

TRACKS

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Annual Report 2024

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First Nations Acknowledgement



We acknowledge that we live and work on Larrakia Land, and give respect to those who provide us with a link to understanding and living on this rich and ancient Country. We rejoice in their Elders past and present and are excited by the emerging leaders.

We acknowledge their request that we tread lightly upon this Country.

We also acknowledge the lands of other First Nations people on which we work, especially the Warlpiri people of Lajamanu.

We give recognition to all who have sung their songs, danced their dances, and placed their designs on this land.

A letter from the Chair

Tracks have fearlessly continued to give voice to our unique Territory culture by living the values of the company. We continue to celebrate the stories of our diverse origins and cultures while holding firm to our sense of place in the here and now.

We have had to say goodbye to some wonderful people this year who each tirelessly supported the work of the company. As funding dwindled, so did the ability to provide the assurance of sustainable employment. This is a sad but real truth of the Arts sector globally. The loss of funding has challenged us to seek strategic solutions, but we hang on to our values and commitment to the community by providing a space for artists to grow and develop new, fresh ideas and to showcase them to the wider community.

We boast new additions to our Artistic Leaders who bring with them a multi-faceted array of talents. This cross-artform cohort of gifted music composers, community theatre and performance mentors, Traditional and Indigenous dance and storytelling along with contemporary dance teachers and practitioners. We still have a strong focus on dance education that is accessible to everyone. Darwin is indeed lucky to have such a powerful team of gifted people.

Despite our challenges, Tracks remain a powerful force in the Top End community, and we continue to provide work of exemplary quality. Into the future, all arts organisations will need to seek support from the wider community. Please consider being a Tracks Ambassador by supporting our artists and company to continue the decades of performances and opportunities for our community. David Taylor





Governance

Core Staff

Artistic Director
David McMicken

Associate Artistic Director
Jess Devereux

Company Director
Sean Pardy

Dance Animateurs
Kelly Beneforti, SJ Spillett,
Jenelle Saunders

Production Manager
Duane Preston

Administrator
Debbie Jane Micaïran, Jocelyn
Tribe

Bookkeeper
Donna Mearns, It Figures

Auditor: AMW Audit

Committee

**Chair: David Taylor/ Max Dewa
Stretton**

Treasurer: Glenn Bernardin

Public Officer: Sean Pardy

Ordinary Committee Members

Anna Lindsay

Andrea Wicking

Ken Conway

Lachlan Spargo Peattie

Rachael Wallis

Sarah Rennie

Venaska Cheliah

**Ex-Officio: David McMicken, Sean
Pardy**



Our Vision

To give voice to Territory culture and to develop contemporary cultural expression through the movement arts in the Northern Territory.

Our Values

Respect for People

Our stories, truths and diverse heritage

Celebration of Place

Darwin with the deserts of Central Australia to the south and the tropics of South East Asia to the north

Evocation of Spirit

The vitality of living culture enriched by traditional and contemporary life

2024 at a glance...



52 ACTIONS



YOUTH LEADERS



SEA BREEZE



IWD



SPACE TIME



THE SHAK



FRESH TRACKS



CUSHION
CONCERRT



CLOUD SPLIT



MILPIRRI



MUSEUM
OF MYSTERIES



TRACKS

Finances

at a glance

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income			
Revenue	3	651,319	690,550
Total Income		651,319	690,550
Expenditures			
Direct program costs		(103,204)	(154,234)
Non-direct program costs		(258,049)	(244,754)
Salaries, wages and fees		(395,160)	(443,758)
Total Expenditures		(756,413)	(842,746)
Loss for the year	4	(105,094)	(152,196)

Tracks continued to incur operating deficits funded from its reserves to maintain operations in 2024. Tracks reduced its operating deficit by 31% from 2023 as revenue reduced by 6% offset by expenses reducing 10% compared to 2023. In 2024, Tracks operating loss of \$105K resulted in net assets declining by 15% to \$613K.

The decline in Tracks revenue relates to reductions in sales, donations and grant funding while reductions in expenditure were principally attributable to reductions in program expenditure. Tracks continues to maintain a healthy level of reserves to fund its short-term obligations with a current ratio of 3, meaning it holds 3 times more in liquid assets than its short-term obligations.

A return to surplus results will be required for Tracks to chart a sustainable financial path over the medium to long term.



Glenn Bernardin, Tracks Treasurer

Artistic report

2024 was the conclusion of the NT Government multi-year funding cycle and the last year of the Board-agreed spending of retained earnings. As a result, we are at the low point of our financial cycle and this impacted our programming. We decided to invest in our artists and let them create what was possible within the program. New works created were Cloud Split for the Darwin Festival, Milpirri Yinapaka and Sensorium in Lajamanu, and 5 short works for Fresh Tracks.

Spillett devised a youth program including training four youth leaders, Suburban Dance Jams with the SHAK Youth Hub, Museum of Mysteries with Darwin Symphony Orchestra, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, and three schools.

Our participation program saw the Dead Singers Dance Society and the Grey Panthers regularly workshop and perform.

The professional and skill development program was full with Space Time studio residencies, hosted residencies and mentored artist residencies. A group of Grey Panthers continued the Generating Divergence program with choreography and improvisational development. Fresh Tracks in the Darwin Fringe included new work drawn from this program and a guest dancer from Alice Springs.

With Kelly going on Parental Leave, Jenelle Saunders joined the team. And we officially farewelled Tim into his retirement proper with a cushion concert.

Artistic Director - David McMicken



2024 Artistic Program



22 Performances and showings total:

- Grey Panthers and DSDS at International Women's Day & Seabreeze Festival
- Suburban DANCE Jams BLOCK PARTY
- Darwin High School dance night
- Palmerston College Special Education Unit performance x 2
- DSDS3 at Darwin Fringe Festival Fundraiser
- Studio Residency showing The Brunettes (The Trio - working title)
- Ade Suharto residency showing
- Dancers Picnic

8 New Works created:

Cloud Split | Darwin Festival | 5 sold out shows

Milpirri Yinapaka | 1 show | remote community OF Lajamanu

52 Actions | MAGNT | 4 events

Fresh Tracks | 5 new works | DARWIN FRINGE FESTIVAL | 2 sold out shows

new works:

Tracks Dance Studio
16-18 August

Cloud Split

Cloud Split was made possible by the generous support of the Tracks Donor Circle

CREATIVE TEAM

Welcome to Country: Cyan Sue Lee

Concept / Artistic Direction: Jessica Devereux

Music Director: James Mangohig

Performers / Collaborators: Kelly Beneforti and SJ Spillett

Conversation / Dramaturgy: Britt Guy

Video / Lighting Designer: Duane Preston

Costume Designer: Irena Graesslin

Understudy: David McMicken

Exploring connection and tenderness, framed by imagery of the moody skies of the Top End, Cloud Split investigated the sublime unknowns of improvised performance, seeking to physicalise unpredictable natural phenomena. Devised by Jess Devereux in conversation with Britt Guy. Performed by SJ Spillett and Kelly Beneforti, with a lush experimental soundtrack by James Mangohig and environmental moving images of the NT by Duane Preston. A long-form project with an incremental development approach, developed across a 10 month time span. At the centre was an intimate performance in the Tracks Studio for the Darwin Festival, with a backdrop of mirrors and projection providing special effects. A love letter to the clouds.



new works:

Milpiri Yinapaka

Lajamanu Community
September 19th



Milpirri Yinapaka

We have been attempting to complete the Milpirri Cycle with Yinapaka since the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we did it. with two visits to the remote community and three weeks of workshops in the school, Milpirri involved a live performance by the youth and women of Lajamanu and the first Lajamanu screening of the Milpirri Sensorium film. It was performed on the community basketball court with the Milpirri banners as the backdrop.

Milpirri is an ongoing artistic and cultural partnership between Lajamanu Community and Tracks Dance grown from a 30-year collaboration. Milpirri links the energy of youth and the wisdom of the old, gaining a better understanding of Western and Warlpiri ways of learning.

Lajamanu is situated on the northern edge of the Tanami Desert. The Milpirri performance is radically local and is performed by and for the Warlpiri people.



Milpiri Yinapaka

CREATIVE TEAM

Creative Director: Wanta (Steve) Jampijinpa Patrick

Senior Elder: Jerry Jangala Patrick

Artistic Directors: David McMicken and Tim Newth

Music: Mark Peckham (Monkey Marc), and Rob Tremlett (Mantra)

Voiceovers: Steve Jampijinpa Patrick, Jerry Jangala Patrick, Maxwell Japanangka Gordon

Vocals: Lajamanu School students, 2020

Multimedia: Duane Preston

Production Manager: Duane Preston

Sound Technician: I Made Liam Bulalasia

Lighting Technician: Sean Pardy

Additional Production Support: Andre Sawenko, Tim Newth

Choreographers: Bec Reid and Jess Devereux (based on material originally created by Jordan Bretherton, Madeleine Brown, and SJ Spillett)



Developing: Artistic Practice



Professional and Skill Development

Space Time Residency
100 hours - 3 residents
(Flynn, Crystal, Debbie)

Mentored residency
Sheila Rose, First Nations

Supported Residency
Ade Suharto (Indonesian)

Hosted Residency
the Brunettes

Youth Leadership Program
90 HOURS

Practise Practice
35 hours

**Generating Divergence
(Grey Panthers)**
34 hours

Impro club / Lush Dance
25 hours / 6 hours



Fresh Tracks

July 14 Tracks Dance Studio

Fresh Tracks returned to Darwin Fringe, offering an exciting meeting place and performance platform for artists working with diverse styles, stories and concepts in choreography.

Fresh Tracks is a program of short, experimental dance works, expanding your vision of the moving body; alive and vibrant.

A place for refreshing ways of seeing, feeling and thinking. With diverse approaches to dance and choreography, Fresh Tracks is an opportunity to witness raw, intimate and generous performance.

Creative Team

Curator: Kelly Beneforti

Choreographers & Performers:
Sheila Rose and Kelly Beneforti
'Sliding Doors and Open
Windows'

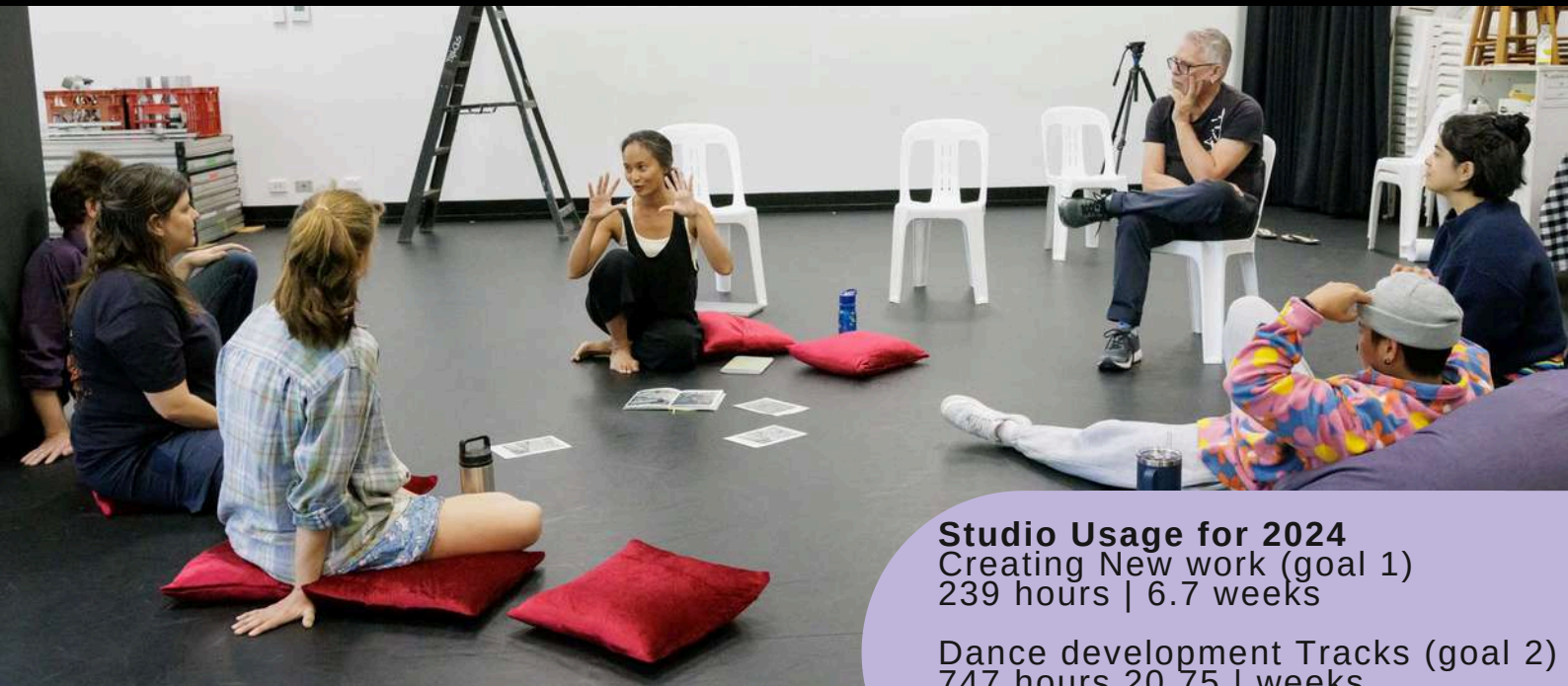
Clare Heath, Darryl Butler, David
McMicken, Lyn Minchin, Natina
Demetriou, Nikki Charlesworth-
Canning 'Va(porous)'

SJ Spillett, Sophia Hodges, Jules
Gabor, Rama Wisuda 'ABCD'
Miriam Nichols 'To Face The Sun'
Jenelle Saunders, Tara Schmidt
'Mapping The Glimmer'

Production: Duane Preston

Programme design: Jocelyn Tribe

Studio Residencies



Studio Usage for 2024

Creating New work (goal 1)
239 hours | 6.7 weeks

Dance development Tracks (goal 2)
747 hours 20.75 | weeks

Dance Development Sector (goal 3)
143.5 HOURS | 4 full-time weeks

SPACE TIME STUDIO RESIDENCY

Crystal Thomas, Flynn, Debbie Jane Micairan

Tracks offered subsidised studio space and time to NT independent movement artists to investigate and develop their ideas through access to time in Tracks space, during the Wet Season (Nov-Feb), with a Sharing at the conclusion. Space Time allows the development of practice in a self-led environment.

HOSTED RESIDENCY

Kate Mornane, Jenelle Saunders and Tara Schmidt continued their long-term collaborative explorations with weekly studio time over 2024. They concluded with an informal gathering with Tracks staff to discuss their key movement curiosities and future recommendations. They appreciated the studio time without the restrictions of having to make a work, allowing them to focus on their skill development, realisations of ideas and ongoing creative practice.

MENTORED RESIDENCY

Sheila Rose

Kelly Beneforti mentored First Nations dancer Sheila Rose concluding in a presentation in Fresh Tracks

GUEST RESIDENCY

Ade Suharto

"Connecting to the Tracks community during my time in Darwin enabled me to cherish a nugget of time in a formal dance space on a regular basis. The time helped organise my choreographic ideas towards my piece for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Annual Studio Usage

1129.75 hours

31.38 full-time weeks

Grey Panthers Darwin & Coomalie:
172 hours, 88 workshops

Dead singers dance society:
12 hours, 12 sessions

Participation: Dead Singers Dance Society & Grey Panthers

Grey Panthers

The Grey Panthers troupe for over 60s is a prime example of dance as a whole-of-life activity. They gather for a weekly dance class in Darwin (Friday) and Batchelor (Wednesday), from February - December. They are regular performers on the Darwin and surrounding region's calendar. Performances: Dancing in the Streets, International Women's Day March, Civic Park, Deckchair Cinema's 30th Birthday Celebrations, Cushion Concert - Tim Newth's Retirement event, Fresh Tracks, Darwin Fringe Festival, and Coomalie Christmas Dinner.

In 2024, David McMicken formed a weekly supplemental research and development group, continuing the Generating Divergence project, dedicated to creative devising and improvisation.

Dead Singers Dance Society

The ever-popular "DSDS" is a 4-week dance course where participants learn a fun and achievable dance routine that celebrates the incredible music of a legendary, dearly departed singer.

The singers celebrated this year were Sridevi, Chrissy Amphlett, Aretha Franklin, and Marie Fredriksson (International Women's Day performance), Bon Scott (Seabreeze performance), and Maurice White (Fringe Fundraiser performance).



DARWIN FRINGE FESTIVAL FUNDRAISER
by Rachael Chisholm

2024



SEA BREEZE FESTIVAL 2024

Youth Leaders Community Animateuring with Spillett

The Youth Leadership Program was designed for young people in the realm of dance or movement, of an intermediate level of experience in any style. It was tailored for individuals who had showcased leadership qualities, offering them a supportive environment to meet weekly, nurture their curiosity, and take bold creative risks. They performed at Seabreeze, Dance 24 Fundraiser at Darwin High, and Fresh Tracks in the Darwin Fringe Festival. Youth Leaders: Jules Gabor, Maddy Lefebvre, Rama Wisuda, Sophia Hodges



Suburban Dance Jams

A Partnership with The Shak and Sietta Creative

SDJ fostered and activated dance for young people living in Darwin's northern suburbs. Dance is a healthy, inclusive, physical activity, that promotes collective spirit, group cohesion and creative thinking. SDJ ran throughout 2024 with workshops after school during school term and during school holidays, culminating in a Block Party for young people, their families, and friends at the end of the year. SDJ provided opportunities for local artists to connect with underrepresented and resourced young people who lack access to dance or music workshops, especially rapping and music producing. The local artists involved shared knowledge and inspirations, and demonstrated possibilities outside of sport and academics. The Block Party was a testament to relationships built over time; the trust and confidence the young people had developed to perform in front of their peers.

Proudly supported by Territory Family, Housing and Communities by Darwin Youth Services

Artistic Team: SJ Spillett, Iselle Chua, James Mangohig, Riley P, Synta

Youth Support Team: Britt Guy, I Made Liam Budalasia, Tahlia Biggs, Jess Devereux, The Shak Youth Workers

Production Team: Duane Preston, Ward Hancock and Heniz Dumbleton (Speargrass Hifi),

Sam Gulliver, Sean Pardy
Guest Performers: Jimmy Rambles, PhlTheBeatSchool workshops





School Workshops

Museum of Mysteries

Spillet ran dance programs in the following schools:
Palmerston Senior College (Special Education Unit),
Casuarina Senior College, Sanderson Middle School (Artist in
School Grant), Good Shepherd College, Milkwood Steiner
School, Nightcliff Middle School, Haileybury Rendall School,
Lajamanu School, Darwin Middle School

Museum of Mysteries. A Choreographed Quest for Curious
Young Minds. Movement workshops were facilitated by SJ
Spillett throughout October 2024. Young learners were guided
through curiosities of history, culture, and nature by experts at
the Museum, before joining with DSO musicians to create
exciting short dance performances inspired by their new found
knowledge. The performance, with audiences on picnic rugs,
was held on the lawns at MAGNT and combined music and
movement, sparking creativity and inspiring children to explore
the world around them.

Staff Farewells



Tim's Cushion Concert

"True happiness is something that you don't have by yourself, you have true happiness when it's radiating from the people all around you." - Tim Newth. We celebrated Tim's 35 years working at Tracks. It was our pleasure to have successfully kept this one a secret right down to the last moment as he walked in the studio. Huge thanks to everyone that joined us and to those who contributed words and thoughts from afar to make sure we sent him off right.

Jess Devereux

"My love for Tracks and Darwin runs deep. After 12 years with the company, I'm filled with gratitude. November 22 marks my final day as Associate Artistic Director. It's been fun! I'll miss the close-knit relationships with the Tracks team, as well as collaborating with the dedicated dancers, makers and volunteers. Tracks is more than just a company; it's a family. The people give it soul. I believe it genuinely fosters a unique space in the NT for artistry, personal growth and celebrating our interconnectedness. Our core values of People, Place, Spirit deeply resonate with me and have circled around my heart. Living and working in the tropics on beautiful Larrakia land has been an immense privilege and enriching journey."

SJ Spillett

"I could go on forever on how my time at Tracks truly shaped me as a person since returning back home to Darwin and I will never be able to find the right words. It's never really a goodbye or "the end of an era". My relationship with this company goes back to little 15yo Spillett and in true Darwin fashion it has ebbed and flowed throughout the years. But during these last three years I have had the opportunity to be on staff; I have achieved and experienced all the things I could've hoped for and never thought I would. It has been nothing short of wholesome. It's more than just dancing for me, it's the people I have been blessed to come across and work with, the places I've been, the smiles of all the young people, being looked after by all the Grey Panthers and giving back to the community. I can't express enough the amount of love, support and nurturing I have received both as an artist but also as a human being. I cannot thank Tracks enough."

Kelly Beneforti

Towards the end of the Year, Kelly took Parental leave to bring her second child into the world. Jenelle Saunders took on Kelly's work.

Sector Development

Tracks believe in a vibrant and active sector built on a legacy that is woven into our community fabric. Predominantly based in Darwin, we extend our reach to include other places in the Northern Territory, and nationally. Our Studio, our archives and our in-house human artistic resources form the solid base for our input into the wider sector.

Great use was made of our dance studio for non-Tracks activities. Our residency program supports the development of the independent dance sector, including guest Indonesian artist Ade Suharto. We created a year-long Youth Dance Leaders program implemented by SJ Spillett and provided teacher in-service professional development workshops. Our education program was rolled out in seven schools.

Tracks is a member of the Network of National Dance Organisations (NONDO) and had input into the Industry Skills Advisory Council NT (ISACNT), Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA), and Theatre Network Australia. We provided input into the new NT Government's Arts Strategy, were guests on Jiawei Zhu Podcast series Dance and the World (two episodes), and hosted our second Dancers' Picnic.

Announced in December Detour Residency is a major opportunity, investing in two national independent dance artists, to mobilise and engage in a sustained program for their personal creative development, in a spirit of reciprocity, with six Australian dance organisations: Dance Makers Collective (Western Sydney, NSW), Dancenorth, Townsville, QLD), GUTS (Alice Springs, NT), Tasdance (Launceston, TAS), Tracks (Darwin, NT) and Strut Dance (Perth, WA). Feras Shaheen will partake in a three-week residency with Tracks and the Darwin Community in 2025.

Creating new work

328 hours

Tracks dance development

747 hours

Sector Dance Development

143 hours

- 104 Education workshops in Darwin schools
- 42 in Lajamanu school
- 2x Teacher PD
- Additional 144 hours of studio use via external hires (4 full-time weeks)



Artistic Leadership Team

We formed the Artistic Leadership team for 2025 and beyond; a collaborative cross-artform team will lead the programming and new directions. The Team consists of: Alyson Evans - community arts, storytelling, and social impact. James Mangohig - music producer. Jenelle Saunders - Dancer, choreographer, and Animateur. Rachael Wallis: choreographer, dancer, First Nations.



NT Performing Arts Awards

Tracks had 3 Winners

Kelly Beneforti - Best Performer,

A longtime dance animateur with Tracks Dance Company, Kelly Beneforti is celebrated for her powerful and dynamic presence in the NT arts scene. Known for her inclusive and movement-based approach, she connects with dancers across various styles and communities. Kelly's nomination highlights her remarkable performance in 'Cloud Split,' where she delivered an extraordinary show while eight months pregnant, exemplifying her commitment to storytelling, creativity, and resilience in the performing arts.

Tim Newth - Ultimate Legend

Since 1988, Tim has had a profound impact on the NT's performing arts, as co-founder of Tracks Dance and in collaborating with Lajamanu's Aboriginal community. Recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia, Tim's inclusive approach and commitment to local creativity has fostered long-term community relationships and nurtured Australia's longest-running seniors dance troupe.

Duane Preston - Behind The Scenes Production

As Production Manager at Tracks Dance Company, Duane has built strong connections throughout the Top End. He started as a musician and sound technician and now brings audio-visual expertise to productions like 'Cloud Split' and 'Milpirri Sensorium.' Duane's collaborations with remote communities and passion for capturing NT's landscapes in photography reflect his dedication to fostering artistic excellence across the NT.

Research, Legacy and Archives

Ongoing research has taken place with two Universities: Auckland University and Professor Nicholas Rowe, And the University of New South Wales with Professor Jennifer Biddle and Dr Sudipta Dowsett.

Both are leading toward publishing books; Prof. Rowe is writing about Tracks' alternate and community approaches to choreography and performance, while Prof Biddle and Dr Dowsett are creating a book about Milpirri and our work with Wanta Jampijinpa Patrick.



Tracks website remains a major archive and legacy for the company. It has been drawing attention from researchers and we are looking at new ways of using the digital knowledge base into the future.



Research:
University of NSW- ARC
Linkage - MILPIRRI
AUCKLAND University -
Alternate
CHOREOGRAPHIC
practice

Conversations:
Guest on 2 podcasts
Interview with Jess
Devereux

Report against goals as stated in the Tracks constitution

Goal 1: To create, produce and develop original movement-based work that reflects culture

(i) developing and encouraging expressions of identity and place;

(ii) exploring the relationship between dance and other forms of cultural expression;

(iii) working towards excellence in the movement arts with artists of traditional, Western and non-Western training in a professional context;

(iv) further developing artistic and cultural exchanges with Aboriginal communities.

Achieved through:

Cloud Split

Fresh Tracks new works

Milpirri Yinapaka and Sensorium

Goal 2: Facilitate the development of dance and cultural activity in the Northern Territory

Achieved through:

Dead Singers Dance Society - 3 short courses

Grey Panthers - 2 classes per week X 42 weeks - Darwin and Coomalie

2024 Studio use 1129.75 hours, equivalent to 31.4 full-time weeks usage (36 hour week)

Residency program

Space Time Studio Residency - 3 residents

Hosted Residency - Ada Suharto

Mentored Residency - Sheila Rose (First Nations)

Guest Residency - The Brunettes

Goal 3: To develop the profile of Tracks within the Territory, Nationally and Internationally

Achieved through:

University of New South Wales Arc Linkage research grant and presentations

Website

Documentation (Photos & Videos)

Having a year-round active social media presence (more engagement)

Articles / Media

EDM's

Performances

Radio Interviews

Advertising and editorials

Goal 4: To have a healthy and responsible organisation that realises Tracks artist and community goals

Health:

Applied and Secured 5 year organisational funding from Arts NT
Annual Staff Check-in and review completed
Policy & Procedures maintained and reviewed throughout the year
All staff First Aid Trained
2 Staff Company Development Days held
Positive and safe workplace environment created

Responsible:

100% Funding acquittals
Engaged and well attended board
Board meetings attendance > 75%
All staff who are working with children hold current Ochre Cards
Completed regular Test and Tag of all equipment
Insurance current and reviewed
Contracts in place for all staff
Financial reserves maintained above 20% of turnover (2024 approximately 92%)

Thanks too:

Company Partners:



Project Partners:



Supporting Partners:



Photo credits:

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