



Roebourne's Final Songs for Freedom Concert Leaves a Legacy of Joy, Creativity and Hope

Annual celebration trusts songs of peace, hope, and freedom will live on in a new generation

Big hART and the community of Ieramugadu (Roebourne) are honoured to invite you to the Songs for Freedom concert on Saturday 21 September from 5pm. This uplifting concert of original songs created by an intercultural group of artists—many from the Pilbara town of Roebourne—is a one-of-a-kind celebration of Country, culture, and community overflowing with generosity, joy, and hope.

Songs for Freedom is a legacy event established in 2010 as Murru before transforming into Songs for Peace (2018 to 2021), and then continuing as Songs for Freedom from 2023. This year marks the end of this incredible 14-year project, with concerts in Roebourne (21 September) and Perth (12 October). Guided by Lucky Oceans' inspired musical direction, Patrick Churnside's impassioned tjaabi singing is beautifully integrated with wholehearted performances from guest artists Kutcha Edwards, Jay Jerome, Kankawa Nagarra, and Prodikal-I (Warren Foster Jnr).

Throughout 2023 Songs for Freedom completed a highly acclaimed national tour performing at Perth Festival, Barangaroo (Sydney), Melbourne Recital Centre, Llewelyn Hall ANU (Canberra), Darwin Festival, MONA FOMA (Launceston), and its hometown of Roebourne. Many of the songs produced from the project are preserved in an album that was celebrated as an **ABC Country Music Album of the Week** in June 2023, as well as being shortlisted for the Musicians Making a Difference Award by the **2023 National Live Music Awards**.

Since 2010 Big hART has delivered creative workshops for the Roebourne community, including the school prison, aged care, youth centres, and on country. The Songs for Freedom album and concert series is one of many artistic outputs the community has produced in collaboration with Big hART to showcase and promote Roebourne's culture, creativity, resilience and strength.

Performer and Roebourne community member Allery Sandy says:

"I felt privileged and honored to be part of the family that was grieving at that time—it's been a long journey. When you open your heart and listen to the songs, what is being sung it can touch you it must make you feel emotional... I think about the songs of this little town, but [with] the big heart and this is exactly what this it's like in Roebourne.

"For the young people to be involved this year. It's like encouraging them to step out and be strong for who they are and not be afraid just because you're an Aboriginal person. We want to inspire young people and give them the encouragement and to be strong for themselves and for the community and to carry on what we have started."

Musical Director Lucky Oceans says:

"Along the way, I've had the pleasure and privilege of being a part of many songwriting workshops in Roebourne, Roebourne Gaol and in other Aboriginal communities around Australia. It was my great joy to bring artists that I'd worked with into the



Photo credits Ben Murphy and Jessica Allen, 2023

concerts – Kutcha Edwards, Kankawa Nagarra, Archie Roach, Paul Kelly, Vikki Thorn and many more, and watch them connect with Roebourne’s deep cultural traditions. It’s a show that brings people from all over the country together to sing Roebourne’s trials and triumphs in a microcosm of the universal quest for freedom. And one that teaches us that there is so much more to learn from the riches of evolving Aboriginal culture than we have been led to believe.”

Big hART’s Creative Director & CEO, Scott Rankin says:

“Over the last 14 years, since we began the music program, Roebourne has proven itself to be a wonderful hothouse of natural creativity and talent. More than a hundred songs written, many recorded and performed all over the country. This music will continue to pour from the community, and hopefully the young people will carry it forward in new ways, with new sounds. Such a privilege to have been able to witness this expression of Pilbara talent, across generations, both in the community and the prison.”

Songs for Freedom has its foundations as a healing gesture for the family of 16-year-old John Pat, whose 1983 death in a Roebourne police cell triggered the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. 28 September 2024 is the 41st anniversary of John Pat’s passing.

Despite the tragedy it was born from, Songs for Freedom is moving, optimistic and full of a hope for a thriving future for Roebourne. It serves as a shining example of what can be accomplished through creative diversionary practice underpinned by strong cultural leadership.

Datess:

ROEBOURNE - Saturday September 21, 5:00pm - Food, 6pm - Concert

Ngurin Cultural Centre, Roe St, Roebourne

FREE ENTRY - No bookings required

PERTH - Saturday October 12, 5-7pm Food trucks & cultural activities, 7-9.30pm Concert

Dyoondalup, Point Walter Reserve, Perth

FREE ENTRY - No bookings required

About Big hART

Big hART’s work exists to restore justice and disadvantage through innovative, transformational projects. Big hART uses film, theatre, documentary, events, music, podcasts, apps, digital media, and augmented and virtual reality to tell powerful stories - ensuring that the voices of the powerless can influence decision makers. No issue is too hard. Big hART’s projects have highlighted issues of homelessness, addiction, slavery at sea, domestic violence, inequality and the intergenerational injustice faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Big hART supports First Nations communities to tell their own stories, enables young women to be change-makers in family violence hotspots, backs young people to create a new future for their planet, and works with isolated communities and prisons, delivering exceptional community driven project which are proven, evidence-based and innovative.

To read more about Songs for Freedom visit: <https://www.bighart.org/projects/songs-for-freedom/>

To learn more about Big hART visit: <https://www.bighart.org/>

For more information on the New Roebourne project visit: <https://newroebourne.bighart.org/>

Big hART acknowledges and expresses deep gratitude to the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Bibbulmun and Whadjuk people as traditional custodians of the country where we work and perform.

Interviews, images and footage available on request



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