

DRAFT



GERALDTON REGIONAL ART GALLERY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2027



Left: Margaret Whitehurst, *Summer Season*, 2009, Acrylic on canvas,
120 x 104cm (CGG Ac. No. 410).

Cover image: Ailsa Small, *My Native Land*, 1993, Oil on canvas,
60 x 100cm (CGG Ac. No. 101).

GRAG
GERALDTON REGIONAL ART GALLERY
— A CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON GALLERY —

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THE CITY OF GREATER
GERALDTON RESPECTFULLY
ACKNOWLEDGES THE YAMATJI
PEOPLES WHO ARE THE
TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND
FIRST PEOPLE OF THIS LAND
ON WHICH WE STAND, THE
NHANHAGARDI, WILUNYU,
NAAGUJA AND PAYS RESPECT
TO THE ELDERS PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE FOR THEY
HOLD THE MEMORIES, THE
TRADITIONS, THE CULTURE
AND HOPES OF THE YAMATJI
PEOPLES.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Julie Dowling, *Granny Mary*, 2017, Acrylic, red ochre, mica gold on canvas, 100 x 120cm (CGG Ac. No. 503).

Housed in the State heritage listed, turn of the century Town Hall building, the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery (GRAG) opened in 1984 as Western Australia's first regional A-Class venue. The GRAG is the City of Greater Geraldton's principal arts institution, delivering high quality arts and creative experiences with the aim to engage, connect and enrich the diverse communities of the Midwest region of Western Australia.

Geraldton is the regional centre of the Midwest, with some 39,000 people and a stable, diverse economy. The arts and culture ecosystem is notable for three characteristics:

- *A strong, publicly funded arts and cultural strategy, with clear rationales that integrate social, cultural and economic objectives;
- *A longstanding, extensive ecosystem of pro-am and volunteer arts and cultural workers, non withstanding increasing challenges of FIFO work; and,
- *Strong local understanding of arts entrepreneurship and innovative business models for artists.

The GRAG presents both touring and locally curated exhibitions, along with educational and public programs for all ages and abilities, with the aim to elevate the vitality of the regional arts scene, amplify local artists and creatives, and provide opportunities for visitors and locals to learn, be challenged, entertained and inspired. Exhibitions and programming provide a community arts hub which is contemporary, accessible and relevant to the region's diverse Indigenous and multi-cultural communities.

The GRAG is wholly owned and operated by the City of Greater Geraldton and is staffed by 3 FTE staff members, with additional support from a small casual pool. The Geraldton Visitor Centre is also co-located within the same building.

PURPOSE

To deliver high quality, responsive and targeted collection management and arts programs which grow and enhance City and regional cultural assets, enrich people's lives, provide economic opportunity, growth of local identity and encourage wellbeing and active participation in regional Western Australia.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Strategy has been informed by the following documents:

GREATER GERALDTON 2031 STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN

Underpinning the GRAG Strategic Plan are the following community aspirations contained in the Greater Geraldton 2031 Strategic Community Plan:

COMMUNITY - Our culture and heritage is recognised and celebrated. We are creative and resilient. We can all reach our full potential.

ECONOMY – A healthy and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all whilst protecting the environment and enhancing our social and cultural fabric.

OTHER INFORMING DOCUMENTS

- City of Greater Geraldton Corporate Business Plan 2021-2025
- Creative Community Plan
- Operational Policy OP017 Geraldton Regional Art Gallery Collection
- Operational Policy OP035 GRAG Exhibition Programming
- Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: a population and hotspot analysis - Geraldton, 2020

KEY PUBLIC ART DOCUMENTS

- City of Greater Geraldton Public Art Strategy 2020-2025
- Public Art Register extract

Trevor Richards, *Wildflower*, 2019, Metagraphic in Rocks Laneway, Geraldton (CGG PA 162).

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS:

Located in an iconic, State heritage listed building with a high level of community visibility; strong, existing local, regional and other partnerships; Local Government Authority committed to provision of service delivery and maintenance of physical building; established permanent art collection; Biennial delivery of prestigious Mid West Art Prize (established in 2011); Geraldton Visitor Centre co-located within facility; Redevelopment of adjacent park and road area undertaken in 2022; CGG Art Collection was last valued in May 2019 and is scheduled again in 2023/24.

WEAKNESSES:

Lack of recurrent funding opportunities; Difficult to plan activities and exhibitions ahead when in the past grant funding was only applied on an annual basis; Lack of Arts and Culture Council Policy, which could also encompass Public Art; Make sure access to the building and theatre is appropriate for all people, including those with a disability.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Promote the Gallery as desired place of employment and one which also welcomes volunteers; Post- Covid grant opportunities; Increased visitation from regional travellers; Increased activity surrounding the Gallery building leading to the possible development of an arts precinct; Possibility of developing new revenue streams such as the sale of artworks; Greater interaction with the local tourism sector, locally and more broadly; Further development of the Gallery brand and identity; Increased visibility of City collection; Partnerships and leveraging existing events will continue to strengthen regional profile; 40th year anniversary in 2024.

THREATS:

Staffing levels remain unchanged since 2017 despite increased demand for services; Maintaining resources which provide the capacity to deliver the artistic programs and other Gallery outcomes; Ongoing wear and tear/damage to public art collection by the environment, vandalism; The need to develop long-term storage solutions for the art collection; Aging building infrastructure; Budget allocation to new acquisitions and conservation/repair of existing collection; Ongoing community engagement a priority to continue to increase traffic and enhance profile.

PRINCIPLES

The principles underpin the City's art activities and management, providing guidance to ensure best practice is maintained.

INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Follow NAVA and ArtsLaw Guidelines for procuring exhibitions and contracting artists and ensure that all practices comply with City of Greater Geraldton procurement policies. Following industry best practice guidelines and utilising existing contracting templates will ensure City of Greater Geraldton remains an attractive exhibiting and commissioning body for artists.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Providing ongoing opportunities for the community to engage with Gallery programming and public art commissions will position the collection as a community asset. The Geraldton Regional Art Advisory Committee (GRAAC) is a Council appointed Advisory Committee which consists of Councillors, community representatives and City officers. The GRAAC is guided by Terms of Reference and plays an essential role in facilitating community involvement.

LOCAL ARTISTS FIRST

The City and Public Art Collections are excellent platforms for local artists to exhibit their works. These collections should represent a cross section of the regional creative community, whilst also representing national and international artists. For significant artworks, an open tender process for artworks allows for locals and artists from further afield to submit. Commissions relating to sensitive local stories may be suited to local artists only.

CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

Home to diverse cultures and demographics, it is important that the collection is inclusive and accessible to all, telling stories and reflecting themes from the community.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility of the collection through online platforms, physical plaques with artworks, and audio guides is considered to be best practice. As the City builds and refines its collection, ensuring sites are selected for public art which are physically accessible, and online platforms are created with consideration given to accessibility should be prioritised.

AREAS OF FOCUS

GOAL 1

Facilitate meaningful and relevant **arts engagement opportunities** which increase engagement of the community with the City of Greater Geraldton Art Collection, exhibitions and programs facilitated by the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery whilst strengthening and developing the regional galleries network.

GOAL 2

Contribute to the vibrancy of the City of Greater Geraldton and the quality of life in regional Western Australia, attracting visitation and economy to the Midwest region.

GOAL 3

Improve, promote and conserve the City of Greater Geraldton Art and Public Art Collections.

GOAL 1

Facilitate meaningful and relevant arts engagement opportunities which increase engagement of the community with the City of Greater Geraldton Art Collection, exhibitions and programs facilitated by the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery whilst strengthening and developing the regional galleries network.



Robert Cleworth, *Thinking of Cornelisz as a Contemporary*, 2009/10, Oil on canvas, 23 x 19.5

KEY STRATEGIES

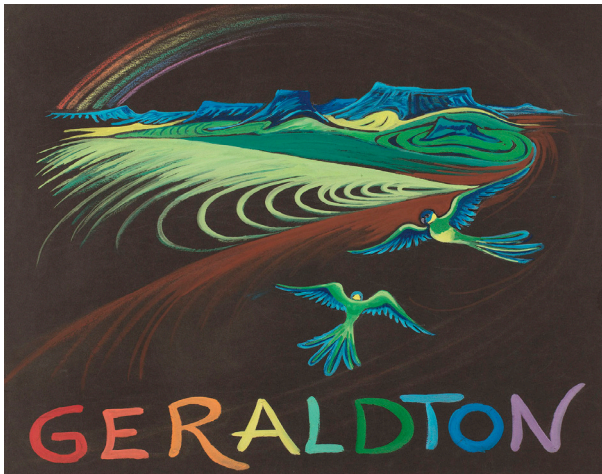
- 1.1 Deliver an Exhibition Schedule at the GRAG which, after taking into account install/deinstall elements in accordance with exhibition requirements, sees the Gallery spaces fully utilised for 10 months of every year.
- 1.2 Continue to seek exciting, innovative exhibition and programming opportunities for the GRAG, including increased opportunities for showcasing First Nations artists, multicultural groups and works which represent the diversity of the community.
- 1.3 Assist and mentor local artists and regional arts and creative organisations with the aim to exhibit locally curated exhibitions which are shown at the Gallery and other regional cultural venues.
- 1.4 Stimulate engagement with and understanding of the visual arts through events, workshops, learning opportunities and lectures.
- 1.5 Increase community access to and engagement with the City's Collection.
- 1.6 Engage with the West Australian School Curriculum to ensure programs for youth are targeted and appropriate for students and teachers.
- 1.7 Coordinate the annual round of community art installations in the Post Office Lane Lightbox Gallery.
- 1.8 Coordinate the Geraldton Regional Art Advisory Committee meetings which are held four times per year.
- 1.9 Deliver the Mid West Art Prize on a biennial basis.

GOAL 1

Facilitate meaningful and relevant arts engagement opportunities which increase engagement of the community with the City of Greater Geraldton Art Collection, exhibitions and programs facilitated by the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery whilst strengthening and developing the regional galleries network.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number and FTE of existing staff
- Number of visitors to the Gallery
- Number of exhibitions held, whether they are curated locally or are travelling
- Number of days/hours open to the public per year
- Number of activities held per year
- Engagement statistics relating to Gallery social media and website platforms
- Annual local funding contribution provided through Local Government
- Annual direct contribution provided by State Government
- Annual cash and in-kind funding provided by business partnerships, private and charitable organisations



Elizabeth Durack, *Rainbow Colours*, 1960, Gouache on paper (CGG Ac. No. D010).

GOAL 2

Contribute to the vibrancy of the City of Greater Geraldton and the quality of life in regional Western Australia, attracting visitation and economy to the Midwest region.



Tim Williams, *Fallen Icon*, 1994, Oil on canvas, 176 x 174cm (CGG Ac. No. 005).

KEY STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Promote the Gallery as the region's principal arts institution and as a regional tourism product, promoting exhibitions and other opportunities for engagement to increase visitation.
- 2.2 Provide a level of visitor service which is welcoming, knowledgeable and consistent with a Gallery of premium standing, seeking and responding to visitor feedback.
- 2.3 Provide local artists with a shopfront to promote and market their creative works whilst continuing to improve the Gallery retail space.
- 2.4 Enable the creation of a Local Creatives Contact List.
- 2.5 Promote the Art Gallery as a venue for use and hire by outside organisations.
- 2.6 Implement the City's Public Art Strategy and coordinate public art opportunities and activities across the City including the Post Office Lane Lightbox Gallery.
- 2.7 Provide employment and volunteer opportunities for local creatives and other community members.

GOAL 2

Contribute to the vibrancy of the City of Greater Geraldton and the quality of life in regional Western Australia, attracting visitation and economy to the Midwest region.



Moira Court, *Howl*, 2011, Acrylic, wax oil, pastel and charcoal on canvas, 101 x 152cm (CGG Ac. No. 453).

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Visitor data collection is undertaken to record the amount of visitation from both local and outside the City
- Engagement in public programs is meaningful as indicated by feedback
- Number of artists represented in the retail space and sales figures
- Number of outside hires
- Number of public/community art activities have been held for the year
- Examples of regional promotion of Gallery activities



Stratigraphy, Art Collective WA Artists, 14 May - 26 June 2022, GRAG.

GOAL 3

Improve, promote and conserve the City of Greater Geraldton Art and Public Art Collections.



Norman Lindsay, *My Reflection*, c1910, Watercolour on paper, 40 x 36cm (CGG Ac. No. 182).

KEY STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Where possible, acquire, by purchase, commission, gift and bequest, works of art of outstanding quality in line with the Operational Policy OP017 GRAG Collection Policy and the CGG Public Art Strategy.
- 3.2 Maintain an Asset Register for both collections.
- 3.3 Where possible, deaccession works that do not fit within OP017 GRAG Collection Policy and the CGG Public Art Strategy.
- 3.4 Seek funding, grant and donation opportunities through the City's Everlasting Agreement process.
- 3.5 Seek funding opportunities for public art via the building development process.
- 3.6 Provide appropriate storage, security and environmental conditions within the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery.
- 3.7 Provide appropriate financial and other resources to adequately conserve and repair works held in both the City and Public Art Collections.
- 3.8 Document, manage and display the collection, including the creation of digital records and online catalogue development utilising the Geraldton Regional Library - Portfolio database and the Collections WA platform delivered by the WA Museum and Australian Museums and Galleries Association.
- 3.9 Maintain relationships with key arts bodies such as the Art Gallery WA, Art on the Move, AMAGA etc. to keep abreast of training and professional development opportunities with regard to collection maintenance and Gallery operations.

GOAL 3

Improve, promote and conserve the City of Greater Geraldton Art and Public Art Collections.



James Goatcher, *The Swan Valley*, c1950, Watercolour on paper (CGG Ac. No. 024).

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Value of acquisitions added to the City of Greater Geraldton Collection and Public Art Collections
- Value of funding, grants and donations received from external sources
- Records are kept of building environmental controls, including temperature and humidity
- Number of collection items that have been condition reported upon and any subsequent repairs or deaccession processes applied
- Number of collection items digitised and added to online catalogues
- Number of training and professional development opportunities attended

APPENDIX I - HISTORY OF THE GALLERY & COLLECTION

The formal exhibition of art in Geraldton first began in October 1894 when the Geraldton Floral, Art and Industrial Exhibition was held at the Masonic Lodge. Mayor Charles Gray officially opened the proceedings, announcing,

"He regarded exhibitions of this character as among the most valuable educational factors of the day. They cultivated a taste for the beautiful and encouraged dexterity of the hand."

(Geraldton Murchison Telegraph, 9 October 1894.)

Through the years, strong local support for the arts continued. The construction of the Geraldton Town Hall in 1907 provided townsfolk with a long-awaited civic venue from which they could hold concerts, dances, recitals and gatherings, including art exhibitions. One group to utilise the Town Hall was the Geraldton Arts and Crafts Society, who were particularly active during the 1930s.

In 1949, one of Western Australia's greatest benefactors, Sir Claude Hotchin (1898-1977), donated 22 substantial works to the people of Geraldton. These works included an early painting by West Australian artist Robert Juniper, and other paintings by Kathleen O'Connor, and Allan William Baker, and landscapes by Hans Heysen and Harold Septimus Power. Hotchin expressed his hope at the time that his gift would be the basis of a district art centre to which he and others could make suitable additions. The following year, a large gathering at Birdwood House celebrated an exhibition of oil and water-colour and etchings by local artist, John Tribe. The call for the construction of an Art Gallery in Geraldton echoes from these proceedings, as recorded by the Geraldton Guardian (02/09/1950)

In 1960 the Town of Geraldton commissioned Elizabeth Durack (1915-2000) to produce a body of work of the Geraldton area, including Dongara, Northampton and out to Carnamah. This collection remains significant not just to Geraldton but also to the State.

Through the 1970s, the Council considered the future of the aging Town Hall. Public use had diminished and the building was now in need of major renovations. Meanwhile, local exhibitions took place at Geraldton Art Centre, opened in 1974 and housed in the former Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Shenton Street. The following year the Wheel of Arts was established by the Arts Council of Geraldton (Inc) at the old Fire Station Building on Durlacher Street.

In 1982 the Council held a poll to ascertain ratepayer views for the future of the old Town Hall. The results, coupled with community pressure from the group known as FROTH (Friends of the Town Hall) led to consideration of the site for the Geraldton and Districts Regional Library or for an Art Gallery combined with a Municipal Museum and Tourist Centre. Costs were approximated at \$750,000. The WA Government had at this time embarked on holding cabinet meetings in country areas and during this meeting in Geraldton, Premier Burke announced a Government contribution of 70% / 30% ratio towards an Art Gallery and Tourist Centre.

On Monday 6 August 1984 the Geraldton Art Gallery was officially opened by the Governor-General of Australia, the Rt. Hon. Sir Ninian Stephen. The high standard of facilities made the Gallery one of the first A class regional galleries in Australia. The opening exhibition was "The Land Beyond Time", a collection of over 100 works by John Olsen. Since 1984, the GRAG has established itself as the region's principal arts institution, serving arts and culture to the Midwest, housing the City of Greater Geraldton's Art Collection, facilitating the biennial Mid West Art Prize, whilst presenting a diverse and stimulating exhibition programme from local, state, national and international sources.

In 2017, the management of the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery transitioned from the Art Gallery of Western Australia to the City of Greater Geraldton.

Prepared by Trudi Cornish, 2021.

APPENDIX II - ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-2023

- In 2022-2023 the Gallery felt the last effects of the COVID border restrictions that previously limited access to nationally touring exhibitions. It has been a time when we have mentored 2 emerging local curators, created opportunities for 15 local artists and craft makers, and enjoyed hosting a trainee in Arts Administration Certificate III funded by Art on the Move. In these ways we have been building capacity and supporting professional development for Midwest arts workers.
- Over the 12 months, 18 exhibitions have been undertaken, including the significant touring exhibition - The Alternative Archive from Art on the Move. This exhibition combined artworks from 15 exhibitions generated state-wide in 2021 through The Creative Grid Project, which GRAG was part of, with the resulting survey exhibition shown at John Curtin Gallery in 2022. Launched as a touring exhibition at GRAG on 8 July 2022 and including 3 Midwest artists, this exhibition partnered with next iteration of the Creative Grid, titled with the 2022 theme Open Borders. Mentored local Curator Roxanne Grant conceived an exhibition across 2 sites – indoors and outdoors - and facilitated a collaboration with community group FROGGS on the CGG Wonthella Bushland Reserve. A performative opening event with ephemeral installations attracted over 60 attendees to the reserve.
- To coincide with the 2022 Big Sky Readers and Writers Festival, GRAG generated 2 integrated exhibitions - The Town Hall 1907-1984 and the Banksia Ball 50th Anniversary. With a 6-month development phase, the exhibitions combined the CGG Heritage, Civic and Art Collections to tell the story of the former Geraldton Town Hall, still functioning as the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery since 1984. The CGG Coordinators of Heritage and the Art Gallery co-curated with local Curator Ingrid Horn to locate, interpret, loan, display and sequence the over-300 items including heritage photographs, original artworks, memorabilia, archival footage and original newspaper reports. Heritage Curator Lorin Cox worked with the Abdullah Family, whose father George was a well-known identity in local Aboriginal politics, to display his rare collection of photographs and memorabilia from the 1972 and 1973 Banksia Ball, the first Indigenous celebrations held in the Town Hall which heralded the community's entry to this significant public space post-1967 Referendum. The Banksia Ball has endured today as the NAIDOC Ball 50 years on. These popular exhibitions became the backdrop to Big Sky and Heritage events, with decorative bunting scribed by the community with their memories of Town Hall events. There was a record attendance of some 3,500 people to this exhibition.
- Beyond and outside the Gallery the Art Gallery Park redevelopment was completed, providing modern landscaping and facilities, enabling further Gallery and community events in the Art Gallery surrounds. The popular sculpture Horizon was replaced. In 2022 the Secondary Schools' exhibition Genesis moved to the Geraldton Regional Library, finding a new and appreciative audience. With Awards for each year level and a People's Choice vote, this vibrant exhibition combined the artwork of 8 local schools displaying 135 students' work in the main area of the Library. Reaching into the Geraldton CBD on Post Office Lane the set of 8 Lightboxes hosted 3 exhibitions, including a collaboration with the Wilunyu Language Reference Group and secondary school students in a Wilunyu Language revitalisation project, creating an opening event that was also part of the Big Sky Festival event. In a successful cross-collaboration, prints from the Post Office Lane Lightbox Gallery found another venue in the Library Walkway, illuminated on interior windows and bringing a new pop-up gallery site into consideration.
- **Snapshot:**
 - Team of 4 (2 full time, 1 part time, 1 trainee) staff and casual staff delivered **18 exhibitions and 58 workshops**/other sessions over the reporting period.
 - Total door count during reporting period was **40,101** (includes foot-traffic to Visitor Centre Desk and Gallery Retail Shop).
 - Open 7 days per week. Hours: Tues-Fri 9am-4pm; Sat, Sun, Mon and Public Holidays, 9.30am-1.30pm (except Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day). Open 310 days in reporting period.



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