



**arts** MID  
NORTH  
COAST

# Looking Back To Look Forward

*2016 to 2020*

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Street Art - Port Macquarie





Curryfest Woolgoolga

# Introduction

*Arts Mid North Coast is the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the Mid North Coast region of New South Wales.*

## Introduction

The Mid North Coast region comprises the six local government areas of MidCoast, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Nambucca Valley, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour and embraces the area associated with the Worimi, Biripi, Dungutti and Gumbaynggirr Nations.

Arts Mid North Coast operates as an incorporated society with 12 Board members; one appointed by each Council and up to six community representatives. In 2018 a skills audit of the Board was undertaken to ensure a wide range of skills is represented on the Board. This followed a major review by the New South Wales Government with a major finding being to ensure skills-based Boards considering the more strategic role of the organisations.

### Our Vision for the region is:

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

### While Our Mission is:

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

First established in 1998 as the Holiday Coast Arts Council, it changed its name in 2000 to Arts Mid North Coast and became part of a NSW network of then named Regional Arts Boards. Today there are fourteen Regional Arts Development Organisations (RADOs) in NSW, each providing strategic direction for sustainable arts and cultural development in their region. The fourteen RADOs are the members of Regional Arts New South Wales which services the Network and advocates the needs of the regions. This network is unique to NSW and services over 100 local government

areas and more than 1.7 million people.

The shared values of the network are:

In regional NSW we standby...

- Recognition and support of First Nations arts and culture practice
- The professionalism of arts and cultural practice
- The right of people living in regional NSW to participate in and contribute to arts and culture
- Genuine connection to place as expressed through the works of artists and creative communities
- The role of the regions in providing pathways and mechanisms for sustained creative practice and experiences
- The strength of collaborative partnerships within and across sectors to deliver arts and cultural development.

All RADOs receive triennial core funding from the NSW State Government through Create NSW supplemented with annual financial contributions from each of their councils. Each RADO prepares a three-year strategic plan for approval by Create NSW. The plan is supplemented further by the submission to Create NSW of an annual work plan which must be approved and acquitted to them. The last process for the approval of RADO three-year plans was for the period 2016 to 2018. The resulting funding agreement has subsequently been rolled over by Create NSW and the approval of annual plans for 2019 and 2020. It should be noted that the 2020 Work Plan has been impacted and modified to reflect the effects of both bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we prepare for the development of our next such strategic plan, we look back at the last five years to reflect on some of the projects and actions we have taken and the major successes achieved.

### Rob Turner - Chairperson November 2020



Akoostik Festival - Wingham

# Overview

*Our Region, What We Do And Our Guiding Principles*

## Our Region

With nearly 315,000 residents the Mid North Coast is the most populated region in the RADO Network with a population greater than two capital cities (Hobart and Darwin) and more than double all but four of the other RADOs. It has the three most populated Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Network as indicated by June 2019 ABS data: Mid Coast Council (93,836), Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (84,525) and Coffs Harbour City Council (77,277). It is also an area of high population growth so will continue to expand at a rate well above the average for regional NSW. By 2036, these three LGAs will have grown in total by 22.5% to a projected total of 313,227 with the population of the total region being 384,000. Covering 22,000 square kilometres the Mid North Coast is not in any way the largest RADO in area, however, it is still larger than countries such as Slovenia and Israel. These factors create a unique dynamic and many challenges.

Other characters that shape the nature of the work and challenges of Arts Mid North Coast include:

The majority of the population live on the coastal edge of the region. However, there are many other smaller and rural townships in our hinterland.

The region is one of the most aged in NSW. Based on 2016 census data, 32 percent of the region's population is aged over 60 compared to 21.8 percent in NSW and 21.4 percent in Australia. However, projections indicate by 2021 it will have the oldest population in Australia.

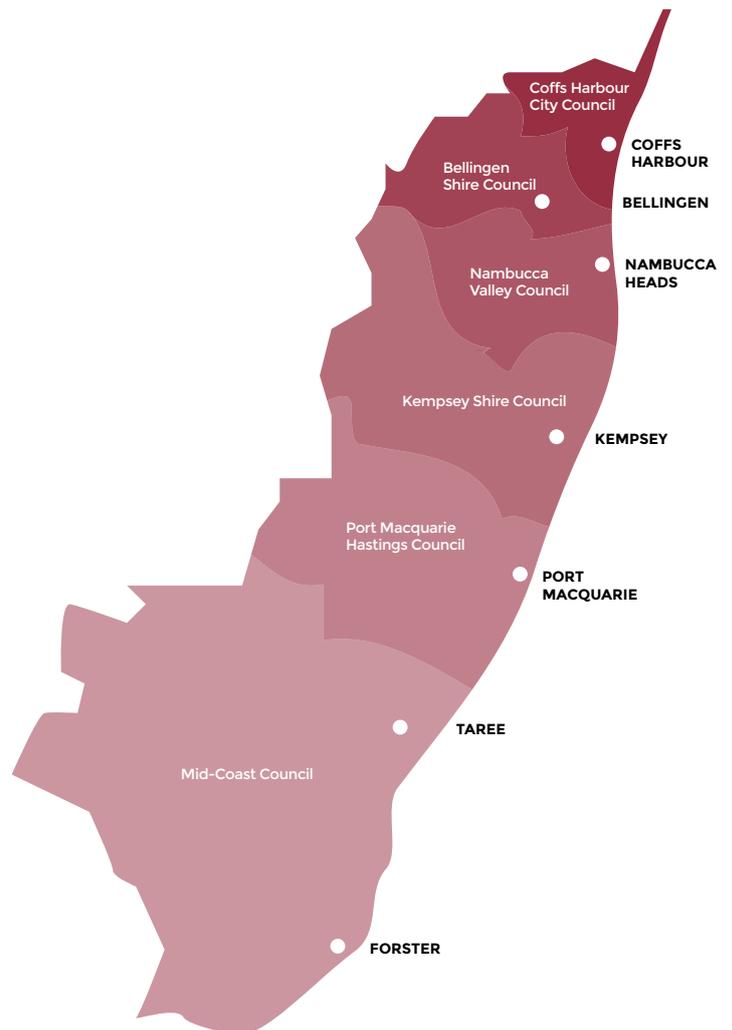
The Mid North Coast's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander population is above the state average. In 2010, a separate arts and culture regional body for Aboriginal culture was formed and brought together the 10 Land Councils of the region. The Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance is now the region's peak body for Aboriginal arts and cultural development.

A small but growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse people reside in the region. There is a variety of cultural backgrounds, with

Coffs Harbour the new home for a significant number of immigrants from the African continent.

Key economic sectors of the region include manufacturing, health services, tourism, construction and retail services. The expanding health sector reflects the growing number of people retiring here because of the area's climate and lifestyle. This provides the potential for Arts Mid North Coast to encourage the development of creative ageing programs while the strong tourism sector provides the potential for cultural tourism initiatives and ventures. The region receives more than 11 million visitor nights a year plus has a growing day-trip market.

A detailed description of the cultural landscape of the region can be found at [www.regionalartsnsw.com.au/networks/arts-mid-north-coast/](http://www.regionalartsnsw.com.au/networks/arts-mid-north-coast/)



## What We Do

What we do and how we do it is a reflection of a number of factors including, the characteristics of the region, the development of the role and history of regional arts organisations, the availability of resources and of course opportunities for the future. This report will focus on what we have achieved over the period since our most current Three-Year Plan 2016-2018, (rolled over to include 2019 and 2020).

In many ways, our new website launched in late 2019 [www.artsmidnorthcoast.com](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast.com) encapsulates what we do through its three main features.

### 1.Our Creative Coast

This section showcases the work of our artists, performers and creative organisations, in summary by the elements of:

#### Cultural Trails

Our region's rich history and creative spirit can be experienced through 17 cultural trails that attract diverse audiences. By promoting a broad view of experiences, we highlight the best from performing arts, food & art, museums, heritage sites and others to landmarks important to the region.

#### Our Creative Places

By featuring the smaller communities on the Mid North Coast, we invite visitors to experience the character and charm these villages and townships offer with a timeless serenity. Each with their own character reflecting the local landscape and heritage, there is a sense of place and an obvious creative soul.

#### What's On

Our regional calendar of events and activities now features over 700 events each year. We promote the events through Arts Blast our e-Newsletter and social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

## 2.Our Creative Community

This section of the website focuses on what we offer the individual artists and arts organisations in the community. It is their place to go for news, funding opportunities and advice. It is about building the capacity of the arts and creative industries. It is also through our SmartART feature that we deliver information and advice. Because of the size of our region, this is now primarily online rather than face to face, and through our 2020 Work Plan will move further into digital engagement via podcasts and video.

### 3.Projects

This feature of the website now showcases seven major projects or themes of activities we have undertaken in recent times. Some of these are ongoing, while others are one-off major projects currently featured because of the significance to the region.

## Guiding Principles

To give greater context and understanding of what we do, the key guiding principles and values that provide a foundation for the organisation are:

### 1. Shared values of the Regional Arts Development Organisations (RADO)

The key themes and delivery messages shared by the NSW RADO Network are:

#### Services

We provide valuable services for:

- Artists - helping them to become viable by achieving artistic and business goals
- Communities - building capacity for communities to develop their own projects to create social connectedness and wellbeing
- Local Councils - working across a variety of council responsibilities to support and augment their work in areas including: tourism, economic development, community, cultural and strategic planning, and cultural infrastructure
- Local Council networks - offering region-wide perspectives of the needs and opportunities for arts and cultural development and its benefits.

#### Connection

We connect and support our creative communities using our knowledge and expertise developed over 20 years.

#### Reach

We reach and connect with regional and remote NSW – where no one else goes.

#### Flexibility

We are flexible, nimble and savvy and able to respond effectively to change, new ideas and opportunities.

#### Amplification

We amplify regional voices through a variety of communication platforms and projects.

#### Employment

We provide employment opportunities for the creative sector.

#### Partnerships

We develop strategic partnerships within the regional arts network, across industry and community sectors and across government portfolios.

### 2. Commitment to Regional Outcomes

In any one year, our work is shaped by a wide range of factors reflecting the particular characteristics of our region, our resources and our stakeholders, including broader policies and strategies. These strategies seek to increase the capacity of the artists and creatives within our region and showcase their work and value. While we deal with individuals, community groups, local organisations, our Councils and other government bodies, our focus remains regional.

The following is the framework for determining what we do when the partnership or project:

- involves or has outcomes across the whole region, rather than one part of it
- establishes useful, innovative and beneficial precedents that will have significant value or use to others who follow
- has an opportunity to create a champion or leader in an aspect of the arts or creative industries and enhance the profile of the Mid North Coast as a vibrant creative region
- indicates new positive policies, directions and innovations not previously undertaken on the Mid North Coast
- provides more than just an artistic outcome but best practice in terms of business models, sustainability and commitment to excellence
- attracts additional funding or the potential of such funding
- brings skills or resources not otherwise available to Arts Mid North Coast for the benefit of the region.

### 3.Goals of our Strategic Plan

In addition to our Vision and Mission already outlined, Arts Mid North Coast is guided by five goals. These goals provide the framework of the discussion that occurs within this 5-Year Snapshot.

#### Focus

- To generate increased opportunities for access, participation, training and education in the arts and creative industries (Capacity)
- To generate increased visibility and awareness of the region's creative and cultural activity and opportunities (Showcase)

#### Enablers

- To develop and foster strategic partnerships, projects and networks that benefit the region's arts and cultural sector (Partnerships)
- To encourage and support the arts, creative industries and cultural development in all strategic processes to provide leadership and ensure positive outcomes for local, community and regional initiative (Strategic)
- To be an agile, dynamic, effective, accountable and sustainable organisation utilising relevant best practice technology and skills to promote and achieve excellence (Governance)

These five goals are the basis of the following snapshot of our region and our work from 2016 to 2020.





Creative Ageing - Mid North Coast

## Goal 1 - Enhance Capacity

*To generate increased opportunities for access, participation, training and education in the arts and creative industries.*

## Connecting Online

Arts Mid North Coast uses the byline ...*Connecting Communities & Culture on the Mid North Coast of NSW*. With our region being one of the fastest growing in regional Australia (increasing by over 50,000 in the last 10 years) we have strategically moved to the online delivery of our services.

### SmartART

SmartART was developed in 2016 to increase the capacity and knowledge of our creative individuals and organisations.

It has grown in five years from the original six toolkits to nine, including recent resources to respond to the issues of 2020 with Toolkits for Creative Recovery and Going Digital. The others are:

- Business Resources
- Cultural Tourism
- Creative Ageing
- Event Management
- Funding Resources
- Marketing Resources
- Policy and Research

All toolkits are updated with the latest and best information from around Australia and where relevant, internationally.

### Research Papers and Guides

Included within SmartART are research papers and guides we have undertaken and commissioned to assist artist and organisations in the region including:

- Events Management Guide - Dr Jane Kreis (2016)
- A Guide to Sponsorship - Stephanie Ney (2017)
- Future Options for the Coffs Creative Network (2017)
- Ways to get Media Attention - Tim Maddren (2018)

- Keep Dancing. The Health and Well-being Benefits of Dance for Older People (2018)
- Marketing Your Museum Ideas for Small Museums (2019)
- Local Strategic Planning Statements and Arts & Culture (2020)
- Digital Creatives Directory (2020)
- Regional Venues Guide (to be completed late 2020)

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### Case Study - Podcasts

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We are always looking for new ways to communicate with our artists and organisations. As part of our digital pivot in 2020, we are developing more engaging online content through a series of podcasts and videos. Funding has been secured to upgrade and acquire all necessary equipment and to undertake the training necessary. This will help develop opportunities to promote the value of the arts and our work across the region. As the fastest growing medium that reaches a broad demographic of listeners, podcasts and videos will become an important part of our future communications strategy. It will give Arts Mid North Coast increased visibility, a stronger voice for advocacy and increase the arts and cultural profile of our region. The focus of the podcasts planned for 2020 are around the themes of Creative Recovery and Arts and Wellbeing.

## Online Resources

While SmartART focuses on enhancing the capacity of existing artists and organisations, we have developed other online services and information sources unique in regional NSW, if not Australia.

### Creative Pathways

Creative Pathways is a one-stop online shop that provides the range of tertiary study options and pathways available for students who wish to pursue careers in the Arts and Creative Industries and further their studies without having to leave the Mid North Coast. It outlines all such courses at Charles Sturt, TAFE NSW and Southern Cross University. It can be searched not only by education providers but by course and study location. This is the only multi-provider, multi-arts guide in New South Wales.

### Creative Ageing

With one of the most aged populations in Australia, we continue to lead the way in creative ageing programs and assistance. In 2017, we developed our Creative Ageing Directory which provides a list of organisations and groups from across the Mid North Coast who provide creative activities and events for older people. It features over 150 groups and activities across the categories of art, craft, cultural heritage, dance, film, lifelong-learning, music, voice and writing. It is the only such directory in regional NSW. We also initiated a new subscriber-based newsletter Creative Ageing Notebook which provides updates of the latest research and programs from around the world.

## Film

Through our partnership with Screenwave (See Goal 3), we have begun to develop online a range of resources on film. This now includes:

- a fascinating history of the role of movie theaters in the region's heritage, with links to our museums
- a history of filmmaking in the region
- the policies for filming in the region.

A Screen Industry Plan to be developed in 2021 will further add to this with the addition of tools for location finders and a directory of all involved in the industry.

## Connecting in Person

### Grants and Funding

A major role of Arts Mid North Coast is to support the arts community, develop their ideas, and bring their art to the public in innovative and rewarding ways. In any year, this traditionally has involved providing information through our News and Grants online features and our e-newsletter Arts Blast. In 2019, this included notifying more than 330 opportunities for artists in terms of grants, residencies, calls for work and calls for action. This was a substantial increase from previous years and a direct reflection of our strategic decision to be active on Twitter. This outlet has proven to be an invaluable place to share opportunities.

Our role is much more than the notification of these funding opportunities. We need to be cognisant of their potential and to match them with artists and organisation's specific needs. This is then reflected in drafting very grant-specific letters of support. Over the last five years Mid North Coast artists or organisations we have supported have been successful from a wide range of funding opportunities including, but not limited, to:

- APRA-AMCOS
- Australia Council
- Charles Sturt University
- Coffs Harbour City Council
- Create NSW
- Creative Partnerships Australia
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Destination NSW
- FACS NSW
- Foundation for Regional & Rural Renewal
- Museums & Galleries NSW
- Music NSW
- NSW Communities
- Regional Arts Australia

- Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund
- Screen Australia
- Screen NSW
- Service NSW
- TAFE NSW

*Arts Mid North Coast has been an integral part of the growth of the Wingham Akoostik Festival. It provides support and advice on best contacts in the industry and for funding assistance. Performance art has been added to give another dimension to the three day festival. Additional promotion of the Akoostik Festival via Arts Mid North Coast's many marketing platforms is an essential means to reach our target market and effectively promote to wider regions. Association with Arts MNC brings credibility and professionalism to our event and is immensely important in raising our profile*

Donna Ballard, Akoostik Music Festival

## Business Development

Each year, we deal with numerous miscellaneous enquiries from where to find an artwork framer; how to source NDIS providers of the creative arts; advice on the regeneration of a town's main street; where to source the judging panel for a sculpture competition; to the establishment of a Surf Museum. This range is indicative of enquiries that can extend to more detailed discussions on business models, marketing and professional development.

*Arts Mid North Coast not only provided a letter in support of Frugal Arts' three-year Frugal Forest project (which drew in the community across the Mid North Coast): they also helped us to publicise it at all stages of the event, providing a way to build networks outside our region... In short, AMNC is a vital link between our work, the communities we draw from and the audiences we aim for, as well as promoting the cultural capital of our region.*

Bryony Anderson, Frugal Forest

## Case Study - BANJO

Throughout 2018 we worked with Port Macquarie-based Got Ya Back Productions on the development of an innovative show, BANJO, which was locally written, produced and cast. The fascinating mash of the poetry of Banjo Paterson, the music of Coldplay and contemporary dance was a sell-out success (seven shows) in Port Macquarie in 2018. We then worked with Got Ya Back to develop and undertake a regional tour (including their presentation to Arts on Tour at their salon in Bathurst) and to secure successful funding support. In 2019 the show toured in our region: Taree, Tuncurry, Kempsey, South West Rocks and Coffs Harbour. In regional NSW it went

to Grafton and Tenterfield, and in a first from our region, it played two shows in Sydney. Our support included marketing, funding, touring and business advice for the region's emerging professional theatre company.

*BANJO was built in the Mid North Coast, produced and performed only by performers/technical crew from the region and toured the length of the Mid North Coast. From the production's incubation we have felt the consistent support of Arts Mid North Coast - thank you. Our 2019 tour was ambitious. For us, it was essential we notified/engaged the Mid North Coast Arts community to make the tour viable. We discovered during this process that Arts Mid North Coast truly is at the centre of the arts web for our region. Their assistance in connecting us with suitable venues, marketing providers, arts groups, arts supporters and influential community members across the length of the region was exemplary. There is a reason there are almost no other regionally based production houses in the state - it's damn hard. Kevin Williams, our local RADO, is a big reason as to why we can continue to survive and also build as a business. We are both in deep appreciation of his marketing/business advice and personal support over the last year.*

Tim Maddren, Got Ya Back Productions

## Workshops and Conferences

Notwithstanding this incredible resource updated by our online News and Grants features, we continue to contribute to and/or fund opportunities for workshops and conferences. In the last five years these have included:

- The Big Chat Creative Ageing Conference (2016 and 2017)
- The 8th International Art of Good Health and Wellbeing (2016)
- Mid North Coast Creative Industries Forum (2016)
- Film Industry Connect (2017 to 2020)
- Creative Ageing Workshops with UK Specialist, Chris Gauge (2017)
- Create NSW Roadshow (2017)
- LGNSW Tourism Conference (2017)
- NSW Regional Cultural Fund Roadshow (2018)
- RED Dementia Conference (2019)
- Bellingen Sunday Bites (2019)
- Festivals Australia Conference (2019)
- Creative Plus Business Workshops (2019)

*Thank you for your support of our 2019 Omnicare Alliance regional dementia conference - the RED Conference, A Regional Experience in Practical Dementia Care. The conference held from March 28-29 at Sails Port Macquarie was an overwhelming success with delegates coming from across NSW, QLD, Victoria, SA, and the NT. Thank you again for supporting our conference, but more importantly, supporting people to live well with dementia in our communities.*

Raymond Gouck former CEO Omnicare Alliance

## Case Study - Industry Connect

Since 2016, Arts Mid North Coast has been the principal sponsor of Industry Connect which runs as part of the Screenwave International Film Festival in Coffs Harbour. The Mid North Coast's annual film industry networking event provides an opportunity for regional and traveling filmmakers to connect, foster collaboration, and to build pathways to new productions for the region. Each year attendees have heard from presenters working both in and on the industry.

In 2020 presenters included:

- Rodd Rathjen. Director of Buoyancy, Rathjen's feature film debut and his first APSA nomination for Best Youth Feature Film which won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the 2019 Berlin International Film Festival.
- Josephine Mackerras. Director of Alice which has won a string of awards including Spirit Award at Raindance, Best Narrative at Byron Bay and The Grand Jury Award at SXSW.
- Ryan Jasper Walsh. Director, Monks of the Sacred Valley. Originally from Thora on the Mid North Coast, Ryan is a young documentary director and film practitioner, specialising in intimate non-fiction storytelling and aesthetic production craft.
- Simon Foster. Simon has been a film reviewer and industry journalist for over two decades. He has brought his industry knowledge to a number of roles at Village Roadshow, 20th Century Fox Video, Columbia Tristar Films and the trade bible, Variety.
- Sally Regan. Senior Manager Sector Investment (Screen) at Create NSW Sally has over 30 years of experience working in the screen production sector. She has produced film and television in Australia, Europe, Asia and America.



Wall Art - Coffs Harbour

## Goal 2 - Showcasing Our Arts and Artists

*To generate increased visibility and awareness of the region's creative and cultural activity and opportunities.*

## Mid North Coast – the Creative Coast

The World Tourism Organisation indicates more than 50% of global tourism is motivated by a desire to experience culture and heritage. Destination NSW confirms this importance in its annual Snapshot of Cultural & Heritage Tourism. Our Creative Coast brand and products provide an extensive range of services to all our cultural tourism providers and in so doing both visitors and locals alike. It does this by SHOWCASING the region's cultural experiences on behalf of our Creative Partners while at the same time, ENHANCING the capacity and ability of the providers of those experiences. Individually, they can further develop their products and their role in the visitor economy.

Our cultural tourism brand, Mid North Coast – the Creative Coast provides for 17 Cultural Trails, with over 450 providers and experiences. It also features 10 smaller Creative Communities and through our online What's On and social media, promotes over 700 events. Additional features are events developed by Arts Mid North Coast including the SHINE Heritage Festival and the Mid North Coast Creative Ageing Festival.

### Highlights

- Recognised by Tourism Industry Awards 2016 to 2019 including Silver at NSW Tourism Awards in 2018
- Launched a new website in late 2019 with a major showcase of the brand 'Creative Coast'
- Developed a new 32 page Creative Coast booklet to accompany and drive visitors to the Creative Coast website
- Developed a combined cultural trail mapping for each local government area in 2020
- Accepted requests as a speaker/contributor on the value of cultural tourism
- Our Summer Guide, More than a Beach, which has been produced since 2017 has grown to feature more than 50 creative activities for families across the region

- Published our Top Ten Holiday Picks annually, highlighting new or interesting cultural experiences for summer holidaymakers.
- Partnered with Port Macquarie Museum to develop the online exhibition, Tourist Paradise, featuring over 100 years of history of the tourism industry
- Developed a series of stories and postcards on arts and culture under the brand of #WeLove to encourage post-COVID recovery.

*Arts Mid North Coast has proved itself to be a leader in developing innovative projects to support the development of cultural tourism on the Mid North Coast. Its programs and marketing showcase the region's rich heritage and creativity. Moreover its strategic advice and support to the wider tourism industry and its operators is highly valued.*

Janette Hyde, Winner of the 2019 NSW Tourism Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual to NSW Tourism

## Cultural Trails

We now showcase 17 Cultural Trails featuring more than 450 cultural attractions, events and experiences. The most recent trails are:

### Inclusive Arts

This showcases those venues that embrace the need for accessibility – for the ageing population, people with disabilities, children, people with prams, people with hearing or vision impairments, etc.

### Online Trails

This allows people to explore the history and stories of the region by using a smartphone, a tablet device or a desktop computer. We are sure they will then want to get out and visit the places or museums involved.

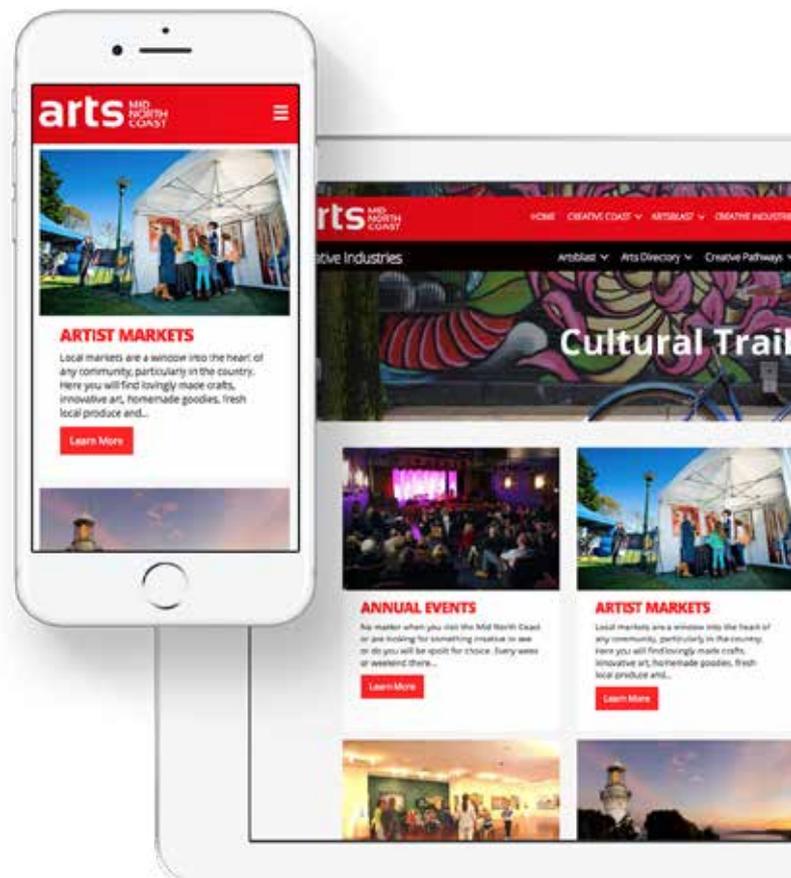
### Creative Waterfall Way Trail

The Waterfall Way is one of the major scenic routes of NSW. It is also the location of numerous creative and arts activities and three of our designated Creative Communities (Sawtell, Bellingen and Dorrigo).

The other Tourism Trails are:

- **Galleries** including three regional galleries
- **Artist Markets** with a reputation for the quality of their artists' work
- **Aboriginal Culture** showcased in galleries and various venues
- **Public Art** in our parks, beaches and public spaces
- **Museums** showcasing the region's rich heritage

- **Performance** places to see film, theatre, live music and gigs
- **The Written Word** for those with a literary interest
- **Showcase Events** including major arts events on the Mid North Coast
- **Annual Events** and annual arts festivals
- **Recycled Art** displayed and places to source material
- **A Walk on the Cultural Side** through the arts and heritage trails
- **Just for Kidz** points of call to entertain the kids
- **Food and Art** cafes, restaurants and wineries where art is on the menu
- **Heritage Places** of state significance



## Creative Communities

Our designation of the Creative Communities of the Mid North Coast recognises the value of the arts to many of our smaller towns and villages. Originally the six communities included Stroud, Kendall, Gladstone, Bellingen, Bowraville and Dorrigo. In the last three years, we have added Sawtell, Gloucester, South West Rocks and Woolgoolga. As well as providing a focus and point of difference for our marketing, we allocate a small pool of funds for projects that will benefit and showcase the community. Funding has been put towards the following:

- Kendall - Tourism brochure
- Bellingen - Arts component to Chamber Business App
- Stroud - A film featuring Stroud for YouTube
- Gladstone - Identifying options for Gateway Public Art
- Bellingen - Development of Opening Up the Arts (OUTA) weekend event
- Dorrigo - Tourism and art workshops
- Gloucester - Events for Gloucester Gallery

*Tremendous to see Woolgoolga included as one of the 10 Creative Communities of the Mid North Coast. As well as our long and rich heritage involving our (my) Sikh community, "Woopi" has developed its own creative and vibrant character enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.*

John Arkan, Councillor Coffs Harbour City Council

### Case Study - Heritage

The rich heritage of the Mid North Coast is not only found in our museum collections but also in our buildings and landscapes. With our commitment to the World Tourism Organisation's

(WTO) definition of culture and heritage, we have incorporated the 26 museums of the region into our Creative Coast brand. We made this commitment long before heritage and the arts were combined at a state level. We have also developed several innovative projects to further the needs of this sector.

Highlights:

- Our 17 Cultural Trails include Museums, Places of State Heritage Significance, Heritage Walks and many works in the Public Art Trail inspired by local history and stories.
- Many of our 10 Creative Communities have a strong heritage focus such as Stroud, and Woolgoolga with their unique Sikh Heritage Museum.
- A collaborative project with the Mid North Coast Chapter of Museums Australia and seven community museums developed the online exhibition, Our Rivers Our History. This won Gold at the 2016 Museums & Galleries National Award and was one of three case studies used by Create NSW in its Cultural Tourism Toolkit for the industry.
- Strategic plans for Coffs Harbour Regional, Bellingen and Dorrigo Museums were developed through workshops and consultations.
- Developed and distributed a 13-page toolkit, Marketing Your Museum - Ideas to Increase Visitation and Engagement for Small Museums.
- Partnered with Port Macquarie Museum to develop the online exhibition, Tourists Paradise to not only increase awareness and visitation to the Museum but for use by the tourism industry.
- Produced the region-wide festival, SHINE... shining a light on our museums and rich heritage. The festival was recognised by an Award at the 2019 NSW Heritage Awards. The 2020 festival was developed but postponed due to COVID 19.

## What's On

Our online events calendar is the most comprehensive events guide in the region. It has doubled in size since 2016 and now features over 700 exhibitions, events and activities. It is easy for visitors to find the information they need at any time by customising their search by region or event category. The categories include music, concerts, theatre, dance, workshops, exhibitions, talks, festivals, film and markets. Each event listing provides a summary of important information, a map and links back to the event organiser's website or Facebook page for more details. Once listed, we further promote the events through a variety of marketing strategies. It is the only region-wide events calendar on the Mid North Coast.

## Major Events and Festivals

Arts Mid North Coast has developed two major festivals as ways of showcasing our arts and creatives as well as many of our smaller communities outside the major cities. These region-wide events have considerable potential into the future to be of value to both locals and tourists. They have also generated considerable media and accolades.

### **SHINE -shining a light on the rich heritage and museums of the Mid North Coast**

Our inaugural SHINE Festival in 2019 was developed to build capacity and show museums different ways they could present themselves to new and different audiences. We worked with museum staff to develop an exciting range of events within their volunteer resources. The festival ran from April 22 to April 29 with 28 special events and online features showcasing our region's heritage. Smaller museums and heritage sites with fewer resources to present major events were able to attract visitors through special online features.

Highlights:

- Wingham Museum. Fully booked with more performances added
- Innes Ruins. Four scheduled tours filled quickly, so two additional tours were added to meet the demand
- Trial Bay Gaol. Fully booked and two tours were added
- Opening of the new Sikh Heritage Museum in Woolgoolga
- 27 articles in local and regional newspapers were published with a limited ad spend
- The SHINE Festival gave us content to redesign and relaunch our Instagram account
- 43 Facebook posts reached 25,200 people
- Twitter postings for the festival reached 10,000 impressions

*Absolutely thrilled. We had hoped for 15 to 20 people and got 30, bursting at the seams. Great coverage in local media before and after the event.*

Dorrigo Museum

*Hi Kevin, just reporting that our Hippy Heritage Walk was a huge success with around 30 people blocking the streets of Bellingen. The reading back at the museum went off well and the after-party was enjoyed by all with one participant reporting that it was the best party in a museum that he could remember. It was a great incentive to participate in the SHINE event. We even got two new volunteers for Bellingen from the event.*

Bellingen Museum

## Mid North Coast Creative Ageing Festival

Established in 2017, the annual Mid North Coast Creative Ageing Festival is an innovative annual event promoting the importance of engaging in the arts and creative activities to foster good health and wellbeing as people age. The event was inspired by creative ageing festivals in Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

The Mid North Coast Creative Ageing Festival offers opportunities for older people to participate in the arts whether through exhibitions, performances, film screenings, dance, workshops, discussion groups, networking and sharing of experiences and information. The 2019 festival was the first to achieve the target of 60 events for those over 60 years. This festival is one of only six programs in Australia showcased in the prestigious publication by the UK-based Baring Foundation Around the World with 80 Creative Ageing Projects, published in London in November 2019.

Under the umbrella of the festival, we have also provided small grants for:

- Port Macquarie Museum's innovative Alzheimer's program
- Port Macquarie Council's iPad Art project
- Nambucca Valley Arts Council's work with the Riverside Gardens Village
- Kempsey Council's work with aged care providers.

## Communications

For those involved or interested in the arts, Arts Mid North Coast shares news and ideas every day. We have developed several media channels to showcase both our work and the work of the region's artists and art groups. Our communication platforms share valuable information such as grant opportunities, practical workshops and the many events in the region. These are showcased in this section of the snapshot but are equally relevant to many aspects of Goal 1.

### Website

Our website [www.artsmidnorthcoast.com](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast.com) is the region's one-stop shop for arts and cultural events, cultural tourism trails, sector news, opportunities and resources. Over the past three years, our website is visited by 24,100 - 34,300 users annually with over 80% being new users to the site. It is important to note that we do not actively use paid Google advertising - and users come to the site organically through searching for local arts and cultural content. As well as an extensive What's On events list and cultural tourism guide, our website hosts many of our special projects and events promotions. These special projects include our Creative Ageing Festival, SHINE Festival, Top Ten Picks for Summer and the popular More Than a Beach - Summertime Arts Guide for Kids.

### Newsletters

Arts Mid North Coast publishes a fortnightly e-newsletter Artsblast which shares the latest news, opportunities and events from across the arts and cultural sector. Currently, we have 2,000 contacts with 1,560 newsletter subscribers. Subscribers to our newsletter come from right across the region as well as national and international subscribers.

Our Creative Ageing Notebook was launched in mid-2019 as part of our Creative Ageing Strategy. This bi-monthly newsletter brings together the latest research, news and opportunities around creative ageing from around the world.

In late 2020, News Alert was launched to provide a concise weekly posting of 4-6 key items - whether it be a grant closing, a major exhibition opening or new information added to SmartArt or our website. With so much happening, this has become our quick post-it note to the region.

## **Social Media**

Our social media presence has steadily grown over the last five years. We post daily across three platforms - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Our Facebook page has a focus on sharing and promoting arts and cultural events listed on our website as well as the latest announcements, news and opportunities from across the arts sector. As of September 2020, our Facebook page had a total of 2,460+ followers. Our posts have an average reach of 1,098 people with our highest post reaching 6,445 people.

Our Instagram account was reignited during our 2019 SHINE Festival promotion and has grown exponentially. Instagram has been a more suitable platform for showcasing the work of individual artists in our region, as well as promoting grant and exhibition opportunities. We have grown our audience to 1030+ followers.

Our Twitter channel is managed by our Executive Director and is used as an advocacy tool for strategic communications and discussions around the value of the arts including current research, funding and creative initiatives from across the globe. In 18 months, we have grown to nearly 900 Twitter followers.

## **Digital Media**

In November 2020, we launched the first in a series of podcasts that will become a regular feature in 2021. The podcasts are another example of how we share insights and information relevant to artists. The COVID epidemic has refocused attention on the different digital opportunities to present the arts and information relating to it. In 2021, we will reintroduce a feature showcasing our videos and those from artists and event organisers.

## **Radio**

From 2016 to 2018 we had a weekly radio spot on ABC Mid North Coast Radio. This is the only radio station covering our entire region and has an estimated reach of 200,000 listeners a week. A reorganisation of the ABC resulted in the loss of this regular feature, but we still seek opportunities for interviews and news pieces across all local radio in the region, including community radio.

## **Print Media**

Arts Mid North Coast has developed close networks with print media in the region and actively engages media coverage to promote events and projects. Our media networks actively seek out arts content from Arts Mid North Coast for their publications. We also publish print collateral for use in on-site marketing at forums and events. These include our Creative Coast brochures showcasing our Creative Places and Cultural Trails, posters, flyers and pull up banners.





SWIFF Festival - Coffs Harbour

## Goal 3 - Partnerships

*To develop and foster strategic partnerships, projects and networks that benefit the region's arts and cultural sector.*

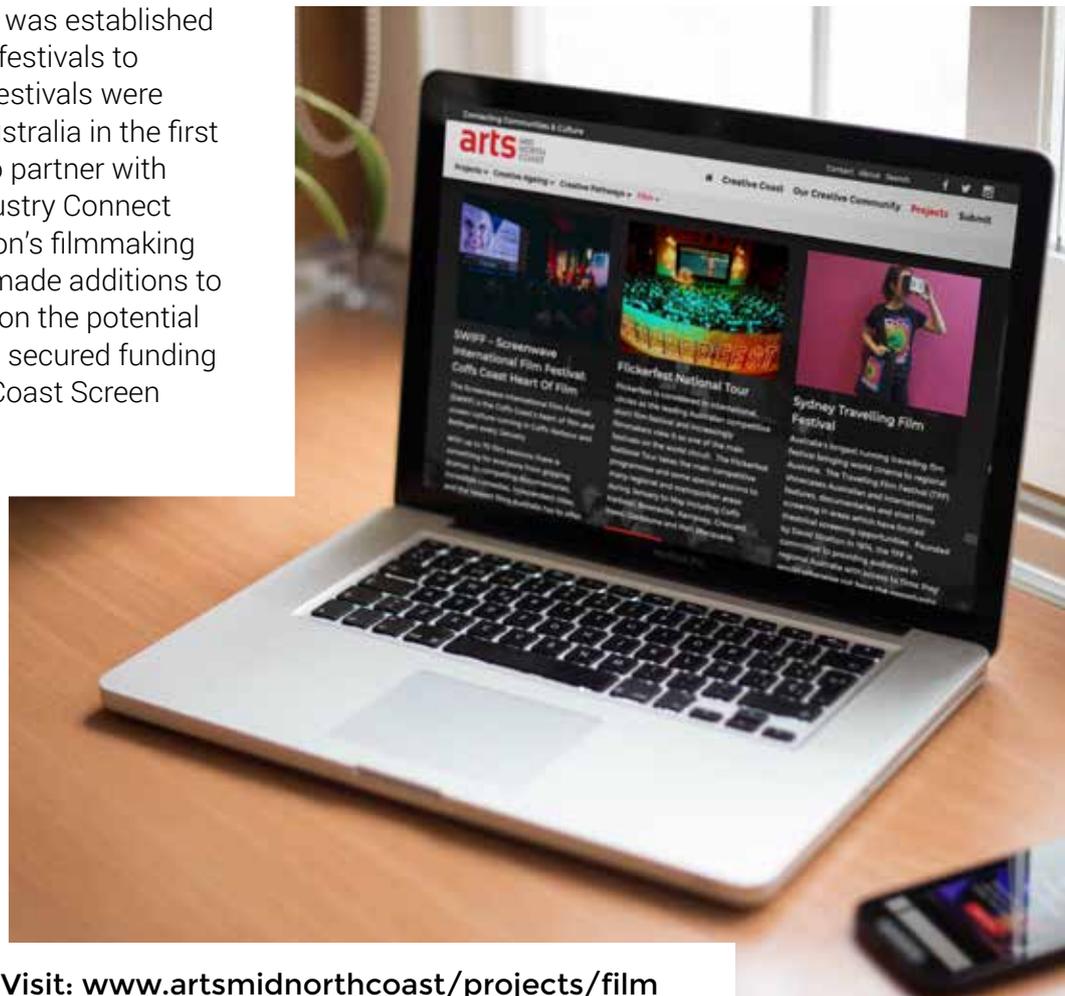
## Screen and Film Development

In 2016, Arts Mid North Coast identified the potential of the screen industry as a way of delivering positive economic returns to the region as well as its value as an art form. It began a partnership with Coffs Harbour-based Screenwave which had established the Screenwave International Film Festival, (SWIFF) in 2015. That partnership has seen us support not only SWIFF, which has become the largest film festival in regional Australia but two other programs they have developed. Nextwave, delivering filmmaking workshops to young people across regional Australia has grown to annually reach around 1400 students through workshops and developing its own Youth Film Festival and Awards. In 2020 it will go online.

In 2018, Film Outreach Australia was established collaborating and providing film festivals to regional Australia. Over 60 film festivals were provided to regional and rural Australia in the first 15 months of operation. We also partner with Screenwave to present Film Industry Connect an annual workshop for the region's filmmaking community. Over time we have made additions to our website to reflect this focus on the potential of film to the region and in 2020, secured funding in 2021 to develop a Mid North Coast Screen Industry Plan.

*All of our programs have been directly and indirectly supported by Arts Mid North Coast. AMNC has supported countless grant applications, provided region-specific information to help us acquire new funding partnerships, connected our team with other regional artists forming new collaborations, provided funding for arts programs where other funding pathways had closed, and have sought to include our feedback in strategic decisions.*

David Horsley, Screenwave



Visit: [www.artsmidnorthcoast/projects/film](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast/projects/film)

## Arts and Health

There is mounting evidence and studies from overseas and within Australia supporting a strong connection and benefit between the arts and better health. Arts Mid North Coast has been seeking partners and projects to develop our role in this field, which extends beyond the work we are doing with Seniors under the banner of Creative Ageing.

In 2016, we were involved in forming The School of Hard Knocks - Absolutely Everybody Choir in Port Macquarie. The program is the first regional project of the original Choir of Hard Knocks in Melbourne by Jonathon Welch. It encourages participation and social engagement through singing for those with a range of health issues, often combined with homelessness and other social concerns. Port Macquarie Community College led the project with initial funding from the Mental Health Unit of the local hospital. The choir continues today.

Since partnering with The School of Hard Knocks in Port Macquarie, we started searching for funding and partners in other arts and health projects. In 2019, we successfully launched our Musicians in Hospital program.

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### Case Study - Musicians in Hospital

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The Musicians in Hospitals program has been in development for over a year as we sought suitable funding. After several attempts to secure funding for this project, it was scaled down to a pilot program to be delivered at Coffs Harbour Base Hospital. It was successful in the 2019 My Community Project funding where it was voted number one by the community. Auditions for

musicians saw 10 selected and underwent a rigorous training program to deliver music-making activities to improve the quality of the patients' hospital experience and wellbeing. Staff and families would also benefit from the more relaxed, calmer environment and happier patients.

The program which is to be evaluated by the University of Queensland was into its second week when halted by COVID 19 social distancing



Musicians In Hospital - Mid North Coast

requirements. It has now been re-imagined to deliver music sessions via telehealth platforms and modalities (including Zoom) to a range of senior clients of the Mid North Coast Local Health District's (MNCLHD) Carers Program. Yet again, funding is being sought to allow the program to continue in this way until the musicians can return to the hospital.





Music Festival - Bellingham

## Goal 4 - Planning for the Future

*To encourage and support the arts, creative industries and cultural development in all strategic processes to provide leadership and ensure positive outcomes for local, community and regional initiatives.*

## Policy and Strategic Development

Since a review of the Regional Arts Network in 2015, the renamed Regional Arts Development Organisations have had a stronger role in strategic planning within their regions. Arts Mid North Coast is committed to being an active partner in ensuring that policy statements, plans and settings across a number of related sectors recognise the value and potential of the arts. By bringing 'the arts' to the table and seeking its recognition in such policies and plans all in the sector will benefit long term. Arts Mid North Coast has been proactive at federal, state, regional and local levels in providing a voice for the region.

### Federal

- Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety 2020
- Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions 2020

### State

- NSW Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025
- NSW Creative Ageing Plan
- NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Museums and Galleries 2017
- NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Music and Arts Industry 2018
- NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Powerhouse and other Museums and Cultural Projects 2020
- Create NSW Regional Arts Network Review 2020

### Region

- NSW Council Boundary Review 2016
- North Coast Destination Management Plan 2018-2021
- Mid North Coast Regional Economic Study 2020

### Local

In total, 29 submissions have been made in the policy areas of:

- Arts and Cultural Plans
- Heritage and Museum Plans
- Destination Management Plans
- Economic Development Plans
- 10-year Community Plans
- Local Strategic Planning Statements (20-year plans)
- Miscellaneous plans and policies (Youth, Positive Ageing, Inclusion, Public art, Glasshouse, Performing Arts Spaces etc).

## Creativity for All

Using a Building Better Regions Fund grant from the Federal Government in 2019, we prepared the 126 page, Creativity for All. A Strategic Pathway for the Mid North Coast. We understand this is the only regional Creative Ageing Plan in Australia. Its goal is to ensure older people in our region are encouraged to live active and healthy lives with improved physical and mental wellbeing by way of better access to, and greater participation in, creative activities and events. The report contains two volumes. Volume 2 highlights considerable reference material we examined and which provides the context of the Strategic Pathway as well as being an invaluable resource for those interested in learning or doing more in this field.

Volume 1 details the process to develop the Strategic Pathway by way of examining what Arts Mid North Coast is already doing in this field, a series of case studies of what is already happening in the region by others in the sector, and opportunities for the future. These are then developed into a Three-Year Plan 2020 to 2022. With bushfires and the COVID pandemic, the plan has been pushed back a year to start in 2021. In total, over the three years, the Plan identifies 70 actions to be undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders in the community.

## Creative Recovery - Bushfires

In response to the bushfires of 2019/2020 Arts Mid North Coast immediately adjusted its 2020 Work Plan to ensure greater preparedness and planning to respond to such disaster in the future. The multi-faceted strategic planning being undertaken throughout the year includes:

- establishment of a Creative Recovery resources section to SmartART
- securing additional funding through grants for the program
- call out to develop a list of accredited arts therapists
- development and delivery of a training program to be rolled out to artists across the region
- development of podcast series on Creative Recovery
- call out for funding assistance for community projects from bushfire impacted areas
- delivery of pilot projects and the recording thereof to inform future activities
- development of a report on where the arts can best work within regional and local emergency and recovery processes and organisations.

## Screen Industry Plan

In 2020 Arts Mid North Coast was successful in securing a Building Better Regions Fund grant to develop a Screen Industry Plan for the region. The plan, to be developed in 2021, will provide a pathway forward to a more developed industry from which new funding, skills training and production can be leveraged. It will ensure not only the generation of jobs, economic opportunities and skills development, but bring cultural benefits and flow of value to sectors such as tourism. No industry understands better than

the screen industry, just how the growth of digital technologies across the world is transforming the way we live, work and play.

The plan will:

- develop the region's reputation for production, supported by our talent, crews, facilities and unique locations
- identify greater awareness of funding support and business development advice
- improve skills and employment opportunities through training and development
- develop new tools, e.g. a Location Finder and Professional Directory of Skills and Businesses.







Cultural Festival - Coffs Harbour

## Goal 5 - Excellence in Governance

*To be an agile, dynamic, effective, accountable and sustainable organisation utilising relevant best practice technology and skills to promote and achieve excellence.*

## Governance

Good governance is at the heart of any successful organisation or business. It is essential to achieve our objectives and drive improvement, as well as maintain legal and ethical standing in the eyes of stakeholders and the wider community. For Arts Mid North Coast, our governance framework is determined not only by us, but our funding partners Create NSW and local government partners.



- Quarterly board meetings now supplemented by between-meeting updates
- A new Memorandum of Understanding developed with six local government partners (2017)
- Despite changes to legislation that no longer requires annual accounts to be audited, we continue to undertake an annual audit for transparency to all partners
- Rollover by Create NSW of 3-Year Plan has meant renegotiation of the MOU with councils has been put on hold as has their annual rate of contribution
- Skills audit undertaken by the Board identifying gaps. These then became the focus of the recruitment of two vacant positions
- External consultants led a strategic plan workshop with the Board and revised the organisation's Vision, Mission and Goals
- Agendas now circulated to senior Council staff as well as their elected representatives
- Completed a review of all AMNC policies
- Annual Reports prepared each year and circulated to key stakeholders
- Ongoing participation in Regional Arts NSW and RADO Network processes and meetings

### Highlights

- Contributed to the review undertaken by the former Arts NSW into Regional Arts Boards which strengthened our regional and strategic role and focus
- Business consultants delivered professional development workshops on governance and fiscal responsibilities for the Board
- A new constitution approved in June 2017, reducing the number of members from 15 to 12 and changed board membership criteria

## Viability

Securing funding to deliver our programs and services is a challenge that is met by good governance and one which also involves us supporting those involved in the arts in the region with their funding needs. In any one year, the range of opportunities varies, as does the increasingly competitive funding market. Nevertheless, the following successes should be noted over the last five years:

- Our annual funding secured from Create NSW through approved and acquitted Annual and Three-year work Plans has ensured an annual injection of \$140,000 into the region. Although it has not increased over 2016 to 2020 an increase has now been secured for 2021 and 2022.
- Support secured from our six local government partners totals over \$71,000 per year, a 16.5% increase over the period. However, it remains below the standard guidelines used by RADO Network.
- Submissions made to government regarding local government amalgamations which saw two of our councils, Greater Taree and Great Lakes, merge with another from outside the region (Gloucester) to form Mid Coast Council. Despite an increase in population and area served, the nature of funding guideline calculations resulted in a 12 percent reduction in contribution from the new larger council.
- Administration costs across the period have been reduced by an average of 10 percent with savings fed into the delivery of services and projects.
- Our management of the annual Country Arts Support Program small grants has resulted in funding of \$85,000 for 26 community-based projects.
- Our support of annual funding by two of our regional galleries has delivered up to \$90,000 to the region in any one year.
- Auspiced funds for our project partners have delivered over \$260,000 for those projects.
- Arts Mid North Coast has secured nearly \$100,000 for our own projects from grants including: Building Better Regions Fund, NSW Tourism Flagship, NSW Seniors and the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR).
- Our support for successful Regional Cultural Fund grants saw over \$6 million committed to the region.
- Other grants have been supported and secured for a wide range of individual artists or community groups including Quick Grants, Festivals Australia, NSW Seniors, Arts on Tour, Live & Loud, Create NSW, Building Better Communities Fund, Australia Council, Youth Fellowships, Clubs Grants NSW, Regional Arts Fund, Stronger Community Funds, FRRR, Regional Arts Fund National Fellowship, council grants and Destination NSW.

## Arts Mid North Coast Board 2016-2020

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### Current

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Cr. Rob Turner. President

Cr. Susan Jenvey. Vice President/Treasurer

Debbie Sommers. Secretary

Cr. John Arkan

Donna Ballard

Cr. Mark Baxter

Cr. Steve Klipin

Lorrae O'Brien

Shelley O'Keefe

Stephanie Sims

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### Former 2016 to 2020

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Nyaree Donnelly

Sonia Fingleton

Dr Lisa Milner

Cr. Claire Pontin

David Quinn

Cr. Katherine Smith

Leigh Vaughan OAM

### Alternates

Sian Nivision

Maya Spannari



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