

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE4808

## Searles, Nalda

(1945 - )

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**Born** 1 January, 1945, Kalgoorlie-Boulder

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**Occupation** Artist, Photographer

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### Summary

Nalda Searles is nationally recognised for her baskets and artworks using materials found in the bush. Working within the landscape her art reflects a deep commitment to nature and culture. Her inspirational workshops and involvement with Aboriginal women have seen new methods of making grass basketry and sculpture spread into remote indigenous communities.

### Details

Nalda Searles was born in Kalgoorlie and went to the Boulder, then Bullfinch, Primary Schools before attending Northam Senior High. She left for Perth to study and work as a psychiatric nurse.

Travel abroad gave her a deeper appreciation of the arts, and on return she undertook a brief course in macramé at the Midland Technical School. This quickly led to a life long commitment to working with fibres.

Renowned potter and friend Eileen Keys encouraged Nalda to source her materials from the environment, and in 1983 a six-week bush camp in the Yilgarn resulted in an exciting collection of baskets made from bark, grass, flowers and sticks. This led to her first major solo exhibition *Bush Meetings and Basketry* (1985) at the Craft Council of Western Australia. In 1989 she featured in the ABC television series *The Makers*. A Fine Arts degree at Curtin University followed.

In 1993, while working on the Wama Wanti Street Art Project for indigenous people in Kalgoorlie, she met senior Wongi woman Pantjiti Mary McLean. The two women became close friends, shared their skills, and collaborated in joint exhibitions of their work.

Nalda has worked overseas as an artist-in-residence, and her works are held in numerous public and private collections. A major survey of her work 'Drifting in my own land' was held in 2009 at Curtin University, and has toured nationally.

In 2009 her contribution to the arts was recognised by the state with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

### Published resources

#### Edited Book

Nalda Searles, *Drifting In My Own Land*, Nichols, Andrew, 2009

#### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

#### Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

### Author Details

Nalda Searles

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**Last modified** 16 September 2013

## Digital resources



**Title:** Amalfi Restaurant, Kalgoorlie Boulder  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** Mrs Marinka, waitress at the Amalfi Restaurant  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023

**Title:** Maude Wordsworth James  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** Pantjiti Mary McLean (sat down) and Nalda Searles  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** Nalda Searles: Trading Teapot  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** Mary-Nalda\_ca-1990s.-Photograph-courtesy-of-Nalda-Searles.jpg  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** NaldaSearles-Courtesy-Nalda-Searles.jpg  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** tran9  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** 3 May, 2023

