

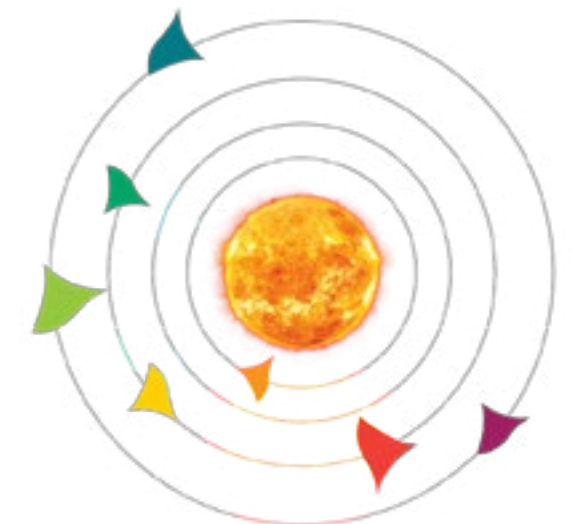


southern
tablelands
arts

Strategic Plan
2022 - 2024

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Heidi McGeoch
Taralga 2021

STA partnered with Upper Lachlan Council to deliver an ambitious and innovative project of creative interventions to revitalise the streets of Upper Lachlan towns.

Detail of work on cover.

Executive Summary

Southern Tablelands Arts, now widely known as STA, is proud to be one of the 14 Regional Arts Development Organisations (RADOs) across NSW making up the RADO Network. The network is unique, innovative and passionate about arts and culture in regional NSW, promoting all art forms across all demographics and building community audiences.

STA has evolved from an informal grouping of local government and local Arts Council representatives commenced in 1996 to the thriving professional organisation it is today, supporting arts and culture across the region.

Purpose

STA's core purpose is to be an effective link between Councils, artists, arts workers, creative enterprises and communities, supporting the development of arts and culture in the region.

Mission

To be the region's most recognised and highly valued arts organisation actively known for its support and development of thriving creative communities, contributing to the liveability and wellbeing of our region.

Values

Southern Tablelands Arts is committed to the following operating principles in all its activities:

1. Strong collaborative partnerships within and across sectors to deliver arts and cultural development.
2. Support and celebrate First Nations creatives and protection of culture and language.
3. The right of people living in and visiting our region to participate in and contribute to arts and culture.
4. Professional arts and cultural practice.
5. The development of audience by creating and being involved in regional arts and culture across every contributing Council community.
6. Organisational accountability and responsibility for balancing environmental and social sustainability with sound financial governance.
7. Recognition of the economic importance of promoting a healthy creative sector.

What we do

We use our knowledge and expertise to connect and support our creative communities and to develop strategic partnerships within the region.

Our creative communities are diverse, encompassing visual and performing arts, history, heritage, indigenous arts, language and culture, literature, digital and new media. Activities we support range from those of individual practitioners, larger arts organisations, festivals, community groups, creative enterprises, schools, disability and arts projects.

We provide valuable services to:

- Local Councils: working across a variety of council responsibilities to support and augment their work in areas including Tourism, Economic Development, Community, Cultural and Strategic Planning and Cultural Infrastructure.
- Communities: building capacity for communities to develop their own projects to create social connectedness and wellbeing.
- Arts and cultural organisations: partnerships to build capacity, sustainability and extending expertise sets.
- Individual creatives: helping them to become viable arts business by inputs to their achieving artistic and business goals.

Achievements

Increased number and frequency of targeted communications have measurably strengthened the collaborative relationships within our creative communities. This has built audience and generated a positive environment for the development of audience and wider engagement in arts and culture across the region.

Even during the pandemic years of 2020-21 STA has improved relationships with stakeholders and communities.

Successes over the past couple of years have included a wide range of initiatives:

- Delivery of \$138,000 of RESTART stimulus funding, and \$50,000 Artist In Residence



Stephanie Corkhill Hyles of Yass Valley
Stories from the Studio every Friday

funding to support cultural activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with funding partner Create NSW. Throughout the STA region more than 100 creatives directly benefitted.

- Supporting initiatives including a **Waste to Art** project with Wollondilly Shire Council; **STA Papparazzi**, a program of trained community based media associates representing STA at community events; **STA Kids**, an online resource of artist led activities for creative kids.
- In partnership with South East Arts, the establishment of the **Creative South Culture Map**, an interactive website promoting cultural tourism across the STA and South East Arts regions for visitors and residents alike.
- Launch of new STA website with increased capacity for engagement with community and members.
- Showcasing creative talent across the region through weekly feature **Stories From The Studio**, and the **STA Creative Directory**. These are building into a rich and accessible archive.
- Established the Advisory Panel with member Councils.
- Significant growth of STA membership.
- Introduction of the STA Mobile Office increasing our reach, visibility and reputation within the region.

Our Key People and Relationships



Rose Marin
Executive Director



Giselle Newbury
Communications



Susan Brindle
President



Rob Moran
Vice President



Joanne McCauley
Treasurer



Lousie Wakefield
Secretary and Public
Officer



Mark Bradbury



Dr Michelle Storey



Desmond Freeman

Regional Advisory Panel

STA has introduced a Regional Advisory Panel comprised of senior staff and elected Councillors from each of our contributing Councils. Meeting twice yearly, it is a formalised information exchange setting which promotes understanding of STA's work across LGAs and builds important operational relationships across LGA boundaries.

Strategic Direction

STA works with our members, makers & creative communities, energising, connecting and supporting the living culture of the Southern Highlands & Tablelands of NSW through a program of activities and events. We support, create, educate and advocate for the arts in the region.

Context

The STA region comprises of the Local Government areas of Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley and Hilltops (Note: QPRC currently non-contributing). It is characterised by emerging, developing and unfolding arts, history and heritage community organisations. Many are yet to connect to the professional arts sector including STA, funding bodies such as Create NSW and professional support networks such as Regional Gallery Network and Museums and Galleries NSW, amongst others.

In a sector already facing funding difficulties, 2019-2021 have been challenging for our communities and our creative practitioners as they faced the reality and the impacts of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020-2021 year, STA has focused on supporting our communities through increased online activities, mentoring and financial support to provide continuity where possible.



**Poetry: The Indelible Stencil project
Mark Tredinnick installed at Crookwell, Upper Lachlan**



Ronnie Jordan
STA Kids Indigenous Weaving activity

Over the coming years, STA anticipates a significant increase in community expectations for access to arts and cultural activities and events across the region, as well as practitioners seeking increased support. STA will continue to offer professional development, capacity building and opportunities to extend creative practice.

We are responding to a 'crippled' creative community which has been publicly held as unimportant.

STA has an important role to highlight the importance of the creative arts sector and the contribution it makes to our communities, to continue to advocate for greater understanding of the human benefits of the arts, we will work to secure a more sustainable future for the arts.

The RADO network rolled out significant financial support to the cultural sector, resulting in increased skills and expertise.

This period (2019-2021) has coincided with the NSW Regional Arts and Cultural Sector Service Needs Review initiated to establish the existing service needs of the NSW arts and cultural sector, identify any gaps in services currently being offered and inform future support for services to the arts and cultural sector across NSW.

This plan's focus areas were based on contributing to the regional arts sector and the NSW Government priority areas, supporting our communities effectively and optimising our available resources.

Focus Areas 2022-24

1. Maintaining a vigilant awareness of the global environmental emergency to bring into every day practice ways to build environmental sustainability into every executive decision, every interaction with stakeholders, communities and creatives.
2. Building capacity among cultural sector practitioners and organisations for professional and volunteer-led arts organisations towards their own sustainability, the delivery of quality artistic programming, audience development and financial sustainability.
3. Maintaining emphasis on supporting key projects and partnerships between community stakeholders in the delivery of strategic programs.
4. Reviewing and implementing robust governance practices based on continuous improvement.
5. Emphasis on activities that provide greater opportunities to generate revenue.



**Al Phemister of Yass Valley
Waste to Art project**

By 2024 we aspire to be:

1. an organisation with a staff of 4 FTE plus volunteers
2. attracting funding from a range of sources
3. developing programs and activities within our local areas which have cross-regional impact.

Priority Actions 2022-2024

Our priority actions encourage working in partnerships across the region to support the delivery of exciting and innovative arts and cultural activity.

STA aims to increase the participation for all people in arts and cultural activities across our region. We will work collaboratively to identify and support arts and cultural projects that target young people, children, people with disability, CaLD communities and older people.

STA aims to work collaboratively with indigenous bodies and support organisations across the region to promote indigenous arts and cultural activities.

STA aims to promote the importance of arts and cultural activities to Councils, in particular

1. in creating livable communities,
2. promote the creative industries as a tool for economic and tourism growth, identify opportunities for the arts to participate in economic and tourism based activities,
3. support the growth and development of arts and cultural activities in our region
4. identify the facilities and services that are available to support arts and cultural development.

To work across the RADO network, with neighbouring RADOs and beyond, where program synergy exists, to extend and amplify resources, audiences and impact.

Delivery Area	FOCUS AREA	PRIORITY ACTIONS	TIMING (Year 1,2,3)	SUCCESS MEASURES
1. Environmental Sustainability				
SERVICES REACH	Maintaining a vigilant awareness of the global environmental emergency to bring into every day practice ways to build environmentally sustainability into every executive decision, every interaction with stakeholders, communities and creatives.	Develop Environmental Sustainability Policy	1	Adopted and implement policy
		Influence behaviour change within our creative community towards their own environmental impact and sustainability. Focus on and reduction in environmental impact of STA activities and supported activities within the community.	1-3	Aiming for 70% of supported activities to incorporate sustainable behaviours in core business including marketing and communication to their audiences
		Include environmental focus in every activity and project.	1-3	Identifiable focus on sustainable practices
		Environmental resources for creatives on STA website	1-3	Website updated
2. Capacity Building				
SERVICES REACH	Build capacity among cultural sector practitioners and organisations towards their own sustainability, including professional and volunteer-led arts organisations towards sustainability, the delivery of quality artistic programming and audience development	Be recognised as a leader within the arts and cultural sector	1-3	Number of programs/ events/activities (services delivered excluding .professional development programs)
				Number of programs delivered digitally
				Number of programs delivered face to face
				Survey results - % attendees reporting satisfaction
		STA Success Stories	1-3	Number of success stories from members

SERVICES REACH	Build capacity among cultural sector practitioners and organisations towards their own sustainability, including professional and volunteer-led arts organisations towards sustainability, the delivery of quality artistic programming and audience development	Support Councils to work across a variety of responsibilities, assisting them in areas including cultural tourism, economic development, cultural planning and cultural infrastructure	1-3	Proven contribution and advice to Council staff, committees and groups
		Cross regional program delivery	1-3	Number of activities supported cross-regional LGA
		Continue to develop STA website building centralised resources for community and members	1-3	All existing fact sheets/resources updated. At least 2 new resources added to website each year.
				Commence dissemination of industry/genre-specific information
		Actively contribute to the broader RADO Network in NSW	1-3	Number of arts network activities supported by attending meetings, advocacy or planning committees, contributing funds, contributing staff time, providing advice
		Capacity building and collaborating with other RADOs	1-3	Number of shared programs and activities including Strategic Program Funds from Create NSW

SERVICES REACH	Build capacity among cultural sector practitioners and organisations towards their own sustainability, including professional and volunteer-led arts organisations towards sustainability, the delivery of quality artistic programming and audience development	Improve communication through website and social media channels to build audience	1-3	Number of STA supported activities publicised through our e-newsletter, social media and traditional media channels.
		Leverage cultural sector content to build cross-regional audience including that from RANSW	1-3	Amount of shared content across the RADO Network publicised by STA

3. Strategic Programs

SERVICES REACH	Maintaining emphasis on supporting key projects and partnerships between community stakeholders in the delivery of strategic programs.	Support and celebrate First Nations artistic and cultural leaders	1-3	Number of First Nations led programs and projects
				Audiences overall for First Nations work
		Maintain strategies for growing and engaging new and diverse audiences	1-3	Number of attendees/ participants/ users that access the services of STA
				Number of programs and projects that target priority areas
		Number of attendees/ participants/ users at programs and projects that target these priority areas		

SERVICES REACH	Maintaining emphasis on supporting key projects and partnerships between community stakeholders in the delivery of strategic programs.	Develop partnerships with other organisations, businesses and government departments to develop arts and cultural activity in the region	1-3	Number of partnerships with organisations, business and government; type and quality of activities
				Financial value of partnerships (cash or in-kind) from organisations, business and government

4. Robust Governance

SERVICES REACH	Continuous improvement based on robust governance practices	Demonstrate good governance and financial management	1-3	% of reserves
		Constitutional review	1	Completed review and updated constitution
		Develop capacity of board and subcommittees	1-3	Diversity inclusion plan and skills matrix for board
		Deliver professional development opportunities in governance areas	1-3	Number of STA initiated professional development programs delivered
		Participate in professional development opportunities	1-3	Number of attendances by STA board and staff in professional development programs

5. Financial Sustainability				
SERVICES REACH	Emphasis on activities that provide greater opportunity to generate revenue	Demonstrates capacity to engage in strategic partnerships and secure revenue from diverse sustainable sources	1-3	% non-Federal, State and Local government funding
		Fundraising policy	1-2	Completed and implemented policy
		Provision of professional services	1-3	% revenue derived from provision of professional services



The Vocal Muster from Wingecarribee appear at the STA Music and STA Kids pages



The STA Screen at community events and festivals

Region

The area we serve

The Southern Highlands and Tablelands Creative Sector is rich and diverse. It includes nationally established artists and creative professionals, grassroots amateur community groups and everything in between. The Arts play an intrinsic role in the liveability of our region and make a considerable contribution to the wellbeing of our communities.

Our region is home to approximately 14% of the regional NSW population spread across 7 Councils and a geographical area of 32,055km². Our communities are diverse. Across the region around 13% of our population are born overseas and more than 3.3% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Our work supports the priorities set out in the regional economic and tourism strategies, and our partner Councils' community strategic plans which identify cultural and artistic events and activities and the significant role they play in attracting visitors to our region.

Across the region the creative sector contributes to the region to prosperity, provides opportunities for meaningful and authentic engagement and interaction. Artists, makers and creative industries facilitate highly desirable and important social outcomes through experiences as well as objects of interest into our local economies.

Around 4,500 people across our communities hold creative arts qualifications, and more than 3,200 work in the arts and recreation services sector. Many more volunteer and provide art and cultural activities within the community for free, and there are hundred of practitioners who support their creative activities with other paid work. STA works with our six partner Councils to provide ongoing and reliable services to develop the creative sector, ensuring they are supported to produce and thrive.



**STA supports makers with commissions and uses hand made, local and sustainable wherever possible.
Work by Maryanne Devey, Win's Creek Pottery in Yass Valley**

Stakeholders

In fulfilling our purpose, STA engages with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Create NSW
- Contributing Councils and Regional Advisory Panel
- Our members
- Our regional communities
- RADO Network and RANSW
- First Nations Elders and community leaders
- Galleries and Museums
- Conservatorium
- Community arts organisations
- Community theatre groups, performances spaces and venues
- Cultural Festivals
- Creatives, cultural and arts workers and service / experience providers
- Creative enterprises
- Schools and educators
- Sponsors, volunteers and the business community
- Our staff and the STA Board

Our Resources

- Staff, Board and Advisory Panel
- RADO Network
- Recurrent funding from Create NSW
- CASP funding
- Local Government support and funding
- Project funding through successful grant submissions
- Community support and donations
- Extensive network

Our Partnerships

- Funding partners: Create NSW and six contributing Councils
- Music NSW
- Highlands FM
- Mobile Office venues
- Potential future partners

Our Financial Sustainability

STA is committed to ensuring financial viability to achieve our aims and objectives. The board and executive officer ensure adequate control systems are in place for accountability with regular reporting supported by professional bookkeeper.

Annual external audit process. Project management and budgeting. Regular financial reports tabled to Board. Annual budgets prepared. Ongoing support of professional bookkeeper and accountant.

Our Strategic Management

Updates on implementation of the strategic plan are considered by the Board quarterly, and summarised in our annual report. Progress on strategic activities are also presented by STA at Regional Advisory Panel meetings

Operating Environment

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTH

- Collective knowledge of Board and long serving President and Vice-President
- Long servicing
- Collaborative board
- Commitment to professional management and organisation culture
- Strong financial management & small reserve• Resilient organisation
- ED visual arts expertise, digital competency & networking skills
- Pivot to online programming during COVID lockdowns and restrictions
- Huge outreach to creatives during 2020-21 featuring and promoting their work
- Improved tech has increased online audience potential through social platforms
- Mobile Offices increasing reach in regions
- Unique organisation in the region
- Gained valuable experience in funding and grants delivery during COVID Government assistance programs
- Increased Create NSW funding and longer funding period
- Relationship with Create NSW
- RADO Network skills, history & knowledge now being shared
- Support from 6 of 7 Councils
- Wealth of creative talent and expertise across the region
- CASP control by RADOs from 2022
- A&C infrastructure: 2 x RAGs, 2 x Conservatorium, Performing Arts Centre, strong libraries, commercial galleries, numerous museums, numerous independent theatre groups
- Embedded role in some ongoing regional Festivals e.g. Illuminate Wollondilly

WEAKNESSES

- Governance: Board recruitment, induction and succession; skill areas and experience lacking
- Risk management needs review, improvement and embedding into work processes
- Unclear purpose/lack of clarity of 'elevator pitch' and representation of STA purpose
- Unlikely significant increases to Council funding amounts due to disaster recovery demands
- Perceived as competing with contributing Councils, individuals and small arts organisations for grant funding
- Regional Advisory Panel membership not influential
- Some Councils unsure of effective ways to utilise STA skills and capabilities
- Profile: strong where known; still widely unknown
- Few and small revenue streams
- Financial position needs continual improvement to fund staff and projects
- No business plan
- No clear policy on level of access and support to the community of a non-Contributing Council
- Short staffed – inadequate and insufficient skills
- Overly reliant on ED work and skills
- Documentation and understanding of previous projects completed so unable to leverage
- Lack of project case studies and image bank
- Small and non-paying membership

OPPORTUNITIES

- Board skills audit and active recruitment
- Board governance training
- Build staff resources in part-time, contract and outsourced positions
- COVID-19 Recovery grants, support and programming raising profile and clarifying purpose
- Membership model development
- Build digital competency and online programming
- Leverage online program offers through strategic agreements with the RADO Network
- Improve/build relationships with all stakeholders
- Capacity building with arts community
- Leverage existing Council strategic plans
- Develop a Business Plan
- Develop entrepreneurial focus on new revenue streams
- Prepare case studies of successful projects as marketing tools e.g. auspicing, program design
- Location flexibility of Mobile Office initiative
- Strategic relationships with other arts orgs
- Strategic relationships with other sectors such as health and tourism to further mutual goals
- Secure Queanbeyan Palerang funding
- Increase support to indigenous arts and cultural sector
- Continue to maintain and build Creative South
- Develop Regional Advisory Panel communication and content to extend to access to all elected Councilors
- Explore financial contribution and service models for Councils
- Build relationship with CRJO

THREATS

- Loss of Council funding; even greater scrutiny of funding by Councils; little or no increase in Council funding
- Dealing with the impact of disaster recovery and going forward in a COVID-impacted world with regulated sudden lockdowns, socially distanced, masked, attendance digitally regulated and cash strapped partners and individuals
- Staff and Board fatigue; staff and Board attrition
- Poor opinion/support from sector
- Changes by/to government support
- Major loss of corporate knowledge
- Economic downturn
- Continuation of lock down conditions
- Decrease in government support through policy and budget changes
- Loss of CASP funding
- Uncertainty and loss of traditional support from RANSW
- Climate change impact on individual communities, landscapes and wider economies
- Website capacity and security
- Appropriate PD for ED and PCO
- Projected population growth at Wollondilly may mean the per capita financial contribution model may not be acceptable
- Difficulty in identifying and developing new revenue streams
- Over reliance on ED hands on involvement across activities
- Inability to deliver of service promises to stakeholders and clients



**Waste to Art with Wollondilly Council
 Bill Dorman 'Adrift' (detail)
 Bill & Jo Dorman at the 2020 Waste to Art exhibition**

Risk Management Plan

Key business risks that the organisation must monitor or manage from the risk management plan.

Risk	Consequence	Risk Rating	Risk Mitigation & Management Measures
Loss of core funding	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet reporting and contractual requirements Maintain quality of programs and services Board advocacy
Loss of Council contributions	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Advisory Panel and communications Participate in Council strategic planning activities Support Council led arts and cultural activities Advocacy
Failure to attract external funding	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of professional services Involvement in cross regional activities and programs
Loss of staff resources	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succession planning Volunteer resources and capacity building
Loss of key board experience	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update skills-based board requirements Succession planning Networking and advocacy
WHS related risk	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHS policies and procedures Mobile Office policy
Pandemic related impact on revenue	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital delivery of programs and activities Support creative members to adapt delivery modes

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**Or by appointment at one of our
Mobile Office locations**

PO Box 1323 Goulburn 2580

ABN 67 208 214 681



**Andrew Galan
Virtual 2 Actual Performance Poetry project**