



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES & CULTURE

arts MID
NORTH
COAST

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



ARTS MID NORTH COAST

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Arts Mid North Coast is the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the mid north coast region of New South Wales. The 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, Dunghutti 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.

Arts Mid North Coast receives triennial core funding from the NSW State Government through Arts NSW supplemented with annual financial contributions from each of our Councils. One of 14 Regional Arts Boards throughout New South Wales this network plays an important advocacy role for regional issues and with strong links to Regional Arts NSW further extends the value to our Councils, artists and creative professionals.

OUR VISION

The Mid North Coast, a vibrant, diverse region embracing the creation, understanding and appreciation of the arts in fostering economic, community, cultural and environmental opportunities and benefits.

OUR MISSION

Arts Mid North Coast, the region's peak arts organisation collaborates with individuals, communities, organisations, government and business to build capacity and create opportunities.

OUR GOALS

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

To generate increased awareness of creative and cultural activity and opportunities.

To develop and foster strategic partnerships, projects and networks that benefit communities and the region.

To encourage and support regional arts, creative industries and cultural development planning to provide leadership to ensure

positive outcomes for local, community and regional initiatives.

To be a dynamic, effective, accountable and sustainable Regional Arts Board utilising relevant best practice technology and skills to promote and achieve excellence

Our work, is shaped by a wide range of factors reflecting the particular characteristics of our region, our resources, our stakeholders and broader policies and strategies that seek to increase the capacity of the artists and creatives within our region and to showcase their work and value.

While much of our work builds and consolidates our knowledge and experience to be shared this Annual Report highlights the specific projects and initiatives undertaken in 2015.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Little did we imagine in January 2015, that Arts Mid North Coast (AMNC) would experience not only one of its busiest years thus far, but would undergo so many significant changes.

As you read this report you can imagine that this is but the tip of a very large creative iceberg. We continue to grow in the areas of social media, community networking, online marketing, building partnerships and audience participation; all detailed in this report. Our fortnightly e-newsletter, Arts Blast, continues to increase its readership and subsequent community engagement. In particular, there are a number of exciting new projects serving the interests of the region and I commend them to you.

At our AGM in May, we said farewell to Mave Richardson, who, after ten years as President and several years previous to that as a board member, resigned from AMNC. Mave steered us through some very challenging times and I offer her my personal thanks and that of the entire Board for her commitment to this organisation and regional cultural development on the MNC.

Thanks are also due to Cameron Marshall and Jeremy Miler who both left the board. They brought their personal brands of creativity and commitment to the board and will also be missed. While saying farewell to these two, we welcomed a number of new board members, as listed on page 13. Organisations such as ours do not exist without support from many diverse people and we warmly recognise their commitment to AMNC.

We appreciate the support from our major funding organisation, Arts NSW. We also acknowledge the contributions made by our participating councils. We know that 2016 will be a particularly challenging one for all NSW councils, and we sincerely thank our member councils who recognise the importance of creativity and culture here on the Mid North Coast.

Finally a very brief but heartfelt thank you to the AMNC Team. To Kevin, who has steered us through this year of changes, to Sophie for her unwavering calm and organised efficiency, Denise for her communications skills and Stephanie for the delivery of important projects. I look forward with optimism to a challenging and innovative year.

Leigh Vaughan

President, Arts Mid North Coast Inc.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES & PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2018

In developing this Plan Arts Mid North Coast (AMNC) undertook a comprehensive process of research, discussion and debate involving a series of workshops by the Board to develop a draft plan that was then put on public exhibition for input from interested parties and stakeholders. When submitted to Arts NSW the final plan was reviewed by a panel of peers in the arts industry before further discussions and development with Arts NSW. The approval of the Plan secured over \$450,000 for the region from the State government over three years plus a share of a further \$140,000 for training and development purposes.

CREATIVE PATHWAYS

Creative Pathways is a major new online guide developed by Arts Mid North Coast in 2015. This one stop shop features the full range of tertiary study options and pathways available for students who wish to undertake or further their studies in the arts or creative industries without having to leave the Mid North Coast. It provides all relevant information from Southern Cross University, Charles

Sturt University and North Coast TAFE and cross references by all campuses in the region. There are an increasing number of tertiary courses available on the Mid North Coast and not just at the major centres at Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie. These include: Design and Visual Arts in Forster; Digital Media in Taree, Fashion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts at Wauchope; Fashion and Visual Arts at Kempsey and Design and Interactive Digital Media at Macksville. As well as featuring online the guide can be downloaded. Promotional material is available for use by the tertiary sector in their work with senior high school students at open days and orientation presentations.

OUR RIVERS OUR HISTORY

This collaborative project with the Mid North Coast Chapter of Museums Australia was launched in April 2015. Its focus is the history of the Manning, Camden Haven, Hastings and Macleay Rivers. The project provided an opportunity to work with the regional heritage sector in the development of an interactive website exhibition highlighting the importance of digitising collections. It involved volunteers from seven museums.

A series of river trail guides were also developed linking the project to cultural tourism opportunities. The project won Gold at the Museums and Galleries NSW IMAGInE Awards in late 2015. It was made possible by a grant from the Arts NSW devolved funding program, administered by Museums and Galleries NSW.

HELLO KOALAS SCULPTURE TRAIL

Arts Mid North Coast has partnered with the organisers of this imaginative public art project developed by Arts and Health Australia and presented throughout the Port Macquarie Hastings region in 2015. The trail has attracted over 100,000 visitors and secured national and international media attention. Seventy percent of the designs have been created by artists across the Mid North Coast who have secured a range of commissions and other work opportunities from the exposure of their koalas on the sculpture trail.

LEGENDARY PACIFIC COAST

Our innovative Cultural Trails and Creative Coast branding ensures a synergy with our regional tourism partner, North Coast Destination Network, and its major marketing tool, the Legendary Pacific Coast. As a partner Creative Coast features in their Legendary Pacific Coast Touring Guide and other regional marketing. We also sponsor the Culture & Heritage Tourism Category of the North Coast Tourism Awards. 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 Mid North Coast. Our work in cultural tourism has seen the RADO invited to give two presentations for Museums & Galleries NSW workshops in Sydney and Tamworth.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Linked to the cultural tourism market are major events that further position the importance of arts and culture to the region and local economies. Arts Mid North Coast works with many

event organisers not only promoting their events through our various communication platforms but assistance with planning and advice.

Two such events of note in 2015 were:

AMNC continued its long running partnership with the Akoostik Music Festival, an increasingly popular event in Wingham. In 2015 it was one of only 6 events in NSW to secure Regional Flagship funding and status from Destination NSW for the next 3 years and the only arts event to do so.

Screenwave International Film Festival is a new event staged in Bellingen and Coffs Harbour which has the potential to become a major regional event in Australia. Our partnership has ensured filmmakers and speakers have been able to attend for workshops and Q&A sessions to further enhance the event.

Throughout the year we have also been planning our own major event in 2016, Opening our heARTS. This will see over one weekend in August artists open their studios, galleries and exhibitions across the whole region.

REGIONAL TOURING

Arts Mid North Coast 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 2015 we worked closely with two theatre productions to assist them bring their productions to smaller towns and/or venues in the region. *Madame Bijou* out of Canberra played in Bowraville, Wauchope, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour while *Dead Men Talking* out of Sydney was performed in Tea Gardens, Taree, Port Macquarie, Bellingen, Kempsey, Bowraville, Sawtell and Forster.

INSURANCE FOR ALL

A benefit of working collaboratively with the Regional Arts Board Network and Regional Arts NSW has been the development and launch in 2015 of Artsure, extremely well priced insurance developed specifically for those working in the arts. It covers everything including events, market stalls, workshops and exhibitions for individual artists or anyone

engaged in various arts mediums, crafts and cultural activities.

RESEARCH

Arts Mid North Coast acknowledges the importance of research so as to shape our understanding of issues and opportunities involved in the arts and creative industries. In 2015 we completed two research projects that are now online publications. *Planning Makes Perfect* is a comprehensive guide for staging arts events and activities while *Sponsorship Are You Ready?* is a similar guide for securing funding.

Two further projects were also commissioned in 2015 and are well underway. The first draws together successful case studies in Australia where community halls owned by Councils have been devolved to community arts groups. The second project contracted to Charles Sturt University will provide us with a resource base of all Australian studies and research that details the financial returns from arts and culture to local or regional economies.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES & PARTNERSHIPS

ACHIEVING STATE AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

While our projects reflect the particular nature of the Mid North Coast our work also seeks to further State priorities established by Arts NSW. In 2015 Create NSW – NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework was released as the first State Plan for arts and culture. It has strong policies and actions for Regional NSW. Our subsequent Strategic Plan integrating the arts with the visitor industry, economic development and creative industries is consistent with the overall approach noted in the Policy Framework. However our work also meets a number of the funding priority areas as identified as a high priority for regional NSW.

ABORIGINAL

Our region has 7.1% of the State's indigenous population compared with 4% of its total population. While the primary responsibility for developing aboriginal culture in the region rests with the Saltwater Freshwater Alliance representing ten local Land Councils AMNC contributes where opportunities arise.

In November Arts Mid North Coast hosted a one day workshop in Taree, Making Money Business - Business Skills for Aboriginal Artists. Presented by business adviser David Sharpe this one day workshop was in partnership with Regional Arts NSW (RANSW). Artists from Taree, Port Macquarie, Wauchope and Kempsey attended.

AMNC was also invited to facilitate a workshop at Sea Acres National Park on ways to develop sustainable events and activities showcasing aboriginal culture. The findings of this workshop will be further developed in 2016 and will have relevance to other National Parks in the region and NSW.

AGEING

Our population is characterised by a high proportion of people aged over the age of 60, (32% of the population). In terms of this demographic the Mid North Coast is what Australia will be in 10 years with all the inherent challenges needing to be met now. In 2015 we partnered with Arts and Health Australia to present The Big Chat, the first conference in the region on creative ageing with speakers from around Australia. This will again take place in 2016.

DISABILITY

Arts Mid North Coast has partnered for several years with projects led by Accessible Arts. In 2015 we were involved on the Steering Committee of Heading Out, a year long project led by Accessible Arts in association with Port Macquarie Hastings Council.

LOCAL PRIORITIES & PROJECTS

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 2015 Arts Mid North Coast facilitated a public workshop on the development of a Port Macquarie Hastings Cultural Plan and began discussions with Arts NSW on the potential of several creative hubs and cultural precincts in the region. Our 2016 Plan has a priority of reviewing all Destination Management Plans in the region to ensure they best reflect cultural tourism assets and opportunities.

COUNTRY ARTS SUPPORT PROGRAM GRANTS (CASP)

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 through a very competitive process. In 2015 six local projects were successful in securing this funding for 2016. These are Brushes for Life in Taree, Bago Magic in

Port Macquarie, Mixed up Art in Bellingen, the Kendall Creative Centre, Horns on Helium in Bellingen and Slippery Sirkus in Kempsey. Over our three year contract period with Arts NSW CASP grants to the region bring the total of State funding provided to the region to more than half a million dollars.

GRANTS ADVISORY SERVICE

Arts Mid North Coast 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 2015 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. Fourteen groups and individuals were assisted with grant applications in 2015 plus a further 13 with their CASP applications. The diversity of funding sought included from: Regional Arts Fund, Festivals Australia Regional Festivals, Clubsgrant, Arts NSW (various programs), Regional Flagship Funding, Australia Council, Windmill Trust and the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal.

LOCAL PROJECTS

Although a regional body Arts Mid North Coast does support local projects especially where such projects can establish benchmarks for other applications or have the potential to be of regional significance. Some examples of the diversity of such local projects facilitated and assisted in 2015 include:

The inclusion of local Arts & Culture Trails on mobile apps developed by the local Business Chamber for Dorrigo and Bellingen.

Support for a promotional/tourism brochure for Kendall, one of the six designated Creative Communities of the Mid North Coast.

Membership of the Steering Committee formed to establish the first regional School of Hard Knocks in Australia working with Choir of Hard Knocks founder, Jonathon Welch.

Adding or updating around 30 local entries on our various Cultural Trails.

Involvement with the newly formed Mid North Coast Creatives Meetup, a network of emerging artists and those involved in the creative industries.

Appointment of a temporary Project Officer position for 6 months to undertake an audit of needs and projects in the Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour local government areas.

Supporting the Slim Dusty Centre in its efforts to open what is now the largest museum in the region.

Increasing the number of local artists featured on our website by nearly 50 percent.

Supporting and promoting artists and events across the region including Scotts Head, Gladstone, Hannam Vale, Wauchope, Bowraville, Urunga, Eungai, Tea Gardens, Kundabung, Macksville, Nambucca Heads, Wootton, Dorrigo and South West Rocks.

Presenting at a grants writing workshop in Coffs Harbour.

LOCAL PRIORITIES & PROJECTS

COMMUNICATING WITH THE REGION

No matter where residents or visitors are in the region or whatever their interest in the arts our varied communication platforms deliver the latest information across the region and beyond.

ONLINE MARKETING

In 2015 AMNC continued to enhance and expand its regional arts portal, www.artsmidnorthcoast.com including the addition of an ArtsVideos section for artists to post their own videos and create a more interactive communications tool. 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 Showcase featured more than 200 major events and news items. The number of unique hits achieved was 20 percent above the 2015 target.

ARTS BLAST

Our e-bulletin, Arts Blast is now 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA

AMNC became far more active on social media in 2015. We now have 2 Facebook pages, (Arts Mid North Coast and Creative Coast) and are using Twitter and Instagram. With more than x postings over the year our social media reach has greatly expanded.

ABC RADIO

We have also started a weekly spot with ABC Mid North Coast highlighting the arts in the region from Bulahdelah to Woolgoolga.

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 updated 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, funding, marketing, media and how to stay informed and connected.

GOVERNANCE

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Arts Mid North Coast has a strong record of a fiscal control achieving again in 2015 a balanced budget after some savings transferred to 2016 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 2016.

REVIEW OF POLICIES.

2015 saw the first complete major review of all Arts Mid North Coast policies since 2010. These range from financial accountability and Board matters to staff conditions, dispute resolution and communications. An annual review will now be undertaken and will include the identification and development of any new policies to meet changing operational and governance requirements.

RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Following on from a Review of Regional Arts Boards by Arts NSW AMNC has taken steps in 2015 to implement a range of actions in 2016 to refresh and better define our relationship with our seven local government partners. This includes the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding, a process to identify regional priorities and new channels of communication and reporting. It is hoped these actions will encourage the Councils to lift their contributions which are currently only 35 percent of the recommended level.



OUR BOARD

As noted in our Presidents message the May 2015 AGM saw three Board members retire and a number of new members elected. The following list is the AMNC Board as at its last meeting of the year in late November 2015.

PRESIDENT

Councillor Leigh Vaughan
Great Lakes Council

VICE PRESIDENT & PUBLIC OFFICER

David Quinn
Coffs Harbour Arts Council

TREASURER

Councillor Gordon Manning
Bellingen Council

SECRETARY

Nyaree Donnelly
Great Lakes Arts Network

BOARD MEMBERS

Jay Beaumont (May 2015)
FOCUS Magazines

Councillor Rodney Degens
Coffs Harbour City Council

Alternate. Sian Nivison (May 2015)

Sonia Fingleton
North Coast Destination Network

Councillor Paula Flack
Nambucca Shire Council

Margie Kirkness
Greater Taree City Council

Margret Meagher (May 2015)
Arts & Health Australia

Dr Lisa Milner (May 2015)
Bowraville Arts Council

Shelley O'Keefe (May 2015)
Bellingen Community Arts Council

Councillor Trevor Sargeant
Port Macquarie Hastings Council

Lester Searle
North Coast TAFE

Alternate Lorrae O'Brien. (May 2015)

Councillor Anna Shields
Kempsey Shire Council

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OUR STAFF

REGIONAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER/EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kevin Williams

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

Sophie Williams

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Denise Aitken

PROJECTS OFFICER

Stephanie Ney (April to November)

CONTACT US

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...and the winner is...

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