

# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

**arts** MID  
NORTH  
COAST

CONNECTING COMMUNITY & CULTURE



Let your  
creativity  
shine

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This time last year, I wrote that I was “looking forward with optimism to a challenging and innovative year”. After reading this annual report I think you will agree that 2016 has indeed been challenging and innovative. While we could have done without some of our challenges, we dealt with them and achieved some great results.

The Mid North Coast is certainly now recognised as a vibrant and diverse region. 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 which I am sure you will find inspiring.

Last May saw many local government Amalgamations across the state, with two of our southernmost councils – Greater Taree, and Great Lakes being joined with Gloucester (formerly in the Upper Hunter Regional Arts). This amalgamation presented many challenges, but true to form, our fearless ED rose to that challenge and we now already have strong links with our very creative Gloucester friends and are working on extending our already strong and unified organisation.

During the year we said farewell to Board members, Anna Shields Jay Beaumont Margie Kirkness Paula Flack, Rodney Degens and Trevor Sargeant. We thank them most sincerely for their positive contributions to creativity on the Mid North Coast and wish them well in their new endeavours. The Local

Government elections (for those councils not amalgamated) gave us several new Board members, to whom a very warm welcome is extended. Their challenges are to move into our creative and supportive Arts MNC “family” while bringing their own style and fresh ideas.

We appreciate the support from our major funding organisation, Arts NSW. We also acknowledge the contributions made by our participating councils. We know that 2017 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.

I must include a very brief but heartfelt thank you to our wonderful team, Kevin, Denise, John, Stephanie and Mark. Finally I leave you with a favourite quote from Beethoven:

***“Strive with all your might towards the unattainable.***

***Develop as fully as you can the gifts that you have been given and never stop learning.”***

May we accept the challenges that 2017 gives us with enthusiasm and creativity.

Leigh Vaughan

President, Arts Mid North Coast Inc.

# ARTS MID NORTH COAST

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 embraces six Councils: Mid Coast, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour and embraces the area associated with the Woromi, Biripi, Dunghutti and Gumbaynggirr Nations. With 305,000 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 Development Organisations 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

1. To generate increased opportunities for access, participation, training and education.
2. To generate increased awareness of creative and cultural activity and opportunities.
3. To develop and foster strategic partnerships, projects and networks that benefit communities and the region.

4. 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.
5. 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 2016



## REGIONAL INITIATIVES & PARTNERSHIPS

### CREATIVE PATHWAYS

Creative Pathways is a one stop online resource which 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.

### OUR RIVERS - OUR HISTORY

This collaborative project with the Mid North Coast Chapter of Museums Australia was launched in April 2015. This online exhibition highlights the history of the Manning, Camden Haven, Hastings and Macleay Rivers. A series of river trail guides also link the project to cultural tourism opportunities. The project won Gold at the Museums and Galleries NSW IMAGinE Awards in late 2015 and a 2016 Museums & Galleries National Award. It is also featured as one of three case studies in the major Arts NSW 2016 publication, A Cultural Tourism Toolkit.

### CREATIVE COAST - CULTURAL TRAILS

Our Cultural Trails now features over 430 cultural experiences with links to another 300 events and the active promotion of these across a number of platforms to highlight the Mid North Coast as a vibrant and cultural destination. There is no other set of cultural trails so extensive other than those for the State of Victoria, including Melbourne. The number of Trails increased to 13 in 2016 with the addition of a Recycled Art Trail.

### CREATIVE COAST - CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

We have designated a number of Creative Communities of the Mid North Coast that further brings to the attention of visitors unique and different destinations where culture is at the heart of vibrant communities offering much to the visitor. In 2016 this number increased to eight with the addition of Sawtell and Gloucester.

### CULTURAL TOURISM

Our innovative Cultural Trails and Creative Coast features 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. In 2016 in addition to sponsoring the North Coast Tourism Awards we developed with Port Macquarie Museum the presentation material for the gala awards night with the theme, 165 Years of Tourism. The role of Arts Mid North Coast in cultural tourism also saw us named a finalist in the 2016 NSW Tourism Awards. This focus 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 thereby increasing the opportunities for our artists and creative businesses.

## HELLO KOALAS SCULPTURE TRAIL

Arts Mid North Coast has continued to advise this imaginative public art project developed by Arts and Health Australia on its expansion in 2016 and further developments to be launched in 2017. The multi-award winning projects has 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.

## 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. Events of note in 2016 were:

- Screenwaves International Film Festival. This three week event was

staged in both Bellingen and Coffs Harbour. Our partnership ensured filmmakers and speakers were able to attend and present at workshops and Q&A sessions to further enhance the event.

- [REC] Ya Shorts Youth Film Festival. This event across a number of our Local Government Areas focuses on workshops for young film makers and public screening of their work.
- AMNC partnered with ETC Ltd to stage the Creative Industries Forum in Kempsey. This saw a day of noted speakers as well as displays by creative businesses.
- Frugal Forest. This exhibition made entirely of recycled waste continues to tour the region and beyond. We continued to support with advice on management, funding and long term sustainability. It also inspired our Recycled Art Trail.
- Wingham Akoostik Music Festival continues to grow and achieve success winning the 2016 North

Coast Tourism Award for Local Festivals.

Development work was also undertaken in 2016 for our major event to be held in August 2017, Opening Our HeARTS. This will see artist studios, commercial and community galleries and arts spaces in cafes and restaurants opened over one August weekend in a co-ordinated Festival across the region.

## A GROWING SCREEN CULTURE

In response to a more active role for Arts Mid North Coast in 2017 in the film and screen sector of the arts a new Film section was added to our website in late 2016. This highlights its heritage and the increasing screen culture in the region. Industry development elements will be added in 2017.



## RESEARCH & POLICY

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. Two major projects were commissioned in 2016 to be published in early 2017. 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 in association with Charles Sturt University will provide us with a valuable resource base of Australian research on the economic value of arts and culture to local and/or regional economies. Arts Mid North Coast also made submissions to a NSW Parliamentary Enquiry into the organisation, structure and funding of museums and galleries in NSW.

# REGIONAL INITIATIVES & PARTNERSHIPS

## ACHIEVING STATE AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Create NSW – NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework was released in 2015 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 the overall approach noted in that Policy Framework. However our work also meets a number of the funding priority areas identified by Arts NSW for regional NSW.

### ABORIGINAL

Our region has 7.1% of the State's indigenous population compared with 4% for the State population. While the primary responsibility for developing aboriginal culture in the region rests with Saltwater Freshwater representing ten local Land Councils AMNC contributes where opportunities arise. In November 2015 facilitated a workshop at Sea Acres National Park on ways to develop sustainable events and activities showcasing aboriginal culture. This project continued throughout 2016 and has now reached the stage of the development of a Three Year Business Plan to be presented to various funding

bodies. It is also now a partnership between the Biripai Land Council, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Arts Mid North Coast, Charles Sturt University and Regional Development Australia – Mid North Coast.

### 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 2016 we again partnered with Arts and Health Australia to present The Big Chat, the only conference in the region on creative ageing with speakers from around Australia. This will again take place in 2017 with Arts Mid North Coast expanding it to a regional Creative Ageing Festival. AMNC also assisted in the staging of workshops by UK Creative Ageing specialist, Chris Gauge.

### DISABILITY

In 2016 we were involved on the Steering Committee of the formation of the School of Hard Knocks in Port Macquarie. This is the first regional project of the original

Choir of Hard Knocks in Melbourne, by Jonathon Welch. This encourages through participation in the choir new skills and social engagement for those with disabilities or other factors of social isolation. The choir had its first major concert with Jonathon Welch in November 2016. This project is led by the Port Macquarie Community College.

## 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 2016 Arts Mid North Coast made submissions on the draft Port Macquarie Hastings Cultural Plan and the Coffs Coast Tourism Plan (in relation to cultural tourism.) Both resulted in important changes to the draft plans when finalised. Our 2017 Plan has a priority of reviewing all relevant strategic plans that come up for review during the year to ensure they best reflect and support cultural assets and opportunities.

### COUNTRY ARTS SUPPORT PROGRAM (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. In 2016 five local projects were successful in securing this funding for 2017.

These were: Lakeside Festival, Opera by the Lake, Kempsey District Silver Band, Heart and Soul Foundation (Coffs Harbour) and Afrekete Cuban Festival (Coffs Harbour). 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 2016 over 45 grants 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. Thirty one individuals or groups were assisted with grant applications in 2016. The diversity of funding sought included from: Regional Arts Fund, Festivals Australia, Clubsgrant NSW, Arts NSW (various programs), Regional Flagship and the Australia Council.

### 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. New categories added in 2016 were Cultural Tourism, Policy & Research and Live Music.



## COMMUNICATIONS

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 2016 Arts Mid North Coast continued to enhance and expand its regional arts portal, [www.artsmidnorthcoast.org](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast.org). 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 online Events Calendar promoted more than 300 events. The site also links to a wide range of relevant external information. During the year the website Showcase featured more than 200 major stories and hits to the website increased 37 percent

### ARTS BLAST

Our e-bulletin, Arts Blast is now delivered every fortnight to over 1200 subscribers. The newsletter contains a large range of vital information and links to cultural news and events plus training, grants and

awards opportunities. A 2016 survey of users showed high levels of satisfaction with the newsletter and a preference for news of events. This must still be balanced with our need to inform artists of relevant opportunities and professional news.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Arts Mid North Coast has become very active on social media. We now have 2 Facebook pages, (Arts Mid North Coast and Creative Coast) and are using Twitter and Instagram. With more than 500 postings over the year our social media reach has greatly expanded with engaged users up 84 percent. Likes to the AMNC Facebook increased 64 percent and to the Creative Coast Facebook by 54 percent over 2016.

### ABC RADIO

In 2016 we began a weekly spot with ABC Mid North Coast and Coffs Coast Radio highlighting arts events in the region. These stations reach a high listening audience for adults in the region especially those aged over 40.

### SPECIAL FEATURES

During 2016 we also produced several special event features. Our Summer Holiday Guide for Kids showcased 32 events supplementing our Top Ten Picks for Summer feature. Another was produced for Seniors Week, all showcasing events across the region.

## GOVERNANCE

### RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Following a review by Arts NSW of all Regional Arts Boards Arts Mid North Coast took steps in 2016 to implement a range of actions to refresh and better define our relationship with our local government partners. This included the drafting of a new Memorandum of Understanding, a process to identify regional priorities and new channels of communication and reporting. Major steps were also taken to draft a new Constitution and to review and increase the Councils rate of contributions. The name of the regional bodies was also changed to Regional Arts Development Organisations (RADOs) supporting our regional and strategic role.

Other external changes also impacted our operation. Local government amalgamations resulted in the merger of two of our Councils (Great Lakes and Greater Taree) and the addition to them of Gloucester to form the new Mid Coast Council. Gloucester Council was formerly in the area of Arts Upper Hunter. This increased both the size of our region and its population.

### FINANCIAL REPORTING

Arts Mid North Coast has a strong record of a fiscal control achieving again in 2016 a balanced budget with some savings transferred to 2017 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 2017.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With the generous support of one off funding from Arts NSW to all RADOs for professional development Arts Mid North Coast was able to implement a detailed program of training. Staff undertook courses and workshops in social media trends, design skills, change management and measuring cultural planning outcomes while the Board undertook a major workshop on how they could best enhance and contribute to the work of the RADO.



## OUR BOARD

As noted in our Presidents message the June 2016 AGM saw a number of Board members retire either from that time or August in the lead up to the local government elections. The list below is the AMNC Board as at its December 2016 meeting.

### President

Leigh Vaughan  
*MidCoast Council*

### Vice President

Nyaree Donnelly  
*Great Lakes Creative Network*

### Treasurer & Public Officer

David Quinn  
*Coffs Harbour Arts Council*

### Secretary

Shelley O'Keefe  
*Bellingen Community Arts Council*

## BOARD MEMBERS

Councillor John Arkan (Dec 2016) & Sian Nivison  
*Coffs Harbour Council*

Councillor Mark Baxter (Dec 2016)  
*Kempsey Shire Council*

Sonia Fingleton  
*North Coast Destination Network*

Councillor Susan Jenvey (Dec 2016) & Councillor Anne Smythe (Dec 2016)  
*Nambucca Shire Council*

Councillor Steve Klipin (Feb 2016)  
*Bellingen Shire Council*

Margret Meagher  
*Arts & Health Australia*

Dr Lisa Milner  
*Bowraville Arts Council*

Lorrae O'Brien  
*North Coast TAFE*

Councillor Rob Turner (Dec 2016)  
*Port Macquarie Hastings Council*

## RETIRING MEMBERS

Jay Beaumont (June 2016)  
*FOCUS Magazines*

Councillor Rodney Degens (Aug 2016)  
*Coffs Harbour City Council*

Councillor Paula Flack (Aug 2016)  
*Nambucca Shire Council*

Margie Kirkness (Aug 2016)  
*Greater Taree City Council*

Councillor Trevor Sargeant (Aug 2016)  
*Port Macquarie Hastings Council*

Lester Searle (June 2016)  
*North Coast TAFE*

Councillor Anna Shields (Aug 2016)  
*Kempsey Shire Council*

## OUR STAFF

### Executive Director

Kevin Williams

### Communications Officer

Denise Aitken

## CONSULTANTS

### Design & Online

Mark Carpenter

### Projects

Stephanie Ney

### Finance & Administration

John Stewart

## CONTACT US

Online: [www.artsmidnorthcoast.org](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast.org)

Ph: 02 6658 9400

PO Box 4007 Moorland NSW 2443



MidCoast Council

T: 02 6658 9400  
[admin@artsmidnorthcoast.com](mailto:admin@artsmidnorthcoast.com)

PO Box 4007  
Moorland  
NSW 2443

[www.artsmidnorthcoast.com](http://www.artsmidnorthcoast.com)

