

# Cultural Strategy

## CONNECTING THROUGH CREATIVITY

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Toowoomba Region whose song lines traverse these lands. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the positive contributions of all Elders of the multiple cultures who shape community in our Region and beyond. We acknowledge the Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.



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Animaux Circus / Union Street #3 / 2016

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



It is exciting that Council has developed a Cultural Strategy, as many other Councils throughout Australia are embedding a Cultural Strategy within their corporate and strategic documents. These documents provide plans and pathways to shape and deliver the types of vibrant communities we all wish to be a part of and that the Corporate Plan wishes to inspire. It also recognises the roles of Councils in leading, valuing and fostering the arts, cultural development and creative industries – to recognise the rich traditions of the regions and the bold ambitions of imagining a future that celebrates innovation and culture by engaging with creativity.

Celebrating culture makes people feel seen, valuable and safe. It recognises that culture isn't just 'nice to have' but is a vital aspect of all parts of our lives. It doesn't just impact the arts and entertainment; culture is how people tell their stories and weave themselves into the fabric of our communities. It is the reason why people are proud to live in a region and why people come to visit.

There are a myriad of opportunities to engage with or participate in arts and cultural programs and events throughout the Region. Council supports these activities by investing in a range of arts, cultural and heritage facilities, services, organisations and community grant programs.

Arts, culture, creativity and heritage stimulate local spaces and places, fostering opportunities to connect with others and activate communities. The Toowoomba Region is a place with a distinct and enviable cultural identity and lifestyle, and Council plans and implements urban improvement work which enhances local character and identity, conserves and improves the region's streetscapes and provides iconic parklands.

Key priorities for Council are to explore opportunities to strengthen resourcing of arts, culture and heritage; to recognise and value the role of arts, culture and heritage as intrinsic to many Council areas of service delivery; and to develop and strengthen partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders in the region.

The research for this project was expansive, taking in both the global knowledge and trends and the local conditions. From the big picture down it shows that, in a changing environment, there is a very strong case to consider investment in arts, culture and heritage as central to the business of local government, alongside its traditional remit. There are few areas of local government business that can deliver such a multi-dimensional package of intrinsic, instrumental and institutional benefits.

At ground level, investment in arts and culture can deliver considerable public value including but not limited to:

- Individual health, wellbeing and enrichment.
- Social inclusion and cohesion; acceptance and tolerance; collaboration.
- Sense of place and belonging; creativity; preservation of heritage; community celebration.
- Preservation and protection of natural and built environments; public art; public space.
- Civic reputation and regional identity; community engagement.
- Local employment; business development; tourism.

In addition, the research indicates that investment in this sector can be a key to prosperity in the new economy. As a core area of Council business, investment in arts, culture and heritage can:

- Fuel a cultural vitality that is attractive to potential residents and a prospective workforce.
- Moderate extra-regional mobility and encourage residents to stay and contribute to the community over the longer term.
- Support creativity, innovation, and the development of cultural and creative industry.
- Provide the foundation for the inevitable transition to the modern economy.
- Underpin a rich, vibrant destination experience for visitors to enjoy.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our first Toowoomba Regional Cultural Strategy. Your input and involvement has been crucial in the formation of the Strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff McDonald'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G' and 'M'.

**Cr Geoff McDonald**  
MAYOR, Toowoomba Regional Council

*'Arts and creativity are vital expressions of the human experience, and there is an ever-expanding body of evidence confirming the arts deliver enormous economic, cultural and social benefits across the whole of society'*

(A. Collette 2019).



Brian Robison / *Playfulness of the Perennials* / 2016



## WHY A CULTURAL STRATEGY

There is considerable international and national research that shows that participation and engagement in the arts, culture and heritage can enrich the personal lives of residents, support the health, social and cultural wellbeing of the community and contribute to the region's economic vitality. These intrinsic, instrumental, and institutional benefits of investment in arts, culture and heritage are conditional upon a strong, dynamic, vibrant local culture.

*Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 – 2028* is a strategic document which will form part of Council's suite of key strategic documents and help inform future policy, procedures, and programs. It will help provide the optimum circumstances for cultural participation, engagement, and creativity to flourish, and to drive the delivery of cultural services that will contribute to an enviable cultural vitality in the Toowoomba Region. It will also provide a framework and identify Council's role in delivering and maximising cultural outcomes for the Region.

Objectives of the Cultural Strategy include:

- Acknowledge that an investment in arts and culture has tangible economic and social benefits for our Region.
- Produce an evidence based Cultural Strategy for Council that redefines how Council addresses the expansive role the arts, culture and heritage play within our community.
- Promote the Toowoomba Region as a place with a distinct and enviable cultural identity and lifestyle.
- To help staff recognise and value the role of arts, culture and heritage as intrinsic to many Council areas of service delivery, strengthening sustainability of cultural and creative industries.

- Achieve outcomes that would influence planning and policy across a wide range of Council branches.
- Operate with integrity and engender trust.
- Strengthen internal working relationships and develop strategic external working relationships.

Realising the actions and goals outlined in this Strategy requires Council to consider the way it works with our community and partners. By defining key guiding principles, we will ensure this Strategy works effectively with the community to achieve its desired outcomes.

The Cultural Strategy will reflect the following high-level principles which frame the work in this sector:

- Build a strong relationship and partnership with First Nations people.
- Nurture and preserve our Region's local identities and heritage and connect to our stories.
- Focus on diversity, equality of access and inclusion.
- Recognise the central role of arts, culture and creativity to the wellbeing of our community.
- Connect to our natural environment, our urban city and regional towns.
- Harness the potential of our cultural economy to drive our future growth and prosperity.
- Advance the role of creatives and Creative Industries in the community.
- Collaborate across the sector and develop creative networks.
- An informed, evidence-based, and representative decision-making process with accountable and transparent reporting.



*“Arts and culture play an important role in our everyday lives in contributing to our economy, enhancing our wellbeing, shaping our identity, and connecting our communities.”*

(Gattenhof et al 2022).



## TOOWOOMBA REGION CULTURAL PROFILE

Home to Queensland's largest inland city, the Toowoomba Region is the perfect mix of metro living and country charm. Only 90 minutes from Brisbane, stretching from Yarraman to the North and Millmerran to the South–West, perched 700 metres above sea level on the western slope of the Great Dividing Range, this Region offers diversity in abundance with rolling plains, vibrant country towns, and bright sunflower farms, combined with its growing urban coffee culture, artisanal produce, and hidden laneways while proudly showcasing its historical connection to the pioneering era.

The Toowoomba Region covers an area of 12,973 km and includes the main urban centre of Toowoomba, the regional centres of Oakey, Pittsworth, Millmerran, Highfields, Crows Nest, Clifton, Greenmount and Yarraman, as well as numerous smaller townships. It encompasses a mix of primary, secondary and tertiary industries and is a significant part of the economic development profile of southern and Southwestern Queensland.

Toowoomba Regional Council is the seventh largest local government area in Queensland with an estimated population of 175,316 persons as of 30 June 2022 (ABS Data 2021). Toowoomba City is the principal activity centre with thriving and diverse neighbourhoods that have a strong sense of community and local identity. The surrounding rural towns and townships retain their character, adding to the charm and appeal of the Region.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on this Country's vast lands for tens of thousands of years and are the world's oldest continuing living culture. Their unique identity and spirit continue to exist in every corner of the Country. The Indigenous tribes of the Jagera, Giabal and Jarowair people inhabited the Darling Downs for at least 40,000 years before European settlement. The Jagera people were of the foothills and escarpment, Giabal were of the Toowoomba area and the Jarowair were of the northern areas towards and including the Bunya Mountains.

The Darling Downs was originally known as the 'upland area' and Indigenous people of this area used a technique in hunting food where they would burn the grasslands as the new, green sprouts attracted animals. This earned them the name "Gooneburra", or "the ones who hunt with fire", by the coastal tribes.

Toowoomba is known as a key meeting place along the ancient pathways that led to huge festivals at the Bunya Mountains. These festivals were held every three years or so to celebrate the harvest of bunya nuts. Until the 1870s, Aboriginal people from as far away as the Clarence River in the south, Condamine and Maranoa in the west and Stradbroke Island in the east travelled via Toowoomba to this deeply spiritual event. The area's reliable water supply, productive grasses and nutritious local plants were a big drawcard. Some local leaders were said to have been able to speak up to five different languages to welcome visitors to country.

Much of the Region's heritage has been preserved in its buildings. In Toowoomba city and surrounds there are many standing examples of the Region's early development. This rich history is balanced by an enviable lifestyle that values natural and cultural heritage alongside a contemporary way of life.

Over its rich history, the Toowoomba Region has transformed its agricultural base into a diverse and strong economy, offering a range of business, investment and employment opportunities. Toowoomba has an economic role as a regional capital city, agriculture and food-processing centre, freight and logistics hub, as well as being a place of knowledge and research expertise. This provides enormous opportunities to respond to the powerful changes to the local, national and global economic landscape.

The Toowoomba Region is a Refugee Welcome Zone, welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees, enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community and ensuring all are able to fully participate in and benefit from all aspects of life in the Toowoomba Region.

Known as Queensland's Garden City, Toowoomba's cultural identity derives as much from the growing urban coffee culture and street art scene, theatres, museums, galleries, wineries and festivals that make it a must stop for many visitors as it does from its abundant parks and natural beauty, and iconic Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers event.



Katie Whyte / *Each New Horizon* / 2022

Research into the benefits arising from investment in public infrastructure and services shows that investment in arts, culture and heritage generates considerable public benefit, described as public or cultural value. The package of benefits comprising this public value includes personal; social; cultural; civic, environmental; and economic. These benefits or outcomes can be measured, providing a clear assessment of return on investment.

## CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The development of the Cultural Strategy has been undertaken by staff using a Cultural Development Network Planning Framework lens, benchmarked across national, state and local government strategy and policy, governed by a board of internal stakeholders and informed by extensive internal and external consultation and feedback using a variety of tools across several years.

The Cultural Development Network Planning Framework recognises the five public policy domains of local governments' work: Culture, Society, Governance, Economy, and Environment. Council goals and related activity can be considered within these domains, and together they enable the desired endpoint of flourishing and fulfilled individuals (Dunphy & Smithies, 2018).

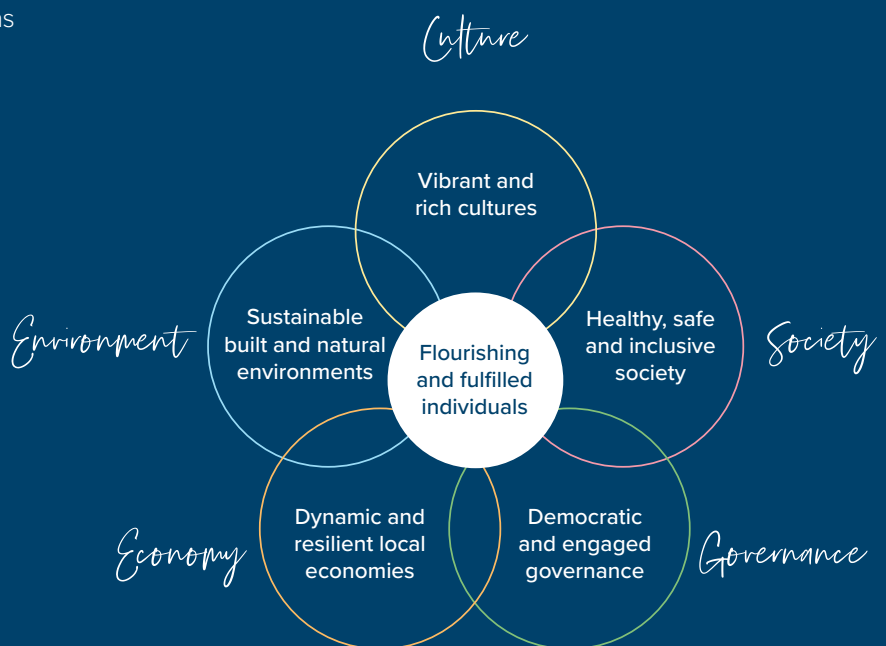


Image 1. Framework for Cultural Planning



*‘..by investing in local cultural capital including: cultural quality, local enterprises and talent; capacity building; participation; education and networking, regional areas can achieve growth’*

(Bucci et al. 2014).

## VALUE OF THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTORS

Australia's arts and cultural sector is deeply embedded in our culture, identity and economy. It is a job-rich industry, employing 714,632 people including 56,670 professional artists (Census 2021). The Cultural and Creative Industries are among the most dynamic emerging sectors in world trade. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows cultural and creative activity was estimated to have contributed \$111.7 billion to Australia's economy in 2021/22.

The 2021 Census data also tells us that- despite some sectors being hit very hard by COVID:

- The creative economy's share of total employment continues to increase, growing from 5.9 per cent of the total workforce in 2021 from 5.5 per cent in 2016.
- Creative employment is growing at a rate more than 50 per cent higher than the rest of the workforce.
- On average, the creative industries employ 1.5 times as many people in support roles as in core creative roles. There are more people in creative roles working in industries other than the creative industries than within them.

Cultural and Creative Industries can be grouped into seven sectors:

- the mostly business-to-business creative services sectors (1) advertising and marketing, (2) architecture and design, (3) software and digital content, and
- the mostly business-to-consumer cultural production sectors (4) film, television and radio, (5) music and performing arts, (6) publishing and (7) visual arts.





Fintan Magee / *Elephant and treehouse* / 2014

Some recent trends in arts and cultural development that will impact upon creative communities, and community engagement now include:

- Impact of COVID-19 - The widespread economic and social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating. The resultant loss of life and livelihood, restrictions and lockdowns, and impact on mental health and wellbeing will have ongoing ramifications for generations to come. Australia Council Chief Executive Adrian Collette said, *'The impact is not just on our cultural and creative sectors. The flow on effect is immense for the broader community and economy, not least the many thousands more employed in related industries driven so strongly by the arts and creative industries, such as tourism, hospitality, regional and community businesses.'*
- Digitisation – New research during Covid lockdowns showed that many artists and arts organisations pivoted to digital content to attract audiences, including streaming live performances, creating virtual galleries and delivering online classes and tutorials (Arts Council for the Arts, 2020). This has led to changed service delivery expectations and consumption by community and staff.
- Health and Wellbeing - It is well-established that engaging in cultural and creative activities helps us develop a sense of belonging, forges social cohesion, stimulates curiosity and the ability to engage with different perspectives, and can have a range of beneficial effects on health, wellbeing, and education outcomes (Gattenhof et al 2022).

- Growth of creative and cultural tourism and rise of Public Art to enliven spaces with cultural assets. From large scale festivals and events, to visits to artist workshops and studios, the Arts draw domestic tourists to both metropolitan and regional locations, providing opportunities to share local creativity and culture with visitors (Were 2020).
- A thriving live music scene has social, economic, and cultural benefits and fosters a connected music community encouraging collaboration between artists, industry, and venues.
- Role of education, learning and engagement at heart of cultural facilities.

It is hoped *Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023/2028* makes a clear case that art and culture can change lives and communities for the better and that they are needed more than ever. It requires a sound evidence-based strategic platform, alignment with related planning mechanisms and integration between policy, planning and program.

*No Arts, No Soul*  
(Community member response).



*Queensland Local Governments value and invest in arts and culture, providing infrastructure, services, events, and experiences which support the development of a vibrant, sustainable arts and cultural sector. Local Governments develop, fund, and support local institutions such as libraries, galleries, visitor information services and performing arts venues.*

*(LGAQ 2013).*

# PLANNING, POLICY AND LINKAGES

Culture is recognised globally as the fourth pillar of sustainable community development, alongside social, environmental and economic dimensions. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) through the Agenda 21 for Culture initiative acknowledges that for ongoing development to be sustainable, culture must be given a central role in policy. This protocol is a feature of Local Government policy around the world.

Toowoomba Regional Council operates within a network of service providers, community organisations and inter-governmental agencies. As a major network connector, Council maintains a responsibility to link, partner and broker opportunities with service providers, community organisations and government agencies to support the arts, culture and heritage across the Region.

Arts, culture and the creative industries are valued by local government as an essential economic driver for visitor, regional and night-time economies, as well as community mental health and social cohesion. The Australian Local Government Association 2021 Arts and Culture Policy calls for the support 'of the pivotal role local government plays in the development of the Creative sector, which is essential to the liveability and economic sustainability of all Australian communities'.

For local government authorities, culture can be viewed as part of the glue that brings and keeps our communities together. A strong cultural sector and enriching cultural life can contribute to welcoming, distinctive and attractive places. Used effectively, culture and the institutions and services of culture (theatres, galleries, libraries, museums, festivals, dedicated staff, venues, public art, heritage, spaces and places, and grants to creatives and community groups) can contribute toward the revitalisation of communities, the development of trust, improved health and wellbeing, and the possibility of a more positive future.

## Corporate Plan

*Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 – 2028* responds to the framework set out from Toowoomba Region's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024. Council's vision is for the Toowoomba Region to be a vibrant, inclusive and liveable Region where respect for tradition and diversity is embraced.

It also recognises the role of Council in leading, valuing and fostering the community arts, cultural development and creative industries – to recognise the rich traditions of the Region and the bold ambitions of imagining a future that celebrates innovation and culture by engaging with creativity.

This vision embraces:

- **Connectivity:** We all feel a genuine connection to the Region. A sense of pride and an emotional link.
- **Diversity:** To some of us it's the diversity of the people or the landscape.
- **Liveability:** We're happy here and feel like we belong. We like the climate, the people and the culture.
- **Tradition:** There is a very real respect for the tradition and history of our Region.

Council has identified five major goals to achieve the long-term vision for the Toowoomba Region. These goals ensure that environmental, social, cultural, economic and governance considerations underpin all strategic and operational decision making in Council. They are:

**People:** Council supports a safe, healthy and engaged Region. We create opportunities for people to connect and belong. We are proud of our unique and diverse communities.

**Place:** Council supports sustainable and innovative practices to conserve our valuable natural assets and rich agricultural land. Our environment is protected for future generations to enjoy.

**Sustainability:** Council integrates good planning and sustainable infrastructure networks to enhance our communities. Our infrastructure is well-maintained and enables growth into the future.

**Prosperity:** Our Region has a strong and diverse economy. Flourishing businesses and industries attract and retain employment opportunities. Rich traditions and bold ambitions continue to drive our Region.

**Performance:** Our diverse Region's values are reflected through ethical decision-making and good governance. Our approach to improvement and innovation enhances customer experience.

In a rapidly growing Region, it is vital that we have a roadmap if we are to harness our arts and cultural assets and create strong communities. The practical purposes of the Strategy are to:

- Acknowledge an investment in arts and culture has tangible economic and social benefits for the Region.
- Focus resources and provide direction, leadership and clarity around the role of Council in arts and cultural development.
- Support whole-of-Council engagement in arts and cultural development.
- Signal our priorities to the arts sector, the wider community, and our partners.
- Enable progress to be monitored and evaluated.

## Macro Policy Context

Advocate	Informed By	Statement of purpose
United Nations	Article 27 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948	Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
UNESCO	Definition 2001	UNESCO defines culture as the ‘set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs’.
	Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005	<p>The convention is a legally binding international agreement that ensures artists, cultural professionals, practitioners, and citizens worldwide can create, produce, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities, including their own. The convention aims to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National policies and measures promote creation, production, distribution and access with regard to diverse cultural goods and services and contribute to informed, transparent and participatory systems of governance for culture.</li> <li>• Sustainable development policies and international assistance programmes integrate culture as a strategic dimension.</li> <li>• International and national legislation related to human rights and fundamental freedoms promote both artistic freedom and the social and economic rights of artists.</li> </ul>
Australian Government	National Cultural Policy <i>Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place</i> 2023	<p>Revive is a five-year plan to renew and revive Australia's arts, entertainment and cultural sector. It delivers new momentum so that Australia's creative workers, organisations and audiences continue to thrive and grow, and so that arts, culture and heritage are re-positioned as central to Australia's future.</p> <p>Revive is structured around five interconnected pillars which set out the Government's strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations First: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.</li> <li>• A Place for Every Story: Reflecting the breadth of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.</li> <li>• Centrality of the Artist: Supporting the artist as worker and celebrating artists as creators.</li> <li>• Strong Cultural Infrastructure: Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts, culture and heritage.</li> <li>• Engaging the Audience: Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad.</li> </ul>
	<i>Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy</i> 2012	Outlines the roles and responsibilities of each level of national government in relation to the provision of services for the Arts and encourages all levels of government to deliver stronger and more coordinated arts and cultural services.
	Australia Council for the Arts Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023	<p>Creativity Connects Us; champion and invest in Australian arts and creativity. 5 strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australians are transformed by arts and creativity.</li> <li>• Our arts reflect us.</li> <li>• First nations arts and culture are cherished.</li> <li>• Arts and creativity are thriving.</li> <li>• Arts and creativity are valued.</li> </ul>

Advocate	Informed By	Statement of purpose
Queensland Government	Arts Queensland	Is dedicated to growing a vibrant and sustainable arts and cultural sector in Queensland. It recognises the public value of Queensland's dynamic arts and cultural sector and its delivery on the Our Future State: Advancing Queensland Priorities. Specifically, its contribution to the creation of jobs in a strong economy and engaging young Queenslanders.
	<i>Creative Together 2020 - 2030</i>	Queensland Government's ten-year vision which will see Queensland renewed and contribute to the state's social, cultural and economic future through arts, culture and creativity. The goal is a strong and sustainable sector, with 5 objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate First nations arts.</li> <li>• Activate Queensland's local places and global digital spaces.</li> <li>• Drive social change across the state.</li> <li>• Strengthen Queensland communities.</li> <li>• Share our stories and celebrate our storytellers.</li> </ul>
	The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF)	Promotes the role and value of arts, culture and heritage as key drivers of diverse and inclusive communities and strong regions. RADF is a flexible fund that supports local councils to invest in arts and cultural priorities, as determined by local communities, across Queensland. The Queensland Government recognises local councils as key partners and co-investors in Queensland's arts and culture. RADF is delivered as a partnership between the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, and eligible local councils.
Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)	Arts and Culture Policy Position 2021	The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) recognises the fundamental importance of community arts, cultural development and heritage in local communities, endorsing the United Committee of Local Governments' (UCLG) policy statement on Culture: The Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development, that places culture as a policy area for local governments to consider alongside the economic, social and environmental outcomes of their policies.
Toowoomba Regional Council	Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024	Council has identified five major goals to achieve the long-term vision for the Toowoomba Region. These goals ensure that environmental, social, cultural, economic and governance considerations underpin all strategic and operational decision making in Council. They are:
	<i>Connecting through Creativity - Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 -2028</i>	<i>Connecting through Creativity - Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 -2028</i> will provide the framework for the delivery of the strategic direction, will identify what will add cultural value to Council's People, Place, Sustainability, Prosperity and Performance goals; and identify Council's role in delivering and maximising cultural outcomes for the Region.
	Arts and Cultural Policy	Toowoomba Regional Council aims to nurture a community which values arts and cultural heritage, and which is creative, committed to life-long learning, and which proudly embraces a strong sense of place as fundamental to our regional identity.
	Public Art Policy	Toowoomba Regional Council's Public Art Policy guides the future development of public artworks in the Region and manages the existing public art as a collection.

*Local Government is recognised as being efficient and effective in the allocation of resources at the local level and is best positioned to make decisions about arts and culture which meet the needs of their unique and diverse communities’.*

(LGAQ 2013).



## The Role of Council

*Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 – 2028* seven goals link to Toowoomba Regional Council’s Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023, benchmarked across national, state, and local government strategy and policy and are underpinned by feedback from community consultation:

- Respect and Recognise: We respect and recognise First Nations culture and heritage.
- Celebrate: Our unique culture, stories and heritage are multicultural, reflecting and shaping our local identities and communities as we celebrate and nurture diversity.
- Activate: Our arts, culture and heritage stimulate local spaces and places, fostering opportunities to connect with others and activate communities.
- Connect, Collaborate and Create: We value creativity and strive to increase access to, and engagement with, the arts, culture, and heritage across the Region.
- Govern: Our leadership and governance enable the cultural development of an inclusive, culturally rich, and vibrant community.
- Thrive: Our local arts and creative industries are thriving, and we cultivate opportunities for this to occur.
- Cultivate: We promote the arts, culture, and heritage of the Region, communicating the wide range of events, festivals, programs, exhibitions and collections to visitors and our community.

This framework ensures services that are delivered are the result of thorough planning process and contribute to the overarching purpose of cultural development;

an inclusive, culturally rich and vibrant community. Benchmarking, consultation and workshopping with the governing board and internal stakeholders helped define the role of Council as:

<b>Advocate</b>	Championing local arts, culture and heritage, leveraging Council’s position to generate new opportunities and fuel a cultural vitality that is attractive to potential residents and a prospective workforce.
<b>Creator</b>	Being proactive and progressive, taking the first step to make things happen in the interests of the cultural life of the area, engaging local artists and creative businesses to work on council projects.
<b>Custodian</b>	Caring for, conserving, enhancing, and developing our cultural and heritage assets and infrastructure and public art and public spaces.
<b>Facilitator</b>	Creating an environment for arts, culture, and heritage to flourish - through capacity building, brokering partnerships, improving access and opportunity, providing cultural facilities, and actively supporting and incubating community-led initiatives and networks.
<b>Funder</b>	Helping communities to realise their own creative initiatives, encouraging diversity and vibrancy through strategic funding programs and in-kind support.
<b>Partner</b>	Collaborating with the community and other agencies to support arts and cultural activity.

# WHAT WE DID

## Review

In 2011, Toowoomba Regional Council adopted an Arts and Cultural Policy which articulated its commitment to identifying, promoting and growing opportunities for arts, cultural expressions and the development of creative industries across the Region.

In 2017 Toowoomba Regional Council's Library and Cultural Services branch commissioned an independent consultant to undertake a review of Council's Cultural Services with a view to making recommendations about future directions, management and marketing. This review's findings and recommendations underpin Toowoomba Regional Council's *Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 – 2028*.

In 2020, research and analysis resulted in a scoping document that was approved for the proposed Cultural Strategy.

## Internal Engagement

Internal engagement was undertaken to ensure a whole of organisation approach to inform the development of the strategy. A project team guided the process, and a governance board was created consisting of identified internal and external stakeholders. An external consultant also facilitated four focus groups with staff from across Toowoomba Regional Council, as well 10 individual meetings with all Councillors.

In these facilitated meetings participants were given several statements about Council's role in Arts and Cultural Development policy, planning and programs to review, considering current context and future thinking. Most internal stakeholders believed Toowoomba Regional Council should:

- Fund and facilitate activation in the Toowoomba Region, without becoming heavily involved in production.
- Continue providing grants and in-kind support to local arts and cultural organisations.
- Consider Indigenous and multicultural knowledge and representation in our understanding of arts, culture and heritage.
- Consider partnerships, connecting people and places.

## Community Engagement

Council sought feedback from community partners, community members and interested groups and individuals to help inform the development of this strategy.

Council also called for representatives from the arts, cultural and heritage spaces throughout the Region to help Council understand the current environment and best ways to meaningfully engage with the community.

Paid and organic social media campaigns were run on Facebook and Instagram to promote the development of the new strategy. Traditional communication methods also ensured over 50 arts, cultural and heritage groups from across the Region were contacted. Staff also spoke at the Artlands Conference Queensland Regional Hub (2021), the Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) end of year event (2021) and the Creative Industries Forum (2023) about the process, progress and how to contribute.

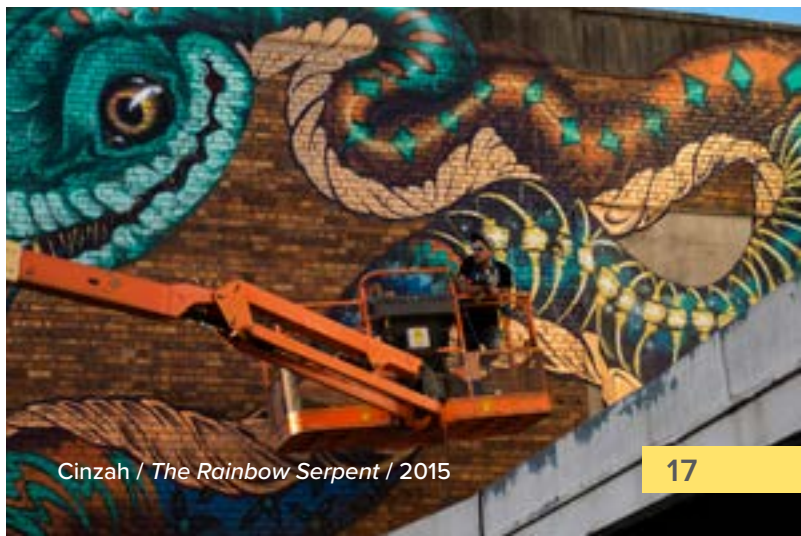
The main consultation period ran from August to October 2022 and nine physical workshops were held across the Region, as well as two online workshops. An online survey ran concurrently during this time frame. These conversations were collated and key themes and feedback from the community was broadly grouped for consideration for the strategy and resulting action plan.

## Closing the Loop; Creative Industries Summit and Workshops

As part of closing the loop with community members who provided input into the development of the Cultural Strategy, a Creative Industries Summit, Networking Event and Workshops were held on 21 - 22 April 2023. The Summit – held in collaboration with Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) - was designed to connect with and to stakeholders from across the Region.

The Creative Industries Summit and Networking events saw 145 people attend events held at the Empire Theatre and Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery. Creative practitioners, entrepreneurs and representatives from arts organisations and Councils from around the South-east Queensland attended both sold out events. The program was made up entirely of local talent except for keynote speaker Queensland's Chief entrepreneur Julia Spicer, with panels and speakers focusing on key goals - identified in the community consultation process - from the draft Cultural Strategy.

A Council representative gave an overview of the Cultural Strategy project, and asked community members to provide more feedback on the draft Strategy goals that were distributed.



Cinzah / The Rainbow Serpent / 2015

# WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

Toowoomba Regional Council acknowledges arts, culture and creativity as a means of building communities that are strong, engaged and connected. Council provides extensive support and makes a considerable annual investment in arts and cultural services and infrastructure, including dedicated staff, venues, theatres, galleries, libraries, museums and community halls; public art; festivals; heritage; and grants to artists and community groups. They play an important role in supporting happy, healthy, thriving, connected and engaged communities and are important places where people can gather, relax, learn, create and celebrate.

## Community Facilities

Community facilities can play an important role in supporting a community to grow and flourish. A successful community facility is more than a building - it is a well-programmed and activated place that provides activities and resources needed by the local community.

Toowoomba Regional Council is the principal provider of cultural facilities to the community and provide a diverse range of programs and facilities whether directly or indirectly through subsidy, in-kind support, informal partnerships, or direct management.

Community and cultural facilities are buildings provided for the community from which programs, activities, events, functions, services and resources can be obtained. Community or cultural facilities are buildings or places owned, leased or managed by Toowoomba Regional Council that serve as a community meeting or gathering place. These premises are used for community use and provide opportunities for artistic, creative, social, recreational or cultural activities or programs. Examples include:

Facility Type	Description
Art Galleries	Facilities that provide access to significant collection items, exhibitions, and public programs to share their stories and themes for education and enjoyment. They also offer opportunities to the community to showcase their work and engage with others.
Community Venues, Rooms, Halls and Spaces	Staffed venues and community rooms across the Region that are available for community to hire and use. Community halls and spaces are generally unstaffed and may contain multiple spaces, town halls, stand-alone single room facilities and small meeting rooms.
Libraries	Facilities that provide access to information, resources, programs, services and public spaces to read, learn, study and socialise.
Museums and/or Historical Villages	Access to smaller regional facilities that provide opportunities for visitors to see the history of a place or specific areas of interest.

Theatres	Council is a funding partner of the Empire Theatre, which provides dedicated arts and entertainment venues that are valued, maintained, and activated (controlled entity).
Other facilities	Council owned or managed facilities that have a primary use as a recreation facility but offer social contribution to the community.
Leased facilities	Council owned facilities leased or licensed by Council to agencies, organisations and groups who utilise the facility for activities, programs or services.

## Community Grants Program

Council recognises the important contribution community organisations make to the safety, health, equity and inclusiveness of their communities and has funded a Community Support Grant Program to provide funding and/or in-kind assistance to support community organisations in their efforts to provide services, activities and events that are of benefit to the community.

Toowoomba Regional Council aims to support and promote regional arts and cultural development, as it recognises the significant contribution vibrant arts and cultural programs, events, activities and pursuits can make to enhancing quality of life and promoting community pride. Council also acknowledges this industry's capacity to strengthen our Region's potential for tourism and economic development.

While the delivery of the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) program in partnership with Arts Queensland plays a major part in the development of quality art and arts and cultural practices across our regional community, many general types of arts and cultural activities are not eligible for RADF funding.

The broadly held and informed opinion of our regional arts sector is that:

- most 'grassroots' community arts and cultural activities are vital to, and underpin, the wellbeing of higher-level arts development; and
- a lack of ability to assist general arts and cultural needs will result in a 'drought' in artistic and cultural capacity building and bring about an environment of artistic and cultural isolation in our Region.

In response, Council established the Cultural & Arts Support Grant Program to assist the non-RADF eligible arts and cultural endeavours within regional communities in general. Council also offers a number of other grant programs targeted to specific priorities and objectives:

- Community Economic Development Grants
- Community Support Grants
- Environment Grants
- Event Support Grants
- Sport and Recreation Grants
- Sports Tourism Grants
- Youth Grants
- Floral Parade Entry Grants

Toowoomba Regional Council administers nine grant programs, with over \$755,000 made available each financial year.

# A CULTURAL SNAPSHOT 2021/22

**35** Community venues, rooms, halls & spaces

**166,195\*** approx. per year Visitation to Community Venues, rooms, halls & spaces

**500+** Parks & gardens

**50+** Community Cultural and Heritage organisations across the Region

**6** Outdoor cultural spaces (Civic Square, Village Green, Art Gallery Park, Kwong Sang Walk, Carnival Lane, Russell St.)

**\$755,000** Community Grants

**441,675** Visitation to key Cultural Facilities

**12 libraries** plus the mobile library

**Empire Theatres**

**160+** Council events and activations across the Region

**100+** large street art murals

**10,000+** Number of items of unique Cultural Heritage in Gallery Collections

**9,140,112** Visitors to the Region

**3** Art Galleries

**11** Museums & historical villages

**5%**  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

**14%**  
born overseas

**150+**  
Community leases where Council funds a reduction of rental costs

**\$3,375,455**  
of Council funding to beneficial enterprises that achieve outcomes for the Region

# RESPECT AND RECOGNISE

# Goal 1 RESPECT AND RECOGNISE

We respect and recognise First Nations culture and heritage.

- 1.1. Build ethical, effective, and collaborative processes for policy, programs and promotion concerning cultural knowledge and creative expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.**
  - 1.1.1. Ensure all Council programs and initiatives that present and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage are developed and delivered in consultation with appropriate stakeholders.
  - 1.1.2. Continue ongoing collaboration and dialogue with our First Nations community to address shared priorities regarding traditional First Nations values and methods for improving Council procedures, promotion, policy and programs.
  - 1.1.3. Continue to advocate for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee to ensure the continued provision of leadership and advice to Council.
  - 1.1.4. Ensure cultural knowledge and creative expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are embedded in the Reconciliation Action Plan.
  - 1.1.5. Continue the role of Indigenous Advisor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and explore the development of specialist expertise in key areas of the organisation.
- 1.2. Promote best practice cultural protocols, the principle of self determination and cultural safety training, in partnership with First Nations communities, across arts and cultural organisations.**
  - 1.2.1. Provide training that delivers and strengthens the organisation's cultural capability, creating greater awareness of the true history and cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
  - 1.2.2. Ensure the broadest distribution of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Information and Cultural Protocols*.
- 1.3. Put effective mechanisms in place to bring the voices and views of First Nations peoples, communities and organisations into the design, delivery and evaluation of programs, services, and facilities.**
  - 1.3.1. Support truth telling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and stories across all Council activities especially when interpreting collections in galleries, libraries, archives, and museums.
  - 1.3.2. Provide accredited training in cultural capability for all Council staff, and role-specific training incorporating local perspectives for staff working with First Nations visitors and collections.
  - 1.3.3. Embed the Australian Library and Information Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Inc. (ALIA ATSI LIRN) protocols into practice to ensure that libraries are taking culturally informed approaches to collection management, description, access, and use of First Nations collection materials.
  - 1.3.4. Maximise opportunities to support and value the history, cultures, and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
  - 1.3.5. Increase career and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners across the Region in partnership with other agencies.
  - 1.3.6. Scope and implement a First Nations employment program aimed at professional development qualifications in one of the Cultural Services (gallery, library, or museum studies).
- 1.4. Deliver and support initiatives that increase the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the Toowoomba Region.**
  - 1.4.1. Support and better promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and celebrations that strengthen understanding and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nations cultures and creative expression.
  - 1.4.2. Foster the role of the arts in celebrating and sharing the many cultures, languages and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and grow opportunities for audiences to experience authentic First Nations arts and cultures, supporting the development of programs that share these skills and knowledge.

# CELEBRATE



## Goal 2 CELEBRATE

**Our unique culture, stories and heritage are multicultural, reflecting and shaping our local identities and communities, as we celebrate and nurture diversity.**

**2.1. Broaden the community's understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity opportunities through the delivery of Council services focused on access, equality, participation, planning and consultation.**

2.1.1. Strengthen strategic partnerships with key stakeholders across diverse communities.

2.1.2. Continue the Multicultural Advisory Committee as a forum to provide leadership and direction to Council.

2.1.3. Respect and celebrate the cultural diversity of the Region and encourage Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to maintain and share their traditional arts practices across the Region.

**2.2. Engage our community and visitors in the cultural life of the Region through the continued development of innovative and dynamic cultural activities and programs.**

2.2.1. Continue to support the Toowoomba International Street Fiesta (formally the Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival), or similar, as a celebration of diversity in the community.

2.2.2. Map the stories, people, and places of significance in the Region to plan and develop cultural tourism such as heritage and art trails, public art, cultural tours, events, and services.

2.2.3. Support the development, preservation, and promotion of local cultural institutions – galleries, libraries, and museums - as custodians of the Region's art, cultural and heritage collections.

2.2.4. Continue to support unique local events, festivals, programs, exhibitions, and collections that generate tourism.

**2.3. Ensure the stories of our Region's people and places are preserved and showcased.**

2.3.1. Promote the value of local stories, arts and artists by fostering activities that motivate and inspire the community to re-engage with arts, culture and creativity.

2.3.2. Improve our community's knowledge and access to local cultural collections and services.

**2.4. Invest in local stories and storytellers to create, develop and present engaging and meaningful arts experiences.**

2.4.1. Create, develop, and present new works that support new and innovative ways of sharing stories.

2.4.2. Encourage projects that allow sectors of the community to discuss, document and present creative expressions of their strengths and characteristics.

# ACTIVATE



## Goal 3 **ACTIVATE**

**Our arts, culture, creativity, and heritage stimulate local spaces and places, fostering opportunities to connect with others and activate communities.**

**3.1. Plan, develop and maintain high-quality community and cultural facilities, precincts and spaces that contribute to inclusive, culturally rich and vibrant communities.**

- 3.1.1. Adopt universal design principals for the development of community infrastructure.
- 3.1.2. Improve the capacity, efficiency and performance of existing facilities in order to meet community expectation; including rationalisation of facilities that are deemed underperforming.
- 3.1.3. Plan future facility upgrades, and development must reflect Council's commitment to access and inclusion for all in order to build healthy, well-connected communities where everyone can participate.
- 3.1.4. Investigate a levy for public art on all major development projects (public and private) as a mechanism to entrench culture in our built environment.
- 3.1.5. Integrate public art and design into all future major Council capital improvement projects including landscaping and building projects.

**3.2. Work with government partners and culture stakeholders to maximize the use of public libraries, museums, galleries, halls, open spaces and other cultural facilities as community hubs and explore opportunities to integrate arts and culture activities and spaces into other community facilities.**

- 3.2.1. Develop a policy to better utilise existing facilities, venues and open spaces and investigate current and future community needs for spaces for arts and cultural practices across the Region - including workshops, exhibitions, and performances -through appropriate community engagement.
- 3.2.2. Advocate for the provision of affordable spaces for meeting, rehearsing, presenting, teaching, making and performing across the Region.
- 3.2.3. Continue to foster Toowoomba Region Libraries as an activator of the Region and its diverse heritage, helping maintain the special sense of place that makes Toowoomba Region unique through preservation and activation of the Region's historic and cultural resources.
- 3.2.4. Continue to develop Toowoomba Region Art Galleries as providers of access to significant collection items, exhibitions and public programs, and custodians of cultural objects, stories, and knowledge.

**3.3. Implement a public art program that reflects and promotes the distinctive character and lifestyle of the Region and embrace opportunities that will instil pride in communities by supporting projects and programs that build a sense of place.**

- 3.3.1. Develop and showcase creative work that activates spaces and places in the Region.
- 3.3.2. Initiate public art projects that connect with spaces and places within the Region using smaller-scale projects that engage and involve community participation.
- 3.3.3. Commission and procure major and iconic public art, Indigenous art, temporary art, and local, national and international works.
- 3.3.4. Expand upon self-guided walking and driving tours and trails of the city and rural landscapes utilising technology and mixed media platforms.

# CONNECT, COLLABORATE AND CREATE



# Goal 4 **CONNECT, COLLABORATE AND CREATE**

We value creativity and strive to increase access to, and engagement with, the arts, culture and heritage across the Region.

## **4.1 Support creative initiatives that target diverse audiences, encouraging their participation in the arts as a vehicle to social and cultural inclusion.**

- 4.1.1 Encourage projects that involve touring of arts and cultural activities around the Region.
- 4.1.2 Support and amplify the live music community through the Live and Local initiative, or similar, that grows opportunities for the arts, culture and development of creative industries across the Region.
- 4.1.3 Facilitate professional and creative skills development workshops to support the careers of local creatives.
- 4.1.4 Provide arts and cultural experiences to support people's health and wellbeing.

## **4.2 Facilitate the production of creative content, supporting, disseminating and showcasing multi-faceted creative endeavours.**

- 4.2.1 Maximise the community's access to Council's arts and heritage collections via digitisation projects.
- 4.2.2 Support cultural venue public programs that attract residents and visitors and build audiences and participation.
- 4.2.3 Provide digital platforms for online engagement for people to engage with arts, culture and heritage.

## **4.3 Provide grant funding that builds and sustains the viability and productivity of community-based organisations and enhances the capacity and capability of local artists and cultural and creative practitioners.**

- 4.3.1 Optimize promotion, marketing and access to Council's annual community arts and support grant program and increase community grant writing workshops that are tailor-made for specific grants.
- 4.3.2 Increase investment in the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) partnership with the Queensland Government and reshape RADF to align with the strategic objectives of this strategy and the changing needs of the sector.
- 4.3.3 Continue to invest in community grants.
- 4.3.4 Review the approach to arts and cultural funding to ensure it is accessible and flexible enough to support the diverse needs and aspirations of artists and arts/ cultural workers.

# GOVERN



# Goal 5 GOVERN

**Our leadership and governance enable the cultural development of an inclusive, culturally rich and vibrant community.**

## **5.1 Seek to position Toowoomba Regional Council as a leader and champion of arts, culture and creativity.**

- 5.1.1 Adopt a coordinated and collaborative approach to arts and cultural investment.
- 5.1.2 Nurture creative talent through fair remuneration, industry standards and safe and inclusive work cultures.
- 5.1.3 Advocate for arts and culture to be acknowledged in the Corporate Plan and in other relevant Council policies, planning and projects.
- 5.1.4 Scope a public art plan that outlines vision, commitment, and principles of public art in the Toowoomba Region, enabling a new Public Art Policy and procedures.
- 5.1.5 Ensure appropriate consultation with and involvement of our community in the review related policies and plans.

## **5.2 Partner with communities and all levels of government to support new and revitalised infrastructure that enhances community engagement in cultural experiences, supports artists and creative industries, and delivers economic and social outcomes for communities.**

- 5.2.1 Galleries, libraries, museums facilities and their physical and digital collections are adequately funded, restored, built and maintained.
- 5.2.2 Secure a commitment to develop a new, state of the art, stand alone, iconic Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery.
- 5.2.3 Scope a plan which incorporates a coordinated and cohesive approach to the Region's art and heritage collections and identifies what local museums should look like across the Region, including infrastructure needs, collections and acquisitions, resourcing, staffing models to determine a sustainable way forward.
- 5.2.4 Advocate the preservation of historically significant architecture and heritage listed structures, objects and places.

## **5.3 Help build strong community-based cultural organisations.**

- 5.3.1 Build a workforce of cultural champions that are informed by best practice, evidence-based research and decision making that increases awareness of, supports the development of, and strengthens the Region's arts and cultural sector.
- 5.3.2 Review, initiate and update funding programs for community museums and heritage organizations to build capacity, strengthen leadership and support more diverse organizations.
- 5.3.3 Consider providing financial assistance for not-for-profit cultural and arts organisations and groups.

# THRIVE



# Goal 6 **THRIVE**

Our local arts and creative industries are thriving, and we cultivate opportunities for this to occur.

## **6.1 Support the development of a cohesive arts and cultural sector that maximises cooperation and resource sharing and builds creative capacity.**

- 6.1.1 Continue to provide free access to high-quality, well-resourced cultural facilities and services across the Region.
- 6.1.2 Promote council facilities to help activate spaces that improve access and awareness of creative spaces.
- 6.1.3 Facilitate better collaboration between community groups and support local initiatives which promote multidisciplinary cooperation and collaboration.
- 6.1.4 Collaborate with Regional Arts Support Network (RASN) to develop a directory of local creative practitioners.
- 6.1.5 Partner and collaborate with all tiers of the education sector and youth service providers to deliver initiatives that provide relevant and meaningful mentoring, industry placements and professional development opportunities in the cultural and creative industries.
- 6.1.6 Encourage the establishment and development of sustainable cultural industries and facilities, related employment opportunities and private and public sector investment.

## **6.2 Recognise, promote and share the importance of arts and culture to an enhanced quality of life, the benefits of a vibrant creative sector and the related economic benefits to the community.**

- 6.2.1 Grow opportunities and pathways for local artists and creatives within their communities.
- 6.2.2 Support events that bring communities together to celebrate local arts and culture.
- 6.2.3 Embrace innovative delivery models, investing in digital literacy as a major driver of cultural development, education and business development.
- 6.2.4 Foster the development and distribution of quality digital content.
- 6.2.5 Advance the volunteer capacity of the Region through the encouragement of partnerships that provide resources to the sector.
- 6.2.6 Provide free access to arts and creativity in the lives of children and young people to support their learning and development.

## **6.3 Support local practitioners and creative enterprises; facilitating professional development, commissioning and platforming local artists, increasing the vitality and reach of the cultural economy and supporting contemporary practice.**

- 6.3.1 Continue to develop Council as a cultural connector, forging cultural links across communities and Regions, and with other culture making organisations and individuals.
- 6.3.2 Promote and facilitate sound business practices for artisans developing creative industry practices through provision of professional development, education and training opportunities, and opportunities to showcase their talents and products.
- 6.3.3 Provide public art spaces on Council managed land/facilities and determine the best mechanism to facilitate the provision of public art spaces on private and commercially held land/facilities.
- 6.3.4 Investigate opportunities to expand the provision of free and low-cost mentoring services to small businesses.
- 6.3.5 Work with local industry to ensure they are aware of opportunities and have the capacity to participate in them.

# CULTIVATE



## Goal 7 **CULTIVATE**

We promote the arts, culture, creativity, and heritage of the Region, communicating the wide range of events, festivals, programs, exhibitions and collections to visitors and our community.

### **7.1 Develop and market cultural and creative tourism as part of Toowoomba Region's identity and image.**

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- 7.1.1 Work in partnership with regional tourism bodies to grow and develop cultural and creative tourism opportunities.
  - 7.1.2 Liaise with tourism sector in development of and promotion of arts, heritage, cultural and creative tourism experiences.
  - 7.1.3 Ensure the Region's heritage and vibrant arts and cultural life are part of the destination brand and promotion.
  - 7.1.4 Cultivate important partnerships in the delivery of shared cultural and creative tourism experiences: internal and external tourism agencies and providers, Regional Arts Services Network, and neighbouring councils.
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### **7.2 Actively promote arts, culture and heritage events, festivals, programs, exhibitions and collections to residents and visitors using traditional and digital media channels**

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- 7.2.1 Develop a Cultural Marketing and Communication Strategy for effective promotion of the arts, culture, and heritage across the Region to our community.
  - 7.2.2 Develop, broaden and maintain channels for increased community sharing of information about the local arts, cultural and heritage offerings.
  - 7.2.3 Promote opportunities for the public to engage with and experience the Region's collections and heritage assets.
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## NEXT STEPS

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### Five-Year Action Plan

This strategic framework is an overarching and guiding document. Our five-year Action Plan 2023-28 outlines specific, measurable objectives, and actions which will be assessed and refined to ensure efforts remain aligned with community interest, resourcing and cultural trends. In measuring progress we will use established methods of beneficial outcomes which are cultural, social, civic, economic and environmental. We will also set baseline data measures with cultural institutions that we can track over time to indicate progress.

### A Sense of Place and Belonging

The Toowoomba Region is a place with a distinct and enviable cultural identity and lifestyle, and our Cultural Strategy provides plans and pathways to shape and deliver the types of vibrant communities we all wish to be a part of and that the Corporate Plan wishes to inspire. Arts, culture, creativity and heritage stimulate local spaces and places, fostering opportunities to connect with others and activate communities. Council supports these endeavours by investing in a range of arts, cultural and heritage facilities, services, organisations and community grant programs.

### A Creative Life

In response to sector engagement and our aim to work closely with our creative community we will articulate more clearly the role of Council. This will help us remain focussed on achieving our goals while we are connecting and collaborating with stakeholders, and fostering community arts, cultural development and creative industries. As an organisation we will lead by example, championing the value of arts, culture, heritage and creativity; partnering with community and all levels of government to develop awareness and understanding, and build strong community-based cultural organisations.

### A Region of Culture and Innovation

For the Cultural Strategy to be brought to life, there will be continued engagements, commitments, and actions from across Council. We want to open doors to new opportunities, partnerships and business models to generate efficiencies, deliver community benefit, and create economic value. We will seek funding partnerships, and the effective use of existing budgets towards arts and cultural outcomes building on our strengths to generate long-term success.

## THANK YOU

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Toowoomba Regional Council would like to thank all members of the community who have so generously participated in one-on-one conversations, focus group sessions and/or responded to the survey or draft Cultural Strategy – your input was highly valuable, and we look forward to working alongside our community as we implement *Connecting through Creativity – Toowoomba Region Cultural Strategy 2023 – 2028*.

A full copy of this report is available from Toowoomba Regional Council.



The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Toowoomba Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

### Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF)

The engagement work was facilitated with assistance from the Regional Arts Development Fund, and the Creative Industries Summit was also supported by RADF funding. The Regional Arts Development Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Toowoomba Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

### Regional Arts Services Network (RASN)

The Creative Industries Summit and Workshops were delivered in partnership with Regional Arts Services Network (RASN). RASN empowers Queensland's regions to realise arts and cultural priorities and drive change through arts-led initiatives and works in partnership with local councils, artists and arts organisations, and communities to foster, facilitate and promote the sustainable growth of regional arts across the state.

# DEFINITIONS

The Cultural Strategy confirms the central role of arts and culture to the liveability, social and economic opportunities of the area and provides an approach for Council, the community and its partners to understand, support, celebrate and develop the creative and cultural life of the Region. One person's understanding of the scope of arts and culture may differ from another's. For the purposes of this Strategy, the following definitions are recognised:

## The Arts

The arts are an expression of culture, the activities that enable expression of cultural meaning, through performing, visual, media and literary art forms, or combinations of those (CDN 2017).

## Culture

Culture can be considered broadly as what we care about- "... the social production and transmission of identities, knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and understanding" and the way we express those things, "our way of life, including customs, codes and manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, traditions and institutions" (Hawkes, 2001).

## Cultural & Creative Industries

Cultural and creative activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

## Cultural & Creative Tourism

- Cultural Tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a traveller's engagement with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape their way of life (OECD 2009)
- Creative Tourism is tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences, which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are taken. (Crispin Raymond and Greg Richards, 2000).

## Cultural Development

The process of enabling cultural activities, including the arts, towards the realisation of a desired future, particularly of a culturally rich and vibrant community.

## Cultural Development Network Planning Framework

Cultural Development Network Planning Framework was conceived to enable a consistent approach and terminology for cultural development professionals for all local councils across Australia. The Framework provides a template for the development of cultural plans that uses an evidenced-based, outcome-focused approach.

## Cultural Services

For the purposes of this strategy 'cultural services' refers to those services delivered by and those facilities or organisations directly or indirectly supported by Council relating to arts and culture as defined below, including heritage. While this definition applies to the scope of Council's activities, it has specific relevance to the activities undertaken by the following sections of Council:

- Library and Cultural Services Branch
- Community Development, Facilities and Tourism Branch
- Parks and Recreation Services Branch
- Property Services Branch
- Strategic Planning and Economic Development Branch
- Regional Architecture and Heritage Branch

## Cultural Value

The value that an arts, cultural or heritage organisation contributes to the community i.e. the public 'cultural' value that is to be produced for individuals and communities - the equivalent of shareholder value in public management (Clark 2016).

## Cultural Vitality

Cultural vitality refers to the wellbeing, creativity, diversity, and innovation that are the product of everyday forms of community interaction and involvement (Hawkes 2001); evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities (Jackson et al 2006).

## Heritage

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations (UNESCO).

## Integrated Development Planning Approach

An approach to planning that involves all stakeholders, including community and Council working together to find the best solutions to achieve good outcomes.

## Intrinsic Value

The belief that arts, culture and heritage are valuable in and of themselves, separate from their contribution to broader economic and social or other aim.

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