



CREATIVE FUTURES

2024

Mid North Coast Creative Sector Mapping Project



arts MID NORTH COAST





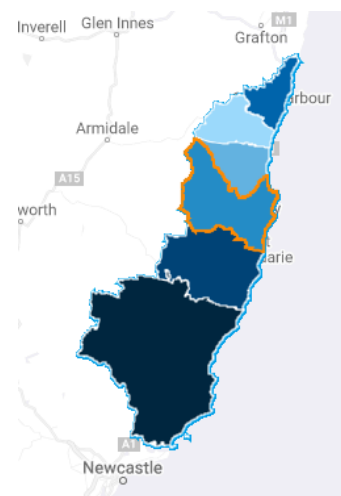
Kempsey Community profile

Kempsey is home to 30,688 people,¹ and is known for its setting against the Macleay River, its unique heritage, and its surrounding national parks. It has a large and vibrant Indigenous population and is located on the lands of the Thungutti/Dunghutti nation

In the 2021 Census, there were 148 people in Kempsey employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 1.4% of the area’s labour force.

Kempsey recorded a total of 70 creative businesses in 2021, with 3 turning over \$2M or more per annum.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Kempsey creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 11% (n=37)² currently reside in Kempsey, providing insight into the area.
- ▶ Survey respondents living in Kempsey partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 81% (n=30) are artists or creative practitioners
 - ▶ 35% (n=13) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 32% (n=12) are volunteering in the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from Kempsey who responded to the survey are working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (n=9), working in government (n=2), a supplier to the creative sector (n=3), or audience or community members (n=12).

¹ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA14350>

² Note that this is a small sample size, so caution should be taken when interpreting results.

Overview of the creative arts sector

Kempsey residents perceive the Mid North Coast creative sector as strong, resilient, and full of talent – but there aren't enough opportunities to make the sector feel sustainable

- ▶ More than a third (38%) of Kempsey respondents have lived in Kempsey for less than 10 years, and just under two thirds (62%) have lived there for more than 10 years.
- ▶ Kempsey residents perceive the creative sector to be growing and strengthening in the MNC. However, a minority say it is currently 'strong' in terms of resilience (39%), artistic vibrancy (35%), cultural practice and safety (24%) and environmental sustainability (21%).
- ▶ 4 in 5 (82%) respondents from Kempsey say the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and two thirds (65%) say it brings people together. One person shared their perception of the sector: *'Growing stronger with an obvious desire to improve. Great people. Great ideas. Respect for Indigenous culture.'*
- ▶ There's a sense amongst Kempsey residents that there's a lot of strength, resilience, and talent in the area, but that there are limited opportunities, impacting the sustainability and health of the sector. One Kempsey resident shared that there is: *'Loads of talent and creatives, not enough sustainable paid arts work and opportunity and networking.'*
- ▶ Kempsey residents are the least likely in the MNC to think that the financial sustainability of the region's creative sector is 'strong' (0%) – though this may be due to the small sample size. 2 in 5 (39%) perceive its financial sustainability as 'poor' while 43% think it's average, and 19% don't know. One Kempsey resident noted that the region is *'Fertile ground for creative minds but hard to sustain financially.'*

Artist profile

Around two thirds (63%) of Kempsey creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from sales or professional services

- ▶ Amongst the 30 artists and creative practitioners from Kempsey, 30% say that their creative practice is their main income source, 33% say it's not their main source of income but it is supplementary, and 27% say they don't earn any income from it but they'd like to grow their earnings.
- ▶ Amongst the 19 artists or creative practitioners living in Kempsey who earn an income from their creative practice, most earn it via sales (63%), and professional services like teaching, consulting, and facilitating (58%). Small proportions earn income through government funding (n=5), funding from foundations or trusts (n=2), and sponsorship (n=1).

- ▶ Kempsey creatives are mostly selling equal amounts of their work in the MNC and outside the region (37%) or selling all/the majority of their work in the MNC (32%) – but small numbers are selling work purely outside of the region in metropolitan or other regional areas, or online.

Creative careers in Kempsey

Most Kempsey creatives work locally, with some extending their practice to nearby regions, and there is strong engagement across a variety of artforms and artistic themes

- ▶ The vast majority of artists or creative practitioners from Kempsey say their creative work has been mainly located in Kempsey over the past 12 months (90%).
- ▶ Some Kempsey creatives are also engaging in their creative practice across other areas in the region, including Coffs Harbour (17%), Port Macquarie (17%), Mid-Coast (14%) and Bellingen (14%). A quarter (24%) are also travelling outside of the region for their creative work.
- ▶ 14% of all of the creative work in the MNC occurs in Kempsey. While this is the second-lowest of the six MNC LGAs (just above Nambucca Valley at 12%), Kempsey hosts only 9% of the MNC's working population, so the area has a proportionally higher rate of creative workers.
- ▶ Of the 30 creatives from Kempsey who responded to the survey, more are emerging or early career (43%), compared to mid-career (23%) or established (30%). Kempsey's proportion of emerging or early career artists is higher than across the MNC on average (34%).
- ▶ Kempsey creatives are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, multi-arts (including video and sound art), creative industries (design, film, etc.), contemporary music, theatre or musical theatre, dance or physical theatre, festivals, Aboriginal arts and culture, literature and heritage.
- ▶ Their practice intersects with a variety of themes, including environment, health and wellbeing, communities and social services, children and young people and/or education, technology, and Indigenous cultures. Compared to the MNC as a whole, a higher proportion of Kempsey creatives engaged with the environment (53%) and Indigenous culture (33%), compared to the MNC's 44% and 16% averages.

Opportunities for creativity in Kempsey

Kempsey creatives face barriers including awareness of what's on, insufficient space, and balancing competing priorities, while they are seeking better venues and funding opportunities, and improved connection and coordination across the sector

ARTS MID NORTH COAST

- ▶ For Kempsey residents, the top 3 barriers impacting the development of practice or engagement with the arts in the region are:
 - awareness or not knowing what's on (49%)
 - having other priorities (49%)
 - a lack of physical space to work/meet with others i.e. venues, hubs (49%), and financial barriers (43%).
- ▶ Space is an issue across the region. Almost half (47%) of Kempsey residents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work, while 17% feel neutrally. Meanwhile, 43% feel neutrally about spaces for making work, and 29% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- ▶ Many commented on a lack of physical spaces to create, exhibit/perform, and sell. One person shared, *'There are limited spaces for local artists to exhibit... Port Macquarie artists regularly exhibit [at the gallery in Gladstone] because there is a shortage of exhibition spaces there. This limits the opportunity for Macleay Valley artists to exhibit. Recently a new venue has opened in Crescent Head... run by a woman who volunteers her time and space in her house for artists to exhibit and collaborate and communicate. More initiatives like hers need to be supported and funded. Currently artist communication and collaboration is very adhoc.'*
- ▶ Another said: *'There are not enough publicly available studio spaces. There are not enough gallery spaces that don't charge exorbitant commissions. There is virtually no funding for individual artists.'*
- ▶ Kempsey residents also indicated dissatisfaction with funding opportunities, with 43% feeling neutral and 51% feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- ▶ Reflecting on some of the recent and ongoing challenges for their practice/organisation, one Kempsey resident shared: *'The continuing changing climate of events, weather, financial crisis or covid, something seems to always be heavily disrupting the industry and not enough gov support.'*
- ▶ Others spoke of feeling disconnected: *'Being outside of the Coffs/Port Macquarie region definitely makes it harder to access and be involved in what's going on. Not impossible but a lot of travelling to access information sessions for grants etc. [I'd] love it if these sessions could be online as well for those who can't make it in person.'*
- ▶ Looking ahead, Kempsey residents' top 3 priorities for enhancing the MNC's creative sector are:
 - building audiences and attracting visitation (76%)
 - establishing new creative spaces (62%)
 - and reinvigorating existing cultural spaces (41%).
- ▶ Thinking about ensuring that the MNC's creativity thrives into the future, one Kempsey respondent highlighted the need for more support: *'More art spaces, more investment and support, more promoted themed exhibitions highlighting issues within society.'*



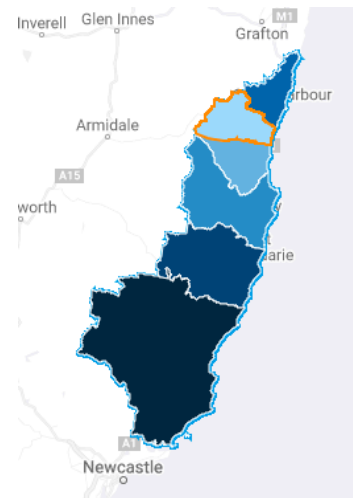
Bellingen Community profile

Bellingen is home to 13,252 people,³ and is known for its scenic waterfalls, World Heritage-listed rainforest and river sites, and vibrant arts and culture.⁴ It is located on the lands of the Gumbaynggirr nation.

In the 2021 Census, there were 237 people in Bellingen employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 5.9% of the area’s labour force.

Bellingen recorded a total of 93 creative businesses in 2021, an increase of 48% from 63 businesses in 2016.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Bellingen creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 16% (n=57) currently reside in Bellingen, providing insight into the area.
- ▶ Survey respondents living in Bellingen partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 63% (n=35) are artists or creative practitioners (including makers, performers, and creatives)
 - ▶ 37% (n=21) are volunteering in the creative sector
 - ▶ 32% (n=18) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 4% (n=2) are suppliers to the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from Bellingen who responded to the survey are audiences or community members (36%), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (27%) and working in government (14%).

³ <https://rdamnc.org.au/resources/community-data-app/>

⁴ visitnsw.com/destinations/north-coast/coffs-harbour-area/Bellingen

Overview of the creative arts sector

A strong and growing arts and cultural scene exists in Bellingen, against a backdrop of natural beauty – but one that is still developing and in need of support

- ▶ In terms of how long they've lived in the area, 7% of Bellingen respondents have lived in Bellingen for less than 2 years, 18% have lived there for 2-5 years, 23% for 6-10 years, 30% for 11-25 years, 16% for 26+ years, and 5% have lived in Bellingen all their lives.
- ▶ Bellingen residents perceive the creative sector to be growing and strengthening in the MNC, with 61% agreeing that the area is 'strong' in terms of artistic vibrancy. However, a minority say it is currently 'strong' in terms of cultural practice and safety (42%), resilience (23%) and environmental sustainability (16%).
- ▶ In addition, 2 in 5 (43%) Bellingen residents perceive the financial sustainability of the MNC's creative sector to be 'poor,' while 39% feel it's average, 4% feel it's strong, and 14% don't know.
- ▶ Around 9 in 10 (88%) respondents from Bellingen say that the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and 70% say it brings people together.
- ▶ One person shared: *'Bellingen is incredible for the arts and sets a great example for the rest of the Mid North Coast. Bellingen supports arts across demographics; other areas tend to be mainly for older people and younger community members do not have as many opportunities to engage.'*
- ▶ Reflecting on the MNC's creative identity, there is a sense that it is vibrant, diverse, talented, and full of potential, while also still developing, obscured, and in need of further resourcing. One Bellingen resident said the region's creative identity is *'Strong, but lots of it is still hidden, the identity is growing though, especially in the last year and it's exciting to see what else we can do to grow it further.'*

Artist profile

Around two thirds (63%) of Bellingen creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from sales or professional services

- ▶ Amongst artists and creative practitioners in Bellingen, almost half (46%) say that their creative practice is not their main income source but it supplements their main income, while another 31% say they don't earn an income from it – but they'd like to grow their earnings.
- ▶ A small proportion (17%, n=6) of artists or creative practitioners living in Bellingen say their creative practice is their main income source.
- ▶ Amongst the 22 artists or creative practitioners living in Bellingen who earn an income from their creative practice, most earn income via sales (73%). Other income

sources are professional services like teaching, consulting, facilitating (46%), government funding (18%), funding from foundations or trusts (14%), and sponsorship (14%).

- ▶ Half sell all or the majority of their work within the MNC (50%), while 27% sell equal amounts of their work in the MNC and outside the region, and another 14% sell all/the majority of their work in metropolitan areas outside of the MNC i.e. in Sydney.

Creative careers in Bellingen

Most Bellingen creatives work locally, with some extending their practice to nearby regions, and there is strong engagement cross a variety of artforms and themes

- ▶ The majority of artists or creative practitioners from Bellingen say their creative work has been mainly located in Bellingen over the past 12 months (89%).
- ▶ Some Bellingen artists are also engaging in their creative practice across other areas in the region, with the most common location outside of Bellingen being Coffs Harbour (33%) – and others are travelling further outside the region (25%) for their creative practice.
- ▶ Around one fifth (18%) of all of the creative work in the MNC occurs in Bellingen, with small numbers of creatives from other townships in the region coming to Bellingen to practice.
- ▶ Artists or creative practitioners living in Bellingen are at a variety of career stages, including:
 - emerging or early career (25%)
 - mid career (33%)
 - and established (36%)
- ▶ Bellingen's proportion of mid career artists is higher than across the MNC on average (26%).
- ▶ The 36 artists or creative practitioners living in Bellingen are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, multi-arts (including video and sound art), creative industries (design, film, etc.), contemporary music, theatre or musical theatre, festivals, Aboriginal arts and culture, literature and heritage.
- ▶ Their practice intersects with a variety of themes, including communities and social services, children and young people and/or education, environment, health and wellbeing, Indigenous culture, and technology. Compared to the MNC as a whole, a higher proportion of Bellingen creatives engaged with themes of children and young people and/or education (51%) and Communities and social services (54%), compared to the region's 37% average.

Opportunities for creativity in Bellingen

Bellingen creatives face barriers including balancing competing priorities, financial concerns, and an awareness of what's on, while they are seeking to build audiences in the region, and improve funding opportunities and venues

- ▶ The top 3 barriers impacting the development of practice or engagement with arts in the region for Bellingen residents are having other priorities for your time (59%), financial barriers (56%), and awareness or knowing what's on (42%).
- ▶ One respondent shared that the *'cost of exhibiting as an "amateur" is prohibitive and generally disappointing. Applying for funding is excruciating.'*
- ▶ Funding for arts projects is a key issue across the region. In Bellingen, only 16% are very satisfied or satisfied with funding for arts projects, while 31% feel neutrally and half (53%) are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Art and ticket sales are also an issue, perhaps linked to building audiences and attracting visitation. One third (30%) of Bellingen residents are very satisfied or satisfied with art/ticket sales, 43% feel neutrally, and a quarter (26%) are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Space is also a challenge across the region. While Bellingen residents feel slightly more satisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work (42%) and spaces for making work (36%) compared to other LGAs, pessimistic sentiments are still strong (44% neutral and 20% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with spaces for making work; 31% neutral and 27% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work).
- ▶ Looking ahead, the top 3 priorities for enhancing the Mid North Coast's creative sector according to Bellingen residents are offering more funding opportunities for projects/groups (58%), building audiences and attracting visitation (56%), and reinvigorating existing cultural spaces (40%).
- ▶ One Bellingen resident noted that: *'Shared spaces are hard to come by and require a lot of financial outlay to set up. Rents in the area are very expensive with little security/ longevity. I see some professional development opportunities occurring that I have been unable to take them up due to other commitments. But I'm glad to see they are happening. Personally, I think there are few opportunities for artists to collaborate either on projects or just to make their work i.e. shared studios. ...the number of empty shops is a criminal waste of space. This is a well-known issue and while there is a huge opportunity for spaces to be made available to artists or more cheaply available through lower rents, it appears the owners prefer to leave them empty. Artist precincts generate energy, positivity, community spirit, and commercial activity.'*

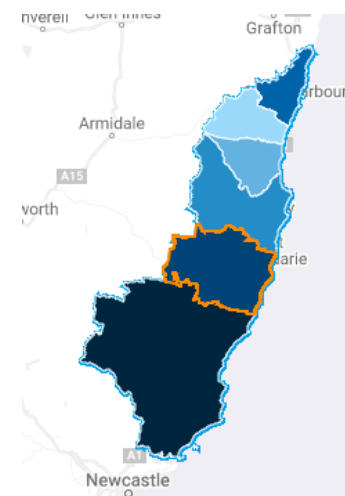
Port Macquarie-Hastings Community profile

Port Macquarie-Hastings is home to 86,762 people,⁵ and is a fast-growing area. It is known for its natural beauty, stunning beaches, and wildlife, and is located on the lands of the Birpai nation

In the 2021 Census, there were 842 people in Port Macquarie-Hastings (PMH) employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 2.6% of the area's labour force.

PMH recorded a total of 327 creative businesses in 2021, with 5 turning over \$2M or more per annum.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Port Macquarie-Hastings creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 25% (n=88) currently reside in PMH, providing insight into the area..
- ▶ PMH survey respondents partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 72% (n=63) are artists or creative practitioners (including makers, performers, and creatives)
 - ▶ 31% (n=27) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 21% (n=18) are volunteering in the creative sector
 - ▶ 4% (n=3) are suppliers to the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from PMH who responded to the survey are audiences or community members (33%), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (15%), and working in government (7%).

⁵<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA16380>

Overview of the creative arts sector

While locals feel that the creative sector in Port Macquarie-Hastings needs more support, there is also a perception that it is growing and has great potential

- ▶ In terms of how long they've live in PMH, 8% of PMH respondents have lived there for less than 2 years, 22% have lived there for 2-5 years, 17% for 6-10 years, 30% for 11-25 years, 13% for 26+ years, and 11% have lived in PMH all their lives.
- ▶ PMH residents appear to feel slightly less positively about the 'health' of the MNC creative sector relative to other townships in the region like Bellingen. However, some PMH residents do perceive the creative sector to be growing, and 'strong' in terms of artistic vibrancy (36%), cultural practice and safety (22%) and resilience (21%).
- ▶ 38% of PMH respondents rate the financial sustainability of the MNC's creative sector as 'poor,' while 27% feel it's average, 2% think it's strong, and 33% don't know.
- ▶ While locals want to see more support for the creative sector in PMH to ensure its sustainability, respondents also shared positive aspects. One said, *'In Port Macquarie, a lot of creative small business's have sadly come and gone, more so in 2023/24 from what I can see. Artwalk has been absolutely fantastic here for the last 7 years. The best event has been an 'artists open studio' weekend held a few years ago, for my business that had the most foot traffic. I hope the council will bring this back, it helps get customers/art lovers out of just the CBD focus and firsthand see artist's studio spaces.'*
- ▶ There's a perception that the creative sector in PMH is growing and has lots of potential if support is provided, including funding, creative spaces, professional development opportunities, audience development, and connection. One person shared: *'While I think Port Macquarie has a long way to go to grow the arts scene... it's much better than when I lived here 10 years ago.'*
- ▶ Reflecting on the MNC's creative identity, many in PMH feel that the creative sector is vibrant and diverse, but undeveloped, disconnected and, as one survey respondent said, *'bubbling under the surface.'* Another noted: *'Just as Port has its own little "groups" within the arts, I believe there could be a lot more cohesion between areas along the Mid North Coast through collaborations etc. Words that come to mind: great potential, disconnected, growing, unique.'*
- ▶ Around 3 quarters of respondents from PMH (76%) say the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and 64% say it brings people together.

Artist profile

3 in 5 (60%) PMH creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from professional services and sales

- ▶ Amongst artists and creative practitioners in PMH, 25% say their creative practice is their main income source.
- ▶ Meanwhile, 35% say that their creative practice is not their main income source but it supplements their main income, while another 30% say they don't earn an income from it – but they'd like to grow their earnings.
- ▶ Amongst those practitioners and artists from PMH who earn an income from their creative practice, most earn income via professional services (e.g. teaching, consulting, facilitating) (66%) and sales (61%).
- ▶ Small proportions earn income via government funding (18%), funding from foundations or trusts (3%) and sponsorship (3%).
- ▶ Around 6 in 10 (58%) say they sell all or the majority of their work within the MNC, while 11% sell equal amounts of their work in the MNC and outside the region. 8% sell all/the majority of their work in other regional areas outside of the MNC, and another 8% sell all their work online.

Creative careers in Port Macquarie-Hastings

Most PMH creatives work locally, with some extending their practice to nearby regions, and there is strong engagement across a variety of artforms and artist themes

- ▶ 91% of creative work by artists and creative practitioners who currently live in PMH has been mainly located in PMH over the past 12 months.
- ▶ However, some PMH artists are also engaging in their creative practice elsewhere, including in the Mid-Coast (13%), Kempsey (5%), outside the region (11%), and internationally (5%).
- ▶ 28% of all of the creative work in the MNC has occurred in PMH over the past 12 months, making it the second most popular area within the MNC for creative practice after Coffs Harbour (32%).
- ▶ The highest proportion of artists or creative practitioners from PMH are emerging or early career (38%). Others are mid career (19%) or established (33%). PMH's proportion of emerging artists is higher than across the MNC on average (34%).
- ▶ PMH-based artists or creative practitioners are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, creative industries (design, film, etc.), music, theatre, multi-arts, literature, festivals, and heritage.
- ▶ Their practices intersect with a variety of themes, including the environment, communities and social services, children and young people, health and wellbeing, technology, and Indigenous culture.

Opportunities for creativity in Port Macquarie-Hastings

PMH creatives face barriers including awareness of what's on, competing priorities and financial concerns, while seeking to grow audiences and improve funding opportunities and venues

- ▶ According to PMH residents, the top 3 barriers to developing practice or engaging with arts in the region are awareness or knowing what's on (60%), financial barriers (56%), or having other priorities for their time (45%).
- ▶ Reflecting on the biggest challenges they are experiencing right now in terms of their creative practice and/or attendance, one PMH resident shared: *'Lack of access to venues such as halls & theatres. No budget for events. Apply for grants but usually only suitable for one event, not long term.'*
- ▶ Another said, *'The trickle down effect of inflation. 2024 has been the worst year in my 19 years in this industry. People like to come into our gallery space but are not willing to part with their money unless it is for very cheap goods such as cards and prints. Original Artworks are just not selling due to being seen as a 'luxury item'... the biggest challenge is creating value, no matter how much you up your marketing, promotions and business strategy its pretty tough right now. So we are currently diversifying our business strategy to accomodate the shift in consumer demand.'*
- ▶ Funding for arts projects is seen to be a key issue across the region. In PMH, only 9% are very satisfied or satisfied with funding for arts projects, while 46% feel neutrally and 45% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Art and ticket sales are also a key issue, perhaps linked to building audiences and attracting visitation. 10% of PMH residents are very satisfied or satisfied with art/ticket sales, 60% feel neutrally, and 31% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Space is also a challenge across the region. Some PMH residents feel satisfied or very satisfied with spaces for making work (23%) and venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work (20%) but more pessimistic sentiments exist (47% neutral and 30% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with spaces for making work; 32% neutral and 48% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work).
- ▶ Looking ahead, PMH residents feel the top priorities for enhancing the MNC's creative sector are: building audiences and attracting visitation (49%), offering more funding opportunities for projects/groups (48%) and establishing new creative spaces (33%).
- ▶ Some suggested that addressing the disconnect in the region's creative sector will strengthen it, with one saying: *'It would be great to see some strong and real collaboration happening across artforms and across LGAs to develop a true regional approach and regional creative cultural difference. Cultural Tourism. We need to strengthen the creative sector as a whole to build audiences and attract visitation, to create a viable creative sector.'*



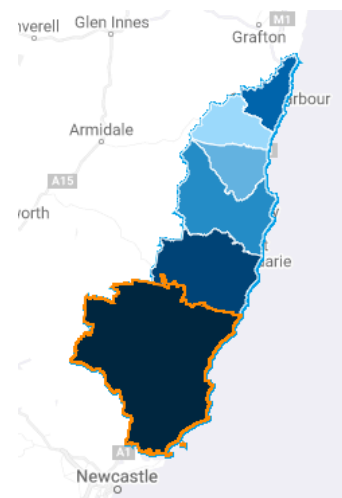
Mid-Coast Community profile

The Mid-Coast is home to 96,579 people,⁶ and is known for its vibrant towns and villages, stunning coastline, beaches and landscapes, and its relaxed lifestyle. It is located on the lands of the Biripi and Worimi nations

In the 2021 Census, there were 680 people in the Mid-Coast employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 2.3% of the area’s labour force.

The Mid-Coast recorded a total of 302 creative businesses in 2021, with 13 turning over \$2M or more per annum.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Mid-Coast creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 14% (n=48) currently live in the Mid-Coast, providing insight into the area.
- ▶ Survey respondents living in the Mid-Coast partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 73% (n=35) are artists or creative practitioners (including makers, performers, and creatives)
 - ▶ 31% (n=15) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 27% (n=13) are volunteering in the creative sector
 - ▶ 6% (n=3) are suppliers to the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from the Mid-Coast who responded to the survey are audiences or community members (31%), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (21%), and working in government (8%).

⁶<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA15240>

Overview of the creative arts sector

While locals say the creative sector in the Mid-Coast is vibrant and exciting, there are also perceptions that it is siloed and disconnected

- ▶ In terms of how long they've lived in the Mid-Coast, 4% of Mid-Coast respondents have lived there for less than 2 years, 6% have lived there for 2-5 years, 21% for 6-10 years, 38% for 11-25 years, 23% for 26+ years, and 8% have lived in the Mid-Coast all their lives.
- ▶ Mid-Coast residents say there are good things happening in the area, and they perceive the creative sector to be growing and strengthening. However, a minority say it is currently 'strong' in terms of artistic vibrancy (35%), resilience (25%), the environment (25%), and cultural practice and safety (25%).
- ▶ One Mid-Coast resident described the identity of the region's creative sector as *'inspired by nature, community driven, unpretentious'* and another said it is *'exciting, vibrant, filled with opportunity for more. Strength in numbers and amazing work from First Nations people on the MNC.'*
- ▶ Three quarters of Mid-Coast respondents (76%) say the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and 60% say it brings people together.
- ▶ However, Mid-Coast residents are less optimistic about the financial sustainability of the MNC creative sector, with 36% rating it as poor, 32% rating it average, 6% rating it strong, and 26% saying they don't know.
- ▶ There is a sense of disconnection, fragmentation, and a lack of exposure, compounded by distance between towns and regions in the MNC. One Mid-Coast respondent expressed doubt as to the existence of a creative identity: *'is there one? I think of the local arts community largely as a group of independent creative practitioners, doing it tough in the regions, with little support from politicians or interest from the community!'* Another said, *'We are many silos due to physical distance of area.'*

Artist profile

Around 3 in 5 (59%) Mid-Coast creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from sales and professional services

- ▶ Amongst artists and creative practitioners in the Mid-Coast, 42% say that their creative practice is not their main income source but it supplements their main income, while another 25% say they don't earn an income from it – but they'd like to grow their earnings. 11% prefer not to earn an income from creative work.
- ▶ Meanwhile, 17% of artists or creative practitioners living in the Mid-Coast say their creative practice is their main income source – a small proportion (n=6).

- ▶ Sales are the most common way for people to earn an income from their creative practice in the Mid-Coast (91%). A smaller proportion earn money through professional services (e.g. teaching, consulting, facilitating) (38%). Very few earn income via government funding (10%) and sponsorships (10%).
- ▶ Around half sell all/the majority of their work within the MNC (48%), while 14% sell all/the majority of their work in metropolitan areas outside of the MNC i.e. in Sydney. Another 10% sell all/the majority of their work in other regional areas outside of the MNC, and 10% sell their work online.

Creative careers in the Mid-Coast

Most Mid-Coast creatives work locally with some extending their practice outside the region, and there is strong engagement across a variety of artforms and artistic themes

- ▶ The majority (94%) of creative work by Mid-Coast artists and creative practitioners occurs within the Mid-Coast.
- ▶ Some Mid-Coast creatives are also engaging in their creative practice outside the MNC region (17%) and internationally (3%).
- ▶ A quarter (25%) of all of the creative work in the MNC occurs in the Mid-Coast, with small numbers of creatives from other parts of the region coming to the Mid-Coast to practice.
- ▶ Of the 35 artists/creative practitioners from the Mid-Coast who responded to the survey, more are established (40%) compared to emerging/early career (29%) or mid-career (29%). The Mid-Coast's proportion of established artists is higher than across the MNC on average (32%).
- ▶ Artists or creative practitioners living in the Mid-Coast are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, creative industries (design, film, etc.), multi-arts, literature, music, Aboriginal arts and culture, dance or physical theatre, heritage, festivals, and theatre.
- ▶ Their practice intersects with a variety of themes, including the environment, communities and social services, children and young people and/or education, Indigenous culture, health and wellbeing, and technology.

Opportunities for creativity in the Mid-Coast

Mid-Coast creatives face barriers including awareness of what's on, financial concerns and competing priorities, while they are seeking better creative spaces and funding opportunities, and to build audiences across the region

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- ▶ The top barriers impacting the development of practice or engagement with arts in the region for Mid-Coast residents are awareness or not knowing what's on (46%), financial barriers (42%), having other priorities (42%), and a lack of physical space to work/meet with others (40%).
- ▶ Reflecting on the challenges impacting their practice, one Mid-Coast resident shared: *'Finding suitable locations to promote and sell artwork is challenging, compounded by organizers taking large commissions, which increases expenses for consumers and makes it difficult for artists to profit. There's a shortage of collaborative spaces and opportunities for artists. Additional funding is essential to maintain the sustainability of successful community projects.'*
- ▶ Funding and support challenges are of particular concern for Mid-Coast residents, as the Mid-Coast is no longer part of Arts Mid North Coast. Qualitative data from many respondents indicates they are missing this connection. One person shared, *'As Mid Coast council are no longer part of Art Mid North Coast, we do not have access to funding and marketing with them to promote independent art galleries or artists. As far as I can see Mid Coast Council has not provided anything to replace what has been lost by no longer being a part of that network.'*
- ▶ Funding for arts projects is seen to be a key issue across the region. In the Mid-Coast, only 1 in 10 (12%) are very satisfied or satisfied with funding for arts projects, while 35% feel neutrally and 54% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Art and ticket sales are also an issue, perhaps linked to building audiences and attracting visitation. 22% of Mid-Coast residents are very satisfied or satisfied with art/ticket sales, 54% feel neutrally, and 24% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Space is also a challenge across the region. 37% of Mid-Coast residents feel satisfied or very satisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work, and 19% feel satisfied or very satisfied with spaces for making work. Pessimistic sentiments around space are more common, however (49% neutral and 33% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with spaces for making work; 33% neutral and 30% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work).
- ▶ High proportions of respondents in the Mid-Coast are feeling that there is a lack of connection, communication and collaboration in the area. A third (33%) are satisfied or very satisfied with connection, communication and collaboration in the region, while 36% feel neutrally and 31% feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- ▶ Looking ahead, the top 3 priorities for enhancing the MNC's creative sector according to Mid-Coast residents are: offering more funding opportunities for projects/groups (54%), building audiences and attracting visitation (50%) and establishing new creative spaces (46%).
- ▶ There's consensus from Mid-Coast residents that the creative sector can blossom with greater targeted support. One person shared, *'To achieve our goal of fostering creativity and supporting the cultural sector, I recommend prioritizing community engagement through workshops, events and collaborative projects that empower local artists and creatives...Ensuring accessible funding opportunities and resources for emerging talents would further enhance the region's creative landscape.'*



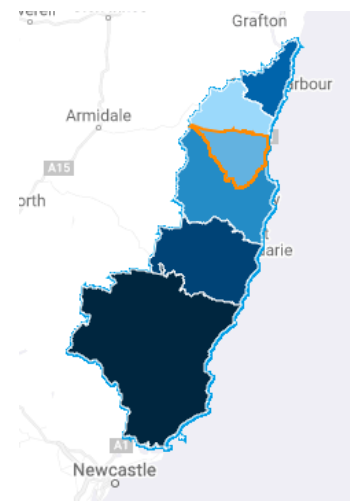
Nambucca Valley Community profile

Nambucca Valley is home to 20,407 people⁷ and is known for its natural beauty, quaint beachside villages, local museums, galleries and markets. It is located on the lands of the Gumbaynggirr nation

In the 2021 Census, there were 162 people in the Nambucca Valley employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 2.9% of the area's labour force.

Nambucca Valley recorded a total of 73 creative businesses in 2021, an increase of 18% from 62 businesses in 2016.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Nambucca Valley creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 10% (n=36)⁸ currently live in Nambucca Valley, providing insight into the area.
- ▶ Survey respondents living in Nambucca Valley partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 61% (n=22) are artists or creative practitioners
 - ▶ 25% (n=9) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 19% (n=7) are volunteering in the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from Nambucca Valley who responded to the survey are working in a community organisation, charity or service provider, working in government, as suppliers to the creative sector, or are audience or community members.

⁷ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA15700>

⁸ Note that this is a small sample size, so caution needs to be taken when interpreting results.

Overview of the creative arts sector

While locals feel that the creative sector in Nambucca Valley is vibrant and full of talent, it needs more support and exposure in order to grow and flourish

- ▶ In terms of how long they've lived in Nambucca Valley, a third (32%) of Nambucca Valley respondents have lived there for less than 10 years, and 69% have lived there for over 10 years.
- ▶ Nambucca Valley residents perceive the creative sector to be growing and strengthening in the MNC. However, a minority say it is currently 'strong' in terms of artistic vibrancy (47%), resilience (39%), and cultural practice and safety (31%).
- ▶ 83% of respondents from Nambucca Heads say the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and 72% say it brings people together. One person shared: *'I would describe it as a supportive creative environment where people are quite open-minded and passionate to share creative experiences.'*
- ▶ Many describe the creative identity of the area as *'varied, vibrant'* and diverse. One person outlined it as *'allowing the natural and human beauty of the region to break free from past practices.'*
- ▶ There's a sense amongst Nambucca Valley residents that there's a lot of strength, resilience, and talent in the region, but much of it is overlooked or patchy and disconnected. One Nambucca Valley resident described the MNC's creative identity with the words: *'talent, diversity, surprising, ambitious, overlooked, understated.'*
- ▶ Amongst Nambucca Valley residents, 39% perceive the financial sustainability as being poor, while 39% think it's average, and 22% don't know.
- ▶ With more support, the MNC creative sector could continue to flourish. One Nambucca Valley survey respondent shared: *'There's so much I don't know about the creative sector on the Mid North Coast. It seems to be growing which is nice, but I definitely don't see it as a creative hub just yet.'*

Artist profile

Over half (56%) of Nambucca Valley creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from sales or professional services

- ▶ Amongst the 22 artists and creative practitioners from Nambucca Valley, 17% say that their creative practice is their main income source, 39% say it's not their main income source but it is supplementary, and 21% say they don't earn any income from it but they'd like to grow their earnings.
- ▶ Amongst the 13 artists or creative practitioners living in Nambucca Valley who earn an income from their creative practice, most earn income via sales (85%) and

professional services like teaching, consulting, facilitating (85%). A smaller proportion earns income through government funding (40%).

- ▶ Nambucca Valley creatives are mostly selling equal amounts of their work in the MNC and outside the region (62%), or selling all/the majority of their work in the MNC (23%) – but small proportions are selling their work purely outside of the region in metropolitan areas i.e. Sydney, or online.

Creative careers in Nambucca Valley

Most Nambucca Valley creatives work locally, with some extending their practice to nearby regions, and there is strong engagement across a variety of artforms and artistic themes

- ▶ The majority of artists/creative practitioners from Nambucca Valley say their creative work has been mainly located in Nambucca Valley over the past 12 months (87%).
- ▶ Some Nambucca Valley creatives are also engaging in their practice across other areas in the region, including Coffs Harbour (39%), Mid-Coast (26%), and Bellingen (22%). A third (30%) are also travelling outside of the region for their creative work.
- ▶ 12% of all of the MNC's creative work of the past 12 months took place in Nambucca Valley. While this is the lowest proportion in the MNC (just below Kempsey at 14%), Nambucca Valley hosts only 5% of the MNC's working population, so the area has a proportionally higher rate of creative workers.
- ▶ Of the 22 creatives from Nambucca Valley who responded to the survey, 26% are emerging or early career, 17% are mid-career, and 39% are established. Nambucca Valley's proportion of established artists is higher than the MNC on average (32%).
- ▶ Nambucca Valley creatives are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, multi-arts (including video and sound art), creative industries (design, film, etc.), contemporary music, theatre or musical theatre, dance or physical theatre, festivals, Aboriginal arts and culture, literature and heritage.
- ▶ Their practice intersects with a variety of themes, including environment, health and wellbeing, communities and social services, children and young people and/or education, technology, and Indigenous cultures. Compared to the MNC as a whole, a higher proportion of Nambucca Valley creatives engaged with the environment (52%, compared to the MNC average of 44%).

Opportunities for creativity in Nambucca Valley

Nambucca Valley creatives face barriers including finding space to work, financial concerns and competing priorities, while they are seeking to build audiences, establish and reinvigorate creative spaces and venues, and create funding opportunities

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- ▶ For Nambucca Valley residents, the top 3 barriers impacting the development of practice or engagement with arts in the region are financial barriers (56%), having other priorities (56%) and a lack of physical space to work/meet with others i.e. venues, hubs (35%).
- ▶ Of current challenges, one respondent said: *'Combination of issues - 1. Financial - not making enough money from performance and music sales to be able to keep making the art full time. Venues not able to pay reasonable amounts because of their own financial pressures. 2. Venue behaviour - live venues only using booking agents, not investing in live music. 3. Lack of critical mass in our region - while [the arts] are valued in our region, the crowds are not there to have every pub and cafe offering music... or every theatre doing a play have decent ticket sales, or every artists having a show getting a lot of sales.'*
- ▶ Another said, *'Heavy administration load distracting from the development of creative practice. Limited performance opportunities to practice regularly and to make a living wage locally and in turn to resource the business growth. Limited audience exposure to contemporary practice... Competitive grants opportunities. Small funding amounts that don't enable artists to develop long term.'*
- ▶ Space is an issue across the region. In Nambucca Valley, 27% are satisfied with spaces for making work, 42% feel neutrally, and 30% are dissatisfied. Meanwhile, 32% are satisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work, 35% feel neutrally, and 29% are dissatisfied.
- ▶ Many Nambucca Valley residents also indicated dissatisfaction with funding opportunities, with 44% feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 28% feeling neutrally. Another 28% feel satisfied or very satisfied.
- ▶ Residents also commented on a lack of physical spaces to create, exhibit/perform, and sell their work in Nambucca Valley, and the lack of funding opportunities. One person shared, *'The region needs better creative infrastructure, performance venues, creatives who develop their commercial skills, including securing funding, through working with others, all of which will result in better sales.'*
- ▶ Looking ahead, the top priorities for enhancing the MNC's creative sector according to Nambucca Valley residents are: building audiences and attracting visitation (58%), establishing new creative spaces (44%), offering more funding opportunities for projects/groups (39%), and reinvigorating existing cultural spaces (39%).
- ▶ Some suggested that improving communication and collaboration across the region would strengthen the creative sector, with one respondent saying: *'I think it would be helpful for the creative sector to collaborate with other industry sectors including business, sports & tourism sectors so we can build more opportunity for jobs and branch out to new audiences.'*
- ▶ Others noted the transformative potential of big events like festivals for the area's creative sector. One respondent suggested: *'Close off the main street to cars and allow al fresco dining, dog friendly venues, and a street festival showcasing local art, music, performance or even an outside cinema once a month... there are so many beautiful areas around.. mobile vans along the water fronts, coffee, food, music.'*



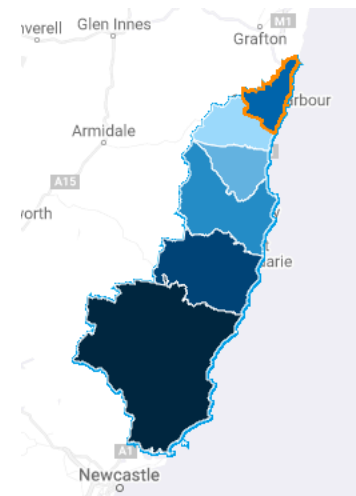
Coffs Harbour Community profile

Coffs Harbour is home to 78,759 people⁹ and is one of the fastest growing areas in regional NSW. It is known for stretches of sandy, pristine beaches, rainforests and waterfalls, and its food and culture. It is located on the lands of the Gumbaynggirr nation

In the 2021 Census, there were 855 people in Coffs Harbour employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 2.6% of the area’s labour force.

Coffs Harbour recorded a total of 345 creative businesses in 2021, with 10 turning over \$2M or more per annum.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors.



Coffs Harbour creative sector mapping results

- ▶ Of the 361 respondents to the Mid North Coast (MNC) Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 22% (n=77) currently reside in Coffs Harbour, providing insight into the area.
- ▶ Survey respondents living in Coffs Harbour partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, including:
 - ▶ 74% (n=57) are artists or creative practitioners (including makers, performers, and creatives)
 - ▶ 33% (n=25) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation)
 - ▶ 31% (n=24) are volunteering in the creative sector
 - ▶ 3% (n=2) are suppliers to the creative sector.
- ▶ Others from Coffs Harbour who responded to the survey are audiences or community members (26%), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (13%), and working in government (10%).

⁹<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA11800>

Overview of the creative arts sector

Coffs Harbour residents perceive the Mid North Coast creative sector as exciting and full of potential, but requiring increased support and connection in order to grow and flourish

- ▶ In terms of how long they've lived in Coffs Harbour, 3% of Coffs Harbour respondents have lived there for less than 2 years, 16% have lived there for 2-5 years, 21% for 6-10 years, 40% for 11-25 years, 18% for 26+ years, and 3% have lived there all their lives.
- ▶ Coffs Harbour residents perceive the creative sector to be growing and strengthening in the MNC. However, a minority say it is 'strong' in terms of artistic vibrancy (43%), cultural practice and safety (22%), resilience (20%) and environmental sustainability (20%).
- ▶ Half (52%) of Coffs Harbour respondents rate the financial sustainability of the MNC's creative sector as 'poor,' while 36% feel it's average, and 12% don't know.
- ▶ There's a perception that the creative sector in Coffs Harbour is vibrant, diverse and full of potential, if support were provided including funding, creative spaces and venues, and if there were more connection and collaboration. One respondent described the creative sector as, *'An untapped source of growth and development.'* Another said *'In terms of the Coffs Coast, there is a lot going on but it is often not visible.'*
- ▶ While locals want more support for the creative sector to ensure its growth and sustainability, Coffs Harbour respondents also shared some positive features. One said *'Coffs has a vibrant population of creative people with refreshingly different creative output.'* Another described it as a *'Vibrant arts community that flies under the radar. Could be the new regional arts hub that blitzes Byron and Hobart!!'*
- ▶ Reflecting on the MNC's creative identity, many in Coffs Harbour feel that it is exciting and full of a variety of talent, but disjointed, underdeveloped, and as one respondent noted, *'Disconnected, in need of leadership and sustainability.'* Others said *'I think its rather eclectic, there is a bit of lots of things and no real cohesive identity,'* and that there are *'lots of scattered very creative talent without a hub.'*
- ▶ Over two thirds (69%) of Coffs Harbour respondents say the MNC creative sector makes the community a better place to live, and 59% say it brings people together.

Artist profile

Around a third (36%) of Coffs Harbour creatives earn income from their creative work – mostly from sales or professional services

- ▶ Amongst the 57 artists and creative practitioners in Coffs Harbour, 18% say that their creative practice is not their main income source but it supplements their main

income, while another 47% say they don't earn an income from it – but they'd like to grow their earnings.

- ▶ A small proportion (18%, or n=10) of artists or creative practitioners living in Coffs Harbour say their creative practice is their main income source.
- ▶ Amongst the 20 artists or creative practitioners living in Coffs Harbour who earn an income from their creative practice, most earn income via sales (74%). Other income sources include professional services like teaching, consulting, facilitating (58%), government funding (5%) and funding from foundations or trusts (5%).
- ▶ A third sell all or the majority of their work within the MNC (35%), while another 25% sell all/the majority of their work in metropolitan areas outside of the MNC i.e. in Sydney. Another 20% sell equal amounts of their work in the MNC and outside the region.

Creative careers in Coffs Harbour

Most Coffs Harbour creatives work locally, with some extending their practice to nearby regions, and there is strong engagement across a variety of artforms and artistic themes

- ▶ The majority of artists or creative practitioners from Coffs Harbour say their creative work has been mainly located in Coffs Harbour over the past 12 months (90%).
- ▶ Some Coffs Harbour creatives are also engaging in their creative practice across other areas in the region, with the most common location outside of Coffs Harbour being Bellingen (11%). Others are also travelling outside the MNC region (21%) for their creative practice.
- ▶ A third (32%) of all of the creative work in the MNC occurs in Coffs Harbour – the highest proportion in the MNC - with small numbers of creatives from other townships in the region coming to Coffs Harbour to practice.
- ▶ Artists or creative practitioners living in Coffs Harbour are at a variety of career stages, including emerging or early career (39%), mid career (33%) and established (23%). Coffs Harbour's proportion of mid career artists is higher than across the MNC on average (26%).
- ▶ The 57 artists or creative practitioners living in Coffs Harbour are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts, creative industries (design, film, etc.), literature, contemporary music, classic music or opera, theatre or musical theatre, Aboriginal arts and culture, and festivals.
- ▶ Their practice intersects with a variety of themes, including the environment, children and young people and/or education, communities and social services, technology, health and wellbeing, and Indigenous culture.

Opportunities for creativity in Coffs Harbour

Coffs Harbour creatives face barriers including awareness of what's on, creative space to work and financial concerns, while they are seeking better venues and funding opportunities, and to build audiences across the region

- ▶ The top 3 barriers impacting the development of practice or engagement with arts in the region for Coffs Harbour residents are awareness or knowing what's on (49%), financial barriers (47%), and lack of physical space to work/meet with others i.e. venues, hubs (45%).
- ▶ Reflecting on the biggest challenges they are experiencing right now in terms of their creative practice and/or attendance, one Coffs Harbour resident shared: *'Cost of living, the works I create are individual pieces for people, they really are a bit of a luxury item which most people cannot afford at this time. Couple this with the need to work to survive which reduces the time I can dedicate to creative work and building a business model around it.'*
- ▶ Another said, *'Connecting with other creatives. Obstacles are the interconnectedness of disparate groups. Groups operate in separate silos.'*
- ▶ Funding for arts projects is seen to be a key issue across the region. In Coffs Harbour, only 7% are very satisfied or satisfied with funding for arts projects, while 41% feel neutrally and 53% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Art and ticket sales are also an issue, perhaps linked to building audiences and attracting visitation. 1 in 10 (11%) of Coffs Harbour residents are very satisfied or satisfied with art/ticket sales, 55% feel neutrally, and 34% are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- ▶ Space is also a challenge across the region. Some Coffs Harbour residents feel satisfied or very satisfied with spaces for making work (22%) and venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work (16%), but more pessimistic sentiments exist (43% neutral and 36% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with spaces for making work; 28% neutral and 55% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with venues for performing, exhibiting or selling work).
- ▶ Looking ahead, the top 3 priorities for enhancing the MNC's creative sector according to Coffs Harbour residents are establishing new creative spaces (58%), offering more funding opportunities for projects/groups (50%), and building audiences and attracting visitation (45%).
- ▶ Some respondents suggested that addressing the need for creative spaces will strengthen the creative sector in the region, with one saying: *'I think what would be great would be a collaborative space where there could be workshops, talks, exhibitions, a retail space even... that could also have a networking space and feel like a cafe. A space that feels safe and inclusive.'*



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