



Draft Creative Wodonga: Arts, Heritage and Events Plan

2027 - 2031



Wodonga Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the Country. We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians across various lands. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuous connections to lands, waters and communities across the country.

We are privileged to gather on this Country and to share knowledge, culture and art, now and with future generations.

Our heritage and culture

Wodonga's cultural identity is shaped by a rich heritage that is grounded in strong connections to Country, heritage, family, community and cultural traditions. This foundational heritage is complemented by significant historical developments, including the rise of traditional agricultural industries, the transformative impact of the railway, the construction of the Hume Weir, the establishment of a major military presence and the growth of innovative manufacturing sectors.

A defining chapter in Wodonga's post-war history is the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre, a nationally significant heritage site that symbolises Australia's migration story and the evolution of our multicultural identity.

While it is vital to honour and preserve our historical narratives, it is equally important to recognise and celebrate the dynamic and diverse communities that are shaping Wodonga today. The city continues to be a vibrant and welcoming community to new migrants, whose cultures, experiences and contributions are enriching our collective identity and strengthening our social fabric.

Vision

Wodonga is a vibrant, connected and creative city where arts, culture and heritage are embedded in everyday life. Through creative partnerships, accessible cultural experiences, rich heritage storytelling and dynamic creative industries, we strengthen community identity, belonging and wellbeing while driving economic prosperity and opportunity.



Our approach

Wodonga is a city defined by connection, creativity and innovation; a place where people, place and potential converge. It is a city that strategically harnesses the strengths of its community and the richness of its natural environment to create a vibrant, resilient and future-focused destination for living, visiting and doing business.

Through diverse programs, venues and public spaces, creative activity animates the city, offering immersive and inclusive experiences that enrich everyday life and strengthen social connection.

The *Creative Wodonga: Arts, Heritage and Events Plan 2027 – 2031* (the Creative Wodonga Plan) aligns with the *Council Plan 2025–2029* (the Council Plan) and works alongside the *Albury Wodonga Destination Management Plan 2024 - 2028* as well as other key council strategies and documents that inform the city's economic development activity and management of early years and youth cohorts. Together, these strategies recognise the contribution that culture, creativity, events and distinctive places make to community wellbeing, population attraction, workforce retention, visitation and economic prosperity.

In this context, the Creative Wodonga Plan provides a clear and strategic framework to grow and elevate Wodonga's cultural identity and impact over the next five years. The plan is informed by evidence-based research, a deep understanding of the city's unique character and strong collaboration with internal teams and the cultural sector. It identifies key opportunities to leverage existing strengths while responding to emerging trends and community aspirations.

Four interrelated strategic objectives guide this work. Together, they will focus investment, strengthen partnerships and drive coordinated action, ensuring Wodonga continues to grow as a creative city where culture enriches community wellbeing, supports economic prosperity and fosters a distinctive sense of place.

Objective 1: Participation and connection - People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can participate in arts, culture, learning and events that strengthen connection and community life.

Objective 2: Culture, heritage and identity - Wodonga's stories, cultures and heritage are shared, preserved and celebrated.

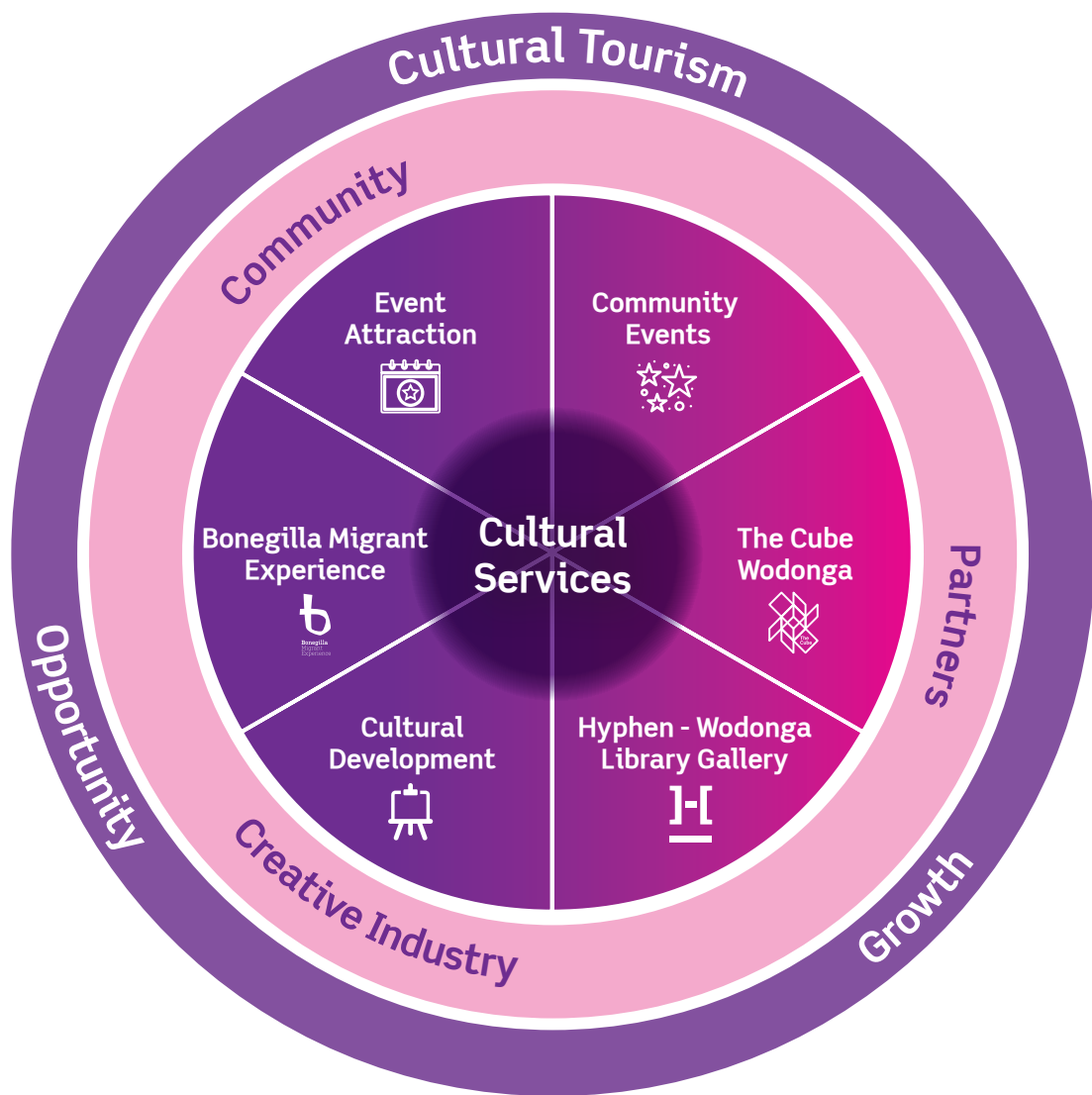
Objective 3: Local creative sector - Local artists, creatives and cultural organisations are supported to grow their skills, create opportunities and contribute to the local economy and community.

Objective 4: Places, events and visitors - Our cultural venues, places and events attract people, activate the city and support the local economy.

Cultural Services Framework

Wodonga’s Cultural Services Framework illustrates how the council’s cultural services work together as an integrated system to deliver meaningful cultural, social and economic outcomes. At its centre is Cultural Services, connecting the council’s key service areas: Event Attraction, Community Events, Bonegilla Migrant Experience, The Cube Wodonga, Cultural Development and Hyphen – Wodonga Library Gallery.

These services are strengthened through collaboration with the creative industry, cultural organisations, government, commercial partners and the community. The framework recognises that Wodonga’s cultural impact is achieved not through individual services alone, but through coordinated delivery, strong partnerships and a shared commitment to building a vibrant, inclusive and distinctive cultural city.



How the plan was developed

To ensure cultural services reflects the needs and aspirations of residents, Wodonga Council engaged with community members, visitors, stakeholders and staff.

Feedback highlighted strong support for culture as a way to strengthen community connection, identity, belonging and civic pride. Participants expressed a desire for more live music, events and cultural activities that bring people together, activate public spaces and enhance Wodonga's vibrancy.

The community identified the importance of celebrating First Nations culture, migration and settlement stories, local heritage, multicultural diversity and contemporary community life. Feedback also highlighted barriers to participation, including affordability, accessibility, transport and awareness of opportunities.

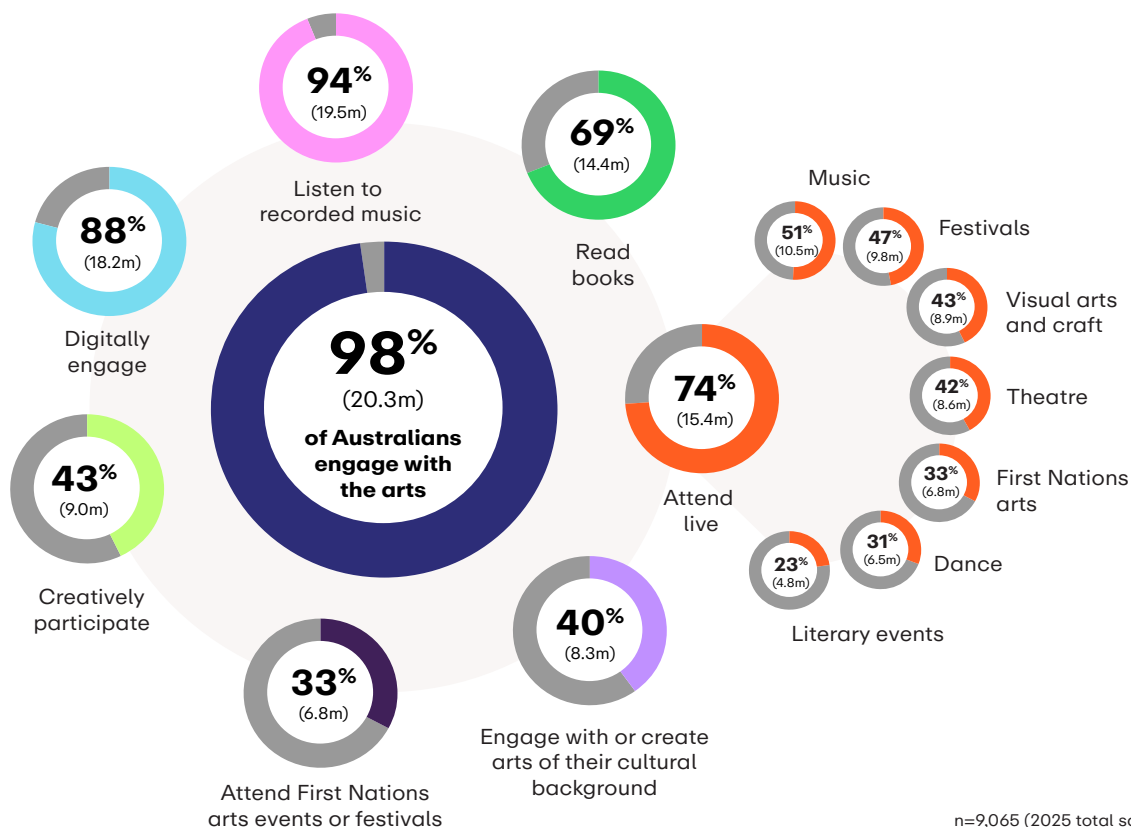
While the broader community prioritised accessible and family-friendly experiences, stakeholders emphasised the need to support local artists, creative organisations and creative development opportunities. Overall, engagement suggests the plan should balance broad community participation with a strong and sustainable creative sector.

The value of arts and culture

Arts and culture contribute to the quality of life of our community. They help people connect, participate, learn and celebrate together, while activating public spaces, strengthening local identity, supporting economic activity and attracting visitors to Wodonga.

Almost all Australians engage with the arts in some way. The results from the 2025 National Arts Participation Survey show that 98% of Australians engage with the arts, either by listening to music, reading, creating art, engaging with the arts online or by attending arts and cultural events and festivals.

Figure 1: Australians' engagement with the arts, 2025



n=9,065 (2025 total sample)

Our creative community

Albury-Wodonga is home to an established and diverse cultural community, enriched by galleries, theatres, creative enterprises and a vibrant community arts scene.

Wodonga Council and AlburyCity work collaboratively to deliver programs that support the growth of a dynamic cultural sector and offer rich, engaging experiences for residents and visitors alike. Together Albury-Wodonga is home to over 35 cultural organisations and recognised as one of the country's top 20 hotspots for creative industries. (reference – Australian Cultural and creative Activity: A population and Hotspot analysis Albury Wodonga)

Across this Creative Wodonga Plan, the council will:



Deliver

Cultural services, programs, venues and infrastructure for which the council has direct responsibility.



Enable

Create opportunities, remove barriers and build community and creative sector capability.



Partner

Work with community groups, cultural organisations, businesses, education providers and government agencies to achieve shared outcomes.



Advocate

Seek funding, investment and partnerships that enhance cultural opportunities and community benefit beyond what the council can deliver on its own.



Partnerships for creative growth and connectivity

A vibrant and sustainable cultural sector relies on strong partnerships, shared leadership and collaboration across the community. Wodonga's cultural future is shaped by the contributions of government, creative practitioners, community organisations, businesses, visitors and residents, each playing an important role in fostering creativity, cultural participation and community wellbeing.

By working together, these stakeholders help strengthen cultural identity, support creative growth, attract investment and create opportunities that enrich Wodonga's social, cultural and economic life.



Our cultural assets

Our cultural assets enable the council to deliver a broad range of arts and cultural experiences for the community and visitors, thereby ensuring our people benefit culturally, economically and socially.



Hyphen - Wodonga Library Gallery

In 2025 - 2026 Hyphen - Wodonga Library Gallery welcomed 135,000 visitors, hosted 16 exhibitions and 521 programs.

Hyphen – Wodonga Library Gallery provides a vibrant space for the development, presentation and celebration of arts and culture. It fosters a safe and welcoming environment for connection, supports regional artists, delivers innovative programming and promotes lifelong learning through access to resources, programs and emerging technologies.



Bonegilla Migrant Experience

In 2025 - 2026 Bonegilla Migrant Experience attracted 14,333 visitors, delivered 13 programs and 297 guided tours, generating an estimated \$3.5 million for the Albury-Wodonga visitor economy.

Bonegilla Migrant Experience (BME) is one of Australia's most significant migration heritage sites and a birthplace of modern multicultural Australia. Today, BME stands as a key cultural tourism destination, offering immersive tours, workshops and experiences that honour the resilience, contributions and diverse stories of those who passed through its gates.



Events

In 2025 - 2026 Wodonga Council's Events team delivered 18 community and civic events, attracting more than 29,000 attendees.

Wodonga Council delivers a vibrant year-round calendar of community, civic, cultural and major events that bring people together, celebrate community diversity and promote economic activity while also enhancing the city's cultural identity.

Our cultural assets continued ...



Event Attraction

In 2025 - 2026 the Event Attraction Funding Program supported twenty events which saw over 35,000 people attend, with an estimated total direct and indirect effect of \$32.2 million to the Albury-Wodonga economy.

Strategic event attraction is a catalyst for both economic growth and cultural vibrancy. These events stimulate local business activity, support tourism, generate economic opportunities and contribute to a dynamic and connected community. This in turn strengthens Wodonga's reputation as a vibrant regional event destination.



Cultural Development

In 2025 - 2026 Community Cultural Development delivered 10 Ephemeral Art projects, installed two new First Nations public art pieces, supported three strategic partnerships, one professional development program with Murray Arts and hosted five public art walks.

The Community Cultural Development Program aims to cultivate a vibrant, inclusive community by embracing a diverse spectrum of artistic and cultural experiences. It encourages participation across all ages and backgrounds, offering content that is entertaining, thought-provoking, educational and engaging.



The Cube Wodonga

In 2025 - 2026 The Cube Wodonga delivered 372 events, attracting more than 40,100 registered participants and over 133,700 visitors, reinforcing its role as the region's premier cultural and performing arts venue.

The Cube Wodonga is a performing arts, events and conference venue. It provides access to arts and cultural experiences, supports community and business events, attracts visitors and creates opportunities for learning, participation and connection. The venue contributes to community wellbeing, city activation and economic activity.

Our action plan

OBJECTIVE 1: PARTICIPATION AND CONNECTION

Outcome - people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can participate in arts, culture, learning and events that strengthen connection, belonging and community life.

Wodonga Council will support diverse, inclusive and accessible arts, culture and learning opportunities that bring people together, celebrate community diversity and encourage creative expression. By reducing barriers to participation, the council will foster a welcoming, connected and culturally vibrant community where creativity enhances wellbeing, learning and everyday life.

Council Plan alignment



Liveable and connected communities

Actions		Indicators	Council role
1.1	Deliver an annual cultural program that supports community participation across events, programs and venues.	Delivery of a diverse cultural program that increases community participation.	Deliver Partner
1.2	Ensure venues, programs and services are physically, socially, culturally and financially accessible.	Accessible and inclusive venues, programs and services.	Deliver Enable
1.3	Provide and partner in cultural learning experiences for children, young people, families, schools and lifelong learners.	Increased participation in cultural learning and education programs.	Deliver Partner
1.4	Strengthen the local cultural ecosystem through partnerships, artist development, creative industry support and regional collaboration.	Number of partnerships and creative development opportunities.	Deliver Enable Partner



OBJECTIVE 2: CULTURE, HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

Outcome - Wodonga's stories, cultures and heritage are shared, preserved and celebrated.

Wodonga Council will work with First Nations communities, cultural groups, heritage organisations and the broader community to celebrate and share the city's diverse stories, cultures and heritage. Through programs, events, exhibitions and cultural experiences, the council will strengthen community identity, foster pride in place and ensure Wodonga's unique history and contemporary stories continue to shape its future.

Council Plan alignment



Liveable and connected communities



Thriving local economy

Actions		Indicators	Council role
2.1	Recognise and promote First Nations culture and Wodonga's diverse heritage, stories and collections.	Number of First Nations and heritage programs, exhibitions, projects and initiatives delivered annually.	Deliver Enable Partner
2.2	Support conservation and activation of BME as a significant heritage asset.	Protect, conserve and activate BME as a nationally significant heritage place and distinctive cultural tourism destination.	Advocate Partner Deliver
2.3	Establish and/or maintain partnerships with First Nations, multicultural groups and community organisations to identify ways their stories, traditions and talents can be shared.	First Nations and multicultural communities represented and engaged through cultural programs and projects.	Partner Enable
2.4	Commission and maintain public art that reflects Wodonga's stories, landscapes, cultures and contemporary identity.	Public art contributes to community identity and sense of place.	Partner Deliver



OBJECTIVE 3: LOCAL CREATIVE SECTOR

Outcome - local artists, creatives and cultural organisations are supported to grow their skills, create opportunities and contribute to the local economy and community.

Wodonga Council will support a strong and sustainable creative sector through opportunities for professional development, collaboration, creative production and audience growth. Through partnerships, advocacy and investment, the council will help build local creative capacity, strengthen the sector's sustainability and enhance Wodonga's reputation as a creative and culturally engaged city.

Council Plan alignment



Thriving
local economy

Actions		Indicators	Council role
3.1	Support local artists, creatives and cultural organisations through advocacy, commissions, presentation opportunities, partnerships and creative development initiatives.	Number of local artists and cultural organisations engaged annually.	Advocate Partner Deliver
3.2	Deliver and facilitate professional development, mentoring and networking opportunities for the creative sector.	Increased capability and connectivity within the creative industry.	Partner
3.3	Create opportunities for young and emerging creatives by providing opportunities to develop, showcase and share their work through cultural programs, events and partnerships.	Increased participation, development and visibility of young and emerging creatives.	Deliver Partner
3.4	Advocate for and attract investment, partnerships and external funding to support growth of the local creative sector.	External creative industry funding to support the creative sector.	Advocate Partner



OBJECTIVE 4: PLACES, EVENTS AND VISITORS

Outcome - our cultural venues, places and events attract people, activate the city and support the local economy.

Wodonga Council will activate and enhance its cultural venues, heritage sites, public spaces and events to strengthen community connection, attract visitors and showcase the city's identity. Through programming, public art, cultural tourism and heritage experiences, the council will support vibrant cultural places that enrich community life and contribute to Wodonga's reputation as a regional cultural destination.

Council Plan alignment



Liveable and connected communities



Thriving local economy

Actions	Indicators	Council role
4.1 Maximise the use and activation of the council's cultural venues and public spaces to grow cultural tourism through performances, exhibitions, events, public art and heritage experiences.	Increased activation of the council's cultural venues and public spaces to support greater visitation and cultural engagement.	Deliver
4.2 Attract nationally and regionally recognised performers, exhibitions, productions and events to enhance cultural participation, development and audience experience.	Increased participation in cultural experiences that activate public spaces.	Deliver Partner
4.3 Promote and develop BME as a Nationally significant heritage, education and cultural tourism destination.	Grow BME'S visitor and education markets through destination development, partnerships, programming and promotion.	Deliver
4.4 Attract and support major events and conferences that increase visitation, activate Wodonga and generate economic benefit.	Events and conferences contribute to economic and social outcomes and increased visitation to Wodonga.	Partner
4.5 Advocate for the inclusion of arts, culture and creativity within precinct planning, place-making and economic development initiatives.	Integrate arts, culture, heritage and creative placemaking into relevant council precinct planning, place development and economic development initiatives.	Advocate Partner





Monitoring, review and accountability

The Creative Wodonga Plan will guide Wodonga Council's strategic direction for arts, culture, heritage, cultural venues and events from 2027 to 2031.

Implementation will occur through the council's annual planning, budgeting, service planning and asset management processes. Actions requiring new or additional expenditure remain subject to the annual budget process, long-term financial planning and, where relevant, external funding.

Progress will be monitored annually against a focused set of participation, cultural, social, visitor-economy, sector-development and asset measures. Operational activity measures will continue to be monitored through relevant service plans and organisational reporting.

Wodonga Council will review progress during the life of the plan and may adjust delivery priorities in response to community need, available resources, emerging opportunities and changes in the council's strategic direction.

A final evaluation will assess progress against the plan's objectives and inform development of the next Creative Wodonga Plan.

References

Creative Australia – 2025 National Arts Participation Survey

Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: A Population and Hotspot Analysis Albury-Wodonga

