

The Alternative Archive
the only
hospital
for miles



**Lake Grace Australian Inland
Mission Hospital Museum**

- 1924 Crown land reserved for hospital
- Community donates £443-15-4
- 1925 AIM agrees to Lake Grace hospital
- 1926 Lake Grace AIM Hospital opens
- Sisters Bennett and Cousin in charge
- First baby born at hospital
- Dr Fry takes up practice in Lake Grace
- 1930 Lake Grace Hospital Board constituted
- 1932 Dr Margaret Clark takes up practice
- 1933 Electricity replaces lighting plant and hurricane lamps
- 1934 Lake Grace Roads Board officially owns hospital
- 1935 Ladies Hospital Auxiliary forms
- 1937 Community raises £574 for extensions
- 1938 Separate maternity block built
- 1946 Staff shortages – hospital closes temporarily
- 1952 New hospital and Nurses' Quarters open
- 1972 Old hospital vacant
- 1983 AIM building in disrepair - State government to demolish
- Public protest by former staff and Lake Grace Lions Club
- Lake Grace Shire Council votes to save the building
- 1980s Community raises funds and restores building
- 1992 Lake Grace AIM Hospital Museum opens

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Visual stories from the
Australian Inland Mission
Hospital Museum,
Lake Grace

Foreword

The Only Hospital for Miles has been coordinated by the Lake Grace Regional Artspace for The Alternative Archive and delivered by the Creative Grid project, through the Regional Arts Partnership Program (RAPP) supported by the State Government of Western Australia and Country Arts WA.

The Alternative Archive has brought together regional artists throughout Western Australia to participate in a series of statewide group exhibitions network that engage with their local social archives. Investigating these local collections and stories provided the initial basis for artists to approach, examine, interpret and then present the information within an artistic constraint.

Our local artists; 11 members of the Lake Grace Artists' Group, local photographers and curators have taken up the opportunity to gain skills by participating in targeted mentorships with artistic leaders in each region. This involved taking part in hands-on skill sessions, monthly gatherings, statewide Skype conferences and face-to-face visits with their mentors. Connecting with participants in other regions to share knowledge and expand on contemporary artistic and curatorial practices has indeed been a valuable experience.

For the artists, this twelve-month project has involved hours of research, gleaning the fragments of stories from engaging with the Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission Hospital Museum and its objects, the remaining historical documents and talking to former staff and patients. It has been a journey of contemplation and reflection of what has been a very special privilege to engage with the museum, our nationally significant local archive. We are very pleased to be given the opportunity to present The Only Hospital for Miles to our community and the Creative Grid Network.

Tania Spencer

Coordinator, Lake Grace Regional Artspace

Alongside the story

Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission Hospital

The National Library of Australia has in its collection a small black and white photograph significant for what is outside the picture frame. A young man in suit and hat stands in the wide, unpaved street of a country town. In ink on the reverse: "taken by the young gentleman in the foreground, a patient. And this is the main street of Lake Grace". Catalogue note: Created/published between 1926 and 1930.¹

It is the Australian Inland Mission Hospital, of which the man was a patient, which is absent in this image.

While the man remains unidentified, clues to the timing can be found in the Lake Grace streetscape. Behind the man can be seen ten or so shops and houses, all built in the early to mid-1920s. The new hotel to his left (built 1925) is evident but not the Bank of New South Wales (built 1929). So "between 1926 and 1930" fits.

The photograph is part of the National Library's Australian Inland Mission (AIM) archive. Reverend John Flynn of the AIM had visited Lake Grace around 1922/23 to meet with locals about building a hospital. Lake Grace would join the AIM network of bush hospitals across outback Australia and in so doing, enter a national story.

While not "outback", Lake Grace was remote, a 266 mile (428 km) rail journey to Perth. By 1926, Lake Grace was ten years a town and nearly 1000 people lived in the district. Farmland, from 1908, spread eastward to Newdegate, Lake Biddy and Pingaring. As today, health services were priority. A medical emergency meant a 110 kilometre trip to Wagin or Ravensthorpe. So the community lobbied the State Government and the AIM and raised funds for a hospital. Built in 1926, the Lake Grace AIM Hospital - a two-storey brick and jarrah building - was impressive, particularly in contrast to the bush homes of corrugated iron, timber and hessian. Patients came from a wide catchment of nearly 16,000 square kilometres, and to keep the hospital running, people from the district regularly donated food, firewood and funds.

In 1934, the Lake Grace Roads Board repaid the AIM loan and took over the hospital under the WA Health Department. By the 1940s, however

and despite modification and extensions, the hospital became inadequate for the growing district and ceased operation in 1952, replaced by the Lake Grace Memorial Hospital. By the 1970s, the old hospital was vacant and in disrepair. When the State government threatened to demolish the building in 1983, the community again rallied and restored it as a Museum.

The AIM archive held by the National Library of Australia is vast, including documents, maps, correspondence, objects and photographs. The Hospital Museum at Lake Grace draws from these, housing an additional collection of medical instruments and equipment, domestic and personal items, and a small but insightful photographic collection. Stories are mapped throughout the wards, rooms and hospital site. The building displays its own record - the marks and traces of alterations and additions, decay and restoration.

The national story of Reverend John Flynn - the man who established 15 hospitals across Australia and founded the Royal Flying Doctor Service has been told, mythologised and critiqued. Alongside his story, here in Lake Grace sit other narratives;

"I was born there."

"I was the Wards Maid in 1936."

"Dr Clark took out my tonsils, right there."

"My grandfather was on the Hospital Board."

"My Dad met my Mum there."

"Mrs D helped save the old hospital."

And then there are those histories still untold.

Now almost one hundred years old and listed on local and State heritage registers, the Lake Grace Australian Mission Hospital is nationally significant as one of three remaining early AIM hospitals (and the only in Western Australia). It holds personal histories - the life events of local families, the work lives of staff and the importance of a hospital to a small rural community.

¹ Flynn, John. 1926, *Lake Grace main street*, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-142606350>

Michelle Slarke

Co-curator

AIM/2019

Artists

Jayne Argent

Kerrie Argent

Taryn Blight

Phyllis Dunham

Lenore Gladish

Jeanne Melville

Kerry Scally

Michelle Slarke

Tania Spencer

Judith Stewart

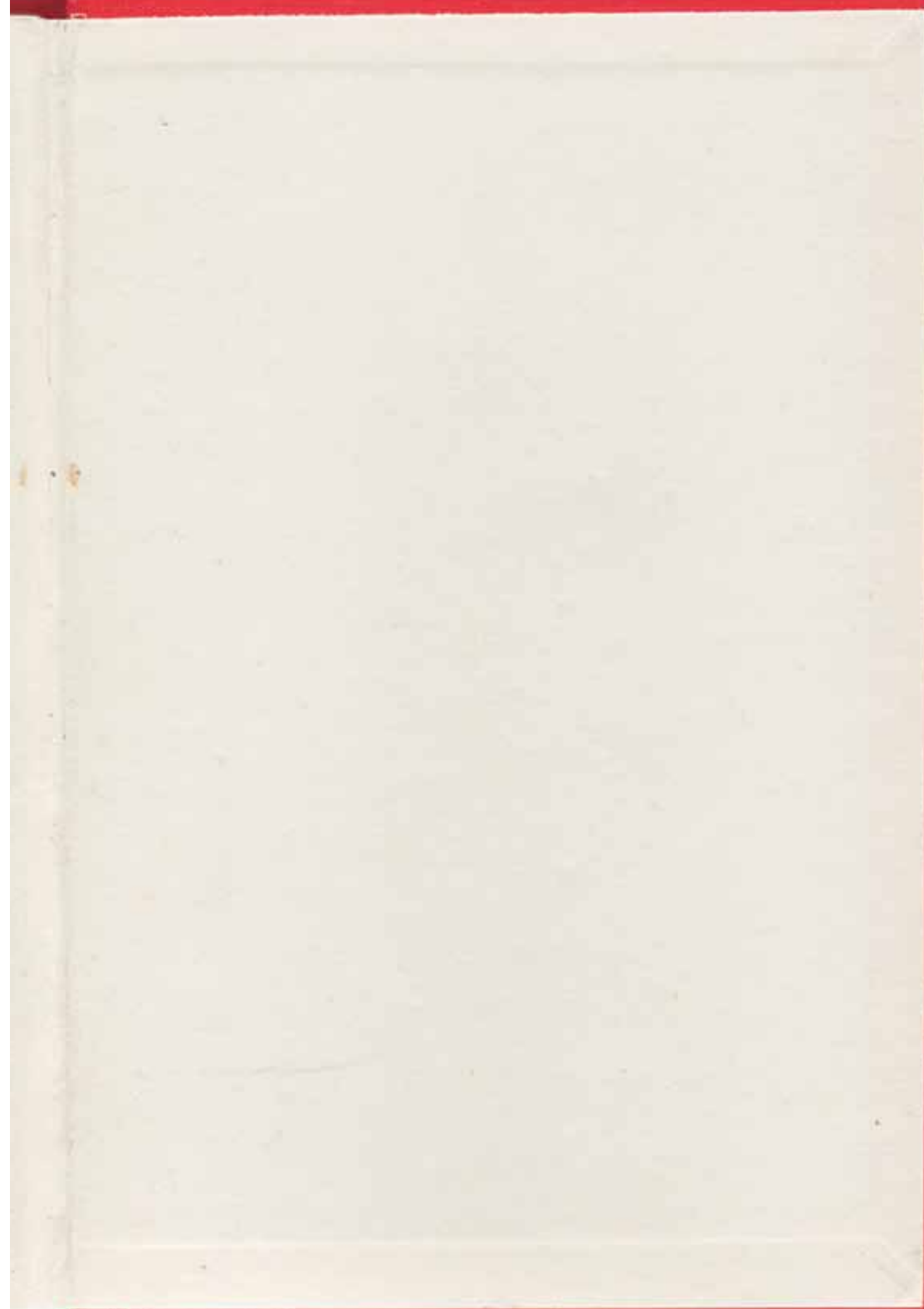
Leanne Young

Curators

Kerrie Argent

Michelle Slarke

Tania Spencer



DAILY REPORT

JA/2019

Jayne Argent

JA/2019

Artist:- Jayne Argent

Artwork Title:	I had favourites, now they are throwaways	
Media	Photographic prints, disposable stainless steel instruments, old theatre table.	
Dimensions:	Approx. 900mm x 900mm	

Statement:-

Bringing into the light, the instruments that would have been good quality and cleaned many times over. Most people would not come into contact with some of the tools that would have been used when the Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission Hospital staff were performing regular surgeries. These photographs give you a look at what would have been treasured and well-respected tools. Society has changed the way it thinks. Nowadays, hospital instruments are sealed in plastic to keep sterile and anything not used is thrown away.

Source: Lake Grace AIM Hospital Museum instrument collection



Photograph: Jayne Argent

DAILY REPORT

KA/2019

Kerrie Argent

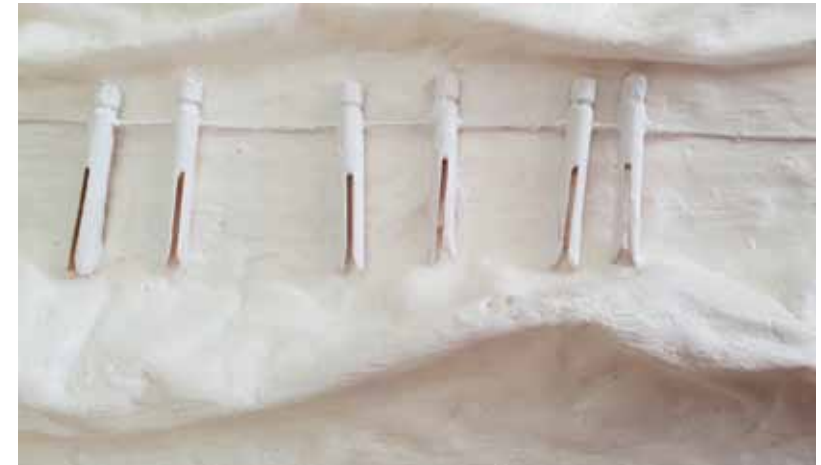
KA/2019

Artist:- Kerrie Argent

Artwork Title:	WhiteWash	
Media	Encaustic, found and up-cycled cloth, wooden chairs and stainless steel	
Dimensions:	Variable	

Statement:-

After wearing white uniforms for years as a nurse and struggling to keep them unstained and pristine clean, I wonder how the AIM nurses managed to do this with their limited laundry facilities, detergents and stain removers. White linen, white uniforms, white veils, white bandages, all washed and recycled.....no throw-always for them. Laundry hung on the outside lines with dolly pegs that popped off with a good wind. Sheets washed every day, nothing disposable that absorbed the moisture to stop the staining of this beautiful white linen. Washing/sterilising pans outside in a copper in their white uniforms...wood, ash, black soot and smoke. Blood, body fluids, dirt, ink... I still can't see how they all stayed white.



Photograph: Jayne Argent

DAILY REPORT

TB/2019

Taryn Blight

TB/2019

Artist:- Taryn Blight

Artwork Title:	Women are Like Teabags...	
Media	Teabags, tulle, silk thread	
Dimensions:	670mm x 850mm	

Statement:-

Women have played a very significant role in the Australian Inland Mission Hospital, from the doctor to the cleaners. Each role was crucial and each would have presented some challenges. Whether it was trying to prepare a meal while the stove was being used to sterilise instruments, operating on patients with limited equipment or caring for the patients, the staff adapted and coped with admirable strength of character. They were all amazing women.



Photograph: Taryn Blight

DAILY REPORT

TB/2019

Artist:- Taryn Blight

Artwork Title:	Masked by Time	
Media	Wire, cotton, cotton thread, tulle	
Dimensions:	Variable	

Statement:-

Time masks many things, the past as well as the future. We look at the AIM Hospital and find it hard to imagine how they coped with such limited facilities. We look at the Hospital now and can't picture how it was in the past. But, what would the people of the past have thought of the present? They would never have been able to envisage the facilities and equipment we have. The present hides so many things, the past and the future.

Taryn Blight

TB/2019



Photograph: Taryn Blight

DAILY REPORT

PD/2019

Phyllis Dunham

PD/2019

Artist:- Phyllis Dunham

Artwork Title:	The Kitchen	
Media	Various items used in the hospital kitchen	
Dimensions:	Variable	

Statement:-

My interest stems from thinking of the difficulties the staff of the Australian Inland Mission Hospitals endured in the early days. Apart from the hardworking nursing staff, the kitchen had to be up to scratch all the time as staff and patients needed to be fed and hot water would be required at any time.

There was a large cast iron kettle and an equally large boiler on the stove kept full at all times for whenever hot water was needed. I believe that when a poultice had to be heated; and regardless of a cake being already in the oven, the poultice was placed there as well; much to the dismay of the cook. There was only the wood stove for heating and that had to be kept alight throughout the night so the wood had to be kept near and dry. I suppose that was the orderly's task.



Photograph: Phyllis Dunham

DAILY REPORT

LG/2019

Lenore Gladish

LG/2019

Artist:- Lenore Gladish

Artwork Title:	Family Connections	
Media	Tea dyed cotton fabric and gauze, photographic transfers, thread	
Dimensions:	Variable	

Statement:-

I was inspired to do this work by photos of my Aunty who started work at the AIM in the early 1930s before doing her nursing in Fremantle, then returning for a short time. My family have also had connections with the hospital from its beginning. I have enjoyed the process of going through family photos, talking to and seeing the other families involved.

Source: Family photographic collection



Photograph: Jayne Argent

DAILY REPORT

JM/2019

Artist:- Jeanne Melville

Artwork Title:	Where the journey leads.	
Media	Copper, brass, nickel, aluminium, metal wires, mica, resin, fabric, paper	
Dimensions:	Approx. 900mm x 900mm	

Statement:-

I've used the idea of a 'charm bracelet' as a vehicle to allow the viewer to contemplate what might have been. Small metal charms with windows, doors, photographs, patched and sewn up pieces, forgotten stories and imagined faces are there to encourage the viewer to engage with the Lake Grace Hospital that was.

Sources: Lake Grace AIM Hospital Museum photographic collection

Jeanne Melville

JM/2019



Photograph (detail): Jeanne Melville

DAILY REPORT

KS/2019

Kerry Scally

KS/2019

Artist:- Kerry Scally

Artwork Title:	Precious Building	
Media	Acrylic paint on stretched canvas	
Dimensions:	305mm x 406 mm	

Statement:-

For this painting, I visited the building and museum to familiarise myself and record the building as it is now. My love of old buildings set me on a path of depicting the building in paint. I can imagine how busy it would have been with staff and patients coming and going; the happiness when someone was saved or cured and the sadness on occasions.



Photograph: Kerry Scally

DAILY REPORT

KS/2019

Artist:- Kerry Scally

Artwork Title:	Having a break	
Media	Plaster bandage, gauze, medical workbook, wire	
Dimensions:	660mm x 520mm	

Statement:-

I am not sure if the nursing staff had much time to take a break, but I like to think that they did. The figure with head in hands depicts the tiredness and sometimes the grief the nurses would have felt. The floating figure represent the feeling of joy that would have been felt when lives were saved or babies were successfully delivered. The tree is a symbol of continuing life and growth. In this work I wanted to create a sculptural work using some of the materials that are used in a hospital environment.

Kerry Scally

KS/2019



Photograph:Kerry Scally

DAILY REPORT

MS/2019

Michelle Slarke

MS/2019

Artist:- Michelle Slarke

Artwork Titles:	Mapped; Phials; Ampoules; Re-made - Artefacts after Burning series	
Media	Objects recovered from old hospital tip/burn sites (glass, metal, china, bone, plastic), wire, nails, PVA	
Dimensions:	Variable	

Statement:-

Accumulation of rubbish immediately outside Hospital boundary needed collecting and removal. *Hospital Inspection report, 6 June 1946.*

Rubbish is definitely not thrown over the fence and the remaining small accumulation seen by Matron Bottle was deposited there many years ago and is being gathered up and disposed of as opportunity permits. *Lake Grace Hospital Board, 5 August 1946*
All human waste was ... carted away to eastern [western] part of the lake near the causeway. *Ailsa McDonald, nurse 1941-43*

Some years ago, I found the remains of a nurse's pocket watch while walking in the bush near the old hospital. Close by, under shrubs and leaf litter, there are charcoal scatters marking places where hospital waste was dumped, burnt and raked over. Soil burns on the west bank of Lake Grace and plough lines at the old tip east of town hide other dump sites.

I found fragments of ampoules and phials, heavy old glass and china, pipettes and test tubes, safety pins, a nurses' button, a suture needle. I surveyed and catalogued the finds and re-made them using soil, ash, charcoal and/or salt from each dump site to bind and ground.



Photograph: Michelle Slarke

Sources: State Records Office of Western Australia, AU WA S268- cons1003 1945/0396, Ailsa McDonald nee Meston, personal correspondence 2003.

DAILY REPORT

TS/2019

Artist:- Tania Spencer

Artwork Titles:	40 Babies a Year Born Here	
Media	Oxidised copper, iPad, live feed	
Dimensions:	1200mm x 1000mm; 240mm x 180mm	

Statement:-

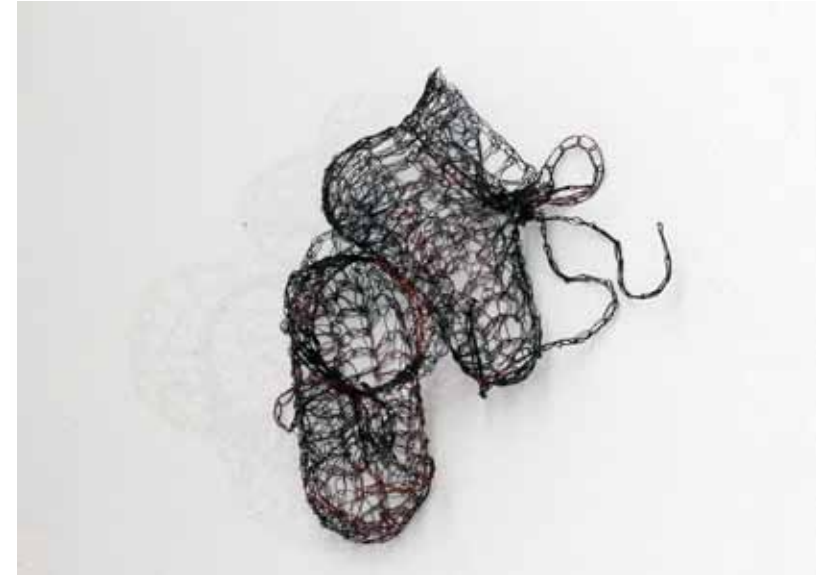
The legacy of John Flynn has touched our town in many ways, starting with the completion of the Lake Grace Nursing Home in 1926. This building has been preserved by the community and is now known as the Lake Grace Australian Inland Mission (AIM) Hospital Museum. It was the dream of Flynn “to see that hospital and nursing facilities are provided within a hundred miles of every spot in Australia where women and children reside.”¹

In the 26 years of its operation, nearly 1000 of our locals were born in this little hospital. By 1937, around 40 babies per year were being born here² and in 1938 a new maternity wing was built. Maternity patients were brought in early because of the distances and transport difficulties.

No babies are delivered in Lake Grace now. If they are, there is much consternation as to why. Our babies are born in Narrogin, an hour and a half journey by car. If they come too early now the Royal Flying Doctor flies them out to Perth, a long three and a half hour drive for expectant fathers. On any one of these planes a little premmie baby could be helped by the “Mantle of Safety” over our landscape.

Tania Spencer

TS/2019



Photograph: Rebecca Clark

Sources: ¹John Flynn-1914 presentation to the General Assembly in *John Flynn* by Ivan Rudolph, 2012.

²Conversation with Elsie Bishop, former nurse.

RFDS live digital feed www.flyingdoctor.org.au used with permission.

DAILY REPORT

JS/2019

Judith Stewart

JS/2019

Artist:- Judith Stewart

Artwork Title:	Wheels of Progress - New Life; New Land; New Hope	
Media	Oil paint and gauze on stretched canvas	
Dimensions:	460mm x 725 mm	

Statement:-

The construction of the AIM Hospital in Lake Grace enabled women to have medical assistance for the delivery of their babies thus avoiding further separation from the support of their families and the long periods awaiting the birth in distant hospitals. Even so, the slow transport over rough tracks in all weather conditions made this a hazardous journey.

Sources: research assistance from Mrs Elsie Bishop, Mrs Sue Hall of the Newdegate Hainsworth Building - Pioneer Museum; *Lake Grace 100 Years - a community memoir* ed. S. Clarke-Lloyd & M. Slarke, *Far Site - Women of the Salt Lake Country* by Michelle Slarke; *Across the Lake, 1911-1992* A History of Lake Grace by John Bird.



Photograph: Meighan Stewart

JS/2019

Artist:- Judith Stewart

Artwork Title:	The Only Hospital for Miles	
Media	Oil paint and gauze on stretched canvas	
Dimensions:	725mm x 965mm	

Statement:-

My impression of the Lake Grace AIM is of a building erected in a time of limited resources, tremendous hardship and difficulties of distance for staff, supplies and patients to travel the miles to reach the hospital. Travelling miles over rough tracks for hours in cold, hot, windy, wet conditions. These journeys involved wheels. Wheels became my focus, as once in the hospital, wheels are evident on the beds, screens, cots, all domestic appliances and equipment.

I have incorporated gauze in all three paintings to refer to bandages which symbolize the connection to the journey of life, the only hospital for miles and the wonderful role the nursing staff played serving the community in the early days.

JS/2019

Artist:- Judith Stewart

Artwork Title:	Hands On	
Media	Oil paint and gauze on stretched canvas	
Dimensions:	460mm x725mm	

Statement:-

The establishment of the AIM Hospital in Lake Grace was a focal point in the development of this region. This painting represents the need for mobility for the care of sick and aging patients, in this case a wheelchair. Being hand-operated reflects an era when patients and staff relied on their own and each other's strength, initiative and resilience to keep going and overcome the difficulties which recovery and nursing required at this time. Wheels were needed to transport the patient to and from the only hospital for miles. All hands on deck!

DAILY REPORT

LY/2019

Artist:- Leanne Young

Artwork Titles:	It feels like only yesterday	
Media	Acrylic paint on canvas	
Dimensions:	1220mm x 910mm	

Statement:-

My interest comes from the human nature aspect; the compassion for others, that doesn't go away but stays with some forever.

For both the giver and receiver.

Without this, then why are we here?

Sources: Lake Grace AIM Hospital Museum photographic collection; Suzanne Reeves photograph

Leanne Young

LY/2019



Photograph: Michelle Slarke

AIM/2019

Project Acknowledgements

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Lake Grace Visitor Centre

Helen Bennett, LGVC

Jo Morgan, LGVC

Lenore Gladish, Lake Grace Post Office

The Only Hospital for Miles *Visual stories from the Australian Inland* *Mission Hospital Museum, Lake Grace*

5 - 26 April, Lake Grace Regional Artspace

As part of *The Alternative Archive*, a series of thirteen inter-connected, regionally generated, group exhibitions and one survey exhibition delivered by the Creative Grid collective.

Design: Michelle Slarke



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

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