



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Magabala Books acknowledges the Yawuru people as the Traditional Owners of Rubibi (Broome), where we are based. We extend our respect to the First Nations people across the Kimberley region whose collective vision, leadership and cultural authority gave rise to Magabala and continue to guide our journey.



We honour Elders as knowledge holders and cultural anchors, recognise and empower emerging leaders, and acknowledge all First Nations people whose wisdom, care for Country and cultural leadership shape our shared future.

Magabala Books is committed to upholding First Nations peoples' enduring cultural, spiritual and relational connections to lands, waters and skies. We affirm the right of First Nations people to self-determination and cultural authority. We commit to ensuring that our publishing, partnerships and storytelling practices are grounded in respect, integrity, and community-led ways of knowing, being and doing. Sovereignty was never ceded.

Our stories are living. Our relationships are enduring. Our responsibility is ongoing.

We respectfully caution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers that this report may contain images of people who have passed away.



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Magabala Books receives financial assistance from the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body, and the State Government of Western Australia through the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport.



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 ABN 56 764 219 082

Artwork by Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams from *Old Days*.

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“

I wanted to do the book so people can see my paintings and hear my stories ... I remember special places and stories. Makes me proud to see my book. Kala Marra!”

— Marjorie ‘Nunga’ Williams





Magabala Books is Australia's leading First Nations publishing house.

Proudly Aboriginal owned and led, we are an internationally recognised and award-winning publisher that has celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling for over 38 years.

38

years

320

publications

334

authors/illustrators



Our vision

- To honour the diverse voices, stories, cultures and truths of First Nations creators from across Australia
- To educate and inspire national and international audiences through a growing body of quality publications
- To change the world, one story at a time.

Our purpose

- Magabala publishes and celebrates unique and powerful stories by First Nations creators
- We provide best practice leadership in the publishing industry as a culturally safe publishing house that values, supports and respects First Nations writers, illustrators, storytellers and publishing professionals
- As a cultural guardian and advocate, we protect the cultural and intellectual property rights of our creators and their communities
- Our publications shape histories and challenge the national narrative about First Nations peoples, cultures and sovereignty.



- 16** new releases
- 4** new editions
- 340,000** books sold
- 19** Indigenous authors and illustrators published
- 5** first time authors/illustrators
- 185** Indigenous authors, illustrators and their families receiving royalties
- 21** awards longlisted, shortlisted or won
- 8** creative development scholarships
- 6** creative development grants
- 1** mid-career fellowship
- 1** Daisy Utemorraah Award

The year in review

Message from Chair Steve Kinnane



For Magabala Books, Kimberley Aboriginal communities, and for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia – 2025 was a year of consolidation and momentum following the impact of the 2023 Voice Referendum and the resultant pause that lingered into 2024.

For the Kimberley, 2025 saw the loss of a generation of legendary Elders, our living libraries, who passed on their knowledge to future generations through Law, culture, and language – many whose stories are inscribed in Magabala publications.

At times like this we pause; we return to kin and Country; we reconnect - we reflect.

At Magabala, we moved forward from this pause with great purpose, guided by our Directors and members; led by our dedicated and diligent CEO, Lilly Brown; strengthened by our professional, creative and community-connected staff, and enriched by the generosity, creativity and passion of our authors, illustrators, and collaborators.

In 2025 our readership grew, as did the scope and range of our publications. We are deeply thankful to the continued support of our readers. Without your interest in Aboriginal story, narratives, imagery, knowledge, wisdom, design and humour, we would not be able to continue into our 39th year of operation.

Over three days and nights in August, 2025, Magabala staff and creatives gathered in solidarity with

hundreds of Kimberley Aboriginal Elders, leaders, family, kids and community-controlled organisations at Ngumpan, South-East of Fitzroy Crossing - for the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) 40th Anniversary Festival. In the dusty red pindan of Ngumpan we celebrated Law, culture and cultural governance alongside the Annual General Meetings of our peak Kimberley Aboriginal Organisations; KALACC; The Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) and Aarnja.

For Magabala staff, returning to Ngumpan retraced the steps of our own creation journey when the idea of Magabala Books formed like a dream in the minds of Kimberley Elders. At Ngumpan in 1984, the seed of Magabala took root along-side the creation of KALACC to support Law and culture, and the KLRC, to support the maintenance and revival of Kimberley Aboriginal languages. By 1987, that dream that started as a publishing project, became the reality of a landmark First Nations publishing house.

Under Lilly Brown's leadership in 2025, Magabala Books' Directors and staff also gathered in Rubibi in September to strengthen and redefine our strategic plan, confirm our plans for the future, re-set policies and review our risk strategy to achieve maximum benefit for our authors, illustrators and creatives. In this Annual Report, our CEO has reflected on Magabala's many achievements, including; the awarding of the Pixie O'Harris Hall of Fame Award and the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) to our esteemed and respected publisher, Rachel Bin Salleh.

As Chair, I must acknowledge our own significant Elder, author, educator and Magabala legend, Edie Wright, who has guided us all through this year of transition and consolidation with an eye on the long history of Magabala. Edie's depth of knowledge of Aboriginal experience and storytelling, and genuine delight in the work of our creators and staff has been a constant and enduring foundation. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our dedicated Directors who volunteer their valuable time and expertise to ensuring that Magabala is well governed to uphold the vision of Elders who first dreamed us into existence at Ngumpan, 1984. Thank you; Bebe Oliver (Deputy Chair), Abby-Rose Cox, (Treasurer), Edie Wright, Josepha Howard, Lenka Vanderboom, Traelyn Aiken, Shas Jurud, and Marlee Hutton.

To our members, supporters, funders, donors, and partners – we could not do the valuable work that we do without your support. We genuinely and gratefully acknowledge your dedication to Aboriginal creativity, and investment in the power of story.

Warranty (Miriwoong for 'all good; done now.')

Steve Kinnane
Chairperson



The year in review

Message from CEO Lilly Brown



Magabala Books' performance in 2025 was guided by our Strategic Plan, *Our Legacy of Living Cultures*, with a focus on reach, excellence, and sustaining our legacy built over almost four decades.

It was an absolute pleasure in 2025 for Magabala to demonstrate that commercial success and community care are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing responsibilities. Our success in this regard is shared by our creators, staff, members, and our First Nations Board of Directors, and reflects Magabala's distinctive position as one of the most remote publishing houses in the world, operating as a community-controlled, not-for-profit organisation grounded in cultural responsibility while excelling commercially.

In 2025, Magabala prioritised community connection, care and accountability. Through the business of publishing beautiful and impactful books, we demonstrated the strength of community-led storytelling, literary excellence and care for creators. Our publications reflect Magabala's enduring leadership, honouring ancient knowledge systems while shaping confident futures for readers across generations. Our books advanced truth telling through story by centring First Nations voices, sovereignty, and lived experience. We published stories of Country, kinship, humour, joy and contemporary life. Together, these books reflect the breadth of First Nations storytelling across age groups, genres and Nations.

The strategic production and operational decisions we implemented in 2025, including changes to printing and freight and the transition to Hachette Australia as our new distribution partner, resulted in sales exceeding projections outlined in our strategic plan. These decisions delivered a 4.5% increase in our gross profit margin, enabling Magabala to reinvest in author support, staff capability and training, and community programs while maintaining affordability and accessibility for readers.

We secured funding to commence the Intergenerational Healing Through Storytelling Project, supporting Kimberley Elders to share their stories while building capacity for emerging First Nations creators. Another personal highlight was attending the KALACC Festival in Ngumpan, the birthplace of Magabala Books. Returning to where we come from reinforced that Magabala is a product of the Kimberley and its people.

We were the recipient of a Social Enterprise Development Initiative (SEDI) grant, which enabled us to further strengthen our foundations through targeted support to develop a social impact and measurement framework and fundraising plan, and to deepen our practices of good governance.

In recognition of our national responsibility in partnership with First Nations literary festival, Blak & Bright, we also secured a significant grant from Creative Australia to deliver the First Stories

Collective (2025–2028), strengthening a culturally safer literary ecosystem. As part of this initiative Magabala convened a national gathering of First Nations writers, illustrators, publishing professionals and academics in Rubibi (Broome). The guiding theme, *We Are Not Plantations but Old Growth Forests*, affirmed Magabala's unique advantage: sustainable growth that is slow, intentional and accountable.

The year concluded with the launch of the new edition of *Bran Nue Dae*, celebrated by 200 members of the Broome community at Sun Pictures, the same theatre where the musical debuted 36 years ago. The event, featuring performances by the original band Kuckles alongside new generations of their families and cast members, exemplified Magabala's commitment to giving back to community, celebrating living culture, and creating events that are both socially and culturally significant.

Throughout the year Magabala Books prioritised staff wellbeing, development and workplace culture, recognising that a supported, valued team is essential to delivering culturally grounded publishing. Our gathering in Rubibi brought together remote-based staff and Directors for strategic planning and shared connections.

Magabala implements policies that position us as leading in both the publishing industry and Aboriginal community-controlled sector in staff care, including Family Violence Leave, Gender Affirming Care Leave,



Cultural Leave, Parental Leave and Chronic Illness Leave. For these efforts we were recognised locally for our workplace culture, winning the 2025 Workplace Culture & Inclusivity Award at the Broome Business Excellence Award.

Every day I show up to work with immense gratitude for the hard-working team at Magabala that makes what we do possible. I am in awe of our creators whose stories enable us to disrupt the status quo and flaunt Blak brilliance, and I'm humbled by the generous support and guidance provided by the Magabala board and broader community.

Thank you to our funders and philanthropic partners, and particularly to Creative Australia and the Western Australian Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport for your ongoing multi-year investment. It cannot be overstated that Magabala's success is contingent on sustainable and flexible resourcing that enables us to go above and beyond what is required to meet the needs of the people and communities we seek to benefit, including readers.

Lastly, we are deeply thankful to our creators who are our extended family. When a new book, fresh off the press, arrives at Magabala's door, the collective joy is palpable. We thank you for entrusting us to care for your stories.

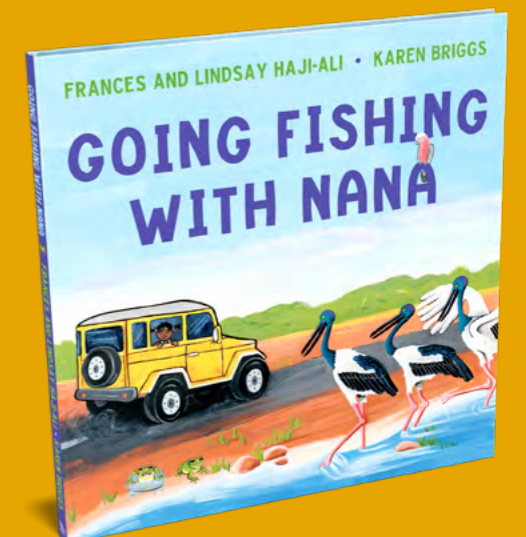
Dr Lilly Brown
CEO



“

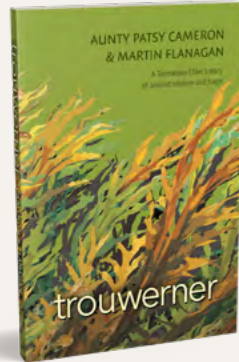
It has been wonderful to work together on our second book. We get so much enjoyment out of knowing that children are counting along with us and sharing their own special family memories.”

— Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali



2025 Publications

New releases



Trouwerner

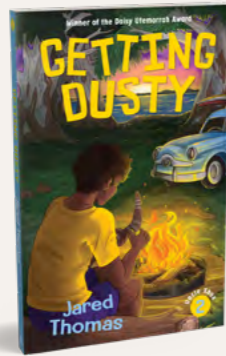
Patsy Cameron, Martin Flanagan

CULTURE & HISTORY

Trouwerner is an inviting yarn between Elder Aunty Patsy Cameron, the 28th Tasmanian Governor Kate Warner, and journalist Martin Flanagan. It weaves through the coming-into-being time, Trouwerner's colonisation and the lies of history, to the power of truth-telling and hope for the future. It is a story of kinship and respect, of realism and optimism, welcoming the reader into the conversation.

'This magnificent book is part memoir and part history, examining both Indigenous and non-Indigenous life in our southernmost state. Flanagan is an ardent student of Tasmanian history; Aunty Patsy is a wealth of knowledge of Indigenous history and culture.'

– Good Reading Magazine



Getting Dusty

Jared Thomas

JUNIOR FICTION

Getting Dusty is the sequel to Jared Thomas' CBCA longlisted *Uncle Xbox* (2023). After punching a bully at a soccer tournament, Dusty is grounded and forced to face the consequences of his actions. With Uncle Xbox's guidance – and time on Country – he begins to learn, grow and make better choices.

'If you're working through some self-regulation and [emotional intelligence] learning with your kiddos, this will be an invaluable asset ... I'm giving it a 5/5 rating and hoping we can expect to see more of Dusty and Uncle Xbox.'

– Sue Warren, Losang Zopa



The First Sunrise

Vanessa Stevens
Illustrated by Paul Seden

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

The First Sunrise is the first Mbabaram creation story to be published and uses the connection between traditional knowledge and science to share facts and lessons for children. Mbabaram Creation stories tell of the beginnings of land, sky and waterways, carrying cultural lessons for each generation. This story shares how Kangaroo and Emu created day, night and the directions.

Passed on to Vanessa by her father, Colin Alec Stevens (Alick Chalk), it honours Mbabaram culture and identity and is the first book in the Magabala Books *First Peoples First Sciences* series.

'The First Sunrise is a valuable resource for classrooms and families alike, fostering an appreciation for Aboriginal culture and the wisdom embedded in Dreaming Stories... a timeless tale that will captivate young readers.'

– Michelle O'Connell, ReadPlus



Hairy Holes, Book 2

Brenton E McKenna

JUNIOR FICTION

In the thrilling sequel to *Hairy Holes* (2023), the mysterious Crypt_hunter19 sets out to prove the Hairy Holes are real – only to attract the attention of the ruthless Major Bart Tux. Out bush, Begley chases online fame while Redley still distrusts humans. When their worlds collide, the Hairy Holes face their greatest threat yet.

'Brenton continues to engage young readers with First Nations titles that are unique and innovative. We want ALL kids to have a greater understanding of Blak culture – and that includes the humour – no gammin!' – Sue Warren, Losang Zopa



Desert Tracks

Marly Wells, Linda Wells

JUNIOR FICTION

In *Desert Tracks*, a Warlpiri teenager is carried by a willy-willy to Alice Springs in 1924, where she meets Sonny, Beryl and Spike. As their paths cross through time, they discover the past and present are deeply connected. A powerful time-travel novel exploring history, racism and young lives in central Australia.

'I loved the conversations in Desert Tracks, the mix of Aboriginal English and Warlpiri words, the voices so authentic, it seems like you can hear them talking ... Highly recommended to young readers.' – Helen Eddy, ReadPlus



Fast Fish

Gregg Dreise

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Fast Fish is the third book in the popular 'Scales and Tails' series, sharing a creation story about the Murray Cod Fish, Yellow Belly Carp Fish and the Murray-Darling Basin. It celebrates difference, learning and looking forward. In the Dreamtime, the Goodoo, Thuggai and Murri peoples feared their differences. Through the guidance of the Ancestral Beings and the Clever Man, Biamme, they learn that difference is part of the Creation.

'Gregg's take on creating new and vibrant narratives based on old Dreaming tales is always both impressive and a fun learning journey. Another wonderful and meaningful story to share with your kiddos from the smallest right up to Year 6.' – Sue Warren, Losang Zopa



Cloudmaker

Helen Milroy

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Cloudmaker is a fictional illustrated story that invites young readers to explore imagination, friendship, change and creation. Long ago, Cloudmaker created clouds for shade, rain and light. When his work was done and he felt the weight of change, he sank to Earth before rising again to join his friend Cirra. His tears of sadness and joy formed a rainbow that encircles the Earth, where he lives on forever.

'Milroy depicts Cloudmaker with stunning transparency, rendering his glowing feathers in a fine digital lattice that contrasts beautifully with the bold, geometric designs of the landscapes. Some of the most striking images are Milroy's mesmeric pre-existence cloudscape.'

– Annie Waters, Books+Publishing



Old Days: Imanka nurna laakinha nitjaarta

Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Old Days: Imanka nurna laakinha nitjaarta shares Nunga Williams' childhood memories between Iwupataka (Jay Creek), Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Tempe Downs, her mother's Country. A beautiful bilingual book in Western Arrente and English, it features vibrant artwork of animals, Elders on Country and life on Hermannsburg mission days, all set within expansive landscapes.

'The author's voice is so vivid, it feels spoken, and as the book feels alive, Old Days invites curiosity about the language and places of Nunga's ancestry. The book reads like a story being told on Country, with a voice that is strong and personal. The illustrations are vivid and animated.'

– Rebecca Wu, Glam Adelaide



Gooramindi the Crocodile

Quinlan Jaffrey

Illustrated Jade Goodwin

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Deep in the river country lives Gooramindi, a wise freshwater crocodile and guardian of the water. When young Corey is caught by Walwarranga, the big cheeky crocodile upstream, Gooramindi must save him. A story of courage, friendship and respect for the ancient spirits of the river, it reminds readers that heroes can be found in unexpected places.

'This delightful story sings with community and responsibility, as the children laugh and play with the old crocodile, who patrols their area keeping them safe ... I love the inclusion of the map showing readers exactly where the story is set. And the large print words will have kids easily recognising them and acting them out.'

– Fran Knight, ReadPlus



Ngurra Home

Carl Merrison, Hakea Hustler

JUNIOR FICTION

The third book in Magabala's best-selling series, and sequel to *Black Cockatoo* and *Dirrarn*, *Ngurra Home* follows Mia in her final year of university studying Conservation and Wildlife Science. Balancing study, part-time vet nursing and volunteering, Mia is called back to the Kimberley when her jawiji falls ill. Home again, she draws on her knowledge and community strength to protect her Country from a large corporation.

'This is a wonderful story of the strong bonds Mia feels to Country, her family and her community. Beautifully written and highlighting the need for us to listen and learn from each other in order to protect the environment, this is sure to become another firm favourite.'

– Michelle, Lamont Books



A Savage Turn

Luke Patterson

POETRY

A Savage Turn is a searing debut from a Gamilaroi author. With biting wit and sharp insight, Luke Patterson takes readers from forest billabongs to prisons and into the shadows of the recent past. Subverting the Australian dream, this seductive collection draws on critical theory, modernist poetry, postcolonial irony, eco-romanticism and western folklore.

'Aboriginal poetry has the ability to love and rage simultaneously. Luke Patterson's debut does this masterfully, constructing pieces full of fire and defiance amongst the love/poems. In this collection, Patterson unpacks colonial myth and legacy, subverts reader expectations, and teases out a tenderness that nourishes.'

– Raelee Lancaster, Australian Book Review



Going for Pippies

Wilaraan Laurie

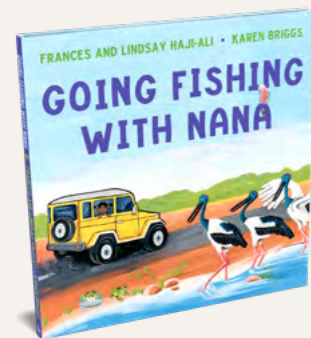
Illustrated Tori-Jay Mordey

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Going for Pippies is a beautifully illustrated children's picture book celebrating family, culture and tradition. Join Wilaraan and his family as they head on Country to collect pippies for dinner. At its heart is a family outing that highlights intergenerational learning and the sharing of cultural knowledge.

'Going for Pippies shows us how important it is to look after the land, pass on family stories, spend time with those we love, and overcome our fears. All are important lessons for any child. Going for Pippies leaves the reader feeling happy and wanting more.'

– Sue Mauger, Glam Adelaide



Going Fishing with Nana

Frances Haji-Ali, Lindsay Haji-Ali
Illustrated Karen Briggs
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

This beautifully illustrated children's picture book takes readers on an exciting fishing trip with Nana in the far north of Australia. Through repetition and rhyme, readers are introduced to early education concepts such as ordinal numbers, counting by twos, and adjectives, all while seeing many cute and cheeky outback animals along the way.

'Bright full-page illustrations are clear and full of colour. Each page highlights another section of their journey, starting with the boob trees, then on to the frogs, jabirus and green tree snakes, crocodiles, kangaroos, dragonflies, ants, and then galahs. Each of the animals is large, giving the readers a wonderful closeup view.' – **Fran Knight, ReadPlus**



Bapa's Last Canoe

Maree McCarthy Yoelu
Illustrated Samantha Campbell
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

Bapa's Last Canoe is a simple, heartfelt picture book about Bapa, a traditional canoe maker, and the making of his last canoe. Bapa takes his three daughters away on a canoe ride to connect to family and Country for the last time before his daughters leave for school in the city.

'Bapa's Last Canoe is a gentle, heartwarming picture book about the author's grandfather ... Samantha Campbell's illustrations are beautiful, created digitally and traditionally in gouache, pastel and coloured pencil. There is a real warmth to the pages which are predominantly double-page spreads, immersing the reader into the environment.' – **Bronwyn Joseph, Reading Time CBCA**



Turbo Turtle

Gregg Dreise
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK

The turbo-charged fourth book in Gregg Dreise's series *Scales and Tails* tells how the turtle got his shell and learnt to slow down. In the Dreamtime, a lizard escapes an eagle and is given speed and sacred Lore by Biamme. When Turbo Turtle forgets respect for Country and the Elders, he faces the consequences. A bold tale of mistakes, change and finding where you belong.

'Not exactly a lesson of peaceful co-existence, but rather something like an ancient law requiring restraint, acceptance, compromise and even a version of a dynamic and fragile equality among all creatures. Each full colour illustration fills two pages with the engaging story, recommended for readers five to nine.' – **Kevin Brophy, Reading Time CBCA**

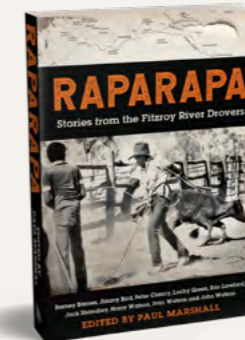


Dingo's Dream

Helen Milroy
CHILDREN PICTURE BOOK

Tales from the Bush Mob follows a group of animals who work together to solve problems, celebrating respect for First Nations culture and Country, and the importance of courage, perseverance and wisdom. When Dingo dreams someone is in distress, the Bush Mob begin a search that leads him back to his homeland. There they rescue a lost Tasmanian devil, Tassa, and Dingo reconnects with his Country, bringing the dingoes back to sing at sunset once more.

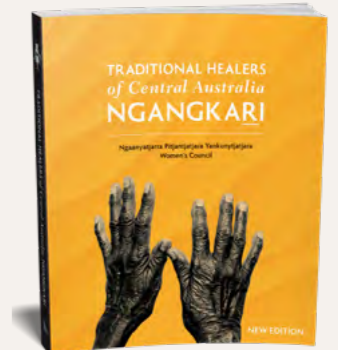
'The stunning illustrations on glossy pages are a visual delight with the white text being a standout feature. This skilfully written narrative is highly accessible and would be a perfect read for those Early Years children seeking an early chapter book or would be an entertaining short novel to be read aloud in class.' – **Kathryn Beilby, ReadPlus**



Raparapa: Stories from the Fitzroy River Drivers – New Edition

John Watson, Paul Marshall (Ed.)
CULTURE AND HISTORY

Raparapa is a raw first-person account of Aboriginal drovers in the Kimberley, revealing the hardships they endured and the resilience they carried. Through personal stories, it traces the history of the cattle industry while honoring the men who upheld Law, culture and connection to Country along the Fitzroy River. First published in 1988.



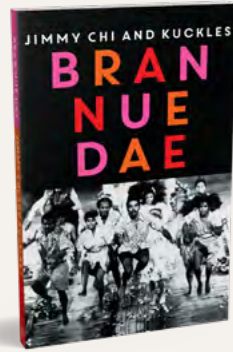
Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari – New Edition

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
Aboriginal Corporation
CULTURE AND HISTORY

An updated, stunning new edition of a Magabala classic. *Traditional Healers* is a generous and authorised sharing of the words and traditions of the Ngangkari, the traditional healers of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Lands. For thousands of years, they have nurtured the physical, emotional and social well-being of their people, and now they share their wisdom, natural healing techniques and cultural history through life stories, spectacular photography and artwork. This new edition includes 10 new Ngangkari stories.

Old Stories; New Editions

With the support of the Cultural Fund, we produce new editions of culturally significant titles to be enjoyed by the next generation of readers. These new editions include re-design and reformatting in keeping with contemporary publishing developments, giving older titles a new lease of life.

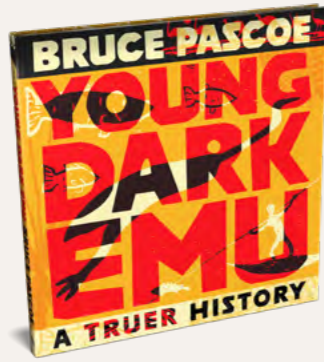


Bran Nue Dae – New Edition

Jimmy Chi, Kuckles

PLAY/MUSICAL

Bran Nue Dae took Australia by storm when it premiered at the Perth International Arts Festival in 1990. This new edition of the script and score from Broome’s trail-blazing musical *Bran Nue Dae*, written by the late Jimmy Chi and musicians from the Broome band, Kuckles, breathes new life into a Magabala classic.



Young Dark Emu: A Truer History – New Format

Bruce Pascoe

CULTURE AND HISTORY

Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu* reshaped how Australians understand the continent’s past. *Young Dark Emu – A Truer History* brings this research to younger readers in a new accessible soft cover format.



Rights Sales

2025 flew by with many and varied rights and contracts activities.

Two staff members attended the Bologna Book Fair in Italy in April 2025 – Rights Manager Kate McCormack as mentor to Editor Melena Cole-Manolis. During this fair, many works by Magabala Books’ creators were pitched to publishing professionals, with much interest from all around the world. Two titles, *Silver Leaves* by Gladys Milroy and *Thank you rain!* by Sally Morgan and Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr, were selected for the Bologna Ragazzi Awards (BRAW) Amazing Bookshelf under the category Sustainability. As a result, they were showcased at the Salaborsa library in Italy as well as in a separate exhibition held at the fair itself.

Kate McCormack accepted an invitation to be part of an exploratory delegation of publishers that attended the Seoul International Book Fair in South Korea and Visited Taipei, Taiwan, for a series of publisher visits and business meetings. The generosity from both countries was overwhelming and the enthusiasm for First Nations Australian literature and artists was inspiring.

Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh and Melena Cole-Manolis represented Magabala Books at the Creative Australia Visiting International Publishers events that took place on Gadigal Land during the week of the Sydney Writers’ Festival.

Rights and Permissions revenue in 2025 increased by 49.19% from 2024. Twenty publishing agreements with author and illustrators were contracted.

Sub-licensing highlights include:

- *Family* (illustrator Jasmine Seymour), *Sharing* (illustrator Leanne Mulgo Watson) and *Respect* (illustrator Lisa Kennedy) by Aunty Fay Muir and Sue Lawson, English and Spanish language rights sold throughout North America and Mexico
- *Living On Stolen Land* by Ambelin Kwaymullina, French language rights sold
- *Gurri!, Storm Bird* by Trevor Fourmile and Jingalu, rights licensed to Queensland Performing Arts Centre and performed as part of the Out of the Box Festival 2025
- West Australian Ballet and the Broome Public Library held a *Thank you rain!* by Sally Morgan and Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr story-time adventure
- *Our Flag, Our Story* by Bernard Namok Jnr, Thomas Mayo and Tori-Jay Mordey, audio-visual rights in Torres Strait Creole licensed to appear on the Indigenous.gov.au website, read by Bernard Namok Jnr
- *Little Bird’s Day*, *Thank you rain!* and *The River* by Sally Morgan and Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr, audio rights sold
- Eleven titles audio-visual rights licensed to Joey Books
- *Sea Country* and *Sky Country* by Aunty Patsy Cameron and Lisa Kennedy, audio-visual rights licensed to Story Box Library
- *Raymangirrbuy dhäwu*, *When I was a little girl* by Kylie Gatjarrarwuy Mununggurr, audio rights licensed to the ABC for ABC Kids Listen Story Time
- *Kunyi* by Kunyi June Anne McInerney, artwork licensed for use on the Australian Collective Stand at the Seoul International Book Fair



Rights Manager Kate McCormack and fellow delegates in Taipei, Taiwan

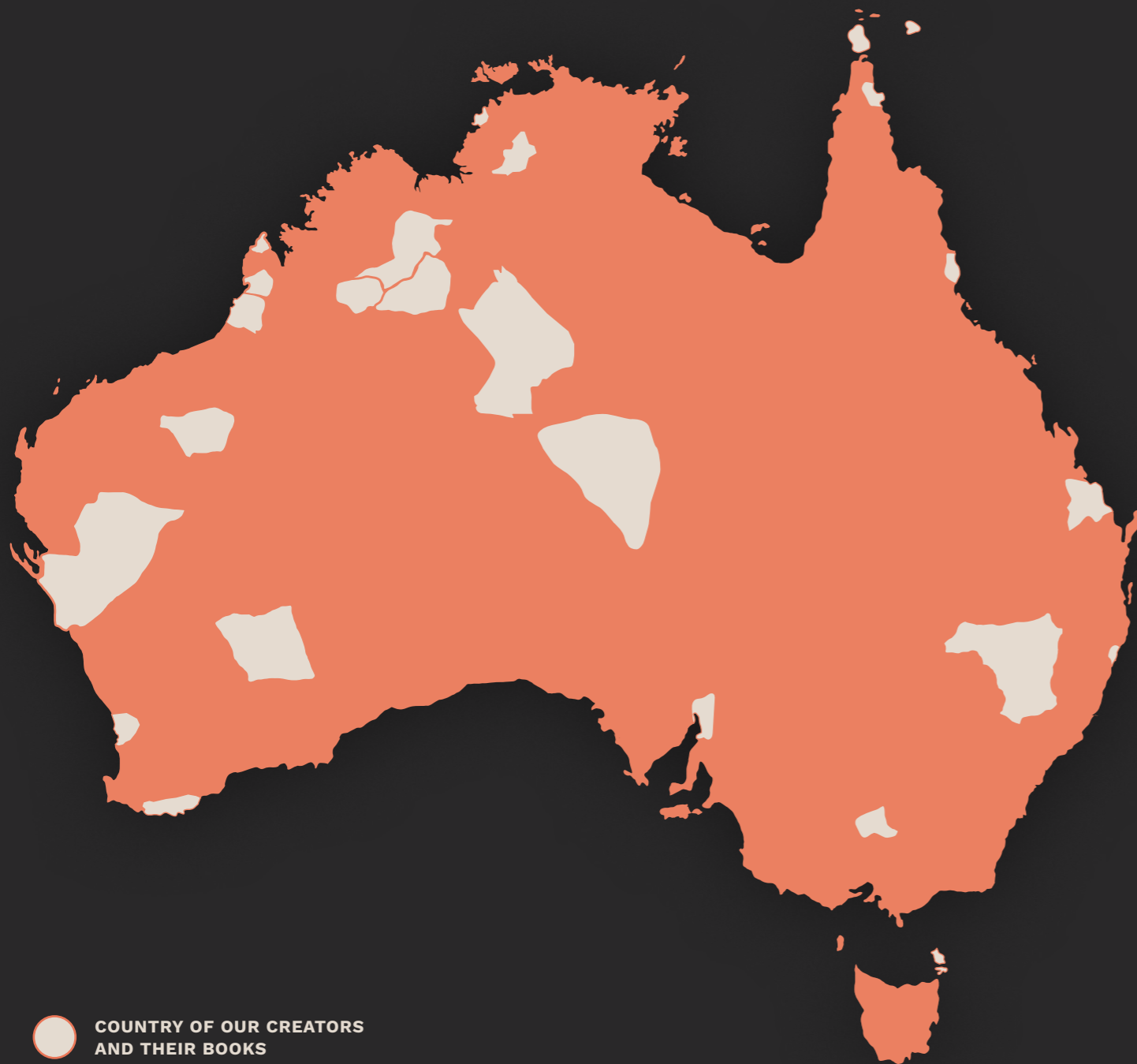
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There's an absurdity in the way history gets flattened in this country. I want this book to operate like a many-faced prism that looks to the past, present and future, refracting fragments of the personal and the political ... a kind of poetic technology, a new tool cracking open old meanings and beliefs.”

— Luke Patterson



A diversity of voices



COUNTRY OF OUR CREATORS AND THEIR BOOKS

This map is an artist's impression reflecting our creators' many and diverse Nations across Australia. Please note due to scale, it does not represent Nation boundaries accurately, nor is it intended to be relied upon for any purpose, including educational purposes.



Carl Merrison
Ngurra Home
Jaru / Kija



Jared Thomas
Getting Dusty
Nukunu



Patsy Cameron
Trouwerner
Pairrebeenne / Trawlwoolway



Vanessa Stevens
The First Sunrise
Mbarbaram / Yidinji / Taribalang Bunda



Paul Seden
The First Sunrise
Wuthathi / Muralag



Marly Wells
Desert Tracks
Warlpiri



Brenton E McKenna
Hairy Holes 2
Yawuru



Gregg Dreise
Fast Fish, Turbo Turtle
Goomelroi / Kamilaroi / Euahlayi



Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams
Old Days: Imanka Nurna
Laakinha Nitjaarta Western Arrernte



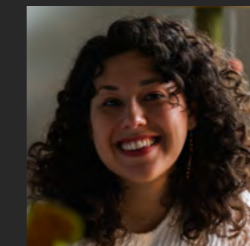
Helen Milroy
Cloudmaker
Palyku



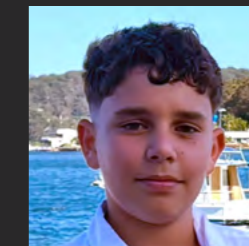
Luke Patterson
A Savage Turn
Gamilaroi / Gadigal



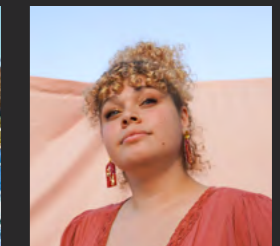
Quinlan Jaffrey
Goorramindi the Crocodile
Gooniyandi / Palyku



Jade Goodwin
Goorramindi the Crocodile
Gamilaroi



Wilaaran Laurie
Going for Pippies
Yaegl / Yamba



Tori-Jay Mordey
Going for Pippies
Meriam / Maluyigal



Lindsay Haji-Ali
Going Fishing with Nana
Yawuru / Karajarri



Karen Briggs
Going Fishing with Nana
Yorta Yorta



Maree McCarthy Yoelu
Bapa's Last Canoe
Wadjigany



Samantha Campbell (née Fry)
Bapa's Last Canoe
Dagiman

NON-INDIGENOUS COLLABORATORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Hakea Hustler
Ngurra Home

Martin Flanagan
Trouwerner

Linda Wells
Desert Tracks

Frances Haji-Ali
Going Fishing with Nana

Celebrating success



Book Awards

Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Indigenous Writing
Refugia – Shortlisted

Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards

Eve Pownall Award
Always Was, Always Will Be – Winner

Early Childhood Book of the Year
Sky Country – Notable

ASLA DANZ Children's Book Awards

Graphic Novel
Hairy Holes – Longlisted

Young Adult Novel
Robert Runs – Longlisted

Non-Fiction
Gurawul the Whale – Longlisted
Always Was, Always Will Be – Longlisted

Australian Book Industry Awards

Small Publishers Children's Book of the Year
Always Was, Always Will Be – Shortlisted
Super Snake – Shortlisted

Social Impact Book of the Year
My Dad's Gone Away – Shortlisted

Miles Franklin Literary Award
Compassion – Shortlisted

ALS Gold Medal

Refugia – Longlisted

ACT Literary Awards

Children's Literature (Younger Readers)
Big, Big Love – Winner

Poetry
Refugia – Highly Commended (Shortlisted)

Fiction
Compassion – Winner



Karajia Awards for Children's Literature

Non-Fiction
Always Was, Always Will Be – Shortlisted

2025 Australian Book Designers Association (ABDA) Awards

Best Designed Literary Fiction/Poetry Cover
Kangaroo Stew – Gene Eaton, Longlisted

Voss Literary Award

Compassion – Longlisted

Prime Minister's Literary Awards

Children's Literature
Raymangirrbuy dhäwu, When I was a little girl – Shortlisted

BRAW Amazing Bookshelf Sustainability Exhibition

Silver Leaves
Thank you Rain!

Business and Staff Awards

Broome Business Excellence Awards

2025 Workplace Culture & Inclusivity Award
Magabala Books – Winner

Australian Book Industry Awards

Small Publisher of the Year
Magabala Books – Shortlisted

Commissioning Editor/Publisher of the Year
Rachel Bin Salleh – Shortlisted

Children's Publisher of the Year
Magabala Books – Shortlisted

Pixie O'Harris Hall of Fame Award
Rachel Bin Salleh – Winner

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Rachel Bin Salleh

Australian Publishers Association Rising Star Award

Dr Arlie Alizzi – Winner
Melena Cole-Manolis – Shortlisted

Kullarri NAIDOC Awards

Bamba Albert Outstanding Contribution to the Arts Award

Dr Arlie Alizzi – Winner



Magabala staff and creators at the 2025 ABIA Awards

Pixie O'Harris Hall of Fame

Rachel Bin Salleh, Publisher at Magabala Books was awarded the 2025 Pixie O'Harris Award by the Australian Publishers Association (APA) at the 2025 Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA). Rachel is descended from the Nimunburr and Yawuru peoples of the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Starting her career in publishing at Magabala Books in the 1990s, Rachel became publisher in 2014.

The award is named in honour of children's book author and illustrator, Pixie O'Harris (1903–1991), who had a longstanding career in publishing.

'Rachel has quietly changed the Australian publishing landscape. From Broome in WA, she has encouraged the Australian publishing industry to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, while also being incredibly generous in sharing her knowledge of publishing First Nations stories.'

– APA

'I am honoured and deeply humbled to receive such an accolade from the judges and my peers in the industry. Thank you for your belief and support in this space, not only for me but also for Magabala Books and all those I work with. Publishing stories, experiences and ways of being for First Nations children (and all our children) is one of the most important jobs we have. To create safe spaces, develop imaginations, challenge the status quo, and to let children laugh like no one is listening, sustains my journey on this planet. It has been a joy and a privilege to serve my community.'

– Rachel Bin Salleh OAM



CEO Lilly Brown and Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh at the 2025 ABIA Awards



Sharing our stories

Social Media Followers

Total **44,259**
Facebook **21,091** 20,467 (2024)
19,836 (2023)
Instagram **20,418** 18,754 (2024)
17,683 (2023)
TikTok, LinkedIn,
Blue Sky **2,750** 1,290 (2024)
4,823 (2023)

Web

7,800 (2024)
6,221 (2023)

14,547 eNewsletter
subscribers

138,000 (2024)
135,000 (2023)

141,878 website users

838,000 (2024)
725,000 (2023)

814,604k website
page views

Mentions

(potential
audience)

14,547 book reviews
and media

(potential
audience
51,255,654)

830* Magabala Books'
mentions

(potential
audience
11,429,388)

324* Magabala Books
or author mentions

*syndicated mentions combined





Publicity

Promotional highlights

A Savage Turn appeared in Australian Book Review's Best Books of 2025 list

CEO Dr Lilly Brown led a media campaign on the importance of First Nations books in the classroom to promote the new Edition of *Young Dark Emu*, with appearances on podcasts, radio, industry blogs and online.

CEO Dr Lilly Brown was interviewed by librarian and Vice President of CBCA Victoria, Karys McEwan, for the educator's podcast YA Substack

Magabala put out a statement in support of Palestinian booksellers from The Educational Bookshop in East Jerusalem after they were arrested and books confiscated by the IDF.

Magabala Books partnered with Fremantle Press, University of WA Press and the ABC to run the ABC Big Day of Books event in Perth. Bebe Oliver and Helen Milroy attended.

Three Kuckles members appeared on ABC Radio Kimberley for a half hour interview with Vanessa Mills in the lead up to the launch the new edition of *Bran Nue Dae*.

CEO Dr Lilly Brown published an article titled *A Book by a First Nations Author is not Just a Book: Planning to use First Nations Stories* in the Australian Literacy Educators' Association Journal.

Exhibition held from April to July in the Story Place Gallery at the State Library of Western Australia of David Hardy's vibrant artwork from *On the Way to Nana's* children's picture book by Frances Haji-Ali and Lindsay Haji-Ali.



Book Launches

Alongside our creators attendances at many festivals and events, we were lucky to gather and celebrate 7 book launches in 2025:

22 February	<i>Trouwerner</i> book launch at Petrach's Bookshop, Launceston
15 March	<i>Trouwerner</i> book launch at The Playhouse Theatre, Hobart
2 August	<i>Desert Tracks</i> book launch at The Sun Bookshop, Naarm
10 September	<i>Old Days Imanka Nurna Laakinha Nitjaarta</i> book launch at Tangentyere Artists Gallery, Alice Springs
6 September	<i>A Savage Turn</i> book launch at The Wheeler Centre, Naarm
21 November	<i>Traditional Healers</i> book launch at Red Kangaroo Books, Alice Springs
12 December	<i>Bran Nue Dae</i> book launch at Sun Pictures, Rubibi



Aunty Patsy Cameron, Martin Flanagan and Kate Warner celebrate the launch of *Trouwerner*



Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara authors and family celebrate the launch of *Traditional Healers* new edition



Marly Wells and Linda Wells at the launch of their book *Desert Tracks*



Celebrating the launch of *Traditional Healers: Ngangaki* new edition



Magabala Director Bebe Oliver with Luke Patterson



Aunty Patsy Cameron signing copies of *Trouwerner*



Marjorie Nunga Williams and Coralie Williams with *Old Days*



Sandy Dann and friends arrive at the launch of *Bran Nue Dae* in Rubibi



Next generation readers at the *Trouwerner* launch



Kuckles perform at the *Bran Nue Dae* launch, Sun Pictures, Rubibi

Investing in creative futures

Magabala Books is committed to nurturing and celebrating the talent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytellers, writers, artists, illustrators, editors and publishing professionals.

The Daisy Utemorrah Award

The Daisy Utemorrah Award was presented at the Western Australia's Premier's Book Awards ceremony at the State Library of Western Australia on 29 August 2025. Wiradjuri writer Beau Windon received \$15,000 prize money and a publishing contract with Magabala, thanks to the support of the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund and the WA Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport.

Beau Windon is a neurodivergent writer of Wiradjuri heritage who flirts with all genres of creative writing. His manuscript *Jax Paperweight and the Neon Starway* is a middle grade comedic fantasy novel that delighted judges with its unique voice and hilarious storylines.

The Daisy Utemorrah Award is for an unpublished manuscript of junior or YA fiction by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writer. Presented within the WA Premier's Book Awards, this national award recognises excellence in junior and YA fiction and seeks to grow Indigenous writing for younger readers.

"Winning the Daisy Utemorrah Award was a lifechanging experience for me ... and has helped to legitimise my writing career and allows me to feel more like there is a future in this industry for me."

— Beau Windon



Beau Windon accepts the Daisy Utemorrah Award at the WA Premier's Book Awards

Magabala Mid-Career Fellowship

Launched in 2020, the Magabala Mid-Career Fellowship provides valuable time for an established author, who has previously published at least two books, to work on a new project. The 2025 Mid-Career Fellowship was awarded to Wiradjuri writer Jeanine Leane.

With the support of the \$10,000 Fellowship, Jeanine Leane will be supported to develop her powerful manuscript *The Genealogy of Bruises*; a polyphonic, multi-perspective work that centres the voices and stories of Wiradjuri Country and women and challenges the limits of existing genre structures to tell a Blak story that is timely and original.

Jeanine Leane is a Wiradjuri writer, poet and academic from southwest New South Wales. Her poetry, short stories, critiques and essays have been published widely. She taught Creative Writing and Aboriginal Literature at the University of Melbourne from 2016–2024. Jeanine's collection of poetry, *Gawimarra: Gathering* (UQP, 2024) won the 2025 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry and was shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Prize at the NSW Literary Awards 2025.



Magabala Books acknowledges Serp Hills Foundation for their generous support of this Fellowship.

Creative Development Scholarships

Our Creative Development Fund extends financial support to writers and illustrators undertaking professional development opportunities and initiating embarking on new creative pathways.

In 2025, 8 First Nations creators were awarded scholarships to commence creative development projects, thanks to the Creative Development Fund and the generous support of our donors.

Magabala Scholars are selected through a competitive application process and expressions of interest come from all over Australia. Funding provides financial support for equipment, mentoring and upskilling to First Nations creatives.



Carly Wallace

Carly Wallace is a Dulguburra Yidinji freshwater, rainforest woman from the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland, now based in Meanjin (Brisbane). An aspiring writer and storyteller, she is known for her Aboriginal comedy platform 'Cjay's Vines' and as creator, presenter and producer of the podcast 'Them Yarns'.

Carly will be supported to develop her manuscript and enrol in a writing course.



Jennifer Kemarre Martiniello OAM

Jennifer Kemarre Martiniello OAM is an award-winning visual artist, poet and writer of Aboriginal (L. Southern Arrernte), Chinese and Anglo-Celtic descent. She founded the ACT Indigenous Writers Group in 1999 and has received numerous awards, with her work published widely in journals and anthologies nationally and internationally. Her poetry has been translated into Polish, Spanish and Arabic, and her children's story *Fish and Rainbow* is forthcoming with Magabala Books. She lives and works on the unceded lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, Kamberri/Canberra Australia.

Jennifer was supported to work on her novel *Blossoms of the Mulga*, based on the generational stories and experiences of her family's Lower Southern Arrernte history.



Kaitlen Wellington

Kaitlen Wellington is a Yuin woman and an emerging writer. She has a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Creative Writing and Indigenous Studies. She has had poems published in the *Australian Poetry Journal* (2019/2020) and *Guwayu – For All Times* (2020). She was also commissioned by Bundanon Art Museum to create a multimedia installation 'true reflections' for their opening exhibition *From Impulse to Action* (2022). Kaitlen worked with Yours and Owls, collaborating with a group of artists creating a multi-media installation *Healing Truth* for the Lazy Mountain Festival (2023). Additionally, she has worked as a poet/mentor with Red Room Poetry's programs *Poetry in First Nations Languages* (2019) and *Barray Barray Whale Song* (2024).

Kaitlen was supported to purchase writing equipment/materials and travel support to attend the Red Room's Poetry Fellowship 2025 writer's residency.



Loyola Wills

Loyola Jane Wills is a Zenadth Kes woman with blood ties to the Wagadagam Tribe from Mabuiag Island, mother of two and junior Doctor. She has had a love of writing ever since she was a teenager and primarily used it as a form of expressing her emotions.

Loyola was supported to continue manuscript development of her novel.



Mariah Sweetman

Mariah Sweetman is a proud descendant of the Ugarapul people. She is passionate about First Nations histories and engaging young people with stories. She loves to create with words and paint; often writing poetry and painting in her free time. She is a teacher by trade with a Bachelor in Education and Arts, Master of Education, specialising in Indigenous Education.

Mariah was supported to continue manuscript development and professional skills.



Ngaire Pigram

Ngaire is a proud queer Wajarri and Yawuru storyteller from Rubibi who has been an active creative and performer in the theatre, television, and film industry for over thirty years. With their desire to publish a book that represents the joy and wonder of a child, experiencing a world of rules they've yet to conform to.

Ngaire attended an online course and received support to develop a children's picture manuscript.



Shinade Mourambine

Shinade recently studied at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and graduated with a Bachelor of Performing Arts. Shinade is an emerging playwright and filmmaker.

Shinade was supported for professional development in writing.



Zakayyah Maclean

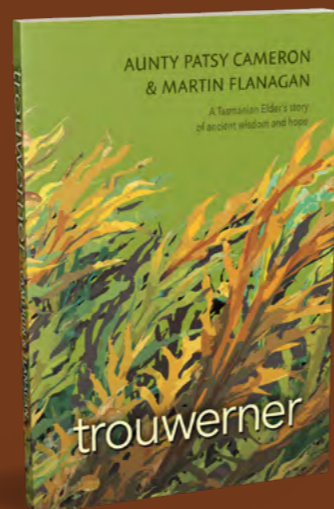
Zakayyah is a multidisciplinary artist working in contemporary dance, illustration, and design for performance. While their primary practice is movement based, illustration and writing have become integral parts of how they explore and document ideas, especially when working on complex collaborative projects.

With the support of the scholarship, Zakayyah will publish a creative zine and create a small archival website.

“

[This book] challenges many historical writings that were written from afar. I hope the reader will understand how precious and unique my cultural heritage is. To appreciate what we mean by truth-telling and to acknowledge how very important our connections to our ancestors are.”

— Aunty Patsy Cameron



Industry pathways and partnerships

Magabala is a leading advocate for First Nations publishing and our guidance and leadership is sought after in the industry. In this role, we work to assert and reclaim First Nations ways of working within the publishing industry.

Industry Leadership

- Membership of Australian Publishers Association, Magabala Books:
 - CEO Lilly Brown member of the Independent Publishers Committee of the APA
 - Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh member of Diversity and Inclusion Panel, APA
 - Editor Melena Cole-Manolis member of the Children's Publishers Committee of the APA
- Public Lending Rights Committee, Board Member, Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh
- Writing Australia Council Member, Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh
- Writing WA Board, Committee Member, Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh
- WA Govt School Curriculum and Standards, Board Member, CEO Lilly Brown



Visibility and Advocacy

Several Magabala staff travelled to the east coast to attend BookPeople Conference and trade fair in Sydney, visit with new Distributor Hachette Australia and visit the warehouse Alliance Distribution Services (ADS).

Magabala CEO Dr Lilly Brown, and Marketing staff Xenica Ayling and Skye Cusack attended the Australian Association for Teaching English (AATE) and the Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) conference in Hobart. Magabala was a silver sponsor with Dr Lilly Brown delivering the opening plenary to a packed auditorium of educators. Magabala also sponsored a First Nations educator to attend the conference. The Magabala stall at the trade fair was visited by many teachers, academics and librarians and lasting connections were made.

Dr Lilly Brown presented the Notre Dame Nulungu Reconciliation Lecture to a large Rubibi audience, titled *Reimagining First Nations futures: Reimagining our future*.

Dr Arlie Alizzi appeared at Bellingen Writers Fest in conversation with Gumbaynggirr Elder Aunty Bea Ballangarry, which received a standing ovation.

Marketing Coordinator Skye Cusack hosted a panel at PULiiMa on First Nations languages in publishing, with Marie McCarthy Yoelu and Marie Munkara

Magabala presented a spoken word event as part of Shinju Matsuri festival in Rubibi (Broome). It was a well-attended event that showcased the talent of local First Nations poets and performers.

Publisher Rachel Bin Salleh presented at a wide range of forums and festivals, including: Broome Chamber of Commerce's Women in Leadership Forum; Blak & Bright Writer's Group masterclass; Curtin University's Centre for Human Rights Education & Writing WA panel 'Sharpening the Pen: Activating Human Rights through Writing'; English Teachers Association (NSW) on 'First Nations publishing, two-way learning, pathways'; RMIT University Roundtable 'Publishing and Futures'; Write Around the Murray Festival panel.

Editor Melena Cole-Manolis attended the NT Writers Festival in Mparntwe, supporting the launch of *Old Days: Imanka nurna laakinha nitjaarta*.

Magabala put out a statement asking for reparations after it was reported that Meta used creators' books to train their AI module. The statement appeared in several media sources and Dr Lilly Brown spoke to the ABC and Goolarri Radio about the incident.

Magabala provided a publicly available submission to the Productivity Commission on the proposed exception to copyright laws to train Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems.

All staff and Directors joined a capacity building session with the organisation Switchboard Victoria who delivered a half-day virtual LGBTQIA+ peer-driven workshop. Switchboard assisted staff and the board to begin strengthening our shared language and build capacity around LGBTQIA+ people so we can better support one another and creators.



Magabala CEO Dr Lilly Brown with Arrernte and Warlpiri poet Marie Elena Ellis during the meeting of the First Stories Collective



Writer Celia Coulthard and illustrator Charmaine Ledden-Lewis at the 2025 gathering



Narrunga researcher and writer Natalie Harkin presenting at the 2025 gathering

Industry Pathways and Partnerships

The First Stories Collective

In 2025, Magabala Books and Blak & Bright were appointed by Creative Australia as Delivery Partner to provide dedicated services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and illustrators. Together, Magabala Books and Blak & Bright have established the First Story Collective — a national initiative designed to strengthen and connect the First Nations literature sector.

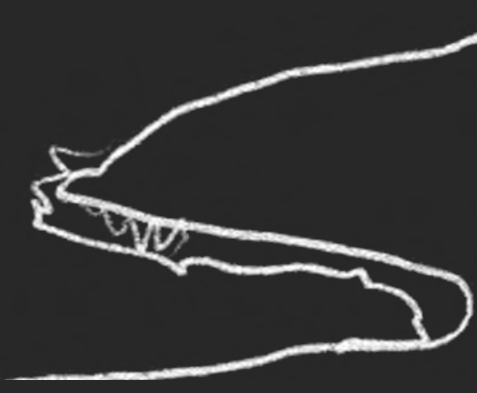
The First Stories Collective brings together two of the nation's leading Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in literature. Together, Blak & Bright and Magabala Books bring almost 50 years of experience and leadership in the literary sector, spanning publishing, festivals, cultural advocacy and sector development.

Blak & Bright Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer Bebe Oliver says:

‘There’s such exceptional talent in the First Nations writing space in Australia, which we’ve seen time and time again through our festival since 2016. As we look to building a stronger future, we’re proud to be leading the First Stories Collective to continue supporting our writers year-round.’

Throughout 2025, Magabala Books and Blak & Bright laid the foundations for the Collective through research, consultation and sector engagement with First Nations writers, illustrators, editors, publishers and arts workers across the country. This work ensured the initiative is being shaped directly by community priorities, cultural values and lived experience within the sector.

A key milestone was the inaugural First Stories Collective Gathering, held on Yawuru Country in Rubibi (Broome) in September 2025. The gathering brought together First Nations writers, illustrators, editors, publishers, librarians, educators and cultural leaders from across Australia. Across three days of dialogue, yarning and knowledge sharing, delegates reflected on the future of First Nations storytelling and publishing, sharing insights into the opportunities and challenges facing the sector.



Delegates highlighted the importance of creative sovereignty, cultural safety, fair recognition of cultural labour, and stronger pathways for emerging storytellers and publishing professionals.

‘This gathering felt like a turning point for our sector. It reminded me why this work matters.’

‘Being in a room full of mob who care so deeply about stories, culture and community was powerful.’

Through the First Stories Collective, Blak & Bright and Magabala Books are championing the work of First Nations writers, illustrators and publishing professionals across Australia and internationally. The initiative is strengthening relationships across the sector while supporting collaboration, knowledge sharing and professional development opportunities for storytellers and publishing practitioners.

Delegates left the inaugural gathering with a strong sense of shared momentum and possibility for the future of First Nations storytelling.

‘Together we are stronger. This collective feels real — not symbolic.’

‘It was healing. It felt powerful. It felt like a place where we could breathe again.’

Building on the foundations established in 2025, the First Stories Collective will continue strengthening national connections between First Nations writers, illustrators and publishing professionals. The Collective will be officially launched at the Blak & Bright Festival in September 2026 with a bespoke website and brand. Workshops, circles and networking activities are now being programmed in various capital and regional cities throughout 2026 and 2027.





International representation: Bologna Children's Book Fair 2025

Magabala Books proudly participated in the 2025 Bologna Children's Book Fair, with Editor Melena Cole-Manolis attending, supported by mentorship from our Rights Manager, Kate McCormack.

The 2025 Fair provided a valuable platform to present the work of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators to an international audience. Titles that generated strong interest included:

- *Cloudmaker* (Helen Milroy)
- *Old Days: Imanka Nurra Laakinha Nitjaarta* (Marjorie Nunga Williams)
- *Sky Country* (Aunty Patsy Cameron and Lisa Kennedy)
- *Silver Leaves* (Gladys Milroy)
- *The Family, Respect and Sharing* series (Aunty Faye Muir and Sue Lawson)
- *Goorramindi the Crocodile* (Quinlan Jaffrey and Jade Goodwin)
- *The Uncle Xbox* series (Jared Thomas)

While rights sales are often a long-term process, the Fair created promising opportunities for future international partnerships by strengthening our global networks and expanding our understanding of international publishing markets. Meetings with over 30 publishers, scouts and agents across Europe, North America and Asia highlighted how different territories respond to distinct themes, artistic styles and cultural narratives. These insights will inform our future rights strategies and targeted pitching.

As Australia's leading Indigenous publishing house, based on Yawuru Country in Rubibi (Broome), Magabala continues to champion First Nations storytelling on a global stage. Participation in Bologna strengthens our capacity to secure international outcomes for our creators and ensures their stories are shared with readers worldwide.

'My experience at the Bologna Children's Book Fair was immeasurable. Being able to represent and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creators on an international scale, while having the opportunity to be mentored has given me the confidence to attend the fair independently in the future to represent our First Nations creatives and publishing house, and sell the rights to our books. This project allowed me to build networks with international publishers, agents and scouts as well as connect with local publishing professionals whom I have since been in contact with.'

– Melena Cole-Manolis



Magabala Rights Manager Kate McCormack and Editor Melena Cole-Manolis, with Cindy Manfong from ILF and illustrator Jade Goodwin at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, Italy.

Ensuring our cultural legacy is continued...

Beyond our publishing program we initiate and deliver a wide range of projects and activity with enduring social, cultural and community value.

Intergenerational Storytelling Project

In October 2025, Magabala Books hosted the inaugural Intergenerational Storytelling Workshop at the Liyan Centre in Rubibi (Broome), bringing together more than 30 participants (a mix of Elders, emerging writers and young storytellers) for two days of connection, creativity and reflection.

Supported by Creative Australia, Water Corporation, Spinifex Trust, Headspace Broome, and Nyamba Buru Yawuru, the workshop formed part of Magabala's Intergenerational Storytelling Project. The project, which seeks to create safe, culturally grounded spaces for sharing stories across generations – honouring the past while nurturing new voices.

Across two days, participants explored creative storytelling techniques through panels, activities and yarnning circles. Elders shared memories and cultural wisdom alongside emerging storytellers who are just beginning to write or tell their stories.

Participants reflected on how much it meant to sit in a 'Culturally full space of us mob, being safe to share stories and ideas.' The workshop also sparked conversations about future storytelling pathways and opportunities. Many participants shared their hopes for ongoing learning, on-Country workshops, and mentorship opportunities to keep building their skills and confidence.

'This workshop opened up new pathways and opportunities for my story to be shared. I'm forever grateful.'

'It's inspired me to record my family stories, even if there's no end goal yet. They could be used years later or be kept just for family.'

Looking ahead, Magabala seeks to extend the Intergenerational Storytelling Project to support participants and the broader Kimberley region through skills development, mentoring and creative opportunities. Future plans include exploring writing retreats, skills workshops and professional development sessions.

Magabala extends heartfelt thanks to all who contributed – participants, facilitators and partners – for creating a powerful space where community, culture and creativity came together. This is just the beginning of what promises to be an inspiring movement of Kimberley storytelling.

Through the Cultural Fund, Magabala also supported the following projects:

- New Editions of the cultural classics: *Bran Nue Dae*, *Raparapa* and *Traditional Healers*
- Reprint of *Story about Feeling*
- Irene Davey's biography in collaboration with Marilyn Metta
- Aunty Rochelle Paton's life story project in collaboration with Kaiela Arts, Shepparton
- *Bran Nue Dae* new edition launch at Sun Pictures (where the original musical was first performed 36 years ago) to an audience of over 100 Rubibi community members.



Kathy Cox, Sabrina Dudgeon-Swift



Doris Victor with Luisa Mitchell from Centre for Stories



Participants of the Intergenerational Storytelling workshop, Rubibi



Uncle Kevin Puertollano and workshop facilitator Amanda Sibosado



Board Director Marlee Hutton with Paddy, Magabala's next generation, at Ngumpan Festival, image courtesy Kimberley Land Council



The crowd gathers at Ngumpan Festival for an evening of Cultural performances and celebration, image courtesy Kimberley Land Council

Ensuring Our Cultural Legacy is Continued...

Ngumpan Festival

Over 3 days in August at Ngumpan, near Fitzroy Crossing in the central Kimberley, Magabala joined in the celebrations of 40 years of law, language and culture with the 40th anniversaries of Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) and Kimberley Land Council (KLC). Attending the Ngumpan Festival was a coming home for Magabala Books, reconnecting with the place where it all began.

In 1984, more than 500 Aboriginal Elders and leaders met at a cultural festival in Ngumpan to discuss how they could keep culture strong and protect cultural and intellectual property. At this landmark meeting, KALACC was established and the foundations for Magabala Books were set. Four decades on, Magabala Books Board Directors and staff travelled to Ngumpan to present a stall and mobile Magabala library. It was a joyous and humbling occasion, connecting with Elders and community members to share memories of that profound foundational event, honour the legacy of the founding Elders and celebrate the ongoing success of the cultural organisations that emerged from this place – and are still strong.

"At Ngumpan, Magabala engaged with community, shared the outcomes of our creative and collective efforts, and listened to stories of Elders who dropped by to share, to question, and to celebrate our place in the story of Kimberley Aboriginal community-controlled self-determination. At the AGMs of our peak Kimberley Organisations, young leaders stepped up, taking on roles of responsibility and respect in the tradition of the many Elders who had passed in recent years, signalling the continued strength of the visions laid down at Ngumpan in 1984. At night, our Magabala crew joined with hundreds of Countrymen and Countrywomen revelling in Law and culture through song, dance and story and coming together at the cultural hub of the Gooniyandi, Walmajarri and Wangkatjungka peoples."

– Steve Kinnane, Magabala Chair

Planting seeds

We seek to broaden the reach and impact of our books through a range of education and community engagement projects.



Magabala Teacher Notes

We produce free teacher notes for new release books based on the education strategy for each title. Teacher notes are written by qualified teachers and curriculum experts and are made freely available on our website.

In 2025 we produced teacher notes for *Getting Dusty*, *Desert Tracks*, *Cloudmaker*, *Old Days: Imanka Nurna Laakinha Nitjaarta*, *Going for Pippies*, *Goorramindi the Crocodile*, *Turbo Turtle*, *Ngurra Home*, *Always Will Be*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Bapa's Last Canoe*, *Ruby's Web*, *Dingo's Dream*.

Education partners

In addition to a growing number of school and educational buyers, Magabala supplies books to or has partnerships with, the following organisations who work with young people:

- Victorian Government Victorian Baby Bundle and Books in Prep Bags and Storybox Library
- Indigenous Literacy Foundation, Book Supply – providing new, culturally relevant books to remote communities across Australia
- United Way for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – a book gifting program aimed at inspiring a love of reading.
- Raising Literacy Australia – enriching children's lives through literacy
- Sydney Writers Festival – Russ the Story Bus
- Koori Curriculum – First Nations own education supplier

Small Seeds Big Reads

The Magabala Books Small Seeds program supports literacy and ensures children across Australia have access to culturally relevant books they love.

With the support of our generous donors, we purchase and deliver book packs for organisations where children and their families may have limited access to books. In 2025, we donated **1623 books** to a range of playgroups, early childhood centres, prison programs, out of home care and family support programs, including:

- Headspace – Broome, WA
- Bell Park Kinder – Geelong, VIC
- NT Hearing Service – Alice Springs, NT
- Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa – Martu Western Desert, WA
- Albury Community Health – Albury, NSW
- Cooke Court Uniting Seed Program – Richmond, VIC
- Moorditj Noongar Community College – Perth, WA
- Uniting Early Learning – Deagon, QLD
- Fostering Hope – Wangara, WA
- Bass Coast Adult Learning – Wonthaggi, VIC
- Melbourne City Mission – Melbourne, VIC

- NICU – Sydney, NSW
- Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, Nguman Festival – Fitzroy Crossing, WA
- Noongar Songbook Project – Perth, WA
- Purnululu School – Woorangeriny, WA
- Coolbellup Community School – Coolbellup, WA
- Marrageil Manggi Refuge and Services – WA
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Corporation – Shepparton Victoria
- HIPPY Broome – Broome, WA
- Kullarri Awards, Goolarri Media – Broome, WA
- Helem Yumba – Rockhampton, QLD
- Women's Liyan Circle, NBY – Broome, WA
- Gunawirra Aboriginal Early Childhood Support – NSW
- Tresillian Family Care Centre – Taree, NSW
- Tolland Community Centre – Tolland NSW
- Umbrellas and Footprints – Perth, WA



Theodore Maher at Jalygurr Guwan, Rubibi (Broome)

Partners

We believe First Nations publishing is changing the world, and we couldn't do all that we do without the incredible support of our major government, industry, corporate, community and philanthropic partners.

Our sales and distribution partners

We are grateful for the passion and expertise of our distribution partner Hachette Australia and warehouse, Alliance Distribution Services. Magabala's partnership with Hachette Australia began in February 2025 and is enabling us to increase book sales and reduce the costs associated with storage and distribution.

We would also like to acknowledge the incredible work of our friends at New South Books who partnered with Magabala Books as our distributor for 16 years.

Our industry partners

Our thanks to:

- The team at Griffin Press, our Australian printers.
- Post Pre-press Group, our typesetters.
- The wonderful freelance editors, packagers, designers, proofreaders and other industry professionals who make our books beautiful.
- Booksellers: our champions, we thank you all. We would particularly like to acknowledge the independent booksellers who represent the majority of our customers and who contribute so much to Australia's vibrant literary culture.

Our funding partners

Magabala Books is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and receives financial support from the State Government of Western Australia through the Department of Creative Industries, Sport and Tourism. We are grateful to both Creative Australia and the WA Dept CITS for their significant investment in First Nations literature.

We would also like to acknowledge:

- Creative Australia for their Delivery Partner support for the First Stories Collective.
- The Australian Government: Department of Social Services and Impact Investing Australia for their support through a Social Enterprise Development Initiative grant.
- Copyright Agency Limited: Cultural Fund for their support of the Daisy Utemorra Award.
- State Library of Western Australia and the State Government of Western Australia for their support of the Daisy Utemorra Award within the WA Premier's Book Awards.
- Regional Arts WA for their support of our attendance at PULiIMA First Nations Languages Conference in Darwin.
- Creative Australia for their support of our attendance at the 2025 Bologna Book Fair, Italy.
- Creative Australia for their support of the Intergenerational Storytelling Project, through the First Nations Recording and Storytelling project fund.
- Water Corporation WA for their support of the Intergenerational Storytelling Project.

Magabala thrives on creating meaningful, long-term relationships with philanthropic partners who share our values, and we acknowledge the following Trusts and Foundations for their generous support:

- The Jon & Caro Stewart Family Foundation (Cultural Fund and Creative Development Fund)
- Spinifex Trust (Cultural Fund and Creative Development Fund)
- Donnelly Garner Foundation (Creative Development Fund)
- Harry Kestin Foundation (Kestin Indigenous Illustrator Award)

- Serp Hills Foundation (Magabala Mid-career Fellowship)
- The JTM Foundation (Creative Development Fund)
- Australian Indigenous Coffee (AIC Creative Grants and Small Seeds)
- Australian Communities Foundation (Small Seeds)
- Tate Family Foundation

We would also like to acknowledge our wide range of individual donors; whose generous contributions support our cultural and social impact projects.



Governance

Strong governance is one of Magabala's greatest assets. As an independent, not-for-profit Indigenous Corporation, we are led by a dedicated First Nations Board of Directors, who serve Magabala on a voluntary basis. Directors are elected from the Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation general membership. The Board comprises long-standing members and a new generation of First Nations Directors with relevant skills and experience.



Steve Kinnane
(Miriwoong)
Chairperson



Bebe Oliver
(Bardi Jawi)
Deputy Chairperson



Abby-Rose Cox
(Kija & Nimanburru)
Treasurer



Josepha Howard
(Kija, Yawuru & Jabirr Jabirr)
Director



Edie Wright
(Bardi)
Director



Lenka Vanderboom
(Yawuru)
Director



Traelyn Aiken
(Bunuba & Yawuru)
Director



Shas Jurud
(Bardi and Kija)
Director



Marlee Hutton
(Bardi Jawi)
Director

Staff

In 2025 Magabala Books continued to expand our staffing structure with the addition of two new positions. Alarna Maher joined the team as Programs and Impact Manager, leading the monitoring and evaluation of our programs and managing Magabala's contribution to the First Stories Collective. We added an in-house Publicist to the Marketing and Publicity team, welcoming Chloe Mills to the role.

Our Reception and Retail Staff continued their professional development, taking on additional responsibilities. Dasia Kitaura has been building her finance administration skills under the mentorship of Senior Finance Manager, Martine Docherty. Shontane Farmer took on additional functions as Assistant to the CEO.

Throughout the year we farewelled Finance Manager Irene Huang, Project Officer Brooke Collard and Editor Sharona Wilson. We thank Irene, Brooke and Sharona for their significant contributions to Magabala.

Lilly Brown
(Gumbaynggirr)
CEO

Rachel Bin Salleh
(Nimunburr and Yawuru)
Publisher

Margaret Whiskin
Managing Editor

Arlie Alizzi
(Yugambah)
Editor

Melena Cole-Manolis
(Warumungu, Luritja & Yawuru)
Editor

Sharona Wilson
(Gooniyandi & Gajerrong)
Editor

Karen Wallis
Production Manager

Kate McCormack
Rights Manager

Xenica Ayling
Marketing and Publicity Manager

Skye Cusack
(Dulgubarra-Yidinji)
Marketing Coordinator

Chloe Mills
Lead Publicist

Gene Eaton
Digital and Design Lead

Rio Ramintas
Senior Designer

Amy Andison
Operations Manager

Kate Rendell
Development and Partnerships Manager

Alarna Maher
(Bardi, Jabirr Jabirr and Yawuru)
Programs and Impact Manager

Danielle Mills
(Yawuru and Bunuba)
Project Officer

Brooke Collard
(Noongar)
Project Officer

Amelia Luscombe
Sales and Inventory Coordinator

Dasia Kitaura
(Karajarri and Kija)
Administration and Retail Officer

Shontane Farmer
(Noongar and Yamatji)
Reception and Retail Officer (Casual) and Assistant to the CEO

Martine Docherty
Senior Finance Manager



Yawuru Elder Dianne Appleby welcomes delegates of the First Stories Collective to Rubibi



Magabala Books all staff and Board gathering on Country in Rubibi



Magabala Project Officer Daniele Mills and Program Manager Alarna Maher at the launch of *Bran Nue Dae*



Kamsani Bin Salleh, Rachel Bin Salleh and Erika Dizon celebrate at the Order of Australia Medal award ceremony



Ngumpan Festival



Magabala staff and Tom Lawford at Ngumpan Festival

We acknowledge with deep respect the passing of Gracie Green, Guy Ghouse, Charmaine Papertalk Green, Noel Tovey, Howard Pedersen and Andrew Krakouer.

Each of them made a profound and lasting contribution to their communities and to the cultural, social and creative life of our nation. Through their leadership, advocacy, artistry and courage, they strengthened understanding, inspired others and helped pave the way for future generations.

We honour their legacy with gratitude and commit to carrying forward the spirit of their work. They will be remembered with respect, admiration and appreciation.

Guy Ghouse OAM 1969-2025

Beloved Broome musician and educator Guy Ghouse, sadly passed on 21 November, aged 56.

An OAM recipient, Guy's work with Noongar songwriter Gina Williams brought Noongar language and song to audiences across Australia. Together they created the award-winning songbook *Kalyakoorl, ngalak warangka (Forever, we sing)* and the first Noongar opera, *Wundig wer Wilura*.

A gifted composer, producer and teacher, Guy will be remembered for his generosity, humour and enduring impact. Our thoughts are with Gina, his family and friends.

Gracie Greene 1949-2025

Renowned Kukatja artist and storyteller Grace (Gracie) Greene.

Gracie was the illustrator and author of *Tjarany Roughtail*, first published in 1992 and still in print. The book won Magabala's first Children's Book Council of Australia Award in 1993. A respected traditional artist, her work is held in major collections including the Art Gallery of NSW and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Born at Billiluna Station and raised at Balgo, Gracie carried and shared the stories of her mother's and father's Country throughout her life. Her storytelling and artistry leave a lasting legacy. We share our deepest condolences to her family and community.

Noel Tovey AM 1934-2025

Noel Tovey AM — Elder, artist and activist — who spent more than six decades championing First Nations voices in the arts.

A pioneering performer, director and teacher, Noel was Australia's first Aboriginal male ballet dancer and later an acclaimed author of *Little Black Bastard* and *And Then I Found Me*. A proud Queer Blak Elder, he lived with courage and integrity, advocating fiercely for justice and equality.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends. His legacy of strength, truth and storytelling will endure.

Andrew Krakouer 1983-2025

Nyoongar and Yamatji man Andrew Krakouer, co-author of the children's picture book *My Dad's Gone Away* (2024).

Andrew brought courage and honesty to everything he did; from his fearless AFL career to sharing the painful truths of incarceration to help children feel less alone. His story, generosity and determination to create change will leave a lasting impact.

Our deepest condolences are with his wife Barbara, their children, and all his family and friends. His legacy will continue in the lives he sought to uplift.

Charmaine Papertalk Green 1962-2025

Visionary Yamaji poet, artist and researcher Charmaine Papertalk Green.

A proud Wajarri, Badimaya and Nhanagardi Wilunyu woman, CPG was a powerful truth-teller whose work spanned poetry, visual art, data sovereignty and community leadership. An award-winning writer and fierce advocate for culture in the arts, her voice reshaped conversations across the nation.

We grieve her loss deeply and hold her family and communities in our thoughts. Her legacy of light, courage and Country will endure.

Vale Howard Pedersen 1955-2025

Magabala Books and many across the Kimberley are deeply saddened by the passing of author, historian and trusted ally Howard Pedersen.

Co-author, with Banjo Woorunmurra, of *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance*, Howard helped reshape the telling of Kimberley history through respect for Aboriginal witness, cultural authority and truth-telling. He was a generous collaborator, mentor and advocate who worked tirelessly for a Kimberley future grounded in Aboriginal leadership.

Our deepest condolences are with his children, family and the many Kimberley communities who claimed and honoured him.





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