

ACT NATIMUK

Annual Report 2023



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Cover: 'Night Blooms' St Arnaud. Gatherings 2023.
Image: Rogan Hando.

Left: Circus Jam crew. Image: Wobbly Spoon.

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Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country with Uncle Ron Marks. Nati Frinj 2022. Image: Michelle McFarlane.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Natimuk respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we are located, the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Jupagulk and Wergaia and all the lands on which we meet and work.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge their sacred connection to land, water and community.

INTRODUCTION

What is ACT Natimuk?

actnatimuk.com

ACT Natimuk is a not-for-profit arts and cultural organisation based in the town of Natimuk on Wotjobaluk/Jadawadjali Country in the Wimmera region of Western Victoria.

Established in 1986, and previously known as Arapiles Community Theatre (ACT), the group has an illustrious history supporting performing arts events within the district. Over the past 23 years ACT Natimuk has extended its vision to support arts over a broader range of disciplines, including dance, visual arts and film. The name ACT Natimuk now speaks more to this extended vision.

ACT Natimuk has a strong community participation and engagement focus through various arts, cultural projects, and events. We provide professional, project, and resources support through a suite of programs:

- ACT Natimuk Presents
- Nati Frinj Biennale
- Made In Natimuk (MiN)/Creative Lab
- ACT Natimuk major Projects & Partnerships

2023 Snapshot in Numbers:

- \$104,000** in state and federal funding
- \$101,712** in earned income
- \$16,326** in private and philanthropic support
- 32** events, exhibitions and workshops across Regional Victoria

People

In 2023 ACT Natimuk consisted of the following people:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chair** – D’Arcy Molan
- Vice-Chair** – Sue Pavlovich
- Secretary** – Yingying He
- Treasurer** – Tony Noller

GENERAL COMMITTEE

- Gail Harradine
- Alison Eggleton
- Martin Perkins

STAFF

- Tracey Skinner** – General Manager
- Verity Higgins** – Made in Natimuk Producer
- Greg Pritchard** – Nati Frinj Biennale Director (outgoing)
- Alison Eggleton** – Nati Frinj Biennale Director (incoming)

MEMBERS

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| No Mi Che | Gillian Turner |
| Rob Grenfell | Dawa Che |
| Genevieve Lilley | Carolynne Hamdorf |
| Sue Pavlovich | Yingying He |
| Jacqui Schulz | Gail Harradine |
| John Mckee | D’Arcy Molan |
| Zlatko Balazic | Alison Eggleton |
| Elaine Uebergang | Lewis Dacre |
| Mary French | Tony Noller |
| Hannah French | Ann Sprague |
| Sally French | Anna Ferguson |
| Peter French | Joan Goad |
| Joy Durston | Ronald Penrose |
| Greg Pritchard | Jenny Peterson |
| Jillian Pearce | Eleanor McDonald |
| Meg Dennison | Angela Walker |
| Mark Gould | Joan Johns |
| Eleanor McDonald | Patrick Ford |
| Adam Demmert | Tobie Coggle |
| Martin Perkins | Meg Holmes |
| Tracey Skinner | Dave Jones |

Message from the Chair

Hello and welcome from Wotjobaluk Country.

I would like to thank Vice Chair Sue Pavlovich, who has been instrumental in my transition to Chairing ACT Natimuk. Also, Mary French, who as a long-term Treasurer stepped down from the role and committee at the start of 2023. Thanks to Tony Noller for taking on the role of Treasurer and Yingying He who took over from Abigail Watkins as Secretary this year. I appreciate all the Committee members work this year, including Gail Harradine, Alison Eggleton, and Martin Perkins.

In 2023, ACT Natimuk has continued to produce, present, support, and auspice arts and cultural work in the Wimmera region and beyond. We receive Creative Enterprises Program (CEP) funding from Creative Victoria (CV) (2022-2025), which is equal to \$400,000 in total (\$100,000 per year for four years), which enables us to employ a General Manager, a Made in Natimuk (MiN) producer, and a Nati Frinj Biennale Director. Thanks to our Sector Relationship Manager from CV, Victoria Jones, for her advice and help.

Tracey Skinner continued to be energetic in her role as General Manager.

Our long-standing Made in Natimuk (MiN) producer and Creative Lab manager, Verity Higgins, remained in her position.

Thanks to Nati Frinj Biennale Director Greg Pritchard who finished his tenure in 2023, and Alison Eggleton who was appointed the new Nati Frinj Biennale Director at the end of the year.

ACT Natimuk had our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. Thanks to Tracey Skinner for her work on the RAP. In Reconciliation Week, ACT Natimuk launched the RAP document at the Creative Voices/Creative Generations event at the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall. The event involved Wotjobaluk/Djubagalk/Jadawadjali Traditional Owner, Gail Harradine, and six other Wotjobaluk artists and was co-ordinated by Jillian Pearce and supported by an event committee from ACT Natimuk and Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network.

There were many programs in 2023, including the long-running Palais de Pixel, and Goatfest - which was a sold-out event at the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall. Thanks to Lynne Quick, Elaine Uebergang, and Yingying He for running Palais de Pixel and Tracey Skinner for co-ordinating Goatfest. Proceeds from Goatfest were put towards the popular Circus Jam program led by local circus performers No Mi Che and Dawa Che.

ACT Natimuk was commissioned again by the Northern Grampians Shire Council to present Gatherings, and successfully staged events in Halls Gap and St Arnaud. Producers for Gatherings included Tracey Skinner, Jillian Pearce, and Jacinda O'Sullivan.

We also saw the return of the Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail (NOSAT) weekend, which had an increased number and variety of local visual artists and studios involved. Tracey Skinner was the driving force behind NOSAT.

On the Saturday night of the NOSAT November long weekend, Alison Eggleton produced the Frinj Trim which involved visual art, circus, and music in an interactive and well attended event at the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall.

This year ACT Natimuk put on three Friends and Community nights in the Natimuk Hall. Thanks to Alison Eggleton as event co-ordinator and Tracey Skinner for their work in making these vibrant and successful events.

Unexpectedly, Federation University in Horsham offered ACT Natimuk a range of printmaking presses and art studio gear as a gift. We have accepted this donation and set up The Studio in Firebrace Street Horsham. Thanks to Sue Pavlovich, Alma McKenzie, Beyond Community Inclusion, HC Pro, and our committee for making this possible.

This year Alison White has continued as our Bookkeeper.

Thanks to all members, volunteers, and the community.

D'Arcy Molan
ACT Natimuk Chairperson



'The Moth Trail' Halls Gap. Gatherings 2023. Image: Anthony McKee.

Message from the General Manager

2023 has been another busy year for ACT Natimuk. Many of our newer programs such as Circus Jam and the Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail have continued to grow from strength to strength. Through these programs, we are able to offer employment to local artists and to provide opportunities to show and share their work with the local community and beyond. With the initial grants to set these up mostly exhausted, we are looking at options to make these sustainable for the longer term. Whilst we will continue to search for grant funding to support them where possible, a more robust user pays system may need to be set in place where we have previously offered a free or minimal cost to community and artists. Sponsorship and a stronger approach with regards to Philanthropic patrons are avenues that the organisation needs to take on board and pursue with a more dedicated focus.

With events happening for the most part every month, volunteers were on high rotation. We couldn't do what we do without these people in the community and the organisation putting their hands up time and time again. Our sincere thanks to them and as the General Manager I can't highlight enough how appreciative I am when I come to do the volunteer call outs.

The administration load that goes alongside a busy event year is commensurate. We continue to be thankful for the Creative Victoria CEP funding that supports the General Manager role. From its early days as a completely volunteer run organisation, the funding has allowed us to

streamline our systems and take the weight off volunteers as ACT Natimuk has continued to grow. This year saw further systems being put in place and will stand the organisation in good stead for the years ahead.

Our special event for Reconciliation Week, Creative Voice/Creative Generations showcased a number of Wotjobaluk artists and had great turnout from the community. The artists available to attend on the evening all provided positive feedback and we look forward to developing more events that provide opportunities such as this to highlight the great work they are producing in the region.

Frinj Trim in November was a fun event that again put the spotlight on local artists. The Grist bar served refreshments for the evening's festivities and was a gathering spot where new friends and networks were made.

Alongside our own programs and events, the organisation has also auspiced a number of projects within the local community. Planning and work began on these in 2023 but for most projects, the delivery will happen in 2024. We are incredibly proud of all the teams and the work they have put into their projects and we look forward to seeing the outcomes in 2024.

Tracey Skinner
ACT Natimuk General Manager

PROGRAM



ACT Natimuk Chair D'Arcy Molan opens the Friends & Community event 'Celebrating Frinj'.

NATI FRINJ BIENNALE OFF YEAR

natifrinj.com

2023 was the off year for the Nati Frinj Biennale. All the acquittals of the 2022 festival were completed and any follow ups and general enquires were answered.

Over the course of the year, Frinj Director Greg Pritchard had discussions with a variety of artists who had expressed interest in participating in the next Nati Frinj.

On August 4th the ACT Natimuk Friends & Community event presented *Celebrating Frinj* which not only looked at the 2022 event but also opened up the floor for conversation and questions around what the community might like to see at the next offering. Feedback was captured and this will help inform and guide for the next festival.

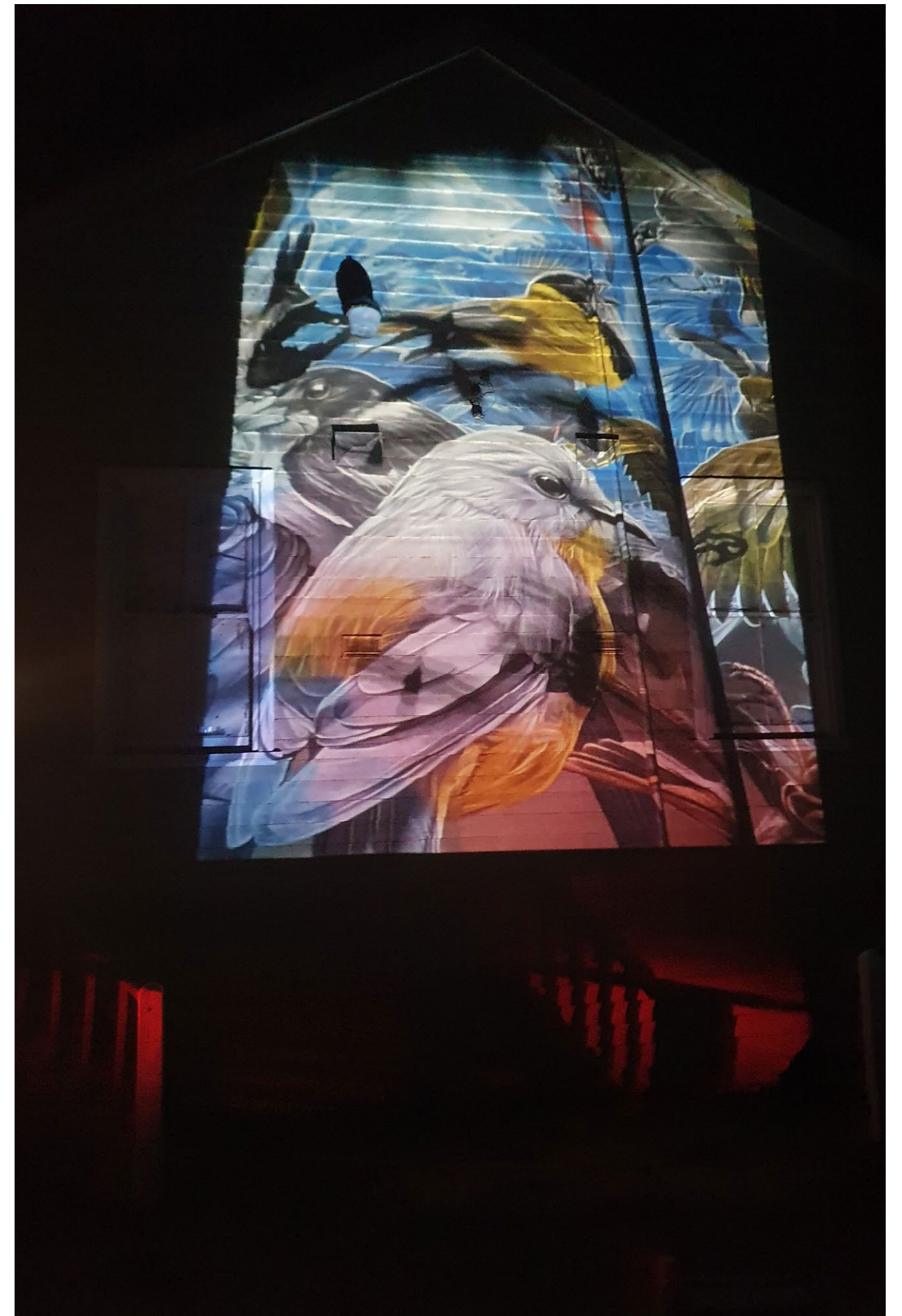
With the Frinj Director contract coming to an end in December, the Executive Committee took this opportunity to revisit the job positions of the festival and its operational guides. COVID-19 had impacted the delivery year of Frinj 2021 which meant it was postponed and delivered instead in what would be its usual off year of 2022. The need for deeper community engagement was highlighted in feedback so taking this into account, the question arose around when the next event should be; 2024 or 2025. There were pros and cons to both options and it was decided that discussing these options with any potential Frinj Director applicants might also help inform this decision. The ACT Natimuk Executive decided that any future planning, including the year of

Frinj festival delivery, should occur in a co-design process with the Executive and the successful applicant.

The Frinj Director position was advertised in September 2023. From an outstanding selection of applicants, a new Frinj Director, Alison Eggleton was chosen. A Cultural Producer and Art Curator, Alison is a resident of Natimuk and comes with a wealth of experience for the role, and is known to many locals from her years at the Horsham Regional Art Gallery as Curator. We welcome her onboard and look forward to seeing an exciting program for the next Frinj take shape.

After further consideration, the ACT Natimuk Executive and Frinj Director Alison Eggleton decided to present the next Nati Frinj Biennale in 2025, from 31 Oct- 2 Nov. This would allow time to plan a Frinj that would ensure many layers of local community engagement and offer opportunities to experiment and play. There will be development of some new initiatives that will encourage greater visibility, accessibility and collaboration. Our hope is this will make the Frinj that we know and love be even more responsive to community's interests, in line with the ACT Natimuk Strategic Plan.

It was a challenging time after the Covid induced postponement of 2021 Frinj, when Greg Pritchard stepped into the role of Frinj Director (2022/23), and at a time when many arts organisations and festivals were having to rethink and regroup. We would like to thank Greg and wish him well with all his future endeavours.



Digital Animation Projection, Dave Jones. Artist, Smug 2023. Commission for the Murtoa Silo Art Mural. Frinj Trim. Image: Alison Eggleton.

MADE IN NATIMUK (MiN)

madeinnatimuk.com

MADE IN NATIMUK

2023 has been a challenging year in terms of uptake of MiN products.

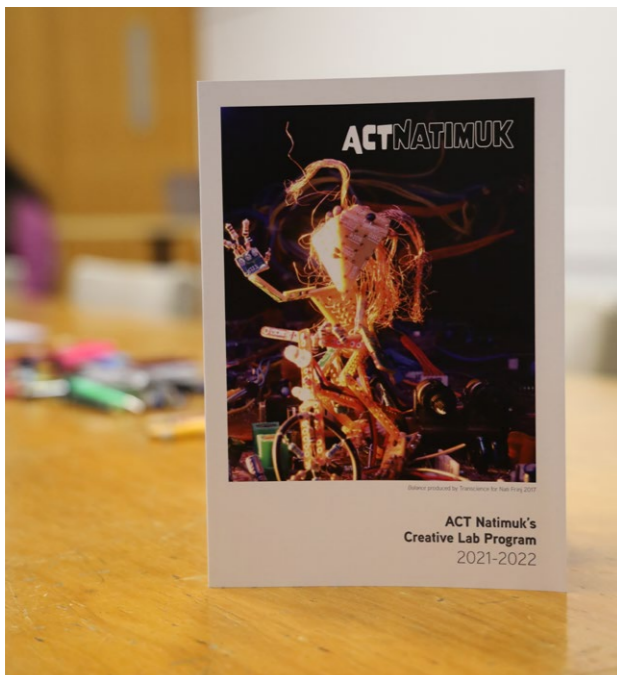
From a pitching session at APAX (Australian Performing Arts Exchange) in August 2022 of the large-scale site-specific work *Space and Place*, strong interest was expressed by Cessnock Performing Arts Centre for an iteration of this project to be developed with community and presented on the Cessnock Poppet head.

Considerable work was put in to build connections with partners in the region and to try and attract resources for a site and relationship-strengthening visit, but this project did not progress.

Southside Festival Frankston also reached out to *Made in Natimuk* and a scoping visit was conducted, and following that an EOI developed for a projection project, but this also did not get taken up.

Connection and a visit was made to Shepparton Art Museum regarding a potential Commonwealth Games community engagement project as well as re-engaging with the City of Greater Bendigo regarding a potential reiteration of *Poppet* for the Commonwealth Games Cultural Program. This latter one was put forward through the tender process but these both fizzled out when the plug was pulled on the Commonwealth Games.

Face Off was again presented at Gatherings 2023 as part of the Moth Trail at Halls Gap for the Northern Grampians Shire.



Creative Lab brochure. Image: Pat Ford.

CREATIVE LAB

The Creative Lab program in 2023 was focused on providing a further opportunity for an artist with a disability and the introduction of a First Nations Creative Lab.

I coordinated the delivery of the Inclusive Creative Lab opportunity by artist Louise Cooper, in liaison with her local mentor, Sue Pavlovich.

Following on from her Creative Lab, Louise was successful in applying for touring funding from Creative Victoria and in 2024 will undertake a Victorian tour of the Neurokin community arts and professional development program for Autistic and neuro-diverse people to a range of community houses across Victoria.

The First Nations Creative Lab opportunity was developed, promoted and support given for the application process. We received one application from Chrissie Secombe in collaboration with Alan Murphy, which the panel deemed worthy of awarding, and this Creative Lab is currently in progress. The outcome will be the creation of a book and an exhibition in partnership with the Wimmera Library.

As a result of the low uptake it is proposed that when promoting Creative Lab 2024 & 2025 information sessions could be run in collaboration with a number of First Nations groups and land councils.

GENERAL

I was given the opportunity to represent ACT Natimuk at APAF (The Australian Performing Arts Forum) in August 2023. One of the clear threads through this forum was the loss in interest and confidence by community and presenters to attend and/or buy in ready-made product. There was a general trend to want work that had a strong community engagement component and a company/artist in residence model. These were then further confirmed as trends when I worked as a locum as Team Leader, Regional Partnerships for RAV from Sept –Dec 2023. The idea of creating/supporting creative nodes with arts residencies and opportunities for meaningful community engagement emerge as a strong thread amongst the current models of sustainable effective regional arts practice. Fortunately this is very much how ACT Natimuk operates but did warrant an evaluation of the MiN model – and resulted in presenting a proposal at the Strategic Plan review to move to offering ‘Creative Services’ instead, or as well as, ‘products’.

Verity Higgins

Made in Natimuk (MiN) and Creative Lab programs.

GOATFEST

The Goatfest Climbing Film Festival has continued to grow since its inception in 2002, and the 2023 iteration was a great sellout success with 180 attendees.

It was a bumper film submission year – we had some submissions from last year’s cancelled event carried over and then received quite a few newly created homegrown local ones in the last few days before Goatfest. 12 in total for the festival competition.

A crew of volunteers from chair movers, front of house to barpersons, set up and packed down for the night and ensured a smooth running production. Local business, the Nati Café ran the kitchen for the night and kept attendees energy sustained. Climbing Anchors and Rock Hardware were prize sponsors.

The event opened with entertainment from NSW Blue Mountains climber and musician Adrian Laing along with fellow musician Carolina.

Films submitted:

Gigantor – Ben Sanford

Get a Job – Lucas Corroto

Crack Café – Lucas Pittaway

7 Seven 7 – Divya Gordon

Don’t Climb This You Bastards – Melissa Edwards

Persisting – Redpointers Anonymous

Inspire – John Morris

Happiness – Olivia Page, Roya the Destroya, No Mi Che

Molly vs The Grampians – Molly Johnson

On the (climbing/birding) Spectrum – Abby Watkins

Teddy – A climbing story – Mica Weatherstone

The Wedgie – Rob Mudie, John Fischer

Chris Wallace’s film ‘Geryon’ was the special screening after intermission.

The Winners for the Goatfest 2024 were:

Audience Choice Award

Don’t Climb This You Bastards by Melissa Edwards

Jury Choice Award

The Wedgie by Rob Mudie and John Fischer

Kids Encouragement Award

Teddy – A climbing story by Mica Weatherstone

The Audience Choice and Jury Choice winners each received the Goatfest trophy and the winner goodie bag containing vouchers and gear from our prize sponsors.

Kids Encouragement Award received a Goatfest trophy and Wild Country chalkbag.

CIRCUS JAM

2023 was another amazing year for Circus Jam. It began with six months of funding from the Horsham Rural City Council (HRCC), providing free workshops for members of the community. Typical class sizes were 13, with people coming from Quantong, Horsham, Natimuk, Melbourne and overseas. Circus Jam has a steady crew of regulars, however each term still sees new faces. Feedback is very positive with children enthusiastic to return, parents participating in the fun and climbers appreciative of another space to test the limits of their bodies.

Gold coin donation entry allowed Circus Jam to purchase: a jumbo twister, 20 hula hoops, balancing sticks, juggling balls and scarves. Horsham Women’s Circus generously donated jigsaw mats for group pyramids and Sue Pavlovich donated an amazing lycra body sock which promotes playfulness and laughter.

In April, the very successful Goatfest event which is ACT Natimuk’s annual fundraiser contributed funds towards the program. By September, Circus Jam received more wonderful news that they were successful with a Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) grant, securing another year of free Circus Jam workshops for the community.



Circus Jam facilitator Dawa Che keeping a careful watch on the balance crew. Image: Wobbly Spoon.



Friends & Community night audience, 'Signals from the Dark'. Image: Alison Eggleton.

FRIENDS & COMMUNITY NIGHTS

ACT Natimuk's *Friends and Community* events were initiated in 2023 and co-ordinated by Alison Eggleton with assistance from Tracey Skinner and D'Arcy Molan. These free events held at the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall consisted of three themed nights across the year which aimed to connect with the broader community and showcase the people and projects of ACT Natimuk in a way that was social and relaxed. They were an opportunity to open up the organisation to new and old friends and to highlight the distinctive art happening in our small community, and also to introduce and make visible the committee and staff.

Our inaugural *Friends and Community* event was held on Friday May 5th and presented ACT Natimuk Creative Lab recipient Anthony Pelchen's project *Signals from the Dark* in a short film by Jacqui Schulz. The film poetically captured the atmosphere and durational nature of *Signals from the Dark*. Anthony spoke about the project which was a light, music, and spoken word installation that activated the Main Street of Natimuk, and the windows and doorway of the Goat Gallery. After the screening of the film, Alison Eggleton conducted a Q and A session with project artists Anthony, Jacqui, and D'Arcy.

The second *Friends and Community* night was held on Friday August 4th and featured ACT Natimuk's Nati Frinj Biennale Director Greg Pritchard, who was looking back and celebrating the festival that was in 2022, and asking about suggestions for the following *Frinj*. Greg presented a slideshow, talking through many different projects that were programmed, and ended with an open discussion around ideas for the next festival.

The third *Friends and Community* night was held on Saturday December 2nd and featured D'Arcy Molan's literary and creative writing PhD- *The Wimmera Speaks*. The event was also the end of year celebration for ACT Natimuk. The night involved an overview of D'Arcy's project, live music, poetry, digital projections, and the voices and work of local artists that he interviewed and collaborated with. D'Arcy spoke about his matrilineal family connection to the region, particularly to Apsley and Edenhope, and the creative and cultural ties that are specific to the Wimmera, by both non-indigenous artists and First Nations Wotjobaluk artists.

Friends and Community events will continue in 2024 in what we hope will be a new era of engagement with our members and broader community.

PALAIS DE PIXEL

Palais de Pixel continued to show a diverse program of local, international and non-English films at NC2. Palais celebrated NAIDOC Week in July with the Indigenous feature documentary 'Ablaze'. This film was the highest rating film (4.6*) for 2023.

Palais was held on the second Monday of every month from February to November by 'Palais' volunteers Elaine Uebergang, Lynne Quick and Yingying He. There were 132 attendees, including 29 visitors throughout the year. 12 people took up full membership (\$55 for 10 films) and 8 people chose a trial membership (\$25 for 3 films).

Films shown were:

- The Arrival
- An Cailín Ciúin (The Quiet Girl)
- Captain Fantastic
- Nitram
- Forušande (The Salesman)
- Ablaze
- The Sound of Metal
- Jagten (The Hunt)
- The French Dispatch
- Hotaru no Haka (Grave of the Fireflies)

THE STUDIO

Federation University Horsham campus approached ACT Natimuk in early 2023 regarding the printmaking, painting and drawing equipment in their arts department. Following the complete closure of that department they were interested in whether ACT Natimuk might find it possible to take on the equipment and a small cohort of artists that continued to use the facilities after their course ended quite a number of years ago. This would mean the equipment could continue being for community use.

A range of arrangements were made by ACT Natimuk due to the large scale of this divestment. The main equipment is now in one of the Beyond Community Inclusion (BCI) shopfronts in Horsham, now named The Studio. BCI is a disability support not-for-profit. They are housing the equipment as a philanthropic gesture. The Studio houses two small presses, one 4m x 2m table, 16 stools, eight painting easels, four small painters' tables, an inking table, three large tables, book press, two cupboards, and six drawing donkeys. HCPPro, a Horsham printing business warehoused the big press for safe storage. We thank BCI and HCPPro for their philanthropy. Horsham College

housed 20 drawing easels and four painting easels. The *boardinghouse studios* in Natimuk housed the small-scale silkscreen equipment. We thank them for making the equipment accessible for community use as required.

A program of use by ACT members of the Studio at BCI was established in April 2023.

The ACT Natimuk Committee manages governance of the Studio through a memorandum of understanding with the BCI Committee. Studio management is by an ACT Natimuk member with visual arts qualifications in a volunteer capacity.

BCI sees the Studio as managed by ACT Natimuk. BCI has a lease to the end of 2027, which includes the ACT Natimuk Studio. They are housing the equipment as a philanthropic gesture.

ACT Natimuk collects a daily user fee from artists using the Studio and periodically donates to BCI to support their participants' activities such as the garden shop, costume hire, and Debutante Ball.



Rob Grenfell hanging works from 'The Studio' members in The Goat Gallery, as part of the Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail. Image: Jacqui Schulz.

ACT NATIMUK PRESENTS

NATIMUK OPEN STUDIOS ART TRAIL

<https://www.natimukopenstudios.org>

With three years of trail under our belt, The Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail (NOSAT) is now a permanent offering on our program. The community artist-led trail grew in size with 14 exhibiting artists in 10 studio locations. There were a range of mediums such as drawing, painting, textiles, upholstery, photography, built and found objects, printmaking and three new artists and studios in digital/video media.

The aim of the trail is that the majority of artists do need to be Natimuk based however we have opened it up to visiting artists from the surrounding areas or those that have had an arts connection with Natimuk. These artists are provided with a 'studio' space from one of the venues in the town or by sharing a local artists studio.

Rather than offering the guided tours of the previous year with D'Arcy Molan – which we found were not that successful, we tried a wandering tour guide with D'Arcy on hand to provide guidance to the trail visitors. The Natimuk trail differs a little compared to some other open studio arts trails in that it is all walkable. The trail tours/guide is still something that we will continue to assess as to whether it is needed.

Many of the artists sold work during the weekend which was a great bonus.

Ongoing funding for the trail is on the table for discussion. Exhibiting artists are charged a minimal fee and the costs of the trail were supported in 2023 by a grant from Horsham Rural City Council (HRCC). For future trails, we are looking at sponsorship and an increase in artist participation fees to ensure the predominant expense of promotion and marketing costs can be covered. Feedback from participating artists was positive but highlighted the need for a more collaborative approach to sharing the promotion of the event.

Thanks to the funding from the local council, we were able to commission a videographer, Jacqui Schulz, to create a promotional video which we can now add to our marketing arsenal.

NOSAT 2023 featured artists:

Carolynne Hamdorf	Martin Perkins	Joan Johns
Tracey Skinner	Sophie Jones	Angela Walker
Gail Harradine	Jason Walsh	Jacqui Schulz
Alison Eggleton	Joan Goad	Pat Ford
Tobie Coggle		



Natimuk Upholstery artists, Sophie Jones & Jason Walsh opening their studio for the Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail. Image: Jacqui Schulz.

'It was a great event. Good local support, and people travelling for it. A variety of studios and arts represented. High level of creative practice and expertise on show. The hospitality and social aspect is particularly strong and welcoming.'
 – Trail artist participant

FRINJ TRIM



Projections showing the work of Dave Jones and Greg Pritchard for the Frinj Trim event. Image: Alison Eggleton.

The Frinj Trim Evening Event was presented in the alternate year to Nati Frinj. As a creative taster, it was designed to celebrate some of the art and performance practices in Natimuk through a selection of recent work or works in development and on-going practices.

Held at the Soldiers Memorial Hall this evening event featured recent digital projections by Dave Jones, a light and shadow installation by Mary French, a contemporary circus community workshop by duo No Mi and Dawa Che of Wobbly Spoon, and a duo music performance by Stu Mathieson and Fuddy Jackson on guitar and double bass. A temporary sculptural installation of steel panels

depicting birds in flight by the late Douglas Hockly also featured in the grounds at the back of the hall to commemorate our dear friend and local artist. A special thanks goes to Dave Jones for organising the production of this work. The evening was complimented by the Grist bar. The event brought together 80-90 local/Wimmera based people to share and experience the diversity of local art practice on offer at this event. A big thank you to all involved in this successful evening event.

The Project team was Alison Eggleton – Event Coordinator, Tracey Skinner- Event Promotion

DOUGLAS HOCKLY MEMORIAL PROJECT



Douglas Hockly memorial sculpture created by Dave Jones using Douglas' bird artwork. Grist on the right. Image: Alison Eggleton.

Douglas Hockly was a much loved and active member of ACT Natimuk, holding position of Chairperson in the organisation for a number of years. Alongside this he held exhibitions, presented at Nati Frinj and was the Goatfest co-ordinator for a period of time. A talented artist, he passed in 2021 after a long illness. Doug's parents donated a sum of money to ACT Natimuk to be used where it saw fit – to support the arts.

A group of friends and ACT artists discussed what would be a fitting legacy. Using Douglas' artwork of birds in flight;

he was a keen birdwatcher, artist Dave Jones designed a number of steel panels which he had laser cut with the birds. The beautifully rusted panels are currently situated at the rear of the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall in two column structures bolted together. Often lit at night at various events they ensure that the memory of Douglas is never far from the work that ACT Natimuk does. Many thanks to Dave Jones and Mary French for keeping the ball rolling on this project and to all his friends who contributed to the discussions. We think the sculpture is fitting indeed.

MAJOR PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS

GATHERINGS 2023



Illuminated floating balls in Queen Mary Botanic Gardens, St Arnaud by Outlook Communications. 'Night Blooms' Gatherings 2023. Image: Tracey Skinner.

grampiangatherings.com

Gatherings 2023 was a project commission working in partnership with Northern Grampians Shire Council and supported by the Victorian Government Department of Job, Skills, Industry & Regions through the Living Local Regional Fund.

Working with the communities in Halls Gap and St Arnaud for 2023, Gatherings was an invitation for community to come together in their local towns, to collaborate, create and share and enjoy a diverse range of arts and cultural activities and to activate the town centres and existing public spaces.

The free community arts and cultural events took place across two towns in the shire in mid-June – St Arnaud and Halls Gap. The project team was made up of Tracey Skinner, Program Producer, and the two Creative Producers; Jacinda O'Sullivan – St Arnaud *Night Blooms* and Jillian Pearce- Halls Gap *The Moth Trail*.

Gatherings 2023 St Arnaud *Night Blooms* took place on Saturday 14th October and was a great success. *Night Blooms* featured light installation, interactive animation and Augmented Reality set in the iconic Queen Mary Botanic Gardens St Arnaud.

Additional Augmented Reality was added to existing murals in St Arnaud further building on the St Arnaud Augmented Reality Trail.

The evening saw a steady stream of people attending. Many arrived early, pulling up a chair to listen to the beautiful voice of Eleanor Parry on her baby grand. She captivated audiences and added to the ambience and delight of the evening. Others wandered through the Queen Mary Gardens engaging in the myriad of projection and light offerings.

Night Blooms saw local residents' art and multimedia enhanced by projections and innovative light installations across the foliage in the gardens. Giant lit up balls floated on the pond. A talking tree projected a video, created by young local Rogan Hando, of Dorothy Patton speaking the stories of the gardens. Sally Wright's flowers were projected onto the fence and sculptural artist Richard Bazeley's work was reimagined, again through video and projection onto the bunya bunya tree.

The animations that featured in The Hothouse were inspired by the town of St Arnaud and offered the community world class artistic design with the ability to interact with the artwork.

Augmented Reality allowed animated ducks and palms to be viewed through visitors mobile devices. This cutting-edge technology was achieved by multimedia company Pink Lake Creative and artist Desiree Cross.

The whole gardens from the ground to the top tips of trees, was lit up in an amazing display of lighting created by Outlook Communications.

New Augmented Reality animation was also added to a number of murals on the St Arnaud Augmented Reality Trail. The Sunday morning saw a trail tour- there are now five locations you can view on the trail and visitors can pick up a copy of the trail guide at the Info Centre.

Gatherings 2023 Halls Gap *The Moth Trail* took place on Saturday 21st October's wild and woolly night in downtown Halls Gap.

The Moth Trail was a reimagining, revisiting and remounting of the Gatherings 2022 Moth Trail Concept developed with and for the Halls Gap Community and their visitors. A projection trail of art experiences and light, activating places rarely visited at night through central Halls Gap beginning with a community gathering around live music at the Pop up Park and touring past the swimming pool to the Botanical Gardens, tennis courts and Primary School.

Despite the brutal winds on the evening of the event, visitors came out in force to support and engage with the art and cultural happening. Music started at 7pm in the Pop up Park. Sharing the stage between sets was *Beatroute and the Nang Nangs* and the *Vanuatu Stawell Community Choir*.



Tya Lovett and family *Welcome to Country*. *The Moth Trail*, Halls Gap. Gatherings 2023. Image: Anthony McKee.

Tya Lovett performed a *Welcome to Country* and engaged the help of his family members to sing a welcome song. The official announcement that *The Moth Trail* was lit up then saw mass movement across to the Botanic Gardens and Halls Gap Primary School.



Umbrella portal. Artist Mary French and community members. 'Night Blooms', Gatherings 2023. Image: Tracey Skinner.



Face Off by Dave Jones. *The Moth Trail*, Halls Gap. Gatherings 2023. Image: Anthony McKee.

Face Off by Dave Jones was slammed as the first stop on the trail with visitors eager to share their faces in a projected face pulling style competition.

The *Eastern Maar dancers* shadow lab work was projected onto trees which remarkably stayed quite still in the blustery winds. The music accompanying it created a magical experience.

Laurie Adams landscape artwork adorned Mary French's *Travelling Lantunda* - a tent structure with imagery projected from the inside. Additional butterfly hand torch puppets gave visitors an opportunity to play on another tent side or create visuals on the ground.

Talking Trees Margot Sietsma and Janet Witham told stories of the Botanic Gardens flora and fauna and there was much tippy toeing amongst the Mushroom Fairy Garden with gorgeous creations by the students of Halls Gap Primary School.

Brave soul and local musician Joy Robson was a great musical backdrop to the kids creating art with their shadows at the Shadow Lab stop.

The trail and trees from across the Pop Up Park through to the gardens and school was beautifully lit by Outlook Communications.

The Moth Trail was produced in collaboration with the Snappy Gappians and supported locally by the Halls Gap Neighbourhood House, Grampians Flora Botanic Gardens and Halls Gap Primary School.

'It was so creative and unique. I just loved how it brought community together, regardless of social class, ability or gender. Outstanding work' – Gatherings 'Night Blooms' visitor



Beatroute & the Nang Nangs. *The Moth Trail*, Gatherings 2023. Image: Anthony McKee.

ACT NATIMUK – COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

RECONCILIATION WEEK – CREATIVE VOICE/CREATIVE GENERATIONS

On Sunday 4th June from 5-8pm we celebrated the Creative Voice/Creative Generations (CVCG) event in the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall. This free event was the inaugural partnering of the arts and cultural organisation ACT Natimuk with Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network and was supported with funds from ACT Natimuk, Reconciliation Victoria, and Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. This event highlighted the continuing cultural practices of Wotjobaluk Nations creative voices, and their ancestral and cultural connections to the Wimmera region. CVCG focused on multigenerational links between artists and their creative practice, both within family groups, and between members of different family groups and generations.

The event featured projected digitised artwork both inside and outside the hall from six artists of the Wotjobaluk Nation: Aunty Annie Nikkelson (Wotjobaluk/Wemba Wemba), Gail Harradine (Wotjobaluk/Djubagalk/Jadawadjali), Tanisha Lovett (Gunditjmara/Wotjobaluk), Yama Harradine (Wotjobaluk/Djubagalk/Wergaia), Thomas Marks (Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai), and Tiffany Alyce Retallick (Wotjobaluk). Aunty Annie, Gail, Thomas, and Tanisha attended the event as well as around 45 others who came from Natimuk, Horsham, Apsley, Edenhope, Ballarat, Melbourne, and other places. People made soups, dahl, sausage rolls, cakes, biscuits, and bought cheeses and snacks to share, which created a lovely atmosphere.

The theme for 2023 Reconciliation Week was *Be a voice for Generations*, and meant that a focus of our event was to hear directly from Wotjobaluk artists about their life experiences and art practices. We aimed to create new social, creative, and work relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within our town and organisations. It was also a chance for non-Indigenous

people in our community to reflect on the role of truth telling around our shared history with First Nations people, and how this influences and impacts the present day.

Featured artist Aunty Annie Nikkelson gave a talk about her arts practice, featured artist and ACT Natimuk committee member, Gail Harradine, gave a talk about her art work, ACT Natimuk, and facilitated a discussion with Aunty Annie and emcee D’Arcy Molan (Chair ACT Natimuk). ACT Natimuk’s Made in Natimuk Producer Verity Higgins launched an upcoming opportunity for First Nations artists through ACT Natimuk’s Creative Lab program. This particular Creative Lab is a (1) \$5000 arts development opportunity available to First Nations artist/s or arts collectives working in any artform – visual, performing, sound, installation, screen-to encourage artists to connect with Natimuk and work as part of Natimuk’s small but vibrant arts community, and to create/seed work for Nati Frinj Biennale.

The event was coordinated by Jillian Pearce and supported by an event committee including Tracey Skinner, D’Arcy Molan, Gail Harradine, Melissa Morris, and Kieran Loughran. Dave Jones worked on the projections, and Hannah French on the flyers and communication. As a committee, we were very happy with the event, and the hospitality and interest shown to the artists. We heard many positive comments.

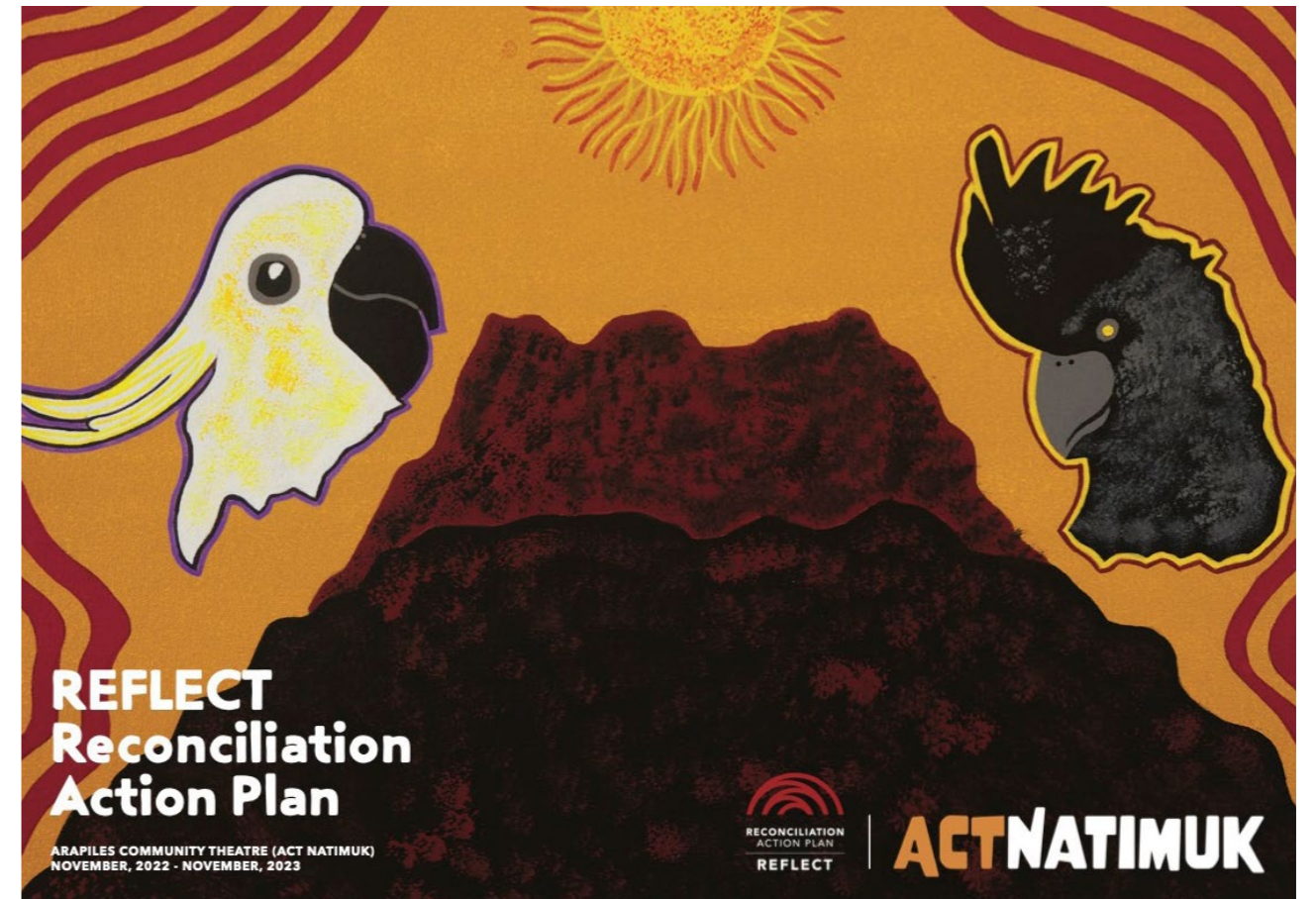
‘It was wonderful to be a part of the event and to see other creative artists as well. I look forward to more opportunities in the future and coming back to Natimuk again’ – Creative Voice/Creative Generations artist



Ceremony by Gail Harradine. Outside projections, Creative Voice/Creative Generations. Image: Tanisha Lovett.



We Still Here by Yama Harradine. Outside projections, Creative Voice/Creative Generations. Image: Tanisha Lovett.



‘Girrin and Dyinap’ RAP artwork by Thomas Marks 2023. Document graphic designer Myrtle Jeffs.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Creative Voice/Creative Generations Reconciliation Week event was also the launch of ACT Natimuk’s Reconciliation Action Plan. This document, with beautiful artwork by Thomas Marks (Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai) and graphic design by Myrtle Jeffs (Wotjobaluk), outlines ACT Natimuk’s commitment and goals of working with and supporting Wotjobaluk and other First Nations artists in ways that are culturally appropriate and relevant to their aspirations and goals. Thomas Marks spoke about his artwork for the Reconciliation Action Plan, the meaning and symbolism behind it, and some of his life story.

During 2022/23 a small working group consisting of ACT Natimuk organisation committee, staff and members worked on the RAP. The document can be seen here:

https://actnatimuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ACT_Natimuk_RAP_2023_web.pdf



Aunty Annie Nickelson, Gail Harradine & D’Arcy Molan. Creative Voice/Creative Generations. Image: Andy Lambrogiotis.



Artist Thomas Marks. RAP launch. Creative Voice/Creative Generations. Image: Andy Lambrogiotis.

FINANCIALS

FINANCE REPORT

ACT Natimuk bank accounts at end of 2023

Nati Frinj	\$9,721.21
ACT Main	\$45,719.64
MiN	\$2,130.36
DGR	\$8056.76
Sandhurst Managed Fund	\$41,538.14
The Studio	\$78.76
TOTAL	\$107,244.87

2023 allowed ACT Natimuk, a not-for-profit business, to establish and strengthen successional changes.

Mary French (Treasurer 2022) continued in an advisory capacity guiding transition of the Treasurer role into 2023. Sincere thanks are extended to Mary, Auditor Michael Ryan OAM who announced his retirement and Alison White for Financial Services – Bookkeeping.

Source funding received from Creative Victoria CEP (\$100,000) covered staff salaries for General Manager, MiN Producer and Frinj Director, administration and office costs and preparation for Nati Frinj in 2025.

Louise Cooper delivered a Neurokin workshop project in 2023 through the MiN Creative Lab program, with a grant of \$5,000. The Northern Grampians Shire Council commission of Gatherings 2023 (\$84,000). Two auspiced projects - Women's Outdoor Wellness (WOW) program received a Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFH) grant (\$10,000) and Y Space's TRIPOD through a grant from Creative Australia (\$27,860). Delivery of WOW and TRIPOD will happen in 2024.

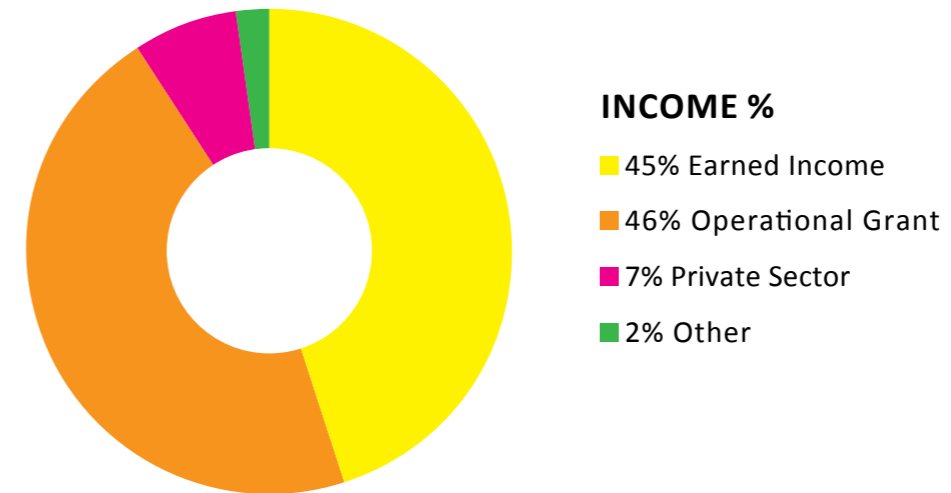
Communicating what we do as a business, with potential to grow membership and reaching the community was further strengthened by hosting three Friends & Community events which also served as a fundraiser to offset the production costs budget of \$900.

The Studio offers space for various existing and future artists. It houses print and art equipment which is a gifted asset from Federation University Horsham Campus' art department closure, acquired by ACT Natimuk February 2023.

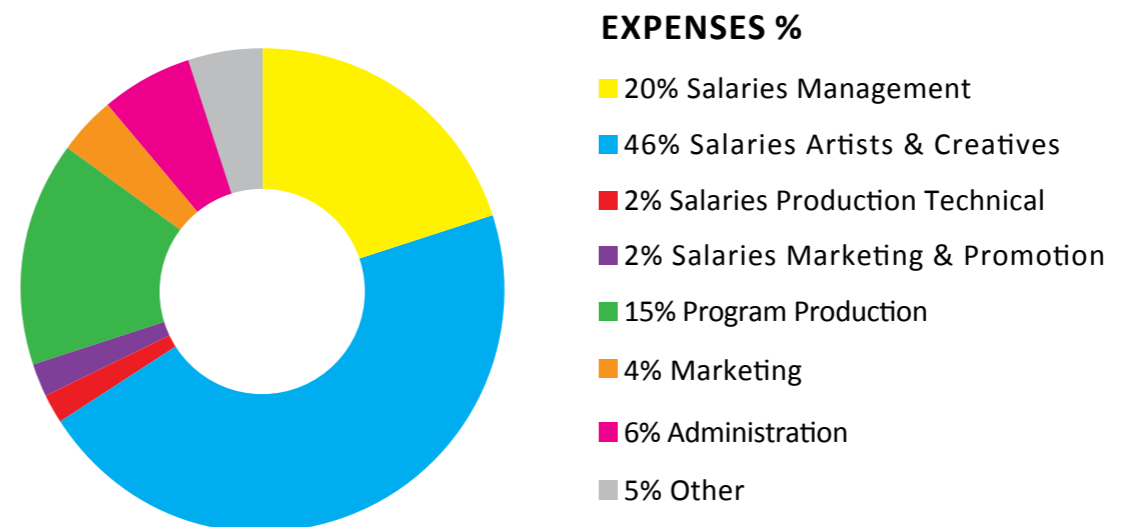
ACT Natimuk contributed \$1,000 alongside \$1,000 from a Reconciliation Victoria grant and \$305 contribution from Barengi Gadjin Land Council to run a local Reconciliation Week event. The public got a glimpse into local artists' studios through NOSAT supported by a grant from HRCC (\$3500). This occurred the same weekend as Frinj Trim with a budget allocation of \$1,000 from ACT Natimuk. Palais de Pixel continued to operate monthly with a budget surplus of \$380. Goatfest generated surplus income (\$2,800) which was allocated to Circus Jam. This together with funding from residual funds from a 2022 HRCC grant (\$3500), a donation of \$500 from the Natimuk Arts & Craft Shop and a FRRR grant (\$8162) brings increased certainty to improve and continue the Circus Jam program.

Tony Noller
ACT Natimuk Treasurer

THE PIE CHART BELOW DEPICTS OUR PERCENTAGE OF INCOME FROM A RANGE OF SOURCES.



THE PIE CHART BELOW DEPICTS EXPENDITURE 2023



Note: Frinj Director and MiN Producer wages are included in the artswoker figures, as these roles requires creative producing and directing.

YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2023	Gross Profit	\$225,730.16
	Expenses	\$210,268.13
	Net Profit Surplus	\$15,462.03
Retained Earnings 31/12/2022	Opening Balance	\$79,797.67
Current Year Ending 31/12/2023	Net Profit Surplus	\$15,462.03
Total Equity	Closing Balance	\$95,259.70

Arapiles Community Theatre

Balance sheet for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Asset		
Current assets		
Cash at bank ACT #151903317	45,720	6,493
Cash at Bank MiN #153041546	2,130	4,438
Cash at Bank FRINJ #149559122	9,721	22,755
Cash at Bank PUB #161871223	8,057	11,734
Sandhurst term deposit	41,538	40,000
Cash at The Studio # 209 497 700	79	
	<u>107,245</u>	<u>85,420</u>
Trade Debtors	0	1,135
Income receivable	0	0
GST Input tax credit	8,991	13,399
Expenses Paid In Advance	22,618	0
Total Current Assets	<u>31,609</u>	<u>14,534</u>
Total Assets	<u>138,854</u>	<u>99,954</u>
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Trade Creditors	0	12,504
GST Payable	5,638	2,663
Income received in advance	37,956	5,000
Total current liabilities	<u>43,594</u>	<u>20,167</u>
Net assets	<u>95,260</u>	<u>79,787</u>
Equity		
Retained Surplus	95,260	79,787
Net worth	<u>95,260</u>	<u>79,787</u>

Arapiles Community Theatre

Income statement for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Income		
Event Income	0	16,308
Merchandise	0	3,624
Equipment rental	1,426	0
Activities & Services Income	86,599	208,702
Sponsorship	0	0
Donations	2,193	6,565
Fundraising	4,799	1,000
Memberships	915	426
Foundations	8420	0
Interest Received	1,548	943
Sundry Income	2,143	2,192
Brokerage fees (commissions)	3,687	0
Creative Victoria operational grants	100,000	100,000
Other Vic State Agencies	0	539
Local Government operational grants	0	5,055
Festivals Australia	0	64,200
Project Grant Creative Victoria	0	0
Project Grants other Vic State Agencies	10,000	21,269
Project Grants Local government	4,000	9,336
Total Income	<u>225,730</u>	<u>440,156</u>
Expense		
Allowances & on costs wages & fees	74,265	97,937
Artist develop & mentorship	3,687	0
Artist/musician fees	64,902	153,565
Insurance	2,913	812
Legal, Finance & Governance	817	115
Management & Administration	6,608	11,760
Marketing & Business Development	0	
Marketing & Promotions	12,610	40,410
Office consumables & resources	1,858	0
Production & Technical	3,886	0
Production & Exhibition stage costs	21,414	130,764
Rent & Running costs	1,440	840
Sundry expenses	5,440	2,493
Hiring Expenses	445	5,670
Bamboo	0	12,191
Travel & Touring costs	6,903	20,603
Various Frinj Expenses	0	18,153
Venue & Exhibition space costs	1,080	0
Workshops, Classes & Seminars	0	1,819
Donations	2,000	0
Total expenditure	<u>210,268</u>	<u>501,132</u>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	<u>15,462</u>	<u>(60,976)</u>



Rob Grenfell at The Goat Gallery showcasing work of 'The Studio' members. Natimuk Open Studios Art Trail. Image: Jacqui Schulz.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

ACT Natimuk is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.



ACT Natimuk would also like to thank all of the volunteers and audiences that support our work.