



CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

ARTS AND CULTURE INDUSTRY

2024/25



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decisions

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Industry Snapshot - 2024/25



\$324M

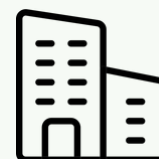
Output / Total Sales



1,310

Local Jobs

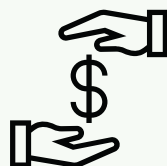
1.5% of total local jobs



370

Local Businesses

2.4% of total GST Registered Businesses



\$139M

Gross Value Added

1.3% of total industry value added

**5YR
GROWTH**



KEY SUB-INDUSTRIES



Creative Artists/Performers

\$16M Value Added

269 Jobs



Arts Education

\$9M Value Added

225 Jobs



Specialised Design Services

\$22M Value Added

151 Jobs

Sources: NIEIR, 2026; ABS ABR 2026

Industry Size and Composition

	 Output/Sales	 Value Added	 Employment
Direct	\$324M	\$139M	1,310

	Indirect/Flow-on Impacts		
Industrial	\$57M	\$23M	42
	+	+	+
Consumption	\$109M	\$48M	320

Total Impact	\$490M	\$210M	1,672

In 2024/25, the Arts and Culture Industry in Cairns was estimated to have generated \$139M in direct plus an additional \$71M in indirect impacts for a total contribution of \$210M in Value Added. The industry supported 1,310 jobs directly and an additional 362 in indirect employment.

The largest sub-industry for direct employment was estimated to be Creative Artists/Performers with 21% of the total sector's employment.

Sub-Sector Employment, 2024/25
Top Sub-Industries

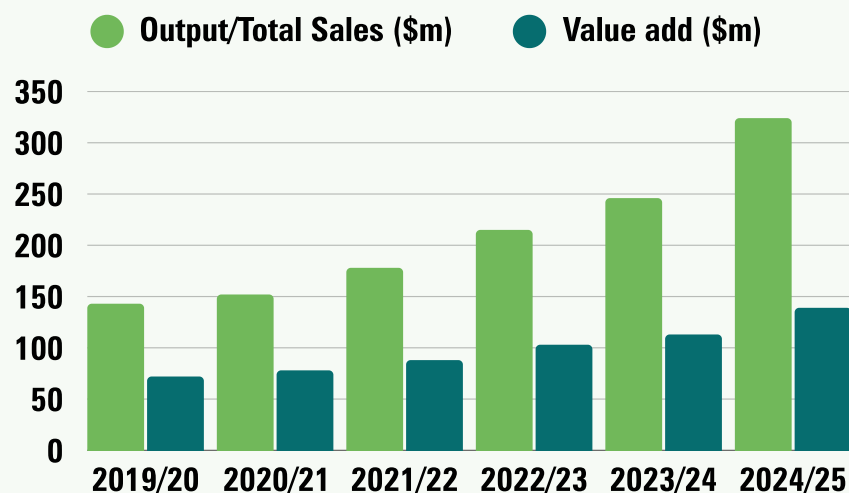


Sources: NIEIR, 2026

GROWTH TRENDS

In 2024/25, there were an estimated 1,310 employees working in the Arts and Culture Industry in Cairns and 970 full-time equivalents. The industry generated \$139M in Value Added, or \$105,828 per employee (\$143,012/FTE). Growth in the industry has averaged 6.3% p.a. for employment over the last five years and 14% p.a. for value added, both above the state average. It is important to note the industry was impacted by COVID based policy responses in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Economic Value, Cairns Region, Financial Year

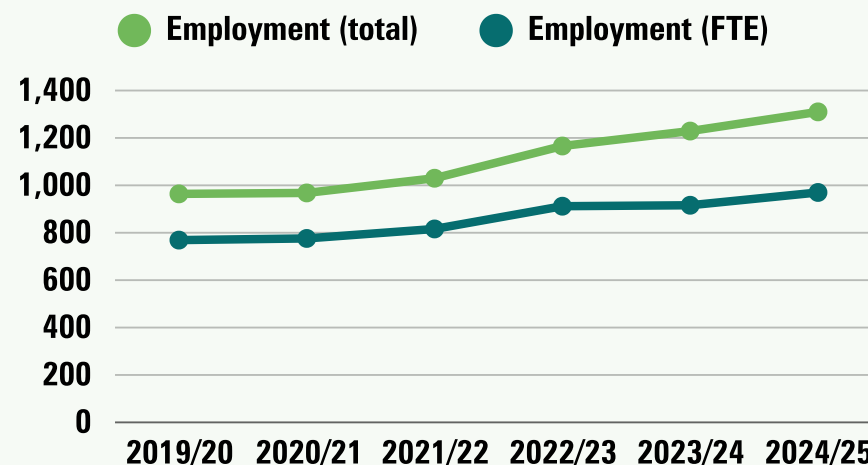


**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

18%
Output/Sales
12% p.a.

14%
Value Added
9.5% p.a.

Average Employment, Cairns Region, Financial Year



**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

6.3%
Employment
2.6% p.a.

4.7%
FTEs
2.2% p.a.

Sources: NIEIR, 2026



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



Cairns has a number of key facilities that support industry development including the Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns Art Gallery Precinct, Cairns Museum, Bulmba-ja Arts Centre, Cairns Performing Arts Centre, Munro Martin Parklands, The Court House Gallery and Mulgrave Gallery.



Cairns’ proximity to natural assets, such as the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforests - both UNESCO World Heritage sites – provides strong opportunities for cross-industry partnerships (tourism, climate and environment, universities), inspiration for the visual arts sector, and unique natural backdrops for the film industry.



With almost 10% of residents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, more than double the QLD average, the Cairns region has a strong First Peoples cultural presence, reflected through major platforms and events such as the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), the Shine on Gimuy festival, and ongoing programming of First Peoples artists at venues such as the Tanks Arts Centre, Cairns Art Gallery Precinct, and Bulmba-ja Arts Centre.



Cairns has the largest number of workers in Motion Picture and Video Production outside SE QLD. The Screen Queensland Studios, Cairns is supporting industry growth through major productions, including the third season of Black Snow, creating local jobs, building workforce capability and opening up new opportunities for screen sector investment and development across Far North Queensland.

Sources: ABS Census 2021

WORKFORCE PROFILE

Workers in the Arts and Culture Industry in Cairns in 2021 were older than the state as a whole with a median age of 43. The workforce was female orientated and 24% were born overseas.

Just over 1 in 3 were degree educated, compared to 41% at the state level, and 71% were working in professional or managerial roles.

In 2021, the FTE median income of the local workforce was lower than the state median. This was influenced by lower qualifications compared to the state.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE INDUSTRY, 2021 - CAIRNS REGION



43 years

Median Age

QLD - 39 years



\$58,999

Median Income FTE

QLD - \$67,572



44%

Male

QLD - 43%/57%



56%

Female



55%

Full Time

QLD - 53%



24%

Born Overseas

QLD - 23%



46%

Owner Manager

QLD - 42%



6.7%

Identified as First Peoples

QLD - 2.3%



71%

Professionals/Managers

QLD - 69%



34%

**Degree or
Above**

QLD - 41%

33%

**Certificate III to
Advanced Diploma**

QLD - 31%

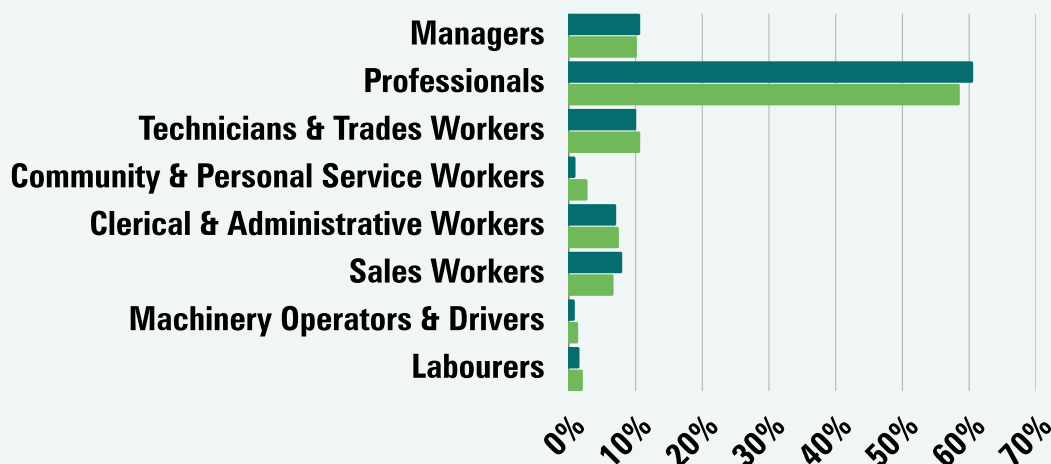
Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

EDUCATION & SKILLS

The Arts and Culture Industry in Cairns had a higher share of workers in professional occupations in 2021 (61%) compared to the QLD average (59%). The top occupations were Private Tutors and Teachers and Photographers. The industry had a lower share of qualified workers (68%) than the QLD average (73%), and a slightly lower share with post-graduate degree level qualifications (7% vs 10% for QLD).

Local Workforce Occupations, 2021

● Cairns ● Queensland

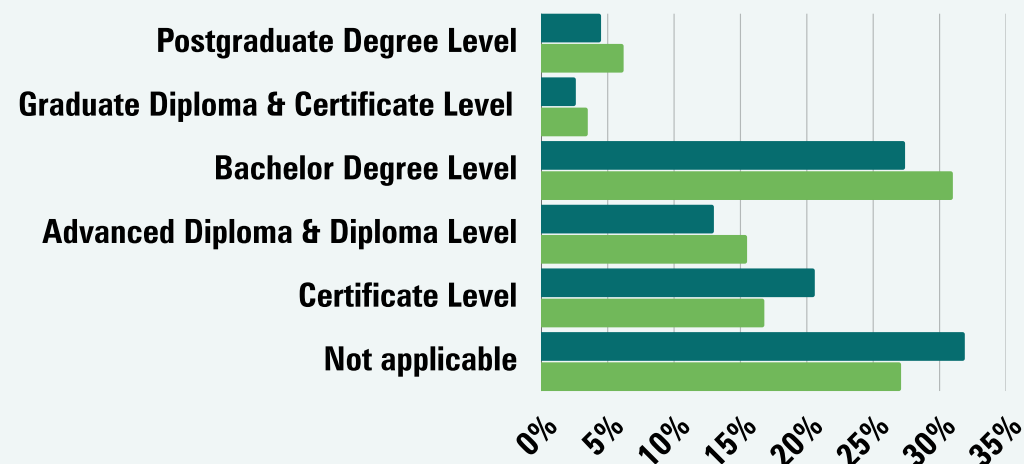


Top Occupations

- Private Tutors and Teachers
- Photographers
- Graphic and Web Designers, and Illustrators
- Journalists and Other Writers

Local Workforce Qualifications, 2021

● Cairns ● Queensland



Top Study Fields

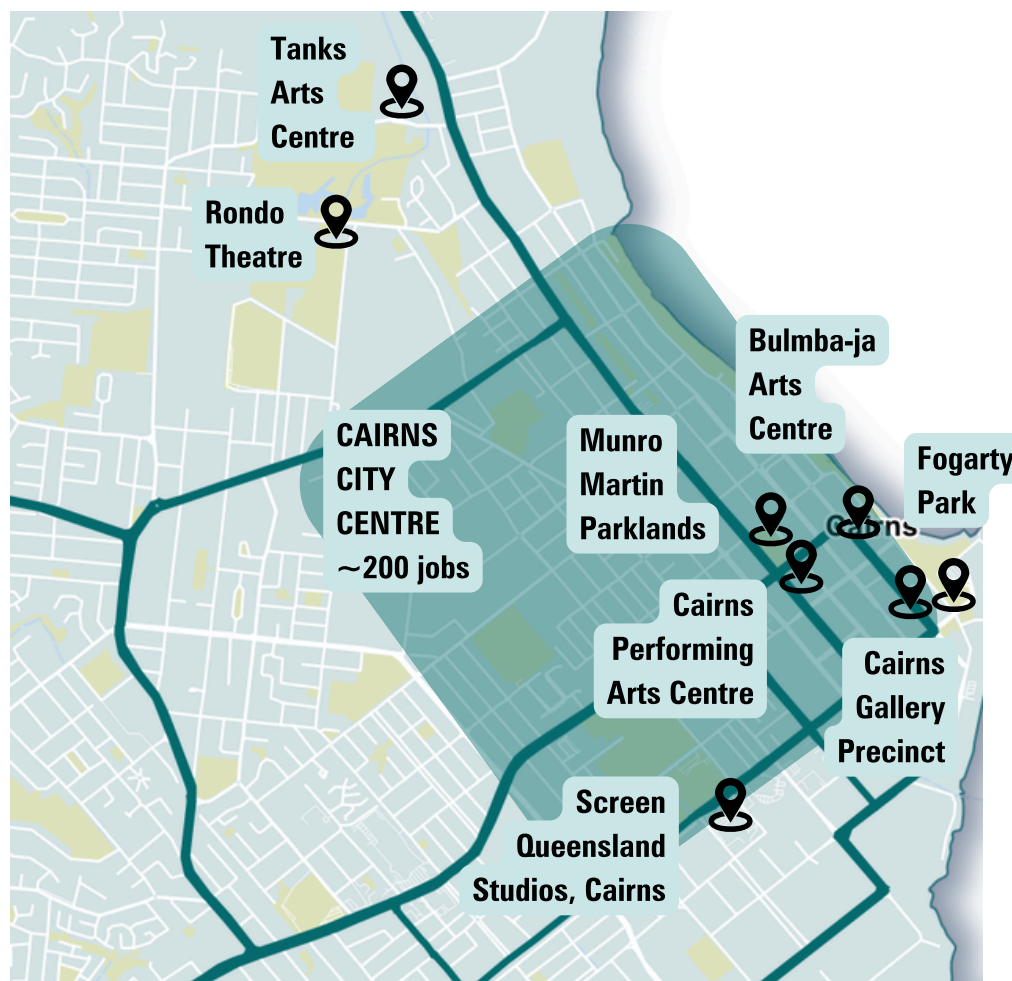
- Graphic Arts and Design Studies
- Journalism
- Music
- Communication and Media Studies

Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Main employment precincts



Estimated Industry Jobs, 2021



Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Key sites/facilities

- Bulmba-ja Arts Centre
- Cairns Art Gallery Precinct
- Cairns Cultural Precinct, Greenslopes Street
- Cairns Museum
- Cairns Performing Arts Centre
- Cairns and District Chinese Association Incorporated (CADCAI)
- Mulgrave Gallery
- Fogarty Park
- Mulgrave Gallery
- Munro Martin Parklands
- NorthSite Art Studio
- Screen Queensland Studios, Cairns
- Tanks Arts Centre

PROJECTS & TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE



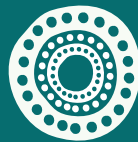
Upgraded Major Facilities

Cairns has expanded its cultural infrastructure significantly over the last decade through the development of the Cairns Performing Arts Centre (2018), Bulmba-ja Arts Centre (2020), Court House Gallery (2020), Mulgrave Gallery (2024). In 2026, the two new galleries were unified as part of the Cairns Art Gallery Precinct, strengthening the city's cultural offering and supporting its ambition to be an arts and cultural hub in Northern Australia.



Screen Queensland Studios, Cairns

Opened in 2024, Screen Queensland Studios Cairns is a fully operational studio complex with a sound stage and integrated production facilities, including production offices, construction, wardrobe, and hair and makeup, as well as event space and creative tenancy opportunities, supporting industry development, skills programs and sector events that contribute to workforce capability and growth in the screen industry.



Enhancing First Peoples Cultural Experience

Cairns is well positioned for further development of cultural tourism experiences, focusing on the unique culture and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and working in partnership with the local Traditional Owner Groups. This aligns with the Queensland Government's Creative Together 2020–2030 strategy and supports broader cultural and creative sector development.



Amplifying Value through Live Music

Council is developing a Live Music Framework to boost the local music industry, foster cultural tourism, and diversify the night-time economy.

The framework will enhance access to development resources, encourage cross-sector collaboration, and support plans for a major entertainment precinct aligned with broader economic strategies.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- A range of key arts and culture facilities catering to multiple demographics
- History of successfully accessing arts funding above other regions in the state
- Strong First Peoples culture supporting a unique and authentic arts, cultural and tourism event offering
- An active screen industry supported by Screen Queensland Studios, Cairns which attracts productions and supports local jobs and supply chains
- World-class natural assets that provide inspiration for artists, unique backdrops for films/events, and can support a distinctive arts and cultural offering.



WEAKNESSES

- Over-reliance on Government funding for growth
- Under-developed private philanthropic support
- Physical connection barriers between the city's arts and culture infrastructure
- Decline in employment within arts education threatens future talent pipelines and the community's long-term creative capacity
- Perceived unbalanced focus of investment between Council-run assets and not-for-profit sector facilities
- Climate creates additional preservation costs for arts and artifacts
- Cairns has a smaller broadcasting sector than Queensland overall, including radio, TV, digital broadcasting/media



THREATS

- Diminishing support for creative arts courses/training means fewer skilled professionals entering the industry resulting in a skills gap
- Lack of affordable housing and low incomes are a risk to being able to attract sufficient skilled workers. This threatens the city's ability to deliver cultural events and attractions
- AI technologies and IP uncertainty may impact creative industry growth and business viability.
- Industry continues to lose out to other industries for major investment and/or major government funding
- Fluctuating or limited funding impacts the sustainability of programs and events
- Over-reliance on volunteers for some organisations leaves them operationally vulnerable



OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage the Cairns Gallery Precinct as a catalyst for creative sector growth, increased cultural tourism, and broader economic outcomes
- Screen Queensland Studios, Cairns is driving growth in the local TV/film industry and supporting supply chains
- Cross-industry partnerships and expanded funding for artist development and audience engagement can strengthen the live music industry
- The 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games present a valuable opportunity for arts and culture sector
- Collaboration with education providers to expand micro-credentials can help address skills gaps and support workforce development
- Greater promotion and facilitation of cultural experiences offer in Cairns can boost tourism economy
- Adoption of digital technology can make arts collections and performances more accessible to wider audiences





For more economic data on the
Cairns Region, visit economy.id

