

# Draft Arts and Culture Strategy 2022 – 2026





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Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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Cover image: Kathy Holowko, *The Unsung Hero*, 2019. Temporary public artwork commissioned for the Edinburgh Gardens Plinth Program. Mild steel, wood, paint. 1300 x 1030 x 850 mm. Photo credit: J. Forsyth

# Draft

# Arts and Culture Strategy 2022 – 2026

## Introduction

Arts and cultural activities should be integrated into our City, as an everyday experience enjoyed by all of our community, whether as makers, audience members or participants.

This was the guiding vision of Yarra's last arts and culture strategy (2016–2020).

It provided a roadmap for the establishment of several major initiatives for our communities. Gamilaroi/Kamiloroi artist Reko Rennie's Stolen Generations marker, Remember Me, is a permanent tribute to Aboriginal people taken and lost from their families. It provides a quiet place in the Atherton Gardens for people to reflect and commemorate. The Room to Create program has provided medium and long term spaces for seven important arts organisations and short term studio space in under-utilised council properties for 20 residency artists since 2016, ensuring they continue to produce and present in Yarra. Council established the Leaps and Bounds music festival in 2013 to support local venues and musicians through the traditional winter 'downtime'. It continued to support this festival to adapt to new challenges and opportunities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vision that arts and culture should provide everyday experiences enjoyed by our whole community remains uppermost for Yarra today. Arts and culture are as crucial to the quality of life in Yarra as are our roads, bike paths and parks. Integrated with other policy areas, our arts and culture can also add value to the way we build our roads and parks.

Other priorities are also just as important today as they were in 2016: the value of our cultural diversity; our respect for Traditional Owners – the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung – and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; and our commitment to social and environmental sustainability. These are all key priorities for Yarra and are reflected throughout this new strategy.

But what has changed is our circumstances. In 2016, the greatest threat to Yarra's vitality was the combined effect of gentrification, rental unaffordability and the pressure of growing density on our public spaces. While these conditions continue to present a challenge, they are overshadowed by the global pandemic of the early 2020s. COVID-19 has had a profound impact on our health, social wellbeing and economy. It has been a historic disruption unparalleled since the Second World War, and particularly detrimental to our creative community.

COVID-19 has put great pressure on our artists and creative producers. Throughout 2020–2021, lockdowns and restrictions have prevented arts and cultural events being presented in Yarra, and prevented Yarra's creative producers from touring. They have reduced venue capacity, making most live performances unviable. They have caused widespread unemployment and prevented interstate and overseas visitors enjoying and spending money on our arts and cultural activities. This has greatly affected our artists' livelihoods and their creative development.

The pandemic has put pressure on Yarra's broader community as well. Repeated lockdowns have been vital for the community's protection, but they have pulled at the threads of our relationships, increased social isolation, and exacerbated risks to our wellbeing. Our most vulnerable residents – the aged, the homeless, the poor and the isolated – are also the most susceptible to the disease and the economic disruption it created.

While the impact of the pandemic has been devastating in many ways, such disruption now presents the opportunity to re-think what we want our arts and culture to be and to 'build back better'. Even in the midst of a lockdown, the Council's 2021 annual customer satisfaction found that residents

remained very satisfied with Yarra's arts and culture;<sup>1</sup> but our vision is for our arts and cultural activities not just to reflect who we are today, but what we can be in the future. The pandemic must not be seen as a passing phase, but as a warning about the need to take preventative action against other existential risks, particularly climate change and growing social inequality. Our arts and culture will be important in providing guiding paths through these risks.

The Yarra 2022–2026 Arts and Culture strategy builds on the values and successes of the 2016–2020 strategy, while also responding to the threats and opportunities presented by the pandemic and the climate emergency.

The purpose of this strategy is to build on Yarra's previous successes, address the crises affecting our community – both the crisis of the pandemic and the ecological crisis – and cultivate a thriving arts and cultural sector for the whole community.

This purpose is reflected in the five key priorities:

- Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are at the heart of Yarra
- Artists are essential to a thriving Yarra
- Our arts and culture shape Yarra's places and spaces
- We celebrate and support our creative and diverse community
- Our arts contribute to an ecologically sustainable future

## Scope

Yarra is well-known for its live music: prior to the pandemic, it was home to 75 music venues that presented over 16,000 gigs per year, including 6 of Melbourne's 10 top music venues.<sup>2</sup> But it is also home to numerous galleries and visual arts studios, theatre, performance, literature, public art, design, digital arts and film and craft. Two areas in Yarra – Collingwood and Cremorne – hold important creative precincts. Collingwood is home to 289 creative spaces and provides 2,178 creative jobs (18.8% of all jobs in the area). Cremorne and Richmond, where there are 362 creative spaces, provides 5,528 creative jobs (15% of all jobs in the area).<sup>3</sup> However, creative activities happen across Yarra, from homes and childcare centres to commercial galleries and pubs.

As the boundaries between these different artforms blur, arts and culture also extend into new territory. The idea of digital live performance, for example, is a twenty-first century phenomenon. It is also an artform that has become an unexpected lifeline for many audiences during pandemic restrictions.

This arts and culture strategy supports all contributors to the creative ecology in Yarra, but it seeks to have the most impact by working closely with and for the individuals and organisations that have made creativity central to their activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Yarra City Council 2021 Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/-/media/files/ycc/about-us/annual-customer-satisfaction-survey/yarra-city-council--2021-annual-customer-satisfaction-survey-report--published.pdf?la=en>, pp 61–62.

<sup>2</sup> Music Victoria 2017, Live Music Census, <https://www.musicvictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2019/07/MLMC-2017-Report-compressed.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Hodyl & Co, Victorian Creative Neighbourhoods report, 04 Collingwood, 05 Cremorne and Richmond.

## Council's role

Council plays three key roles in arts and cultural activity, including:

- Producing arts and cultural initiatives and activities. For instance, Council commissions public art for the streets, parks and buildings of Yarra. Reko Rennie's Remember Me is an example.
- Investing in arts and culture. Council's annual and small grants programs are an example of how Yarra invests in arts and culture.
- Cultivating arts and culture. By providing support and opportunities for artists to develop and show their work, Council's Room to Create and Exhibitions programs are examples of how Yarra cultivates arts and culture.

These three roles are evident across Yarra's strategic actions.

## Consulting with our communities

This strategy is built on community consultation. In 2019, Council ran an online survey and engaged with communities in pop-up face-to-face events. Over 350 people participated in this research and discovery process.

This consultation found that people love the diversity, accessibility and vibrancy of Yarra's arts and culture, as well as the contribution they make to Yarra's sense of identity. In contrast, they found Yarra challenging for its lack of affordable spaces and the associated financial vulnerability of its artists. They wanted more public events, studio spaces, and artist-in-residence opportunities.

From this research and discovery process, Council developed the priorities for 2022 to 2026. The COVID-19 restrictions delayed the strategy's development, but in 2021, Council ran workshops in person and online with communities and special interest groups. These included artists at Abbotsford Convent and Collingwood Yards, Yarra Youth Services, CALD communities and the Victoria Street Traders Association, as well as Council staff. These workshops and meetings with approximately 100 people gave rise to the initiatives and actions that achieve our priorities.

## Yarra in 2022

Arts and culture continue to be important to Yarra's economy and communities. They are an important subset of the creative industries, which form one of Yarra's top four sectors of economic strength.<sup>4</sup> A key theme of Yarra's Economic Development Strategy is a 'creative, inclusive and sustainable economy' and Council aims to make Yarra a global hub for the arts sector. These industries are also growing. In the decade to 2019, total visitation to Yarra more than doubled, until more than half a million visitors were coming to Yarra every year.<sup>5</sup> Many visitors and tourists are drawn by Yarra's arts and culture, as well as the night-life to which they are connected.

COVID-19 has upset this economy in Yarra and across Melbourne. By the end of August 2021, only 40% of Melbourne permanent events workers employed prior to the pandemic were still employed, and only 16% of freelancers, contractors and casual staff.<sup>6</sup> Interstate and overseas visitors were prevented from coming to Melbourne, and as a result visitor spend in Melbourne fell by over 50%.<sup>7</sup> In April 2020 alone, 120 people in Yarra's arts and cultural sector lost their jobs.<sup>8</sup> Although they were slowly re-employed over the following year, the economic impact of the pandemic continued throughout 2021, and many – perhaps most – of Yarra artists have struggled to maintain a sustainable practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Yarra City Council, Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2020–2025.

<sup>5</sup> Yarra City Council, Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2020–2025.

<sup>6</sup> Save Victoria's Events, The State of Victoria's Events Industry, 30 August 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Save Victoria's Events, The State of Victoria's Events Industry, 30 August 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Yarra City Council, Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2020–2025.

Yarra has enjoyed a dynamic gig and night-time economy that has attracted residents, businesses and tourists and it can do so again. In 2020, Yarra responded to pandemic-related lockdowns by providing \$405,000 to support the creative sector in COVID-19 arts grants. It has also worked to find 'COVID-safe' ways for artists to present their work (See Case Study: Rock Around the Block).

## Case Study: Rock Around the Block



In December of 2020, Arts & Cultural Services was tasked with producing a replacement for the traditional Carols in the Park event, which could not proceed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The result was Rock Around the Block, a series of pop-up concerts featuring local performers in Yarra's iconic streets over the course of three weekends.

In partnership with Trucked Up Entertainment and Press Play Presents, busking-style entertainment took place throughout Yarra on the back of a truck stage, in locations selected for their prime viewing locations from either adjacent outdoor dining parklets, or public parks, for 30 minutes at each location.

### What was Council's role?

Our role involved setting out the creative strategy, project scope, budget and timeline. Yarra Arts then co-produced the event series with project partners, and coordinated road closures for each performance location.

### Outcomes

- 14 performances across Collingwood, Fitzroy, North Fitzroy, North Carlton, Clifton Hill and Richmond
- Seven local acts presented across three weekends after months of live music interruption
- Stimulated trade in high street shopping and dining precincts
- Media coverage, including major newspaper and TV features
- Nomination for Best Festival in 2021 Music Victoria Awards
- Positive feedback from community and participants.

### Learnings

Taking a responsive approach to public health restrictions can promote great outcomes for both local artists, businesses and the wider community. Unconventional projects can deliver high value for audiences, and increased coverage from media.

Image by J Forsyth.

Yarra's population continues to grow strongly. It is projected to grow by 57% by 2036.<sup>9</sup> As a result, there is great pressure on property affordability. Yarra's two arts precincts – Abbotsford Convent and Collingwood Yards – and its artist rental scheme (Room to Create) provide production and presentation spaces for some of Yarra's creative producers who may otherwise be priced out of our region.

Abbotsford Convent is Australia's largest multi-arts precinct. This significant hub is home to over 120 studios and is a sought-after location for art projects, rehearsals, workshops, exhibitions, markets, events and festivals. In the 2018/2019 period prior to the pandemic, the precinct welcomed over 1 million visitors through its gates.

Collingwood Yards is a new, permanent and affordable home for scores of artists and independent arts organisations working across music, visual arts, performance, digital media, creative industries and beyond. Situated across the former Collingwood Technical School campus, Collingwood Yards forms the largest part of the wider Collingwood Arts Precinct which also incorporates the adjoining home of Circus Oz.

The Room to Create program has also provided low-cost rental spaces in Council and community buildings for artists (see Case Study: Room to Create Collingwood Yards Studio). These facilities help to keep our artists in Yarra in the face of cost pressures.

### Case Study: Room to Create Collingwood Yards Studio



Room to Create is Yarra Council's dedicated program developed to retain artists and creatives in the City of Yarra. A key feature of the program is the Room to Create Fund, a charitable fund established under the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation which directly supports creative infrastructure and more affordable spaces.

The Room to Create fund in partnership with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, co-contributed funds to support a three-year studio program at Collingwood Yards, offering highly subsidised spaces for artists.

#### What was Council's role?

Council's role was to work with LMCF and Collingwood Yards to develop the opportunity; manage the Expression of Interest for the studio artists and the selection process; liaise with artists to initiate the tenancy; and promote the artists and program.

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<sup>9</sup> Yarra City Council, Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2020–2025.



## Outcomes

- Six artists are supported with subsidised rent making the spaces more affordable
- Artists are part of the Collingwood Yards community, providing potential for collaboration with other tenants and support of a likeminded community
- The artists gained opportunities through being part of the community, such as performance and exhibition opportunities
- The profile of the artists was raised through promotion of their work via council platforms

## Learnings

Providing subsidised spaces is a proactive way to support artists to practice in Yarra and contribute to the local arts ecology. The placement of the tenancy within a creative hub adds value to the opportunity, providing the artists with a further level of engagement and potential to enrich their practices.

Room to Create Collingwood Yards studios. Image: Natalie Jurrjens

In addition to such cultural hubs, it is important that all neighbourhoods benefit from easy and very local access to arts and culture. Melbourne seeks to be a city of '20 minute neighbourhoods', in which residents need walk no further than 800 metres (or for no more than 20 minutes) to meet their daily living needs.

Yarra's pattern of development means that almost all residents are within 400m of an activity centre.<sup>10</sup> The provision of local services is therefore important for maintaining the character of activity centres as local destinations.

Neighbourhoods such as Collingwood and Cremorne are experiencing significant development demand, because they are close to transport, the city and Yarra's creative activities. Ironically, it is attractiveness of creative activity that contributes to these development pressures, while the pressure on property affordability makes it increasingly difficult for artists to continue to practise those activities in Yarra.

Collingwood is one of Australia's most diverse, vibrant and creative inner-city neighbourhoods. In 2021, Smith Street was voted as the 'coolest' street in the world by 27,000 Melbourne residents.<sup>11</sup>

Cremorne attracts design and multimedia enterprises, and offers co-working spaces. Creative organisations cluster in particular streets, such as Swan Street and Smith Street. We need to ensure that our creative hubs continue, but also that they are part of a robust network of creative practices throughout Yarra.

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<sup>10</sup> Yarra City Council, Activity Centres – Roles and Boundaries – Yarra City Council, October 2019.

<sup>11</sup> R. Russo, Smith Street has been named the coolest street in the world, TimeOut, 10 June 2021, <https://www.timeout.com/melbourne/news/smith-street-has-been-named-the-coolest-street-in-the-world-060921>

This strategy seeks to continue to ensure that all of Yarra’s neighbourhoods benefit from the presence of arts and cultural initiatives, and that all feel included. Often, this means integrating arts and culture into places that also have other purposes (see Case Study: Rose Street Shared Zone).

### Case Study: Rose Street Shared Zone



In 2020–2021, Arts & Cultural Services partnered with the Traffic Engineering team to commission two major artworks along Rose Street, Fitzroy. A stunning 209-metre road mural that extends from Brunswick to Spring Street and a comical ‘big’ banana sculpture both contribute to making this street a more liveable urban environment. Rather than simply having a transport function, this street is alive with creativity and offers higher levels of amenity for residents and business communities.

Eye-catching *Fallen Fruit* by local artist Adam Stone stands two-metres tall on the corner of Brunswick and Rose Streets. *Giirrwaa* – which translates roughly to ‘community’ in the language of the Gumaynggirr people – reflects the area’s significant Aboriginal history. This road mural was created by proud Gumbaynggirr/Bundjalung artist and professional surfer, Otis Hope Carey, and was installed by Council’s contractor MPS Paving.

#### What was Council’s role?

Our role included curatorial development and the setting of creative objectives. We developed a project scope i.e. technical and budget considerations, liaised with external and internal stakeholders, and consulted with the artist around production and installation.

#### Outcomes

- Creates awareness around the important Aboriginal history of the area
- Locals and visitors enjoy art and creativity as an everyday experience
- Improves pedestrian access, safety and the streetscape along Rose Street
- The artwork is simultaneously functional in and creatively transformative of the public realm
- Makes local streets more attractive and inviting for pedestrians
- Increases visitation to local businesses with economic benefits
- Generates positive feedback from the community
- Encouraged contact from various Councils and commercial businesses about implementing similar projects.

#### Learnings

Working across Council collaboratively on projects with mutually beneficial outcomes in the public realm provides a platform to integrate public artwork into the urban environment in creative and surprising ways.

Image: *Giirrwaa* road mural by Otis Hope Carey, 2021

Yarra's population is economically and culturally diverse. While our socio-economic profile is relatively high, Yarra has pockets of disadvantage characterised by high unemployment and underemployment, and low-income households. It has a younger median age than Victoria as a whole, but it has fewer children and young adults, and fewer people over the age of 50. Our older residents value their ability to independently access a range of social and cultural programs and services. Council facilitates events, activities and intergenerational dialogue to build social connectedness for older residents.<sup>12</sup>

Thirty-nine per cent of Yarra's population was born overseas, and it has significant communities that speak other languages, including Vietnamese, Greek, Mandarin, Italian and Cantonese.<sup>13</sup>

Over more than two decades, Yarra has celebrated its cultural diversity through annual events such as the Victoria Street Lunar Festival in Richmond, and the Johnston St Fiesta in Fitzroy.

As new migrant groups move into Yarra, Council seeks to make sure that their cultures too are celebrated. Between 2018 and 2021, Yarra provided grants for a range of arts and culture events aimed at general and specific communities, including children and young people (14%), CALD communities (18%), First Nations people (8%), LGBTIQ+ (7%) and families (2%), amongst others.

The arts are particularly important after an event as socially divisive as the COVID-19 pandemic: they generate empathy that can bridge social divides and create a future in which diversity is celebrated (see Case Study: LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club).

### Case study: LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club



All The Queens Men (ATQM) is one of Australia's leading arts organisations, reflecting contemporary Australian culture through art-making acclaimed for its community-committed practice. ATQM engages with communities as co-collaborators, co-designing its processes and creative experiences enabling people improved access, not only to the arts, but broader community and social services. ATQM partner with all tiers of government and cross-sectorial industry partners, working at the intersections of health, ageing, LGBTIQ+ equality, young people and physical activity; the results of which aim to inspire social transformation and change.

Since 2017, ATQM has presented LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club in the City of Yarra, offering this community a free monthly social dance event that celebrates the social, cultural and recreational rights of older LGBTIQ+ people (55+).

#### What is Council's role?

ATQM has received Arts and Culture funding since 2016 and a multiyear Engage 2020-2021 grant. ATQM is one of the few arts projects that engage with LGBTIQ+ Elders in Victoria, as a result Yarra Arts has worked hard to connect individuals and organisations to their activities and their methodologies, develop and maintain a volunteer program as well as promote their activities to the broader community.

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<sup>12</sup> Yarra City Council, Active and Healthy Ageing in Yarra Strategy 2018–2024.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016.



## Outcomes

- Connects disparate and isolated LGBTI+ elders, through a network of community gatherings and creative workshops.
- Fosters a strong and supportive LGBTI+ elders community throughout the City of Yarra through regular contact and relationship building among individuals.
- Produces a monthly dance club honours the creative expression, storytelling, advocacy of LGBTI+ elders; an event that engages the broader community with their narratives and needs.

## Learnings

Arts companies who have strong emphasis on community led and co-design of their projects have longevity and achieve their outcomes.

Image: Bryony Jackson

Australia Council surveys of the national population suggest that Australians are becoming increasingly aware of the role arts and culture play in forging social connections.<sup>14</sup>

Yarra is committed to increasing the input of our Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung community in shaping our region's future.

Over the past five years, close collaboration between the Yana Ngargna Advisory Committee and Yarra's Arts and Culture team, and initiatives like Smith Street Dreaming (see Case Study: Smith Street Dreaming Festival), have embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures into Yarra's activities.

One of the key priorities of the Yana Ngargna Plan (2020–2023) is to increase the visibility of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, issues and achievements in Yarra. The arts and cultural strategy seeks to advance this aim.

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<sup>14</sup> Australia Council for the Arts, Creating our Future: Spotlight on Social Cohesion, Results of the National Arts Participation Survey, August 2020.

## Case study: Smith Street Dreaming Festival



Smith Street Dreaming celebrates the local community, promoting awareness of Aboriginal culture and building strong relationships between the many different people who live, work and visit Smith Street. It is about 'one street, many mobs and one community'.

The annual Smith Street Dreaming takes place on the corner of Stanley Street and Smith Street, a traditional meeting place for Aboriginal community. Established in 2013, this award-winning event (2015 HART Awards, Reconciliation Victoria) attracts new local audiences and promotes a shared sense of space between the local Aboriginal community, local traders, police and the greater community of Yarra.

### What is Council's role?

City of Yarra's Arts and Cultural Services produce Smith Street Dreaming as part of Leaps and Bounds Music Festival on behalf of the Smith Street Working Group, which is chaired by Mission Australia/Charcoal Lane.

The Working Group includes Aboriginal Elders and community members, justice and outreach workers, the Parkies, Victoria Police, City of Yarra, Co Health, MAYSAR and Mission Australia's Charcoal Lane.

### Outcomes

Smith Street Dreaming presents a showcase event of the best of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander emerging and established artists in addition to a Welcome to Country, ceremonial fire, traditional dancers, talks and performances by Smith Street Community members and 'the Parkies' and a free BBQ.

Previous artists have included local legend Uncle Archie Roach, Emma Donovan and The Putbacks, Frank Yamma, Uncle Dave Arden, Coloured Stone, Indigenous Hip Hop projects and many more.

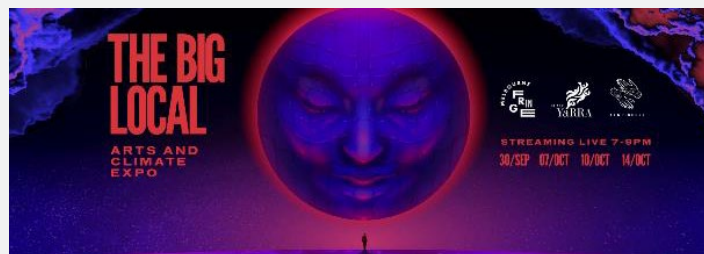
### Learnings

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander festivals that are self-determined and led with authentic partnerships provide true representation, opportunities for truth telling and reconciliation through engagement with the arts.

Image: Amos Roach, Smith Street Dreaming 2018. Photo by Sarah Walker.

Yarra Council was one of the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, and it is a key priority for Council that it reduce its carbon emissions to slow climate changes such as extreme heat and reduced annual rainfall.<sup>15</sup> Yarra's goals include achieving net zero emissions by 2030, as well as enabling the community to take climate action. The arts and culture have a major role to play in achieving these goals (See Case Study: The Big Local Arts and Climate Expo).

## Case Study: The Big Local Arts and Climate Expo



In 2021, an Artist in Residence Community (AIR), Teneille Clerke, was initiated through the State Government Working for Victoria program. This six month part-time position provided a creative practitioner to develop community participation arts and cultural projects that build on and add value to Council's projects, programs, and priorities.

The Big Local Arts and Climate Expo was curated and produced by the AIR with support from Arts and Culture and the Sustainability unit. The expo was originally conceived as an in-person event but due to restrictions, the program was delivered online as a series of livestreams showcasing diverse local artists working in innovative ways to engage the public in climate action. The expo featured short films, panel discussions, interactive live chats, stand-up comedy, and live art making from discarded and recycled materials. The program was delivered as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

### What was Council's role?

Council engaged the AIR and support the role with other internal units to deliver the outcome, which takes a creative lens to discussions around climate change.

### Outcomes

- Four online live streams delivered during the 2021 Melbourne Fringe Festival
- Highlights and demonstrates that creatives are responding to climate change
- Provides an opportunity for community engagement centred on climate action in multiple creative ways, e.g. through panel discussions, engagement with live artmaking and performance
- Supports over 14 creatives through artist fees and opportunity to share their work with a broader audience
- Provides a different platform for Council to engage with community on climate action and reach a different demographic through the project being presented as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival

### Learnings

Creative producers have an important role to play in contributing to change around climate action. Through providing different ways to discuss the issues and presenting different solutions, creatives can extend engagement and help deliver the narrative that everyone has a role to play in creating positive environmental change.

Design: Sebastian Berto

<sup>15</sup> Yarra City Council, Climate Emergency Plan 2020–2024.



## Priorities

### 1: Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures are at the heart of Yarra

Yarra's goal over the next five years is to enhance our connection with Aboriginal culture. It will celebrate, respect and embrace Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and heritage.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have clear priorities for arts and cultural development in Yarra, including sharing their culture, supporting a range of traditional and contemporary arts activity and storytelling. However, they aim to do so in ways that protect the community's principles of knowledge transfer and ownership of intellectual property. To realise these aims and to increase the prominence of Aboriginal arts and culture in Yarra, Council will ensure community leaders have input into major decision making. This input will include Aboriginal Elders, but will not be limited to them. It may also include Aboriginal artists, community workers, residents and businesses.

Yarra will celebrate and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and culture by increasing the cultural competence of our creative producers, participants and audiences. It will ensure our decision-making in arts and culture reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and values by embedding their leadership into our decision-making processes.

### 2: Artists are essential to a thriving Yarra

Council recognizes the need to safeguard our artists' future by revitalising the arts, culture and night-time economy after the pandemic. Creative producers need help to adapt their work to accommodate a world in which public health restrictions may be ongoing, such as by increasing the outdoor and digital aspects of their practice.

Council will leverage support from government and private partners, to help strengthen and innovate Yarra's artistic practice for a post-COVID era. All levels of government need to coordinate their support for Australia's creative production, and Yarra can initiate and lead this coordination. Within Council too, greater coordination between different divisions will leverage support for arts and culture. Many areas across Council already have arts and culture embedded in their work – including Economic Development, Aboriginal Partnerships, Youth Services, Library Services, Sustainability and Design and Placemaking – but there are further opportunities across Council.

Community feedback has also made it clear that Council's networks and resources have the potential to provide important knowledge and skills that can help artists renew and adapt their practices to changing conditions. Council's own staff provide important networks that are valuable to our arts community, including our environmental, arts and culture, and planning units. External organisations that Council has strong relations with are also important resources for artists, including arts and culture peak bodies and community organisations.

### 3: Our arts and culture shape Yarra's places and spaces

Yarra's public places bring people together. As Yarra grows, opportunities to experience arts and culture will need to follow patterns of population growth and development. Rather than 'art washing', in which a public artwork is added as an adornment to a planned building or neighbourhood, Yarra's arts and culture unit will be involved in decision-making from the inception of a planning decision. They will ensure that artists' visions are central to development plans and that these visions provide ongoing opportunities for the community to engage with the arts.

Council will work with property owners, including private owners, commercial arts venues and non-profit organisations, to investigate ways in which it can expand opportunities for artists to occupy a

range of flexible, temporary, long-term and public-facing spaces and to use these spaces to increase engagement with the public throughout Yarra.

#### **4: We celebrate and support our creative and diverse community**

Participating in community life is the key to a healthy, socially connected and culturally rich Yarra. Council aims to enable as well as celebrate Yarra's diversity. Community feedback suggested that there is scope to ensure that Yarra's grants processes are promoted to and made accessible to diverse communities, who use different communication channels and present their work in different ways.

Council aims to strengthen inclusion and support vulnerable communities. In doing so, it recognises the need to make sure that urban development provides economic and social opportunities to our diverse community, and to address the negative impacts that COVID-19 restrictions have had on feelings of social connection.

#### **5: Our arts contribute to an ecologically sustainable future**

Collectively, we need to imagine, explore and develop ways in which we can live prosperous and fulfilling lives that are independent of fossil fuel use. The practice of imagining and exploring alternative futures is central to much arts practice. Yarra will develop strategies to encourage its artists to help us see and experience new ways of living. Council's arts and culture funding schemes, artist and public programmes, and procurement process will cultivate arts practice that assists Yarra to reach its sustainability goal.

These five priorities for our arts and culture strategy have shaped Council's initiatives and actions.

Initiative	Action	What will this look like?
We will increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence	<p><b>1.</b> Develop resources and create opportunities for artists/organisations to increase their cultural competence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative producers will have access to resources, such as protocols for working with Yarra’s Aboriginal artists and practices.</li> <li>• Creative producers will have new opportunities to develop competence, such as tours of significant Yarra sites, storytelling and introductory events.</li> </ul>
We will raise the prominence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts in Yarra	<p><b>2.</b> Implement a plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to contribute to Yarra’s strategic decisions and investment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture expertise will be employed into the Council’s Arts and Culture team, represented on the Yarra Arts Advisory Committee, and/or contracted to provide advice on art procurement.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>3.</b> Create opportunities to increase the prominence of Aboriginal arts in all artforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yarra will be home to a significant new Aboriginal arts and culture initiative, such as a dedicated festival or significant public art commission.</li> </ul>
We will safeguard our artists’ future	<p><b>4.</b> Create opportunities for coordination and collaboration with the Victorian and Australian governments to advance our arts and culture priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will partner with State Government on initiatives that advance the interests of Yarra’s creative producers, such as on Creative Neighbourhoods Partnership and Pilots program with Creative Victoria to improve rental affordability for creative producers.</li> <li>• Council will advocate to the State Government to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adopt State-wide definitions of ‘affordable workspace’ and ‘Creative Neighbourhoods’.</li> <li>• formally recognise Collingwood and Cremorne as State significant ‘Creative Neighbourhoods’.</li> <li>• provide further planning guidance and best practice models for the delivery of affordable workspaces for arts and creative industries.</li> <li>• identify and repurpose vacant or underutilised publicly owned buildings for affordable workspace hubs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Initiative	Action	What will this look like?
	<p><b>5.</b> Assist artists to develop new skills, build connections and increase innovations through a community of practice that gives them access to Council networks and resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will regularly host events that bring Yarra’s artists, communities and generations together, provide skills- and resource-sharing opportunities, and build connections between artists and representatives from other sectors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>6.</b> Work with areas across Council to embed arts and culture priorities and objectives into their strategies and operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council areas such as Financial Services and Planning and Development will take action to help achieve arts and culture priorities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>7.</b> Continue to provide a range of creative spaces for artistic practice that responds to the needs of the arts community, to ensure that Yarra remains an accessible home for artists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbish underutilised Council-owned spaces for artist residences and creative use.</li> <li>• Continue to negotiate with planning permit applicants for space in major developments to be leased to Council at a below-market rate for its Room to Create or other similar program.</li> <li>• Investigate drafting a ‘Yarra Planning Policy Guidance Note’ which sets out Council’s expectations for major development to include a % of affordable creative workspace at a minimum of 20% below market rate.</li> </ul>
<p>We will ensure that all of Yarra benefits from our arts and culture</p>	<p><b>8.</b> Determine investment in Yarra’s arts and culture in response to development, population and density trends, providing opportunities for residents in all neighbourhoods to participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate resources for the development of arts and culture initiatives for emerging communities, such as Yarra’s African community.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>9.</b> Ensure the integration of Arts and Culture into Yarra’s built form and public realm design.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include Arts and Culture in Structure Plans and Local Area Plans or similar.</li> <li>• Embed, early in the process, public art into Council public realm and infrastructure projects through collaboration.</li> <li>• Facilitate new opportunities, through negotiations with landowners, for public art to be commissioned in the private realm.</li> </ul>

Initiative	Action	What will this look like?
	<p><b>10.</b> Review and adapt Yarra's arts and cultural grants schemes to make them equitable and improve the resilience of arts practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yarra's arts grants scheme will:</li> <li>• Encourage collaboration between applicants with shared goals.</li> <li>• Be strengthened by processes that are accessible to all artists, regardless of age, culture and experience.</li> <li>• Provide funding that supports projects to succeed.</li> <li>• Provide assistance to artists to develop pandemic-resistant practices.</li> </ul>
<p>Our arts and culture will present us with alternative futures</p>	<p><b>11.</b> Cultivate arts practices that present us with ecologically sustainable futures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An artist-in-residence scheme will be established, in which artists work in Council teams with frontline responsibility for issues of sustainability (such as Services Contracts and Waste Management).</li> </ul>
<p>Our arts and culture will advance Yarra's sustainability goals</p>	<p><b>12.</b> Yarra's ecological sustainability goals will be built into its arts and culture schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability objectives will be built into arts and culture funding criteria.</li> <li>• A sharing or hiring opportunity will be developed for artists that pools resources and avoids duplication, reducing cost and waste.</li> <li>• Arts organisations will be supported to audit and develop their own sustainability plans, drawing on Council's environmental expertise and networks.</li> </ul>