


# Honouring First Nations Excellence, Leadership and Legacy at the 2025 First Nations Arts Awards

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Media release

Creative Australia has announced the recipients of the 2025 First Nations Arts and Culture Awards at an intimate ceremony held this evening at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

May 27, 2025



(L to R) Susan Templeman MP, Candice Lorrain, Ben Graetz, Lily Shearer, Shellie Morris AO, Gutingarra Yunupingu, Tony Albert, Vanessa Inkamala. Photo: Joseph Mayers

Among those honoured were soprano Prof **Deborah Cheetham Frailon AO**, celebrated poet and activist **Lionel Fogarty**, leading First Nations musician and educator **Dr Shelley Morris AO**, and cultural arts champion **Lily Shearer** – all recognised with the prestigious Red Ochre Award for Lifetime Achievement.

The awards, held each year on the anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the opening of National Reconciliation Week, honour First Nations excellence and the outstanding contributions of First Nations artists to arts, culture, and community.

This year marked the expansion of the awards, including three new categories introduced to reflect the growing diversity of First Nations arts leadership across generations and industries.

**Gutingarra Yunupingu** received the Youth Award for Achievement in the Arts, while **Tony Albert** was awarded Established Artist of the Year Award. **Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre** was honoured with the First Nations Arts & Culture Business Innovation Award.

Also acknowledged at the awards were the two recipients of 2025 First Nations Fellowships, including performing arts trailblazer, **Ben Graetz** and singer/songwriter and music producer, **Candice Lorrae**.

**Francesca Cubillo, Executive Director First Nations Arts and Culture**, said:

“These First Nations individuals and organisations represent the strength, depth and diversity of First Nations creative practices across the country. We take this moment to congratulate and celebrate these remarkable artists and thank them for leading the way for future generations.”

Creative Australia congratulates the recipients and shortlistees of the 2025 Awards.

### **Red Ochre Awards for Lifetime Achievement**

#### *For Artistic Excellence*

Prof Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO

Lionel Fogarty

#### *For Cultural Advocacy and Leadership*

Dr Shellie Morris AO

Lily Shearer

### **Youth Award for Achievement in the Arts**

Recipient: Gutingarra Yunupingu

Shortlisted: Bebe Oliver, Aidan Hartshorn

### **Established Artist of the Year Award**

Recipient: Tony Albert

Shortlisted: Troy Cassar-Daley, Yhonnie Scarce

### **First Nations Arts & Culture Business Innovation Award**

Recipient: Il tjja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre

Shortlisted: Blaklash, mili mili

The Awards were assessed by an independent panel of First Nations Industry Advisors, with the Red Ochre Awards determined by the Creative Australia First Nations Board. All recipients were nominated by peers and colleagues from across the country.

More information about the [First Nations Arts and Culture Awards](#) can be found on our website.

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We respect their deep enduring connection to their lands, waterways, and surrounding clan groups since time immemorial. We cherish the richness of First Nations peoples' artistic and cultural expressions. We are privileged to gather on this Country and to share

knowledge, culture and art, now and with future generations.

Art by Jordan Lovegrove