



Artback NT

Malandarri Festival
Artistic Report 2016

Contents

2016 Borroloola Artistic Report 2

ITDP staffing 3

ITDP Coordinator role 3

Borroloola Cultural Events Officer role 3

ITDP community based activities 4

Creation of new works 4

Junk sculpture workshops 7

Production training 7

Professional development 8

Malandarri Festival 8

Planning and programming 8

Dance groups and performers 12

Catering 12

Dance groups and performers (including children) 12

Partnerships 13

Funding 17

Media and marketing 17

Highlights 18

Challenges 18

Summary 21

Future engagement in region 21



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2016 Borrooloola Artistic Report

The Indigenous Traditional Dance Program (ITDP) was established to support and facilitate traditional dance practice throughout the NT. The framework developed is based on a three year community engagement cycle, which has now been delivered in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Borrooloola. ITDP is set to engage with the community of Numbulwar from 2016 for the next three years. Each community has seen a different model developed to respond to the specific community needs.

This year Artback NT was in the unique situation of being able to continue its engagement with the community of Borrooloola (2013 – 2015) while also developing a new relationship with the community of Numbulwar (2016 – 2019). Maintaining a presence in Borrooloola was agreed to after much consultation with the community. It was identified that although the model of transition had been delivered by Artback NT, there was an ongoing willingness by Artback NT to support local Cultural Events Officer, Marlene Timothy, on the ground as an Artback NT employee. With this comes a level of administrative support and collegial mentoring to deliver the robust and innovative program included in this year’s inaugural Malandarri Festival - formerly known as DanceSite.

The aims of ITDP are to:

- Assist in the coordination of DanceSite, or an annual event that celebrates the diversity of traditional Indigenous dance in the

Northern Territory, providing an exciting cross-cultural platform for audience and performance development

- Deliver 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
- Provide further Territory, national and international performance opportunities where appropriate for the hosting community to establish business and professional development pathways.

The objectives of ITDP are:

- Sustainability of DanceSite as an annual event in the hosting community and its uptake in the region
- An improved overall understanding in remote Indigenous communities of the integral relationships between cultural maintenance and professional performing arts opportunities through participation in local, regional and national showcase events
- An increased awareness of the value of traditional Indigenous dance as an integral strategy in community wellbeing, and a pathway to improved employment and further education and training for individuals, particularly disengaged youthThe preservation of culture by traditional intergenerational learning methods that strengthen the relationships

between Elders and youth and encourages cultural leadership

- To provide an integral strategy to create pathways for cultural understanding, appreciation and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia
- Undertake independent evaluation through:
 - Data collection
 - Qualitative and rich media
 - Structured feedback and review
 - Critical reflection
 - Regular, rich reporting

ITDP staffing

Artback NT recognises the importance in nurturing individuals and relationships as part of its engagement in remote communities. To this end, Artback NT has supported staff through the transition phase in Borrooloola by adapting the delivery model to include the program coordinator’s delivery from Cairns through phone, Skype and email contact.

ITDP Coordinator role

Lia Pa’apa’a has been engaged in Borrooloola for the duration of the program, living and working in the community for the first two years of its delivery. During Lia’s time living in Borrooloola, she was able to establish working relationships across the community and help to embed ITDP into the arts and cultural landscape of the town.

Lia now lives in Cairns where she works part time to support the Cultural Events Officer, Marlene Timothy, in Borrooloola, while also working with Ella Geia in Numbulwar. Lia’s involvement has been integral to the development, delivery and evaluation of ITDP in both Borrooloola and Numbulwar.

Borrooloola Cultural Events Officer role

Marlene Timothy is a local Yanyuwa/Garrwa woman from Borrooloola who works for Artback NT part time, while also being employed at the Waralungku Art Centre. Marlene has been vital to ITDP’s development and delivery in the region. She is an active leader within the Borrooloola community and having her on the ground has reinforced the program’s local presence, ensuring that there is a continued delivery of traditional dance activities and events at a high production level. Marlene is now the Event Director of Malandarri Festival, and leads all community engagement in Borrooloola to deliver the programs and projects developed by the ITDP team.

The community responded enthusiastically, with an increased attendance at Malandarri Festival as a result

ITDP community based activities

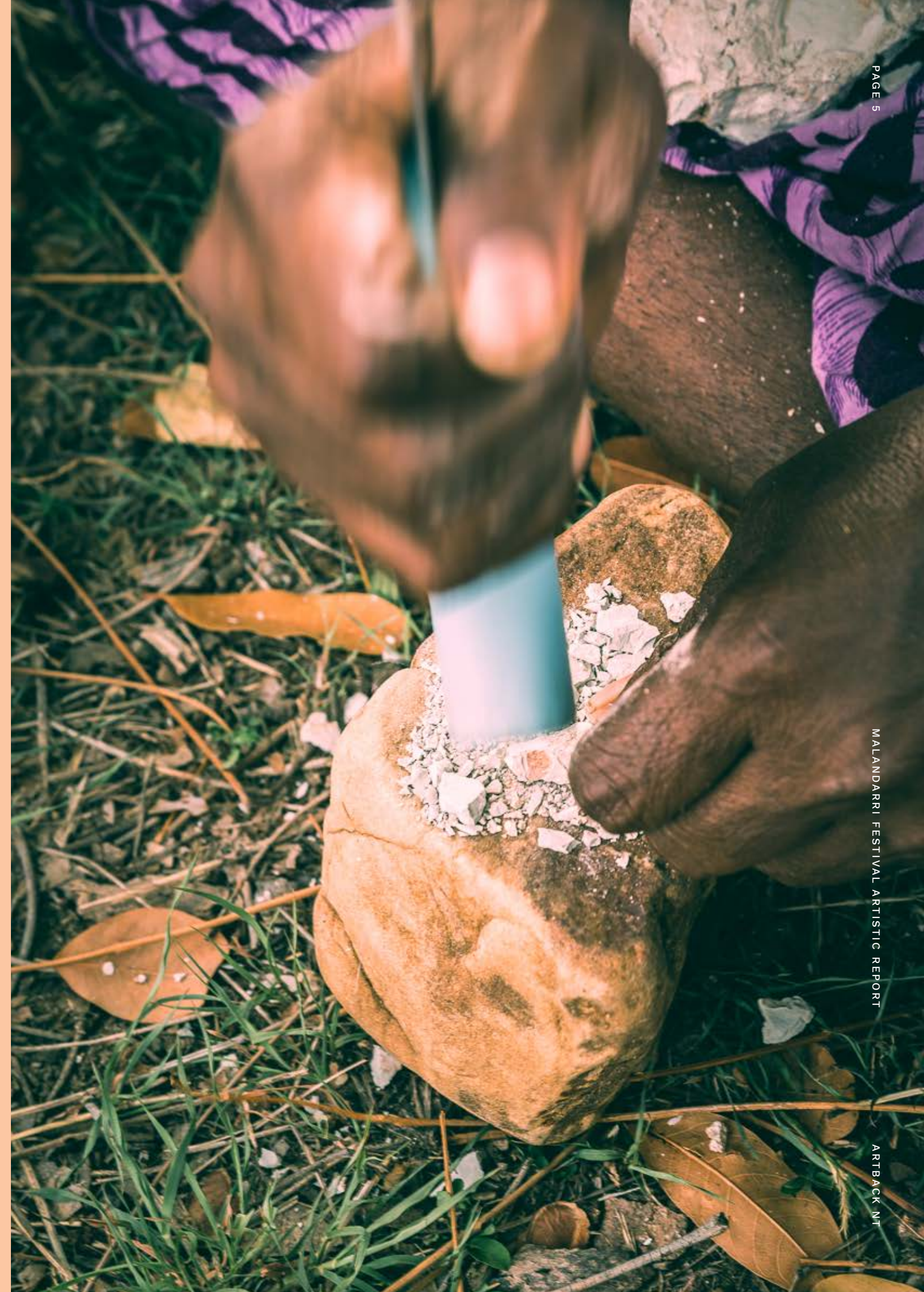
Due to the success of ITDP in Borroloola, and the relationships established as a result, it was decided to extend the planned three-year engagement by another year. It was identified that although ITDP staff had been working to transition out of Borroloola, additional time was needed. Furthermore, the current climate of service providers in Borroloola means there is no organisation to take over as the key producer for the arts activities and festival outcomes Artback NT is delivering. As such, it is best Artback NT maintains this role until another organisation is identified.

Artback NT secured funds from the NT Government's Department of Business, Alcohol Action, Harm Minimisation Unit for the first time, which allowed 2016 to have one of the most robust programs to date. The delivery was managed by Marlene Timothy on the ground, with the employment of a second local arts worker Rachel McDinny as her support. Lia Pa'apa'a maintained her role as the program coordinator remotely from Cairns, and supported the program one day per week with mentoring, strategic planning and managing of budgets.

Creation of new works

After the success of last year's development and performance of the *Bing Bong* song, the community wanted to continue developing new songs and dances related to contemporary issues facing the community. The workshops were facilitated by local ITDP staff Marlene and Rachel, and took place over three sites. The first was in Robinson River where community met and camped over three days in the riverbed and created a dance in the local Garrwa language about their daily life. This was the first time ITDP had worked directly with the community, as previous years had been managed through the school. The community responded enthusiastically, with an increased attendance at Malandarri Festival as a result.

Wandangula is a small outstation community approximately 20 kilometres outside Borroloola. They worked on creating a new dance about a significant issue for the Elders and the community. The dance is about current fracking policies and associated activity taking place across the NT and elsewhere.





The two week workshop engaged 12 community members, most of whom had never been involved with ITDP or the Waralungku Arts Centre before

Junk sculpture workshops

Artback NT engaged sculpture artist and welder Nina Amberj-Pederson as part of Malandarri Festival to create site-specific works with the community, using these as stage and site props.

Nina works with Katherine Regional Arts on their broader junk sculpture program and competition, which ITDP arts workers Marlene Timothy and Rachel McDinny attended earlier in the year. This gave them a clear idea of what was possible for the workshops and saw them engage with a local regional arts organisation.

The two week workshop engaged 12 community members, most of whom had never been involved with ITDP or the Waralungku Arts Centre before. The crew worked at the Mabunji work shed to develop 12 pieces that were then placed in key positions at the festival site. Each piece was developed to reflect elements of traditional dance and song from the four clan groups of Borroloola, and can now be utilised again at future festivals. This was considered by organisers to be a huge success, not only for its engagement but the participation levels of all involved. As the materials were scrap metal from around the community and tip this is something that could be replicated for a small amount, potentially providing earning capacity for local community members.

Production training

The production training has been a long-requested activity affiliated with ITDP that up until now, couldn't be delivered due to resourcing. The sound and lighting element of the festival has to date been an outsourced element with equipment hire and freight costing Artback NT approximately \$20,000 per event. Artback NT engaged local Darwin production manager Joshua Grant to roll out the acquisition of the appropriate gear for the community before delivering an intensive week long training that included Malandarri Festival. A group of 10 participants worked prior to the event at Waralungku Art Centre, learning about the gear and set up of musical instruments, as well as sound checking bands for the event. Participants then moved on site for the setup of the staging and dance ground, as well as the site decorations and general production requirements, managing the two night festival, working with supervision from Josh Grant. It was exciting for the community to see local community members running the stage, and being actively involved in the production side of the event for the first time. It is hoped there will be a refresher course prior to each event in the future with additional training so participants can continue developing their skills and eventually run Malandarri Festival and other community events such as NAIDOC on their own.

Having Marlene in the community was an essential asset to the success of *Walking Together* that engaged over 30 young people over two weeks

Professional development

In her fourth year of working with Artback NT, Marlene has continued to grow and develop her craft as a remote community arts worker and event manager. Marlene has continued to engage with external events company Agentur, and in 2016 worked at the National Indigenous Music Awards, which has become a yearly source of employment. Marlene also acted as the community liaison for the *Walking Together* project that Artback NT delivered as part of its performing arts programming. Having Marlene in the community was an essential asset to the success of *Walking Together* that engaged over 30 young people over two weeks.

Malandarri Festival

Formerly known as DanceSite, Malandarri Festival is the result of Artback NT's three year engagement with the community of Borroloola. It was determined the focus of 2016 was community ownership and delivery, and as a result Artback NT took a largely passive role in the programming and logistics behind such an event. Marlene Timothy took on the role of Event Director and was supported by Event Coordinator Rachel McDinny who worked collaboratively to deliver the suite of pre-festival

workshops throughout the year and oversee the festival team. Lia's role as the Program Coordinator was to manage the funding and local arts workers. Lia spent one week on site in the lead up to the event, in contrast to the previous year where she spent six weeks, thus giving an indication of the level of ownership taken by Marlene and her team.

Planning and programming

As the NT Government's Department of Business Alcohol Action, Harm Minimisation Unit were the major sponsor of this year's festival, organisers considered the messaging of health and wellbeing in all elements of programming. They also took into consideration what these messages need to look like in the context of Borroloola and other remote communities.

The aim of 2016 was to build capacity and handover as many skills as possible to the local community so that each year the festival would require less external human and financial resourcing to ensure its sustainability as the key arts and cultural event for Borroloola and the region. The community of Robinson River was also engaged in a deeper, more consistent way with community consultations, workshops and performance support offered for the first time in 2016.





Wandangula women and girls performing →

Dance groups and performers

Due to Sorry Business two of the local dance groups were unable to perform. The Elders who had passed away from Gurdanji and Mara clans were key participants of the festival in previous years, and they were greatly missed by all. This did however allow for members of those groups to support the other three local groups who performed, and it was heartening to see the Elders of each clan group support each other with singing and dancing.

A Torres Straight Island dance group based in Darwin were invited as the headline act to share their songs, stories and dances. Yellow Kokawam (hibiscus) are a traditional family dance group from Murray Island, and performed both nights showcasing their culture with singing, drums and dancing. The crowd especially loved the bright island costuming and the children aged as young as three years old who performed with such confidence and pride.

This year saw two bands perform as part of the programming. After a negative experience with a night of music in 2014 (increased levels of alcohol brought into the festival site), the organisers had initially decided against increasing music content, however a request from Borroloola’s original rock band, The Malandarri Band, who had not performed in over 20 years, changed that. It was decided band performances would take place at the end of each night so as not to compromise the focus of the festival: traditional dance.

An opportunity became available for Music NT’s project, Sista Sounds, to attend the festival at late notice. As one of their key artists, Ella Dixon, has family connections to Robinson River, they delivered three days of music

workshops in Robinson River prior to the festival. Ella and her father Ray then played an acoustic set on both nights of the festival. This was the first time after touring nationally that Ella had a chance to perform her music to her own community, which was a source of great pride.

ITDP organisers wanted to continue with the theme of supporting local and NT artists so Djuki Mala’s (The Chooky Dancers) management wereapproached to emcee the event. This was not a role that members of Djuki Mala had done before, and their management was excited to have them gain professional development and experience that would enhance their performance abilities. Three members of Djuki Mala were chartered over from Galiwin’ku for the festival with senior member Baykali Ganambarr emceeing the night with Marlene Timothy. Djuki Mala also performed three times each night, including new works from their next show and crowd favourite, The Zorba Dance.

Catering

After working with three different professional catering companies in previous years, this year the role was taken on by the community’s men’s group who caught and killed the meat, and the Sea Rangers who caught fish and dugong. A local family was then brought on to cook the meat and vegetables, and local Elders were employed to make large quantities of damper for the meal. This approach meant that for the first time, all audience members received a free meal, as in previous years the festival was only able to cater for dancers due to the large costs involved. The overall cost was almost half compared to previous years, and there was again greater community involvement and ownership of the event as a result.

Dance groups and performers (including children)

Language Group	Dance Group/ Band	Community	Performers
Garrwa	Wandangula	Sandridge Outstation	80
Garrwa	Blind Mermaid Dancers	Robinson River/ Borroloola	60
Yanyuwa	Ngardji Dancers	Borroloola	45
Murray Island	Yellow Kokowam	Darwin	12
Yolngu Mata	Djuki Mala	Elcho Island	3
Yanyuwa	Malandarri Band	Borroloola	8
Garrwa	Sandridge Band	Sandridge Outstation	8
Garrwa/	EllaRay	Robinson River/ Marlinja	2
TOTAL			218

Participants	Total 2014	Indigenous	Other	Total 2015	Indigenous	Other	Total 2016	Indigenous	Other
Performers	181	100%	0%	127	100%	0%	120	100%	0%
Production	7	14.9%	85.1%	20	90%	10%	36	100%	0%
Committee	17	100%	0%	15	100%	0%	12	100%	0%
Contractors	18	55.5%	45.5%	5	100%	0%	15	80%	20%
Volunteers	10	50%	50%	7	90%	10%	12	100%	0%
Audience	1000+	80%	20%	1000	95%	5%	1000	95%	5%

Partnerships

Organisation	Type of Support
Waralungku Arts Centre	Office space, marquees, artist support and logistical support, staffing and volunteers
Roper Gulf Shire	Venue support, staging, firewood, rubbish collection and drinking water
AirRemote	Video documentation
Music NT	Sista Sounds’ workshops in Robinson River, recordings, artist support
MAWA	Bus, lights and additional funds
Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association	Accommodation, vehicles, office space and additional funds



Yellow Kokowam boys and men performing →



The lead up to the event was heavily documented on Instagram, which generated significant engagement through 'likes' and reposts

Funding

As previously mentioned, the NT Government's Department of Business was the significant sponsor of the event through their Alcohol Action, Harm Minimisation Unit.

The McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust assisted with delivery of the Indigenous Traditional Dance Program throughout the year.

Artback NT is proudly sponsored by the Northern Territory Government.

Media and marketing

The marketing campaign for Malandarri Festival utilised social media platforms to engage audiences on both a local and national level. The bulk of social media content was produced and delivered by Marlene Timothy, support from Lia Pa'apa'a and Jess Ong, Artback NT's Communications Manager. The lead up to the event was heavily documented on Instagram, which generated significant engagement through 'likes' and reposts.

A media release was distributed before the event, focusing on the story of the Borroloola community assuming ownership of the festival. This yielded interest from ABC Local Radio for two interviews and one with Indigenous broadcasters, TEABBA radio, with event organisers sharing the benefits of such a transition process and the festival programming.

The story of ITDP was featured in an Indigenous spotlight report on ArtsHub, which garnered

a positive response and was shared widely on a national level. As a result, Artback NT was approached by Budget Australia to promote the event on their Facebook page, further adding to the conversation and anticipation around this inaugural festival.

Malandarri Festival worked with Benjamin Bayliss as the official photographer for the third year running. Self-taught, Ben has familial and cultural connections to the Borroloola community, and has developed his practice through these opportunities. He is now being engaged by Indigenous festivals around the country. Ben is one of the many positive outcomes that Artback NT can celebrate; providing Ben with paid employment has not only boosted his portfolio but also his confidence to continue to learn and build his craft.

Artback NT engaged AirRemote Media to document Malandarri Festival, having worked with the group at the other ITDP event, the Numburindi Festival in Numbulwar. AirRemote works with local members of the Numbulwar community to train local members in film and audio documentation. This was an exciting opportunity to provide a paid opportunity to a local organisation from the incoming community to work across the ITDP program. As this was the second event and the production team were the same across both, the documentation of Malandarri Festival produced excellent outcomes that will serve both as promotional material and archival material for the community.

The delivery of the 2016 Malandarri Festival was the first time that the community had such a strong level of ownership and determination around the delivery of the event

Highlights

The delivery of the 2016 Malandarri Festival was the first time that the community had such a strong level of ownership and determination around the delivery of the event. For Artback NT, it was a chance to truly discover how it is that an organisation provides a real life transition and let's go of the artistic and logistical control of a community event of this scale. It was imperative that festival staff had clear communication channels and supported each other to be able to achieve this.

As Marlene Timothy was on the ground, there was also a level of training that she had to provide to Rachel as the senior worker. This gave Marlene a chance to explain the reasoning of the different elements of the event, and lead the project out like never before.

The strong focus on training and empowering the community meant there was a higher level of engagement from different community members who had not previously participated with the Waralungku Art Centre or ITDP in the past - the diversity of the festival's programming allowed for men and boys to engage.

The production training has been requested by community for several years, seeing this

come to fruition was exciting for all involved; to have a production crew of local Indigenous men to run the festival each night was an additional highlight. This physically showed the community the level of hand over and training that Artback NT was willing to provide. Those involved proudly carried out their role with a level of professionalism that exceeded all expectations.

Challenges

This year, due to funding timelines, the event was pushed back until October. This meant the weather was much hotter than previous years, and meant the set up and pack down had to take place well into the night to avoid the heat of the day.

Sorry business also played a large role in the programming this year, with several local Elders passing away and their mourning period needing to be observed by their respective clan groups. This meant there were only three local groups who were able to perform. In future there will need to be additional support considered for the Mara clan, as they lost both their head song man and key Elder dancer.





Malandarri Festival was a great success and provided a foundation for the necessary training and opportunities needed for it to grow into an independent, self-determined event for the community

Summary

Malandarri Festival was a great success and provided a foundation for the necessary training and opportunities needed for it to grow into an independent, self-determined event for the community. There is still a need for financial viability and security that must be addressed for the future of the event to be delivered at such a scale, however organisers were able to break up the festival's different elements to provide some real on the ground training and support, ensuring all areas of delivery were greatly developed and enhanced by local engagement.

The artistic model that will continue to be developed for Malandarri Festival now includes a wide range of artistic and cultural activities that can take place throughout the year both in Borroloola and Robinson River. In addition to the traditional dance there is now music content for each night as well as other artistic mediums such as junk sculptures, production and a limitless amount of other opportunities to be explored in the future by the community.

Future engagement in region

Artback NT is still in conversations with the Borroloola community and Marlene Timothy about what the role is for the organisation in the future. At this stage it is felt there is still a need and desire to have Artback NT maintain the producer role as the lead organisation for the delivery of Malandarri Festival and its year round programming. This is for several reasons including the current transitional stage Waralungku Art Centre is going through with change of management. There are no arts organisations currently operating in Borroloola, and it is felt the level of expertise that Artback NT can continue to bring through funding, programming and mentoring is still valid at this phase of ITDP. Artback NT is applying for further funds from the McArthur River Mine Community Benefit Trust and the NT Government Alcohol Prevention Funds for 2017 programming and beyond.

