IMPACT REPORT

THRIVE SYDNEY 2025 - 2026



creative + PLUS BUSINESS

CITY OF SYDNEY

Creative Plus Business acknowledges and pays respects to the Gadigal people, the original custodians of the land where our head office sits, and their continuing spiritual, cultural, and physical connection to this place now called Sydney. Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

AN ANNUAL PROGRAM OF CONNECTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SYDNEY'S CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Produced by Creative Plus Business, THRIVE Sydney was delivered as a hybrid in-person and online program created to enhance the professional viability, business confidence, and wellbeing of Sydney's arts and cultural practitioners. Initially funded through the City of Sydney's Innovation and Ideas Grant, the initiative directly targeted professional isolation and financial precarity in the creative industries.

THRIVE brought to the city a program of events, resources, and online experiences that helped creative practitioners and arts professionals come together, hear from inspiring industry leaders, access free professional development opportunities, and build new creative and professional networks.

Each THRIVE event was designed around a theme that reflected a current area of interest to creative practitioners and arts business. The Toolkit and LinkedIn group then proide ongling education and support across a range of topics.

By pairing practical business education with structured networking and direct mentoring, THRIVE empowered artists to transform their practice into sustainable, long-term commercial enterprise.

384

EVENT TICKETS

64

TOOLKIT USERS

20

CREATIVES EMPLOYED

97%

POSITIVE FEEDBACK



"It was refreshing to hear from creatives and network with others in the industry - that is very diverse. It was good to see the content mixed with 'business tips' as this is crucial for all creatives to be informed about.."

THRIVE participant



THE PROGRAM

The THRIVE program consists of three main components, and additional resources. Over the two years, a number of outcomes emerged as a result of delivery.



THRIVE CONNECT

THRIVE Connect is a series of meaningful meetups that combine networking opportunities with skills development for creative practitioners, artists, innovators, and small businesses. Hosted at venues across the city, guest speakers addressed topics across a series of themes, followed by facilitated networking with our hosts, and conversation starters to make networking easier and connections more interesting.

Key Outcomes: Combated professional isolation and built active community networks.

- Delivered 7 (so far) fully accessible in-person meetups across Sydney venues, attracting 235 attendees.
- 100% of surveyed participants reported feeling an improved sense of connection with their creative community.
- 57% expressed explicit intent to continue forging relationships formed during the events.



THRIVE TOOLKIT

The THRIVE Toolkit is an on-demand online resource designed to help Sydney's creatives build strong foundations for their creative practice and business. It includes free access to video tutorials, resources, templates, tools and more to help arts professionals enhance their creative business skills, financial literacy, marketing ability and wellbeing management.

Key Outcomes: Strengthened commercial enterprise capacity and long-term viability.

- Provided artists and micro-businesses with practical online learning modules and business templates on essential business systems, marketing, cash flow, and wellbeing.
- Built tailored skills so creative practitioners could navigate specific industry business challenges with increased confidence.
- All video modules guaranteed accessible learning for all participants.



THRIVE LINKEDIN

The private THRIVE LinkedIn group helped THRIVE participants stay connected between events, share news, amplify opportunities and resources, and develop their new network through the year, and beyond. They connected with like-minded creatives to build their local community in a safe online space.

Key Outcomes: Provided a continuous, digital 'village well' for peer-to-peer engagement.

- Offered an ongoing space to sustain relationships and network beyond live events.
- Served as a centralised noticeboard where Thrivers discovered relevant industry activities, opportunities, and shared knowledge.



THRIVE SUPPORTS

Getting involved in the THRIVE community also meant accessing additional support, including the monthly free webinars from Creative Plus Business, updated blog posts about issues relating to creative industries, updates about happenings in the City of Sydney, special offers from partner organisations and more.

Key Outcomes: Delivered an accessible, equitable, and eco-friendly central hub.

- Attracted 1,200 unique users across the year.
- Functioned as a 100% digital resource suite, eliminating paper waste.
- Maintained highest accessibility and cultural safety standards for all participants.

MEETING DEMAND

Sydney is home to more creative workers than anywhere else in Australia, but the number of core cultural professions is declining. THRIVE actively addressed that challenge by upskilling creative freelancers and micro-businesses, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and providing strategic professional support. BY equipping local artists with the entrepreneurial skills necessary to convert creative practice into sustainable, viable business, they are much more likely to stay as an essential part of the coty's culture. Specialised online training and themed events on the topics of small business systems, financial literacy, marketing and wellbeing enabled creatives to navigate the idea of creative business with greater confidence, and find connection within their community of creatives.



THRIVE PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTED THE WIDER CREATIVE SECTOR IN SYDNEY

35%	23%	20%	9%	5%
Performing Arts	Visual Arts & Making	Screen Sector	Writing	Music Sector







EVENT THEMES 2026



THRIVE 1 2026 was all about the hot topic of the day - Artificial Intelligence. Special guest speaker, former Google Creative Director and Artificial Intelligence consultant Tea Uglow, lead us through a fast and fun dive into the "what, why and how" of Artificial Intelligence, where it's going and why we can feel confident within the creative and culture sector about the innate value of human creativity. She also discussed killer robots, which was surprisingly fascinating.



THRIVE 2 was an evening of understanding work in the creative industries, including workplace responsibilities, navigating contracts, and knowing where to go for support , especially for freelance or project-based work. This session brought together experts from Creative Workplaces and Support Act as they shared practical resources to help build safe and respectful workplaces, and sustain creative wellbeing.



THRIVE 3 focused on an optimistic future. With AI cramping our vibe, the economy playing hard to get, and the news like a sci-fi thriller gone wrong, we decided to try something radical... defiant optimism. Guest speakers, comedian Sam Wade and writer Simone Amelia Jordan, discussed actively transforming current challenges into opportunities by asking "How do we make this work anyway?" to innovate, support each other, and rewrite the rules.



THRIVE 4 2026 (TBC November 2026) will focus on wrapping up the year with a practical and interactive “Year in Review”, conducted live with our resident expert and Doyenne Monica Davidson and the Creative Plus Business team.

EVENT THEMES 2025



Our inaugural THRIVE event was all about getting your creative house in order. Our guest speaker, commercial artist and entrepreneur Jeff McCann, shared his insights on the way he harnesses simple systems and tools to generate new opportunities and keep on top of the business side of things so his creative work can thrive. He also discussed his colourful systems and processes, helping creatives put their best foot forward for the new year.



THRIVE 2 centred on marketing, reaching new audiences, and keeping our current ones engaged. Special guest, marketing expert Belinda Daly, sshared out-of-the-box ways that creative businesses can approach marketing. Belinda also discussed innovative ways to spread the word about creative work, and develop lasting relationships with clients and consumers, without as much reliance on social media as a tool.



THRIVE 3 focussed on good finance management so creatives could focus on the work, and the clients, that they love. Special guests Oliver Garside from Rounded and Kirsty Donachie from The Pen Accounting shared their best tips, tools, and systems to take the stress out of finance management and plan for the future. They shared practical, grassroots advice that made managing money and planning possible, so creatives could set up for success.



THRIVE 4 focussed on creative wellbeing through reflection. By thinking back and discussing the year that's been, THRIVE participants were guided on the ways they could embed self-care into their work and practice by exploring what we can take forward, leave behind, and get excited about the future. Special guests included Deputy Lord Mayor Jess Miller and Felicity Nicol, a leading local theatre maker.

FACILITATED NETWORKING

THRIVE events utilised facilitated networking to replace the awkward and unstructured stand-and-mingle events. Instead, we used prompt cards to create guided, intentional interactions between participants, speakers and hosts. This simple step ensured that every attendee made meaningful, productive connections. This was not a room of strangers, but a community built and sustained.

Some examples of the cards we distributed, themed to the relevant events...

How do you define success in your creative work?



If you could give your past self one piece of advice about systems and processes, what would it be?



What was your 'lightbulb moment' where you realised AI was actually going to change your business?



What's your 'go-to' productivity hack when things get chaotic?



What's a creative skill you think is actually becoming more valuable now that AI is everywhere?



What's the most unusual source of inspiration you've ever had for a project?



What's one wellbeing boundary that you've set and maintained to take care of yourself?



What's a surprising opportunity that only happened to you because your original plan fell apart?



Is AI changing the way you approach the marketing?



What's the most valuable piece of marketing advice you've ever received?



What's something going on right now that makes you feel genuinely optimistic about the future?

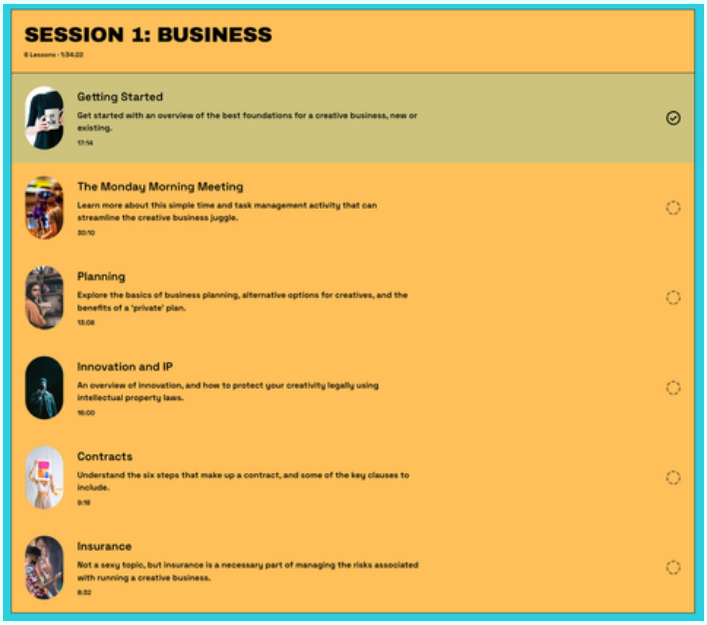


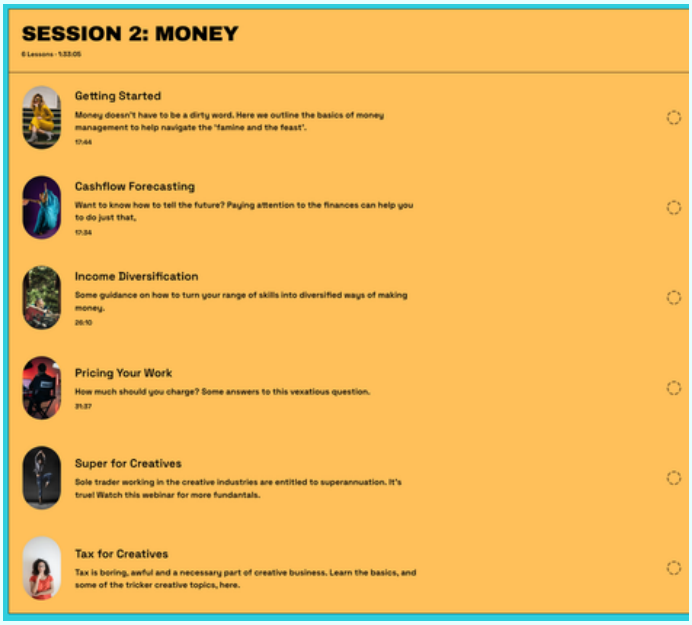
What are your tips for maintaining a work/life balance as a creative?



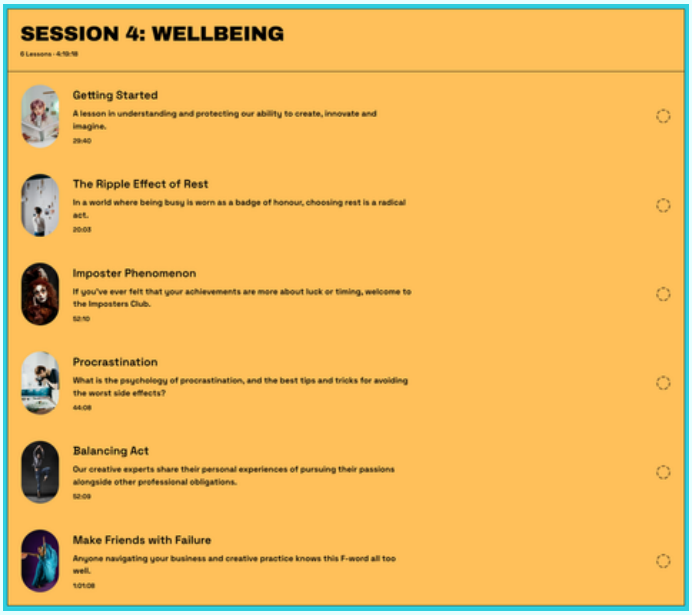
TOOLKIT DETAILS

- **24 accessible online recordings of workshops and webinars**, arranged into four topic areas of Business, Money, Marketing and Wellbeing.
- **Interviews and presentations from creative business experts**, across a wide range of industries and levels of experience.
- Ongoing access to a wide range of additional **free webinars** on the topics of creative business, professional development, financial literacy and marketing.
- Ongoing access to a **permanent Dropbox folder** full of additional materials, resources, information sheets, interesting links and practical workbooks.
- Templates for both a One Page **Creative Business Plan** and a One Page **Creative Marketing Plan**, to be worked through during workshop time and at home.









SURVEY RESULTS

86% Participants felt the resources shared in the Toolkit and Events were helpful.

100% Participants felt that their experience was somewhere between very good and excellent.

100% Participants stated that the guest speaker's presentation were valuable and insightful for their creative business or practice.

100% Participants felt an increased connection with their creative community.

100% Felt the suggested conversation topics helpful in facilitating networking conversations.



Some comments from participants...

- “A great selection of creatives speaking and imparting their knowledge.”
- “It was refreshing to hear from creatives and network with others in the industry - that is very diverse.
- “It was good to see the content mixed with 'business tips' as this is crucial for all creatives to be informed about.”
- “I loved connecting with other creatives working on their business.”
- “The presentation was good as were the games we played on the night.”
- “Truly remarkable conversations and networking opportunities for young and emerging creatives like myself.”
- “It was great to hear a creative talking about managing a business. We have such unique jobs and many people don't really understand our financial situation.”
- “It was super helpful to get insights from industry members who actually understand the issues we deal with regarding money.”

BIOGRAPHIES THRIVE EVENT SPEAKERS



JEFF MCCANN | ARTIST, DESIGNER

Jeff is an artist, illustrator and maker living and work on Gadigal Land in Sydney. He strives to create inclusive work that celebrates the making process while encouraging his audience to get involved. His loves exploring themes of play, childhood nostalgia, world building, games and the natural environment. His work can range from murals, public art, community engagement projects and artwork licensing; through to wearable art, illustration, collaborations and small batch products. His previous clients include Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), City of Sydney, Westfield, Reverse Garbage, Twenty10 & Heaps Gay.



OLIVER GARSIDE | FOUNDER, ROUNDED

Oliver Garside is the Co-Founder and COO of Rounded, an Australian cloud-based accounting and invoicing platform designed specifically for sole traders and freelancers. Having previously worked with digital platforms including LinkedIn, Oliver co-founded Rounded to strip away traditional accounting jargon and complex software overheads. He is passionate about empowering independent practitioners to master their business admin, improve cash flow, and achieve financial clarity through intuitive, plain-English tools built to help creative sole traders focus on what they do best.



KIRSTY DONACHIE | ACCOUNTANT, THE PEN ACSOUNTING

Kirsty Donachie FCPA is the Founder and CEO of The Pen Accounting, a Surry Hills agency providing tailored financial management and business advisory for Australia's creative sector. With over twenty years of experience across publishing, film distribution, and digital agencies, Kirsty is passionate about demystifying complex finance. She works closely with artists, freelancers, and creative businesses to navigate irregular income streams, master tax compliance, and implement sustainable growth strategies - turning creative ambition into lasting financial resilience and independence.



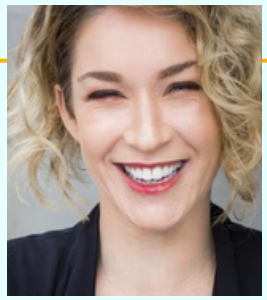
BELINDA DALY | MARKETING STRATEGIST

Belinda Daly is the Founder of The Marketing Edit, a Sydney consultancy specialising in strategic marketing, digital communications, and community engagement. With over 25 years of experience leading major brand, retail, and precinct initiatives across Australia, Belinda is passionate about demystifying complex marketing landscapes. She works closely with small businesses and independent creators to build customer-led strategies, enhance brand identity, and foster strong community connections—equipping creative enterprises with the practical tools required to achieve sustainable, long-term growth.



FELICITY NICOL | THEATRE MAKER

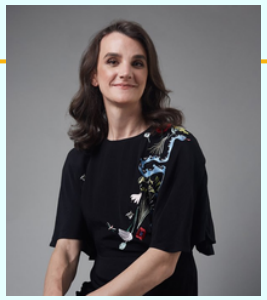
Felicity Nicol is an acclaimed theatre maker, director, and arts leader with extensive experience creating social-impact performance across Australia and internationally. A graduate of NIDA's MFA in Directing, Felicity specialises in youth arts, community-engaged practice, and interdisciplinary performance. As former Artistic Director of Spark Youth Theatre, she has led transformative projects empowering diverse young people and marginalised voices. Felicity is dedicated to fostering collaborative, inclusive creative environments, equipping artists with the agency to tell urgent, meaningful stories.



JESS MILLER | DEPUTY LORD MAYOR, CITY OF SYDNEY

Councillor Jess Miller is the Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney, dedicated to creating a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant city. First elected to Council in 2016, Jess co-chairs the Nightlife & Creative Industries Advisory Panel and sits on the Board of the National Art School. With over 20 years' experience in strategic communications and placemaking, she is a passionate advocate for urban greening, 24-hour economy reforms, and unlocking unused spaces for Sydney's creative community to thrive.

BIOGRAPHIES THRIVE EVENT SPEAKERS



TEA UGLOW | STRATEGIST, FUTURIST

Tea Uglow is a Peabody-winning creative strategist, innovation advisor and internationally sought-after speaker exploring how technology is reshaping creativity, leadership and culture. Formerly a senior creative leader at Google Creative Lab, Tea has spent her career helping organisations make sense of emerging technologies, from AI to new digital experiences and what they mean for people, audiences and the future of work. Working with EP Australia, Tea brings a global perspective to conversations about leadership, innovation and change across the creative and digital economy.



MONIQUE WILLIAMS | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, CREATIVE WORKPLACES

Monique Williams is the Communications Manager at Creative Workplaces, an initiative established by Creative Australia to promote safe, fair, and respectful environments across the nation's arts sector. With extensive experience in strategic communications, media relations, and arts advocacy, Monique is passionate about driving positive workplace culture for creative workers. She plays a pivotal role in translating complex sector guidance into practical tools, empowering independent practitioners and creative businesses to navigate workplace rights, safety standards, and industry best practice with confidence.



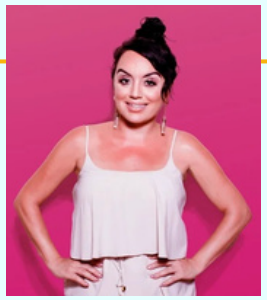
DR ASH KING | PSYCHOLOGIST, WRITER

Ash is a psychologist, writer/designer & cyberpsychology researcher at the University of Sydney. After her life in the music industry came to a halt following a vocal injury, she's now using psychology & mindfulness to help folks live their best lives with creativity, passion and purpose. She has run workshops and talks for Amazon, Pinterest, Linktree, Pedestrian TV, APRA/AMCOS and BigSound. She believes that learning to manage the mind can be a fun and inquisitive process. Through insight, wisdom and a splash of pop culture, she helps individuals & organisations develop practical skills to go deep, get wise, and be happy.



SAM WADE | COMEDIAN, CONTENT CREATOR

Sam is a comedian and content creator, based in old Sydney town. After selling out his debut hour 'Inner World' at Sydney Fringe in 2018, he has gone on to crush at the Sydney Comedy Festival with 'Mind Cave' in 2021 and 'Vs The Void' in 2022-23. He has guest starred and script consulted for hit DnD-based web series '1 For All', garnering a cult following amongst its 700k-strong audience. He also has Autism, loves talking about neurodivergence, and has a laugh that has been described as "an obnoxious honk, like a goose being used as a bagpipe".



SIMONE AMELIA JORDAN | WRITER / ESSAYIST / JOURNALIST

Simone is a Gadigal-based writer, essayist, and author, recognised as Australia's most successful hip-hop journalist. Working at the intersection of culture, identity, and social justice, she has dedicated her career to amplifying underrepresented voices and mentoring emerging multicultural talent through organisations such as Media Diversity Australia, Diversity Arts Australia, and her initiative, The Dream Collective. Her debut memoir, *Tell Her She's Dreamin'*, won the Richell Prize.



OLLY ARKINS | COUNCILLOR, CITY OF SYDNEY

Councillor Olly Arkins was elected to the City of Sydney in 2024 and serves as Deputy Chair of the Cultural, Creative and Nightlife Committee. Dedicated to building an inclusive and dynamic city, Olly is a strong advocate for affordable housing, an improved and diversified nightlife, and expanding local cultural amenities. Through her work on Council, Olly strives to create vibrant, accessible public spaces and support initiatives that foster community connection, equitable growth, and opportunity across Sydney's creative sectors. She is the first openly transgender person elected to councillor for the City of Sydney.

BIOGRAPHIES THRIVE TOOLKIT FACILITATORS & GUESTS



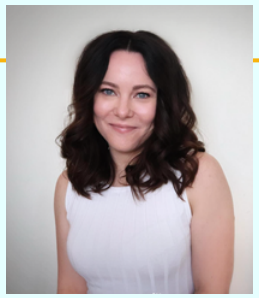
MONICA DAVIDSON | CREATIVE INDUSTRIES EXPERT, FOUNDER OF CREATIVE PLUS BUSINESS

Monica is an award-winning expert on the creative industries. After twenty years working as a self-employed filmmaker, writer and performer, she founded the social enterprise Creative Plus Business Group to help creatives at all stages of their careers to improve their business skills. Monica was appointed as Australia's first Creative Industries Business Advisor in 2013 and completed her Masters in Screen Arts and Business at AFTRS. Monica continues to juggle her creative practice with her business.



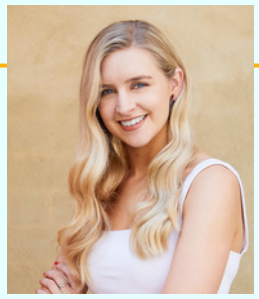
STAVROULA ADAMEITIS | ARTIST, ILLUSTRATOR, FASHION DESIGNER

Australian artist and designer Stavroula Adameitis, aka FRIDA LAS VEGAS, creates bold textiles, neon art, and installations. Remixing nostalgia with a graphic sensibility, she celebrates pop culture icons from the pre-internet era. Inspired by digital printing after interning with Sex and the City stylist Patricia Field, Stavroula built a cross-disciplinary career in illustration, graphic, and textile design. She's collaborated with cultural institutions like the Sydney Opera House and global brands including Disney and Meta, plus performers like Katy Perry. A University of Adelaide graduate, Stavroula works from her Adelaide studio, time-traveling through her vibrant, technicolor art.



CAT DIBLEY | INDEPENDENT CREATIVE PRODUCER

Cat is a national and international creative producer with over 10 years' experience producing dance, theatre, tours, and festivals, and has been published on ArtsHub on the subject. She has worked at major theatre companies across Australia, Europe, and the US and founded a theatre company in 2011, producing many shows under this banner for mainstage companies, festivals, and large-scale national tours. Cat also works as a creative consultant, story producer, and screen development producer, and is one of C+B's most popular facilitators and advisors.



WENDI LANHAM | ACTOR, MODEL, PRESENTER, PRODUCER

Wendi started young in her professional creative career, as an actor and model; later adding presenting, producing and business development to her professional skill set. Her theatre credits include the Sydney Theatre Award Winning production 'Dignity Of Risk' with ATYP & Shopfront Arts, and 4 successful seasons of 'Deadhouse: Tales of Sydney Morgue'; including playing the lead roles of Juanita Nielsen, and Nellie Cameron. Her film credits include 'Promise Mum', '2 Girls, A Guy and a Gun', and the short film 'Finding Addison' which recently won an AACTA Award.



MIA FILEMAN | CREATIVE STRATEGIST, CAMPAIGN DEL MAR

Mia is a marketing strategist and the founder of Campaign Del Mar, which offers strategic marketing training to founders and teams. Mia spent the first decade of her career in brand management roles for global consumer brands Vegemite, Kraft, Maybelline and BIC in France. Upon returning to Australia, Mia worked agency side before launching and running her own marketing agency, Campaign Del Mar. With more than two decades of experience in marketing across the globe, Mia is now sharing her learnings and helping business leaders and teams to demistify marketing

BIOGRAPHIES THRIVE TOOLKIT FACILITATORS & GUESTS



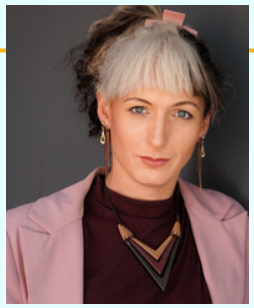
SATS KRAMER | MUSICIAN, FILMMAKER, BUSINESS CONSULTANT

Satoru (Sats) is a professional musician, photographer and videographer based on the Far South Coast of NSW. For many years he also represented MusicNSW as the Regional Music Officer for the South East of the state. This role saw Sats working across the music industry, as both a professional development facilitator and a central information and connection hub for all stakeholders in the local music industry. He is passionate about empowering artists with the tools and know-how to make a career out of doing the thing they love. He is also one of C+B's most popular business advisors.



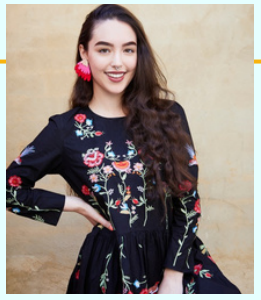
BALI PADDA | PERFORMER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, ADVOCATE

Bali's multidisciplinary career spans stage and screen. He founded Little Goat Arts & Entertainment in 2024, following impactful strategic roles advocating for inclusion in the creative arts. His directorial debut, Guards at the Taj, toured nationally after rave reviews. He has since directed acclaimed productions like Sunderella and Champions. Bali's produced landmark works including In The Space Between and Lighten Up. A former Screen Australia executive, he consults for funding agencies and guilds. Bali's acting credits range from Top of the Lake to the award-winning Over and Out. A passionate advocate for diversity, Bali was also a MEAA committee member.



CHARLEY ALLANAH | THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE MAKER

Charley is a proud trans woman, multifaceted theatre and performance maker and Co Artistic Director of House of Sand. She holds a BA (Acting) and an MFA (Directing) from NIDA. She has created award winning work at House of Sand, directed work across Australia, and internationally including at STCSA, ActNow, BATS, and Paul Lucas Prod. NYC, assisted directors at STC and Opera Australia, and performed for STCSA and STC. She has held positions at Sydney Fringe and Sydney WorldPride and is LGBTQIA+ Co-Chair of the MEAA Equity Diversity Committee, and is a facilitator and consultant for Creative Plus Business.



LILLIE BROWN | FREELANCING MARKETING CONSULTANT

Lillie is an artist from regional Australia who found her calling in supporting fellow creatives. Specialising in marketing for creative and lifestyle businesses, she blends rural-regional and metropolitan arts management experience with intuitive digital strategies. She empowers creatives to confidently share their stories, build vibrant brands, and revitalise their marketing. As an energetic educator and facilitator, shen also delivers workshops and lectures equipping creatives with practical skills to cultivate engaged communities.



EMMIE RAE | WRITER, POET, YOGI, SOMATIC THERAPIST

Emmie is a writer, poet and the founder of The Daily Rest Studio, an online membership for doing hard things, gently. Part salon, part teahouse, the Daily Rest teaches women to breathe life into their dreams by finding the courage to slow down. Emmie began teaching yoga full time in 2015 and over the next seven years introduced the practice of Restorative Yoga and Deep Rest to multiple studios across Sydney, Australia, teaching classes and hosting workshops, trainings and retreats both locally and internationally. She also holds a BA in Writing and Cultural Studies from UTS.

PHOTOS























statement of thanks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who contributed to the success of THRIVE Sydney:

CREATIVE PLUS BUSINESS

MONICA DAVIDSON
WENDI LANHAM
JILLIAN D'ERCOLE
ROBBI JAMES
FIONA PULFORD
JAMIE LIVINGSTONE
OUMI KARENGA-HEWITT
FRANCESA D'ERCOLE
TALIA MEYEROWITZ-KATZ

CITY OF SYDNEY

TEIK-KIM POK
JESS MILLER
OLLY ARKINS

BRAND X
THE COMMONS
THE ROSE ERSKINEVILLE

Creative Plus Business acknowledges the Gadigal people, the original custodians of the land where our head office sits, and their continuing spiritual, cultural, and physical connection to this place now called Sydney. Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

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+PLUS BUSINESS

CONTACTS

Program Information
To learn more about SCREEN ARTSELERATE, or to create a bespoke program outline that meets the needs of your community or organisation:
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