

**BENALLA
ART GALLERY
FOUNDATION**



**Annual Report
2024–2025**



The Benalla Art Gallery Foundation works with the community and Benalla Rural City Council to secure the financial future of the Benalla Art Gallery and to ensure it continues enriching our long-term cultural, social and economic wellbeing.

Message from the Chair

2024–25 has been a year of significant growth and quiet evolution behind the scenes. In the first half of the year, our Board focused on building strong foundations for deeper, community-led involvement in the Foundation's work. This honours and follows the outcome of intensive community consultation over recent years, which led to the term 'People's Gallery' being coined for our much-loved Art Gallery, and ultimately led to the establishment of the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation in 2022.

We worked closely with the former Friends of Benalla Art Gallery to conclude and celebrate the extraordinary contribution they made over the past 30 years. Their legacy helps shape the future, and we remain deeply grateful for their enduring impact.

Building on this legacy, the Foundation established a committee comprised of three key Working Groups: Community Awareness, Donor Engagement, and Special Events. Each plays a vital role in broadening our reach and strengthening community connection. I wish to acknowledge and thank our dedicated Working Group convenors, Andrew Ashton, Gail O'Brien, Georgina Burston and Alana Johnson AM, and every Committee member for their energy and commitment.

In preparation for our first public fundraising campaign, we formed a Finance & Investment Committee to oversee corpus growth and ensure rigorous financial oversight. We thank Paul Coughlin for his expert contribution to this area. Thanks also to the two generous donors who enabled us to engage the consultancy team, PW Strategy for three days per week. Led by Penny Whitehead and assisted by Bron Dunwoodie (Donor Support & Events) and Wendy Clark (Philanthropy), the team has driven our Business Development, put in place a modern foundation infrastructure and built the engagement and capacity of our community. Wendy concluded her role in April 2025, and we value her ongoing contribution as a volunteer highly.

A major milestone this year was the successful launch of our inaugural Giving Campaign in March 2025. We are deeply grateful to the 124 donors who contributed so generously, and to everyone who participated in this important step in our development. We were especially pleased to establish 19 Named Funds through the campaign – an enduring legacy made possible by the long-term commitment of individuals, couples and families who share our vision. Several significant contributions deserve special mention. We warmly thank the Messenger Family, with special tribute to the late Pauline Messenger; the Tallis Family; Mavourneen Cowen; the Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust; and the J & C Abdallah Trust.

We also acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the many members of our Donor Circles, whose support was a powerful demonstration of collective belief in the future of Benalla Art Gallery. Our heartfelt thanks go to James and Katherine Murray, who generously hosted a memorable evening for Melbourne-based supporters in their home – an occasion which not only brought people together but helped build momentum around a bold shared vision for the Gallery's future.

To my fellow Board members – Dr Sheryl Coughlin, Margaret Richards OAM, Bill Dobson, Sue Clark, and Councillor Peter Davis – thank you for your unwavering support and stewardship throughout the year.

The Board continues to play a vital advocacy role, working alongside Benalla Rural City Council and the Benalla Art Gallery Advisory Committee in securing investment needed for the Gallery's long-term future. We remain focused on engaging our community, philanthropic partners and stakeholders to ensure the Gallery continues to thrive as a regional cultural leader.

Now that our framework is firmly in place, our attention turns to deepening impact through supporting the Gallery to upgrade its facilities and reimagine what's possible for future generations. We are acutely aware of the current building's limitations. The spaces are simply too small to host major 'blockbuster' exhibitions as seen in other regional centres. These exhibitions not only inspire and bring great art to our regions, but they also generate significant economic returns. The current Gallery's spaces are too small to accommodate vastly changing audiences needs including immersive, inclusive, and relevant experiences which reflect both contemporary practice and community identity.

The Board of the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation invites and welcomes all those who care about our community and region's cultural, social and economic wellbeing, to join with us, with our Committee, our generous donors, Council and our whole local community in working together to realise a bold, exciting future for the Benalla Art Gallery – our 'People's Gallery'.

Winsome McCaughey AO
Chair, Benalla Art Gallery Foundation

If you'd like to find out more about the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation, attend an event, donate or volunteer, visit benallaartgallery.com.au/support.



Financial achievements

\$398k total income **52%** Corpus growth **280%** increase in donations
(incl. donations and interest) FY 24/25 compared to FY 23/24

Impact highlights

124 donors **6** Board members **20** volunteers

5 Benalla Art Gallery Foundation events hosted*

328 people attended Benalla Art Gallery Foundation events*

*Includes Friends of Benalla Art Gallery event

Impact Report 2024–2025

In 2024–25, the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation focused on building essential infrastructure and capacity to deliver tangible outcomes. These efforts are enabling us to achieve key milestones (outlined below), while also strengthening the Gallery's role as a cultural leader in the region and expanding its reach and impact within the community.

A major step forward in operational capability of the Gallery and the Foundation was the introduction of a modern Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. For the Gallery this enables greater efficiencies and point of sale connectivity plus improved access for Members. For the Foundation it enables more responsive, personalised, secure communication with donors, thereby helping build stronger long-term relationships. It also strengthens our reach to potential future donors, with the ability to tap into the Gallery's increasing number of visitors – currently around 75,000 per annum.

The Foundation's investment in governance and community engagement has enhanced our ability to lead with transparency and purpose. The establishment of a Board Committee with structured Working Groups each with a distinct focus – Community Awareness, Donor Engagement and Special Events – has expanded our volunteer leadership and increased the Foundation's presence across the region. This is helping build trust, deepen awareness and grow the network of advocates supporting the Foundation and the Gallery's future.

The Foundation developed a new brand identity in conjunction with Atticus Design, which elevates visibility, strengthens reach and anchors our communications in ways that signal who we are, what we stand for, and the value we seek to create.

The Foundation designed and rolled out a comprehensive giving framework – including Named Funds, Donor Circles, Major Gifts and Bequests. This is helping to make giving more accessible and meaningful, opening new avenues for community and philanthropic support and playing a critical role in growing the Foundation's corpus for the Gallery's future.

The Foundation values our early conversations with a number of philanthropic foundations whose feedback and advice is proving to be invaluable. We are quietly and carefully developing a new model for a local, place-based, 'bottom-up' foundation – one that strives to foster a strong sense of community belonging and meaningful volunteering. We hope this may evolve to be of interest and use to other cultural and community entities, as well as to the wider philanthropic sector.

The Foundation gratefully received a grant from the Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust signalling a clear expression of our aim to work in partnership with the Gallery and philanthropic sector to strengthen our community.

Looking ahead

As we look to the year ahead, we do so with confidence, clarity, and commitment. Our focus is on growing the Foundation's capacity to continue securing resources that the Benalla Art Gallery needs to thrive creatively and financially with a well-organised community support structure. The Gallery plays a critically important role in assisting our community build a meaningful cultural identity, a strong economy and a resilient city and region. By collaborating with Council, the people of Benalla, donors, and partners, the Foundation can help shape a bold and sustainable future for our much-loved Gallery.

Cover image: Benalla Art Gallery with Adnate mural, 2022. Photo: Serana Hunt-Hughes.

Above L-R: 1. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation launch, March 2025. 2. James Murray, Eric Nash and Teagan Nash. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation event, March 2025. 3. Bec Macdougall, Anna Parle and Alice Tallis. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation event, March 2025. 4. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation launch, March 2025. 5. Jenny Williams, Winsome McCaughey, Robyn Sutton, Nick Clark, Kerryn Dobson and Bill Dobson. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation event, March 2025. 6. Elspeth Riggall and Jean Miller. Benalla Art Gallery Foundation event, March 2025.

The Benalla Art Gallery Foundation would like to thank the following donors for their contributions

General Gifts

- J & C Abdallah Trust
- The Calvert-Jones Foundation
- Mavourneen Cowen
- The Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust
- The Messenger Family
- James & Katherine Murray
- William Parris
- Murray Stapleton

Named Funds

- Neville and Jan Arnott*
- Georgina Burston Family
- L J Burston
- Sue and Nick Clark
- The Coughlin Family
- Friends of the Benalla Art Gallery
- Bill and Kerryn Dobson
- The Jane and Norton Grimwade Family
- Grubb Family
- Punarji Hewa Gunaratne*
- The Holmes Family*
- Kirkwood Family*
- Peter and Jill Lloyd – Karn Station
- Clan McPherson: Winsome McCaughey and Snow Barlow
- The Messenger Family
- James and Katherine Murray
- Sabine and Mike Smyth
- Fiona and Frank Stephens
- The Tallis Family

*Fund name still in discussion

Patron Donor Circle (>\$5000)

- Diana Gibson AO
- Patricia Melgaard
- Meredith Paez

Champion Donor Circle (>\$1000)

- Kerryn Amery
- Kate and Anthony Beggs
- David Blore
- Annie Cuming
- Dorothy Falkiner
- Vanessa Mahon
- Jane and Andrew Marriott
- Suzy Martin
- Gay Morton
- Robyn and Damon Sutton
- Patricia Thompson
- Jenny and David Williams

Visionary Donor Circle (>\$250)

- Randolph and Barbara Alexander AO
- Anonymous donor
- Ken and Marilyn Bourke
- Wendy and Peter Clark
- Celeste Collins
- Angeline Daniels
- Bronwyn Dunwoodie
- Sally and Stewart Gough
- Helen Haines MP
- Rosemary Inglis
- Rozie Kennett
- Melinda Martin
- Angus and Di McMillan
- Eugenie Miechel
- Pamela and Barry O'Connor
- Karen and Steve Viant

Founder Donor Circle (>\$100)

- Katrina Bailey
- William Besley
- Marcus Bolger
- Irene Cain
- Kerrie Cooke
- Peter Dunn
- Jeni Dunn
- Liz Gallagher
- Anna Gourlay
- Janice Hilton
- Maggie and Brian Hollins
- Rosie Koop
- Elizabeth Leviny
- Betty Lindsay
- Kirstin Mann
- Diane Martin
- Wendy Oliver
- Liz Sadler
- Dawn Stephens
- Linda Tullberg
- Keith Redenbach
- Merike Redenbach
- Max and Margaret Richards OAM
- Pamela Robinson AM
- Alex Ross
- Margaret Walshe
- Penny and Stuart Whitehead
- Fiona Whitewood

Community Donor Circle (>\$50)

- Vivienne Drew
- Catherine Fuller
- Julie Hooper
- Patricia Mitchell

Directors

- Winsome McCaughey AO, Chair (Appointed September 2022)
- Dr Sheryl Coughlin, Company Secretary (Appointed June 2024)
- Margaret Richards OAM, Treasurer (Appointed September 2022)
- Bill (John) Dobson, (Appointed August 2023)
- Sue Clark, (Appointed November 2024)
- Councillor Peter Davis, (Appointed September 2022)

Finance & Investment Committee

- Bill Dobson
- Margaret Richards OAM
- Paul Coughlin (Appointed April 2025)

Community Committee

Special Events Working Group

- Andrew Ashton, Chair
- Gail O'Brien, Acting Chair (April–June)
- Bec Amos
- Jane Ashton
- Chris Barnes
- Lou Correll
- Ellen Crocker
- Gail Davies-Brown
- Neville Gibb
- Louise Gourlay
- Jane Grimwade
- Margaret Richards OAM, (Board representative)

Donor Engagement Working Group

- Georgina Burston, Chair
- Wendy Clark
- Anna Parle
- Fiona Stephens
- Alice Tallis
- Mary Tallis
- Sue Clark (Board representative)

Community Awareness Working Group

- Alana Johnson AM, Chair
- Jane Grimwade
- Dennis O'Brien
- Linda Tullberg
- Winsome McCaughey AO (Board representative)

Board special support

- Barbara Alexander AO
- Pamela O'Connor

Business Development team

- Penny Whitehead
- Wendy Clark (July 2024–April 2025)
- Bronwyn Dunwoodie (Commenced February 2025)

Our special thanks also to:

- Peter Keane, CEO, Benalla Rural City Council
- Courtney Naughton, Manager of Economic Development and Sustainability
- Eric Nash, Director, Benalla Art Gallery
- Katherine Hauptmann, Administration and Customer Relations Officer, Benalla Art Gallery
- Geoff Hill, Director, Aldous & Hill Chartered Accountants
- Laura Hodge, Aldous & Hill Chartered Accountants
- Will Mahon, Atticus Design
- Karl Phillipson, Code Garden



Contact us

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w: benallaartgallery.com.au/support