

Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022



Unleash the opportunities

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Acknowledgments

Armidale Regional Council acknowledges the contribution of Positive Solutions, consultants specialising in the cultural and non profit sectors, in the development of the Arts & Cultural Discussion Paper.

Council also acknowledges the work of the Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee, made up of volunteers with expertise in a variety of creative sectors.

Council would also like to thank the community for their input into the development of the Draft Arts & Cultural Discussion Paper.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders past and present.

The Armidale Regional community pays tribute to their love of land, love of people, and love of culture.

We all share the beauty of this land, the richness of its soil and the uniqueness of its wildlife.

Let us walk together in the footsteps of love and understanding.

While valuing diversity, let us share the same hope for a better future.

Executive Summary

Armidale Regional Council is pleased to introduce the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan.

This Strategy is a statement of Armidale Regional Council's values and outlines our priorities for the next five years. The document has been developed through extensive community consultation and reflects the aspirations of the community and recognition that arts and culture is part of who we are as a regional community.

The new Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan celebrates the artistic vitality of the region and offers innovative strategies to encourage and support the community's involvement with creativity and culture.

Council recognises that arts and cultural activities are valuable to our community and to those who live, work in, and visit our region. It is part of our identity and is fundamental to a cohesive, livable and attractive region that celebrates diversity.

The Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan highlights initiatives aligned with Council Goals across five themes that:

- > Deepen community engagement with arts and culture
- > Build on current infrastructure
- > Celebrate people and diversity
- > Strengthen connections and collaborations
- > Grow our creative industries.

This plan outlines the opportunities and aspirations of our region and sets out the actions Council will take to ensure arts and culture is embedded in all areas of Council work to enhance accessibility for all the community.

CEO Peter Dennis
Armidale Regional Council

Arts & Culture in the Armidale Region

Armidale Regional Council is home to a vibrant, diverse and thriving creative community.

Our Place

The newly formed Armidale Regional Council (ARC) was created in May 2016 following the amalgamation of Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council.

Armidale Regional Council is located in the New England region of New South Wales, half way between Sydney and Brisbane, and is a major tourism destination due to its beautiful gorges, national parks, spectacular water falls, its history and heritage.

Armidale is the largest urban centre of New England and is known for its four seasons, heritage buildings, cool climate gardens and strong agricultural community.

It is also widely known as a centre of educational excellence and is home to the University of New England, TAFE, three private schools, six state primary schools, two state high schools, a Catholic school and two independent schools.

There are a number of significant arts and cultural facilities in the Armidale region including the New England Regional Art Museum (housing two of the most important and extensive collections of Australian art in regional Australia), the New England Conservatorium of Music, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place, Saumarez Homestead, and several museums located within the towns and the university.

Armidale is also well placed to take advantage of the opportunities NBN technology provides in finding new and innovative ways to communicate with and grow audiences as well as to support creative businesses which are digitally focused.

Our People

The Armidale Region has a vibrant cultural identity that is fostered by a population of highly engaged arts practitioners and consumers of arts and culture. The creative industries across the region span the entire spectrum with a particularly vibrant visual arts network, active performing arts groups, a strong music industry and a dynamic writing sector. Many of Armidale's high quality arts and cultural events are delivered by a range of volunteer run organisations.

Armidale is home to a number of nationally credible institutions including the New England Conservatorium of Music and the New England Regional Art Museum and has earned an enviable national reputation for arts and culture beyond the capacity of similarly sized rural regions across Australia.

The area was also a major meeting place for many Aboriginal groups and still supports a strong Aboriginal community with deep connections to heritage and identity. The area is proud of its multicultural diverse community, enriched by the university's engagement with international students and staff, and is a refugee welcome zone.

Community Profile

The LGA has a well educated community with a higher proportion of people with formal qualifications. There are also a high percentage of residents who volunteer their time to local groups and organisations.

A community survey about arts and culture conducted by Council in March 2017 found 97% of respondents rated arts, culture and heritage as very important and 73% actively participated in the creative industries. The results indicate a community that aspires to be a culturally diverse and connected region that actively participates in a rich and complex arts and cultural life.

There are concerns that the Armidale region loses its younger demographic to larger cities with greater opportunities. However, many return as they start their own families.

The area has seen a decline in recent years in its retail sector with many small business struggling and a number of empty shops evident in the towns' centres. The Arts and Cultural Strategic Plan is one of the strategies that aims to build local cultural capacity by linking ideas, individuals and organisations, as well as providing leadership and resources. This will generate a positive impact on the region's livability that will attract new residents and increase tourism and economic development.



1000 Origami Butterflies Installation: Artist Genevieve Tavener

The Context



How do we live?

In **2016** the Armidale Regional Council LGA had a population of **30,045**, with a median age of **36** and **6%** of the population coming from a non-English speaking background. **25%** of households are made up of couples with children, **25%** are made up of couples without children and **27%** are made up of lone personal households. **60%** own or are in the process of purchasing their own homes and **26%** renting with the median weekly rent at **\$204** compared with the NSW median of **\$307**. **82.5%** of dwellings are standalone houses.

What do we do?

The LGA has an employment rate of **92.8%** with most residents working in Education and Training than any other area (**18.6%**).



Health Care and Social Assistance (**12.25**), Retail Trade (**15%**), and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (**5.4%**) are key employment industries with these four industries employing **53%** of the population. **7.4%** of the population is unemployed.

The median weekly household income is **\$949** in comparison to the NSW median of **\$1,233**. There is a smaller proportion of people earning a high income - **\$1,500 or more** p/w and a higher proportion of low income earners - **\$400 or less** p/w in comparison with Regional NSW.

Volunteering

The Armidale Regional Council LGA has a higher percentage of residents who volunteer when compared to regional NSW. In 2011, there were **2,640** residents providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long-term illness or old age, while **1,819** residents provided unpaid care for children other than their own.



Education

The LGA has a well-educated community with a higher proportion of people with formal qualifications and a lower proportion of people with no qualifications when compared to other rural NSW areas. **6,193** residents are tertiary educated and **44%** of people over the age of 15 hold qualifications with **20%** of the population holding a Bachelor Degree or higher.



Visitors

From 2010 - 2016 there was an average of **9,537 international** and **245, 579 domestic** visitors to the Armidale Regional Council area, generating total hospitality and tourism sales of **\$91.5 million** and a total value added of **\$50.5 million**.



Arts and Culture

In 2016 in the Armidale Region **206** spaces and facilities were identified, **21** in Guyra. Education venues dominate the market at **49**, with **21** museums and historical sites, **14** churches, **12** community centres, **11** performance spaces, **9** halls, **7** gallery or exhibition spaces, **3** libraries and **1** film studio. v

257 organisations were listed as engaging with arts and culture with **60** of these being community organisations, **38** educational organisations, **35** schools, **32** cultural tourism, **23** performing arts, **21** museums, **9** youth organisations and **8** Aboriginal organisations as well as **205** arts practitioners.

A survey conducted with **78** contributors showed that **97.4%** believed that it was very important to have art, cultural and heritage offerings in the region. **93.6%** actively participate in arts and culture practice with **64.4%** participating at least once a week. **100%** of responders attend arts and culture activities on a regular basis with **47.4%** attending at least once a month. Overall **46.6%** were satisfied with the opportunities to actively participate in arts, culture and heritage practice in their local area.



Consultation

Armidale Regional Council engaged Positive Solutions to undertake community consultation on arts, culture and heritage and provide a discussion paper on the findings. The consultation process involved a public survey, interviews with key council staff and six art representatives, and five focus groups: Aboriginal, Youth, Business, Visual Arts and Design, and Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee.

The following key themes were explored during the consultation process: the Armidale region identity and local Aboriginal identity; Armidale region's changing social and economic profile; arts and cultural facilities and infrastructure; Destination and Events Tourism; Creative Industries; Development – funding and partnerships; as well as the current priorities for Armidale Regional Council.

These are the key issues that we heard during the consultation process:

Distinctive and Complex Identity of the Region:

- > Bountiful natural beauty
- > Magnificent built environment reflecting the region's heritage
- > Strong, connected Aboriginal community with rich culture and heritage
- > Well educated and diverse community celebrating an agricultural heritage alongside contemporary creative and intellectual aspirations
- > Community engaged in a wide range of arts, cultural and heritage activities supported by a range of significant cultural facilities.

What Is Missing - Gaps and Needs:

- > Better promotion and marketing of activities to optimise audience participation
- > Enhancing the reach of arts and cultural activity to young people, new residents and visitors
- > Opportunity to develop partnerships, networks and collaborations between arts/cultural and community groups
- > An absence of a high quality performing arts venue to accommodate a wide range of activities including large scale productions
- > The importance of vision, leadership and strategic planning in developing the Armidale region as a national tourism and events destination
- > Strengthening of current events and development of new signature events/heritage trails
- > Revitalising public spaces including the Armidale Mall, CBD and Guyra main street

Role of Council:

- > Council to provide vision and leadership to the creative industries
- > Council to partner with Arts North West to provide advocacy, professional development and networking opportunities for the arts and cultural sector
- > Council to support investment in public art, and through the Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee, to develop and strengthen public art program
- > Council and community to grow and develop key festivals and events that support the Tourism and Events/Destination Strategy

Our Priorities

The Armidale Regional Council works in partnership with the community to enhance and celebrate its unique character and build a connected, creative and dynamic place to live and visit.

Armidale Region is home to many high quality grassroots music, theatre, art, heritage and cultural groups managed by passionate and talented volunteers who deliver a range of high calibre programs and productions. It's important that partnerships between community and local government are strengthened to support local talent to ensure a vibrant, innovative and dynamic creative and cultural future for the Armidale Region.

The following themes have been developed to provide direction for arts, culture and heritage in our community. They acknowledge and support the partnerships between arts and cultural groups, community and government to provide clear goals that strengthen and celebrate our region.

- > **Engaged Communities:** Deepen community and visitor engagement in the creative and cultural life of the region
- > **Places and Spaces:** Establish and develop dynamic creative and cultural public spaces
- > **People and Diversity:** Promote and celebrate the region's Aboriginal, pioneering and multicultural heritage
- > **Connections and Collaborations:** Support and encourage arts and cultural connection, networks and collaborations
- > **Creative Industries:** Foster and support the region's Cultural and Creative Industries.



Autumn Festival Parade

Engaged Communities

Deepen community and visitor engagement in the creative and cultural life of the region

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
As part of future workforce planning incorporate a position of Cultural Development Officer (CDO) into the ARC organisational structure	Year 1+	ARC
In consultation with the community develop a long term budget for investment in arts and culture as part of future service levels/rates review process	Year 2	ARC Community
Develop a plan to reinvigorate and grow the Armidale Autumn Festival including fostering stronger connections to cultural organisations	Year 2+	ARC Arts & cultural stakeholders
Collaborate and partner with arts & cultural stakeholders to provide strategic direction to revitalise and enhance existing events like the Black Gully Festival, Bach Festival, Day on the Green and local film festivals.	Year 3+	ARC Arts & cultural stakeholders
Support the community and arts & cultural organisations to investigate potential future signature events for the region such as a major art prize and jazz festival.	Year 2+	ARC/ Arts & cultural stakeholders
In partnership with ARC Economic Development and Tourism develop and enhance marketing and publicity opportunities for local events/activities	Year 2+	ARC/Arts & cultural stakeholders
Investigate grant funding to increase art & cultural opportunities for youth	Year 2	ARC
Work with Council's Youth Services and Youth Council to investigate establishing a Youth Festival for the Armidale Region	Year 3	ARC/ Arts & cultural stakeholders
Encourage Council's Youth Services and Youth Council to work collaboratively with existing cultural organisations to develop a youth art activities program	Year 1	ARC/ Arts & cultural stakeholders
Ensure that Youth is a priority area for the Arts Grant Program administered by the Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee (A&CAC)	Year 2	ARC A&CAC
Revise the New Residents pack to include a book of arts & cultural vouchers and information on "what's on" calendar	Year 1+	ARC/Arts & cultural stakeholders
Promote current calendars of events	Year 1+	ARC

Outcomes

- > Strengthening and enhancing existing cultural events
- > Collaboration with the community to explore additional, distinctive signature events for Armidale
- > Increased youth arts activity
- > Increased participation in arts & culture by new and long term residents
- > Partnership with Armidale's Event Management Plan & Destination Armidale Strategy

Places and Spaces

Establish and develop dynamic creative and cultural public spaces

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
Reduce barriers to Council venues/spaces to encourage increased use for cultural activities including live music	Year 1+	ARC
Develop a grant program to support the cost of hiring council venues/spaces for arts & cultural activities	Year 1+	ARC
Ensure the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan informs, integrates and links with the Mall Vibrancy Plan and the Guyra Main Street redevelopment plan	Year 1+	ARC
Develop a range of arts/cultural activities to reactivate the mall including accessing empty shops in the CBD	Year 2+	ARC/A&CAC Community
Investigate alternative venues for live music and community theatre projects including shopping malls, movie theatres, retirement homes, parks, airports	Year 3+	ARC/Music and theatre groups
Work with A&CAC to advise ARC on public art opportunities	Year 2+	ARC A&CAC
A&CAC to revise and update Council's Policy 228 Public Arts Policy & Program	Year 1	ARC A&CAC
Update and maintain the Public Art data base	Year 2+	ARC
A&CAC is given a delegation for the commissioning of public art	Year 1	ARC A&CAC
Establish a Section 94 Contributions plan for public art	Year 3	ARC
Investigate opportunities to include creative design in functional items such as street furniture, paving, bins, bike racks etc.	Year 1	ARC A&CAC
Provide advice and planning on the establishment of a Performing Arts Centre	Year 2	ARC A&CAC
Provide advice and input on the Dumaresq Creek Master Plan to include arts and culture	Year 1	ARC A&CAC

Outcomes

- > Increase use of Council venues/spaces by community groups
- > Linkages created with other Council plans and priorities
- > Street art, music and pop up activities in the Armidale Mall and Guyra Main Street
- > Creative and dynamic public spaces including high quality public art
- > A range of cultural performances held in the City
- > New spaces used to present arts & cultural activities
- > Better art spaces available to attract/retain creative industries to the area

People and Diversity

Promote and celebrate the region's Aboriginal, pioneering and multicultural heritage

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
Council to develop a position statement on the value of Aboriginal culture and heritage	Year 2	ARC
Support the Aboriginal community to tell their stories and celebrate their history and culture	Year 3	ARC/Aboriginal community and organisations
ARC reaffirms its commitment to work in partnership with ACCKP and provide funding under its agreement	Year 1+	ARC
Support Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer to grow events that celebrate local Aboriginal culture and heritage including NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week	Year 2	ARC Aboriginal Community
Further support the Armidale Folk Museum to identify, preserve and promote local heritage including appropriate signage	Year 3	ARC Community groups
Investigate opportunities for empty or underutilised land mark heritage buildings like the Old Armidale Court House and the Lands Office	Year 1	ARC A&CAC
Support and expand the current Heritage Tours in Armidale	Year 3	ARC Community
Investigate a heritage walk in Guyra	Year 4	ARC/Community
Support the reopening of the Guyra Museum	Year 2	ARC/Community
Partner with local multicultural organisations and community to support existing community events and activities that celebrate diversity including Harmony Day	Year 3	ARC Community
ARC develops an MOU with Saumarez Homestead	Year 2	ARC/Saumarez
Provide opportunities for local museums to work more collaboratively	Year 3	ARC/Museums Arts North West

Outcomes

- > Increased knowledge and awareness of the history and culture of local Aboriginal people
- > Increased capturing of local history and stories
- > Recognition and celebration of our cultural heritage in the LGA
- > Increased heritage tourism



Aboriginal Cemetery Memorial Sculpture for unmarked graves

Connections and Collaborations

Support and encourage arts and cultural connections, networks and collaborations

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
The Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee is recognised by Council as the primary resource for arts and culture	Year 1+	ARC A&CAC
Articulate and include in all strategy documents an acknowledgement and recognition of arts and culture where appropriate	Year 2	ARC
Build and strengthen relationships between key arts and cultural organisations within Australia and overseas	Year 2	ARC A&CAC
The A&CAC is a 355 Committee of Council and given an appropriate delegation enabling it to administer an Arts Grant Program	Year 1+	ARC A&CAC
The Group Leader Organisational Services is the responsible officer for the A&CAC	Year 1+	ARC A&CAC
Collaborate with Arts North West to develop and resource a schedule of networking events and professional development opportunities for internal and external stakeholders.	Year 2+	ARC Arts North West
Encourage creative and cultural co-location and incubator spaces in Armidale & Guyra	Year 4	ARC/Arts & cultural groups
Advise on the Moran Oval Management Plan in Kentucky Street	Year 3	ARC A&CAC
ARC reaffirms its commitment of an annual contribution to Arts North West and its working partnership to facilitate, foster and develop arts and cultural activities in the region	Year 2	ARC Arts North West
Facilitate creative partnerships to strengthen local events/activities	Year 3	ARC/Arts & cultural groups

Outcomes

- > Recognition and value of the Arts & Cultural Advisory Committee's knowledge and expertise
- > Shared information and collaboration across Council areas including Economic Development, Tourism and service delivery
- > Increased funding support for creative activities in the area
- > Creative industries and cultural networks are strengthened
- > Partnership with Arts North West strengthened
- > Partnerships developed with significant arts and cultural organisations nationally and internationally

Creative Industries

Foster and support the region's Cultural and Creative Industries

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
Develop an annual program of Council run activities including Waste to Art & Design Competition and an Arts Open Day with Arts North West	Year 2	ARC/Arts North West
Investigate arts and cultural grant opportunities	Year 2	ARC/Arts NW
Fund & develop a set of guidelines for a small annual arts community grant program for locally based arts activities/artists administered by the A&CAC	Year 3	ARC A&CAC
A&CAC membership includes representatives from key cultural stakeholders and community representatives	Year 1+	ARC A&CAC
ARC has an MOU with the following arts and cultural organisations: NERAM, NECOM, ACCKP, New England Writers' Centre, Arts North West	Year 2	ARC NERAM/NECOM ACCKP/Arts NW
ARC reaffirms its commitment to work in partnership with NERAM and provide funding under its agreement	Year 1+	ARC A&CAC
Work in partnership with UNE on research in the creative industries sector and investigate how this can support local artists and businesses	Year 5	ARC UNE
Support Arts North West to deliver local professional development workshops	Year 2	ARC Arts North West
Investigate digital public art opportunities in collaboration with TAFE Digital Art	Year 3	ARC TAFE
Sponsor an Arts Category in the annual Armidale Regional Business Awards	Year 3	ARC/Armidale Business Chambers
Create an Arts/Cultural category for the annual Volunteer Award	Year 3	ARC/Volunteer Services
Support the Armidale & Guyra Libraries to develop public programs	Year 4	ARC

Outcomes

- > Annual program of Council run arts activities for the region
- > Better links with art and the environment
- > Funding available for arts and cultural activities/events
- > Support for key arts and cultural organisations
- > Professional development opportunities for creative individuals, groups and organisations
- > Digital media opportunities and activities in the region
- > Recognise excellence in the arts
- > Recognition of valuable support of volunteers in the creative/cultural industries

Conclusion

The Armidale Regional community derives great satisfaction from its rich and complex arts and cultural heritage. There is an exciting opportunity to position Armidale as the leading Regional Centre of Arts and Culture in NSW.

There has been a significant shift in our communities as people relinquish the consumption of goods and place an increased priority on the value of experience, and what gives their lives meaning. There is an increasing recognition of the value of arts and culture to our personal and collective wellbeing. They are intrinsically important to communities by inspiring, connecting and uniting people. Arts and culture is at the centre of our community experience and should be valued as such.

During the consultation process the community expressed the hope for a culturally diverse, artistically invigorated and dynamically engaged region that is actively involved with a rich and complex arts and cultural life.

The Arts and Cultural Strategic Plan outlines actions to support and develop the regions creative and cultural potential to build a stronger more connected community and create dynamic and welcoming public spaces.

The plan aims to support proactive engagement with young people, warmly welcome new residents, take pride in our Aboriginal and pioneering heritage, and seek collective opportunities to celebrate diversity.

Key priorities for Council are to explore opportunities to strengthen resourcing of arts and culture within our new structure; to recognise and value the role of arts and culture as intrinsic to all Council areas of service delivery; and to develop and strengthen partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders in the region.

Council will provide leadership by integrating arts and culture into its operations including Tourism and Economic Development. It acknowledges that a dynamic, vibrant culture and thriving creative arts scene are contributors to the economic success and wellbeing of our region. Embedding arts and culture into Council's services offers unique outcomes and adds value to our work.

Many of the actions listed in this plan will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders including cultural and heritage individuals /groups, and community organisations. Partnership and collaboration provides momentum and strengthens ownership which is critical to the success of this plan.

We look forward to delivering on this strategy and working with you over the next five years.



Medieval reenactment



International Students Grand Parade