



2026 Asia Pacific Arts Awards

recognise creative leadership across the region

Six artists and organisations have been recognised for their sustained contribution to artistic collaboration and cultural exchange across the Asia Pacific.

Feb 24, 2026

Creative Australia has announced recipients of the [2026 Asia Pacific Arts Awards](#), recognising Australian-based artists, collectives and organisations whose work demonstrates long-term commitment to creative collaboration across the region.

The 2026 recipients are:

Legacy Award

William Yang (NSW)

Impact Award

Small Island Big Song (VIC / Taiwan)

Innovation Award

Haji Oh (NSW)

Connect Award

Encounter Theatre Incorporated (WA)

Inspire Award (Individuals, Groups and Collectives)

Hand to Earth (TAS/VIC)

Inspire Award (Organisations)

Asia TOPA (VIC)

Each recipient receives \$25,000 in recognition of their artistic practice and contribution to long-term cultural exchange across the region.

CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

“The recipients of the 2026 Asia Pacific Arts Awards exemplify the depth of creative leadership that exists across Australia’s engagement with the region. We are proud to recognise practices that strengthen cultural relationships and contribute so significantly to Australia’s cultural life.”

Director of International Zainab Syed said:

“The 2026 recipients demonstrate how cultural connections are built through trust, collaboration and shared creative leadership, creating lasting legacies and contributing to a thriving cultural sector.

"Their work celebrates deep engagement with communities across the Asia Pacific and shows the important role artists and organisations play in strengthening cultural connection across the region.”

Nominations for the 2026 Awards were open to the public. Shortlisted nominees were assessed by panels of independent industry advisors representing a mix of artforms, cultural backgrounds and professional expertise.

The Asia Pacific Arts Awards ceremony was held in Perth on Monday 23 February 2026 in conjunction with the Australian Performing Arts Market and Perth Festival.

Find out more about the [Asia Pacific Arts Awards](#).

Media contact:

Brianna Roberts, Senior Media Manager

Creative Australia

Mobile: 0498 123 541

Email: [**brianna.roberts@creative.gov.au**](mailto:brianna.roberts@creative.gov.au)

More information**Recipient details:****Legacy Award – William Yang (NSW)**

For five decades of photographic and performance practice documenting Australia's cultural and queer histories with honesty, sensitivity and humanity, and for his pioneering contribution to national understandings of identity, belonging and community through his Chinese-Australian and LGBTIQ+ experience.

Impact Award – Small Island Big Song (VIC / Taiwan)

For a decade-long collaborative practice connecting artists and communities across 16 island nations through music, film and live performance, celebrating shared heritage and environmental consciousness and amplifying cultural resilience and climate awareness across the Asia-Pacific.

Innovation Award – Haji Oh (NSW)

For innovative cross-cultural textile practice drawing on techniques from Korea, Japan and across the Asia-Pacific to explore memory, migration and belonging through participatory and community-based projects, and for re-imagining textile practice as a living archive of intergenerational storytelling.

Connect Award – Encounter Theatre Incorporated (WA)

For building an inclusive and interconnected arts ecosystem in Boorloo/Perth, amplifying stories from First Nations and Asia-Pacific communities through community-driven performance and long-term collaboration, and for creating career pathways for under-represented artists.

Inspire Award (Individuals, Groups and Collectives) – Hand to Earth (TAS/VIC)

For forging a profound cross-cultural musical collaboration that connects Yolŋu song traditions with Korean and Australian contemporary practice. Developed through an Australia Art Orchestra residency in remote Tasmania. Hand to Earth brings together Daniel Yipininy Wilfred, Sunny Kim and leading instrumentalists to create immersive soundscapes that honour Indigenous knowledge while fostering intercultural exchange. Through international touring, including performances in Korea, the ensemble exemplifies music as a powerful bridge across cultures and continents.

Inspire Award (Organisations) – Asia TOPA (VIC)

For the re-imagined 2025 Asia TOPA festival, celebrating intercultural collaboration and artistic innovation across the Asia-Pacific, and for its commitment to centring First Nations, Māori and Pasifika voices while nurturing new generations of artists through large-scale commissions and knowledge exchange.