



# **GURRUMUL YUNUPINGU FOUNDATION 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



# BUSINESS OVERVIEW

Business name: Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation (GYF)

Business structure: Australian Public Company

ABN: 25 163 166 283

ACN: 163 166 283

Business location: L1 66 Smith St Darwin 0800

Date established: 16 May 2013

## Directors

Rob Collins appointed 2018

Mark Grose (Chairperson and Public Officer) appointed 2013 (resigned 18 July 2023)

Michael Hohnen appointed 2013 (Leave of absence granted from the board 18 July 2023)

Barbara Pitman appointed 2013

Professor Fiona Stanley AC appointed 2014

Damian Trotter appointed 2015

Paul Ah Chee 'Ngala' appointed 2023

Jennifer Nixon appointed 2023

Donald Wininba Ganambarr appointed 2023

## Committee of Management

Mark Grose (Chairperson) appointed 2013 (resigned 18 July 2023)

Michael Hohnen appointed 2013 ((Leave of absence granted from 18 July 2023)

Barbara Pitman appointed 2013

## Services

The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation provides a single service – to deliver and/or support long term programs and activities to engage and support young Indigenous Australians – particularly in remote communities – that build on their strengths and give them hope for the future.

# VISION STATEMENT

The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation's vision is to alleviate poverty, ill-health and substance abuse, disadvantage, lack of education and employment opportunities, bullying and youth suicide in remote communities.

## MISSION

The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation's mission mirrors its' service, which to carry out and achieve its vision by engaging young people in remote communities in activities that build on their strengths, enabling them to contribute to culturally vibrant and sustainable communities and give them hope for the future, through approaches which include:

- Engaging young people by supporting community-initiated and managed programs;
- Supporting artistic, traditional, and contemporary community projects and developing artistic partnerships with mainstream industry bodies;
- Building on the strengths and existing skills of young people in the visual arts, music, dance, social media and IT, sport, cultural knowledge, and languages;
- Assisting young people with income generation and social support;
- Respecting community approaches to learning and the dissemination of information.

# KEY PRINCIPLES

The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation believes that change can be achieved through adherence to key principles as points of difference from much current service delivery. All the Foundation programs must:

- Be community devised and driven, with long-term planning and longevity always the goal.
- Value the importance of community languages, the inherent cultural knowledge they embrace, and celebrate their use.
- Employ Indigenous artists and trainers, especially from the local communities involved in the program, alongside guest/visiting artists, specialists, and trainers.
- Ensure that guest program leaders have appropriate cross-cultural awareness and knowledge, and the support of local language speakers on the ground.
- Build community capacity to continue activities, so skills remain in the community and ultimately lower the cost of delivery in remote locations.

## Goals and Objectives

- Find new approaches and solutions to the well documented, serious social effects of poverty, disadvantage, ill health, limited education, and employment opportunities in remote Indigenous communities.
- Enable community involvement in the development of Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation funded programs, to determine what they want, and what they are interested in.
- Commit to long-term relationships and programs within communities, avoiding the one-off or 'fly-in fly-out' delivered outside local perspectives and needs.
- Ensure all Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation activities and programs are informed by the needs and aspirations of young Indigenous people and community leaders.
- Provide opportunities in areas where young Indigenous people might excel and build on existing knowledge and capacities such as multi-media, IT, dance and music, arts and design, land care and conservation, cultural tourism as well as languages/interpreting (since most are multilingual).
- Compile evidence on social outcomes and benefits, collected from community networks, the wider community and service providers (e.g. local schools and health clinics).
- Provide evidence that young people are devising and initiating their own activities and engaging with community networks to secure their delivery by the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation.

# DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Despite a major Australian constitutional disappointment, 2023 has been a productive and rewarding year for the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation.

This year our **Indigenous Children's Songs Project** came to fruition with the recording of thirteen beautiful Indigenous children's songs.

Further, supported by our foundation, new skills were learnt during the annual **Barunga Beats** workshop, which was enjoyed by all the student participants at the Barunga School.

While we sadly said farewell to Mark Grose, Chair and Co-founder of the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation, we were fortunate to appoint three new directors to our Board who will reinforce strong cultural authority:

## **Donald Wininba Ganambarr**

Don is a senior Yolŋu man from Galiwin'ku and Gurrumul's brother-in-law. His status is that of a cultural leader, also known as Djungaya. In that role he has responsibility for cultural and family matters involving Gurrumul's family. Recently, Don co-directed *Bungul*, based on Gurrumul's posthumously released album, *Djarimirri* (Child of the Rainbow). Receiving glowing reviews, *Bungul* was an opportunity for audiences to become engrossed in Yolŋu music and dance, combined with European musical traditions.

## **Jennifer Nixon**

Jenny is an Amnatyerr, Kaytetye and Alyawarr woman from Alice Springs. She is currently the Director at Central Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) for Central Australia. Over the years, Jenny has accumulated skills in negotiating information and practice in education, social services, law, governance, and health between two cultures. Jenny's work history harmonises with her desire to improve opportunities for children, families, students, and the wider community. Combined with this is a strong motivation to see Aboriginal cultures shared, incorporated, and recognised more widely in education, health, support, and communication networks.

## **Paul Ah Chee 'Ngala'**

Paul is a First Nations Arrernte Elder from Alice Springs. His ancestry is Aboriginal, Chinese, and European. Allied always with a clear sense of community and family, Paul has worked in the fields of sport, business and music. His crucial goal is to contribute wherever possible in providing opportunities and pathways for individuals or groups to become economically self-sufficient, to build capacity to make choices about their future and day-to-day living. Currently Paul is embarking on an exciting re-entry into the creative industries which includes music and film.

Paul, Jenny, and Don join our long-term board members:

### **Rob Collins**

Of Tiwi Island descent, Rob was born and raised in Darwin. He graduated from the National Institute for Dramatic Arts in 2013. Rob's theatre credits include a national tour of The Lion King in the role of Mufasa and as Lysander in the Sydney Theatre Company's A Midsummer Night's Dream. His film and television roles are prolific. In 2017, he won the TV Week Logie Award in the Best New Talent category for his role as Jack in The Wrong Girl (2016). Recent leading roles have been in the ABC's award-winning drama Total Control (2019-2024), the award-winning film The Drover's Wife (2021) and Limbo (2023).

### **Michael Hohnen**

Michael has worked in the Northern Territory (NT) for over 20 years, in the fields of music and teaching, with more than 20 remote Indigenous communities. As a classically trained double bass player, he was employed as Coordinator of VET Contemporary Music Certificate for Charles Darwin University which incorporated course delivery into remote Indigenous communities. He established the independent record label – Skinnyfish Music Pty Ltd together with Mark Grose and has since produced numerous ARIA award-winning albums (Gurrumul, Saltwater Band and Nabarlek) as well as receiving his own ARIA nomination for Producer of the Year (2008). Michael was awarded Australian of the Year (NT) in 2013 (in partnership with Mark Grose).

### **Professor Fiona Stanley AC**

Fiona is the Founding Director and Patron of the Telethon Kids Institute, Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Western Australia, Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne. Trained in maternal and child health, epidemiology, and public health, she has spent her career researching the causes of major childhood illnesses such as birth defects. A powerful advocate for Aboriginal social justice, Fiona was named Australian of the Year in 2003 and in 2006 was made a UNICEF Australia Ambassador for Early Childhood Development. Fiona is one of the most esteemed living Australians. In 1996 she was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and appointed a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia, Australia's highest civil honour.

### **Damian Trotter**

Damian began his music industry career in 1981 working at CBS Records. When Sony restarted its publishing arm in 1992, Damian was appointed Managing Director of Sony Publishing Australia. Following the merger of Sony Music Publishing with EMI Music Publishing in 2012, he was appointed Managing Director of the combined publishing companies. Damian has served on the Sony Publishing

Australia board since 2000 and is the current Deputy Chair. He is also a Director and former Chair of the APRA AMCOS (music rights management organisation) Board and is a Director of AMPAL (industry collective for music publishers in Australasia). Damian worked closely with the singer Gurrumul Yunupingu and an array of remote Indigenous musicians to help build and support their careers, bringing their music to national and international audiences.

Finally, myself, **Barbara Pitman**. I lived and worked with remote Aboriginal communities for ten years and feel strongly about improving Indigenous health, well-being, and rights.

The related fields I have worked in include primary health care, community cultural development, community arts, and vocational education and training. The skills, knowledge, and conceptual frameworks I acquired were applied to the development of high-quality products and strategies, many of which were for Indigenous communities.

I believe there is great benefit in having board directors with different backgrounds, skills, ideas, and experience. A diverse board brings varied ideas, experiences, and knowledge and as a collective, it can lead to the development of inspired original projects.

This will be my last year with the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation. I've been on the Foundation's board since it was founded in 2013, and for the last ten years I have seen several wonderful programs for young Indigenous people flourish. I am very proud of the work that the Foundation has undertaken or supported. I would like to thank all my fellow board members, and all the people and organisations who have supported us. I wish you all the very best. To all young Indigenous people, especially those living in remote communities I respectfully cite this Indigenous Australian quote<sup>1</sup>:

“Believe you can and hold firmly onto your dreams”

**Barbara Pitman**  
**Deputy Chair**  
**Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation**  
**14 May 2024**



*The Galiwin'ku Festival was held during the week of June 24, 2019. The Festival was designed as a healthy lifestyle event, with health messages embedded in all the activities.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://barayamal.com.au/a-collection-of-inspiring-australian-aboriginal-proverbs/> Accessed 14 May 2024

# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

After several years of occasional volunteer work for the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation this year, I was hired as the part-time Executive Officer. I started work in March 2023 and I already feel like a piece of the furniture (my own) as I work from home.

I am very proud to work for the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation and to be of assistance, even in a small way, to carry out the late Gurrumul Yunupingu's mission which is to engage and support young Indigenous Australians, particularly in remote communities, through long term programs and activities that build on their strengths and give them hope for the future.

This year the Foundation celebrated 10 years in operation and given its small size, and limited resources, it has undertaken and/or supported a diverse range of programs for Indigenous youth in this period.

It's a good time to name many of the Foundation's projects and contributions:

- The Barunga Fashion Parade – Young Women's Self Esteem Project 2014
- Barunga Beats
- The Barunga Festival Circus Project 2014
- The Galiwin'ku Healthy Lifestyle Festival
- Barunga Festival
- Remote Young Women's Program 2015
- Cyclone Lam Recovery Concert – Elcho Island
- Music, Language and Culture Workshops
- Junba Dance Workshop at 2019 Mowanjum Festival
- The Indigenous Children's Songs Project



*Junba Dance Workshop at 2019  
Mowanjum Festival*

Details about these programs can be accessed here:

<https://gurrumulfoundation.org.au/our-programs/>

In 2023, our focus was on completing and acquitting the Indigenous Children Project. Funding for new projects was not sought as it was important that we use all our existing resources to complete the project which had been generously supported by the Northern Territory Government, philanthropic trusts, and public donations.

Administrative work undertaken for the project included drafting the project plan budget and reporting template. Other work included updating the Foundation's policies and procedures, writing new ones, updating the website's text, and writing reports for the trusts and foundations who funded the Indigenous Children's Song Project.



Thank you to Michael Hohnen who took leave from the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation board to lead this amazing project and to the singers Jill Nganjmirra, Salome Nabarlambarl, Vanessa Nabarlambarl and Jean Burrunali, the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre, the musicians and everyone else involved.

Beginning a new job is always exciting including the challenges. I would like to thank Barbara Pitman for all her support and advice. There is truth in cliches, I could not have completed my first year without Barbara.

For the past ten years, Barbara has voluntarily stewarded the Foundation through good and difficult times, using her experience and skills to provide advice about the way forward, and to wisely problem solve whenever required. She will be missed by everyone associated with the Foundation.

A. Superina  
Executive Officer  
14 May 2024



*Barunga Fashion Parade – Young Women’s Self Esteem Project 2014*

# SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES IN 2023

## Indigenous Children's Songs Project

### Background

The importance of keeping traditional Australian Indigenous music and songs alive has been discussed with Indigenous communities over the life of the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation and well before. There is strong evidence that Australian Indigenous languages and music are becoming endangered.

The United Nations expert group on Indigenous languages has stated:

“Through policies of assimilation, dispossession of lands, discriminatory laws and actions, indigenous languages in all regions face the threat of extinction.”<sup>2</sup>

This is particularly the case for Indigenous Australian languages:

“One of the world's fastest rates of language loss is in Australia. Indigenous languages in Australia comprise only 2% of languages spoken in the world but represent 9% of the world's critically endangered languages.

More than 250 Indigenous languages and over 750 dialects were originally spoken. However, as some experts estimate, only 40 languages are still spoken, with just 12 being learned by children”<sup>3</sup>.

### The Project

As a way of helping to give Indigenous languages and songs a future, in consultation with Indigenous communities, the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation developed the Indigenous Children's Song Project. The key goal of the project was ***To collect, translate and record traditional Indigenous children's songs***

Funding was applied for and received by government and philanthropic organisations to undertake the project, and it all seemed set to go ahead. But this was in 2019 and the emergence of COVID-19 the year later threw all plans into disarray.

However, this year the project proceeded, and the outcomes surpassed our hopes. Working closely with Indigenous singers from the Wildflower band, project leader Michael Hohnen recovered and professionally recorded thirteen Indigenous children's songs primarily for the Bininj, the Aboriginal Australian people of West Arnhem Land. The project was significantly supported by the Bininj Kunwok Regional

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<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/04/Indigenous-Languages.pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/04/Indigenous-Languages.pdf) Accessed 6 May 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://theconversation.com/we-are-on-the-brink-of-losing-indigenous-languages-in-australia-could-schools-save-them-184736> Accessed 6 May 2024

Language and Culture Centre who assisted the singers and worked on the transcriptions and translations of all the songs into the Kunwinjku language to ensure cultural accuracy.



L – R Jean Burrunali Salome Nabarlambarl, Jill Nganjmirra, Vanessa Nabarlambarl,

The finished songs will be given to their Indigenous owners and housed in the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre. The lyrics and placements of Kunwinjku words take time to be negotiated and this process is respected. At the time of writing we are awaiting final approvals, after which the songs will be posted on the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation website:

<https://gurrumulfoundation.org.au/>

The songs are beautiful in their own right but they also have importance beyond the wonderful singing, lyrics, music, and production. As stated by Indigenous academic Associate Professor Associate Professor Clint Bracknell:

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affirm that performance, languages, and associated ways of knowing country are fundamental to positive health outcomes and identity... It has never been more important to understand and appreciate the links between Indigenous performance, language, landscapes, and social cohesion...<sup>5</sup>.*

To our knowledge, this is the largest repertoire of Indigenous children songs sung in an Indigenous language to be professionally recorded. The songs will help to keep the Kunwinjku language alive.

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<sup>4</sup> Duane Preston photographed all the Indigenous Children Song's Project including the front cover photograph

<sup>5</sup> <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about/connect-us/make-difference/songs-australia#:~:text=Songs%20are%20important%20for%20transmitting,knowledge%2C%20and%20many%20other%20things,Accessed> 14 May 2024



## **SONG LIST\***

**BARNDOL DJA MADDJURN (Carpet Snake)**

**DALKKEN (Dingo)**

**DANA DANA (Crying Baby)**

**DJAKARNA (Jabiru)**

**DJANAY BOKEN (Yellow spotted monitor)**

**KALAWAN DJA DJANAY (Gould's Sand Monitor and Yellow spotted monitor)**

**KARNUBIRR (Fresh water mussels)**

**KURDUKADJI (Emu)**

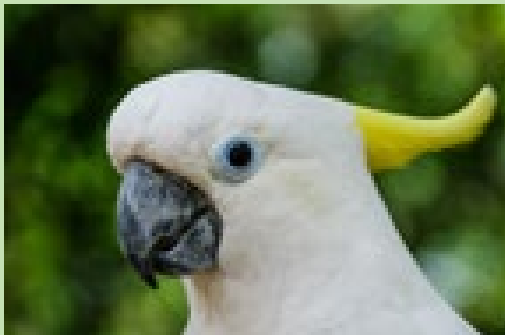
**NABARLEK BADBONG (Short eared rock wallaby)**

**NAWALABIK DJA NANGORDYAWOK (Story about two men)**

**NGANABBARRU (Buffalo)**

**NGARRADJ (White Cockatoo)**

**YOK (Bandicoot)**



\*Please note the spelling of the songs has not been finalised yet. The final versions will be posted at: <https://gurrumulfoundation.org.au/project/indigenous-childrens-songs/>

# Barunga Beats

An annual event, run at the Barunga School, located in Katherine, this week-long workshop aims to further hone the musical skills of Barunga's students.

One of the best parts of the program is that the students can practice the skills they have learnt at the workshop - at the Barunga Blue Light Disco, which immediately follows the Barunga Beats workshop, and kickstarts the annual Barunga Festival.



*Barunga School students with Clarence workshopping DJ skills together*

In the last few years, the students have expressed great interest in learning more about being a DJ. So, this year the workshop began with the Barunga School students helping the program leader, Clarence Playford to choose the tunes they would like to hear at the 2023 Barunga Blue Light Disco.

Following, Clarence ran two days of dedicated DJ skills workshops including sound engineering, mixing of songs, and stylistic taste with 15 students from Years 9 -12.

The Barunga Beats program ran from the morning of Monday 4 June and ended on the evening of 9 June when the 2023 Barunga Blue Light Disco was held. Here the DJ skills of those who participated in the program were demonstrated.

As a test run on the Thursday, at lunchtime, a disco was held so that many Barunga School students could have a go at being DJs. Any glitches were resolved, ready for the big event on Friday. On the night, four students were in charge of setting up and running the disco. The other students provided additional support.

Like last year, it was great to see an increase in the number of female participants in the program.

Thanks to everyone involved, the disco was a huge success and there is now a new group of young people with DJ and event management skills. A big thank you too to everyone who donated via our website which funded the Barunga Beats program this year.

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2023

The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation (GYF) finished the 2023 financial year with a surplus of \$26,714 (2022: \$397), increasing the net equity position to \$282,753 (2022: \$245,972).

GYF's cash position as at 31 December 2023 decreased to \$299,685 (2022 \$321,682) and liability for unexpended grants decreased to \$16,932 (2022: \$ 79,429).

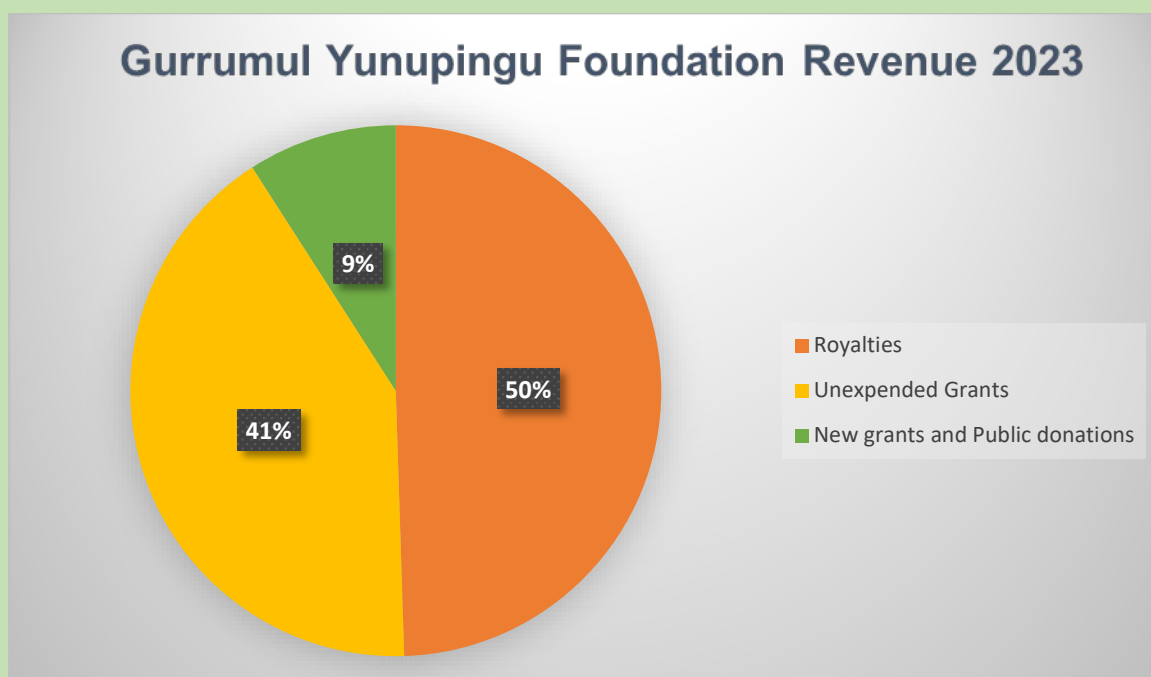
## Revenue

Overall, the Foundation's total revenue for the year was \$154,366 (2022: \$ 20,525), which was 87% higher than the previous year.

Much of this is attributed to the payments of royalties (increased by 96.5%) which had not been attributed in 2022.

Applications for funding were not sought as the Foundation's focus was on undertaking and acquitting the Indigenous Children's Songs Project and website donations in 2021 were sufficient to cover the Barunga Beats program for two years.

Royalties received made up 49% of the total revenue, unexpended grants – 41%, new grants and public donations - 9%.



## Expenditure

**Operational expenditure** for the Foundation totalled: \$50,579. This was a 50% increase from the previous year (2022: \$20,525). In 2023, funds were directed towards the Executive Officer's wage, superannuation, essential software, GYF insurance, previous auditor's costs, Workcover costs, payroll tax.

### Indigenous Children's Songs Project

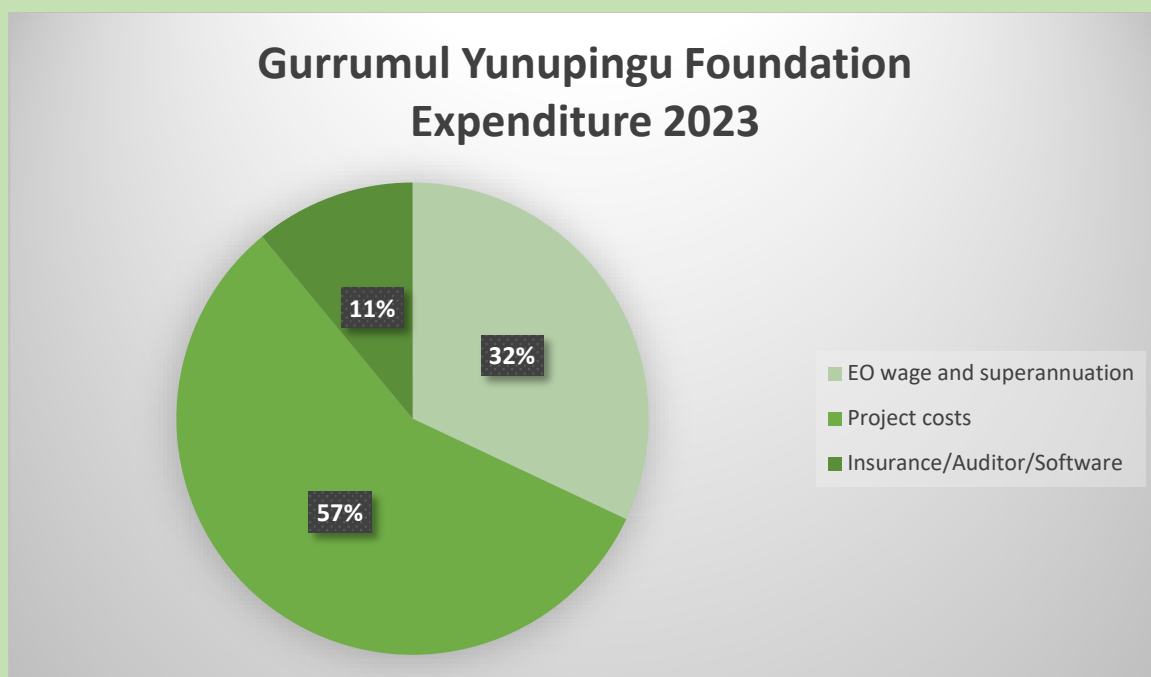
Total Project cost: \$87,146.05.

External funding available in 2023 was \$78,739 and the additional costs were to come from GYF's core funding: \$8,407.

82% (\$64,006) of the unexpended grants funding (\$78,739) for the project was spent by 31 December 2023.

73% of the total project costs (\$87,146.05) was spent in 2023 – the remaining invoices were paid in January 24.

**Barunga Beats Program** costs were \$3,000 in the form of a grant.



The highest cost was for the Indigenous Children's Songs Project followed by the Executive Officer's costs, and finally administrative costs (including insurance, auditor's costs, essential software fees).



The Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation could not have undertaken its work without the generous assistance it received from:

*Northern Territory Community Benefit Fund*

*Sony Foundation*

*Australia Post Community Grants Program*

*Milton Corporation Foundation and*

*Public donations.*

**If you would like to support Indigenous youth, especially those living in remote communities, please consider donating through our secure donation website page:**

<https://gurrumulfoundation.org.au/donations/donate-today/>

A big thank you also to:

Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre

Michael Sweeney, Lee Green Strategic Accountants

Duane Preston, Photographer of Indigenous Children's Songs Project