

theWILLE

TILT | PUBLIC ART | MELVILLE BIRD SANCTUARY | SUMMER MUSIC | CULTURAL HEART | STORIES | ART CLUB | RECONCILIATION





Above Zoë Atkinson captured by Luke Latty

Cover *Bin Day* (detail) by Steven Makse, captured by Bo Wong

Kaya

The team at the City of Melville pay our respects to the Bibbulmun and Whadjuk people who have cared throughout time for the beautiful boodja on which we stand today. We thank them for their generous example of connection to place and community, from which we stand to learn so much.

Place—this place—is a constant inspiration, shaping the programs we’ve presented this year, and those we’ll continue to share in 2026. This edition of *The Ville* invites a deeper look at some of these programs, the artists with whom we work, and the beautiful places that inspire our creativity and hold our stories.

We invite you to read about our Biophilic Public Arts Lab, which explored public art as an act of care for other species, and which has seeded an exciting new commission for the coming year. We’ve also delved into some of the stories behind our natural places, such as the Melville Bird Sanctuary and its magnetic pull for artists, and looked back over the history of Melville Summer Music and its knack of gathering neighbours together in local parks to celebrate music and community ... and we’re thrilled to share a *future* place with you: our very own Cultural Heart precinct, which is moving ahead rapidly after ten years of gestation and planning.

Please enjoy diving deeper into your place and its community. If you’re a seasoned reader of *The Ville* you may also notice a few changes, including some curtain lifting on our art collection, a cryptic crossword to test your reading skills, and new creative writer’s commission, with this edition showcasing a short story by former Leeming resident and acclaimed poet Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa OAM.

We’ve also switched up our calendar of events and taken it out of our broadsheet pages. You’ll now find this in a separate guide which we’ll bring to you four times a year, to sit more comfortably on your fridge or notice board. Keep an eye out in our libraries and community centres to get your hands on a copy; or stay updated via our website.

Above all... enjoy our beautiful place and its stories!

Zoë Atkinson
CITY OF MELVILLE | CREATIVE PRODUCER – ARTS AND CULTURE

The City of Melville acknowledges the Bibbulmun people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the City stands today and pays its respects to the Whadjuk people, and Elders both past and present.

City of Melville nagolik Bibbulmen Nyungar ally-maga milgebar gardukung naga boordjar-il narnga allidja yugow yeye wer ali kaanya Whadjack Nyungar wer netingar quadja wer burdik.

What’s on?

To find out more about upcoming Arts and Culture events, visit melvillecity.com.au/artscultureevents

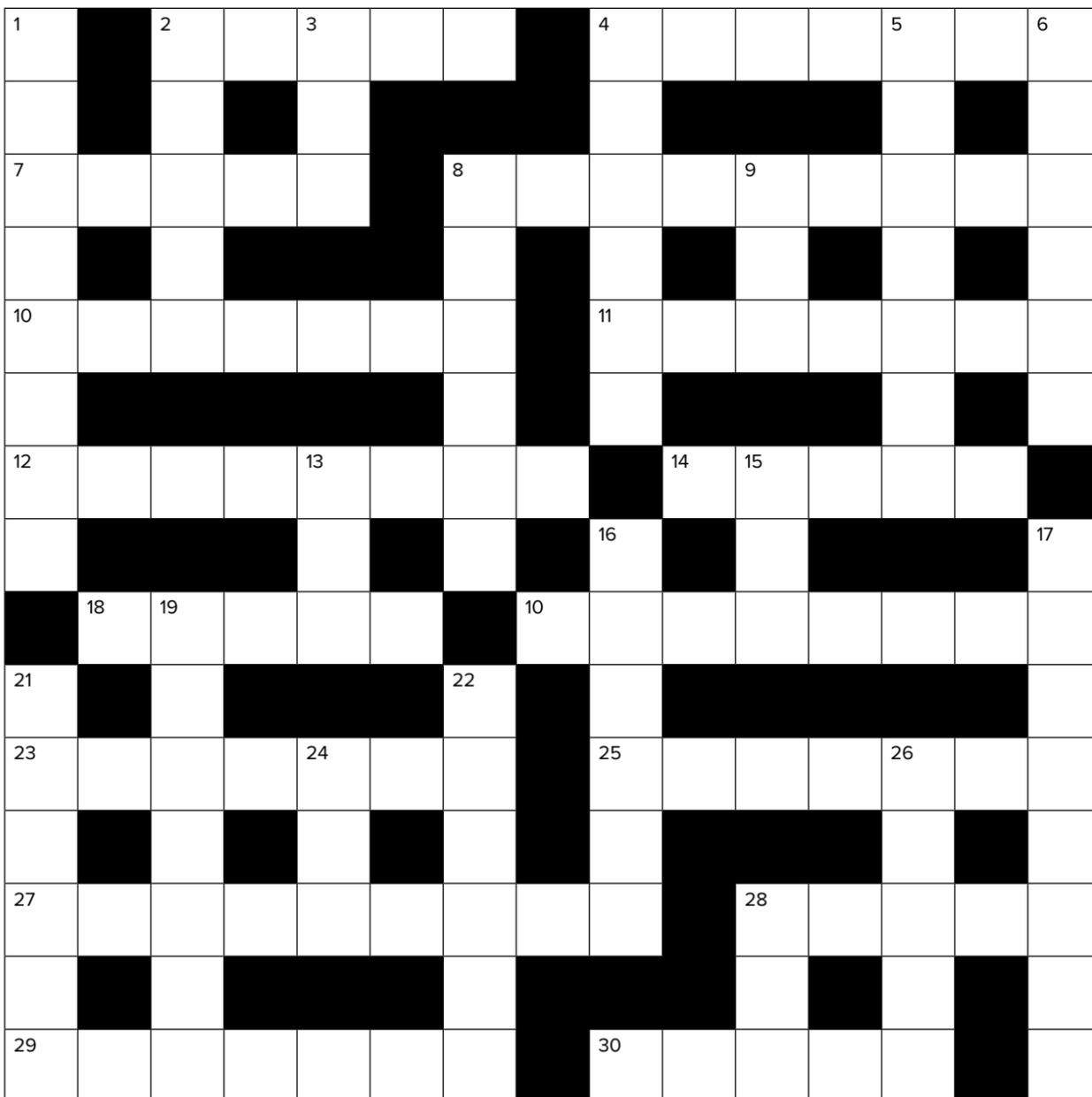


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TILT EXHIBITION

Johns' house

**What happens when a house becomes art?
At Goolugatup Heathcote, Jessee Lee Johns
transforms the gallery into a home, questioning
how we define shelter, necessity and comfort.**

Many artists hang vivid scenes of everyday life on the walls. Jessee Lee Johns brings the everyday itself into the gallery: a letterbox here, a bed there, the raw fragments of suburbia staged as sculpture.

For this year's TILT commission at Goolugatup Heathcote, showing from 29 November 2025–18 January 2026, he puts it plainly: "in inverted commas, I'm going to build a house". Instead of bricks and mortar, it will take shape as a series of human-sized sculptural forms that echo the familiar functions of home: a place to sit, to eat, to shower and to rest.

This collapsing of art and architecture is typical of Johns, a Perth-born artist driven by a desire to reimagine the structures—both physical and social—that shape how we live. His projects have included a self-declared micro-nation, a gallery in a fly-dumping zone and a brickworks company that doubles as social commentary.

A HOUSE INSIDE A GALLERY

For TILT, that logic takes a site-specific turn. The annual commission asks artists to respond to place, and Johns' house will be partly drawn from found materials around Goolugatup—an intentional foil to the opulent riverside mansions of Applecross looming just beyond the gallery. "So far, I'm using some bits of wood and a fencing-style gate that I found," he says.

Stepping inside Johns' house, visitors will encounter a series of familiar domestic objects, all made by hand. But there's one aspect he's particularly excited about: "I want to try and make a shower. The enclosure will be purpose built, like a cubicle, and I've got a scheme in mind for the drainage."



AT ITS CORE, JOHNS' PRACTICE INTERROGATES SOCIAL STRUCTURES — FROM BORDERS TO BRICKS TO HOUSING — HOW WE MAKE THEM, WHAT THEY COST AND WHO THEY SERVE.

Above from left Jessee Lee Johns, New Bayswater, captured by Nic Duncan

Jessee Lee Johns, TILT works in progress, captured by Luke Latty

Jessee Lee Johns, New Bayswater, captured by Nic Duncan

Other elements also take on practical roles: spaces to eat and sleep, and even a letterbox, which loops back to a prior Melville project. “I painted a mural for the City of Melville. It was like a collection of letter boxes... I’m hoping to get some of them from the wall that I painted and make a letter box out of it.” With a grin, he adds: “It would be nice to try and convince a postal worker to deliver something.”

BUILDING WORLDS, ONE ROOM AT A TIME

At its core, Johns’ practice interrogates social structures—from borders to bricks to housing—how we make them, what they cost and who they serve. In 2017 he declared himself the sole citizen of the Commonwealth of New Bayswater, a self-styled micronation whose borders flicker in and out of existence—sometimes at the Fremantle Biennale, sometimes in the margins of a suburban street. “I made up a country some years ago... a lot of what I do is build versions or parts of that country,” he says.

That same impulse runs through Prestige Bricks, a tongue-in-cheek enterprise that started with novelty “feature” bricks and has since grown into a real service for repairing walls and filling gaps in houses. His works hover between satire and utility, a deliberate “misunderstanding” of the systems of property and housing, re-tooled as art that provides, in his words, “parts of a house” or a kind of spiritual shelter.

The approach is resourceful—sometimes using found objects, sometimes engineered. “Sometimes you gotta buy some things,” Johns jokes, “Especially when engineers start sniffing around. They like fancy new materials.”

Where & When?

DWELLING | TILT 2025

Goolugatup Heathcote
Opening Sat 29 Nov | 5pm
Exhibition runs until 18 Jan 2026
FREE

LIVING WITH LESS

Asked about the housing crisis, Johns answers with a maker’s pragmatism: “It seems like there’s a lot of resources that go into houses, and if we don’t have enough houses, maybe we could make some with less resources.”

It’s not glib austerity he’s quick to add, “I don’t want to suggest that people who don’t maybe have housing... should just sort of suck it up and do less.” Rather, it’s a philosophy shaped by lived experience. He recalls winters with only a hose for a shower, and finding resilience in the restriction: “Knowing if I don’t have a hot shower, I’m okay. I can still be clean and refreshed.”

That ethos carries into his plans for Goolugatup. He notes the irony of staging a makeshift house on one of Perth’s most desirable river bends. Against that backdrop, his project suggests we don’t need quite so much—that shelter can be provisional, porous and stitched together from what’s at hand. In doing so, it becomes less a house than a proposition: an invitation to rethink what sustains us, and what we can let go.



Opposite from left

Pelicans on a lamppost, captured by Luke Latty

Zoë Atkinson, Penelope Forlano and Luke Davey, captured by Luke Latty

Keynote speakers Uncle Dr Noel Nannup and Professor Stephen Hopper with Biophilic Public Arts Lab participants, captured by Fionn Mulholland

I LOVE THE IDEA THAT PUBLIC ART COULD ALSO BE PERFORMING A FUNCTION FOR NATURE. IT'S ABOUT THINKING OF ART NOT JUST AS SOMETHING TO LOOK AT, BUT AS SOMETHING THAT CREATES CONDITIONS FOR LIFE.

ZOË ATKINSON, CREATIVE PRODUCER - ARTS AND CULTURE

BIOPHILIC ART

Art takes root

In an Australian-first, the Biophilic Public Arts Lab brought together artists, architects and scientists to imagine public artworks that don't just depict nature — they live and breathe it.

What if public art could feed birds, cool streets and clean the air? What if sculptures in parks were not just symbols of nature, but active parts of it — growing, sheltering and sustaining life? Those questions shaped the city's first Biophilic Public Arts Lab, held this year at Yagan Mia Wireless Hill.

Bringing together more than 20 artists, architects and scientists, the Lab explored how public art could respond to and support the natural environment. Across four days it featured sessions with ecologist Mandy Bamford, a Two Knowledges walk with Dr Noel Nannup and Professor Stephen Hopper, and workshops on rewilding, fabrication and community engagement.

Its findings will guide the City's investment in biophilic public art, with funding already earmarked for new works designed to support threatened wildlife and ecosystems. "I love the idea that public art could perform a function for nature," says Zoë Atkinson, Creative Producer at the City of Melville. "It's about thinking of art not just as something to look at, but as something that creates conditions for life."

BEYOND SCULPTURE: ART AS ECOSYSTEM

It began with pelicans on lamp posts. Walking over Canning Bridge, Atkinson wondered: what if those poles were designed for birds as well as people? That idea — infrastructure serving nature too — sparked the Lab.

"It may be the first of its kind in Australia," she says. "To my knowledge, no other council has brought together a group this broad purely around art and ecology."

For Atkinson, art must move beyond symbolism. "We've had hundreds of years of men on horses in our public spaces. Now we need to ask: how can art connect us back to the larger system we are part of?"

The Lab produced a set of provocations to test in upcoming projects. One example: sculptural poles that light pathways and invite curiosity while also offering perches and nesting spots for local birdlife.

One key takeaway: art should be functional, balancing the needs of both people and ecosystems. "In the face of climate change, every bit of infrastructure has to do more than one job. It can't just sit there — it needs to be cooling, shading, filtering, supporting life."

FORM AND FUNCTION: WHEN ART GETS TO WORK

Designer and public artist Penelope Forlano, whose practice integrates research with material experimentation and advanced technologies, joined the Lab to extend her thinking in a collective experiment.

Forlano believes biophilic art can restore psychological well-being by connecting us to nature, but is equally focused on giving back to the systems it inhabits. She stresses the importance of layered functionality: "It's not just a bench or a sculpture. It could also be providing habitat, or cooling, or cleansing the air."

She also emphasises the social role of biophilic design. Public artworks, she argues, can spark stewardship: "When people have an emotional connection to a place, they're more likely to look after it."

FROM CONCRETE TO CANOPY: RETHINKING PUBLIC SPACES

Luke Davey, Principal and Founder of Artitecture, spans from hand-made interventions to major civic projects like RAC Arena. At the Lab, he reflected on how public design often defaults to "a plaza or a walkway or a green space." For him, there's scope to think more ambitiously about how these places function for both humans and nature.

Davey's interests extend to aquaponics and community food systems, where water, plants and fish sustain one another. He sees parallels with public space: "There's no reason why art and design can't be productive as well as beautiful," he suggested, pointing to models that cool, filter or even generate food.

His provocation underscored the Lab's mission: art and infrastructure should not only represent nature, but actively sustain it. And those provocations won't just stay on paper. Melville will now test them in the field, commissioning new public artworks designed to give back to the ecosystems they inhabit and strengthen the City's connection to its natural environment.

For more on Melville's Public Art strategy, visit melvillecity.com.au/publicart

CITY OF MELVILLE ART COLLECTION

Collected landscapes

From orchids and rivers to cliff-top views and suburban streets, this new series shines a light on the City's Art Collection through works inspired by Melville's natural environment.



With more than 480 works ranging from painting and printmaking to sculpture and textiles, the collection reflects the cultural heritage, creativity and lifestyle of the community whilst supporting local artists. These key works focus on pieces that connect us, from wildflowers and waterways to neighbourhood rituals.

Discover

Works from the City's collection are displayed across Melville's libraries, recreation centres, the Civic Centre, and Goolugatup Heathcote. Find out more about the art collection melvillecity.com.au/artcollection



JAELE PEDROLI

A SENSE OF SOMETHING

2024, ACRYLIC ON BOARD

Drawing from her deep connection to Jenalup / Blackwall Reach, Pedrol's luminous acrylic brings to life the cliffs, water and bush that define her local landscape. A finalist in numerous WA landscape prizes, her work reflects belonging through place-based observation.



JUDY ROGERS

DONKEY ORCHIDS

2023, WATERCOLOUR & INK ON BOARD

Created during her residency at Yagan Mia Wireless Hill amid its abundant wildflowers, Rogers captures native Donkey Orchids in delicate detail. The Hungarian-born, science-trained artist approaches WA flora like a cabinet of curiosities: imperfect, fleeting, and wondrous.



ZALI MORGAN

DJILAB-K KWOBIDAK BILYA

2024, WATERCOLOUR MONOTYPE

Whadjuk, Ballardong and Wilman Noongar artist Zali Morgan created this watercolour monotype during her Goolugatup Heathcote residency. Evoking the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River), the work layers abstract form with cultural memory to reflect place and decolonising narratives.



ROHIN KICKETT

NO SERVICE FOR CHARLIE

2025, ACRYLIC & OIL ON WOOD

Ballardong Noongar artist Rohin Kickett confronts history in this commissioned work. Drawing on his great-grandfather's experience of being denied service at the Raffles Hotel, the work entwines ancestral stories, place and family resilience.



STEVEN MAKSE

BIN DAY

2024, OIL ON CANVAS

Locally-based artist Steven Makse finds existential poetry in everyday suburbia. With refined technique and sensitivity, *Bin Day* elevates an ordinary street scene, inviting quiet reflection on beauty embedded in routine and quotidian rhythms.



FROM THE SILHOUETTE OF A HERON TO THE TURQUOISE SHEEN OF A SACRED KINGFISHER, THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF INSPIRATION FOR WILDLIFE ARTISTS.

Above Pelicans take in a smoky sunrise at the Melville Bird Sanctuary, image courtesy of Gareth Evans

MELVILLE BIRD SANCTUARY

The art of birdwatching

The Melville Bird Sanctuary is not only protecting threatened species—it's also inspiring a new flock of artists, photographers and the wider community to see nature through a creative lens.

At dawn, the wetlands of Alfred Cove stir with life. Black swans glide across the water, pelicans wheel overhead and tiny red-necked stints probe the mudflats. This stretch of the Swan Estuary is more than a picturesque backdrop—it's the heart of the Melville Bird Sanctuary, a protected zone created in 2023 to safeguard more than 130 resident and migratory bird species.

This thriving sanctuary is also sparking creativity, with the adjacent Atwell Gallery emerging as a hub for bird-inspired art and workshops. From the silhouette of a heron to the turquoise sheen of a sacred kingfisher, there's no shortage of inspiration for wildlife artists.

Photographer Gareth Evans treats the sanctuary as his studio, spending hours capturing birds as they feed, nest and soar. He also leads bird photography walks, guiding visitors and sharing his passion. "The key is the eyes," he says. "Humans tend to identify very much with eyes... it's the same when we look at a photo or art."

That creative spirit is finding a home at Atwell Gallery, which has begun collaborating on exhibitions and workshops.

Curator Yvonne Doherty says the partnership is still developing but already fruitful: "We want to support the Melville Bird Sanctuary and let artists use the Atwell space to spread the word about birds."

In July, Atwell hosted *Birds in Perth* by Liz Bozsa and Mia Wang, celebrating the city's resilient birdlife and featuring a live drawing session with Rex, a black cockatoo from Kaarakin Conservation Centre. This spring, the collaboration continued with a two-hour mobile phone bird photography workshop, showing how simple tools can capture the estuary's birdlife.

The Sanctuary was conceived by The Friends of Melville Bird Sanctuary, established by co-founders Tom Lubin and Jenny Christenson in 2020, and a passionate group of volunteers continue to support it through community events and advocacy.

For Christenson, safeguarding the site and increasing community awareness is a huge part of protecting the sanctuary: "Some of these birds fly from Siberia, Mongolia, Alaska. When they arrive, they're totally exhausted, and they need to feed straight away. Increasing community awareness is a huge part of what we do."

From mudflats to easels, binoculars to sketchbooks, the Melville Bird Sanctuary reminds us that protecting our feathered neighbours is not just conservation, it's an art.

For more on the Melville Bird Sanctuary, visit melvillecity.com.au/melvillebirdsanctuary



Above from left Kankawa Nagarra performs at Kadidjiny Park, captured by Cole Baxter

Bob Evans performs at Centennial Park, captured by Daniel Njegich

Bob Evans at Melville Summer Music in 2022, captured by Daniel Njegich



The crowd enjoying Melville Summer Music at Kadidjiny Park, captured by Cole Baxter

MELVILLE SUMMER MUSIC

Five and alive

Now in its fifth year, Melville Summer Music has filled local parks with song, stories and community spirit. We revisit five standout moments that have helped shape the series into a much-loved summer tradition.

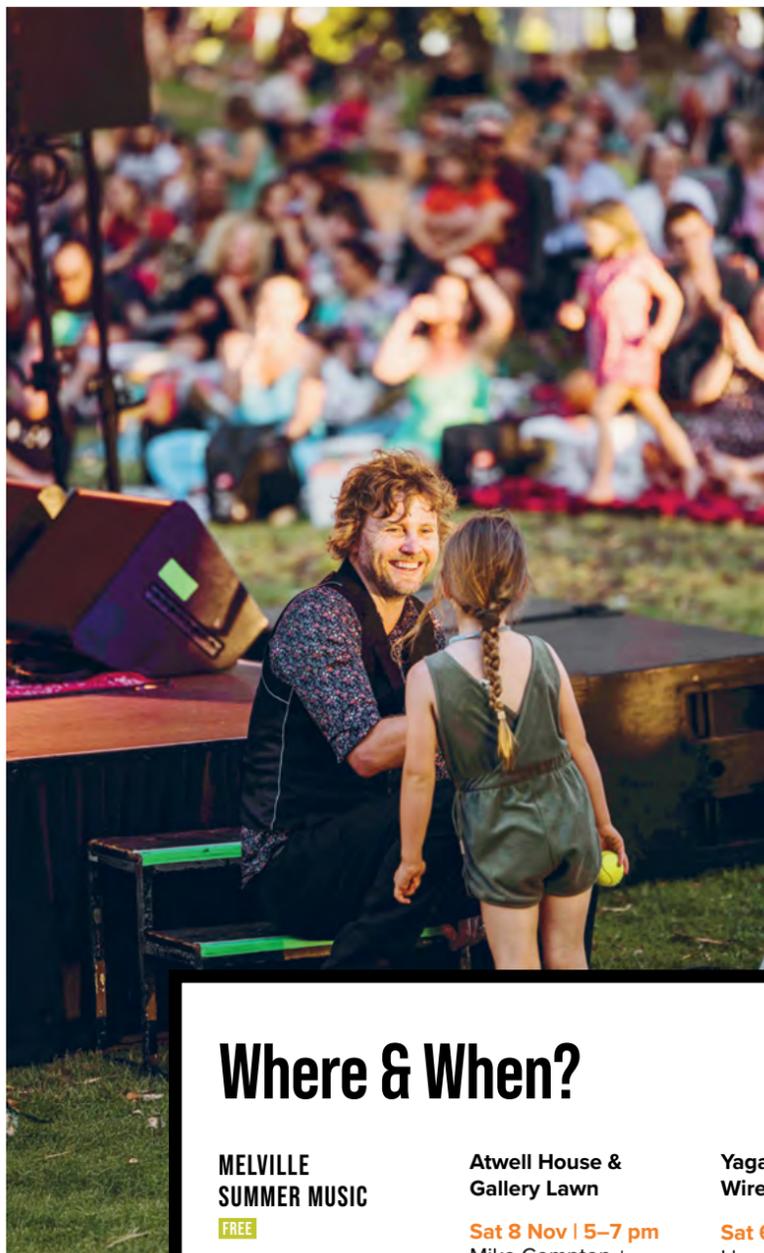
Every summer, Melville's parks transform into open-air stages alive with rhythm and celebration: kids dancing on the grass, families picnicking beneath eucalypts, friends soaking in tunes as the sun sets. As the series turns five, we look back on standout moments—from soulful First Nations storytelling to rollicking bluegrass duels—that capture the talent and warmth that have made these free concerts a beloved part of local life.

HOMEcomings HARMONIES

In 2022, Bob Evans (aka Kevin Mitchell of Jebediah) returned to Centennial Park in Bull Creek for a long-awaited homecoming. The performance carried special resonance given his roots in the suburb. "After three decades of making music, to come back and perform where I grew up, went to school, rode my bike, learned guitar—basically became who I am—was a really special full circle moment," Mitchell reflected.

SONGLINES AND SOUNDWAVES

At Kadidjiny Park in March 2024, Kimberley Elder Kankawa Nagarra (Olive Knight) wove gospel and blues in Walmatjarri, Kriol and English, through her soul-stirring set speaking of Country and resilience. Manager Ashlyn Jada Koh called



Where & When?

MELVILLE SUMMER MUSIC

FREE

Atwell House & Gallery Lawn

Sat 8 Nov | 5–7 pm
Mike Compton +
Laura Boosinger
Bluegrass Parkway

Sat 22 Nov | 5–7 pm
Lucky Oceans +
Louis Rebeiro
Jack Carroll Band

Yagan Mia Wireless Hill Park

Sat 6 Dec | 5–7 pm
Lloyd and the Leftovers
Dolce Blue

Sat 20 Dec | 5–7 pm
Lightnin Jack
Papa | Pete

For more on Melville Summer Music,
visit melvillecity.com.au/melvillessummermusic

Piney Lakes Reserve

Sat 10 Jan | 5–7 pm
Siobhan Cotchin
Grace Woodroffe

Sat 24 Jan | 5–7 pm
TTT Afro Brand
Tchéga

Centennial Park

Sat 7 Feb | 5–7 pm
Airline Food
Hector Morlet

Sat 21 Feb | 5–7 pm
Echo of Aphrodite

Kadidjiny Park

Sat 7 March | 5–7 pm
Romeo Walker (Ben Witt)
Heathcote Blue

Sat 21 March | 5–7 pm
The Kill Devil Hills
Clare Perrott

it “a treat for anyone who was lucky enough to witness it.” The following season, The Sandridge Band from Borroloola lit up Yagan Mia Wireless Hill Park with their electrifying blend of rock, reggae and roots, singing in both English and Yanyuwa. Together, these concerts underscored the series’ commitment to a diversity of voices.

NEW WINGS, NEW SONGS

In February 2023, Vikki Thorn—one-third of The Waifs—stepped on stage at Centennial Park after more than a decade in Utah. Performing under her solo project Thornbird, she premiered new material infused with the ache of distance and the joy of returning home. “I just had this very deep yearning to come home... I’d been away too long,” she admitted. For many, it was a privilege to hear songs never performed before, in a setting that made live music accessible to all.

PICKING AND GRINNING

Bluegrass found a surprising home at Piney Lakes Reserve. In January 2024, the Hamilton Hillbillies faced off against Bluegrass Parkway, swapping sets before joining for an all-in jam that had audiences whooping. The showdown returned in 2025, this time against the Justin Walshe Folk Machine. Featuring stalwarts like Jim Fisher, banjo champion Ian “Simmo” Simpson and Adam Gare on mandolin, the Hamilton Hillbillies embody the genre’s lightning-fast picking and knee-slapping energy. “It’s very energetic and exciting music... and of course it’s lovely sitting out on the grass by the lake,” Fisher said.

FUTURE FAVOURITES

The series also thrives on discovery. Perth trio The Stamps, formed in 2020 at Fremantle College, won new fans with tight harmonies when they played Wireless Hill in December 2023 alongside Jack Davies. Davies’ band The Bush Chooks—born from busking—has since become a local favourite, blending folk picking with spoken word. In March 2025, The Wilds and Clove closed out the season at Kadidjiny Park, bringing earthy rock and enchanting indie-folk to the stage. These performances turned Melville’s green spaces into places of encounter, where audiences discovered sounds and stories to carry with them long after the music faded.

AFTER THREE DECADES OF MAKING MUSIC, TO BE ABLE TO COME BACK AND PERFORM IN THE SUBURB THAT I GREW UP, WENT TO SCHOOL, RODE MY BIKE, KICKED THE FOOTY, LEARNED TO PLAY GUITAR, BASICALLY BECOME WHO I AM, WAS A REALLY SPECIAL FULL CIRCLE MOMENT. I FELT VERY FORTUNATE TO BE A PART OF SUCH A SPECIAL COMMUNITY GATHERING AND I HOPE THEY CONTINUE TO HAPPEN FOR MANY YEARS.

KEVIN MITCHELL, BOB EVANS / JEBEDIAH



THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN CO-CREATED WITH THE COMMUNITY. PEOPLE TOLD US THEY WANTED MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT, TO LEARN, TO CELEBRATE CREATIVITY. THE CULTURAL HEART IS ABOUT MAKING THAT VISION REAL.

LEEANN REID, MANAGER OF CULTURAL SERVICES

CULTURAL HEART PRECINCT

Curiosity at the heart

The new Cultural Heart precinct will be a hub where stories, art, heritage and community converge. At its core lies a simple idea: curiosity is the spark that connects us.

Every city needs a heartbeat—a place where people gather, ideas spark and stories unfold. For Melville, that pulse is growing stronger with the development of the Cultural Heart precinct. Woven around the new Library and Cultural Centre (LCC), the precinct links the Main Hall, outdoor piazza, Yagan Mia and Hickey Street into a walkable hub. Each space is distinct yet designed to flow into the next. “It’s a precinct that brings the community together, offering different ways for people to connect, learn, share and create,” says Leeann Reid, Manager of Cultural Services. “This project has been co-created with the community. People told us they wanted more opportunities to connect, to learn, to celebrate creativity. The Cultural Heart is about making that vision real.”

MAPPING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The Cultural Heart has been more than a decade in the making, shaped by consultation, bold ideas and planning. On track to open in early 2029, its centrepiece will be the Library and Cultural Centre, conceived as Melville’s cultural anchor.

Designed by Christou Design Group, the LCC will span three levels. The ground floor will blur indoors and outdoors, with retractable glazing to the piazza, the layout inspired by yarning circles, radio waves and tree growth rings and a “marketplace” library encouraging browsing, exhibitions and informal gathering. The first floor will hold the main collection and a children’s learning space, while the top floor will feature a Creative Lab, youth area, local history collections and a flexible performance venue. A museum presence will thread through all levels with rotating exhibitions.

The design mirrors the creative process: quiet discovery, hands-on exploration, bold expression. Programming will build on this, with annual themes linking exhibitions, storytimes and performances across the precinct. Work developed at venues like Goolugatup Heathcote or Atwell House & Gallery could also be showcased at the LCC, connecting into a wider hub-and-spoke model.

THE PRECINCT: WEAVING SPACES INTO ONE HEART

The Cultural Heart is a tapestry of places designed to work together. The Main Hall will continue to host theatre and civic events, while the public piazza will serve as a tree-lined plaza for festivals and markets. A line of eucalypts will guide the eye toward Yagan Mia Wireless Hill, a place of Whadjuk Noongar significance that later housed telecommunications stations and today combines museum, bushland and wildflowers.

At the base of the hill, Hickey Street’s heritage cottages—once quarters for wireless operators—now house artist studios and residencies. Ideas sparked there can be tested at Yagan Mia Wireless Hill, showcased in the LCC or Main Hall, and then shared back through neighbourhood libraries, creating a living ecosystem of creativity.

SHAPED BY COMMUNITY VOICES

From the start, the Cultural Heart has been shaped by the people who will use it. At the 2017 MERGE Festival, 16,000 residents envisioned a flexible, informal, and connected hub. Their ideas inspired a design where indoor and outdoor spaces blend, retractable walls open to the public piazza, and visitors naturally move between books, exhibitions, and performances. More recently, key community groups have been helping to shape the design through dedicated consultation sessions.

The layout also addresses practical needs. Melville’s five existing libraries were built for a “grab a book and go” model, with few gathering spaces. The new LCC will hold the city’s largest collection and cultural showcase, freeing branches to lean into their neighbourhood identities—youth and First Nations focus at Willagee, multicultural programs at Bull Creek—while the LCC serves as the hub that connects them all.

When it opens in 2029, the Cultural Heart will be more than a collection of buildings. It will be a living place of stories, curiosity and connection, designed to grow with Melville’s people.

For more on the Cultural Heart Precinct, visit melvillecity.com.au/culturalheart

MELVILLE ARTIST FOCUS

Local author spotlight

Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa OAM



Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa

Fully Sikh

hot chips and turmeric stains

Known for her candid, humorous reflections on identity, belonging and cultural heritage, Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa is a multidisciplinary artist and Executive Director of The Blue Room Theatre. In 2025, she was awarded an Order of Australia for her contribution to the arts and published her debut memoir, *Fully Sikh: Hot Chips and Turmeric Stains*—a vibrant collection of stories, poems and recipes that capture her unique voice.

You grew up in Leeming. How did that environment influence you as an artist?

While I have fond memories of Leeming, it was very sheltered and suburban. If you stepped outside of conformist behavior, even in the tiniest ways like having body hair or laughing too loud in the cinema—you are reminded, from a very young age, that you have to belong. You've got to fit in. And as a result, my creative work has this lens of isolation and semi-loneliness. I know that's very normal in high school for anyone around the world, but I feel like there's just this extra lens here.

To find out more about Sukhjit's writing, visit upswellpublishing.com/fully-sikh



I'VE BEEN TOLD NO SO MANY TIMES... I'VE BEEN REJECTED, OR HEARD 'IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, YOU LIVE TOO FAR AWAY, WE CAN'T FLY YOU THERE'. BUT I STILL HAVE THIS FIRE.

SUKHJIT KAUR KHALSA OAM

This year you released your debut memoir, *Fully Sikh: Hot Chips and Turmeric Stains*. How did that come about?

The publisher's been asking me to write a book ever since I did my theatre show in 2019 with *Black Swan* and *Barking Gecko*. Being a spoken word poet, my comfort zone is live performance and it's constantly evolving. You know, what if I don't feel that way in a year's time? So I think I was a bit afraid of being held to words on a page. It was a brave step for me... and it was important for me to finally do it and have a beautiful sort of memoir I can take to festivals and share with my audience, including the Sikh audience overseas.

Food is a recurring theme throughout the book. What's behind that?

My mum was a chef. I grew up in kitchens and catering businesses—selling food, hustling with Mum, being her kitchen hand. I wanted to include recipes you'd have if you came to my house: mac and cheese, a kidney bean curry, apple cake, aloo tikki burgers and a traditional Indian ice cream kulfi. They sit next to stories and photos. It gives a sense of who I am, and my humour and mix of cultures. It's the closest I can get to a sensory experience in a book—it reminds me of a scrapbook.

You received an OAM this year for your service to the arts. How did that feel?

I think it's awesome, it's very cool to get that recognition from Australia. It makes you feel like you belong, or that art deserves a place with a gold medal, just like sport. I think it's really exciting to have a Perth person up there on the national stage. But I think personally... I do feel kind of awkward about it and I didn't really know what to do with it! It was sitting in my wardrobe, so I gave it to my parents because, in a way, they're the ones who deserve it; they helped me grow into the person I am. I also think it's pretty cool for the Sikh community to have that recognition.

What advice would you give young creatives?

I've been told no so many times. The amount of times I've been rejected, or heard "it's not going to happen, you live too far away, we can't fly you there". But I still have this fire. So my best advice would be to be persistent and don't get in your own way. We're in a different world now, where you can go online and learn any skill you want. You can learn from peers. There's so many opportunities and services out there. Embrace it. Nothing should be stopping talent right now.



Toucans over Twin Poles

We invited Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa to share a story inspired by life in Melville – settle in as Sukhjit reflects on long summers in Leeming, childhood nostalgia and the perfect icy treat.

Growing up in Leeming in the early 2000s, life felt simple and self-contained. Our family home on Westminster Road was a typical suburban brick house, with a garden that never quite stayed neat and the familiar hum of sprinklers filling the warm evenings. The street was a safe little bubble, where kids rode bikes around the primary school, and neighbours knew each other well enough to babysit or even borrow money.

At the heart of so many of my memories from those years was Farmer Jacks Leeming. It was more than a supermarket, it was the community's meeting point. That shopping centre was there for us on a rainy night when you went to pick up your steamy Prima Pizza. It delivered once again in the sweltering heat of Perth summers, and I'd go for a walk to choose an ice cream to devour from Farmer Jacks. A Peters dixie cup or Golden Gaytime never lasted the journey home but if you chose wisely like I did, you'd get close.

My go-to was a Frosty Fruit or a Toucan. For those who weren't lucky enough to have Toucans in their childhood, let me break this down for you. It's a twin pole but with four flavours running down so if you broke the icy pole with a loved one, no one had to compromise on flavour. You'd get the same deal. Now Toucans (RIP) are no longer available—and I don't even know how long they were actually available, they kind of came and went. A Toucan from Farmer Jacks is the epitome of nostalgia for me. I can still taste it and smell it and feel that flicker of joy ripple through me. I dream about this feeling every summer. And no fancy gelato from my new suburban home can replace it.

When I got a bit older, I went to Leeming High and that was even closer to the shops. I never dared to wag school but was jealous of the others that left to buy hot chips and bring them back to recess time. I started at Leeming High when the "traffic light" system of canteens came into place, where you had

a lot of menu items that got taken off that were "red/unhealthy". My older siblings had donuts and greasy hot food that wasn't available during my time, so the temptation of Farmer Jacks just around the corner was always there. I was such a good girl, I didn't even pass through the shops on the way home like everyone else did. Or maybe I just didn't have any money or an allowance so what would I even do there?

Mum was a trained chef, so food has always been deeply entwined with memory and place. While the schools adopted the traffic light system for the students, my mum started her own little side hustle: catering for the Leeming teachers. I wonder if her food passed the test. She'd cook two different dishes every morning and go and take orders at the front office. I'd hear all the reviews from the classroom, "you're so lucky you get to eat this delicious curry every night". My teachers were absolutely right. I was very fortunate. I still am. My mum still travels all the way on the Mandurah line to deliver me Tupperware with two curries.

It doesn't matter how old I get; I'm never too far away from my past. Whenever I pass through Leeming today, I can't help but think of those days on Westminster Road and the little world we built around our neighbourhood, around Farmer Jacks. And it's nice to see places like Emperor's Kitchen, Chin's and Prima still going strong. They're reminders of how deeply place and community can shape who you are. I do enjoy making a stop at the new IGA and treating myself to a Twin Pole (even though it's not the real deal). I still haven't figured out how to make it last the journey home so now I buy two.



From diverse storytime sessions and English classes to boardgames and craft activities, Melville's libraries offer something for everyone. For more on what's on, visit melvillecity.com.au/libraries



Above Rhyme Time at AH Bracks Library, captured by Luke Latty

LIBRARIES

A house for everyone

From multi-language storytime to English classes and shelves of Chinese literature, Melville's libraries embody the simple premise of democracy: open doors, open shelves, open to all.

Step into one of the City's libraries and you'll find more than shelves of books. Toddlers at storytime, students revising, seniors playing games, newcomers practicing English, and people simply resting in a safe, cool refuge. In a world where so many spaces are driven by money or status, the library stands apart. It is, as Coordinator Library Services Alison Mudgway describes, "a safe place where, no matter who you are, what background you come from, or what language you speak, the staff welcome you."

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

Libraries are one of the few remaining democratic spaces—public places where no purchase is required, no explanation expected. "It's important that the community feel welcome when they walk in," Mudgway says. "It's non-judgmental, it's inclusive and it's comfortable."

That welcome extends beyond atmosphere. Melville's five branches reflect their neighbourhoods: Bull Creek holds Chinese-language books and popular storytime sessions, while Willagee has a strong First Nations presence through Noongar storytime and youth hip-hop. Elsewhere, seniors gather for games or movies.

FREEDOM TO READ, FREEDOM TO LEARN

Melville's libraries also defend intellectual freedom. "Especially with censorship issues emerging from the United States, it is important that freedom to read is not challenged," Mudgway says. Collections are

refreshed to reflect demand, while staff guide visitors through both print and digital resources. "Libraries provide a vital role in helping people navigate what's fake news and what's not. We're trusted and we're safe."

Digital literacy is another cornerstone. From eBooks and streaming to tech help, libraries guide people through a shifting information landscape. During COVID, staff even helped residents download QR codes and government apps, stepping in where bureaucracy left gaps.

A PLACE TO BELONG

Nearly 600,000 visits a year prove the need. For some, it's their only social contact. "It's lovely to watch how people connect," Mudgway reflects. Strangers strike up conversations at computers, or mums at storytime become friends. For isolated people, it can be a lifeline.

Beyond lending books, libraries hum with activity: conversation circles, chess groups, craft clubs and study sessions. Students revise, jobseekers use computers, parents bring children, and older residents drop by for a chat. "They're important community spaces, places where people can come together, feel included and feel safe," says Mudgway.

In an age where public space often comes with conditions, the library remains radical in its simplicity: free, open, and for everyone.

ART CLUB

Click, capture, connect

At Willagee youth drop-in's Art Club program, a developing mentorship between local student Xavier and photographer Cole Baxter shows how creativity can build confidence, connection and new ways of seeing.

Art Club Willagee was created to engage young people from Willagee's Youth Drop-In group, pairing them with teaching artists in term-long hands-on workshops. Co-produced by artist and Whadjuk Ballardong & Wilman Noongar woman Zali Morgan, who has curated the lineup and helped shape the program, Art Club is as much about relationships as it is about skills.

In this Q&A, Zali chats to Xavier — a young First Nations student and drop-in participant — along with photographer and Noongar man Cole Baxter as they embark on a mentorship to extend on workshops Cole ran. Together, they discuss how photography has become a way for Xavier to express himself, tell stories and see the world anew.

ZALI Xavier, you did the photography workshops with Cole for the Art Club Willagee program that the City of Melville has been running. Do you want to talk a little bit about your favourite parts of that, or what was really interesting for you?

XAVIER Yeah. I like learning about taking pictures. Like what it means, like a story. If you take a picture of someone, it can mean it's angry, and happy, or that's sad. And then it [the workshops] helped me with the camera, so I know what to do and how to look at the photos and how to take the pictures and like, it really helped me, so I can let out my feelings, and then I can show people what I've been doing.

ZALI Yeah, great. I think it's really nice that you feel you can show some emotion through the photos. Cole, how was it working with the young people and what was interesting for you, or did you learn anything from them as well?

COLE Yeah, I love working with kids. It's nice to just be in a space where the priority is just having a good time and learning. And that's great to hear that feedback from you [Xavier]. I'm really glad that's how you feel about the workshops and the classes.

ZALI Xavier, when you were in the workshops with Cole, was there any sort of other ideas that you were having whilst taking photos other than the emotions, or were you really just trying to capture that?

XAVIER [looking at images of his work] Yeah. I was trying go for like a kind of sad thing, kind of like a depressed or sad feeling. And, with the black and white and grey, kind of showing, like, the parts of the city and Willagee. I was trying to show you a different view of things, not just straight up, different sides and different angles. So not just all colourful.

ZALI Xavier, do you have any ideas on what you want to do with your mentorship with Cole, and is there anything you want to learn more from Cole?

XAVIER Yeah. I want to learn how to take photos from different views, from other people's perspectives. And then, like, take photos of, not just, like, things, but, the stories behind the things. And learn more about how to use the camera properly. Like how to print photos out and how to take pictures better.

COLE Before these photography workshops, did your parents or anyone at home or anyone in your life outside of these [library] walls, take photos? Like, has it been something you'd done much of or at all before?

XAVIER Um. My Nan has a camera and she knows how, like, to put them into photo frames or something like. Yeah, but that's it.

COLE Wow, that's deadly. It must be really exciting to be able to get to tell her about your photography. She'll love that!

This project has been supported by the WA Government and Healthway through the Creativity and Wellbeing for Young People Program.

I LIKE LEARNING ABOUT TAKING PICTURES. LIKE WHAT IT MEANS, LIKE A STORY (...) IT REALLY HELPED ME, SO I CAN LET OUT MY FEELINGS, AND THEN I CAN SHOW PEOPLE WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING.

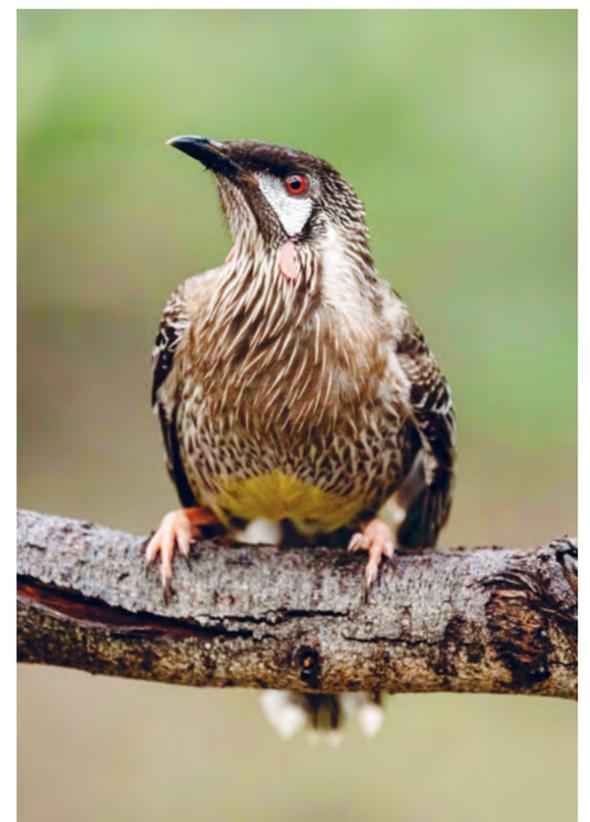
XAVIER, PARTICIPANT OF ART CLUB WILLAGEE



Above from left Art Club Willagee workshop participants, captured by Cole Baxter

Xavier and mentor Cole Baxter, captured by Zali Morgan

Wattlebird at Jenalup Bidi, captured by Xavier during mentoring program



RECONCILIATION

Pathways of knowledge

Piney Lakes, revealed through the Place Names Melville project as Bidi Katitijiny, is a site where culture, history and environment meet.

Tucked within Winthrop's suburbs, Piney Lakes feels worlds away—paperbark groves shimmer white along winding boardwalks, wetlands brim with turtles, and bird calls fill the air.

Beneath its beauty lies a deeper story: for countless generations, Noongar people gathered here to share knowledge and pass on culture. Some areas were traditionally places for women's birthing and cultural practices, while others were reserved for men's business. The landscape was a living classroom: a place for ceremonies, teaching and family life.

In 2023, this heritage was explored through Place Names Melville, in collaboration with the Noongar community, Community Arts Network and Moodjar, revealing the place name - Bidi Katitijiny. According to Noelene Mantellato, Place Names Melville Project Coordinator, the name meaning "pathway of knowledge," originated with the women's knowledge trail created in the mid-2000s and was reconfirmed during the project.

The project unfolded in two phases: first, Elders and knowledge holders in the Decoding Advisory Group decoded and translated 17 Noongar place names across Melville, including Bidi Katitijiny as part of this process.

Later, cultural mapping workshops at Piney Lakes brought together more than 40 participants, who painted, made clay stamps and riso-printed a large linen map to record pathways, gathering places, stories and connections to Country. Noelene emphasises that it "honours the ongoing cultural activities of Noongar people

in the area" and underscores how the site continues to act as a place where knowledge, family life, and connection to Country intersect.

Local Elder Marlene Warrell brought her daughters and grandchildren to these creative sessions. "We made little ornaments and clay stamps of turtles and animals," she recalls. "I really enjoyed it." Turtles, still abundant in the Piney Lakes Reserve, link Marlene to childhood memories of wetlands as places of sustenance and story.

Noelene reflects that these creative practices offered a new way to share cultural knowledge: "Creative activities gave people a way to show their connection to Country." The result? Bidi Katitijiny has become not just a name, but a living cultural landscape — a place layered with memory, resilience, learning and connection, for today and tomorrow.

For Rickeeta Walley, a proud Noongar woman with ties to Yamatji Country, Piney Lakes is as much about keeping stories alive today as it is honouring those of the past. She now leads seasonal cultural tours that bring the landscape to life through Noongar knowledge. Each walk shifts with the six Noongar seasons — from bush medicines in Makuru's rains to bush foods in Djilba's blooming — offering walkers a tangible connection to place and protocol. "There's one place along the boardwalk, surrounded by tall paperbarks, that always stops people in their tracks... it feels completely magical," she reflects.

The City of Melville EcoHub offers activities and events at Piney Lakes including seasonal walks on Country. To find out more, visit melvillecity.com.au/pineylakes

Below from left Bidi Katitijiny Piney Lakes printed on the Place Names Melville map, captured by Natasja Kremers

Rickeeta Walley leads a guided walk at Bidi Katitijiny, captured by Cole Baxter

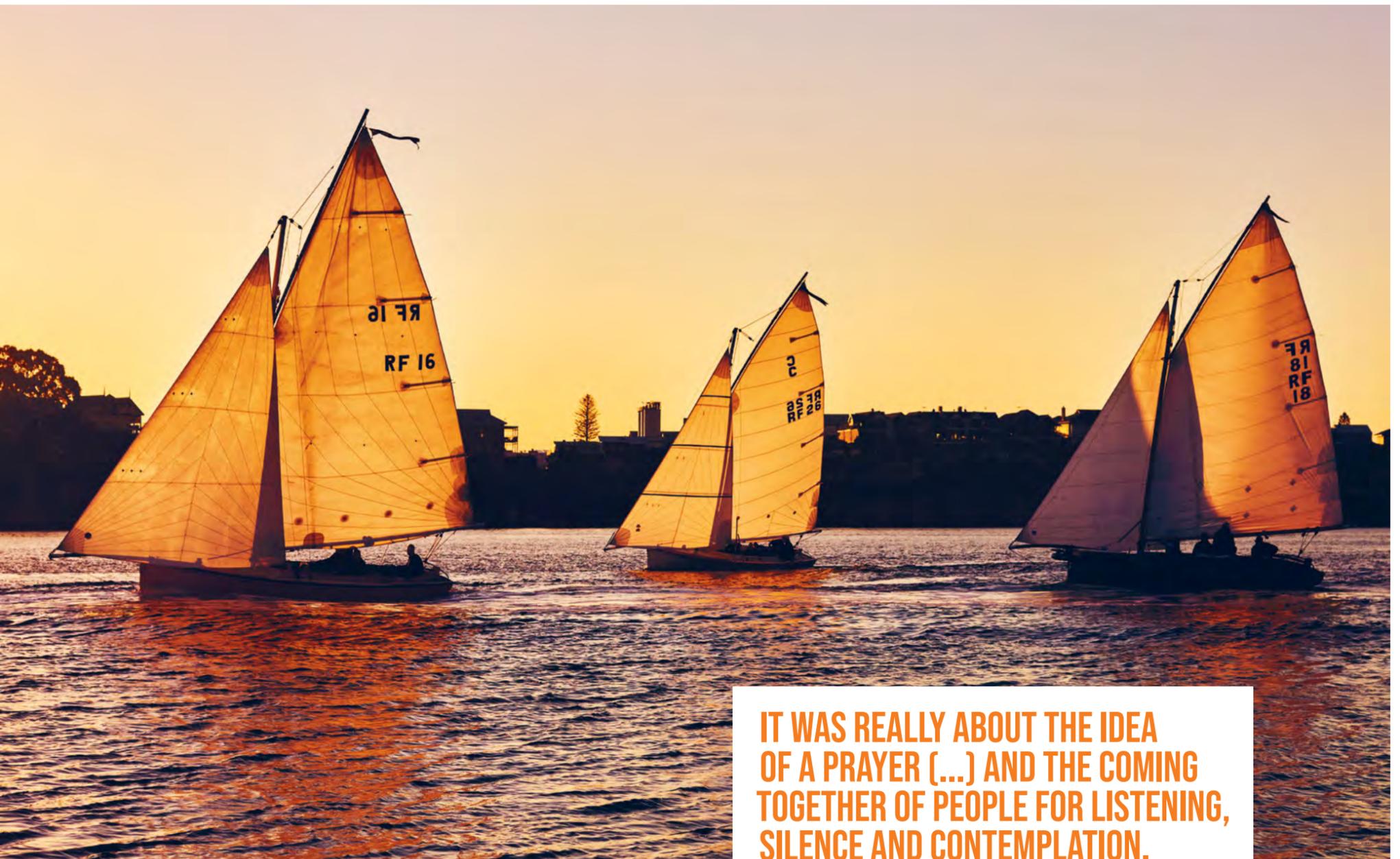
Opposite Vespers at the Fremantle Biennale CROSSING 2021 captured by Duncan Wright



THERE'S ONE PLACE ALONG THE BOARDWALK, SURROUNDED BY TALL PAPERBARKS, THAT ALWAYS STOPS PEOPLE IN THEIR TRACKS... IT FEELS COMPLETELY MAGICAL.

RICKEETA WALLEY, CULTURAL EDUCATOR





IT WAS REALLY ABOUT THE IDEA OF A PRAYER (...) AND THE COMING TOGETHER OF PEOPLE FOR LISTENING, SILENCE AND CONTEMPLATION.

RACHAEL DEASE, ARTIST AND COMPOSER

FREMANTLE BIENNALE

The river's chorus

Combining choral singing, sailboats and shifting winds, Vespers reimagines ritual for a secular age. Fremantle Biennale brings the acclaimed work to the waters of Goolugatup Heathcote for the first time.

As the sun dips low, sails catch the last light and voices float across the water. Boats drift in unison, their white canvases glowing like lanterns while sound carries on the evening air; disembodied yet deeply human.

"It was really about the idea of a prayer," says Rachael Dease, the composer and artist behind the work. First staged at the Fremantle Biennale in 2021, Vespers returns in November 2025 for an expanded presentation on the river at Goolugatup Heathcote Lowerlands, John Tonkin Reserve and Manjaree Bathers Beach.

"It's absolutely not a religious work, but it was inspired by multiple religions that have evening prayer and what happens at that time, and the coming together of people for listening, silence and contemplation."

The piece unfolds as a flotilla of historic couta boats gliding across the river at dusk, each fitted with speakers projecting layers of recorded voices and instruments. This year the fleet will grow to seven boats, each carrying a custom sound system, creating a richer, more immersive soundscape.

When Vespers first appeared, audiences were transfixed. "People were just very still and very quiet, but not in an uptight way... There was just a stillness. And I think a lot of people came up afterwards and said they didn't know what to expect, but they really needed it."

That atmosphere of quiet communion is something Dease hopes will deepen at Goolugatup Heathcote. Long a special site for Noongar people, and later layered with colonial histories, it offers what she calls "quite literally, a sanctuary for the audience to sit in these little bays."

Vespers was born during Dease's 2020 residency at Gallop House, where she spent long days watching the river and passing couta boats. When collaborator Tom Müller spoke of "ghost ships," she began to imagine vessels as instruments. "It started off maybe as a more visual work, but then it became more of a sound work when I was putting the idea of having separate speakers on each vessel and utilising them like an ensemble."

For its return, recordings of local children's choirs will be projected from the boats, their voices shifting with the breeze. The elements are integral: "A slight turn, a slight change of the wind, will completely take one voice and put it somewhere else... To me, it's incredible how clearly sound can be heard if it's designed in the right way, and it doesn't need to be bombastic, it just needs to be clear."

Where & When?

Enjoy an evening of music by the river presented as part of the Fremantle Biennale SANCTUARY 25.

VESPERS

Goolugatup Heathcote Lowerlands
Sat 15 Nov | 6.15pm

FREE

FOR FULL CALENDAR OF EVENTS,
EXHIBITIONS, ACTIVATIONS
AND PROGRAMS, VISIT
MELVILLECITY.COM.AU/WHATSON
AND GOOLUGATUP.COM



Image Pelicans on
a lamppost, captured
by Luke Latty

#creativemelville
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