

who we are

KYOGLE

creative sector profile and needs analysis | 2025

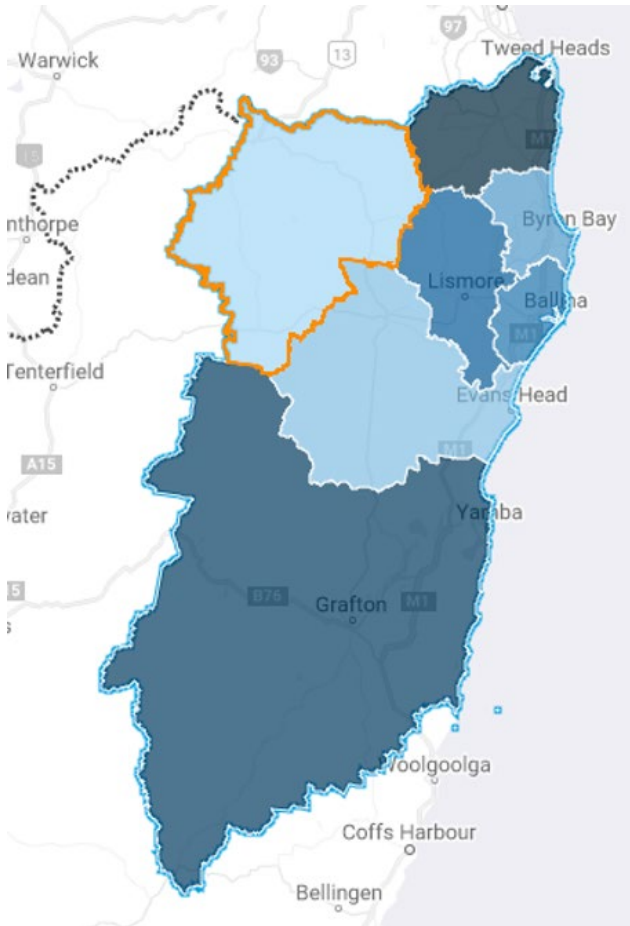


**ARTS
NORTHERN
RIVERS**



Renowned for its green hinterland and charming villages, surrounded by national parks and rainforests, Kyogle has a vibrant creative community.

Located on the lands of the Bundjalung nation, it is one of the smaller LGAs of the region by population size, home to 9,359 people.



Overview of creative sector

The creative sector represents around 2.3% of the workforce, with ABS data showing 35 creative businesses operating, and 67 people employed in cultural and creative occupations

In the 2021 Census, there were 67 people in Kyogle employed in a cultural, creative, or both cultural and creative occupation – making up 2.3% of the area’s labour force. It is similar in size to wholesale trade (2.1%) and transport, postal and warehousing (3.1%).

Kyogle recorded a total of 35 creative businesses in 2021, up from 31 in 2016.

In addition to businesses and employees, there are many artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors in different ways.

The creative attractions of the region include Council-run venues, community festivals and independent galleries

In the township of Kyogle, there are a range of important cultural venues and attractions, such as:

- Venues like Kyogle Memorial Institute’s Main Hall and Banquet Room, Kyogle Library and the Art Deco buildings of the township
- Galleries such as Roxy Gallery
- Creative retail boutiques like Clay Corner and The Leather Shop.

In the smaller settlements around the Shire, there are places like the Bonalbo & District Community Hall, Eden Creek Hall and Hanging Rock Hall.

Key organisations and activities which generate participation and opportunities in the creative sector and add value to the community are:

- Major event Kyogle Readers and Writers Festival (KRAW)
- Organisations:
 - Kyogle Together, which primarily serves families and young people
 - Arts Kyogle, which offers events, arts prizes and exhibitions
 - Village Hall Players, an amateur touring theatre company, which also provides a youth theatre program DIRT (drama in rural towns)
 - Bonalbo Arts Alliance, which offers a summer Gala Art Show, and partners with Woodenbong Arts Group
- Other events such as:
 - Kyogle Bazaar
 - Kyogle Farmers Market
 - Kyogle Zine Fair
 - Art on Bundjalung, which was delivered by Arts Northern Rivers in Kyogle in 2022, generating \$34,000 for stallholders and artists
 - Tabulam Trail of Light and Sound 2024, a multi-arts installation by RealArtWorks Inc., which brought over 300 attendees to diverse communities of Tabulam and Jubullum.

Kyogle creative sector mapping results

Of 678 respondents to the Northern Rivers Creative Sector Survey, 7% (n=45) reside in Kyogle, providing insight into the area

- Survey respondents living in Kyogle partake in a variety of cultural and creative work, with 62% (n=28) identifying as artists or creative practitioners and 22% (n=10) working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation).
- Others from Kyogle who responded to the survey are audience or community members (47%, n=21), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (36%, n=16), a supplier to the creative sector (11%, n=5) or working in government (9%, n=4).
- Kyogle creatives are engaged in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts (86%), contemporary music (25%), creative industries (design, film, etc.) (25%), festivals (18%), multi-arts (including video and sound art) (18%) and more. Their practices intersect with a variety of themes, including the environment (50%), children or young people (25%), access and inclusion (25%), health and wellbeing (21%), technology, (17%) Indigenous culture (4%) and others.

Kyogle residents perceive the Northern Rivers creative sector as exciting and adaptable – but are concerned about sustainability

- When asked to describe the Northern Rivers creative sector, Kyogle residents offer descriptions such as, ‘Strong. Known. Attracting.’, ‘Diverse, inspired and hopeful’, ‘Quirky, inclusive, edgy, fun’ and ‘Persistent, resilient’. One person perceived there to be, ‘A gamut of niches, some connected and supported, others completely independent.’
- Most Kyogle residents agree that the Northern Rivers is ‘strong’ in terms of artistic vibrancy (60%) and resilience (47%), while slightly smaller numbers feel positively about the health of the sector’s cultural practice and safety (37%) and access and inclusion (33%).
- Residents are concerned about the long-term health and future of the sector, with low numbers saying it is currently ‘strong’ in terms of financial (>1%) and environmental (23%) sustainability.
- However, the vast majority of respondents from Kyogle (91%) say the Northern Rivers creative sector also makes the community a better place to live and/or visit, and 82% say it brings people together.

Creative careers and artists in Kyogle

Kyogle has proportionally more established artists than elsewhere in the Northern Rivers, reflecting in bold ambitions

- Of the 28 creatives from Kyogle who responded to the survey, more are established (57%), compared to emerging or early career (21%) or mid-career (11%). Kyogle’s proportion of established artists is higher than across the Northern Rivers on average (33%).
- Kyogle creatives are most interested in professional development opportunities around masterclasses with established artists/creatives (37%), assistance with grant-writing and attracting investment (37%), collaborating with other artists/creatives/arts workers/businesses (23%) and training in creative business/arts management/cultural leadership (23%).
- Kyogle artists described wanting to create works that address issues of concern to the area, particularly around environmental issues. One stated that their goal for the next 5 years was to ‘create more work that connects more people to care for the environment’ and another described wanting to ‘bring awareness to the loss of biodiversity and animals caused by humans into the natural environment.’
- Others noted the importance of getting disadvantaged members of the local community artistically engaged, with one writing that their goal was ‘to empower women in the creative sector and create a festival by women for women.’

Most Kyogle creatives work locally, and while there is strong engagement across artforms and themes, only 1 in 10 earn their main income from their creative practice

- 6% of all of the creative work in the Northern Rivers occurs in Kyogle, and the majority of the 28 artists or creative practitioners from Kyogle say their creative work has been mainly located in Kyogle over the past 12 months (88%). Smaller numbers are working across other areas in the region, including Lismore (17%), and Tweed (4%), travelling outside of the region (8%) or travelling internationally (4%) for their creative work.
- 13% of Kyogle creatives say that their creative practice is their main source of income. Another 25% say it’s not their main source of income but it is supplementary, while 33% say they don’t earn any income from it but they’d like to grow their earnings.
- Kyogle artists mostly rely on sales for their creative incomes (89%), along with services like teaching, consulting, and facilitating (33%).

“In Kyogle we have a gamut of niches, some connected and supported, others completely independent.”

—Survey respondent, Kyogle

Audiences for creative experiences in Kyogle

Kyogle audiences participate in a wide range of arts activities and experiences, but many face barriers to attending

- 9% of all Northern Rivers audience or community members live in Kyogle, while 22% of all respondents have visited Kyogle to participate in cultural events in the last 12 months.
- Kyogle audiences have participated in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts (80%), festivals (63%), Aboriginal arts and culture (57%), literature (49%), creative industries (e.g. design, film etc.) (43%) and more.
- For Kyogle residents, the top 3 barriers impacting audience development and engagement with the arts in the region are:
 - awareness or not knowing what's on (58%)
 - financial barriers (53%)
 - and difficulties travelling to events (44%).

Kyogle audiences want to see more public art, exhibitions, and community gatherings

- Looking ahead, the top 3 types of experiences that Kyogle audiences want to see more of are:
 - public art, murals, street art (67%)
 - exhibitions (60%)
 - gatherings and community events (56%).
- Kyogle respondents suggested that attendance in the region could be improved significantly by providing more affordable transportation options, more consistent and widespread marketing, diversifying what's on offer and introducing more participatory activities.
- One commented 'I like to participate in activities where I learn skills' while others pointed out the importance of improving exposure for existing arts experiences that could attract more visitors, one giving the example of 'Kyogle museum - best little museum on the northern rivers ... needs assistance with promotion.'

Looking ahead

Kyogle respondents say creatives space is a priority, and see a need for connection and partnership

- Spaces for making and presenting creative work, and economic opportunities, are two burning issues in the region in 2024. Looking ahead, Kyogle residents' top 3 priorities for enhancing the Northern Rivers creative sector are:
 - establishing new creative spaces (44%)
 - building audiences and attracting visitation (42%)
 - and offering more funding opportunities (40%).
- Reflecting on the effects of the cost of living crisis, one shared: 'financial burden leading to overworking, burnout: I'm often overworking in order to make enough money and spreading myself too thin.'
- Others commented on physical barriers like age and illness, the frustrations of continuously writing grant applications, and the limitations of geographic isolation and travel distances – particularly feeling left out of other Northern Rivers initiatives or institutions in nearby areas.
- Thinking about ensuring that Northern Rivers creativity thrives into the future, Kyogle respondents highlighted the need for creative spaces such as 'a cultural centre where artists can all come together periodically,' as well as ensuring the inclusion of smaller towns/communities in the region. Others noted the centrality of engaging in a cross-disciplinary approach to arts – forging connections and partnerships with other industries such as health, environment and planning.

About this Fact Sheet

This fact sheet was prepared by Patternmakers for Arts Northern Rivers. It includes publicly available statistics, along with results from the WHO ARE WE Northern Rivers Creative Sector Mapping Survey.

For more information about the project, including the full-length regional report and other resources, visit <https://www.artsnorthernrivers.com.au/>

For any questions, please contact:

- Arts Northern Rivers at info@artsnorthernrivers.com.au
- Patternmakers at info@thepatternmakers.com.au

Key data sources:

- WHO WE ARE: Northern Rivers Creative Sector Mapping Survey 2024
- LGA-level population statistics: ABS, <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>
- LGA featured characteristics: Visit NSW, <https://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/north-coast>
- Cultural and creative employment: ABS analysis produced for Patternmakers, 2024

Image credit:

- Map: Regional Development Australia, Community Data App. Source: <https://app.remplan.com.au/northernrivers/community/summary>

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