

Arts north west

2024-2028

ABORIGINAL ARTS &
CULTURAL STRATEGY





Arts North West acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the lands we work on; the country upon which language, arts and culture has been shared and practiced for thousands of years.

We celebrate First Nations people's enduring Connection to Country, to Culture and Community. We pay our respects Aboriginal Elders past and present, our cultural leaders of today and the inspirational leaders of our future.



INTRODUCTION TO ARTS NORTH WEST

Arts North West facilitates the development of arts and cultural projects and initiatives across the New England North West of New South Wales. We have a service area of over 93,000 km² and population of over 183,000 people.

Our Vision is for a rich, diverse cultural landscape

Our Mission is to expand creative opportunities in our region

As a key service provider in the region we work hard to build a rich cultural landscape, increase participation in arts and cultural activities and build cultural and community capacity through advice and advocacy, professional development provision and forging key partnerships and networks throughout the region.

For over 25 years, ANW has been true to its core purpose of regional arts development while also being responsive and agile through the myriad of changes and hardships faced both globally and locally. ANW is proud of our strong community engagement and has established a robust reputation locally, as the peak advisory body for arts in the region. Arts North West is proud of the services we deliver and the creatives we work alongside.

Our core business is providing quality advice, information and professional support to artists and organisations. Arts North West is committed to the development and delivery of services that foster opportunities for development, collaboration, facilitation and experiences in the arts, that support and respond to our diverse creative and cultural ecology.

Arts North West is dedicated to forging robust partnerships that harness the transformative power of the arts to enrich communities and strengthen our region's cultural fabric. Advancing our region's shared goals of promoting creativity, fostering inclusivity, and building resilient communities.

**“Art has been a
part of our Culture
from the beginning,
always was,
always will be”**



**“Don’t forget
the knowledge
and wisdom of
our old people”**

**“Art is a part of who
we are, all types of
art, storytelling,
singing, dancing
and visual”**



ABORIGINAL ARTS STEERING COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

The logo for Yaama, featuring a stylized, flowing script that resembles a signature or a natural element like a wave or smoke.

The Arts North West Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy 2023-2025 symbolises a renewed commitment to cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development. By embracing new partnerships, innovative approaches, and community-led initiatives, Arts North West aims to create a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive future where Aboriginal arts and culture thrive.

This strategic plan honours and advances the cultural heritage and unique artistic expressions of Aboriginal communities in the New England North West of New South Wales. Rooted in profound respect for Aboriginal peoples as traditional custodians, it focuses on fostering connections to Country, culture, and community while promoting self-determination and sustainable development.

The vision of this document is to enrich the cultural landscape of the New England North West by celebrating and empowering Aboriginal arts and cultural practices. The mission is to generate creative opportunities, support cultural capacity, and forge strong partnerships that elevate Aboriginal voices and artistic expressions throughout the region.

The key objectives of the strategy - belonging, being, doing, and knowing - include creating nurturing and respectful relationships, acknowledging Aboriginal wisdom, developing opportunities for self-determination, and ensuring a safe and welcoming environment.

This strategy aims to celebrate Aboriginal connections, support deep connections to place, improve our communication strategies, and foster a sense of community. The strategy also focuses on sharing benefits with communities, co-designing community programs, innovating for sustainable outcomes, and securing long-term resources. Furthermore, it emphasizes ethical and culturally safe practices, honouring Aboriginal wisdom, building cultural capabilities, and establishing pathways for engagement.

The input and commitment of the Aboriginal Steering Committee and contributing community members have been pivotal in shaping this strategy. Their guidance ensures that the strategy aligns with community values and aspirations, fostering a culturally respectful and inclusive approach. The Committee's involvement guarantees that the initiatives are community-led and reflect the true needs and desires of Aboriginal peoples in the region.

The Arts North West Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy 2023-2026 is a transformative blueprint for enhancing the cultural, social, and economic well-being of Aboriginal communities. By prioritising self-determination, cultural preservation, and sustainable development, this strategy aims to create a vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape that honours and uplifts Aboriginal heritage and creativity.

Embracing this new beginning, Arts North West is committed to fostering a future where Aboriginal communities and their rich cultural traditions can flourish. Join us on our new beginning and journey with us into the future of Aboriginal art and culture in the New England and North West.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lyniece'.

Lyniece Keogh
Chair

ARTS NORTH WEST EXECUTIVE STATEMENT



Arts North West is proud to present the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy 2023-2026, a pivotal document that underscores our renewed commitment to cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development. This strategy aligns with our overarching mission to expand creative opportunities across the New England North West region, with a particular focus on amplifying Aboriginal voices and honouring their profound role as the traditional custodians of the land. As an organization with a deep-rooted history in supporting the arts and culture across the New England North West of New South Wales, we recognize the profound role that Aboriginal arts and culture play in shaping the identity and vibrancy of our region.

Since our establishment as a Regional Arts Development Program in 1996, and later as an independent Regional Arts Board in 1997, Arts North West has consistently championed the development of arts and cultural projects that reflect the diverse voices and traditions of our communities. As a not-for-profit organisation supported by local, state, and federal governments, our mission is to generate creative opportunities that enrich the cultural landscape of our region. Our approach is guided by core objectives—Belonging, Being, Doing, and Knowing—which emphasize fostering connections to Country, culture, and community while promoting self-determination.

The Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy 2023-2026 is a transformative blueprint designed to honour and advance the unique artistic expressions, creating nurturing relationships, acknowledging Aboriginal wisdom, and developing opportunities for self-determination within a safe and welcoming environment and cultural heritage of Aboriginal communities. Rooted in respect for Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land, this strategy is centred on fostering connections to Country, culture, and community while promoting self-determination and sustainable development.

This strategy is not just a standalone document; it is integral to our broader organisational goals. As part of Arts North West's mission to build a resilient and culturally rich region, the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Strategy focuses on creating safe, inclusive spaces where Aboriginal arts and culture can thrive. It aligns seamlessly with our strategic priorities of First Nations First, which places Aboriginal cultural support at the heart of our operations. By embedding these priorities into our daily practices, we ensure that Aboriginal perspectives and leadership are central to our decision-making processes.

The development of this strategy has been guided by the invaluable input and commitment of the Aboriginal Steering Committee and community members. Their contributions ensure that the strategy is aligned with community values and aspirations, fostering a culturally respectful and inclusive approach that reflects the true needs and desires of Aboriginal peoples in our region.

As we move forward, Arts North West is dedicated to forging robust partnerships that harness the transformative power of the arts to enrich communities and strengthen our region's cultural fabric. We invite you to join us on this journey as we work together to create a future where Aboriginal art and culture continue to flourish, enriching the lives of all who call the New England North West home.'



Lauren Mackley
Executive Director

COUNTRY

Our service area is over 93,000 square kilometers and serves a population of more than 180,000 people, encompassing a diverse range of geographical and cultural landscapes. From the mountainous New England Highlands to the fertile plains of the Namoi region, ANW is committed to responding to the unique needs and identities of the communities we serve.

Arts North West services a region with 17 Aboriginal Land Councils:

- Moombahlene
- Glen Innes
- Guyra
- Armidale
- Amaroo
- Tamworth
- Jabullum
- Nungaroo
- Wathallow
- Red Chief
- Pilliga
- Wee Waa
- Narrabri
- Moree
- Mungindi
- Toometah
- Anaiwan

Regional demographics:

Land area: 93, 103 km²

Population: approx. 183, 000

Arts North West services eleven local government areas in the New England North West

- Armidale Regional
- Glen Innes Severn
- Gunnedah Shire
- Gwydir Shire
- Liverpool Plains Shire
- Moree Plains Shire
- Narrabri Shire
- Tamworth Regional
- Tenterfield Shire
- Uralla Shire
- Walcha Council



PEOPLE

The New England North West is home to the Ngarabal, Bundjalung, Gumbainggir, Nganyaywana, Dainggatti, Biripi, Banbai, Jukembal and Kamilaroi Nations.

According to available data (ABS 2021) the Arts North West service area has over 28 232 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people living in the region, representing 11.9% of the total regional population which is 8.7% higher than the state average.

According to 2021 ABS data (Figure 6), the highest concentration is in Moree Plains Shire Council (19.9%), with significant ATSI populations in Gunnedah Shire (15.6%), Liverpool Plains Shire (14.8%), Narrabri Shire (14.8%) and Tamworth (10.6%). Boggabilla, Toomelah, Walhallow, Wee Waa and Mungindi are all towns with a high Aboriginal population.



Arts
north
west



Australian Bureau of Statistics

Figure 6 : ATSI Population Statistics



SOUTHEAST ABORIGINAL ARTS MARKET

Original Arts Market offers a snapshot of the extraordinary artistic and
that are flourishing throughout the South-East of Aboriginal Australia today

Yerkins and Jonathan Jones, SOUTHEAST showcases the stage of
original Australia. The line-up includes established artists and
emerging talents from New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria,

and Western Australia. The region where
Our communities have long been part of the systems,
and the region where
different waves of colonialism have shaped the region where
the region where



IDENTITY

Arts North West supports the development of arts and culture regionally and is involved in the development of regional projects and initiatives.

Arts North West was established in 1996 as a Regional Arts Development Program, and later established as an independent Regional Arts Board in 1997.

Arts North West is a not-for-profit incorporated association and charitable institution that receives financial support from local, state and federal Government.

Our Vision

A rich cultural landscape in the New England North West of New South Wales.

Our Mission

To generate creative opportunities in the New England North West of New South Wales.

Our Core Objectives

1. Develop and broaden diverse audiences and their participation in arts and cultural activities.
2. Grow and support community cultural capacity.
3. Forge strong partnerships and networks across the region.
4. Provide sound and effective corporate governance to ensure a sustainable organisation.

GOVERNANCE

Arts North West is a not-for-profit incorporated association, with a two-tier governance structure comprising a small Board of Management governing the organisation, a Strategic Advisory Council (SAC) and an Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee.

ANW is committed to First Nations representation, cultural diversity, gender equity and inclusion in its board composition and encourages nominations to reflect the diversity of the New England North West area of NSW. Nominations are sought to reflect a geographical spread across the Arts North West region.

The ANW Board of Directors is a skills-based Board with a total of nine members. The Board meets 5 times per year inclusive of an AGM usually held in May of each year.

The Strategic Advisory Council is made of representatives from the 11 contributing LGAs and independent cultural organisations providing strategic input and feedback into programming and direction.

Arts North West was the first Regional Arts Boards to establish an Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee to assist in providing cultural direction and planning for programs and projects.

The Arts North West Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee (ANWAASC) provides support to Arts North West to foster strong relationships within community, provide cultural guidance and decision making, strategic planning, advice and feedback.

The ANWAASC also determines priority areas for consideration in the development of the Arts North West Aboriginal Cultural Support Program. The Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee supports the Aboriginal Arts Officer additional level of connection, consultation and cultural guidance.





ABORIGINAL ARTS OFFICER

Arts North West has a large Aboriginal population, our communities are passionate about culture, sharing and learning with a diversity of capable artists through to those with a strong need of support and development.

There is considerable Aboriginal arts activity in the New England North West with a number of large projects being undertaken by Arts North West and a variety of other individuals and organisations. Aboriginal creatives in the region, work across a number of different artforms including music, dance, visual arts, film, sound production and traditional crafts such as weaving, painting and carving and more.

Arts North West works with creatives to provide opportunities for creative, cultural and professional development to embrace opportunities to foster economic viability and connection to country and culture.

Arts North West Aboriginal Arts Officer is a central contact point of liaison with individuals, organisations and communities and improves networking between the diverse arts hubs, events and activities in Aboriginal communities in the region.

Through consultation and co-design with the Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee the role of the Aboriginal Arts Officer differs from previous structures and other similar roles in other Regional Arts Development Organisations.

The Aboriginal Arts Officer is not employed to deliver all facets of the role but to connect with individuals and organisations to deliver events, program, and projects, where possible. This model has been developed to nurture self-determination, ensure protocols are respected, knowledge and skills remain in community, while also ensuring long-term economic sustainability and knowledge sharing.

The Aboriginal Arts Officer provides support and program management across the Arts North West footprint and works towards ensuring the aspirations of our organisation, Board, Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee and Communities are realised. This is achieved by providing consultation, support, skills development, networking and capacity building to create an invigorating and sustainable Aboriginal Arts community in the New England and North West of New South Wales.

STAKEHOLDERS

OUR PARTNERS

Individuals
Artists
Arts Workers
Community
Service Organisations
Local Aboriginal Lands Council
Elders
Funding bodies
All tiers of government
Creative and cultural institutions

WE SUPPORT

Individuals
First nations Creative Business
Aboriginal Arts & Cultural Workers
Aboriginal Arts & Cultural Facilitators
Artists
Arts Workers
Creatives
Community
Service Organisations
Collectives
Creative and cultural institutions



OUR STRENGTHS

- Support from Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee
- Vibrant landscape
- Cultural currency
- Community engagement
- Sector influence
- Growing sector
- Numerous First Nations Organisations
- Networks and open communication
- Consultation with communities
- Governance and compliance
- Diversity of skills and practices in the region

OUR OPPORTUNITIES

- Partnerships and collaboration
- Self determination
- Local Decision Making
- Cultural competency
- Sharing of knowledge
- Aspirations of the communities
- Increased Marketing and Promotion

OUR BARRIERS

- Inadequate funding
- Funding continuity
- Sheer size of region and the ability to service
- AAO position hours insufficient to adequately service all stakeholders in the region
- Competing communities and organisations
- Lateral violence
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of cultural knowledge in institutions
- Lack of cultural protocols and procedures
- Staff burnout
- Political environment

STRATEGY

BELONGING

BEING

DOING

KNOWING



BELONGING

GOAL ACTION AND MEASURES

Develop opportunities for self-determination in decision making, somewhere that Aboriginal people can be heard. Encourage thoughts, concerns and ideas without judgment through community led co-design

- Deliver 2 x sessions of Community consultations per year

Create nurturing and respectful relationships. Provide information, opportunities, resources and tools to support healthy communication and relationship development to build networks and partnerships

- Establish the Arts North West Aboriginal Arts social media platform

Establish an environment where Aboriginal people feel safe and welcome. Rebrand Aboriginal Cultural Support Program

- Create a new identity for the Aboriginal Cultural Support Program to reflect community and incorporate Arts North West branding

Acknowledge Aboriginal wisdom in all that we do. Engage with Elders and community in project design and delivery and respect community and cultural protocols

- Deliver 3 x co-designed programs or projects per year

BEING

GOAL ACTION AND MEASURES

Establish a space where Aboriginal people can feel a sense of belonging and connection to each other, their communities and Arts North West. Advocate for the increased community led development of cultural centres and spaces for cultural practices to occur

- Provide 5 x Letters of Support and/or written submissions support cultural spaces and creatives throughout the New England North West

Create a space where Aboriginal people feel connection, they are valued and celebrated. Develop and deliver cultural programming that responds to community consultation and identified needs

- Support, showcase and advocate 35 x existing and emerging cultural institutions, organisations and artists

Acknowledge Aboriginal people have a deep connection to place. Nurture cultural connections through supporting and delivering cultural mapping and tourism opportunities, language initiatives, cultural and creative projects and programs

- Deliver 2 x artist residencies, cultural exchange and/or community led mentorship opportunities

Develop strategies to communicate with Aboriginal Communities. Incorporate Storytelling and oral traditions into programming and projects as a way of honouring Aboriginal culture and preserving traditional knowledge

- Deliver 10 x social media posts that reflects and values First Nations wisdom and celebrates culture

OBJECTIVES

DOING

GOAL ACTION AND MEASURES

Create programs that share the benefits with Aboriginal communities for their knowledge and practices. Facilitate professional development workshops across the region based on the needs of each community to contribute towards achieve social and economic independence increase sustainable cultural and career pathways through arts and cultural activity

- Deliver 2 x 'Gather and Trade' events per year.
- Deliver and/or support 3 x First Nations Exhibitions per year

Acknowledge programs that are co-designed will meet the aspirations of the Aboriginal Community. Undertake community consultation to ascertain the community needs to codesign project that are flexible and adaptive

- Develop a 'Needs Assessment Report' to inform codesign of projects

Develop innovative approaches to what we do that lead to sustainable outcomes for our people. Support and facilitate knowledge sharing to build the capacity of creatives and develop opportunities

- Deliver 2 x opportunities per year with established and emerging artists

Establish long term sustainable resources Arts North West will continue to advocate to both State and Federal Governments for long term sustainable core funding for Aboriginal Arts Officer role, programming and projects

- Apply for 2 x grant funded projects per year

KNOWING

GOAL ACTION AND MEASURES

Create protocols so everything with do is done in an ethical and culturally safe way. Respect cultural customs and sensitivities in all interactions and activities

- Work with community to develop an Acknowledgement to Country that is used across all Arts North West platforms
- Review the Arts North West Aboriginal Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Acknowledge the wisdom of our people, listen, learn and share. Foster a culture of listening, learning, knowledge sharing and story telling

- Host 2 x meetings per year with the ANW Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee to provide cultural and strategic direction and priority areas

Establish pathways for Aboriginal people to work with Arts North West. Opportunities for meaningful engagement through skill development and professional advancement through development programs and projects, networking forums, residencies, and mentoring and build networks and partnerships throughout community

- Develop online and printed resources.
- Deliver 2x networking forums.

Develop knowledge and cultural capabilities to learn and share with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Share and distribute resources supporting cultural protocols and guidelines for interacting with Aboriginal communities throughout the ANW network and stakeholders

- Support 2 x cultural knowledge/ capability projects and programs

OBJECTIVES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aboriginal Arts Steering Committee

IVAIS Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program

Aboriginal Elders and Community who contributed to the development of the Arts North West

Aboriginal Arts and Culture Strategy.

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