

who
we
are

RICHMOND VALLEY

creative sector profile and needs analysis | 2025

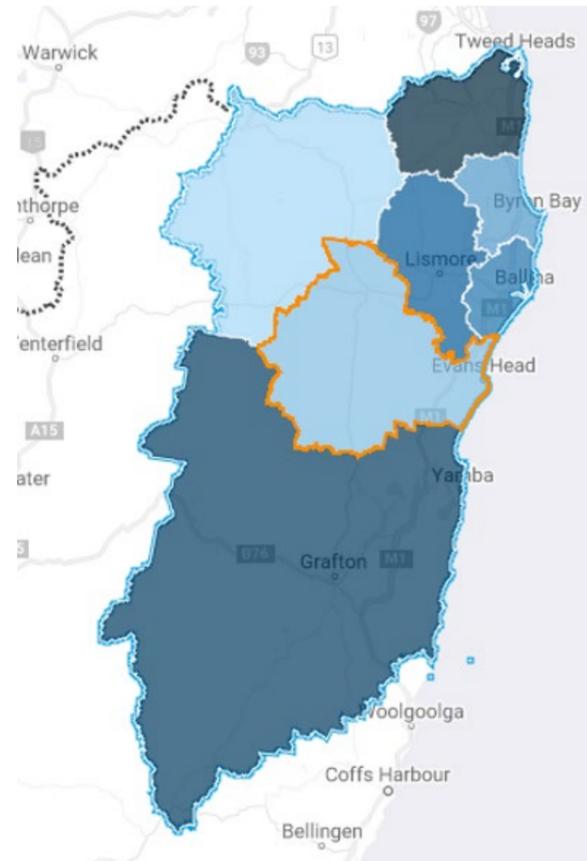


**ARTS
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The Richmond Valley, renowned for its pastoral roots and coastal villages, is home to an untapped creative sector, enriched significantly by the creativity and cultural knowledge of First Nations artists. This cultural richness offers significant potential for growth, particularly in terms of tourism.

One of the larger LGAs by land size, Richmond Valley is home to 23,565 people, and is known as the ‘Beef Capital of Australia’. It is located on the lands of the Bundjalung nation.



Overview of creative sector

The creative sector represents around 1.7% of the workforce, with ABS data showing 43 creative businesses operating, and 126 people employed in cultural and creative occupations

In the 2021 Census, there were 126 people in Richmond Valley employed in cultural and creative occupation as their main job. These workers made up 1.7% of the area’s labour force, similar to the size of the area’s real estate industry (1.3%), wholesale trade (1.5%) and professional, technical and scientific services (2.4%).

Richmond Valley recorded a total of 43 creative businesses in 2021, with 3 turning over \$2M or more per annum.

In addition to businesses and the ‘main job’ employees noted above, there are many organisations, artists, makers and audiences participating in the creative and cultural sectors in other ways.

Although participation data isn’t available at the LGA level for Richmond Valley, data for the Electorate Page, which includes surrounding LGAs, shows that attendances are similar to other rural Electorates in NSW, with the area having a strength in hands-on creative participation.

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

In the township of Casino, and villages of Broadwater, Coraki, Evans Head, Rappville and Woodburn, there are a range of important cultural venues and attractions, such as:

- Galleries like the Cassino Art Gallery and Good Evans Art Studio
- Venues like Casino Civic Hall, Casino Community and Cultural Centre, the Casino Showground undercover arena , Broadwater Hall, Coraki Youth Hall, Woodburn Hall, Evans Head Recreation Hall, and Rappville Community Hall.

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

- Prizes like the Bentley Art Prize and Coraki Art Prize
- Partnerships and exhibitions at the Cassino Art Gallery, such as Clarence Gets Creative, a partnership with Serco on an exhibition featuring artworks from inmates at Clarence Correctional Centre
- Casino and Rappville Art Trail, with murals and public art
- Richmond Valley Art Trail in Mid Richmond
- Initiatives like the Art on Bundjalung market and cultural program, which was delivered by Arts Northern Rivers in Evans Head | Dirruwung in 2024, and Rappville Creative, a creative recovery project in 2020 and 2021 as part of the bushfire recovery response.

“Our creative identity is broad and visually focused. Lovely to enjoy.”

— Survey respondent, Richmond Valley

Creative sector mapping respondents

Of the 678 respondents to the 2024 Northern Rivers Creative Sector Mapping Survey, 7% (n=45) currently reside in Richmond Valley, providing some insight into the local area.

- Survey respondents living in Richmond Valley partake in different forms of cultural and creative work. Among the 45 respondents, 47% (n=21) are artists or creative practitioners and 13% (n=6) are working in the creative sector (including marketing, production, admin in a creative business or cultural organisation).
- Others from Richmond Valley who responded to the survey are purely audience or community members (29%, n=13), working in a community organisation, charity or service provider (27%, n=12), working in government (11%, n=5) and a supplier to the creative sector (9%, n=4).
- Richmond Valley creatives are engaged in a variety of artforms, including practising visual arts and crafts (67%), Aboriginal arts and culture (29%), dance or physical theatre (24%), contemporary music (14%), festivals (14%) and more.
- Their practices intersect with a variety of other sectors and issues, including health and wellbeing (40%), children or young people (40%), access and inclusion (30%), environment (20%), Indigenous culture (20%) and others.

Richmond Valley residents perceive the creative sector as broad and authentic – while being conscious it is still developing.

- The vast majority of respondents from Richmond Valley (80%) say the Northern Rivers creative sector makes the community a better place to live and/or visit, and 67% say it brings people together.
- Many Richmond Valley residents agree that the Northern Rivers has a vibrant, unique and resilient creative identity, with one describing it as “diverse, authentic, wild, wonderful” and another calling it “broad and visually focused. Lovely to enjoy.”
- Meanwhile, residents are also conscious that the area’s creative sector is still developing, and yet to embrace all parts of the community. One participant said, “The arts haven’t been a big priority for Council or the community but that is slowly changing...Especially since COVID, people are venturing out more, and discovering new things like the gallery and artists, after everything was taken away”.
- Another said they felt there are “a lot of art ‘producers’ with far fewer ‘art’ consumers” – and generally there is support for increasing participation and making creative opportunities accessible.

Creative careers and artists in Richmond Valley

Local creatives are eager for professional development and support for progressing in creative careers locally

- Of the 21 creatives from Richmond Valley who responded to the survey, more are established (38%) or emerging/early career (38%), compared to mid-career (19%). Richmond Valley has proportionally fewer mid-career artists, suggesting this could be an area for support.
- Others discussed wanting to develop their artistic practice or business, but struggling with limited resources and opportunities for self-improvement. One wrote, “although an amateur artist I thought there would be many opportunities in this area, however I have found it very difficult to access education and workshops that don’t cost a huge amount. I previously lived in a large rural town but the art gallery would often have free or relatively inexpensive workshops for not only children but adults too.”
- Richmond Valley creatives are most interested in professional development opportunities around collaborating with other artists/creatives/arts workers/businesses (57%), training in digital marketing (e.g. social media, web, e-marketing, smart phone photography) (36%), training in creative businesses/arts management/ cultural leadership (29%) and masterclasses with established artists/creatives (29%).

Strengthening cross-regional opportunities could help Richmond Valley creatives grow their incomes

- No Richmond Valley creatives said that their creative practice is their main source of income, while 5 respondents say it’s a supplementary income stream. A further 3 say they don’t earn any income from their creative practice, but they’d like to grow their earnings.
- Amongst the 5 responding artists or creative practitioners living in Richmond Valley who earn income from their creative practice, they say they rely on sales (n=3), and other professional services like teaching, consulting, and facilitating (n=2). One (n=1) relies on income through government funding.
- 3% of all of the creative work in the Northern Rivers occurs in Richmond Valley, and most artists or creative practitioners in the Richmond Valley are working locally. Only a small proportion are selling work in other areas of the Northern Rivers like Lismore or Byron, or internationally, which could suggest opportunities for collaborations and partnerships across LGA boundaries.



Creative audiences in Richmond Valley

Richmond Valley audiences participate in a wide range of creative activities, but face barriers to attending more often

- While only a small portion (6%) of all Northern Rivers audiences live in Richmond Valley, about twice that (11% of all survey respondents) have visited Richmond Valley to participate in cultural events in the last 12 months.
- These Richmond Valley audiences have participated in a variety of artforms, including visual arts and crafts (80%), festivals (47%), Aboriginal arts and culture (33%), literature (33%) and more.
- For Richmond Valley residents, the top 3 barriers impacting audience development and engagement with the arts in the region are:
 - awareness or not knowing what's on (50%)
 - financial barriers (51%)
 - and difficulties travelling to events (48%).

The community's priority is to see more community gatherings, public art and festivals that are accessible and inclusive

- Looking ahead, the top 3 types of experiences that Richmond Valley audiences want to see more of are:
 - gatherings and community events (80%)
 - public art, murals, street art (73%)
 - festivals (69%)
- Richmond Valley respondents suggested that attendance in the region could be improved by providing more events that are inclusive of all types of families. Another stated, "I would like to see more accessibility and options for people with disabilities to engage in the arts."
- Others suggested more activities that are Indigenous-led and engage with local Indigenous culture, e.g.: "A two day event that showcases local indigenous talent. Dancers, weavers, singing, all things culture etc. mini workshops held in tents with a range of things to do and listen to."
- Festivals are seen as beneficial for growing community and visitor engagement, as is public art, with one respondent suggesting, "Make visual & performing arts a prominent presence in the streets and outdoor spaces of our towns and cities. Get that stuff out of buildings & galleries and put it in front of people where they gather and interact."

Looking ahead

Opportunities centre around activating creative spaces and partnering on initiatives that build audiences and visitation.

- Spaces for making and presenting creative work, and economic opportunities, are two burning issues in the region in 2024. Richmond Valley residents' top 3-4 priorities for enhancing the creative sector are:
 - reinvigorating existing cultural spaces (44%)
 - building audiences and attracting visitation (42%)
 - establishing new creative spaces (38%)
 - filling skill gaps in the sector (38%)
- Thinking about ensuring that Northern Rivers creativity thrives into the future, Richmond Valley respondents highlighted the need for better communication about what's on in the region, for both artists and audiences. One said, "I would like better exposure and marketing. Other than social media options how else can my work get out there?"
- Another artist explained, "There is very little structured opportunities to collaborate in specific fields, eg. Theatre or Youth Theatre. As a muso, a great place to collaborate is at festivals but as there are less of these there is less opportunity."
- One person said, "there is very little in the Richmond Valley area to encourage the keen amateur" and there is interest in seeing more activities and workshops to engage the creative community, including in visual arts, performing arts and literature. Another person suggested "workshops, adult art education, local art shows and competitions for local artists."
- Regarding First Nations works, one said, "Would be great to have somewhere that had a constant rotation of local indigenous artwork (all forms) on show all year round." Another suggested "An Indigenous (Bundjalung) cultural centre that valued contemporary practice and experience alongside traditional."
- One person expressed a goal, "To be a thriving hub of creative activity through live performance", while another said the most important thing for the sector would be "greater utilisation of local halls to provide spaces for workshops, community groups and exhibitions, performances etc."
- Another noted the centrality of creative representation in government, prioritising "having more creatives being representatives in local government and positions of power and decision."

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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