

Strategy 2024–2033

# Horizon



# 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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## **Acknowledgements**

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NOISE by Dancenorth. Horizon Festival 2023. Image: Nic Morley.



# Introduction

This strategy will guide the growth and development of Horizon from a successful regional multi-arts festival to a leading arts festival on the national calendar and a central component of the international cultural offer for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Horizon has an opportunity to lead in the transformation of the creative arts landscape on the Sunshine Coast through the implementation of this plan.

This will be achieved in alignment with the Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan 2023–2038, Revive, Australia’s cultural policy and Creative Together 2020–2030 [Grow 2022–2026], the Queensland Government’s 10-year vision for the sector and the state.

The Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan 2023–2038 (SCCAP) is the second iteration of the region’s 20-year Sunshine Coast Arts Plan 2018–2038. Its refreshed vision and goals reflect the region’s growth and maturation over the past five years and speak to the unique opportunities of our immediate future.

Horizon is a key deliverable in the SCCAP and identified by council to play a lead role in the Cultural Olympiad and Brisbane 2032 for the Sunshine Coast.

This 10-year strategy through consecutive action plans and a staged approach will ensure it remains relevant and effective.

The strategy will be used to seek future funding from all levels of government to support the delivery of the action plans through to 2033 and beyond, and has been developed through:

- Alignment to council, state and national arts policy and strategy
- Analysis of past-festival performance, feedback, data, and learnings
- Ongoing benchmarking against arts festivals with similar variables
- Community engagement of attendees, participants, and volunteers
- Sector engagement with Arts Queensland, Tourism and Events Queensland, and council’s Sunshine Coast Arts Advisory Board
- Internal engagement with relevant stakeholders.

The strategy end date of 2033 acknowledges that 2032 is not the end, but a game-changing opportunity in our journey of transformation.

**The strategy will be delivered over the following four phases:**

1. Build: 2024–2027
2. Cultural Olympiad: 2028–2031
3. Olympics and Paralympics: 2032
4. Future Horizon: 2033 and beyond.





Dirty Laundry by Briefs Factory. Horizon Festival 2023. Image: Ben Vos Productions.



# Context

## National

The timing for the development of the Horizon Strategy is favourable given the release of the Federal Government's new National Cultural Policy **Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place**, in late January 2023.

The intention of the policy is to 'change the trajectory of the creative sector, to deliver new momentum, so that Australia's artists and arts workers, organisations and audiences thrive and grow, and our arts, culture and heritage are re-positioned as central to Australia's future.'

Revive's centrepiece is the establishment of Creative Australia, which will be the government's new principal arts investment and advisory body. The governing body of Creative Australia will continue to be known as the Australia Council for the Arts, but the new structure seeks to expand on and modernise the organisation's work with additional funding of \$200 million over four years.

Revive is structured around five interconnected pillars, which set out the government's strategic objectives as follows:

1. **First Nations First:** Recognising and respecting the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.
2. **A Place for Every Story:** Reflecting the breadth of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.
3. **Centrality of the Artist:** Supporting the artists as workers and celebrating artists as creators.
4. **Strong Cultural Infrastructure:** Providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts, culture, and heritage.
5. **Engaging the Audience:** Making sure our stories connect with people at home and abroad.

Ten principles also sit across the pillars to guide the government's actions and investments over the next five years.

## State

Arts Queensland's lead strategy, **Creative Together 2020–2030**, is supported by three consecutive action plans, categorised as Sustain (2020–2026), Grow (2022–2026), and Thrive (2026–2030).

The strategy evolves in maturity to 2030 and beyond to the development and delivery of the Brisbane 2032 Cultural Olympiad and includes strategies for legacy outcomes. The key priority areas of the 10-year roadmap are:

- Embrace Brisbane 2032 across Queensland.
- Elevate First Nations arts.
- Activate Queensland's places and spaces.
- Drive social change and strengthen communities.
- Share our stories and celebrate our storytellers.

The Grow action plan provides a valuable overlay for this strategy, with strong synergy between its focus areas and Horizon's. Those focus areas include elevating the state's experience economy and international reputation through high-quality arts experiences, particularly unique First Nations experiences, and products specifically in response to Brisbane 2032. Additionally, there is a strong focus on nurturing the state's pipeline of arts workers and supporting collaborations or partnerships to grow investment in the sector, boost audience development, and extend market reach.

The state government's commitment to building a prosperous and sustainable arts sector through Creative Together 2020–2030, provides a supportive policy environment for Horizon to operate within.

**Towards Tourism 2032: Transforming Queensland's Visitor Economy Future** is the state government's collective framework to set the direction of tourism in Queensland for the next 10 years. It is supported by a series of implementation plans categorised as Build and Focus (2023–2025); Evolve and Transform (2026–2029) and Accelerate and Shine (2029–2032).

The vision is for Queensland to be Australia's destination of choice for domestic and global visitors seeking the world's best experiences by 2032. The key strategic themes of the 10-year framework are:

- **Demand:** Deliver a global marketing strategy, the Queensland Music Trails program, and develop a new business events industry strategy.
- **Supply:** Deliver tourism product/experience grant programs, targeted accessibility initiatives, and leverage the new State Fossil Emblem.
- **Connectivity:** Develop a new drive tourism strategy, deliver the aviation attraction funding boost, and support regional connectivity and accessibility.
- **Sustainability:** Develop a pathway to net zero, support destination eco-certification, and develop an ecotourism plan for protected areas.
- **Brisbane 2032:** Drive global awareness of the Queensland brand and embed tourism in the Brisbane 2032 Legacy Strategy and Plan.
- **First Nations:** Develop an Indigenous Tourism Development Roadmap, extend the Our Country Advisory Service, and enhance industry partnerships.



- **Investment and funding:** A one-stop concierge service for investors, examine approval pathways for tourism, and advocate for insurance affordability.
- **Talent and skills:** Leverage the Queensland Workforce Strategy, deliver targeted business capability and advocate for visa streamlining.
- **New ways of working:** Investigate a tourism knowledge hub, support technology uptake, and enhance service delivery across the tourism network.

The 10-year plan is complementary to the Creative Together 2020–2030 roadmap, with actions aligned to developing creative arts and cultural tourism experiences and events. The Build and Focus implementation plan for 2023–2025 provides another valuable overlay for Horizon as it sets actions to grow industry now, and lay foundations for future growth.

Authentic culture is identified as one of the ‘10 tourism game changers’ for Queensland and it also seeks to establish Queensland as Australia’s leading destination for Indigenous arts and cultural events through a greater investment in events.

## Local

The Sunshine Coast region has experienced rapid population growth, increasing by over 79,000 people between 2011 and 2021 (30%), and forecast to grow to over 500,000 people by 2041.

It is vital to meet the demands of this growing community through a sophisticated and diverse cultural offer.

The Sunshine Coast Creative Arts Plan 2023–2038 (SCCAP), leads the development of the arts sector in the region. The plan complements a suite of council endorsed strategies, plans and policies that aim to nurture the development of the interrelated aspects of culture, creativity, and the arts. These strategic documents contribute to the vision of the Sunshine Coast Council’s Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026 to be: Australia’s most sustainable region: Healthy. Smart. Creative.

Through the SCCAP, and Horizon, council aims to amplify the voice, visibility, development, and recognition of the arts sector within the growing region provide diverse opportunities for cultural participation and the quality and diversity of arts experiences expected by thriving communities.

As a key deliverable in the Creative Arts Plan, Horizon has a role in achieving its vision — ‘The Sunshine Coast is alive with arts, culture and creativity’ — through delivering against four of its five goals:

1. **Empower First Nations:** First Nations creativity and contemporary cultural expression is celebrated, emboldened and self-determined.

2. **Build capacity:** the region's creatives, artists and sector are professional, skilled, and connected.
3. **Strengthen engagement:** arts audiences grow through genuine participation and a diverse range of meaningful tailored experiences.
4. **Cultivate identity:** our reputation as a creative region attracts attention, talent, and investment.

Horizon aligns with the values of the Creative Arts Plan in all undertakings:

- **Bold:** We are brave risk takers, who experiment and innovate.
- **Authentic:** We keep it real, do what we say we will and ensure it is relevant and realistic.
- **Sustainable:** We care about people, planet, place, and prosperity.
- **Inclusive:** We welcome, respect, and celebrate diverse perspectives and experiences.
- **Connected:** We build dynamic partnerships and collaborations across sectors, communities, and cultures.





Gubbi Gubbi Dance performing at Dawn Awakening, Horizon Festival 2022. Image: Nic Morley.

# Background

Horizon was first delivered in 2016 to support the development of artists and the sector while building the identity of the Sunshine Coast as a cultural destination.

The concept was developed after a “cultural festival” was identified as a strategic initiative to be seed funded within the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland and was supported by the Sunshine Coast Regional Arts Development Fund Committee, independent group of industry peers that provide advice and guidance with regard to RADF program priorities.

The success of Horizon’s inaugural year with the local community, visitors, and the regional arts sector translated into significant economic, cultural, and social benefit for the Sunshine Coast. As a result, council endorsed the delivery of the festival from 2017–2019, then again from 2020–2022.

The 2020 Horizon was moved to a digital online event (due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the mandatory restrictions by state governments) and was delivered to over 100,000 online viewers — 90% of whom stated they would visit the Sunshine Coast based on their experience.

The 2021 festival was cancelled after a COVID-19 pandemic hard lockdown was implemented days from opening. Despite this, 53 local events were still delivered to over 12,000 attendees from September to December 2021.

In late 2022, council unanimously endorsed further funding for 2023–2027, while requesting officers prepare a strategy to lead into 2032 and come back to council for an increased request.

While Horizon was developed to achieve arts and cultural development outcomes, it also generates economic benefit, promotes social inclusion and wellbeing, brings communities together, fosters participation, and enables residents to gain a wealth of experiences that would otherwise not be readily available or accessible.





Mountain by Stalker Theatre. Horizon Festival 2019. Image: ben vos productions.

# Horizon achievements

Some key achievements (from 2016–2023) include:

## Awards

- Best Achievement in Marketing, Communication or Sponsorship at the 2018 Australian Event Awards – National and State Winner
- Best Regional Event at the 2019 Australian Event Awards – State Winner and National Finalist
- Best Regional Event at the 2021 Australian Event Awards – State Winner and National Finalist

## Engagement

- 319,192 attendees
- 726 First Nations artists
- 1,180 volunteers

## Outcomes

- \$5.2m economic impact
- \$16.2m economic benefit
- 6,798 creatives employed

## Investment

- \$1.2m partnerships / sponsorships
- \$430,750 grants / funding

## Profile

- \$3.2m media value
- 27.6m media reach





The Sinkers by Lara Fischel Chisholm from the Wet Hot Beauties. Horizon Festival 2022. Image: Tim Birch.

# Horizon profile

## Purpose

We produce powerful arts experiences that showcase our unique stories, share our authentic lifestyle, and celebrate our beautiful landscape.

## Vision

We enrich and transform lives through the arts, as we grow to be the Sunshine Coast's premier cultural event with national significance.

## Values

### **Bold:**

We are brave risk takers, who experiment and innovate. Our program is driven by the transformative power of art to create moments of beauty, joy, insight, and connection. We present brave artists and exceptional work that challenges and captivates. Proudly rooted in our regional identity, we strive to transform perceptions of the arts in regional settings, creating experiences that leave a lasting impact.

### **Authentic:**

We keep it real, do what we say we will, and ensure it is relevant and realistic. Our program is thoughtfully curated with care, insight, and a focus on contemporary practices. At its heart are the artists and their work, embodying ideas that resonate deeply across local, national, and global contexts.

### **Sustainable:**

We care about people, planet, place, and prosperity. We actively engage with our regional arts sector, creating opportunities to integrate Sunshine Coast-based artists and projects into our program. We prioritise the well-being of our artists, audiences, stakeholders, and team; building a strong foundation for a sustainable future.

### **Inclusive:**

We welcome, respect, and celebrate diverse perspectives and experiences. Our program amplifies diverse voices and is committed to engaging with a broad spectrum of communities. We provide thoughtfully crafted information and inclusive experiences, ensuring audiences of all types can navigate and enjoy the festival.

**Connected:**

We build dynamic partnerships and collaborations across sectors, communities, and cultures. We respectfully acknowledge that Horizon operates on Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Country. We are committed to upholding protocols for working on this land and engaging with First Nations artists throughout the festival. We are dedicated to expanding our networks and fostering meaningful collaborations with diverse partners, enriching the festival experience and broadening our reach.





LOOKS LIKE A TOURIST by Daniele Constance. Horizon Festival 2022. Image: Horizon.



## Focus areas

This strategy identifies five high level focus areas as the key modes to support the delivery of our purpose and vision. Each action plan delivered under this strategy will develop actions and measures under each focus area to achieve its specific objective.

1. **Curate** and deliver a festival of contemporary art experiences set in unique locations across the Sunshine Coast.
2. **Engage** with diverse resident and visitor communities to reflect and enrich the region.
3. **Support** Sunshine Coast based artists, arts workers, and Traditional Owners to develop and present work.
4. **Build** brand value and grow audiences to strengthen Horizon and the Sunshine Coast's reputation as an arts destination.
5. **Embed** sustainable practices to ensure Horizon's future.

## Key stakeholders

- Sunshine Coast Council, Mayor, and Councillors
- Artists, arts-workers, partners, and sponsors
- Visitors, including cultural tourists
- The Sunshine Coast community
- Local businesses, including the arts, events, and tourism sectors
- Federal Government through Creative Australia
- Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and Tourism and Events Queensland



Sunshine Coast National Art Prize at Caloundra Regional Gallery.  
Horizon Festival 2018. Image: Nic Morley.



# Key challenges and opportunities

The following analysis provides an overview of Horizon's current environment used to inform the development of this strategy and subsequent action plans.

## Strengths

- Support of Council
- Council's organisational infrastructure
- Skilled core team
- Legacy of past festivals
- First Nations Program
- Existing audiences
- Sunshine Coast location and population growth
- Regional positioning and unique offer for the region
- Clear vision and strategy - Culture before Commercial.

## Challenges

- Heavily reliant on external funding and partnerships with limited resources to seek and support opportunities
- Geographical spread of population and willingness / access to travel - transport
- Limited cultural infrastructure and availability of existing venues
- Limited brand recognition in market – locally and nationally
- Navigating external factors – weather and costly regulatory requirements
- Agreed measures of success and impact – cultural value, economic value or attendances.
- Scale of resources to meet current expectations – significant KPI's and growth expected
- Cost of living pressure on cultural spend
- Population growth – stream of new residents that are not engaged locally

## Opportunities

- Develop stronger connections with Sunshine Coast arts community
- Brisbane 2032
- Biosphere status - regenerative approaches and opportunities
- Growth, diversification and deepening of audience engagement
- Ability to position Horizon as leading regional arts festival with national appeal
- Ability to position region as an arts destination

- Seek to build and diversify partners and funding including longer term partnerships
- Reputation building through export of new work made in region
- Refining a unique value proposition and brand identity
- Expectation management (active managing of expectations)

## Threats

- Inflation and continued cost increases in goods and services
- Competition for budget in political environment
- Expectations exceed resourcing and impact on staff retention
- Cost of living impacts on audiences - Audience habits change
- Retaining staff – maintaining required specialised skills and experience in regional setting
- Priorities in fast growing region – culture gets put last



Walk & Talk with Leah Barclay. Horizon Festival 2019. Image: ben vos productions..



## Next steps

This strategy provides the overarching vision to guide the growth of Horizon toward 2033.

Leveraging the unique opportunity Brisbane 2032 provides to transform the creative arts landscape on the Sunshine Coast through the development and implementation of consecutive action plans with proposed priorities as below.

### **Build: 2024–2027**

Focus on growth and development:

- Local artistic practice and skill
- Local producers and arts-workers
- Audience development
- Brand awareness
- Partnerships and funding

### **Cultural Olympiad: 2028–2031**

Focus on delivering a program of events — with partners — that showcase our stories, lifestyle, and landscape while leveraging global opportunities.

### **Olympics and Paralympics: 2032**

Focus on delivering a one-off extended festival experience with an authentic and impactful program that leverages and complements the Brisbane 2032 offer and puts the Sunshine Coast on the global map.

### **Future Horizon: 2033 and beyond.**

Focus on the future delivery model for the festival.