AWESOME SCHOOLS IMPACT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025

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Prepared for
BARKING GECKO ARTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, Barking Gecko Arts' AWESOME Schools program continued to deliver high-impact creative residencies across Western Australia, engaging 124 students across three schools:

1. Koondoola Primary School

2. Bentley Primary School

3. Moorditj Noongar Community College.

Through ten-week residencies co-designed with each school, students explored a range of artforms - from visual arts and digital self-portraits to collaborative songwriting, to mosaic art incorporating Noongar language and symbolism. Each residency was tailored to school priorities, curriculum links, and student interests, fostering measurable improvements in creative confidence, collaboration, cultural awareness, and emotional wellbeing.

Pre- and post-program surveys, aligned with the SEW-Arts Wellbeing Factors, demonstrated significant positive shifts across key areas:

• **Collaboration:** 100% of students felt good when everyone in their group worked together post-survey, up from 69% pre-survey **(31% improvement).**
• **Creative experimentation:** 87.5% of students liked making music or sounds post-survey, up from 64.9% pre-survey **(22.6% improvement).**
• **Resilience:** 87.5% of students felt it's okay to make mistakes when learning, up from 72.4% pre-survey **(15.1% improvement).**

Qualitative reflections from artists and students reinforced these findings, highlighting the program's role in building trust, encouraging leadership, and creating culturally safe spaces for self-expression. Exhibiting work at the AWESOME Festival gives students a public platform to celebrate their achievements and be recognised as young professional artists.

AWESOME SCHOOLS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The AWESOME Schools program, now in its third year of a two-year pilot, merges elements from the Creative Challenge and STEAMED UP programs to build deep and lasting relationships with seven partner schools in Western Australia.

Deep creative partnerships that enrich students, teachers, and communities.

Now part of Barking Gecko Arts, AWESOME Schools is a targeted creative residency program designed to support students and educators in disadvantaged schools, amplifyingthe voices of young people, and responding to each community's unique strengths and needs.
The program was originally launched by AWESOME Arts in 2023 and, from 2025, has delivered under the organisation's new name — Barking Gecko Arts. AWESOME Schools builds meaningful, long-term relationships with participating schools, partnering with metro and regional communities to deliver ten-week residencies (or 20 workshops) with the same group of students, allowing for deep engagement and transformative creative outcomes.

Each residency is co-designed with the school through a Strategic Partnership Plan, with school leaders identifying students and setting clear learning and wellbeing goals for the residency. Teaching Artists shape their work in response to students' interests, talents, and community context, nurturing confidence, creativity, and connection.

As the program continues under Barking Gecko Arts, AWESOME Schools carries forward a strong legacy of meaningful, place-based arts experiences for children in WA. Participants create work that is exhibited in the AWESOME Festival, bringing the students as young professional artists into the city to celebrate their creations with the wider Perth community.

AWESOME SCHOOLS PROGRAM OVERVIEW
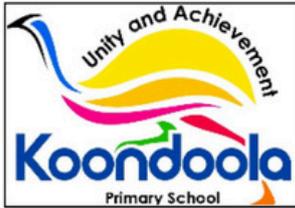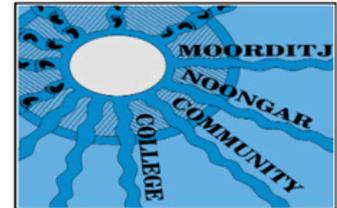
Koondoola Primary School

Artists: Ellie Glen & Melanie Maclou
Number of Students: 40
Art Project:
Visual arts, Textiles and Digital Arts
Curriculum Areas:
Oral Language, Literacy, Music

01

Moorditj Noongar Community College

Artists: Arron Yarran & Sherrise Todd
Number of Students: 26
Art Project: Visual Arts & Noongar Culture & Mosaics
Curriculum Areas: Science, Languages

02

Bentley Primary School

Artists: Luke Joseph Ryan & Ayo Busari
Number of Students: 46
Art Project: Story books and Audio books and Mosaics
Curriculum Areas: Oral Language, Humanities & Social Sciences and History

03

PROGRAM AIMS

## The AWESOME Schools program is designed to:

- Establish a legacy within partner schools by fostering long-term relationships between school staff, students, and the creative community.
- Target curriculum areas and wellbeing priorities identified through collaborative planning with school staff.
- Expand Western Australia's network of creative practitioners and provide them with professional development opportunities to enhance their capacity to work within school settings.
- Showcase and celebrate student achievements through public platforms such as the AWESOME Festival, building pride and legacy with participants and highlighting each school community's unique identity.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The evaluation aims to:

- Measure the program's impact on student wellbeing, engagement, and learning outcomes.
- Review the extent to which program partnerships helped meet each school's goals.
- Examine the impact of training and resources provided to educators and Teaching Artists.
- Gather feedback from students, Teaching Artists, and educators to ensure ongoing program relevance and improvement.
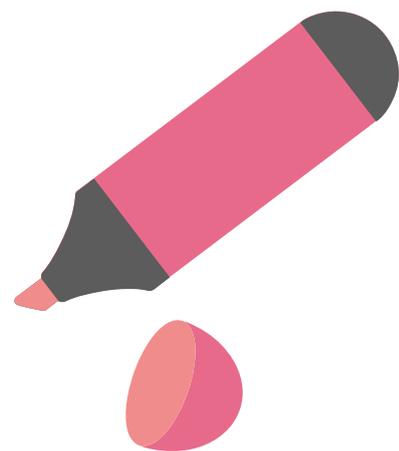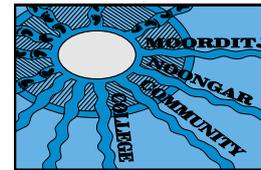
AWESOME SCHOOLS EVALUATION TIMELINE
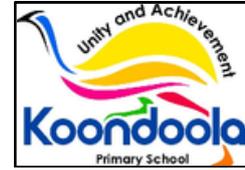
📅 **3 April - 3 July**
📍 **Koondoola Primary School**
👩🏻 **Ellie Glen & Melanie Maclou**

📅 **30 April – 2 July**
📍 **Bentley Primary School**
👩🏻 **Luke Joseph Ryan & Ayo Busari**

📅 **14 May – 26 June**
📍 **Moorditj Noongar Community College**
👩🏻 **Arron Yarran & Sherrise Todd**

📅 **July - August**
Data Collected from Teaching Artists

📅 **August - September**
Analysis of Data

📅 **September - October**
Evaluation Report

AWESOME SCHOOLS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

6
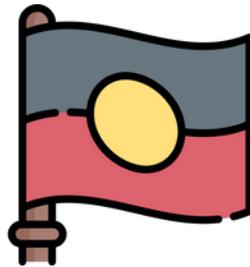
NUMBER OF ARTISTS

332

NUMBER OF ARTWORKS CREATED

124

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

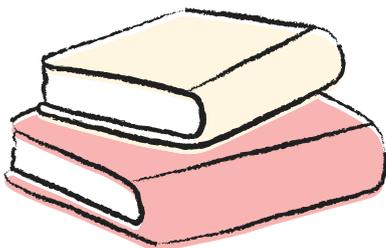(64 Males and 60 Females)

43

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

(35%)

101

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

(81%)

2

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Total Number of Participants:
- 124 students (40 Koondoola + 48 Bentley + 36 Moorditj Noongar)

Indigenous Participants:
- 43 students, 35% of total students (2 Koondoola + 5 Bentley + 36 Moorditj Noongar).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Participants:
- 101 students, 81% of total students (35 Koondoola + 30 Bentley + 36 Moorditj Noongar)

Participants with Disabilities:
- At least 2 students (0 Koondoola + 1 Bentley + Moorditj Noongar unknown)

Gender Breakdown:
- Male: 64 (26 Koondoola + 20 Bentley; 18 Moorditj Noongar)
- Female: 60 (14 Koondoola + 28 Bentley; 18 Moorditj Noongar)
- Non-binary/Other: 0 reported

Artworks Created:
- 332 total (250 Koondoola + 28 Bentley + 54 Moorditj Noongar)

Primary Art Techniques Explored:
• Koondoola: Drawing, collage, fabric dyeing, digital art, printmaking.
• Bentley: Songwriting, music performance, narrative writing, storybook creation, audio recording.
• Moorditj Noongar Community College: Mosaic design and construction (including creativity drawing and designing, arrangements), Noongar symbolism, colour theory.

Cultural Connections:
- Programs at multiple schools incorporated Indigenous cultural elements, including Noongar language and traditional art forms, explicitly referencing cultural inclusion Koondoola: Celebration of student identity and cultural diversity; integration of Intensive English Centre students; personal symbolism and cultural storytelling.
- Bentley: Collaborative storytelling and songwriting reflecting personal and community narratives.
- Moorditj Noongar Community College: Deep integration of Noongar culture, family connections, language, and symbolism; depiction of native flora and fauna from local Country.
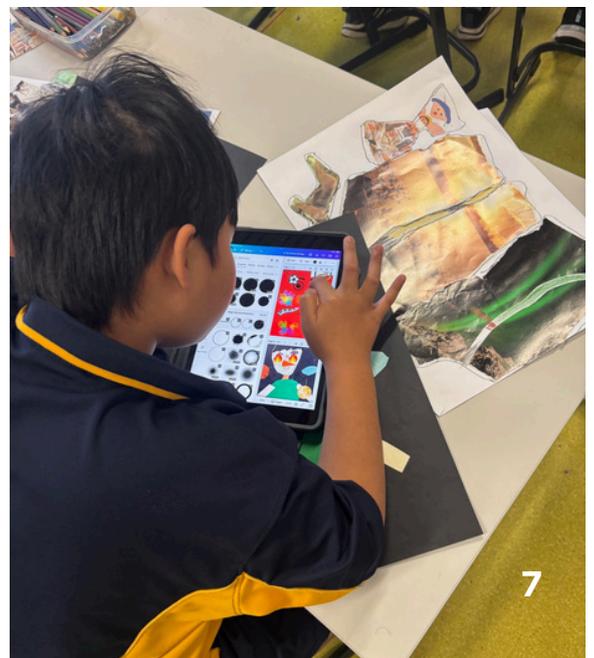
IMPACT EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The program's impact was measured using several tools to understand how students grew and what they enjoyed. These included:

- **Pre/Post Surveys** – capturing changes in confidence, collaboration, creative engagement, and specific artform skills.
- **Artist Reflection Workbooks** – documenting observations, key moments, and emerging themes during residencies.
- **Artist Reports** – summarising project outcomes, successes, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Photographic Documentation** – capturing both process and final outcomes.

Together, these tools gave a clear picture of how the program helped students grow and connect.

SURVEY RESULTS

The purpose of this impact evaluation is to understand the program's overall effect across all participating schools, rather than to compare or rank individual residencies.

The program was evaluated using a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data:

Pre- and Post-Program Surveys: Completed by students in all three participating schools to measure changes in social, emotional, and creative engagement. Surveys included a combination of SEW-Arts Wellbeing Factor questions and additional custom questions tailored to each residency's focus.
• Artist Reflections: Teaching artists provided weekly and end-of-residency reflections capturing student engagement, skill development, and notable moments of growth.
• Strategic Partnership Plans (SPP): Each school's SPP was reviewed to ensure program design and evaluation measures were aligned with school-identified learning and wellbeing priorities.

Because survey questions varied between schools, individual items were mapped to the most relevant SEW-Arts wellbeing factor category. This allowed for meaningful comparison across schools while preserving each residency's unique focus.

| School	SPP Focus Areas	Corresponding SEW-Arts Category/Categories
Koondoola PS	Oral Language Learning from Mistakes Trying Something New Doing What I value	Sharing Perspectives (Connecting) Learning from Mistakes (Discovering) Trying Something New (Discovering) Creative Expression (Expressing Emotions) / Cultural Connection (Connecting)
Bentley PS	Oral Language Narrative Sharing Perspectives Expressing Emotions Positive Peer Comparison	Sharing Perspectives (Connecting) Creative Expression (Expressing Emotions), Sharing Perspectives (Connecting) Sharing Perspectives (Connecting) Expressing Emotions (Expressing Emotions) Positive Peer Comparison (Connecting)
Moorditj Noongar CC	Science Languages (Noongar) In the Zone Working in Groups	Learning (Discovering) / Cultural Connection (Connecting) Cultural Connection (Connecting) Creative Expression (Expressing Emotions) / Learning (Discovering) Working in Groups (Connecting)

About the results:

While each residency explored a different artform and learning focus, all programs were designed to align with the school's Strategic Partnership Plan and targeted curriculum areas.

• **Koondoola Primary School:** Visual arts, digital art, and self-portraiture, integrated with oral language, literacy, and Humanities and Social Sciences. (37 pre-surveys, 32 post-surveys)

• **Bentley Primary School:** Collaborative songwriting, music performance, and storybook creation, integrated with narrative writing, literacy, and music. (45 pre-surveys, 46 post-surveys)

• **Moorditj Noongar Community College:** Mosaic design and construction (including creativity drawing and designing, arrangements), integrated with science, Noongar language, and cultural knowledge. (29 pre-surveys, 25 post-surveys)

To create an overall program picture, results from each school were matched to the most relevant SEW-Arts wellbeing factor category (e.g., Working in Groups, Learning from Mistakes, Expressing Emotions). For each matched question, the percentage of students answering "Yes" pre- and post-program was calculated, and the percentage point change recorded. These were then combined across schools to create an overall program average for each wellbeing factor, while retaining the ability to analyse and present results for each school individually.

While most categories showed positive change, some recorded a decrease in percentage points. This is due to the fact that survey questions were not identical across all three schools - meaning some categories draw on results from only one or two residencies. In small cohorts, even a single student changing their response from "Yes" to "No" post-program can create a noticeable percentage drop. These changes do not necessarily reflect a program-wide decline, but rather differences in question content, sample size, and individual student responses.
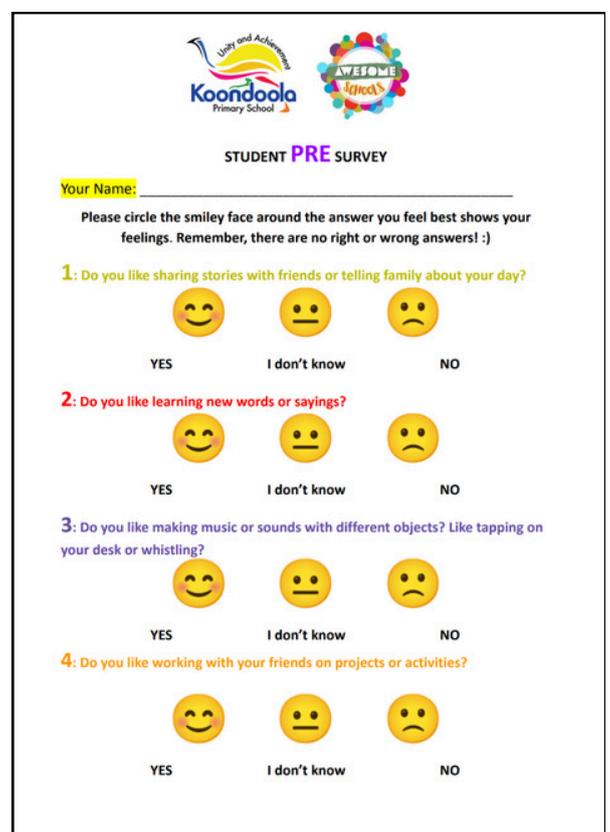
CONNECTING

100%

Felt good when everyone in the group worked together (+31% improvement)

96%

Liked learning about the land and nature around their school (+6.3% improvement)

95.8%

Liked learning new words in Noongar language (+9.6% improvement)

+84%

Enjoyed working with their friends in a group (+8.1% improvement)

DISCOVERING

87.5%

Liked making music or sounds with different objects (+22.6% improvement)

87.5%

Thought it was okay to make mistakes when learning (+15.1% improvement)

+68.8%

Felt it was okay to not be good at something when first trying (+14.7% improvement)

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

100%

Liked drawing, painting or making art about animals or nature (+13.8% improvement)

71.7%

Felt it was okay to talk to a friend or teacher when feeling sad (+10.3% improvement)

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Analysis of artist reflections across Koondoola Primary School, Bentley Primary School, and Moorditj Noongar Community College highlighted several areas where program delivery could be strengthened to further enhance student engagement, wellbeing outcomes, and project quality.

Embedding More Cultural Content and Language
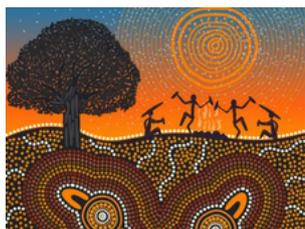
Moorditj Noongar Community College set embedding culture and language as a strategic goal for the program, with clear benefits seen from weaving Noongar language, cultural stories, and symbolism into the creative process. Artists suggested increasing opportunities for students to share personal and community narratives, supported by cultural mentors or Elders, across all schools.

Extend Timeframes for Deeper Engagement
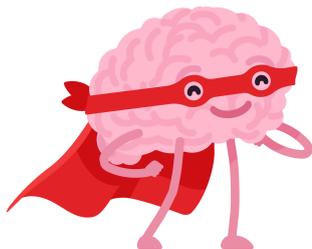
Artists across all schools noted that longer residencies or additional sessions would allow for stronger relationship–building, more complex creative outcomes, and deeper application of SEW–Arts principles. Several projects reached completion within the allocated time, but artists felt extended engagement could have further consolidated skills and confidence.

Balancing Group and Individual Learning Needs

While group work fostered collaboration and peer connection, some students preferred working independently or required more personalised support to participate fully. Offering a balance between structured group activities and individual creative exploration would help accommodate varied confidence levels, learning styles, and social comfort.

Increasing Activity Variety and Pacing

At times, students' engagement dipped when tasks were too repetitive or lacked variety. Artists recommended mixing physical, interactive, and reflective activities within each session to maintain energy and interest, particularly for younger students or those with high energy levels.

Encouraging Quieter Students to Contribute

Artists observed that some quieter students were hesitant to speak up during collaborative activities or discussions. More targeted strategies, such as small group sharing, paired storytelling, or alternative ways to contribute ideas could ensure these students' voices are included and valued.

ARTIST REFLECTION RESULTS

Koondoola Primary School
Main Themes:
• Strong engagement with visual storytelling and creative self-expression through art and mixed media.
• Building confidence in English-language learners by integrating art with oral language activities.
• Group projects fostered collaboration, though some students required extra encouragement to share ideas.
Quotes:
"I feel proud of my art because it shows who I am." – Student
"It's amazing to see the way art gave them a voice when words were harder to find." – Melanie Maclou, Teaching Artist

Bentley Primary School
Main Themes:
• Songwriting and storytelling built confidence in literacy, creativity, and public performance.
• Students responded strongly to opportunities for leadership and peer support.
• The final sharing of work was a high point, building pride and a sense of achievement.
Quotes:
"I didn't know I could write a song until now." – Student
"They went from shy and unsure to singing their own lyrics in front of their classmates — that's the power of this program." – Luke Joseph Ryan, Teaching Artist

Moorditj Noongar Community College
Main Themes:
• Deep cultural engagement through mosaic art incorporating Noongar language and symbolism.
• Strong teamwork across small groups, with visible pride in collaborative achievements.
• Creative process created space for personal sharing and cultural connection.
Quotes:
"I love doing this, it really chills me out." – Braxton, Student (from Sherrise's reflection)
"Each student learned to work as a team to get the best out of their design." – Arron, Teaching Artist

"I FEEL PROUD OF MY ART BECAUSE IT SHOWS WHO I AM."
–STUDENT

"THEY WENT FROM SHY AND UNSURE TO SINGING THEIR OWN LYRICS IN FRONT OF THEIR CLASSMATES — THAT'S THE POWER OF THIS PROGRAM." – TEACHING ARTIST

ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The 2025 AWESOME Schools program met or exceeded its key objectives through tailored residencies, targeted curriculum integration, and strong community partnerships.

1. Establish a legacy within partner schools by fostering long-term relationships between school staff, students, and the creative community.
The program deepened relationships between schools and the creative sector by embedding Teaching Artists in classrooms for ten weeks. At Moorditj Noongar Community College, cultural connections extended beyond the residency, with Teaching Artists engaging in personal storytelling and shared heritage. At Koondoola and Bentley Primary Schools, strong rapport created trust and encouraged student voice, particularly among quieter or less confident students.

2. Target curriculum areas and wellbeing priorities identified through collaborative planning with school staff.
Each residency was co-designed with schools to meet identified learning priorities:
• **Koondoola:** Visual arts integrated with oral language, literacy, and Humanities and Social Sciences.
• **Bentley:** Songwriting and music performance aligned with narrative writing and literacy goals.
• **Moorditj Noongar Community College:** Mosaic art embedded with science, Noongar language, and cultural knowledge.
Survey results linked to SEW-Arts wellbeing factors demonstrated measurable improvements in collaboration, resilience, and creative engagement.

"I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD WRITE A SONG UNTIL NOW."
-STUDENT

3. Expand Western Australia's network of creative practitioners and provide them with professional development opportunities to enhance capacity in schools.

Three residencies provided employment for six Teaching Artists, bringing together artists to collaborate. Artist reflections noted increased skills in adapting practice to different student needs, integrating cultural content, and applying SEW–Arts wellbeing principles while delivering the AWESOME Schools program.

4. Showcase and celebrate student achievements through public platforms like the AWESOME Festival.

All participating schools exhibited their work at the AWESOME Festival, giving students the opportunity to present their creations to the public as young professional artists. For many, this was their first experience exhibiting outside of school, fostering pride, recognition, and community celebration.

"IT'S AMAZING TO SEE THE WAY ART GAVE THEM A VOICE WHEN WORDS WERE HARDER TO FIND."
—TEACHING ARTIST

CONCLUSION
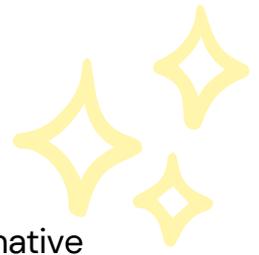
The 2025 AWESOME Schools program has again demonstrated the transformative impact of sustained, place-based arts engagement in schools. By combining creative practice with strong community and cultural connections, the program has delivered measurable gains in student wellbeing, collaboration, and confidence.

Across the three residencies, students developed new skills, deepened their cultural understanding, and built meaningful relationships with Teaching Artists. Teaching Artists reported that the program supported curriculum goals while also fostering social and emotional learning outcomes that extended beyond the classroom.

The data shows that the combination of tailored program design, highly skilled Teaching Artists, and a focus on student voice creates lasting benefits for individuals and communities alike. Continued investment in this model will ensure that more young people across Western Australia can access the creative tools, cultural connections, and confidence they need to thrive.