



Upper Hunter Shire Council  
**CULTURAL PLAN 2017-2027**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**The Upper Hunter Shire Council would like to show respect and acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land and of elders, both past, present and in the future.**



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### Message from the Mayor

The Upper Hunter Shire has a rich and vibrant culture celebrated in many forms throughout the year.

From the Scone Horse Festival which proclaims the versatility of the horse in our community to the annual fiesta of all things Scottish at the Aberdeen Highland Games, to the running of the sheep in bright red socks down the main street of Merriwa in the much loved Festival of the Fleeces to the adrenalin rush of watching the King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge in Murrurundi.

All are popular annual events that have become synonymous with our Shire and contribute to our sense of place and belonging.

The Cultural Plan is a document that highlights some of our cultural expression within the community.

It summarises what cultural assets and organisations we have and provides a guide to Council and other community groups for future cultural development activity and investment.

The Cultural Plan consultation process unearthed many inspiring and innovative ideas. Many of these ideas have been included in the Plan and will guide Council, regional arts organisations and community groups in future cultural activities over the next decade.

I wish to sincerely thank the community members who have participated in the consultation process.

We greatly value your input and acknowledge the important role you play in our community preserving our heritage, our culture and inspiring us in a creative future.

*Cr Wayne Bedggood*  
MAYOR





### Overview

Culture is about what matters in relationships, shared memories and experiences as part of everyday life. Alongside this, culture includes the creative forms that are made to tell the stories that connect the present with the past and the future. The stories of the Upper Hunter express the meaning of the Shire's identity, enabling residents to make sense of their place and to reflect on and celebrate local shared behaviours, beliefs and values.

The arts promote a culture of learning, inquiry and creativity for participants and audiences as part of this storytelling. Artists encourage things to be seen anew, by experimenting with ideas and working in new ways to entertain, challenge and enrich audiences with their work.

The Upper Hunter's Cultural Plan 2017-2027 is a ten-year guide for Council's investment in the arts and cultural sector and is intended to be actioned within the context of Council's Long Term Financial Plan Resourcing Strategy, the Upper Hunter Museums' Strategy 2015+ and the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

As a planning framework the document provides strategic directions for Council in response to the priorities identified by the Shire's residents as part of the consultation process. As Council implements the range of actions over the coming years and continues its support of local events and arts organisations, it will be positioned to meet the cultural needs of the Shire in a targeted and timely manner.

This Plan assists Council to fulfil its role as a cultural leader, supporting the Shire's art and cultural organisations, events and artists, and participating in the Shire's cultural life. Elucidating and promoting Council's strategic direction will assist strengthening the Shire's partnerships, and relationships with other levels of government to grow the Shire's cultural vibrancy.

The Plan contributes to delivering Council's overall vision for the Upper Hunter Shire and connects the aspirations of the arts and cultural sector to the overarching context of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework and the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2027 with its cultural, Community and capacity building objectives.



The importance of further supporting arts and cultural events and other creative activity, growing audiences, and supporting artists and practitioners and their initiatives, is fundamental to the overall vision the community and Council have for the Shire.



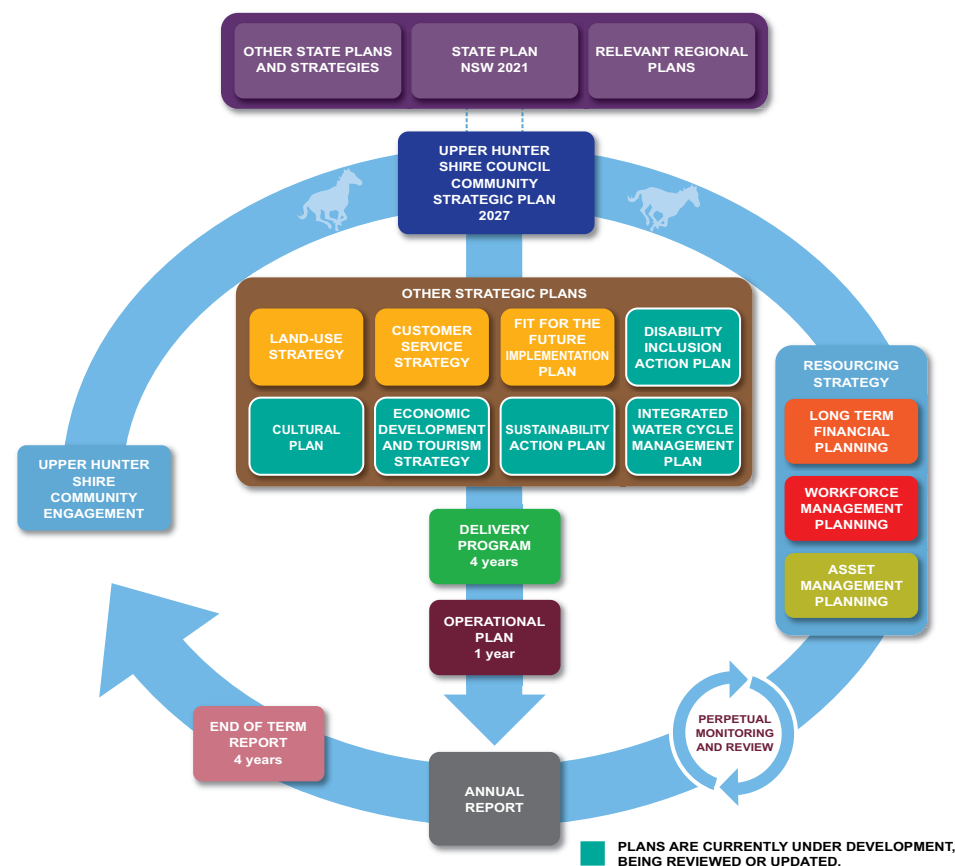
## Our Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework aims to ensure a more sustainable Local Government sector. The Local Government Act 1993 requires Council to work with the community to review the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and other documents within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework after the commencement of each four-year elected Council term.

Councils need to take a long term view and consider social, economic and environmental aspects and the needs of the current and future generations when making decisions. This underpins the Integrated, Planning and Reporting Framework. The importance of Civic Leadership and accountability and transparency in decision making should also underpin the Plan.

All NSW Councils are required to develop a Community Strategic Plan along with a Delivery Program (4 years) and Operational Plan (1 year). The CSP 2027 and its strategic objectives provide a foundation for our Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The Delivery Program and Operational Plan detail how each service addresses the CSP 2027 objectives, ongoing activities, priority projects and the strategies supporting this work.

These documents are informed by a Resourcing Strategy that is made up of a Long Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Plans and Workforce Management Plan. In order to achieve the integration envisaged by the IP&R Framework, there is an alignment between the CSP 2027, Delivery Program, Operational Plan and the other key documents. This is identified on the Upper Hunter Shire Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.



### Our Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework - Colour Codes

Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework is colour coded and each of the key documents has a marking with the corresponding colour.

This alignment of Council's Key Plans is formed through the 11 Community Priorities and the 4 Key Focus Areas:

- Community Life;
- Built and Natural Environment;
- Economic and Infrastructure; and
- Leadership and Community Engagement



Delivery Program

Operational Plan

Long Term Financial Plan    Workforce Management Plan

Asset Management Plans

Annual Report

End of Term Report

Community Strategic Plan  
(CSP) 2027

### Links to the Community Strategic Plan 2027

The Cultural Plan 2017-2027 delivers outcomes linked to the CSP 2027 Community Priorities we are working towards:



Upper Hunter Shire Council to support and provide community services which promote health wellbeing and the celebration of culture.



Well maintained, safe, reliable and additional infrastructure, including sporting fields, parks, family and cultural facilities.

Six Community Strategies (CS) in the CSP 2027 look to culture to deliver outcomes:

#### Community Life

- Value our heritage and cultural diversity, celebrating together and fostering creativity.

#### Built and Natural Environment

- Implement, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for our future generations.

#### Economy and Infrastructure

- Encourage and support innovative industry and a diversity of businesses that provide a range of services and employment opportunities for current and future generations.
- Facilitate and provide access to a range of local educational and training opportunities that complements the economy.
- Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community infrastructure through best practice and risk management.
- Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all.





### Culture of the Upper Hunter

The Upper Hunter's cultural expression includes those visual forms exhibited in galleries, museums, markets, shops, school displays and other spaces, as well as events such as the Shire's flagship festivals and public art.

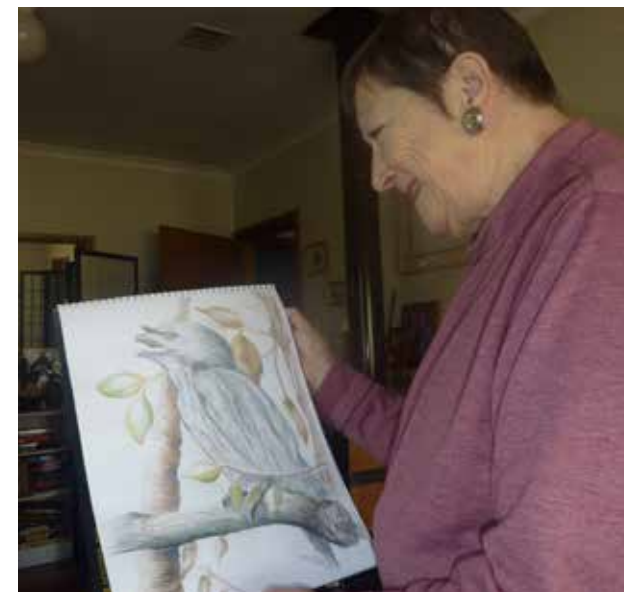
Professional and amateur performance is presented in Council managed and other public buildings, private venues and as part of programming in large-scale events. Many people are involved in the Shire's arts and cultural sector, working in paid and voluntary roles, as artists, producers and organisers. Private creative enterprises, not for profit arts and cultural organisations, educational institutions, schools, festivals and other events are part of the ecology contributing to the Shire's vibrant and distinctive cultural mix.

History and the environment inform culture. This can be seen in the way that the Shire continues to benefit from learning about its unique and diverse natural environment, rich Indigenous heritage, and its pastoral and agricultural foundations in celebratory efforts.

When charcoal from a hearth with a Pleistocene date of more than 20,200 years ago was found by archaeologists near Aberdeen, the Upper Hunter assumed its expected place in the developing picture of ancient Australia. The Shire's natural landscape has supported Indigenous peoples for thousands of years where rivers and the bush provide food in abundance. The traditional Indigenous sacred and ceremonial activities closely integrate with their respectful relationship to the land, which are also links to the creation processes and spiritual ancestors of the Dreaming.

The clan names of the Upper Hunter's Indigenous peoples live on in the Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC), which are all located in the local government areas neighbouring the Shire. This includes the Wanaruah LALC at Muswellbrook, and others in Quirindi and Mudgee. The Shire is home to many Indigenous peoples today, and their families have contributed significantly in a range of ways, particularly those in relation to the land, such as the sheep, beef and horse studs, and crop and meat production.

European settlement of the Upper Hunter occurred soon after 1822, when Henry Dangar began surveying the entire valley. The first official selection of land for settlement on the Goulbourn River was in 1828, but for some years prior to this the upper valley was used as backcountry for sheep grazing.



Today, the Shire's superb bushland settings, historical architecture and sun-drenched climate are central to its charm. A range of private galleries, fine dining places, boutique accommodation, and quality shopping is now available to complement this. Furthermore, the vital network of volunteer initiated museums and galleries with their membership organisations, act as dedicated custodians of the Shire's arts, crafts, artefacts and archives, curating year round showcases for specialised interests and passions to widen and deepen the cultural conversations.

Visual arts galleries of the Shire include the Michael Reid Art Gallery and Haydon Hall at Murrurundi, Plough Inn Cassilis, Merriwa Welcoming Centre and the Scone Arts and Crafts Society to name a few. Both Murrurundi and Scone continue with popular annual exhibitions and events.

Quilting and other textile crafts flourish in the Shire integrating their displays into the heritage institutions and events. These include Aberdeen Quilt Affair, Merriwa Quilters, Sew Scone, Embroiderers Guild Scone Group, Scone Spinners Group, Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society Scone and Scone Arts and Crafts. The Scone and District Garden Club also undertake creative activity.

On the heritage front is the Merriwa Bottle Museum, Merriwa Cottage Museum, Merriwa Railway Society, Merriwa Tourism Welcoming Centre and Hut, Murrurundi and District Historical Society, Murrurundi and District Historical Society Exhibition Centre, Murrurundi Historical Society Pioneer Cottage, Murrurundi Memories Facebook page, Scone Historical Museum, Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society, Scone Research Centre, Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life at Aberdeen and the Cassilis Guild Hall Museum.

In the performing arts area the presence of the Upper Hunter Conservatorium based in Muswellbrook is felt in a large portion of the institutions and events of the Shire and other regular events include performances by: Kia Ora Music Camp, the Scone Community Amateur Dramatic Society, the annual Fawlty Towers community production in Murrurundi, the Upper Hunter Signing Choir, Scone Singers, Scone RSL Pipes and Drums, Murrurundi Memories, Moonan Mummers and Showstoppers Performing Arts Company for people with disabilities.

Writing is developed within the Shire in a variety of ways that include the Murrurundi poetry group, the Warrah Writers, Scone Literary Long Weekend, Scone Writers Festival, the Scone Writers Group, and the Scone Film Group supports film culture.

Reading is encouraged through provision of high quality, accessible library facilities and services. Council's libraries are a vital hub for all age groups in the community. Our libraries in Scone, Aberdeen, Merriwa, Murrurundi and Cassilis continue to look for ways to increase accessibility and integrate new technologies as they become available.



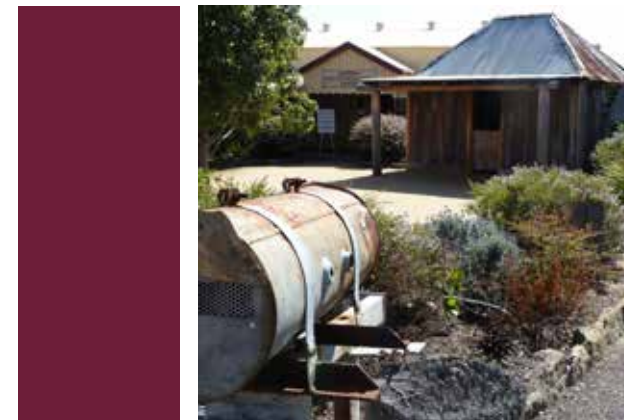


The Shire's flagship festival events are popular attractions for locals and visitors and include the Scone Horse Festival, Murrurundi's King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge and Bush Festival, Merriwa's Festival of the Fleeces, Merriwa Springtime Show, the Aberdeen Highland Games and the Aberdeen Big Boy Toys.

The Shire's institutions are enlivened by art and other exhibition openings, public programs, performances and functions that create life-long learning and recreational opportunities for the Shire's residents, as well as playing a role in stimulating creativity and innovation in the arts and cultural sector.

The Shire directly supports cultural development by providing Cultural Activity Grants each year, supporting the Kia Ora Music Camp which is open to all Upper Hunter primary and high school students; hosting of annual NAIDOC Week activities; assisting groups with grant applications for cultural activities; and hosting events such as Music Beat for Youth; Welding for Women; Play in a Day for youth as well as supporting numerous locally driven events and festivals each year.

The Shire also provides financial support for the upkeep of rural halls to ensure they are safe and meet local needs for cultural activities such as dances, plays, functions, workshops and exhibitions. The Shire also supports local Museums through provision of venues, assistance with upkeep of buildings and administrative support through the Upper Hunter Museums Network.





### The Context

The Upper Hunter Shire is located in the Hunter Region of NSW, approximately 250km north of Sydney. The Shire is predominantly rural and encompasses 8,100<sup>2</sup>km. In 2011 the Shire had a population of 13,754 people, compared to 541,950 people in the Hunter region, of which the breakdown of girls and women to boys and men was 50.1% to 49.9%. 11.5% of the Shire's population are young people aged 15-24 years.

The median age of people in the Upper Hunter Shire is 39 years. There are 536 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Shire. The largest ancestries in the Shire are English, Irish and Scottish.

\$56,678 million is generated from tourism annually in the Upper Hunter, making it the fifth highest-ranking industry for the Shire. In 2016 the Hunter had 8,838 visitors staying overnight that made day trips. 3,308 of these were international visitors and 57.2% were for the purpose of holidays.

Current University of Newcastle research led by Dr Phillip McIntyre about the Hunter states the creative industries 'contribute more than \$90 billion to our economy annually in turnover, add more than \$45 billion to GDP and generate annual exports of \$3.2 billion.

In 2011 there were more than 600,000 people working in the creative industries in Australia and over 120,000 creative businesses'. The current NSW state government has also established a Creative Industries Taskforce to 'develop comprehensive strategies to drive growth, innovation and productivity in the NSW creative industries sector'.

### National Statistics Indicate

**48%** of  
Australians are  
**creating art  
themselves**

**89%** of Australians  
agree the arts are an  
**important part of  
education**

**91%** actively  
**participated in  
some form of  
cultural activity**  
including using  
a library, reading,  
online gaming and  
social sites, visual  
arts, cultural events,  
collecting, craftwork,  
live performances,  
writing and  
performing arts

The national  
average for  
**attending  
cultural events  
or venues is  
86%**

**90%** agree  
that **Indigenous  
arts** are an  
**important part  
of Australian  
culture**

**85%** of Australians  
believe the **arts make** for a richer  
and **more meaningful life**



### Approach to Arts and Culture

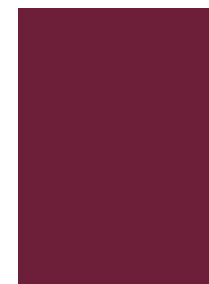
Culture is the lintel that helps value, connect and deliver the three columns of society, economics and the environment. This section explores Council's strategic directions for developing arts and culture to impact on the Shire's long-term economic viability, contextualised within broader economic development and social planning agendas.

The Upper Hunter offers a unique lifestyle and amenity that no city can offer, but is close and connected enough to benefit from Newcastle. These characteristics identify the Shire as a connected life style region (CLSR) as defined in a recent report by the Regional Australia Institute "Innovation in Regional Australia: Spreading the Ideas Boom" 2016. The research provides Council with an opportunity to implement ideas already proven successful by other CLSRs who are securing strong economic growth.

Innovation, which is the activity of creating or capturing value from doing something new, drives the economic value of research and development (R&D) and entrepreneurship that lies within a region. The arts and creative industries are a vital force in this process because they are both a means for developing the necessary skills to enable general innovation, and as an end in themselves they can form industry ecologies.

Although the Shire does not have R&D institutions, it can become a hub of innovative capacity because like other CLSRs, it has the residents with the skills to build business dynamo. Business dynamo is shown in ways that are indicated by: new businesses (driving change, generating new knowledge and opportunities for innovation), owner-managers (building better business practices, efficiency and high quality products or services), trademark applications (business point of difference) and knowledge-intensive business services (linking research and industry to commercialise innovation).

The new systems approach to understanding innovation emphasises attributes such as the number of firms/ entrepreneurs/actors (density), mixing and remixing of labour pools (fluidity), strength of interactions between system elements (connectivity), and economic and social factors (diversity). These place a great deal of importance around the entrepreneurial ecosystems supporting innovation, ecosystems less welded to intense institutional R&D, and more able to emerge in a vibrant region.



### Further enabling the Shire as a tree-change place to be

Increasing the quality of the lifestyle and amenity in the Shire to attract more tree changers will build the Shire's innovation ecosystem as a lifestyle and business hub. The level and types of arts and culture available in a location plays a significant role in decision making related to where people will choose to live and there are key moves Council can make to fast-track desirability for the Shire.

Flagship built environment projects already planned in the three main town centers provide leisure, recreational, creative and learning opportunities as part of their creation processes and their enjoyment as finished projects. In Murrurundi Turning the Pages is a comprehensive river and bushcare regeneration program that incorporates public art, a walking trail and interpretation that draws attention to the township's many bridges. In Merriwa there is enthusiasm for a community food growing garden and creative access hub, and in Scone the cultural precinct that comprises the township's major arts organisations has been identified as an area that if beautified and creatively interpreted will bring renewed focus and energy.

A public art gateway at the Scone turnoff on the proposed bypass could encourage travellers to stop and the previously mentioned precinct showcase efforts accompanied by adequate refurbishment of the Scone Old Court Theatre building will draw people away from the heavy truck flow of the main street and lead to further interest in development of a cultural hub.

Sourcing a new multi-artform centre for the Murrurundi Arts Council within the township's cultural precinct could provide an additional space to the existing railway station buildings and extend working and exhibition opportunities for the increasing amateur and professional arts community as well as for those working in the heritage areas. The research currently being undertaken by the University of Newcastle identifies Murrurundi as having the most striking potential in the Shire to become an innovative hub because of the lifestyle it offers. Together with existing privately owned arts enterprises, galleries and exhibition spaces, the fledgling idea of a regional arts festival would also provide more cultural opportunities to feed back into the community.

Council will continue to support many existing and new events in the year round calendar to assist with extending the range of entertainment available, whilst supporting those participatory programs that develop artistic excellence and others with their recreational creative benefits. Possible pathways to achieving this are discussed further below.





### Ensuring fast broadband

McIntyre, Balnaves, Kerrigan, Williams and King in their current university research on the creative industries stress that high capacity broadband and Wi-Fi has the potential to open up further prospects in various creative industries sectors in the Upper Hunter. These areas include opportunities in fashion and industrial design, multi-media applications, public art, new forms of responsive theatre, film and internet-based business, research and training prospects as well as other opportunities for investment in the creative industries system.

### Nurturing the creative industries

Council will continue to explore the interconnectivities of the creative industries in general, as well as map who is operating within the Shire to help build capacity within a systemic context, where elements that can be linked or facilitated to provide a structure within which creative industries practitioners can capitalise on their work or artists can capture the best cultural production capacities. The sector includes the four main areas of the visual and performing arts, design, information technology and the media. However, subsets include advertising, architecture, design, visual arts, music, theatre, dance, publishing, film, television, writing, marketing, radio and electronic games and interactive content. Many of these types of businesses are already established in the Upper Hunter.

### Extending the Shire's ecology to include Lower Hunter and statewide connectivity

The Allen Consulting Group "Scoping a research and innovation cluster in the creative industries in Newcastle and the Hunter region: report to the University of Newcastle" 2013, indicated that 'all facets of the creative industries are represented in the Newcastle and Hunter' (ACG 2013, p. 35). By better understanding those sectors that are mature and established in the Shire and those that are absent or fledgling, a creative system can be developed for local artists to support their development and to enable pathways for their product within the Hunter and statewide, whilst they continue to be based in the Upper Hunter.

This system incorporating networks, facilities and specific strategies can specifically explore ways to retain younger people in the Upper Hunter, who can become important creative industry innovators within the local system. This can lay the groundwork to provide a stronger intergenerational mix of interest in the Upper Shire's arts and culture, and potentially assist those organisations with their ageing populations succession plan into future years.



### Council will focus on three areas to assist this

#### Educational institution learning opportunities

The Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Performance (based in Muswellbrook) provides outreach education into the Shire's schools and events, and Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery also provides a public program of different learning. TAFE NSW's Scone campus has the capacity to offer courses through their pathway programs to support the development of the creative industries and could become the state's regional hub for rural students given the onsite residential facility. Following on from this, a reciprocal onsite residential facility for the Upper Hunter's residents wanting to study courses in Newcastle could be made available to enable local flow on benefits from course areas such as event management, Indigenous arts and culture, and the many artform areas.

The University of Newcastle already has over 3000 enrolled students studying to occupy creative industries positions locally, nationally, and across the globe. As part of a concerted effort to draw this expertise to the Upper Hunter the Bachelor of Creative Industries course that will be introduced in 2017 could see third-year students in 2019 undertake six-month study placements in the Upper Hunter. Representatives from the Shire's historical and arts organisations, and flagship events have overwhelmingly expressed interest in this program that can assist with the shortage of skills and labour, and to innovate and grow experiences of arts and culture in the Upper Hunter for participants and audiences as part of a re-energising process and to potentially assist with the intergenerational challenges of succession planning.

Home hosting students for these programs in blocks or on a regular basis throughout their placement was found highly popular during consultations. Council will also continue to provide in kind support and seek funding to renovate the Scone Community Amateur Dramatic Society's 'Old Court Theatre' building with future potential to develop hostel style room accommodation for visiting students. This will also give students a means to develop ties to the Upper Hunter and assist with developing the precinct as a site of arts activity, exchange and pollination.

Other exceptional educational opportunities and potential partnerships include the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle, an Australian leader in Indigenous education and the Hunter School of the Performing Arts that is the only wholly selective public performing arts school in NSW. Other potential partnerships include working with the Muswellbrook Campus, Hunter Tafe.





### Ancillary organisations with their local community connections

Council will continue to support creative activity and cultural development within the Shire's three Youth Centres, CWAs and Men's Sheds that provide access to work spaces and ongoing workshop programs. Festivals and events also have potential to expose attendees to arts and creative workshops.

### Working better with organisations with an Upper Hunter or regional delivery brief

Arts Upper Hunter (AUH), the regional arts development organisation whose officer is based in Muswellbrook, stimulates arts development by delivering arts and heritage programs, publishing an e-newsletter, calendar of events and maintaining a database of local arts and cultural practitioners and organisations. AUH draws on the networks and programs of Regional Arts NSW to deliver arts and culture to the Upper Hunter Shire. Other arts organisations that deliver in the Upper Hunter include the Hunter Writers Centre, Catapult Dance and Tantrum Theatre. These organisations, along with others with a statewide or national focus delivery such as Music NSW, Museums and Galleries NSW and the National Association for the Visual Arts could also be encouraged to deliver more within the Shire.

Developing partnership programs or projects with other organisations also assists with brokering expertise and funds to develop product in the Upper Hunter for local audiences as well as to travel elsewhere. Other routes to develop local talent and open up new markets include outreach such as a Shire supported presence in the Renew Newcastle program to connect and incubate creative entrepreneurs, as well as developing exchange residency programs and building satellite events with major festivals.





### Consultation Summary

One of the main aims in developing this Cultural Plan has been to use the consultation process to ascertain how Council can move forward to support a wider vision of arts and culture for the Shire. This focus has revealed the enormous wealth and diversity of cultural activity driven by volunteers in each township.

Creative industries, in relation to economic development and tourism, is considered in this plan, as is the social value of lifelong learning and education for arts and culture. However, in this consultation individual business or strategic planning of arts and cultural organisations has not been done, because this development requires a different set of approaches and is considered secondary to setting up a more broad-based foundation to build the Upper Hunter's total arts and culture ecology. For this same reason, only some individual community cultural assets and location-based aspirations are included.

A series of 29 individual and 5 group consultations were held from April to July 2016 with artists and creative practitioners, heritage volunteers, historians, council staff, academics and stakeholders in the Shire, Muswellbrook, Newcastle and Sydney. Public consultations were held at Scone with 15 community participants, Merriwa with 10 community participants and Murrurundi with 8 community participants.

26 people completed surveys about arts and culture in the Shire and returned these in hard copy, by email or as online entries. General comment and specific feedback was received on how Council could focus efforts over the next 5 years to deliver services more effectively as well as capturing what people already appreciate and do as part of the Shire's arts and culture.

Overall, 103 people actively participated in the development of this plan of which 69 are members of the Shire's community.

Overall, the people of the Shire love their home and want to see it rise to meet its cultural potential.



### Participants in this plan

**Representatives from the following organisations have contributed to this plan:**

- Cassilis Guild Hall
- Merriwa Quilters
- CWA Merriwa
- Merriwa Railway Museum
- Aberdeen Local Studies
- Scone Arts & Crafts
- Arts Upper Hunter
- Scone Literary Long Weekend
- Scone Grammar School
- Murrurundi Public School
- Murrurundi Preschool
- St Josephs Primary School Merriwa
- Merriwa Central School
- Blandford Public School
- Showstoppers
- Aberdeen Highland Games
- Aberdeen Quilt Affairs
- Scone Horse Festival
- Murrurundi Arts Council
- Murrurundi Rotary Club
- Murrurundi Historical Society
- Pages River Walk
- Warrah Writers
- CEMENTA Inc
- Upper Hunter Library
- Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music
- Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council



## 10 Year Vision

Culture is an intrinsic part of the Upper Hunter, valued for its contribution to people's life-long learning and wellbeing, as well as the identity and economy of the area.

What can be achieved locally, working collaboratively, is significant and can enable the artistic sector, progress society, develop audiences, and grow artistic and cultural participation.

### Council wants to make a positive impact on culture to ensure that:

Shire residents see great artistic and cultural works and events that are relevant, distinctive, stimulate their imaginations, and reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary life through local and other stories.

The Shire is a vibrant society that embraces dynamic social and cultural conversation and values diversity and new ideas.

Every Shire resident participates in lifelong cultural expression to captivate and enrich them.

Shire artists and other practitioners receive support so that they can influence creative practice, benefit the community and contribute to innovation.

The strategies and actions described on the following pages to achieve the cultural impacts serve as a vital component to strengthen the Upper Hunter's cultural foundation and are necessary to assist Council to meet the vision set in this plan.





## Priority Areas

### Priority Areas Identified in the Consultations



Developing an integrated approach to public art and progressing community-initiated flagship built environment projects in townships.

Develop connectivity between Council and independent organisations and arts practitioners and cultural workers, in relation to programming, strategic packaging and promotion to develop audiences, and resource sharing.

Developing the hard infrastructure of the arts and cultural sector.

Better supporting fledgling and existing festivals and events.



Focussing on Indigenous people to increase visibility and support for traditional and contemporary cultures.



Building a partnership to best facilitate the University of Newcastle's third year Bachelor of Creative Industries course student placements in 2019 to boost Shire skills and labour.

Focussing on young people to create more opportunities for young people to participate in and present their creative efforts as part of arts and culture.



## Strategies and Actions - Cultural Impact

### Growing Participation

Every Shire resident participates in lifelong cultural expression to captivate and enrich them.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	2017 - 2018	2019 - 2020	2021 - 2022	2023 - 2026
Facilitating enriching arts and cultural experiences to develop lifelong passion for participating in arts and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support programs that develop skills in reflection, collaboration and making artistic forms that assist with health, ageing, youth, disability wellbeing and engaged citizenship</li> <li>• Promote development of public art and link with Council's CBD revitalisation projects</li> <li>• Provide ongoing annual Cultural Activity Grants for innovative creative projects, materials, exhibitions and workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Town Revitalisation Committees to devise projects then seek grant funding, sponsorship and inkind support to develop public art.</li> <li>• Support local groups to deliver creative and inclusive programs across artforms</li> <li>• Continue to support the Kia Ora Music Camp open to all primary and high school students across the Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue support for the Kia Ora Music Camp</li> <li>• Increase access to mainstream participation in arts and cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an integrated public art policy (eg using Arts North West template)</li> <li>• Continue support for the Kia Ora Music Camp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop public art projects</li> <li>• Continue to support local groups to deliver creative programs across the Shire</li> <li>• Review Cultural Activity Grant funding terms and target areas</li> <li>• Review support for Kia Ora Music Camp</li> </ul>



Increase focus on young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote programs that encourage new ways of seeing, knowing and understanding art</li> <li>• Encourage linkages between schools and arts/cultural organisations and festivals/events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage youth services to tailor and deliver art related programs</li> <li>• Stay connected with schools, arts and event organisers via UH Tourism and other networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate an artists in schools or townships program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore sponsorship program for technology acquisitions for schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review support for youth and art related programs</li> </ul>
Celebrate Indigenous culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support NAIDOC week activities across the Shire</li> <li>• Partner Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC) and other organisations to promote Indigenous cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for opportunities to use Indigenous words in town planning,</li> <li>• Encourage significant site visits and school education trips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local organisations seeking to preserve and record local Indigenous histories and artefacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for funding opportunities to interpret and tour Indigenous collections across the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop ongoing partnerships and promote Indigenous cultural activities across the Shire</li> </ul>
Increase inclusion and participation of people with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for ways to increase access and participation in mainstream arts and cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote increased access at local events and festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for ways to include more pictorial representation of people with a disability in Council documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Local organisations that assist people with disabilities in cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop ongoing partnerships and promote increased access and participation of people with a disability</li> </ul>
Provide library services that meet the needs of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain library agreement between Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook Shire Councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate, support and promote inclusive library services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support existing facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate and support community celebrations that promote cultural awareness (eg Harmony Day, NAIDOC Week)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review partnerships with organisations and community groups to increase participation.</li> </ul>





## Strategies and Actions - Cultural Impact

### Developing Audiences

Shire residents see great artistic and cultural works and events that are relevant, distinctive, stimulate their imaginations and reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary life through local and other stories.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	2017 - 2018	2019 - 2020	2021 - 2022	2023 - 2026
Ensure the Shire's audiences have access to a diverse range of exhibitions and works of high quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support arts and cultural organisations to implement an artist and art product residency/exchange program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make linkages between school curriculum and arts/ cultural organisation and festival/event programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and encourage local arts and cultural exhibitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with accessing academics and other guest speakers to stimulate interest in art and culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review future Shire needs and areas for further cultural development</li> </ul>
Embrace digital platforms to broaden audiences for arts and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote arts and cultural activities online using Council website, newsletter, Upper Hunter Tourism, Arts Upper Hunter and develop links with regional, state and national platforms</li> <li>Explore radio, print and social media promotional opportunities</li> <li>Advocate for faster broadband</li> <li>Promote community bus use for art product transfer and excursions within and outside Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Arts UH to ensure all art activities are reported in Artsbark and seek links with other outlets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local businesses that develop tourism packages eg tourist drives, natural tourism, food and wine, accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships with: National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Regional Arts NSW, Museums and Galleries NSW, Tourism NSW and art centres nationally and internationally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support digital arts and craft activities</li> <li>Explore new promotional activities and opportunities</li> </ul>



<p>Increase connections between institutions for the benefit of moving and building audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the activity of the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music (UHCM)</li> <li>• Support arts and cultural organisations to explore cross programing with festivals and events</li> <li>• Attend Arts UH meetings and cross promote projects, opportunities and grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote UHCM, look for opportunities to showcase local talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross promote projects, art activities, opportunities and grants across the Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for ways to partner with arts related institutions outside of the Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local arts and crafts groups and look for ways to integrate into other local events</li> </ul>
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## Strategies and Actions - Cultural Impact

### Progressing Society

The Shire is a vibrant society that embraces dynamic social and cultural conversation, values diversity and new ideas.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	2017 - 2018	2019 - 2020	2021 - 2022	2023 - 2026
Contribute to regional growth and regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a long-term strategy to ensure a role in the student placement program of the University of Newcastle (UofN) Bachelor of Creative Industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create formal partnership with UofN outlining support for the Bachelor of Creative Industries student placement program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the launch of the UofN Bachelor of Creative Industries course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote program and develop student accommodation strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review partnership with UofN and look for links with other institutions</li> </ul>
Expose local stories through cultural programming and build Shire's cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist cultural heritage (eg UH Museums Network) organisations with meetings, rotating the location each time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore resource sharing, cross programming and joint publicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support existing and new festivals and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complement community projects with temporary art installations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review way local stories are promoted and look for new promotional opportunities</li> </ul>
Grow the Shire's identity via its collections of art and artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local organisations to develop an arts collections policy and develop an item borrowing system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify exhibition spaces in the community – shire offices, hospitals, schools, hostel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit council managed spaces to identify where art and other items can be exhibited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look for funding opportunities and seek donations of local arts and artefacts and rotate displays across Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively source and acquire local arts and artefacts</li> </ul>





## Strategies and Actions - Cultural Impact

### Enabling the Artistic Sector

Shire artists and other practitioners receive support so that they can influence creative practice, benefit the community and contribute to innovation.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	2017 - 2018	2019 - 2020	2021 - 2022	2023 - 2026
Increase support for and engagement with local artists, innovative thinkers, academic creatives and cultural practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work individually with the region's arts and cultural businesses and nonprofit organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage research organisations with a Hunter wide brief and state-wide brief to develop mentorships, outreach delivery and other programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore pathways for exhibiting within and outside region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage partnerships with arts organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review progress and look for new ways to support engagement with local artists and practitioners</li> </ul>
Arts and culture hard infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop VICs to incorporate exhibition space</li> <li>• Continue to renovate Old Court Theatre Scone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with staff and local artists to develop infrastructure projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source funding to bring Old Court Theatre Scone to standard and improve accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore potential as venue for art student accommodation and artists in residence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit arts infrastructure and update arts community group register</li> </ul>
Facilitate training and education opportunities to better enable artists in their arts excellence, creative businesses & social entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist arts and cultural organisations to deliver workshops, forums and conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore grant opportunities from community, cultural and arts organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop TAFE and University of Newcastle partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for funding opportunities and seek donations of local arts and artefacts and rotate displays across Shire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively source and acquire local arts and artefacts</li> </ul>



### Ideas and Inspirations

#### From our Community

During the consultation process for the Cultural Plan, many provided innovative and inspiring ideas for embellishing and enriching the culture of our community, some of these ideas included:

#### Scone

Further develop the Old Court Theatre to provide accommodation for visiting artists and students  
Develop a walking trail  
Create opportunities for art exhibitions in Council buildings, hospitals and other public places.

#### Merriwa

Create a garden regeneration project and vegetable garden with students. Host a ceramic family fun day. Source funding to renovate the old canteen at the Merriwa netball courts as a community arts facility. Investigate opportunities to use under utilised spaces such as Roman Catholic Sisters Quarters and the old Sale Yards sales room building (Hacketts Lane) for arts activities. Look for partnerships in the community to reinstate the Merriwa Art Show.

#### Murrurundi

Re-introduce the Antiques Fair or develop a new 'regional festival' with an arts and culture focus. Work with the Murrurundi Community Forum and organisations supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Build a multi-arts centre in Murrurundi working with the State Government/ industry/ M&GNSW/Arts NSW to work on design of building and funding. Explore opportunities to upgrade buildings for art and cultural activities.

#### Shire-wide Ideas

- Assist with education kit ideas for arts and cultural organisations/major festivals to ensure they match school curriculum.
- Work with the WLALC to develop a regional skills workshop program in Indigenous music, video and story.
- Support private arts enterprises to distribute shire promotional materials eg local tourist drives, natural tourism, food and accommodation.
- Explore a 'singing the land' theme from Indigenous traditions as well as folk songs for events of coming together in times of crisis and to assist with the understanding and adaptation necessary for climate change.
- Support Landcare's annual photography exhibition.
- Explore sister city relationships to assist the Murrurundi Community Forum with their aspirations to support Syrian and other refugees.
- Support a fledgling shire-wide festival project to celebrate arts and culture.
- Investigate opportunities for outdoor cinema, opera in the church, more live theatre.
- Seek sponsorship of a community bus for regional gallery tours and use by cultural organisations for moving product within the Shire.
- Explore opportunities to engage a cultural development officer.



### Credits

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### Art Community Groups and Venue Register

A current list of Upper Hunter arts related community groups and contact details as well as a register of venues is available from the:

Council Website: [upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](http://upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)

Email: [council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)

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