

FREE EVENT

Buga Yanu Junba: Strengthening First Languages and wellbeing through collaborative songwriting

Wednesday 1 April 2026, 12.00-1.30pm

The University of Notre Dame Australia

Broome Campus, 88 Guy Street, The Hall

Light lunch and refreshments @12pm

Opening Address: Emily Carter, CEO of Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre

Presenters: Educators from Baya Gawiya Buga Yani Jandu yani U,
Gillian Howell and Annika Moses.

Abstract

In September 2025, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre (MWRC), Indigenous Literacy Foundation and Tura released Buga Yanu Junba, a songbook and companion album of 22 original songs in Bunuba, Gooniyandi, Walmajarri, and Kimberley Kriol. But where did these songs come from? This presentation traces their origins in a three-year participatory arts-based research project: a collaboration between early childhood educators at Baya Gawiya Buga Yani Jandu yani U in Fitzroy Crossing, facilitators from the Perth-based cultural development organisation Tura, and a researcher-musician from the University of Melbourne as part of Tura's ongoing SoundFX program.

The research pursued two interconnected goals: to increase the number of early childhood songs in local languages, strengthen cultural knowledge among young children, and support intergenerational transmission of knowledge from Elders; and to investigate—through participatory action research and the Most Significant Change methodology—how songwriting in First Languages can support healing and wellbeing for educators, children, and families.



The presentation will include performances by songwriters from Buga Yanu Junba and discuss research findings about the wellbeing affordances of language songwriting and singing through a framework of Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003).

The project's distinctive contribution is its focus on early childhood educators—a key cohort for sustaining intergenerational language transmission—and how creative collaboration centring local languages supports wellbeing for all participants alongside language strengthening.

Biographies



Gillian Howell

Dr Gillian Howell is a Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. Her creative practice and applied research investigate how community music and other participatory arts can foster voice, dialogue, peacebuilding, and social repair in places impacted by war, disaster, and settler-colonialism. She has worked as a research consultant and music leader around Australia and in many parts of the world including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Norway, Kosovo and North Macedonia. Her publications appear in journals and books addressing community music, peace and conflict studies, music education, global development, and place-based community arts collaborations.

Annika is a sound artist and facilitator who lives in Boorloo and works across regional Western Australian communities. Since 2021 she has facilitated community music, songwriting and recording projects in Fitzroy Crossing, Warmun, and the Martu communities of Punmu, Parnngurr, Kunawarritji, and Parnpajinya (Newman). Her Boorloo-based work includes the co-directorship of experimental music organisation Tone List, presenting with local community radio station RTRFM, and fostering a vibrant local scene through peer-to-peer support and organising.



Annika Moses



About Tura

Tura has supported and produced new music for over 37 years, collaborating with leading Australian cultural institutions, festivals and artists. Recognised for excellence and deep engagement, Tura presents, commissions and advocates for Australian cultural development. Tura create meaningful cultural experiences through sound, celebrate First Nations artists and communities through intercultural collaboration, and explore Australian identity while pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.



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