

FIRST

LIGHTS





Acknowledgement

The Fremantle Biennale acknowledges the Whadjuk Noongar People whose land we live and work on.

We acknowledge the nations and communities we have worked with across First Lights, namely the Larrakia of Garramilla (Darwin), Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi peoples of Karratha, Yinggarda peoples of Gwoonwardu (Carnarvon) and Coral Bay, Baiyungu and Thalanyji peoples of Nynggulu (Exmouth), Amangu and broader Yamaji peoples of Geraldton, Menang of Kinjarling (Albany), Wudjari of Kepa Kurl (Esperance), Wadandi of Cowaramup (Gracetown), and Gundungurra of Ngununggula (Bowral), alongside the iwi and hapū we have collaborated with across Aotearoa, and the many communities and cultural groups we have worked with across Papua New Guinea.

We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging for their part in the continuation of culture and care for Country. We are grateful for their passage of knowledge so we can move through Country with awareness and form collaborations that are meaningful and rightful.

VIEWER CAUTION: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that this publication contains names, images and voices of deceased persons.



What we do

First Lights is a series of place-responsive drone light, sound and storytelling experiences presented by the Fremantle Biennale.

Grounded in collaboration with Traditional Owners, cultural custodians, artists and communities, First Lights transforms stories of place into immersive experiences across the night sky. Combining drone technology, sound, narration and movement, each project is shaped by the Country on which it is created.

First Lights premiered as part of the Fremantle Biennale's CROSSING 21 program with Moombaki, a choreographed drone light and sound work reimagining the first stories of Whadjuk Nyoongar Country across the Derbarl Yerrigan (river) and wardan (ocean). Since then, First Lights has travelled across Western Australia, Australia and internationally — including Aotearoa and Papua New Guinea — creating large-scale public experiences in collaboration with local artists, communities and cultural custodians.

At its core, First Lights seeks to listen to place, honour continuing cultures, and explore how new technologies can support the sharing of ancient knowledge and living stories with contemporary audiences.

First Lights is presented by Fremantle Biennale in partnership with Stellar Lights.



First Lights - Moombaki

5 – 21 November 2021
Fremantle, Attadale and Coogee,
Western Australia

Presented for the Fremantle Biennale
festival, CROSSING 21
Artist: Ilona McGuire
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation: Armands Blumbergs
(Basemotion)

First Lights - Balarr Inyiny

19 – 21 August 2022
Jervois Park, Darwin,
Northern Territory

Artists: Jenna Lee in collaboration with
elders from the Larrakia community
Narrated by Christopher Lee and
Lena Kellie
Sound Design: Kuya James with
compositions by Lena Kellie
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Binalup

8 April 2023
Middleton Beach, Albany,
Western Australia

Artist and Narration: Kim Scott
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Nyngulu

19 & 20 April 2023
Cardabia Stn, Coral Bay & Town Beach,
Exmouth, Western Australia

Artists: Hazel Walgar and Sonya Edney
Narrated by Hazel Walgar and
Ilona McGuire
Composer: Alice Humphries
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation & Videography: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Boodja Dwordak Wirn

12 & 13 May 2023
Esperance Foreshore, Esperance,
Western Australia

Artists: Esperance Tjaltjraak Native
Title Aboriginal Corporation with
contributions from Kepa Kurl Wudjari six
family groups, the Dabb, Boxer-Rogers,
Reynolds, Yorkshire/Knapp, Bullen and
Tucker families, and led by local Wudjari
artist Jennell Reynolds (Nannapa).
Narrators: Wudjari Nyungar Elders
Kevin Reynolds Snr and Annie Dabb.
Sound Design: Maatakitji (Clint
Bracknell) and Envelope Audio
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Cowaramup

20 May 2023
Cowaramup Bay, Gracetown,
Western Australia

Artists: Mitchella Hutchins and
Vivian Brockman-Webb
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Buungbaa-ma-ndhu

24 June 2023
Ngununggula, Bowral,
New South Wales

Artist and Narrator: Kirli Saunders
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Kooranup

3 – 18 November 2023
Manjaree Bathers Beach,
Attadale Reserve, Wadjemup (Rottnest
Island), WA

Presented for the Fremantle Biennale
festival, SIGNALS 23
Artists: Yabini Kickett, Cass Lynch, Ilona
McGuire and Tyrown Waigana
Narrators: Jayden Boundry, Walter
McGuire and Mitch Walley
Sound Design & Composers: Envelope
Audio and Thalia Skopellos
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Matariki

27 & 28 June 2024
Sir John Guise Stadium, Rotorua
Lakefront, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Artists and Narrators: Cian Elyse White
and Mataia Keepa featuring Rangitiarua
Tibble
Music: James Webster
Sound Design: Envelope Audio
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Winthu Wangga

13 July 2024
Geraldton Foreshore, Geraldton,
Western Australia

Artists: Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green
with Nicole Dickerson
Sound Design: Azariah Felton
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights: Bunggaliyarra Munggu

18 May 2025
Hearson Cove, Karratha,
Western Australia

Artists: Lorraine Coppin, Mum T
(Tootsie Daniel), Judith Coppin
Narrator: Lorraine Coppin, Michael
Woodley
Sound Design: Max Barton
Animation: Rachel Wong

First Lights - Hiri

16 September 2025
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Artist and Narrator: Airileke Ingram
Sound Design: James Mangohig with
Airileke Ingram
Animation: Tatyana Bitekhtina

First Lights - Bimarra

18 October 2025
Geraldton Foreshore, Geraldton,
Western Australia

Artist: Mabel Gibson
Narrator: Donna Ronan
Sound Design: Ken Meyer (Kumo-bako)
Animation: Jarrad Russell

First Lights - Kinjarling

6, 7, 8 March 2026
ANZAC Peace Park, Albany,
Western Australia

Artists and Narrators: Kim Scott, Cass
Lynch
Sound Design: Envelope Audio and
Rachel Claudio
Animation: Tatyana Bitekhtina

First Lights - Gudjurah

24 May 2026
The Fascine, Carnarvon, Western
Australia

Cultural Lead and Narrator: Kath Ryan
Sound Design: Max Barton
Animation: Tatyana Bitekhtina

FIRST LIGHTS LOCATIONS



FIRST LIGHTS

Moombaki

Between the bridges, Fremantle - 5, 6, 7 Nov
Attadale Reserve, Attadale - 12, 13, 14 Nov
Coogee Beach, Coogee - 19, 20, 21 Nov
Western Australia
5 – 21 November 2021

Moombaki (Moom-bah-kye) marked the beginning of the First Lights program, transforming the night sky in November 2021 with an epic spectacle of light, movement and sound. As the Fremantle Biennale's first drone light and sound experience, it set the foundation for a program that would grow across Western Australia, Australia and beyond.

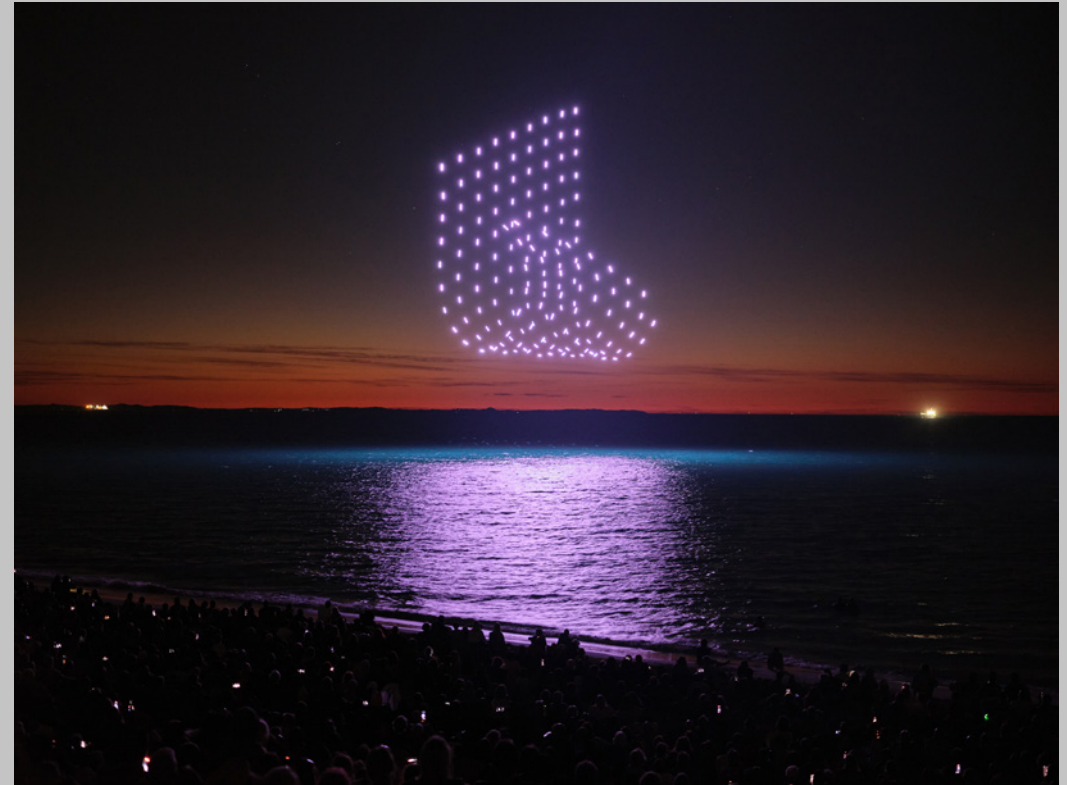
The Nyoongar word for 'where the river meets the sky', Moombaki was a choreographed drone light show re-creating the first stories of Whadjuk Nyoongar Country for all to experience.

With artworks created by Ilona McGuire and a narrative guided by story and knowledge held by Whadjuk Nyoongar Traditional Owners Doris Getta, Marion Kickett, Karen Jacobs, Glenys Yarren, Neville Collard, Stan Headland, Farley Garlett, Walter McGuire Brendan Moore, and project contributors Rohin Kickett and Grant Revell, Moombaki launched the Fremantle Biennale program in 2021.

Across eight nights and three locations in Fremantle, Attadale and Coogee, Moombaki saw over 160 drones take flight over the stage of the bilya (river) and warden (ocean), to reveal a series of connected stories. An Australian first, this unique sky show pioneered new technologies to tell ancient and living stories of place.

Co-presented with City of Fremantle, City of Melville and City of Cockburn.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ilona McGuire is a Bibbulmun Noongar and Kungarakan interdisciplinary artist. Her interests in all forms of creative expression manifests itself through culturally informed visual work, writing, performance and an open artistic practice. Ilona centralizes the Indigenous experience of Australia's ongoing systemic dysfunction by exploration of its historical, social and political impacts on her families and broader communities. Following her 2021 drone light show, Moombaki with the Fremantle Biennale, Ilona was awarded the Schenberg Art Fellowship for Hatched: National Graduate Show 2022 and residency at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA). 2022 and 2023 saw her work exhibited at Fremantle Art Centre, Stala Contemporary, Goolugatup Heathcote Gallery, John Curtin Gallery and in NSW for the National 4: Australian Art Now.

FIRST LIGHTS

Balarr Inyiny

Jervois Park, Darwin
Northern Territory
19 – 21 August 2022

Following on from the Australian premiere of First Lights with Moombaki in Western Australia, the Fremantle Biennale's choreographed drone light show journeyed to Darwin, transforming the night sky in an epic spectacle of light, movement and sound.

Co-presented with Darwin Festival in 2022 and led by Larrakia artist Jenna Lee in collaboration with music producer Kuya James and composer Lena Kellie, and supported by elders from the Larrakia community, this new experience titled balarr inyiny (bah-lahrr een-yeen-y), meaning light dreaming, saw 160 drones take flight from Jervois Park in a breathtaking choreographed sky show illustrating Larrakia songlines that run down Darwin's coastline.

Balarr inyiny used new technologies to bring to life ancient stories, transforming the way we understand Larrakia culture and our shared relationship to country.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jenna Lee is a Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman and KarraJarri Saltwater woman with mixed Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Anglo-Australian ancestry. Using art to explore and celebrate her many overlapping identities, Lee works across sculpture, installation, and body adornment. She also works with moving images, photography and projection in the digital medium.

FIRST LIGHTS

Binalup

Middleton Beach, Albany
Western Australia
8 April 2023

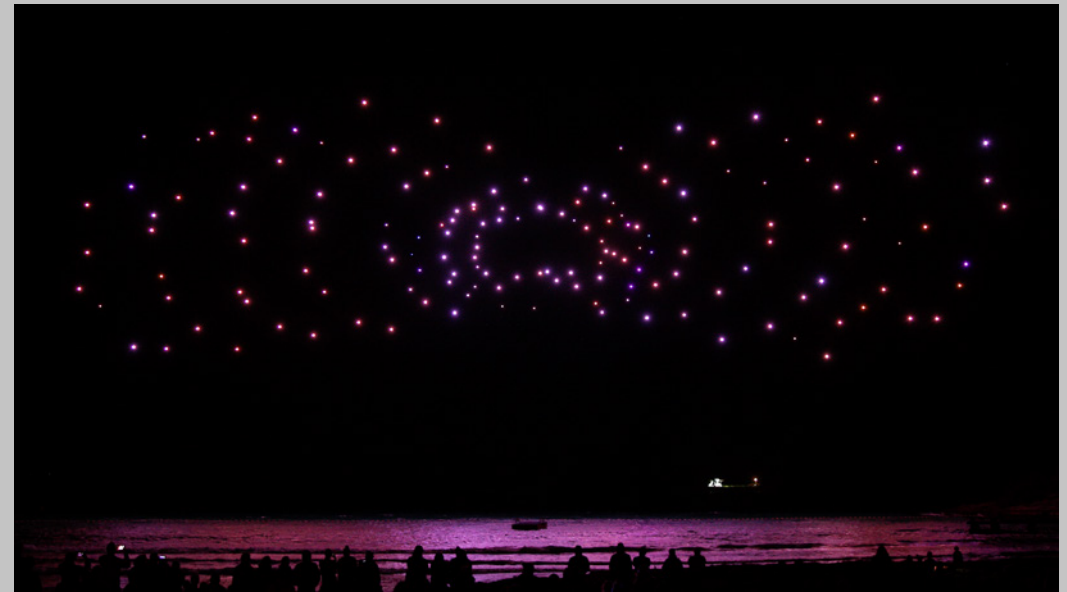
Award-winning Noongar author, Kim Scott, transformed the place of first light, Binalup (Albany) presenting a rhythmic arrangement of language and light to allude to old stories, including Mamang Koort, the beating whale heart. Guided by the Albany Heritage Reference Group Aboriginal Corporation (AHRGAC), local Menang Custodians imparted their ancient knowledge of the lands and waters to bring audiences this deeply moving experience.

“This piece is inspired by some of the Creation Stories around the town of Albany. Riffing on rhythms of south coastal Noongar language and gathering energy from pools and pulsing water, it summons the great Mother to return with light and song and open up our world.” – Kim Scott

Co-presented with the City of Albany.

The artist would also like to acknowledge the trust and support of Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories, and to thank Noongar staff and students at Albany Senior High School, Great Southern Grammar, Mt Lockyer Primary School, North Albany Senior High School, Saint Joseph's College, and Spencer Park Primary School for their voices and the good fun.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kim Scott is an award-winning novelist, having twice won the Miles Franklin Award (for *Benang* and *That Deadman Dance*) along with many other Australian literary prizes. Kim was 2012 West Australian of the Year, is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, a member of the Western Australian Writers Hall of Fame and in 2022 was declared a State Cultural Treasure. He is currently Curtin University Distinguished Professor in the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry.

Proud to be one among those who call themselves Noongar, Kim is convenor of Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories (www.wirlomin.com.au) which is responsible for a number of bilingual (Noongar and English) picture books and regional performances of story and song. Two books, *A Companion to the Works of Kim Scott* (Camden House, 2016) and *Kim Scott: language, readers and interpretation* (UWAP, 2019) deal with aspects of his writing and career.

FIRST LIGHTS

Nyinggulu

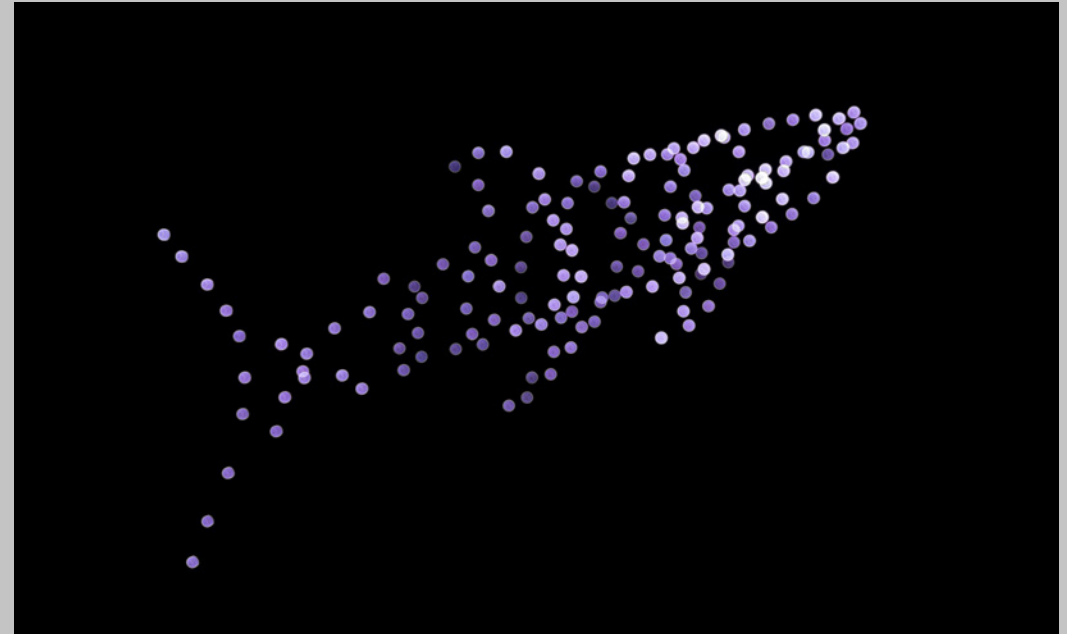
Cardabia Stn, Coral Bay - 19 April
Town Beach, Exmouth - 20 April
Western Australia
19 & 20 April 2023

In April 2023, one of nature's most phenomenal occurrences, a Total Solar Eclipse, took place across the World Heritage listed Ningaloo (Nyinggulu) region. The shadow of the moon graced the tip of Western Australia, with the Exmouth region becoming host to the most accessible place on Earth to view this spectacle.

Preceding and closing this occurrence, First Lights – Nyinggulu took place on Baiyungu Country at Cardabia Station followed by Town Beach at Exmouth. Guided by Baiyungu custodian Hazel Walgar of the Nyinggulu coast and Yingarrda-Wadjarri artist Sonya Edney, the spectacular Dreaming story of the great eclipse resounded across the night sky. An epic story born from silence, of Jirndarl and Willarda, the sun, the moon and their first encounter.

Co-presented with the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation as part of the Jamba Nyinayi Festival and Tourism WA as a part of the Dark Sky Festival.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Hazel Walgar is a Baiyungu woman, traditional owner of the Ningaloo Coast and the cultural elder of the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation. As a Baiyungu woman her connection to country stems from her grandmother, Yingagurru, who belonged to the Nyingalara clan which is now known as Ningaloo. Her people have a strong connection to this Country that spans tens of thousands of years. She is the cultural adviser to the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for the region as well as for the Museum of Western Australia.

Sonya Edney is a Yingarrda-Wadjarri artist born in Carnarvon in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. Sonya started painting at Burringurrah community and now exhibits at Japingka Aboriginal Art Gallery, Fremantle.

Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation

Baiyungu country extends from Point Cloates, north of Carnarvon along the coast to Point Quobba, then stretches east to Manberry Station and north to Winning Pool Station. A major area of significance is Coral Bay and neighbouring Cardabia Station. Cardabia Station is home to Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation. The station is 2,000 square kilometers and is now a place of important cultural heritage, gathering and run as a pastoral property, by Baiyungu people.

FIRST LIGHTS

Boodja Dwordak Wirn

Foreshore, Esperance
Western Australia
12 & 13 May 2023

First Lights - Boodja Dwordak Wirn, meaning 'Bringing Country's Spirit back to Life', was led by Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation and the six Wudjari families of Kepa Kurl (Esperance).

Across the white sand beaches and ancient granite domes of the Esperance foreshore, revealed were stories of deep connections and knowledge of sea Country. Of ancient rhythms between ancestors, wadarn (ocean) and the many creatures that call this place home.

Co-presented with Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (ETNTAC) was registered by the Federal Court of Australia as the Native Title Body Corporate for the Kepa Kurl Wudjari people in September 2016. They are the first point of contact for government and other parties who want to conduct business with traditional owners in Esperance.

Kepa Kurl Wudjari People are descended from seven apical ancestors. Today, six family groups are recognised as the direct descendants of those ancestors and the elders of those families have the rights and responsibilities for the practice of Wudjari Nyungar culture and for passing it on to future generations.

The six family groups are the Dabb, Boxer-Rogers, Reynolds, Yorkshire/Knapp, Bullen and Tucker. Today, the majority of Kepa Kurl Wudjari people live within the Esperance region, though some live elsewhere in the southwest, including Perth, Albany and Norseman.

Whilst member-focused, they value inclusivity and offer their services to all locally based First Nations people. Their pro-social and localized approach, achieves tangible outcomes for the entire Esperance community.

FIRST LIGHTS

Cowaramup

Cowaramup Bay,
Gracetown
Western Australia
25 May 2023

Led by Wardandi matriarchs, Mitchella Hutchins and Vivian Brockman-Webb, First Lights — Cowaramup brought an ancient tale transcending space and time. This story takes place in the beginning, when life stirred into existence and formed a great assembly to decide who would be Custodian of all creation. Located on the shores of Gracetown, the bay was transformed, opening a portal to a time when the world was Dreaming.

Co-presented with the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River and The Farm Margaret River.

This event was generously supported by: The Farm Margaret River, Caroline de Mori, Simon Bedbrook, Justin Vivian, Marie Forrest, Chris Ryder, Vanya Cullen, Rodney Silberstein, Neil McKaracher, and Wayne Martin.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mitchella Hutchins is a prominent Aboriginal businesswoman and mother of four children. She is the eldest grandchild of Vilma and George Webb who bestowed upon her the responsibility of cultural caretaker and knowledge sharer. She was a presenter on GWN7's Milbindi program and has lectured at Western Australian universities on Indigenous topics and issues. She is a foster parent to over twenty children, manages her business, Waljin Consultancy, and created an online learning package for Indigenous cultural awareness training. Mitchella wants community values to be rediscovered by caring for community and country and believes building a healthy community is essential to tackling many issues affecting people in the South West of Western Australia.

Vivian Brockman Webb (also known as Dwardinan) is a Dordenup Wardandi matriarch Elder, cultural custodian and artist from the South West region of Western Australia. Born in Busselton on Wardandi Country, her practice is deeply connected to ancestry, storytelling, language and the continuing care of Country. Vivian's work and cultural leadership draw on generations of Wardandi knowledge passed through oral histories and family lineage. Her ancestry includes connections to the Beenup, Lake Jasper and Scott River regions, and to ancestors remembered as Sugar Rag, Queen Jinny and King Bungitch. Through painting, cultural sharing, ceremony and collaborative projects, she continues to strengthen and transmit Wardandi culture across generations. She has collaborated on major contemporary art and projection works including Wannang Biridge and Djanga – Spirit alongside Mitchella Hutchins, Martine Perret and Roly Skender, with works presented in Western Australia and internationally, including at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

FIRST LIGHTS

Buungbaa-ma-ndhu

Bowral,
New South Wales
24 June 2023

Award-winning Gundungurra raised Gunai writer and artist, Kirli Saunders (OAM), energised mugaru (cold winter) with her synchronous installation of language and light, Buungbaa-ma-ndhu meaning rise (as the sun), all of you. Remnant of a bedtime story told around the campfire, Saunders' poetic bi-lingual digital work roused audiences to collaborate and create a powerful future together, "to rise, like light from the fire, mountain top...whirlwind, diamond python, black cockatoo". Conjured with welcome dance from local First Nations families and community, this choreographed and responsive drone show was presented by Fremantle Biennale and Ngununggula for First Lights.

The artist would like to acknowledge language teachers, her great aunt, the late Aunty Velma Mulcahy (OAM), Aunty Sharyn Halls and through her the language teaching of Jim Barrett and Melissa Wiya and Aunty Sharyn for their generous teaching of the Welcome Dance as well as First Nations students from Bowral, Berrima, Mittagong, Moss Vale, Robertson

and Tallong Public School. First Lights – Buungbaa-ma-ndhu is presented as part of the MIDWINTER FESTIVAL at Ngununggula. A site-responsive festival that brings together nationally acclaimed artists to celebrate the cultural and social voice of the region.

[Watch full show here](#)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kirli Saunders (OAM) is a proud Gunai Woman and award-winning multidisciplinary artist and consultant. An experienced speaker and facilitator advocating for the environment and equality, Kirli was the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year (2020). In 2022, she was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her contribution to the arts, particularly literature.



FIRST LIGHTS

Kooranup

Manjaree Bathers Beach, Fremantle 3 & 4 Nov
Attadale Reserve, Attadale 10 & 11 Nov
Wadjemup (Rottnest Island) 17 & 18 Nov
Western Australia
3 – 18 November 2023

“Kooranup, is the place beyond the horizon and past Moombaki, where the water meets the sky. It is the heavenly shore located in the far west. Our spirits final resting place in the Noongar Nyitting (Dreaming)”. – Ilona McGuire

As a part of the Fremantle Biennale’s fourth festival SIGNALS 23, First Lights: Kooranup was presented; a sequel to the stories shared through First Lights: Moombaki in 2021.

The Fremantle Biennale’s fleet of 160 drones took flight over the bilya (river) and warden (ocean), revealing the first stories of place across three weekends and three locations, created by artists Yabini Kickett, Cass Lynch, Tyrown Waigana, and Ilona McGuire, guided by Whadjuk Nyoongar Traditional Owners.

On the first weekend, as the saltwater lapped at the shores of Manjaree / Bathers Beach, Tyrown Waigana brought to life a witty reflection of an ancient story of ancestral beings and an epic battle that shaped our coastline.

On the expansive grounds at the river edge, Yabini Kickett’s offering called us to attention within the natural landscape; from the echoing sounds of wind in the sheoaks to chirping frogs of the bilya (river), this was a story of kinship, interconnectedness and transformation.

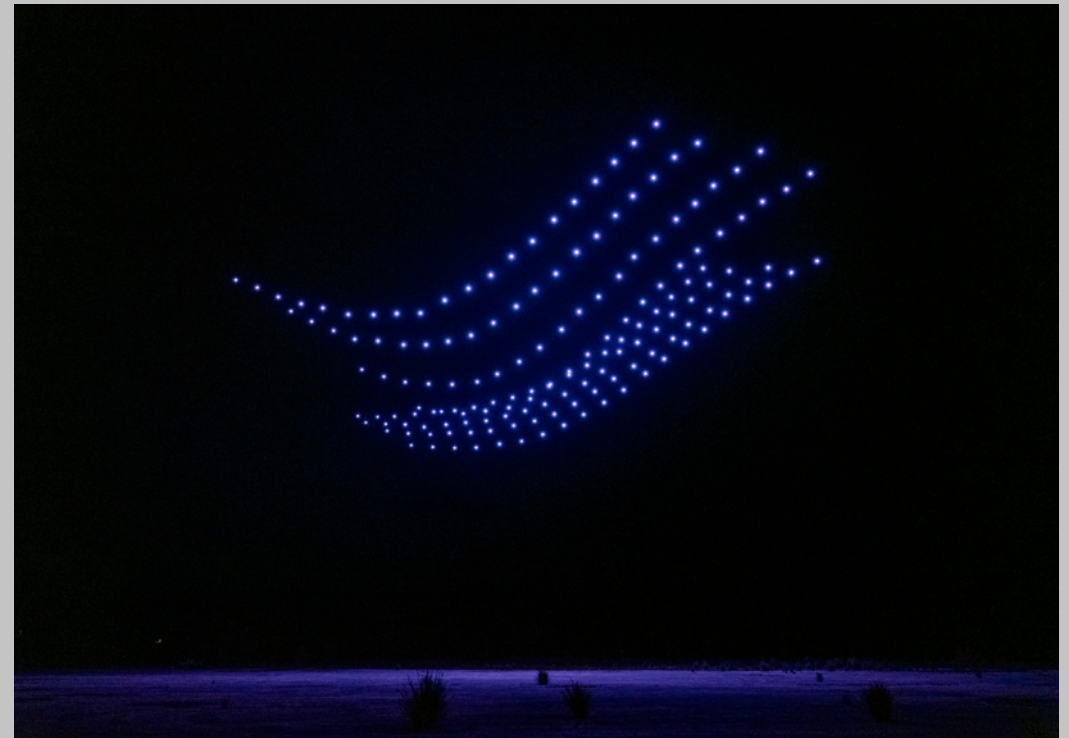
The last chapter unfolded across the ocean, on Wadjemup / Rottnest Island, with a collective offering, led by Ilona McGuire and writer Cass Lynch. This closing chapter created a space for deep contemplation across land and water, weaving together the many stories across time, both beautiful and heartbreaking, that are held by the island.

Co-presented with City of Fremantle, City of Melville and Rottnest Island Authority.

[Watch Kooranup, Manjaree \(Bathers Beach\) full show here](#)

[Watch Kooranup, Dyoondalup \(Attadale\) full show here](#)

[Watch Kooranup Wadjemup \(Rottnest\) full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tyrown Waigana is an emerging Noongar and Torres Strait Islander artist. Through his surreal concepts and abstract painting, Wardandi and Saibai Islander multidisciplinary artist and graphic designer Tyrown Waigana probes themes like identity, feelings, politics and art history.

Yabini Kickett is an artist with ties to Ballardong, Nyaki-Nyaki, Wadjuk people of the Bibulman Nation. Her work focuses on portraiture, endemic plant and fungal species, and stories from her kin.

Ilona McGuire is a Bibbulmun Noongar and Kungarakan conceptual artist. Historical truth-telling and cultural protocol informs her writing, performance, and visual work that encourage audience self-awareness of their place in our country’s shared histories. Ilona was the inaugural artist for First Lights with her ground-breaking show, Moombaki with the Fremantle Biennale in 2021.

Cass Lynch is a Koreng Wudjari Noongar woman descended from the families of Ravensthorpe in the Great Southern region. She is a writer and research fellow, and has a PhD in Creative Writing that explores Noongar stories that reference climate change.

FIRST LIGHTS

Matariki

Rotorua Lakefront, Rotorua
Aotearoa (New Zealand)
27 & 28 June 2024

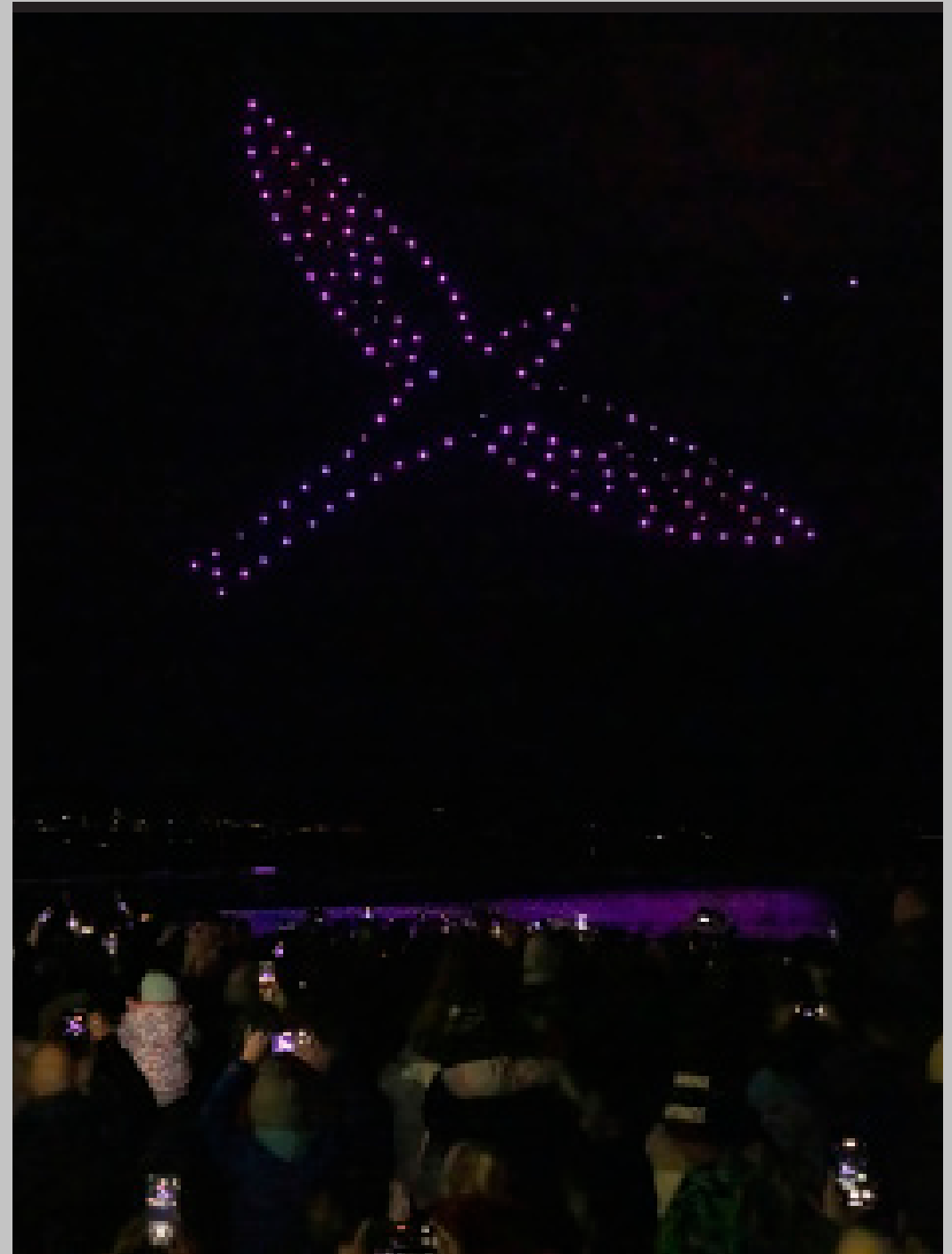
ARONUI Indigenous Arts Festival with First Lights presented Matariki, a drone light, sound and story event during midwinter at the Rotorua Lakefront / Kouramāwhitiwhiti, Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Created by Māori artists Cian Elyse White (Ngāti Pikiao) and Mataia Keepa (Ngāti Whakaue), Matariki (the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades) told the stories of environmental markers connected to this star cluster, as well as the large Waka or Canoe (Te Waka o Rangi) and it's captain Taramainuku. Throughout the year, Taramainuku traverses the sky with a large net, collecting the souls of those who have passed away across the year. During the month of May, Te Waka o Rangi sails beneath the horizon, rising again in June/ July. When it rises, Taramainuku casts his net into the sky, releasing the collected souls to be immortalised forever as stars.

Signalling the start of a new year, Matariki invited audiences to look to the night sky and consider their human connection to the celestial realm.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ARONUI Indigenous Arts Festival
ARONUI is a boldly Indigenous arts festival located within the heart of Aotearoa's volcanic epicentre, Te Rotoruanui-a-Kahumatamomoe. With Mana (pride), Mauri (energy) & Manawa (heart), ARONUI is helmed by key Iwi leaders and world-class, award-winning artists in the heart of Aotearoa's leading Māori arts district, making this festival a direct incentive developed, designed & driven by Manawhenua (Iwi of the land).



FIRST LIGHTS

Winthu Wangga

Foreshore, Geraldton
Western Australia
13 July 2024

Illuminating the night sky, First Lights travelled to the foreshore of Geraldton, inviting audiences to listen to the songs of the winthu wangga.

First Lights – Winthu Wangga (Wind Talk Lights) is a drone light and sound experience which told the many stories of the wind as it flows and connects across Yamatji lands from inland to the sea. Created by acclaimed Yamatji poet Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green with artist Nicole Dickerson, First Lights – Winthu Wangga saw our fleet of drones take flight sharing ancient stories of place across Geraldton beach.

“This tells the many stories of the winthu wangga (wind) and the honouring of our Old People and Culture by making sure we pass on cultural knowledge and cultural practices to the next generations. You are invited to listen to the ancient sound of winthu wangga as it connects to all – across people, animals, land, waters and stars”
– Dr Charmaine Papertalk Green.

Co-Presented with Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation.

[Watch full show here](#)



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Dr. Charmaine Papertalk Green was born at Eradu (between Geraldton and Mullewa) on Southern Yamaji country. She is a member of the Wajarri, Badimaya and Nhanagardi Wilunyu cultural groups of Yamaji Nation in Western Australia. Green is a visual artist, poet and writer and began writing poetry in Mullewa in the late 1970's. Charmaine was instrumental in the incubation of the nationally and internationally touring exhibition “Ilgarijiri – Things belonging to the Sky” arts and cultural project a Yamaji Art collaboration with the Curtin Institute of Radio Astronomy Curtin University, Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project Australian Government and City of Greater Geraldton. Her publications include Just Like That (Fremantle Art Press 2007); Tiptoeing Tod the Tracker (Oxford University Press 2014); collaboration with WA poet John Kinsella, False Claim of Colonial Thieves (Magabala Books 2018); Nganajungu Yagu (Cordite Publishing Inc.'s 2019); and numerous anthologies and other publications.

Nicole Dickerson is a proud Yama(t)ji Woman from Geraldton WA, she is connected to the Amangu, Naaguja, Wilunyu People & also to the Ngarluma people on her Mother's side. Her work is influenced both by contemporary Aboriginal art and her strong tie to where she comes from, through sharing stories, memories of family traditions and times spent at special places. Nicole's artwork is bold, poetic and she always puts her soul into everything created. It's her form of healing, it's her strength, it's her words when she cannot speak and most importantly it's her story.

FIRST LIGHTS

Bunggaliyarra Munggu

Hearson Cove, Karratha
Western Australia
18 May 2025



Minkala, the Great Spirit, lifted the Mayalarri (seven sisters) into the sparkling night sky. Then came Marrga, singing the Burndud (sacred song). Their voices were so powerful that two of the Mayalarri were drawn down from the sky, into the sea near Murujuga. They were the Bunggaliyarra.

This special presentation of First Lights by Juluwarlu Art Group celebrated the Bunggaliyarra Munggu journey through a spectacular narrated drone light and sound experience at Hearson's Cove, the site where the Seven Sisters storyline begins.

Presented by the Fremantle Biennale, Juluwarlu Art Group and supported by the City of Karratha for the Red Earth Arts Festival.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Juluwarlu's purpose is to collect, sustain and promote knowledge of Yindjibarndi culture. Juluwarlu's cultural recording and archiving project was started by Lorraine Coppin in the Ngurrawaana Community on the Yindjibarndi tablelands in 1998 with elder Woodley King and his grandson, Michael Woodley, and was incorporated in 2000. Juluwarlu took its first steps in 1999. Until then, there had been no enduring agency in Roebourne that had taken up the work of recording local culture. That the work of cultural recording was being taken up by a new generation of Indigenous activists, and that they had successfully established a local archive and recording centre, was enormously significant. Juluwarlu's purpose is to collect, sustain and promote knowledge of Yindjibarndi culture – ngurra, wanda, and animals, our language, genealogy, mythology, social history, and biography to sustain Yindjibarndi identity, self esteem, respect and other values considered vital to their lives, well-being and culture future.

FIRST LIGHTS

Hiri

Sir John Walter Stadium,
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
16 September 2025

First Lights travelled to Papua New Guinea for their 50th independence anniversary presenting Hiri — a drone light, sound and story experience sharing a seafaring tradition of journey, exchange and connection across the Gulf of Papua.

Created by Airileke Ingram, who reinterpreted the Creation Story with new additions, Hiri brings to life the story of Edai Siabo, a fisherman from Boera village.

As the story unfolds, Edai encounters a sea spirit who draws him into an underwater cave and instructs him to build a Lakatoi — a large sailing canoe — and follow the laurabada, the southeast trade wind, westward.

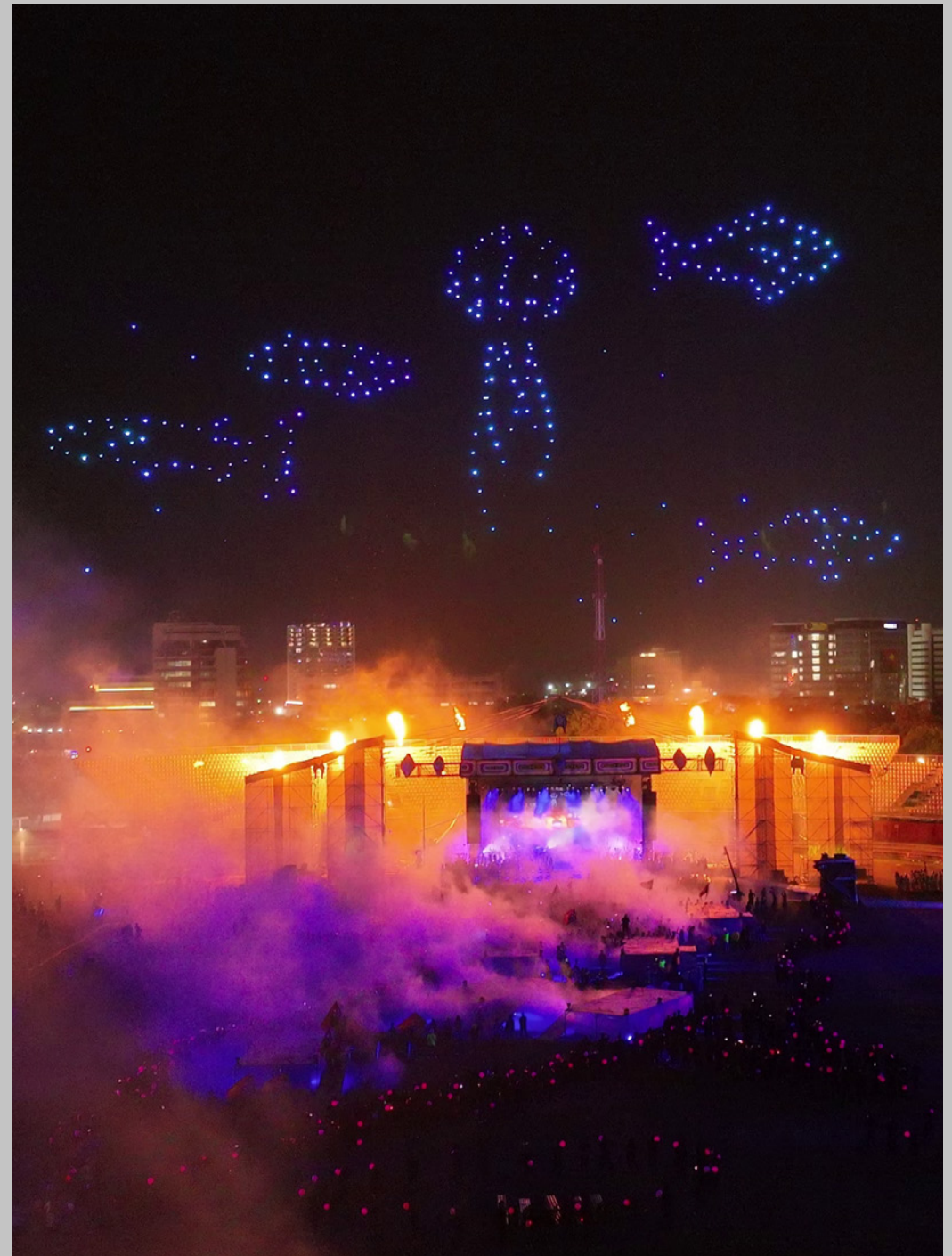
With pots made by his wife, Edai journeys across the Gulf of Papua, trading with coastal communities for Rabia (sago). This voyage becomes the first Hiri — a trading expedition that establishes an enduring tradition of exchange, knowledge-sharing and connection between communities.

Through light, sound and movement, First Lights – Hiri invited audiences to consider pathways of wind, water and navigation, and the cultural systems that continue to connect communities across sea.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Airileke Ingram is a Papua New Guinean–Australian musician, producer and cultural practitioner. Born in Australia with roots in Papua New Guinea, he grew up between PNG and the Top End, learning traditional drumming from his ancestral village of Gabagaba.

His practice spans music, performance and large-scale cultural events, combining traditional Melanesian forms with contemporary sound and storytelling.



FIRST LIGHTS

Bimarra

Foreshore, Geraldton
Western Australia
18 October 2025



First Lights returned to the Geraldton Foreshore, inviting audiences into a story of return, memory and belonging on Yamatji Country.

Created by emerging Yamatji writer Mabel Gibson, First Lights – Bimarra saw 240 drones illuminate the night sky in a moving aerial performance inspired by the Bimarra (Serpent). Following a young woman’s journey back to her ancestral lands, the work traced connections between family, dreaming, rivers and Country — guided by wind, water and the enduring presence of the Red River Gum.

As drones drifted and transformed overhead, the story unfolded across the foreshore as a shared experience of reconnection and cultural continuity, bringing together ancient knowledge and contemporary technology beneath the night sky.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Mabel Gibson is a twenty-five-year-old Yamatji writer. Mabel grew up in Boorloo (Perth), Kinjarling (Albany), and Jambinu (Geraldton) – three vastly different locations, whose landscapes and climates all play an important role in Mabel’s story. Mabel’s debut book ‘CryBaby’ came out in early 2025 and is a collection of micro memoirs, that follows her through all the seasons of life, from the brightest summers to the coldest darkest winters and all the transitions and rebirths in between. Mabel’s work explores what it is to grow up First Nations in the 21st century.

FIRST LIGHTS

Kinjarling

Kinjarling / Albany, WA
6, 7, 8 March 2026

Illuminating the night sky, First Lights returned to Kinjarling / Albany in 2026, invited back as part of Albany 2026 — a major bicentennial program marking 200 years since the establishment of the first European settlement in Western Australia.

Across the foreshore, three distinct drone light, sound and story experiences unfolded, each drawing from Menang story and connecting audiences to the Stirling Ranges, the Porongurups and the south coast. Led by Menang Custodians and Noongar artists across three evenings, the works invited audiences to encounter Kinjarling through story, across both sky and Country.

On the first night, *Kaawar (Koi Kyenunu-Ruff)*, inspired by Averil and Lindsay Dean with Kim Scott, brought a Creation Story of the Stirling Ranges into the sky, offering alternative perspectives on these ancient peaks and their enduring spiritual significance.

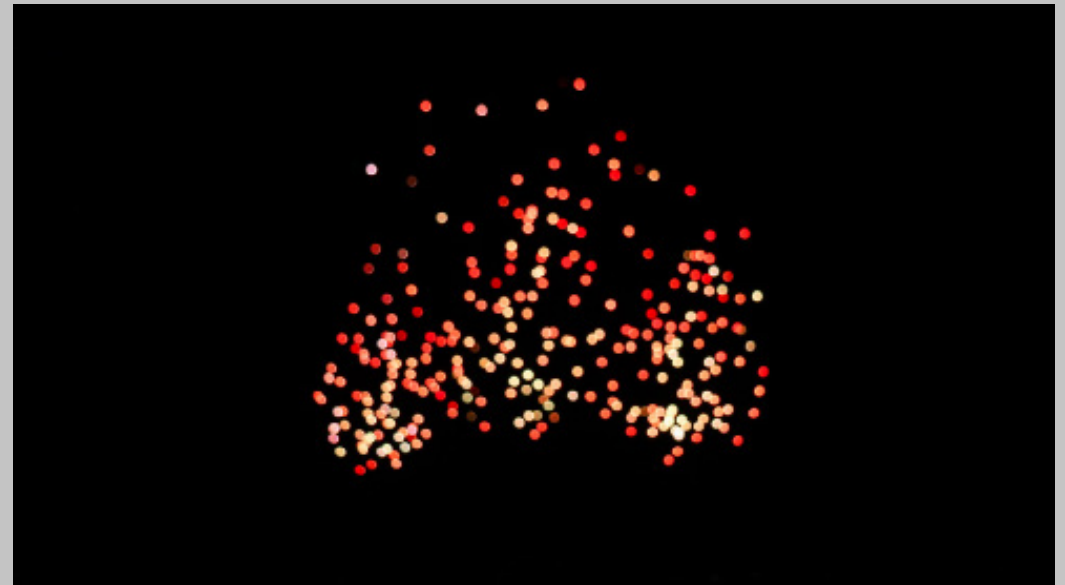
The second night, *Borongur (Porongurups)*, told through the voices of Vernice Gillies and Larry Blight with Cass

Lynch, explored the Porongurup mountain range as a place of totems and rain, alive with Gondwanan species and ancient songs. Through the eyes of a granite peak, a trapdoor spider and the moon, the story reflected on time, home-building and the endurance of culture.

The final night, *Mamang Koort*, written by Kim Scott and Iris Woods with Olivia Roberts, drew upon a south coast whale Creation Story, opening space for reflection and hope.

Alongside the drone shows, Kinjarling Reflections presented a program of guided walks and talks across Menang Country. Led by Custodians and community members at significant cultural sites, these gatherings deepened the stories shared in the drone light shows through place-based experience. Together, these experiences invited audiences to encounter Kinjarling through story, across both sky and Country.

Presented by Fremantle Biennale as part of Albany 2026, supported by the City of Albany and Lotterywest.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Kim Scott is an award-winning novelist, having twice won the Miles Franklin Award (for *Benang* and *That Deadman Dance*) along with many other Australian literary prizes. Kim was 2012 West Australian of the Year, is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, a member of the Western Australian Writers Hall of Fame and in 2022 was declared a State Cultural Treasure. He is currently Curtin University Distinguished Professor in the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry. Proud to be on among those who call themselves Noongar, Kim is convenor of Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories (www.wirlomin.com.au) which is responsible for a number of bilingual (Noongar and English) picture books and regional performances of story and song. Two books, *A Companion to the Works of Kim Scott* (Camden House, 2016) and *Kim Scott: language, readers and interpretation* (UWAP, 2019) deal with aspects of his writing and career.

Cass Lynch is a Koreng Wudjari Noongar woman descended from the families of Ravensthorpe in the Great Southern region. She is a writer and research fellow, and has a PhD in Creative Writing that explores Noongar stories that reference climate change. She is a member of the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories group who focus on the revitalisation of culture and language connected to south coast Noongar people. She is the co-founder of the Aboriginal literature project Woylie Fest, which facilitates bringing Noongar stories into print and training community members to be presenters. Her Noongar language haikus, published in *Westerly* 64.1, won the 2019 Patricia Hackett Prize. Her audio storytelling works have been featured at Perth Festival, Arts House Melbourne, CCA Glasgow, and PICA. Her short story 'Split', a creative impression of deep time Perth, can be found in the UQP publication *Flock: First Nations Stories Then and Now*.

FIRST LIGHTS

Gudjurah

The Fascine, Carnarvon,
Western Australia
24 May 2026

First Lights – Gudjurah, presented for Shire of Carnarvon's inaugural Gnulli Festival, will bring a powerful Creation story from Yinggarda Country into the night sky.

As the culmination of the festival, this large-scale drone light, sound and storytelling experience will unfold above the Carnarvon Fascine, guided by Elder, Kath Ryan. Through choreographed formations, the work will trace the story of the gudjurah — Dreamtime serpent creators — and their role in shaping the land and waterways of the Gascoyne region.

Across the sky, serpents will rise and shift, carving rivers and forming pathways through Country. Spirits will move between forms — human, animal and elemental — revealing moments of transformation, tension and connection between land and sea.



ABOUT THE CULTURAL LEAD

Kath Ryan is an Ingaarda woman from the Gascoyne region of Western Australia, with family ties to Noongar communities in the Great Southern. Across more than 25 years working in Aboriginal Health, she has dedicated her career to supporting Aboriginal communities through culturally informed care, advocacy and education.

After graduating from Curtin University with a degree in Indigenous Community Health, she worked extensively across the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, primarily in the areas of drug and alcohol support and mental health. Her work in mental health became deeply personal following the loss of her eldest son to suicide in 2006, strengthening her commitment to supporting young Aboriginal people, families and communities navigating grief, trauma and wellbeing.

Now retired, she continues to work as an instructor delivering Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid training across Australia, sharing her knowledge and lived experience with communities nationwide. Known for her warmth, generosity and willingness to connect with others, she is a proud mother of seven children, grandmother to twenty grandchildren and great-grandmother to five great-grandchildren. Based in Perth, she regularly returns north to visit family and remains passionate about working collaboratively and meeting new people.



Engagement

232,700+

Visitors to First Lights events

20

major new artworks and events

52 artists representing
12 language groups

from metropolitan, regional and remote WA, NT, NSW,
Aotearoa and Papua New Guinea.

EVENT	AUDIENCE	ARTIST/S	CULTURAL LEADS
First Lights - Moombaki	55,500	3	37
First Lights - Balarr Inyiny	24,000	3	20
First Lights - Binalup	25,000	1	10
First Lights - Nynggulu	17,000	3	3
First Lights - Boodja Dwordak Wirn	4,000	15	25
First Lights - Cowaramup	1,600	2	4
First Lights - Buungbaa-ma-ndhu	4,500	2	4
First Lights - Kooranup	25,200	4	4
First Lights - Matariki	30,000	2	10
First Lights - Winthu Wangga	6,000	2	12
First Lights - Bunggaliyarra Munggu	1,600	4	
First Lights - Hiri	12,000	4	1
First Lights - Bimarra	8,000	2	6
First Lights - Kinjarling	16,800	3	9
First Lights - Gudjurah	1,500	2	1

Online

245+

Pieces of media coverage

15,000+

Website visitors to First Lights

25,310

Engagements, likes and shares
across social media

Launched in February and July 2022 the new [First Lights website](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages created dedicated digital platforms for each project, expanding the reach of Fremantle Biennale and its regional, national and international partners through online audiences, social engagement and media coverage. Complementing existing websites and social channels, these platforms strengthened audience connection and amplified the visibility, storytelling and impact of each program across diverse communities and locations.

21,533

Livestream Views

159,328

Reach across social media platforms

Documentaries

Directed by filmmaker Luna Laure and produced by the Fremantle Biennale, these short documentaries offer behind the scenes insights from the lead artists, communities and Traditional Custodians around each of the stories told through First Lights – Binalup, Nynggulu and Kinjarling.



FIRST LIGHTS

Binalup

[Watch Here](#)

FIRST LIGHTS

Nynggulu

[Watch Here](#)

FIRST LIGHTS

Kinjarling

[Watch Here](#)

From Our Artists, Partners and Audiences

“The project has helped to develop pride and confidence in the Kepa Kurl Wudjari community, who are able to share ancestral stories, culture and language with the wider community in new and innovative ways. The project worked towards changing the perceptions of some of our young people – who may dream about pursuing arts careers... Our storytelling also aimed to secure the sense of connection and belonging to Country which so many of our people have been dispossessed from”

Jennell Reynolds, ETNTAC on
First Lights - Boodja Dwordak Wirn

“I am grateful for the platforming of First Nations voices, and for the chance to hear a fuller story of our local history”

Audience member

“This project represents a significant opportunity for us to develop and expand new cross-sector partnerships and to develop a meaningful and relevant arts experience that pays tribute to our Traditional stories and culture, that connects broad audiences to engage with spiritual connection to place.”

Baiyungu Traditional Owner and Cultural Lead for
First Lights - Nyinggulu, Hazel Walgar

“Riffing on rhythms of south coastal
Noongar language and gathering
energy from pools and pulsing water, it
summons the great Mother to return with
light and song and open-up our world”

Kim Scott, Lead Artist on
First Lights - Binalup

“These miraculous motes of light
might resemble animated dot painting.
They might resemble skeins of
glowing birds. But for many, the stories
are part of their Dreaming. For the rest
of us, they are permission to dream.”

William Yeoman, The West

“For the past three years, First Lights, a small yet visionary site-responsive contemporary arts festival has been working with First Nations storytellers and custodians to bring their stories of Country to life on what is the world’s most sacred canvas – the open-air night sky...In doing so, the Fremantle Biennale is realising one of its long-held goals, to see its site-responsive works go beyond densely populated urban centres and reach artists and audiences in remote and regional Australia.”

Jo Pickup, Artshub

“As a resident of Fremantle, I consider the Fremantle Biennale an absolute calendar highlight and this latest incarnation has been outstanding. The connection it has made to the Whadjuk Noongar people and their heritage is ground-breaking... Sitting on Coogee Beach amidst throngs of people from so many cultural backgrounds watching a stunning drone light show of Whadjuk story telling was something I will never forget. Bravo to the Biennale organisers for this brilliant bringing together of community.”

Audience member

“It’s an honor to work alongside artists like Ilona McGuire and Kim Scott for an East Coast iteration of First Lights, especially on the lands that raised me, here in the Highlands on Gundungurra lands at Ngununggula. Language is experiential, it’s felt and created in the body, it connects us and helps us find meaning. In this vein, this work, Buungbaa-ma-ndhuis an immersion. It’s a conversion to be a part of – something to soak in, to feel deeply and to know so we can forge paths and walk together. I feel really grateful to write in the language taught to me by the Late Aunty Velma Mulcahy (OAM) – my Pop’s sister, and also to center the wisdom of other language teachers like Aunty Sharyn Halls and through her the work of Jim Barrett. To see this work simultaneously be brought forth with First Nations students from local public schools, who are dancing a Welcome dance taught by Aunty Sharyn and local Arawkwal Bundjalung woman, Mel Wiya is really exciting. Ultimately, it’s these young ones who’ll be the carriers of our language, our dance, our art, our stories – it’s our young ones we’re carving out a nourishing future for.”

Kirli Saunders, Artist

This series of cultural events has been important in highlighting the importance of our indigenous culture particularly during the recent political events”

Audience member

“It was a privilege to see this in our home town. I loved hearing the stories and the beautiful designs in such an amazing backdrop...”

Audience member

“It’s very exciting to be able to tell these stories at this moment, and it’s probably only in recent decades that we’ve been given the opportunity to retrieve and rebuild a lot of these stories”

Kim Scott, Artist on First Lights - Kinjarling

“Absolutely magical experience, such a beautiful show of culture and storytelling. An incredible combination of ancient culture and modern technology to create an inclusive, incredible community experience.”

Audience member

“It was so incredibly moving.
I have never before felt so
connected to Country.”

Audience member

“As non-Aboriginal people we feel
very held and privileged to listen
to the stories shared.”

Audience member

“This was a spiritual experience,
deeply moving and beautiful.”

Audience member

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PRESENTING & INDUSTRY PARTNERS



Fremantle Biennale's First Lights is supported by the Australian Government through the RISE Fund, the State Government through the Regional Arts and Cultural Investment Program (RACIP), the Remote and Regional Festival Fund and the Regional Exhibition Touring Boost (RETB) administered by the Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries and supported by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, The Shire of Exmouth, and the Minderoo Foundation.

FIRST LIGHTS is owned and
produced by Fremantle Biennale Inc. (FBI)

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