

# MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release  
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## Celebrate the Arts in all forms with the Whitsundays Arts Festival

The Whitsundays Arts Festival comes alive in Airlie Beach this September

The Whitsundays Arts Festival returns with a grand celebration of our creative community and region, and our inspiring environment, inviting audiences to experience fun, interactive, and vibrant arts events. Enjoy the sights and sounds in the form of fine arts, live original music, arts workshops, multicultural performances, handmade markets, and impressive installations.

Jess Begun, president of the Festival, explains that “The two-week Festival is reimagined this year as audiences and visitors are welcomed into beautiful settings around The Whitsundays, including 5-star resorts, The Belvedere at Toscana, the new Proserpine Entertainment Centre, and Fairy Tree Park on the Airlie Beach foreshore.”

In its third year, the Whitsundays Arts Festival brings an even bigger program. It all kicks off with the Opening Ceremony on Saturday 24 September on the Airlie Beach foreshore. Welcoming locals, visitors, and audiences to the waterfront of Airlie Beach is Uncle Harry Bowen, owner of the region’s only First Nation’s art gallery who will also play his original music. The Festival is also honoured to welcome Whitsundays Mayor Julie Hall to officially open the 2022 program. Then settle in for storytelling through song by the Namarca Corowa band, playing original reggae, blues and funk style music. Namarca Corowa is born and bred in Mackay and of South Sea Islander descent, singing about hope and freedom from oppression. The ceremony culminates when the art installation Scarewood which won the People’s Choice Award at the 2021 Townsville Ephemera comes alive through projections and recordings.

Adorning the foreshore is the magnificent outdoor art spectacle, three impressive art installations created by artists-in-residence and the local community in free art workshops: Soaring Stingrays, a collection of stingrays made from recycled rope, fishing nets, and debris collected from our shores; the Pursuit of Happiness, painted timber boards that are an invitation to explore your memories and experiences, and Scarewood, the old man in the majestic fig tree on the festival site.

On Sunday 25 September, come on down to the Airlie Beach foreshore for the ever-popular Handmade Art Markets (even bigger and better with 50+ stalls from all around QLD and NSW), meet the makers and peruse artisanal homewares, handmade gifts, treats, and try your hand at some of their crafts. The full day of festivities also includes mandala-making on the beach, Aboriginal art exhibition and storytelling, African drumming, Torres Strait Island dancers, ukulele workshops and performances, Fijian performers, and a dance performance by Tchundal Malar Aboriginal Dance Troupe with fire demonstrations and didgeridoo. There’s also a dedicated marquee for the kids to join artists Sofia Fortunato and Lisa Ashcroft for free art workshops.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Julie Hall said she was looking forward to two weeks of activities that will be a celebration of local talent, culture, colour, music, and food.

“Council is proud to be a sponsor for 2022 as arts festivals are such important community events that give our residents the opportunity to showcase their artistic and creative talents,” she said.

Tourism Whitsundays

PO Box 479 | Cannonvale QLD 4802

1/5 Carlo Drive | Cannonvale QLD 4802

+617 4948 5900

[www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au](http://www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au)

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“This is an opportunity to broaden our horizons in the amazing Whitsundays and offer a unique experience for locals and visitors.”

For the first time ever, the Festival is also adding the art of cinema to the program, between 24-25 September. Screening films at the new Proserpine Entertainment Centre, in partnership with Film & Arts Mackay and the Whitsunday Regional Council, see ‘Celeste’, filmed at Paronella Park, and ‘Parallel Mothers’, starring Penelope Cruz, on the big screen. In line with the Festival theme of ‘memories,’ take a trip down memory lane with a historical photographic exhibition of The Whitsundays as it was, kindly provided by long-time resident Peter Crossley and Silvio Balma.

Festival President Jess Begun says of the program:

“We are delighted to focus this year on multi-cultural and First Nations culture in words and song. We are also excited to introduce a film program at the newly opened Proserpine Entertainment Centre with the latest in digital screening equipment. We are bringing a special guest, Bridget Evans, who was at Paronella Park when ‘Celeste’ was filmed and then screened at the Cannes Film Festival.”

New this year is the inaugural Whitsundays Songwriter Festival & Residency, presented as part of the Whitsundays Arts Festival. Six of Queensland’s finest musicians, hailing from a variety of genres, will be mentoring new songwriters in a one-day workshop on Saturday 24 September at the fabulous Yangaro Resort in Funnel Bay. Bringing together country musician Graeme Connors, who holds 14 Golden Guitar awards, and Queensland Music Award winner and dream pop sensation Tia Gostelow, with Francesca de Valence, Karen Jacobsen (voice of Siri and Google), Bryce Sainty, and LT (Leanne Tennant), the Residency is a melting pot of genres and artistic experience. The Residency culminates in an amazing, not-to-be-missed event at the latest and greatest addition to the Airlie Beach food scene, The Belvedere at Toscana. Ticket holders will be treated to a special three-course dinner created by The Belvedere team, a glass of bubbly, and an up close and personal insight into the stories of each individual songwriter, as well as their new and original songs. This intimate event has just 35 tickets available.

For aspiring artists, those who are keen to try something new, develop their skills with guidance from experienced teachers, or just keen to meet other locals, is the Whitsundays Arts Festival Art Workshop Program. Primarily held in the dedicated (and sheltered) workshop space at Kipara Rainforest Retreat, these workshops offer a relaxed and inviting environment to express yourself and get creative.

Workshops begin on 17 September with Street Art with Sandy, teaching stencilling and spray painting (perfect for those bored teenagers) and Creating Children’s Books with Sofia, one of last year’s most popular workshops which brings out the imagination in everyone, a chance to foster those storytelling skills. The week continues with Watercolour and Acrylics with Lisa, last year’s major prize winner in the Whitsundays Art Prize Exhibition, Urban Sketching with Michael and Aaron, guiding the international drawing movement used to document the goings on and essence of a particular place (on Airlie Beach foreshore), and Sip & Paint with Amanda, a chance for participants to have fun, let loose, and paint Frida Kahlo-esque figures, with a side of their favourite drinks. For a free activity for the whole family, join renowned basket weavers Marion Gaemers and Lynnette Griffiths to make small, stitched stingrays, or painted timber memory boards with Amanda Sadler.

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The Whitsundays Art Prize Exhibition, featuring 70+ works from 63 artists from the Whitsundays region and around Australia, is another major event on the Festival's schedule. The Exhibition has come into its own and will be occupying the Elbow Room at the Coral Sea Resort, visual art and sculpture enriched with scenic waterfront vistas. The opening night on Friday 23 September is open to the public. Over \$11,000 worth of prizes, including the \$5,000 Regional Arts Award and Whitsunday Regional Council acquisition, are awarded to artists. The Exhibition runs until 30 September and is a chance for holidaymakers and the local community to get behind the artists.

This September, immerse yourself in the arts in The Heart of The Whitsundays!

For more information about what's on, the full program, tickets, and registrations, and where to get your arts fill, head to the [Whitsundays Arts Festival website](#).

*The 2022 Whitsundays Art Festival was made possible by the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund, provided through Regional Arts Australia, administered in Queensland by Flying Arts Alliance, and the Mackay Regional Arts Development Fund. The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Mackay Regional Council and Whitsunday Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland. This program is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and the Queensland Arts Showcase Program, and through the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund, which supports the arts in regional and remote Australia.*

The Whitsundays Arts Festival is presented in partnership with Tourism Whitsundays, with Media Partner Whitsunday News. We thank our presenting partners Whitsunday Regional Council, and Coral Sea Resort. The Whitsundays Arts Festival is made possible through corporate sponsorship, and we acknowledge Gold Sponsor BHP, Silver Sponsors Tassal Group, Wilmar Australia, Bendigo Bank, Ray White – Stephanie McWhirter, Your Business Angels, and Amanda Camm MP, Member for Whitsunday, as well as Bronze Sponsor R&K Kenyon Picture Framing.

Our partners are Yangaro, Cruise Whitsundays, Umbrella Studio, Smart Arts, Big 4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort, Little Red House, Katy Woollatt Design, Butterfly Effect Nursery, and Signs Seen.

This media release is in partnership with the Whitsunday Arts Festival.

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To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [click here](#).

To view The Whitsundays Heart of Events video, [click here](#).

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About Tourism Whitsundays: Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.

## FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES, CONTACT:

Cait Fleming  
Marketing & Communications Coordinator  
Tourism Whitsundays  
Ph: +61 417 765 736

### Tourism Whitsundays

PO Box 479 | Cannonvale QLD 4802  
1/5 Carlo Drive | Cannonvale QLD 4802  
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Email: [pr@tourismwhitsundays.com.au](mailto:pr@tourismwhitsundays.com.au)

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