

Carbon_Dating: Transcript: Panel Discussion, Longreach Museum of Art, Qantas Founders Centre, Longreach, QLD, 15/3/25

Tony Cullen (CEO/Event chair): Good morning, everybody. My name is Tony Cullen: . I'm the CEO of the Qantas Founders Museum, and it's my privilege to be, without further ado, I would like to invite Tony Weldon into the podium, turn is the Iningai custodian, and Tony will perform the country acknowledgement.

Tony Weldon (Iningai Traditional owner): Good morning, everyone, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Tony Weldon, Iningai custodian in Longreach I'd like to begin to begin by acknowledging and pay my respects to the traditional owners of the of the land on which we are gathered here today, the Iningai peoples. and that will respect their spiritual relationships with their country. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, together let us recognise the importance of the country on which we are meeting on today I would also like to pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging I'd like to welcome the Carbon_Dating exhibition and the 15 artists responding to native grasses. Once again I welcome you here again to Iningai country Thank you.

Tony Cullen (CEO/Event chair): Thanks very much, Tony, for that. Before we get on to some more presentations, I'd like to just give a small background on the exhibition we have. It's known as Carbon_Dating, and it's such an apt installation to have right now as part of what's going on in the world. But more importantly, this exhibition has been on the road since 2022. 7 venues across Queensland and we're the second last venue to be hosting this amazing contemporary art exhibition. The Carbon_Dating showcases native grasses and the relationships to the environment, which I think is super important and also in our regions where we have large areas of stock, so grasses are very, very important. Carbon_Dating presents and shares knowledge and stories incorporated a variety of contemporary art forms responding to the Queensland Indigenous grasses, and it's very important that I was made known yesterday that the grasses that we speaking about through this exhibition are all native grasses. The artists present a broad range of mediums, including sculpture, weaving, textiles, photography, media, film, performance, related artworks. featuring works of art by artists from around Queensland, including artists that are here today, Mr. Keith Armstrong, and Donna Davis.

So, without further ado, I'd like to introduce you to Keith - Keith Armstrong. Just some background on Keith. Keith has more than 30 years' experience in collaborative experimental practice with emphasis on innovation performances. Site specific

electronic arts, works, networks, interactive installations, art-science, collaborations, and socially and ecologically engaged practices. Keith has a Sorry, I've lost my words here. Keith has engaged in practices that provokes audiences to understand and imagine collective pathways towards a sustainable future. Without further ado, I'd like to invite Keith to the podium, to open and give us a few words.

Keith Armstrong (Carbon_Dating Director/Lead Artist /Keynote): Thank you. Thank you, Tony. And also thank you very much. Also, Tony, for your welcome to your Country. My name is Keith as you' heard. and I'm from Turrbal Jagera Country, Meanjin, Brisbane. So, we've escaped the cyclone to make a way out to your beautiful part of the world. So, thank you so much for having us. and thank you so much for having us having our exhibition. We really do appreciate that. Now, I've only got four minutes and if you give an artist four minutes, they'll want to take forty, so I'm going to try my very best to do it at four minutes, but I just want to tell you why Carbon_Dating? So, most of us will know that carbon dating is a scientific method for determining the age of things. How old is that tree? How old is that rock and so forth? But we took a little bit of a twist on that idea with the idea that you. Could we find a way of setting up a date with a carbon life form? OK? So, hold that in your mind and I'll talk about what carbon life form and why date. So, in general, we humans tend to put plants in the hierarchy of things. We tend to put plants pretty much at the bottom of the hierarchy. I mean, there's in traditional cultures from way back when, that was never the case, but from Aristotle onwards, basically Aristotle put plants at the bottom and he put animals, then he put humans. And from that time on, we pretty much thought of plants as being in the service for us. We haven't really accorded them their own sort of position in the hierarchy. And if you think about Noah's Ark Noah took two of everything animal on board, but he didn't take any plants on board! So how did the plants survive, you know, 150 years of 150 days of flooding or whatever?

So, plants are kind of low in our imagination unless, of course, you work the land. And I'm sure many of you here plants are are high in your consciousness, but for many people, they're quite low down. And if you think of a plant that's least known to most people, and again, I just want to stress that I understand that anyone who works the land who's a pastoralist, has an intimate knowledge of grass. But for most people, grass is something annoying. It's an unidentifiable weed or something you've got to mow on a Sunday afternoon. it's the underdog. So, we thought, well, let's let's pick grasses and then let's let's introduce those to groups of people around Queensland and let's let them have a date. So, when you go on a date with someone new, you slowly get to know them you know, you warm to them, you have a conversation, and if things go well, then you kind of form a kind of partnership. So that was the idea that we would give six groups of artists three months, we'd give them a mound, a mound structure that Donna

will talk about about later. We'd give them some plants that we'd all grown, five native grasses, including Curly Mitchell grass, which you're obviously extremely familiar with here. And then we'd give them a series of prompts and this beautiful art that co-director Donna Davis made over there and we just let me sit with it. We'd sit with them for three months; they could just ponder what it was like to be with grass and. So, this idea of a carbon date, if you want. And that's really the basis of how this whole exhibition came to fruition, because each of those six people who spent three three months growing grasses were then commissioned to make the artworks you see today. And that's what the exhibition is. It's really the residue or the end, I suppose, of a process that started in 2019. So, we're very happy. It's very diverse. There are many different takes. And I should just say that we also, for us, it was really important to build community and care for Country and communities. So, in every case, people connected with local ecologists, often local landowners and the traditional owners of each place in which we worked to actually give out their ideas that then came to tradition in these artworks. Okay, I'll leave it. Thank you.

Tony Cullen (CEO/Event chair): Thank you very much, Keith. And I think it's so apt. I think you've summarized that beautifully and I think it's just in our day and age, it really is important that we understand you, that ecology across so many spectrums, I'd think it's beautiful that we beautifully said, thank you very much. We're going to have an open forum very shortly and before I hand over that, I'd just like to acknowledge a couple of people again, sorry, and first of all, I'd like to acknowledge our senior curator, Sarah, for those who don't know Sarah. She's been with us now for two and a half years. And Sarah has brought a wonderful arts and culture passion to our region, and our region is so much richer for having Sarah here. For those who don't know, Sarah also was awarded a prestigious award last year as curator of the year. And I think it just sums up, you know, you know, having an exhibition like this and attracting it to our region it wouldn't have happened without Sarah's determination. And for that, Sarah, thank you so very much. You know how much I appreciate having arts and culture, and we've had such a variety of everything from Kusama to this beautiful Carbon_Dating exhibition now, so I'm going to hand over Sarah's I' going to leading the open forum. So, I'll hand over the mic to Sarah. I'm not sure if it'll actually reach the chair there, Sarah. But again, thank you so very much for coming this morning. We are very, very excited about the exhibition and thank you to the artist for all of your dedication. I mean, 2022 is a long time to have something running, and I think it's so special that our regions get to experience this sort of exhibition, so we do appreciate it very much. So, without further ado, I'm going to hand over to Sarah. She's going to leave the open forum So hi, everyone, thank you very much.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): What a beautiful show so thank you so much for joining us today. I'm not gonna talk much. I'm going to just be the timekeeper with our wonderful people. here. So, please folks, I'm going to introduce, so you've just met Keith. Thank you, Keith. Really, really a pleasure to finally meet you. We've talking about grass for a long time. The legal form don't worry. But look, it's been wonderful. I have valiantly attempted to try and grow some native grasses, but I decided, and Thumper, please don't think poorly, I'll me, because I do religiously read your book - I only grow what grows. And in that case in my garden that says, nothing's happening, Sarah. So. I valiantly attempted but even my succulents have died in the last couple of months Keith so we will persevere. Yeah, please. I would like to introduce Jo-Anne Driessens It's been absolutely wonderful to reconnect with you, Joanne. We first met her on Koa Country nearly three years ago, which was, yeah, wonderful to reconnect. And it's always two degrees of separation, obviously, in the arts and culture. And of course, out here out west, I did say to a couple of people jokingly when I first moved out here you don't move to Longreach for witness protection because you will be found out by someone with about five minutes, because you find out you're very intimately connected to everyone. Joanne is a First Nations curator and cultural advisor for this spectacular exhibition and a wonderful artist and practitioner in her own right. Joanne is a Koa, Gungarri and Kuku Yalanji woman there's been a practicing photographer spent having spent three decades, documenting Aboriginal communities in urban, remote and regional areas. Since completing a photography cadetship at the State Library of Queensland in 1999, she's worked in curatorial and photography roles, focusing on archival research exhibitions, and original family history. Please welcome Joanne.

Oh, I'm just going to introduce everyone first and then we can then I'll throw to you. We have Donna Davis. Donna's beautiful work is behind us here and she's also the head collaborator, I guess, on the beautiful Interweaver installation, just amazing. And Donna will talk a little bit more about this because I'm interested in how you made it, you conceived of it and how each artist were given, if you like a little special pressie to evolve the project with. So, Donna's a multi-disciplinary artist who examines human and non-human relationships concerning ecological health. She explores the interactions between art and science, often embedded within ecological research projects, and her work tells stories that examine science through a creative lens, exploring imagined futures and constructing new ways of seeing complex natural systems and our world within them. Donna's travelled widely onto taking residencies with the Queensland State Archives, the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, the Queensland Herbarium, the Department of Environment and Science, and is currently artists in residence on projects with the Australian Tropical Herbarium and the University of Miami. She's got a Bachelor of Arts from Curtin University and has worked both in public and private collections and has exhibited widely in the internationally and living in Australia. Please welcome, Donna.

And some of you may know our wonderful Jody Brown. Every time we've got an exhibition, we're just going to ask Jody. No, I've got to know Jody in the last year or so and I'm a super fan, honestly, is there nothing this amazing woman can't do? Jody is a grazier from the sun-drenched natural grasslands of Central Western Queensland on Iningai Country. She is a storyteller and community catalyst for curiosity and knowledge and sharing principles of regenerative natural evolution environment. So, Jody has a vision for the rangelands of abundant landscapes and vibrant communities. Please welcome Jody Brown.

Plus, we've met Keith. What a super fan I am of all of you, but particularly your video works as well Keith. So it's interesting. I was just doing a little Google on you, and I realise how much of your artwork I've actually seen. So, it's so great in your own career as a curator to finally meet artists whose works you've been around. So. There's a lot of fan girl going on here :) Now, without further ado, I'm going to hand over to Joanne. We're going to be pretty organic today. Excuse the pun, because I will sort of want to get a sense of what we've talked a little bit about the evolution of the project, but I guess everyone's own perspective and Jody, your insight to, obviously what you do in the context of the exhibition. So, I'm just going to let it flow. We'll be about half an hour. If you've got a burning question, do ask, but at We'll leave some time at the end for questions as well. So, then you get tea and scones after. All right, over to you Jo!

Jo-Anne Driessens (Carbon_Dating First Nations Consultant/Co-Curator): Now I can take this. Yeah! I never thought I'd be reaching desperately for a mike. Yeah, literally, I did a lot of training in the dark room in the old school. Photography world, so when the doors opened up in 1999, I stepped out. I have never looked back since. And I guess, in a nutshell, I really love these kinds of projects because you get to meet other traditional owners, and I'm really grateful to have Tony here today, and Aunty Myrtle who's come along. We haven't met before. This is probably only just my second or third time in Longreach Iningai Country. But the beauty of the research and my career having reconnected, it connects you with all these beautiful artists. The team is incredible. And now having going deeply into my Koa research and family history this is going to call you here and this won't be the last time you see me, because I'm going to try and become more embedded in this country and learn. And I guess if I just go back, one little step, I want to acknowledge Freya Carmichael, who's a Quandamooka curator. First Nation curator who started in these shoes and then she got really busy and she gave me and call and wanted me to step into this space and I love the topic. Native grasses, because I just love plants culture, Country, and combining art and science. Having also worked for the library museums for a number of years and now on the external part of the buildings now meeting all the communities like Jody sitting here, I'm like in awe and having you all here today is a really, like it sort of fills my heart to think, you're actually

interested in this topic as well, and how can we have that ongoing dialogue? Because I think it's an ongoing process. So, we've got about - and you'll see them - we've got about a dozen artists, some of them have dualled up together and I would love you to bring family colleagues back to just spend time reading a little bit about how they responded to the work, I won't go into each depth, but it's this space is amazing. I think from what Donna was saying, this is the first time they've actually put out all the work because some of the venues are a lot smaller, take your time, come back, soak it up a bit more. But, yeah, I guess my role has been very fluid and funnily enough through, I've got my adopted family, I've got my Aboriginal blood family, and Donna and I kind of like related through my white family throughout your son's marriage to my niece. So, we got to know each other on the trip out here and spending the week together. So that's that relational process and that's what I love about all these kinds of projects. So yeah, that's me in a nutshell. Would you like me to pass the baton?

Donna Davis (Carbon_Dating Co-Director/Lead Artist): Yeah. yeah, thank you, everyone, for coming. The whole idea of this project was it to get other people to come and love grass as much as what we do.. So, seeing this great turnout is awesome. So back in like 2020 I think, Keith rang me and said, hey, Donna, like we'd kind of be bumping into each other through different art science symposiums and things. We both knew each other's work, and he just said, hey, I've got this idea. I really want to do a project with Australian Native Grass and wondered if you might be interested and I was like, oh yeah, that sounds good. And then when he said, I want to call it Carbon_Dating, because I think it'd be nice for people to have relationships with grass. Well, that's all he had to say. I just went, people dating grass love it. And so, I immediately started thinking of, you know, like dating apps and stuff. Not that I've used dating apps, but I've been thinking, like, wouldn't that be hilarious that people were like looking at grass, hm, no, I'm more attracted to this one. I like this one and we'd be really good together. So, I kind of liked that sort of fun idea. And I suppose from that first conversation, we just really started going, well, how could we get people to love and see grasses and learn more about grass?

So, you know, and we're both, you know, from the city as well. So, you know, I suppose city folk and people who are more regional have very different relationships with grass. A lot of the people that we would know would maybe live in apartments or have small blocks and they're really thinking about their turf, not Australian native grass So we started thinking about, how could we get other people to love grass? Let's maybe try and build some sort of device. Keith is very tech savvy, and so he was thinking of a real tech sort of device, and I was like, oh, cool, let's see what we can do. And through that process of prototyping, I built many different iterations of what this device would be. I would make one at my house, key, and then I'd make one for Keith to have at his house,

we'd have lots of conversations. And through that experience, you know, I kind of went, oh, you know what? I think people just really need to be with the grass. Like, they need to need to grow grass. Like, it's great that we have a little device that kind of talks about the grass, but we really want to get people out and have their own grass. So, I decided that I was going to create a flatpack grass garden bed kit that all of our artists were going to get in conjunction with the little device you see behind us there. So, the little device that's sitting behind us over there is called the personal Inter Weaver and it is basically a tool kit. So, I suppose this is kind of riffing a bit off. I do a lot of work with working with Herberia, and botanists going out in the field and doing field work with them. And when people are out in the field, they're looking at things very closely. They're using magnifying glasses. They often will use those little dentist mirrors that they'll look underneath, especially if we've got people who are looking for fungi So without disturbing the landscape, using mirrors to actually get closer looks at things. So that's basically a little toolkit. There's mirrors, there's magnifying glasses, there's even a little ball of seed there. So, if you wanted to grow your own grass, there's seeds there. Connected to the side of the device is a little video work, a little kaleidoscopic video work. And the video that is running in that sequence is a video that was taken from the Samford Research facility, which is a QUT research site.

And Keith is associated with; he's actually a lecturer at QUT. So, he had set up a grass planting at this research facility and he also set up, like a device to measure rainfall, humidity, temperatures, all of that type of stuff. So, we then started working with a sound designer and the sound designer basically put a soundtrack to all of that data, all of that weather data that was coming in. So, he built a software code that every time we would hit a certain figure with any of that data, it would draw a sound in. And then Keith had set up some little videos to do stop laps, time lapse videos of the grass growing, and this was then fed through to all of our carers from cans, all the way to Cairns, out to Miles, down to the Gold Coast, out to Ipswich So we and everywhere in between. So, everyone was getting this live feed and musical composition was getting fed to this device. We then really needed to get the people from that device out to the grass. So, we worked with a wonderful artist called Danielle Constance, who who is a performance artist and a very socially engaged artist. And so, she wrote a heap of text prompts. And so, she designed a series of .. - do you want to hold one one of those cards up? - these little round cards So there were 60 cards, and the idea was that every day, our carers would go to this device, they would have a bit of look at the video, and they would pick up their first card, number one in the series, and number one might say, ..oh, do you want to read one of the oh, here we get, it says .. Number 49 says, "Have you noticed other grass growing around you"? "What have you noticed while the grass has been growing"? "What does grass smell like"? So, there was all these really lovely little prompts that they would take this prompt, walk down to the grass and maybe sit with the grass as it was growing and maybe write something on the back of that, but basically

just giving them ideas to think, how do we build that relationship? How do we get to know? And really, how do we build relationships with other life forms that aren't human? We don't know their language you know. So maybe just sitting there and being with it might give us some prompts.

So, these then were in conjunction with the grass mound, which you see an example of that as we go into the next room. So the grass mound, Keith and I grew, I don't know, about 300, over 300 grass tube stocks across all the five different species and while we were developing this project, which was about 18 months, two years, just getting the device built and working out how we were going to grow grass, how we were going to transport grass, how we were going to engage the artists how we were going to work with galleries.

So, it was a big project. But Keith and I would often be on the phone going, "How 's your grass going?" And I'd be going, "My barbed wire grass is going great guns, but kangaroo grass just isn't working at my place". And Keith would just be like, "I've got the opposite". "Kangaroo's going crazy at my house!" And so, then we would have, Keith might ring up and go, "I've lost one". And I'm just like, "me too. I'm very sad!" And so, we were starting to really build this really, we were so invested in this grass, and they were our babies and you know, and then we could see and I said, I remember when we were kind of just doing this and it was like Keith and I and I said, you know what? This has to be big, this has to go bigger like we and that's when we real started to talk about working with other artists from all over Queensland and and letting them have the experience we had So I think that, you know, well, there's a lot on logistics and admin and planning and funding and all of the things that go with it, you know, we did it, we pulled it off -it's a big project. So, yeah.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): Jody, we will cut to you shortly, but Keith, and this is also for Jo as well. Curatorially, so it's great that you just talked about the artists just then Donna .. How did you go about selecting the artists? Was it an expression of interest? Were there people that you sort of had in mind? How did that process evolve when Jo, I'll get you to jump into that one too?

Jo-Anne Driessens (Carbon_Dating First Nations Consultant/Co-Curator): Yeah, so one of the artists in this show whose beautiful photograms, you'll see later, Andrea Higgins. She works for Regional Arts. Museum and Galleries MAGS yeah. MAGS Museum and Galleries, Queensland. So, she has this incredible network across Queensland of contacts with galleries. So, we asked Andrea if she could go out to start to see the project. So, she went out to regional galleries around Queensland, and she developed a prospectus and we said to them, look, would you sort of say support

our project and find a key person or persons in the region who would be grass growers? They would probably be artists, but they didn't have to be. So, we had a whole range of different people join us. We had three First Nations artists, we had a very keen gardener from Murilla, just outside of Miles there, a whole range of different people. And that's really how it started, wasn't it? Jo, do you like to? I guess what I was commenting on when I took from Freya was the artists had been selected, but what I do want to just acknowledge too, we've got about seven from the Sunshine Coast area that happened to be that you, the extended family with this group. So, you'll see two over there, Pipier Weller, Jason Murphy A Jinibara man, and then we've got the rest of them in the middle room. So, I think it was really nice when we were placing the works too, that they were kind of together as a family. We can talk a little bit more about it, but I just want to just plug that Jason and Pipier's bags and that are part of a fundraising, so they've been touring with each venue and then if you buy a bag, then that money goes back into a land care project.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): Yeah. Jody, I'm going to bring you into the conversation. So, people may know Jody, if you don't know Jody, get to know Jody. When we first talked to about this show, and it was when we had the wonderful women of the world show, thank you, Heather, for enabling that to be hosted here, because that was quite special. So, we got chatting and then we talked about Carbon_Dating and so, here we are today. What does a show like this mean for you? And tell us a bit about your ecological practice. I mean, because your background is visual arts training, isn't it? So, you're, you know, and we all, we're all like a Venn diagram, aren't we? We all exist in lots of different worlds where, you know, art and science are polar opposites. They're mutually like beneficial and integral to each other. So, yeah, tell us what about you and what a show like this means for you.

Jody Brown (Local grazier/activist/panellist): Thank you very much. Okay, a little bit about me. I was born in Brisbane, but I grew up in, well, actually on the desert uplands country. So spinifex country north of Aramac, so and then ended up down on the downside of the open grassland plains south of Longreach. So Iningai Country on both counts and digits and Z, you know, from primary school, high school here, yeah, I worked at stock camps and offside, Yard building and fencing and all the random things you do. And actually, ironically cut quite a lot of grass on the Barkly Tablelands and so a bit of hay baling. And then I went to Uni and did of all things, a Bachelor of Fine arts in Film TV and New Media production and Creative Writing, which was hilarious because at that point I hadn't actually probably watched a lot of movies compared to other other kids that ended up at uni doing that because I was camping out so often in stock camps and things, but I just love story yeah, I guess I'm quite visual. And so, for

me, having that that's of interesting interests, I guess, and being sort of like captivated by things visually, but then also to have that, oh, sorry, and now I live on my on a cattle station with my parents and other family and my little daughter, Violet. And so, and I have a handful of cattle and help everyone else with theirs. But so very connected, I guess, to the land in that way and then to walk in here and I'm perpetually running late so I did a whirl wind tour - Donna kindly just swept me around I don't. I don't? Yeah, swept me around and I just what an exhibition means to me is it's like, it actually, I had to when we came back and sat down, I had to sort of calm down a bit. It was always have been emotional because, you know, it's like all these artists that captured things that that fill me with wonderment that I think are beautiful, that I think are some of the reason that, you know, you want to live the life that you do and you want to care for, The Country better and you want to learn more so that you can do that better. And yeah, I think if I don't know how in depth you want me, I could go on and on, Sarah.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): Is that a start to the answer? That's fantastic. So, the show's been touring. Can everyone hear? Yeah. The show's been touring for three years. Two years? What's been your takeaways from each venue in terms of audience responses? I'm particularly interested in how children and younger people engage with this. So I might throw to you first, Keith, and yeah, audience interaction, because even talking to Tony, my CEO over the year or so that we've been planning the show, even my perceptions of the show, and I'm probably the most early informed because I get the images, I get the list of works, so I can get a good sense of the show, but then the beauty of what we do as curators and facilitating exhibitions is that you never really going to see it until you're in it. and that's the kind of opening the present moment, isn't it? And I love install. So, we've had a great week and thank you very much for your patience gals, I've been a little bit rusty in some areas, but it's such a joyful thing because you're watching this evolving present, if you like, you're literally unpacking crates.. So, if you like unpacking presents, you might want to be a curator, because with a drill and some gloves on. But yeah, I'm interested in the audience takeaways from each venue and what it's meant, particularly for younger people. I guess, yeah, so it's education's obviously a critical part of this.

Keith Armstrong (Carbon_Dating Director/Lead Artist /Keynote): I mean, at the end of the day, for us, you know, building a community of care around native grasses and grasslands and by extension, all the country is really important. So, we hope that the artworks do that, but we also have an interactive component, which I think has got. It's just on the back wall; everyone can check that out at the end of the tour. Yeah, so a bit of a touch and feel kit.. It's a kind of a touch and feel kit. every venue's been a bit different, but in some of the venues we've set up, like, there's been a whole room dedicated to

education and touch and feel, and we've had books and we've had playthings and things that children could do. But you can actually get your hands on the native grasses there and feel them. You can smell. Melissa's made the little pads that you can actually smell the grass and all of those things, all of those things I think, have been critical and important to that. Yeah, I mean, in a sense we don't actually, as artists, we actually don't we come and we hopefully without the opening, we don't always get to experience the full richness of it, but at every venue we've run public workshops. So, for example, Delissa Walker whose, her works in the other room, beautiful work. She's from Cairns She did a beautiful weaving work. She's a master weaver. Amazing artist. Would anyone else like to add anything? Donna?

Donna Davis (Carbon_Dating Co-Director/Lead Artist): Yeah, I was just going to say that every gallery has responded and has run different programs, knowing their own audiences. So, they would always run different public programs and say, for instance, somewhere at Caloundra, what they did is they set up a whole room where they really responded to the little grass prompt cards. And so, we had them all up on the wall and then we had encouraged the children to write their own responses, make their own cards. We also did Pipier. You'll see some beautiful grass vases down the end, some ceramics that have the imprints of grass seed heads. So, we had another workshop where I think it was Redland Art Gallery decided that they were going to engage one of our artists to do imprints of grass heads. Yeah, and then Sunny Coast, we had Kilagi came and did some weaving workshops. So, every venue will really work out what their need is, what their community wants, and how the community works. Oh, Redland also had a little trail for kids. So, they had little pictures of things within artworks and so the kids could pick up a little art trail and walk around and find out which artworks were they were responding to and ask them little questions. So, every venue, yeah, created their own little public program, but we do have an education kit, which has been created by Beth Jackson, one of the other curators, for school groups and for teachers to use and that's available on our website and it's available here with Sarah just to give some prompts. So, if a teacher just turns up and wants to do something they can or if they want to have a bit of pre-learning before they get here as well. And that's great.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): So, we're just hitting the ground now to reach out to schools, but I just had an email from Distance Ed, so they're going to bring their classes in for cluster later before the show ends, which is great because the kids came in last cluster when the Yayoi Kusama show was on. So, it's really been beautiful to start to build connection there and the kids love it. But they' coming here in a STEM capacity. So, they've seen that and said, oh, it's a visual art show, but it ticks so many boxes for science education as well. So, I love that idea that an art exhibition can actually be, you

know, and that's a thing of art, isn't it? It's never superficial, it's always going to be about interrogating and that's what you do as artists. You're asking those questions that people are afraid to ask or discuss. And even though there's stuff going on at the higher levels of government, with artists at the moment, we won't go into that, but it's really important that you're all doing such an extraordinary job. And I guess in my capacity of curating is kind of interrogating that and being able to enable that. As artists, and as a creative too, Jo, what's the impact of this show had on your practice? Because often when we're curating, we will be sort of thinking about how an artwork or maybe an artist making a work for a show kind of fits into a rationale or an idea. But what's the flip side of that, where you've been immersed and this has been part of your life for so long and Donna, we were talking about that, it's kind of like when you see a movie star talking about a film they made three years ago, you're talking about things that you made some time ago. So, you kind of you put it beautifully, Donna - your kind of living in the past, present, and the future. So, Keith, I'll start with you. What does a show like this mean and what are the impacts or changes or evolutions for your practice?

Keith Armstrong (Carbon_Dating Director/Lead Artist /Keynote): Okay, thank you. Yeah, so I've been doing this for a few decades and my every, I think almost every single artwork project that I've worked on has been some form of collaboration and what the passion that drives me that's driven me for decades is the possibility that through creative practice in working with members of the community and scientists and traditional owners and anyone who's really interested in caring for Country that through through creative process and outcome that we can inspire people just to love, love the world a little bit more and take just a little bit more time to think about how we can do things differently. I think we all know that you, we've taken some right turns, some wrong turns along the road, but the road is long, the road is thousands of years ahead. So, what can we do at this place and this time to try to prepare for adding more time to the future? I guess that's what I'm about, I'm about, how can we inspire the possibility that the future could be endless rather than finite? Just very briefly, in this project, I've been working with electronic interactive online media for the most of my life. And I've actually shied away from working with carbon life forms, not because I don't like love them, because I'm going to have a bushwalker and I love just being out in the bush. But because I thought that that's what everyone else was doing so I would talk about a kind of ecological philosophy rather than practice, but in this one, I've really come back to the grass roots, so to speak. And it's really, really Donna - a super inspirational artist, you know, I rang Donna because if everyone just all roads led to Donna where we come from, when it comes to plants They say, you need to talk to Donna, you need to talk to Donna And she really inspired me to get back from my hands in the earth, start growing stuff. And yeah, I've learned so much along along that process. So, it's really changed

me. It's brought you back to actually literally being someone else who's actually growing growing Carbon life forms as well as creative outcomes yeah.

Jody Brown (Local grazier/activist/panellist): Yeah, I'll drop in there. I think the impact of this show and it's like a very new impact, I'm talking about it - as it's impacting me, is that for a while now I've been trying to dig deep deeper and learn more about, you know, how do we build ecological health and resilience and yes, going from partial perspective that's important, but I think that capturing curiosity, like, really digging into your curiosity and finding the details that fill you with that, like, joy, wonderment all that stuff. That's what keeps you going and so. Keith was just doing that bringing people together from all walks of life. And when I started wanting to learn more and thinking, well, if I want to learn different things that I need to be mixing with different people from different backgrounds and experiences. And so, you know, we ended up having this crazy, through this event and I felt quite crazy that it happened - where we had an international Speaker, so a rancher came over who's been doing these wonderful things reversing desertification in the Chihuahuan desert in Mexico and we had, you know, some wonderful First Nations perspectives and people coming and sharing stories and we had scientists and rangeland extension officers and a lot of pastoralists and it was just, and we all camped out and we had a fire and I made them all stay the night, so they weren't allowed to come back to town. Because I just wanted us to all rub shoulders more and more.

But I think as I've been leaning into trying to figure out better ways of sharing knowledge and building community, around regenerative principles and around how we improve the way we're managing landscapes. I think that often it will get brought back .. And it has to because people have to pay bills and figure out how they get a lot of their businesses. But it will often get brought back to money and how profitable is the enterprise? And yes, we have to tick that box. But this kind of you know, this kind of event and this exhibition is about celebrating, you know, the joy and the love that's there, but also the energy it gives you. And I think that that's something that's really critical, I think, even if we don't if we don't put it so specific into specifics, we all still feel that drain, like when there's been an all sort of, you know heat waves, when the drought's being here for an awful long time and all the colour is seeping out of the landscape and all the life is leaving it in; there are less grasses and then there are less forbs and then there's, you know, you're down to just the prickles and, you know, we really do feel that loss of life in ourselves and that I think that it's about understanding and appreciating that when there's abundance of native grasses species and there's abundance of forbs and Lupinus and different flowers and you see the different seed heads and the different structures of plants and the different heights of plants. and there are different ways they interact with the soil and the different ways of interacting

with microorganisms in the soil, which actually funnily enough, I'm like, oh, that's a type of carbon dating, right? Because you know, there's a lot going on under the ground. They're exchanging energies in different ways. And it's all part of building a healthy landscape, but we're not apart from the landscape. We are nature too. And so yeah, it's like if that energy is depleting and there's not much diversity there, then we're depleted too. And so, it's so lovely to come somewhere where you walk in and straight away the beauty of it's kind of celebrated and the diversity celebrated. So, thank you very much for doing that. And yeah, the impact on me and is like, okay now I'm thinking how do I, how do I pay it like you know, how can I pay that forward, how can I keep going a little bit with what you've done and sparked in my head today? So yeah, thank you. Just thank you all very much for this.

Jo-Anne Driessens (Carbon_Dating First Nations Consultant/Co-Curator): Yeah, that's a really big question, but if I go back to the beginning, when I was talking about connecting with all the artists and the extended family is also, I think about my relationship now with these artists, and I forgot to mention, I grew up in the west suburbs of Brisbane. I live in in the northern New South Wales region now, which is really rich rainforest area complete opposite, but I'm so keen to learn off each other and how we can empower the the artists to continue making really important messages In their work, encouraging them into different platform, sharing, it's like, "Oh, this is right opportunity you should apply it"! And now I understand your practice, now I understand what you're interested in. And for me, an un overarching component is continuing to learn, not just thinking I'm an expert in anything, really because I had to rely on everyone like yourself to connect with when I walked to the Desert Channel's office yesterday, I was like really keen to see who was there and what they could offer me and what our relationship then looks afterwards when I leave and then come back and just go, okay, let's pick up that conversation again, and I really want to learn to understand the landscape. So deeply, you know, through the root system and right through to the Sky Country and all that sort of thing, yeah, let's just keep the conversation going on the same page.

Donna Davis (Carbon_Dating Co-Director/Lead Artist): Yeah, and I think that that's just it, isn't it the family, the ecological system, if we consider ourselves as really embedded, we are part of the ecosystem, and that includes not only our relationship with the other organisms or non-human organisms, but also our relationships with each other and what we can learn from each other. And yeah, constantly learning, absolutely It is, you know, like how many times have I heard, oh Donna you've done a project on grass. What grass is this? And I'm like, I don't know. It's really hard. But let's find out together. And, you know, it's that type of thing that's interesting. And also, it's the, as an

artist, I think, um, I like what Jody was saying, being a storyteller. That's what I feel like. As many different ways that we can tell a story, the better. because here is a perfect example. The concept is native grass, and all of these stories are told differently. and all of these will resonate with everyone differently. And that's what I love about being an artist. You know, if you walk up and you're just, that's the one I want to look at and that's what I want to learn from, that's great. We're also, also diverse, and also the curiosity. And I think that's where my practice and particularly with this project's been great like working with with Keith as well. We've both been kind of following and I kind of went, hi, here's the tech guy. I'll learn all this tech off Keith, you know. And that, you know, that type of thing was really interesting, yeah, an interesting process. But I went deeper in. I've always loved using microscopes, really have loved looking at the things you can't see with the eye, because for me, that's a curiosity and that's a wonder. I can look at at a grass, but if I really look at a grass and I go right in I'll see all the really, really tiny parts of the plant that are super interesting and super exciting. So, in Sorry. So, like in this particular work, I was really looking at, you see all these funny little forms that are coming up behind us here. These are images, they're animations that I have made, but they're based on the stomata, which is on the underside of the leaves of plants, which are basically the little breathing pores So this is where CO₂ and oxygen come in and out of the plants So I'm really talking about the very air we breathe has gone through so many other life forms and in here, you know, the air we breathe has gone through the grass. So, they are taking in the CO₂ and releasing the oxygen, we're taking the oxygen in. So, we are intimately connected. So having these forms and getting the opportunity to start going deeper than a microscope, I've got to start looking at scanning electron microscopes, so going even deeper. How tiny can I go in and how interesting is that and the tinier we go, the more we start to see these resemblances between our our inner organisms, our cells, our cellular, we're not so different. We're not so different. Yeah.

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): I'm just keeping an eye on the time, but we might throw to the floor for any questions if anyone's got.. Or comments? Questions, comments. Suggestions. Feedback. I haven't seen it yet. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, speaking of which, did you want to do a quick little walk through? or what? I don't know that we could do a quick walk. Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. But we do encourage everyone. We're going to be here. Yeah, but I would really just love people to take that slow time and we're all going to hang around and we're happy to talk yeah, to anything. But, yeah, yeah. I tried to do a quick one with Jody and even that wasn't quick..

Audience: How long's the exhibition here for?

Sarah Johnson (Museum Curator): The exhibition is on until early June, so we've got plenty of time here. So, we will be sending more information out. We'll probably be doing a few more programs as well I just want would like to also just shout out to thank you, Tony, for saying yes to the show. Now also to wonderful John and my partner in crime up the back there, David, our assistant curator, thank you very much, guys, for your really amazing help with install and Justin's not here, but I just want to shout out to him as well.