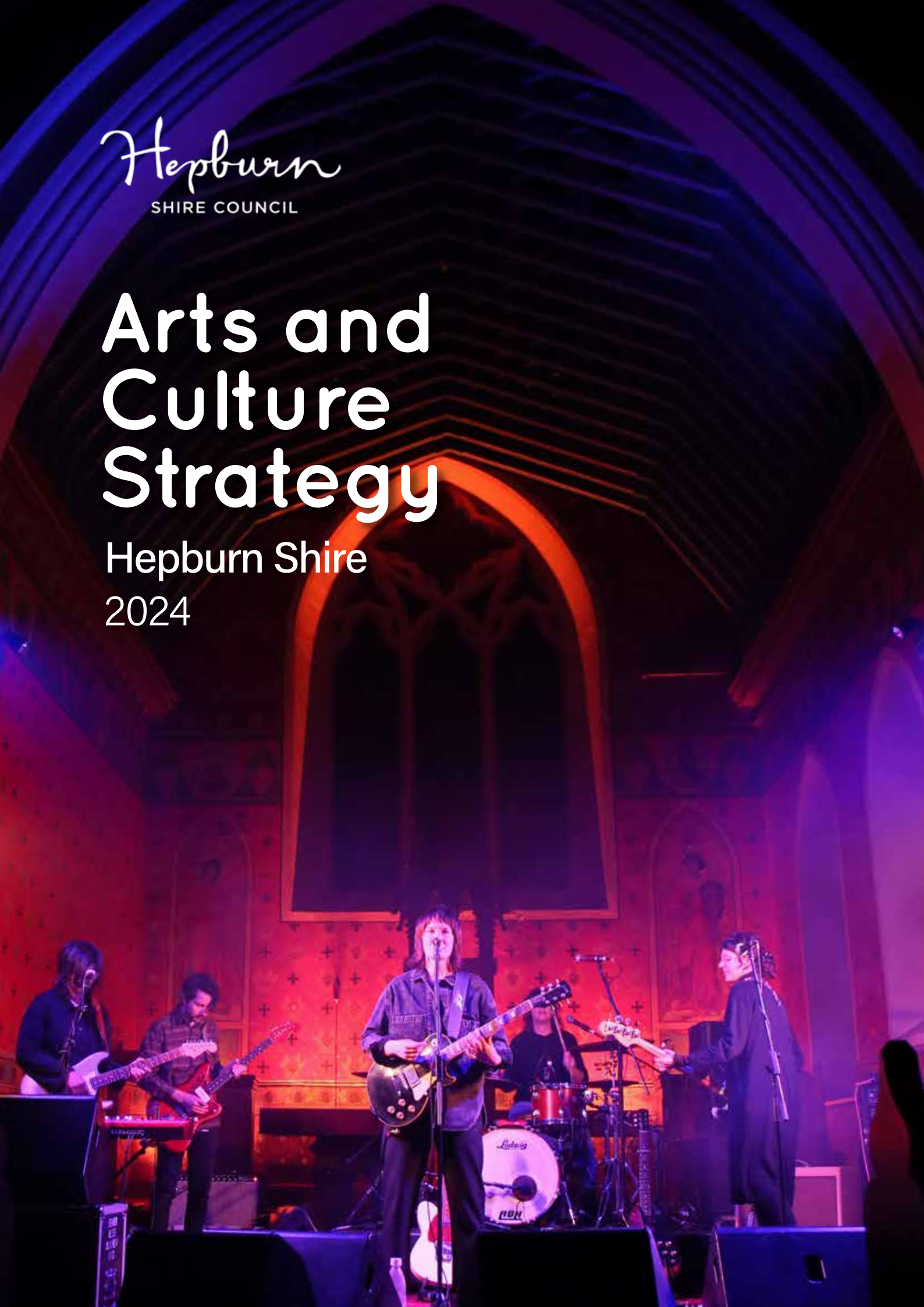
Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

Arts and Culture Strategy

Hepburn Shire

2024



Reasons To Be Invisible
Image by Lab Kelpie

Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

Cover image:
Jen Cloher at St Peter's Church, Daylesford for Winter Sounds 2023

ARTS, CULTURE AND COUNTRY

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

We recognise their resilience through dispossession, and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore.

We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.

Rodney Carter, Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

It is with a profound sense of pride and optimism that I endorse the Hepburn Shire's Arts and Culture Strategy. It signifies not just a commitment to reconciliation but a genuine partnership in shaping the future of Hepburn Shire, one that is inclusive, respectful and reflective of the rich Djaara heritage that has existed on this land for millennia.

This document serves as a testament to the power of collaboration, where the Council and the community have actively engaged with us, the Djaara people, to recognise and celebrate our culture, history and contributions. It acknowledges that our traditions and stories are not relics of the past but vibrant and integral aspects of the present and future.

It's heartening to see the commitment to inclusivity, youth empowerment and the promotion of Djaara voices and narratives. The document signals a new era of partnership where we collectively work to dispel stereotypes, empower our youth and ensure that the Shire's arts and culture are a true reflection of the diverse and ancient heritage of this land.

I believe this document is not just a blueprint for the future of arts and culture in Hepburn Shire, but a model of how reconciliation can be achieved through collaboration, respect and a shared vision. It is a testament to our shared commitment to a brighter, more inclusive and culturally rich future for all residents, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

MAYOR'S INTRODUCTION

Hepburn Shire benefits from a rich cultural heritage and is home to a diverse and active creative community. We experience culture as part of our day-to-day lives and recognise its valuable contribution to our wellbeing. We benefit from our connection to Dja Dja Wurrung culture and from the influences of more recently arrived cultures. Arts and culture frame the stories we tell that define who we are. Its practitioners – artists, musicians, performers and the storytellers of our heritage, contribute to the local economy directly and indirectly. We are pleased to have developed this strategy to help guide and assist how we support the local arts and cultural community.

Through the Hepburn Together process in 2020/21 and via community engagement for this strategy, members of our community told us how much they valued opportunities for cultural engagement. Whether as artists of one form or another, or as audiences for creative activity in its many public and private forms, our community seeks the enrichment that arts and culture bring.

Council has a role to play in creating an environment that provides opportunities to both experience and create art and culture across our Shire. Through this strategy we aim to ensure Hepburn Shire continues to be an attractive home for artists, artistic organisations and creative businesses. The strategy will ensure that the cultural potential of Council decisions will be taken into account, enabling better integration of cultural outcomes across the broad range of Council services.

In adopting this strategy, Hepburn Shire commits to being a place where access to the enrichment of arts and cultural experiences is available for all. I commend this strategy to you and look forward to what it can help us achieve across the rich spectrum of experiences that make up the arts and culture of Hepburn Shire.

Cr Brian Hood
Mayor

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1> WHY HAVE WE CREATED AN ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY?

This strategy aims to connect, support and elevate the already vibrant arts and culture spaces and groups, further empowering them to continue to grow and create. Council offers strategic support and investment in the creative and cultural industries, benefitting the broader community. A culture rich in the arts and respected history is vital for a healthy and connected community. Arts and culture is one of the defining cornerstones of human civilisation and one which we as a culture are remembered for. Hepburn Shire has a long history of art and storytelling on this country, originally from the traditional owners, Djaara, who continue this long history today. More recently we continue this tradition to create and play on Dja Dja Wurrung country. With a large amount of studio- based artists, commercial galleries, several dedicated community art groups facilitating events, live music venues and three local historical museums already in operation, Hepburn is renowned for its creative and inclusive community.

More broadly, Australians from every walk of life participate in and benefit from the arts, culture and creativity. In 2017-18, 82% of Australians attended at least one artistic or cultural activity. During COVID-19 (June 2020-22), this slipped to 62% however has since rebounded. At the end of 2022 Creative Australia's National Arts Participation Survey found that 97% of Australians engaged with the arts in some way (Intergenerational arts and culture: Lessons across middle Australia). This demonstrates the national importance of arts and culture and why every level of society has a role to play.

We are excited to present Hepburn's first Arts and Culture Strategy that provides a framework which Council can implement, providing strategic leadership for an already thriving arts scene. Over 300 community members expressed ideas and opinions that informed a shared vision that Council and the creative community can work towards. From this, Council will endeavour to:

- Establish the foundations for the development of an action plan to help Council, in partnership with other government agencies, the arts sector and broader community to meet our priorities.
- Define Council's role in supporting arts and culture.
- Measure our progress and impact.
- Focus where we invest our resources and effort.
- Establish and communicate shared priorities with the arts sector and broader community.

Access to the arts provides an opportunity for the community to consider differing perspectives, and to learn about each other's stories and creates experiences that can alter and change people for the better. The arts and creative industries provide economic outcomes for many within the shire. We are lucky to have many professional artist and creatives industries calling Hepburn Shire home.

A rich heritage of story collection, maintenance and display has resulted in several local museums and historical societies, run and championed by passionate volunteers. The home to these museums are heritage listed buildings that hold important council assets. These institutions prove an invaluable service to the local community and the broader Australian story. This strategy aims to improve support structures and update collection maintenance and management for these well-established community groups.

Clunes Museum volunteers prioritises showcasing local women's stories, recently securing a conservation grant for a historic winter coat. Addressing historical neglect, volunteers and historians actively work to elevate female narratives, with cultural spaces increasingly dedicated to amplifying their presence.

The collective of community voices has recorded great enthusiasm for more inclusion and storytelling opportunities for our first nation artists and this strategy will action outcomes to continue to develop positive relationships and outcomes. Engagement with the cultures that have shaped, and continue to shape, the Shire is highly valued in this strategy. In Hepburn Shire this includes support for LGBTIQA+ communities that continue to contribute significantly to the regions.

2> HOW WILL WE SUPPORT DELIVERY OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES?

Developing an action plan as a response to this strategy will ensure that we harness its strategic benefits to the fullest extent for the Hepburn community.

Djaara Elder Aunty Marilyne at Calembeen Park

Spudfest 2023

Council will adopt an 'Arts Development' approach that supports positive outcomes for community members, artists and arts and cultural organisations.

3> HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS?

The strategy's execution will be guided by an annual action plan, which will be created and executed in direct response to this strategy. The action plan will detail the specific projects and initiatives that the Hepburn Shire Council will undertake and provide regular reporting to both the Council and the community to keep everyone informed.

4> WHAT ARE THE STRATEGY FOCUS AREAS?

FOCUS AREAS	1. A CONTINUOUS CULTURAL CONNECTION	2. ACCESS AND EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY	3. CREATIVE PLACES AND SPACES
	Respect, celebrate and foster the sharing of First Nations and Djaara culture, history, and art.	Strengthen equity, access, involvement and support diverse cultural and creative practices.	Activate environments to enable creativity and cultural engagement.

VISION

- Enhancing wellbeing through culture and creativity.
- To connect local artists with the community, visitors and each other to grow the vibrancy of Hepburn Shire and the wellbeing of people who live, work or travel here.

4. A VIABLE AND DYNAMIC ARTS SECTOR	5. LIVING LOCAL HERITAGE
Strengthen the arts and cultural economy while providing support to the sector.	Ensure the preservation of our local heritage and the ongoing sharing of our stories.

The Brass Harpies celebrating culture and storytelling at the Clunes Booktown Festival

5> WHAT ARE THE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES?

FOCUS AREAS	1. A CONTINUOUS CULTURAL CONNECTION	2. ACCESS AND EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY
OBJECTIVES	1.1 Partner with DJAARA to share and build knowledge on Country.	2.1 Ensure the arts and other expressions of culture are visible within our community and can be enjoyed by everyone.
	1.2 Strengthen DJAARA partnerships for meaningful consultation, centering Djaara knowledge and priorities.	2.2 Support local and visitor participation in diverse cultural events, activities and exhibits located across the Shire.
	1.3 Support the sharing, celebration, and continuous and ongoing heritage, recorded in stories, customs and lore.	2.3 Encourage and support lifelong creative engagement including professional pathways for young and emerging creatives.
	1.4 Partner with and empower Traditional Owners and the broader community to acknowledge, understand, celebrate and preserve cultures, traditions and environments.	2.4 Maximise accessibility to arts and cultural experiences and remove barriers to access for more members of the community.
	1.5 Identify opportunities for First Nations people and Traditional-owner creative professionals to practice and share their art.	2.5 Make information about arts and cultural events, activities and practitioners in Hepburn Shire more broadly available and easily accessible.

3. CREATIVE SPACES AND PLACES	4. A VIABLE AND DYNAMIC ARTS SECTOR	5. LIVING LOCAL HERITAGE
3.1 Foster accessible arts and cultural spaces available across the Shire that can support the full spectrum of creative activities.	4.1 Explore and promote funding avenues that contribute to and elevate cultural achievements.	5.1 Protect and animate the stories and cultural heritage that continue to influence and shape our community.
3.2 Pursue opportunities to integrate arts and cultural experiences, creating distinctive places that celebrate local environments and values.	4.2 Through building relationships improve the capacity of the creative community to collaborate and facilitate opportunities to share talent, ideas, expertise and resources.	5.2 Nurture partnerships with our museums and cultural institutions.
3.3 Ensure opportunities to include public art in planning and works in public spaces are integrated into capital processes.	4.3 Position arts and culture as an enticing factor for visitors and the tourism sector, in line with the region's Destination Management Plans.	5.3 Gradually adopt and implement best-practice methods for the management of artworks and cultural artifacts by Council.
3.4 Encourage the utilisation of existing spaces and places as creative co-spaces.	4.4 Support industry and community stakeholders to elevate and promote the skills, talent and sustainability of our local creative practitioners.	5.4 Encourage the exploration of local cultural identities, including new ways to tell local stories and identifying new local storytelling voices.
3.5 Support dispersed arts and culture initiatives that drive visitors to different parts of the shire.		

6> HOW DID THE HEPBURN COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS STRATEGY?

The Hepburn Shire Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 was developed following consultation with the Hepburn Shire community, partners and staff. This included:

STAGE 1: MAY – DECEMBER 2022

- Online focus groups with the broader community
- In-person focus groups with the broader community in Daylesford, Trentham, Clunes and Creswick
- Arts and Culture community survey completed by 48 people
- Arts and Culture creative sector survey completed by 26 people
- Arts and Culture staff survey completed by 16 people
- Focus groups with Council staff
- Interviews with key stakeholders including:
    - Daylesford Macedon Tourism
    - Regional Arts Victoria
    - Yandoit Hall
    - Creswick Museum
    - Daylesford Museum
    - Clunes Museum
    - The Lee Medlyn Home of Bottles
    - Trentham Historical Society
- Ideation and Action Planning workshops with Council staff.

STAGE 2: JANUARY – MARCH 2023

- An online arts and culture participation survey (completed by 103 people)
- Pop-up engagements in Daylesford, Trentham, Clunes and Creswick (observations recorded from 151 conversations)

The input obtained from these consultations was reinforced by conducting desktop research and a review, which included an analysis of local, state and federal government policies and data. Additionally, a preliminary mapping of the creative ecosystem was conducted to identify the existing arts and cultural infrastructure and activities within the local government area. This included consultation with key local stakeholders, Creswick, Daylesford and Clunes Museums and Regional Arts Victoria. This groundwork has served as a foundation for the iterations of this strategy.

Geordie Williamson, winner of the best in show at the 2023 Daylesford Rotary Art Show
Image supplied by artist

7> WHAT DID COMMUNITY MEMBERS TELL US?

This Hepburn Shire Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 is informed by the voices of the Hepburn Shire creative community and partner organisations and the general public. We have drawn upon insights gathered during consultations for the Community Visioning and Council Plan processes. We combined these with new insights from our consultations, where we asked artists, organisations, the broader community and our partners about the importance they place on arts and culture in Hepburn Shire.

During discussions, we discovered several strengths within the Shire's art and culture scene, including the rich diversity and the considerable expertise present in the creative sector. However, we also encountered various challenges, such as the complexities of navigating systems and processes, enhancing business capabilities, effectively promoting and marketing the creative sector and ensuring art and culture are accessible and inclusive for everyone. Some individuals expressed feelings of isolation and a desire for a more connected community that could self-organise and collaborate.

Throughout these conversations, a common theme emerged: the profound influence of art and culture on all aspects of our lives, from our sense of identity and connection to our overall well-being.

Clunes Booktown
Image by Visit Victoria

“An expression of our rural culture and shared experiences helps us all feel less alone with the overwhelming emotions we are all experiencing at this difficult time in human existence. Any arts experience is important for anyone and everyone. It creates wellbeing and harmony - making art keeps me engaged with the world. It keeps me thinking and participating about and in the community.”

“Creating and making is absolutely essential to my health and well-being. My studio at home is my workspace. Visiting galleries with friends stimulates discussion and has social benefits. I value participating in workshops to learn new skills and challenge myself.”

ChillOut Ball
Image by Tessalated Studios

COUNCIL PLAN CONSULTATIONS

INSIGHTS BROUGHT FORWARD

The following summarises community inputs that helped to shape three focus areas detailed in the Council Plan 2021-2025 that intersect with this Arts and Culture Strategy:

A healthy, supported and empowered community

A community that values connection, supports diversity, health and wellbeing and is inclusive of all people and their needs.

Individuals expressed their desire for stronger community connections, community groups, recreational facilities geared towards creativity and educational opportunities to enhance their wellbeing. In particular, young participants in Hepburn's arts and culture activities emphasised how engaging in the arts positively impacted their mental health. This sentiment has been echoed during community consultations, where arts and culture activities have been recognised as a catalyst for improving mental well-being within local community.

Embracing our past and planning for the future

We acknowledge and empower the Traditional Owners and other cultures of our area to protect our historical roots while planning for future generations.

Community members expressed a strong desire to preserve the rural character and overall quality of life in the Shire, while also celebrating its history, including the heritage of first nations people. During consultations, it became evident that people were enthusiastic about safeguarding historical infrastructure and sharing the diverse stories of those who reside in the area.

Clunes Museum

> "I visit galleries and museums as a way to relax. I feel intellectually stimulated by arts and culture and it appeals to my lifelong learning. It's also a way we as family bond and have shared experiences. It's one of the few things my teenage son enjoys doing together as a family which is important in maintaining relationships."

A dynamic and responsive Council

Council and the community partner to achieve their aspirations through excellent communication and engagement, the delivery of effective services, strong financial management and governance.

ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY ARTS AND CULTURE ENVIRONMENT

Ensuring that arts and culture are accessible to all residents across the Shire emerged as a significant concern for the community, especially for those that are typically underrepresented or underserved. This inclusivity extended to older individuals, which was a recurring theme in our engagement process.

Moreover, the community expressed a desire for increased opportunities for hobbyist and emerging artists to showcase their artwork. This aims to challenge the perception that only professional artists should have a place in creating and selling within the Shire.

Jason Kerr and Uncle Rick Nelson at Larni Barramal Yaluk performing a Smoking Ceremony

A connected community of local Arts and Culture

The arts community believes Council can play the role of convener, bringing together creatives, art sector professionals and the wider community. Consultation with arts and culture organisations reported that the local sector was heavily reliant on volunteer support, however there was lack of recognition and support given to these volunteers.

As in other sectors, continuing to source and maintain volunteers is also an ongoing issue. Partner organisations concurred that there are no formal resources dedicated to connecting with and consistently supporting arts and cultural activity. Residences in Hepburn Shire were looking to Council to provide opportunities for cross connection in the creative sector and historical settings, enabling an environment for arts and culture to thrive across the community.

Capability building for arts businesses

The arts community called for support to build its entrepreneurial, financial and grant writing capabilities. They sought support to access grants, to strategically position themselves to win funding and more generally to promote and advertise themselves and the cultural sector.

Rising economic barriers challenge Hepburn Arts and Culture growth

In the wake of COVID-19 and during a period of high inflation, the arts and cultural community in Hepburn Shire faced mounting financial challenges that impacted their ability to be creative and to share their passions with the Hepburn Shire community and beyond. During consultations many said they struggled to find affordable places to make and exhibit their art. Others said they found it difficult to navigate the grants and funding landscape.

Ideas to support the local arts and culture sector included an introduction of subsidised rent for Council sites, facilitation of financial literacy training for the local creative sector and grant writing support for creatives and cultural producers. Consultations with partners indicated a belief that there may be underutilised venues and a willingness to offer shared spaces and hubs for arts and culture activities.

> “A vibrant creative community would help financial growth of the town, the mental health of the residents and the career opportunities for the generations to come”

Showcasing and building awareness about Hepburn Arts and Culture

The community expects Council to support the arts and cultural sector to demonstrate and advocate its value and impact to the Shire, community and broader Victorian economy. Consultations with regional partners echoed the belief that arts and culture does attract tourism to Hepburn Shire, and with continued collaborative marketing and engagement with the tourism sector would continue to grow. Local Area Action Plans for Hepburn Shire (2024-2029) identify Arts and Culture as a key pillar of the visitor economy. Key actions including better integrating community arts initiatives with the visitor economy, exploring the estabishment of contemporary art trails and further improving the visitor experience at existing museums and galleries.

There was also a desire to showcase arts and culture regularly through events and exhibitions. Many felt arts and culture could be better integrated with the tourism infrastructure and ambitions of the Shire to increase the recognition and visibility of the local arts and culture community and sector. Statistics around visitor demographics strongly suggest that this sentiment echos in the research conducted to encourage local tourism.

> **“We need colour in this world. Colourful people, colourful art, colourful music, colourful theatre. We've got colourful cafes and restaurants in Hepburn Shire, but what about matching that with arts and culture. What about some support for this.”**

Reactivating spaces

The community is seeking affordable spaces to create and share arts and culture. There was a strong need for spaces that could be used for multi-purpose and interdisciplinary art. Many were open and excited about the prospect of shared facilities, temporary/pop-up creative spaces and cooperatives.

> **“I'd like to see more innovative, cutting-edge, thought-provoking art, literature and music in the area with more specific, regular spaces for these.**
>
> **We need art spaces.”**

Partners highlighted how, in other regional communities, shared hub spaces for the community were a vital enabling infrastructure component supporting the arts and culture sectors. Both accessibility and flexibility were highlighted as key attributes of shared creative and cultural production spaces. The community called for thoughtful urban design and consideration of arts and cultural amenity in future capital planning and works in Hepburn Shire.

> **“A space for dance, clay, metal work, sewing, talking. That space needs to be free. If it's made available then the volunteers will do the rest!”**

Inclusion and accessibility

Ensuring all people across the Shire can access arts and culture was important to the community, including people who are either underrepresented or underserved. Specifically, access for older people and youth was a theme during the engagement. Furthermore, the community wanted to see more opportunities for all artists to showcase their work, dispelling the perception that only professional artists required support to create and experience art in the Shire.

People wanted to see arts and culture represent the diverse heritage and stories of Hepburn Shire. Some emphasised how it was important to move away from limiting the identity of Hepburn Shire to 'farming and the gold rush'.

Wings and Wheels at Chill Out Festival 2023
Image by Michelle Donnelly Photography

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Stage two consultation identified the main barriers to participation. Timely accurate and accessibile information was a primary concern, along with time and financial constraints and difficulty travelling to events.

Barriers to Involvement (Stage Two Community Engagement)

- Lack of awareness/information **49.1%**
- Cost of tickets/entry **33.0%**
- What's on offer isn't relevant to me **26.8%**
- Travel/too hard to get to **22.3%**
- Hard to find the time **20.5%**
- Health (physical or mental) **11.6%**
- Lack of personal interest **4.5%**
- Safety concerns **1.8%**

> "We need a one stop shop for women, youth, disabled, disadvantaged, to come and be included whilst exploring creativity and new ideas."

Acknowledged and empowered First Nations People

Partners emphasised that it was important to exercise cultural sensitivity, respect and have an empowering approach to ensure First Nations voices were included genuinely, and actively participated in arts and culture in Hepburn Shire.

Many expressed the need for greater awareness and showcasing of First Nations history in Hepburn Shire as a priority.

> “It also provides scope to tell stories about a better future. If you don’t know where you came from, you will never know where you are going.”

Uncle Rick Nelson and Jason Kerr - Welcome to Country

8> WHAT OTHER POLICIES INFLUENCE ARTS AND CULTURE OUTCOMES IN HEPBURN SHIRE?

The policy context for this strategy includes local, state and federal policies that are designed to create sustainable creative industries, healthy and connected regional communities and spaces for the expression and appreciation of Traditional Owner culture. The strategic priorities included in the Hepburn Shire Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 are aligned with and reflect these areas of public policy.

FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY

Creative Australia – National Cultural Policy

- Respecting and celebrating First Nations arts and culture
- Reflecting diversity in the stories that are being shared
- Recognising and supporting artists as critical workers
- Building strong institutions that can sustain the sector
- Reaching new audiences at home and abroad.

Creative State 2025 – the Victorian Government's creative industries strategy

- More and better job opportunities and pathways
- Innovative creative products and experiences
- Industry stability and growth
- Equitable access to the creative industries
- New audiences and markets.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS POLICY

Dhelkunya Dja, Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034

The goals of this strategy require that:

- Every Dja Dja Wurrung person is happy, healthy and secure in their identity, livelihood and lifestyle
- Dja Dja Wurrung customs and practices are alive and respected
- Dja Dja Wurrung cultural heritage is recognised and protected
- Cultural connections with land, plants and animals is recognised and protected
- Rivers and waterways are healthy
- Land is managed to be returned to health
- Self-determination empowers Djaara to manage their affairs
- Traditional Owner economy is strong and diverse
- Aboriginal Title land is solely managed underpinned by joint management principles.

LOCAL POLICY

Hepburn Shire's Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 supports the Council Vision and is an outcome of the Council Plan 2021-2025. It is both supported by and supports a suite of inter-related local strategic plans that are summarised below.

COMMUNITY VISION

The Hepburn Shire Community Vision is a product of the Hepburn Together project that articulates the community's aspirations for the region over the next ten years.

"Hepburn Shire – an inclusive rural community located in Dja Dja Wurrung country where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environment is protected, diversity supported, and innovation embraced."

The Drop in Glenlyon

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

The Council Plan 2021-2025 reflects state and federal policy settings by focusing on creating a diverse economy and acknowledging and empowering Traditional Owners and other cultures.

It outlines five focus areas that describe how Council and community will work together to progress the Community Vision.

1. A resilient, sustainable and protected environment
2. A healthy, supported and empowered community
3. Embracing our past and planning for the future
4. Diverse economy and opportunities
5. A dynamic and responsive Council

The Council Plan recognises arts as an important part of Hepburn Shire's social and economic fabric. It also acknowledges the impacts on the sector of pandemic measures associated with COVID-19. It is the Council Plan that called for the first ever Arts and Culture Strategy to be developed for the Shire, under the priority area 'Improving mental wellbeing'.

"3.1.3 Develop and implement an Arts and Culture Strategy to support local artists to provide creative cultural experiences to enrich community wellbeing."

Hepburn Shire Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 was informed, in part, by the insights garnered from public consultation for the Council Plan. These are described in the section, 'What did community members tell us?'.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The art, culture and heritage of the Traditional owners play a fundamental role in shaping the history and identity of the region, and they will continue to be a cornerstone of arts and culture in the Shire. Hepburn Shire Council is actively working on the development of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, which will build upon the previous Reflect Reconciliation Plan. This new plan aims to deepen our understanding of the most effective approaches to advancing reconciliation in Hepburn Shire.

The overreaching focus will remain on fostering relationships within and beyond communities, promoting understanding and showing respect for Dja Dja Wurrrung culture. This ongoing effort will also strive to create fresh opportunities for the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and communities.

PUBLIC ART POLICY

The Public Art Policy recognises that the arts contribute to the beauty of the built and natural environments. This policy guides how Council determines the funding, commissioning, installation, maintenance and de-accessioning of public art. It ensures public art explores themes that are relevant to the community and is suitable for the spaces it activates and enhances.

The focus is on ensuring art reflects community values and emphasises the importance of cultivating and preserving the arts and culture unique to each village in Hepburn Shire.

HERITAGE STRATEGY

Heritage forms a distinct part of Hepburn Shire's arts and culture, preserving the unique qualities and values that continue to shape the region. The Hepburn Heritage Strategy 2020-2030 sets Council's plan for managing its heritage assets, predominantly in relation to the built environment. Hepburn Shire is home to nearly one thousand heritage places and precincts. This strategy will supplement strategic planning initiatives in protecting heritage sites by protecting other heritage items that hold valuable memories for the community.

EVENTS STRATEGY

The Hepburn Shire Events Strategy 2020-2025 seeks to bring Hepburn Shire's arts and culture to the forefront of Hepburn's visitor economy.
The events strategy presents a clear vision for Hepburn Shire to become a premier Regional Victoria Events destination. The strategy aims to attract, retain, and grow events across the regional tourism brand pillars of Indulge (Food and Drink), Refresh (Escape and Rejuvenate), Learn (History and Culture) and Make (Art and Artisans). While the events strategy supports the promotion of major annual tourism events, there is an opportunity to bring awareness to smaller events in other areas of the Shire that have not been able to garner the same level of engagement.

Swiss Italian Festa

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN

Arts and culture can supplement primary healthcare and benefit community wellbeing by supporting a social, creative and active lifestyle. Council is committed to supporting the overall health and wellbeing of the community through health promotion, early intervention and primary intervention. Priority areas for community health included tackling climate change and its impact on health, increasing healthy eating, improving mental wellbeing and preventing all forms of violence. It is also recognised that social determinants of health such as gender, employment, inclusion and socioeconomic status need to be addressed through initiatives originating in other areas of Council.

EARLY AND MIDDLE YEARS STRATEGY

Arts and culture will continue to play a critical role in supporting the learning and development of young children socially and cognitively. The Early and Middle Years Strategy 2022-2030 is designed to support family growth and the development needs of early and middle years children. Council recognises that a child's early years provide a foundational basis for their growth and development across their lifetime. In setting up children for success Council is committed to developing and coordinating services, programs, infrastructure and activities that support and impact children aged 0 - 12 years.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Arts and culture play a vital role in enhancing the social wellbeing of young individuals, offering distinct educational wellbeing of young individuals, offering distinct educational and development experiences and providing opportunities for their voices to be heard. Currently the Council is actively working on the development of a new youth developmental strategy. This strategy is centred on advocating for and alongside young people, celebrating their contributions, and empowering them as leaders and decision makers within schools and communities.

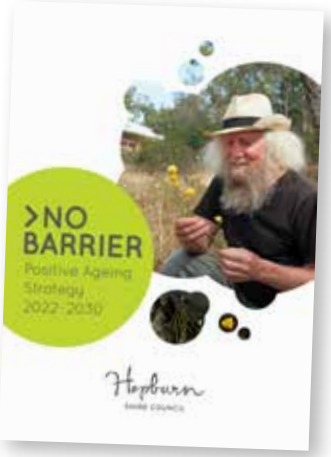
The strategy's core objectives include delivering programs that bolster the resilience of young people, support their mental health, foster connections with their culture, encourage peer engagement and enable them to take active roles in their lives.

POSITIVE AGEING STRATEGY

Arts and culture play an important role in supporting social participation respect and social inclusion, civic participation, and enjoyment of outdoor spaces for older community members. The 'No Barrier' Positive Ageing Strategy 2022-2032 aims to support people aged 55 years+ in leading fulfilling lives.

Positive Ageing is the process of maintaining a positive attitude, keeping physically fit and healthy and fully engaging in social and community life. It means that older members can move through the community with ease, feel respected by others, have access to information and develop the skills to use technology.

Daylesford Regional Arts Cooperative members with their displayed work at the Visitor Information Center, Daylesford Photo supplied by members



9> HOW IMPORTANT IS ARTS AND CULTURE?

Research by the Australia Council for the Arts, conducted before COVID-19, provided insights into the importance of Arts and Culture to regional Victorians, which confirmed what we heard from our community during consultations for this strategy. This information is indicative of the issues facing arts audiences in locations such as Hepburn Shire, away from the focus, and major cultural institutions of Melbourne and the largest regional cities. It reinforces the value communites place on local, accessible cultural opportunities.

Because this data was gathered in 2019, immediately pre COVID-19, it provides a very meaningful benchmark for the sector as it recovers from a pandemic that disproportionately impacted arts businesses.

Arts have a 'big' or 'very big' impact on...

- Stimulating our minds **61%**
- Our ability to think creatively and develop new ideas **60%**
- Child development **58%**
- Our ability to express ourselves **58%**
- Our understanding of other people and cultures **55%**
- Helping us deal with stress, anxiety or depression **52%**
- Our sense of wellbeing and happiness **50%**
- Shaping and expressing Australian Identity **43%**
- Building creative skills necessary for the future workforce **41%**
- Bringing customers to local businesses **35%**

Attitudes toward the Arts

- The arts reflect the diversity of cultures in Australia **76%**
- The arts should be an important part of education **75%**
- Artists make an important contribution to our society **73%**
- The arts help you to understand different perspectives **70%**
- The arts make for a richer and more meaningful life **66%**
- The arts should receive public funding **64%**
- The arts allow me to connect with others **47%**
- I have plenty of opportunities to get involved in the arts **45%**
- The arts are not really for people like me **28%**

10 > WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN HEPBURN SHIRE?

While less tangible benefits to wellbeing and community cohesion are reason enough to support a healthy local arts and culture environment, the sector also contributes significantly to economic activity in the Shire and more broadly in the region.
Arts and culture is a key drawcard for visitors to the region, with Hepburn Shire attracting 1.4M visitors annually (Tourism Research Australia 2023) with these visitors spending more than $335M in 2023. Arts and cultural experiences improves the visitor experience and increase in length of stay in-region as well as encourage return visitation. The 2023 REMPLAN data indicates that tourism is the largest employer in the Shire, accounting for 949 jobs in the Shire which is 1 in 6 of total jobs.

Arts and culture also generates direct income and employs people at numerous levels for artists and in the production and delivery of cultural services.

Watty Thompson at Winter Sounds 2023, Clunes Town Hall
Image by Winter Sounds

Arts/Culture Professionals in Hepburn - Areas of Practice (ABS, 2021)

- Architecture and Design **37%**
- Visual Arts **29%**
- Writing and Journalism **20%**
- Arts Professionals (NFD) **4%**
- Fashion **3%**
- Theatre/Performing Arts **3%**
- Film and Television **2%**
- Music **2%**

Value of Arts and Culture (ABS, 2021 - COVID-19 impacted)

- Value of annual regional exports by the industry sector ($M): **$8.17**
- Value of sector's contribution to Gross Regional Product ($M): **$6.63**
- Total value of local expenditure on intermediate goods and services ($M): **$4.28**
- Value of annual regional imports by the industry sector ($M): **$3.02**
- Annual wages and salaries earnt by people employed by this sector in the region ($M): **$2.81**
- Total value of sales to industry sectors in the region ($M): **$2.31**

Winter Sounds at Bullarto
Image by Winter Sounds

Reasons To Be Invisible
Image by Lab Kelpie

> **"Hepburn Shire – an inclusive rural community located in Dja Dja Wurrung country where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environment is protected, diversity supported, and innovation embraced."**

Council Vision – developed in partnership with our Community

OUR ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY:

What will happen now?

This Strategy establishes a clear mission for arts and culture in Hepburn Shire which focuses on…

FOSTERING THE CONDITIONS FOR ARTS AND CULTURE TO FLOURISH, FOR OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY TO THRIVE AND FOR OUR COMMUNITIES TO BE ENRICHED BY CULTURAL EXPERIENCES.

Hepburn's Arts and Culture Strategy 2024 sets out a roadmap for where we collectively want arts and culture to thrive in coming years. We are home to a talented and energised creative community that is organic and connected and its Council's role to work with the community and our partners to foster those conditions.

During the initial phase of the strategy delivery Council will:

- Create and promote the first action plan in response to the strategy objectives, setting out clear and specific deliverable objectives
- Commence annual reporting against Strategy key objectives
- Strengthen internal structures to support the strategy, and external partnerships to maximise its potential
- Continue to build on existing programs and relationships

Council is proud to have developed this strategy in support of arts and culture in Hepburn Shire, recognising the value of the sector to the wellbeing, identity and economy of the Shire.

Minna Graham Ceramics
Image provided by artist

Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

PO Box 21 Daylesford 3460
P: 03 5348 2306
F: 03 5348 2911

shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au
www.hepburn.vic.gov.au
www.facebook.com/hepburncouncil

COUNCIL OFFICES

DAYLESFORD
Corner Duke &
Albert Streets, Daylesford

CRESWICK
68 Albert Street,
Creswick

CLUNES
The Warehouse - Clunes
36 Fraser Street, Clunes

TRENTHAM
13 Albert Street,
Trentham