Sunshine Coast

Arts Advisory Board Annual Report 2025–26



Sunshine Coast COUNCIL

October 2026

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Acknowledgements

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Information contained in this document is based on available information at the time of writing. All figures and diagrams are indicative only and should be referred to as such.

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Cover image

Image: Installation view of 'Circadian Field: Light as Panacea' by Dr Kellie O'Dempsey, supported through MadeSC. Photo by: Georgia Haupt.

Traditional Acknowledgement

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country, home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community.

We commit to working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians and the broader First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) communities to support self-determination through economic and community development.

Truth telling is a significant part of our journey. We are committed to better understanding the collective histories of the Sunshine Coast and the experiences of First Nations peoples. Legacy issues resulting from colonisation are still experienced by Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples.

We recognise our shared history and will continue to work in partnership to provide a foundation for building a shared future with the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations peoples continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

Together, we are all stronger.



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Image: Lyndon Davis at Yauar Warai Wandi, Horizon 2026. Photo: Daniel Fewquandie.



Image: Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026 exhibition. Photo: Sarah Smith.

Chairperson's address

The Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board continues to proudly support Sunshine Coast Council and the creative sector in delivering the vision of the Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan. Over the past year, we have seen continued momentum across the region's arts and cultural landscape, underpinned by strong partnerships, creative ambition and a shared commitment to community outcomes.

2025 has marked another year of significant progress.

This year has been one of consolidation and future planning. Progress toward the First Nations Strategic Arts Plan, continued investment through the Arts and Heritage Levy, the successful growth of Horizon Festival and the development of key cultural infrastructure and public art initiatives all demonstrate the strength and maturity of our sector.

The Board remains focused on supporting long-term opportunities that will position the Sunshine Coast as a leading creative region. As we look toward the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond, we are well placed to build on the foundations established through the Creative Arts Plan and continue growing a vibrant, connected and resilient arts ecology.

On behalf of the Board, I thank the artists, creative organisations, audiences, supporters and partners who contribute so much to the cultural life of our region. Your innovation, generosity and collaboration continue to bring the vision of the Creative Arts Plan to life.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of outgoing Chair Maz McGann, whose leadership has tangibly strengthened the arts and culture ecology on the Sunshine Coast. I thank Maz alongside outgoing Board members Aunty Helena Gulash and Kris Stewart, and former Council representative Claudia Di Blasi, for their stewardship and valued contributions.

Thank you to my fellow Board members, Mayor Rosanna Natoli, Councillor David Law, Council's executive and senior leadership team, and the Arts, Heritage and Libraries staff. It is a privilege to work alongside such committed advocates for arts and culture, and to play a role in shaping the creative future of the Sunshine Coast.

Catherine Jones

Chair
Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board





About the board

Established in 2016, the Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board has now completed 9 years of dedicated service to the region's creative sector.

The Board plays a vital role in positioning the arts as both a cultural cornerstone and an economic driver for the Sunshine Coast. Since its inception, it has been instrumental in fostering partnerships between government, artists, arts organisations, philanthropists and the broader business community.

As an advisory committee to Council, the Board provides expert guidance and insight, helping shape the strategic development of spaces, programs and initiatives that contribute to a vibrant and sustainable arts ecosystem.

Through formal recommendations and strategic advice, the Board actively supports Council in identifying collaborative opportunities and guiding investment in arts and cultural infrastructure across the region.

Membership

The Board, which is governed by the Sunshine Coast Advisory Board Charter, is comprised of locally and nationally recognised arts and creative industry leaders who represent a wide range of experience, skills and creative insight in strategic planning, policy and advice, artistic practice, community and audience engagement and development, First Nations arts, and arts and cultural festivals and events.

Key roles of the Board include:

- positioning the Sunshine Coast as a leading arts destination for tourism, industry and community engagement
- advocating for investment in arts and cultural infrastructure to support long-term growth
- providing strategic advice on the development and enhancement of arts facilities and cultural spaces
- shaping cultural policy and strategy to reflect the region's creative ambitions
- encouraging philanthropic support and private sector engagement in the arts.

This strategic approach ensures that community and stakeholder voices are central to the delivery of the Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan 2023–38, and that the region's creative future is inclusive, innovative and resilient.

Board Members



Catherine Jones (Chair) (14 August 2025–Current)

Creative industries leader

Catherine's prior roles include Director of the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) Office, delivering the APAM, and General Manager of Arts House, Melbourne's centre for contemporary and experimental performance.



Rosanna Natoli

Mayor, Sunshine Coast Council

Mayor Rosanna Natoli is an honorary member of Council-endorsed boards. In relation to the Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board, Mayor Natoli receives briefings on all recommendations before they are considered by Council.



Maz McGann (Chair) (1 July 2021–14 August 2025)

Founder and Principal, Play Your Part Consultancy

Maz McGann is a consultant working across arts, culture, tourism and community development.



David Law

Councillor, Sunshine Coast Council

Cr David Law has an extensive background and passion for the arts and all it brings to the community. He holds the Strong Community Portfolio – including community development, support services and facilities, community sport and recreation, arts, heritage and integrated transport planning and delivery.



Helena Gulash

Strategic Arts Consultant

Helena Gulash is a Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) woman who brings strategic leadership experience from her work with First Nations communities within both government and community organisations.



Jennifer Radbourne

Emeritus Professor, Deakin University

Emeritus Professor Jennifer Radbourne has extensive experience in the performing arts, arts governance, philanthropy and academia.



Liz Burcham

President, Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance

Liz Burcham is President of the Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance (SCCA), bringing to the role a wide-reaching career in the arts and creative industries.



Kris Stewart

Venue Manager, Kingston Butter Factory Cultural Precinct (1 July 2021–14 August 2025)

Kris Stewart was Chief Executive Officer of QMusic, the statewide peak body for the Queensland music industry, and is now Venue Manager of Kingston Butter Factory Cultural Precinct.

Board Members



Andrew Maccoll

Founder of Saturate

A creative director and cinematographer, Andrew Maccoll is an expert in brand strategy and culture-changing creativity, with a skill set including photography and film direction.



Melissa Lanham

Co-founder of LJ Projects

Melissa is the co-founder of LJ Projects, independent choreographer, freelance artist, and educator with three decades of creative leadership in Australia and the UK. From classical ballet to contemporary dance, she highlights social narratives and community voices.



Bronwyn Edinger AM

CEO, The Events Centre

Bronwyn Edinger AM has worked across the performing arts, leading production companies, venues and sector service organisations to create and program arts activities that are valued by their audiences and celebrated by their communities.



Image: Jo Walker, Jennifer Radbourne and Ferre De Deyne at Business in the Arts Lunch by Sunsine Coast Arts Foundation. Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Meetings

The Board holds regular scheduled meetings throughout the year, structured to allow open and informed discussion, supported by the Manager of Council's Arts, Heritage and Libraries department.

Meeting dates	Board members attendance	Guests attended
14 August 2025	Cr David Law Maz McGann Jennifer Radbourne Liz Burcham Kris Stewart Andy Maccoll Catherine Jones Claudia Di Blasi Janine Symons	John Collins, Commissioner, Night Life Economy Kim Carlyon, Manager of Policy and Engagement, Night Life Economy Skye Parker, Sunshine Coast 2032 Legacy Plan Community Reference Group
26 November 2025	Cr David Law Jennifer Radbourne Liz Burcham Bronwyn Edinger Melissa Lanham Catherine Jones Claudia Di Blasi Janine Symons	Jodie Fielding, Director, Community Strengthening Bec Martin, Festival Lead, Horizon Festival Rachael Dwyer and Robyn Fernandez, University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) Megan Rowland, Creative Sector Development Lead Sarah Saunders, Creative Development and Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) Officer
10 March 2026	Cr David Law Jennifer Radbourne Liz Burcham Bronwyn Edinger Melissa Lanham Catherine Jones Janine Symons	Kirsten Herring, Deputy Director-General, Arts Queensland (online) Celia Reordan, Executive Director Strategy and Programs, Office of the Deputy Director-General, Arts Queensland (online)

Finance

The Queensland Government's 'Remuneration procedures for part-time Chairs and Members of Queensland Government Bodies' (Category E-1) allows for the payment of local government-appointed boards. Under this arrangement, the board has been remunerated as outlined below:

Fees up to April 2025

Chairperson	**$195** half day	**$390** full day
Ordinary Member	**$150** half day*	**$300** full day*

*The board services of Bronwyn Edinger AM are donated by Sunshine Coast Events Centre Pty Ltd.

The Board member fees and costs are outlined below:

2025–26 (Financial Year)



Board member fees and contract services

$15,186.64



Catering and hospitality (including premises hire)

$1,568.99



Materials, printing and postage

$447.11



Travel costs

$2,621.61

As an advisory board of Council, the Board does not have authority to allocate funding or endorse arts programming. It provides long-term strategic advice and recommendations to achieve the vision, goals and outcomes as articulated in the Creative Arts Plan.



Picture Culture: Here & Now – Horizon Festival 2026. Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Building a profile for the Arts

Members of the Board, both formally and informally, represent and promote the Sunshine Coast as an arts destination, engage and connect with the arts and creative sectors and industries, and maintain and develop new relationships and networks locally, nationally and internationally. They do this to build the region's arts profile and identify opportunities for partnerships and advocacy.

The representation during 2025–26 included formal and informal roles, meetings and attendance at a range of arts festivals and events.

Industry activity included:

- Horizon Festival events and Festival Director recruitment activities
- community events – the Big Pineapple Festival, Sunshine Coast Biosphere Awards Breakfast, Sunshine Coast Australia Day Community Awards Ceremony, Arts House 10th Anniversary Celebration and 25 Years of Caloundra Regional Gallery Celebration
- creative arts events – Australian Opera's La Boheme (The Events Centre), La Boheme (Opera Australia), Catbird Theatre and Parados Productions' Metamorphoses, Melbourne Theatre Company's Dying: A Memoir opening night, A Few Good Men and The Great Gatsby (Queensland Theatre at Queensland Performing Arts Centre [QPAC]), Kimberley Akimbo opening, Muses Trio and Naamba Folk Club
- visual arts exhibitions and events – the 2025 Sunshine Coast National Art Prize and Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026 art prize announcements (Caloundra Regional Gallery), Marvene Ash studio exhibition, Yvette Coppersmith exhibition opening, Textiles Vs Art exhibition opening, Artbank's 40th anniversary exhibition, Knowing Otherwise exhibition opening, Interwoven exhibition opening, A Velvet Ant, a Flower, a Bird exhibition opening Mira Chorik's Painting Melody exhibition, Sculpture on the Edge, Melbourne Art Fair and the Tapestry Design Prize
- design events – Space Craft Design Week Opening, Being Sensitive Design Week Opening, Decor + Design, Craft Lab Ballarat, Design Institute of Australia event, RMIT University Fashion Enterprise and Sustainable Design Showcase, Melbourne Fashion Festival Launch, National Craft and Design Network meeting, We the Makers exhibition opening
- creative industries forums – India and Australia Creative Industries Forum, Australian International Documentary Conference Regionality Sunshine Coast, Consulate General of Canada in Sydney Long Table Arts Forum, Hong Kong Culture and Sustainability Conference, QPAC Foundation Launch, meeting with Suncoast Community Legal Service regarding philanthropy
- creative climate events – Creative Climate Melbourne event and national launch, Creative Climate Bundanon Residency and Lab, Small Giants Climate Accelerator Program, Federation Square Planting Program
- creative programming events – Queensland Programmers meetings, PAC Australia Third Thursday Exchange, PAC Australia Presenter Development Program and training, PAC Australia Annual General Meeting, Arts Queensland New Program Briefing, Stage Queensland programming catch-up, Growing Queensland Arts Audiences meeting, presentation for Queensland Touring; combined Arts Queensland, Opera Queensland, Stage Queensland and Regional Venues meeting, QTouring Showcase and Showfest Showdown Showcase
- industry assessment panels – Arts Queensland Queensland Arts Showcase Program assessment panel, Creative Australia assessment panel
- creative industry events – Australian Performing Arts Exchange, Australian Performing Arts Market, The Refinery R|7.0 Alumni and Industry Gathering and showcase
- creative Australia Leadership Residential Program
- Keith Murdoch Oration
- J.P. Pomare author talk, Rosetta Bookshop, Maleny.



2025–26
Creative Arts Plan outputs

687 events, programs and exhibitions
+94 digital programs presented to
183,766 audiences/ participants

1096 local artists contracted or funded by Council

233 of which were First Nations artists

475 training development opportunities undertaken by **1029** artists

1383 Sunshine Coast Art Collection pieces valued at **$9,201,820**

200 new works added to the Collection (including public art)

$577,308 in council funding provided to **96** art projects valued at **$3,834,097**

127 total grant applications received

76% applicant success rate

515 volunteers engaged



Image: Picture Culture: Here & Now – Horizon Festival 2026.
Photo: Georgia Haupt.

2025–26 Creative Arts Plan profile

Webpage views

341,107:
Horizon Festival, Caloundra Regional Gallery and Creative Sector Development

E-news subscribers

20,260:
Horizon Festival, Caloundra Regional Gallery and Creative Sector Development

Instagram followers

19,398:
Horizon Festival, Caloundra Regional Gallery and Creative Sector Development

Facebook followers

18,089:
Horizon Festival,
Caloundra Regional Gallery

Media

Reach	15,951,926
Value	$741,037
Placements	740

2025–26 Creative Arts Plan outcomes

Satisfaction*

90% good to excellent

*Satisfaction derived from 709 Caloundra Regional Gallery, Creative Sector Development, Horizon Festival event surveys conducted across the 2025–26 financial year. Attendees were asked to rank their score on a scale of 1–5 from poor to excellent.

Cultural Vitality**

4

** Indicates the level at which 700 attendees at a range of branch events agreed to 5 statements relating to individual well-being, local economy, community pride, capacity building and appreciation of the arts, based on the measures '1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree'. The scores are indicative of the cultural value of the community, with a higher score indicating higher levels of vitality. Note the survey format is integrated across all Council branches surveys. The questions do not relate specifically to the service or program being surveyed, they are based around Council's broader cultural services and programs.

First Nations



The Creative Arts Plan has a key focus on supporting First Nations peoples to protect their cultural knowledge and further develop their innovative contemporary expressions.

Key highlights over 2025–26 include:

472 First Nations artist beneficiaries (funded, promoted, engaged, participated)

50 First Nations artists and cultural workers employed through Council Grants

171 First Nations artists involved in Horizon Festival

20 First Nations artists exhibited at Council galleries

18 First Nations artworks acquired into the Sunshine Coast Art Collection

164 First Nations articipants in creative development programs

9 First Nations events delivered during Horizon Festival featured **171** First Nations artists and attracted almost **4,000** attendees.

There was **one** First Nations visual art exhibitions at Caloundra Regional Gallery, From the sea, the land and the mountains: Works by Kabi Kabi and Jinibara artists, which attracted **4600** visitors with **95%** of these satisfied to very satisfied.

Image: SALTWATER – Connections of Land and Sea at Horizon 2026. Photo: Luna Productions.

First Nations Sub-Committee

The First Nations Sub-Committee (FNSC) was established in 2023, now with 7 members, 4 of whom are Traditional Custodians of the Sunshine Coast region.

The focus for the FNSC is to finish the development of a First Nations Strategic Arts Plan which is an action from the Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan.

In partnership with University of the Sunshine Coast, a report was created developed by the Indigenous and Transcultural Research Centre, after extensive community consultation and research. The report informs the First Nations Strategic Arts Plan, which will be finalised and launched in 2027.



Helena Gulash

Helena Gulash is a Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) woman who brings strategic leadership experience from her work with First Nations within both government and community.



Lyndon Davis

Lyndon Davis is a Gubbi Gubbi (Kabi Kabi) man and internationally acclaimed artist, educator and cultural performer.



Jason Murphy

Jason Murphy is a Dungidau man of Jinibara descent and visual artist whose work critiques social, political and cultural issues affecting First Nations peoples.



Deline Brisco

Deline Brisco is a Yalanji woman of song whose practice explores Wulgkubadi (Yalanji traditional singing) with jazz, hip-hop and soul infusion.



Nicole Reilly

Nicole Reilly is a proud queer Wiradyuri woman, whose work spans the roles of creative producer, director, performer and teaching artist.



Jennifer Kent

Jennifer Kent is a Jinibara and Quandamooka artist and arts practitioner passionate about strengthening cultural capability through education and reconciliation.



Sasha Parlett

Sasha Parlett is a Malyangapa and Barkindji artist whose multidisciplinary practice and film background share First Nations stories, histories and lived experiences.

The First Nations Studio Program provides First Nations artists with space and time to develop new work, share and test ideas, experiment, connect with other artists and create new work. Based at Lantana Space in Moffat Beach, the space has been opened weekly as a place of connection and creativity. The First Nations Studio Program is funded by the Arts and Heritage Levy.

The First Nations Screen Printing Workshop was supported by the Arts and Heritage Levy and led by respected Jinibara artist Jennifer Kent. This inspiring project brought **10** First Nations artists together at Light Industry Kunda Park, to develop new skills and expand their creative practice. The artists were then offered the opportunity to showcase their work at Maroochydore Library Artspace for an exhibition that was launched for Reconciliation Week and continued into NAIDOC Week.

The BL:AK Camp Residency, delivered by Munimba-ja Arts Centre with support from the Arts and Heritage Levy, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF) and NorthSite Contemporary Arts, ran from 1–10 March 2026 and brought together artists for an intensive period of creative development.

Artists were provided with shared studio access, mentorship and opportunities for cultural and creative exchange. The residency will culminate in exhibition outcomes presented at CIAF 2026 in July.

The selected artists included Bianca Bond (Kabi Kabi, Da'la Peoples), Lyndon Davis (Kabi Kabi and South Sea Islander man), Brenda Mau (Mandubarra and Torres Strait Islander woman of Waiben, with connections to Kalkadoon and Wuthathi/Mutjati) and Clea North (Mithika and Gunggari woman) from the Sunshine Coast. The residency's creative team also included Munimba-ja Arts Centre's creative associate Darren Blackman (Gureng Gureng/Gangalu man from Queensland's central coast with Kanak South Sea Islander heritage from Vanuatu).

Blak Camp forms part of CIAF's broader commitment to strengthening professional development pathways for First Nations artists and fostering collaboration across regions and cultural networks.

There has been an increase in First Nations-led applications for RADF projects and professional development, with 8 successfully funded applications across the categories. There has also been an increase in First Nations representation as part of the pool of RADF Peer Assessors.



Dana Whiston, Lynda Page-Bickley and Leighanne McHugh at Blak Out, Horizon 2026. Photo: Luna Productions.



Boundaries at Bankfoot at Horizon 2026. Photo: Daniel Fewquandie.



Image: First Nations screen printing workshop at Light Industry.
Photo by: Teddy Horton.

Grants and funding



Image: Artwork by Petalia Humphreys – MadeSC Projects. Photo by: Ketakii Jewson-Brown.

Grants and funding

Council supports not-for-profit arts organisations, independent creative businesses and individual artists across the region through several grants and funding programs, including:

Regional Arts Development Fund

The **Regional Arts Development Fund** (RADF) supports independent arts projects and artist development opportunities. The program received **74** funding applications and awarded a total of **$165,043** to **33** successful projects in the 2025–26 financial year. RADF grants supported the delivery of projects with a total value of **$680,600**, and enabled the engagement of **138** artists, creative practitioners and producers, with arts outputs reaching audiences of **77,825**.

RADF is an annual partnership between the State Government, through Arts Queensland, and Sunshine Coast Council, promoting the role and value of arts, culture and heritage as key drivers of diverse and inclusive communities and strong regions.

Creative Industries Investment Program

The **Creative Industries Investment Program** (CIIP) provides funding for established arts and cultural initiatives that support the strategic development of the local arts ecology and deliver significant cultural benefit to the Sunshine Coast region. With existing multi-year funding agreements due to expire in December 2025, current partners were invited to apply for a 6-month extension to support initiatives delivered from 1 January–30 June 2026. A total of **$120,393** was awarded to **8** initiatives through CIIP, supporting a total value of more than **$700,000**, engaging **84** artists, creative practitioners and producers, and reaching audiences of approximately **14,000**.



Image: TAKEOVER – The Old Ambulance Station. Photo: Cynthia Lee.

The CIIP initiatives for the 2025–26 financial year are:

- **SCCA** – Annual Creative Development Program, promoting and developing professional contemporary practices and stimulating connection and collaboration, including an artist-led short program, artist talk and artist residency
- **IN | artist run initiative** – IN | SITE Program, a program of exhibitions, performances and residencies with a focus on site and place, based at the Old Lock Up, Maroochydore
- **Munimba-ja** – Blak Creatives, a series of First Nations-led professional development opportunities embedding cultural safety to support First Nations artistic endeavours on the Sunshine Coast
- **Arts Connect** – Open Studios Sunshine Coast, a weeklong curated arts trail event where artists open their studios to the community, allowing visitors to explore creative spaces, engage with artists and purchase original artworks

- **Basket Of Hammers** – The Glooming 2026, an immersive evening of live music, sound installations and performance
- **Red Chair** – The COMPASS Project, a micro-touring circuit of 4 performing arts tours (totalling 16 concerts) across the Sunshine Coast, presenting local and visiting contemporary music-based productions of diverse genres including classical, folk, world, popular, comedy and cabaret
- **Sunshine Coast Arts Industry Precinct Inc. trading as The Old Ambulance Station** – Old Ambo TAKEOVER Project, activating The Old Ambulance Station spaces (Black Box Theatre, RAMP and galleries) with contemporary artist-led residencies and programming
- **Sunshine Coast Film Festival** – International Series and Sunshine Coast French Film Festival.

Community Partnership Funding Program

The Community Partnership Funding Program (CPFP) provides a contribution to the operational expenses of well-established not-for-profit local arts peak bodies and creative spaces for up to **3** years. A total of **$149,740** in funding was awarded to **11** creative not-for-profit organisations, supporting a total value of more than **$1.1 million**, engaging **850** volunteers and benefiting **97,482** volunteers, participants and attendees. The CPFP creative partners are Arts Connect, Munimba-ja Arts Centre, Buderim Craft Cottage, Caloundra Arts Centre Association, Sunshine Coast Art Group, Kenilworth Arts Council, Maleny Community Centre, Sunshine Coasts Arts Industry Precinct, SCCA, Sunshine Coast Screen Collective and Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation (SCAF).

Creative Development Grants

The Creative Development category of Major and Minor Grants, delivered under the Community Grants Program, supports not-for-profit organisations to deliver projects, events and activities that strengthen the creative ecology of the Sunshine Coast by nurturing connections, promoting experimentation and inspiring collaboration. A total of **$122,180** was awarded to **26** projects, supporting a total value of **$958,153**, engaging **692** volunteers and benefiting **107,312** participants and attendees.

Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation

Council continued its support of SCAF in the 2025–26 financial year. SCAF's Strategic Plan provides objectives along with annual measures of success that include dollars raised through donations, number of donors, events, newsletters, partners, letters of support and philanthropic workshops with artists and arts organisations.

Highlights for the 2025–26 financial year include:

- received donations totalling **$93,230**
- **$30,000** given to artists as part of SCAF's Gifted Program and Scholarship
- new UniSC **$5,000** bursary created and awarded to a second-year student studying in the Creative Industries
- increased number of partnerships to **19**, offering shared events with prospective donors, tax deductibility advice and mentoring on philanthropy and income growth strategy
- total donations to partners was **$36,650**
- held a high tea event for donors with performances from local artists Louise King, Riley Cope and Natalie Ferris with guest speaker Director of Philanthropy Kenneth Watkins, The Australian Ballet
- partnered with the Caloundra Regional Gallery to offer significant support in managing their donations and newly-launched members program.
- provided philanthropic advice and mentoring to Sunshine Coast organisations such as Arts Connect, building the value of philanthropy and its relational practice with donors.



Image: Libby Derham. Photo: Georgia Haupt.



Image: Libby Derham. Photo: Georgia Haupt.



Image: Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation 'Business and the Arts Lunch'. Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Sector development programs



Image: MadeSC Residency at LJ Projects with Dana Maliphant and Lewis Major. Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Sector development programs

Spaces for Creatives is an ongoing initiative that champions accessible, affordable places for artists to connect, create and collaborate. It supports the development and activation of spaces for making, exhibiting and performing, while advocating for the essential role of creative infrastructure.

Council continues its partnership with IN | ARI, curators of The Old Lock Up in Maroochydore. In the past year, this collaboration has delivered one residency, **4** performances, **4** curated exhibitions showcasing emerging and established contemporary artists and a suite of professional development workshops. Council also remained a key supporter of SubTropic Studio in Caloundra until its closure in December 2025. Established by Council in 2020 and led by SCCA, this dynamic space, located in the former Caloundra Bus Interchange, hosted an annual emerging artist residency, co-working and studio facilities for creative businesses and a year-round program of events and masterclasses.

MadeSC supports independent artists, creative businesses and arts organisations to strengthen professional practice, foster industry connections, develop new work and link participants with presentation and career advancement opportunities. In the 2025-26 financial year, **8** artist residencies were delivered in partnership with The Falls Farm, LJ Projects, LANTANA Space, Gaba Musik and the new Library+ Caloundra Makerspace. These residencies directly supported **95** artists in the early-stage development of new contemporary art across the region.

The Falls Farm, Mapleton, hosted a 3-week residential residency set within a working permaculture farm. Sunshine Coast-based artist Corrie Wright developed new work exploring how regenerative practices can inform an equally regenerative artistic process.

LJ Projects, Nambour, held a dedicated month-long residency in a purpose-built dance studio, supporting the development of a new collaborative project between Adelaide-based choreographer Lewis Major and Mapleton-based dancer, photographer and sound artist Dana Maliphant.

LANTANA Space facilitated month-long studio residency embedded within a regional artist-run initiative supporting interstate artists Rose Rigley and Maj Muecke to develop new regionally relevant artworks that explore how acts of repair and remembrance intersect with ecological systems and local knowledge.

GABA MUSIK, Jinibara Country is a fresh, exciting and dynamic First Nations performing arts company, led by co-directors Deline Briscoe (Yalanji) and Airileke Ingram (Papua New Guinea). Gaba Musik worked with Jinibara man, Will Murphy, a guitarist and songwriter with a passion for contemporary music.



Image: Corrie Wright at The Falls Farm for MadeSC Residency 2026. Photo by: Ketakii Jewson-Brown.



Image: Artwork by Renee Mead at Caloundra Library+ Maker Space for MadeSC Residencies. Photo by: Georgia Haupt.



Image: Amanda Benetts MadeSC June. Photo: Ketakii Jewson-Brown.

The Library+ Caloundra Makerspace hosted a series of supported micro residencies for Sunshine Coast-based artists from 2 February to 11 May 2026. Supported artists for this series of residencies included Renee Mead, Megan Robinson, Isabella Hood and Julia Rose van Haren (Lewis).

As part of the MadeSC professional development program, Council partnered with Creative Plus Business and Red Chair to run 2 long-form professional development programs. Creative Plus Business hosted a series of professional development workshops in partnership with Light Industry, with the workshops focusing on business and marketing for creatives, including a series of online webinars. The program engaged a total of **446** participants across **2** workshops, **3** webinars and the I Hate Networking event.

Presented by Red Chair, the PRODUCER PD was a weekend intensive designed to strengthen participants producing knowledge, skills and networks. Through a combination of in-person workshops, panels and incursions, a selected group of producers were guided by some of Australia's leading producers and producing companies, including Performing Lines, Kerbside Collective, LJ Projects and Red Chair. The program featured **13** presenters, **18** participants and **62** attendees. **17** participants were also supported to attend QShowcase 2026, Queensland's premier performing arts market, as part of this program.

The MadeSC Projects annual callout for expressions-of-interest (EOI) invited established contemporary artists from all disciplines to propose ambitious and innovative projects for development in collaboration with venues, organisations and presenters across the Sunshine Coast and beyond. The 2025 EOI attracted **20** applications, with **4** shortlisted artists invited to submit a full proposal with **3** artists' projects selected by a panel made up of industry representatives. The successful projects include works by Kellie O'Dempsey, Amanda Bennets and Petalia Humphreys.

Circadian Field: Light as Panacea by Kellie O'Dempsey, was supported by Council, resulting in a large-scale project prototype: a light chamber translating plein air studies of Pacific twilight from Coolum Beach into projection across a large sculptural form to be viewed as a public artwork. O'Dempsey worked with audio-visual artist and designer Freddy Komp, creative producer Amie Moffat, sound composer Mick Dick, consultant Ruby Donohoe and mentor Natalie Hennedige.



Image: Rose Rigley at LANTANA Space.
Photo: Ketakii Jewson-Brown.

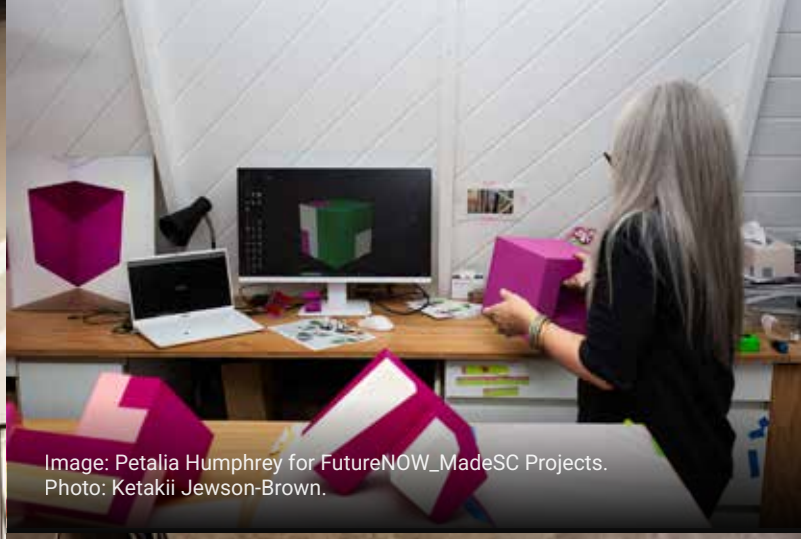


Image: Petalia Humphrey for FutureNOW_MadeSC Projects.
Photo: Ketakii Jewson-Brown.

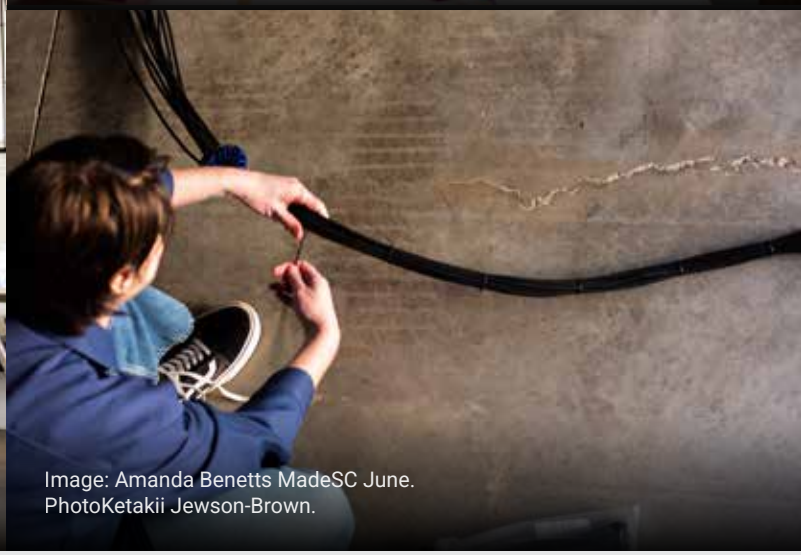


Image: Amanda Benetts MadeSC June.
PhotoKetakii Jewson-Brown.

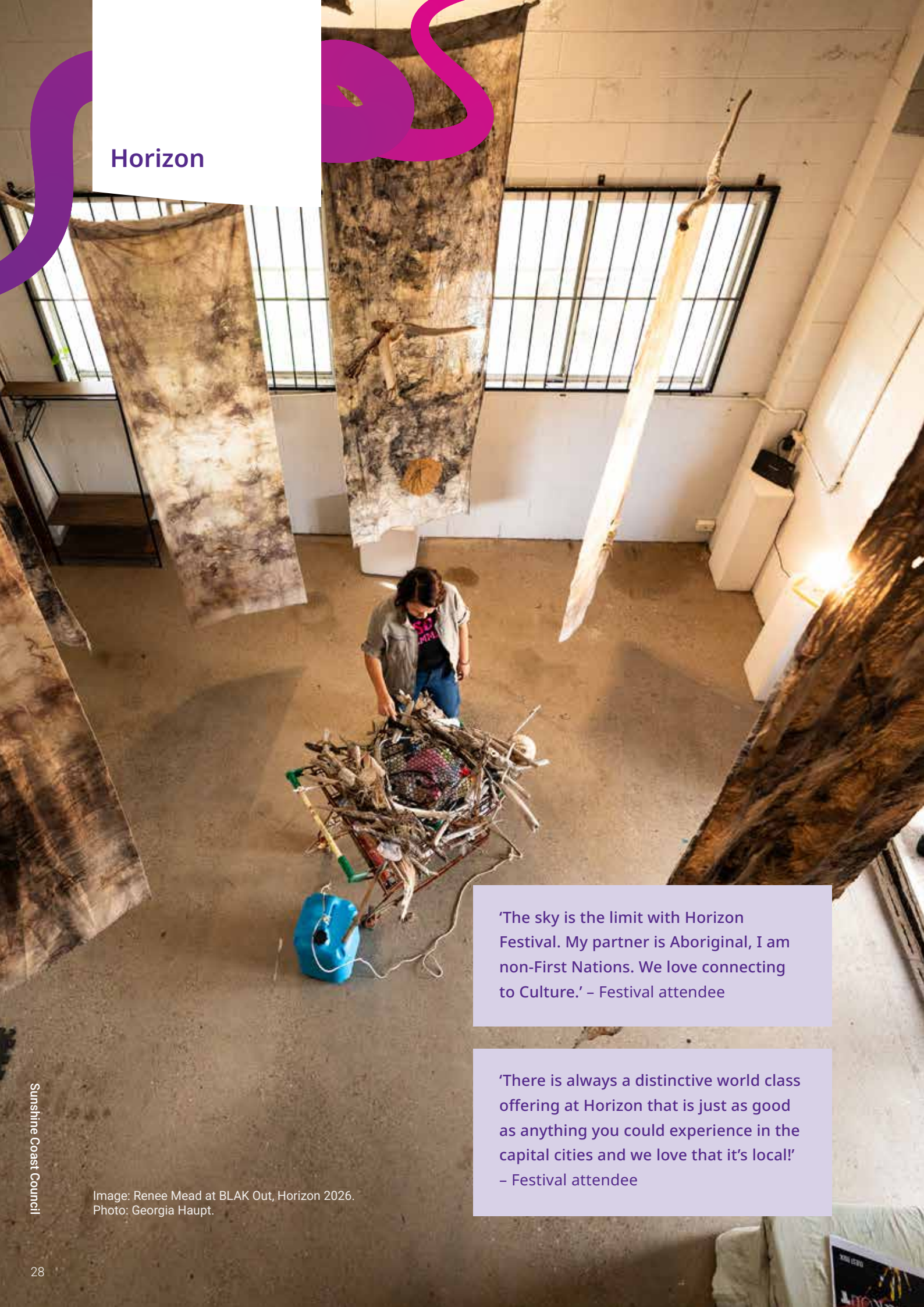
Axis Mundi by Amanda Bennetts received Council support for development. The work is a 5-metre freestanding sculptural work composed of server racks, flat screens and 3D-printed objects forming a speculative shrine offering audiences an opportunity to engage in a grounded interrogation of disability, algorithmic targeting and the body as infrastructure, drawing on the artist's lived experience of diagnosis with a rare muscle disease. Axis Mundi is slated to be presented at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art as part of NEW26, a platform for the next generation of Australian artists to experiment, take risks and present major new work within a public institution.

Latent Space by Petalia Humphreys received Council support for early-stage concept development. The project by explores interdisciplinary sculpture and new media works, presenting Humphrey's cube works in distinct ways and exploring how audiences engage with the built spaces around them.

The Keeper Project is a live public art project where artists work in a temporary role as observers, collectors, makers and storytellers within a community. The project was established in 2019 by Council in collaboration with Field Theory and delivered in partnership with Red Chair Productions from 2021–2023 in Coolum. Red Chair has since successfully secured funding from Arts Queensland and Creative Australia and delivered The Keeper Project in Nambour, Caloundra and now Maroochydore. In 2025, **10** 'Keepers' were selected for The Keeper Caloundra and based in an office at The Strand, Caloundra. A total of **18** artists and cultural workers were engaged, **827** people directly participated and over **57,000** people witnessed the Caloundra project. In 2026, The Keeper Project is being delivered in Maroochydore.

From the Keeper Project Caloundra:
It was a great experience working with community creating an installation that grew over the three weeks so I really enjoyed the process of it growing over that time and having people from all walks of life coming in to share story and contribute items.

Horizon



‘The sky is the limit with Horizon Festival. My partner is Aboriginal, I am non-First Nations. We love connecting to Culture.’ – Festival attendee

‘There is always a distinctive world class offering at Horizon that is just as good as anything you could experience in the capital cities and we love that it’s local!’ – Festival attendee

Image: Renee Mead at BLAK Out, Horizon 2026.
Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Horizon

At its heart, Horizon Festival is deeply connected to place. Celebrating the spectacular natural landscape of the Sunshine Coast region, honoring the stories and artworks of our First Nations people and providing a platform for local artists to create work and dialogue. In 2026, the Festival recorded an increased audience of **22,857** (with and audience of **21,837** in 2025) who attended over **104** events across **13** locations.

In 2026, Horizon Festival created a program that connected people, arts, culture and place through a carefully curated suite of events and activities. These events were scheduled across a range of locations across the region and featured **764** artists and arts workers, of which **545** were Sunshine Coast-based.

With a focus on bringing world class events to the Sunshine Coast, uplifting local voices and creating family experiences, the Festival achieved a high satisfaction rating with **93%** rating their experience as good to excellent (an increase of **4.5%** on 2025).

Horizon attracted just under **20%** of attendees from outside the region, with visitors contributing **$534,132** to the Sunshine Coast economy. The gross economic stimulus, or total spending in the region by attendees and the Festival, was **$1,791,156** across hospitality, retail, transport and accommodation.

Beyond positive economic impacts, the investment delivered strong community and cultural outcomes, with over **80%** of attendees feeling engaged and inspired, and **75.8%** reporting

improved perceptions of the Sunshine Coast as a destination, reinforcing Horizon Festival as a pillar of the region's cultural and tourism offering.

'The events are affordable and accessible. Performances outstanding.'
– Festival attendee

- **501** media features
- Potential audience reach of more than **7.44 million** (increase on **4.04 million** reach in 2025)
- **15%** increase in Instagram followers
- **53%** first time visitors
- **3794** attendees to **9** First Nations events

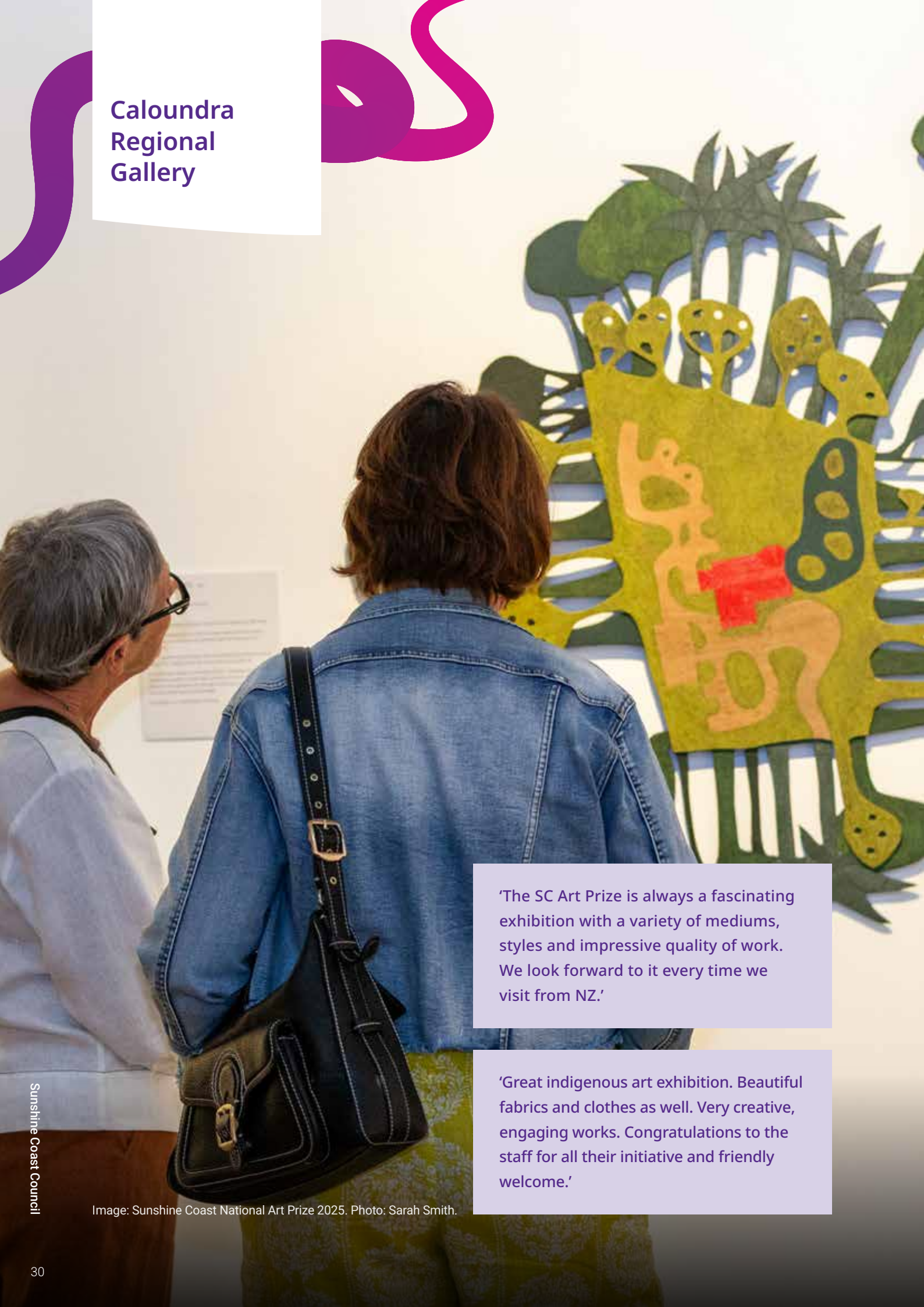


Image: Natalya Hughes exhibition 'The Interior'.
Photo: Georgia Haupt.



Image: Jem Cassar-Daley performing at Horizon 2026.
Photo: Georgia Haupt.

Caloundra Regional Gallery



‘The SC Art Prize is always a fascinating exhibition with a variety of mediums, styles and impressive quality of work. We look forward to it every time we visit from NZ.’

‘Great indigenous art exhibition. Beautiful fabrics and clothes as well. Very creative, engaging works. Congratulations to the staff for all their initiative and friendly welcome.’

Image: Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2025. Photo: Sarah Smith.

Caloundra Regional Gallery

The Caloundra Regional Gallery has remained pivotal in shaping the creative industries and cultural identity of the Sunshine Coast. Beyond hosting and fostering regional, national and international exhibitions and establishing one of the most prestigious national art prizes, the Gallery has continued to nurture and support artists through public and educational programs, artist residencies, art collection acquisitions and public art commissions.

34,521 total audience

23,173 exhibition visitors

7,916 program attendances

3,433 digital attendances

In-person visitation to exhibitions and programs has decreased by **7.5%** in the past year

$35,000 sponsorship secured for the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize

58 local artists featured in programming

20 of which were First Nations artists

7.5% Facebook growth with engagement rate of **2.43%**

25.4% Instagram growth with engagement rate of **23.6%**

6,600 in e-news subscribers

90% of visitors rated exhibitions and programs as good to excellent.

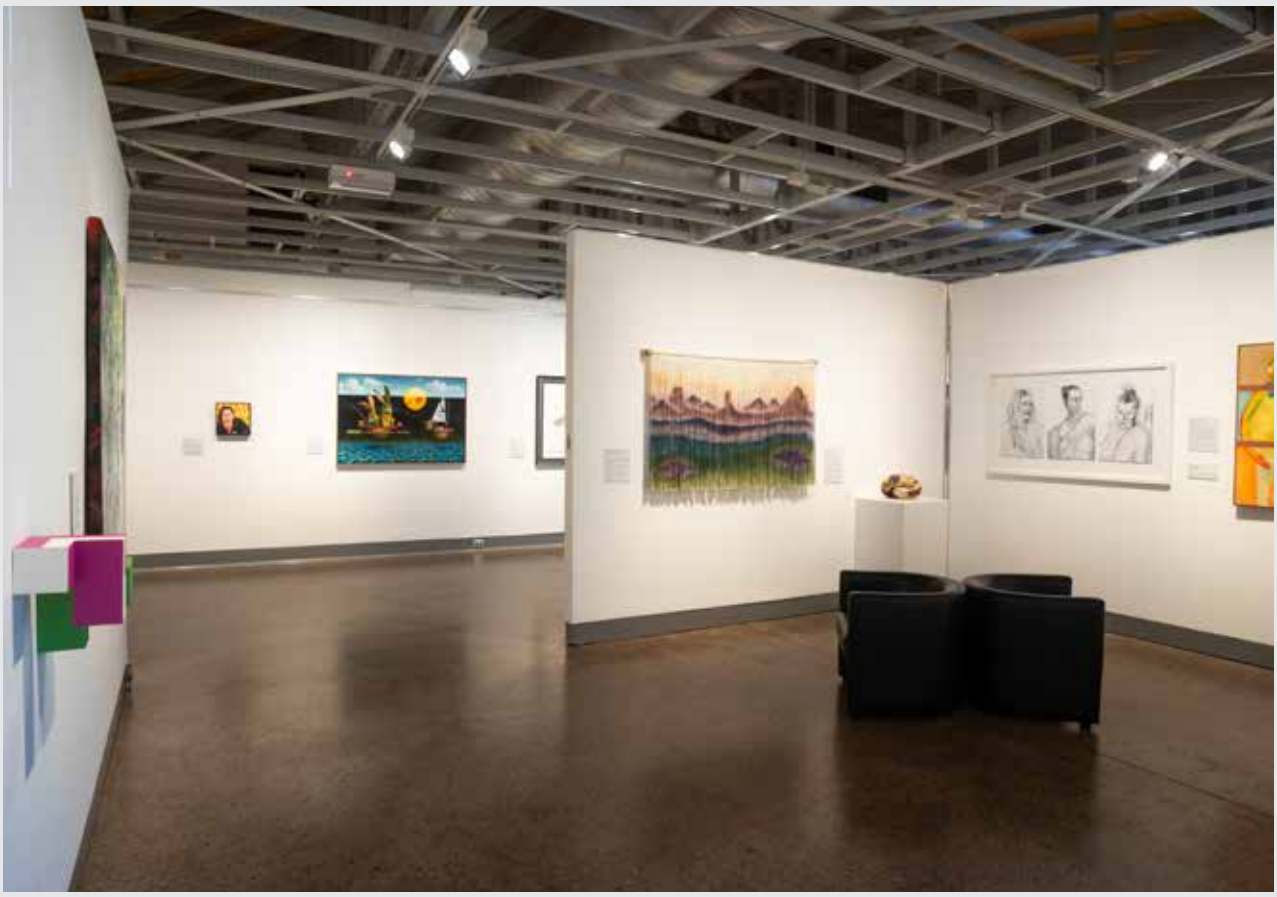


Image: Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026. Photo: Sarah Smith.



Image: 'Candyfloss Dreams (detail)' by Heidi Broom. Courtesy of the artist.

Exhibitions

The Gallery curated 15 exhibitions throughout the 2025-26 financial year at 2 locations. Accompanying the exhibitions were complimentary pop-up displays located in the Gallery Store, highlighting local artists in a mini-profile space. Each exhibition at the Gallery was also complemented with programs and events aligned with the exhibition's themes.



Image: Caloundra Regional Gallery 25th Anniversary.

Caloundra Regional Gallery

- **From the sea, the land and the mountains: Works by Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi and Jinibarra artists)**, 13 June to 3 August 2025, featuring works by Kane Brunjes, Zartisha Davis and the Jinibara Printers
- **Celebrating 25 years of Caloundra Regional Gallery and 20 years of the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize**, 5 August to 11 August 2025
- **Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2025**, 15 August to 12 October 2025
- **Wildflowering by Design**, 17 October to 30 November 2025
- **The Language of Laws: The colourful life of Judith Laws**, 5 December 2025 to 1 February 2026
- **The Brothers Gruchy**, 6 February to 22 March 2026
- **Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026**, 27 March to 17 May 2026
- **Local Student Art Prize 2026**, 27 March to 17 May 2026
- **How Soon is Now: Bruce Reynolds**, 22 May to 28 June 2026.

Maroochydore Library Artspace

- **Nan'garim Mi'bir: Sammy Ray Jones Peer Waneragal**, 27 May to 19 July 2025
- **From Perfectionism to Vulnerability: Heidi Broom**, 15 September to 8 November 202
- **The Andromeda Collection: Jonathan Jones AM**, 10 November 2025 to 10 January 2026
- **Mythimo: Favourite fairy tales reimagined under the sunlit Australian skies** – Simo, 12 January – 14 March 2026
- **Glimpse: Cecile Bell, 16 March to 16 May 2026**
- **Old Ways, New Marks: Works by First Nations Screenprint Collective**, 28 May to 11 July 2026

Art Prizes

Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2025

The acquisitive Sunshine Coast National Art Prize is a dynamic visual art award reflecting outstanding contemporary arts practice in Australia. This significant art award is the flagship visual art event for the Caloundra Regional Gallery. In 2025, the Prize attracted 469 entries from established and emerging artists across the nation.

Winners:

- David Wells won **$25,000**, generously funded by Argon Law and Council. The wining artwork, Dream house with galah, was acquired into the Sunshine Coast Art Collection.
- The Highly Commended Award, sponsored by the De Deyne family to the value of **$5,000**, was awarded to First Nations artist, Sam Harrison, for his work Born Here, From There.
- First Nations artist, Naomi Hobson, was awarded the 2-week Artist Residency for her work Rare. The residency includes accommodation and studio space provided by Montville Country Cabins, vehicle supplied by Coastline BMW and travel costs funded by Council.
- The People's Choice Award of **$2,500**, sponsored by Caloundra Chamber of Commerce, was awarded to Seabastion Toast, who received the most community votes for her work The River House.

Highlights

- **469** entries
- out of the **40** finalists: **17** from Queensland, **11** from New South Wales, **6** from Victoria, **1** from Western Australia, **3** from Northern Territory, 1 from ACT and **1** from Tasmania
- **20** female artists, **20** male artists
- **9** First Nations artists
- **5** local artists
- guest judge was Robert Heather
- visitation was **4,708** with **923** online votes for the People's Choice Award
- over **6,000** total online visitation with a **44%** increase in new visitors during the Prize
- social media engagement rose to **17.52%**.

Image: 'Dream house with galah' by David Wells - Sunshine Coast National Art Prize 2025 - Major Prize Winner. Image courtesy of the artist.



Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026

The acquisitive Local Contemporary Art Prize celebrates the diversity of visual arts practice across the Sunshine Coast. The Gallery, in partnership with the Friends of the Gallery, invited local artists working across all mediums to submit 2D and 3D works for the Prize.

40 finalists were selected from 215 entries for the exhibition and winners shared in $17,000 prize money, thanks to sponsors Council, Friends of the Gallery and Community Bank Caloundra – Bendigo Bank.

Winners:

- Marvene Ash won Best in Show, a **$10,000** acquisitive award sponsored by Council.
- Ketakii Jewson-Brown was awarded the 2D Excellence Award, with **$2,500** sponsored by Friends of the Gallery.
- Samantha Mays received the 3D Excellence Award, with **$2,500** sponsored by Friends of the Gallery.
- Jeska Valk won the People's Choice Award, with **$2,000** sponsored Community Bank Caloundra – Bendigo Bank and Friends of the Gallery.

Highlights:

- **3,575** Gallery visitors during the exhibition
- **1,300** public program and event attendees
- **919** People's Choice Award votes received
- Winning artworkwork, Studio Furniture (hare hiding), acquired into the Sunshine Coast Art Collection.

Image: Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026 Best in Show Winner Marvene Ash accompanied by Friends of the Gallery President Fiona Heiner and 2026 Guest Judge Kerryanne Farrer. Photo by Sarah Smith.





Image: The Brothers Gruchy, Caloundra Regional Gallery. Photo: Sarah Smith.

Marketing

Social media marketing had a successful year, with substantial audience increase – **604** Facebook followers, a **7.5%** increase year-on-year and **1,600** Instagram followers, a **25.4%** increase. Engagement rates on Facebook **(2.43%)** and Instagram **(23.6%)** are sitting at a high level for the industry, showing that this larger audience is also engaged with the Gallery's content.

Social media has been a key driver for website visitation, with a further increase on last year, totalling **188,834** page views.

Sunshine Coast Art Collection

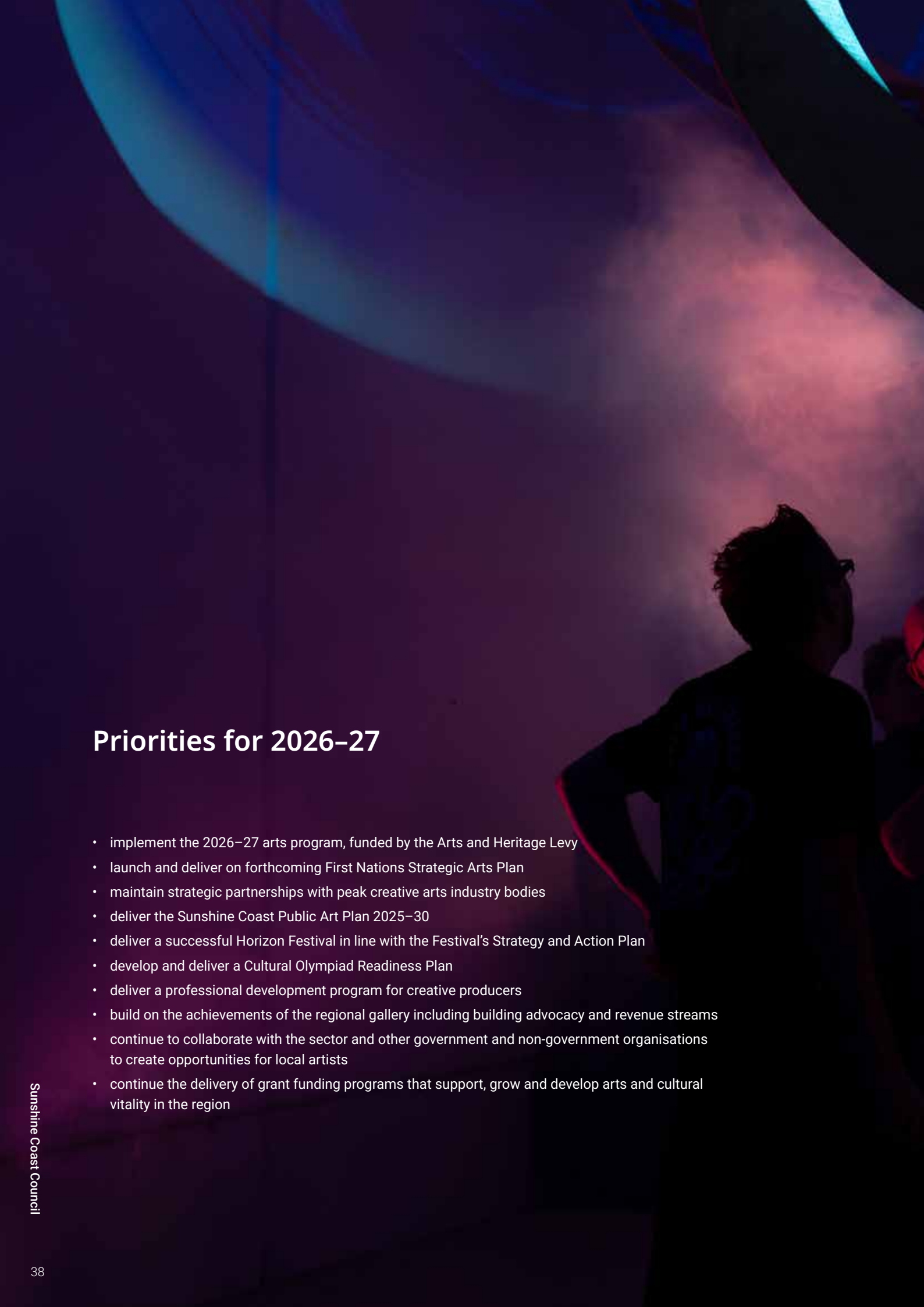
In the 2025–26 financial year, the Sunshine Coast Art Collection (which includes public art) held **1,383** individual items, including **1,137** artworks valued over **$3.1** million. The public art holdings included **246** works with valued over **$6 million**. The Collection's combined insurance value is over **$9.2 million**.

Gallery Store

The Gallery Store and Pop-Up Artisan program earned a total of **$24,593**, benefiting local artists. Over **1,100** individual items were sold in the financial year, produced by a diverse range of over **70** local and national artists and collectives. The top-selling homewares were produced by ceramicist Kath Melzer. Stick + Stone by Rebecca Ward, a Sunshine Coast-based artisan, was the top-selling jewellery brand. The Wildflower Women pop-up, curated by Dr. Sue Davis, sold over **$4,000** in stock during the Wildflowering by Design exhibition. Products by First Nations artists and creators contributed to **$2,200** in sales, with local Kabi Kabi designer and artist Amanda Pitt-Lithgoe being our most popular for fashion accessories and clothing.



Image: 'Life cycle of plants' by Carol Forster – Local Contemporary Art Prize 2026. Photo: Sarah Smith.



Priorities for 2026–27

- implement the 2026–27 arts program, funded by the Arts and Heritage Levy
- launch and deliver on forthcoming First Nations Strategic Arts Plan
- maintain strategic partnerships with peak creative arts industry bodies
- deliver the Sunshine Coast Public Art Plan 2025–30
- deliver a successful Horizon Festival in line with the Festival's Strategy and Action Plan
- develop and deliver a Cultural Olympiad Readiness Plan
- deliver a professional development program for creative producers
- build on the achievements of the regional gallery including building advocacy and revenue streams
- continue to collaborate with the sector and other government and non-government organisations to create opportunities for local artists
- continue the delivery of grant funding programs that support, grow and develop arts and cultural vitality in the region

Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board Alumni

Collette Brennan, Inaugural Chair	August 2016–November 2020
Tracey Vieira (inaugural member)	August 2016–November 2020
Sue Davis	November 2019–November 2020
Phil Smith (inaugural member)	August 2016–November 2019
Paul Calcott	March 2019–July 2020
James Birrell (inaugural member)	August 2016–October 2018
Kathi Holt (inaugural member)	August 2016–November 2018
Nicole Voevodin-Cash	April 2018–August 2022
Amy Clarke	April 2019–May 2023
Patricia Adjei	February 2021–December 2023
Karina Seljak	February 2024 to November 2024
Kris Stewart	February 2021–August 2025
Maz (Maria) McGann	February 2021–August 2025
Helena Gulash	February 2021–November 2025

Image: 'Circadian Field: Light as Panacea' by Dr Kellie O'Dempsey, supported through MadeSC. Photo by: Georgia Haupt.

Sunshine Coast COUNCIL

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creativearts@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

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