

Gympie Regional Council  
Arts and Cultural Plan 2015-2025 Review  
Summary and Action Plan



**GYMPIE  
REGIONAL  
COUNCIL**





Image: Emma Beau and Andy James. Photography by Leeroy Todd

This report forms an overview of a review of Gympie Arts and Cultural Plan 2015-2025 conducted April – June 2020. It is complemented by a report on the delivery of key actions outlined in the plan and a draft of an updated and revised Gympie Arts and Cultural Plan 2015-2025.

The purpose of the Arts and Cultural Plan 2015-2025 is to inform Council's commitment to Arts and Culture over its 10-year life, outlining strategic priorities and actions to develop the region's creative sector. Halfway through the term, this review is to:

- review Council's progress in delivering the plan
- survey the current arts and cultural landscape
- consider whether in the current landscape, the remaining actions are appropriate to deliver the stated vision and objectives
- determine whether Council should consider any specific opportunities.

There has been no consideration of changing the stated vision of the Arts and Cultural Plan or its key objectives, which remain relevant and appropriate. Rather, changes to actions are an appropriate evolution to maintain the plan's currency and deliver on the plan's vision and objectives by 2025; and the introduction of specific KPIs enable tracking of the plan's delivery.

The review was predominantly conducted online via zoom meetings and by telephone due to restrictions in place to control COVID-19. A total of 43 people engaged in interviews and/or discussion forums. There were four group discussion forums focused on specific facets of the plan and one forum conducted with a small stakeholder group to provide feedback on specific findings and ideas. The Acting CEO and Acting Director, Economic and Community Development also had the opportunity to offer feedback to a draft of the review, in addition to the three Councillor representatives with responsibilities for Gympie Council's Arts and Culture portfolio.

Cover image: Minnie Marks.

# An overview of the current arts and cultural landscape

The community recognise the increased focus by Council on arts and culture and more than 80 per cent of people considered arts and culture in Gympie to be improving and growing stronger. The community consider the portfolio to be strategically led, resulting in a strengthening of the arts and cultural environment. Within the Council's administration there is cross portfolio understanding of the value of arts and culture to tourism, economic development, CBD revitalisation and community wellbeing. The current approach to arts and culture is considered a significant improvement on Council's previous approach and the community wants to see the momentum that has been established, continue.

Staff in the Gympie Venues and Events and Community Learning and Engagement business units, who are Council's primary facilitators of arts and culture, are considered professional, accessible and responsive; working to raise the bar, deliver improved outcomes and connect the Gympie region with South East Queensland and Wide Bay regions. Council's staff resources deployed to arts and culture are small in relation to the breadth of activity and work that is necessary to realise tourism and economic development opportunities for the region. The community has an appreciation of Council's limited resources and their expectations are measured. They are seeking support to make the sector stronger not necessarily bigger.

Gympie's arts and cultural community is very proud of its capability and doesn't feel the community and elected representatives sufficiently recognise the value of arts and culture and its capacity to deliver economic benefits to the region including improving its image and reputation.

Gympie's arts and cultural strength lies in its community-based arts and heritage groups who are active, contributing to a strong and healthy community, facilitating self-expression and a sense of place for local residents.

These arts and heritage groups are unfunded, with the exception of intermittent minor project funding, and solely rely on volunteers whose capacity is observed to be exhausted. The capacity of these small volunteer groups to continue the current levels of service to the community is limited. In the face of reported reduction in volunteerism, the arts and cultural sector is vulnerable.

Despite their lack of funding, these organisations are active celebrating their great love for and pride in their local area. As volunteer-based community organisations, their market is their membership and thus they are inward facing, focused on their areas of interest. This becomes an issue when you rely on these organisation to deliver tourism and economic development outcomes.

Gympie has a growing population of professional artists, expanding due to an attractive lifestyle and housing affordability. These artists are not necessarily visible, practicing locally or actively contributing locally because there is not a professional or equitable environment where they can earn an income. While central to its delivery and meeting the objectives of Council's Tourism Strategy, the Arts and Cultural Plan is not currently structured to support and grow a professional sector to complement the community-based arts and heritage groups.

Council owns and manages the key arts and cultural facilities including Gympie Civic Centre, Gympie Regional Gallery and the Gympie Library network. These facilities are all serving the community well, taking a collaborative partnership approach, investing time and expertise into community organisations within their available resources. There is positive community response to the Civic Centre being returned to Council management.

Council's funding to the Arts and Cultural sector is primarily limited to RADF funding. This fund is well managed including provision of assistance to applicants, peer assessment and acquittal reporting. Over the last 5 years there has been an increase in the number of Council-initiated projects funded through RADF to support strategic development of the local sector and leverage the Regional Arts Services Network (RASN), a state-funded initiative to deliver on-the-ground arts services in regional communities. While RADF guidelines articulate support for professional artists, funding limitations restrict capacity to support a professional sector or the development of creative industries. In practice the RADF fund primarily supports community-based initiatives. By allocating funding in small tranches of project money, the capacity to increase organisations' sustainability and connect outside the region is limited and thus a dependency on Council is maintained.

Council has a sponsorship fund which provides more substantial funding. Gympie Music Muster and Heart of Gold International Short Film Festival are arts and cultural events supported through this program. Both of these events have significant profile outside of the Gympie region and deliver tourism and economic benefits. There is greater opportunity to collaborate more closely with these organisations and leverage these partnerships for the benefit of the local sector and Council. *(NB: Goomeri Pumpkin Festival is also funded through this program however has not been considered an arts and cultural event.)*

Council's current capacity to engage with First Nations peoples is low and requires a whole of Council approach including training and facilitated grassroots engagement in order to meet the objectives of both the Arts and Cultural Plan and Tourism Strategy.

The University of Sunshine Coast (USC) is an asset to the region with a focus on expanding its services to the creative arts in the region. Unfortunately, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has put at risk the plan to deliver increase creative arts courses at Gympie campus in 2021. The university is investing in its music studies program, including performance and production, and has made strategic staff appointments to position the program and its graduates nationally and internationally.

Overwhelmingly the review highlighted the opportunity presented to the Gympie Region through music. This artform is clearly the strength of the region which has a composite of assets rarely found however there is currently insufficient community leadership and minimal capacity for the region to capitalise on this potential.

# Progress with meeting objectives of Arts and Cultural Plan

The following are the key objectives the plan sets out and a progress on meeting these objectives.

Objectives of Arts and Cultural Plan	Progress on meeting objective
Recognise the vital role arts and culture play in the wellbeing, prosperity and distinctiveness of the region	Community acknowledge that there is an increase in the value placed on arts and culture by Council and appreciate it is now a genuine and focused role within Community and Economic Development directorate with experienced leadership guiding the business unit. Some further work is needed for this value to be recognised across the whole of Council especially with respect to its potential to contribute to the region’s economy.
Provide space and opportunity for people to express themselves creatively, come together and share experiences as a community	Council infrastructure is well used and accessible to the community. Returning management of the Civic Centre to Council has enabled much-needed maintenance while also positioning this venue to be a flagship for the town while concurrently maintaining community access. Support for community-run and council-run events is balanced. Consistently the community report they don’t feel any barrier to accessing Council venues and appreciate the value delivered by inbound cultural programming.
Celebrate and protect a rich history that continues to inform and shape our futures	Community-run organisations are the major custodians of Gympie’s colonial heritage sites. While Gympie Library’s local history collection is well maintained and has a part-time dedicated officer respected for the support provided to community-run groups, the reliance on unfunded community groups and volunteers means Gympie’s heritage is at risk and its capacity to connect and inform future generations hampered. In addition, there is an absence of First Nations heritage and storytelling.
Support local careers and skill development in the creative industries	There are insufficient actions to support the development of creative industries.



Objective is being met



Partial meeting of objective



Different actions are required to meet objective

Objectives of Arts and Cultural Plan	Progress on meeting objective
<p>Harness the location, environment and cultural assets of the region to attract visitors and investment</p>	<p>The Tourism Strategy is grounded in meeting this objective. A reliance on un-funded community-run organisations to maintain assets and deliver the product and services to attract and meet expectations of visitors means the capacity of the region to harness cultural tourism potential is low. Community organisations are contributing to the growth in liveability, health and wellbeing, and civic pride but missing is the professionalisation necessary to create employment and attract people to the region to live, work and play.</p>
<p>Enhance liveability, lifestyle and well-being for residents</p>	<p>There is an overwhelming love for the Gympie region by its residence and this is fed by its arts and cultural community groups who focus on the needs of residents.</p>
<p>Effect a culture shift within Council which acknowledges and considers cultural outcomes across each business area.</p>	<p>While a comprehensive survey across all business units was not conducted, strong cross-portfolio support for arts and culture was observed.</p> <p>Specifically, there is comprehensive support offered across the Community and Economic Development directorate to deliver multi-faceted outcomes.</p>



Objective is being met



Partial meeting of objective



Different actions are required to meet objective

# Key issues

There were eight key issues identified as barriers to meeting the vision set out in the Arts and Cultural Plan: a vibrant, diverse, engaged and creative community rich with character, history and opportunity.

1

## Disproportionate reliance on unfunded, volunteer-based community organisations

Gympie's unfunded community groups are the backbone of Gympie's arts and cultural landscape. There is a strong tradition of volunteering, described as, 'much higher participation than other areas of the same size'. Harnessing the capacity for volunteering, a foundation of community-based arts and cultural activity has been founded, and significantly contributes to the region's liveability and health and wellbeing of residents, which together generate great civic pride. There is a long history of these groups delivering valuable outcomes to the region with minimal support from Council and this has wrongly created an expectation that this model is on its own a vibrant arts and cultural sector and sustainable.

Multiple organisations report that it's becoming harder to attract new volunteers and their existing base is aging. Council's reliance on these volunteer-based groups without funding or support is a risk to arts and culture in Gympie and a barrier to strengthening the sector. While this issue prevails across all parts of the sector, the greatest misalignment between Council's actions and its vision is its reliance on community-run heritage groups.

2

## Low-level participation by First Nations peoples with primarily a colonial story being told

Participation by First Nations peoples is low. Most critical is the absence of First Nations people in Gympie's heritage story which primarily has a colonial history focus. There is a lack of platforms and focus to support gathering, preserving and presenting First Nations peoples' stories.

While the Arts and Cultural Plan commits to 'Acknowledge and celebrate the rich indigenous cultures of the region's traditional owners including the Kabi Kabi, Butchulla and Wakka Wakka people' there are currently no specific actions to enable this outcome. Similarly, the Tourism Strategy has a focus on growing cultural tourism with First Nations peoples however the foundation upon which this can grow is missing and requires Council leadership.

3

### The plan doesn't address distinction in the needs of the community and professional sectors

The lack of structure to support professional practicing artists is a weakness of Gympie's Arts and Cultural Plan. Support for professional artists and organisations is key to raising the standard of the cultural output, creating employment and attracting people to the region to live, work and play. Importantly the professional sector has a market focus, operates with multiple income streams, including partnering to attract investment beyond Council, and pays employees. The professional sector complements the community-based organisations and together they create tourism and economic opportunity and reduce the sector's dependence on Council.

Currently a distinction in the needs of the community and professional parts of the sector is not being made. As a result, professional practicing artists are connecting to other communities to deliver their value or moving away. Repeatedly feedback included the need to pay artists appropriately again highlighting the lack of distinction in professional and amateur practice. Some professional artists choose not to be visible in the local area because they don't see it as benefiting them (poor association).

4

### Lack of strategic actions to grow creative industries

The community consider the creative economy an opportunity for Gympie and seek investment from Council in realising it. While development of creative industries is an objective of the plan, it lacks actions to achieve it.

5

### There is some tension in the sub-regions due to the centralisation of arts and cultural services

Gympie LGA is geographically large and structured with multiple sub-regions. Council's arts and culture services are largely operating on a centralised CBD-based model due to the location of infrastructure, staff and density of population. This operational structure contrasts the community's reluctance to travel and as a result this is creating a tension. In contrast there are strong, high-functioning sub-regionally focused community arts groups (e.g. Mary Valley Artslink) servicing their local communities. There is also numerous Community Halls, with the exception of two, managed by community hall committees on behalf of Council.

6

### Lack of community leadership

There is a lack of community leadership and dependency on Council. With limited funding options, capacity for professional growth and minimal interface outside of the local area, this dependency will continue. The newly established Creative Arts Gympie Region (CAGR) is a positive step in addressing this issue.



## Need for increased communication between Council and community

There is general agreement that the disbanded Arts and Cultural Reference Group was not meeting the expectations of community. The replacement forum model is offering increased discussion around industry development but there is a general frustration with the lack of reporting by Council back to the community with regards to outcomes and/or progression of ideas raised at the forums. There is an expectation by the community for feedback on the progress of discussions within Council. Concurrently, there is low-level understanding by the community of Council processes and how proposed ideas/decisions translate into recommendations to Council and the relationship to the Arts and Cultural Plan.

This issue is compounded by the high level of consultation that has occurred over the last three years to underpin changes and growth in support for arts and culture. The connections and distinctions in consultations and plans is not well understood.

In addition, Council is in need of a functional database to enable and underpin effective community communication. The current database has grown out of the Art Gallery's promotional list and is out of date and has restricted functionality.

## Arts and Culture is a pillar of the Tourism Strategy however there isn't the alignment with the actions of the Arts and Cultural Plan

Beyond the Arts and Cultural Plan, the Gympie Region Tourism Strategy 2019-2024, identifies heritage and culture and events and festivals as two of Gympie's five key tourism assets. The proportion of un-funded community-based arts and cultural organisations, who are not market-driven and don't seek to operate in a context broader than the local region, is a risk to the achievement of this strategy. The Arts and Cultural Plan requires additional actions in order to align with the Tourism Strategy.

# Priority areas

In reviewing the plan and considering feedback from the community the following areas are identified as priorities in order to realise the vision of the Arts and Cultural Plan and address weaknesses in Gympie's arts and cultural landscape.

1

Increase capacity to engage with First Nations peoples through a whole of Council approach including training and facilitated grassroots engagement to complement formal communications and build a foundation for collaboration.

2

Increase communication with the sector and make transparent Council's actions while educating community about Council processes. Create a database that enables targeted on-going communications including ongoing updates on strategies and actions, registration and pre-qualification for opportunities such as public art, volunteer management and promotion of events.

3

Increase support of community-based volunteer heritage groups to complement their focus on collecting and restoring to deliver high quality public experiences that engage the general public and unlock education tourism opportunities and thus position Gympie to capitalise on cultural tourism.

4

Establish an arts incubator to support development of professional arts and cultural practice and business and strengthen collaborations and networks to enable creative enterprise.

5

Explore a decentralised service delivery structure that leverages the community arts groups (e.g. Mary Valley Artslink) who may be best placed to co-ordinate programs for their local areas in a hub and spoke model. This model could connect into community halls committees and expand usage of this infrastructure.

6

Research Gympie's potential as a music capital leveraging the region's strengths.

# Opportunities for the Gympie Region

1

## Confirming the value of Gympie Music Muster

Gympie Music Muster is a significant event with a brand known nationally however there is an ongoing tension within the community with respect to the value it contributes to the region due to the location of the event. Some of the community question Council's support, or the level of Council's support, in the context of its perceived value. In order to resolve this tension and importantly grow and further leverage the event, this question of the festival's value needs to be resolved. The muster receives data from Tourism and Events Queensland however independent, tailored analysis is required. It is recommended that at the 2021 festival, in partnership with Gympie Music Muster, an analysis that qualifies the festival's economic and cultural impact on the region be undertaken. This information can form the basis for an evolution of the partnership and inform future opportunities.

2

## Growing community leadership and reduce dependence on Council

Gympie's art sector is in need of an independent artists' space – a collaborative space for independent presentation of work, artistic experimentation and development. A space of this form, supported by Council however operating independently, will stimulate community leadership and enable independence. Creative Arts Gympie Region (CAGR) is evolving and growing as an independent organisation supporting creative practice and in keeping with their vision is looking to take over the lease of Quartz Hub and expand the space in line with needs for an independent artist's space. Successfully achieving this goal would complement the services of Gympie Regional Gallery and reduce the pressure on this institution to service all facets of the visual arts and enable it to focus on the achievements that position it as a leading regional gallery serving local and inbound audiences.

3

## Position Gympie as a music capital

Council is limited in its capacity to support the development of all facets of the arts and cultural sector however the current arts and cultural plan positions it to do so. The result is that Gympie risks missing an opportunity to position itself as an artform leader and leverage this position to grow arts and culture more broadly.

Gympie is uniquely positioned to participate in the music industry (across genres) nationally across the value chain (education, production and presentation). With leadership, partnership and strategic investment, there is potential to deliver economic and cultural tourism outcomes for the region.

In reviewing arts and cultural activity, music is the one artform where there is evidence of:

- youth engagement
- First Nations participation
- reputation and brand outside of the region
- a base of professional practicing artists (multiple genres) living locally and practicing nationally
- a long history of continuous seeding of practitioners who've gone on to have national careers.

The Gympie region is served with:

- quality music education in high schools
- a growing University of Sunshine Coast (USC) music program with potential for partnership
- a base of festivals
- AICM infrastructure
- Creative Alliance investment in music development in the wider SEQN region of which Gympie is a partner
- production capacity
- attractive environment for production development and inbound residencies.

Developing the industry is not the responsibility of Council, however Council has an opportunity to provide the necessary leadership to capitalise on the opportunity. Recommend developing a partnership with USC to undertake a thorough exploration of the opportunity and development of a strategic plan. *Note: the evaluation of Gympie Music Muster could form part of this work.*

# Report on the delivery of Key Actions outlined in Gympie Regional Council Arts & Cultural Plan 2015-2025

## 1. People

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>1.1 Coordinate a cohesive response to Arts and Culture for Council</b></p> <p>Create a Cultural Development position within Council to work across various Council departments and teams. This position will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ taking the lead role in the delivery of the Arts and Cultural Plan</li> <li>■ Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) management</li> <li>■ identifying and establishing opportunities between various arts and culture work areas</li> <li>■ coordinating Council programs that support and develop arts and culture in the community</li> <li>■ liaising directly with the community to support community-led arts and cultural projects</li> <li>■ supporting the development of new cultural initiatives between Council and the community</li> <li>■ leading the consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation of major cultural projects and initiatives for Council</li> <li>■ advocating on behalf of the region with other levels of government and funding bodies</li> <li>■ communicating the value of arts and culture for individuals and communities</li> <li>■ promoting and raising awareness of local artists and creative projects</li> <li>■ supporting cultural tourism marketing and communications strategies</li> <li>■ contributing to strategic planning across Council so that Arts and Cultural outcomes are considered and included wherever possible.</li> </ul>	<p>A full-time officer level position has been created with the position title: Officer – Arts and Cultural Development/RADF Liaison. Reporting to the Manager, Gympie Venues and Events, this role is providing the on-the-ground resource necessary to successfully lead arts and cultural development in Gympie and freeing the time needed for the Business Unit Manager to provide visioning and leadership, as well as advocate on behalf of the region with other levels of government and funding bodies.</p> <p>Externally the position is acknowledged as contributing to the accessibility, and responsiveness of Council and is facilitating opportunities between various arts and culture work areas however there remains a call for greater transparency of Council's actions and processes.</p> <p>The Officer position is effectively managing and coordinating RADF and as a result money is being expended and reporting obligations met.</p> <p>The addition of the position is enabling Increased opportunities through Council initiated events which are well recognised and valued – Live and Local, City Centre community events, professional development forums. There is cross- business unit participation evidenced in realisation of events as well as strategic initiatives such as Tourism Strategy and Public Art Advisory Group.</p> <p>There is some feedback on the level of centralisation of services and events in a large geographic region with local town centres that have strong and contrasting identities, where there is a resistance to travel.</p>	<p>The responsibilities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ leading the consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation of major cultural projects and initiatives for Council</li> <li>■ advocating on behalf of the region with other levels of government and funding bodies</li> <li>■ communicating the value of arts and culture for individuals and communities</li> <li>■ contributing to strategic planning across Council so that Arts and Cultural outcomes are considered and included wherever possible</li> <li>■ currently sit with the Business Unit Manager and this is appropriate due to the level of experience, authority and networks to deliver results.</li> </ul> <p>This position is not formally supporting cultural tourism marketing and communications strategies. The skills and experience required to effectively perform this role is not necessarily synonymous with those of the Officer role.</p> <p>Consider a decentralised structure that acknowledges the community arts groups (e.g. Mary Valley Artslink) are best placed to co- ordinate programs and services for their sub-regions– i.e. spoke and hub model. This model could input into infrastructure access (community halls) and funding could also benefit communications and desire for more inclusion.</p> <p>Council's current capacity to engage with First Nations peoples is low and requires a whole of Council approach including training and facilitated grassroots engagement.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>1.2 Cultural Mapping Project</b></p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lift the profile of local creative activities and people.</li> <li>■ Actively promote local arts and culture through tourism and other communication strategies.</li> <li>■ Identify gaps within the local cultural sector that would benefit from future support and investment.</li> </ul>	<p>A cultural Mapping Project has not been completed.</p>	<p>The need for a Cultural Mapping Project is questioned. The local arts and cultural organisations are well identified by Council and their roles understood. This review, together with the thorough knowledge of Council's Gympie Venues and Events staff, provide a clear understanding of the gaps in the local sector.</p> <p>Of greater value to both Council and the community is a database of professionals and organisations that sits independent of any one section of Council and rather services Arts and Culture, Events, Tourism and Industry Development. The current database is out of date and has low functionality. Recommend using a registration model where the onus is on practitioners/ community to sign up and maintain their own information. Whether data held in existing databases is utilised/ported, should be determined as part of the project planning phase.</p> <p>Council to consider providing access to the data as a service, based on authorities provided by the registering party.</p> <p>This database can be used to ensure information dissemination is appropriately targeted and can also serve to pre-qualify people for opportunities including volunteering.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>1.3 Children and young people</b></p> <p>Children and young people across the region will actively participate in arts and cultural activities. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ events and programs tailored to meet their interests</li> <li>■ stronger links between Council, schools and other care providers</li> <li>■ more support and liaison with families, parents, guardians and carers.</li> </ul>	<p>Council is responding to the need for children and young people to participate in arts and cultural activities. The Libraries are the backbone of this provision with continuous services throughout the year, including responsive outreach programming. The maker space is relevant to young people with capabilities such as 3D printing, robotics and VR work to position the library service in a contemporary landscape. The Art Gallery also provides programs targeted to children (Arts Stars/ Art Play), tailored tours for schools and along with the Libraries, present events targeting the school holiday market. There was suggestion that the community would like to see joint promotion of these activities across venues to have a comprehensive view of what's available at any time.</p> <p>Response to the increase in quality children's theatre programming presented at the Civic Centre is positive and the accessible pricing model valued.</p> <p>Gympie's arts education in high schools is well positioned, particularly with respect to music where there is a program of excellence offered at Gympie State High School.</p> <p>Little Kids Day Out is a key event in Gympie supporting early learning through a one-day free arts education event, a strategy to support school readiness which is below state average in Gympie.</p> <p>The Australian Institute of Country Music continue to provide accessible music education to complement school programs.</p>	<p>Feedback suggests local heritage organisations lack engagement with young people and the experience is not being relevantly packaged for this demographic. It is expected that this is due to lack of resources and specialist expertise.</p> <p>Cooloola Coastcare is noted as setting a benchmark for youth engagement.</p>
<p><b>1.4 Access and inclusion</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>There is awareness and commitment by Council staff to be accessible and inclusive and are working within their resource levels to achieve equal participation. The area of greatest investment is children and young people – see 1.3.</p>	<p>NDIS has been established since the commencement of the plan and offers opportunity to increase all abilities engagement.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>1.5 Sustainable volunteering</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>There is no formal data to accurately assess volunteer activity and demand. While some organisations report they have a strong base, the majority of community groups are struggling to access the volunteers they need. There is reoccurring comments that organisations are drawing on the same pool of people and thus competing for resources. There is a consistent concern that the volunteer base is aging and not replenishing.</p> <p>There is a high number of volunteer-based community organisations and the capacity of these groups to continue the current levels of service to the community is limited. In the face of reported reduction in volunteerism, the arts and cultural sector is vulnerable.</p> <p>Some organisations commented on the burden of managing and maintaining compliance of volunteers which is increasing.</p> <p>Local organisations need support to find more people willing to contribute in order to maintain the level of community-based volunteer organisations.</p>	<p>There is a need for increased valuing and recognition of volunteers and greater support in their management. The effectiveness of Gympie Volunteer Centre in supporting arts and cultural organisations, identify skills gaps, needs to be evaluated and whether further collaboration is needed with Council to optimise their services for this sector.</p> <p>Investigate including a category within RADF funding for small grants to support community organisations provide volunteer training and development.</p>
<p><b>1.6 Arts and Cultural Reference Group</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>At its General Meeting on 26 September 2018 Council resolved to replace the Arts and Cultural Reference Group established in 2016 with two facilitated Arts &amp; Culture forums per year and to recruit a team of RADF volunteer grants assessors. Feedback from the community suggests there is majority support for this approach.</p> <p>However, there is an ongoing need for Council to report back to the community on how information and proposals made by the community at public forums are reported to Council and actioned.</p>	<p>There has been a high-level of community consultation to a point where there is a risk of over-evaluation and consultation. The community is not necessarily seeing the connection between consultations.</p> <p>Recommend more transparency of Council's process through increased communications to not only meet community's expectation but also educate community on process. Suggest a regular information bulletin that could include what's on.</p>



## 2. Place

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>2.1 Gympie Region Cultural Centre Project</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ staff dedicated to present, support and extend arts and cultural programming</li> <li>■ workshop and rehearsal spaces for community arts programs and theatre productions</li> <li>■ spaces for creative businesses to develop their practice in a safe, supported environment</li> <li>■ expanded library facility including more floor space, meeting rooms and computer labs</li> <li>■ expanded local history section to include a space for regular exhibitions involving local history and heritage groups</li> <li>■ exhibition spaces to connect with and promote Gympie Regional Gallery.</li> </ul>	<p>Council received State funding for an upgrade of the Civic Centre which is currently being undertaken. Funding is insufficient to address all of the maintenance upgrades required for the theatre however it is providing a baseline including a thorough report on what the building requires to inform the forward plan necessary to secure further funding. The team has been refreshed and structured to increase customer service and take a strategic approach to cultural programming.</p> <p>A master plan for a library expansion has been completed and endorsed by Council. Funding is required to progress to the next stage of detailed design.</p> <p>A master plan for the Civic and Cultural precinct that complements the master plan for an expansion of Gympie Regional Library would benefit the long-term strategic development of Council's venues.</p>	
<p><b>2.2 Gympie Regional Libraries</b> 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.</p>	<p>A Strategic Plan for Gympie Regional Libraries has not been completed.</p>	<p>As well as being important for the continued improvement and visioning of the library service, a Strategic Plan is necessary to secure funding for an expansion and should be prioritised.</p>
<p><b>2.3 Gympie Regional Gallery</b> Increase the Gallery's capacity to provide arts and cultural services and support across the region by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ identifying additional spaces that are suitable for exhibitions, workshops and storage</li> <li>■ implementing marketing and communication strategies that increase visitation from local residents and visitors</li> <li>■ increasing staff levels to expand programs delivered throughout the region</li> <li>■ increasing capacity to present touring exhibitions and to tour local exhibitions to other communities with the region.</li> </ul>	<p>The Gallery's multiple exhibition spaces and workshop space makes it well place to serve the community. It is receiving touring exhibitions as well as curating exhibitions. Overall it is showcasing a breadth of exhibitions and supporting the local visual arts scene including the education market. Some commented on the lack of evolution of the operational model and it not necessarily being inclusive. The gallery opens its workspace to community groups (there is questions around which groups get this opportunity) and there is excess capacity.</p> <p>State funding was secured to upgrade Gallery shop.</p>	<p>As Gympie's only Gallery, the community is looking to it to be all things to all people which undermines the institution. In order to strengthen the visual arts there is a need to increase support of artist development and emerging artforms and suggest this is better served by the community in an artist space/artist-run model with support from Council. The plan described by Creative Arts Gympie Region (CAGR) at the Quartz Hub which includes both exhibition and studio space as well as networking, embraces experimentation and artist development. This model will grow audiences overall and complement Gympie Regional Gallery thus reducing the burden on it to service this market directly.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>2.4 Community Halls Initiative</b></p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ review the current activity within community halls</li> <li>■ support the development and strategic visioning of local community hall</li> <li>■ committees through training, funding support and promotion</li> <li>■ develop programs that maximise the potential of small halls and increase their capacity to support connectivity and engagement across local communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Community Halls are seen as an under-utilised asset and some report that they are difficult to access. The community see them as an opportunity to service sub-regions as well as offer unique experiences that draw a broader audience. The Wolvi Hall has successfully hosted arts and cultural events and demonstrated the potential. The special RADF initiative for Small Halls Revitalisation in F19/20 is a way to underpin this opportunity.</p> <p>With the exception of two halls, all are managed by Community Hall Committees and Council's Property and Facilities team has a review meeting with these committees on a 6-monthly basis. Council relies on the committees to raise funds to maintain halls.</p>	<p>There is opportunity to increase the capacity of the halls to deliver increased community value for arts and cultural events and expand infrastructure across the region through minor upgrades such as 3-phase power.</p> <p>Feedback from the community suggests that there is lack of awareness of the availability of the halls or how to access them. Suggest the review of hall's activity be built into the 6 monthly meeting process and require committees to be transparent on the number of enquiries as well as bookings, if this is not happening. Also suggest a promotional campaign communicating what's available, showcasing how the halls can be used and how to access them utilising the venue prospectus and website.</p>
<p><b>2.5 Public space activation</b></p> <p>Increase the use of public areas across the region through programs and activities that draw people to parks, recreational areas and shopping precincts.</p> <p>Initiatives may include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Promotion of busking sites.</li> <li>■ Active and healthy parks program promoting health and wellbeing activities.</li> <li>■ Free public access to the internet through Wi-Fi in popular locations.</li> <li>■ Proactive support for community-focused outdoor events, festivals and activities.</li> <li>■ Community gardens.</li> </ul>	<p>Council shows understanding of the value of activating public space and is actively working to increase activation within existing resources and of spaces it owns/ controls. The community see opportunity for artists to creatively activate empty retail space on Mary Street which would benefit the town and would like to see Council facilitate opportunities.</p> <p>Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund is supporting Town Centre Revitalisation including the Mary Street Precinct.</p> <p>In addition to Gympie's Gold Rush Festival including the Gold Rush Parade, Gold Rush Carnival, and community picnic day, Council is supporting outdoor community-run events and small music events on Mary Street to access new audiences.</p> <p>Council's key venues have Wi-Fi access but at this stage there is no free outdoor public Wi-Fi and no plans to invest in smart City technology.</p>	<p>There is value in considering new initiatives for professional artists and producers to creatively respond and contribute to town centre revitalisation and public space activation. Projects may include public art, laneway events, temporary creative businesses etc.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>2.6 Public Art</b></p> <p>Development of a Public Art Management Plan to provide a coordinated approach to Public Art across the region including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ establishment of a public art fund to provide opportunity for commissioned work to be created</li> <li>■ public art trails to link various sites across the region</li> <li>■ promotion of public art with artist information and locations.</li> </ul>	<p>Council adopted a Public Arts Policy in February 2020 and is now well placed to develop a program of public art. The Events team together with Tourism and Planning, Strategy and Major Projects, are all focused on the value public art can bring to the town including the development of public art trails.</p> <p>Gympie Youth Precinct and Skate Park Mural project was completed, funded as a RADF Council-initiated project.</p> <p>To date no work has been completed on the establishment of a public art fund and it doesn't appear the Council has an appropriate entity with DGR status, such as the Art Gallery, under which it could operate this fund. Focus is currently on accessing government funding. Proposals have been submitted for artworks as part of Bruce Highway Upgrade and Melawondi Tunnel in Imbil, as part of the Mary Valley Rail Trail.</p>	<p>A well-planned database (ref 1.2) can include pre-qualification by artists for public art opportunities. This makes the public art development process more time and resource efficient.</p>
<p><b>2.7 Placemaking in our communities</b></p> <p>Wherever possible, Council will adopt a 'placemaking' approach in urban planning and cultural development that integrates planning, design and community products and activities.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>All indications are that place making is embedded in Council's approach to urban planning.</p>	

### 3. Past

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>3.1 Heritage Strategy</b></p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ heritage mapping project to identify existing activities, significant locations, and individuals and organisations involved in local history</li> <li>■ review of Council’s Heritage Advisory Committee</li> <li>■ consideration of heritage projects in community and project funding opportunities</li> <li>■ new programs to encourage community engagement and education</li> <li>■ increased digitisation of local history collections.</li> </ul>	<p>While Gympie Gold Mining Precinct Strategic Plan was endorsed by Council October 2019, no progress has been made on a Heritage Strategy and it remains needed to strategically guide its support of the heritage sector and assets across the region. The Local heritage planning scheme is at the end of its life and needs to be updated to progress the heritage strategy.</p> <p>An updated local heritage register is in draft, and this activity is the current focus of Council’s Heritage committee. This document forms part of the mapping action.</p> <p>Reporting indicates Council’s Heritage Advisory Committee is operating well, meeting monthly, however has a restricted focus on site and building protection at the exclusion of engagement.</p> <p>The addition of the informal group convened by the Director of Gympie Regional Gallery, <i>Museums and Keeping Places Group</i>, is working to increase connectivity between heritage organisations.</p> <p>The focus of community organisations, who are the major custodians of Gympie’s Colonial heritage sites, is collecting, preserving and restoring. Their strengths don’t lie in community engagement and education and have little capacity to deliver education tourism.</p> <p>COVID-19 restrictions that have resulted in the libraries being closed to the public have provided opportunity for an increase in the digitisation of the Library’s local history collection. This is a resource intensive activity and dependent on available staff resources.</p>	

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>3.2 Local History</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>3.2.2 Continued development and support for local heritage organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kilkivan Museum</li> <li>■ Gympie Gold Mining Historical Museum</li> <li>■ Gympie Family History Society.</li> </ul>	<p>While the Library continues to actively collect local history, expansion of the collection, its access and display, is in part constrained by building capacity and staff resources. Local History Library staff are highly commended for the level and quality of support they provide the community and repeatedly the community commented on their under-resourcing. The Library actively collaborates with community heritage organisations and leverages Council's other sites to create display opportunities.</p> <p>Council's support of community heritage organisations is limited to in-kind with the exception of some project funding through RADF.</p> <p>There is no operational funding support of community-based heritage groups who rely solely on volunteers and this severely limits the capacity of these organisations and potential for these sites to offer signature experiences and deliver tourism benefits.</p>	<p>Council needs to consider how it can support heritage groups with a level of operational funding in order to deliver Tourism Strategy and include the story of First Nations peoples and engage new audiences including youth.</p> <p>In addition, where Council owns public heritage sites that are under management of heritage groups, Council assist with grounds maintenance and site beautification through in-kind resources.</p>
<p><b>3.3 Heritage trails</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>A number of methods will be used to create permanent and temporary trails ranging from visual installations, storytelling, interactive digital interfaces and multimedia.</p>	<p>There are two stages of Heritage trails in development with stage 1 (Gympie CBD) complete and available on Council's website.</p> <p>Call from community to include public art in trails – could be temporary or ephemeral. Cooloola Coastcare an exemplar project and deserved of support for continuation/expansion. A Mary River project that tells the story of the native habitat and its saving, is a promoted project.</p> <p>Some visual artists not participating in the annual studio trail as it's not at a professional level and attracting sufficient audiences – 'better to invest time in exhibiting in other regions which deliver sales and reputation benefits.'</p>	<p>Note there is cultural value in trails beyond heritage trails including studio trails, public art trails, rail trails.</p>

## 4. Possibility

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>4.1 Cultural tourism</b></p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ extensive marketing and communications strategies to support the creative industries in the region</li> <li>■ strategic partnerships that support local arts and culture and creative activity through investment and networking</li> <li>■ targeted programs which encourage productivity and innovation in specific areas of the cultural sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Community desires investment in the local creative economy and there is confidence in building a viable creative industries sector and cultural tourism market delivering economic outcomes for the region.</p> <p>There is consistent feedback from community on the poor marketing and promotional capacity by Council. Need for a platform for promotion – social media, general communications and public space. Need for promotion to be greater than the LGA and broader than events presented by Council.</p>	<p>Council support is not currently structured to deliver economic growth from creative industries.</p> <p>It is also similarly limited in its capacity to achieve cultural tourism outcomes. Additional resources and focused support are needed to stimulate and facilitate economic development. There are major gaps such as participation by First Nations peoples, capacity of heritage sector, targeted support for professional artists, and market focus, all key to harnessing cultural tourism opportunities.</p>
<p><b>4.2 Festivals and events strategy</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Council has recognised the value of events and directed resources appropriately to presenting key community events such as Gold Rush, as well as new capacity building events such as Live &amp; Local, and sponsoring local organisations to deliver Gympie Music Muster and Heart of Gold International Short Film Festival, both profile events for the region. In addition, smaller community-driven festivals are supported through RADF.</p>	<p>Achieving an economic return from festivals and events needs to include proactively positioning national promoters and production companies to consider Gympie Region as a presentation destination. Success requires investment in both attracting and securing the events. This can be through in-kind resources such as venue, logistics resources. A Festivals and Events strategy is needed and its development include a review of Gympie’s festivals considering Council’s role and investment in regionally significant events to achieve economic and social returns.</p>
<p><b>4.3 Digital community hub</b></p> <p>Development of online community spaces that support, promote and connect local cultural activities. Council will host and manage the hub, which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ an event calendar</li> <li>■ various resources and guides</li> <li>■ database of creatives available to work on new projects</li> <li>■ listings of cultural facilities and resources</li> <li>■ information about funding opportunities</li> <li>■ links to support and information services</li> <li>■ access to Council staff for advice and guidance.</li> </ul>	<p>While a digital community hub has not been established, Council is currently updating its website and it is expected that some of this functionality will be incorporated into the new website and information access will be improved. This resource is also complemented by the current and future activities of Creative Arts Gympie Region (CAGR).</p>	<p>The establishment of a database (ref 1.2) would provide the mechanism to efficiently underpin communications with the sector. Suggest review of the form of a community hub to deliver objectives from this action.</p>

ACTION	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
<p><b>4.4 Funding and grants</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Council's grant funding is highly limited however well-managed as evidenced by a small increase in the RADF funding pool from state government.</p> <p>Council's RADF funding supports community- based projects through community organisations in addition to strategic Council-led initiatives. This small pool of funds is spread thin.</p> <p>The only funding of any scale is through sponsorship which is also a small fund and only two cultural events are supported. As on-going signature events for the region there is little capacity for funding new entrants without increasing the funding pool.</p> <p>There is no operational funding for community organisations to build their sustainability and enable future planning; project funding of a scale to support professional practice; or investment in creative industries. All three of these are essential to building and strengthening arts and culture in the region and reducing the dependence of organisations on Council.</p>	
<p><b>4.5 Creative business development</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Funding through RADF has been channelled to Creative Arts Gympie Region (CAGR) to deliver a workshop program to develop artists' business skills such as grant writing and promotion.</p>	<p>While valuable, the outcome of one-off workshops is limited and a more holistic and thorough approach with ongoing support, is needed to deliver objectives. The establishment of an artist and creative entrepreneur incubator would increase artists capacity and deliver the foundation for creative economy. An investigation of The Generator on Mary Street will determine whether this program is aligned with creative industries development or whether a bespoke program is needed.</p>

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