

2026 Audience Development Fund

The 2026 round of the Audience Development Fund, a program supported by Museums & Galleries of NSW, was assessed on 7th August by a three-member panel comprising of Aleema Ash, Senior Manager Place & Programming, Reactivate; Rebecca Turnbull, Museums & Collections Manager, Mary MacKillop Museums; and Zana Kobayashi, Audience Lead, Newcastle Art Gallery.

The panel assessed 17 applications from public galleries and museums across NSW and awarded seven grants to programs that aimed to develop new ways of engaging diverse audiences with artists, educators, exhibitions and collections. The assessors feedback indicated that high scoring proposals demonstrated how they would attract new audiences; build community connections and new partnerships; remove barriers to allow diverse audience participation; foster a sense of belonging; provide opportunities for professional development; and develop models that also expand mentoring and staff training.



Image: *'Interfacial Intimacies'* exhibition, Léuli Eshrāghi *'afiafi'* 2023, installation view, SECCA (South East Centre for Contemporary Art) Bega. Artist David Rosetzky keynote lecture, April 2026. Presented in collaboration with FLING Physical Theatre. Photo: Marcus Ward Curran

The assessment panel encourages all applicants to: explore new partnerships; include support letters from local community organisations and partners that demonstrate a need for the proposed program; contact M&G NSW staff prior to submitting their application to check eligibility and talk through project aims and deliverables; ensure the proposal will engage with a 'new' audience and is a 'new' program; confirm artist fees are consistent with NAVA rates (including the payment of superannuation); propose creative and innovative strategies for audience development; ensure that the funding sought is for an audience engagement program rather than for an exhibition; consider outreach opportunities to broaden the scope of the proposed program; and ensure that the budget does not include fees for existing staff.

2026 Audience Development Fund Recipients

Bankstown Arts Centre - *Own Words* (\$8,000.00)

Own Words is a suite of multilingual artist-and community-led creative workshops and exhibition resources designed to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers to arts engagement for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Canterbury Bankstown by encouraging them to play an active role in leading their own art experiences.

Clifton School of Arts Gallery and Arts Centre - *Regional Emerging Curator Program* (\$8,000.00)

The *Regional Emerging Curator Program* is an audience development initiative to grow, diversify and retain next generation creative practitioners connected to Clifton School of Arts Gallery and Art Centre. It targets early-career artists, curators and administrators in the Illawarra, specifically First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and LGBTQIA+ practitioners.

Griffith Regional Art Gallery - *Art Your Way* (\$8,000.00)

Art Your Way promotes inclusive gallery experiences for neurodivergent audiences. Developed with the Griffith Autism Support Group, it includes staff training and offers six sensory-friendly tours and artmaking workshops. Workshop outcomes will form a participant exhibition, celebrating creative expression and encouraging individuals to engage with art in their own way.

Kew-Y-Ahn Aboriginal Gallery - *KYA Makers & Creators* (\$7991.09)

The project engages Aboriginal young people in creative workshops led by Wiradjuri artists at Kew-Y-Ahn Gallery, strengthening cultural identity, wellbeing and community connection. Partnering with Mingaan Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation and Illuminart, Stage 1 builds relationships that will inform a major Hartley based projection artwork in Stage 2.

Lismore Regional Gallery - *Common Ground: Pathways to Inclusion and Community Connection* (\$8,000.00)

Common Ground expands access to arts and culture by creating welcoming, inclusive opportunities for Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+ communities. Through creative participation, accessibility-led design and strategic partnerships, it builds community connection, audience diversity and a stronger sense of belonging within the gallery.



Image Credit: Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA), Mawang participant with lino print, 2023, photo by Sophie Holvast.

Murray Art Museum Albury - Mawang Holiday Art Club (\$8,000.00)

Mawang Holiday Art Club is a free school holiday art program for local First Nations children aged 9-12. Led by local First Nations artists, educators and Elders, this program will foster new generations of First Nations creatives through engagement with exhibitions and artworks that elevate South East Aboriginal art practices.

South East Centre for Contemporary Art (SECCA) - Creative Encounters - Expanding Curatorial Conversations in Regional NSW (\$8,000.00)

Creative Encounters is a series of public talks and artist clinics in the Bega Valley, connecting regional artists with leading Australian curators - including a First Nations arts leader - for dialogue, mentorship, and professional development, addressing cultural access gaps, developing new audiences, and fostering sector connectivity in regional NSW.

For more information or to discuss a project please contact: Vanessa James, Exhibitions & Programs Coordinator, vanessaj@mqnsw.org.au or Alana Leslie, Museums Coordinator, alanal@mqnsw.org.au

The Audience Development Fund is a Museums & Galleries of NSW program.