

# creative ecology02

BACKGROUND PAPER  
BALLARAT CREATIVE ECOLOGY  
LEFT BANK CO  
MAY 2018



Image: Ballarat International Foto Biennale

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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the land on which its community live. Our community has strengths and assets, and we seek to develop and build on these, taking into account the diversity of our community.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The City of Ballarat aspires to be Australia's leading regional creative city. This will improve the quality of life which the City offers its residents. Moreover, the City has a broader agenda to harness the potential of its cultural and creative industries to contribute to a stronger local economy and a more self-sustaining community.**

A consultant team comprising SGS Economics & Planning Pty Ltd, MGS Architects, Left Bank Co. and Eleni Arbus is working with The City of Ballarat to prepare a Creative City Strategy.

Overall, this effort is expected to deliver:

- An innovative and nimble **strategy** to steer the development of the arts and creative sector in the City;
- A **Master Plan** for the creative precinct centred on Lydiard Street in the City; and
- A feasibility study and **business case** for the expansion of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

The City of Ballarat has embarked on an extensive program of community consultation, engaging with residents and businesses, creative practitioners, key organisations and industry leaders.

To date, the program of consultation has included:

- An online survey via City of Ballarat's *Mysay* website;
- A community drop in session;
- 4 stakeholder workshops with local creative practitioners and community groups;
- Over 20 targeted interviews with key stakeholders.

The team has compiled evidence around the themes of the Ballarat creative economy, its creative ecology and the structure and functionality of the creative precinct.

This evidence base is documented in three background papers, of which the current report is one.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Image: Ballarat International Foto Biennale

The focus of this paper, authored by Left Bank Co., has been to examine the health of Ballarat's creative ecology, through workshops held with over 60 stakeholders representing the Ballarat creative community. The creative ecology has been examined through a three-pronged lens that looks at the flagship cultural and creative institutions in Ballarat; the supporting hard and soft infrastructure that underpins the sector; and the constituencies for creativity spanning community arts, the creative workforce as well as audience participation and engagement through to business support.

## **Ballarat's Creative Identity and Vision**

In discussions with the creative stakeholders of Ballarat, it is evident that the creative identity of the city has long been embedded in the heritage of the city, celebrating the flagship cultural institutions and historic buildings that house traditional arts and cultural activity. In more recent times, this identity has been building on the strengths of an emerging, passionate, independent and vibrant creative community who work across a very diverse range of creative practice and who are challenging this traditional identity.

This, together with a lack of dedicated spaces for collaboration, making and coworking, has resulted in a siloed and fractured creative city where creatives between the arts and culture sector and creative industries are disconnected from each other with a very apparent lack of coordination. This lack of unity is coming from a need on one hand to maintain the city's cultural heritage, and on the other, make room for creative innovation to thrive: finding the equilibrium between the two is critical.

When asked to envision the future of Ballarat as a creative city, stakeholders from across the sector pointed to ways to support, nurture and leverage the local creative community from a grassroots level upward and to bring the sector together. They pinpointed more collaborative spaces and studios for working, investment in education and career pathways for the sector, as well as embracing innovation and contemporary approaches to creative practice in order to foster a sustainable grassroots creative workforce.

Acknowledging that this needs to be done in a way to stimulate the local economy and produce social and community outcomes, consultation revealed the importance of creativity in tackling societal issues such as Indigenous engagement, multicultural acceptance, youth engagement, education, and socioeconomic differences.

While a clear and single direction for a vision did not emerge, some of the key themes that were discussed included Ballarat as a place for incubating, educating and establishing creative talent; Ballarat as a place where doing and being creative is embraced, valued and nurtured as business; and tapping into unique characteristics and strengths of the city to build a strong narrative and area of growth across creative industries.

## The Creative Ecology

The research found that in all three parts of the creative ecology – flagship institutions, supporting infrastructure, and the constituencies – Ballarat had a very diverse range of creative content on offer, with a varying level of strengths and weaknesses.

The flagship institutions are overall performing their remit well: the major cultural institutions are attracting healthy audience numbers and contributing to a strong identity for Ballarat, but could do more to engage with local audiences and support the creative community; while the organisations supporting the sector could do more to connect those they support with the broader community, industry and audiences. Overall, the flagships are in need of more strategic leadership and a vision they can commit to and work towards.

The supporting infrastructure is extremely diverse, across different creative places, spaces, organisations, festivals and events, programmes and platforms that support the creative sector and engage audiences. The overall strengths are in the number of places to showcase traditional creative work, the thriving festival scene, and an increasing diversity on non-traditional creative practices; while the weaknesses are in the undersupply of infrastructure to support the growth and professional development of the sector, the lack of coordination and communication about what is happening in the local sector, and a preference for venues and institutions to support visiting audiences and touring content rather than locals.

Finally, for the constituencies who participate and engage with the creative ecology, there is plenty of appetite and willingness from creatives to get involved, for audiences to engage, and for businesses to support. Yet local creatives have a lack of confidence in their professional abilities and continue to be siloed without collaborating and sharing knowledge and resources; many graduating from the Arts Academy are being lost to other cities that have more to offer; the local community only gets involved if they are exposed to creativity and culture, with many in outlying and poorer suburbs not at all engaged in creativity; while visiting audiences are limiting their engagement to major festivals, events and cultural institutions when there is much more depth and richness to the city for them to discover.

Various challenges with the geographic spread of the creative community, as well as the types of interactions and relationships between different parts of the sector compound some of the issues within the creative ecology, but also present many opportunities that can be leveraged to inform and shape the Creative City Strategy, such as drawing on strong leadership and maximising clusters and precincts of activity.

The insights that have emerged from this research enable a clear picture of what matters to Ballarat's creative community and to the development of this strategy, and are as follows:

**Ballarat is centred around presenting creativity, with little opportunity to nurture and professionalise it:** there is high demand for but a critical lack of spaces for creating and producing work, resulting in limited opportunity for collaboration, connection and cross-pollination of different industries.

**The act of balancing local and external demand needs to be mastered:** to manage expectations of the community but also achieve economic growth, the challenge is to find the balance between nurturing local grassroots creativity with showcasing established touring work, and engaging local community audiences with attracting visiting audiences.

**Without a critical mass of audience, the sector will continue to compete for audiences, funding and support:** due to the limited local population, Ballarat's local creatives are reliant on external markets to get exposure and growth, justifying the need to not only attract these audiences, but to also encourage creatives to professionalise to achieve success and sustainability.

**The tension between the cultural core and contemporary creative industries is a barrier to a truly creative city:** there is a need to overcome the conservatism and tradition in Ballarat to allow space for creativity to thrive, shifting attitudes to make room for contemporary and innovative work, and appreciating the value they can bring to a city.

**Ballarat needs to maximise the value of its education assets:** Federation University's Arts Academy is widely viewed as an invaluable part of Ballarat's creative offer, but needs to better connect with the city and the wider creative community. It is also critical to embed creativity into the education system from a primary level, making creative practice a better recognised and valued part of everyday life right throughout the community.

**An aspirational vision for the city that establishes the Ballarat brand needs to underpin this whole strategy:** a coordinated approach to the creative 'Ballarat brand' can uplift the creative sector and broader community, but requires strong leadership, a willingness to take risks and try something new, and buy in at all levels of the community.

# 1.0\_INTRODUCTION

A consultant team comprising SGS Economics & Planning Pty Ltd, MGS Architects, Left Bank Co and Eleni Arbus is working with The City of Ballarat to prepare a Creative City Strategy.

This effort is expected to deliver:

- An innovative and nimble **strategy** to steer the development of the arts and creative sector in the city,
- A **Master Plan** for the creative precinct centred on Lydiard Street in the city, and
- A feasibility study and **business case** for the expansion of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Production of the Creative City Strategy involves several analytical and consultation steps as summarised in Figure 1.

Following a period of stakeholder consultation and community engagement, the consultant team has compiled additional evidence around the themes of the Ballarat creative economy, its creative ecology and the structure and functionality of the creative precinct.

This evidence base is documented in three background papers, of which the current report is one. In addition, SGS has produced a fourth paper documenting the findings of the first round of community consultation expressed via The City of Ballarat's *Mysay* website.

The suite of three background papers and the Community Consultation paper will be distributed to a wide group of stakeholders who, in turn, will be invited to participate in a vision and strategy conference or 'charette' [1].

In addition, the papers will be shared publically via The City of Ballarat's *Mysay* website. This presents a key opportunity for the community to provide further feedback on the findings presented ahead of the charette.

The upcoming charette will build on the options and questions raised in the background papers and generate a 'sketch' of the Creative City Strategy.

The consultant team will then develop this sketch into a fully specified strategy and Master Plan taking into account further feedback from stakeholders and the community.

## 1.1 The Creative Ecology

The purpose of this paper is to capture a snapshot of Ballarat's creative ecology: an understanding of the types of entities that make up the core of the creative sector, their interactions and their environment. An understanding of this intricate ecosystem plays a key role in establishing critical insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Ballarat's creative sector, as well as where desires lie, where there may be challenges to overcome, and where the biggest opportunities are to build a successful Creative City Strategy.

The scope of this paper covers a high-level qualitative assessment of this ecology from a three-pronged approach that looks at the flagship cultural and creative institutions in Ballarat, the supporting hard and soft infrastructure that underpins the sector, and the constituencies for creativity spanning community arts, the creative workforce as well as audience participation and engagement through to business support. This framework allows a critical lens to be applied to the different relationships, interactions, dependencies and environments within which creative sector operates.

This ecology will also be used to evaluate Ballarat's position against other cities that have achieved success through creative city strategies, understanding how Ballarat can use the building blocks of its ecology today to become a thriving creative city in the future.

## 1.2 Project Methodology

The methodology informing the contents of this report has been structured to gather qualitative evidence, primarily through a series of stakeholder engagement workshops that established a big picture view of this ecology.

Over the course of four hands-on workshops, attended by over sixty individuals representing Ballarat's creative sector, strategic consultancy firm Left Bank Co. explored, discovered and tested the health of the city's creative ecology with workshop participants. The opportunity was also made available to share feedback via The City of Ballarat's online survey, the results of which have been documented in an additional paper produced by SGS Economics and Planning.

The qualitative findings of this research underpin this background paper, with the quotes found throughout the report coming directly from the stakeholder workshops and capturing the opinions of those who were consulted. This anecdotal evidence has been backed up by desktop research and evidence gathering drawing from a variety of The City of Ballarat documents, the outputs from the Ballarat Creative City Strategy survey mentioned above, and research undertaken by SGS Economics & Planning and MGS Architects. All statistics are drawn from publicly available Annual Reports and documents supplied to the team by Council.

- 4 sector workshops
- 60 sector representatives
- Representing: Visual Arts, Music, Performing Arts, Museums, Photography, Digital, Gaming, Film, Publishing, Design and Architecture, Literature, Indigenous, Council, Community Groups, Community Arts Practice, Education, and cultural development.

[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charrette>



Figure 1  
Ballarat’s Creative City Strategy project methodology

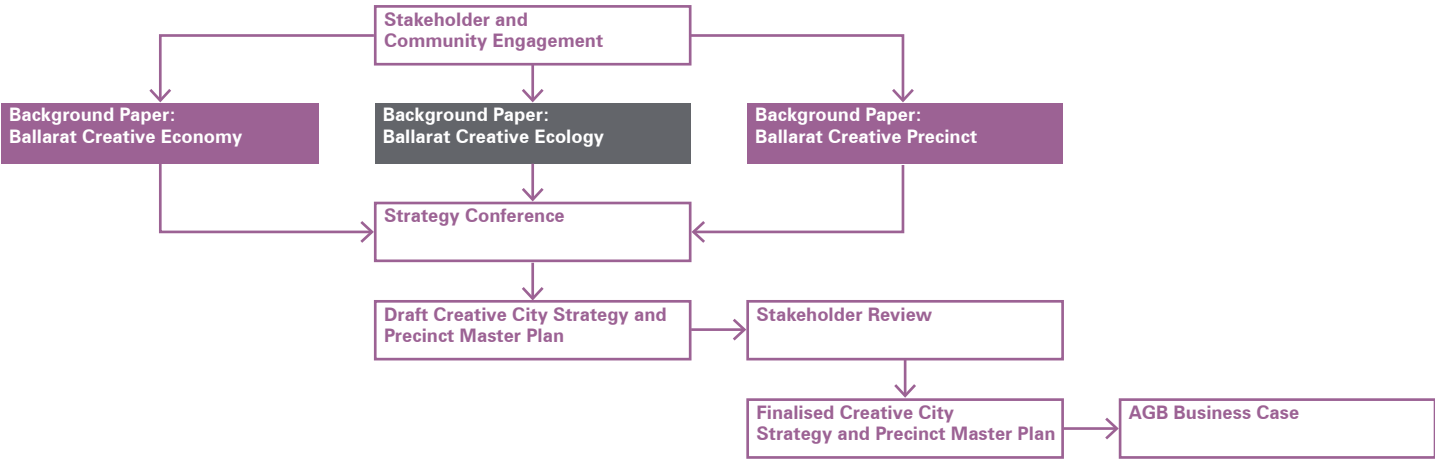
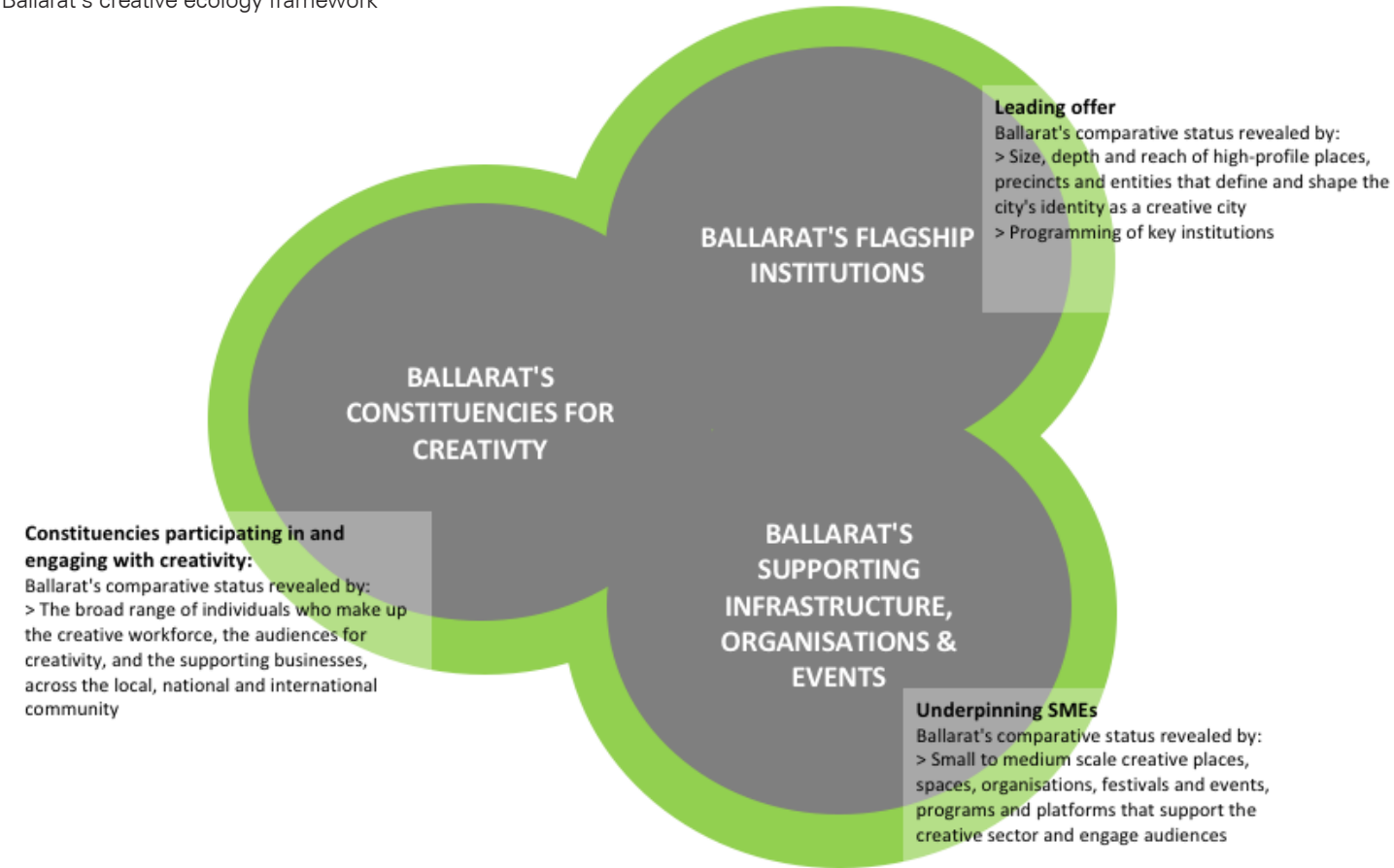


Figure 2  
Ballarat’s creative ecology framework



## 2.0 BALLARAT'S CREATIVE IDENTITY



Image: Ballarat International Foto Biennale

Understanding the creative identity of Ballarat is a vital piece of the puzzle in examining the creative ecology, demonstrating how the creative community perceives itself as a collective unit. This is a way to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and to get to the heart of what shapes Ballarat as a creative city.

In consultation with the creative sector, the creative identity of Ballarat as it currently stands was explored in detail, followed by an in-depth exploration of the possibilities of a future vision for the Creative City Strategy that can build on strengths of the sector and be shaped to achieve commonly agreed objectives.

### 2.1 Current Creative Identity

There is clear consensus that there is a growing presence of emerging creativity starting to shape Ballarat's identity as a diverse, enthusiastic, passionate, vibrant place. Independence is a defining factor, as independent creative people are often impressive self-starters who are behind many of the best creative entities in the city. This is reflective of increasing potential, increasing innovation and willingness to try new things, particularly from new creatives moving into the area, as well as increasing national prominence of creatives and creative events, including the Ballarat International Foto Biennale, Aunty Marlene Gilson, White Night Ballarat, and Pitcha Makin Fellas. [3]

**"I love the fact that artists and creative professionals are increasingly moving here and working here... it has an energy about it, a feeling that anything is possible."**

The creative identity of Ballarat is also considered to be embedded in the heritage of the city, which many feel brings with it a tendency towards conservatism, well demonstrated by the celebration of traditional arts and culture via the flagship institutions and major festivals and events in the city. To many within the sector, this has resulted in a creative identity that is stifled, dated, frustrated and undervalued and that fails to celebrate anything innovative, contemporary and challenging. This is a major factor in creating a very siloed and fractured creative identity, where different creatives and creative disciplines – particularly between the arts and culture sector and creative industries – are disconnected from each other with a very apparent lack of coordination.

**"The city has an incredible number of creative practitioners. But it's still an old town, with those old connections, networks and power structures."**

**"The conservative attitude from those who have lived here a long time and always done things a certain way. They have far too much power in decision making, and the balance at 'the table' needs addressing, with more creative people getting a say."**

Overwhelmingly, the key issue with the current creative identity is the lack of unity and coordination that can offer a strong, distinctive identity to put Ballarat on the map. There is a very apparent tug of war between holding onto the city's cultural heritage and making room for contemporary innovation to thrive, and a disconnect between individual creatives. As such, there is a sense of urgency around finding an equilibrium.

**“The middle ground is missing – there is plenty happening at the grassroots level and plenty of big things, but the middle where creative people can do things together and generate innovative ideas does not exist.”**

## **2.2 Creative City Vision**

When asked to envision the future of Ballarat as a creative city, stakeholders from across the creative industries overwhelmingly pointed to ways to support, nurture and leverage the local creative community from a grassroots level upward. Ensuring the spaces, places, funding and programs are in place to foster a sustainable grassroots creative workforce, where local talent is recognised and utilised, was seen as a major failure in the current state of play. [4]

**“The strategy has to look inward and nurture the creativity here, rather than looking outward. The skill and knowledge base is here for it to work.”**

**“There is a belief that the Bendigo model of cultural tourism will save us all. Sure, it's a seductive model but it doesn't support local industry.”**

The sector has pinpointed opportunities to achieve this, such as more collaborative meeting spaces and studios, investment in education and career pathways for the sector, as well as embracing innovation and contemporary approaches to creative practice. Stakeholders also acknowledge that this needs to be done in a way to stimulate the local economy and produce social and community outcomes, overall looking at how creative activity can collectively support and lift up the community to enable it to thrive. This revealed the importance of creativity in tackling societal issues such as Indigenous engagement, multicultural acceptance, youth engagement, education, and socioeconomic differences.

**“The city as a place must bring the voice of our important narratives forward to celebrate them in the way that they should be... We need to be enabling young Indigenous representatives – help them to get a leg up and a start.”**

Targeted interviews with key stakeholders and online community consultation highlighted the strength of Ballarat's contemporary Indigenous arts practitioners and the sentiment that Ballarat is beginning to connect its long history with contemporary resonance, investigating the impact of colonisation on culture and memory. There is a real sense that Indigenous culture needs to be captured in the vision for Ballarat as a creative city, with consultation indicating that the community value Indigenous culture, content and heritage and see a place for celebrating Indigenous culture and content in the creative precinct.

**“Priority exposure and educational resource to telling the Indigenous story of Ballarat and Australia over the common European component.”**

While a clear and single direction for a vision did not emerge, some of the key themes that were discussed included Ballarat as a place for incubating, educating and establishing creative talent, utilising the talent already here as well as building on the infrastructure on offer to create a city known as a creative education and professional development hub; Ballarat as a place where doing and being creative is wholeheartedly embraced across all disciplines and levels of talent and creativity is valued and nurtured as business; and tapping into unique characteristics and strengths, such as the long history of innovation and the growing number of innovation and tech hubs, to build a strong narrative and area of growth across creative industries.

**“If we want something sustainable, it needs to celebrate the Ballarat point of difference. Ballarat's history of innovation is still here and being celebrated.”**

**“We're not exploring the unique character of Ballarat in events, and the creative community is not involved. We could do a better job of exploring what Ballarat has to offer.”**



Community

Inclusive

Grassroots

Meeting

Supported

Risktaking

Innovation

Sustainable

Collaborative

Positive

Space

Local

Value

Authentic

Connected

Partnerships

Youth

Carriers

Pathways

Activation

Practice

Embedded

Nationalreach

Engagement

Incubation

Grants

Funding

Culture

Immersed

Vibrant

Engaged

Outreach

Place

Support

Desirable

Multiculturalism

Communication

Intercultural

Fringes

Thriving

Accessible

Destination

Education

University

Partner

Social

Brand

Everyday

Digital

Impact

Soul

Homegrown

Contemporary

Risk

Immerse

Attract

Leverage

Doing

Collaboration



## 3.0\_FLAGSHIP INSTITUTIONS

Flagship institutions are the leading and high-profile places and entities that define, shape and mark the identity of Ballarat as a creative city. Below are profiles of the institutions identified during stakeholder engagement as flagships, which are on the whole considered to be critical to shaping Ballarat's creative identity.

These flagship institutions fall into two clear categories: those that are highly visible and audience-facing, engaging first and foremost with the public; and those that are sector-facing, supporting a network of creative individuals, organisations and businesses behind the scenes.

### 3.1 Audience-facing

#### Art Gallery of Ballarat

The Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB) is the oldest regional gallery in Australia, the majestic 1880s building a point of pride for the people of Ballarat. A not-for-profit entity owned by The City of Ballarat, the quality of its comprehensive collection as well as the rich depth of home-grown and touring exhibitions it attracts has positioned the AGB as a strong tourism attractor at the heart of the city's creative precinct. It is also an institution well engaged with the local community, offering public and education programs, with consistently growing visitor numbers. [5]

On the whole, the creative sector holds the AGB in high regard, appreciating the value it adds to Ballarat's creative identity, and have high hopes for the newly appointed Director to take it from strength to strength.

Online community consultation results indicated 40 per cent of respondents believe the AGB exceeds a reasonable standard expected for a regional city, while an additional 14 per cent see the AGB as having a world class offer. However, statistics from the AGB show that engagement with the local community could be improved, with high numbers of travelling visitors coming to see major shows showcasing touring work, and overall low attendance from locals. [6]

#### 2015-16 Statistics:

- 187,000 visitors
- 130 public programs run
- 10,000 children in education programs
- 2015 budget: \$2.4m total revenue (including funding support, self-generated revenue and private support)
- 2016 budget: \$3.0m total revenue (including funding support, self-generated revenue and private support)

#### Her Majesty's Theatre

First opening its doors in 1875, Her Majesty's Theatre (HMT) has housed live performance for generations of locals and visitors to enjoy, shaping the cultural core of Ballarat as a place for theatrical entertainment. Owned and operated by The City of Ballarat in an agreement with the Royal South Street Society, the 890-seat venue accommodates the Royal South Street Society for approximately 10 weeks per year, local amateur performing companies for a further 6 weeks per year, and otherwise is available for third-party rentals and the HMT's own programming. The venue attracts a varied program of performing arts events from across the nation and overseas, including theatre shows, musical performances, dance, circus, cabaret, comedy acts, and children's performances, as well as providing space for rehearsals and events such as conferences. [7]

While the creative sector understands the value of having a venue to attract travelling shows and adores the heritage of the building, it is generally thought the space could be better utilised throughout the calendar year. The sector would like to see better management and strategic planning, ensuring governance models that can maximise the use of the venue and see it meet its full potential. The heritage status of the building has many limitations, creating challenges for performance groups and no longer meeting best practice standards.

**"Many of our major venues sit empty most of the year with no creative direction or vision."**

**"Ballarat's big institutions need to be more engaged with supporting grassroots creativity."**

#### 2016 Statistics:

- 58,000 annual attendees
- 90% attendance from locals

#### Sovereign Hill and Gold Museum

Sovereign Hill and the Gold Museum tells the history of Ballarat at the time of the goldrush, an invaluable cultural institution that reflects how Ballarat has been shaped today. An Australian tourism icon and the heart of the Goldfields region, the living museum with its working exhibits, costumed interpreters and visitor participation plays a significant role attracting national and international visitors to Ballarat, while also building local pride in the heritage that is the foundation of the city.

The Museum operates as an independent Trust, overseen by a Board and operated by an Executive Team with a predominantly commercial focus and supported by State funding. Despite being considered a flagship, Sovereign Hill plays little role in engaging or supporting the local creative sector or local community beyond providing a source of employment, firmly focused on its tourism and educational remit.

#### 2016-17 Statistics:

- 530,000 visitors
- 1,665 locals employed or volunteering
- Contribution to Victorian economy \$260m
- 2016 Income \$29m
- 2017 Income \$31.7m

Figure 5  
Ballarat’s Flagship Institution

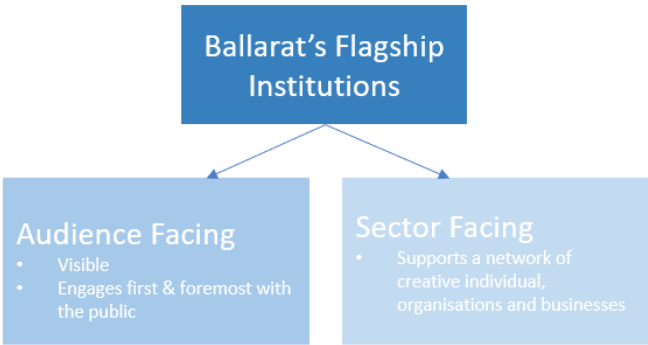


Figure 6  
Community Consultation – Galleries and Exhibitions

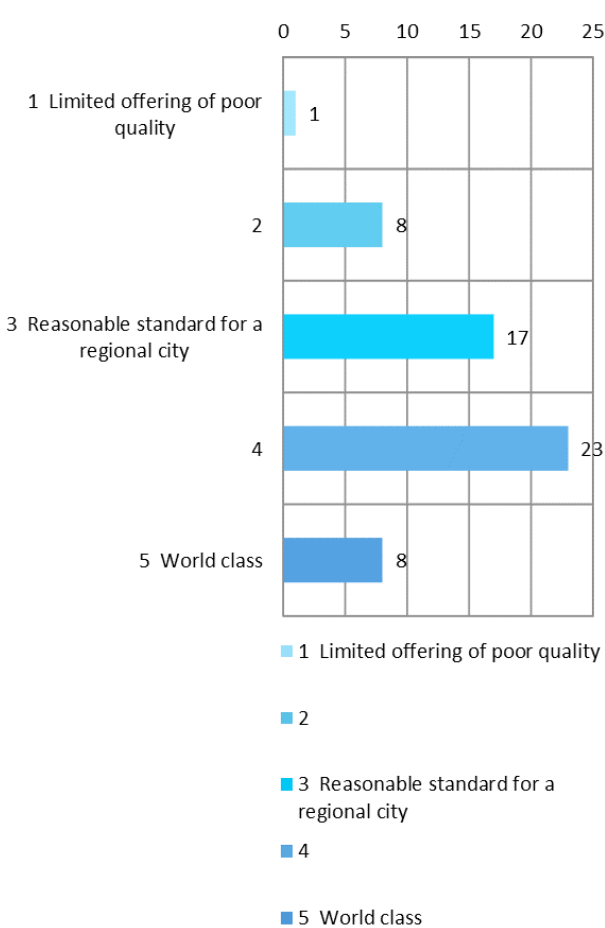
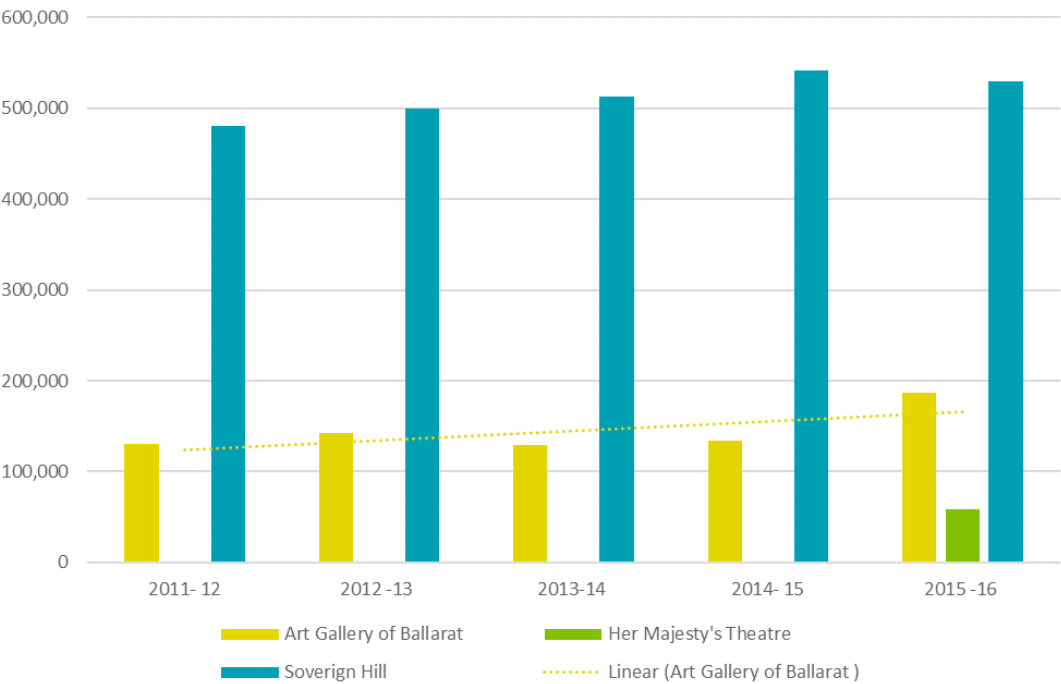


Figure 7  
Flagship Institutions Visitor Numbers



Source: Annual Reports, 2011-2017

### 3.2 Sector-facing

#### Federation University of Australia Arts Academy

The Arts Academy at Fed Uni is Ballarat's regional university dedicated to the training and education of artists and creatives, with the ambition to retain creative youth in the community and enable them to reach their creative potential. Established in 2001, visual arts, performing arts, music, communications and design feature as the key courses on offer attracting students from all over Victoria, Australia and overseas. The Arts Academy is located in the centre of Ballarat at the Camp Street Campus and incorporates a range of venues and infrastructure to support students and staff.

The student body attending the Arts Academy come from across the state, the country and the world, positioning Ballarat as a place where creatives can cut their teeth in visual arts, performing arts, music, communications and design – performing arts is considered to be the strongest of the programs on offer. However, there is critical concern from within Ballarat that there is a tendency to lose these students once they graduate, with no real professional opportunities for them to flourish.

**“We need investment in creative industries that allows graduates from Fed Uni courses to remain in Ballarat and work locally, keeping at least some of the talent cultivated here in town and contributing back to our economy.”**

There is also frustration from the creative sector at the lack of engagement and collaboration between the University and the city, particular around the public's access to utilising venues, and the activation of Camp Street Campus, which feels closed off to the public despite being at the heart of the city's cultural precinct. The Arts Academy is the custodian of some key heritage buildings, including the iconic Old Ballarat Post Office, Old Library, Sherriff's Office and Old Law Courts. The buildings are much loved and considered prime real estate that is not being capitalised upon appropriately to benefit the city, with no apparent plan or vision from within the University to invest in improving or leveraging the Academy.

**“The Arts Academy looks like a desert 99% of the time – it's not active, it's all closed up and shut off to the public.”**

Additionally, initial conversations with stakeholders indicate that the SMB campus is viewed as the University's biggest opportunity for investment, with the establishment of the Ballarat Tech School on this site.

#### Statistics:

- Approximately 300 students enrolled in the performing and visual arts

#### The City of Ballarat's Arts & Culture unit

The Council's Arts & Culture unit is an integral part of the creative sector in Ballarat, providing staff, resources, opportunities and funding to foster and promote local creativity and engage the community with arts and culture. This is reflected by the sector's consideration of the unit itself as flagship infrastructure.

Part of Council's Development and Planning department, the success of this unit is greatly attributed to resourceful, innovative, proactive and engaged Arts & Culture Coordinator, who has the drive and capability to work closely with local creatives to enable them to thrive.

The unit also manages specific supporting infrastructure, including spaces and programs. While most creatives applaud the work being done by the unit, some are frustrated by the lack of long-term support for projects and the lack of grant availability for community creatives.

In 2015 – 2016 The City of Ballarat spent \$6.06 on Arts and Culture for every \$100 of local rates.

**“We need to take better care of the most valuable people in our creative community and protect them from burning out – we can't afford to lose people from our Arts and Culture team.”**

#### 2015-16 Statistics:

- \$6.06 spent on Arts and Culture for every \$100 of local rates

## The City of Ballarat's Arts &amp; Culture - 2017 - 2018 snapshot

Initiatives	Artists Supported	Audience & Demographics	Community Partnerships
Backspace Gallery	93	Approx. 1,000 monthly, with increased numbers (~5000) associated with citywide events such as Foto Biennale; primarily attracting adults, with secondary market of all ages, backgrounds and abilities	Phoenix P12 Secondary College, Ballarat Vegan Festival, Ballarat Foto Biennale, Soldiers Hill Artists Collective, CoB Harmony Festival, MADE, FedUni Live Production Course, Creative Victoria
ContainART Mobile Gallery	32	Est. 200 people monthly, with increased numbers associated with citywide events such as Foto Biennale; primarily families and secondary market of adults	Ballarat North Neighbourhood House, Karden Foundation Arthur Creative. Ballarat Foto Biennale, Welcome House, Rural Australians For Refugees, Creative Victoria
ContainART Community Events x 5	26	Approx. 300 attending; primarily families and all ages, backgrounds, abilities	HanzOn Drumming, Make It Creative Arts, Invermay Progress Committee, U3A, Ballarat North Neighbourhood House, 1M Stars To End Violence Project
Unicorn Lane Gallery	35	Approx. 1,000 monthly, with increased numbers associated with citywide events such as Foto Biennale; primarily attracting adults, with secondary market of all ages, backgrounds and abilities	Ballarat North Neighbourhood House, 1M Stars To End Violence Project, Karden Foundation Arthur Creative
Backspace Readings Coconut Woman	7	25 attending; primarily Aboriginal adults and others from diverse cultural backgrounds	Wathaurong Corporation, KEAG, Creative Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria
17 Laneways Lumieres	6	Est. 1,000, primarily families and others of all ages, backgrounds and abilities	Ballarat Winter Festival
18 Ballarat Backyard Tasters	53	Approx. 1,000; primarily adults with secondary market of families and all ages, backgrounds, abilities	FedUni Performing Arts Course, Auspicious Arts; 6 local commercial food vendors
17 Ballarat LoungeRoom	9	Approx. 300; adults	Ballarat Mechanics Institute
17 Ballarat Laneways All Ages + After Dark	14	Approx. 750; primarily adults and young adults	CoB Youth Services; 3 local commercial food vendors
Kari Ikonen SKIPTICS Concert	7	Approx. 200; adults	Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues, Art Gallery Ballarat
Harmony Mandala	1	Approx. 5,000 overall (White Night event); primarily adults and families	CoB Cultural Diversity Week

### 3.3 Evaluation

#### Strengths

##### Audience-facing flagships:

- Present world-class calibre creative content from across Australia and overseas
- Attract tourist audiences from outside Ballarat, across Victoria, the country and overseas
- Provide a strong cultural core for Ballarat, founded in its history, heritage and the celebration of 'high' forms of creativity and culture
- Critical to shaping the identity and narrative of Ballarat

##### Sector-facing flagships:

- Focused on nurturing grassroots and emerging creatives through availability of opportunities
- Encouraging the development of a creative student body
- Many creatives from a wide range of disciplines with which they can engage

#### Weaknesses

##### Audience-facing flagships:

- Struggle to maintain engagement with the local community over what they offer
- Generally risk-averse, playing it safe by offering high profile and known content, rather than presenting contemporary, homegrown content
- Some inconsistency in directorship

##### Sector-facing flagships:

- Some inconsistency in directorship
- Lack of long term visioning and planning for how to support the sector
- Over reliance on key staff members
- Can be invisible to the public, with their impact going unnoticed

#### Opportunities

##### Audience-facing flagships:

- Increase opportunities to work with, engage and nurture local creative content
- Take more risks around programming to demonstrate the creative flair of Ballarat

##### Sector-facing flagships:

- Enhance engagement beyond the creative community, reaching new audiences
- Play a more critical role in activating the city

#### Threats

##### Audience-facing flagships:

- Lack of vision from directors to further grow the quality and profile already established
- Heritage buildings limiting the exploration of innovative creative work

##### Sector-facing flagships:

- Lack of vision or plan internally at Federation University potentially destabilising the future of the Arts Academy
- Failure to integrate the Arts Academy with the wider city and community





Image: Ballarat International Foto Biennale

## 4.0\_SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The supporting infrastructure of Ballarat's creative ecology is made up of the small-to-medium scale creative places, spaces, organisations, festivals and events, programmes and platforms that support the creative sector and engage audiences. These are the various entities that form the foundations of Ballarat as a creative city, supporting, nurturing and fostering Ballarat's creative identity by encouraging all stages of the creative process from making through to presenting, and representing creatives from all parts of the industry and at all levels from amateur to established.

The supporting infrastructure can be grouped into categories as described below, with reference to a selection of valuable entities that have been identified in discussions with the sector.

### 4.1 Council

The City of Ballarat has ownership of several facilities in addition to the Art Gallery and Her Majesty's Theatre, that make up the supporting infrastructure of Ballarat's creative ecology. These include Backspace Gallery, the Ballarat Library, Ballarat Town Hall, The Mining Exchange, the Civic Hall, and recently, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka.

These facilities meet a variety of needs at different levels of the creative sector, from providing space for community events and activities, through to promoting local creative work, and communicating the history of the city. These are largely presenting spaces for hire by external parties and cater to a variety of creative but primarily community needs.

The exception is Backspace Gallery, which is considered by the creative community to be an invaluable asset, with a clear focus on nurturing local creativity in an affordable, accessible and professional manner. Its success is greatly attributed to the staff running it, and the Council's capacity to offer such a space with such little financial commitment on behalf of the artist.

### 4.2 Community groups and amateur creative companies

There are a wide range of community facilities, groups and amateur organisations that are critical to underpinning the creative ecology in Ballarat. Key community venues include the Ballarat Mechanics Institute and Trades Hall, which are run by community groups who manage venue hire and facilitate access to collections. These venues are utilised for a range of creative and community uses, however, there is some frustration at the cost of accessing these spaces.

Key community groups and amateur companies have a tendency to focus on representing the arts, performing arts and music as well as wider community needs. Major creative and cultural groups and companies identified during stakeholder engagement included:

- Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative
- Ballarat Arts Alive
- Ballarat Arts Foundation
- Ballarat Choral Society
- Ballarat Film Society
- Ballarat Lyric Theatre
- Ballarat National Theatre Company
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council

- Ballarat Symphony Orchestra
- Ballarat Writers
- BLOC Music Theatre
- Soldiers Hill Artist Collective
- SONIKA Youth Group
- Tripwire Theatre Inc
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
- Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts.

This wide variety of organisations all have quite distinct purposes, but also many cross overs, and collaborate with one another to varying degrees. Many rely on accessing particular facilities to showcase the work of the community they represent, and many are run by and represent considerable talent.

It is also clear that many of these community initiatives are 'hidden', operating without dedicated facilities and without funding, but acting as invaluable conduits for creative individuals to come together, engage, support and create content with a strong support network. There is a sense within the creative community that many of these community organisations have such impressive professional capacity, that they could be untapped resources for nurturing and growing the overall professional strength of Ballarat as a creative city.

**“Community arts groups should be used as a platform to foster growth, drawing on the skills of exceptionally talented creatives and providing opportunity for students beyond their graduation.”**

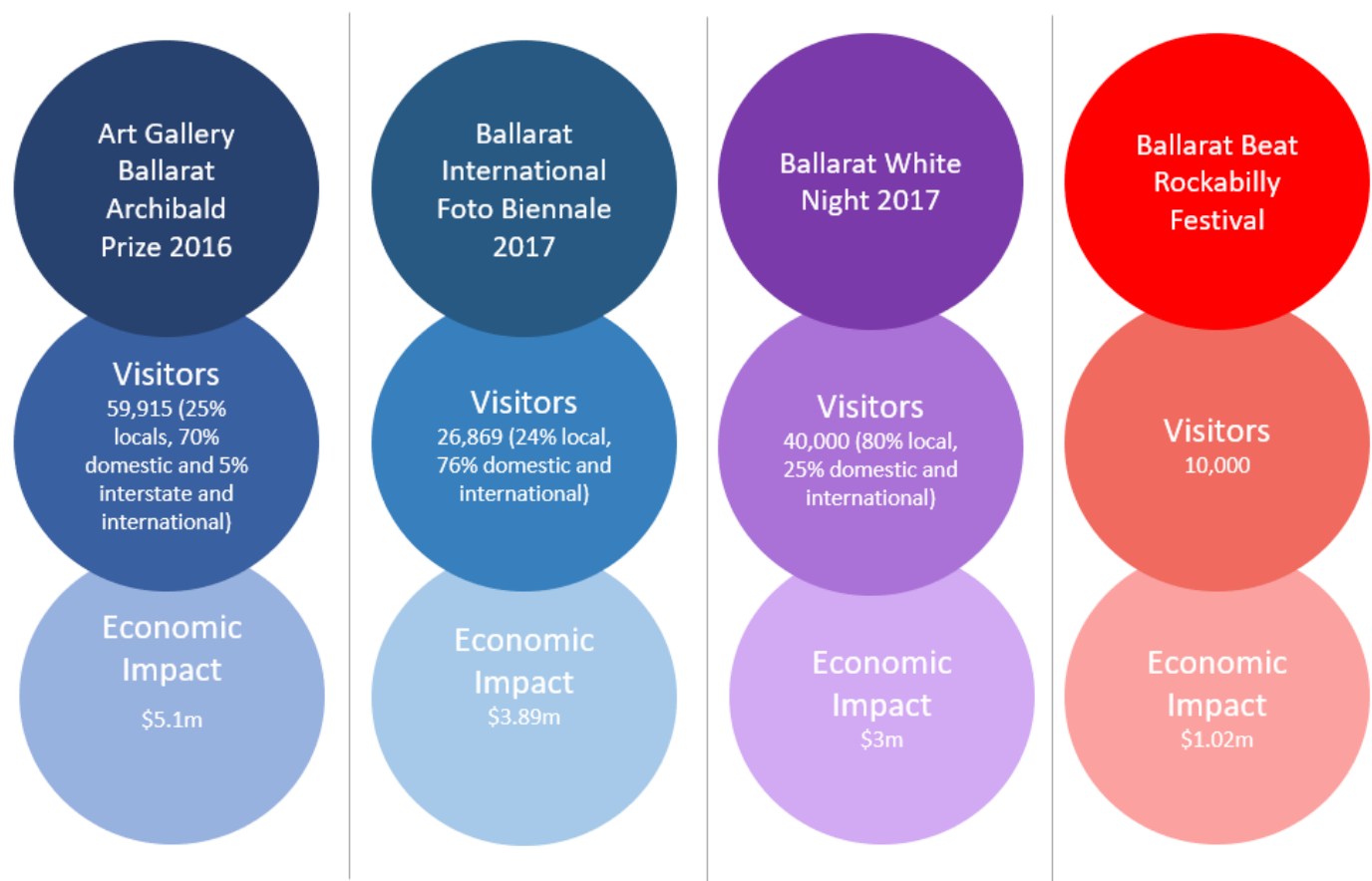
### 4.3 Education

The creative ecology's supporting infrastructure associated with the education system is primarily focused on Federation University's facilities, including the Art Academy's major venues the Post Office Gallery, the Courthouse Theatre and the Helen MacPherson Smith Theatre. The Academy also has numerous smaller facilities for the development and showcasing of creative content, including a black box theatre, white box studio, creative and rehearsal studios. These facilities are primarily utilised by the students, teaching staff and alumni of Federation University, with the performing arts spaces used as development, rehearsal and presenting venues, and the gallery showcasing work from the University cohort and its collection.

Meanwhile, Federation University's Ballarat Technology Park and the Ballarat Tech School open up avenues for creative industries education, at both a secondary and tertiary level, encouraging collaboration and capacity building through engagement and colocation with industry, and some of the local schools, in particular the private schools, also have excellent creative arts facilities dedicated to student use.

While there is some use of education facilities for showcasing locally produced creative content, there is an overarching feeling from the creative sector that they are underutilised and closed off to the wider creative community to access. These facilities are provided for student use first and foremost, which does not allow much access to them by the community's creative sector and in turn, encourage natural collaboration by uniting students with the sector. This is exacerbated by an 'us and them' mentality, with no shared vision for integrating the University and particularly the Arts Academy into the city.

Figure 8  
Top Performing Festivals and Events





**“There is a fracture between the City of Ballarat and Federation University. No one talks to each other. There is a lack of vision, and discussions are always between ‘us and them’.”**

#### **4.4 Festivals and events**

Festivals and events hold a dominant place in the creative ecology, with over 400 event and festival days in Ballarat in 2015-16, a significant number of which showcase and promote the creative sector. [8]

The major creative festivals in the current calendar include White Night Ballarat, the Ballarat International Foto Biennale (BIFB), the Ballarat Beat Rockabilly Festival, and the up and coming inaugural Biennale of Australian Art (BOAA).

Targeted interviews revealed that festival leaders of the Ballarat International Foto Biennale and the upcoming Biennale of Australian Art see the city as well placed for events, and an ideal location for a regional biennale in terms of scale and impact. With the right support and coordination from Council, it is felt that these contemporary festivals have the potential to dramatically reshape the Ballarat brand and make a far-reaching contribution to establishing Ballarat’s profile as a creative city.

Other community festivals and events include the Ballarat Show, the Begonia Festival, Ballarat Heritage Weekend, and Harmony Fest, all of which contribute to and stimulate the city’s broader cultural scene.

It is strongly felt by the creative community that the majority of the creative festivals and events have a tendency to present and support creatives from outside of Ballarat, importing creative content and work into the city. This is also mirrored by some of the festival models themselves, which have been replicated from other parts of the world (e.g. White Night). There is frustration that the local creative sector is not being sufficiently represented at these festivals and events, and a sense that the city should be enabled to dream up its own festivals without turning to outside models.

**“Our festivals are great, but they are failing to bring up and nurture local creatives and performers.”**

**“We need to stop replicating initiatives from elsewhere and build our own ideas.”**

There is also reported frustration around the tendency for festivals and events to happen once or twice, with no long-term commitment or funding support from local or State government often meaning they fail or move away from the region after a few attempts to get going. Sustainability of the creative sector is of considerable importance to local creatives, and this event and festival mindset fails to nurture this long term planning and stability.

**“Ballarat needs to move beyond only promoting festivals and one-off events and start thinking about the longevity of the city.”**

**“I see initiatives such as White Night to be temporary and longevity is what we need to exercise in the future of our city.”**

#### **4.5 Commercial**

Commercial entities that support the creative ecology in Ballarat are diverse and encompasses private galleries, private music and performance venues, and commercial performing arts schools, as well as retail and hospitality ventures, coworking spaces, and leisure and entertainment venues. Some of these commercial entities are particularly notable and influential on the creative ecology, with business such as the Lost Ones Gallery and Karova Lounge being pinpointed by the creative sector as invaluable to creative city identity.

Both private galleries and music venues have had particular influence in supporting local creative talent and creating a vibrant creative scene in Ballarat, but unfortunately major venues such as Suttons House of Music have closed down, due to issues with renegotiating the lease. The expense of and lack of flexibility around private property was noted by many creatives as often presenting a major barrier for local talent.

Commercial ventures such as retail and hospitality are also flourishing and heavily contributing to the creative ecology, pushing the creative factor into non-traditional sectors of food production, brewing and retail experiences. These are valuable complimentary offers that greatly support the cultural core, with places like Hop Temple, Mitchell Harris Wine Bar, the Local Café and Ballaristas showcasing creative practice through pop up gallery spaces, gigs and participation in key local events.

What has been critical to the success of many of these commercial entities has been the innovative thinking, risk taking and commitment from a few select individuals who have made these thriving creative venues. The people who run these commercial entities are playing a significant role in shifting the creative identity of Ballarat, demonstrating that a creative place is much more than its flagship cultural institutions, and that the creative industries flourishing in hidden places add a valuable layer to the city.

#### **4.6 Programmes and platforms**

Ballarat’s creative programmes and platforms have an important role in supporting, nurturing and promoting the creative ecology, and exist beyond the buildings and facilities that exist within the city. These are digital platforms, media outlets and professional development programmes that offer unique ways to stimulate creative capability within the community.

Platforms like Visit Ballarat, Best of Ballarat, Ballarat Courier and the local community radio are vital to communicating the output of the creative sector, however anecdotal evidence shows that these platforms are not always in alignment with, or even connected to, the creative sector. There is a big demand to make sure the creative ambitions of the city are recognised and supported by these promotional platforms that have significant opportunity to reach both local but also visiting audiences and promote a creative Ballarat brand. Meanwhile, platforms like Arts Atlas, while considered to have positive origins, are not working to their full potential, and would benefit from improved financing and dedicated staffing to grow their capacity as a valuable tool for connecting and promoting the overall creative sector.

There is significant demand from the creative sector for programmes that promote collaboration, resource and skill sharing, mentorship and advocacy for Ballarat as a creative city. Ballarat's Leadership Program demonstrated the attractiveness of this kind of opportunity, and Lost Ones Gallery is currently offering these meet up events for the creative industries. However, there is overwhelming demand for broader programmes and opportunities that can maximise knowledge sharing and build a strong platform for sector promotion. Minimal professional development opportunities can be found within Ballarat, failing to support or nurture any creatives beyond their tertiary education.

**"Resources required are more than space – skills and knowledge, meeting and connection opportunities, practice, skill share models, funding."**

**"Ballarat needs proactive support for the creative arts industries who seek to make Ballarat their home base, and affordable coworking office and incubator spaces for creative industry practitioners, to help train and educate those in the creative industries as to how to become sustainable and profitable enterprises."**

#### 4.7 Public space

Public realm, creative precincts and city streets are a valuable part of the creative ecology, with places like Alfred Deakin Place, Camp Street, Lydiard Street, and Sturt Street noted as important public precincts tied into the city's creative identity. However, there is a feeling that much of the public space in the city is ripe for reinvention, and ready for clear statements of creative content including public art and creative activation. The areas pinpointed for improvement include the train station precinct, and the areas around the Arts Academy.

Overall, there is frustration at the hidden nature of the creative sector, which is often invisible to the public eye as it happens behind closed doors. There is a desire to get more creativity into the lives of everyday people, out into the streets, and into the communities beyond the CBD. Initiatives like Contain Art, run by Council, have begun to strive for this kind of engagement, but it is very apparent that the nature of the city's heritage does keep a great deal of creativity off the streets and limited by conservative venues.

**"All our creativity is invisible and indoors! People that live here have no idea what goes on inside most buildings. Make it open, accessible and visible. Heritage is suffocating our growth and vibrancy by keeping us visually stuck in the 1800s."**

#### 4.8 Evaluation

##### Strengths

- Plenty of space within the city dedicated to showcasing creative work across the visual arts, performing arts and music
- Great presence from Council and education bodies providing supporting infrastructure
- Thriving festival and events scene driving significant engagement with the sector
- Evidence of a thriving music sector, ranging from contemporary live music to classical
- Growing number of non-traditional creative practice across retail, food, wine, and brewing establishing a strong complimentary offer to traditional creative experiences

##### Weaknesses

- Oversupply of venues to present and showcase work, with an undersupply of infrastructure to support the growth and professional development of the sector
- Too many large performance venues, with no mid-sized venues that the various theatre groups can access and utilise
- Majority of creative activity happening behind closed doors and not visible to the public
- Inaccessibility of spaces that could support local creatives, especially through the Arts Academy
- Underutilised public realm that fails to sell the creative identity of Ballarat
- No coordinated approach or clear lines of communication about what is happening in the creative sector
- Overarching lean towards catering to visiting audience and touring creatives rather than nurturing local audiences and talents

##### Opportunities

- Maximising underutilised space to meet the demands of the local creative sector
- Maximise the strengths of community groups to foster a culture of professional development
- A coordinated approach to promoting, marketing and supporting the local creative sector
- Dedicated programmes and platforms to nurture the growth and capability of the sector
- Investment in the public realm to create great outdoor, creative spaces
- A shared vision and formal agreement between the City and Arts Academy to see both collectively flourish

##### Threats

- Too many visions and differing opinions about how the city should progress, continuing to result in a lack of communication and coordination across the sector
- Lack of coordination and communication across the annual program/offer of festivals and events
- Heritage nature of the city and conservative attitudes stifling attempts at innovation and creative growth of the city
- Local creative community being priced out of accessibility of any venues and facilities



## 5.0\_CONSTITUENCIES FOR CREATIVITY

The constituencies for creativity are defined as the broad range of individuals across the local, national and international community that participate in and engage with the creative sector. An expansive category, this encompasses the creative workforce across all industries within the sector; the local audiences and visitor audiences; as well as the businesses supporting and engaging with the creative ecology in Ballarat. An evaluation of these constituencies assists in understanding the appetite within Ballarat to access, engage with, participate in and be part of the creative sector.

### 5.1 Creative workforce

The creative workforce spans all creative individuals, collectives and businesses who actively participate in arts, creative or cultural activity. This ranges from those who physically create content themselves, to those working as support staff in cultural institutions, including volunteers, and includes all segments of the creative industries.

SGS's economic analysis (see Ballarat's creative economy background paper), indicates that Ballarat's cultural and creative industries profile is similar to that of Regional Victoria overall. Key insights regarding the creative workforce include:

- Ballarat has a similar number of residents who work in creative industries to the number of creative industry jobs, with approximately 1,900 workers in 2016. This represents 1.9 per cent of the total resident workforce in Ballarat;
- Internet and digital services is largest sector of creative industries in Ballarat, with 30 per cent of total creative industry jobs in 2016. This may be inflated by the presence of IBM Service Centre at the Ballarat Technology Park;
- Libraries, archives and museums is second largest, at 14 per cent in 2016. This was the largest share for this sector compared to Greater Melbourne, Regional Victoria and Victoria overall, again indicating Ballarat has a level of specialisation or concentration of employment in this industry.

Compared to other regions, Ballarat has a smaller proportion of design, advertising and music, performing and visual arts, however these are also some of the city's growing sectors, in particular, design, music, performing and visual arts and education. The figure below shows this evidence in employment growth in each creative industry sector between 2006 and 2016.

Two sectors detracted from growth in Ballarat, namely, fashion and publishing. This is likely driven by the overall decline in manufacturing industry across Regional Victoria.

There is clear agreement from the sector that Ballarat's strength is its significant number of individual creatives who work locally, representing a wide spread range of creative industries, and forming a large cohort who are passionate about Ballarat being a creative city.

This includes people who have lived in the region for a long time, but also an increasing number of creatives moving to Ballarat, many coming from Melbourne due to being priced out of the big city or coming to attend the Arts Academy. [9-11]

It is this grassroots level of the creative community that needs and wants the capacity to grow, with the appetite to experiment, collaborate, showcase and engage audiences with their work. Keeping the creatives that the city attracts is proving to be a threat to the long-term stability of the creative sector.

**“More could be done with support of grass roots creative projects and for local, semi local and truly innovative international artists.”**

The creative workforce also includes those working professionally at a management level, operating venues and facilities, and delivering programs, festivals and events. These creative workers are in most cases seen as vital leaders within the creative ecology, often controlling funding and facilities and armed with the power to create and deliver on opportunities.

**“Our creative leaders are often constrained, but they have time, money and power to make things happen.”**

The Indigenous creative workforce is of particular importance to Ballarat's creative ecology. An increasing awareness of Indigenous creative and culture has come with the emergence of Auntie Marlene Gilson on the national stage and members of her family in leadership roles in the Ballarat arts community; the success of Pitcha Makin Fellas being programmed in major national and international events and having paintings collected by significant institutions; and the growing reputation of artist Josh Muir. From both within and outside of the Indigenous community, there is an urgency to use this momentum to embed Indigenous narratives and creativity in education and youth institutions, not only to build on the awareness of the value of Indigenous creativity and culture, but also to empower youth to draw on creativity as an outlet.

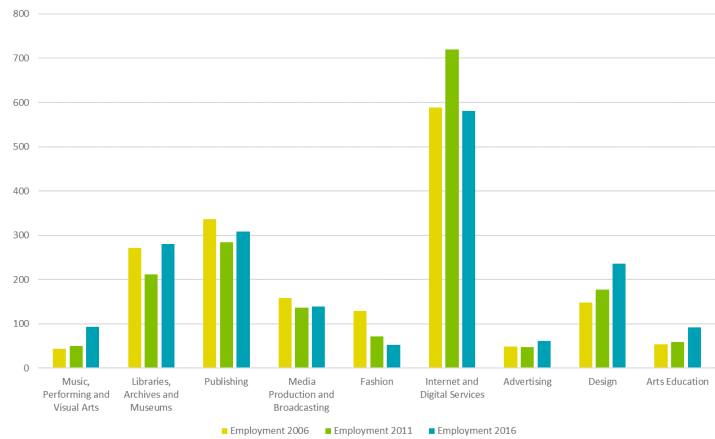
**“The world of our tomorrow is in our children, we need to capture their imaginations early and not wait until they are exhausted, by the time the children grow older and reach university we can set an example by tapping into junior institutions to shape the City of Ballarat from fresh eyes and fresh generations...”**

Consultation with the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation indicated that there are no studio and work spaces for creative practice and community workshops available in the city, or a place where young people can come to work down town. Workshops are currently held at private residences or a space for hire, rather than at the centrally located headquarters of Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation in Mair St and/or BADAC due to space restrictions.

There are several key insights to be noted when considering the creative workforce:

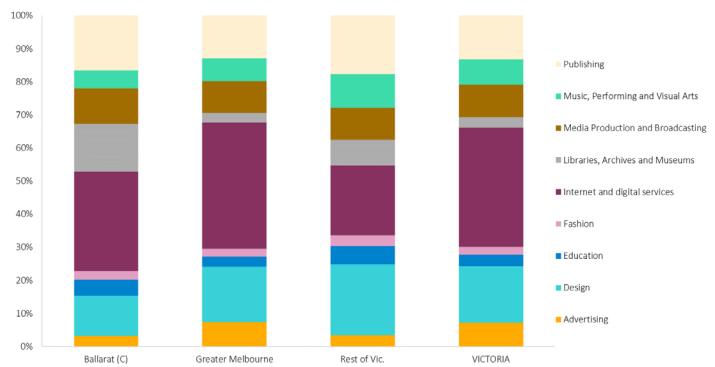
- There is a tendency for the creative workforce to be siloed and fractured, with little interaction, collaboration or unification across different artforms and industries
- Not all those within the creative workforce will consider their creativity to be their primary source of income, often working in the industry as a second job part time or in their spare time.
- Many in the creative workforce do not get paid at all, offering their time and passion as a volunteer
- Many individuals within the creative workforce do not work in a formal setting, often operating out of their homes, back gardens and sheds

Figure 9  
Cultural and Creative Industries Employment



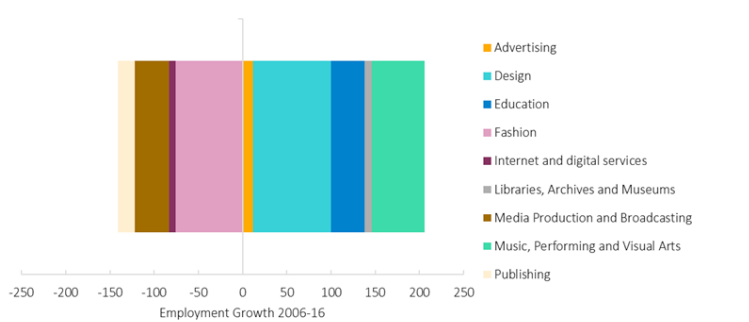
Source: ABS Census for years 2006, 2011 and 2016. Based on place of work

Figure 10  
Creative Industry Sectors, 2016



Source: ABS Census, place of work data.

Figure 11  
Creative Industry Sector Employment Growth, 2016



Source: ABS Census, place of work data.

**“There are no common places or hubs for creatives to meet in the city. We need to find ways to get people to talk to one another.”**

**“Very few creatives can currently be dependent on their creative practice as full-time work – this poses a serious threat to the industry.”**

## 5.2 Audiences

The audiences engaging with Ballarat’s creative sector play a vital role in enabling the creative ecology to function, but also to flourish, with audience demand driving growth and success. Audiences are generally seeking unique experiences, cultural enrichment, entertainment and education from their engagement with creativity, on the whole looking for ways to promote their pleasure and wellbeing. The audiences for Ballarat’s creative sector include local audiences from within the LGA, visiting audiences who travel to the LGA, and online audiences who engage with creativity via digital platforms. [12]

### Local

According to ABS data, Ballarat’s local community is generally well engaged with its own creative sector. Attendance to arts activities by locals in Ballarat is consistent with national averages (82 per cent attended arts in Ballarat compared to 83 per cent national figure) but participation was notable higher in Ballarat than the national average (33 per cent vs 25 per cent). This data shows that much of this attendance is within the music industry, which supports feedback from the sector that this is one of the city’s creative strengths. Cinema also plays a major role in stimulating these attendance figures. Participation is strongest around visual arts and crafts.

There is also clear evidence from the ABS that attitudes in regional Victoria are strong when it comes to making contributions to the creative sector, through donating money to the arts, but particularly when it comes to committing time to volunteering. While the data is not specific to Ballarat, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that Ballarat locals are highly engaged in volunteering and participating in community groups who support the creative ecology. Local groups such as the Soldiers Hill Artist Collective have an immensely strong volunteer effort, while there appears to be a rise in local philanthropy through the Biennale of Australian Art and the Gurigus New Art Prize.

According to the creative sector, local audiences are looking for a number of different points of value when they engage with their own creative sector, including connection to their own community and social cohesion, entertainment and leisure opportunities, educational experiences, but also pride and a sense of belonging to the city.

However, there are a number of issues presented by the local community audience which the creative sector struggles to overcome. The size of the population does mean the pool of people to engage with the sector is limited, and the range of creativity on offer far outweighs the size of the local market. There is a reliance on people coming from further afield to engage with what is happening locally. This is further perpetuated by struggles

to attract people from across the LGA to travel outside of their community, but also by a struggle to promote positive attitudes about creativity within the local population. There is also the feeling that there is a significant degree of conservatism in the community, often suppressing the appetite for innovative, challenging and contemporary creative work. Attitudes need to be shifted to ensure the community understands the value of different forms of creativity, and that a creative city is much more than its heritage venues. [13]

**“There is so much creativity happening in and around Ballarat. The audience does not really meet the supply! We need to cultivate the audience and also support local artists wherever and whenever we can.”**

**“We need to remove the conservative attitude from those who have lived here for a long time and always done things a certain way. They have far too much power in decision-making, and the balance at ‘the table’ needs addressing, with more creative people getting a say.”**

**“There is an urgent need here – but also right across society – to collectively change the point of view about the importance of creativity.”**

### Visiting

Visiting audiences from outside Ballarat who come to the city to engage with the arts, culture and creativity on offer, are particularly attracted to the flagship institutions or major festival and event periods. With over 400 days of the year offering events in 2015-16, the major drawcard cultural and creative events including the Archibald Prize, the Foto Biennale and the Rockabilly Festival made a significant bearing on visitor numbers and economic impact. Visitors are also looking for experiences unique to Ballarat, seeking to engage with the culture and history of the city and discover enriching offers across food, drink, creativity and entertainment. Many visitors will tend not to stray far from the inner city.

#### 2015-16 Statistics:

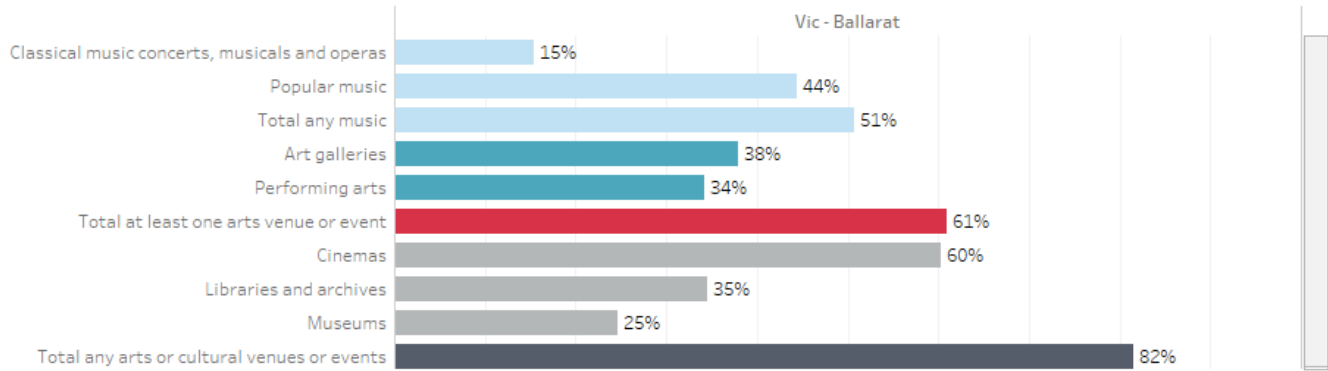
- 138,000 daytripper visits
- 137,000 overnight stays
- Economic impact from visitation \$34.8m
- Economic impact from events \$15m
- Economic impact from creative drawcard events \$7.5m

The creative sector understands the value of visiting audiences but feels the opportunity is being missed to promote the unique characteristics and talents of the local creative community to these visitors, such as the strength of local Indigenous visual artists or the talents of local musicians. Creative offers that attract visitors are primarily showcasing work by creatives from other parts of the country or overseas, frustrating locals who believe they should be prioritised. There is an overwhelming opinion that local creative work has the capability to be nurtured, developed and produced in situ and then presented locally to attract audiences as well as being toured beyond the region, celebrating the unique identity and strengths within Ballarat.

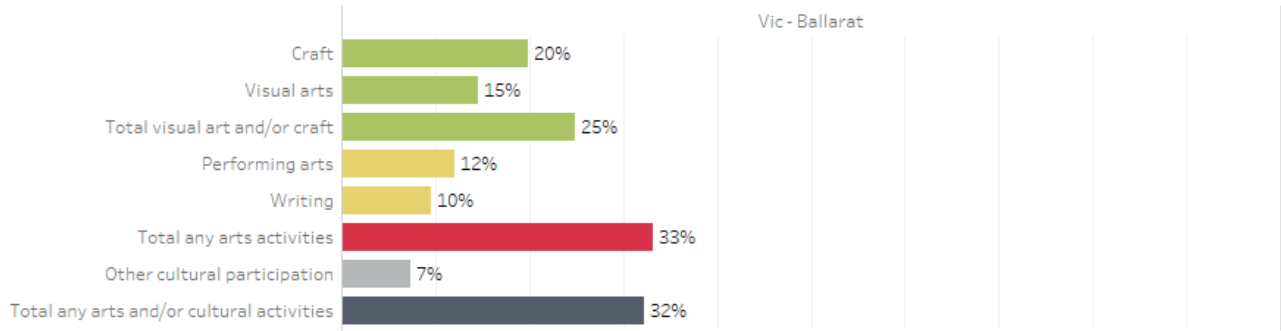
**“There is visitor demand for a distinctive and uniquely Ballarat experience that is culturally enriching and artistically intimate, but visitors are being offered imported content that fails to invest in Ballarat’s inherent creativity.”**

Figure 12  
Ballarat’s Engagement and Participation in the Arts: Local Region Arts Engagement dashboard

Proportion of Australians (aged 15+) who attended arts, June 2013 - July 2014:

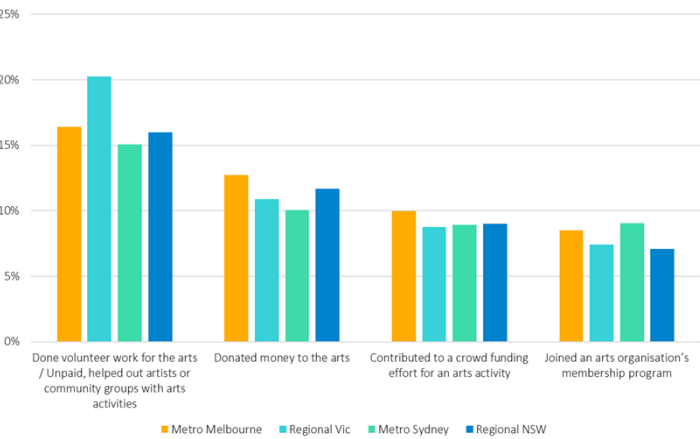


Proportion of Australians (aged 15+) who participated in arts, June 2013 - July 2014:



Source: Australia Council, ABS (2013-14).

Figure 13  
Proportion of the population giving to the Arts



Source: ABS (2015 – 16)

**“If the Creative City Strategy is going to be sustainable it has to come from local authenticity – this is our point of difference.”**

### Digital

Digital audiences are increasingly relevant and important to the creative ecology, offering opportunities for Ballarat’s creativity to reach parts of the world that would before never have been possible. While this was only touched on by the creative sector, it has been acknowledged that this cannot be ignored in a world that is increasingly digitally connected. For a digital audience appetite to build for Ballarat’s creative sector, better connectivity will be a critical foundation, followed by establishing a distinctive online offer that online audiences can access and engage with.

### 5.3 Businesses

Local business as a whole, while not strictly part of the creative ecology, are beginning to have a more significant role in Ballarat’s creative ecology. This is particularly evidenced in the work being done around Ballarat Evolve, demonstrating there is an appetite for businesses to support and nurture creative content, especially if there is a benefit in it for them. There are also numerous micro-business and local shops who are actively supporting the creative sector, with cafes and retail stores becoming valuable platforms for showcasing the work of creatives.

Notably, there is a great desire from the creative sector for creativity to be taken more seriously as business, with demand for spaces and services that can teach creatives the business of creativity and stimulate them to become more self-sufficient.

### 5.4 Evaluation

#### Strengths

##### Creative workforce:

- Rich diversity in the types of creative industries represented
- Willingness to be resourceful and do things independently of funding or formal frameworks
- Growing number of creatives moving to the area, attracted by affordability and increasing reputation as a creative city

##### Audiences:

- Local audiences who are generally well engaged with creative content
- Great appetite from external audiences to travel to Ballarat for creative experiences

#### Weaknesses

##### Creative workforce:

- Very siloed and independent from one another, particularly between different industry sectors
- Lack of professional confidence or capability to be able to make creative practice a sustainable profession
- Some degree of expectation that all creatives should be funded to undertake their practice

##### Audiences:

- Local market is not big enough or hungry enough to sustain local creative content
- Difficulty getting locals who are not connected to the creative sector and in the outlying communities to engage with it or appreciate the value of a creative city
- Visiting audiences have expectation around the quality of creativity on offer, now expecting world class touring content

#### Opportunities

##### Creative workforce:

- Providing space and opportunity to encourage collaboration within the sector
- Improved local funding opportunities and long term to commitment to local talent and initiatives
- Professional development programs and facilities to stimulate the capability of the local sector

##### Audiences:

- Foster local appreciation for and pride in local creativity
- Creative innovative ways to get local audiences to naturally connect with and experience creativity and the arts
- Increase visiting audience perceptions of the value of local creative talents by continuing to showcase work in highly visible places

#### Threats

##### Creative workforce:

- Losing graduate students to other, more creative centres
- Established creatives looking to move out of the capital are attracted to other centres
- No incentive to leave home studios, and therefore failure to maximise collaborative and coworking opportunities

##### Audiences:

- Lack of buy in to the value of culture from high levels of Council and community
- Backlash from community at the investment being made in local creativity, when other demands are seen as of high value





Image: The Lost Ones Gallery

# 6.0\_THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The creative environment in which Ballarat’s creative ecology is located has been examined in detail within the boundaries of the City of Ballarat Local Government Area, in order to understand clusters and spread of activity, the dynamics related to these different clusters and the way that people engage with this activity dependent on its location. Understanding this creative environment is critical to the sound planning of strategies and programs that address the very different needs and requirements across Ballarat.

The figure on the opposite page [14] shows a digitised version of the map produced by stakeholders during the stakeholder workshops. As expected, much of the activity is clustered in the central business district. However, it is important to note the geographic spread of activity reaches beyond the city centre as seen with emerging clusters at Soldiers Hill, Brown Hill, to the south at Mount Pleasant and in and around Lake Wendouree. This geographic spread is unpacked further in the following pages.

## 6.1 CBD Arts Precinct

At the heart of Ballarat’s CBD is the city’s arts precinct, a cluster of buildings between Lydiard and Camp Streets, including the Art Gallery of Ballarat, the Arts Academy, the Post Office Gallery, Helen Macpherson Smith Theatre, Karova Lounge, the Mining Exchange, Ballarat Trades Hall, Backspace Gallery, and the Lost Ones Gallery. These form the heart of Ballarat’s creative ecology, home to most of the flagship institutions and notable supporting infrastructure. The focus is firmly on more traditional creative practices of visual arts and performing arts. [15]

The CBD cluster is in most cases the first port of call for visitors to the city who are seeking to engage with arts, culture and creativity, with the close proximity of the different landmark venues making the precinct a significant flagship in of itself. It also benefits from its location, accessible from the Ballarat train station, the wider CBD and neighbouring urban offers such as retail and hospitality.

**“The walkability and access around the CBD and our proximity to Melbourne is very marketable to visitors.”**

This precinct is dominated by the creative workforce responsible for managing these venues, with small numbers of creative practitioners based within and working from this precinct. The creative sector has voiced the need for getting more individual creatives engaged with the arts precinct, stimulating a more productive conversation and supportive relationship between the flagship institutions and local creative community, but also to diversify the types of creative industries that define Ballarat as a creative city beyond visual and performing arts.

Figure 15

Maker spaces and collaborative artistic work spaces

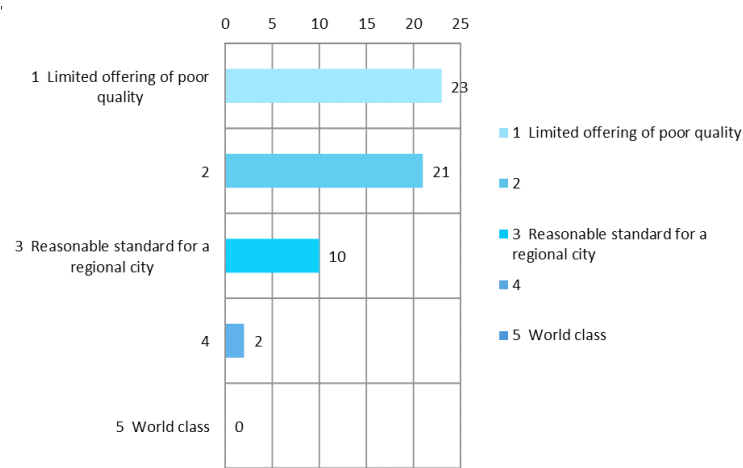
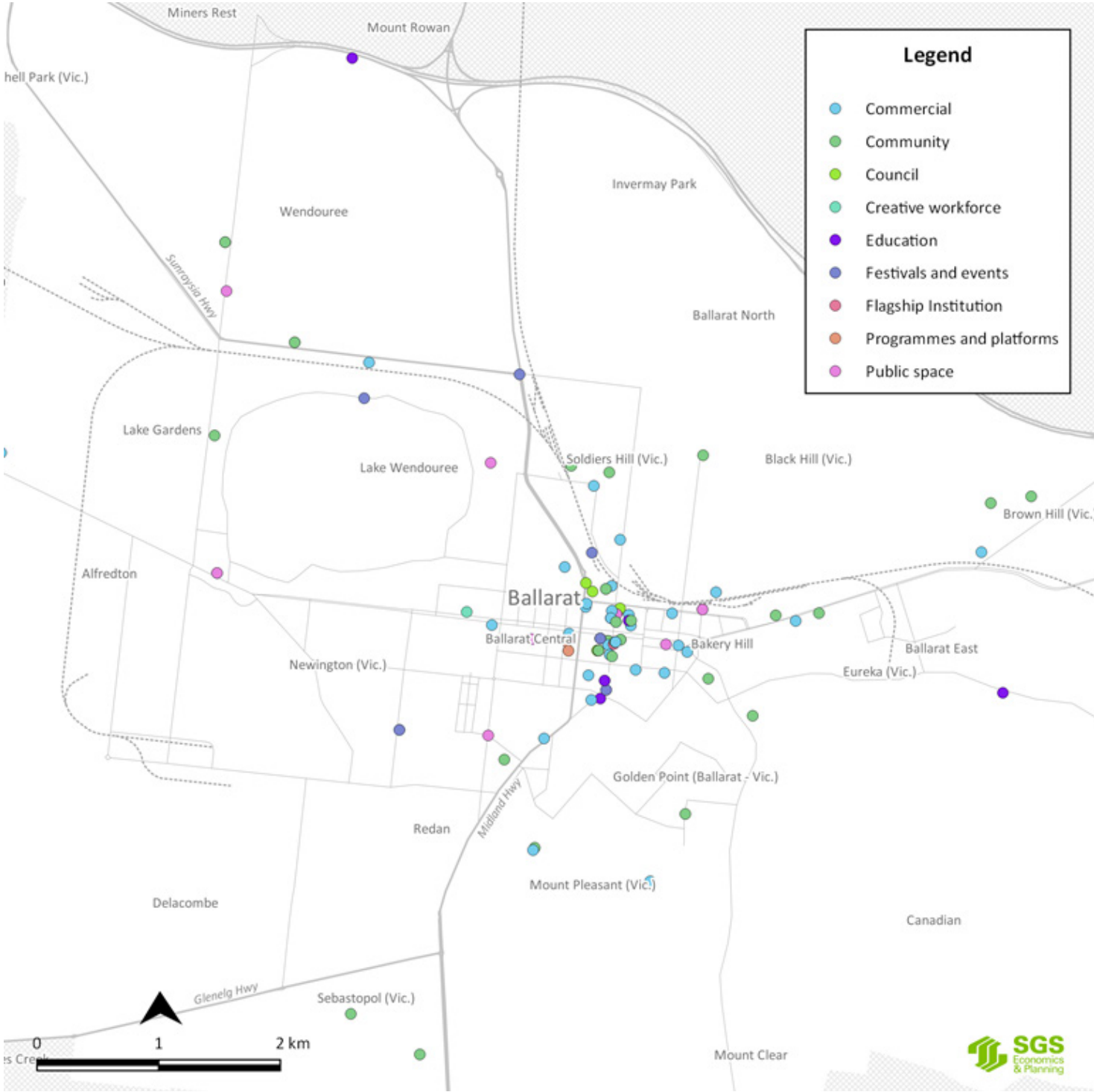


Figure 14  
Geographic spread of Ballarat’s creative ecology





## 6.2 Ballarat City

Beyond the heart of the CBD, there is a spread of other creative facilities and entities that support the city's creative ecology. While this is quite dispersed across the city, there are several creative clusters and precincts, including the Federation University's SMB campus and its surrounds, the blocks surrounding the Sturt Street and Lydiard Street junction, Ballarat East, and the Lake Wendouree precinct. The types of creative activity throughout the city are diverse and varied, with no clear clusters of particular industries in one place. However, strong creative facilities like the Courthouse Theatre and Civic Hall do seem to attract supporting creative infrastructure, with creative hospitality, retail and street art tending to flourish in close proximity to places where there is a critical mass of creative workers and content.

What is particularly noticeable across the city is the number of empty and underutilised spaces, which the creative sector is very vocal about accessing and maximising to drive a more creative Ballarat. The overwhelming message gathered through workshops, one-on-one consultation and the community survey was that there is a real desire for affordable, accessible spaces dedicated to supporting and nurturing the local creative sector and placing this creativity in the eye of the public. This ranges from affordable equipped studio spaces, collaborative work environments, making spaces and dedicated places to meet and network, all places to let grassroots creativity happen and flourish.

Director of Lost Ones Gallery, Tara Poole, has been investigating this need, and has recently launched Ballarat Evolve in conjunction with the Ballarat Arts Foundation to connect creatives with the owners of empty properties and shopfronts. The ambition of Ballarat Evolve is to give artists and creatives workspaces to encourage their growth and build capacity, while bringing life back to the city's empty spaces.

**“We need to plan and deliver ways to disperse this creativity to be seen by and accessible to those within, across and beyond the CBD.”**

Beyond the city, there are individual creative practitioners scattered right across the Local Government Area, some of which cluster in the region's suburbs and communities. Suburbs such as Soldiers Hill, Delacombe, Wendouree and beyond that, Learmonth and Buninyong have community halls, arts centres and organisations where creative activity – particular around the visual arts – flourishes.

However, there are also a lot of gaps across the LGA, where there is little to no infrastructure to support a creative community. This has been particularly noted in new developments like Lucas, where the creative sector can see the opportunity to embed creative spaces into the infrastructure at this early stage of planning and building, to ensure gaps are filled and the needs of the community are suitably met.

There is often a real difficulty getting people from the broader LGA to engage with creative content, particularly when there is no suitable infrastructure or community groups nearby. Many who live outside the city rarely come into town, with those working in Melbourne often bypassing their own city each day. The creative sector acknowledges that more needs to be done to drive engagement with the wider LGA, finding a balance between getting creative content out to the suburbs and getting regional creatives both within and outside of the creative community into the city.

**“People from across the region need motivators to get them to come together and be engaged with the creative community: we have to mix it up, get people in for a variety of different reasons that will then cause them to engage with creativity.”**

Figure 16  
Example of local entrepreneurship/leadership



EVOLVE: The Ballarat Art Foundation's Paula Nicholson and Tara Poole on the stairs of the empty for a decade Ballarat Business Centre on Sturt St. Picture: Caleb Clift.

## New program to link artists with landlords for city's renewal

# EVOLVE A CITY

**BY CALED CLIFF**

A NEW program drawing inspiration from the Renew Newcastle and Renew Australia initiatives has been launched in Ballarat.

Named Ballarat Evolve, the program will trial until December and involves bringing together artists, landlords, real estate agents and other interested parties to open empty retail spaces in the CBD for free use by artists until commercial tenants can be found.

It is being managed by the Ballarat Arts Foundation

(BAF), the region's primary grant-making body for artists and creative makers.

The program came into being after Ballarat business owners noticed a shift in retail behaviours in the CBD, and is the result of careful research involving mapping unused shopping spaces and surveying Ballarat residents about a range of issues including safety, parking, sustainability and overall change.

Paula Nicholson, BAF chair, says the research proves that change in the CBD is happening.

**FULL STORY pp.4,5**



**EMPTY SPACES:** Tara Poole walked the streets of Ballarat noting the existence of buildings that were for lease or sale, or were visibly derelict.

of the direction of the CBD's future was discussed.

"He advised me on the changing nature of the centre of the city, specifically about the impact of big developments on the outskirts meaning retailers are pulled to the circle surrounding the city. This leaves a vacuum in certain parts of the city centre and that means change of use, which is all part of the evolution."

Tara Poole is adamant the program is not about casting the city in a negative light, but rather accepting that retailing has changed irrevocably and so the life of the CBD must also evolve to rejuvenate itself.

She has made a map (which Poole stresses has been compiled recently through manual processes, documenting the commercial locations that carry either a 'for lease' sign, a 'for sale' sign or are visibly derelict or uninhabited) which charts the empty buildings in the block bounded roughly by Mair and Dana streets to the north and south, and Dawson and Handlary streets to the east and west.

One of those buildings for lease is owned by Mark and Carolyn Guirguis. The former surgery is on the corner of Sturt and Gerard Street North is now vacant, and while Carolyn Guirguis says the premise is seeking a commercial tenant, she was excited to be part of the Ballarat Evolve program in the interim.

"I am really keen to be involved," says Ms Guirguis.

"Tara actually contacted Mark and I only a couple of weeks ago. We're supporters of BAF and she was interested in picking our brains about the whole concept she was looking at bringing to Ballarat."

"I said, 'We've got a building that's currently vacant and we would love to be a part of it.' I think it's a very tried and tested model. I think the cities that have gone before us have made all of their information freely available."

"It's going to be administered by BAF, who I've got a huge amount of faith in. They've been around for 20 plus years administering grants to artists. So it's almost a bit of a natural progression for them to move into

Ms Guirguis says it's interesting that Poole has chosen the name Ballarat Evolve rather than 'renew' or something similar.

"I think it's a really positive way forward. It's not going to solve all of the problems everywhere but I think that it comes with so many positives and it's done on many different networks and on many different levels. I think it brings a whole lot of positivity with it."

"It's not a state government initiative, it's not a local government initiative, so hopefully it will come without some of the bureaucratic challenges. I hope that the answer to everything with it is 'yes' and then find a way, instead of looking for the negatives and saying, 'this might be too hard, that might be too hard.'"

BAF chair Paula Nicholson agrees with Carolyn Guirguis that focusing on property is right for the foundation.

"Our grants assessment team is hugely experienced, so this extension is a natural one for the Foundation. We are fortunate being able to rely upon the experiences of the application of the Renew program in other cities."

## Kim Anderson is the artist in residence

THE two things an artist needs, more than anything, are time and space says Ballarat's Kim Anderson.

Anderson will be the inaugural Ballarat Evolve artist working at the Sturt Street premises provided through the Guirguis and the Ballarat Art Foundation.

The award-winning practitioner works mostly in drawing, and while her works are large now, she'd like them to be larger.

The limitations of working in a spare room in her home mean she can't do that

**KIM ANDERSON**  
Ballarat-based, Anderson is the recipient of many awards

Anderson been a finalist in numerous awards including the Paul Guest Award, Rick Amor Drawing Prize, and the Hazelhurst Works on Paper Award.

"I'd like to get bigger, but I am limited by the space I work in," says Anderson, who



**TRIAL RESIDENCY:** Kim Anderson is the artist chosen to take part in the Ballarat Evolve trial. Picture: Lechlan Bese.

residency at The Art Vault in Mildura.

tends to dictate the kind of work that you make, and I

**66**  
I've always thought there were so many empty spaces about the CBD

Kim Anderson, artist

bigger work as I have a solo show coming up for BOAA (Biennale of Australian Art). This will be the perfect opportunity to do that. I wasn't

otherwise."

Anderson says it's important to remember that creating art is work, and having a workplace to go to is an important discipline for an artist.

"You can get distracted working at home, with piles of laundry to do and so on. It's really important to have a space to work in."

"There were so many empty spaces about the CBD. In the past people weren't really open to artists moving into spaces. In this case, Tara is the right person to lead us."



## 7.0 THE CREATIVE SECTOR INTERACTIONS

The interactions and relationships across Ballarat's creative sector demonstrate the numerous strengths and weaknesses in the creative ecology. The dynamics of these interactions range from how entities work together, how they take charge to lead and shape the city's creative capability, to the way they interact with their local environment and the external market. These dynamics create both positive and negative tensions and ultimately either promote or undermine the ability for Ballarat to become a creative city. By understanding these different relationships and networks within the creative sector, weak spots can be identified and managed and strengths leveraged in order to promote a more cohesive and united creative sector.

### 7.1 Competitors and Collaborators

Within the ecology, it is possible to identify those who tend to be collaborative, and areas where there is more competition. Nurturing collaboration and overcoming competition is seen as vital to establishing the Ballarat creative community and creative city image as a whole. [17]

Competition appears to exist at its worst between different creative art forms and industries, where people work in silos and do not reach out to engage and connect with others. This is perpetuated by the existing creative venues being quite restricted to serving the purposes of only a limited amount of creative practice. There is also quite significant competition between entities and venues that are offering quite similar things, such as music venues, theatre groups, and community groups, where a lack of conversation has led to uncoordinated approaches and duplication of ideas. Critical to the competitive nature of the sector is the rivalry for support and funding, with a large number of individuals and organisations competing for a limited pool of money and limited number of sources to draw from. This promotes an environment where tall poppy syndrome is rife and the need to share funds often means the downfall of initiatives before they get a chance to become established.

**“Those who are competitive tend to work in isolation. There is constant competition for money, with a lack of funding stifling anything creative from flourishing.”**

Collaboration is most evident at a grassroots level, but also in places where the sector is encouraged to come together and engage on a level playing field with one another, such as festivals and events, radio, community centres and coworking spaces. A desire for a collaborative approach is being fostered by the City's Arts and Culture unit, but it is the independent initiatives, such as the Lost Ones Gallery's creative industries meet ups, that have been overwhelming well received and in great demand. However, collaboration often fails because of the lack of resources and dedicated spaces that foster this kind of mindset and opportunity. The creative sector sees this as one of the biggest areas of opportunity for the Creative City Strategy, with a huge demand for spaces that have the facilities but also the services to promote collaboration and strengthen the sector to collectively elevate creative capability.

**“Good collaboration comes back to having a place to work that allows creatives to establish their identity, be proud and engage others.”**

### 7.2 Followers and Leaders

All relationships naturally tend towards having followers and leader, but the success of these relationships is founded on the levels of respect between the followers and leaders. In Ballarat's creative ecology, the leaders fall into two inherently different categories: the 'official' leaders who have a title or position that enables them to lead the sector, such as the Director of the Art Gallery or the head of the Arts & Culture Unit; and the unofficial leaders who tend to be the go-getting, innovative and risk-taking members of the creative community who have a determination to achieve outcomes for the greater good of the creative community. Official leaders are very often constrained by their position, handling tax-payers money and reporting to senior leaders within the community, but they are enabled by the time, money and power they wield to achieve outcomes. Risk taking leaders are constantly looking for ways to make things happen outside of the constraints of approvals, structures and strategies – they are driven by their passion, and establish a creative following based on their eagerness, proactive attitude and ability to make things happen without time, money or power. These are rare personalities within the community, and Ballarat is lucky to have several who are stimulating new initiatives and opportunities within the creative sector.

**“If you are an official leader, you assume followers – but you also have a lot more to lose.”**

**“It's a town in which you can have a level of impact, and as a personality are instantly recognisable, and able to make a positive difference.”**

Followers are very valuable to the creative ecology, making up the audiences for creative content, but also the volunteers, participants and funders who enable creativity to occur. These followers actually wield quite a lot of power, voting with 'bums on seats' by directing their attention to the leaders and creative content that they are most inspired, interested and engaged by. There is a symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers: official leaders already have willing followers who will go where the funding and opportunities are, while risk-takers will assume followers if they are finding success, very quickly promoting them to the status of leader.

Figure 17

Online community survey – When collaboration would be beneficial, how well do Ballarat people collaborate on their creative projects?

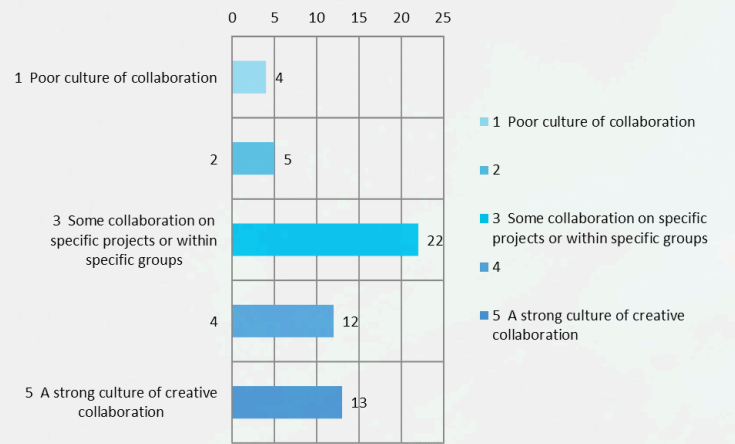


Image: Thinkstock





## 8.0\_BENCHMARKS

**Four local, national and international cities have been selected as benchmarks against which Ballarat can be compared, providing a measure of success to understand the capacity Ballarat has to work with its current creative ecology to achieve its Creative City Strategy. These cities include the Australian cities of Geelong, the Blue Mountains, and Newcastle, as well as Manchester in the UK.**

These benchmarks all had similar building blocks to Ballarat which were critical to establishing and delivering their reputation as creative cities, including proximity to a major capital city, strong cultural offerings and heritage, and a grassroots community of creatives.

Utilising creative and cultural city strategies, each of these benchmarks took a strategic approach to planning and delivering initiatives that have generated great outcomes for the local communities and their creative sectors.

While the strategies themselves are not necessarily benchmarks, the way in which they have repositioned and leveraged the strengths of the local sector and the outcomes of these strategies are of particular interest to this report.

### 8.1 Geelong, Victoria

The City of Greater Geelong, located just over an hour from the centre of Melbourne, is the State's second largest city with a population of around 190,000. Located between the capital and the tourist mecca of the Great Ocean Road, it has a long industrial history as a port and then as a manufacturing centre. Today, with the closure of much of its industry, Geelong has been undergoing significant strategic redevelopment to reposition itself and retain its population, leading to increasing gentrification as it becomes an increasingly attractive place for people to live due to affordability and proximity to Melbourne.

While Geelong's flagship institutions, supporting infrastructure and creative workforce has been around for a long time, there has been a recent push to stimulate the creative economy as part of the city's repositioning. In 2017, Geelong released its thirty-year 'Clever and Creative Future' strategy, with the ambition to make the city internationally recognised as a creative destination by 2047. Building on the existing strengths including proximity to Melbourne, growing population, emerging creative businesses and strong leadership in education and cultural infrastructure, the key aspirations of the strategy sit within the possibility for creativity to drive a prosperous economy and culturally rich community, with the fundamental belief that creativity drives culture.

One of the first tangible examples of the impact this strategy is going to have is the designation of Geelong as a UNESCO Creative City for design, reflecting its long history of industrial and automotive design. This provides a chance to celebrate and promote the strength of the creative industries in Geelong to an international audience, and stimulate the capability and professionalism of local creatives. Design is also fundamental to the redevelopment of much of the city as it undergoes its transformation, with Geelong Library and Heritage Centre and the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and cultural precinct included in this redevelopment, as well as Deakin University's and the Centre for Advanced Design in Engineering facilities. While Geelong's Council is not responsible for all these projects (many coming from State Government or independent organisations), they have worked closely with both local and State Government stakeholders, and provided strategic incentives to companies, building up the capacity of the city to meet its ambition as a city for design.

#### Statistics:

- Council spends \$4.24 for every \$100 of local rates on arts, culture and libraries
- Creative industries account for 8% of employment in the region
- Creative industries contribute \$1.6 billion, or 5.5% to the economic output of the region
- 5,200 creative industries businesses operating in the region
- Geelong Art Gallery: 80,000 visitors / 31 public programs / 4,400 children in education programs



## 8.2 Blue Mountains, NSW

The city of the Blue Mountains is located 1-2 hours outside of the centre of Sydney, home to approximately 80,000 residents across 27 distinct villages and towns. The region is one of the most visited parts of Australia due to its proximity to Sydney and rich culture and history, drawing on the stories of the first crossing of the ranges by the early settlers, the growth of the city during the gold rush out in Bathurst, and today's status as a World Heritage area.

Due to long standing appreciation for and planning around culture, the city was named the inaugural 'City of the Arts' in NSW in 1995, and ever since, the creative ecology in the Blue Mountains has grown and strengthened considerably, and particularly in recent years it has found a good balance between its cultural core and creative industries. This has been encouraged by a comprehensive cultural strategy, growing creative population, the development of major cultural infrastructure, and a willingness to embrace local creativity and culture as an economic driver, with the creative industries now the Blue Mountain's fifth largest workforce industry.

The city's 2006-2016 Cultural Strategy identified a focus on development of enabling infrastructure and collaboration across sectors as required to support growth in creative industries and cultural production. Impacts as a result of the strategy include two newly established flagship institutions co-funded by Council, State and Federal government, the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre and Library in Katoomba (launched 2012), and the Theatre and Community Hub in Springwood (redeveloped in 2016), which have filled a much-needed gap in the lack of professional grade infrastructure. A continually strengthened calendar of festivals and events celebrates the creativity within the city and attracts it from outside, with the historic hotels, homes and gardens housing these creative events.

A key aim of the 2006-2016 strategy was to develop more opportunity for employment in creative industries, strengthening the professionalism of artists. Council supported independent body, the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise, to develop a creative industries cluster and build a strategic brand to elevate and promote the quality of local creativity. The MTNS MADE initiative was created, positioning the region as an internationally competitive creative hub with creative producers and products reflecting the essence of the Blue Mountains. Council's Visitor Information Centres and the Cultural Centre have included products from MTNS MADE artisans in their retail range, while a website and professionally created brand presence has built an image for Blue Mountains creatives, and a way of increasing awareness of local creative talent to both domestic and international visitors and stimulating the economy for the region.

### Statistics:

- 7.6% of the population working in the creative industries, and 1.21% in arts and recreation services
- Top employing creative sectors: writing and publishing, creative makers, performing arts, painting, graphic design
- Largest number of creative businesses: music, performing and visual arts, design
- 58% of the local creative industries workforce works from home
- Blue Mountains Cultural Centre: 110,000 visitors / 18 exhibitions / 82 public programs
- Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub: 40,000 visitors / 112 shows

## 8.3 Newcastle, NSW

The City of Newcastle on NSW's coast, about two hours north of Sydney, has a population of around 160,000, while the larger metropolitan area surrounding it is home to about 450,000 people. Once a thriving export harbour and industrial centre for coal and steel, years of economic ups and downs and the closure of the steel plant have impacted the city and its growth. However, in recent years, Newcastle has begun to change, redeveloping in a post-industrial economy and becoming increasingly gentrified. The population across the metro area has been steadily growing, with many attracted by affordable housing and growth of alternative industries, but the city centre itself has been slow to keep up, only now making inroads with urban development.

Arts and culture has been valuable to the city for a long time, famous for having more artists per capita than any other city in Australia. The city has one of the oldest theatres in the country, and numerous long-established flagship institutions in its heritage buildings, including the Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle Museum and the Civic Theatre. Redevelopment is aiming to amplify these long standing cultural institutions, but it is generally acknowledged that supporting the creative industries and large number of artists has the most potential for stimulating the city as a creative hub.

The 2016-2019 Cultural Strategy is just one of many intersecting strategies that show how critical creative industries are to the future of Newcastle, with the aim to build on the existing strengths of the creative ecology and shift the city to be Australia's innovative creative capital. The aim is to help sustain and nurture a vibrant and healthy community but also to stimulate creativity and capture its economic value, by building on the success of programs of innovation like the nationally lauded Renew Newcastle program that brings independent creative practitioners into the city's empty shopfronts, shining a spotlight on local talent and stimulating innovation within the city, and This is Not Arts (TiNA) festival which has Newcastle on the global stage.

While Council sees itself as critical to achieving this strong creative identity, it is also well recognised that institutions such as the University of Newcastle have an enormous amount to contribute. The University has significantly repositioned itself around Creative Cities and Creative Industries, investing in new infrastructure and programs, and relocating creative courses off the main campus outside the city and into the CBD. New University developments in the CBD are also seeking ways to open their facilities up to the creative sector, uniting the community with the student cohort and building capacity as a whole for the good of the city and its people.

### Statistics:

- Newcastle Museum: 163,000 visitors
- Newcastle Art Gallery: 66,500 visitors
- Civic Theatre and Playhouse: 119,000 visitors



## 8.4 Manchester, UK

Manchester, in the United Kingdom, is a city of 530,000, approximately 4 hours' drive from London, and about an hour from the neighbouring major regional cities of Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield, and often labelled as the second city of the UK. Manchester has a long history of industrial activity, responsible for its often grim past and proliferation of warehouses and industrial precincts, but in the post-industrial world, it has had to rediscover its strengths, and regenerate to remain relevant.

Manchester has long been on the up, the role of culture and creativity critical to this. This is built on more than just city's musical prowess and cultural institutions, instead being far more about creative precincts and neighbourhoods where innovative and pop-culture driven aspects of culture can thrive, making the most of dormant warehouse, heritage spaces, empty shopfronts, old factories and mills. First considered a creative city in the early 2000s, the city's 2010 Cultural Strategy makes clear that the city is a place where people do things, essentially setting the standards for creatives to go about their creativity. With the ambition to be a world class creative city, there has been significant investment in supporting the large number of major flagship venues, driving relationships between the universities and creative economies, and investment in the creative workforce to carry their talent into the wider community.

Today, Manchester is a UNESCO Creative City of Literature, built on its traditions of radical writing and its enormous calendar of literature events. It has used reading and writing initiatives to bring disparate communities together, overcome prejudice, and cultivate connectivity and belonging, all critical to the mental wellbeing of the local population. The city's popular culture narratives are also celebrated, particular around the city's history of music, stimulating further growth in this direction through advertising and media, and setting the city up as a vibrant creative industries hub.

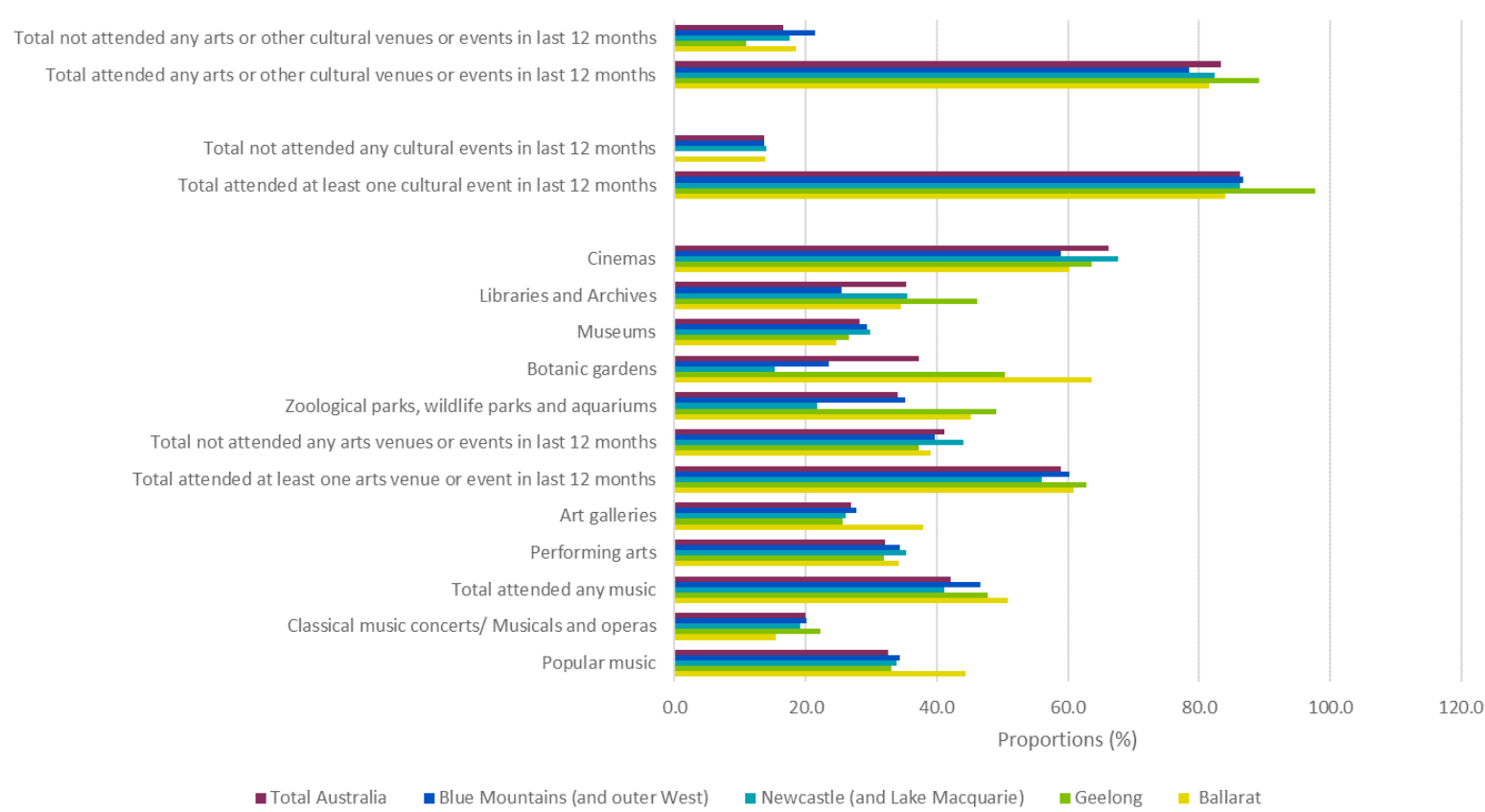
### Statistics:

- £395 million's (€ 561M) worth investments in the cultural infrastructure of the city since 1995
- 10,483,942 recorded visits were made to major cultural attractions in 2000/2001
- 22,585 people employed in the cultural sector in the city
- 4,553,000 visitors stayed overnight in Manchester in 1999, contributing € 500M million to the economy

## 8.5 Learnings for Ballarat

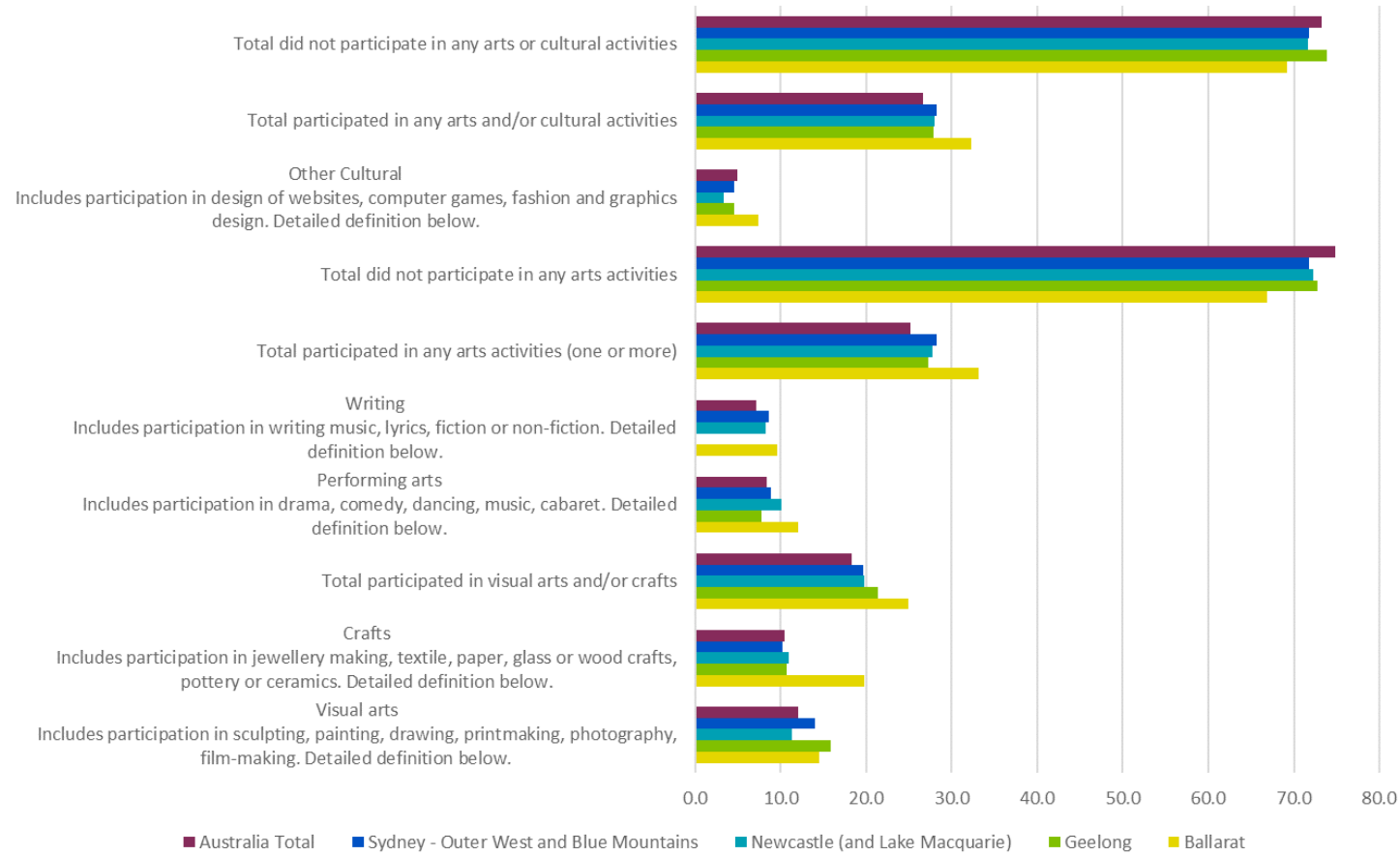
- A commitment to driving the capability and professionalism of the creative industries is seen as critical to stimulating a creative economy and building a strong creative culture for a city
- Innovation, design thinking, and creative pursuits outside of the traditional creative arts is stimulating new directions for different types of industry to grow and thrive in cities
- Facilities that make up the cultural core do far more for cultural tourism than for the stimulation of the creative economy
- A point of difference founded in the unique qualities of the location is invaluable to building a strong vision and identity for creative strategies
- Creative strategies tend to come out of a loss of industry and manufacturing, but still retain some of the qualities of this history as they look to the future
- Facilities, spaces and programs for supporting the making, exploration and production of creative content must be in place for creative strategies to work
- The support and frameworks need to be there to allow creatives to be creative and not fight for their right to survival
- The UNESCO Creative City framework demonstrates that long term planning to improve access and participation for the community in cultural life in cities is fundamental to the identity of a creative city, placing the importance on the local community and economy, not its visitors

Figure 18  
Attendance at arts venues and events



Source: ABS (2013 – 2014) Participation in cultural activities.

Figure 19  
Participation in selected cultural activities



Source: ABS (2013 – 2014) Participation in cultural activities.

## 9.0\_INSIGHTS

### **Ballarat is centred around presenting creativity, with little opportunity to nurture and professionalise it.**

There are an overwhelming number of presentation spaces and venues within Ballarat, with the majority of flagship institutions and supporting infrastructure dedicated to showcasing visual arts, performing arts and music. There is a critical lack of spaces for creating and producing work, resulting in limited opportunity for collaboration, connection and cross-pollination of different industries. There is plenty of demand for creation, making and production space across all parts of the creative sector in order to nurture the existing creative community and encourage meeting and collaboration. Without it, people will continue to work in silos and fail to collectively stimulate and lift one another up.

**“Ballarat needs arts spaces that enable artists and creatives to engage with and participate in their own practice, and infrastructure to help train and educate those in the creative industries as to how to become sustainable and profitable enterprises.”**

### **The act of balancing local and external demand needs to be mastered.**

The strategy needs to find the balance between nurturing local grassroots creativity with showcasing established touring work, and engaging local community audiences with attracting visiting audiences. Getting this balance right is a difficult task and requires considerable efforts to care for both sides of the equation. The risk will be either leaving the local community and creative sector behind, or failing to build a strong market for Ballarat as an attractive place for both creatives and visitors to come. This equally feeds into the need to balance blockbusters and traditionally recognised content with more risky, experimental work, which will enable the city to grow as a creative place.

**“Don’t import and simply plonk things here. Give the community ownership as well, and a sense of intrigue where they want to go and see what is happening within their city.”**

### **Without a critical mass of audience, the sector will continue to compete for audiences, funding and support.**

With a small population, and not enough critical mass of local audiences engaged with the creative sector, Ballarat’s local creatives are reliant on external markets to get exposure and growth. Visiting audiences expand the marketplace for exhibiting and selling work and establishing a following, but without more considerable effort to get the work of locals in front of these audiences, that marketplace will remain limited. There is a need to not only attract these audiences, but to also encourage creatives to professionalise, not just workshoping their practice but building their capability as business people who can get their work in front of audiences and achieve success and sustainability.

**“Ballarat is a great workshop but a terrible marketplace.”**

**The tension between the cultural core and contemporary creative industries is a barrier to a truly creative city.**

There is a significant piece of work to be done to overcome the conservatism prevalent in Ballarat to allow space for creativity to thrive, making room for contemporary and innovative work, and nurturing the value that creative industries bring to a city. The heritage of the city is inherently valued by all, but does deliver an old fashioned message about what kinds of creative practice fit within the cityscape. Work needs to be done to advocate for change and shift attitudes, as well as embed creative industries and contemporary work into the CBD and bring this creativity out into the public eye.

**“We’re a city of contradiction, a quirky combination of provincial and progressive. We need to strike a happy balance between the heritage beauty of the city and the new ideas and needs of today’s citizens. They are equally important and worth celebrating and promoting to visitors.”**

**Ballarat needs to maximise the value of its education assets.**

The Federation University’s Arts Academy is widely viewed as an invaluable part of Ballarat’s creative offer, and positions Ballarat as one of the few regional cities in Australia that can offer this kind of education experience to students. However, the Academy is failing to connect well with the city and the wider creative community, with limited access to the campus grounds, education resources and formal facilities that cater to creation and production of creative work. There is an untapped opportunity to use the staff knowledge, facilities and coursework for professional development and growth of the general creative population, with professional development education opportunities non-existent in Ballarat beyond graduation from the Academy.

**“The Arts Academy should be the centre of the creative city and provide a framework for education at all levels.**

**Other Uni’s step in here to continue the training of artists.**

**The Academy needs the principles and frameworks to position the University well.”**

It is also critical to embed creativity into the education system from a primary level, making creative practice a better recognised and valued part of everyday life right throughout the community. Engaging children and youth with creativity and culture fosters natural appreciation of, value for, and participation in creativity, but it is also of vital importance to social welfare of young generations, giving them a way to connect to one another and have pride in their city.

**“We can set an example by tapping into junior institutions to shape the city of Ballarat from fresh eyes and fresh generations...It’s about time we acknowledge that this town is old and needs a serious revamp in order to maintain its honesty. Otherwise the future seems bleak, overrun with drugs and crime because the kids have got nothing to do.”**

**An aspirational vision for the city that establishes the Ballarat brand needs to underpin this whole strategy.**

A vision for and coordinated approach to the creative ‘Ballarat brand’ is the critical piece of the puzzle to collectively lifting the creative sector and broader community up to be a leading regional creative city. This requires strong leadership, a willingness to take risks and try something new, and buy in at all levels of the community. The narrative of this vision needs to be explored, building on the strengths of the city, and a creative brand built that is celebrated by Council, Visit Ballarat, and all entities within the creative ecology.

**“The critical thing is not to discard the heritage and tradition or ignore the strong creative undercurrent in Ballarat in an eagerness to create a strategy. The strategy needs to pull these disparate stories together in a way that appeals to the policy makers and funders but without stifling or unduly influencing the direction of that creativity.”**



