

# Proposal York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre

Incorporating the York Courthouse  
Museum complex



Wheatbelt Arts & Events acknowledge the Ballardong Noongar people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands on which we live, create, and operate.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to boodja (land/country) and Noongar culture.

We honour and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



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# Proposal Overview



Our proposal is to establish the **York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre** within the York Post Office and Courthouse buildings, creating a dynamic **Museum Precinct** on York's Avon Terrace. This is a project that positions First Nations storytelling at its heart and incorporates:

- The York Courthouse complex
- Three significant buildings designed by George Temple-Poole (the post office, courthouse and police station)
- Elements of the Sandalwood Letterpress Museum ... in conjunction with the adjacent York Motor Museum.

## Objective

Our goal is to empower Ballardong Noongar storytelling while breathing new life into some of Western Australia's most iconic regional heritage buildings. This plan will position York as a premier destination for regional arts and cultural tourism, effectively addressing gaps in regional arts infrastructure while achieving economic and cultural outcomes for the community.

**Jenny Garroun**

Chair, WAEi





# Our story - so far...

The York Festival was established in 2014 and has grown from a locally rooted event into a multi-venue, year-round cultural platform that strengthens York's profile as a regional arts hub while delivering significant economic benefits to the town.

WAEi has evolved, expanding its annual output to deliver three flagship events:

- Ballardong First (January)
- York Regional Writers Weekend (May),
- The York Festival (September)

WAEi has signed an MOU with the Shire of York to develop the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre.

Since early 2025, WAEi has auspiced Ballardong Moorditj, an unincorporated community group comprising York's Noongar community and collaborates with Ballardong Moorditj, the York River Conservation Society and arts organisations like WA Opera, WAAPA, Writing WA and Theatre 180 to deliver its programs.

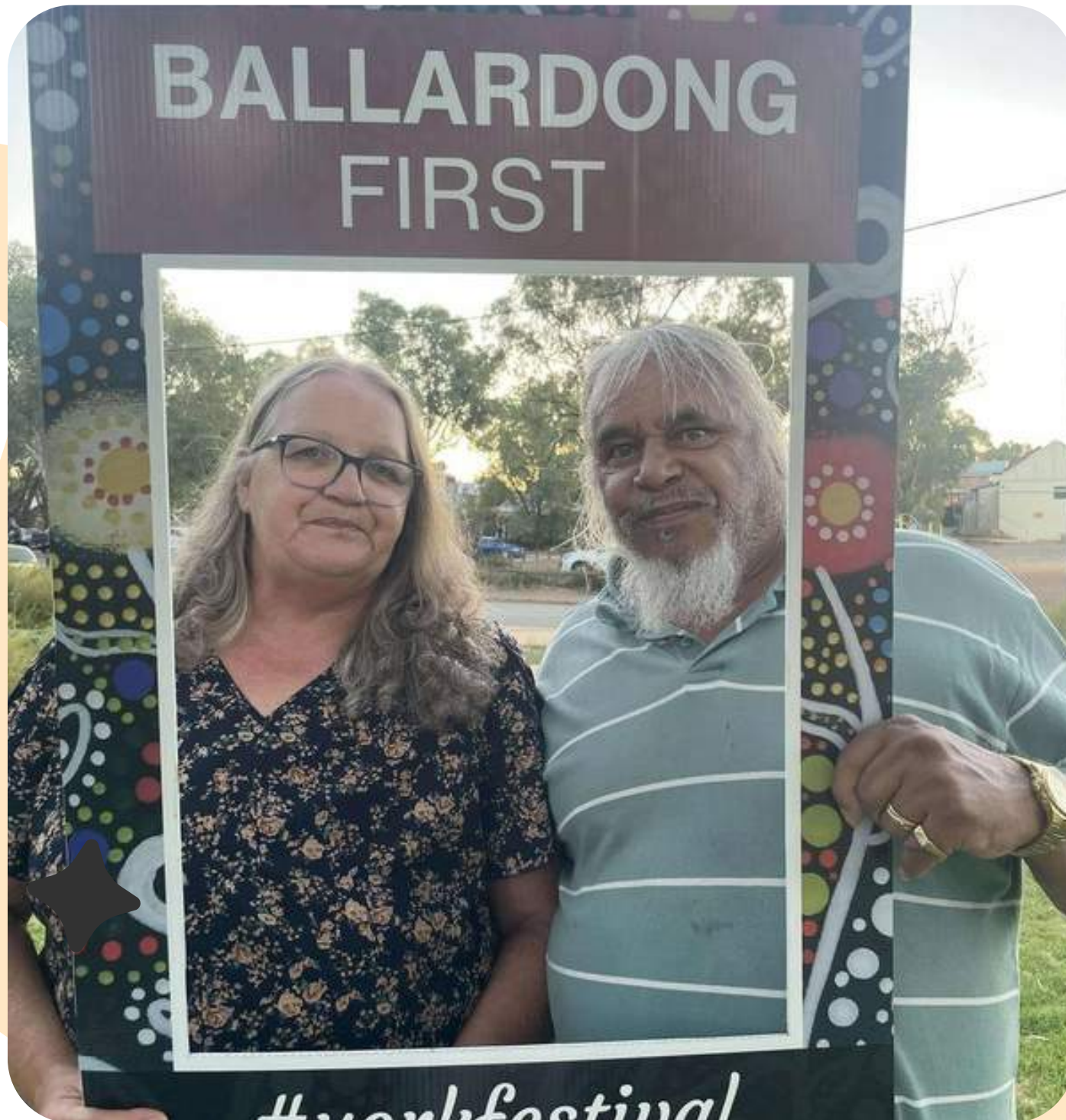
It leases the ground floor of the Post Office building to run Ballardong Moorditj and broader workshop program, and has applied for funding to carry out upgrades, including new toilet facilities.

To date, WAEi has secured \$2million+ in funding from local, state and federal agencies including multiyear funding from Shire of York, Regional Arts and Tourism WA..





# About WAEi



## Date of Incorporation

5th April, 2017

## Objects

A charity whose purpose is to advance culture and education by

1. running visual arts, crafts, music, literary, screen and performing arts and other cultural and educational events in York, the Avon Valley and the Wheat Belt, including the York Festival;

2. providing a community base in York for people to engage, collaborate and network in the pursuit of arts, culture and education including by holding seminars, workshops and courses;

3. doing anything which may be incidental or ancillary to these objects.

WAEi is in the process of applying for Deductible Gift Recipient Status

## Insurances

Public Liability \$20million

Volunteer cover

Workcover

Insurance Broker PSC Insurance Brokers

## Management Committee

**Chair / CEO** Jenny Garroun

**Vice Chair** Dennis (Noongali) Kickett

**Treasurer** Georgia Kidman

**Secretary** Dan Skelton

## Committee

Michelle Kickett

Joanna Bryant

Natasha Atkinson

## Employees

Program Co-Ordinator (part-time)

Ballardong Moorditj Co-Ordinator (part-time)

2 x Facilitators (casual)

## Certificates / Policies

All arts workers engaged to work with children are required to have current Working With Children Certification

The CEO has completed the National Principals for Child Safe Organisations

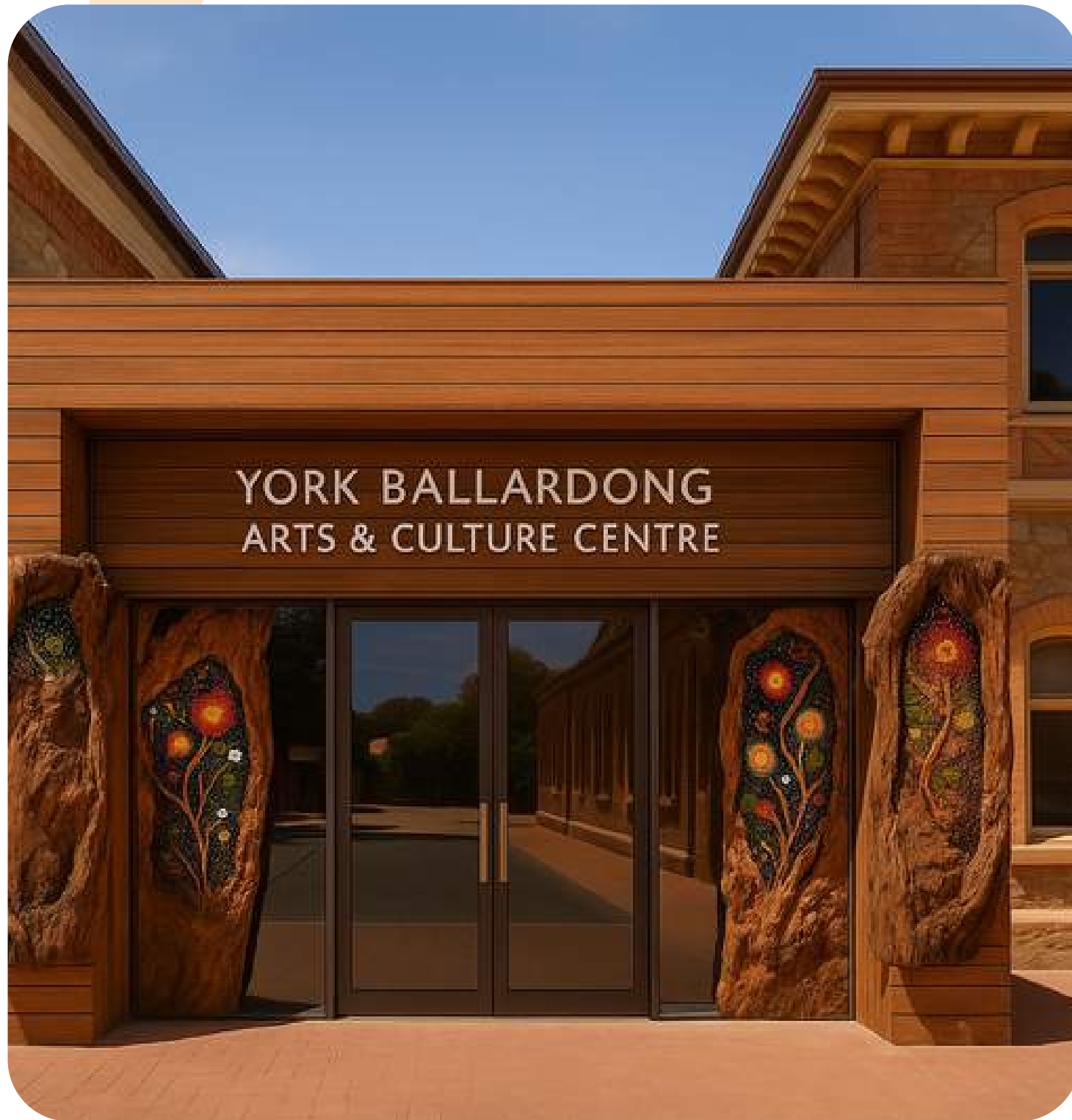
WAEi is currently revising its 3-year Strategic Plan 2026-2028

WAEi has drafted Protocols for engaging with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Three staff members have completed Mental Health 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Training



# Our vision



To quote outgoing National Trust CEO, Julian Donaldson, the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre represents a 'game changer' for the town of York.

The **York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre** will establish a connected **Museum Precinct** along Avon Terrace, activating some of WA's most significant heritage buildings as public spaces for cultural programs exhibitions and community use.

The precinct will include three George Temple-Poole buildings:

- The York Courthouse complex
- The Post Office and
- Police Station
- Licensed Post Office – potential "living museum" utilising objects contained in the Post Office Building Objects Trust.
- Prison cells, Troopers' Yard and Troopers' Cottage
- Elements of the Sandalwood Letterpress Print Museum and potentially, the adjacent York Motor Museum

Together, these sites will form a cohesive public precinct that celebrates Ballardong Noongar culture, reveals York's layered pre-settlement, colonial and contemporary history, and creates a vibrant destination for locals and visitors.

The York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre will provide accessible spaces for cultural sharing, creative workshops, exhibitions and community events – strengthening cultural tourism, learning and participation across York





# Why York Needs an Arts & Culture Centre



The 2021 community consultation highlighted a clear gap in York:

- No dedicated place for the Arts
- Limited workshop, rehearsal and performance space
- No consistent venue for community arts activities
- The community asked for a permanent space to learn, create, perform and connect.

In response, WAEi has entered into a 10 year lease of the ground floor of the York Post Office building. The space is offered on a rent-free basis, enabling WAEi to setup studio space(s) and giving York's arts community its first stable home.

WAEi has applied for funding to upgrade these areas so they are safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose.

Activating the Post Office building is an early, practical step toward creating the Avon Terrace Museum Precinct. Incorporation of the **York Museum complex** activates key heritage buildings, enabling the precinct to grow into a vibrant cultural hub.





# Strategy

## Collaboration

WAEi is collaborating with the Shire of York, the Ballardong Noongar community, Regional Development Australia/Wheatbelt, the Sandalwood Letterpress Museum, and various community organisations to establish the **York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre** in three stages.



Stage 1 - Years 1-2



Stage 2 - Years 3-4



Stage 3 - Years 5-6



# Stage 1 - 2026 / 2027

- Activate the Courthouse precinct to deliver WAEi signature festivals and community events
- Develop First Nations-led and heritage tourism experiences, including site interpretation and tours
- Establish an art gallery showcasing Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists
- Create a retail space for local arts, crafts and souvenirs
- Introduce new heritage-focused events (e.g. Rare & Endangered Crafts Fair)
- Secure funding to upgrade the Post Office and Courthouse for workshops, exhibitions and performances







## Stage 2 - 2028 / 2029



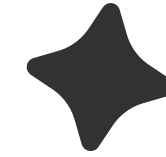
- Secure State Government funding (with National Trust) to upgrade Courthouse infrastructure and interpretation
- Establish a “living museum” within the York Post Office in partnership with the licensee
- Collaborate with National Trust and Shire of York on plans for new shared civic facilities
- Engage heritage architects to develop concept plans







## Stage 3 - 2030 / 2031



- Secure State/Federal funding to deliver new civic facilities within the Courthouse precinct
- Construct new facilities
- Complete restoration works
- Officially open the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre for York's 2031 commemorations

**Aligning with the Shire of York's strategic priorities for vibrant communities, cultural tourism and inclusive regional development.**





# The case for a long-term lease: sustainability, heritage, and community impact

This is a legacy project of significant regional importance that safeguards and valorises some of the region's most important heritage buildings for future generations. Substantial human and capital resources are required to upgrade and adapt site buildings, transforming the complex from an ad-hoc public access site into a premier, year-round cultural destination.

## Core rationale

- **Financial viability & risk reduction:** A long-term lease supports diversified income, stable budgeting, and stronger funder confidence.
- **Strategic branding & tourism:** Secure tenancy anchors Avon Terrace as a flagship heritage and arts precinct, boosting visitation and local economy.
- **Cultural stewardship & community benefit:** Centres Ballardong Noongar culture while delivering learning, skills and employment outcomes.
- **Governance & accountability:** A clear lease underpins strong governance, transparency and public access.
- **Phased delivery & sustainability:** Staged development enables growth, measurable impact and long-term viability without compromising heritage.

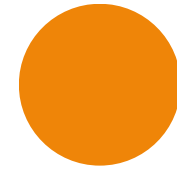


*WAEi's tenancy and its strategic investment in core infrastructure, will re-activate this heritage building as the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre serving the community 7 days a week. By upgrading and adapting the space, WAEi will unlock a versatile venue capable of hosting weddings, filming locations, live music and theatre, film screenings, and art exhibitions showcasing Wheatbelt artists.. It will also support a year-round program of workshops in visual arts, music, and theatre, artist residencies and community events.*

*This approach will enrich cultural life and language transmission for Ballardong Noongar and broader audiences, while stimulating local employment and tourism, increase footfall in the town centre, and provides a stable, sustainable hub for creative enterprise. The centre will become a shared public asset, accessible to residents and visitors alike, preserving heritage while catalysing contemporary arts and conversations*



# Community Consultation



In 2021, with funding from the state government, WAEi contracted arts consultants Jude van der Merwe and Helli Donaldson to undertake a comprehensive community consultation to help guide the then plans to establish an arts & culture centre based at the old convent school in York. The thrust of the consultant's Executive Summary is included here.

As our plans have evolved and shifted to the George Temple-Poole buildings, we have continued to consult with the York community. In recent weeks, we have two public meetings (including the Ballardong Noongar community) and collected signatures from 35+ attendees who support the establishment of the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over a three-month period, the consultants met with over 100 people, mostly through 1:1 conversations but also through four well attended public meetings. There was a high degree of enthusiasm for the discussions and deeply considered responses to our queries. It was clear from the outset that people were going to make time in their busy lives to contribute to the discussion.

In some ways It's a no-brainer – who on being asked if they would like to see arts and culture flourish in their town would say no? But it was obvious from all the discussions that participants are aware of both the community need and value of a physical centre AND the potential barriers to a successful outcome.

There is a clear hunger for a place that the arts can call home in York. The large number of people who belong to arts groups focussing on a single discipline (i.e patchwork, singing, embroidery etc) is a testament to engagement; and the fondness with which people spoke about institutions such as the Art and Craft Exhibition and the long-gone Jazz Festival reflect pride in the town and its contributions to Western Australian culture.

York does not have a dedicated venue for local artists, musicians and performers to present their work; for people of all ages to rehearse or make; for residents of all ages and abilities to learn new skills or share knowledge.

The arts need space – to make and to be. Communities need access and a sense of belonging. As a culture we are very good at acknowledging our physical needs through sporting facilities; but we often lag when it comes to our emotional and mental needs and ways to make and share stories about who we are.

An arts and culture centre in York is clearly wished for by many residents. Considering the way in which such a centre is developed, funded and managed is also clearly very important.

Note: The Noongar community were particularly vocal about the previous Courthouse Lessee whose insensitivity saw 'fake' indigenous art exhibited alongside the ball and neckchains that had been used to incarcerate Aboriginal prisoners in the prison cell known as the 'Aboriginal prison'. The community advises they support the ongoing display of these artifacts as they provide potent evidence of their history and connection to the site.



# Evidence of Support

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Contact:

26 November 2025

To whom it may concern

**LETTER OF SUPPORT – COMMUNITY CULTURAL HUB YORK**

I am writing to express support for the establishment of a Community Cultural Hub in York. This initiative is deeply aligned with the aspirations and needs of our community, as consistently articulated through extensive engagement and strategic planning.

**Community Aspirations**

The people of York have repeatedly voiced their desire for a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich community. Recent Council Plans, developed with input from over 1,000 community insights, highlight the following shared values:

- **Celebration of Heritage and Culture:** York’s unique identity is rooted in its historic streetscapes, Ballardong Noongar heritage, and a growing arts scene. Residents value opportunities to celebrate and share this heritage through creative initiatives and cultural events.
- **A Welcoming, Connected Community:** There is a strong emphasis on fostering collaboration across generations and lifestyles, ensuring that York remains a family-friendly, relaxed, and inclusive place to live.
- **A Destination for Arts and Culture:** The community aspires for York to be recognised as a regional cultural destination, supporting festivals, creative industries, and cultural tourism that contribute to local vibrancy and economic resilience.

**Demonstrated Demand**

The demand for a dedicated cultural premises is clear:

- **Overwhelming Community Support:** Consultation and needs analysis found overwhelming support for an arts centre. However, previous proposals were limited by site constraints and financial viability. The current vision for a centrally located hub on Avon Terrace responds directly to these findings, offering greater accessibility and capacity.
- **Council Endorsement:** The Shire of York Council has provided in-principle support for the Community Cultural Hub, authorising ongoing collaboration with the Steering Committee and progression of formal agreements to bring this vision to life.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The Council’s 10-year priorities include facilitating access to community facilities for all life stages, strengthening cultural identity, and advancing York’s position as a regional hub for arts and culture. These priorities are echoed in the community’s own feedback, which consistently calls for investment in culture, arts, and heritage as a foundation for a proud and prosperous future.



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E: records@york.wa.gov.au  
W: york.wa.gov.au

**Conclusion**

A Community Cultural Hub will not only meet the expressed needs and aspirations of York’s residents but will also serve as a catalyst for economic, social, and cultural vitality. It will provide a space for creativity, learning, and connection—ensuring that York continues to thrive as a welcoming, resilient, and forward-looking community.

We wish Wheatbelt Arts & Events Inc all the very best with its application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alina Behan".

**Alina Behan**  
TEMPORARY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER





# Evidence of support



Re: York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre etc



○ Keith Schekkerman <keithschekkerm...

Wednesday 20 August 2025 at 6:46 PM

To: ✓ Jenny Garroun - York Festival

To Wheatbelt Arts & Events Inc,  
Wednesday, 20 August 2025

From Keith Schekkerman  
Owner/operator Sandalwood Press printing museum

To whom it may concern,  
I hereby agree in principal to work with Wheatbelt Arts & Events Inc and other interested parties to include elements of Sandalwood Letterpress Print Museum in plans to establish a museum precinct based around the three George Temple-Poole buildings including the post office, courthouse, police station, police cells, troopers yard and trooper cottage, which are among WA's most important heritage buildings.

Keith CJ Schekkerman

Sent from my iPad



# Evidence of support

**York Ballardong Arts and Culture Centre Proposal York Courthouse Museum Complex**

We, the undersigned, express our support for the establishment of a York Ballardong Arts and Culture Centre within the York Courthouse Museum Complex.

**This Centre will:**

- Celebrate and honour **Ballardong Noongar culture, heritage, and creativity.**
- Provide a dedicated space for **arts, exhibitions, workshops, and cultural programs.**
- Strengthen community connection and reconciliation by sharing stories and traditions.
- Enhance York's cultural tourism and community pride.

We affirm our commitment to supporting the proposal and encourage the Shire of York and relevant stakeholders to prioritise its development.

### Signatures of Support

Name	Address	Phone/Email	Signature	Date
Margot Kerkhoff				24-11-25
LIZ McCULLAGH				24-11-25
Nic COMPTON				24-11-25
Jenny Garraun				24-11-25
Lore Ralph				24-11-25
CARMEN MORRISON				26-11-25
Gabrielle Pickett				24-11-25
DENNIS Kie King				24-11-25

- Celebrate and honour **Ballardong Noongar** culture, heritage, and creativity.
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### Signatures of Support

Name	Address	Phone/Email	Signature
TRACEY KICK			T. K. Kick
Audrey White			Audrey White
SANDRA MARKLE			S. Markle
BRIAN ASHWORTH			B. Ashworth
Thomas Kickett			Thomas
Lo Bryant			L. Bryant
SARINA N.			Sarina North
Larissa N.			L. North
Chris Up			C. Up
Michelle Kickett			M. Kickett

## Petition of Support

York Ballardong Arts and Culture Centre Proposal York Courthouse M.  
Complex

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- Enhance York's cultural tourism and community pride.

We affirm our commitment to supporting the proposal and encourage the  
and relevant stakeholders to prioritise its development.

### Signatures of Support

[illegible]



# Evidence of support

**Community Support Statement**

I support the proposal to house the York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre in the York Courthouse Complex.

I believe this project will benefit the York community by:

- Strengthening opportunities for arts, culture, learning, and creativity
- Celebrating and sharing Ballardong Noongar culture and York's broader colonial and contemporary history
- Revitalising an important heritage place as active public spaces
- Providing dedicated workshop, exhibition, and gathering spaces for the whole community

By signing below, I confirm my support for Wheatbelt Arts & Events Inc. to proposal to the National Trust.

Name	Signature	Date
Darsha Atkinson	[Signature]	16/11/25
R. Blain	[Signature]	16/11/25
Cheryl Wallace	[Signature]	16/11/25
Darren Wallace	[Signature]	16/11/25
Mark Armstrong	[Signature]	16/11/25
Sheyla Russo	[Signature]	16/11/25
Nic Compton	[Signature]	16/11/25
MARION WHELAN	[Signature]	16/11/25
Marganne & John CROOK	[Signature]	16/11/25
Brett Fischer	[Signature]	16.11.25

Ratio

**York Ballardong Arts & Culture Centre**

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By signing below, I confirm my support for Wheatbelt Arts & Events Inc. to proposal to the National Trust.

Name	Signature	Date
Vicki Forwood	[Signature]	16/11/25
Laura Appleton	[Signature]	16.11.2025
Carolyn Coulson	[Signature]	16.11.2025
PAUL CLAUSA	[Signature]	16.11.2025
ANNE CROOK	[Signature]	16.11.2025
Karen James	[Signature]	16.11.2025
MERYL WIDENSON	[Signature]	28.11.2025
Mike Burt	[Signature]	28.11.2025



# Thank You



On behalf of WAEi's Management Committee, its volunteers and the York Community, we thank you for this opportunity and look forward to discussing our proposal further.

Jenny Garroun  
Chair

