

Annual Report 2025–2026



Message from the Chair



2025–26 has been a defining year for the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation. For several years we had to focus on building the fundamental infrastructure required by a community-based foundation to raise large sums for a 50-year old cultural facility. Thankfully, these efforts are now translating into significant progress for our Gallery's future.

Our vision is simple: **Our Gallery. A place for all.** Community remains central to everything we do.

The scale of our ambition is big – but so too are the opportunities. Global research has established beyond doubt that cultural institutions are far more than the sum of their buildings, collections or exhibitions. Great institutions are economic, bringing immense cultural and social benefits to their cities and regions.

Our ambition is that our Gallery can be both a leading Australian cultural destination and a place of local creativity, connectivity, legacy, learning and civic pride – one that brings social and economic benefits to our region. To achieve this, our Foundation will work alongside Council and the Gallery to realise a fit-for-purpose building and adequate future staff levels.

Our ambition is reflected in the financial targets we've set. Given the myriad of responsibilities under management by our Council and the limitations of the region's rate-base, a redeveloped Gallery has to be a whole-of-community effort – individuals, families, businesses, philanthropic trusts, and government, each playing a part.

Over the next decade the Foundation aims to raise \$18.35m to assist the Gallery to deliver this dynamic future. This includes an ambition of \$12.35m for the building redevelopment and \$6m for the Foundation's Future Fund. The Foundation's role lies in fostering a strong sense of collective ownership and in finding practical ways to encourage and enable more people, at every level, to participate.

We are delighted that by the close of the 2025–2026 financial year, thanks to donor generosity, we had raised \$1.885m towards Stages 1 and 2 of the building redevelopment and approximately \$536,000 for the Future Fund – an extraordinary demonstration of confidence in what can be achieved when community, philanthropy and government work together.

Our aspirations are also reflected in the *Our Gallery* initiative developed by Foundation Committee members, in partnership with the Gallery during 2025-2026. In line with celebrating the Gallery's 50th birthday, 50 local people from across the region chose their favourite artwork from the Gallery Collection. Read more about this later in this report.

We continue working to assist Council with finding \$470,000 for Stage 1.

Stage 2 will be our next focus, for only when Stage 2 is completed, will the Gallery have the capacity to host big exhibitions, attract many more visitors, generate its own income and take its place as a leading Australian cultural facility.

With gratitude

The Benalla Art Gallery Foundation Board wishes to say a big thank you to the many people and entities already playing major roles in helping the Foundation assist the Gallery to attain a secure, dynamic future.

We thank the **Benalla Rural City Council**, owner and operator of the Gallery on behalf of our community. We thank the Mayor and Councillors, the CEO and Council Officers, especially the Gallery Director and staff, and the **Benalla Art Gallery Advisory Committee** for their shared ambitions and willingness to collaborate.

We congratulate all involved on commencing the works of the Gallery's Stage 1 redevelopment.

I extend the Board's sincere thanks to the many individuals, couples and families who continue to make deeply personal commitments to the Foundation in support of their Gallery's future.

It is with very great pleasure we thank the **Bertalli Family Foundation** for their extraordinarily generous gift of \$1.5 million towards Benalla Art Gallery's redevelopment.



Their gift is truly transformational. As is the donors wishes, \$500,000 will go to support Stage 1, while the balance of \$1,000,000 is directed by the **Bertalli Family Foundation** towards the larger, more ambitious Stage 2.

We are profoundly grateful for the **Bertalli Family Foundation's** belief in the Gallery and their commitment to the shared long-term vision for its future. We will work collaboratively with the community, the Council and philanthropists to make this happen.

Our special thanks go to **Sheryl and Paul Coughlin** for their extremely generous gift, and for their leadership and hard work throughout the year, helping ensure Stage 1 is delivered. We also thank anonymous donors and **James and Katherine Murray** for their generous contribution to this initial Gallery upgrade.

During this financial year the Foundation received 96 separate donations, contributing a total of \$231,818 towards the Foundation's Future Fund. Thank you donors.

The Board extends our grateful thanks to a number of philanthropic bodies. In particular, we thank **The Ian Potter Foundation** for their generous grant over two years. This grant enables the Foundation to engage the part time professional services of the skilled PW Strategy team!

We thank five other Foundations for their generous support, including the **Albert and Barbara Tucker Foundation**, **The William Angliss Foundation**, **The William Buckland Foundation** and **Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust** (both via Equity Trustees) and the **Stuart Leslie Foundation**. Together these five grants totalled \$176,903.

The Board thanks the **PW Strategy** team led by Penny Whitehead, assisted by Bronwyn Dunwoodie, each part-time. They are doing an incredible job in building the capacities and systems required by modern community-based foundations.

The Board thanks the **Honorary Advisors to the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation** whose valuable pro bono assistance enabled us to achieve the critical milestones throughout 2025-26 Financial Year.

Hon Strategic Advisor, **Lin Bender AM** for her leadership in guiding the Board through the development of our 9-year Strategic Plan. Based on extensive consultation, the Plan provides a clear roadmap through to 2035.

Hon Legal Advisor, **Rhys Jewell**, Partner in Corrs, Chambers, Westgarth and his team, who so generously assisted us establish a new legal structure. This gives us critical DGR1 ATO endorsement and makes us eligible to seek funding from more philanthropic entities. In October 2026 our existing Foundation will morph into the Benalla Art Gallery Cultural Foundation.

Hon Donor Advisor, **Wendy Clark** for her work skilling our local community in modern fundraising methods, and for quietly, steadily working away behind the scenes.

Most importantly, the Foundation Board extends our heartfelt thanks to the **Foundation's Committee members and Volunteers**. Through working groups, they have tirelessly achieved quite extraordinary outcomes throughout the Financial Year. Thank you for giving your valuable expertise, experience, networks and time to securing the Gallery's future.

In conclusion I would like to express my deep personal gratitude to my dedicated fellow **Board directors**. As we travel together through 2026–2027 we invite all those who believe in the cultural, social and economic value of Benalla Art Gallery to join us in creating its next chapter.

Winsome McCaughey AO
Chair, Benalla Art Gallery Foundation

Cover image: Benedict Ncube, *You and the space between*, ADNATE, 2015.
Photo by Stephen Winkler
Image above: Benalla Art Gallery. Photo: Serana Hunt-Hughes, 2021



THE BUSHRANGER
AND THE STREET ARTIST
AND KELLY AS RETURNER

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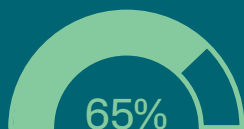


Image: HA-HA: Street Art Bushranger.
Photo: James Bugg

2025–2026 At a Glance



\$1.885m raised
towards Stages 1 & 2
\$1.35m Foundation
commitment to Stage 1
\$11m Foundation
commitment to Stage 2



\$880,000
raised so far towards the
Stage 1 commitment



\$1,050,000
raised so far towards the
Stage 2 commitment



96 Total donations
27 Named Funds established
48 Donor Circle contributions
21 Other donations



50 local people
participating in
Our Gallery



1 Foundation video
produced featuring
8 participants



44 communications
tailored enews sent



5 donor events
stewardship and
engagement

Our Strategy 2026–2035

Our vision

Our Gallery. A place for all.

Over the next decade, the Foundation will build the philanthropic, community and organisational support required to secure Benalla Art Gallery for future generations.



Image above: Benalla Art Gallery.
Still from video: James Bugg

Our ambition

Transform the Gallery

Help realise the transformational Stage 2 redevelopment.

Secure its future

Build a Future Fund of more than \$6 million.

Grow our community of giving

Create opportunities for many more people to participate in the Gallery's future.

Build enduring partnerships

Bring together community, philanthropy, business and government.

Strengthen the Foundation

Maintain the governance, capability and systems required to deliver our ambitions.

Building for our future

NOW

Stage 1



- Essential building upgrade
- \$8.2m+ project
- Climate control, insulation, storage, security, artwork delivery, and contemporary restaurant
- Currently under construction

Status: The Foundation continues to source funding to support Council

NEXT

Stage 2



- Transformational redevelopment
- Approximately \$26m investment
- Expanded exhibition, education, community spaces; improved retail; increased visitation; and a more commercially viable business model driving significant economic impact for the region
- Foundation philanthropic ambition: \$11m

Status: Quiet phase underway

For Generations Future Fund

- Long-term financial sustainability
- \$6m+ ambition
- Creating an enduring source of support for the Gallery.

Status: Future Fund growth and investment under management



Our Gallery initiative



To mark 50 years of Benalla Art Gallery and its contribution to our community, culture, economy and visitor experience, the Our Gallery project invited 50 local people to choose and reflect on a favourite artwork from the Gallery Collection.

Participants represented a broad cross-section of the Benalla community, including school students, farmers, a local GP, mechanics, teachers and hospitality workers, as well as people connected with Cooinda, Schneider Electric, Benalla Travel, U3A, Benalla Veterinary Clinic, local churches, the CFA, Benalla Theatre Company and many other businesses and community organisations.

They came from across the district, including Swanpool, Winton, Warrenbayne, Tatong, Lima and Benalla.

Their choices, and stories behind them, were diverse.

Some participants chose works that reminded them of life on the land or the landscapes of our region. Others were transported to places they had travelled or experiences they remembered. Some were captivated by an artist's technique or use of colour, while others were simply drawn to the way an artwork made them feel.

Across their reflections emerged feelings of calm, happiness, curiosity, memory and belonging.

The enthusiasm of the 50 participants demonstrated something simple but important: there is no single way to experience art. We each bring our own histories, memories and perspectives to an artwork, creating connections that are individual, meaningful and deeply personal. Art truly is for everyone.

Our Gallery celebrates more than the Gallery's 50-year history. It celebrates the relationship between Benalla Art Gallery, its Collection and the community it serves – and the many ways art connects us to people, place and each other.



Main: Beno French with *Landscape Painting*, Caroline March Williams, 1987.
Top-Bottom: 1. Stephen Coulter with *Guardian Angel*, Mirka Mora, 1996.
2. Deakin Horne with *Raft City No. 5 (Surveillance Version)*, Jon Cattapan, 2015.
3. Yonnie Miechel with *Your friends are waiting for you (Biei Hokkaido)*, Jason Benjamin, 2007. 4. Katrina Hope and children Arlo and Remi with *Second Movement*, Roger Kemp, Not dated. All images showcase the Our Gallery project. Photos: Stephen Winkler

Engaging our donors and community

Throughout the year, the Foundation hosted a series of events designed to strengthen relationships with donors, engage the community and build understanding and support for the future of Benalla Art Gallery.

In September 2025, Chair Winsome McCaughey AO welcomed donors and community members to celebrate the Gallery's 50th anniversary and look towards its next chapter. Guests heard from Benalla Rural City Council CEO Peter Keane, Gallery Director Eric Nash and Foundation Business Development Manager Penny Whitehead about the Stage 1 redevelopment and the longer-term vision for Stage 2.

In April, the Foundation launched its annual Giving Campaign at the Pop-Up Benalla Art Gallery, bringing supporters together to hear about the Foundation's progress and the important role philanthropy plays in realising ambitions.

In May, an intimate gathering at Holland Park celebrated and thanked our Named Fund and Patron Circle donors, philanthropic partners and special friends for their generosity and commitment to the Foundation and Gallery.

In June, the Foundation broadened the conversation through *Growing the Benalla Economy through the Arts*. A panel of sector leaders explored the economic and community impact of investment in regional cultural infrastructure, drawing on the redevelopment of Shepparton Art Museum. The event also provided an opportunity to share the vision for the Benalla Art Gallery precinct and proposed Stage 2 redevelopment.

Together, these events created opportunities to celebrate, inform and connect, while building a growing network of donors, advocates and community members invested in the Gallery's future.



Images: Foundation event in September 2025. Photo: Rene Martens



Enabling community impact

Art Therapy program

The Foundation's role extends beyond raising funds for the Gallery's future. We also work behind the scenes to help connect the Gallery with philanthropic funding and partnerships that enable it to deliver meaningful programs for the community.

During 2025–26, the Foundation supported the Gallery to secure funding from the Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust and the Albert and Barbara Tucker Foundation, enabling the Gallery team to deliver programs focused on wellbeing, participation and community connection. We also assisted the Gallery to pursue funding for learning programs and provided letters of support for other significant projects and funding applications.

Our role is deliberately one of enablement. The Foundation brings philanthropic relationships, fundraising expertise, advocacy and support, while the Gallery brings the curatorial, creative and community expertise to develop and deliver programs that respond to local needs.

The impact of this partnership can be seen in the Gallery's Art Therapy program. With philanthropic support from the Scobie and Claire Mackinnon Trust, more than 450 participants were involved in the 37 open community workshops and 10 outreach sessions delivered in Benalla Health, Cooinda Aged Care and Waminda Community House.

Participant feedback described a sense of belonging and connection, opportunities for self-expression and the importance of having a safe and welcoming place to come together.

It is a model we hope to build upon: the Foundation helping create opportunities and attract investment, and the Gallery translating that support into experiences and programs that benefit our community.

By strengthening the Gallery's capacity to attract philanthropic support, the Foundation helps turn generosity into lasting impact for people and place.

What participants said about the program.

'A sense of coming together and belonging to something.'

'This is the most beautiful experience and I look forward to it every week.'

This program was proudly presented

BENALLA ART GALLERY

Images: Participants in Benalla Art Gallery Art Therapy program, 2026.



A lasting legacy

The Kirkwood Family Named Fund honours Mary and Fred Kirkwood who were early advocates for the Benalla Art Gallery.

Mary and Fred came to Benalla in 1956 with their young family and were soon involved in local arts groups. In fact, their home beat to the 'arts drum': the imperative of 7pm Blue Door drama club rehearsals; planning for visiting MSO, MTC, Australian Ballet, and Victoria Arts Council performances; billeting of performers; Gilbert & Sullivan on the stereo to rehearse for the next Light Opera Co. performance; the home piano trundled along Nunn St for events at the Town Hall; appreciating Film Society 'foreign films'; and many early evening 'drop-ins' by friends for a drink and discussion of the latest arts project – one big topic being an Art Gallery.

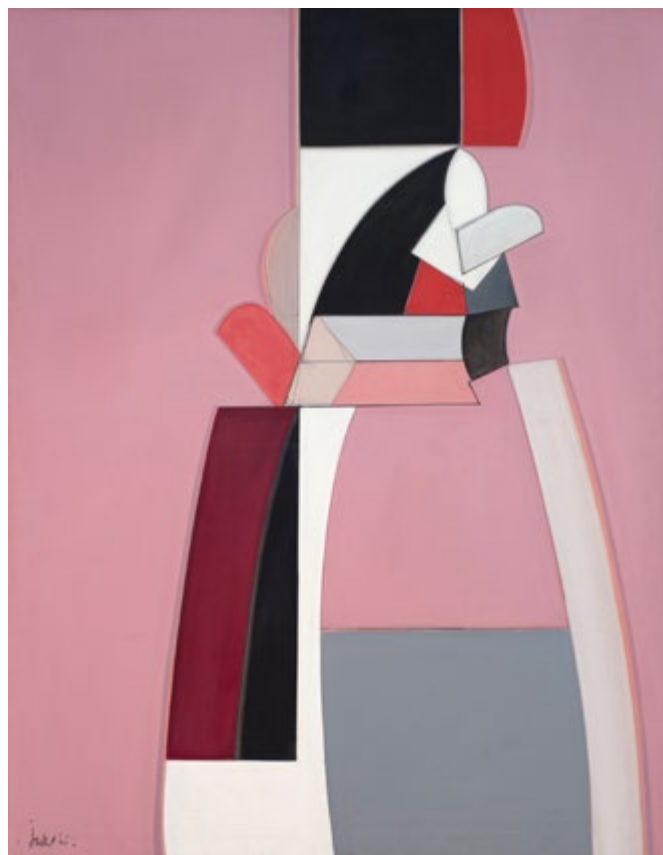
Fred and Mary were involved in establishing an Art Gallery Committee and the subsequent planning of the Inaugural Acquisitive Exhibition (1967). The committee wisely chose to follow Patrick McCaughey's recommendation and invite emerging artists to exhibit – providing wider, if not more risky choice, for the modest purse on offer.

The family remembers well the exhibition in the Memorial Hall as impressive with its square metres of painted canvas. Works were large, obscure in topic and loud in colour – hardly what most Benalla residents would have in their homes. Unsurprisingly, Fred and Mary also acquired several paintings for their home which continue to be enjoyed by the family.

The Kirkwood family chose this work by Robert Jacks to represent their Named Fund as the work was acquired during the period in which Fred and Mary Kirkwood were involved in establishing the Benalla Art Gallery.

This inaugural exhibition was a local success and generated excitement towards the possibility of Benalla establishing the 'regional gallery' for North-East Victoria.

Story supplied by Mary and Fred's family.



Robert Jacks, *Compelling Vestures*
1965, synthetic polymer paint on
canvas, 151.2 x 120.9 cm [canvas];
153.2 x 122.2 cm [frame] Gift of the
Benalla Apex Club, 1967, 1967.01,
Benalla Art Gallery Collection

A Named Fund

A Benalla Art Gallery Foundation Named Fund can be established by, or named after, an individual, family, or corporation to support the donor(s) or deceased/honourees interest in the Benalla Art Gallery, community or region. A Named Fund is a wonderful way to encourage intergenerational giving or to leave a legacy that will support the future prosperity of Benalla Art Gallery and the community it serves.

You can establish your own Named Fund for a \$10,000 contribution which can be paid over five-years. Contact admin@bagf.org.au or visit the benallaartgallery.com.au for more information.

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

General Gifts

John and Christa Abdallah
Trust
Anonymous Donor
Sheryl and Paul Coughlin
Mavourneen Cowen
James and Katherine Murray
Bertalli Family Foundation
Stuart Leslie Foundation

Named Funds

Anne Pennington*
Beryl & Jim Burrowes*
Bill and Kerry Dobson*
Coughlin Family*
Fiona and Frank Stephens*
Friends of the Benalla Art
Gallery
Georgina Burston Family*
Grubb Family*
James and Katherine Murray
Jane and Simon Taylor
& Family*
Jean Miller Family*
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Sue and Nick Clark*
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The Jane and Norton
Grimwade Family*
The Tallis Family

*Contributed in FY 25/26

Patron Donor Circle (>\$5000)

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Bill and Jane Parris

Champion Donor Circle (>\$1000)

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Judith and Ken Bertalli
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Erna Howell
Alan and Jenny Monger
David and Gay Morton
Jacqueline and John Smyth
Patricia Thompson

Visionary Donor Circle (>\$250)

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Irene Cain
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Maggie and Brian Hollins
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Roberta Murphy
Kirsty McIntosh
Merike Redenbach
Linda Tullberg
Margaret Walshe

Our Gallery Donor Circle (>\$50)

Vivienne Drew
Catherine Fuller
Regina Laity-Plex
Patricia Mitchell
Lis O'Halloran

Benalla Art Gallery Foundation Directors

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Secretary, Dr Sheryl Coughlin
Treasurer, Margaret Richards
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Bill (John) Dobson
Sue Clark
Georgina Burston
Councillor Peter Davis

Benalla Art Gallery Foundation Finance & Investment Committee

Margaret Richards OAM
Bill Dobson
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Winsome McCaughey AO

Board support portfolio volunteers

Barbara Alexander AO
Pamela O'Connor

Benalla Art Gallery Foundation Business Development team

Penny Whitehead
Bronwyn Dunwoodie

Special thanks

Benalla Rural City Councillors
Peter Keane
Lin Bender AM
Rhys Jewell
Wendy Clark
Courtney Naughton
Eric Nash
Katherine Hauptmann
Geoff Hill
Laura Hodge
Will Mahon
Karl Phillipson

Benalla Art Gallery Foundation funding partners

William Angliss
Charitable Fund



The Benalla Art Gallery Foundation

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ACN 662 150 709
Registered Charity
Deductible Gift Recipient
DGR Item 2

Contact us

info@bagf.org.au
benallaartgallery.com.au/support