Sandra Saunders, *Natures Justice,* 2025, oil on board, 68cm x 130cm. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Kumarangk

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Kumarangk*. Inside, you'll find a curatorial overview, background information on the artists, and insights into selected artworks.

The kit includes discussion prompts to encourage critical thinking, along with a flexible activity designed for use in the classroom or gallery setting. Educators can adapt the content to suit primary or secondary students, integrating it into broader visual arts, history, or cultural studies learning.

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About the Exhibition

Kumarangk is an exhibition that shares a powerful First Nations story through the voices of Ngarrindjeri women. Named for the place colonially known as Hindmarsh Island, this exhibition centres Country as living, cultural, and deeply connected to identity, memory and responsibility. Through a range of contemporary and traditional art practices, the artists honour the strength, knowledge and resilience of Ngarrindjeri women.

The exhibition reflects on the events surrounding the proposed Hindmarsh Island bridge in the 1990s, a time when Ngarrindjeri women's cultural knowledge and authority were publicly challenged. Rather than retelling this history through political debate, *Kumarangk* reclaims it through art. It offers space for truth-telling, remembrance and cultural continuation, led by the voices of those directly connected to the story.

Across weaving, painting, ceramics, installation, soft sculpture and text, the artists express intergenerational knowledge and care for Country. The works are thoughtful, reflective and deeply grounded in community. They highlight the importance of women's cultural practices, storytelling and the ongoing responsibility to protect and nurture land and water.

Kumarangk invites audiences to listen, to learn, and to consider how art can hold history, healing and resistance all at once. It reminds us that Country is not just a place - it is family, story, and future.

The Mardawi Collective, *Mat*, 2025, Spiny flat sedge and steel frame, 175cm x 175cm. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artist(s)

Kumarangk brings together the work of Ngarrindjeri women artists whose practices span generations and artistic disciplines. Each artist contributes to a collective narrative of culture, resistance, storytelling and care for Country. The exhibition honours both the historical resistance led by Ngarrindjeri women and the ongoing cultural inheritance that continues today.

- Sandra Saunders (Ngarrindjeri) is a respected artist and activist whose Hindmarsh Island Collection revisits the events surrounding the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy through powerful paintings and wireworks. Her work anchors the exhibition, telling history from a Ngarrindjeri woman's perspective.
- Aunty Betty Sumner (Ngarrindjeri) is an elder and weaver whose practice connects traditional Ngarrindjeri textile knowledge with contemporary presentation. For *Kumarangk*, she has produced new weaving pieces that express cultural continuity and care.
- Sonya Rankine (Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri, Narungga & Wirangu) creates work that reflects her complex cultural heritage, often exploring identity and belonging through both traditional and contemporary art forms.
- Carly Tarkari Dodd (Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna & Narungga) contributes weaving and other works that blend ancestral practices with contemporary approaches, continuing Ngarrindjeri women's storytelling traditions.
- Tiarnie Edwards (Ngarrindjeri) is an early-career ceramicist whose work in *Kumarangk* extends the dialogue between material practice and cultural meaning, adding another layer to the exhibition's intergenerational voice.
- The Mardawi Art Collective, including Aunty Ellen Trevorrow, Temeika Campbell, Zemiah Campbell, Debra Rankine, Elizabeth Rankine, Bessie Rigney, Stephanie Russell and Margi Sumner, brings collaborative strength to the exhibition through weaving, soft sculpture and other mediums. Their work continues a tradition of communal creation, embodying shared responsibility and cultural memory passed through generations.

Collectively, these artists harness a range of media, from weaving and ceramics to large soft sculptures, painting and text-based work, to tell interconnected stories of resistance, resilience and love for Country and community. *Kumarangk* is a testament to their artistic skill, cultural knowledge and enduring legacy.

The *Kumarangk* Story

Kumarangk, known colonially as Hindmarsh Island, is a place of deep cultural, spiritual and ancestral significance to the Ngarrindjeri people. It is not simply land. It is living Country, connected to women's knowledge, responsibility and cultural law that has been carried for thousands of years.

In the early 1990s, a proposal was made to build a bridge from Goolwa to Kumarangk to support a marina development. For Ngarrindjeri women Elders, this was not just a construction project. It was a threat to sacred cultural knowledge and women's law. In 1994, Ngarrindjeri women courageously spoke up, explaining that the proposed bridge would damage culturally significant sites connected to restricted women's knowledge, knowledge that, under cultural protocol, could not be publicly shared in detail.

Rather than respecting these cultural boundaries, their knowledge was questioned, politicised and publicly scrutinised. A Royal Commission established in 1995 concluded that the women had fabricated their claims. This finding caused enormous distress and division. Ngarrindjeri women were subjected to intense media attention, racism and personal attacks. Their cultural authority was dismissed and their integrity was publicly undermined.

Despite this, the women stood firm.

In 2001, a Federal Court case reconsidered the evidence and found that the women's restricted knowledge was not proven to be fabricated. While the bridge was ultimately built and opened in 2001, the legal outcome marked an important moment of recognition. Years later, in 2010, the South Australian Government formally acknowledged that the Ngarrindjeri women's knowledge was genuine Aboriginal tradition.

The Hindmarsh Island Bridge controversy is now understood by many as a significant injustice in Australian history, a moment when Aboriginal women's voices were doubted and publicly challenged. It exposed how Indigenous cultural knowledge is often forced to fit within Western legal systems that do not easily recognise or protect it.

For Ngarrindjeri women, Kumarangk represents resilience, truth telling and cultural survival. The story is not only about a bridge. It is about sovereignty, women's law and the right to protect Country.

The exhibition *Kumarangk* reclaims this history. Through art, Ngarrindjeri women share their own narrative, honouring the Elders who stood strong, carrying forward cultural knowledge and ensuring that future generations understand both the pain of the injustice and the strength of their resistance.

Kumarangk installation view, 2026, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Selected Artworks

Sandra Saunders is a respected Ngarrindjeri and Boandik artist and activist whose work powerfully connects art, history, and cultural advocacy. For decades, she has used painting, collage, and sculpture to document and respond to events that have deeply affected her community. Her practice transforms lived experience into visual storytelling, ensuring that Ngarrindjeri perspectives are recorded, remembered, and honoured.

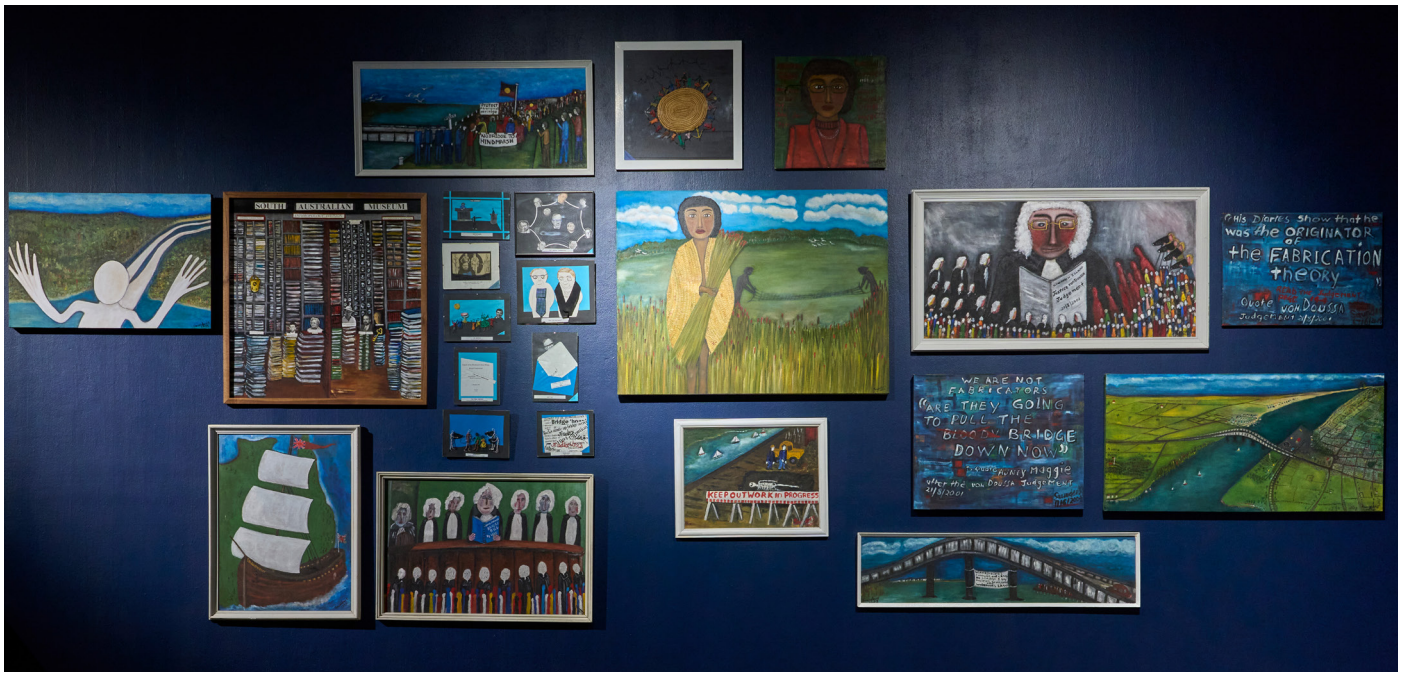
Saunders played an active role during the Hindmarsh Island Bridge controversy in the 1990s. In response to the pain, anger, and injustice experienced by Ngarrindjeri women, she created what is now known as the Hindmarsh Island Collection. Produced largely between 1996 and 2003, this series documents key moments, people, and places connected to the protests. Through layered compositions, text-based collage, and symbolic imagery, Saunders created a visual archive of resistance and cultural strength at a time when Ngarrindjeri women's knowledge was publicly questioned.

Her works are often intricately detailed and richly textured. She incorporates materials such as satin, lace, jewels, papier-mâché, and paint to create surfaces that shimmer with beauty while carrying powerful political meaning. The combination of decorative materials with serious subject matter reflects both the strength and dignity of Ngarrindjeri women. Beauty, in her work, becomes a form of resilience and defiance.

In *Kumarangk*, a selection of rarely seen text-based collages from the original *Hindmarsh Island* series is shown alongside a new commission, *Nature's Justice* (2025). While her earlier works were created during a time of conflict and uncertainty, *Nature's Justice* reflects a different emotional space. In this painting, Saunders imagines the bridge being overtaken by a powerful wave, symbolising the idea of nature restoring balance. Groups of women are shown cheering, echoing the collective strength that has always underpinned the story. The work centres Ngarrindjeri Women's Business and imagines a future shaped by healing, justice, and cultural continuity.

Through her art, Sandra Saunders ensures that the story of Kumarangk is told from within community. Her practice demonstrates how art can act as both protest and preservation, recording injustice while affirming identity, sovereignty, and self-determination for future generations.

Sandra Saunders, *No Wars*, 2003, oil on board, 130cm x 70cm. Photography by Sam Roberts.



Sandra Saunders, Selected works from the original *Hindmarsh Island* series, 2026, *Kumarangk* installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Selected Artworks

Tiarnie Edwards, *Country v Commonwealth*, 2025, terracotta and underglaze, 50cm x 50cm x 50cm. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Tiarnie Edwards is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores identity, culture, politics, and the layered histories that shape contemporary Aboriginal experience. Born on Kaurna Yarta and raised on Nauo Country in Tulka, Edwards uses storytelling, humour, and historical reflection to examine how personal and collective identities are preserved, challenged, and reimagined. Since discovering ceramics during tertiary study, clay has become central to their practice. For Edwards, ceramics is more than a material. It is a language for truth telling, cultural continuity, and resilience.

In *Country v Commonwealth* (2025), Edwards presents a large terracotta vessel accompanied by wall mounted ceramic forms. Measuring 50 × 50 × 50 cm, the work extends beyond a single object, creating a powerful visual statement. The vessel is decorated with pelicans and bold text, including the phrase "STOP the bridge," directly referencing Ngarrindjeri resistance to the proposed bridge at Kumarangk. Through this imagery, Edwards highlights the tension between Indigenous sovereignty and colonial governance, reflected in the title itself.

The ceramic forms surrounding the vessel echo the shapes and gestures of Ngarrindjeri woven adornments. By translating the language of weaving practice into clay, Edwards creates a dialogue between mediums, reinforcing the vessel as a site of cultural memory. Pots are traditionally containers, and in this work the vessel becomes a container for story, history, and honour.

Edwards describes the work as a commemoration of the sacrifice, love, and strength of Ngarrindjeri women who fought to protect Kumarangk. Growing up without seeing statues or monuments celebrating Aboriginal storytellers and land protectors, Edwards positions this vessel as a form of monument making. Through clay, they celebrate those who stood firm in defence of Country and ensure their legacy continues to be visible.

Country v Commonwealth reminds audiences that art can act as both remembrance and resistance. It invites viewers to consider how objects can hold stories, and how contemporary Aboriginal artists continue to honour and protect culture through creative practice.

Gallery Discussion

- *Kumarangk* shares stories from Ngarrindjeri women about their land, culture and history. How does hearing these stories through art help you understand their connection to Country?

- Many works celebrate strength, memory and resilience. What materials, colours or symbols do the artists use to show care for Country and community?

- Some artworks refer to the women's resistance to the building of the bridge at Kumarangk. What feelings or ideas come up for you when you think about protecting Country and cultural knowledge?

- The artists share both old stories and new ways of telling them. How do you see tradition and contemporary art coming together in the works?

- *Kumarangk* shows art as a way of remembering and honouring people and places. What does this artwork make you think about when you reflect on your own community and heritage?

Classroom Activity

- Begin with a discussion about standing up for something important. Ask students:
  – Have you ever felt strongly about protecting something?
  – Why is it important to listen to people when they speak about their culture or beliefs?
  – How can art be used to share a message?

  Explain that in *Kumarangk*, Ngarrindjeri women used both activism and art to protect Country and share their truth.

- Ask students to think of a place, community, or issue that matters to them. This could be:
  – A natural place they care about
  – A cultural tradition
  – A community space
  – An environmental issue
  – A value such as fairness or respect

- Students create an artwork that shares a message about protecting or honouring that place or value. They might:
  – Design a poster with bold text and imagery
  – Create a mixed-media collage with layered materials
  – Make a banner using fabric or paper
  – Produce a short illustrated zine page
  – Combine image and words in a painting or digital artwork

  Encourage them to think about how artists in *Kumarangk* used text, repetition, colour, and symbolism to make their message strong and visible.

- Display the works together as a classroom "community wall."

  Reflect:
  – What messages are most powerful? Why?
  – How do words and images work together to communicate meaning?
  – How does seeing everyone's messages together change how you think about community and responsibility?
  – What does this activity show us about the role of art in social change?

Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art /
Years 11–12 SACE Objectives

- Implement ideas and representations
- Apply literacy skills
- Analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in art
- Evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories
- Experiment in response to stimulus
- Create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of art materials, techniques, technologies, and processes
- Realise responses to communicate meaning

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts /
Years F-10

- Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)
- Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Respond to art works and consider where and why people make them, including visual art works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how they use materials, techniques, technologies, and processes (AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVA10D02)
- Practice techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art making (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)

Visit Us

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Tours

We welcome visits from education groups, primary through to tertiary, and encourage self-guided visits to our exhibitions. For more information about how to book, visit our website or email us.

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Kumarangk is supported by the South Australian government through Create SA; Country Arts SA; and Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE). This project is presented and supported by Adelaide Festival. This project is also presented as part of Tarnanthi. The publication is supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation. This project is also supported by SA Water and the Graham F Smith Peace Foundation Inc.

Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) is supported by the South Australian Government. ACE is also assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body. ACE is a member of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia.