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Bundaberg Regional Galleries Finalist at State Awards

The Winners, Highly Commended and Finalists of the **2024 Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards** (GAMAA) were proudly announced by Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) on Tuesday 8 October, at a special awards presentation hosted by the Queensland Museum Cobb+Co, Toowoomba.

Museums & Galleries Queensland is excited to announce that **Bundaberg Regional Galleries** was recognised as a **Finalist** at the 2024 Gallery and Museum Achievement Award in the category **Projects: Organisations with Paid Staff** for its outstanding exhibition ***Wajgan's Return: Bringing Ron Hurley Home***.

This multi-faceted project, initiated in partnership with the Hurley family and delivered by Bundaberg Regional Galleries, has not only brought to light the extraordinary talent of the late Ron Hurley but has also served as a testament to the rich cultural tapestry of the region's First Nations community.

An initiative of Bundaberg Regional Galleries, the exhibition, *Wajgan's Return*, was developed in partnership with the Hurley family to celebrate Ron Hurley, a pioneering Gooreng Gooreng / Mununjali artist.

Curated by Angelina Hurley, daughter of the late artist, this exhibition stands as a profound tribute to Ron Hurley's life and work. It showcases four decades of his career, incorporating various mediums such as paintings, etchings, prints, ceramics, and more, all of which symbolise the totems and stories of the Gooreng Gooreng People.

Moreover, the project encompassed extensive public programming, coinciding with the wider Milbi Festival, to foster greater connection and engagement with Hurley's artistic practice. This inclusive approach, inviting artists like Ivy Minniecon and Gordon Hookey to respond to Hurley's work, has forged meaningful connections with Bundaberg Regional Galleries' audiences and within the broader community.

The exhibition featured 68 artworks that recognised and respected the ancestors and the First Peoples of the region, highlighting Hurley's diverse use of various mediums in his artistic practice. Notably, the project culminated in the acquisition of nine key artworks from the Hurley private collection for the Bundaberg Regional Galleries Collection and the addition of a gold *Wajgan* to the Gallery's exterior signage.

In awarding Bundaberg Regional Galleries as a Finalist in this category, the 2024 GAMAA judging panel recognised *Wajgan's Return: Bringing Ron Hurley Home* as an important exhibition on Country, that re-examined the legacy of a leading Australian, trailblazing artist.

Showcasing rarely seen materials, the exhibition contributed to expanding knowledge of local language, building on and strengthening connections with Traditional Elders, and provided space for family members and community to come together. The incorporation of contemporary responses by emerging First Nations artists was a strong addition.

Museums & Galleries Queensland (M&G QLD) Executive Director, Rebekah Butler said, "Bundaberg Regional Galleries and curator Angelina Hurley are to be congratulated for this important exhibition. The success of *Wajgan's Return: Bringing Ron Hurley Home* is testament to Bundaberg Regional Galleries' commitment to curating and presenting high-quality exhibitions that celebrate the rich artistic and cultural heritage of their region."

Ms Butler continued, "The 2024 Winners, Highly Commended and Finalists were selected from a strong field of nominations received from organisations, large and small, across Queensland. It is an honour to be shining a spotlight on the outstanding work of so many worthy individuals and organisations."

Now in its twentieth year, the GAMAA were established by Museums & Galleries Queensland to honour the achievements of our State's individuals and organisations in striving towards excellence.

The 2024 Winners received an exquisite trophy by far north Queensland artist, **Monique Burkhead**. Monique is of Polynesian, Maori and Australian heritage and lives in Cairns. She is passionate about conserving our natural environment and, through her art, hopes to raise awareness of its fragility and the impacts of climate change.

The 2024 GAMAA trophies are proudly supported by Brian Tucker.

The 2024 GAMAA are proudly supported by **Queensland Museum** and sponsored by **Public Galleries Queensland** and **Australian Museums and Galleries Association Queensland**.

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