



**murray arts**

SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



**2025**  
annual report

[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.



**Cover page:** Julio Kayumbu, Smart Arts Amplify Talent Jam Wodonga, Image by Ian Han

**Inside cover:** Gugaa by Darren Wighton, Yindyamarra Sculpture Trail, Image by Jeremy Weihrauch

**Facing page:** Limelight 3.0, Bangerang Park Corowa, Image by Sue Davis



## Acknowledgments



Murray Arts acknowledges the ongoing support of our Member Councils



### Creative Partners

HotHouse Theatre, Hyphen, Murray Art Museum Albury, Gateway Gallery, North East Water, North East Catchment Management Authority, NELLEN, Amplify, Windbreak 3690 Youth Hub, Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Music NSW, Jindera Pioneer Museum, Albury Entertainment Centre, Old Stone Hall Beechworth

## Murray Arts regional footprint:



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about

# Murray Arts

Murray Arts are leaders in the facilitation, participation and promotion of arts and cultural development in the Murray NSW and North East VIC region. We are advocates for the region's creative community and the industries they serve.

Murray Arts is a connector between creatives and their community, developing strategic partnerships, advocacy and advice services, professional development and networking opportunities, and promotional and engagement platforms.

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

# Murray Arts values:

- Artistic endeavour, creativity and integrity
- The opportunity to participate, express ourselves and access all artforms
- The ability of the arts to connect us
- The arts as a medium to challenge us and explore our humanity
- Community wellbeing through the arts

# Chair's Message



**Murray Arts looks forward with excitement to 2026, as we celebrate our 30th anniversary year and the continued growth of our regional creative industry.**

This year, Murray Arts successfully secured vital multi-year funding from Create NSW for our upcoming strategic period. While the absence of a CPI increase presented a financial challenge, Executive Director Lauren Black and the dedicated Murray Arts team have risen to the challenge, developing creative solutions to maintain our community services all without compromising our core service delivery.

A key priority this year has been the formalisation of long-term strategic service agreements with our member Councils. These agreements provide a stable foundation, ensuring we can continue to offer the creative industry in our region the high level of support and advocacy they have come to expect from Murray Arts.

Our commitment to First Nations Creative Development remains a cornerstone of our programming. This year, our collaborations included the 2025 North East Water First Nations Art Prize, the highly successful Kinder Kulture workshops, and the Burraja Gallery Independence Project. Each of these initiatives highlights the depth of talent and cultural richness within our region.

Furthermore, the Murray Arts Cultural Council has gone from strength to strength. The newly formed Creators Collab has provided a vital platform for creatives to connect, collaborate and support one another online, and the Country Hope Art Auction and Exhibition proved a particular highlight. We are incredibly proud that this collaboration raised over \$8,000 for Country Hope, directly supporting families in our community.

These projects represent only a fraction of the team's achievements. My sincere thanks goes to Lauren Black and her team for their tireless dedication to the arts. I would also like to thank my fellow Board Directors for their unwavering support and governance.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to our Council members, funding bodies and partners - Create NSW, Regional Arts NSW, and the Regional Arts Network. Their continued investment is essential to our success.

*Cara Crosswhite*

Chair of the Murray Arts Board of Directors



**In 2025, Murray Arts delivered on a number of key commitments, implementing projects in response to key consultation with our creative community**

# Executive Director's Report



*Lauren Black*

Executive Director

In 2025, Murray Arts delivered on a number of key commitments, implementing projects in response to key consultation with our creative community

We secured four-year funding through Create NSW, alongside ongoing support from our regional partners - reinforcing our role as a vital resource for creative communities.

We launched two digital resources; Creative Murray and Creatives Directory. The first a What's On in Arts & Cultural designed to build audiences for creative activity. This site attracted 10,000 unique users in its first year, and we are keen to see it grow across our region and further afield.

The redeveloped Creatives Directory gives our creatives and creatives organisations a strong online presence with the bonus of connecting them to jobs, grants and collaborations through our opportunities portal.

The Burraja Independence Working Party delivered a new vision for the Border's only First Nations led Gallery Blak Circle and have secured seed funding to develop this new inclusive initiative and appoint a dedicated resource for the project.

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 RALLY – Rural Led Arts Regeneration and Regional Cultural Tourism Project.

Finally, a huge thank you to my team, Julien Bonnel, Executive Support & Grants Officer, Glennys Briggs, Burraja Gallery Outreach Coordinator, Ian Han, Engagement Officer and Mark John Martyn, First Nations Creative Development Officer, who make these achievements possible.

We look forward to continuing to be out in the community supporting 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, 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

We are the natural central point of communication for all arts and cultural practitioners and organisations and are building audiences through our website and 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.

# 2025 highlights



**468,100**

SOCIAL MEDIA  
CONTENT VIEWS



**10,000**

CREATIVE MURRAY UNIQUE  
WEBSITE USERS



**7,229**

SOCIAL MEDIA & NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS

**During 2025, Murray Arts funded 13 creative grants, auspiced 4 creative projects, wrote 20 letters of support, published 30 e-newsletters and participated in two NSW state-wide project through the Regional Arts Network.**



## Country Hope Art Auction

Supported artist Pauline Farries (dec.) who donated her final collection of works to Country Hope to raise money for families with children diagnosed with cancer or other life-threatening diseases. The Exhibition and Auction, featuring 17 local artists, raised over eight thousand dollars and was held at **Gateway Gallery Wodonga**.

## Cultural Council Established

To strengthen strategic input across the current planning period, Murray Arts convenes its Cultural Council twice each year. The Council comprises representatives from our LGA partners, key cultural institutions, and independent creatives, bringing diverse perspectives to help guide our direction and increase community collaboration.

## Musical Theatre Scholarship

Collaboration with **HotHouse Theatre** and Murray Arts supporting five emerging musical theatre students to attend a Masterclass with Philip Quast AM and Anne-Maree McDonald supporting regional performers to access high-level training right here at home.

## Regional Cultural Tourism Project

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. In 2025, the report was developed through consultation with each RADO and is now a resource used by **Destination NSW**.

## Hyphen Emerging Artist Residency

Our inaugural residency for emerging artists has given the opportunity for creatives to access a private studio, share their work with the public and be supported by the incredible team at **Hyphen Wodonga**.





## Creative Directory Launch & Roadshow

We delivered a series of five presentations in **Beechworth, Jindera, Corryong, Corowa,** and **Wodonga**, introducing regional artists to the new Creatives Directory and Creative Murray websites. The sessions guided creatives through the platforms, highlighting how they can build profiles, increase visibility, and connect with opportunities.

## NELLEN Key Note

Executive Director, Lauren Black, presented a key-note speech on the intersection between arts and science – sharing

the journey of **Limelight: Art | Science | Light 2018 - 2024**.

We value our long collaboration and their acknowledgement of the transformative power of the arts education in learning and employment.

## Grant Writing Workshops

Executive Support & Grants Officer, Julien Bonnel, delivered two grant writing workshops to **Indigo Shire** residents. This was an excellent extension of his daily work, providing one-on-one sessions with individual creatives to identify funding opportunities, review applications and develop creative project budgets.







I've been meaning to share that I've been really impressed by all the communications and work coming out of Murray Arts. The organisation feels dynamic, intentional, and full of impact. It's wonderful to see the difference you're making—congrats!

Julianne Piko, Artist, Beechworth

# 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.



Yorta Yorta Dreaming by Tamara Murray, Burraja Cult





ural Centre, Image by Ian Han



## Burraja Gallery Transition to Blak Circle

Launched in 2016, Burraja Gallery is the region's only dedicated First Nations art gallery. It supports First Nations artists connected to the area and creates opportunities for cultural exchange between First Nations communities and the wider public.

In 2025, the Burraja Gallery Independence Project working party continued the work of transitioning to a First Nations-led model. This work is focused on strengthening cultural leadership and self-determination, developing a new vision and brand identity, identifying a gallery space on the Border and successfully received seed funding to establish the new entity: Blak Circle – a vibrant and inclusive First Nations led gallery.

## North East Water First Nations Art Prize

Murray Arts partnered with Burraja Gallery, North East Water, and the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to present the 2025 North East Water First Nations Art Prize at Burraja Cultural Centre, Gateway Island Wodonga.

The exhibition featured 13 works by First Nations artists from across North-East Victoria and the Murray NSW region, each responding to the theme of water through diverse stories, cultural knowledge, and connections to Country.

The 2025 Prize was awarded to Tamara Murray - pictured bottom, (Maurara Barkindji, Yorta Yorta, Duduroa) for her work Yorta Yorta Dreaming.

## Windbreak Mural Project

Murray Arts auspiced the Windbreak 3690 Youth Space mural project featuring emerging Wiradjuri artist Tannah Lee. The project activated this public space through a dynamic artwork celebrating identity, creativity, and community connection. Tannah was supported throughout by First Nations Creative Development Officer, Mark-John Martyn.

## Kinder Kulture

Interactive workshops led by local First Nations creatives, engaging 500+ pre-school aged children across 10 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.

# Professional Development Programs & Projects

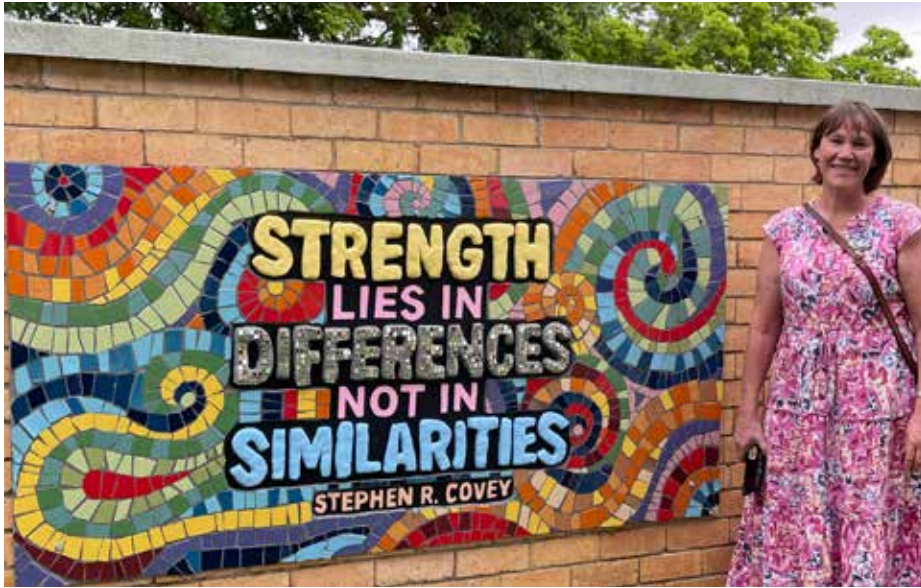
## Smart Arts

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

In 2025, we ran the following events supported by Wodonga Council:

- 🕒 **AI's Impact on Creativity, Hyphen Community Studio**  
Explored the intersection of artificial intelligence and the arts featuring artist Robert Sherwood Duffield, Filmmaker Helen Newman, Photographer Ben Eyles and Curator Bronwen Garner.
- 🕒 **Music Listening Party**  
A collaboration with Music NSW inviting local regional musicians to share their original music with a like-minded group of musicians sharing insights and support.
- 🕒 **Amplify Youth Talent Jam**  
A collaboration with Amplify Youth Committee inviting emerging creatives to one-on-one speed networking with ten professional creatives across music, theatre, opera, production, illustration, ceramics, visual arts and virtual reality technologies.
- 🕒 **First Nations ICIP Roadshow**  
Presented by Create NSW and hosted in partnership with Murray Art Museum Albury, local aboriginal creatives and arts workers were given an overview of the current Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property laws and current changes coming into effect.





## Country Arts Support Program (CASP)

CASP is a NSW Government grassroots funding program, now in its 38th year, dedicated to energising and activating a bold, creative, and vibrant regional NSW arts scene. In our third year of solely administering the program, Murray Arts continues to champion projects that spark new ideas, bring communities together, and activate local creative spaces across the region. We're thrilled to see the arts come alive in these communities, and in 2025, we were proud to support the following inspiring initiatives:

- **Into the Jungle:** Ranaway Theatre & Theatre on Toast, \$5,000
- **The Real Housewives of Windsor:** The Other Theatre Company, \$5,000
- **Corowa South Public School Mural,** BNG Learning \$5,000
- **Creative Skills Workshops:** Jindera Cottage Crafts Group \$2,000



## Creators Collab

Murray Arts Creators Collab is a social media-led creatives collective that showcases and amplifies the work of artists and creatives across the Murray region. It brings together diverse creative voices to celebrate practice, share stories, and strengthen connection within the regional arts community through digital platforms and online engagement.

## UNLOCKED Professional Development Microgrant Program

UNLOCKED has evolved into a dynamic professional development program supporting independent creatives across the region to grow, adapt, and thrive in an ever-changing arts landscape. Focused on building skills, expanding networks, and unlocking new opportunities, the program empowers creatives at all stages of their career to invest in their practice and future. In 2025, we proudly supported the following nine creatives with \$1,500 grants across the entire footprint.

Fabulous content and delivery, much appreciated, will certainly pass these sentiments on to Indigo Shire Council.

Robynne Hall, Intro to grant writing workshop participant, Chiltern Library, June 2025

2025

# Financial

## Performance

Murray Arts total revenue for 2025 was \$418,599. We continue to draw income from a variety of sources including our valued multi-year agreement with Create NSW and LGA Council partners, as well as one-off grants and creative project service fees.

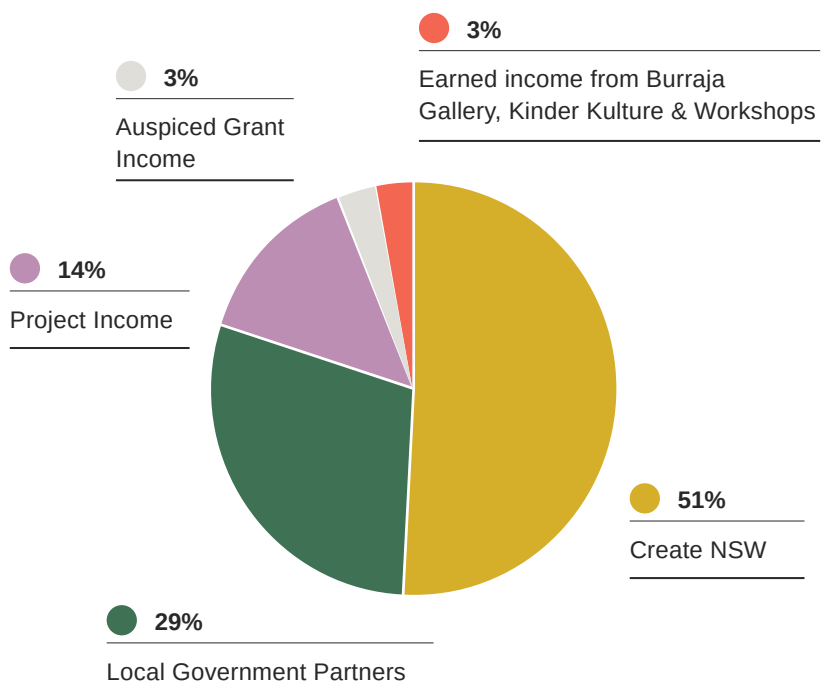
Auspicing grants on behalf of individuals, collectives and groups continue to be a valued and accessed service of Murray Arts, as well as Burraja Gallery and Kinder Kulture educational workshops. This year the launch of the Creatives Directory also provided an opportunity for our community to support us through annual memberships.

Overall, Murray Arts is in a healthy financial position with our reserves enabling the organisation to continue investing in our community through project and professional development grant programs.

You can read our full audited 2025 financial report at: [murrayarts.org.au/about-us](http://murrayarts.org.au/about-us)

Overall, Murray Arts is in a healthy financial position with our reserves enabling the organisation to continue investing in our community through project and professional development grant programs.

### 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  
 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 (1.0 FTE)  
 Julien Bonnel, Executive Support & Grants Officer (.8 FTE)  
 Ian Han, Engagement Officer (.6 FTE)  
 Mark-John Martyn, First Nations Creative Development Officer (.4 FTE)  
 Glennys Briggs (Taungurung/Wiradjuri/Yorta Yorta), Burraja Gallery Outreach Coordinator (Contract Support)  
 Dianne Andrews, Bookkeeper (Contract Support)  
 Renee Paola, Graphic Design (Contract Support)  
 Torre DeRoche, Communications (Contract Support)

## Strategic Direction

# 30 Years Strong A Future in the Making

In 2026, Murray Arts proudly celebrates 30 years of championing creativity, connection, and cultural vitality across our region.

In 1996, the Regional Arts Board Albury-Wodonga was officially incorporated (changing its name to Murray Arts in 2003). Leading up to this important milestone, a dedicated group of arts leaders worked alongside artists, communities, and partners to nurture a thriving regional arts scene. This anniversary marks both a celebration and a launchpad, with four key projects planned for the current strategic period - continuing our commitment to support creatives at every stage and ensuring the arts remain a powerful force for expression, community wellbeing, and regional growth.

## 2026 Projects:

### Project 1

Blak Circle Gallery Launch

### Project 2

30th Anniversary – Celebrating our Creative Region

### Project 3

Albury CBD Mural Project

### Project 4

AMP Lane Pop-Up Gallery

Murray Arts is such an important arts connection for the Upper Murray North East. There is a recent genuine surge in interest in all areas of the arts here which has been due to engagement and encouragement from Murray Arts. Artists here truly appreciate the efforts of Murray Arts bringing arts to us when working with such a large area is truly a huge challenge.

Barbara Pritchard – Towong Artist & Resident



Murray Crayfish by Benjamin Gilbert,  
Bringenbrong Bridge Great River  
Road Sculpture Trail



# murray arts

SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

## **Murray Arts**

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

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

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