


# another way: The Artistic Journey of Helen Seiver and Desmond Taylor Towards Healing

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 Natalie deRozario

In a unique and emotive collaboration, artists Helen Seiver and Desmond Taylor have spent the past four years creating a powerful testament to healing and reconciliation through their project 'another way'. Their journey, which began with a shared personal tragedy, has evolved into an exploration of cultural practices, artistic techniques, and a culminating exhibition at the Holmes à Court Gallery in West Perth.

## A Journey of Healing and Forgiveness

Helen and Desmond's collaboration was sparked by a chance meeting 23 years after a personal tragedy that linked them through a mutual friend, whom Desmond affectionately calls 'the Bridge'. This serendipitous connection led to their first meeting in the Pilbara, marked by the creation of a 'burning bridge' fire sculpture. This initial act symbolised their visions for healing, which they committed to pursuing despite any challenges.

Helen and Desmond have met regularly on country, engaging in site-specific processes and rituals to foster connection and understanding. Their practices have included ceremonies of cleansing, restitution, and forgiveness, symbolising their personal journey and contributing to the broader reconciliation effort. As Helen puts it, the transformation they have experienced defies simple explanation, encapsulating emotional depth and significance.



## Cultural Practices and Rituals in Nullagine

During their time in Nullagine, Helen and Desmond immersed themselves in traditional rituals, such as the making of Papirri. Papirri is traditionally a headpiece made from circles of vegetation and worn during difficult conversations to maintain focus and grounding. If the Papirri falls, the conversation must restart. Inspired by this tradition, Helen created a two-metre steel Papirri, now a centrepiece of their exhibition, illustrating the weight and strength of their shared journey.

## Artistic Techniques and Mediums

Helen's approach to their collaborative work is deeply rooted in materiality. For instance, the steel Papirri symbolises the robustness of their shared concept, while the use of blankets in her art evokes warmth, security, and love. One of her significant works, 'Big Blue Sky,' began with 32 paintings of the land's colours, guiding her subsequent blanket creations. These pieces, such as 'Pilbara Insignia' and 'Threads, Conversations and Mending,' have become integral to their narrative, offering a tangible connection to the land and the healing process.

Photography plays a crucial role in their exhibition, documenting the various cultural processes Desmond has taught Helen, such as spear making and site cleansing. These images convey the importance of these rituals, providing viewers with a glimpse into their transformative journey.



Image: Site Specific Installation of Helen's embroidered blanket. H & D under blanket, Nullagine, 2022, Photography Samuel Tetlaw

## Breaking Colonial Bonds

Helen's journey towards forgiveness has been long and complex, spanning 44 years. The collaboration with Desmond has highlighted the ongoing impact of colonial history on both societal and familial levels. Despite the reluctance of some family members to engage with the project, Helen finds joy in the mutual forgiveness she and Desmond have achieved. Their project stands as a testament to the possibility of understanding and reconciliation, challenging the dominant culture to listen and learn.

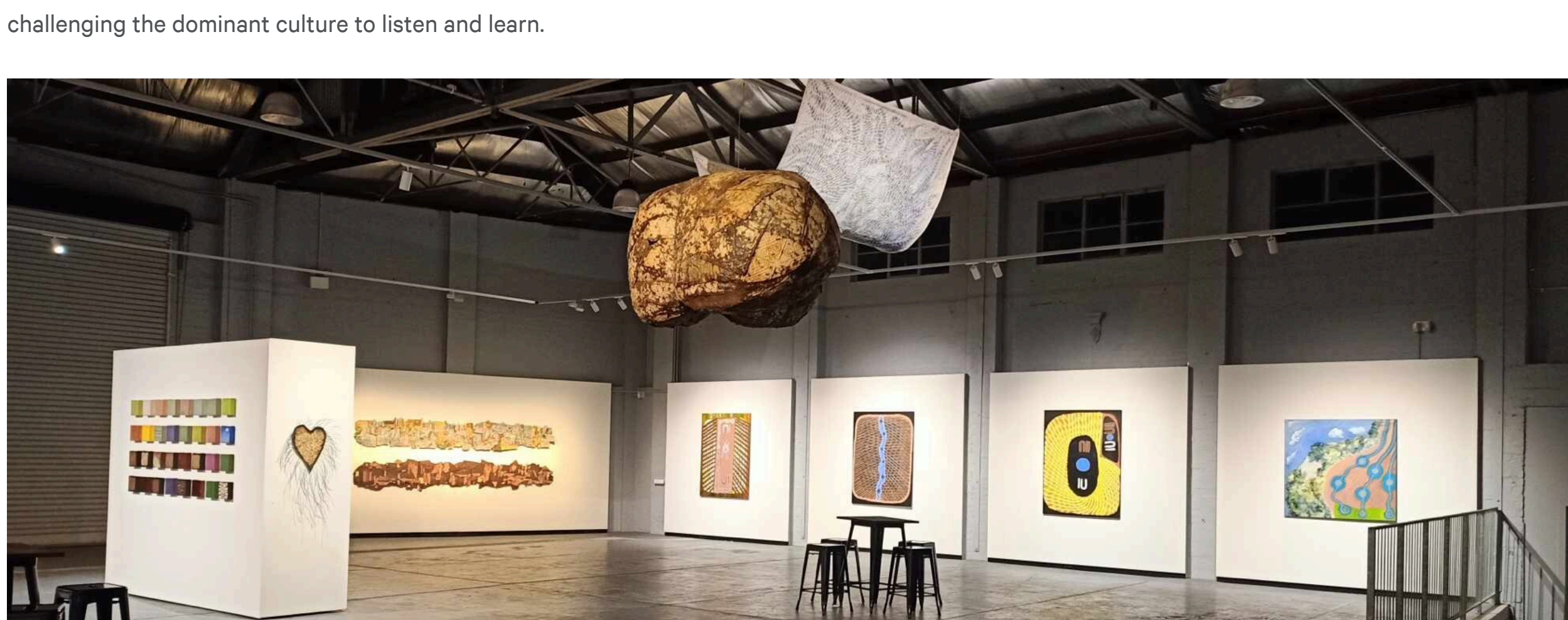


Image: Installation image at 'another way' at Holmes à Court Gallery, Courtesy of the artist

## Impact and Reception

'another way' has resonated deeply with audiences, culminating in a powerful exhibition at the Holmes à Court Gallery in West Perth. Helen and Desmond have shared their story not only through their art but also via artist talks and family discussions, aiming to inspire broader conversations about reconciliation. Their work has garnered interest from organisations like the Kinchela Boy Home Aboriginal Corporation, which seeks to use their story in its healing initiatives, and 'Together for Humanity,' which plans to incorporate their methods into educational programs.

As Helen and Desmond continue to share their vision, they hope to illuminate a path towards understanding and reconciling cultural differences, demonstrating that art can be a vehicle for change. Through "another way," they offer a beacon of hope and a blueprint for healing, both within Australia and beyond.

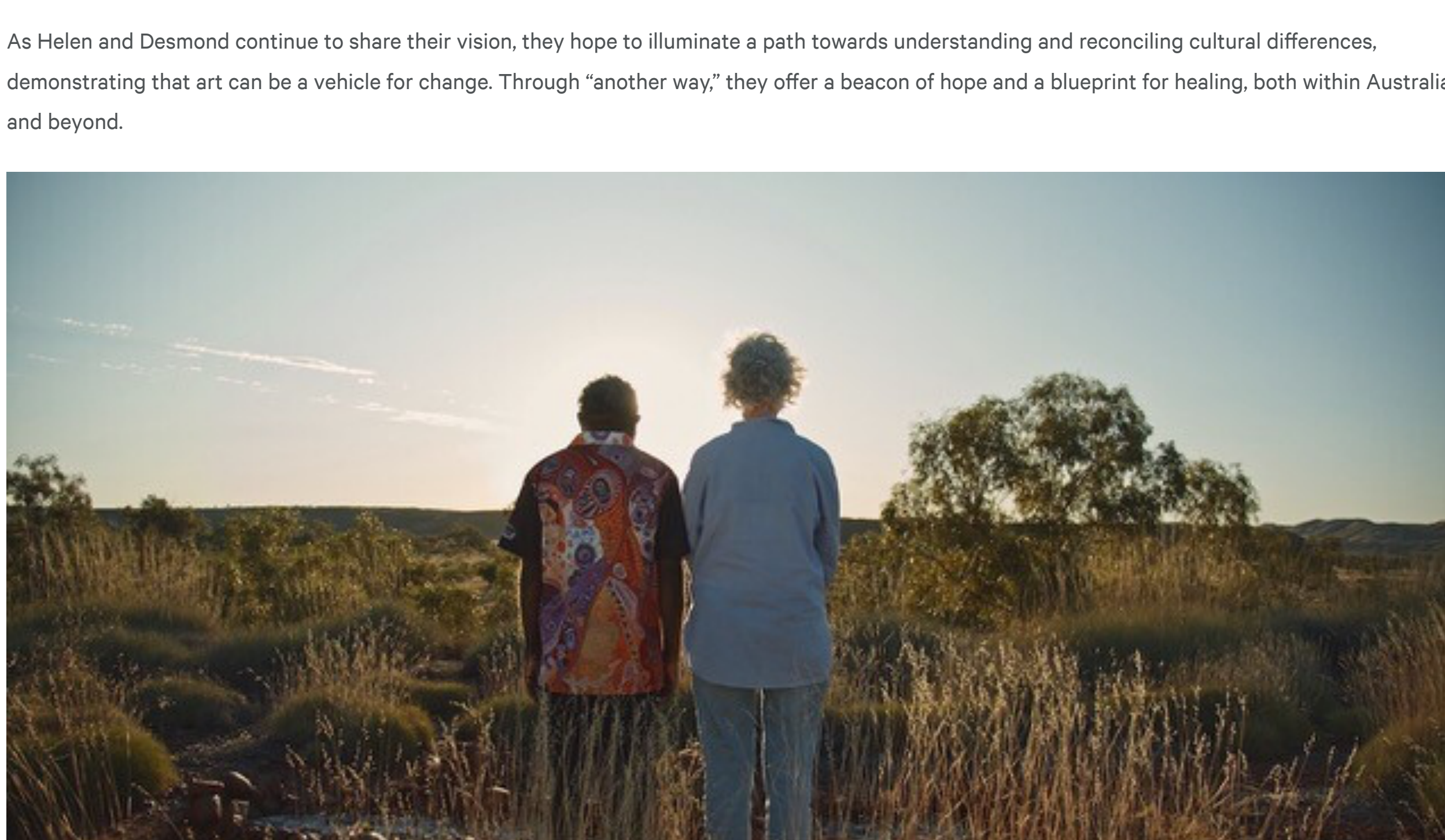


Image: Desmond Taylor and Helen Seiver, Standing Together, 2023 photo by Samuel Tetlaw.

In 2023 Helen Seiver and Desmond Taylor received a Regional Arts Fund Project Grant to support the final development of the 'another way' project. We are thrilled to have Helen Seiver as our April 2024 Artist of the Month to share her experience and the process of this incredible journey. During the Artist of the Month program Helen shared meaningful moments from 'another way' on our Instagram feed.

Find out more about Helen Seiver and her practice [here](#).

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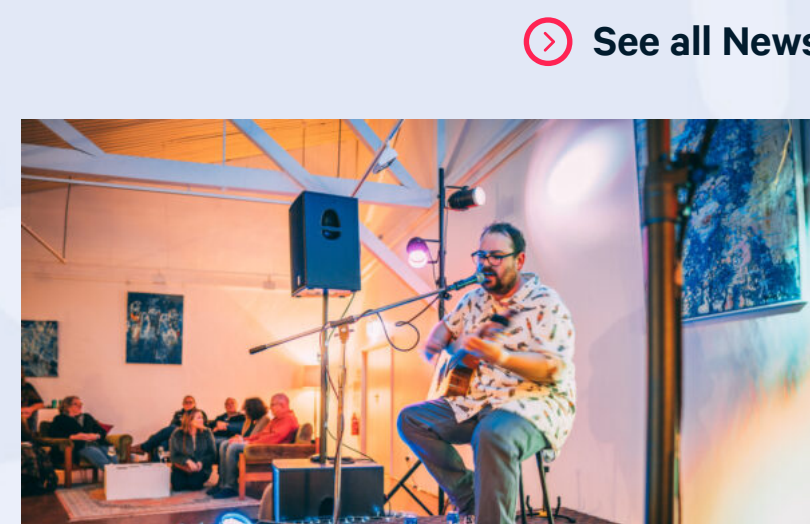
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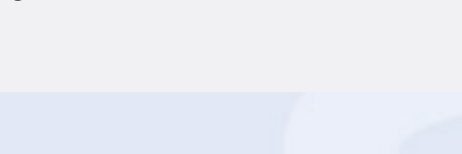
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