



**Creative
Barkly**

CREATIVE BARKLY:

Sustaining the Arts and Creative Sector in Remote Australia



Mapping the Arts and Creative Sector in the Barkly

There is increasing recognition that the arts and creative sector has a crucial role to play in supporting and sustaining communities in Australia's remotest regions where the demographics and circumstances are vastly different from other urban, peri-urban, and regional locations. The *Creative Barkly* project worked closely with partners **Barkly Regional Arts** (BRA) and Regional Development Australia, Northern Territory (RDANT) to address a pressing need for evidence-based research that examines how this sector is currently functioning in very remote Australia and where its growth potential lies. The study sought to achieve these aims by;

1: Mapping the arts and creative sector in the Barkly Region: With the assistance of the project's partners, the research team undertook extensive face-to-face surveys with 120 artists in communities across the Barkly Region, as well as sector interviews with 36 key stakeholders and organisations.

This constitutes the first cultural mapping of its kind ever to be undertaken in the region.

2: Case studies of arts programs and organisations: **Barkly Regional Arts** (BRA), identified as the key organisation working in the region, working across cultures, with the largest reach and range of events, activities, programs, and art forms. **Desert Harmony Festival**, the only event of its kind occurring in the Barkly, providing a significant site for cultural expression that promotes both social and economic linkages and networks. **Arlpwe Art and Culture Centre**, a critical driver of cultural and social activity in the community, contributing economically through providing financial opportunities and workforce development.

This research design was underpinned by **an ecological approach** to studying the arts and creative sector in the Barkly that incorporated cross-cultural, cross-artform, and cross-sector perspectives on the cultural, social and economic contributions the arts and creative sector makes to the region.

This marks the first independent evidence base of its kind to be generated for arts and creativity in the Barkly.

A key strength in sustaining the arts and creative sector in the Barkly is its unique situation at the intersection of a number of diverse cultures:

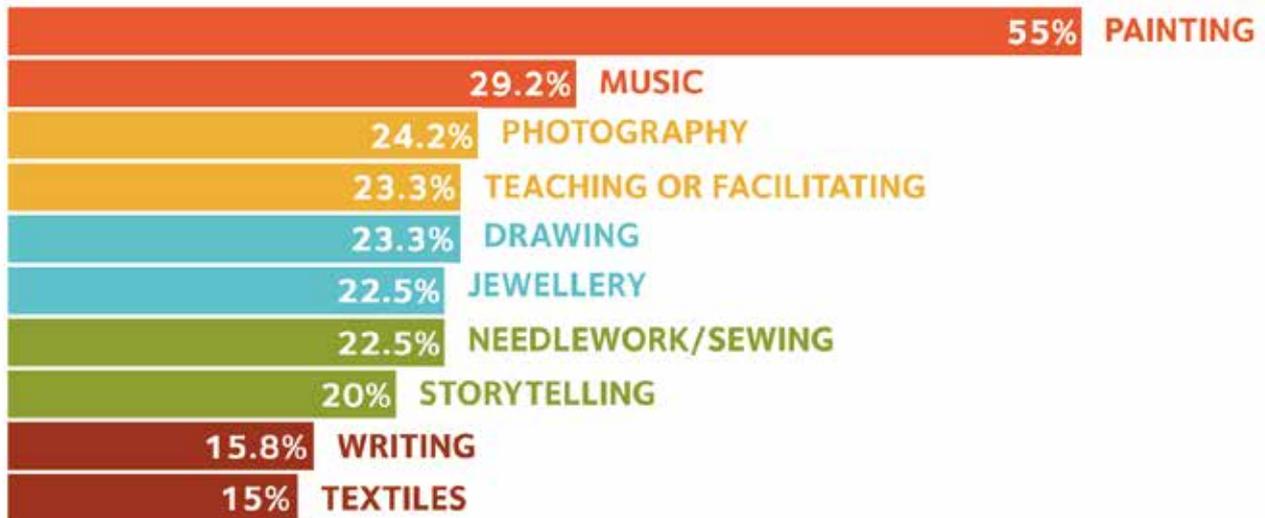
16 different First Nations language groups; and non-Indigenous cultures that include Anglo-European, Filipino, Indian, Chinese, Italian, Fijian, Zimbabwean and Indonesian. These cultures are being expressed through the work of over 550 artists and creative practitioners (our conservative estimate); working across over 40 different art forms and practices; and all contributing their skills, knowledge and experience to the cultural capital of the region.



Key Findings

Top 10 Art Forms

Out of 120 artists surveyed, **85.8% of people are practising multiple art forms.** Artists in the Barkly are involved in many more arts activities than those listed, including ceramics, carving, blogging, event management, and video production.



The Barkly Arts Sector Ecology

Our research found that the arts and creative sector in the Barkly involves arts organisations and artists, as well as non-arts organisations such as health and human services, and education and employment services, for whom arts and creativity is not core business, but valued for what it can contribute. **We found the cross-sector collaboration and partnerships undertaken by these organisations are a key strength of the region.**

With continued support and leadership from the arts sector, non-arts organisations delivering arts programs and activities may be able to build on their strengths to engage meaningfully and ethically with the cultural life of the region.



Working Artists in the Barkly

With 75.7% of respondents making an income from their practice, and over half of those citing this as their primary source of income, **the sector is playing an important role in the livelihoods of Barkly artists.** The Community Development Program (CDP) is an important element of the sector ecology, featuring in the working lives of 21.8% of survey respondents. There are **nearly 20 times more artists working in the Barkly than the number captured in the census.** This finding has major implications for any future policies and funding based on economic modelling.



ABS Census 2016

Occupation (Barkly LGA)

Arts Professionals nfd	3
Painter (Visual Arts)	5



8

Creative Barkly 2017 - 2018

The ABS recorded only eight artists or creative professionals working in the Barkly Region, whereas we estimate the figure of working artists across the region at over 150. Any form of economic modelling or policy which relies on ABS data will underestimate the economic contribution of arts and creativity to the regional economy.

150+



Barkly Art Centres/ Organisations (BRA, Nyirikka Nyanyu, Arlpwe, Ampilatwatja)

Number of artists registered	550
Number of artists employed (permanent f/t)	12
Number of artists employed (permanent p/t)	18
Number of artists employed (fixed term f/t)	4

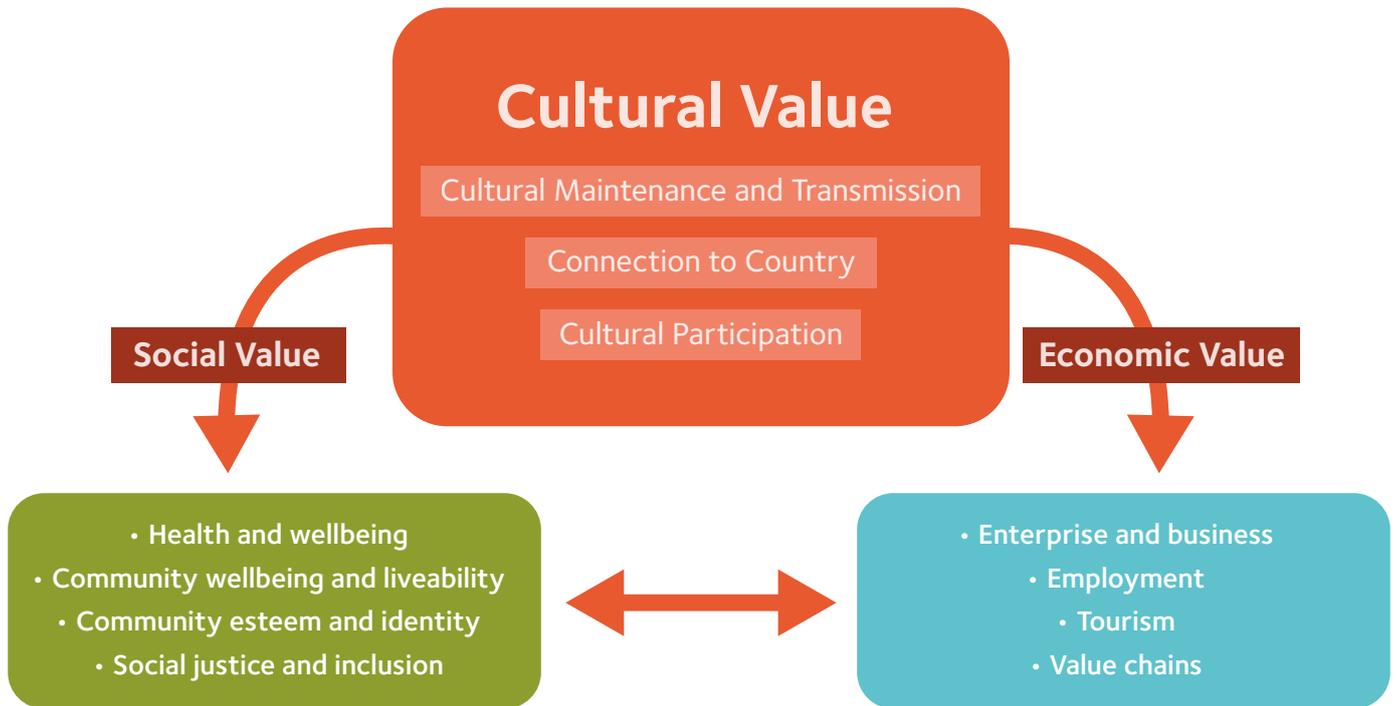
Survey Respondents

Number of artists/ creatives	120
Artists/ creatives who generate income (non-CDP)	79
Artists/ creatives with art as main source of income (non-CDP)	27

Enterprise, Education, and Resources

- **Voluntary labour** by artists in the Barkly is worth \$320k annually
- **Art centres or organisations are the main drivers of arts business and enterprise.**
- **Family mentoring, peer mentoring, and non-accredited cultural transmission** are the primary modes of learning for both First Nations' and non-Indigenous artists. Artists would like more opportunities for learning and professional development.
- The majority of artists are enabled by **collaborations, informal networks, and support** from arts organisations in the form of space and resources.
- **A total of 48.1% of artists and creatives used online platforms to show, share, or sell their work,** and a significant majority of these were non-Indigenous. This demonstrates the need for reliable communications infrastructure for the sector.
- **Around half of all respondents access an art centre to make and share their work,** with the majority of these being First Nations' artists.
- **Place is a key resource in terms of space for making and sharing work,** which is shared by both First Nations' and non-Indigenous artists.
- **The majority of creatives are making work at home or in free or private spaces rather than art centres or galleries,** however, between 2007 and 2017 (with the exception of two years) at least 97% of NTG-administered arts and screen funding went to art centres and organisations rather than individuals.
- **Artists and organisations are keen to develop tourism opportunities for business, enterprise and cultural transmission.** Integrating arts and tourism requires capacity building and investment in "soft infrastructure" such as training and professional development.

The Value of Arts and Creativity in the Barkly



The study uncovered a rich and interconnected set of findings reflecting the value of arts and creativity in the Barkly across the cultural, social, and economic domains. First Nations' ideas of cultural maintenance and transmission, cultural knowledge and practices, and connection to Country were key to our conception of cultural value. Country featured throughout the study in terms of First Nations' arts and creativity, as did the land and landscape of the Barkly for non-Indigenous artists who lived and practised there. Survey respondents from all cultures recognised directly the health and wellbeing benefits of arts or creative activity, and one of the most frequently cited barriers to creative practice was poor health. "Fun and enjoyment" was the strongest value for survey respondents' arts or creative practice, and must be recognised as a key factor in health, wellbeing, and quality of life. The arts and creativity promoted confidence and self-esteem for individuals, and was integral to celebrating and promoting the uniqueness of the Barkly, and counteracting negative stories and stereotypes about the region. The study found that the arts and creative sector in the Barkly is almost 100% not-for-profit. In 2017 Barkly arts organisations contributed approximately \$3 million to the Barkly economy.

Contributions that arts and creativity make to the social and cultural life of the Barkly cannot be separated from the economic outcomes. The research revealed the importance of development in the region looking beyond the "jobs and growth" agenda, recognising the value of social enterprise and artists' flexible, mobile livelihoods.



For further information on this project, and to read the full report and its recommendations visit: creativebarkly.org

Creative Barkly is an initiative of Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (QCRC), Griffith University, with industry partners Barkly Regional Arts, and Regional Development Australia NT, and university partner University of the Sunshine Coast. It was supported by the Australian Research Council as a Linkage project with financial and in-kind contributions from all partner organisations.

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Images

Cover images: Melbourne City Ballet performing 'Romeo and Juliet' at Desert Harmony Festival 2016; Needlework display at the Tennant Creek Show 2017; scrapping workshop at Desert Harmony Festival 2016; Artists of Ampilatwatja works on display at Desert Mob 2018; Brian Morton performing at Territory Day 2019; Susan Nakamarra Nelson doing beadwork at Barkly Artist Camp 2019.

Inside images: Tartakula artist Lindy Brodie painting the *Creative Barkly* logo; Reggie O'Riley (L) and Dirk Dickenson at WMC preparing for the release of the Barkly Drifters album 2019; Tartakula artist Gladys Anderson working at the BRA Tennant Creek gallery and artist workshop.

The Creative Barkly team would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and the lands on which we conducted this research. We also pay our respect to Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all First Nations' Peoples.

