

North Midlands Project

Annual Report

for the year from January to December 2017



About the Organisation

The North Midlands Project is a not-for-profit community capacity-building organisation based in Carnamah, 300 kilometres north of Perth in Western Australia's Mid West region.

We were incorporated in 2015 to empower individuals and assist in creating viable communities which foster inclusiveness, participation and cohesion. We strive to actively strengthen regional communities through arts, culture, heritage and education.

Geographically, the 'North Midlands' is the southern portion of the Mid West region, which includes the local government areas of Carnamah, Coorow, Mingenew, Morawa, Perenjori and Three Springs. The North Midlands is our focus but we strive to deliver impacts more broadly.



Message from the President

The year that was 2017, and what a year it was!

Our first Annual Community Strengthening Program was a huge success and operated across seven towns in six local government areas. We were honoured to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message, with greatly appreciated sponsorship from Healthway. Stakeholder and community feedback was overwhelmingly positive and has led to the development of a broader program for 2018 that stretches northward into the City of Greater Geraldton (Geraldton, Greenough, Mullewa and Walkaway).

After two years of anticipation our community gallery, office and artist accommodation facility in Carnamah was officially opened by Duncan Ord, the Director-General of what was then the Department of Culture and the Arts. *The Bank Gallery Space* is the kind of outcome that people don't expect to happen in a small country town. We were honoured to welcome leading WA visual artist Di Taylor as our first artist-in-residence and she facilitated an impressive number of events and community workshops. Our thanks to Lotterywest for their grant that helped equip both *The Bank* and the community programs run from it.

Our major exhibition for the year, *10863 Bushranger presented by Act-Belong-Commit*, successfully brought together visually striking artworks by Di Taylor, fascinating interpretation from the Carnamah Historical Society & Museum, a short-story by emerging regional writer Lauren Selfe, a unique song by WA singer-songwriter Ashlea Reale and all overlayed with a message of positive mental wellbeing. The exhibition was seen by over 23,000 people within its first four months.

We began the implementation of our Exchange model with the opening of *The Exchange – Perenjori*, a community arts studio and exhibition space that runs free community activities on a weekly basis (with many thanks to local artist Christina Laue). To address gaps in the community, we opened a regional Learning Hub at the rear of the Carnamah Hall and it was utilised almost immediately for the establishment of a CoderDojo club for local youth. We look forward to a fuller range of free community activities taking place in this space during 2018.

Work has begun on *The Exchange – Carnamah*, which when completed, will be a game-changer for the communities of the North Midlands. Our thanks to CBH Group, the Shire of Carnamah and so many community members who have helped transform this former garage and showroom into a vibrant, inviting and useful place to bring people together for a range of formal and informal activities, programs, workshops and events. It is very much on track to become the heart of the community and is already being coined "the community's lounge-room".

To quote Tom Vilsack, *People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible*. This is very much the story of the North Midlands Project. I'd like to thank our volunteers, employees, everyone on our dedicated Management Committee, our Regional Advisory Team and our group of passionate Artistic, Cultural & Wellness Directors. We can be justly proud of everything we have achieved together in 2017.

– Andrew Bowman, President

The Bank Gallery Space

We launched *The Bank Gallery Space* in Carnamah on Sunday 30 April 2017 as part of the Australian Heritage Festival. The opening was patronised by hundreds of people from across the North Midlands in addition to visitors from Geraldton and Perth.

The Bank was constructed in 1930 as a branch and residence for the Bank of Australasia but was later used for many years by the Rural & Industries Bank (now known as Bankwest). Over 26 months the building was renovated and restored to its original configuration. The octagonal bank chamber, strong room and manager's office constitute our gallery space while other rooms include an office, meeting room and accommodation for artists.

Duncan Ord, the Director-General of the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA), officially opened the building. Duncan's address on the day in many ways captured the essence of our endeavours:

It's an absolute delight to come up to Carnamah this morning for this opening. I get lots of invites but occasionally one particularly intrigues me. What inspired me was the story about a bank that had closed, as is the case with many banks and other buildings in small country towns, and that it had been not only restored as a piece of heritage infrastructure but was being reopened giving new life to the community through the arts. That resonated with me enormously. I would like to pay tribute to the North Midlands Project for their vision to bring life to this building. The restoration here is really magnificent. It is so faithful to the building.

I was really impressed driving into Carnamah [seeing] the photographs of the past in windows of buildings, which gives a real sense of the long enduring history of this community and its people. For many years no one could have imagined the Rural & Industries Bank wouldn't be here. Such is change in our society that the things that we would think are the most stable in our community, like banks, move on. Yet one of the enduring elements is of course our creativity and the role the arts play in society... I think this is the beginning of a whole new era... The North Midlands Project is highly ambitious and is clearly going to inspire people.

midwesttimes.com.au
Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Artistic interest in bank job

■ **Francesca Mann**

A building constructed in 1930 to house a bank has been renovated and transformed into a gallery space, which will officially open on April 30.

In the centre of Carnamah, The Bank Gallery Space is part of the North Midlands Project, a not-for-profit arts, culture and heritage organisation.

The building includes a gallery space, office, artist studio and accommodation for an artist-in-residence.

Restorative work began in 2015 to bring back the building's striking features that had been hidden for several decades such as pressed-tin ceilings, jarrah floors and an



The Carnamah bank in the 1950s, when it was occupied by the Rural & Industries Bank.

octagonal-shaped banking chamber.

Opening during the Australian Heritage Festival, North Midlands Project executive director David Bowman-Bright said it was important to keep the historical building

in Carnamah. "It was one of the main purpose-built banks in the area and it's very prominent," he said.

"It was either going to be saved or knocked down."

"From a heritage component we wanted to keep that for the community."

The building was originally constructed for the Bank of Australasia but was closed during World War II because of labour shortages.

For most of its life the building was used by the Rural & Industries Bank, later renamed Bankwest before eventually closing in 1996.

WA artist Di Taylor will be the first artist-in-residence at The Bank Gallery Space and will be

doing live portraiture on the opening day. During the residency Taylor's art pieces will focus on Frank Thomas, a young 1920s bushranger from Coorow.

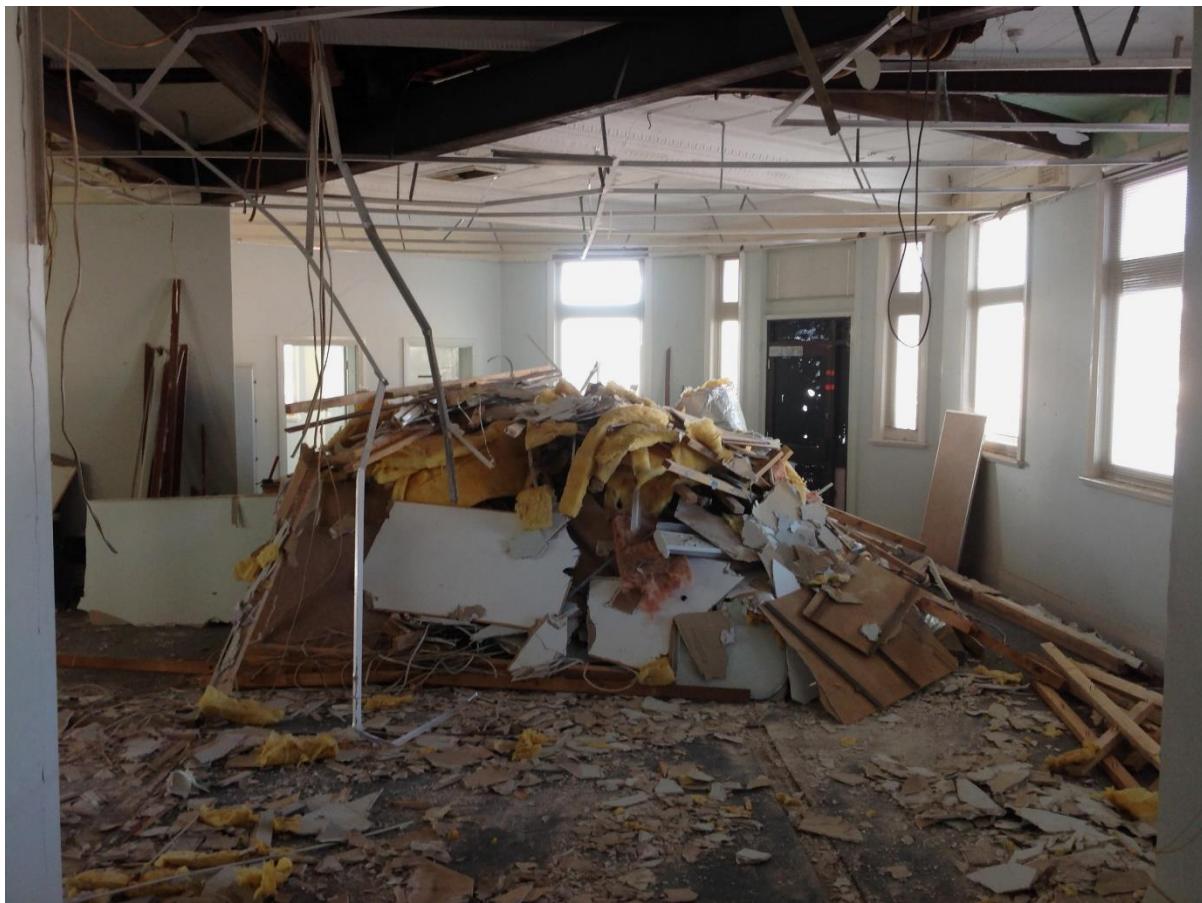
Her work will make up an arts project run by North Midlands Project, which will later be on tour in the region.

Mr Bowman-Bright said there was a jam-packed calendar of events for the gallery space.

"We use arts, heritage and culture to make change," he said.

"Everything we do is derived from a community need. We look at things that need to be addressed in community."

"There's meaning behind it. It all comes back to strengthening the community."



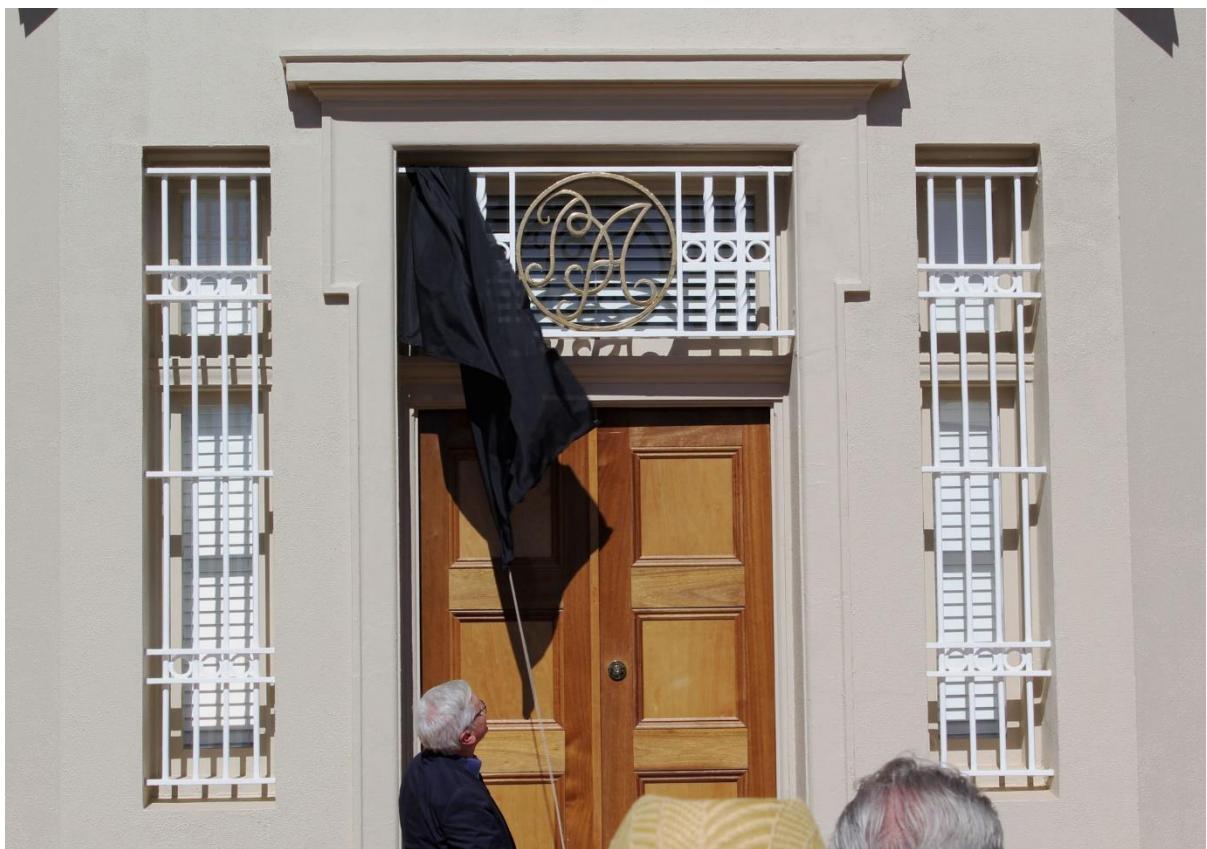
During the opening of *The Bank* we ran children's activities, our first artist-in-residence Di Taylor live-painted a portrait of local bushranger Frank Thomas and singer-songwriter Ashlea Reale set the vibe with her earthy acoustic songs about Western Australia's history and heritage. The Carnamah Museum opened especially for the day, as did the Bush Basket (to sell roasted coffee) and the Carnamah Hotel (providing the many people in attendance with the option of lunch).





For the opening the bank chamber contained an exhibition about the history of the building while the now blackened strong room (vault) contained images of the building's renovation. The old manager's office, which has been named *The Geoff Ryder Room* after the bank's first manager, displayed artworks created by students from four local schools (shown below).





Above: Duncan Ord officially opening The Bank. Below (left): The re-creation of the passageway of *The Bank* and (right) our inaugural community artist-in-residence Di Taylor in the restored passage.

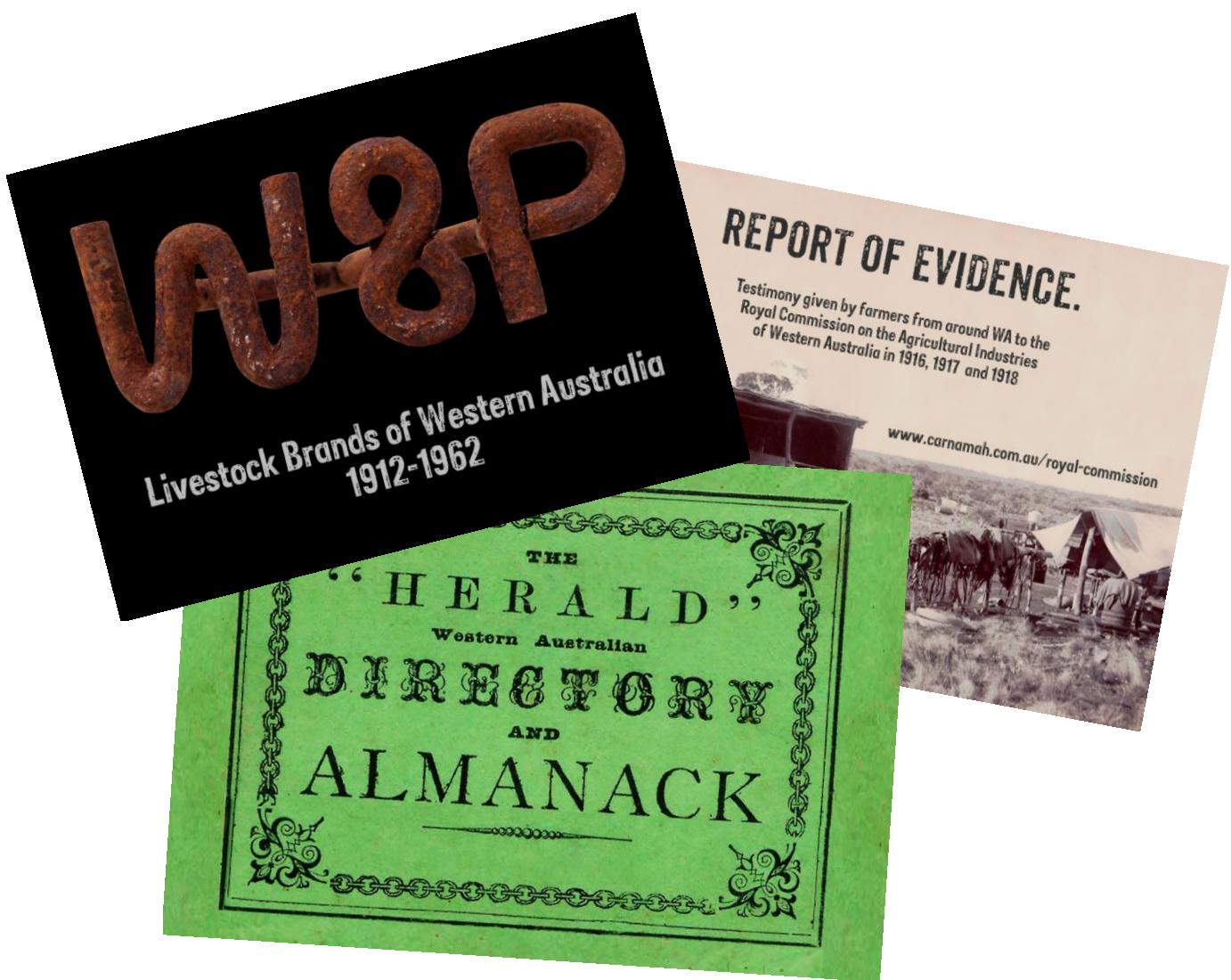


Training & Community Heritage Projects

During the year we undertook a range of training and heritage projects. These projects helped transform huge historical repositories into more useful, accessible and appreciated resources. Some of these focussed on Mid West content while others covered all of WA. During 2017 over 450 people contributed approximately 171,600 hours at eight locations across metropolitan Perth. Some of the noteworthy outcomes include freely available online databases for:

- Western Australian Livestock Brands 1912-1962 (extracted from Government Gazettes)
- State School Teachers in Western Australia 1900-1980 (from The Education Circular)
- People in the Colony of Western Australia 1873-1889 (from directories and almanacs)
- Reports on Aboriginal People on Western Australian stations 1899-1902
- Testimony from the Royal Commissions on Agricultural Industries and Soldier Settlement
- Early Western Australian Motor Vehicle Registrations 1915-1928 (addition of extra years)

Our thanks to the many people who helped achieve these outcomes as well as the State Library of Western Australia, Parliamentary Library Western Australia, the Department of Education's Library and Information Service, atWork Australia and the Carnamah Historical Society & Museum.



Artist-in-Residence



In 2017 the North Midlands Project hosted Di Taylor as its inaugural artist-in-residence at *The Bank Gallery Space* in Carnamah.

Di is an established Western Australian visual artist with a wealth of knowledge and experience from a career spanning over 45 years. Di usually works from an open studio on Angove Street in North Perth, where she creates, exhibits and sells her artworks. She has successfully exhibited across multiple states of Australia and regularly donates her time and art to charities and organisations who work to improve the lives of communities in WA.

Working with Di across seven towns in the North Midlands, we conducted a community mural, community arts workshops, exhibitions, pop up galleries, school programs, artist talks and mental resilience workshops.

Through her residency Di produced twelve new artworks on the life and stories of Mid West bushranger Frank Thomas, which culminated in the hugely popular exhibition *10863 Bushranger presented by Act-Belong-Commit*. Check out www.ditaylor.com.au to discover more about Di.

We would like to thank Di for her passion and commitment to the North Midlands Project.



Above: *Yarra Yarra Lakes* in Carnamah, painted by Di for the opening of *The Bank Gallery Space*.

Community Strengthening Program

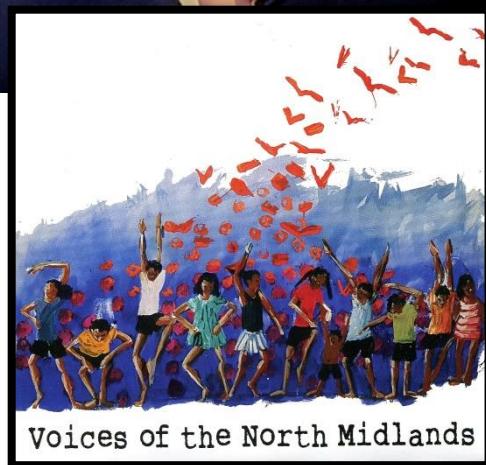
Our annual 'Community Strengthening Program' is our framework to deliver purpose-driven activities linked to positive mental health and community capacity-building outcomes. The program utilises arts, culture, heritage and education as the vehicle to drive positive social change/impact through the six local government areas of the North Midlands.

In 2017 the program delivered 93 activities with 1,260 participants and 32,244 spectators.



Above: One of the *Art of Music* workshops facilitated by Western Australian singer-songwriter Ashlea Reale.

Right: Cover of the CD *Voices of the North Midlands* which published the songs about the region created during the *Art of Music* workshops, which are also freely available online on SoundCloud.



Consultation had been undertaken with the local community in 2016 to identify focus areas for the program, which revealed:

- A need for social and personal growth opportunities outside of sport
- Stress over unconventional gas exploration in the area
- Periodic anxiety during periods of low rainfall and subsequent financial distress (which extends beyond the farming community due to the flow-on effect to local businesses)
- A desirability for more events that bring people together and foster a sense of community
- Recurrent gaps in the arts and cultural calendar due to previous endeavours, although widely patronised and appreciated, not being set up to be sustainable
- Instances of depression due to social isolation



Above: Ron Bradfield Jnr of Urban Indigenous running Aboriginal Yarning & Tracking Workshops.

The major outputs of the program were:

- Six community arts workshops, four exhibitions, exhibition launches, artist and curator talks, three pop up galleries, two school programs, a community mural and 14 mental resilience workshops with six schools across the North Midlands
- Four music workshops facilitated by WA singer-songwriter Ashlea Reale with regional youth, culminating in a CD of their songs about the region
- Aboriginal Tracking & Yarning Workshops in Coorow, Carnamah and Perenjori with Ron Bradfield Jnr from Urban Indigenous
- The exhibition *10863 Bushranger presented by Act-Belong-Commit*, which engaged with more than 23,000 people!
- Positive feedback to the program from community members, schools, local governments and other stakeholders



Above: Students at Perenjori Primary School with artist Di Taylor and their teacher Shiona Herbert at the conclusion of their art-based mental resilience workshop.



Above: Act-Belong-Commit Community Mural on the main street of Carnamah. Children from across the region painted themselves onto the mural with assistance from their parents and three artists.

Di Taylor with a community workshop participant (below left) and a family taking part in some of our activities at the Mid West Expo in Mingenew (Below right). Further below are some of the participants who took part in our Act-Belong-Commit Painting Workshop during September.



We would like to thank Healthway for supporting us to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message through the activities and events of our 2017 Community Strengthening Program.

10863 Bushranger

One of the brightest outcomes for the North Midlands Project in 2017 was the exhibition *10863 Bushranger presented by Act-Belong-Commit*. The exhibition was the culmination of Di Taylor's residency and a number of community programs that occurred through the year.

The exhibition showcased 12 new artworks produced by Di, which depicted the life and stories of local bushranger Frank Thomas. Each was accompanied by fascinating interpretation researched by volunteers and prepared by the Carnamah Historical Society & Museum. Also included was a captivating short story by emerging writer Lauren Selfe of Carnamah; a unique song by WA singer-songwriter Ashlea Reale; and visual diaries about the bushranger created by five of the schools in the North Midlands.

Timed to coincide with the North Midlands Agricultural Society's biennial art and photography show, the exhibition was launched at *The Bank Gallery Space* in Carnamah on 15 September 2017. *The Bank* was filled to capacity on opening night and over 500 people attended the exhibition over the following four days.

The exhibition travelled to Geraldton for the Sunshine Festival and then spent two and a half months at the historic Fremantle Prison in Perth, where the bushranger had been an inmate. A metro launch was held at the prison, with the exhibition officially opened by Duncan Ord, the Director-General of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. The exhibition and its positive wellbeing message engaged with over 22,000 people while at Fremantle Prison.





Above: Launch of *10863 Bushranger* presented by *Act-Belong-Commit* at The Bank Gallery Space in Carnamah. Below: Part of the exhibition in the gallery at Fremantle Prison in Perth.

Those who attended the exhibition received a brochure about the bushranger's story and a magnet card. The card contained an artwork on one side and helpline numbers on the back. As it was visually appealing it ended up on many a fridge! The wives of two local men have passed on their thanks for the messages imparted in the exhibition and for the helpline cards, which their husbands used.



Youth Ambassador

To help support and foster emerging artists to work with regional communities, the North Midlands Project will appoint a Youth Ambassador each year. They will work with us in the delivery of our annual Community Strengthening Program and also provide us with guidance to help ensure we keep things youth-relevant.

Our inaugural Youth Ambassador, Gabrielle Butler, was announced at the metro launch of *10863 Bushranger presented by Act-Belong-Commit*.

Gabrielle is a young visual artist, filmmaker and photographer who spent her childhood in Perenjori and Geraldton. One of her artworks was featured in the 2016 Year 12 Perspectives at the Art Gallery of WA and she is presently studying a Bachelor of Arts at Curtin, majoring in Screen Art with a minor in Photography. Visit www.gabriellebutler.com to discover more about Gabrielle.



Regional Learning Hub

Our Regional Advisory Team identified the need for personal development opportunities to exist across the communities of the North Midlands, which led to the establishment in 2017 of our Regional Learning Hub.

The Shire of Carnamah generously offered a peppercorn lease for three underutilised rooms at the rear of the Carnamah Hall. The offer was accepted and these are now being used as a training room, break-out room and office. The Shire of Carnamah's President, Merle Isbister, officially opened the *Learning Hub* on 12 October 2017.

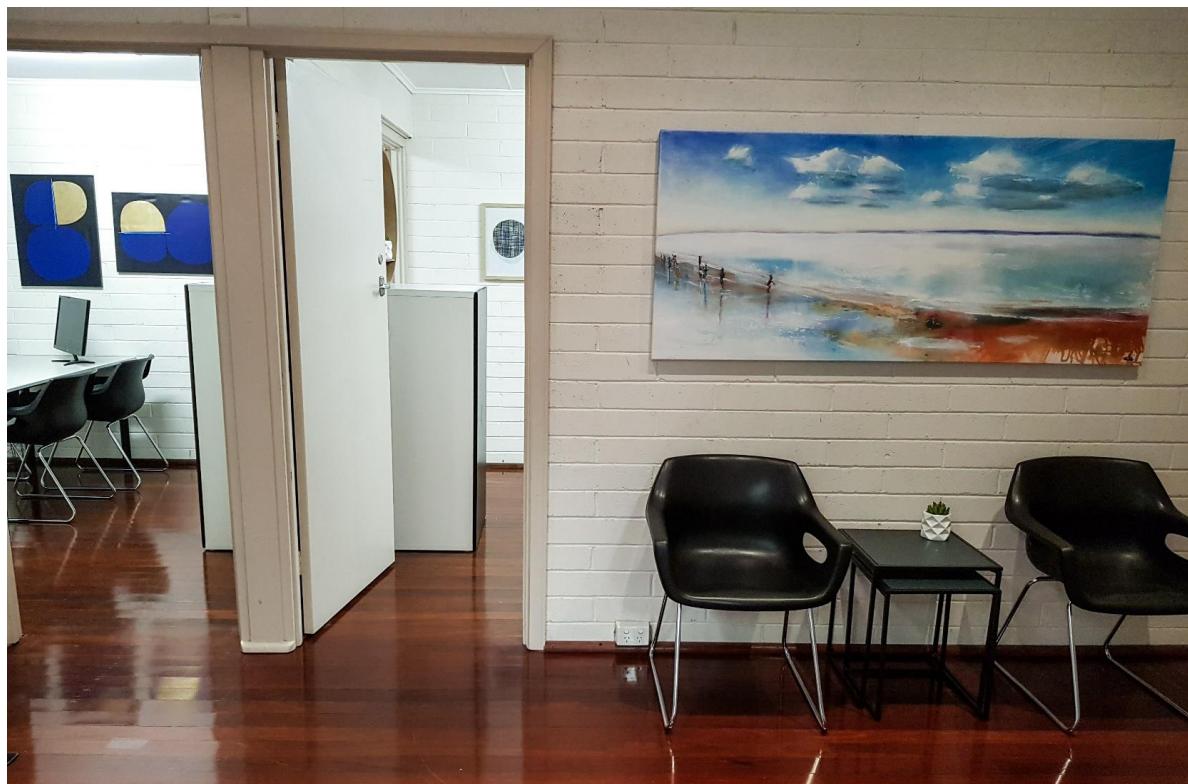
The *Learning Hub* is evolving to become a training and resource facility to provide access to personal learning, education and workforce development services for people living in the North Midlands. We believe 'learning' empowers individuals and assists in creating a viable region while fostering community inclusiveness, participation and cohesion.

In late 2017 Richelle Essers was appointed Program Delivery Officer to develop and manage the programs of the *Learning Hub*. All existing and future programs are available to community members and are provided free of charge to ensure they remain democratically open to everyone.



Above: Carnamah's after-school CoderDojo club, which was established by a community member days after the inception of the *Learning Hub*. Music lessons have also commenced in the space, with many more programs planned for 2018.

Below: Office, break-out room and foyer of the Learning Hub at the rear of the Carnamah Hall.



The Exchange

During 2017 we began the implementation of our *Exchange* model, which was developed to address two community needs:

- Create 'all of community' multipurpose spaces for the people of the North Midlands to enhance their quality of life, health and wellbeing through arts, culture, heritage and education activities. Spaces to foster inclusiveness, participation and cohesion to drive positive social change. *The Exchange – Carnamah* will be the main building used for the delivery of our annual Community Strengthening Program.
- Create a centralised 'hub' for multiple community and not-for-profit organisations to conduct their activities to reduce volunteer burnout and minimise duplicated services, insurances and operational costs. The facility will be made available to community organisations at no cost and all activities, programs and events run from the facility will be accessible to community members free of charge.

We began with *The Exchange – Perenjori*, which we run in collaboration with local artist Christina Laue. This small but functional space runs community workshops on a weekly basis with a focus on bringing isolated youth together. While we can accept thanks for helping to develop the space, the success and great programs are a credit to the wonderful work done by Christina.

Below: *The Exchange – Perenjori* on Fowler Street, near the centre of the Perenjori townsite



A former showroom and garage at 4 Macpherson Street in Carnamah is undergoing a range of renovations and works to become *The Exchange – Carnamah*. Works have included a new roof, new ceilings, removal of a false wall, repairs to walls, installation of locks, electrical re-wiring, installation of new plumbing, new bathrooms and industrial cleaning to remove 88 years of grease and dust. To give the space more meaning the render has been stripped off one internal wall to expose the bricks underneath – one of the few buildings made of local bricks from the Carnamah Brickworks in 1930.

The Exchange – Carnamah will open on Sunday 5 May 2018 as part of the Australian Heritage Festival. The showroom will be used as a community lounge room, meeting place and free book exchange while the workshop at the back will become an arts studio, workshop space, venue for community dinners and movies as well as allow for the holding of large-scale events.

A community garden is planned for the front yard of *The Exchange – Carnamah*, in collaboration with the Carnamah Lions Club and the Carnamah Land Conservation District Committee (Landcare). The plants will be entirely native with a focus on bush tucker and Aboriginal medicine.

Our thanks to CBH Group, the Shire of Carnamah and a number of community members for helping in the creation of *The Exchange – Carnamah*.



Above: The former showroom under renovation to become part of *The Exchange – Carnamah*

Betsy!

It's a unique situation to be operating across six local government areas in a region as vast and large as Western Australia's Mid West. During 2017 we acquired Betsy, the enabler! Betsy helps us move items for workshops, artworks for exhibitions and in 2018 will also be used as a mobile arts studio.



Supporters

We would like to thank and acknowledge the invaluable support we received during the year:

- Healthway for sponsorship of our first annual Community Strengthening Program
- Lotterywest for a grant enabling us to purchase required items to equip *The Bank Gallery Space* and for the delivery of our Community Strengthening Programs
- CBH Group for a grant towards the development of *The Exchange – Carnamah*
- Shire of Carnamah for the \$1 lease of three rooms at the rear of the Carnamah Hall for our Regional Learning Hub; for installing new ceilings in two of the rooms; and for their in-kind contributions of labour and equipment towards *The Exchange – Carnamah*
- The Sidney Myer Fund, Minderoo Foundation and Spinifex Trust for Capacity Building Arts Funding in both 2017 and 2018
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries for funding towards Aboriginal Yarning & Tracking Workshops
- Perenjori Public Benefit Trust, supported by Mount Gibson Iron and the Shire of Perenjori, for funds towards *The Exchange – Perenjori*
- atWork Australia and the Carnamah Historical Society & Museum for their assistance in our training and community heritage projects
- The Midwest Times for profiling our activities so many times throughout the year



Management Committee

The North Midlands Project is comprised of highly experienced and qualified leaders in multi-disciplinary professions from both the not-for-profit, community and commercial sectors. The Management Committee is guided by a Regional Advisory Team and assisted by a dedicated group of Artistic, Cultural & Wellness Directors.



President – Andrew Bowman

Andrew is President and a Heritage Director of the North Midlands Project.

Andrew is the virtual curator and a project manager of the Carnamah Historical Society & Museum, works independently as a researcher and cultural heritage consultant and formerly held positions with the State Library of Western Australia Foundation and Curtin University.

His work promoting the history and heritage of Carnamah, a town and farming community in WA's Mid West, was acknowledged with the Outstanding Newcomer Professor David Dolan Award at the 2013 Western Australian Heritage Awards. He played an integral role in four WA projects winning Museums and Galleries National Awards (MAGNAs) in 2014 and 2015 and in the Carnamah Historical Society winning the Outstanding Community Organisation category in the 2015 Western Australian Heritage Awards.

In recent years Andrew has served on the boards of the Young Australia League, Royal Western Australian Historical Society, History Council of Western Australia and the WA branch of Museums Australia. He is also Vice President of the North Midlands Agricultural Society and in 2017 was elected to the Carnamah Shire Council.



Vice President – Jane King

Jane is the Gallery Manager at JCG (John Curtin Gallery), the Art Gallery at Curtin University. She has previously held the roles as Head of Member Development at Artsource, Executive Director, State Library of WA Foundation and Executive Officer Museums Australia.

She is also the Vice President of Museums Galleries Australia WA Branch, the peak body for Museums and Galleries. Jane also represents the Collection Sector on FutureNow's Industry Advisory Group, and was a founding board member of the Chamber of Arts and Culture in Western Australia.

Jane has degrees in Economics and Fine Art, and a postgraduate Diploma in Management. In 2015 Jane attended the Museum Leadership Program at Macquarie University. On behalf of her organisation, Jane received the 2015 MAGNA Exhibition award for small museum exhibition, the 2010 Western Australian Heritage Award and the 2009 WA Business and the Arts Partnership Award. Jane was a State finalist in the Telstra Business Women's Awards 2014.

Jane is also a practising artist, and sometimes freelance curator. She holds both the Vice President position and an Artistic Director role in the organisation.

Secretary – Anne Chapple



Anne has a diverse working life experience, from her first position in education, through to involvement in the arts, event management, tourism, marketing, fundraising, history and heritage. This activity has been complemented by her passion for and extensive participation in community and community engagement. Anne has been involved in a number of very successful on-going community projects proving that the strength and power of the community can and does initiate and implement change.

Being born and bred in country Western Australia, Anne has a deep love of the rural areas of Western Australia and believes that the North Midlands project will be an instrument of inspiration and a model for other small communities to follow in establishing their own enterprises. Anne's love for and knowledge of the arts, culture and heritage are all satisfied and stimulated by this project and is very proud to be part of such a creative and innovative endeavour.

Treasurer – Fritha Zentner



Fritha is a Certified Practicing Accountant (CPA) and has completed a Bachelor of Commerce with a double major in Accounting and Taxation at Curtin University. She has extensive experience in Public Practice for small to large businesses including those in the non-profit sector.

Fritha grew up in Geraldton and is passionate about the Mid West region. Her mother is a prominent Geraldton artist who has spent the last 30 years creating and leading artistic, cultural and heritage projects to benefit the local community. Through this Fritha understands the benefits of community engagement to its health and wellbeing and is thrilled to assist North Midlands Project reach its goals in these areas.

Committee Member – Tamara Hill



Tamara currently works within early childhood and special needs education. She is dedicated to assisting the young and socially challenged to find, value and share their voice. Completing a Visual Art degree in 2012 Tamara exhibited numerous multidisciplinary artworks and highly values the discourse provoked through relational aesthetics and performance art.

Tamara advocates for the ineffable contribution the arts offer to community enhancement and is excited to facilitate this in its many forms and on all levels. Tamara is both a Committee Member and an Artistic Director role of the North Midlands Project.

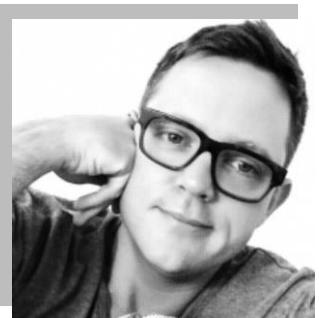
Committee Member – Penelope Wheeler



Penelope is an experienced business administrator and is presently a Global Service Line Coordinator for People & Organisation Support at Rio Tinto. In addition to holding other high-level administration positions, she previously worked as a Workplace Learning Coordinator & Career Adviser at Belmont City College.

Penelope brings strength to the committee around compliance, governance and the development of policies and procedures. She appreciates arts, culture and heritage and the positive impact it can have on people of all ages.

Executive Director – David Bright



Over 17 years David has successfully developed and managed improvement projects in corporate, community and the social enterprise / non-profit sectors in Australia, Asia, Europe, America and Africa. Leading high-performing teams he has established organisations, assisted in scaling-up and created sustainable models allowing focus on dreaming BIG to create awesome legacies.

David has a genuine passion to empower people and strengthen communities through emerging technologies, the arts and cultural initiatives. He is personally committed to placing his energy where he can add value to an organisation, its people and outcomes. David's ongoing mission is to explore new ways of working with each other, moving beyond the conventional, challenging the status quo.

North Midlands Project

www.northmidlands.org.au

4-8 + 9 Macpherson Street, CARNAMAH WA 6517

PO Box 12, CARNAMAH WA 6517

Telephone 0419 766 808

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @northmidlands

mail@northmidlands.org.au

