

**Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc.
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

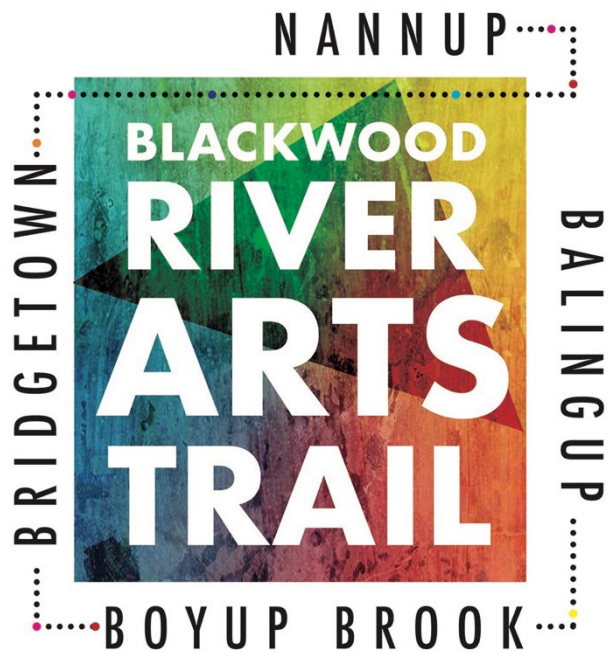


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Chairperson's Message

Dear Members and Stakeholders,

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for 2024 on behalf of Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc. As Chairperson, I am proud to reflect on the remarkable achievements and progress we have made over the past year.

In the face of challenges and uncertainties, our trail has continued to thrive and fulfill its mission: promoting the arts, culture, and community.

This year, we have not only expanded our reach but also deepened our impact, fostering a vibrant artistic community that celebrates creativity and collaboration.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated members, volunteers, sponsors, and partners who have played an integral role in our success. Your unwavering support and commitment have been the backbone of our achievements. Together, we look forward to another year of creativity, collaboration, and growth in 2025.

Thank you for being a part of the Blackwood River Arts Trail community. We are excited about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,



Melinda Stephens
Chairperson
Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc.



Opening Night BRAT 2024 Abby Murray Photography

Executive Summary

The Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc. (BRAT) is delighted to present its Annual Report for 2023-2024. As a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the arts, culture, and community within the Blackwood River region, we are proud to share the successes of the past year. This report provides an overview of our achievements, financial performance, and our strategic plans for the future.

Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc. is committed to fostering creativity, promoting local artists, and enriching our community through impactful engagement with artists and audiences. We strive to create platforms for artists to showcase their talents and for the community to engage with and appreciate the arts.

We strive to be a leading advocate for the arts and culture in the Blackwood River region, creating a vibrant and inclusive community where the arts thrive, inspiring creativity and bringing people together through shared artistic experiences.

This year, we successfully continued our 16-day art trail and the blackwood river film festival and also provided a three day artist professional development workshop, 'Blackwood Art Essentials' that was met with enthusiastic participation.

We have seen a significant increase in community involvement, with continued attendance, higher sales figures and increased venue participation.

Strengthening our ties with local businesses has been a key focus this year. These collaborations have not only provided additional resources and support for our events but have also helped us to broaden our impact and reach new audiences. Our efforts and effectiveness have been acknowledged by increased local business sponsorship and grant approvals.

Our financial performance remains strong, with increased support from sponsors and funding bodies. This financial success has allowed us to invest in new initiatives and ensure the sustainability of our current programs.

As we move into 2025, the involvement of an active committee will ensure that we can create a strategic plan that will strengthen our brand and increase awareness of our event. We will continue to build strong relationships with local stakeholders, ensuring that our initiatives are aligned with community needs and aspirations.

We will remain committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of BRAT through prudent financial management and continued fundraising efforts.

We are immensely proud of what we have accomplished this year and look forward to another year of creativity, collaboration, and growth as we continue to enrich the Blackwood River region through the arts.

Achievements and Highlights

In 2024, BRAT achieved significant milestones, including:

The Guide: 6000 trail guides packed with information about our artists, venues, and communities, were published and distributed throughout Perth, regional WA and the Southwest. It was also published online as a flipbook for greater access and in downloadable PDF format. This year included the addition of a removable map to assist visitors in finding venues.

Posters and Postcards: Posters and postcards advertising our event were distributed throughout Perth's Cafes and strategic venues throughout southern WA.

The Website: continued efforts to increase available information and further reflect our mission. Our first trial of online registration had some hiccups but was overall a success in its mission to streamline collection of artist and advertiser information for the booklet and the website. Website visits increased over 25% on the previous year with the home, Bridgetown artist and Blackwood river film festival pages having the highest traffic volume

The Film Festival: Our Film Festival is growing. We screened a fantastic lineup of films in Nannup and Bridgetown and wowed attendees with three locally filmed feature films. We expect interest in the event to increase over coming years. The selection of short films from 'Revelation Short films 2024 Program' were enjoyed by all who attended.

Blackwood Art Essentials: a 3 day professional development workshop for artists was organised and highly subsidised by BRAT. Twentytwo attendees gained insights and practical knowledge in the business of art from arts consultant Paula Silbert. Held at Bridgetown Gardens Function Centre the event was a great success and has seen the participating artists create a BRAT artists group that engages in studio meetups and collaborative conversation.

Grants, Sponsorship and Support: The committee successfully secured greater funding and further in-kind support increasing our impact.

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Donnybrook-Balingup shire grant..... | \$2000 |
| Nannup shire grant..... | \$2000 |
| Bridgetown-Greenbushes shire grant..... | \$1000 |
| Boyup Brook shire grant..... | \$1000 |
| Native Forrest Transition Grant (Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation)... | \$27000 |
| Regional Arts WA Grant..... | \$10000 |
| Talison Lithium Sponsorship..... | \$5000 |
| Jacksons Drawing Supplies, in kind support..... | \$400 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Wilding Balingup Sponsorship (Silver Sponsor)..... | \$500 |
| The Rabbit Hole Sponsorship (Silver Sponsor)..... | \$500 |
| Black Cockatoo Distillery (Silver Sponsor)..... | \$500 |
| Australian Abstract Art by Josh Windrahm (Silver Sponsor)..... | \$500 |
| Nannup Music Festival, in kind support..... | \$300 |
| Scoop Localista, in kind support..... | \$500 |

The Artists and Venues

This year BRAT had 69 participating artists in 35 venues from Donnybrook, Balingup, Boyup Brook, North Greenbushes, Bridgetown and Nannup.

14 of the 35 Participating Venues returned their recorded numbers including a total sales amount of **\$61,954** and total visitors at **6030**

A conservative estimate from all venues (including those that did not complete reports) has been calculated at approximately **\$89,000** in sales and **13,000** visitors to venues over the 16 day event.

Online visitor feedback: with an overwhelmingly positive response from visitors with 58% rating their overall experience as excellent and another 21% as very good, 60% responding that they can't wait to return and 31% expressing that they would return if they could we look forward to future visitor participation

Some Visitor feedback comments:

- Some fantastic artworks and such a range of different styles and mediums! Very impressed with the local talent, and the artists were all friendly and happy to chat about their works. Having the BRAT flags at each gallery made it easier to find. Beautiful scenery. The map was very handy. It would be nice to expand the information about the artists in the brochure a bit - even just a keywords section with primary media/styles.
- An enjoyable three day experience including Donnybrook, Balingup, Bridgetown and Nannup. Had some rewarding talks with the artists. I visited fifteen over the Easter weekend. Clear signage and great maps in the booklet.
- Nothing negative to say
Absolutely awesome
- Can't wait until next year!
- So many talented people in this region. So inspiring. Love Nannup, it's beautiful gardens, cafe strip and its surrounds.
- I found the website easy to navigate and had all the relevant information I needed to plan the trip.
- The wonderful Chrissy and Thelma were lovely to chat to on the last Sunday of the trail, thank you so much! Balingup art collective was lovely too.
- I love my yearly visits to the region to explore both the art trail and the local beautiful areas, and this year included an extended road trip to places I haven't visited for a few years. I'll be back next year.
- I travelled with a friend and on one day we visited Nannup, Bridgetown, Greenbushes, Balingup and Brookhampton. As it was a big day the last vent in Brookhampton was closing but opened up for us, nothing was too much trouble. And the pottery in Bridgetown also opened especially as it was not her advertised day. Flags at venues were a great help.
- Beautiful artwork, interesting meeting Artists in their own space
- Will be back for more soon, we loved it

- Great two days
- So many talented & generous artists in the Blackwood River Arts Trail.
- Booklet was good to show locations for the various Artists, even as far as Boyanup.
- I just love to see how different artists see the world. I love their unique creativity, colour, interpretation, form, texture.
- Great booklet with lots of info about different artists and easy format so could plan a route.
- Black barn studio was amazing! :)
- Google maps took me to a paddock in the middle of nowhere. But apart from that, what a fantastic event! Thank you to all involved.
- Friendly artists
- What a terrific initiative bringing art to the public.
- Loved meeting all of the local artists and hearing their own stories
- My daughter from Perth and myself - local - only had a very short time but thoroughly enjoyed Vivienne Litson, John Garde & Tracey Jarick.

Their studios/art work & pottery were very impressive. Friendly informative locals!!

- Local banners pointing to the next location were great
- Loved how local businesses were mentioned in the brochure
- Enjoyed many studios ... only found out it was on by accident... We live in Dunsborough and had not seen any advertising.
- A fabulous journey of the local artists talents and creativity. Very enjoyable and enlightening.
- Had a great time, awesome artworks, friendly locals, great food.
Will be back next year.

Looking Forward

BRAT aims to:

1. **Expand the Blackwood River Arts Trail:** Our primary objective is to perpetually broaden the scope of the Blackwood River Arts Trail, providing a platform to celebrate the rich diversity of local creative talent.
2. **Diversify Artistic Participation:** We are committed to increasing participation across various artistic domains, including music, theatre, and dance, to create a more inclusive and multidisciplinary arts experience.
3. **Cultivate Stronger Community Engagement:** We aim to foster deeper community engagement by continuing to offer funded creative workshops and launching innovative initiatives that bring the community together through the arts.
4. **Ensure Financial Sustainability:** We will maintain financial sustainability through consistent grant applications and the strategic acquisition of sponsorship and donations, guaranteeing the longevity of our mission.
5. **Expand the Artist Base:** We seek to strengthen our foundation by building upon the current roster of participating artists, ensuring the trail remains vibrant and dynamic.

6. **Enhance Website Accessibility and Functionality:** We are dedicated to improving our website, making it more user-friendly and accessible to all visitors, allowing for seamless exploration of the Arts Trail and an affordable online presence for artists.
7. **Elevate Marketing Strategies:** Our objective is to implement an enhanced marketing strategy to promote the Arts Trail effectively, reaching a broader audience and generating increased interest and support.
8. **Boost Social Media Presence:** We are committed to increasing our presence on social media platforms, leveraging these channels to connect with a wider audience and to share the beauty of the Arts Trail with the world.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our members, volunteers, sponsors, partners, and the entire Blackwood River community for their unwavering support. Your commitment to the arts and culture in our region has been instrumental in our success.

Contact Information

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