



arts MID
NORTH
COAST

CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES & CULTURE
2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover Photo: J Slavin
This page: K Williams

ARTS MID NORTH COAST OUR MISSION

Arts Mid North Coast (AMNC) is the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the mid north coast region of New South Wales. Our region comprises the seven local government areas of Great Lakes, Greater Taree, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour and embraces the area associated with the Woromi, Biripi, Dughutti and Gumbaynggirr Nations. With nearly 300,000 residents it is one of NSW's most populous regions with a remarkable diversity of creative activity and industry.

AMNC is part of a network of 14 Regional Arts Boards throughout New South Wales. And we link to Regional Arts NSW and Regional Arts Australia thereby extending the value achieved to both our Councils and creative professionals. AMNC receives triennial core funding from the NSW State Government through Arts NSW supplemented with annual financial contributions from each of the region's local Councils.

Our mission is to engage with individuals, community organisations and government and private sectors to support and promote participation and excellence in the arts, cultural and creative industries across the region.

AMNC also aims to produce significant outcomes in employment, economic development, tourism, education, health, Aboriginal cultural development and community capacity building.

OUR GOALS

To generate increased opportunities for access, participation, training and education. (Participation)

To generate increased visibility for creative and cultural activity and opportunity. (Audience Development)

To initiate develop and foster strategic partnerships that benefit communities and region. (Partnerships)

To have and foster networks supporting regional resource/ knowledge sharing and collaborative projects. (Collaboration)

To have significant effective and frequent input to regional arts, creative industries and cultural development planning. (Cultural Development)

To be an agile, effective, responsibly governed and sustainable Regional Arts Board. (Governance)

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

It is pleasing to report that Arts Mid North Coast Inc. (AMNC) has continued to forge ahead in a range of sectors across the region. These include audience development, online marketing and social media, building partnerships, community networking and Grants advisory services. Details of these and many other projects are recorded elsewhere in this report.

Our thanks go to all AMNC staff, Executive Officer/ Regional Arts Development Officer, Kevin Williams, Finance & Administration Manager, Sophie Williams and Communications Officer, Denise Aitken, who joined the organisation in August this year. With challenging workloads, these people are delivering promising results for future growth. Congratulations to them all.

Appreciation is also extended to our funding bodies – Arts NSW and the seven participating local government Councils; Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Port Macquarie/Hastings, Greater Taree and Great Lakes. We acknowledge their ongoing contributions to the continuing growth of cultural development in their respective areas and the region as a whole. Thanks also to all Regional Arts NSW staff and our project partners. We are all in exciting times as new opportunities continue to be sourced, initiated and developed.

As a member of the AMNC Board for the past ten years and President for the past nine years, I will not be seeking

re-election as President in 2015. It has been my privilege to have worked with dedicated and skilled Board members, working as a team to ensure the best results for all. I sincerely thank each one of them, past and present, for their personal support and for their absolute commitment to cultural development in our region.

We are off to a great start for another successful year ahead.

Mave Richardson. AM PSM
President, AMNC Inc.

PARTICIPATION

To generate increased opportunities for access, participation, training and education.

SMARTART

Recognising the value of digital technology as the way forward in delivering information and training we created in 2014 a new section to our website, SmartART. This provides an ever changing and detailed repository of information and tools to increase the business skills and capacity of the artists and creative professionals in our community. Categories include business planning and development, market research, crowdfunding, insurance options, digital marketing, media and how to stay informed and connected.

ONLINE MARKETING WORKSHOPS

In the first half of 2014 we partnered with ETC Coffs Harbour to deliver seven workshops across the region to artists and community groups providing insights into digital marketing and the development and use of websites and social media. The workshops were made possible by the support of the Regional Arts Fund, Aus Industry and the Federal Government's Digital Business Advisory Service.

CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS DIRECTORY

In 2014 we expanded the range of categories of creative professionals that could profile on our website and then in late 2014 undertook an active campaign to increase the number of artists and creative professionals involved. The result a seventy percent increase so we now showcase more than two hundred individuals.

DIRECTORY OF TEACHERS

Increased participation in the arts often requires acquiring new skills. To facilitate this we created in 2014 a directory of all art, music, dance and drama teachers in the region. With over 210 listings it is the largest such directory in regional New South Wales.

COUNTRY ARTS SUPPORT PROGRAM GRANTS

The Country Arts Support Program of Regional Arts NSW (CASP) delivers on behalf of Arts NSW funding to a range of community based organisations, art forms and activities across the region.

In 2014 seven local projects were successful in securing this funding for 2015:

Kendall Community Centre, What Talent We've Got

*Great Lakes Community Resources/
Forster Film Festival, Inspired by Stroud
Film making*

PARTICIPATION

Garlambirla Youth Theatre, Coffs Harbour, Artist in Residence

Afrekete Afro Cuban Festival, Coffs Harbour.

Mosaic Mojo - Community Art in Nambucca Heads

'Garlambirla' 'Gagu' Arts, Culture & Youth Leadership Camp

Capturing Elders memories of Traditional Art, Manning Regional Gallery

GRANTS ADVISORY SERVICE

AMNC encourages and supports artists and community groups in seeking funding under a wide range of grant programs delivered by State and Federal Government and other philanthropic organisations. In 2014 over 50 grant and other opportunities were brought to the attention of those in the region.

We also review and advise on applications as well as provide letters

of support. Sixteen groups and individuals were assisted in 2014 with grant applications plus a further 14 with their CASP applications.

The diversity of funding sought included:

Community Building Partnership

Aboriginal Regional Arts

Festivals Australia Regional Festivals

CATCH

Arts NSW Annual Program

Regional Arts Fund

Regional Flagship Funding

Creating Liveable Communities

Commercial sponsorships.



AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

To generate increased visibility for creative and cultural activity and opportunity.

CREATIVE COAST BRANDING

In 2013 AMNC launched the new Creative Coast branding and a website to showcase the regions signature events. In 2014 we expanded that branding to a much broader concept for use in all our marketing to highlight the region as a vibrant arts and cultural destination with two major elements to the brand: our new Cultural Trails and our Creative Communities feature. This branding is particularly relevant to our work with the tourism industry and was used extensively with the tourism industry. The Mid North Coast now receives 10 million visitor nights a year from the Australian domestic market plus an ever expanding day trip market. The expanded Creative Coast brand has its own website address www.creativecoast.org.au and Facebook both then driving visitors to other AMNC communication platforms.

CULTURAL TRAILS

The cultural trail previously developed by AMNC was substantially expanded

in 2014 increasing to 12 different themed trails with the number of listed attractions and events increasing from 36 to over 300 plus events. This has created the largest online portal of cultural activities in regional Australia. The trails are now a significant tool for increasing visibility of our creative and cultural activity and have been used in a variety of media, advertising and print collateral initiatives throughout the region.

ONLINE MARKETING

In 2014 AMNC continued to enhance and expand its regional arts portal, www.artsmidnorthcoast.com. The site provides a comprehensive one-stop shop for artists and audiences across the region. The site offers mapping and search capabilities, making it simple to locate specific tools, events and organisations online. The site also links to a wide range of relevant external information sources. During the year the website showcased more than 200 events and the number unique hits achieved were 50 percent above the 2014 target.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

ARTS BLAST

Our e-bulletin, Arts Blast was delivered every fortnight to over one thousand subscribers. The newsletter contains a large range of vital information and links to cultural news and events plus training, grants and awards opportunities. The online newsletter is a valuable tool in sending traffic through to the more comprehensive AMNC website. In 2014 both the website and Arts Blast underwent exciting design changes to be both a more effective communications tool and responsive for mobile and tablet use.

SOCIAL MEDIA

AMNC became far more active on social media with the appointment of a social media co-ordinator two days a week from August 2014. While considerable work has been undertaken setting up monitoring systems and trialling the nature and timing of postings we already have seen considerable benefits whether measured by the doubling of Likes or the expanded reach achieved in just a 4 month period. We now have 2 Facebook pages, (Arts Mid North Coast and Creative Coast) and are using Twitter and Instagram. A review after 6 months of operations will set priorities for use in 2015.



PARTNERSHIPS

To initiate develop and foster strategic partnerships that benefit communities and region.

LEGENDARY PACIFIC COAST

Our innovative Cultural Trails and Creative Coast branding ensured a new synergy with our regional tourism partner, North Coast Destination Network, and its major marketing tool, the Legendary Pacific Coast.

As a partner Creative Coast is featured in the 2014 Legendary Pacific Coast Touring Guide and other regional marketing. We also partnered in their major Food & Art campaign including organising its launch at the Manning Regional Gallery.

As another first we partnered the North Coast Tourism Awards sponsoring two categories: Cultural & Heritage Tourism and Local Events & Festivals. It was great to see both awards taken out by Mid North Coast operators.

Our strengthening partnership with North Coast Destination Network ensures that arts and cultural activities have a strong presence in the experiences that both domestic and

international tourists are seeing as part of the many reasons to visit the whole North Coast, now the third most visited destination for Australians after Sydney and Melbourne.

BIG DANCE

Our region was one of only two chosen to be part of the Big Dance Event that saw thousands of dancers come together in simultaneous celebrations of dance in London, Glasgow, (at the time of the 2014 Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Arts Festival) the Sydney Opera House, plus Port Macquarie and Bega.

We secured the event with South East Arts by partnering with Ausdance NSW and the Sydney Dance Company as part of their 45th Anniversary celebration. The relationship established with Ausdance NSW is particularly important as they seek a stronger presence in regional NSW.

PARTNERSHIPS

OUR RIVERS - OUR HISTORY

This collaborative project involves volunteers from seven museums and features the Manning, Camden Haven, Hastings and Macleay Rivers. Coordinated by the Mid North Coast Chapter of Museums Australia our partnership has provide an opportunity to work with the regional heritage sector in the development of an interactive website exhibition highlighting the benefits of digitising collections and perhaps museums of the future. Our partnership has provided significant input into the areas of branding, website design and marketing. The project is an Arts NSW devolved funding program, administered by Museums and Galleries NSW

HELLO KOALAS

AMNC has partnered with the organisers of this incredible public art project (Arts and Health Alliance) throughout its development. Seventy percent of the designs have been created by Mid North Coast artists.

The trail was the launched by the Premier of NSW in September 2014 and has secured national and international media attention as well as thousands of visitors in its first few months; an amazing opportunity to showcase our artists.

BAGO MAGIC

Bago Magic is the premier performance group in the region which enables people with a range of disabilities, as well as people without disabilities, to participate in theatre and dance. Formed in 2001 the group was going through a major transition in management and we have worked closely with them over the year to support their ongoing growth and success. This has varied form funding advice and promotion to placing Bago Magic front and centre of the Big Dance project designating them the local Ambassadors of the project.

We also worked with others in the disability sector including sourcing Mid North Coast artists to feature in the Twelve +3 exhibition, an initiative of

Accessible Arts North Coast and Arts Northern Rivers.

REGIONAL TOURING

AMNC is the point of contact for many “external” artists and performers who wish to present their work in our region. Our role varies from information and advice to referring parties to operators and venues to taking a more proactive role. In 2014 we worked with Musica Viva, Ausdance NSW, NIDA and Sydney Conservatorium on strategic goals for greater regional engagement. We also worked with stage shows which will see the productions Madame Bijou and Dead Men Talking come to smaller towns and venues in the region in the first half of 2015.

COLLABORATION

To have and foster networks supporting regional resource / knowledge sharing and collaborative projects.

SHARING ONLINE

Increasingly AMNC is moving to use online resources to share information to and between networks and individuals in the region. The upgrading of Arts Blast, the greater use of social media, the establishment of a Vimeo presence on the website and the extensive material to be shared by SmartART are all examples of initiatives we put in place in 2014.

LOCAL ARTS NETWORKS

The vitality of the arts in our region is evident from the six very active local arts networks that we work with; promoting their events and activities, assisting with grants and advising on business issues as well as policy and strategic directions. An unsuccessful attempt in 2014 to develop a regional workshop to discuss common matters highlighted the issues of time and travel required in an increasingly busy world of volunteer based groups and the benefits of moving to a greater online involvement.

GREAT LAKES ARTS NETWORK

In 2014 AMNC actively supported the creative community in Great Lakes transform from a Council 355 Committee to a community based network, the seventh for our region. As well AMNC chose to develop a case study in Great Lakes for a community based Creative/Arts Expo that will then be able to be rolled out by other networks in the region.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

In 2014 six communities were named as the Creative Communities of the Mid North Coast: Stroud, Kendall, Gladstone, Bowraville, Bellingen and Dorrigo. These smaller townships have vibrant cultural activities and events which they cherish and nurture. Work began with a variety of groups to further showcase these communities with such community engagement varying from Arts Networks to Chambers of Commerce and other community groups.

COLLABORATION

NSW REGIONAL ARTS NETWORK

AMNC staff attend regular RADO Network meetings which ensure peer networking, the sharing of information and updates from peak state and federal arts organisations. Such information is invaluable for sharing with regional practitioners and groups.

REGIONAL AND STATE NETWORKING

AMNC acts as a conduit of information from throughout the arts and culture sector to those living locally. In 2014 this involved networking with state and national bodies including Arts NSW, Museums & Galleries NSW, Ausdance NSW, Australia Council and Destination NSW. It also includes regional players including Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance, Regional Development Australia -Mid North Coast and North Coast Destination Network.



CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

To have significant effective and frequent input to regional arts, creative industries and cultural development planning.

FACILITATING CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

A key role of Regional Arts Boards is to assist Councils and the community where possible with the preparation of strategic cultural planning documents. These are the essential foundations from which so many other initiatives can develop. In 2014 AMNC facilitated two workshops on the development of a Port Macquarie Hastings Cultural Plan. These engaged Councilors, Council staff and members of the Heritage Arts & Cultural Priorities Advisory Group developing a set of principles and goals as well as a community engagement strategy. On a less formal basis we also worked with other Councils and their initiatives to develop a Public Art Strategy.

SUPPORTING CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

When plans are developed or made available for public comment and submission AMNC has sought to assess and support such initiatives. In 2014 this resulted in detailed

submissions on the value and potential of cultural tourism to the draft Destination Management Plan of Port Macquarie Hastings Council and the value of the arts and creative ageing strategies in the Active Ageing Strategy of Great Lakes Council. The development of such submission is also a resource for future actions.

THE VALUE OF RESEARCH

AMNC acknowledges the importance of research so as to shape our understanding of issues and opportunities involved in the arts and creative industries. In 2014 we identified two areas where further research could inform better decisions: on the role and importance of the creative industries today on the Mid North Coast and also the economic value of culture and how that can be measured and assessed. The results of this research will inform our 2016 – 2018 Business Plan and its priorities and actions.

GOVERNANCE.

*To be an agile, effective,
responsibly governed
and sustainable
Regional Arts Board.*

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Board of AMNC remains focused on the future and the development of new ideas and opportunities. Our overall strategic positioning in 2014 has focused on revisiting a number of areas of the operation and delivery of services to create better foundations from which to work in the future. This will continue in 2015 but with the benefit of now being in a position to undertake a number of specific projects that have been provided for in the 2015 Business Plan and approved budget. Strategic workshops have also laid the foundation for the development of a 2016 -2018 Business Plan to be finalised in early 2015.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

AMNC has a strong record of a fiscal control achieving again in 2014 a balanced budget after some savings transferred to 2015 approved projects. Although no longer a legal requirement to do so but to show good faith with our partners and stakeholders a full set of accounts for the financial year will be audited and available for our AGM in May 2015.

REGIONAL ARTS BOARD REVIEW

Arts NSW engaged consultants in the second half of 2014 to review: best practice governance models for Regional Arts Boards, partnership agreements with local government, capacity building, relationships to Regional Arts NSW, service models and opportunities for development and improvement. The President and RADO participated in that review and the Board looks forward to considering the recommendations in early 2015 and rigorous discussion of those with its partners.

REVIEW OF POLICIES

In late 2014 we began the first major review of all AMNC policies since 2010. Currently there are 29 diverse policies ranging from financial accountability and Board matters to staff conditions, dispute resolution and communications. The review being undertaken by staff and a Board subcommittee is to be completed prior to the next AGM and will include the identification and development of any new policies to meet changing operational demands.

OUR BOARD

President

Mave Richardson AM PSM
Community Representative

Vice President

Councillor Leigh Vaughan
Great Lakes Council

Treasurer

Councillor Gordon Manning
Bellingen Shire Council

Secretary & Public Officer

David Quinn
Coffs Harbour Arts Council

Councillor Rodney Degens
Coffs Harbour City Council

Nyaree Donnelly
Great Lakes Arts Network

Councillor Paula Flack
Nambucca Shire Council

Margie Kirkness
Greater Taree City Council

Cameron Marshall
ABC Radio

Jeremy Miller
Manning Entertainment Centre

Belinda Novicky
North Coast Destination Network

Councillor Trevor Sargeant
Port Macquarie Hastings Council

Lester Searle
North Coast TAFE

Councillor Anna Shields
Kempsey Shire Council

OUR STAFF

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Kevin Williams

Finance & Administration Manager
Sophie Williams
Tuesday-Thursday

Communications Officer
Denise Aitken
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