

REGIONAL FUTURES:

Creative
Innovation
and
Connection

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to lands, water and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is a not-for-profit peak body that is the national voice for arts in regional Australia. Throughout 2023 we celebrated 80 years. In 1943 our founder, Dorothy Helmrich, envisaged a nation where people living in regional, rural, and remote Australia could contribute, participate and enjoy the arts on equal level to those living in metropolitan areas. For 80 years, RAA has been facilitating opportunities, increasing access, maintaining collaborative relationships and providing timely support to celebrate Australian stories across art forms and across landscapes. Regional Australia is changing, the role and value of regional arts sector is also changing. RAA has been an active voice in this changing environment supporting artists, communities and the creative sector in rural and remote Australia.

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01 Preface – why this research now

Thinking about a future, a creative future, a regional future we are often drawn to the collective. A whole of government approach, a whole of industry approach, a whole of ecosystem approach. As we listen, observe and understand conversations around practice, place and creativity we are reminded to broaden our perspective and ways of thinking. What does sustainable practice look like, what does a future based management system mean? We are increasingly asked to question the systems in which we work, systems of knowledge and systems of thought.

Economically we talk about systems. A system being simply a set of things that are interconnected in ways that produce distinct patterns of behaviour – be they cells in an organism, protestors in a crowd, birds in a flock, members of a family, or banks in the financial network. How do we recognise creative systems and respect their intrinsic value and create a thriving balance. What are the values, norms and networks that help shape and inform our behaviours and priorities – how can they be nurtured and nudged?

It is the relationships between the individual parts that give rise to their emergent behaviour...

Kate Raworth, Economist, Author

Regional Arts Australia's guiding principle is that 'place' is central to creative practice. It provides profound practical and emotional links between the economies and synergies of artistic and cultural practice. As the team at RAA work through outcomes from this research, Artlands23 and a suite of programs we need to be guided by an intentional approach that bridges cultural, environmental and economic connections. It is paramount to work alongside Indigenous knowledge systems and where appropriate reflect Indigenous values, aligning with our purpose and organisation as a whole.

To support a creative ecosystem, we need to strengthen the fabric of the creative sector. This means supporting the artists, practitioners and communities. It also means supporting institutions, service agencies, venues, businesses and collaborators that work alongside and champion artistic endeavours. Partnerships are critical and are key in leveraging cross industry support and championing arts in the regions beyond the regional arts sector.

It is appropriate and timely that the national body supporting arts in regional and remote Australia, Regional Arts Australia, is undertaking this research. This research will support the regeneration of Australia through a better understanding of how creativity in regional and remote parts of the country contributes to the nation's well-being and prosperity. To offer a unique moment in time to reflect on current practice in the sector and propose new approaches.

A thriving creative ecosystem requires a whole of ecology approach – let's get to know creative practice better.

Ros Abercrombie
Executive Director, Regional Arts Australia



Introduction – regional creativity

02

←
A Meander, 2023, sound,
performance, scenography,
city planning, sculpture.
Image supplied by
FutureFarmers

half of all professional artists in Australia
apply their creative skills outside of the arts
(Australia Council for the Arts 2017).

Through this research our aim is to initiate a discussion about the role of cultural and creative sector workers in sustainable employment in regional industries.

This research project is informed by issues that are relevant not only to regional Australia but also to the creative and cultural sectors on a national and international level. Studies worldwide highlight the positive impact of arts and culture on social issues such as mental health, well-being, social cohesion, and population attraction and growth. Using this wealth of knowledge we explore how the arts, creative skills, and capability can be used in many industry sectors to both drive employment in the creative arts and overall regional development.

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a nationwide discussion on the value of jobs in the creative and cultural sector, highlighting the unique nature of creative labour, and the sustainability of cultural work. A shift in thinking about the nature of work will recognize the public value of arts and culture and their role in fostering innovation. Studies support the idea of creating sustainable employment in the arts and cultural sector, emphasizing that regular income, workspace, the ability to engage in creative work, and recognition of creative work are key factors for successful creative practices. Exploring employment opportunities for creatives in regional areas prompts us to consider how other sectors of the economy can provide platforms, training opportunities, and markets for creative activity.

The aim of the research undertaken for this project is to stimulate a conversation about the impact of the regional cultural sector on regional development. The link between creativity, culture, and innovation, has emerged as an important factor through studies on the broader socio-economic effects of culture and creativity. These studies explore the creation of cultural identities, creative place-making, regional quality of life, and attractions that extend beyond the local context.

The economic, social, and cultural benefits derived from the arts, culture, and creative sectors suggest the opportunity for a more integrated approach and cross-sector engagement in regional economies. Recognizing the arts and creative sectors as catalysts for sustainable regional development requires collaboration between the three tiers of government in Australia. While local governments have a closer understanding of the diverse regional challenges, strategic policies could be developed at the state or federal level.

2.1 Creative country

The significance of Country is deeply embedded in First Nations' cultural narratives and practices. This connection to the land is not just about preservation; it is also intricately tied to community wellbeing and identity. The intertwining of creativity with the environment, community and traditions is a foundational principle of First Nations worldviews. Current frameworks that emphasise sustainability, liveability and improved living standards resonate with this holistic perspective. The environment plays a pivotal role in shaping artistic expressions, acting as both an inspiration and a medium.

An integrated approach would echo First Nations approaches to community life and work. A meaningful and prosperous life cannot be achieved without treating human activities as integral to relationships with the land, animal world, community, and culture. Such an approach can already be observed in frameworks of sustainability, liveability, and living standards. This research attempts to find points of collaboration, of common ground between the arts, creative and other economic sectors in the regions – to develop integrated regional economies and meaningful lives.

Local creative initiatives and everyday cultural practices contribute to what is known as ‘place-making’, breathing life into places and stimulating economic development (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Cultural and creative initiatives, along with everyday practices, shape regional identities and influence the perceptions of a place. Creative initiatives and place-making practices provide a platform for local entrepreneurs to thrive and create opportunities for themselves and their communities (Clements, 2018).

2.2 Creative connections

Community engaged practice within the Australian regional arts landscape is more than a method; it’s a philosophy that roots art in the very fabric of community life. It upholds the belief that art, when co-created and shared, becomes a powerful tool for social engagement, reflection, and transformation. Given the scope of community-based, volunteer and amateur engagement in the cultural sector this research acknowledges the importance of this kind of non-remunerated labour and its impact on regional cultural production.

Regional creative practitioners are deeply embedded in their communities. Their work goes beyond art, reflecting community interactions, resourcefulness and fresh ideas (Eversole, 2005). Social relations through regional creativity prompt us to view regional areas as interconnected and interrelated. Community networks and the capacity to establish new connections are fundamental for regional innovation as they encourage reimagining regional limitations and opportunities. Research shows that artisans in regional areas have particularly strong networks, and connecting hubs are a critical element for building and maintaining those networks (Felton Collis and Graham, cited in Gibson, 2012).

Regional creative practices rely on reimagining community resources and connections with other places. Expanding social networks and fostering new interactions are crucial in overcoming geographical isolation and resource constraints. This social aspect contributes to regional liveability and regional vibrancy (Gibson and Gordon, 2018). Regional connective initiatives, such as festivals, events, new businesses and collaborations, lift economic outcomes through, for example, tourism, community engagement and participation (Clements, 2018). Examples of regional creative networks demonstrate that cross-border collaborations extend regional cultural boundaries and give rise to unique local creative practices and products – for example, collaborations in Aboriginal communities in Darwin (Gibson et al. 2010) and hip-hop music production on the Torres Strait Islands (Warren and Evitt 2010).

Through everyday cultural activities, regional communities shape their identity and emotional attachment to the place, influencing perceptions of quality of life and regional

appeal. Everyday culture is a significant aspect of regional life, with a combination of high art and vernacular cultural expression recognised as a vital indicator of a thriving small city culture (Bratton and Garrett-Petts, 2010). These practices involve individuals and groups contributing their work to the community or engaging in shared expressive activities that often have multiple meanings (Gibson, 2012). These local creative initiatives, deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric of the region, can evolve into significant regional events that generate symbolic capital with tangible economic outcomes, such as employment opportunities, increased tourism and population growth (Clements, 2018).

2.3 Creative contribution

The 2021 Australian Census data underscore the burgeoning prominence of Australia’s creative sector, employing over 714,000 individuals. Even amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19, the creative industries displayed resilience, growing at a rate 50 per cent faster than many other sectors. When it comes to economic contributions, the creative realm injected a staggering A\$112 billion into GDP. Furthermore, specific domains such as design, fashion and digital media have emerged as powerhouse contributors to this growth (BCARR, 2020). If the upward trajectory Deloitte (2021) holds true, projections suggest that by 2030 the creative sector could account for a significant 8.3 per cent of Australia’s total employment, providing opportunities to approximately 1.3 million individuals.

The creative sector is key to the dynamism of Australia’s regional areas, not only retaining the existing population but also attracting newcomers. Recognising this, the Australian government’s initiative Regions 2030: Unlocking Opportunity underscores the importance of job creation and economic development across the creative sector (DIRDC, 2017). Creative practitioners in regional Australia contribute to their communities in myriad ways. Rather than being driven solely by professional creatives or artists, regional creativity is a grassroots activity that unifies and sustains communities. Research tells us that creative practitioners increased by 13 per cent between 2016 and 2020, with 45 per cent of Australians involved in activities from artistic photography to playing a musical instrument or taking a community arts class.

The Regional Australia Institute (RIA 2019a) identified the creative industries as one of the four foundational pillars determining the economic trajectory of regional Australia. The regions are pivotal to Australia’s economy, with agriculture, tourism, retail, services and manufacturing collectively accounting for about two-thirds of the nation’s export earnings (Infrastructure Australia, 2022). Between 2011 and 2016, there was a 21 per cent growth in Australia’s regional creative sector, with regional centres such as Byron Bay and the Surf Coast emerging as prominent creative hubs providing models for other emerging regions.



Background – regional arts now

03

← Participants at Earth Canvas on farm field day learning about art and farming and connecting with the landscapes Mt Narra Narra Holbrook. Photo by David Geraghty

3.1 The National Cultural Policy 2023

In January 2023, a new national cultural policy called *REVIVE: A place for Every Story, a Story for Every Place* was launched. It is built upon five main pillars: First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure, and Engaging the Audience. The policy focuses on empowering First Nations communities, restoring and expanding funding for the arts, and recognizing the importance of artists and their work. It acknowledges that a thriving cultural and creative sector is vital for supporting regional communities and local economies, as well as promoting social connectedness, well-being, and mental health.

The policy recognizes the significance of regional artists in representing Australia's diversity and depth in the arts. It highlights the role of architects in shaping the built environment and driving sustainable design. It also praises the craftsmanship and design innovation of Australian craftspeople. The policy acknowledges the increasing digital engagement across the country in various forms of media and entertainment, such as music, screen content, digital games, podcasts and e-books. It commits to investing in improved digital connectivity, especially for First Nations and regional and remote communities.

Although the policy maintains a distinction between art creators and consumers, it expresses a commitment to collaborating with the sector to address workforce challenges and skills needs in the cultural and creative sectors. REVIVE aims to foster collaboration with the arts and culture sectors to gain insights into workforce challenges and contribute to industry-driven solutions. Our research aligns with this objective, taking a cross-sectoral and co-creative approach to integrating creative employment across workforce sectors.

3.2 Defining creative and cultural industry

UNESCO defines culture and creative industries as activities *whose principal purpose is production or reproduction, promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature.*

In fact, both cultural and creative industries include activities involved in the making and dissemination of goods, services and practices whose primary value lies in their meaningfulness to us – as enjoyment, transformation, education, information, challenge, dissent, and the making and celebration of individual and collective identities (O'Connor, 2017, p.9).

3.3 Creative industries – potential in the regions

The *Australian Academy of Humanities Inquiry into Australia's Cultural and Creative Industries* (2020) found that Australia's creative economy employs in excess of 600,000 workers and is worth \$112 billion to Australia's GDP. This aligns with the findings of the Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR) that cultural and creative activity contributed \$115.8 billion to Australia's economy in 2018-19 – or about 6% (BCARR report 2021).

The BCCAR report identified design (\$45.3 billion), fashion (\$14.7 billion), and broadcasting, electronic or digital media, and film (\$9.2 billion) as the creative and cultural industries making the greatest contribution in 2018-19. However, substantial employment is also found across various other creative industries and creative occupations outside the creative industries.

3.4 Community building through creative practice

Regional creative practices rely on reimagining community resources and connections with other places. Expanding social networks and fostering new interactions overcome geographical isolation and limited resources. Regional creative initiatives, such as festivals, events, new businesses, and collaborations, not only lead to economic outcomes through tourism and utilization of local services but also value community engagement and participation (Clements, 2018). Examples of regional creative networks demonstrate that cross-border collaborations extend regional cultural boundaries and support unique local creative practices and products.

The Regionalisation Ambition Framework proposed by the Regional Australia Institute focuses on well-being, digital connectivity, transportation, housing, medical services, childcare, education, and the arts as targets for regional development. It acknowledges that community cohesion and its connection to places are strengths of regional Australia that are fostered through regional cultural activities. Cultural amenities, rich history, heritage, and a particular emphasis on First Nations cultural heritage and practices are identified as key drivers for the regional tourism economy. Cultural activities, along with factors like housing, transportation, jobs, and digital connectivity, are recognized as motivating factors for people to relocate, contributing to further regional development (*Rebalance the Nation Report 2022*).



Connecting industry sectors

04

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Students from The Pines
Primary School play with
string during a creative
based learning exercise.
Photo by Braw Media

This report explores the intersection of creative practice and industry sectors in regional Australia. We spotlight six industry sectors – health and wellbeing, education, tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure. Some of these sectors, such as education, tourism and health, already have clear connections with the creative/cultural activities in their communities. Sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing are still exploring potential connections. For this report, we have selected a number of regional case studies, highlighting national and international examples within each sector.

4.1 Health and Wellbeing

In 2014, Australia's Health and Culture Ministers released a framework to promote greater integration of arts into health practices. The landscape of health concerns in rural Australia differs from that in urban settings. Challenges in regional Australia include elevated suicide rates, especially among men, and limited specialized healthcare services. To address these challenges initiatives such as from the Rural and Remote Mental Health program (rrmh.com.au) curate tailor-made solutions.

Aboriginal art in Australia stands out as a transformative tool in the health domain. First Nations art and culture initiatives are increasingly recognised as powerful drivers for improved health and wellbeing within Indigenous communities. Employing art as a rehabilitative instrument and amalgamating traditional cultural practices, there has been a discernible positive shift in health outcomes for First Nations people. Central to these initiatives is the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). Its innovative methodologies, from poster design competitions to narrative storytelling, are geared towards highlighting health disparities within the Indigenous community. This synergy has been particularly palpable in collaborations with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NSW Government, through its Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI), further acknowledges the instrumental role of art, especially in the rehabilitation of Aboriginal patients (Flinders University, 2023). Similarly, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation's case study *Promoting Aboriginal Health Through the Arts* (VicHealth, 2013) underscores the transformative influence of initiatives such as The Torch Project, which offers artistic outlets to Aboriginal offenders, and the Short Black Opera Company, which fosters musical talent within the Aboriginal community.



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All One Under the Sun
Festival 2022
Photo by andthetrees
photography

All One Under the Sun – leveraging the power of art and music to advance health and wellbeing

Organisation	Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
Sector	Health
Location	Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Australia
Website	alloneunderthesun.com.au

The ‘All One Under the Sun’ project by the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) exemplifies how creative partnerships can advance health and social inclusion among migrant and Indigenous youths. This initiative not only improved participants’ artistic skills and personal expression but also addressed broader societal issues such as racism. The project’s success underscores the importance of strategic collaborations, inclusive practices, and comprehensive evaluations in advancing the role of arts in promoting health and wellbeing.

STARTTS is a prominent organisation dedicated to supporting people who have experienced torture and trauma, particularly refugees and asylum seekers. Based in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, STARTTS provides a range of services including counselling, advocacy, and community development programs to help people rebuild their lives. STARTTS launched the innovative ‘All One Under the Sun’ project to enhance the wellbeing and social inclusion of migrant and Indigenous youths through the transformative power of art.

‘All One Under the Sun’ was inspired by the refugees’ deep connection to music – particularly inspired by a group of Congolese youth who wanted to start a band. Recognising the therapeutic and unifying potential of music and art, STARTTS collaborated with several, including the Coffs Harbour City Council, Multicultural NSW, and the Headspace youth mental health foundation, to bring this project to life.

The objectives of the ‘All One Under the Sun’ project were multidimensional – including, instilling and honing artistic skills such as songwriting, storytelling, and performance, providing a platform for personal expression, allowing participants to articulate their experiences and emotions through art, challenging and addressing societal issues, particularly racism, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and communal wellbeing.

The program featured a variety of activities designed to engage and empower youth, including:

- Interactive Workshops offering hands-on opportunities for participants to develop their artistic talents under the guidance of professional artists.

- Culturally Rich celebrating the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants, promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.
- Inclusive gatherings providing a safe and welcoming space for youth to share their stories and connect with others.

Key components of the program included:

- ‘Stand Up Stand By’ – a powerful performance that combined various art forms to shed light on the experiences and implications of racism. It was designed to educate and provoke thought among audiences, fostering a more inclusive community.
- ‘Change the Story’ – a collaborative project that brought together Indigenous and Yazidi youth with seasoned artists to create musical stories. This activity promoted cross-cultural collaboration and understanding, highlighting the shared human experiences across different cultures.

The ‘All One Under the Sun’ project aligns closely with key themes identified in research on creative partnerships in health.

The initiative’s success was underpinned by strategic collaborations with local government, health services, and arts organisations. This multi-stakeholder approach ensured sustainable funding and support, demonstrating the importance of diversified partnerships in fostering creative and health-oriented projects.

By incorporating the experiences and narratives of Indigenous and migrant youth, the project emphasized the importance of success stories in promoting wellbeing. The partnership with local Indigenous communities also underscored the value of integrating traditional knowledge and perspectives into contemporary health and arts initiatives.

The project demonstrated the potential for arts-based initiatives to influence regional policies on social inclusion and community health. By showcasing the positive impact of creative engagement on youth wellbeing, the project provided evidence to support the integration of arts into broader health and social policies.

The collaborative nature of the project, involving youth, artists, and community organisations, ensured that evaluations were comprehensive and reflective of diverse perspectives. This approach highlighted the importance of collaborative vision in assessing the impact of creative health initiatives.

Flourishing Lives – working together to promote fulfilling and autonomous lives for older people

Organisation	Flourishing Lives
Sector	Health
Location	London, United Kingdom
Website	flourishinglives.org

Flourishing Lives is a London-based coalition of arts and wellbeing organisations dedicated to enhancing the lives of older people. Founded on a creative and relational approach, the coalition believes in the power of building quality relationships with the elderly and the professionals and volunteers who support them. By serving as a central hub for practitioners, day centres, top-tier arts entities, health and fitness programs, and community outreach initiatives, Flourishing Lives facilitates the exchange of knowledge, research, and resources. This collective effort aims to establish exemplary standards of practice within the industry, thereby improving the wellbeing of older adults.

In 2012, the Claremont Project (claremont-project.org), a leading arts and wellbeing centre for the elderly, sponsored an independent research study to understand better the needs and aspirations of older people using day care services. Funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (esmeefairbarin.org.uk), supported by the City Bridge Foundation (citybridgefoundation.org.uk) and The Mercers’ Company (mercercs.co.uk), this study laid the groundwork for the establishment of Flourishing Lives in 2016.

The coalition believes that building quality relationships is the heart of our work – genuinely engaging with older people as unique individuals and forming close bonds with the dedicated staff and volunteers who work alongside them. Today, Flourishing Lives brings together over 350 organisations from the arts, health, and wellbeing sectors.

A significant component of Flourishing Lives is its intergenerational forum, which provides a relaxed environment for arts and wellbeing providers to exchange ideas about integrating intergenerational practices into their services. These sessions are collaboratively led by specialist intergenerational practitioners and organisations, such as Chickenshed Theatre (chickenshed.org.uk), Time & Talents (timeandtalents.org.uk), Magic Me (magicme.co.uk), InCommon (incommon.org.uk), Intergenerational Music Making (imm-music.com), and the McCarthy Stone Foundation (mccarthystonefoundation.org)

The Flourishing Lives programs and activities include:

- Intergenerational forums encouraging the exchange of ideas and practices between arts and wellbeing providers, focusing on

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Flourishing Lives is a
coalition of arts and
wellbeing practitioners
Image supplied by
Flourishing Lives

intergenerational engagement. Sessions are led by experts and organisations with extensive experience in intergenerational practices, fostering a collaborative environment for learning and development.

- Arts and wellbeing programs introducing music, dance, theatre, and visual arts programs into the daily lives of older people. These programs are designed to improve physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connections.
- Research and knowledge sharing that highlights the benefits of creative engagement for the elderly. The coalition disseminates findings through publications, workshops, and conferences, ensuring that best practices are shared widely within the sector.
- Community engagement and outreach working closely with local communities to develop programs that are responsive to the specific needs of older community members. This community-centric approach ensures that the initiatives are relevant and impactful.

The activities and achievements of Flourishing Lives align closely with several themes identified in research on creative partnerships in health.

The success of Flourishing Lives is rooted in its strategic partnerships with various funding bodies and organisations. This diversified funding model and collaborative approach has enabled the coalition to develop and sustain innovative programs that significantly impact the older people's wellbeing.

Flourishing Lives places a strong emphasis on research and the sharing of success stories. Documenting and disseminating the positive outcomes of programs provides valuable insights and evidence to support the integration of creative practices.

The coalition's efforts to influence and align policies with the needs of older people highlight the importance of regional creative practices. Their work demonstrates how targeted, community-based initiatives can drive broader policy changes and improve service delivery for older people.

The collaborative nature of Flourishing Lives ensures that evaluations are comprehensive and reflective of diverse perspectives. This approach not only measures the effectiveness of the programs but also fosters a shared vision for continuous improvement and innovation in the sector.



4.2 Education

Arts in education programs instil critical skills, self-expression, teamwork, appreciation of diversity and creative thinking, and foster self-belief, agency and empathy (Brouillette & Jennings, 2010; Catterall & Pepler, 2007; Henderson, 2018).

In regional Australia, arts education initiatives deliver powerful benefits. A regional research study with young children in 28 regional schools, for example, found that these children recognised the value of the arts in enhancing life skills, such as reflective thinking, problem-solving and communication. Regional arts organisations, such as Regional Arts Victoria and Arts Tasmania, offer project-based arts interventions such as artist-in-schools programs. This approach has had success worldwide, operating through both local and national initiatives or as partnerships between arts and education government portfolios. It has spawned an international teaching artist movement, with much literature concerning arts in schools and community educational settings (Jaffe, Barniskis & Cox 2015).

In the context of First Nations education, integrating Indigenous art (White and Hillary, 2009) can act as a bridge to support the high percentage of Year 10 school leavers in First Nations communities to reconnect with their heritage and instil in them a sense of identity and belonging. For example, in the community of Lajamanu, 560 kilometres west of Katherine in the Northern Territory, the local school involved local artists in designing uniforms that would showcase the region's four Warlpiri skin groups.

Higher education and TAFE institutions and other educational centres play a significant role in regional creative ecosystems by providing infrastructure hubs for the arts, supporting professionals, and facilitating knowledge exchange (Gibson, 2007; Hancox et al., 2019). These institutions act as catalysts for regional development, fostering the growth of the creative sector, nurturing vibrant artistic communities and fostering entrepreneurship through fresh approaches to local issues. Regional areas demonstrate significant potential for developing the connection between arts/cultural education and regional innovations. Regional educational capacity is supported by the Regional Universities Network, which enrolls nearly 300,000 students across multiple regional locations. Universities, such as Federation University in Ballarat and Southern Cross University in Lismore, serve as leading regional arts hubs, with robust educational programs in performing, visual and digital arts.



Carclew Artists in Schools – testament to the transformative power of creative partnerships in education

Organisation	Carclew
Sector	Education
Location	South Australia, Australia
Website	carclew.com.au/program/artists-in-schools

Carclew is a prominent South Australian youth arts organization dedicated to fostering creativity and arts education. Established in 1981, Carclew’s Artists in Schools initiative is its longest-running program, focusing on integrating professional artists into school settings. This initiative aims to provide both students and educators with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the arts, emphasizing the importance of artistic expression in education.

The Artists in Schools program began with financial support from the Arts Council of South Australia, the Australia Council and the Education Department of South Australia. Between 1981 and 1990, Carclew guided schools statewide in securing funds to host in-school artists. This collaboration involved the Carclew Arts Education team, participating schools, and resident artists, leading to the development of a comprehensive arts-based curriculum and policy.

Currently, both Developing Effective Arts Learning and Creative Based Learning are active. Ngarrindjeri Yanun, following a successful pilot, evolved into Carclew’s Aboriginal Artists in Schools initiative. Supported by Catholic Education South

Australia, the Department for Education, and the Nunn Dimos Foundation, this initiative seeks to cultivate enduring and self-sustaining ties between Aboriginal Elders, artists, cultural practitioners, and nearby schools.

This case study aligns with key findings from research on creative partnerships in education. Here’s how the Artists in Schools initiative relates to broader research themes:

- **Historical and contemporary funding** – initial funding from various councils and the evolution to a self-sustaining model demonstrate the importance of diversified funding and strategic partnerships. This approach ensures the longevity and impact of creative initiatives.
- **Cross-sector collaboration** between artists, educators, and cultural practitioners mirrors the research recommendation for cross-sector partnerships to foster innovation and growth.
- **Indigenous engagement** – the Ngarrindjeri Yanun initiative emphasizes the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education. This aligns with the research’s emphasis on engaging with Indigenous

← Students from The Pines Primary School play with string during a creative based learning exercise
Photo by Braw Media

communities to create meaningful and inclusive educational experiences.

- **Documenting success stories** – the contributions of notable artists and the program’s evolution serve as a valuable success narrative that can inspire similar initiatives.
- **Policy alignment** with the Australian Curriculum demonstrates the importance of policy support in integrating arts into education. This ensures that creative programs are not only impactful but also sustainable and scalable.
- **Regional impact** focusing the program on schools across South Australia underscores the significant impact of regional creative practice on community development and cultural enrichment.
- **Collaborative learning and teaching** – the involvement of teaching artists and the collaboration with Aboriginal Elders and cultural practitioners foster a collaborative learning environment. This enhances the educational experience and ensures that the arts are integrated in a way that is relevant and impactful.
- **Sustainable models** – the artist-in-residence framework offers a sustainable model for arts education, ensuring that the benefits of the program are long-lasting and deeply integrated into the school curriculum.

By integrating professional artists into schools and collaborating with Indigenous communities, the program enriches the educational experience, fosters cultural understanding, and supports interdisciplinary learning. This case study underscores the importance of strategic funding, policy alignment, and collaborative evaluation in sustaining and scaling creative education initiatives. The success of this program provides valuable insights for similar initiatives seeking to integrate the arts into education and community development.

4.3 Tourism

The Australian tourism sector is a cornerstone of the national jobs market, underpinning one in twelve jobs. This is particularly significant for regional communities, which rely heavily on tourism for employment. In total, the industry provides jobs for over 534,000 individuals. Deloitte’s research (Australian Government, 2023) underscores the prominence of tourism in regional areas, emphasising that these areas have a denser concentration of tourism-related employment than the major cities. Remarkably, regional Australia accounts for almost half of all national tourism spending, at 46 per cent or A\$107 billion. To provide further context, in areas beyond the capital cities, about one in nine jobs relates to tourism. In contrast, the ratio in major cities is one in 20 (Deloitte, 2021).

In the Australian context, cultural tourism manifests in myriad ways: heritage tourism, First Nations experiences and event-centred tourism, with festivals being a notable example. Furthermore, the creative and cultural sectors play roles across tourism sectors, even those not directly associated with cultural or creative tourism. Sectors such as wine tourism, agritourism and ecotourism, which traditionally focus on farming, exploration of natural sites and nature-based activities respectively, are increasingly incorporating cultural and creative practices. The cultural sector contributes through creative skills and competencies in marketing, branding and the organisation of events that require artistic services.

The regional wine tourism industry serves as an illustrative example of utilizing creative skills to promote the industry and create destinations. Australia has more than 2,400 wineries in 65 wine regions across the country. One in four international visitors reportedly consumed Australian wine during their trip in 2019, amounting to at least \$279 million spent on wine (Deloitte, 2021). The wine sector contributes over \$40 billion annually to the Australian economy. Marketing and branding play a crucial role in highlighting the stories and attributes of specific vineyards or regions, and events and festivals – including art and wine experiences – further promote these products (Carlsen & Charters, 2006; Gammack, 2007; Taylor, 2006).



Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair – a powerful model for integrating the creative economy with tourism

Organisation	Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair
Sector	Tourism
Location	Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia
Website	daaf.com.au

Established to promote and support the vibrant traditions of First Nations art, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage while contributing to economic development. DAAF showcases how strategic partnerships and community-centric approaches can drive significant economic and social benefits. By celebrating Indigenous art and culture, DAAF boosts the local economy and fosters a deeper appreciation of Australia’s rich cultural heritage among visitors, reinforcing the transformative potential of creative practice in regional development.

DAAF is an annual cultural event that celebrates the rich artistic heritage and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Held in Darwin, Northern Territory, the fair is a significant cultural and economic event, providing a vital platform for Indigenous artists to showcase their work to a global audience. The fair collaborates with key organisations such as Creative Australia (creative.goc.au), Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists (anka.org.au), and various national art centres.

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair is a cornerstone of cultural tourism in the Northern Territory. By attracting thousands of visitors each year,

it contributes approximately A\$16 million annually to the local economy. The fair not only highlights the exceptional talent of First Nations artists but also creates numerous opportunities for employment and training, particularly through collaborative efforts and specialised programs.

Key Components of the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair include:

- Economic impact – DAAF significantly boosts the Northern Territory economy by attracting tourists, who spend on accommodation, dining and other local services. The economic benefits extend nationwide, with sales of Aboriginal art providing vital income for remote and regional communities.
- Employment and training opportunities – The fair supports employment for Indigenous artists and arts workers, offering a platform to sell their work directly to the public and international buyers.

Training pathways are established through initiatives such as ANKA’s Arts Worker Extension Program, which focuses on skill

← Ngukurr Arts booth at DAAF, Darwin 2022
Photo by Dylan Buckee

→
Arpaka dancers from
Thursday Island,
Queensland, performing
at the 2019 Darwin
Aboriginal Art Fair.
Photo by Dylan Buckee

development for arts workers from remote and regional areas. This program enhances their capabilities in managing art centres and promoting their work effectively.

- Collaborative efforts -- Collaboration with entities like Creative Australia and ANKA is instrumental in the fair's success. These partnerships help in organizing the event, marketing the artworks, and providing logistical support.

National art centres also play a crucial role in ensuring the fair represents a diverse range of Indigenous art styles and traditions, enriching the cultural experience for visitors.

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair exemplifies how the integration of the creative economy with tourism can yield substantial benefits, aligning with research findings on the impact of collaboration across regional industries.

DAAF demonstrates a strategic, long-term commitment to integrating creative practice with tourism. DAAF's consistent success over the years underscores the importance of sustained efforts and long-term partnerships.

DAAF highlights the unique narratives of Indigenous communities, offering a culturally immersive experience that resonates with visitors, aligning with the idea that regional creative practices are deeply rooted in their local ecosystems and historical contexts.

By providing economic opportunities and promoting cultural heritage, DAAF addresses the broader community benefits of the creative sector beyond traditional tourism metrics, supporting the argument for a policy shift that recognizes the pervasive role of the arts in regional development.

The ANKA's Arts Worker Extension Program exemplifies how targeted training can enhance the skills and employability of Indigenous arts workers, contributing to sustainable regional growth, aligning with the call for diversified funding and strategic collaborations to reinforce the regional creative sector.





Public Silo Trail – fostering community pride and economic growth

Organisation	FORM and CBH Group
Sector	Tourism
Location	Western Australia, Australia
Website	publicsilotrail.com

The Public Silo Trail project, spearheaded by FORM (form.net.au), a cultural and creative development organisation in Western Australia, is an ambitious public art project that breathes new life into the Wheatbelt region by converting functional grain silos into spectacular large-scale murals. By engaging both local and international artists, the project creates an open-air gallery that links rural and coastal towns through a shared visual narrative. This trail, which was completed in 2018, spans multiple towns including Northam, Merredin, and Katanning, and extends to Albany, transforming ordinary agricultural structures into vibrant works of art.

The Public Silo Trail demonstrates the transformative potential of integrating the creative economy with tourism in regional areas. By turning grain silos into spectacular murals, the project not only enhances the cultural tourism experience but also fosters community pride and economic growth. This case study highlights the importance of strategic planning, community engagement, and collaborative efforts in maximizing the benefits of creative partnerships in tourism.

Key components of the Public Silo Trail include:

- **Artistic Transformation** – turning grain silos, public walls, and transformer boxes into massive canvases for murals, each telling a unique story that reflects the local community’s identity, resilience, and hard work. Artists from both local and global backgrounds are invited to contribute, ensuring a diverse and dynamic range of artworks that attract a wide audience.
- **Community Engagement** – extensive community consultation and participation ensures that the murals resonate with local residents and accurately represent their stories and values. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership and pride among community members, reinforcing the social fabric of these towns.
- **Tourism and economic impact** – a major draw for tourists, creating a unique road trip experience that encourages visitors to explore the Wheatbelt and Great Southern districts. Increased tourism boosts local businesses, from hospitality to retail, providing significant economic benefits to these rural areas.

← The Public Silo Trail in Merredin, WA

The Public Silo Trail exemplifies how creative partnerships can effectively integrate the creative economy with tourism, providing both immediate and long-term benefits to regional communities.

- The project's focus on local stories and community involvement underscores the importance of regional narratives.
- By attracting tourists and boosting local economies, the Public Silo Trail addresses the broader community benefits of the creative sector beyond traditional tourism metrics. This supports the call for policy shifts that recognize the pervasive role of the arts in regional development.
- The success of the Public Silo Trail is underpinned by collaborations with artists, local governments, and community organisations. This aligns with the recommendation for diversified financial mechanisms and strategic collaborations to reinforce the regional creative sector.

↓
The Public Silo Trail in
Northam, WA



4.4. Agriculture

Agriculture Innovation Australia (AIA, 2022) underlines the urgency for the farming sector to adopt a renewed strategy. This approach is centred around welcoming innovative concepts, pioneering new models and endorsing diverse perspectives. For AIA, the crux of transformative progress lies in collaboration and forging strong partnerships. Its commitment is deeply rooted in the pursuit of innovative solutions to tackle pressing challenges. Moreover, it sees collaboration and strategic partnerships as invaluable in refining the tools and strategies that will define the future of agricultural innovation. The growing agritourism sector focuses on creating experiences centred around agricultural produce. Agritourism connects people to products and is delivered through direct 'on-farm' experiences. The Agritourism 2030 Action Plan (Australian Regional Tourism, 2022) emphasises capacity-building and relevant skills development within local communities, including storytelling, marketing, digital advertising and communication skills, which fall within the creative economy portfolio.



Earth Canvas – emphasizing sustainable practices and a deep connection to the environment

Organisation	Earth Canvas
Sector	Agriculture
Location	Australia
Website	earthcanvas.com.au

The Earth Canvas project exemplifies how creative partnerships can bridge the gap between art and agriculture. By fostering collaboration between artists and farmers, the project has successfully highlighted the interdependence of these two sectors, promoting sustainable practices and enriching community life through creative expression.

The Earth Canvas project was designed to create a dynamic interaction between artists and farmers, focusing on shared creativity and empathy towards the landscape. By fostering collaboration between these two seemingly disparate groups, Earth Canvas aims to highlight the interdependence of art and agriculture, emphasizing sustainable practices and a deep connection to the environment.

The Earth Canvas project undertook several innovative activities aimed at bridging the gap between artists and farmers. The main components of the project included:

- Residencies on farms – artists were invited to reside on farms, allowing them to immerse themselves in the agricultural environment and develop a deep understanding of farming practices. These residencies facilitated the creation of artworks that reflected the landscape and the daily life of farmers.
- Interactive workshops – the project organised workshops where artists and farmers could share their experiences and techniques, providing a platform for mutual learning and creativity, fostering a deeper appreciation of each other's work and perspectives.
- Art exhibitions – artworks created during the residencies were showcased in public exhibitions. These exhibitions aimed to bring the rural and urban communities together, highlighting the beauty and significance of the agricultural landscape through the eyes of artists.
- Community engagement events – alongside the exhibitions, the project hosted community events such as panel discussions, farm tours, and interactive art-making sessions. These events aimed

←
Cattle producer Gillian Sanbrook on her Bowna property, NSW. Photo by David Geraghty

to engage the broader community, promoting dialogue around sustainability, creativity, and the role of agriculture in society.

The Earth Canvas project aligns closely with research findings on the integration of the creative economy with regional industries. The project illustrates several key insights:

- By bringing together diverse stakeholders, the project fostered co-designed initiatives that spanned multiple industries, echoing the recommendation to leverage diversified financial mechanisms and strategic alliances to amplify the impact of creative practices in regional development.
- These stories provide inspiration and practical insights for other regional communities looking to integrate creative practices into their local industries. Additionally, the project's framework could be expanded to include Indigenous partnerships, further enriching the narrative and fostering cultural diversity in creative and agricultural collaborations.
- By demonstrating the benefits of integrating art with agriculture, the project advocates for a policy shift that acknowledges the continuous influence of creative practices in regional economies. This aligns with the call for sustained support and recognition of the creative sector's contributions to regional development and community cohesion.
- By assessing the multifaceted impact of the project, stakeholders can gain a holistic understanding of its social, cultural, and economic benefits. This approach aligns with the recommendation to partner with academic institutions and cultural organizations to develop robust evaluation metrics that capture the diverse contributions of creative practices in regional Australia.



←
Regenerative farmers
Michael and Anna
Coughlan Mt Narra Narra
Holbrook with Goulburn
artist Jenny Bell with her
earth canvas artwork
- *Lifeblood*, 2019
Photo by David Geraghty

Broom and Brine – promoting sustainable and community-focused farming

Organisation	Grace Gamage and Dylan Lehmann
Sector	Agriculture
Location	Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
Website	broomandbrine.com

Broom and Brine in Tasmania serves as a compelling example of how creative partnerships can enrich regional communities and promote sustainable development. By blending art and agriculture, Broom and Brine has created a vibrant platform that celebrates the unique cultural and agricultural heritage of the region. This case study underscores the transformative potential of the creative economy in regional Australia, highlighting the need for strategic collaborations, supportive policies and ongoing research to unlock further opportunities for regional development and sustainability.

Broom and Brine is a market garden run by Grace Gamage and Dylan Lehmann. The organisation is dedicated to promoting wellbeing and environmental harmony through sustainable agricultural practices. Dylan Lehmann brings expertise in worker cooperatives and sustainable processes, while Grace Gamage, an artist and market gardener, combines business administration with soil science. Together, they operate a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program that delivers fresh vegetables to approximately 130 people weekly. Additionally, Broom and Brine offers coaching and consultancy services for

other market gardeners, emphasising sustainable and community-focused farming practices.

Broom and Brine's activities highlight the synergy between creative practices and sustainable agriculture. Key components of their program include:

- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program**

Weekly Deliveries – CSA program provides fresh, locally grown vegetables to about 130 community members each week. This model fosters a direct connection between farmers and consumers, ensuring a steady market for produce and promoting community engagement.

Sustainable Farming Practices – inspired by Booker T. Whatley's 1970s concept of small-scale farming, the CSA program emphasises sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. This includes organic farming techniques, soil health management and reducing the carbon footprint of food production.

- **Integration of Art and Agriculture**

Creative Management and Soil Science – Grace Gamage’s unique blend of artistic skills and agricultural expertise is reflected in the management of Broom and Brine. She integrates creative approaches to business administration and soil science, fostering innovation and sustainability in farming practices.

Artistic Community Engagement – Broom and Brine engages the community through artistic and cultural activities. This includes farm tours, workshops, and community events that highlight the intersection of art and agriculture, promoting a deeper appreciation for sustainable farming and environmental stewardship.

- **Coaching and Consultancy**

Support for Market Gardeners – Broom and Brine offers coaching and consultancy services aimed at supporting other market gardeners to adopt sustainable practices. This includes advice on cooperative business models, value improvements, and integrating creative approaches into farming operations.

Workshops and Training – Broom and Brine conducts workshops and training sessions on sustainable agriculture, soil health and business management, helping to build a network of knowledgeable and empowered market gardeners.

The Broom and Brine initiative aligns closely with research findings on the integration of the creative economy with regional industries. Several key insights from the research are reflected in their activities:

By combining sustainable agriculture with artistic practices, Broom and Brine exemplifies the power of cross-sector partnerships to drive innovation and community development. This approach mirrors the recommendation to leverage collaborations across various sectors, such as health, education, and tourism.

The framework established by Broom and Brine could be expanded to include partnerships with Indigenous communities, incorporating Indigenous cultural practices and perspectives into the creative and agricultural landscape.

The collaborative evaluation strategy employed by Broom and Brine, involving artists, farmers, and community stakeholders, highlights the importance of comprehensive assessment methods. By evaluating the social, cultural, and economic impacts of the initiative, stakeholders can gain a holistic understanding of its benefits and areas for improvement.





FutureFarmers – creating a vibrant platform that celebrates the unique cultural and agricultural heritage of rural landscapes

Organisation	FutureFarmers
Sector	Agriculture
Location	San Francisco, California, USA
Website	futurefarmers.com

Founded in 1995, FutureFarmers is a radical design studio based in San Francisco that focuses on blending art, design and agriculture to create innovative projects that transform rural landscapes. The collective comprises artists, designers, farmers and architects who collaborate on various initiatives aimed at fostering a rural artistic renaissance. Their projects often challenge conventional agricultural practices and promote sustainable, community-centred approaches to farming and rural development.

FutureFarmers has spearheaded several activities and programs that emphasise creative partnerships in agriculture. Key components of their work include:

- **Artist projects and residencies**

Support for specific artist projects that engage directly with rural and agricultural settings. These projects often involve reimagining traditional farming practices, exploring sustainable methods, and integrating artistic expression into everyday agricultural activities

FutureFarmers offers residencies for artists to live and work in rural communities. These residencies provide artists with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local agricultural context, collaborate with farmers, and create works that reflect and respond to the rural environment.

- **Community engagement and education**

FutureFarmers conducts workshops and creates public art installations that engage local communities in discussions about sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, and the role of art in rural life. These activities aim to foster a sense of community and shared purpose among participants

FutureFarmers develops educational programs that teach sustainable farming techniques and encourage innovative thinking in agriculture. These programs often involve hands-on learning experiences that bridge the gap between art and agriculture.

←
A Meander, 2023, sound, performance, scenography, city planning, sculpture. Image supplied by FutureFarmers

- **Collaborative Agricultural Projects**

FutureFarmers collaborates with local farmers on experimental farming projects that test new methods of cultivation, land use and resource management. These projects seek to demonstrate the potential of integrating artistic creativity with practical agricultural practices.

The collective also focuses on designing sustainable agricultural tools and infrastructure. This includes creating low-impact farming equipment, designing efficient irrigation systems and exploring alternative energy sources for rural communities.

The activities of FutureFarmers align closely with research findings on the integration of the creative economy with regional industries. Several key insights from the research are reflected in their work:

By integrating artistic creativity with agricultural practices, the collective demonstrates how cross-sector partnerships can

enhance both cultural and economic outcomes. This mirrors the recommendation to leverage collaborations across various sectors, such as health, education, and tourism, to amplify the impact of creative practices in regional development.

The collective's emphasis on documenting and showcasing the outcomes of their projects provides valuable success narratives that inspire other regions. FutureFarmers' framework could be expanded to include partnerships with Indigenous communities, further enriching the creative and agricultural landscape.

By evaluating social, cultural, and economic impacts of the initiative, stakeholders can gain a holistic understanding of its benefits and areas for improvement. This approach supports the recommendation to partner with academic institutions and cultural organizations to develop robust evaluation metrics that capture the diverse contributions of creative practices in regional contexts.

↓
A Meander, 2023, sound, performance, scenography, city planning, sculpture.
Image supplied by FutureFarmers



4.5 Manufacturing

While there is limited research into manufacturing and cultural production in regional Australia, there are a number of examples in specific locations of engagement in localised cultural product manufacturing and related infrastructure. For instance, in Sydney, over 67 per cent of all manufacturing employment is linked to cultural industry products. Studies have identified advanced manufacturing, creative industries, tourism and food processing as potential growth areas for regional areas, emphasising the importance of localised, place-based economies. Gibson et al., 2017).

Australia's manufacturing sector has seen a resurgence in small-scale, localised manufacturing over the recent years Achurch (2019). The focus should be on leveraging regional strengths and addressing local barriers for optimal job creation and business growth. It is vital to assess workforce availability in specialised regions, ensuring the creation of new jobs and the development of regional migration strategies as detailed in the RAI's *The Future of Regional Jobs report*. (Regional Australia Institute, 2019b).



←
Ridgeline Pottery uses methods that provide a direct connection to the land of Tasmania. Image supplied by Ridgeline Pottery

Ridgeline Pottery – creative partnerships driving innovation, sustainability, and commercial success

Organisation	Ridgeline Pottery
Sector	Manufacturing
Location	Sandford, Tasmania, Australia
Website	ridgelinepottery.com

By engaging in a collaborative design process with renowned chefs, Ridgeline Pottery creates customized, high-quality tableware that enhances the dining experience. This approach highlights the potential for integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern market needs, demonstrating that artistic integrity and commercial success can coexist. Ridgeline Pottery’s commitment to sustainability, local sourcing, and cultural preservation further underscores the value of creative partnerships in manufacturing. This case study offers valuable insights for researchers and practitioners interested in exploring the intersections of art, craft, and commerce.

This small enterprise has carved out a unique niche by providing high-end, handcrafted tableware to prestigious restaurants across Australia. Situated in a region renowned for its rich artistic heritage, Ridgeline Pottery stands out for its dedication to quality, creativity, and sustainable practices. The pottery is celebrated for its bespoke approach, which involves intimate collaborations with renowned chefs to create custom-designed ceramic pieces that enhance the dining experience.

The cornerstone of Ridgeline Pottery’s success lies in its innovative approach to creative partnerships in manufacturing. Instead of producing generic ceramic designs, Ridgeline Pottery engages in a co-creation process with culinary experts. This program involves hosting chefs at their studio, where they collaboratively design plates, bowls, and other tableware tailored specifically for unique dishes. This bespoke approach adds a personal touch to dining experiences, highlighting the versatility and adaptability of Ridgeline’s craftsmanship.

Ridgeline Pottery’s innovative approach involves:

- A collaborative design process where chefs are invited to Ridgeline’s studio to discuss their vision and requirements for specific dishes. Through this interaction, potters gain a deeper understanding of the culinary context, allowing them to create tableware that complements and enhances the presentation of the food.
- Customized production where once the designs are finalized, Ridgeline Pottery produces high volumes of customized tableware while maintaining a commitment to quality and artistic

integrity. This ensures that each piece is unique and tailored to the specific needs of the restaurant.

- Traditional wood-fired ceramics using methods that provide a direct connection to the land of Tasmania. This technique not only adds aesthetic value but also embodies sustainable practices by utilizing local materials and traditional firing methods.
- Balancing art and commerce by remaining dedicated to individual artistic pursuits while producing high volumes of customized tableware. The artisans at Ridgeline continue to explore their creative expressions through various ceramic pieces, ensuring that their commercial success does not compromise their artistic integrity.

Ridgeline Pottery's approach to creative partnerships in manufacturing offers valuable insights for research in this area. Key themes that emerge from this case study include:

- The collaboration between potters and chefs illustrates how traditional craftsmanship can be seamlessly integrated with modern market demands.
- The bespoke approach taken by Ridgeline Pottery adds significant value to its products.
- Ridgeline Pottery's use of wood-fired ceramics and local materials highlights the importance of sustainability in manufacturing.
- Ridgeline Pottery's ability to balance high-volume production with individual artistic pursuits showcases a model where commercial success and artistic integrity can coexist.
- By utilizing traditional techniques and local materials, Ridgeline Pottery preserves and promotes the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Tasmania.
- The collaborative design process between potters and chefs is an example of how innovation can be achieved through creative partnerships.

For the last 15 years I have been working with some of the best chefs and restaurateurs in Tasmania and on the mainland to develop custom tableware for their restaurants. The work is developed in consultation with the chefs but is made to our design not theirs.

Ben Richardson

4.6 Infrastructure

Regional social and cultural infrastructure is pivotal for the creative ecosystem. Social and cultural infrastructure encompasses the essential facilities and services that foster community wellbeing, such as health, education, green spaces, arts, culture and emergency services. While primarily covering tangible assets – museums, galleries, theatres and various other spaces that promote cultural activities and expressions – infrastructure also includes digital platforms that facilitate online cultural access.

Internet access is pivotal for connectivity, community-building and accessing services in today's digital era. Particularly in regional Australia, the internet serves as both a medium and venue for cultural exchange and expression. Social and cultural infrastructure also provides employment opportunities and stimulates population growth in regional areas. On a national scale, social infrastructure sectors contributed 12.5 per cent of Australia's GDP in 2018. These sectors employ just over three million people, or around a quarter of Australia's workforce (Cunningham 2022).

Diverse and accessible social and cultural infrastructure is crucial to ensure inclusivity for all community demographics. The *Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps* report (Infrastructure Australia, 2022) notes that infrastructure plays an essential role in demographic shifts, attracting diverse populations, boosting creativity and stimulating regional economies. Research on youth mobility and regional identities underscores the importance of 'informal' cultural spaces such as festivals, music venues and public squares. These spaces are where local culture is practised, fostering community ties and identity (Christopherson, 2004; Farrugia, 2015; Gibson et al., 2010; Radford, 2017).



Songlines: Woolgoolga to Ballina Aboriginal Art Trail – fostering deeper connections between infrastructure and cultural heritage

Organisation	Transport for New South Wales and Balarinji
Sector	Infrastructure
Location	New South Wales, Australia
Website	pacifichighway.nsw.gov.au/drive-songlines

Songlines: Woolgoolga to Ballina Aboriginal Art Trail, NSW by Transport NSW and Balarinji (balarinji.com.au) is a pioneering example of how creative partnerships can enhance infrastructure projects. By integrating Indigenous art and cultural heritage into the Pacific Motorway, the project not only preserves and promotes Aboriginal narratives but also enriches the travel experience for motorists.

The ‘Songlines’ project features artworks strategically placed along nine overpass bridges on the Pacific Motorway. These installations depict themes of physical and spiritual belonging, as well as the deep connection to Country that is intrinsic to Aboriginal cultures. The artworks are designed to narrate the ancient and vibrant history of the Gumbaynggirr, Yaegl, and Bundjalung peoples, providing travellers with an immersive cultural experience.

In 2016, Transport NSW partnered with Balarinji to develop an integrated art strategy that would bring Indigenous cultural heritage to the forefront of a major infrastructure project: the Pacific Highway upgrade. This collaboration culminated in the ‘Songlines’ project, which

involved local Aboriginal artists from the Gumbaynggirr, Yaegl and Bundjalung communities. The project aimed to transform the section of the Pacific Motorway between Woolgoolga and Ballina into a culturally rich and visually striking journey.

The collaboration also explores extending these artistic installations to motorway rest areas, offering motorists additional opportunities to engage with and appreciate the cultural heritage of the region. This extension aims to enhance the cultural journey and promote a deeper understanding and respect for the Aboriginal communities whose land the motorway traverses.

The ‘Songlines’ project serves as an exemplary model for integrating creative partnerships within infrastructure development. This case study underscores several key themes relevant to research on such partnerships:

- By collaborating with Balarinji and local Aboriginal artists, Transport NSW ensured that the project was deeply rooted in the cultural narratives and traditions of the Indigenous communities.

←
Artwork installation
Woodburn interchange
southbound. Photo via
NSW Transport

- The project involved local Aboriginal community-endorsed artists, ensuring that the artworks authentically represented the stories and heritage of the Gumbaynggirr, Yaegl, and Bundjalung peoples.
- The integration of Indigenous artworks along the motorway transforms a routine travel experience into a culturally enriching journey.
- The potential extension of artwork installations to motorway rest areas indicates a scalable model that can be replicated in other infrastructure projects.
- The partnership between a government agency and a creative studio exemplifies the positive outcomes that can result from cross-sector collaboration.
- By embedding cultural elements within the infrastructure, the project promotes cultural tourism, encouraging visitors to engage with and learn about the region's Indigenous heritage.

↓
Artwork installation
Arararra interchange
southbound. Photo via
NSW Transport



→
Artwork installation
Maclean interchange
northbound. Photo via
NSW Transport





Findings

05

←
Ridgeline Pottery
products. Image
supplied by
Ridgeline Pottery

5.1 Diversified funding and strategic collaborations for creative growth

Tapping into portfolios such as health, education, tourism, and infrastructure can spawn co-designed projects spanning multiple industries. Leveraging the success of the Regional Art Fund could provide a template for similar funds targeting education and wellbeing. Regional Arts Australia's data suggest this could catalyse up to 50,000 new job opportunities, reinforcing the regional creative sector and fostering robust research in the years ahead. Strengthening inter-industry collaboration requires deliberate partnerships with leading organisations across these sectors. For example, RAA is ideally placed to lead collaborations with the Regional Health Alliance, the CREATE Centre and AgriFutures Australia. These strategic alliances offer reciprocal benefits by merging specialised knowledge and working towards collective objectives. Programs such as Indigenous Business Australia, the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program and Indigenous Languages and the Arts are examples of how Indigenous art and cultural preservation can be woven into the fabric of community health and development, especially in remote Australian regions.

5.2 Emphasising research, success narratives and indigenous partnerships

To ensure dynamic and adaptive integration across industries, ongoing research into collaboration dynamics is essential. Highlighting success stories serves to inspire, drawing in stakeholders and underlining the efficacy of cross-sectoral partnerships. Within the creative practice of regional Australia, there is a marked push towards acknowledging the presence of the arts in everyday life. This expansive creative panorama can be further enriched through collaborations with First Nations communities, intertwining Indigenous cultural practices with business, tourism and community development.

5.3 Supporting and acknowledging the impact of regional creative practice

Strengthened support to the arts will harness the rich creative resources inherent in regional communities, forging potential pathways to sustainable regional development and growth. The broader societal benefits of the arts are incontrovertible: they knit communities together, preserve regional identities and foster environmental sustainability.

5.4 Evaluating through collaboration and partnership

Accurately assessing the impact of the arts necessitates a comprehensive, collaborative evaluation strategy. By allying with academic institutions, cultural organisations and policy-makers, we can holistically understand the multifaceted contributions of creative practitioners in regional Australia. Partnerships with organisations such as the Regional Australia Institute can be innovative, fortifying regional economies and elevating regional living standards. Through such symbiotic collaborations, the transformative potential of an integrated creative practice in Regional Australia can truly be harnessed.



Research project

06

←
Red Flag Dancers,
Darwin Aboriginal Art
Fair 2023. Photo by
Dylan Buckee

Our approach to this research project has drawn on ideas and core definitions best summarised by the Prime Minister in the introduction to REVIVE... *varied forms of artistic expression* important to the building of national identity at home and abroad, manifest in *our stories being told, our music being played, or our world being interpreted through paint, dance, textile, stone or clay*. The wealth of values and potential financial worth of culture are writ large across REVIVIE. The arts are lauded for the part they play in communal health and connectivity, as well as for the A\$12.7 billion of economic activity they contribute.

The purpose of our research is to shed light on the complexity and diversity of cultural geographies in regional and remote areas. These geographies interact with other regions through professional artistic networks, migration, grassroots initiatives, specific projects and movements, as well as personal connections and perceptions of place. We encourage viewing regional and remote Australia as a dynamic and multi-layered tapestry of meanings and relationships, where each region exists, evolves, and connects with global places. This perspective has the potential to highlight the resourcefulness and creative potential of regional areas and leverage that potential to strengthen regional development.

This research project aimed to address three key questions:

1. How do cultural and creative sectors currently intersect with other economic sectors in the regional Australian economy?
2. What are the relevant agendas and potential partners in other regional economic sectors that could encourage a broader involvement of creative and cultural employment in regional areas?
3. What would an integrated approach to creative initiatives targeting regional economic sectors look like, and how can we measure or evaluate its impact?

6.1 Research Methodology

Our research has delved into the existing academic literature, focusing on theoretical debates surrounding the overall influence of culture and creativity on place, community development, and innovations. We utilize case studies to provide evidence of how culture and creativity affect specific aspects of social life and sectors of the economy, such as health and well-being, education, tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing. To highlight current priorities in each economic sector, we have also analysed policy documents such as strategic plans and reports issued at both federal and state government level.

While this research project was primarily desktop, in 2023, Regional Arts Australia we delivered *Artlands23* as part of our 80th year. *Artlands* is a bi-annual gathering for regional arts practitioners, who often work in isolated silos, to come together to survey the current landscape of regional arts, build connections, generate exchange and strengthens a national network. Organisationally *Artlands* forms a central pillar of our people and place-led approach. Hearing directly from artists and arts workers is an invaluable resource for guiding our work.

Artlands23 was an 18-month co-design process curated to share ideas that will help determine the priorities for the regional creative sector and shape future policy priorities. We facilitated 80 regional practitioners, facilitators and presenters from multiple art forms, across industries, generations and cultures to participate in a national gathering at the National Gallery Australia on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country (in Canberra). The part symposium, part think tank, part workshop program encouraged responses to this research.

6.2 Artlands23 workshops

Installed along a breakout space were three large prints that talked to the research and encouraged interaction and responses.

In our research we have identified key facets of regional creativity.

Creativity in regional Australia contributes to:

- Employment
- Liveability
- Cultural vibrancy

The following questions guided the workshop discussion:

What opportunities do we have to build more a sustainable sector or partner to develop cross-industry approaches?

What are the ways forward – locally / regionally / nationally?

How does creativity in regional Australia intersect with other industries?

(This builds on RAA's regional Strategic framework. Participants were asked to fill in the circles with case study examples.)

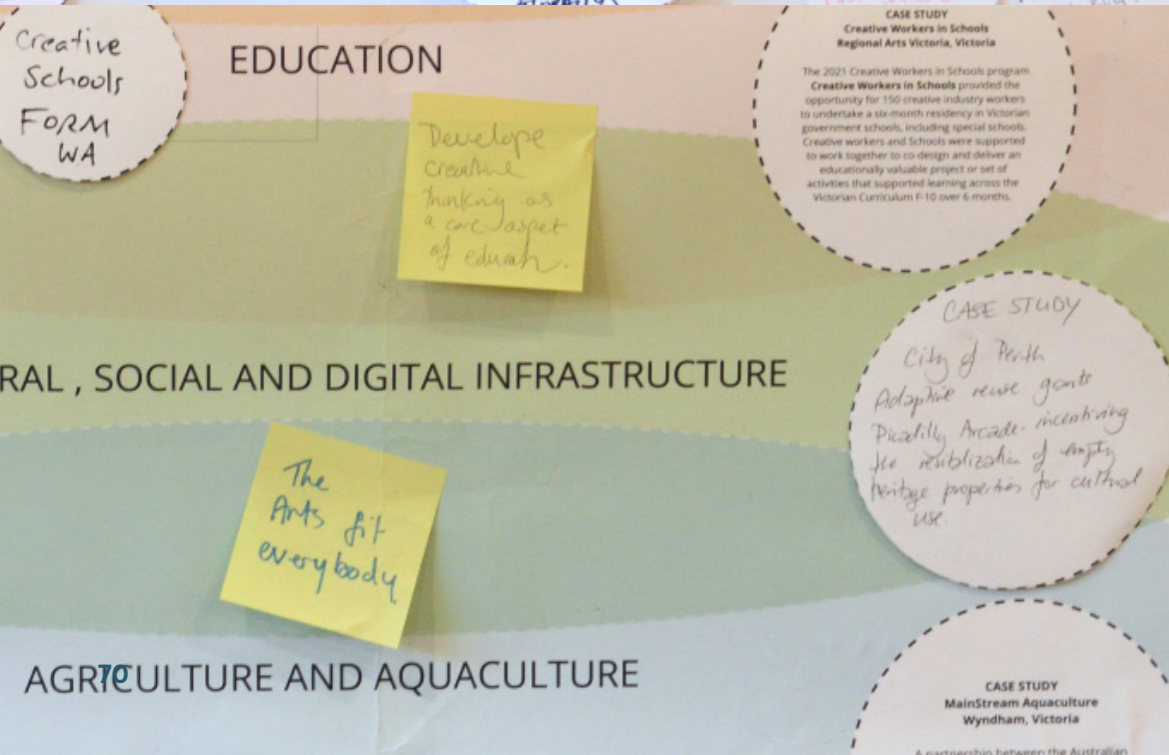
Dr Simon Spain was available across the three days to talk through any ideas, comments and responses.



→ Examples of participant responses from the Artlands23 workshops

CASE STUDY
 Toronto, Canada
 Art scape - gentrification
 that retains artist-led
 families living & working there.
 through partnership between
 development, government & arts
 sectors. - can be applied
 regionally, especially in
 collaboration with Development
 Commissions.

hat could an



6.3 Research team

Dr Simon Spain (Lead) is globally acclaimed for his community-engaged arts practice. He blends academic knowledge with practical insights to explore creativity's impact on wellbeing and prosperity. Affiliated as an adjunct senior researcher at the University of Tasmania, Simon has a master's degree and a PhD, focusing on the transformative power of creativity in individual and community connection together with an understanding of social investment for healthy societies.

Dr Alexandra (Sasha) Blok (Co-lead) is a PhD graduate from Griffith University with a rich fifteen-year background in the cultural industries. She was a manager and later CEO of Russia's inaugural World Music Festival. Alexandra has amplified regional cultural and economic development, collaborating with local, and international artists and government bodies. Alexandra's doctoral research focus was on the roles of music in regional migrant sustainable resettlement and integrated approaches to the arts, international migration and regional development policies.

Additional contributions from:

Professor Paul Long, Monash University is an authority on the intersection of the creative sector, media and cultural policy, Paul previously directed the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research before joining Monash in 2019. At Monash, he leads the Culture Media Economy research hub and the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre. His current research delves into DIY cultural production and the impact of migrants on Australia's cultural and creative sectors.

Dr Miriam McGarry is currently an associate consultant with First Person Consulting and works on project management, survey design, data analysis, communication and report delivery for research and evaluation in the environment and community development sector. She is also a research assistant at Monash University in the creative and cultural economy and Indigenous practice.

Denise Robinson, University of Tasmania is a Tasmanian woman with Palawa (paternal) and English/Scottish (maternal) bloodlines. An accomplished artist, arts administrator and project manager, she has held a diverse range of senior roles in government departments and agencies, corporate business, community and industry sectors over more than 40 years. She holds an MFA and BFA (Hons) from the University of Tasmania and is currently studying for a PhD.

Dennis Stokes is an advocate for empowering First Nations voices and self-determination in the arts sector. He has developed senior advocacy and business experience in the First Nations arts and media sector for over 25 years as CEO at peak bodies like First Nations Media Australia and Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, and at the grassroots organisation level at Mimi Aboriginal Arts.

Dr Sam Whiting, University of South Australia is a lecturer in creative industries at UniSA Creative, renowned for his expertise in the music industry, particularly live music cultures and cultural policy. He has contributed significantly through publications on topics ranging from music scenes, venues and gender studies to cultural identity. Besides his academic contributions, he has collaborated with the SA Music Development Office and RMIT University among others.

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