

Media Release

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Makuru Arts Festival fills winter void as community craves connection and affordable all-ages arts experiences

An eclectic, all-ages arts festival in Cockburn this June will feed a growing appetite for heartwarming community activities as the colder weather sets in.

The City of Cockburn's free Makuru Arts Festival will enter its second year with fresh additions including a dedicated family weekend for junior art lovers and two artist residencies, designed to provide art teams with time and space to create or develop new artworks or practices.

Festival Creative Producer, the City of Cockburn's Ella Hetherington, said attendance at the successful 2025 festival exceeded all expectations demonstrating the community was hungry for connection in the cooler winter months.

"In contrast to summer, there are less community-focused artistic opportunities available in Perth during the cooler months," Ms Hetherington said.

"Winter is the perfect time to head into theatres and venues, to gather, connect with community and experience art together. It's part of why Europe has such a vibrant arts culture; people naturally seek warmth, shelter, and shared experiences during the colder months

"In Australia we rush toward summer festivals and open-air events because our climate supports them so well, yet there always seems to be a surprising lack of winter festivals offerings.

"In many ways, winter makes sense – it invites us indoors, encourages connection and creates the perfect atmosphere for intimate, meaningful, artistic experiences.

"The City is not only tapping into that need but meeting a desire from people of all ages to continue making community connections by gathering to appreciate homegrown artists and performers year-round."

City of Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett said the 2026 festival not only aimed to combat

Media Release

the winter blues, but to break down the barriers created by the high cost of arts experiences and making the majority of the program free to attend.

“It’s an invitation for everyone to gather, connect with their community and be a part of new circles as they experience world-class art, regardless of financial circumstance,” Mayor Howlett said.

“I’m very proud our City can offer these amazing opportunities to our community, especially children and those with limited access to high quality arts experiences; they will be unforgettable.

“The City’s inaugural Makuru festival in 2025 achieved 95 per cent attendance across five weeks of programming and we can’t wait to do it again.”

Ms Hetherington is well known in Perth, with a respected reputation as a multidisciplinary performance maker, facilitator, educator, and producer across a career spanning more than 20 years.

As an actor, deviser, and collaborator she has worked with many of Perth’s major theatre companies and multiple international companies, receiving several nominations for her theatre roles, including a Helpmann nomination.

Her work has toured throughout Europe, Canada, nationally and throughout regional WA, she has directed large scale performance projects across Australia, has work currently under development, with her most recent work premiering in WA in 2023.

“The 2026 Makuru program brings together some of the most exciting and respected performers in WA and across Australia,” Ms Hetherington said.

“Actor and director Humphrey Bower is widely recognised with an extraordinary career spanning decades. He will perform his adaptation of seminal Australian classic novel *An Imaginary Life* by the late David Malouf, who passed away earlier this year, with live musician Pavan Kumar Hari.

“Sensorium Theatre will be in residence developing a brand-new work called Snuggleplay, while musician Billie Rogers, an acclaimed artist in her own right, continues the legacy of her father, Bill Rogers, who was inducted into the City’s Arts

Media Release

Hall of Fame in 2025.

“Adam Kelly of ARCO is one of the most remarkable artists and humans you could encounter, offering his unique view of the world, while SPARK Arts workshops will bring a selection of WA’s leading artists across dance, theatre, puppetry, and circus.

“Blue joy theatre company, a new collective of independent artists amplifying underrepresented voices, is creating some of the most dynamic and compelling new work in the scene right now. We are so proud to have all these incredible artists coming to Cockburn this Makuru.”

Ms Hetherington said Perth had few winter festivals but it was the perfect time of year for exploring the arts.

“It is increasingly difficult for artists in Perth to find opportunities to present work and this little festival is helping fill that gap,” she said.

“Nationally, the arts sector is experiencing a decrease in funding and dwindling audiences but it appears there is a wealth of interest and keen audiences in the suburbs.

“The 2025 Makuru Arts Festival showed that the decentralisation of the arts and taking it to the people outside the major performances houses and out of the CBD could be part of a thriving future for the sector.”

The festival offers 14 events between 5 and 27 June, all of them free, except for the World Music Café Dinner & Show opening event on 5 June.

For more details and to register attendance visit the City’s [website](https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au).

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For more information contact:
Media and Communications Advisor
City of Cockburn
T: 08 9411 3551
E: media@cockburn.wa.gov.au