

ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY

2024 - 2029



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Balonne Shire Council acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

The six main Indigenous Peoples in the Balonne Shire are the Bigambul People, Gamilaraay People, Gungarri People, Kooma People, Mandandanji People and Yuwaalaraay / Euahlayi People.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDING PARTNER

The development of this Arts and Culture Strategy has been funded by the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF), a partnership between the Queensland Government and Balonne Shire Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.



Queensland Government



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

I am delighted to introduce the Balonne Shire Council Arts and Culture Strategy.

We live in a region that poses such a promising opportunity to further build on the breadth of arts and culture initiatives already in place, such as our range of regular and popular festivals, our much-loved sculpture trails and our myriad public artworks and murals.

This five-year strategy is essentially the roadmap that will provide a framework and clear direction to guide council's support for the development and expansion of our thriving, vibrant and connected arts and culture sector across the shire.

We undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultation with hundreds of individuals in the development of this strategy and I would like to thank everyone for taking the time to participate in this process. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and ultimately helped shape our vision for the path forward.

The consultation feedback has now been incorporated with industry research and the State Government's strategic priorities to ensure we are focused on providing best practice and evidence-based support to our arts and culture sector.

The key objectives of this strategy include:

- To strengthen access to arts and cultural activities for all residents in our shire
- To promote our diverse arts and culture sector
- To assist our arts and culture sector to develop and enhance their existing strengths and
- To support the sector by improving and developing cultural facilities and infrastructure.

Although this strategy is measured in its principles, it is designed to be agile and adaptable, and over the next five years, we will regularly review this strategy to ensure we are able to respond to shifting needs and new opportunities as they arise.

I commend this strategy to the residents of Balonne Shire and trust it will be embraced and cherished in the same way that our existing arts and cultural initiatives already are.

Kind Regards

Mayor Samantha O'Toole



BALONNE SHIRE PROFILE

The Balonne Shire covers an area of 31,152km² and has a resident population of 4,345 people (ABS 2023).

The local government area comprises seven communities, St George, Thallon, Dirranbandi, Bollon, Nindigully, Mungindi and Hebel. St George is the hub of the shire and is centrally located at the intersection of six highways, ensuring strong transport links and a constant flow of goods and visitors into the region. St George also has an airport which is serviced with regular Rex Airlines flights.

Traditionally, the shire's economy has been built around the agriculture sector, led by cotton, grain, sheep and cattle production. The shire is currently experiencing exciting growth in the tourism industry, welcoming more than 16,000 visitors per year (BSC Visitor Information Centre 2023).

The Balonne Shire boasts a unique and relaxed lifestyle, strong community values and diverse natural landscapes. All towns in the shire are uniquely situated on waterways, which provide water for our nationally significant agricultural industries and create an abundance of recreation activities for residents and visitors to enjoy, including boating, fishing, swimming, walking and camping.

ARTS AND CULTURE SNAPSHOT

STATISTICS

\$493 MILLION 2023-24 Gross Regional Product

4345
Population

2217
Local jobs

2250
Employed residents

922
Local businesses

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
Largest industry

2.4% Unemployment rate

BALONNE SHIRE COUNCIL ARTS AND CULTURE FACILITIES



5 town halls



5 libraries



Parks and outdoor
cultural spaces in all
towns



Murals and outdoor
art in all towns

Existing arts and cultural attractions

St George	Thallon / Nindigully
The Hub and Cultural Centre The Harmony Centre Art Mural Trails Murray Cod Sculpture St George Pilots Memorial The Unique Egg The Anchorage Homestead The Bush Garden The Amoy Shepherds Memorial	Thallon GrainCorp Silos Thallon History Trails The Watering Hole Heritage Trail William the Wombat Old Bullamon Homestead Nindigully Paperback Hero Boomerangs
Bollon	Dirranbandi
Aboriginal Dreamtime Artwork walkway Bollon Heritage Centre Nullawokka First Nations Gallery and Tours	Beersheba Memorial Mosaic Walkway Rail and River Precinct The Goods Shed Tom Dancey Memorial
Hebel	Mungindi
Hebel Historical Circle Hebel Pub	Sculpture Trail One Ton Post

Balonne Shire Council outdoor venues

Town	Venue
St George	The Hub Amphitheatre River parklands – RSL to bridge Rowden Park St George showgrounds
Dirranbandi	Railway parklands – Rural Transaction Centre River parklands – near fishing area Dirranbandi showgrounds
Thallon	Pine Street parklands (wombat area) Thallon recreation centre and RV parking (managed with Thallon Progress Association)
Mungindi	Mungindi river parklands and RV camping area
Bollon	Bollon river parklands and RV camping area
Hebel	Hebel parklands near library

WHY DO WE NEED AN ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY?

The Balonne Shire has an abundance of talented local artists, musicians and creatives. This strategy is both a framework and vision that will guide council's efforts to support and strengthen Balonne's arts and culture sector over the next five years.

The benefits of a strong and sustainable arts and culture sector

Arts, cultural and creative activities are known to have positive, direct and indirect effects on the economy, employment, tourism and society more broadly.¹

It has been proven that local arts and culture sectors, typically composed of micro businesses and some small to medium enterprises, have the potential to develop into powerful economic clusters, helping to drive significant economic growth within their communities.²

Research demonstrates that strong and sustainable arts and culture sectors build thriving communities and can be a key factor in attracting new residents to communities.³

It is also well documented that arts and cultural programs and activities for young people can improve self-esteem, positive behaviour and academic outcomes.⁴

The positive social impacts of a thriving arts and culture sector should not be overlooked or undervalued. We reached over 700 local voices through our community consultation process. They told us that engagement in arts and cultural experiences fosters social connection, improves health and wellbeing and is an important source of fun and joy.

¹ SGS Economics and Planning, 2013, Valuing Australia's Creative Industries.

² The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2010, Creative Economy Report.

³ Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2019, Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity Produced by A New Approach (ANA) think tank with lead delivery partner the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

⁴ Ibid.

Strategic context

The Arts and Cultural Strategy sits under and supports the Balonne Shire Council Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027 (Our Plan, Our Future) and other key strategic documents. It also represents the key values of shire residents, as expressed through our extensive community consultation.

This Strategy details actions that will deliver on council's priorities and initiatives. These activities will be implemented through more detailed planning and projects by the Communities team and, where relevant, in partnership with other Balonne Shire Council teams (including the Tourism and Infrastructure teams).

The Arts and Culture Strategy will assist council to achieve its vision of welcoming, connected and innovative communities, where economies are strong, and opportunities are abundant.

'Welcoming, safe and thriving communities where cultural diversity, traditions and the arts are celebrated, and quality education is accessible.'

Community Goal from 'Our Plan, Our Future: Balonne Shire Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027'

Arts Queensland: Creative Together 2020 – 2030

Where relevant and possible, we have aligned our Arts and Culture Strategy to the Queensland Government's strategy and action plans for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland.

The Arts Queensland strategy and action plans are called *Creative Together 2020-2030*. Collectively, they form a 10-year vision for transforming Queensland through arts, culture and creativity. Details of the Arts Queensland roadmap and action plan can be found here: www.arts.qld.gov.au/creative-together.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Organisation	What they do
<p>Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF)</p> <p>Arts Queensland RADF information: www.arts.qld.gov.au/regional-arts-development-fund</p> <p>BSC RADF information: www.balonne.qld.gov.au/grants-assistance</p>	<p>Arts Queensland partners with local governments to support quality arts and cultural experiences across Queensland through RADF.</p> <p>RADF promotes the role and value of arts, culture and heritage as key drivers of diverse and inclusive communities and strong regions.</p> <p>RADF invests in local arts and cultural priorities, as determined by local communities, across Queensland.</p> <p>RADF is delivered in partnership with 59 Queensland local councils.</p> <p>RADF supports arts and cultural activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide public value for Queensland communities • build local cultural capacity, cultural innovation and community well-being

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver Queensland Government's objectives for the community.
<p>Regional Arts Services Network (RASN)</p> <p>Balonne RASN contact: Michelle Blair michelle@empiretheatre.com.au</p>	<p>RASN empowers Queensland's regions to realise arts and cultural priorities and drive change through arts-led initiatives.</p> <p>RASN works in partnership with local councils, artists and arts organisations, and communities to foster, facilitate and promote the sustainable growth of regional arts across the state.</p> <p>RASN service providers deliver local arts services across the state that enhance cultural vitality, create thriving communities, and advance regional development and social priorities.</p>
<p>Queensland Museum's Museum Development Program</p> <p>www.museum.qld.gov.au/about/museum-development-program</p>	<p>Queensland Museum, in conjunction with Arts Queensland, runs a program that provides community organisations with an opportunity to access museum expertise through professional development and project-based activities.</p> <p>The Southern Inland Queensland Museum Development Officer is based in Toowoomba. She has extensive experience of working with regional and remote communities and understands the challenges and opportunities that community collecting organisations face.</p>
<p>Arts Queensland</p> <p>Visit www.arts.qld.gov.au/</p>	<p>Arts Queensland, part of the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, is committed to building a strong and sustainable sector which supports the renewal and transformation of Queensland through arts, culture and creativity.</p> <p>Arts Queensland offers a suite of funding, projects and initiatives to drive creative employment and grow new creative work and events that will activate Queensland communities and showcase uniquely Queensland stories.</p>
<p>State Library Queensland</p> <p>Visit https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/about/partnerships-and-collaborations/local-government-and-public-libraries</p>	<p>Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ) represents a significant collaboration between local governments and the State Library of Queensland to provide high quality public library services to rural Queensland's people.</p> <p>The State Library also distributes the Public Library Grant and First 5 Forever funding to support collections, programs and services delivered by local government.</p>
<p>Somerset Storyfest</p>	<p>Somerset Storyfest is the premier writers' festival for the Gold Coast, holding an annual three-day event in March.</p>

Storyfest extended their outreach program to St George in 2024, providing our shire with equitable opportunities to interact with authors and books in a fun, festive atmosphere and strengthening connection in our communities around a unique cultural experience.

CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

This 5-year Arts and Culture Strategy has been informed by over 700 voices through an in-depth engagement and consultation process. As part of this process, we heard from community members, local artists, musicians and creatives, arts and cultural organisations and groups, as well as key strategic partners outside the shire.

Community survey

The response from the community survey was overwhelmingly positive with 98.5% of respondents ranking arts and cultural programs, activities, events, venues and development as especially important.



Most rewarding aspects of arts and cultural experiences	
It is fun and provides joy (77%)	77%
It provides social connection (75%)	75%
It improves health and general wellbeing (73%)	73%
Helps us understand and empathise with other people, perspectives and cultures (58%)	58%
Helps us express ourselves and make sense of our own experiences (56%)	56%
Provides economic benefits for our region (56%)	56%

Preferred arts and cultural experiences	
Events and festivals	77%
Music and concerts	75%
Visual arts and crafts, including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, photography, video, filmmaking, design and crafts	69%
Art exhibitions and galleries	62%
Theatre	58%
Arts or cultural education and/or workshops	54%
Museums and historical attractions	54%
Arts and crafts markets	33%

Key themes identified in the community survey included:

- An ardent desire to have a dedicated gallery space within the shire.
- Desire to celebrate and embrace First Nations and multicultural arts and culture.
- Children and young people in our shire need more exposure to arts and culture.
- Upgrades required for venues and arts/cultural spaces to make them inviting and comfortable spaces. Specific items mentioned included:
 - accessibility
 - acoustics, sound equipment, lighting and stages
 - heating and cooling

- Empower and support developing arts / culture organisations and artists / musicians.
- Include all towns across the shire
- Local arts groups and organisations should work together to share events, resources and venues, when possible.

Youth consultation

All schools, kindergartens and childcare facilities across the shire were invited to participate in a range of age-appropriate activities and exercises to gain an understanding of what arts and cultural activities and experiences children and young people currently engage in and would like to engage in.

Participating education providers included:

Balonne Kindergarten

Bollon State School

Hebel State School

NCC Daycare, St George

St George State High School

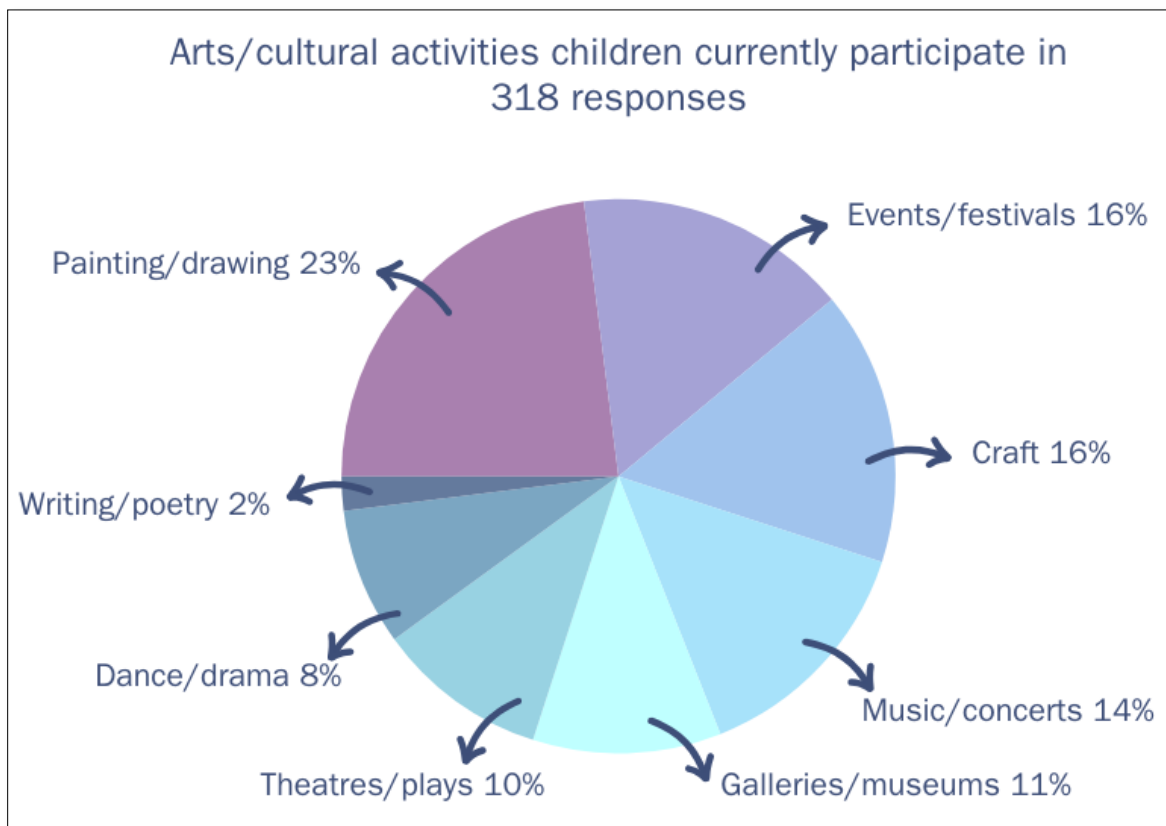
St George State Primary School

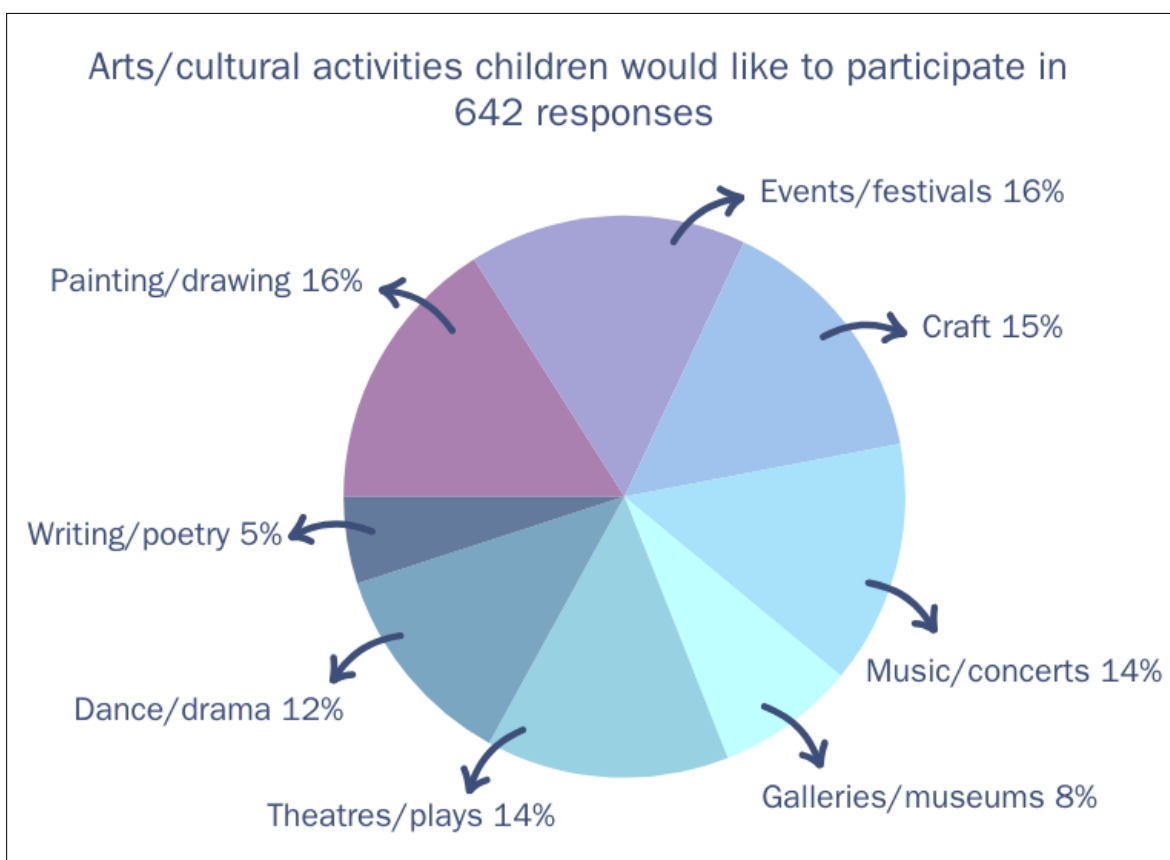
St Joseph's School, Mungindi

St Patrick's School, St George

Thallon State School

Children feedback summary





Key themes identified in early years and primary feedback included:

- Art, music and dance were key interests expressed in worksheets completed by children across all towns.
- A desire to learn more about First Nations culture and art was a common theme, particularly traditional dot painting and dance.
- Wood, steel and art technology (animation, film and Artificial Intelligence) were also listed as areas of interest by several respondents.

Young people feedback summary

We specifically sought feedback from young people attending high school within the Balonne Shire. High school students surveyed said arts and cultural experiences provided the following benefits:

- helps them feel like engaged and active community members
- gives them a sense of freedom and self-expression
- provides a healthy and productive outlet
- gives them a way to connect with other young people
- allows them to express themselves
- allows them to connect with their culture
- assists them to connect with different ideas and perspectives.

This group of young people were most interested in events and festivals, closely followed by music and concerts. Interest was also expressed in crafts, theatre and plays, as well as galleries and museums.

The senior art students at the St George State High School expressed an interest in being able to participate in arts and cultural competitions for young people. They also expressed a powerful desire to participate in community art projects, including murals and other public art.

Arts and culture stakeholder consultation

We identified 26 groups, organisations and individuals within the shire who have either direct or indirect involvement in arts and cultural activities, events and programs. Each of these organisations was contacted and invited to contribute their thoughts and feedback to inform the development of council's Arts and Culture strategy.

A total of 9 organisations and individuals agreed to participate in interviews as part of our engagement and consultation process. The Regional Arts Services Network Provider for our region also provided feedback and direction.

Key themes identified in stakeholder feedback included:

- The shire lacks a gallery space both for local artists and creators to exhibit and sell their work, and for travelling art and craft exhibitions.
- Several recommendations relating to RADF were consistently raised, including:
 - establishing a wider variety of RADF categories and grant sizes (for example, young creatives, First Nations, big event and quick response grants)
 - providing previous RADF fund recipient information to the community (for example, successful recipients and projects listed on the council website)
 - improving communication with RADF applicants and arts and culture community groups, particularly for funding rounds, processes and key dates.
- Council should explore opportunities to support the development of emerging and established creatives based in the shire.
- Council should explore opportunities to support the reinvigoration and build capacity of arts and culture community groups.
- Too many free events devalue arts and cultural activities and programs, making it difficult for local artists and creatives to remain viable and sustainable.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Overview

The Arts and Culture Strategy will guide Balonne Shire Council's activities to embrace, celebrate, support, develop and promote Balonne's arts and culture sector.

A thriving arts and culture scene, which intrinsically links all towns within our shire, will further enrich our communities and provide an opportunity for our arts and culture sector to enjoy sustainable development and growth.

Objectives

1. Create an environment that supports and encourages the growth of a thriving arts and culture sector.
2. Increase the number of practicing artists, musicians and creatives across age groups and cultures.

3. Boost arts and culture tourism by linking and promoting arts and culture businesses and activities across all towns within the shire.

Strategies

1. Support local artists, musicians and creatives to develop a strong and sustainable sector.
2. Renew and maintain infrastructure to support the development of our arts and culture sector.
3. Increase opportunities for children and young people to experience and engage in arts and cultural activities, events and programs.
4. Celebrate, respect and support First Nations and multicultural artists and creators within our community.

ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Support local artists, musicians and creatives to develop a strong and sustainable sector

Overview

We will support the development of our emerging and established local artists, arts organisations and creative businesses to grow their skill base and increase their capacity to:

- seek opportunities
- diversify
- develop their creative skills
- promote their practices and products
- adopt best practice governance and sustainable business models.

What we know

During consultation interviews, local artists, arts organisations and creative businesses repeatedly told us that they would like to access opportunities to develop their creative practices and increase their avenues to promote and sell their work.

Broader community consultation reiterated the sector's view that more needs to be done to reinvigorate and support arts and culture community groups, particularly in attracting and retaining new members and from a governance perspective.

During our consultation process we received many recommendations relating to RADF funding, including:

- establishing a wider variety of RADF categories and grant sizes
- providing greater transparency around previous RADF fund recipients
- improving communication with RADF applicants and arts and culture community groups, particularly for funding rounds, processes and key dates.

What we already do

Regional Arts Development Fund

The Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland, and Balonne Shire Council work in partnership to provide RADF funding opportunities to provide support to artists and community organisations to run projects which promote and develop the arts, culture and heritage in our region.

Community grants

Council supports not-for-profit organisations and community groups through its Community Grants and Assistance Program.

The Community Grants and Assistance Program is a broad-criteria fund. Funds provided through this program can go towards community celebrations, workshops, events, traffic management costs and other activities, which are deemed to be of benefit to the broader community.

What we will do

Action	We will...	Timing
RADF review	Provide easily accessible information on all successful RADF recipients and projects (for example, listed on council's website)	2024
	Promote and offer online and in-person information sessions prior to all RADF funding rounds. Sessions will be open to all potentially interested applicants and will cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application guidelines • Assessment criteria • Process, key dates and contacts 	Commence 2025
	Work with our RADF Reference Panel to investigate best practice RADF funding categories and review our RADF funding structure. Categories could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development • Quick response • Arts and culture tourism • Young creatives • First Nations people • People with disability • Strategic initiative fund for council-led projects 	2025
Seek opportunities to offer development and capacity building workshops for local creatives	Actively seek funding opportunities to offer a suite of development workshops for emerging and established creatives based in the shire, this could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying for arts grants • Arts administration and governance • Earning from art and running arts businesses • Branding and marketing for art and culture • Event planning • Goal setting and strategy development 	2025 - 2029
Support and promote the development of shire-wide arts and culture links	Complete a shire-wide audit of the local arts and culture sector to identify and establish a complete database of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual artists, musicians and creatives • Arts and culture businesses • Arts and culture community groups 	2025
	Work with interested parties within our arts and culture sector to explore opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectively share resources, governance responsibilities and funding • Reinvigorate voluntary group membership • Grow and develop together. 	2025 - 2029

	Work with our Tourism team to develop a shire-wide arts and culture trail.	2026 - 2027
Promote the value of art and culture to strengthen our arts and culture sector and further enrich our communities	<p>Actively seek opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster partnerships between the arts and culture sector, other industries and philanthropists to support local outcomes • Build and share the evidence base for the value of arts, culture and creativity. • Promote arts, culture and heritage of the shire, communicating the wide range of events, festivals, programs, exhibitions and collections to our community and visitors. 	2024 - 2029

Strategy 2: Renew and maintain infrastructure to support the development of our arts and culture sector

Overview

Investment in our existing cultural buildings and offering new infrastructure, combined with ‘pop up’ and programmed events has many benefits for our shire, including:

- enhancing the vibrancy of our local communities and improving liveability
- providing more opportunities for our residents to engage in arts, culture and creativity
- allowing our arts and culture sector to showcase their talents and products
- making Balonne more appealing to new residents and visitors
- supporting economic development.

What we know

Consultation with our community and local artists and creators has highlighted that many of our existing venues and spaces are either not fit for purpose or are not inviting and comfortable spaces for audiences. Specific issues mentioned included:

- accessibility
- acoustics, sound equipment, lighting and stages
- heating and cooling.

What we already do

Balonne Shire Council own and have responsibility for maintaining numerous arts and cultural buildings and spaces across the shire, including:

- The Cultural Hub in St George
- Five town libraries
- Five town halls
- Four showgrounds
- Numerous outdoor cultural spaces
- Outdoor art and murals throughout the shire.

What we will do

Action	We will...	Timing
Review existing arts and cultural places and spaces	<p>Work with the Infrastructure team to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an audit and gap analysis of council owned arts and cultural buildings and spaces 	2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate cost of completing required upgrades and improvements • Estimate cost of completing desired upgrades and improvements. 	
	Work with the Infrastructure team to ensure required upgrades and improvements are completed urgently.	2025
	Work with the Infrastructure team to seek funding opportunities for desired upgrades and improvements.	2026 - 2029
Seek grant funding to complete facility improvements at the Cultural Hub	<p>The Cultural Hub in St George is the largest arts and culture facility in the shire.</p> <p>While the library precinct has undergone significant redevelopment, this has highlighted to users of the Cultural Centre that it requires similar grant-funded investment and improvements.</p> <p>We will prepare design details in preparation for suitable grant funding. Design details will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to original larger auditorium capacity with upgrades sensitive to its heritage, including stage, backstage and storage • Integrated and upgraded air conditioning, lighting, technology and equipment • Function area, kitchen and toilet amenities • Meeting rooms and layers to support the Country Universities Centre, the disaster centre and boutique-sized conferences • Associated Klinge Lane traffic and parking. 	2024 -2029
Gallery review	Complete a shire-wide audit to identify and establish a complete database of all existing gallery spaces.	2025
	Complete a community and sector engagement process to identify specific requirements and desires for gallery spaces within the shire.	2025
	Trial a 'pop up' gallery space in the St George library	2025
	If required, develop a detailed business case and plan for a dedicated gallery space and seek funding opportunities to develop this business plan.	2025 - 2029
Local artistic components incorporated into council infrastructure	Where possible and practicable, council will collaborate with local artists to incorporate artistic components to council owned facilities and infrastructure for both new developments and improvements.	2024 - 2029

Strategy 3: Increase opportunities for children and young people to experience and engage in arts and cultural activities, events and programs

Overview

Throughout our consultation processes, adults, young people and children in our shire all expressed a fervent desire to give young people and children greater access to arts and cultural experiences.

Council will connect with our strategic partners and local arts and culture individuals and organisations to address the limited access young people have to arts and culture in our rural and remote location. Where possible, we will collaborate with our partners to increase opportunities for young people and children to participate in local and touring arts and cultural programs and events.

What we already know

Research clearly demonstrates deep value and many benefits for children and young people who have access to, and participate in, arts and cultural activities and programs. This includes developing critical skills for life, such as problem solving, responsible risk taking, critical thinking, empathy and teamwork.

Evidence shows that youth engagement in arts and cultural activities can improve academic outcomes and reduce anti-social behaviour.

What we already do

Balonne Shire Council have an engaged and active Youth Council. The purpose of the Youth Council is to:

- Strengthen engagement between Balonne Shire Council and young people.
- Build young people's knowledge of council processes to enable them to participate in council's decision-making processes.
- Build council's knowledge of the needs of young people and how these needs may be met.
- Enhance the leadership skills of youth and develop a strong positive image and profile of young people within the Balonne Shire
- Promote and encourage youth involvement in the planning and development of council services and infrastructure (especially if they have a direct impact on young people, such as skate parks and recreational facilities)
- Ensure that the views of young people are canvassed and conveyed to council, including providing advice on, or assistance with, formal consultations being undertaken by council.

Young people must apply to be a member of the Youth Council, application requirements include living within the shire, having an interest in community issues and services and enjoying meeting new people. Youth Council members must be aged between 12 and 25 years of age.

What we will do

Action	We will...	Timing
Youth Council	Provide young people with an ongoing opportunity to share their evolving thoughts and ideas about council's arts and cultural programs and events.	2024 - 2029
Youth and children's programs	Support and promote children and youth-focused performances, programs and events in Balonne.	2024 - 2029
Youth inclusion	Explore opportunities to partner with schools in the shire to develop and promote age-appropriate arts and cultural activities and programs. Include young local artists and musicians at council events, where possible and appropriate.	2024 - 2029

Youth facilitation	Encourage artists and creatives to connect with children and young people in our community, through the appropriate channels. Support children, young people and their families to access council's programs and infrastructure for arts and cultural expression and activities.	2024 - 2029
Youth and children engagement	Encourage children and youth engagement by providing subsidised or free access to council arts and cultural activities for children and young people, when possible.	2024 - 2029

Strategy 4: Celebrate, respect and support First Nations and multicultural artists and creators within our community

Overview

Arts and culture can play a unique role in celebrating and sharing the many cultures, languages and traditions of First Nations peoples and other diverse cultures within Balonne.

First Nations arts and cultural expression provide stories, culture and languages that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. This provides our shire with a unique identity which we should embrace and celebrate.

First Nations artists, creative talent and performers are increasingly recognised nationally and internationally, they also attract audiences from all over the world.

With increasing numbers of visitors travelling to and through our shire, there is an opportunity for First Nations and multicultural artists and creatives in our communities to share their art, stories and culture with broader audiences.

Our shire is embracing our growing multicultural community. We have a unique opportunity to celebrate the diverse cultures of our shire through arts and culture.

What we already know

Results from our community survey show that our community believe it is particularly important to support and celebrate First Nations heritage, culture, stories and knowledge in Balonne. Our community also believes it is especially important to support and celebrate multiculturalism in Balonne.

Our youth consultation revealed that young people and children in our shire have a strong desire to learn more about First Nations culture and art, particularly traditional dot painting and dance.

We have several talented First Nations and culturally diverse artists and creatives living and creating in our shire. Some already have established and thriving businesses, others could be supported to further develop their skills and flourish in our shire.

What we already do

Balonne Shire Council consults with a range of First Nations groups including:

- The Balonne Shire Council Indigenous Advisory Committee, with representatives from all six First Nations Peoples corporations
- The Queensland Government sponsored St George First Nations decision making body
- Goondir Health Elders Group.

What we will do

Action	We will...	Timing
Support First Nations and culturally diverse creatives to grow and flourish in Balonne	<p>Support our local First Nations peoples and our expanding multicultural community to design and deliver culturally unique arts, culture and creative services.</p> <p>Support the growth of ethical production and distribution of First Nations arts and cultural products.</p> <p>Actively promote opportunities for audiences to experience authentic First Nations arts and cultures.</p>	2024 - 2029
Provide development and funding opportunities	Support First Nations and culturally diverse creative talent to access development and funding opportunities to expand their audience and grow their market access.	2024 - 2029
Active consultation with First Nations advisory groups	Actively seek advice and input from members of council's Indigenous Advisory Committee (and other relevant advisory groups) in decision making specifically related to arts, cultures and heritage policy and investment.	2024 - 2029

NEXT STEPS

The Balonne Shire Council Arts and Culture Strategy is a framework that will guide council's efforts to support and strengthen Balonne's arts and culture sector and scene over the next five years.

Our commitments

As an organisation, we will commit to working collaboratively and strengthening our professional relationships with our strategic partners, the local arts and culture sector and touring arts and cultural programs and events.

We will lead by example, establishing clear arts and culture governance frameworks, advocating for our valued arts and culture sector and supporting arts and cultural capacity building and skills development in our communities.

We will work with all towns and communities across the shire to ensure we are developing strong and tangible arts and cultural links across the entire shire.

Five-year action plan

This strategic framework is an overarching and guiding document. Council's Community team will use this strategy to develop a 2024 – 2029 action plan which will outline specific, measurable objectives and actions. This action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure our priorities and areas of focus remain aligned with our communities' needs and desires.