the formation of *Arrkula Yinbayarra* and had been in Borrooloola all week for workshops together with the local women, was also a special treat for the Festival and generated much excitement in the audience. Encouraging shouts of "that's my sister" and "yes... my mother" from members of the Borrooloola Song Group watching on in the audience, were very touching. Especially given they hadn't met –

or heard of – the Tiwi Strong Women's Choir until their trip to see them at Darwin Entertainment Centre in 2021, this was a truly touching display of the connections that had been made during the week together. Eighteen months and a huge journey later, there they all were, together on Yanyuwa Country, as sisters and mothers now, performing as family and friends. Powerful connections have been made.

The Tiwi performance was vocally stunning and also featured dance and storytelling through action. The show was animated and captivating. A highlight of this performance was Regina Kantilla's rendition of the old blind woman in one song – a role Regina has only fairly recently begun to perform, and had absolutely everyone in stitches of laughter.

SANDRIDGE BAND

While the band originates from Borrooloola and the Sandridge outstation, many of the members have moved away, so it was a delight for everyone that some band members travelled in from Tennant Creek and Katherine for this reunion performance. The dance floor was pumping and the crowd knew the words to every song.

Between songs, lead singer Gadrian Hoosan gave a forceful speech about guns in community to coincide with the National Day of Action against police guns. A powerful political voice of Borrooloola and local councillor for Roper Gulf Regional Council, he also spoke about the importance of looking after country and learning from the Elders. The old people in the crowd commenting "yes, that's true... that's true what he's saying" when he spoke about caring for Country and keeping culture strong.



Marlene Timothy presenting Dinah Norman with her textile design costume



Arrkula Yinbayarra (Together we sing)

**BARNABAS TIMOTHY, JOHN LOUIS
AND THE MALANDARRI BAND**

Barnabas and John joined William Charlie, Benjamin McDinny and Andrew Dodd to deliver a rousing rock and roll set. John (who was visiting from the Tiwi Islands) and William haven't played together in over 40 years, when they used to be on the same tour circuits in bands in the 1970s, so this was another real treat for performers as well as for the audience.

BARNABAS TIMOTHY AND DAVID SPRY

Barnabas introduced Dave as his brother and invited him to play three songs together – they didn't know each other 12 months ago. Through the Music Program, David has travelled out to Borroloola multiple times to mentor Barnabas, and at the Festival they performed a song together that they had been working on in those sessions. Barnabas' solos also showcased how his style as a songwriter had developed through the Program.

“It was something different singing with John from Tiwi and playing rock and roll; we had a good show. And so did me and Dave together”

Barnabas Timothy,
Malandarri Festival Performer

ODETTE FITZPATRICK

This was Odette's first ever public performance, and she travelled all the way from Alice Springs to appear solo at the Malandarri Festival. She also joined the Women's Cultural Song Project for the week working with the Tiwi women. The youngest member of the group, she sang next to her mother on stage, which was clearly a special moment for them, and for the audience.

DANCE PERFORMANCES

Three local clan groups – Mara, Yanyuwa and Wandangula – presented traditional danceworks and the cultural-sharing was complete with the appearance of visiting dance groups from Doomadgee and Tiwi.

FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES LIST

LANGUAGE GROUP	DANCE GROUP/ BAND	LOCATION	PERFORMERS
Garrwa / Yanyuwa / Mara/ Gurdanji	Arrkula Yinbayarra	Borroloola Darwin Sandridge Outstation	15
Tiwi	Ngarukuruwala	Tiwi Islands	14
Garrwa / Yanyuwa	Sandridge Band	Borroloola Katherine Tennant Creek Sandridge outstation	5
Mara	Barnabas Timothy	Borroloola	1
Yanyuwa	Malandarri Band	Borroloola	4
Tiwi	John Louis	Tiwi	1
	David Spry	Darwin	1
Garrwa	Odette Fitzpatrick	Alice Springs	1
Garrwa / Yanyuwa / Mara/ Gurdanji	Borroloola School	Borroloola	19
Gangalidda	Gangalidda Dancers	Doomadgee	10
Tiwi	Ngarukuruwala	Tiwi islands	17
Yanyuwa	Yanyuwa Dancers	Borroloola	7
Mara	Mara Dancers	Borroloola	16
Garrwa / Yanyuwa	Wandangula Dancers	Sandridge Outstation	18
TOTAL			129



Gregoriana Parker performing with Tiwi Strong Women's Choir. Photo: Laura Shipp



Tiwi Strong Womens Choir



Barnabas Timothy
and Malandarri Band



Malandarri Band

OTHER FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

TRADITIONAL GROUND OVEN

Nicholas Fitzpatrick treated performers to a feast of dugong and local bullock that was slow cooked in the ground for 10 hours for the Saturday evening dinner, having spent the week hunting. Special thank-you also to Red Dirt Trading for donating the root vegetables that were part of the feast.

FOOD STALLS

There were food stalls aplenty this year with tea, damper, stew, steak and sausage sandwiches, trifle, frappes, cakes and baked treats all on offer across both nights from different local stall holders.

ART AND CRAFT STALLS

Stalls included local bush medicine and ointments, independent art, paintings and clap sticks. To encourage local stallholders, Artback NT set up marquees and tables so vendors could nominate to have a stall pre-set for them. This helped people who might not have a full market stall to be able to showcase their handmade goods. Many families joined together to sell multiple items in each marquee and there was a great selection of local product available for purchase.

MEDIA

As always, the Malandarri Festival won considerable attention from around Borroloola and from around the Top End, and the Artback NT Communications team made sure it had a strong presence around town and elsewhere, including in radio interviews.

Posters were put up around Borroloola and in some Darwin locations. Postcards were distributed in Darwin, Katherine and locations along the Stuart Highway. It was promoted in Off The Leash magazine – monthly guide to what's on in the NT as well as on the websites of Artback NT and the NT Major Events Company, and on their social media.

The official Festival photographer and Festival videographer were appointed to document the event, including lead-up activities in the week before, providing both a collection of images and video for the community and material for future promotion.

“I felt very excited to be a part of the Malandarri Festival as it gave me an opportunity to perform in front of my hometown, as well as my older ardi ardis. It made me very happy and proud, and I can't wait to see next year's performances. I hope I have inspired younger artists in Borroloola to come forward and show off how much strength music and dance has in First Nations' culture.”

Odetta Fitzpatrick,
Malandarri Festival Performer



Nicholas Fitzpatrick preparing dugong from the ground oven

PARTNERSHIPS

ORGANISATION	TYPE OF SUPPORT
Festivals Australia	Women's Cultural Song Project Grant – financial contribution
NT Major Events Company (NTMEC)	Community Festivals Grant – financial contrubution
McArthur River Mines Community Benefits Trust	Financial support through the Remote Arts and Culture Program and The Borroloola Music Program
Roper Gulf Regional Council – Night Patrol, Sport and Recreation, Municipal Service and Community Development Program	Community Grant - financial contribution Venue set up and support including lawns and sand ground, fencing, water, toilet facilities and waste collection, shuttle bus transfers, additional security, site power including generator
Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation – Operations, Women's Safe House, Waralungku arts, Aged Care, Lianhawirriyaa Sea Rangers Unit	Fencing resource and equipment, sculpture installation, aged care shuttle bus and assistance, use of Women's Safe House as workshop venue, storage, Artwork display and costume licencing
Mawurli Wirriwangkuma Aboriginal Corporation (MAWA)	Additional lighting, use of Rumburiya Hall for rehearsals, financial support to visiting performers
Borroloola School	Performance at Festival. Ongoing support with music program , screen printing workshops, venue for costume making
Borroloola Police	Additional personal, support for reduced alcohol sales
Borroloola Clinic	Standby support for covid safety plan
Malandarri store	Support for reduced alcohol sales
Borroloola Show Society	Provision of marques and tables
Cairns Industries	Provision of 3 phase distribution board and cables
Red Dirt Trading	Catering
Savannah Way Motel	Catering



ITDP AND MALANDARRI FESTIVAL TEAMS

ITDP CULTURAL EVENTS OFFICER – FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Marlene Timothy Karkadoo has been the Malandari Festival Director for many years and is also Cultural Events Officer for Artback NT in Borrooloola. Marlene is a Yanyuwa/Garrwa woman and traditional owner of Yanyuwa country where Borrooloola lies. A respected artist, musician, singer and leader, Marlene's passion and vision for her community and the Malandarri Festival is informed by her cultural knowledge and appreciation for the arts.

ITDP FESTIVAL COORDINATOR

Laura Shipp has worked with Artback NT as the Remote Arts and Culture Coordinator since 2020 – pulling together logistics, funding and stakeholder engagement to deliver the Malandarri and Numburindi Festivals alongside the local Artistic Directors. Laura works closely with Marlene and Barnabas throughout the year, organising the ITDP and Music Program in Borrooloola.

“Supporting the cultural leadership within the communities I'm fortunate enough to work in is the highlight of my role. As the Festival and Arts and Culture Coordinator, I support Marlene and her vision for the festival. We work together all year developing artistic and cultural programs within the community, and to see it come together at Malandarri is so special. Borrooloola is a unique place and the Malandarri Festival is such a joyful way to celebrate the new and old culture that is buzzing in this diverse and historic Country.”

Laura Shipp,
Festival Coordinator

PROJECT OFFICER

Barnabas Timothy is a Mara man from Borrooloola. As Music Program Officer he has supervised the establishment of an important resource for all things music and production for the Borrooloola community. Barnabas is an accomplished singer-songwriter and musician. He performed on opening night of the Festival with the Borrooloola School choir he has been working with throughout the year, and with his own performances. He has been a reliable and valued addition to the Artback NT team and, as always, a highlight for the Malandarri Festival performance schedule.



Borrooloola School performance

MALANDARRI FESTIVAL CREW

PRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Michael Vernau is a lighting and audio specialist, lecturer in Technical Production at CDU, and winner of a NT Performing Arts Award in 2021 for his contribution in educating people in technical stage production.

Bradley Fawcett has provided technical expertise to a wide range of projects, from Indigenous music and cultural festivals, through community arts to theatre, and is a fixture at events across the Territory.

DOCUMENTATION

Benjamin Warlangunder Ellis Bayliss, a Borroloola local who specialises in documenting Indigenous culture and arts, was again the official Festival photographer.

Matthew Wells of Good Well Productions filmed the Festival and the Women's Cultural Song Project in their final week of workshops and rehearsals.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT AT PRE-FESTIVAL ACTIVITY

Shauna Upton

Eve Pawlik

Shellie Morris

David Spry

Kate McGreal

Tarzan JungleQueen

SITE OPERATIONS

A special thank you to Karen Noble, Robert O'Keefe, Julie Martin, Priscilla Pluto, Brian Shadforth, Ryan Karkadoo, William Charlie and Andrew Dodd and Nicholas Fitzpatrick, and to everybody who contributed to site logistics.

Front of house

Cleaners

Security

Bus drivers

Production load-in/load-out

Catering

VOLUNTEERS

Roger Press

Tom McGreal

Donna McGreal

Artback NT sends a huge THANK YOU to everyone who contributed, took part and was in the audience for Malandarri Festival 2022.

From left to right, top to bottom.

1. Marlene Timothy, Michael Vernau and Laura Shipp.

2. Top row: Evan Saunders, Laura Shipp, Michael Vernau, Shay Vigona-Goudge, Marlene Timothy, Mathew Wells.

Bottom row: Bradley Fawcett, Eve Pawlik, Tarzan JungleQueen

3. Marlene Timothy and Genevieve Campbell (photo: Laura Shipp)

4. Michael Vernau and Shellie Morris

5. David Spry and Barnabas Timothy (photo: Laura Shipp)

6. Andrew Dodd, Brian Shadforth, Julie Martin, William Charlie (photo: Laura Shipp)

7. Shauna Upton and Regina Kantilla (photo: Laura Shipp)

8. Benjamin Warlangunder Ellis Bayliss and Mathew Wells (photo: Laura Shipp)

9. Barnabas Timothy, Evan Saunders and David Spry

10. Kate McGreal (photo: Tarzan JungleQueen)





Isa McDinny, Nancy McDinny and
Gadrian Hoosan singing for Wandangula dancers



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Artback NT

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