

STATE OF THE ARTS IN CAIRNS REPORT 2021 (SoARTS)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and First Peoples of the lands on which the State of the Arts in Cairns research took place. Cairns Regional Council also acknowledges all First Peoples within the region, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. We recognize and respect your languages and the unique beliefs and pride within your customs and cultures that define your continuing relationships and responsibilities to Land and Sea. We extend this respect to Elders both past, present and emerging.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

MESSAGE FROM CAIRNS MAYOR BOB MANNING

Culture and the arts are vitally important to the Cairns region.

Developing the infrastructure and the creative networks needed to elevate the Cairns region into the Arts & Cultural Capital of Northern Australia is one of Council's highest priorities.

This goal, set out in our Strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022 and our Shared Vision 2050, is not just about supporting our communities and our arts, it is about developing and diversifying our economy.

Arts experiences are a growing driver for tourism in Australia and are increasingly part of visitors' itineraries.

We want to be part of this growing market and to that end have invested significantly in the city's arts and cultural landscape over the past decade.

This includes the development of the Cairns Gallery Precinct, which will transform and connect three heritage listed buildings – Cairns Art Gallery, the Court House Gallery and the former Mulgrave Shire Council Chambers, to create a dynamic and world class precinct in the heart of the city.

In 2020, Council officially opened the restored Court House Gallery and has committed funds this year to complete the refurbishment of the former Mulgrave Shire Council Chambers, as well as to progress detailed design of a new fit for purpose art gallery as part of the precinct.

Importantly, we need to keep talking to governments, both State and Federal, to continue progression of this project, so as to discern our city and First Nations culture.

In order to ensure we remain on the right track, it is critical that we examine the impacts and importance of the arts and culture to the Cairns region.

We know that the creation, celebration and sharing of arts and culture is important on many levels – it supports social cohesion, community connection, our economy and inspires people to visit, revisit and settle in Tropical North Queensland.

The SoARTS research project considers and evaluates the value of culture, the arts and creative enterprise and its influence on the wellbeing and economy of Cairns.

It provides vital information and data as we look to build on the arts sector, which contributes a total of \$126 million (direct and indirect) in value added to the city's economy, employs more than 1000 people, and also generates over \$150 million in sales.

Cairns is a cultural, artistic and creative industries hub for Far North Queensland with key links to Cape York, the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea.

The ongoing success of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair highlights the national and international appetite for First Nations art and culture.

Ongoing and targeted investment in the sector, along with continued engagement with other levels of government and private enterprise, will be key in achieving our goal of becoming the Arts & Cultural Capital of Northern Australia.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This SoARTS report includes 'Sector Insights' where a series of stakeholder interviews provide a deep reflection on the experiences of organisational participants in the arts, cultural and creative industry sector in Cairns. The purpose of interviewing industry stakeholders is to assemble a section of the SoARTS report that reflects experiences of the broader sector and to include the views of players operating outside the sphere of influence associated with Cairns Regional Council.

Despite the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19, over the course of 2021 the arts, cultural and creative sector in Cairns remained buoyant and continued a cycle of growth. This growth benefitted from members of the Cairns community who turned to arts and creativity during the pandemic to maintain their wellbeing and community connections. SoARTS stakeholder organisations and businesses often reported an increase in activity indicating that the sector, at an organisational level, was resilient to COVID-19 impacts. This contrasted with the dominant tourism industry in Cairns whose business operators suffered deeply from closed borders and the cessation of international travel. Arts, cultural and creative industries catered for local audiences and practitioners. In addition, the sector was agile in being able to realign production and product offering quickly and effectively to online digital delivery methods, while taking advantage of temporary COVID-19 funding initiatives.

The SoARTS 2021 report is an opportunity to reflect on the priorities identified as "Culture, heritage and place" and whose values are "shared, celebrated and promoted". These are aims associated with Priority Two of the Council's *Strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022*. It is evident that many elements of the strategy interconnect. For example, the priority aligned to "adequate space for cultural and creative sector operations, production and storage," from priority area one, are linked to the "initiatives that protect and value the region's built and natural cultural heritage as well as historic and contemporary collections." As such, for continuity, the set of questions put to our stakeholders included responses relevant to all key priorities identified in the strategy.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provided information about regional populations. Through the ABS we know that the Cairns area has the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in regional Australia. In addition, Cairns hosts entities and services, including a number from the arts and cultural sector, which provide support mechanisms for Indigenous communities north of Townsville, in Cape York, the Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait. There are several significant issues for Indigenous arts and creativity in the region. The prevalence of inauthentic Aboriginal artefacts in tourism outlets and the need for broader Indigenous leadership in the sector are just two of the many points that have been identified by stakeholders. Of growing and immediate importance is the need for Indigenous keeping places that can accept significant repatriated historical artefacts from international and local institutions.

The opening of the Court House Gallery in Abbott Street has been applauded by the sector and adds to the growth of infrastructure development that has transformed the city of Cairns into a hub of arts and creativity. However, the addition of new public gallery spaces in a precinct that incorporates the established Cairns Art Gallery suggests the need for new organisational structures to ensure consistency of curatorial program delivery. The sector identifies the opportunity to strategically underpin the Gallery Precinct in terms of initiating creative development programs that elevate the aptitude of local artists to undertake work of outstanding quality. The continued growth of infrastructure highlights Cairns as a regional creative hub. The sector supports the Council's engagement with intra-regional and national organisations to extend its influence and resources to the sector outside the local government area boundaries, to those who are dependent on the economic centre that Cairns represents.

A healthy arts ecology encourages a range of cultural activities that support and facilitate creativity at multiple levels of engagement. Opportunities that foster experimental and underground programs, accessible and inclusive productions, and diverse recreational and amateur activity are all critically important in terms of cultural output that can coalesce in a unique expression of place. Supportive activity for artists and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

creatives at early career stages is critical to feed a sustainable sector that can absorb creative risk taking and nurture voices that develop into effective cultural ambassadors representing the city and the region.

The experience of arts, culture and creativity in Cairns encompasses a broad range of touchpoints that go beyond the presentation of artistic excellence in galleries and on stages associated with the region's arts infrastructure. Urban landscape design, wayfinding, public art and the prevalence of cultural landmarks all contribute to the impression of a creative destination. The potential of public art walking trails and the walkable city is discussed in a few sections of this report.

The unique attributes of Far North Queensland's Wet Tropics rainforest and Great Barrier Reef environments are the mainstay of the region's major industry - tourism. The arts, cultural and creative industries sectors have encountered barriers to significant participation in tourism. These barriers have included reports that tourism service organisations consider many entities in the creative sector as not meeting minimum requirements for tourism industry participation, and the sentiment from the creative sector that the cost of participation in mainstream tourism promotion being too great for the scale of their enterprise. Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), in its thirteenth year, continued to be a focus and exemplar with its integration as a major event within tourism promotion. However, the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, once an international benchmark for Indigenous cultural tourism, closed its operation after 33 years. Central Queensland University (CQU) has contributed an airport exit survey to this report that sampled over 700 visitors at Cairns airport providing a snapshot of what broad arts and cultural activities they experienced.

The 'Mapping Creativity' section of the report investigates the impact and metrics associated with the council-hosted website *Arts and Culture Map*. Tablelands, Cassowary Coast and Douglas local government areas have adopted the extension of the initiative.

Finally, three case studies show the growth patterns of community-initiated arts and cultural infrastructure over time. The Bulmba-ja Arts Centre had its origins as an artist's collective and an independent theatre company working together to effect sector development by instigating a Centre of Contemporary Arts. Initial State Government funding was awarded to KickArts Collective and JUTE Theatre company through the Millennium Arts Fund in 1999. Now those same organisations are in the mix of tenants at the centre that provides a focus for Indigenous performing arts. The Cairns Museum is a popular destination, archive and resource housed in the beautifully renovated School of Arts building in Cairns CBD. The museum is supported by Council and operated by a historical society that attracts the services of many volunteers, making it a remarkable and successful enterprise for telling the stories of the region's heritage and cultures. The final case study includes research by students from James Cook University (JCU) who identified public art walking trails that could be strategically visioned for future development and take advantage of the city's collection.

The key findings that follow summarise the main points and issues highlighted through stakeholder insights, tourism data and the people-oriented urban design process associated with the development of this report.

KEY FINDINGS

HARD INFRASTRUCTURE

The provision of cultural infrastructure and strategic urban planning and landscaping has transformed Cairns city over the past decade.

Stakeholders continue to acknowledge the prominent level of cultural planning that has led to the successful provision of arts and cultural infrastructure and beautifully landscaped parts of Cairns.

Bulmba-ja Arts Centre is an important Indigenous landmark that would benefit from additional promotion and service models.

Florence Street upgrades are welcome, but improved signage and walkability around the CBD would enhance the accessibility and legibility of arts infrastructure.

There is potential for the Gallery Precinct to be multifunctional, catering for day and night activation. An alternative name could help imagine this.

There is a need for smaller arts spaces that allow different parts of the ecology to grow, including experimental, underground arts programming. The Council-initiated *Renew Cairns* program has contributed to the remedy of this issue.

There is an uneven provision of arts and cultural infrastructure, as well as landscaping, across the city.

SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE

There are limited mechanisms that draw together the broader sector, however capacity sharing occurs effectively in sub-sector clusters.

The organisation of arts leaders into a cohesive voice has some merit. It will provide an avenue to develop greater support and appreciation of the efforts of the sector in the wider political and cultural context of Northern Australia.

There is demand for broad regional programs that rely on Council's influence, infrastructure and resources to be valued over a larger geographical region than the local government area demarcation.

There is potential to strategically enhance the capacity of the sector leading into the rollout of the Gallery Precinct and towards cultural events associated with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.

Arts, cultural and creative activity is in a sustained period of growth. As a result, the demand for development, production and presentation facilities remains high.

The establishment of the Court House Gallery has increased infrastructure for curatorial practice and collaboration.

The *Renew Cairns* program has connected the region to a national program while providing subsidised tenancies to shopfronts in the CBD.

COLLECTIONS

Indigenous keeping places are needed. They are a critical piece of infrastructure to maintain historical material culture. Currently, significant artefacts are scattered around the region and international collections seek to repatriate to appropriate facilities for conservation and protection.

The need for AAA grade storage facilities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous collections is an ongoing and immediate concern for the sector.

The sector's interpretation of collections includes oral and social history recordings, precincts, public art, murals along with art, archives and artefacts.

INDIGENOUS ARTS

There is a clear argument for arts and cultural development, resources and infrastructure representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, to be centred in Cairns. The success of Cairns Indigenous Art Fair is an indicator of this potential.

A key step to achieving equity in the sector is growing Indigenous leadership in broader arts, cultural and creative management, projects and programming scenarios. The Council's aim to include an Indigenous curator within its team is an appropriate step encapsulated within its cultural strategy.

LOCAL HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Beginnings: A Musical Story of Cairns at the 2018 Cairns Festival was held up as an example of multicultural visions done well.

Fogarty Park continues to be regarded as a traditional multicultural gathering space.

The Greenslopes Street Cultural Precinct has ongoing potential as a multicultural node for cultural and arts groups.

ARTS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL OR DESTINATION?

There is a sense that Cairns is an important hub for Northern Queensland and should aim to be part of a strong network across northern Australia with links to the Pacific and South East Asia.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of local and grassroots arts and culture development to any status that represents Cairns as an arts capital.

Tourism organisations and operators could do more to shape Cairns into an arts and culture destination, although reef and rainforest tourism remain the drawcard for the region. The build up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games in Queensland provides an opportunity for more cross sector activity and partnerships.

ARTS AND TOURISM

Participation in the tourism market is out of range for many small organisations. The cost of participation and meeting minimum expectations of the tourism industry is beyond the means of many in the sector.

The arts sector is largely disengaged from tourism activity, preferring to cater at a level for immediate local audiences or traditional arts touring markets.

Having arts company boards, directors and managers integrate tourism outcomes as strategic indicators has the potential to focus the sector efforts on integration with the tourism economic cluster.

An arts leaders group would strengthen the cohesiveness and confidence of the sector in terms of cross sector and cross industry outcomes.

PUBLIC ART

There are many success stories of public art in Cairns, reflecting the region's connections to Cape York and the Torres Strait as well as connections to Sea and Country.

The Gilbert, Oliver, Penelope, Roxanne and Yasmin sculpture *The Jelly Babies* in Munro Martin Parklands and Giringun artwork at Cairns Performing Arts Centre have generated discussion that highlights how identity is represented and perceived in the placement of public art.

Although Council has adopted state of the art procedures for consultation on public art, there remains a perception/sentiment that its processes could be enhanced. The availability of the Council's *Strategy for Public Art and Creative Placemaking* may remedy some of these concerns.



ARTS AND DISABILITY

Sector wide accessibility associated with infrastructure should be balanced with an increased level of engagement involving inclusive programming. The Council has demonstrated leadership with the release of an *Arts and Disability Strategy* highlighting aims for inclusive participation throughout its programs.

Representatives from disability arts suggest the idea of a locally hosted disability arts festival has some merit, and that disability inclusion complement the other sector wide festivals in the region.

Across the entire cultural and arts sector, inclusion should be a central strength of programs rather than a segregation or add-on.

YOUNG CREATIVES

Across the sector, there remains a sense of losing a young generation, with limited youth-oriented organisations, few young people on boards or committees and diminishing pathways at tertiary education institutions.

The young generation needs to be engaged sector wide through new models and methods that include innovative technologies.

With the loss of many other youth-oriented programs in the sector, internships and mentorships are key to young people's knowledge and skill sets so they reach their full potential.

The Council's *Strategy for Young Creatives* provides exemplar youth-oriented programs that redress some of the decline in youth arts of previous decades.

ART, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is the inspiration for all artforms in Cairns; the environment itself is a backdrop and sustenance to art making.

Foregrounding the connection between environment, culture and the arts is desirable and part of the city and region's cutting edge.



MAPPING CREATIVITY

The Cairns *Arts and Culture Map* expanded in 2021 to include associated online portals for the Tablelands Regional, Cassowary Coast Regional and Douglas Shire Councils.

The Cairns *Arts and Culture Map* grew during the calendar year of 2021, with 65 new contributors.

Cairns Performing Arts Centre, Cairns Festival, and Carnival on Collins are consistently popular web pages; a consistent popular category is public art, although Facilities and Spaces and Festivals consistently appear in the top four. The (Arts and Culture) Map is most popular with the 25–34 year age group, particularly at the beginning of 2021.

TOURISM

Central Queensland University conducted a survey of visitors departing Cairns from the domestic terminal of the Cairns Airport commencing in August 2020 after COVID-19 restrictions on travel were lifted. Most visitors had visited Cairns previously and stayed on average 5-6 nights.

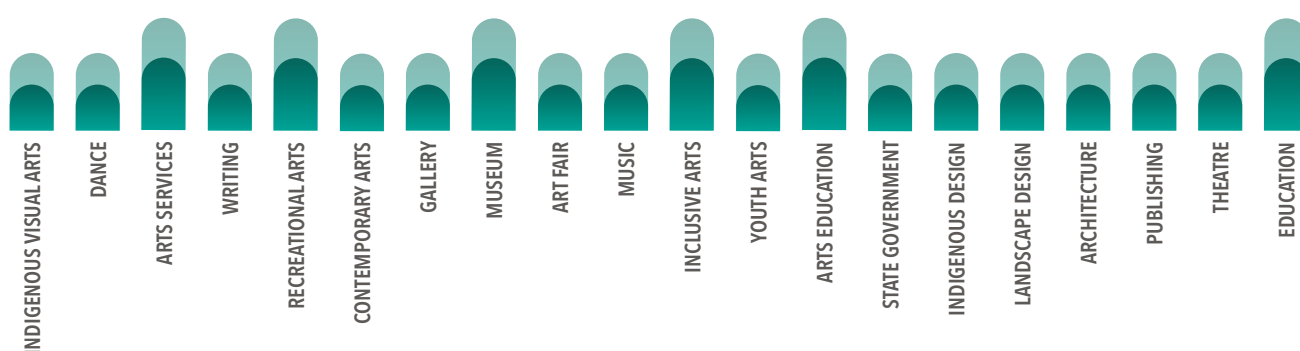
There is a gap between how tourists rate the importance and availability of cultural activities as a motivation for selecting a destination, and participation in events and activities of this type in Cairns. This may indicate a lack of awareness of these types of activities and/or that visitors perceive a lack of suitable activities. Further research would be beneficial.

CASE STUDIES

SoARTS 2021 includes three case studies reflecting the broad theme of 'Culture, Heritage and Place' at the end of the report. The Cairns Museum focuses on the preservation and promotion of culture and heritage of Cairns, and Bulmba-ja Arts Centre celebrates contemporary Indigenous artforms in Far North Queensland. Following on from SoARTS 2020, students from James Cook University identified public art walking trails that could be strategically visioned for future development and take advantage of the city's collection. These included a waterfront trail along Trinity Inlet, a walk along Florence Street connecting Cairns Performing Arts Centre with the Esplanade, and another walk looping around the important arts and culture infrastructure in the city centre.

SECTOR INSIGHTS: CULTURE, HERITAGE AND PLACE

The SoARTS 2021 stakeholder group includes 26 representatives across the sector. Representatives included: Indigenous visual arts, dance, arts services, writing, recreational arts, contemporary arts, galleries, museums, art fairs, music, inclusive arts, arts education, state government, Indigenous design, landscape design, architecture, publishing, theatre and education. A visualisation is presented in this graph showing how many stakeholders participated.



HARD INFRASTRUCTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND CULTURE-LED PLACEMAKING

SoARTS stakeholders expressed that the provision of cultural infrastructure is creating landmarks and a cultural identity for Cairns, noting the massive transformation of Cairns over the past 10-15 years. Positive attitudes were expressed towards the overall development of the city centre, particularly the Esplanade and new Dining Precinct, the wharf area, Shields Street revitalization and in general the lush plantings around the city. Stakeholders continue to acknowledge the high level of strategic planning that has led to the successful provision of arts and cultural infrastructure and beautifully landscaped parts of Cairns. The Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns Museum, Cairns Performing Arts Centre (CPAC), Munro Martin Parklands (MMP), Cairns Art Gallery, Court House Gallery, and soon the Mulgrave Shire building and proposed Gallery Precinct, are all important to the future development of the city and region. The Arts Queensland space of Bulmba-ja and its tenants (JUTE Theatre Company, NorthSite Contemporary Arts, Miriki Performing Arts, Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts and Minjil) is also acknowledged as an important Indigenous creative space. These combine with the Esplanade, Dining Precinct and wharf area to showcase Cairns as a city of arts and culture.

While some continue to lament the loss of cultural infrastructure that would have developed on Trinity Inlet, others applauded the cohesiveness across the Court House Gallery, Cairns Art Gallery

and Mulgrave Shire building precinct for visual art, with CPAC and MMP as a performance precinct. These landmarks speak to place, although some suggested the need for an overlay of First Nations values for all infrastructure and that the new Gallery Precinct should be associated with a vision for the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander community to develop tolerance and understanding. Several stakeholders felt the terminology of 'Gallery Precinct' was too narrow—and potentially elitist—limiting the appeal of the precinct to other art forms. One stakeholder noted that the Court House Gallery is still in the early days of finding its own identity. The Tanks Arts Centre was seen as a highly unique and memorable landmark, noting the need for more interpretation of its history. In general, stakeholders placed emphasis on the landmark status of the Tanks and other heritage buildings, with CPAC deemed fit for purpose and technologically advanced (although there are challenges with the internal configuration of the studio space). Bulmba-ja was also perceived by many as an Indigenous-identified landmark that had been missing up until now in the city. Indeed, several stakeholders suggested the need for a formal opening of Bulmba-ja with street art markets or similar and the need for wider circulation of its programming. The removal of the Jelly Babies to MMP was lamented by several stakeholders, who thought they should have been integrated nearby into the Florence Street redevelopment.

Several stakeholders mentioned the neighbourhood revitalization that has accompanied the redevelopment of MMP and CPAC. Improvements along Florence Street were noted in terms of improved walkability, with the removal of roundabouts and lush plantings, but problems remain: Bulmba-ja is not visible as arts and culture infrastructure, the nearby former Ibis Styles hotel and Cairns Aquarium do not have active frontages to entice walkers down the street. One stakeholder suggested a long-term plan to repurpose the Ibis Styles to convert its lower storey to commercial use (e.g., a row of boutique shops). This would make it more conducive to the walking public. Activating the area during the day could also be achieved by opening up CPAC to visit the artwork inside, and special exhibitions could be held in the upstairs studio which has a commanding view of Cairns city but appears to be rarely used. In general, there was a perceived need for a CBD 'curator': not a council officer but someone who could access various bodies including Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Tropical North Queensland, regarding commercial vitality and the possibility of using covenants and bylaws to activate the streets. *Renew Cairns* was suggested as an important innovation having good results, but other suggestions included adding more markets in the city (eg Shields Street, Abbott Street), holding pop-up events and other activities that support local artists. Most stakeholders felt more could be done with smart phones including QR codes and augmented reality to make the most of what the city has to offer.

Walkability and wayfinding between arts infrastructure were consistently raised as issues, with several stakeholders suggesting the need of enhanced signage for the public and tourists. Cairns is a hot, humid city with a large CBD footprint similar in size to Brisbane - and convincing people to walk is challenging but would generate essential urban vitality. The need for connection from the Court House Gallery to Cairns Art Gallery to Bulmba-ja was raised by several stakeholders, with clear signage deemed essential (a traffic hazard in the link between the Esplanade and Shields Street was also noted). More playful and interactive objects like swings, objects that change colour when stepped on or touched, or that make sounds, were suggested as possibilities that would encourage walking around the city (the sound chimes at Muddy's Playground were given as an example). Stakeholders lamented that although the arrival of electric buses in Cairns was welcome, they do not solve the problem of public transport connectivity across the city more generally. A shuttle bus connecting the Cairns Museum to Cairns Art Gallery and Court House Gallery, and to Bulmba-ja, CPAC/MMP and Greenslopes Street Cultural Precinct were strongly recommended, even if it only ran twice a day in the tourist season. For the walking and bike riding public, the Lily Creek corridor was suggested as a beautiful avenue but is currently considered not safe. On a wider scale Cairns was depicted as a network of villages and getting public transport right could bring people all the way from Palm Cove to Babinda.



SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE, SECTOR NETWORKS AND SHARING

Council's strategy seeks to understand the capacity of the sector to self-organise networks, drive cross-promotion, project development, shared resources and professional development. However, there appears to be limited mechanisms to draw together the various strands of activity operating in the broader scope of arts, culture and creative industries in the region. Instead, capacity sharing occurs effectively in sub-sector clusters. Currently, many stakeholders have the impression that Cairns Regional Council is the one entity operating in the region that has the capacity to provide tangible broad scale cross-promotion of the sector. For example, representing an extension of the arts, culture and creative industries networks by broader inclusion and representation in *Vibrance* magazine. Some stakeholders reflected on the potential of *Vibrance* magazine to include a broader sector program. The value and effectiveness of an inclusive arts magazine was cited by some stakeholders, suggesting it would provide a more complete listing of arts and cultural activity in the region. The Council's *Arts and Culture Map* while functioning as a valuable listing of participants in the sector, may be enhanced to meet the expectations of stakeholders by including more dynamic content. For example, aggregating current sector wide program information in the form of event calendars, call outs, expressions of interest and project date claimers. This type of service can inform the sector as well as visitors looking for arts, cultural and creative experiences. Another possibility is an annual compendium incorporating the events, opportunities and experiences being

offered by a broad range of participants in the sector. Even though there is a general shift to digital marketing methods, a print publication, in the form of an arts magazine or compendium, may be effective in conveying a regional program of activity to local and tourism audiences and markets.

Council has engaged with some stakeholders to access shared resources and commercial opportunities. For example, sharing a print run with *Tropic* magazine for its *Vibrance* publication. The Council's *Renew Cairns* initiative, facilitated by *Renew Australia*, helped to connect the region with a national program within a community of practice while providing subsidised tenancy to shopfronts in the Cairns CBD. This has actively supported start-up creative businesses and independent artists. The establishment of the Court House Gallery, by the Council, has engendered an increased infrastructure for curatorial practice that has included projects with Cairns Art Gallery, UMI Arts and others. The Council's *Flame.Arts* program engages a network that has included NorthSite Contemporary Arts and Regional Excellence in Arts and Culture Hubs (REACH) with a focus on emerging professional practice and pathways for entry into the sector. Stakeholders have identified further potential for Council to enhance the capacity of sector practice and pathways by nurturing strategic programs of focused development towards creative product that might be showcased in the incremental roll out of the Gallery Precinct and towards cultural events associated with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.



A number of stakeholders engage with State Government agencies that operate networks and infrastructure appropriate to the sector. Arts Queensland with Bulmba-ja Arts Centre and Screen Queensland with the proposed Screen Queensland Studio, indicate that Cairns is being recognized as an arts, culture and creativity hub with the establishment of regional facilities that provide access to services aimed at a broader Far North Queensland catchment. The Queensland Museum in partnership with Council, provides a Museum Development Officer (MDO) in Cairns who services a network of small museums and historical societies in the region. The MDO advises historical groups on best practice, collections management, presentation and professional development etc. Many additional stakeholders service organisations and artists in the broader Far North Queensland and Northern Australia region. The colocation of regional services in Cairns suggests that the council might consider further significant partnerships and joint ventures with other local government areas, state and national entities. There is clear justification and demand for broad regional programs that rely on Council's influence, infrastructure and resources to be valued over a larger geographical region than the local government area demarcation.

Arts Queensland's Bulmba-ja Arts Centre in Cairns brings together several arts organisations as tenants. Since 2019 the art centre at 96 Abbott Street has promoted a focus on Indigenous performing arts. Miriki Performing Arts, Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts and Minjil are Indigenous arts companies collocated with JUTE Theatre Company and NorthSite Contemporary Arts. The open plan layout of the tenanted office spaces promotes the shared resources of the centre which provides theatre/rehearsal access across approximately 50% of the building. The other half of the building is a series of galleries and retail spaces programmed by NorthSite Contemporary Arts. Arts Queensland staff manage the overall operation of the site. The open plan design allows the various companies to freely interact and develop network activity. The refurbished building opened shortly before the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns and entry restrictions put in place were progressively lifted over the course of 2021. While stakeholders applaud Bulmba-ja being promoted with a focus on Indigenous performing arts, there are concerns about a lack of Indigenous leadership in the management and direction of the centre. Additional concerns from stakeholders relate to a home for broader contemporary arts practices that had previously been facilitated at Bulmba-ja when it was known as the Centre of Contemporary Arts.

Developments in the film sector have included the imminent establishment of a sound studio in Cairns by Screen Queensland. There is some stakeholder concern that the facility will have technical limitations or not meet expectations of the professional industry. However, the initiative is represented by strong partnerships that include education providers and service organisations. The project is infrastructure driven, but includes developmental programs

aimed at providing more skills and opportunity for film and media production in the region.

Stakeholder activity suggests strong and effective developmental support networks operate within sub-segments. However, peak strategic representation engaged in focused advocacy for the arts, cultural and creative industries as an aggregated sector is limited. This is due to the diversity of operational structures and the wide disparity of production approaches represented by arts, cultural and creative activity in the region. Discrete self-organising support networks successfully service small organisations, micro-business and individual practitioners that work effectively at a local level. These entities have provided access and opportunity for broad participation in creative practice at a community level and engage in collaborations and partnerships that support local production.

Engagement with stakeholders suggested that the breadth and significance of arts, cultural and creative activity is in a sustained period of growth. Demand for development, production and presentation facilities remained high. However, the gap for a strategic advocacy group focusing on sector advancement is evident. A consortium of arts leaders would provide an avenue to develop greater support and appreciation of the efforts of the sector in the wider political and cultural context of northern Australia. A key advantage of considering a peak forum for the sector is the sharing of program information and the reduction of duplicated services through program diversification. A more informed and less fragmented sector would allow a stronger advocacy and overall delivery for the community and links with other sectors.

Other stakeholder statements associated with arts, culture and creativity networks include:

- For the small to medium arts sector, national networks provide access to professional skills that are in short supply in the region. There are instances of access to skills and professional experience that have been shared across multiple organisations. The skill shortage in the region has been compounded by the reduction of creative arts curriculum in the education system from primary schools right through to the disestablishment of tertiary level degrees.
- The Council's facilities that are suited to activity associated with artist residencies i.e., accommodation and studio/workspaces can be further enhanced by engaging in an international network of art residency programs.
- Council might develop a more efficient approval process to enhance engagement and potential for film locations in its catchment. A suggestion that a streamlined approval process through a single council representative, and with a quick response time will be more attractive for production professionals and more competitive with neighbouring councils.

HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS

Stakeholders recognize that the responsibility of working with collections is multifaceted and it is important to get the foundations right. There is a clear message that it is not just about presentation spaces, and significant investment in appropriate storage and conservation are critical infrastructure elements that need addressing immediately.

It is suggested that the demand for appropriate Indigenous keeping places will continue, and increasingly become important. Many large European public museum collections look to repatriate material to their Traditional Owners, as do local collections, for example those held by universities. Indigenous keeping places appear to be a critical piece of infrastructure to maintain the historical material culture which is currently scattered around the region and in need of conservation and protection. Appropriate storage, conservation, access and education are important elements associated with keeping places. It may not be all one piece of infrastructure, for example, secure storage may be at one location, with interpretive presentation spaces more central and accessible.

Appropriate and secure storage is indicated as a critical need by a number of stakeholders, particularly those engaged with galleries and museums but also by performing arts organisations. The role of Cairns as a regional creative hub suggests that significant AAA grade storage facilities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous collections is an ongoing concern for the sector. It appears harder to find resources for appropriate and specialised storage because of the cost and the fact that it is not necessarily a place that maintains high visibility to the public.

Through its collections, the Cairns Museum is a key repository, resource for research and dissemination point for contemporary and historical storytelling related to the social life of Cairns and the region. There are significant opportunities for the digitisation and deployment of the Cairns Museum's holdings. Making the collection of over 40,000 historical photographs more accessible as a searchable online resource would add value and community benefit to the Museum's operation. However, as an independent museum, monetizing access to collection material is suggested to be the enabler contributing to financial sustainability. The business case for digitisation of the collection then becomes entangled with increased costs involved with operating and maintaining a paywall. Access to the collection as a community resource may be significantly impacted by higher usage fees. The cost of establishing and maintaining a commercial website for a large image collection appears to be beyond the reach of a small community museum or historical society. The issue of community access and financial

sustainability suggests that a fully funded museum complex is a gap in facilities and infrastructure for the region. Council supports the Museum with operational funding, and in the *Strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022* supports planning for future needs.

The idea of character precincts is important in terms of retaining a collection of vernacular architecture that represents different timeframes in the region's history. Council's purchase and restoration of the Court House is an exemplar project applauded by stakeholders. It inspires suggestions that include adding more conservation and renovation of heritage period vernacular buildings and architectural conservation in Cairns. Historical places provide opportunities for hybrid cultural experiences that have the potential to become very popular while at the same time providing educational and public interest content. For example, the council-supported promenade theatre production *Shadows from the Past*, presented in local cemeteries, is an innovative approach to historical storytelling. It provides a production model with high potential for popularity, outreach and engagement. Stakeholders recognize that the region's collections are important for telling stories through curatorial practice and other creative production methods. It is suggested that often projects start from a single collection piece, artefact or historical place then grow in scope to include outside loans, collaborations and partnerships that augment and draw interest for regional audiences. The stakeholders promote the concept of collections in broad terms to include oral and social history recordings, precincts, public art and murals, etc.

Other stakeholder statements associated with regional collections include:

- While council collections are listed online through the *Arts and Culture Map*, stakeholders feel they are not well known, and the holdings do not appear to be easily accessible.
- There is an opportunity to conceptualize regional collections by considering the impact of Cairns as an arts and cultural hub.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTS

There is a role for the sector to enable capacity building, mentoring and support for Indigenous arts enterprise. Indigenous culture in the region is unique due to the prevalence and proximity of traditional communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait. There is a strong and unique influence from Melanesia and the Pacific. The 2021 ABS census data indicates Cairns has the largest community of Indigenous people in Australia outside of a capital city (Brisbane City 22,940, up from 17,074 in 2016, Cairns 16,152, up from 14,100 in 2016). Add to this that Cairns is also a hub for arts, cultural

and creative services relied on by Indigenous artists, art centres and communities in the broader North Queensland region. This includes from Girringun (near Cardwell) north through Cape York and into the Torres Strait. Council and stakeholders agree that there is a clear argument for more focused arts and cultural development, resources and infrastructure representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, as First Nations and Traditional Owners, to be centred in Cairns. For Council this is acknowledged through the development of the Gallery Precinct in the overall strategy.

Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair continues to be a focus for the sector in terms of visibility of Indigenous Art. CIAF is recognized as attracting the attention of national and international art collectors and visitors to Cairns creating positive flow-on for the creative sector and broader economy. The cancellation of public events like CIAF due to COVID-19 has impacted the awareness of Indigenous art activity and trade in the region. 2021 has been described as a difficult year with impacts that have been counter-productive in terms of sector development.

The reimagining of the Centre of Contemporary Arts as Bulmba-ja, with a focus on First Nations performing arts, represents a positive cultural shift within the sector. However, it has not caught the imagination of the broader Indigenous community as much as might have been anticipated. High cost of access and shortfall of educational programs promoting the centre are suggested as limiting the reach and impact of its significance.

Indigenous arts and cultural organisations within the stakeholder group recognize a positive relationship with Council that is genuine and generally described as non-tokenistic. However, there is a need for more Indigenous people with decision-making clout and in positions of responsibility to effect capacity building and engagement within the sector. A key step to achieving equity in the sector is growing Indigenous leadership in broader arts, cultural and creative management, projects and programming scenarios.

There are suggestions that more prominent access and promotion of information about Indigenous sites and locations and the Aboriginal story of places, would promote cultural awareness and understanding of Indigenous significance in the region. Embedding Welcome to Country is an important reconciliation and acknowledgement, which stakeholders recognize as a tangible validation particularly for young Indigenous people, as it reveals what might be considered a threatened cultural geography. Highlighting the stories that provide linkages to Cape York and Torres Strait communities has the potential to strengthen the concept of Cairns as an artistic and creative hub

and gateway to Indigenous art and cultural values across the northern parts of Queensland. There are suggestions that Council might collate appropriate information about the priorities and protocols associated with understanding the region's Indigenous communities. For example, basic information such as Indigenous place names are difficult to find and often with conflicting and unvalidated sources.

There are suggestions that Council enhance support for a number of grassroots activities that are significant within the community, such as the Frontier Wars recognition event and UMI Arts activities in Manoora. It is suggested that Indigenous consultation might be extended to further enhance council programs. Stakeholders identify opportunities, such as public art that may allow positive impacts resulting from recognizing the importance of places outside the CBD, in various suburbs, which have Aboriginal meaning and significance. Paying respect to Elders beyond Acknowledgement of Country to generate positive reconciliation. For example, renaming places in honour of Elders during NAIDOC week, similar to what happens leading up to the annual Australia Day awards.

There is a perception that increased inclusion and visibility of Indigenous arts and creativity has continued to develop in Cairns reflecting growth in Indigenous community numbers as reported through the 2021 census data. Indigenous engagement manifests in the appearance of strong civic connection to Traditional Owner groups and the vibrant expression of Indigenous arts and cultural practices. The Council's support for CIAF with its program of visual art, music, dance and other performing arts, extends the experience of Indigenous art and culture as a unified expression.

Other stakeholder statements associated with Indigenous arts, culture and creativity include:

- The suggestion of a bed/tourism tax that provides enhanced sustainability and funding for Indigenous arts, culture and creative activity.
- The State Government has committed to move towards a treaty with First Nations People.
- Arts, cultural and creative organisations that engage and promote inclusive and accessible programs are less likely to specify programs and services that are Indigenous identified.
- There is a sentiment that Indigenous arts in the region are being serviced to a higher degree of effectiveness than for non-Indigenous participants in the sector.

LOCAL HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND BELONGING

The Cairns region is home to a diverse array of migrant groups. Council's strategy aims to promote local heritage and multiculturalism as a source of identity and belonging and most stakeholders felt arts and culture contributed to Cairns as a multicultural place. Many suggested Indigenous stories needed to be told much more loudly—including stories of the Frontier Wars—suggesting NAIDOC week would benefit from an activity of recognition, either renaming a place or recognizing people in the community. But stakeholders were also aware of the diverse multicultural history of migration and the importance of these waves of migrants to the development of the city and region. Malay Town, for example, important in the early establishment of Cairns, is a migrant history that remains particularly invisible. *Beginnings: A Musical Story of Cairns* at the 2018 Cairns Festival, on the other hand, was held up as an example of multicultural visions done well. Also mentioned were the Cairns Art Gallery's collaboration with the Filipino community to produce *Project Another Country*, and collaboration with the African community to launch *Faceless: Transforming Identity*. JUTE's *La Bella Figura* proved a very successful engagement with the local Italian community and JUTE is working toward creating shows that work with the African and Thai communities. Visual art and theatre are two ways to express cultural identity, although several stakeholders also mentioned the sharing of food.

Only some stakeholders were aware of the city's Multicultural Festival (previously the Tropical Wave Festival) run by the Cairns and Region Multicultural Association (CARMA). Some believed the festival was no longer running. CARMA supports more than 50 groups spanning the region's diverse migration including Australian Indigenous communities as well as those from Bhutan, Fiji, Chile, Mauritius, Africa, Jordan, Thailand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, India, Serbia, Greece, to name a few. Some felt the Multicultural Festival had lost importance as individual cultural events grew, such as the Chinese New Year festivities, the Thai Water Festival and the African Festival. In terms of spaces to host events, most suggested Fogarty Park as the traditional multicultural festival gathering space. The Tanks Arts Centre was also mentioned as a good place for community events. Council venues such as MMP, while beautiful and appropriate, are perceived as too expensive for community groups. Council support services for those not literate in writing complex grants or applying for in-kind funding might be better promoted to some groups.

The Greenslopes Street Cultural Precinct was also mentioned for its multicultural potential. Not only through Indigenous people in productions and printmaking, or through the traditional knowledge

of the watershed where the precinct is located, but through the Zhanjiang Chinese Friendship Garden and the World War II history in Jess Mitchell Park beside Cairns Little Theatre (recognizing the impact of displaced migrants from across Europe on the development of Cairns).

In terms of heritage, some stakeholders suggested more could be done to promote the history of the Tanks Arts Centre and other parts of the city like Malay Town. Others noted the value of the Cairns Museum and its ability to be relevant, for example by releasing archival photos and social media stories relevant to ongoing events in the city and region (e.g., photos of flooding, Queenslander housing). Several stakeholders mentioned the importance of built heritage as an important story for the city, although outdoor space was noted as an important part of heritage in Cairns - particularly from a colonial perspective. Stakeholders suggested that early work on the Tanks Arts Centre and the Cairns Art Gallery were important moments in forming foundations for arts and culture in Cairns today. Recent renovations of the Court House, School of Arts and Mulgrave Shire buildings will continue this connection between heritage, architecture, arts, and culture.



PUBLIC ART

Public art enriches and revitalises public spaces and places and although interpretations of public art are personal and can be controversial, most stakeholders felt public art in Cairns was timeless, made sense and had longevity. Stakeholders mentioned the many successes and opportunities for public art, as well as some instances where consultation and placement could be improved. Success stories included Torres Strait Islander art, including Brian Robinson's Woven Fish, Dennis Nona's mating sea turtles and Aboriginal artist Thanakupi's love story sphere at the wharf and termite mounds at the airport. These pieces were seen to interpret sea life as well as the thick connections Cairns has to Cape York and the Torres Strait. Collaboration between Brian Robinson and Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrganydji artists also shaped the success of the Citizens Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, with a framed view of the ocean as well as stingrays expressing the importance of sea life to local people (although maintenance costs of the artwork were expressed). Roland Nancarrow's and Arone Meeks' pieces around the Esplanade and hospital were all mentioned as excellent Indigenous storytelling—although their placement did not recognize their important role in Cairns and Far North Queensland. Paul Bong's Rainforest Shields, Bernie Singleton's Storywater Brothers and the mosaics on Shields Street were also highlighted as important place-based storytelling. In general Shields Street was noted as good urban design with public art integration. The transformative power of Sea Walls, and in particular Claire Foxton's mural of Henrietta Marrie, was also noted.

Public art is often controversial, and many stakeholders also gave examples of where they felt public art could do better. There was widespread upset that the Jelly Babies, once iconic landmarks in front of the Centre of Contemporary Art, were removed to MMP. It was suggested they could have been relocated to the Esplanade for more public engagement or been incorporated into the Florence Street upgrade to encourage tourists to walk down Abbott Street

for Instagram photos. Half of stakeholders also expressed concern about the Girringun Rainforest Bagu artwork at CPAC. Although acknowledged as a great Indigenous story, it is not a local story, and many felt it inappropriate to place them at the premier performing arts building—especially given its proximity to MMP which was a well-known Indigenous meeting place before its renovation. One stakeholder mentioned the recent removal of some Indigenous art as part of upgrading of Shields Street for safety which disengaged those artists. Shields Street received mixed reviews: some saw it as a successful urban place, while others felt there was a need for more interpretation. Bong's shields were argued to need more clarification as they are above eye level, and while the projection infrastructure on Shields Street near the Cairns Museum was effective with Craig Walsh's projection, many seemed puzzled as to why this infrastructure was no longer used. There were also questions about the public art commissioning process for the Dining Precinct, although the *Year 3 Report on Outcomes and Achievements* documents that after the selection process investigation into ongoing cost, maintenance, life cycle and environmental impacts was needed. Council has in place procedures for consultation on public art, and a *Strategy for Public Art and Creative Placemaking*, however there is a perception/sentiment in the sector that there could be better processes to commission, procure and place public art. Many recalled the days of *Art Built-In*, a policy of the Queensland Government mandating 2% of construction budgets over \$250,000 go toward public art. When there were more resources, *Art Built-In* generated an awareness of the importance of public art in the general public and in the construction sector, and stakeholders lamented the loss of these resources as public art is inexpensive and results in wellbeing and youth engagement.

Stakeholders also raised many opportunities that could further enhance public art in Cairns. Opportunities included some ideas discussed above, including more interactive art and the use of new technologies to make art more accessible to a younger audience





(e.g., QR codes, virtual reality, etc). Holding events at particular pieces of art was also suggested (e.g., music, theatre), with some suggesting a *Shadows from the Past*-like theatrical engagement with public art in the city. A walking tour of public art, including some sort of pamphlet and QR code system was suggested. More ephemeral art, like Esplanart and the Laneway Festival, were fondly remembered and seen as opportunities to activate the city and provide opportunities for local artists. The *Sea Walls Australia* mural project was noted as particularly effective due to its global message and attraction for young people, but it really was fly-in and fly-out artists. Some see murals as more transformative than sculpture, at a cheaper price, and recommended research into Townsville's effective public art mural policy which could be emulated. Stakeholders also noted public art opportunities to interpret different parts of Cairns' history and culture. Ideas suggested included art that interprets the changing seasons and bush tucker and more contemporary Indigenous art and street art/murals like Council's *Youth Urban Art* project which runs annually. Finally, several stakeholders expressed the need for public art beyond the city centre. Opportunities included more murals on the Cairns Showgrounds, opportunities to interpret how places like Redlynch and Freshwater acquired their names, public art could celebrate everyday experiences of the Cairns population, such as the vista of Cairns city from Reservoir Road.

In general, stakeholders expressed the need for stronger engagement with the art sector in terms of public art, innovation and placemaking. Art opportunities are seen to be driven by council decision makers, with less input from the sector. Some argued a stronger proposition would be a strategic commissioning approach and work with artists in a different way, to elevate the role of the artist. Otherwise, some feared public art could end up being about decorative bins and bus shelters. The sector supports Council and the new *Strategy for Public Art and Placemaking* but would like to see advocacy in a different way.

ARTS AND DISABILITY

There is a greater awareness of accessibility issues associated with hard infrastructure and spatial design. The Council's adoption of *An Arts and Disability Strategy* provides a clear exemplar to the sector. However, disability arts stakeholders suggest that for the wider sector, providing access is not the same as embracing inclusivity and difference in projects and programming. In response, many smaller businesses and organisations express concern that they do not have the resources or capacity to develop articulated programs with inclusivity embedded. This suggests that small arts organisations require additional support to develop strategies and programs aimed towards arts inclusion activity.

It is indicated that inclusion is a process that can be facilitated within many elements of the arts and cultural sector. Arts, culture and creative industries are considered as having the potential to provide tangible opportunities for wellbeing, social integration and community participation for people with disability. There are focused producers and associations that specialise in inclusive artistic practice. For example, Tropical Arts is an exemplar arts organisation with a focus on inclusivity, community and grassroots process to theatre making and audience engagement. They have presented an annual theatre work at the Tanks Arts Centre with support from Cairns Regional Council for over a decade, with ARC Disability Services Inc. proactive in facilitating and hosting arts and cultural participation for its clients. The arts are not the service organisation's core business, however strong ongoing collaborations and partnerships occur in the fields of performing arts, filmmaking and exhibitions. This includes partnerships with Council resulting in touring theatre work supported by Arts Queensland.

The Council's arts and disability strategy is considered to feature accessibility associated with infrastructure and as future stages of the strategy roll out this may be enhanced with an increased level of engagement involving inclusive programming. Disability

arts stakeholders have suggested that Cairns is well placed to host a disability arts festival and that increased inclusion complement the other festivals in the wider sector. To make inclusion a central strength in sector wide programming rather than a segregation or add-on.

Disabled representation in leadership roles is evident in stakeholder organisations, for example Tropical Arts. ARC Disability Services Inc. maintains networks with the arts and cultural sector and is represented in numerous community consultations locally and nationally. There are efforts to establish pathways into the sector through Screen Queensland and part of that is to engage writers, actors and filmmakers with disability to mentor and lead workshops. However, Council could further support inclusivity for artists and creatives with disability through buy-in to annual events like Disability Action Week and International Day of People with Disability. Council's role as a sector leader influences the broader sector through its strategy and investment in inclusive programming, particularly at presentation venues.

YOUNG CREATIVES

Stakeholders were asked how Council's *Strategy for Young Creatives* could increase youth participation, education and employment in the cultural and creative industries. Many felt the issue of youth participation was vital but challenging to achieve in the current context, querying how to invest in young people's knowledge and skill sets so they reach their full potential. Many felt Cairns was losing a young generation, with few young people on boards or committees and with pathways closing at tertiary education institutions like JCU. Cairns currently offers little in the way of youth-oriented creative organisations and many young creatives move out of region to seek out opportunities to further their skills base. While this is a rite of passage for many artists, the sector can only hope for their return.

Stakeholders were only partially aware of *Council's Strategy for Young Creatives*, but *Flame.Arts*, Youth Week and the Energy exhibition at Tanks were deemed strong initiatives. Many of the problems perceived were in relation to education because future producers and audiences develop these skills from an early age. Stakeholders uniformly argued the need for good arts education from primary school to the tertiary level, otherwise it is difficult to get young people to continue with serious careers and for Cairns to have a young talent pool feeding its arts and culture scene. It was lamented that TAFE and JCU no longer have strong arts certificates or programs, and CQU has few locally enrolled students with

the rest online in other parts of Australia. This means reduced peer groups for catalysing ideas among young Cairns creatives. More short courses that are not accredited or expensive could help young people gain competencies and fill the gap as these provide access points to move forward. The scenario in Cairns was contrasted with the Sunshine and Gold Coasts where flourishing young artists can fill spaces like Home of the Arts.

In general, arts education was deemed important from an early age and open to all abilities. There was widespread appreciation of the important work of REACH, but fear that lost funding would make it difficult for young budding creatives to find pathways from school. Some suggested relations in the sector are strong, but communication is ad hoc and not strategic. Before and after school art programs were suggested as one way around the lack of art in primary school, with some remembering the Art Society programs that ran on weekends - although access for all these programs is not universal. Stakeholders did note that the Cairns Museum and Cairns Art Gallery as having good outreach and school holiday programs. Schools are important but challenging to work with due to teachers' multiple commitments, and stakeholders felt there was not enough connectivity between schools and industry. Several recommended traineeships and mentorships with industry as avenues to address this but highlighted the need for a holistic approach that is multicultural and works across generations since the arts might be a pathway to another/different/potentially non-arts occupation. Finally, while young creatives are important, some stakeholders noted that the extensive facilities in the city also require installers, theatre technicians and other jobs that are of value to the wider arts ecosystem. It was emphasized that the grassroots and young people themselves need to be the drivers of such initiatives.

Some sectors already have strong connections to industry. The built environment profession supports awards in high school, programs like 'Architect for a Day' and student placements. These connections lead to part time employment while studying and permanent employment post-study. The Cairns Museum likewise offers programs for young curators. As always, the danger lies in training young people in Cairns, only for them to fulfill their dreams by moving to a capital city (as a rite of passage). This results in a particular kind of brain drain, although it was noted Indigenous artists tend to stay closer to home and stories. There needs to be employment opportunities for young people as well as education and mentoring, and simultaneously artists need to take responsibility for their own financial affairs. There are government programs to support small business practice programs, especially in the Indigenous sector.

Although the *Flame.Arts* mentorships were an industry development project, there was some criticism of this initiative. One stakeholder reflected on the early days of the program, praising the mentoring, but felt it was too much work for mentors and therefore unsustainable. The program was then scaled back and is only a once-a-year event for a smaller cohort. Others felt the mentors should rotate from year to year to keep the program fresh, and that *Flame.Arts* was too closely tied to International Women's Day and part of a council strategy to tick two boxes (women and youth). While inclusion of young women creatives is important, gender diversity and LGBTIQ+ issues are of vital importance to young people. Some suggested this is not often addressed by Council more generally (apart from a rainbow path painted for the Cairns Pride Festival, suggesting only temporary inclusion). In general stakeholders lamented the cleaning out of youth arts organisations like Youth Arts Queensland and the federal program *Jump* which were seen as better and more inclusive initiatives—although expensive. Without these types of activities Cairns is losing a young generation.

The Children's Festival was raised by different stakeholders as an important event for enculturating young people to the arts. There was a sense that Council holds the festivals in its own venues and could usefully engage the rest of the sector to participate. Although Council regularly promotes EOIs for festival participation, it was suggested that Council could partner with other small to medium enterprises to enrich the offering.

Finally, stakeholders acknowledged the need to engage young people in new ways—so that they see the arts as an opportunity for them. There are few young people at exhibitions and openings. Few artists design exhibitions for the 0-5 age group, and children are rarely privileged in any planning of programs. There needs to be a layer of consideration in all arts and culture activities to encourage generational growth, not just in roles, training and expertise, but also in appreciation and valuing of the arts. Ticket prices at Council venues—although heavily discounted—can be prohibitive for young people, who also have a different sense of aesthetic to what old fashioned museums and galleries are about. Online culture, gaming culture and anime are all things that young people respond to. Stakeholders gave examples of youth clubs at galleries and museums and galleries in South Australia and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London as suggestions for Cairns to make art and culture relevant to them. After the mid-2000s, the National Gallery of Victoria and Museum of Contemporary Art started putting on dance parties, developing strategies and designing exhibitions to engage young people – an important investment.

ARTS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL OR DESTINATION?

When asked if stakeholders thought Cairns was an arts and culture 'capital' or 'destination', there were mixed views. Most felt Cairns was not an arts and culture destination like Melbourne, Adelaide or Hobart, as the city does not have some of the key elements such as a fringe festival, comedy festival, and there were no events at key travel times such as Easter etc. However, most felt Mayor Manning's language and advocacy were shaping this reality for the long term with strong policies and priorities at the local government level. In contrast, there was a clear sense of Cairns as a hub and capital of North Queensland - especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art with the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair envisioned as getting larger and larger with time. Stakeholders suggested the potential of being part of a strong network of places across northern Australia rather than being in competition for the capital. Many mentioned the Darwin Festival and Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, which are difficult to compete with, as with Townsville's well-known events throughout the year that people travel for including the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Dancenorth, Ephemera and Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts' PUNQ (Pop Up North Queensland). Stakeholders suggested that Cairns' role as a destination could decrease as other places develop similar policies; Rockhampton's new precinct was raised as a game changer as the largest regional gallery in Australia. Stakeholders expressed the urgency for the new Gallery Precinct to be strategic and 'extraordinary' considering this competition.

Most stakeholders saw arts and culture as an important part of the tourist mix, but not the sole drawcard for tourism to Cairns. The potential for Cairns to increase arts and culture tourism was noted largely because of an existing tourist trade, the tropical lifestyle, beautiful landscapes and cultural diversity—these can be simultaneously drawn upon in marketing a mythical tropical identity. Cairns is already a destination for regional tourists who come for the experience of being in the city and are happy to spend money on arts and culture while visiting. Stakeholders suggested a palpable sense that Cairns could be the arts capital of the Pacific region with dedicated effort and funding and collaboration, which could galvanize Indigenous and Pacific artists, but there is a very long way to go. One stakeholder highlighted that a professional, well-constructed arts scene, with events sequenced in time, could attract the super yachts. Cairns already has the super yacht 'vibe' that could be enhanced.

Most stakeholders pointed to the need to work with tourism organisations and operators to make Cairns more of an arts and culture destination—making sure arts and cultural tourism activities

are not scheduled in the shoulder or wet seasons but in the tourist peak periods. Tourism Tropical North Queensland was seen as playing an important role in this regard. Cairns Festival was seen as a regional highlight, although not enough to attract national travelers to Cairns as currently configured (one stakeholder suggested the need for associate artistic directors to widen its appeal). Some suggested CIAF need to market the destination as well as the CIAF event, and many noted the opportunities arising with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics and the need for a ten-year roadmap with Brisbane as a gateway to culture in the far north. Others mentioned the value of everyday art production spaces as tourist sites, especially given the vacancies in the inner city, and a way to showcase a creative city. An arts centre that could be the outpost for Lockhart River and other Indigenous communities was also mentioned.

Stakeholders consistently reiterated that an arts and culture capital does not merely showcase talent from down south, and that Cairns should be building a stronger network across the top of Australia and outwards to South East Asia and the Pacific. Cairns must do more than invite touring companies from down south or provide excellent venues to make its mark. Arts and culture destinations offer a unique, creative sense of place - which may require different kinds of investment and commissioning. The entrepreneurial, do-it-yourself culture of Cairns was seen as an asset and contrasted to Townsville's public service and garrison mentality, arguing this is a strength of the city that could be drawn upon for creativity. Artist collectives like Diffraction Collective in Townsville were offered as an example of how more could be done collectively at the grassroots.

Stakeholders also felt there were untapped and under-recognized artforms in Cairns that could be explored and promoted as tourism events. Cairns has a strong vocal community, for example, and the idea of tropical opera is one deserving more attention—particularly with Adrian Strooper returning to Cairns and Alteouise DeV Vaughn in Port Douglas. An annual tropical opera event at MMP could be tagged on to Townsville's Festival of Chamber Music or the Queensland Music Trails to be leveraged. Also noted was the possibility of expanding the Cairns Tropical Writers Festival to an international writer's festival with connections to Asia and the Pacific, building on the Tropical Writer's City of the Arts Hero Project funding through RADF in 2021. Writing is the least developed artform in the region and might become more important with the development of film and screen writing.

ARTS AND TOURISM

The Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair stands out as an event that has the support of tourism organisations, such as Events Queensland and Tourism Tropical North Queensland. The support, strength and vision of the CIAF event has withstood the impacts of COVID-19 by pivoting to a digital platform. Online representation of the artworks and online sales facilitated the ongoing operation of the activity despite the disruption of COVID-19. Partnerships and resource agreements with Council allowed CIAF to find the space and capacity to develop digital and online production including setting up temporary exhibitor stalls at CPAC for digital recording and photography. These media images formed virtual exhibitions navigable through a time limited online event portal.

Council's 'Cairns Summer Sounds' program leveraged partnerships with tourism authorities and state government to entice audiences back to entertainment and arts venues in Cairns after the relaxing of some COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns. There are stakeholders who suggest that the price of ticketed events was a disincentive for local audiences. For some arts and cultural facilities COVID-19



educated a pivot from tourists to local audiences. This required an agility to program appropriately and maintain interest for changing audience profiles. Some organisations, more oriented towards production, have used the restrictions caused by COVID-19 to develop, plan and invest in creative development of new initiatives. This activity has included programs aligned with the State Government's focus during 2021 on elements of Indigenous cultural tourism.

The capacity for locally produced events and smaller grassroots productions to be considered for promotion by tourism authorities appears to be limited. There is stakeholder sentiment that small arts and cultural entities do not meet a minimum expectation to be considered for broader promotion within the region's tourism offering. Participation in the major tourism market as clients of tourism service organisations is suggested to be out of range of many small organisations, although Council does support a number of organisations with community events and major regional event funding. The cost of tourism promotion into visitor markets is beyond the means of many small to medium entities in the sector. The perception that tourism authorities are mostly concerned with domestic and international visitors seeking adventure tourism, means many creative producers are disengaged with tourism activity. The segment of small creative enterprise preferring to cater at a level for immediate local audiences or incidental tourism markets. There is a perception that tourism authorities can only tolerate homogenised product for its markets. Many arts and creative entities respond to innovative experimentation and that embedded artistic processes are prone to change and may have fluid outcomes effecting product consistency. It appears that tourism authorities are resistant to having conversations with the broader arts, cultural and creative sector. It is suggested that tourism authorities consider arts and cultural activities and offerings as being of insignificant economic benefit to the region. Through COVID-19, stakeholders reported a shift to predominantly domestic tourists visiting their facilities and spaces. The current relationship of the sector to the tourism industry highlights the potential for more familiarisation. Arts and culture can provide significant authenticity, all weather alternatives and diversity to the regional tourism experience. For example, promotion of the night economy made up of theatre shows and music gigs, along with self-guided arts and cultural tours in the CBD and broader region, incorporating art galleries and public art trails.

The sentiment that there is hidden potential for the broader arts and cultural sector to engage with tourism continues to be expressed. The key to leveraging tourism support for the arts and cultural sector is suggested to be an investment in strategic planning that incorporates cultural tourism goals and indicators. Having creative sector boards, directors and managers integrate tourism outcomes as strategic indicators has the potential to focus sector efforts on integration with the tourism economic cluster. The supply of local artworks to accommodation suppliers has a reciprocal potential. However, arts and cultural partnerships and programs with tourism need to be carefully curated and undertaken with consideration and respect. There is an organic dimension to cultural tourism that turns out to be associated with the quality of an experience or service. Some stakeholders have partnered with specific tourism providers,

such as hotels, to exchange sponsorship for complimentary tickets that can be offered to guests. The suggestion is to define a benefit within the partnership over time. ARC Disability Services Inc. has engaged in niche holiday experiences for people with disability wanting to holiday in Cairns. They present the region as a destination that it is inclusive and accessible. The success of these models needs further investigation and research.

The issue of unauthentic Aboriginal artefacts is a concern that needs to be addressed by the tourism sector and retail operators. It is suggested that the council can make more of a stand on reducing the prevalence of fake artefacts. Prioritising certificates of authenticity and Indigenous-led suppliers is going to strengthen the local industry and provide a more conducive and satisfying experience for the tourism market.

ART, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT

Given the theme of this report, as well as Cairns' iconic identity as a city between the rainforest and the reef, stakeholders were asked to ponder the natural environment's relation to arts and culture in Cairns as well as what areas of the arts and culture sector best expressed or reflected this identity.

Stakeholders first and foremost articulated that the natural environment is, in essence, the inspiration for all artforms in Cairns. Connection to Country and reflecting on that connection is part of the creative journey, the environment itself is a backdrop and sustenance to art making. Stakeholders felt this was uniquely pronounced in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, where nature is presented in the artwork and tells a story. This is particularly evident at CIAF as you cross through different curated sections that echo different natural environments: rainforest, coastal, wetland. In general, stakeholders cited the reflection of the environment in arts: Brian Robinson's Woven Fish and Stingrays, Mollie Bosworth's pottery infused with ferns and Lone White and Monique Burkhead's exhibition 'Vessels of the Rainforest and the Reef' at the Court House Gallery. Stakeholders also used examples of visual art, dance, performance and environmental writing. The environment is connected to the arts through natural flora and fauna, when artists use natural products like lomandra, when writers tell the story of the reef and rainforest or when Miriki Performing Arts has fires in their park shows as a kind of expression of outdoor spaces. Marine environments are reflected in textiles and fashion. NorthSite was seen as leading experimental work in this space, with for example, art and science collaborations that bring together artists with biological scientists. The Cairns Museum's very identity is about being a city in the tropics: from why people migrated to the city to what they did when they

arrived and the industries that flourished. Boutique experiences were also emphasized as part of arts and culture, with food and drink expressive of the environment we live in (e.g., local seafood and gin).

A few stakeholders mentioned the built environment, suggesting there was no clear vernacular or 'style' that strongly responded to the environment in Cairns. Architects and landscape architects connect to landscape in unique ways, in relation to roofs for example, and work with breezes, shade and filtered light. The tropical urbanism provisions in the council's planning scheme were cited as reflecting the development of a desired vernacular, prioritising views to the mountains, double story verandas and greenery. The provisions helped shape the built form of Bulmba-ja and the Bailey hotel. Double storey verandas on the street derive from Queensland pubs overhanging commercial space but also an Asian notion of living. The provisions challenge minimum amounts of green in urban development and help shape the lush landscapes and tropical style noted in interviews. Stakeholders were keen to keep the city green and protect the environment, partly for aesthetic reasons but also to keep the city cool. One stakeholder hoped the new Gallery Precinct could be made more 'tropical', with more plantings, as the Court House Gallery lawn is too sunny and hot for daytime visitation. Many thought the landscape architecture along Florence Street could be emulated elsewhere, for example at suburban locations such as Forest Gardens which have potential for activating places.

Stakeholders also made specific reference to parts of the city that they thought reflected the environment-art synergy best. Tanks Arts Centre was consistently put forward as an innovative example of arts and culture in the rainforest. Work here tends to have an environmental focus and many visiting artists in residence focus on environmental themes. The Botanic Gardens were also mentioned as a special place to be emulated throughout the city, with art pieces in the Botanic Gardens area being particularly memorable. Sculpture Botanica was singled out as something special. The spectacular vines and landscaping of MMP were put forward as representing a desire to enjoy arts and culture outdoors as were the markets along the Esplanade. Being outdoors and celebrating the tropical lifestyle was consistently mentioned as an important part of the creative environment of Cairns. The *Shadows from the Past* dramatisation at McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery was raised by several stakeholders as 'uniquely Cairns', with some even suggesting this as a method to bring public art to life.

Finally, a few stakeholders cautioned against succumbing to tropical kitsch. The fish and turtle 'vomiting' baggage out at the airport carousels were noted by a few stakeholders. Cairns fits the idea and myth of the tropics from reef to rainforest, where everything

is bigger and colourful and lush. This also makes Cairns prone to tropical clichés as a frontier town on the edge of civilisation where deep north characters come to hide in the foreboding landscape of crocodiles and places only reachable by boat. The television series 'Troppo' was singled out as an example of such tropical cliché—and one mostly filmed on the Gold Coast. Another stakeholder raised the importance of being different from South East Queensland, preserving 'authentic' Cairns landscapes for the budding film industry. This stakeholder criticized 'ticky-tacky' residential development across Cairns, fearing the demise of pristine landscapes like Taylor Point that make Cairns an attractive filming location (it is more expensive to film in Cairns if you must travel to Wangetti for authenticity).

Biodiversity was suggested as a model for cultural diversity and harmony and as a guiding insight for arts and culture in Cairns. Foregrounding the connection between environment, culture and the arts was seen as something as desirable. One stakeholder suggested the possibilities of more environmental art, and that Cairns EcoFiesta could be a platform for more collaboration in this space. Another suggested a festival based on the aesthetics of plant life. Stakeholders felt this image of Cairns could be usefully updated on the Welcome to Cairns signage on Bruce Highway.



MAPPING CREATIVITY

THE (CAIRNS) ARTS AND CULTURE MAP

The Cairns *Arts and Culture Map* was developed by Cairns Regional Council and launched in 2018 as a one-stop-shop for information on the city's cultural assets. Council-owned art and cultural facilities are listed, including venues for hire, historic sites, information about festivals and cultural organisations and more. Creative businesses and individual artists create their own entry and can use the site to promote their practice. The map works to promote festivals and places as well as individuals and businesses. In 2020 Cairns Regional Council initiated conversations with Tablelands Regional, Cassowary Coast Regional and Douglas Shire Council about the possibility of extending the map to cover a wider area and the *Arts and Culture Map* now includes these jurisdictions. In 2021 these councils launched their own versions of the map connected through a shared interface.

Data collected from 1 January to 27 November 2021 appraising the use of the *Cairns Arts and Culture Map* show the service grew during the calendar year of 2021, with 65 new contributors and a total number of listings at 1252 (Table 1). Data on map usage is presented below. Table 2 highlights the importance of specific pages and categories. Although the pages fluctuate with events, CPAC, the Cairns Festival, and Carnival on Collins are consistently popular pages. A consistently popular category is public art which justifies using the map in relation to the walking trails discussed below, although Facilities and Spaces and Festivals consistently appear in the top four. The map is most popular with the 25–34-year age group, particularly at the beginning of 2021.

Table 1: Comparative data, 2019 to 2021 (January to November)

	2021	2020	2019
Contributors	65 new, 496 total	410 total	300 total
Total listings	137 new, 1,252 total	1,080	1,412
Users	8,452	12,713	14,351
Page views	35,916	36,021	44,425

Table 2: Top pages and categories on the map

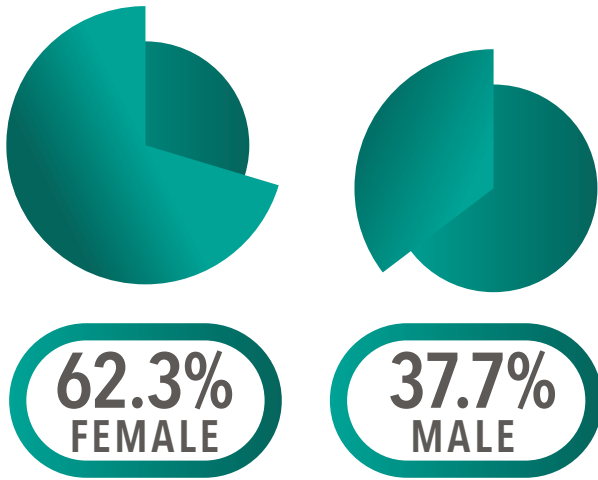
Most popular pages in 2021	Most popular pages in 2020	Most popular pages in 2019 (Jan to Nov)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPAC 2. Cairns U3A INC 3. Starry Night Cinema 4. Carnival on Collins 5. Court House 6. Freshwater CWA Hall 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Starry Night Cinema 2. Cairns U3A INC 3. Oktoberfest 2020 4. CPAC 5. Carnival on Collins 6. Cairns Festival 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cairns Festival 2. CPAC 3. Carnival on Collins 4. Cairns Amateurs 5. Great Pyramid Race 6. Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Most popular categories in 2021	Most popular categories in 2020	Most popular categories in 2019 (Jan to Nov)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilities and Spaces 2. Public Art 3. Artists 4. Festivals 5. Historical Places 6. City Collections 7. Industries 8. Organisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Art 2. Historical Places 3. Facilities and Spaces 4. Festivals 5. Artists 6. Organisations 7. City Collections 8. Industries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Art 2. Artists 3. Festivals 4. Facilities and Spaces 5. Historical Places 6. Organisations 7. Industries 8. City Collections

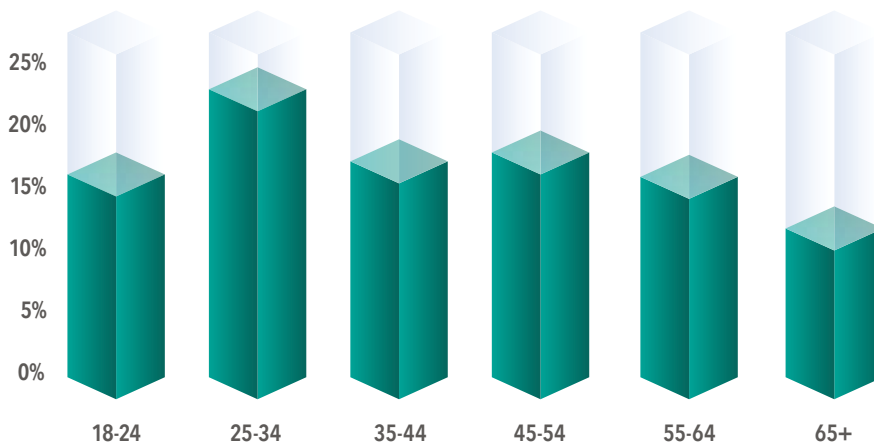
In 2021 most map users were female and in the 25-34 age category (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender and age of map users in 2021

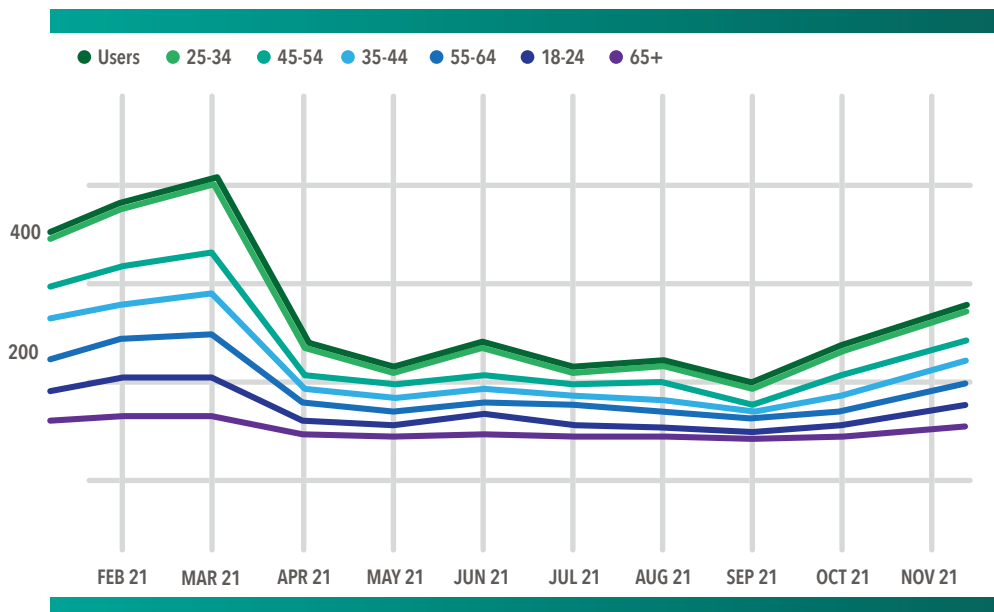
GENDER (28.61% of total users)



AGE (27.57% of total users)



USERS



ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISM POTENTIAL IN CAIRNS

As part of each SoARTS research project, Cairns Regional Council commissions CQU to conduct an ongoing survey to assess the participation of domestic and international tourists in arts and cultural activities while visiting Cairns. CQU has conducted an exit survey of tourists departing the domestic terminal of Cairns airport for several years and in June 2018 added several new questions to develop a deeper understanding of the kinds of arts/cultural activities tourists engage in.

The results presented here in this SoARTS 2021 report are from a survey carried out in the domestic terminal of the Cairns International Airport. The surveying commenced in August 2020 after COVID-19 restrictions on travel were lifted. Ongoing travel restrictions including those imposed in Victoria in the winter of 2020 disrupted the usual pattern of intra and interstate travel.

A convenience sampling approach was used. Survey staff approached potential respondents and enquired if they had visited the Cairns region on holiday. If a positive response was given, they were invited to participate in the survey. A total of 702

valid responses were received from both first-time and repeat visitors to the Cairns region.

As in any survey of this type, there are limitations. The results can only be regarded as a limited snapshot of tourists over the survey period and therefore care should be taken in generalising the findings. In some instances, survey items were general rather than specific. For example, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of 'cultural experiences' without specifying what types of cultural experiences this implied.

The survey was administered in English. Several significant market sectors, including those tourists travelling via road, rail and sea were not surveyed. Due to COVID-19 border closures, international tourists are not represented. It should also be noted that during the survey period domestic tourism markets were severely disrupted by snap lockdowns in many states and the longer Victorian lockdown in the second part of 2020. It is also acknowledged that there is some potential for the findings to reflect some elements of social desirability bias.

FINDINGS

The results reported in this discussion are based on the responses of 702 tourists, comprising 248 first-time domestic and 454 repeat domestic respondents. Distribution by state is outlined in Figure 2. Compared to previous years, Cairns received a much higher number of intrastate visitors, a result of snap lockdowns in many interstate generating regions and subsequent disruption of domestic air services. The majority of both first-time and repeat domestic respondents were female (see Table 3).

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by state of origin (n=691)

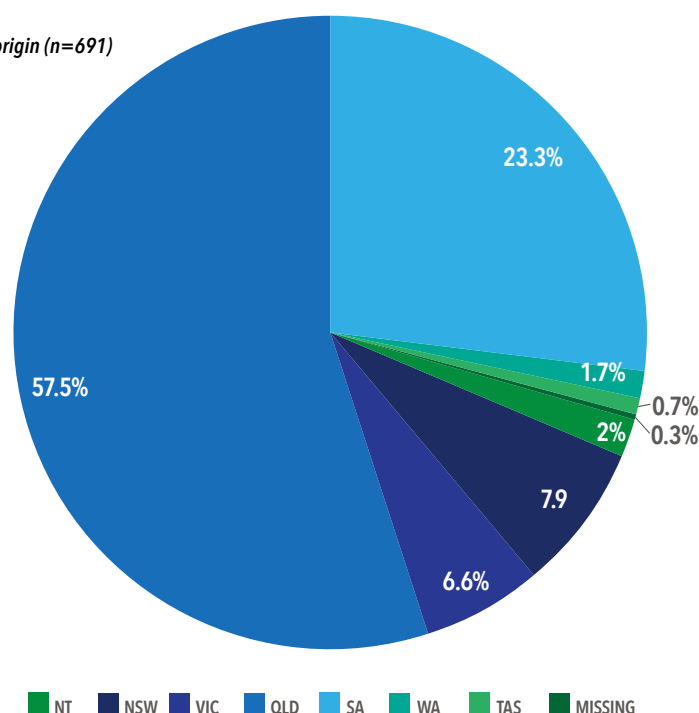


Table 3. First-time and repeat domestic respondents by gender n=701 (1 did not indicate gender)

	Male	Female	Total
First time visitors	85 (33.7%)	163 (36.3%)	248
Repeat visitors	167 (66.3%)	286 (63.7%)	453
Total respondents	252	449	701

The majority of both male (66.3%) and female (63.7%) domestic respondents had visited the Cairns region previously. The average length of stay in Cairns by first-time domestic respondents was six nights while the average length of stay of repeat domestic respondents was seven nights.

Respondents were asked to indicate the activities they regarded as important when selecting a holiday destination. Results are reported in Table 4. Nature based experiences and national parks headed the list of experiences that visitors look for when selecting a destination. The results also indicated that a significant percentage of respondents look for destinations that offer cultural experiences with repeat visitors (38.3%) showing slightly more interest than first-time visitors (37.3%). Museums/galleries and festivals were of interest to both first-time visitors (14.9% and 11.6%) and repeat visitors (16.9% and 10.3%). Arts, defined as performing and/or visual were not a major factor in destination selection for either first-time (6.4%) or repeat (7.9%) respondents.

Table 4. Importance of activities experiences when selecting a holiday destination

Activities	First-time n=248	Repeat n=454
Nature-based experiences	77.5%	70.2%
Visit national parks	65.5%	53.6%
Local food	57.4%	60.2%
Dining experiences	53.4%	61.1%
Cultural experiences	37.3%	38.3%
Nightlife experiences	23.3%	15.5%
Coffee culture	18.9%	23.0%
Special events	15.3%	13.8%
Museums/galleries	14.9%	16.9%
Festivals	11.6%	10.3%
Activities for children	9.2%	12.3%
Arts (performing/visual)	6.4%	7.9%

Respondents were asked about their participation in arts/cultural activities during their visit to the Cairns region. Results are reported in Table 5. These results show that less than 10 first-time and repeat male respondents, and less than 16 first-time and repeat female respondents, took part in an arts or cultural activity while in Cairns.

Table 5. Participation in arts/cultural activities n=702

Respondents	Male	Female
First-time	9 (10.6%)	13 (8%)
Repeat	8 (4.8%)	15 (5.2%)

Table 6 ranks the importance of a range of motivations to visit the Cairns region for first-time domestic respondents. 'To have fun' was the highest ranked motive just above 'rest & relaxation' and 'experience the natural environment'. To 'experience Aboriginal culture', 'visit arts & cultural spaces' and 'the event that I attended' were ranked 16, 17 and 20 respectively.

Table 6. Motives to visit the Cairns region for first-time domestic respondents using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = most important; 1 = least important) n=248

Rank	Motivation	Mean
1	To have fun	4.68
2	Rest & relaxation	4.46
3	Experience the natural environment	4.27
4	Visit the Great Barrier Reef	4.24
5	Enjoy the tropical lifestyle	4.23
6	Visit the Wet Tropics rainforest	4.10
7	Visit the beaches	3.95
8	Visit national parks	3.93
9	The price matched my budget	3.91
10	Snorkelling	3.87
11	Learn about the natural environment	3.79
12	Visit World Heritage areas	3.78
13	See Australian wildlife	3.71
14	Climate	3.68
15	Spend time with my Family	3.68
16	Experience Aboriginal culture	3.14
17	Visit arts & cultural spaces	2.92
18	Diving	2.82
19	Visit friends & relatives	2.47
20	The event I attended	2.41

Table 7 shows the top motivation for repeat domestic respondents was 'to have fun', followed by 'rest & relaxation' and 'to enjoy the tropical lifestyle'. Domestic respondents ranked 'experience Aboriginal culture', 'visit arts & cultural spaces' and 'the event I attended' as 16, 18 and 19 respectively.

Table 7. Motives to visit the Cairns region for repeat domestic respondents using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = most important; 1 = least important) n=454

Rank	Motivation	Mean
1	To have fun	4.53
2	Rest & relaxation	4.43
3	Enjoy the tropical lifestyle	4.21
4	Experience the natural environment	4.09
5	The price matched my budget	3.89
6	Climate	3.86
7	Visit the Great Barrier Reef	3.84
8	Visit the Wet Tropics rainforest	3.82
9	Spend time with my family	3.77
10	Visit the beaches	3.71
11	Visit national parks	3.68
12	Visit a World Heritage area	3.57
13	See Australian wildlife	3.55
14	Learn about the natural environment	3.47
15	Snorkelling	3.23
16	Experience Aboriginal culture	3.02
17	Visit friends & relatives	2.97
18	Visit arts & cultural spaces	2.86
19	The event I attended	2.41
20	Diving	2.33

Respondents were asked to name the arts or cultural activities they participated in. As shown in Table 8, a range of activities not usually regarded as arts or cultural related were reported by respondents. These activities included golf, the Ironman event and Hartley's Crocodile Adventures. These results are included in the report to indicate the type of activities some respondents appear to regard as arts or culture related. The top two arts/cultural activities reported by respondents were the Dreamtime Great Barrier Reef Tour, Rainforestation Nature Park and Mossman Gorge. Overall, the results indicate that Indigenous arts/cultural activities were more popular than other arts/cultural events. This may reflect the commercial nature of the Indigenous arts/cultural activities. Several of the other arts/cultural activities mentioned by respondents are either free, do not appear on commercial tourism booking web platforms or respondents did not recall the exact name of the activity such as galleries and markets.

Table 8. Arts/cultural activities participated in

Activity	First-time visitor		Repeat visitor	
	Male n=85	Female n=163	Male n=167	Female n=286
Aquarium	1 (1.2%)	0	0	0
Art Gallery (location not specified)	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	2 (0.6%)
Dreamtime Great Barrier Reef Tour	2 (2.4%)	0	2 (1.2%)	3 (0.9%)
Golf	0	1 (0.6%)	0	1 (0.3%)
Hartley's Crocodile Adventures	1 (1.2%)	0	0	0
Ironman	0	1 (0.6%)	0	0
Kuranda	1 (1.2%)	0	0	0
Rainforestation Nature Park	2 (2.4%)	0	3 (1.8%)	1 (0.3%)
Mossman Gorge	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)	0	3 (0.9%)
Markets	0	1 (0.6%)	0	3 (0.9%)
Remote Aboriginal community	0	1 (0.6%)	0	0
Welcome to Country	0	1 (0.6%)	0	1 (0.3%)
Aboriginal culture	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Kuranda Wildlife Park	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Canvas painting	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Cooktown Museum	0	0	0	1 (0.3%)
Gallery (type and location not specified)	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Great Barrier Reef	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
National parks	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Kuranda Scenic Railway	0	0	0	1 (0.3%)
Cairns Gallery	0	0	0	1 (0.3%)
Palm Cove	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Port Shorts	0	0	1 (0.6%)	0
Sydney Nolan Exhibition	0	0	0	1 (0.3%)

Results outlined in Table 4 show that just over a third of respondents considered that the availability of cultural opportunities was an important factor in their selection of holiday destinations. However, results outlined in Table 5 indicate a much lower level of reported participation in these activities. Results outlined in Tables 6 and 7 indicate that 'experience Aboriginal culture' and 'visiting arts & cultural spaces' were not ranked as significant motivations for visiting Cairns.

The gap between the importance of the availability of cultural activities as a motivation for selecting a destination and participation in events and activities of this type in Cairns may indicate that visitors are not aware of these types of activities in Cairns and/or that visitors perceive that there is a lack of suitable activities of this type in the destination. Further research is required to provide insights into this problem.

CASE STUDIES

Three case studies reflecting the broad theme of 'Culture, Heritage and Place' are featured in this SoARTS report. The Cairns Museum focuses on the preservation and promotion of culture and heritage of Cairns, Bulmba-ja Arts Centre celebrates contemporary Indigenous artforms in Far North Queensland and the JCU student walking trails suggest how some of the public art in the city might be connected.

CAIRNS MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The history and diversity of Cairns creates a unique sense of a place. The Cairns Museum plays a pivotal role in preserving and communicating this history and character, allowing residents and visitors to explore the city through tangible and intangible heritage. The Museum is operated by the Cairns Historical Society, a not-for-profit incorporated association run and managed by volunteers, with the support of paid staff members (the Museum is supported by a Cairns Regional Council funding agreement). In 2021 the Society also had 585 fee paying members. The

Museum is the public face of the Cairns Historical Society and has occupied the heritage-listed School of Arts building (1907) on the corner of Lake and Shields Streets since 1980. The building was recently renovated with the addition of an adjoining purpose-built structure and is owned by Council.

The Cairns Historical Society was founded in 1958 and is the keeping place for 85,000 historical items from Far North Queensland, covering a large area from Cardwell to Normanton to the Torres Strait. The Society was established to maintain and preserve the region's history and to provide access to members and the public via the Research Centre. The Society's collection includes documents, books and newspapers as well as maps and photographic images and other individual objects. The Society's vision includes delivering a high-quality museum experience that makes the history of Cairns accessible to locals and visitors from all around the world. The Research Centre assists a wide range of people and projects, from authors writing books to those interpreting the Indigenous history of the Court House Gallery.



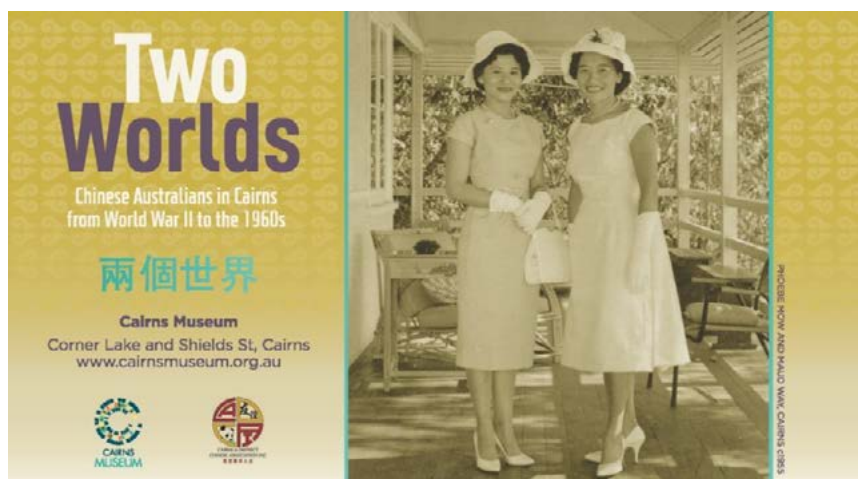
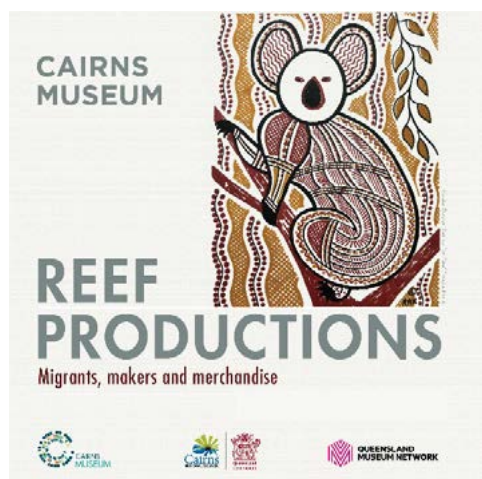
The Museum includes permanent, temporary and virtual exhibitions that invite visitors to gain a better understanding of the Indigenous landscape through to the transformation of Cairns from a small town to an international tourist city beside the Great Barrier Reef. Exhibits tell the Cairns story from the vantage point of its Traditional Owners, migrant groups and through the industries and wars that shaped the city's economy and society. Alongside permanent exhibitions, the Museum encourages repeat visitation through temporary displays. First Nations voices and stories are advocated through collaborative temporary exhibitions like *Percy Trezise* (2021) and *Reef Productions* (2021). A collaborative exhibition developed by Cairns Museum and the Cairns and District Chinese Association Inc. *Two Worlds* (2020) tells the story of Chinese Australians in Cairns from World War II to the 1960s. The Museum is currently experimenting with a participatory museums experience approach in *1x4 One Object/Four Stories* (2022). The exhibition features unrelated objects of the Cairns Historical Society collection and explores multiple stories associated with each of them through using QR codes and active participation/interpretation.

The Museum is committed to lifelong learning and education for a diverse range of age groups. Museum staff and volunteers work closely with local schools to develop programs to deliver knowledge about Far North Queensland's culture and heritage to future generations. In 2020-21 the Society engaged a total of 2,676 students in different activities and programs. The Museum's *History on the Move* program mobile trailer is one example of hands-on learning experiences for school kids. The program includes a fully equipped trailer that can be booked by local schools and provides themed learning experiences about the history of Cairns in a playful way. In 2020-21 the Society developed new activities to engage children in culture and heritage educational experiences. Audio-guided in-house trails

with different themes, such as NAIDOC Week and Chinese New Year are examples, as are holiday workshops for families. The Museum also invites international student groups to connect to the people, places and uniqueness of Far North Queensland in a meaningful way.

In addition to engaging young people, the Museum provides adult learning and socially responsible engagement in many ways. These include group activities such as public lectures, information sessions, 'meet the collector' events, exhibition openings and the mentoring of emerging conservators. Museum activities also include training and supervising an active volunteer base of around 60 people ranging in age from 14 to 80 years. Volunteers work across the Collection, Research Centre and Museum. In their annual report the Society reported their volunteers provided "16,517 hours, approximately 2,202 working days of service in front of house, lifelong learning and education, collections and research, membership and publications. At a conservative rate of \$20p/h, this equates to a \$330,340 contribution". To do so the Society ran 19 skills training programs in collections handling, guiding, digitizing and hosting children. In short, the Museum provides much in-kind training to the Cairns community who in turn provide valuable work hours that help keep the Museum a viable entity.

COVID-19 saw a pause in international tourism which greatly impacted Museum visitation during the pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, visitors tended to be 20.5% local, 48% national and 30.5% international. In 2021 these percentages shifted to 30% local and 68% national. In the Society's annual report 2020/21, 24% of visitors were locals living in the Cairns Regional Council local government area. This led to more children and family-friendly programming in 2021. With the opening of international borders and the return of tourists from around the world to Cairns, it will be interesting to see what next lies in store for the Cairns Museum.



BULMBA-JA ARTS CENTRE

Bulmba-ja Arts Centre, located on Abbott Street in the heart of Cairns city, is another example of sharing and celebrating culture in Cairns. In contrast to the Cairns Museum, Bulmba-ja prioritises the unique performing arts stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Far North Queensland region. The name Bulmba-ja (pronounced BULL'M-ba-jar), has a shared meaning of house or place in local Yidinji and Yirrganydji languages and it is also reflected in Djabugay language. It is managed by Arts Queensland a division of Queensland State Government and plays an increasingly important role in Cairns' art scene. In addition to providing creative, presentation and operational space for tenants (JUTE Theatre Company, NorthSite Contemporary Arts, Miriki Performing Arts, Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts and Minjil), the centre functions as galleries, theatre and creative development space for project-based initiatives.

Formerly known as the Centre of Contemporary Arts, Bulmba-ja was re-opened in 2020 following a \$5.9 million refurbishment as part of a Queensland Government vision to support Far North Queensland arts and culture. The original building housed the Department of Motor Transport from 1976 and was where the Cairns community obtained their driver licenses. At the end of the 1990s, the creative organisations, Kick Arts Contemporary Arts and JUTE Theatre Company succeeded in securing a grant from the State Government's 'Millennium Arts Project' that allowed the establishment of the Centre of Contemporary Arts that opened in 2004. At that time five colourful Jelly Baby sculptures, the signature artwork created as part of a public art commission, drew the community and visitors to the centre.

Today, the multi-functional Bulmba-ja hosts several arts companies and organisations and the Cairns-based staff of Arts Queensland. This team, in conjunction with their colleagues in Brisbane, manages the state government's contribution to arts and cultural development including financial support for an innovative and resilient arts and cultural sector. By focusing on the active involvement of First Nations peoples, Bulmba-ja represents a shift in arts representation in the city. By managing state government infrastructure and stakeholder relations in Cairns and Far North Queensland, the team works on the Queensland Government's 'Backing Indigenous Arts' initiative, which focuses on building sustainable and ethical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts industries in Queensland.

NorthSite Contemporary Arts, previously known as KickArts, is one of regional Queensland's leading contemporary visual arts organisations. With a focus on contemporary art, craft and design practice inclusive of work from urban and remote communities, NorthSite celebrates the unique cultural stories of Far North Queensland, with reach into Cape York and the Torres Strait. NorthSite works across disciplines (visual art, craft, design, sound, performance and screen media) to develop exhibitions and programs for the exhibition spaces at Bulmba-ja and touring programs. In 2020, 4,608 physical attendees visited the facilities and 104,911 participated virtually in exhibitions and activities.

NorthSite manages Bulmba-ja's digital public artwork façade that utilises LED strips to feature First Nations artists through commissioned artworks. For example, the work of Arone Meeks (1957 – 2021), a Kuku Midigi man who grew up in El Arish and with his tribal country around Laura, Cape York. The artwork is



formatted to display on the building which illuminates at night and provides a unique platform for showcasing Indigenous artists.

NorthSite also manages NorthSite Store, which sells contemporary art pieces, prints and paintings representing Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. In 2020, NorthSite made A\$95,000 in artwork sales, reflecting the economic value of the organisation to local artists. Furthermore, NorthSite hosted 16 exhibitions and featured 399 artists. Forty artworkers were employed and a total of A\$380,000 was paid to artists, arts workers and local art businesses.

Bulmba-ja also hosts JUTE Theatre Company, a theatre organisation dedicated to regional capacity building, community empowerment and engaging the diversity of the Cairns community on stage. JUTE offers a range of activities including script development, creative developments and the production of new programs based on a diverse range of stories, such as migration, cultural heritage and racism. Their *Dare to Dream* program is an Indigenous theatre tour that supports young Indigenous people and promotes positive stories. The JUTE Actor's Studio is designed for students from the region to provide pathways through capacity building.

Miriki Performing Arts, formerly known as Biddigal Performing Arts, is a dance theatre-based performance group. The group was developed to provide the opportunity and encourage Indigenous Australian youth from Cairns to create, choreograph and perform their Australian Indigenous heritage. All performances are based on authentic Indigenous Elders' stories, which epitomizes the core value of the group.

Pryce Centre for Culture and Arts also reside at Bulmba-ja, which offers global pathways for remote Indigenous youth with a strong commitment to the arts. The centre encourages arts development and cultural maintenance by providing a safe platform for unique stories through art. The initiative is a perfect fit for Bulmba-ja promoting and celebrating Indigenous culture in a contemporary way.

The Indigenous cultural group Minjil offers authentic experiences and works with tourism businesses, education providers and other clients in the government and corporate sector by providing creative solutions connecting Indigenous Australia's diverse culture and Cairns' history. Their services include Welcome to Country ceremonies, 'edu-cursion' programs and presentations as well as dance performances and cultural awareness tours. The company links authentic cultural knowledge and practice with artistic performance to simultaneously entertain and educate.

Finally, IndigeDesignLabs is an example of developing career pathways for young Indigenous creatives. The learning lab program, supported by NorthSite, along with John T Reid Charitable Trusts and Ingeous Studios, bundles culture with design and technology seeking to transfer knowledge and skills towards storytelling in digital and creative design. The program is guided by mentors supporting Indigenous digital careers. IndigeDesignLabs projects include design creations, such as colourful art wraps on Translink's Sunbus vehicles via the bus network Kinetic as part of their Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

The renovation of the old motor registry building first to the Centre of Contemporary Arts and then to Bulmba-ja has provided an incubator for contemporary Far North Queensland arts and culture in Cairns, with a strategic focus on enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative arts in visual and performing arts. The Traditional Owner groups informed the architecture of the rebuild which now includes an Elder's Lounge and Yarning Circle in the street-front veranda. Bulmba-ja will be an important focus for the next phase of arts and culture development in Cairns in association with the new Cairns Gallery Precinct.





JCU PUBLIC ART TRAILS

James Cook University's Tropical Urbanism and Design Laboratory recently ran their award-winning Tropical Design Studio for upper year undergraduate Bachelor of Planning students with a brief of curating/designing public art trails for the city centre. This brief was inspired by the excellent collection of public art in Cairns as well as a high level of engagement with it on the *Arts and Culture Map* (it consistently features as the most accessed category). It was also inspired by the ability of public art to encourage walking and new experiences of the city. The student research included a desktop audit, background research and a walking tour of streets with high densities of public art and other services and amenities. Students were tutored by local architects, planners and creative leaders who graciously donated their time.

The students identified several possible walking trails that could be strategically visioned for future development. These included a waterfront trail along Trinity Inlet, a walk along Florence Street connecting CPAC with the Esplanade, and another walk looping around the important arts and culture infrastructure in the city centre.

Waterfront trail: A walking trail along Trinity Inlet was proposed to 1) tell the history of the wharf area and its recent restoration; 2) highlight existing public art that is not currently on the *Cairns Arts and Culture Map*; and 3) direct walkers' gaze to landforms significant to Indigenous communities across the inlet (vistas that resemble crocodiles, sea eagles, stingrays and tell important stories of the region). The walk is already an active passageway for cruise liner visitors but is also a key connector

■ Waterfront Trail ■ City Loops ■ Florence Street



from the Cairns Convention Centre and is activated by the Fig Tree Playground, the many pubs and restaurants along the boardwalk, and opportunities for fishing. The land for this trail belongs to Ports North, and because many of the significant public art pieces are not council owned and managed (e.g., Thanakupi's artwork, they are not listed on the *Cairns Arts and Culture Map*. Dedicating some energy to creating a public art trail along the waterfront is an opportunity for Cairns Regional Council to work with Ports North and the Traditional Owners to create something genuinely novel.

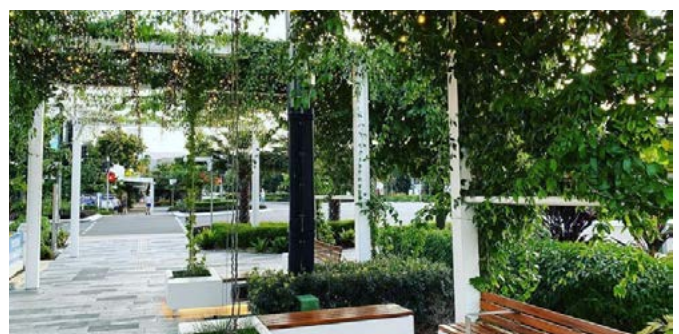


Florence Street: On the opposite side of the city centre is an opportunity to create a public art and heritage trail along Florence Street. Recent initiatives in the area, including removing traffic roundabouts and greening the area with lush plantings and arbours with fairy lights have made this a safer and more walkable street that provides opportunities to connect CPAC to the Esplanade. Key pieces of public art include Braham Steven's Embrace at MMP and the Girrigun Rainforest Bagu at CPAC, a Sea Walls mural and Bulmba-ja's digital façade. This public art combines with the history of MMP to provide a memorable experience. Access to CPAC during daytime hours would enable trail users to see the Centre's inside collection as part of their journey. Moreover, as Florence Street is a zone of transition from the city centre to Cairns North, a public art trail would be a stronger proposition with more strategic planning/urban design promoting mixed use and residential development along this street (sites with development potential are currently zoned 'Tourist Accommodation', encouraging single use zoning which may not be appropriate). Any redevelopment in this area should consider adding to the public art collection—especially at the Esplanade end to balance the offering. It is also possible this trail becomes a night-time trail, illuminated by lights

City Loops: The middle of the city centre is the cultural and tourist heart of Cairns. There are many well-known public art pieces—from community art to Indigenous sculpture—but connecting them into a coherent trail is not straightforward given their dispersed locations. A set of separate but interconnected walking loops is one opportunity. The first loop, around the Esplanade Lagoon, takes advantage of the celebrated Woven Fish, Citizens Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef as well as community art pieces such as the 'Work for the Dole' scheme tiles and the fig tree lined walk. It is well connected to the Dining Precinct and has a range of facilities

and services. A second loop is less public art and more arts and culture infrastructure, including the Cairns Art Gallery, Court House Gallery and the new Gallery Precinct. The walk would eventually find some permeability through the Gallery Precinct without the need to loop out to Spence Street. A final loop would include the public art along Shields Street—including Paul Bong's Rainforest Shields, the mosaic tiles by Philomena Yeatman, Edna Ambrym and Valmai Pollard, Bernard Singleton's Storywater Brothers—and include a stop at the Cairns Museum before heading to Sebastian Di Mauro's Rise and the City Library's Literary Trail. Promoting the Lake Street bus interchange as the start of the trail could encourage public transport and use of the Lake Street carpark.

In addition to these walking trail loops, students recommended a QR code model to bring tourists to the Cairns *Arts and Culture Map* and recommended some interactive public art pieces to complement more sculptural elements of the city. The Sea Walls were also suggested as a different offering but are not easily connected by foot. Other suggestions included public art workshops and public display of collaborative art pieces. A Public Art Masterplan would complement Council's *Strategy for Public Art and Creative Placemaking* and provide public art urban design considerations to the *Cairns City Centre Masterplan*.



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