

## MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 3 December 2024

## SCULPTURE BY THE SEA, COTTESLOE PAUSED DUE TO LACK OF FEDERAL FUNDING



*Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe 2019. Photo David Dare Parker*

Sculpture by the Sea today announced that the annual Cottesloe exhibition will be cancelled in 2025 due to a lack of vital funding support from the federal arts funding agency Creative Australia.

Following the end of the Catalyst Fund and the RISE Fund in 2023, *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* has received no federal government arts funding to stage the large-scale exhibition that transforms Cottesloe beach for 230,000 visitors over 18 days in March each year.

One of Perth's largest, longest running and most beloved public events, *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* was founded on the idea of providing a major free exhibition to transform Cottesloe beach into a temporary world class sculpture park for everyone to enjoy. However, organisers see no other choice but to cancel the 2025 edition due to the significant costs of mounting a free to the public exhibition of this scale.

Without secure federal government funding it is simply not possible to stage an exhibition of this scale as other sources of income vary so much from year to year.

Exhibiting artists collectively contribute approximately \$1M towards the costs of displaying their sculptures, with 50% of the artists not recovering any of their costs from sculpture sales or the artist awards or subsidies. Nevertheless, a very large number of artists from WA and around the world are in full support of the exhibition and the unique opportunity it provides sculptors to showcase their artworks to people from all walks of life in a stunning natural location. Senior WA artists are imploring the federal government to demonstrate its understanding of the significance of *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* both locally and internationally

**Sculpture by the Sea Incorporated**  
ABN 84 103 984 756  
Trading as 'Sculpture by the Sea'

PO Box 470, Cottesloe  
WA 6011 Australia

**Telephone** +61 2 8399 0233  
info@sculpturebythesea.com  
www.sculpturebythesea.com

**Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi**  
18 October – 4 November 2024

**Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe**  
To be confirmed 2025

**Snowy Valleys Sculpture Trail**  
Adelong | Tumut | Talbingo | Batlow  
Sculpture Forest | Tumbaramba  
Cellar Doors | Tooma  
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Michelle & Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM  
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Luca Belgiorno-Nettis AM

to enable the exhibition to be staged in 2026 after a one-year pause.

Over 95% of the Western Australian artists who have been in the exhibition four or more times have signed a letter to the Federal Arts Minister or written their own letters to the Minister asking for funding, as well as an explanation as to how Creative Australia can ignore the exhibition and its significant cultural impact. The letter highlights that some 10,000 school students visit the exhibition each year and thousands of people living with disability visit or take part in the free Access & Inclusion Program. The letter to the Minister which accompanies this press release also reflects on the unique opportunity for artists in Western Australia, Australia and internationally to engage with the public in such significant numbers. Few, if any Australian art exhibitions have an international reputation with artists around the world on the scale of Sculpture by the Sea.

Denise Pepper, a Perth-based artist who has exhibited at *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* 10 times since 2009, said: “*Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* was a game changer for my career as a sculptor. For once, I could engage in a conversation with the people of Perth about my work and for once the Western Australian arts sector finally got an exhibition that showcases sculpture!”.

Fellow WA artist Dr Jon Tarry said, “This feels like a funeral. We can’t believe it’s happening and how anyone responsible for the public arts in Australia could let this happen. Sculpture by the Sea is what every city in the world would love to have.” Olga Cironis a longstanding exhibitor from Fremantle added , “Sculpture by the Sea gives many local as well as national, and international artists the incredible opportunity to share their stories with hundreds of thousands of people at the one venue”.

Founding Director of Sculpture by the Sea, David Handley, said: “Thank you to the people of Perth and WA for making *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* such a wonderful community and cultural event for the last 20 years. Thank you to the artists from WA, across Australia and around the world for their artworks that captured the imagination of so many people year after year.

“We have really enjoyed staging the exhibition despite the financial challenges and hope the federal government will support the exhibition to enable it to return in 2026. When people ask me what I most enjoy about working on Sculpture by the Sea, it is the look of wonderment on the faces of the young children as they explore the sculptures.”

This is not the first time the organisers of *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* have been forced to consider pausing the exhibition. However, unlike in previous years, no solution has been found in time.

In March 2019, Sculpture by the Sea signaled the potential end of the Cottesloe exhibition, announcing that unless substantial new funds were raised by the end of June, the exhibition would have to be cancelled. Thankfully, in June 2019, one dozen private philanthropic donors came on board which allowed the March 2020 - 2023 exhibitions to proceed. The 2024 exhibition should, in fact, not have proceeded without federal funding; however, organisers hoped the extra year would give the federal government time to respond on the matter.

Without the funding required to stage *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* in 2025, the not-for-profit organisation behind the exhibition is looking ahead to future years as it continues to search for government, corporate and philanthropic support to enable *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* to be staged. It is the hope of organisers that a solution can be found ahead of the planned March 2026 exhibition.

David Handley added: “As *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* grew in response to the large number of visitors, the interest from artists around the world and the scale of the sculptures, so did the costs to stage each exhibition. Sadly Creative Australia, as the only source of federal arts funding, does not want to support the exhibition and it is simply not possible to stage an exhibition of this scale without federal funding.”

The artists who were selected for *Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* 2025 will be invited into one of the next two *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi* exhibitions in 2025 or 2026 or the next Cottesloe exhibition if funding is found to revive the Perth exhibition.



*Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe* is one of Perth's largest public events attracting an estimated 230,000 visitors to explore the art and creating Perth's own version of the Italian passeggiata, with many thousands of people wandering among the sculptures on Cottesloe Beach at sunset each evening.

Since the exhibition began in 2005 with 35 sculptures on the iconic white sands of Cottesloe Beach, 596 artists from 44 countries have exhibited 1,329 sculptures in 20 years.

For further information about *Sculpture by the Sea* please visit: [www.sculpturebythesea.com](http://www.sculpturebythesea.com)

**20 YEARS OF SCULPTURE BY THE SEA, COTTESLOE IMAGES AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

For further information on *Sculpture by the Sea* please contact:



Jillian Heggie | T: +61 434 618 555 | E: [jillian@nixco.com.au](mailto:jillian@nixco.com.au)  
Rosie Braye | T: +61 407 933 544 | [rosie@nixco.com.au](mailto:rosie@nixco.com.au)