



# Arts and Cultural Plan

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## 2015 — 2025

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# Purpose

The Gympie Regional Council Arts and Cultural Plan provides an approach for Council and the community to support, celebrate and develop the creative and cultural life of the region.

This plan considers the overall directions and outcomes necessary to support Council's commitment to Arts and Culture over the next ten years.



## Gympie Regional Council's Arts and Cultural Policy

Gympie Regional Council recognises that arts and culture are major contributors to building strong and healthy communities, innovation, economic development, public relations, self-expression, cultural identity and sense of place.

Gympie Regional Council aims to provide an environment that allows people to enjoy opportunities for artistic and cultural expression and development whilst acknowledging the diversity of cultural values, lifestyle, religious, political, social, economic and ethnic differences.





# A definition of ‘Culture’

Gympie Regional Council adopts the definition of Arts and Culture as outlined in the National Cultural Accord<sup>1</sup>:

“ A broad concept of arts and culture encompasses three overlapping and interrelated sectors:

*Core arts: Music, performing arts, literature and visual arts, including established and emerging art forms, and inter-arts activities. In addition to the individual and collective activities of practitioners, for vocational or recreational purposes, the core arts include arts education, collections and performances which may be made available to the public in galleries, libraries, theatres, cultural venues and training institutions and increasingly on-line and broadcast.*

*Creative industries: A sector which harnesses a range of creative and business skills for commercial production and dissemination. Creative industries include film and television production, broadcasting, electronic games, architecture, design and fashion, publishing, media and advertising.*

*Cultural heritage: In parallel with core arts and creative industries there is a strong recognition of Australia’s diverse cultural heritage, and the work of museums, galleries and libraries and archives to preserve and provide access to the artifacts and intangible heritage of Australia’s culture. In particular, Australia’s heritage includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which are amongst some of the oldest living cultures in the world.* ”

Gympie Regional Council also recognises that sport is an important part of our culture bringing people together to engage as a community.

<sup>1</sup> National Arts and Culture Accord ‘Partnering for a Creative Australia’ (2013)



## Understanding OUR culture

There is much to love about the Gympie Region.

The Gympie Region spans almost 7000sqkm and includes urban, bush and beach areas. The natural environment is incredibly important to local people and serves as inspiration to many of our artists and for much of our cultural development.

Family friendly, relaxed outdoor lifestyle, a dynamic natural environment, rich history of determination and resilience, and a strong sense of community – it is not surprising to find Gympie is the place to call home for nearly 50,000 residents.

Cultural expression and activity has contributed to shaping the region and its appeal. The earliest recorded community gatherings were for the triennial Bunya Nut feasts held by Indigenous Kabi Kabi people. These were important events for people to come together for ceremony and cultural exchange<sup>2</sup>, the first signature festivals in the region that celebrate what is significant and distinctive to the people who live here.

Nowadays, events like Gold Rush, Goomeri Pumpkin Festival, Mary River Festival, Tin Can Bay Seafood Festival, Rainbow Beach Fishing Classic, Gympie Muster, Gympie Show, Heart of Gold Film festival and many others express the region's identity. They have become iconic, signature events that represent and celebrate the qualities, history and values of the people and places that are the Gympie Region.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson and Saunders (2007) Wild Heart Bountiful Land: an Historical Overview of the Mary River Valley, Queensland State Archives, Sunnybank Hills, Queensland



The face of the region has grown, changed, adapted and prospered. As one industry has fallen, another has taken its place allowing for considerable stability over time. Timber, mining, dairying, agriculture, rail and manufacturing have shaped the towns and spread stories across the region. History is a great source of pride to residents, heritage groups, organisations and individuals who tirelessly work to promote, educate and preserve our many culturally significant assets, artifacts and stories.

Arts and culture is supported by large numbers of cultural facilities and spaces. Local community halls, the regional gallery, libraries, museums, theatres, showgrounds, outdoor stages, parks, and open spaces are used by dance academies, amateur theatrical societies, drama schools, church choirs, community bands, families, artists groups and individuals. They provide spaces for residents and visitors to express their creativity and encourage communities to share and learn together.

The Mary River winds through the region linking a number of towns along the way. Those living alongside it are familiar with its ability to both nourish the land and bring destruction with more than 50 moderate-to-major flood events recorded since 1870<sup>3</sup>.

The Mary River has helped shaped the history of the region for many – industries and livelihoods have risen and fallen around it, locals have joined together to fight for it, festivals are held to celebrate it and our built environment has been shaped by it.

The river provides an ever-present reminder of our connection, dependence and vulnerability to the local environment.

Residents value the lifestyle and location of the Gympie Region within South East Queensland. Many essential public amenities and services are available including, schools, hospital, railways, and public transport. The region is conveniently located on the northern tip of the Sunshine Coast making it easily able to access other major shopping districts and services. Locals are proud of the region's distinct identity and enjoy being at arm's length from the more populated areas north and south.

Technology has made residents of Gympie Region more connected and engaged than ever before. Approximately 70% of private dwellings have internet connections allowing them to seek out information, ideas and content that interest them<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>3</sup> Flood warning system for the Mary River (2011) Australian Bureau of Meteorology

<sup>4</sup> Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for Gympie Regional Local Government Area (2014) Government Statistician, Queensland Treasury and Trade





This access to mainstream culture and the ability to participate in specific subcultures, groups or online communities significantly redefines the notion of ‘regional living’.

Community is incredibly important to people across the region. People feel proud, safe and believe their opinions matter. Great arts and cultural groups, schools, community groups, sporting clubs and social groups help people feel that they contribute and belong. Strong social values and a willingness to support each other are realised in the commitment to volunteering, without which, many activities in the region would not be possible. These attributes enhance the development and wellbeing of people, making them more resilient and able to recover from natural disaster and adversity<sup>5</sup>. It is this sense of community that has unified people and fostered the strong reputation of resilience that is synonymous with the region.

Gympie Regional Council is responsible for enhancing liveability within the region through the provision of essential services, infrastructure, planning and governance. It directly supports arts and culture through the management and maintenance of numerous cultural facilities across the region and delivery of many community programs and activities. Funding programs like the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) support individuals and groups to achieve their own creative pursuits whilst the Community Assistance Grants relieve some of the financial pressure felt by not-for-profit groups and allow them to continue supporting others in the community. Council is committed to ensuring the delivery of these services continues to support and celebrate the distinctiveness of the people and places in the community.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly, J-F.; Breadon, P.; Davis, C.; Hunter, A.; Mares, P.; Mullerworth, D.; Weidmann, B., (2012), Social Cities, Grattan Institute, Melbourne



# *What is the role of Council?*

To ensure artistic and cultural growth, Council will need to fill several roles:

## **Enabler**

Creating an environment where Arts and Culture can flourish through capacity building, brokering partnerships, access and opportunity, actively supporting community-led initiatives, and creating and supporting community networks and resources.

## **Leader**

Setting a positive example, proactively addressing community needs, and taking the first step to make a difference.

## **Customer**

Engaging local artists and cultural representatives on Council projects.

## **Host**

Providing community spaces to support local artists and encourage cultural activity.

## **Advocate**

Being a champion for local arts and culture, leveraging Council's position to generate new opportunities, and promoting the interests of the community to other decision makers.

## **Partner**

An active and engaged collaborator, working hand in hand with the community to support arts and cultural activity.

## **Funder**

Empowering communities to realise their own creative initiatives, encouraging diversity and vibrancy through strategic funding programs.

# What our Arts and Cultural Plan will do

In 2010, Gympie Regional Council adopted an Arts and Cultural Policy which articulates their commitment to supporting the creative and cultural life of people living in the region.

This plan supports that policy by providing a road map with which Council can grow and develop arts and culture for the next ten years.

The Gympie Region Arts and Cultural Plan provides a number of exciting opportunities, including:

- building on the Council's current cultural support and activity in a cohesive and strategic way
- supporting the creativity and expression of local residents and groups
- supporting people to come together to have shared experiences as a community
- supporting a creative economy that contributes to the overall economic development of the region through jobs, commerce and tourism
- enhancing cultural infrastructure across the region whilst encouraging accessibility and use
- increasing the capacity of the region's events, festivals and activities to attract new audiences and better engage with local communities
- promoting and preserving the region's significant cultural heritage including iconic buildings and social history collections
- encouraging links between community arts and social wellbeing practices
- promotional activities and cultural tourism initiatives that raise awareness of local artists and activities.



# Cultural vision

A vibrant, diverse, engaged and creative community rich with character, history and opportunity.

## Key objectives

Our key objectives are to:

- recognise the vital role arts and culture play in the wellbeing, prosperity and distinctiveness of the region
- provide space and opportunity for people to express themselves creatively, come together and share experiences as a community
- celebrate and protect a rich history that continues to inform and shape our futures
- support local careers and skill development in the creative industries
- harness the location, environment and cultural assets of the region to attract visitors and investment
- enhance liveability, lifestyle and well-being for residents
- effect a culture shift within Council which acknowledges and considers cultural outcomes across each business area.

## Strategic Themes

To frame Council's approach to supporting the cultural life of the region, the Arts and Cultural Plan is separated into four key themes.

- People
- Place
- Past
- Possibility

## Strategic outcomes

1. **PEOPLE** shape our local culture through their stories, values, creativity, generosity and passion.
2. A strong connection to **PLACE** is inspired by our natural environment and supported through accessible, active community spaces and facilities.
3. Our **PAST** informs the future and our cultural heritage is valued, shared and protected.
4. Creativity invites **POSSIBILITY** and offers opportunities to grow, innovate, plan and achieve.





# PEOPLE



## 1 **PEOPLE** shape our local culture through their stories, values, creativity, generosity and passion

At the centre of every community are the distinctive, unique characters that make up its fabric. The lifestyle, backgrounds, identities, values and experiences of the people within our community inform the stories we want to tell and share. We are resilient and caring, and this altruistic impulse to help our neighbours and tackle challenges together is celebrated and recognised far beyond the borders of our region.

Our signature festivals and events shine a spotlight on our diversity, and show what we are proud of. We value the importance of our local artists and community groups and seek to engage with them and celebrate their role in our community.



## What will our community see?

- Acknowledge and celebrate the rich indigenous cultures of the region's traditional owners including the Kabi Kabi, Butchulla and Wakka Wakka people.
- Stronger links between health, well-being and the arts.
- A continued commitment to community engagement.
- People of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds participating in arts and cultural activities.
- Increased intergenerational arts and cultural activities linking children and young people with community elders.
- New audiences developed for local events, festivals, programs and activities.
- Arts and culture used to express resilience and support recovery from natural disasters.
- Communities feeling safe and connected across the region.
- A sustainable culture of volunteering.



## What are the key actions?

### ***1.1. Coordinate a cohesive response to Arts and Culture for Council***

Create a Cultural Development position within Council to work across various Council departments and teams.

This position will be responsible for:

- taking the lead role in the delivery of the Arts and Cultural Plan
- Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) management
- identifying and establishing opportunities between various arts and culture work areas
- coordinating Council programs that support and develop arts and culture in the community
- liaising directly with the community to support community-led arts and cultural projects
- supporting the development of new cultural initiatives between Council and the community
- leading the consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation of major cultural projects and initiatives for Council
- advocating on behalf of the region with other levels of government and funding bodies
- communicating the value of arts and culture for individuals and communities
- promoting and raising awareness of local artists and creative projects
- supporting cultural tourism marketing and communications strategies
- contributing to strategic planning across Council so that Arts and Cultural outcomes are considered and included wherever possible.

### **1.2. Cultural Mapping Project**

Council will lead a cultural mapping project to capture the cultural diversity, activity and skills across the whole region. It will explore community demographics, professional artists, programs, facilities and events that shape local arts and culture and use this information for the following.

- Lift the profile of local creative activities and people.
- Actively promote local arts and culture through tourism and other communication strategies.
- Identify gaps within the local cultural sector that would benefit from future support and investment.

### **1.3. Children and young people**

Children and young people across the region will actively participate in arts and cultural activities. This will include:

- events and programs tailored to meet their interests
- stronger links between Council, schools and other care providers
- more support and liaison with families, parents, guardians and carers.

### **1.4. Access and inclusion**

Across all areas of this plan, Council will ensure people with different abilities are able to participate equally in the cultural life of the region. Council facilities will be updated to ensure appropriate means of access and Council programs and events will be inclusive in nature.

### **1.5. Sustainable volunteering**

The richness of arts and culture in the Gympie Region is only possible because of the strong culture of volunteering that exists. As communities change and grow, it is vital that volunteering is supported appropriately to ensure its sustainability into the future. Local volunteers require recognition, skills development and training opportunities. Local organisations need support to find more people willing to contribute their time and ensure business models protect and support volunteers.

### **1.6 Arts and Cultural Reference Group**

The local community will take an active role in supporting cultural opportunities across the region. The Arts and Cultural Reference Group will consist of community leaders and stakeholders and will meet with Council regularly to offer insight and strategies around arts and cultural development across the region. This commitment to ongoing community consultation, collaboration and engagement will assist Council to be continuously improving its services and support of local arts and culture.

## **Measures of success**

- Arts and culture is embedded across Council portfolios.
- A cohesive approach to supporting arts and culture evidenced by the number of collaborative projects within Council.
- Increased quality and capacity of community events and organisations.
- Number of people actively engaged in arts and culture across the region.
- Increased number of new volunteers involved in arts and cultural activities and organisations.
- Role of Cultural Development Officer established.
- Cultural mapping project is complete and a plan exists to address gaps and areas of need.



## PIE CREEK COMMUNITY HALL

# 2

**A strong connection to  
PLACE inspired by our natural  
environment and supported  
through accessible, active  
community spaces and facilities**

We are deeply connected to the region we live, work and play in. The dynamic landscape inspires and informs our artists whilst our gallery, libraries, museums, community halls and Civic Centre provide a platform to develop and showcase our creativity and culture.

## What will our community see?

- A whole of region approach to supporting and improving cultural infrastructure.
- Creative projects that reflect our connection to the region's natural environment.
- Libraries and community halls working as local hubs for connecting with others and presenting cultural events.
- New public spaces suitable for community events.
- Improved access to arts and cultural activities through facility upgrades, public transport improvements and affordable spaces.
- Links between significant places across the region through heritage, culture and public art trails.
- A robust and varied public art program that enhances public spaces.

## What are the key actions?

### 2.1. *Gympie Region Cultural Centre Project*

A significant upgrade of the Civic Centre and Library, two of Gympie's most significant cultural facilities, to create a multi-purpose cultural hub in the heart of Gympie. The upgrade to the cultural hub could include:

- staff dedicated to present, support and extend arts and cultural programming
- workshop and rehearsal spaces for community arts programs and theatre productions
- spaces for creative businesses to develop their practice in a safe, supported environment
- expanded library facility including more floor space, meeting rooms and computer labs
- expanded local history section to include a space for regular exhibitions involving local history and heritage groups
- exhibition spaces to connect with and promote Gympie Regional Gallery.

### 2.2. *Gympie Regional Libraries*

Develop and implement a strategic plan for Gympie Regional Libraries that continues to improve library infrastructure and programs to meet the future needs of the community.

### 2.3. *Gympie Regional Gallery*

Increase the Gallery's capacity to provide arts and cultural services and support across the region by:

- identifying additional spaces that are suitable for exhibitions, workshops and storage
- implementing marketing and communication strategies that increase visitation from local residents and visitors
- increasing staff levels to expand programs delivered throughout the region
- increasing capacity to present touring exhibitions and to tour local exhibitions to other communities within the region.



#### **2.4. Community Halls Initiative**

Community halls can make a significant impact within local communities. They are places for gathering, celebrating, learning and sharing. They encourage active participation and are highly versatile spaces that can accommodate a large variety of activities and events. They are capable of operating individually or collectively on region-wide programs. The Community Halls initiative targets Council-managed halls and will:

- review the current activity within community halls
- support the development and strategic visioning of local community hall committees through training, funding support and promotion
- develop programs that maximise the potential of small halls and increase their capacity to support connectivity and engagement across local communities.

#### **2.5. Public space activation**

Increase the use of public areas across the region through programs and activities that draw people to parks, recreational areas and shopping precincts. Initiatives may include the following.

- Promotion of busking sites.
- Active and healthy parks program promoting health and wellbeing activities.
- Free public access to the internet through Wi-Fi in popular locations.
- Proactive support for community-focused outdoor events, festivals and activities.
- Community gardens.

#### **2.6. Public Art**

Development of a Public Art Management Plan to provide a coordinated approach to Public Art across the region including:

- establishment of a public art fund to provide opportunity for commissioned work to be created
- public art trails to link various sites across the region
- promotion of public art with artist information and locations.

#### **2.7. Placemaking in our communities**

Wherever possible, Council will adopt a 'placemaking' approach in urban planning and cultural development that integrates planning, design and community products and activities. Projects such as the Mary Street Revitalisation will support and encourage the involvement of local communities in the design and delivery of planning projects as well as planning with consideration of how communities come together to share public spaces.

### **Measures of success**

- Expansion and development of cultural facilities within the region.
- Increase in use of public spaces and facilities.
- Increase in arts and cultural activities.
- Increased public art across the region.



# PAST

## 3

**Our PAST informs the future  
and our cultural heritage is  
valued, shared and protected**

Our region has a rich cultural heritage which informs the living of today and our decisions for the future. Museums, the local history library, history groups, community elders and storytellers keep us connected with a past we can celebrate and learn from.

The heritage buildings within the region tell their own tales of a past filled with determination, wealth, resilience and pride.



## What will our community see?

- A community proud and eager to share their rich past including the stories, places, people and achievements that have shaped the whole region.
- Awareness and support for the heritage of the region's Traditional Owners.
- Significant buildings and locations protected and preserved.
- New urban development that is respectful to existing built environment.
- Traditions, skills and knowledge handed on to new generations keeping important tradecraft alive.
- Support for the network of heritage organisations and groups.
- Council representation on an active heritage group.

## What are the key actions?

### 3.1. Heritage Strategy

Council will develop a Heritage Strategy to consider how it can best support local heritage initiatives and groups along with the protection of our historically significant assets. It may include:

- heritage mapping project to identify existing activities, significant locations, and individuals and organisations involved in local history
- review of Council's Heritage Advisory Committee
- consideration of heritage projects in community and project funding opportunities
- new programs to encourage community engagement and education
- increased digitisation of local history collections.

### 3.2. Local History

3.2.1. Expansion of the Gympie Library's local history collection, which includes an invaluable collection of images, records and genealogical research materials. The library will have increased capacity to exhibit these stories and artifacts within the library and other Council buildings across the region.

3.2.2. Continued development and support for local heritage organisations, including:

- Kilkivan Museum
- Gympie Gold Mining Historical Museum
- Gympie Family History Society.



### 3.3. Heritage trails

Working with local community groups, a series of heritage trails will be developed to highlight historically significant places and stories. These trails will be used to attract visitors to the region as well as help local residents learn more about their past.

A number of methods will be used to create permanent and temporary trails ranging from visual installations, storytelling, interactive digital interfaces and multimedia.

## Measures of success

- Increased awareness of Gympie's diverse cultural heritage amongst residents and visitors.
- Increased number of heritage related projects within the region.
- Development and installation of cultural heritage trails across the region.
- Development and implementation of a Heritage Strategy.





# POSSIBILITY

## 4

**Creativity invites POSSIBILITY and offers opportunities to grow, innovate, plan and achieve**

A creative region is a prosperous one. Arts and culture contribute to the economic development of the region through employment, commerce, innovation and tourism. New partnerships, collaborations and networks are possible with well-placed investment, support and leadership. Creativity in the community can be fostered beyond the creative industries. New technology and new ideas will lead to innovation and opportunity.



## What will our community see?

- More creative and knowledge based enterprises established across the region.
- New career and employment opportunities within the creative sector.
- More professional development opportunities for local artists and creative practitioners.
- Prosperous communities where locals enjoy an enviable lifestyle and culture.
- A culture of creativity driving innovative local industries.
- Improved local education and training opportunities for young people to stay in the region and pursue creative careers.
- Ongoing commitment to funding and sponsoring of local creative projects and organisations.
- Arts and culture making a significant contribution to local and regional tourism.

## What are the key actions?

### 4.1. Cultural tourism

The lifestyle and distinctiveness of the region is celebrated and promoted via cultural tourism initiatives that support the growth of key cultural assets and contribute to the economic prosperity of the broader community.

These initiatives will include:

- extensive marketing and communications strategies to support the creative industries in the region
- strategic partnerships that support local arts and culture and creative activity through investment and networking
- targeted programs which encourage productivity and innovation in specific areas of the cultural sector.

### 4.2. Festivals and events strategy

Council recognises the vital contribution festivals and events play in celebrating local distinctiveness, promoting regional tourism and boosting economic development. This strategy will consider how best to support local organisations, allocate Council's resources and liaise between various groups to achieve a coordinated and united program of events and festivals across the whole region.



#### 4.3. Digital community hub

Development of online community spaces that support, promote and connect local cultural activities. Council will host and manage the hub, which will include:

- an event calendar
- various resources and guides
- database of creative people available to work on new projects
- listings of cultural facilities and resources
- information about funding opportunities
- links to support and information services
- access to Council staff for advice and guidance.

#### 4.4. Funding and grants

Council will continue to deliver a range of grants and funding to support local artists and community groups. Ongoing reviews of this support will ensure funding programs are consistent, equitable and meet community needs. This includes the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) that has supported many significant cultural projects within the Gympie Region.

#### 4.5. Creative business development

Council will support creative enterprise to flourish with a program of training, business skills development and mentoring. Local artists and creative entrepreneurs will be actively encouraged to attend to ensure they have the tools required to successfully grow and prosper locally.

### Measures of success

- Increased capacity of creative businesses across region.
- Improved engagement with community.
- Number of people accessing digital community hub.
- Contribution of the reference group to the community.
- Level of support for RADF increased.
- Increased number and quality of RADF applications.
- Festivals and events strategy developed and implemented.



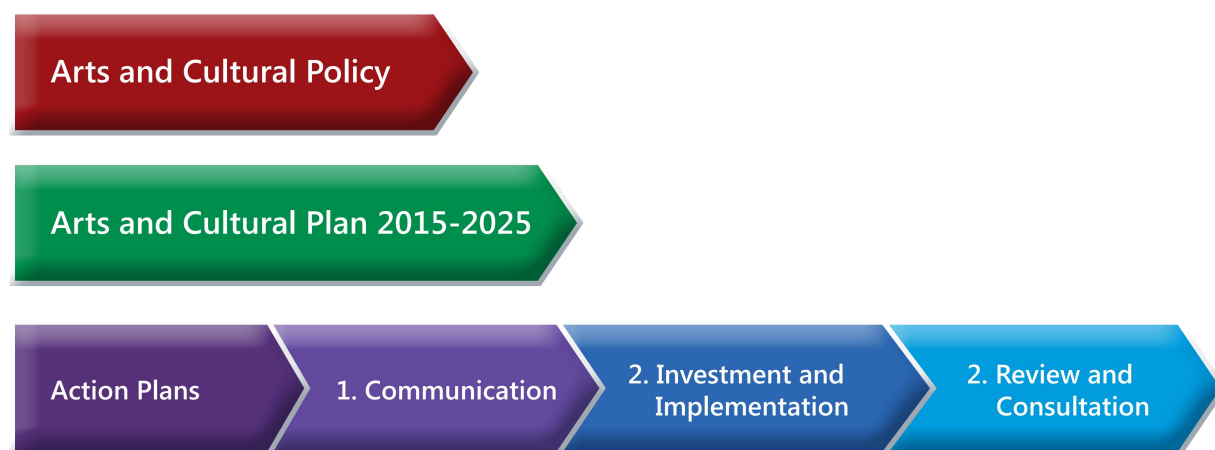


# Delivering our plan

The proposed timeframe for the arts and cultural plan is 2015-2025. This ten-year period will allow time for a well structured, carefully considered implementation and regular review of the plan.

Three action plans will address specific phases of the arts and cultural plan. They will ensure outcomes are delivered in a timely, logical and cost effective manner. Each phase compliments and builds on the one prior creating an accumulative effect.

## Arts and Cultural Policy



### Communication

- Identify the current cultural activity in the region, the mechanisms that support it and the people involved.
- Articulate our identity and consider how we want others to speak about Gympie Region.
- Celebrate the region's cultural identity by raising the profile of creativity, artists, community groups, events and spaces.

### Investment and Implementation

- Improve current services and activities that contribute towards a shared cultural vision for Gympie Region.
- Initiate new programs, services and support that strengthen our arts and creative community.
- Invest in the hard and soft cultural infrastructure of the community through funding and development.

### Review and Consultation

- Evaluate the outcomes of the arts and cultural plan to determine where improvements can be made.
- Communicate with all stakeholders about they progress made and outcomes achieved.
- Consult the community to inform the next arts and cultural plan for the region.



## Cost of implementation

The project outlined in the strategy represent an ambitious yet achievable plan for our cultural development over the next 10 years. The strategy contains a combination of:

- signature projects with medium and long term actions that will require investment from other levels of government, private entities, philanthropic organisations, business and industry
- lower cost, short term activities that sustain and grow our regions culture.

### Funding options

The Arts and Cultural Plan 2015–2025 is a vision to guide the transformation of the regions culture and creative enterprise and to prioritise investment. The strategy will be used to assess and prioritise funding needs and work collaboratively with partners.

### Stakeholders

Many stakeholders actively contribute to the success of the arts and cultural plan. Many more will benefit from a creative and engaged community.

Stakeholders include:

- Artists
- Community Organisations
- Volunteers
- Council Staff
- Local tourism and business.