

**AWARD-WINNING CHILDRENS ABORIGINAL STORY FLIES TO REGIONAL STAGES**

***Adapted from the Reader's Choice Children's Book of the Year 2016 Australian Book Industry Awards, Kookoo Kookaburra is heading to the Broome Civic Centre.***

Written by A.J. Bailey, this heartwarming story teaches children about the importance of friendship, respect and kindness. The story has been adapted from the award-winning book published by Broome's Magabala Books and authored by Gregg Dreise, a descendant of the Kamilaroi and Yuwalayaay people of Queensland and NSW and author, illustrator and teacher in the Noosa hinterland.

Kookoo and his friends are visiting Broome on Wednesday 10 May as part of the 2017 Shows on the Go touring circuit, travelling to 17 communities in regional and remote areas of WA in May and June.

*Kookoo Kookaburra* uses contemporary dance and didgeridoo to create a fun and interactive performance of Aboriginal culture and storytelling performed by Leonard Donahue, a descendant from the Djabugay people of the rainforest in far-north Queensland.

Country Arts WA's Executive Director, Paul MacPhail, said Country Arts WA's Shows on the Go program was unique as it not only coordinated the entire show for regional communities but also aimed to build creative capacity in local towns to ensure high quality shows were available to everyone.

Shows on the Go are presented by Country Arts WA and Healthway promoting the Mentally Healthy WA campaign message, Act-Belong-Commit. Healthway's Acting Executive Director, Maree De Lacey, said Healthway was delighted to support the Shows on the Go tour for 2017 to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message.

"*Kookoo Kookaburra* will give regional families a terrific opportunity to get together and enjoy great performances - a great way to Act-Belong-Commit - and we're proud to partner with Country Arts WA to encourage country families to join with others for a mentally healthy WA," she said.

*Kookoo Kookaburra* is at the Broome Civic Centre on Wednesday 10 May for one show presented by the Shire of Broome, with doors opening at 5pm for a 6pm performance. Tickets are available from [www.broomeciviccentre.com.au](http://www.broomeciviccentre.com.au) or (08) 9191 8780.

For more information on Country Arts WA and *Kookoo Kookaburra*, please visit the website at [www.countryartswa.asn.au](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au).

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## **REVIEW QUOTES**

“... an important message about the power of words and the importance of being kind. This is a wonderful core for so many curriculum units in Humanities and Social Sciences, Health, English, Dreaming Stories, Art and just for sharing.” - Rhyllis Bignell, Audience Member

## **AUDIENCE SUITABILITY**

Kookoo Kookaburra is suitable for pre and primary school age children, Indigenous communities and families.

## **PRESENTED BY**

Country Arts WA and Act-Belong-Commit present:

Kookoo Kookaburra by A.J.Bailey adapted from the book by Gregg Dreise

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **A.J. Bailey, Playwright and Director**

Alli's career began in Melbourne with appearances in Neighbours, A Country Practice, Blue Heelers and Janus, plus a number of T.V commercials and film roles. After a move to Queensland in the 90's Alli re-discovered her passion for the stage, appearing in a variety of musicals and comedies across the state and leading her into regional and national touring on a regular basis. During this time, she began to write and direct one-act plays and comedies, before moving into the challenge of full-scale musicals, which she also produced and toured consistently, around Australia.

Alli's children's theatre credits include, Cinderella at the Disco, Aladdin and his Magic I-Pod, Snow White and the Seven Cool Dudes, Noah's Ark, The Little Mermaid, Rumpelstiltskin, Goldilocks Rocks and Little Red in the Hood.

### **Leonard Donahue, Performer**

Leonard Donahue is a young Indigenous Brisbane-based artist and a descendant from the Djabugay people of the rainforest in far-north Queensland. Leonard is a member of the performing arts ensemble, eXcelsior, which fuses Indigenous culture in a contemporary context. Through eXcelsior, he has performed at various festivals including Homeground (Sydney Opera House), Woodford Folk Festival, Boomerang Festival and Byron Bay Blues Festival.

Leonard worked creatively with Digi Youth Arts on the stage production In-dig-gen-ous and was given the opportunity to attend the 2016 Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam as an Australian delegate. Leonard also had the honour of presenting a rainforest shield, collected over 200 years ago from his country, as a part of the exhibition, This is my Heritage, at the Queensland Museum.

Leonard graduated from the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts in 2014 with an Advanced Diploma within Performing Arts and has been working professionally throughout the industry since.

### **John Bailey, Production Design**

John is a third generation builder, having re-honed his skills to designing and building theatre sets for Jally Entertainment. He has worked alongside a range of directors including Peter

Sumner, Alli Pope, Dale Pengelly, Val Lehman Tony Bonner and Aarne Neeme on productions of Gallipoli – A Manual of Trench Warfare, Steaming, Popcorn, Sleuth, Ladies Night, The Castle, Calendar Girls, An Evening with Groucho and many more with The Adelaide Fringe Festival.

With talented scenic artist, Ziggy Moskwa, John has developed many exciting, yet practical sets to suit intimate theatre spaces and full-scale touring projects.

### **Gregg Dreise, Book Author**

Gregg Dreise is an award-winning author and illustrator of Silly Birds, Kookoo Kookaburra and Mad Magpie. As a descendant of the Kamilaroi and Yuwalayaay people of south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales, Gregg's books present morality tales to children through storytelling in an Indigenous context.

Gregg works as a teacher in the Noosa hinterland in Queensland and his books have won multiple awards including 2015 Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year and 2016 Australian Book Industry Awards, Reader's Choice Children's Book of the Year.

Gregg's uses his books as a platform to inspire people to try their hardest; set realistic achievable goals; believe in yourself; and surround yourself with good friends who can inspire and encourage you to follow your dreams.

### **AWARDS**

- WINNER – 2016 ABIA Awards in the Small Publishers' Children's Book of the Year category
- SHORTLISTED – Speech Pathology Australia's 2016 Book of the Year Awards (Indigenous Children's category)

### **COUNTRY ARTS WA**

Country Arts WA is one of Western Australia's leading arts organisations. As an independent, not-for-profit, membership based organisation, our role is to build creativity, capacity and connection in and around regional communities to further develop Western Australia's regional arts sector.

[www.countryartswa.asn.au](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au)

### **SHOWS ON THE GO**

Shows on the Go is a community-driven touring model wherein regional Western Australians vote for the productions they would most like to see performed in their town. This is done annually through the Shows on the Go Touring Menu. Shows are then short-listed for selection by the communities in the regions, with the successful shows to tour the following year.