



NIGHT RISE

WHEATBELT
OBSERVATORIES



A new initiative by the Fremantle Biennale

ABOUT NIGHT RISE

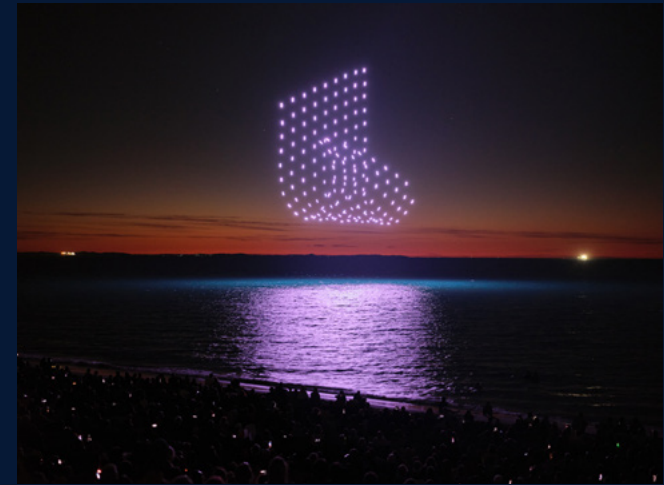
NIGHT RISE is a new Fremantle Biennale initiative that will bring together contemporary art experiences, artists and cultural leaders with the dark sky places, stories and communities of Western Australia.

Over 80% of the world's population now live in areas where they cannot see the stars. Across Australia astrotourism and initiatives focussed on protecting darkness are growing rapidly, as ever-greater numbers of people seek out starlight and naturally occurring phenomena such as eclipses, solstices and rare astral happenings.

Western Australia is one of the world's most remarkable places to experience the night sky and its celestial movements. Across the next ten years WA will see more total solar eclipses than anywhere on earth. NIGHT RISE explores how arts and culture can contribute unique perspectives, experiences and ways of connecting to our vast dark sky environments.

NIGHT RISE is currently in a research and creative development period across four WA regions – the Wheatbelt, Gascoyne, Murchison and the Kimberley. In its delivery NIGHT RISE will present new place-responsive artworks, cultural experiences and community initiatives coalescing in a series of destination events.

The R&D phase focuses on consultation, partnership development and long-form artist research, residencies and creative developments. It brings together expertise from astronomy, environmental science, conservation, tourism and community, while supporting artists to explore new technologies, creative practices and innovative forms of site-responsive work.



Ilona McGuire, First Lights – Moombaki, 2021. Photo by Duncan Wright

ABOUT FREMANTLE BIENNALE

The Fremantle Biennale is a Western Australian arts organisation commissioning and presenting ambitious site-responsive contemporary art. Through a biennial festival and year-round program, we facilitate and create opportunities, connections and transformative experiences between artists, audiences and place.

ABOUT THE WHEATBELT

The [Wheatbelt](#) is one of nine administrative regions of Western Australia, spanning 154,862 square kilometres and partially surrounding the capital city of Perth. Home to 75,000 residents across more than 200 communities, it is celebrated as the agricultural powerhouse of the state alongside its rich cultural heritage, distinct landscapes, and vibrant biodiversity.

THE BRIEF

Following extensive consultation across 10+ communities in the Wheatbelt, Night Rise proposes a constellation of artist and architect designed sky observatories distributed across multiple locations. Combining permanent and temporary works, these sites are imagined to form a dark sky trail activated by the Fremantle Biennale in collaboration with each community through public programs and events over a 1 or 2 year period.

Fremantle Biennale is seeking Expressions of Interest from contemporary artists and architects to imagine singular observatories (nocturnal and diurnal forms) for select sites across the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia. [Artist Architect collaborations are strongly encouraged].

OUR PROCESS

We support artists and architects to engage with place, communities, and stakeholders, as relevant to the process and production needs of their projects. Listening to place, collective care, and acknowledging the past to enable truthful futures, are guiding principles for our organisation. Our organisation is supported by an active Board, Advisory Panel and Cultural Advisors, who support and guide in both the visioning and delivery of our projects.

Located in the picturesque countryside just outside Eryuan Botou Village in Yunnan, China, the Concrete Pavilion, crafted by LIN Architecture, serves as a serene observatory. Its angular design opens up to panoramic views, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the undulating landscapes of mountains and sprawling rice paddies. Originally a humble pump house, a historical landmark used by villagers for water and electricity, the structure was reimagined to honor its past while embracing its transformation into a contemporary observatory.



Gitai Architects used rammed earth and stones from the nearby Mitzpe Ramon crater to build the Landroom observatory in Israel's Negev desert.

Landroom is intended to function as a shelter from the sun in daytime and an observatory at night. The structure measures just six square metres and has space for only two people.



James Turrell, Twilight Epiphany Skyspace 2012-
Shepherd School of Music on the Rice University campus, Texas
Photo by Jessica Hamilton



SELECTION & EVALUATION PROCESS

EOIs will be assessed by a selection panel comprised of experts and authorities of both the architectural and contemporary art fields. The panel will consider the artistic, architectural and place-responsive qualities of each submission, alongside the applicant's experience and capabilities.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

40% | Artistic & Architectural Merit

Demonstrated artistic and/or architectural excellence, originality and creative vision, including a clear approach to developing meaningful, culturally responsive and place-based work. Submissions should demonstrate the potential to create a distinctive experience and lasting connection between audiences, community and place.

30% | Response to Place & Brief

Response to the Night Rise brief and an understanding of the site, landscape and broader context. This may include consideration of the physical environment, cultural narratives, community context, environmental conditions, history and/or the night sky.

30% | Relevant Experience & Capability

Demonstrated ability to develop and deliver projects of a similar scale, ambition or complexity. This may include previous artworks, architectural projects, public or collaborative projects, community engagement, consultation, co-design and/or work within technically demanding contexts.



Courtesy of Shire of Lake Grace

We welcome applications from emerging and established artists, architects and practices. Experience will be considered in the context of each applicant's practice and circumstances. For emerging applicants, this may include smaller-scale projects, transferable skills, relevant study or training, professional experience, or other evidence of creative and/or delivery capability. The panel will assess the strength and potential of the applicant's practice and proposal, rather than the volume or profile of previous work.

SITES

- * [Avoca Farm](#) & [Lake Walker](#), Narambeen
- * [Gorge Rock](#) & [Lew's Lookout](#), Corrigin
- * [Kondinin Lake Nature Reserve](#), Kondinin
- * [Lake Ninan](#), Wongan Hills
- * [Airstrip](#), Beverley

Applicants may nominate a specific site or propose a broader approach.
All sites are subject to change and further approvals.

BUDGET

Successful applicants will progress to phase 2 and will be offered a Design Fee of AUD\$10,000 (ex GST) to develop a comprehensive Research & Development (Design Development) document complete with concept, drawings, budgets and timelines.

A travel stipend for selected applicants will be offered in addition to the Design Fee.

The overall project budget for each site / observatory is estimated at AUD\$300,000, and is inclusive of all fees, permits, and construction budget.

TIMELINE

- Phase 1
EOI open: 4 Sept 2026
EOI close: 2 Oct 2026
Notifications: 30 Oct 2026
- Phase 2
Research & Development: 10 Nov 2026 – 25 Feb 2027
- Phase 3
Construction and Delivery: timelines TBC

SUBMISSION

- Proposals may nominate a specific site or adopt a general approach
- Written response (1000 words max)
- Bios (250 words max)
- A selection of relevant recent work with weblinks (2 pages max)
- Teams to nominate the principal client contact/ project lead

For more info please contact:
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2023

2028

There are a total of 5 total eclipses over Australia in the 15 years between 2023 and 2038. This map shows the paths of all five eclipses intersecting with Western Australia.

2038

KIMBERLEY

GASCOYNE

2037

MID WEST
MURCHISON

WHEATBELT

2030



The Fremantle Biennale collaborates with artists to commission and present remarkable, ambitious and experimental site-responsive contemporary art. Through a biennial festival and year-round program, we facilitate and create opportunities, connections and transformative experiences between artists, audiences and place.

The Fremantle Biennale calls home the unceded lands and waters of the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation. We acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the traditional owners of the Walyalup area. We acknowledge elders past, present and emerging, and respect the living culture and heritage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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