



**murray arts**

SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

# Annual Report 2024



[www.murrayarts.org.au](http://www.murrayarts.org.au)



# Acknowledgment of Country

Murray Arts acknowledges the traditional custodians and caretakers of the land and waters on which we are privileged to work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and encourage everyone to champion the emerging leaders of the future.





# Table of Contents

- 5. Welcome
- 6. Our Values
- 7. Chair's Report
- 9. Executive Officers Report
- 10. Supporting Creative Industries
- 11. 2024 Highlights
- 14. First Nations Creative Development
- 16. Limelight 3.0
- 18. Core and Grant Supported Projects
- 20. Financial Performance
- 21. Our People
- 22. Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028
- 23. Acknowledgments



"Thank you so much for not only taking the time to support us... but highlight our needs and the role Murray Arts plays in supporting organisations such as ours. It's situations like these where the broader community can make tremendous progress from working together and supporting one another."

Sam Bulowski, Partnerships & Events Manager, Murray Conservatorium

## Murray Arts regional footprint:







Welcome to

# Murray Arts

Murray Arts is a connector between creatives and their community. We focus on the facilitation, participation and promotion of arts and cultural development on the Border and wider region. We are advocates for our region's creative community and the industries they serve.

Our footprint borders the Indigenous Nations of Duduroa, Yaithmathang, Bangerang, Wiradjuri, Yorta Yorta and Wavaroo and encompasses the local government areas of Albury City, Greater Hume Shire, Federation Shire, Wodonga City, Indigo Shire and Towong Shire.

# Murray Arts values:

Artistic endeavour, creativity and integrity

The arts as a medium to challenge us and explore our humanity

The opportunity to participate, express ourselves and access all artforms

Community wellbeing through the arts

The ability of the arts to connect us

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# Chair's Message



Stepping into the role of Board Chair this year has been a privilege and I thank my fellow Directors for their continued dedication to the organisation as well as their support.

You may have noticed not only new faces amongst the Board and staff but also a refreshed new look for the Murray Arts brand, website and office.

2024 has been a year of moving forward, where we refined our role in the community. As we build upon the past year, we do so with a new Strategic Plan 2025-2028 that will guide us and the newly formed Murray Arts Cultural Council. The Council will ensure we stay connected across our entire footprint enabling collaboration and advocacy for our regional creative industry to flourish.

Lauren Black, Executive Director, and her team have continued to go above and beyond with their dedication to the creative industries in our region. All have brought innovation and new ways of thinking to Murray Arts and their output is nothing short of impressive.

Furthering the work that Donna Caffrey established during her tenure as Chair, this year we introduced and updated

several policies whilst also conducting Cultural Awareness training to cement our focus on First Nations Creative Development.

We saw great progress with the Burraja Gallery Independence Project Working Group and we look to exciting things happening in 2025 in that space.

Limelight 3.0 was another huge success along with hosting the hugely successful Arts & Cultural Round Table to a sold-out crowd and not to mention our behind the scenes work in Cultural Tourism. These and other projects have cemented Murray Arts as the peak arts and cultural body in the region.

I would like to thank our much-valued member councils and our state funding bodies and partners Create NSW, Regional Arts NSW and Regional Arts Network for their funding and support. Without you we couldn't have achieved what we have in 2024.

*Cara Crosswhite*

Chair of the Murray Arts Board of Directors

## **What an incredible year we have had at Murray Arts.**

With the support of the Board, my dedicated team and our engaged creative community we have made excellent progress including developing our new Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028 in consultation with our entire footprint, ensuring we are servicing our community in the most impactful way we can.





# Executive Director's Report



*Lauren Black*

Executive Director

2024 came with its own unique challenges, with our core funding partner Create NSW announcing the new Arts and Cultural Funding Program (ACFP). The program has ended the long-standing agreement with the Regional Arts Network which saw all 15 NSW Regional Arts Development Organisations including Murray Arts equally funded and instead enabled us to apply for increased competitive funding.

We took this opportunity to examine the core services and value we have provided to our community over our 30-year history and submitted a very competitive and exciting plan for continued multi-year funding.

Limelight 3.0 was a huge success welcoming 4000+ people across three nights and three locations. A big thank you goes to everyone who helped deliver this project both by creating original art installations and supporting the running of the event.

We asked for expressions of interest for the Burraja Independence Working Party

and spent the year collaborating and being guided by those First Nations artists who came forward with a passion to establish an independent First Nations-led gallery.

Our involvement in the NSW Regional Arts Network (RAN) and Regional Arts NSW (RANSW) enabled us to offer opportunities to emerging and professional creatives through HORIZONS Youth Mentorship, Work of Art Regional Women's Professional Development and Regional Cultural Tourism Project.

Finally, a huge thank you to my team, Julien Bonnel, Executive Support & Grants Officer, Mark-John Martyn, First Nations Creative Development Officer, and Glennys Briggs, Burraja Gallery Outreach Coordinator who always give 110% not only to Murray Arts but to their creative communities. We look forward to continuing to be on the ground offering support, connections and opportunities for this region's unique creatives.

# Supporting Creative Industries

Murray Arts' role in developing our regional arts and cultural scene is underpinned by three key pillars:



## Support

We continue to offer exceptional value to our community with our daily service taking on many forms, including: giving expert advice, auspicing creative projects, brainstorming solutions, sourcing performance venues, writing letters of support, hosting events, grant writing assistance, business advice, commissioning works and sitting on panels for local, state, and federal government bodies. Murray Arts provides that valuable link between creatives and their community.



## Promote

A core service requested by our community this year was a digital space for the promotion of Arts & Cultural events and opportunities. We are the natural central point of communication for all arts and cultural individuals and organisations and have developed a new website with events platform *Creative Murray* to complement our monthly newsletters, e-notifications and social media activity.



## Advocate

Murray Arts plays a vital role in advocating for our creative community by actively engaging with government bodies and key stakeholders to amplify the voice of local creative practitioners. Through these strategic relationships, we work to strengthen the support structures surrounding the creative industries, ensuring policies and funding opportunities align with the real needs of the sector. By championing the value of arts and culture, we help build a more sustainable future for the region's arts and cultural sector.



# 2024 highlights

21

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL,  
NON-FOR-PROFIT AND  
CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS

14

CREATIVE PROJECTS  
AUSPICED AND  
DELIVERED

25

LETTERS OF SUPPORT  
WRITTEN

30

E-NEWSLETTERS  
PUBLISHED

26

ARTISTS GRANTS  
FUNDED

3

STATE-WIDE PROJECTS  
PARTICIPATED IN

## ⊕ Arts & Cultural Round Table

**Hosting 80 creatives**, arts workers, council and tourism leaders at The Cube Wodonga, presenting the Arts & Cultural Tourism in Regional NSW Report, Creative Communities Survey findings and leading group tasks and discussions.

## ⊕ Albury Wodonga Health Commission

Supported Albury Wodonga Health to commission an artwork for their new Emergency Department Foyer with local artist Abi Thompson successfully completing and installing her final work.

## ⊕ Swim Exhibition

Collaboration with HotHouse Theatre and Creators ArtSpace to mark the Griffin Theatre Company production swim by Mununjali poet Ellen van Neerven. Swim exhibition **featured 10 local First Nations** artists.

## ⊕ Urana Art Prize

Announced winners of the 25 years of the Urana Courthouse Art Exhibition with the wonderful members of the Urana Progress Association and their dedicated community.

## ⊕ Regional Cultural Tourism Report

The Regional Arts Network (RAN) commissioned a research report in 2024 on Cultural Tourism in regional NSW, undertaken by Patternmakers and funded through Create NSW.

## ⊕ Horizons Creatives Industries Career Launchpad

Mentoring program **supporting 75 young people** aged 16–27 across regional NSW in developing creative industry careers, delivered with Regional Arts Network and culminating in a co-designed showcase.

## ⊕ Work of Art

Regional Arts NSW professional development project funded by Women NSW and **featuring 70 regional female artists** chosen from the Regional Arts Network.



"Seeing what Albury has to offer in the art community, we have just moved here and was amazing to see so many people! My children loved the chalk light on the pavement and being able to walk through the gallery. Also the magic show and the light paper works were beautiful."

Member of the public responding to the survey question;  
What was your favourite thing about Limelight 3.0





Murray Arts is a fantastic supporter of local creatives. They have always been proactive and supportive. I would not have my creative practice without Murray Arts.

Aimee Chan





# First Nations Creative Development

**Murray Arts is committed to supporting First Nations Creative Development.**

We established the Aboriginal Artist Network (AAN) which supports artists in each stage of their artistic journey, from emerging to established, as well as forging connections through art to our greater community.







## Burraja Gallery

Launched in July 2016, Burraja Gallery is the only dedicated First Nations Art Gallery in the region. The Gallery advocates for all First Nations artists who live, work or connect to our region, and provides opportunities for dialogue and connection between the wider community and the First Nations community.

In 2024, the Burraja Gallery Independence Project began along with establishing a working party of First Nations artists who have been collaborating on transitioning Burraja to a First Nations-led model and once again opening a gallery space on the Border in 2025.



## Kinder Kulture

Interactive workshops led by local First Nations creatives, engaging 500+ pre-school aged children across 5 kindergartens and early learning centres. Creatives share their practice in fun and interactive ways across music, visual arts, drama and storytelling to celebrate Aboriginal arts and culture.

## Yidaki Workshop

Digeridoo making workshop presented by Alan & Phil Murray and supported by Albury City Council.



## Unique Identities

Murray Arts First Nations Creative Development Officer took part in the Unique Identities program delivered by Aboriginal Regional Arts Alliance. The NSW statewide professional development initiative for Aboriginal artists and arts workers from regional NSW took place over one year and saw participants gain greater knowledge and connection to their own traditional Country and people.

## Keep the Fire Burning, Naidoc Week

Murray Arts attended the Albury Wodonga NAIDOC Committee event on Gateway Island to display Burraja Gallery artworks and merchandise and gather feedback from the community about the Independence Project.

“Murray Arts offers our regional community professional arts support services and creative opportunities. Their approach is supportive, informed and inclusive. I felt safely guided in a new area of arts contracts.”

**Sandra Collins – First Nations Artist**



# Limelight 3.0

**3 nights**  
**3 locations**  
**4,000+ attendees**

In April 2024, Murray Arts presented Limelight 3.0, a free, family-friendly art trail investigating the relationship between art, science, and light.

The event took place over three nights and three locations in the Murray region including Gateway Village, Wodonga, Bangerang Park, Corowa and Wirraminna Environmental Educational Centre, Burrumbuttock.

*Limelight 3.0 was supported by Create NSW through the Rescue & Restart Funding Grant*

## Creative Commissions

- *Crazy Big Theremin* by Adam Boon
- *Luminaria* by Patrick Thurtell
- *Constellation* by BNG Learning and Corowa SPS as well as other regional Primary Schools: Burrumbuttock, Howlong, Middle Indigo, Albury North, Yackandandah and Brocklesby.
- *The Sun and the Moon* by Dane Certificate
- *Up, Up and Away* by Kylie & Noel Biltris, Art Starts Here
- *Star Stuff* by Helen Newman
- *Nest* by Murray High School students
- *Bunting & Lantern Canopy* by Kurt Saggars, The Cats Pyjamas



## Art Science Light

Limelight 3.0 featured a diverse array of interactive installations, projections, magic show and performances commissioned by local creatives and designed to captivate audiences of all ages.



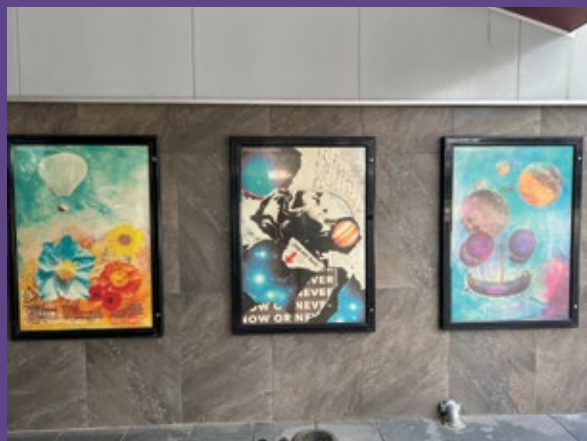
# Core & Grant Supported Projects

## Smart Arts

Smart Arts Creative Forum & Networking events are designed to bring together creatives, arts organisations, and creative professionals from the Murray Arts Footprint to share knowledge, collaborate, and foster connections.

In 2024, we ran the following events supported by Wodonga Council:

- 🕒 **The Art of Small Business**, Wodonga Council Chamber featuring Artist Xavier Pinard, Accountant Pheobe Taylor, Marketing Expert Alex Gibbs and Karen Walls-Smythe, Cultural Projects Coordinator.
- 🕒 **State of Play**, collaboration with Music NSW featuring Music NSW Coordinator Kayne Mills and Yakandandah Folk Festival Director Chris Smith.
- 🕒 **Talent Jam**, collaboration with FReeZA Youth Committee featuring Writer Aimee Chan, Musician Helena Kernaghan, Dancer Tim Podesta and Artist Sonam Yangdon.







## GreenHouse Residency Workshop Program

GreenHouse National Artist Residency is an initiative of HotHouse Theatre and is open to performing artists from across Australia.

Each residency includes a requirement of the artist(s) to deliver a community workshop that shares their unique artistic skill or experience with our community. These workshops are produced by Murray Arts in partnership with HotHouse Theatre and AlburyCity Cultural Activation team.

**In 2024, we delivered seven workshops collaborating with the following creatives:**

1. **Aurora Kurth and Matt Anderson:** Public Preview and Songwriting Workshop
2. **Bare Witness Theatre:** Lecoq Technique Physical Theatre Workshop
3. **Nadiyah Akbar & ConfiDANCE Studio:** Contemporary Improvisation Dance
4. **Karli Evans & Kerrie Simon-Lawrence:** Crafting your Personal Story
5. **Hurrah Hurrah:** Making Theatre
6. **Felicity Nicol & Scott Parker:** Autobiographical Theatre Workshop
7. **Re:group:** Live Cinema

## UNLOCKED Professional Development Microgrant Program

The UNLOCKED professional development program was an initiative developed as a response to the massive disruption that COVID-19 caused across the creative sector. Designed to support professional development of individual independent creatives in the Murray Arts footprint, UNLOCKED continues to attract a record number of applicants and funded 20 grants of \$1,500 in 2024.

“Go for it! The application process informs the work and helps consolidate ideas and process. If successful, the support from Murray Arts is wonderful! Its a great community to be part of.”

**Megan Rigoni, Playwright & Producer, UNLOCKED Summer 2023/24 recipient**



## Country Arts Support Program (CASP)

CASP is a NSW Government grass roots funding program, in its 37th year, aimed at supporting a creative and vibrant regional NSW art scene. Murray Arts is now in its third year of solely administering the program and have achieved an extremely efficient turn around, from close of submissions to informing successful applicants.

**We were happy to support the following projects in 2024:**

1. **The Genius of Shostakovich:** Murray River Fine Music, Albury, \$3,983
2. **The River Songs Project:** Performance Lab, Corowa, \$5,000
3. **Culture Across Borders:** Narelle Vogel, Lavington, \$3,000
4. **Bald Archy Exhibition:** Rotary Club of Holbrook, \$5,000
5. **Sovereign Tea:** Write Around the Murray, Albury, \$2,082

2024

# Financial

## Performance

Murray Arts total revenue for 2024 was \$524,942. We continue to draw income from a variety of sources including multi-year agreements with Create NSW and our LGA partners, one-off grant income from federal, state and local sources.

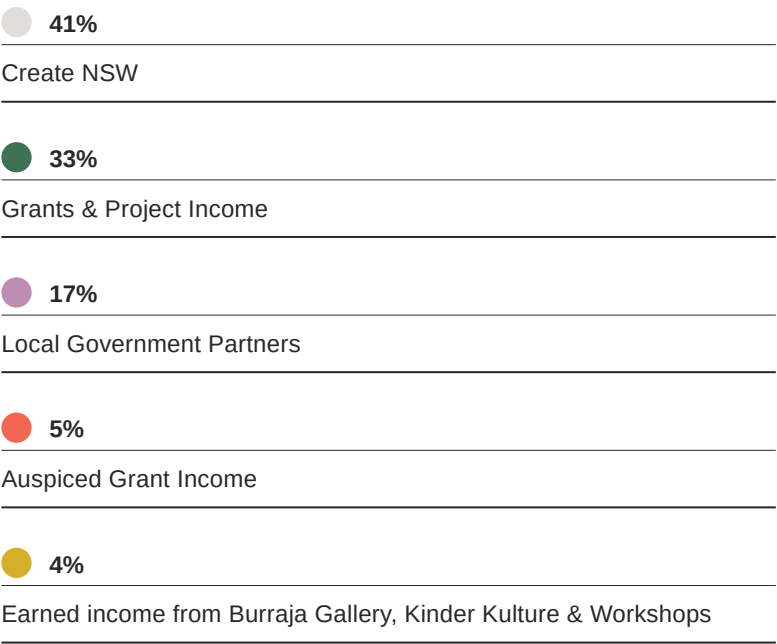
Auspicing grants on behalf of individuals, collectives and groups continues to be a valued and accessed service of Murray Arts, plus Burraja Gallery and programs such as Kinder Kulture, creative workshops and Creatives Directory aid towards our earned income.

Overall, Murray Arts is in a healthy financial position with our reserves enabling the organisation to invest in updating infrastructure. This year we recorded a deficit of \$28,279 redeveloping our website, digital events guide and Creatives Directory.

You can read our full audited 2024 financial report at: <https://murrayarts.org.au/about-us/>

Overall, Murray Arts is in a healthy financial position with our reserves enabling the organisation to invest in up-to-date infrastructure.

### Murray Arts Income sources:





# Our People

## **Murray Arts Board of Directors is a not-for-profit incorporated association, governed by a volunteer board:**

Cara Crosswhite, Chair  
Brendan Maher, Vice Chair  
Pheobe Taylor, Treasurer  
Cr Jessica Kellahan  
Cr Ben Hooper  
Kevyn Morris (Jagera)  
Camille Whitehead  
Barbara Pritchard  
Susan Reid  
Public Officer: Lauren Black

## **The Murray Arts Strategic Advisory Culture Council is made up of representatives from our six local government areas:**


Anne Mutula Musubao, Wodonga City  
Blair French, Albury City  
Danielle Brooke, Towong Shire  
Erin Davis, Indigo Shire  
Fleur Rhodes, Federation Shire  
Kayne Mills, Murray Region  
Kurt Saggars, Greater Hume Shire  
Lily Bones Gonscak, Greater Hume Shire  
Margie Gleeson, Albury-Wodonga & Indigo Shire  
Narelle Vogel, Albury City  
Nina Machielse Hunt, Indigo Shire  
Olga Siret, Towong Shire  
Richard Hull, Albury-Wodonga  
Sandra Collins (Wiradjuri), Albury City  
Sarah Stamm, Indigo Shire  
Simone Nolan, Indigo Shire  
Stephanie Jackovac, Albury City  
Terese Casu, Wodonga City  
Tim Podesta, Wodonga City  
Cr Jess Kellahan, Albury City  
Cr Sue Wearne, Federation Shire  
Cr Jane Dowsley, Indigo Shire  
Cr Scott Landells, Indigo Shire  
Cr Roberta Horne, Indigo Shire  
Cr Ben Hooper, Greater Hume Shire

## **Murray Arts Staff & Contractors:**

Lauren Black, Executive Director  
Julien Bonnel, Executive Support & Grants Officer  
Mark-John Martyn, First Nations Creative Development Officer  
Glennys Briggs (Taungurung/Wiradjuri/Yorta Yorta), Burraja Gallery Outreach Coordinator  
Rod Brammich, Bookkeeper  
Alyce Fisher, Creative Director Limelight 3.0  
Helen Newman, Creative Advisor Limelight 3.0  
Duryarne Streat, Event Manager Limelight 3.0  
Renee Paola, Graphic Design Support  
Julianne Piko, Communications Support  
Torre DeRoche, Communications Support

# Strategic Plan

## 2025 – 2028



Over the coming four years, we are excited to deliver core services to our ever-growing creative community, bring industry expertise to our six member councils and forge impactful collaborations with industry partners.

Our goal is to ensure Murray Arts remains a leader in creative development and cultural innovation – now, and for the next 30 years and beyond.



### Our Projects:

#### Project 1

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Burraja Gallery Independence Project

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#### Project 2

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Cultural Tourism & Regional Profile Expansion

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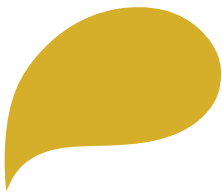
#### Project 3

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Creatives School Pathways Pilot

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Acknowledgments



Murray Arts acknowledges the ongoing support of our Member Councils





**murrayarts**

SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

**Murray Arts**

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