

Our councils are excellent partners. The conversation I want to have with levels of service and support into the future. A new approach is required to maintain this level of support is finite. A new approach is required to maintain regional communities to survive and thrive. The energy required to maintain access to and participation in arts and cultural practice is fundamental for of ever increases costs, we continue to deliver because we already know from the funding received and the team resources we have. In a climate So, STA continues to deliver beyond what would be reasonably expected Government's Heartland strategy is welcome, and we will hold it to account. inquiry has since found the system is under serious strain. The NSW received nothing and one RADO was defunded entirely. A parliamentary annum - a continuation, not an uplift, in a round where 76 organisations On funding: STA received four-year Create NSW funding at \$21,000 per this region in ways that a board report can list but not really capture. Rose and the team wrote, organised, facilitated, promoted, and showed up for The list of how STA support and work with our communities goes on and on. Austin Johnson, Michele Barker and Barbara Nell. nineteen years old and still going strong, supported Rosa Daniela Diaz, small country town is worth replicating. The Veolia Creative Arts Scholarships, as a Heartland case study - national recognition that what we built in a Queanbeyan on a Saturday night. Create NSW selected Connect@Gunning Health Hospital. A lantern parade of 1000 people wound through heart to visitors for the first time. Art therapy sessions ran at Kenmore Mental in free creative workshops. ULACHT opened the Upper Lachlan's creative Station drew 2,500 people through 21 exhibitions and hosted 552 participants organisations, and nine CASP grants reaching every LGA. Connect@Gunning editions of Stories from the Studio, 48 letters of support for artists and Across 2025, STA delivered 63 Mobile Office days across seven venues, 50 creative experience already knew.

Last year I gave you a poem at the AGM. This year I give you a speech. Every year someone asks me why councils should fund the arts when there are potholes to fix. Every year I aim to have a better answer... I'll start by borrowing from a UCL researcher who published in May 2026: arts and cultural engagement is not a luxury. It is an essential, as fundamental to human health and longevity as exercise. Science has now caught up with what anyone who has ever watched a community come alive around a creative experience already knew.

STA President's Report Louise Wakefield

them - about shared investment in the cultural infrastructure that underpins tourism, wellbeing, and community identity - is one whose time has come. Thank you to our heartland - the creative practitioners, collaborators and audiences at the centre of our regional communities. Thank you to our Council teams, our STA team and the STA board members - all of whom continue showing up because creative practice is not a cultural add-on, but the generative core from which community identity, economic activity, and social cohesion radiate outward. Thank you.



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Southern Tablelands Arts works with our members, makers & creative communities to energise and support the living culture of the STA Region. We do this through a rich program of professional services and projects that support, create, educate and advocate for the Creative Industries and our creative communities.

Our seven contributing councils are Goulburn Mulwaree, Hilltops, Queanbeyan Palerang, Upper Lachlan Shire, Wingecarribee Shire, Wollondilly Shire and Yass Valley. STA is part of the state wide Regional Arts Network supported by Create NSW and a member of Regional Arts NSW. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of Country where we create, live & work.



## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

- 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 & creatives.
- 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 & financial sustainability.
- Maintaining emphasis on supporting key projects and partnerships between community stakeholders in the delivery of strategic programs.
- Reviewing and implementing robust governance practices based on continuous improvement.
- Emphasis on activities that provide greater opportunities to generate revenue.

Cover image: Celebrating the 2nd birthday of Connect@Gunning Station & the 150th Birthday of Gunning Train Station, November 2025. Lily Acheson, Michael Simic, Ged Corben & Jeriky Williams - tear it up.



annual  
report  
2025



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2025 was a year of renewed cycles. Critical to our existence is the four-year funding through Create NSW, and 2025 marked the first year of the current agreement, which extends to 2029. STA was successful in securing funding after being moved into a competitive funding stream alongside our fellow Regional Arts Development Organisations that make up the Regional Arts Network (RAN). This was an unprecedented move by the State Government and resulted in a complex, challenging, and highly pressurised process.

A major part of the Heartlands policy announcement in February 2026 was the recognition that the RAN is critical to the cultural ecosystem of NSW, and that a funding safety net would be created to ensure its continued viability. The relief I felt at this announcement was overwhelming, and we now await further advice from Create NSW regarding the details.

We also entered into renewed Strategic Partnership Agreements with the seven local governments that make up the STA region, they are collectively our most important partners and the relationships continue to grow in strength and capacity. The new agreements align with the 2025–2029 funding period.

With our core partnerships and funding in place, STA is in a strong position to lead cultural delivery and innovation. 2025 proved to be a busy and productive year, with an emphasis on core services and project delivery, several of which deserve special mention.... *read the full report at the STA website*

This printed component of the 2025 STA Annual Report works in conjunction with expanded online content at the STA website. Copies of the 2025 Audited Financial Report are available on request.

**Staff 2025**

Kevin Greaves Project & Comm Officer (started May) (Hilltops)  
 Kate McKay, Admin & Connections Officer (Upper Lachlan)  
 Rose Marin, Executive Director (QPRC)  
 Erin Olafson, Projects & Comms Officer (left Feb) (Goulburn Mulwaree)

**Board of Directors 2025**

Louise Wakefield, President (Goulburn Mulwaree)  
 Mark Bradbury, Vice President (Goulburn Mulwaree)  
 Joanne McCauley, Treasurer (Goulburn Mulwaree)  
 Mandy McDonald, Secretary & Public Officer (Upper Lachlan)  
 Cecilia McKenize, Director (QPRC)  
 Cath Brennan, Director (Wingecarribee)  
 Robyn Sykes, Director (Yass Valley)  
 Garth Prentice, Director (Goulburn Mulwaree)



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**2025 Programs & Projects**

STA delivered more than 150 programs with 70+ partner organisations. Read about six of our favourites below with much more at our website.

**Stories from the Studio**

Our flagship online program published every Friday featuring a different artist or group for an exclusive visit to discover more about their practice. Stories from the Studio now has over 321 stories from artists & organisations from across the STA Region and is a pivotal connection point between STA and the Creative Sector. SFTS has grown to boast a large regular following and continues to build an online record of the creative sector in our region.

**Mobile Office**

STA Mobile Offices were held monthly at partner venues in each of our seven local government areas throughout 2025. The Mobile Office program offers creatives and organisations regular face to face appointments with STA staff. STA acknowledge the partner venues who hosted the program in 2025; Goulburn Library in Goulburn Mulwaree, Boorowa and District Historical Society and Museum in Hilltops, Crookwell Historical Society Crookwell Memorial Hall in Upper Lachlan, Berrima Museum in Wingecarribee, The NSW Rail Museum Thirlmere in Wollondilly, Yass Valley History Centre, Queanbeyan-Palerang Heritage Library

**Creative South**

In 2025, the Creative South cultural tourism website continued to grow and expand, now including every town south of Sydney and north of Canberra, from the coast west to Hilltops across 13 local government areas. With over 500 listings across 13 local government areas, it has become the largest cultural destination website in regional NSW. Making the Creative South the most exhaustive offering of museums, galleries, public art, festivals and hidden cultural gems between Sydney and Canberra. Don't go anywhere before a visit to creativesouth.com.au.

**STA Creative Directory**

Our Creative Directory is a major feature of the STA website with over 400 listings in a searchable database of creative practitioners from across our seven local government regions. Making it the most comprehensive directory of the Creative Industries anywhere in the STA Region. Find your perfect creative match at the STA Creative Directory.

**PAINT THE TOWN Street Art Tour**

PAINT THE TOWN has transformed into a street art tour that embraces all council areas in the STA region. STA continues to add murals into the PAINT THE TOWN Street Art Tour. The impressive facts: PTT created over 50 murals with an investment of over 500k, making it the biggest dedicated street art tour in NSW. Check out the Paint The Town website

**The Country Arts Support Program (CASP)**

Our much loved annual small grants program that support grass roots cultural programs in our region. In 2025, CASP supported 7 creative projects, from dozens of artists to offer rich cultural programs in our community. These were: • Local Playwrights Showcase from Lieder Theatre – Goulburn Mulwaree • Small World Small Wonder from Lizz Murphy – Yass Valley (with Links to Hilltops and Goulburn Mulwaree) • Art for Wellbeing: Creative Journeys for Children from Mrs Jennifer Browne – Wollondilly • Folk on Gundungurra Country from the Bundanoon Folk Festival Wingecarribee • "Editors Realm" The Art of Making Movies & Special Effects – Hilltops • 'Paint the Hive' Storage Container from QBN Hive – Queanbeyan Palerang • LET THERE BE LIGHT & SOUND! From Gunning Focus Group – Upper Lachlan.