

Creative Strategy 2018-2022





Acknowledgement

Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present.

Through consultation, we have heard, and we understand the need to incorporate and acknowledge aboriginal people - that by putting the voice of aboriginal artists and community members front and centre, as a community we have the potential to do something extraordinary together.

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Background

Extensive community engagement has informed the development of this creative strategy.

We asked community members to define what creativity means in this region and to envision a prosperous, creative community through a series of community consultations, public events, online feedback sessions, and meetings.

Our deliberations have included conversations with children, with young people, with members of the Aboriginal community, the multicultural community, senior citizens and retirees, councillors and council staff, and business owners.

Workshops happened at the Robinvale P-12, Robinvale Community Arts Centre, the Library, the Swan Hill Town Hall Performing Arts and Conference Centre (PACC), the Lake Boga Catalina Museum, Nyah Community Hall, and the Manangatang Pub.

The invigorating and collaborative process involved face-to-face consultation and community discussion with over 140 community members.

The consultation was further enhanced and informed through workshop discussions with the cultural services and economic development teams at Swan Hill Rural City Council, Youth Inc., the Robinvale Resource Centre, and the Pioneer Settlement.

This plan takes into account and is in alignment with other council strategies and plans including the Aboriginal Community Partnership Strategy, individual Community Plans, Community Access and Inclusion Plan, Swan Hill Region Economic Development Strategy, Youth Strategic Plan, and the Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

What's already happening

Our creative vision - The Swan Hill region is culturally strong and artistically ambitious - has a strong foundation.

Council is the custodian of the community's exceptional cultural facilities including the Swan Hill Town Hall (PACC), the Regional Library and the Regional Art Gallery.

Council's Cultural Services Team is comprised of the management and staff of the Library, Regional Art Gallery, and Performing Arts program. Our library and gallery manage extensive and wellmaintained collections to which successive generations of our community have contributed.

We support long-running programs such as the Fairfax Youth Initiative, partnerships with local service agencies, educational and early childhood services, library outreach activities, and school holiday programs.

Our Town Hall PACC houses world-class equipment and is capable of hosting international artists.

We provide additional creative programming to offer community members extensive opportunities for self -expression.

Our cultural spaces host large-scale concerts, visiting artists, workshops, and other community events. The library doubles as a youth music venue and the gallery as an outdoor events venue.

The ACRE (Australia's Creative Rural Economy) project works with schools and artists in small agricultural towns.

Our wide-ranging service delivery is an example of our all-embracing community engagement.

Our region is home to creative practitioners - artists, writers, photographers, musicians, dancers, designers and actors - who love living here. We have a strong and growing community arts sector along with an excellent base of volunteer-driven community groups.

Our towns have halls and other surprising facilities, ready to be ignited with new creativity.

The Cultural Services Team contributes to the whole community, from the tangible economic impact of events and tourism drivers to the social impact of community connectedness and cohesiveness.

Council also provides a range of cultural experiences through the Pioneer Settlement, youth program, event support, tourism and community development.

"Over the past 30 years the changes in Swan Hill as a cultural and creative centre have been excellent. It's been a breathtaking transformation."

- Community member



The economic and social value of a Creative Strategy

Fostering a vibrant creative practice within a region will do more than just support artists in their practice.

Creativity must be central when considering how a region will sustain and grow local economies.

The impact of cultural and creative investment is about much more than programming and engagement.

The impact can be measured in terms of innovation, ingenuity, and entrepreneurialism.

Community-based arts practice can set a regional agenda for development and provide all of the benefits traditionally associated with fine arts, such as the economic benefits of tourism, alongside the social and cultural benefits.

We note:

 The Creative Victoria Act acknowledges the economic value of the creative industries, which currently make up eight per cent of the economy, contributing \$23 billion a year to gross state product (GSP) and generating around 220,000 jobs (Creative Victoria, 2017).

- The Commonwealth Government has come to recognise the importance of innovation for 'all sectors of the economy, from ICT to healthcare, education to agriculture and defence to transport' (Australian Government, 2018).
- VicHealth prioritises the social dimension of arts participation through a focus on health and wellbeing impacts.

This plan is the first step in Swan Hill Rural City Council embracing the cultural and creative industries as a legitimate economic driver for the Swan Hill region.

"The Victorian arts and culture sector generates widespread economic benefits as well as other benefits, such as contributing to liveability, helping to foster knowledge and skills transfers, contributing to education outcomes, tourism, destination branding, image, and promoting innovation and creativity."





What we have heard through community consultation

- This plan must reach out to our smaller towns and become less Swan Hill-centric.
- Cultural diversity, the natural environment, and our people are strengths.
- Future creative projects can be visionary to activate the Murray River and our region.
- Our community needs accessible venues to create and connect.
- There is a lot happening already that we can build on. It needs to be more visible.
- Young people deserve opportunities and Fairfax Youth Initiative must be grown into the future.
- Council continues to facilitate the Town Hall PACC as a civic, community and cultural centre.

This is a plan for everyone

Over the next four years, we will become strong and steadfast in our commitment to creativity.

This is a plan for everyone in our community. Council's goals will support a whole-community approach.

This plan says to the community that Council is inspired by the work that is already taking place and hopes to see even more creativity in the future.

This is a plan for the Council, the Cultural Services team, and for people who already identify as being creative, but it's also a plan and an agenda for the community more broadly.

This plan is about articulating the Council and community's aspirations for the region to reach its potential.

Our Creative Vision

The Swan Hill region is culturally strong and artistically ambitious.

We have five key aspirations for realising this creative vision:

- 1. Nurturing a dynamic creative region.
- 2. Fostering a connected creative community.
- 3. Bolstering libraries as hubs in the community.
- 4. Supporting community participatory arts.
- 5. Establishing the Council as a custodian, producer and connector in arts practice and programming.

For our vision to succeed, the Cultural Services Team of Swan Hill Rural City Council will:

- Celebrate the story of our region.
- Connect with our community.
- Enable the potential of every town and community.
- Develop the new and emerging cultural leaders in our region.
- Promote a vision for the future to further develop and build upon each success.
- Foster and grow our creative community.





Aspiration 1 Nurturing a dynamic creative region

Ambition 1.1

A dynamic multi-purpose Community Arts Hub in the region that provides accessible spaces for workshops, events and exhibitions.

Long term outcome: A vibrant and centralised community arts hub where everyone comes together to explore arts and creativity.

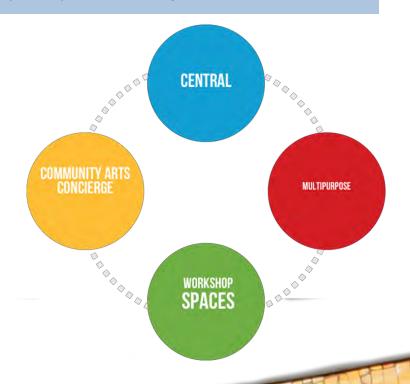
Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Explore Council-owned community spaces with affordable or subsidised fees and charges. Council will explore other Council-owned assets with 'extra space' for community and creative use. 	 Council will investigate a purpose-built (or purposefully re-imagined) space for the centre of creativity in the region. Permanent places for local artists and crafters to display and sell their arts and crafts. Council will ensure each venue has a publicly-articulated and clear agenda to support community arts practice.

Long term action 5+ years

 Council will investigate a purpose-built (or purposefully re-imagined) space for the centre of creativity in Swan Hill. Located in a central position, accessible to the town and to the riverfront, community workshop spaces, community access exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, makers' spaces, community kitchen facilities, and outdoor spaces, while also providing linkages to the Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery. Any developments will ensure child and family friendly aspects in design.

"We need a multipurpose space for the community. Not as religious as the Grain Shed, not as formal as the Town Hall. Every weekend there is some-thing different, every weeknight there is something exciting."

"There is so much art out there where the art gets done at home. We need an arts and cultural centre. A place where we can share knowledge and experience."



A reinvigorated Robinvale Community Arts Centre, connected to and managed by the community of Robinvale.

Long term outcome: A self-actualised arts and creative community in Robinvale which has an impact across the region with tangible health and economic benefits for the community.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Look to existing models for community-	 Council budget to include maintenance and
managed assets.	building management support.
 Become proactive in enabling the creation of a	 Council to maintain the physical building and
community-led Incorporated Association to	return all spaces back to an operational
manage the centre.	standard suitable for regular programming.
 Program more performing arts into the Robinvale Community Arts Centre. 	

Long term action 5+ years

 Staged process to hand the management of Robinvale Community Arts Centre to a community group- Incorporated Association



A gathering place to celebrate culture and support the development of aboriginal self-determined arts.

This ambition acknowledges Council's work in the investigation of a Murray River Interpretive Centre. This gathering place (or similar) aims to be complementary to any future interpretive centre. An interpretive centre is where culture and heritage is discussed, displayed and celebrated for tourism. A gathering place is a place where culture is reclaimed, re-learnt, and re-established by members of the community.

In alignment with the Aboriginal Community Partnership Strategy, this ambition supports the building of leadership and self-determination within the Indigenous communities.

Long term outcome: Local aboriginal people have a space and a place where they can come together to share and celebrate. An Indigenous owned and operated business enterprise where local arts and other products are sold, and culture is explored and passed on.



"We need to get culture back into our community. A place where we can come together, to teach our kids. A culturally safe space."

"Councils are well-placed to work with the local Aboriginal community to develop a vibrant Aboriginal arts and culture sector within an inclusive strategy. The strategy could drive positive change throughout the region such as employment and economic development."



Short term actions 1 - 2 years

- Support Council in embracing the importance of aboriginal culture and history in this region and acknowledge the significance of First Nations places.
- Support the community to explore funding options for an Indigenous gathering place.
- Provide Indigenous time allocation within established community arts spaces.
- Create a quota for inclusion of indigenous creative works into programming by Council.

Medium term actions 2 - 4 years

- Support the process to establish an Indigenous Corporation or other registered association (as per Aboriginal Partnership Strategy).
- Assist with the identification of a place and building that could house the gathering place in alignment with the investigation of an interpretive centre.
- Support the Robinvale community to identify a space for the teaching of languages.



A strong supported network of creativity in small towns utilising built and natural environments.

This ambition aims to support small towns and individuals in rural areas in an understanding that creativity can happen anywhere.

Long term outcome: Our small towns and outlying residents are engaged in creative practise in their towns and localities.

Short term actions 1 - 2 years	Medium term actions 2 - 4 years
 Encourage and support small towns and creative leaders to access community funding available for projects. 	 Council-led creative projects are delivered in outlying areas.
 Cultural Services Team engaged with Community Planning process. 	

"Our natural environment is obviously something which can be utilised. Sculpture along the river in our many river towns could explore this environment. In our Mallee towns the history of agriculture utilising recycled sculpture. Our irrigation areas provide many products that could also be used as a theme for sculptural works."

Aspiration 2 A connected creative community

Given the geographical challenges of the region, with the two main towns being one-and-a-half hours drive from each other, and the smaller towns being dispersed, a recognisable brand that connects all arts and creativity across the region will assist to lessen the tyranny of distance.

The region needs leadership from Council to provide those linkages and to support the active development of arts and creativity.

Ambition 2.1

A united brand for creativity in the region, used on all promotion and on each facility.

Long term outcome: A community that is connected through arts and creativity. All of the community are aware of all events and opportunities across the region.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Develop a new and identifiable brand for all arts and creative activities in the region. Re-brand the Cultural Services Team to sit underneath this new encompassing brand. 	 All community facilities and community events are branded to link venues, activities and events. Produce an annual 'State of Creativity' report card (develop a set of evaluation measures based on the Creative Strategy to measure impact and engagement. Focus on both quantitative and qualitative feedback). Identify and implement one ticketing system shared and operated across various venues.

Long term action 5+ years

• Address the community perception of Council being Swan Hill-centric.





Maintain the relationship with Regional Arts Victoria and build on the capacity for Council staff to connect our artists across our region and be part of a statewide network.

Long term outcome: A community that is connected through arts and creativity.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Maintain and develop the partnership with	 Cultural Services to continue to support and
Regional Arts Victoria for the provision of a	encourage the development of arts and
Creative Arts Facilitator.	creativity within the region.

"We need a location and a person that is the hub for creativity in the region. Someone who has details about facilities, who the people are that can perform or create."

A joint communication strategy, ensuring all events and opportunities are jointly promoted, including all related events across the region.

Long term outcomes:

- All of the community are aware of all events and opportunities across the region.
- All tourists arriving in the region have ways of connecting with all events and activities.

Short term actions Medium term actions 1 - 2 years 2 - 4 years • Provide an accessible process where all events • Digital screens in the main facilities and the main shopping areas (including Robinvale) promoting and opportunities across the region are collated and shared in one repository, via existing all events and opportunities across the region. databases and weekly circulars. • Town Hall PACC, Performing Arts, Art Gallery and Library present a shared annual season • Explore the potential of promotion of events and opportunities in other areas, such as the digital launch event. screen at sporting events, in sports programs • Town Hall PACC, Performing Arts, Art Gallery and tourism publications. and Library present a shared calendar. Arts and creativity events and opportunities are included in all Council community promotions such as wider community newsletters, and town or district-specific promotions.



Aspiration 3 Libraries as hubs in the community

Ambition 3.1

Urgent need to finalise and establish the Robinvale Library.

Long term outcome: A shared community asset that can provide a safe meeting space and resource for all community members.

Short term actions 1 - 2 years	Medium term actions 2 - 4 years
 Conduct community consultation for joint use library in Robinvale. 	Opening of a library in Robinvale.
 Complete planning for the new Robinvale Library. 	

Ambition 3.2

The Swan Hill Library will be ambitious in its future and be located in a visionary, energetic, central hub.

Long term outcome: Swan Hill has a central hub that provides the town with a creative, active and vibrant focus.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
Explore options for relocation or remodelling of the Swan Hill library to a location that is accessible for the whole community, and be incorporated into a new community hub.	 The confirmation of Library relocation or remodelling including incorporation into a broader community hub. Investigate designs for the future Library.

Long term action 5+ years

• The relocation or remodelling of the Library into a Community Hub.

"My passion is reading, and exposing young people as well as people from every background and age to books. I have deep regret that a community our size does not have a library that is permanent. I appreciate the book vehicle coming, but it's transient. The library is the hub of Swan Hill, with great activities. We need something similar for access to activities."



Ensure everyone in the Swan Hill region can access library services.

Long term outcome: All small towns feel connected to the library services and therefore to the broader community.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
 Alternatives to the current Mobile Library to be explored with the understanding of the value that is placed on the service by the community. Ongoing development of library resources, programs and activities to meet the changing needs of the community. 	A new model for the delivery of library services to all outlying areas is implemented.



Aspiration 4 Community participatory arts is key

Ambition 4.1

Fairfax Youth Initiative is renowned as the leading youth community arts event in regional Australia.

Fairfax Youth Initiative is a unique and valued experience for young people in the region. For some, it is their only opportunity to experience performing arts and can be life changing. Fairfax Youth Initiative provides the opportunity to model great community arts development practise to the world.

Long term outcome: All young people in the region have opportunities to participate in arts and creativity.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Council to facilitate a business plan for the continuing future of Fairfax Youth Initiative, which includes the broader development of arts genres and extension of the program. External funding options be explored through consultation. 	That the Fairfax Youth Initiative model is expanded and funded in alignment with the new business plan.

"Fairfax is a community bonding experience – that unites young people from across the region. Friendships are made. When we get together, we unite. Fairfax is awesome and we're so lucky to have it."

"We have platforms here that could be used as the base. The river, the earth, the parks, the Art Gallery, the town halls both in Swan Hill and around our community. How about murals on our community halls, that depict their surrounds i.e.: wheat at Natya, the river and fishing at Speewa, or sculptures at our community halls that contribute to an art drive/tour in our region"



Explore, solidify and strengthen community arts engagement in the region.

Long term outcome: A community that has opportunities for creative expression and engagement through arts and culture.

Short term actions Medium term actions 1 - 2 years 2 - 4 years Explore other opportunities for the delivery of Deliver a variety of community arts activities exemplary community arts engagement across across the region annually. the region. Create arts committees made up of community Ensure the ongoing use of the soundshell on members to assist in decision making the Swan Hill riverfront for events. regarding creative programming by Council. Ensure continued linkages with other arts and cultural groups in the region.



Flagship venues and Council programs engage every town and every community in our region.

Long term outcome: Socially cultural events happen in small communities. Exhibitions and performances in small halls. There are regular visits to schools and community groups by all types of artists.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 KPIs established for all Cultural Services Team members to ensure stronger engagement and more focus outside of Swan Hill. A percentage of community grants targeted to community arts projects in outlying towns and communities. Assist with reviews of hall and community facility hire rates to encourage community members and community arts activation. 	 Performing Arts programs a number of shows each year in collaboration with Robinvale community. Art Gallery to explore opportunities for exhibitions and events in other towns. Increase opportunities for outlying area creative arts workshops.

"Small towns have hidden human and physical assets that could be tapped into to create unique experiences for visitors and locals. By embracing creativity, we may potentially uncover hidden talents and encourage inclusiveness."



A culturally diverse community as an asset to strengthen and celebrate.

Harmony Day is loved and looked forward to by the community. There is opportunity to support and assist in the development of festivals and events that celebrate the cultural diversity of the region.

Long term outcome: All communities in the region feel celebrated, safe and supported to express their unique culture. The whole community comes together regularly to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity that connects them.

Short term actions Medium term actions 1 - 2 years 2 - 4 years Work as an incubator for local leaders and groups • Encourage a schedule of events across the to identify and develop events and projects. region that celebrate diverse cultures. • Publicise resources available to community for their events and projects. Support the development of Indigenous cultural events and programs. • Work in partnership with Council's Events Support Officer to maximise benefits. • Define Harmony Day as a flagship Council event, with co-ordinated events in both Robinvale and Swan Hill.



Research and production of contemporary art and cultural development work in rural communities.

Long term outcome:

- Rural communities are exposed to and engaged in contemporary art.
- This region is recognised nationally and internationally for the research and production of contemporary art in rural settings.

Short term actions 1 - 2 years	Medium term actions 2 - 4 years
 Council to be proactive in the development a strategic plan that supports the continuation and development of the Australia's Creative Rural Economy (ACRE) project 	 Council to actively explore partnerships with agricultural business, universities and national/ international arts organisations.
 Council to assist in the establishment of an artist residency program in rural communities. 	
 Council to assist in securing ongoing funding to support ACRE. 	

"There is an element of the arts, culture and creativity that resonates with everyone - including agricultural and industrial beauty. With our large agricultural industry, art can be born."



Extend the arts and education experience for youth and schools.

Long term outcome: Young people are recognised as the future and are supported in all arts and creative endeavours.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Actively link programming for exhibitions, workshops, performances and opportunities for participation to engage youth and teachers, aligning with curriculum delivery. Revisit the community access use of Harrison Hall. Support Youth Inc. and other agencies that work with youth in the presentation of youth-led arts activities across the region. Ensure all Council programming is engaging with youth and schools. 	 Consult with schools to ensure they are supported in the delivery of arts and creativity in the curriculum. Identify the young creative leaders and develop a program to support youth arts (e.g. internships).

"It provides an opportunity to be open to be possibility of big visions. i.e.: who would have thought painting silos was going to create international hype? Who'd have thought painted cows were going to be iconic to a region? I think it will give people who live regionally the platform to express ideas, desires and pipe dreams that have long been oppressed. In every community there is someone with an amazing idea. They just need the launching pad to get it off the ground. The Creative Strategy could help to foster those opportunities."





Programming for whole of life participation in the arts across all cultures, abilities and ages.

Long term outcome: Arts literacy and appreciation is established from early years.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Cultural Services maintain programming for ages and abilities, from early years to seniors. Consider the diversity of communities in all Council programming. Develop an Audience Development Strategy . 	 Implement methods to ensure community input into programming and to identify future community trends. Programming takes into account an Audience Development Strategy that allows for all cultures, all abilities and all ages to engage.

Aspiration 5 Council is a custodian, producer and connector of cultural development and programming

Council is custodian of facilities and programs.

As custodian of the Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery collection, Council must maintain this important cultural asset and look to the future.

As custodian of the Swan Hill Town Hall PACC, Council has a legacy that must be built upon in the region. The Town Hall PACC is a cherished community cultural space.

As custodian of the Swan Hill Regional Library collection, Council must ensure ongoing access and resourcing.

A producer of programs, the performing arts centre and the art gallery must manage to think locally and genuinely engage the local community well, and to also bring work to the region that is visionary, challenging and will have significant audience impact. There was strong belief that the region should be able to see and experience excellent art in this region without needing to travel somewhere else.

In the future, the Cultural Services Team has an important role to play as a **connector** between artists, arts organisations, communities and new ideas. It is not solely responsible for delivering this vision and plan, but it can be a powerful partner and will actively seek external funding and partnership opportunities to support cultural development and projects.







Our performing arts program is sustainable in its delivery, ambitious in its programming and our entire region.

Long term outcome: Performing arts programming is integral to the connectivity of the community and is celebrated across the region.

Short term actions Medium term actions Performing Arts program to invest and develop • The Performing Arts program increases local talent; and connect important and critical audiences, community engagement and works and artists to our region. development. Establish a Performing Arts reference group to Performing arts programming is regularly support staff in long-term decision-making and extended to other towns. community buy in. This group to include local schools. Establish ticketing schemes that broaden community access to programmed events. Partner with organisations and agencies to continue to deliver programs of excellence.

Our art gallery becomes a place where people want to be, energised by visionary curation and an invitation to everyone in the community to participate.

Long term outcome: The Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery is celebrated across the region and the state as exemplary in community engagement and curation.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Invest and develop local talent; and connect important and critical works and artists to our region. Explore opportunities for extended physical space that is connected and central. Galleries and exhibitions in surprising locations. Continue to deliver exhibitions of national and international significance. Partner with arts organisations to continue to deliver programs of excellence. 	 The Art Gallery increases audience attendance and community engagement and development. The Art Gallery floor space is increased and includes spaces for workshops and community access. The Art Gallery permanent collection is exhibited in the region regularly.

Ambition 5.3

Our community is enriched through public art that is inspiring, playful and reflective of our diverse community.

Council will champion, advocate and support local artists, designers, creatives and storytellers.

Long term outcome: Art is central to the built environment of the Swan Hill region.

Short term actions	Medium term actions
1 - 2 years	2 - 4 years
 Council will ensure the Public Art Policy is adhered	 Community public art programs are explored,
to with all new development.	funded and supported.
The Cultural Team in partnership with other Council programs is consulted and involved in the commissioning of new public art.	 Ensure there is contingency for signage, maintenance and a decommissioning plan.

