



# Warrnambool City Council Creative Strategy

2025-2029



WARRNAMBOOL  
CITY COUNCIL



# Acknowledgement of Country

Warrnambool City Council respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land upon which we live and work and waters we share, the Peek Whurrong and Gunditjmara people of the Maar Nation, who have had a deep spiritual and cultural connection to country for thousands of years. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and acknowledge the contribution their traditions, cultures and stories make to the cultural landscape of Warrnambool.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring tribes in this area, Kerr-up-Jmara, Chaap-Whuurong, Kuurn-Kopan, Kirra-Whuurong, and Yarro-Waech.





## Role of Council

Council is a key stakeholder in the development of the city's artistic and cultural life and the city's creative sector.

**Council also recognises that creativity, arts and culture play a key role in supporting its responsibility to:**

- enhance the quality of people's lives and the liveability of the City
- provide opportunities for public involvement and cultural expression
- contribute to community health and wellbeing
- contribute to building vibrant, engaged and socially active communities
- contribute to a strong sense of place and community pride
- fuel community and economic development
- provide opportunities for employment and lifelong learning
- attract new residents to live, work, play and create in the city.

**Council will support the development of creativity, arts and culture as:**

- **champion** – partner, supporter and promoter
- **connector** – brokering networks and partnerships
- **capacity builder** – through research, policy, professional development
- **host** – providing places and opportunities; and
- **custodian** – conserving, collecting, holding.

## Why a Creative Strategy?

A strategy is required to scaffold the growth of the city's creative enterprise and will be used to prioritise the important work that needs to be done to support the development of a diverse and robust creative sector in our region.

The strategy will enable Warrnambool to capitalise on the well-evidenced economic, health, social and civic benefits that result from a flourishing cultural landscape.

As this is Warrnambool's first Creative Strategy it focuses, in the short-term, on establishing a strong foundation from which to grow, with the expectation that the next version will expand upon its activity and its vision.

The projects outlined in the strategy represent an achievable and measurable plan for Council to contribute to the city's cultural development over the next four years.



# Links to key Plans and Strategies

The Warrnambool Arts and Culture Strategy 2025 - 2029 is a key strategic plan of the City Wellbeing Branch of Council and is closely aligned to other key strategic plans of Council.

**The Council Plan 2025–2029** describes the strategic direction of the Council within that period. Key to this strategy are the embedded strategies of the Council Plan:

- Our City activates and promotes local culture and art.
- Our City is activated to be attractive to residents and visitors.
- Our City encourages business growth and development.
- Our City will support and grow industries that will bring employment and prosperity to the region.
- A creative City that encourages opportunities for innovation and creativity, increasing community connectedness.

## **Warrnambool Art Gallery Strategy 2025-2029**

## **Warrnambool Economic Development Strategy 2023–2028**

### **Warrnambool Events Strategy 2024 - 2028**

#### **Warrnambool 2040:**

- Warrnambool fosters a creative and collaborative culture
- Warrnambool will embrace digital innovation and technological change
- Warrnambool has accessible, high-quality public spaces and facilities

### **Warrnambool Destination Action Plan**

#### **South West Creative Industries Strategy 2025 - 2029:**

a collaborative plan to support and grow the creative sector across five southwest Council areas, led by Regional Arts

Victoria. The Strategy is supported by regional stakeholders including Creative Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, First Peoples - State Relations, Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism and South West Community Foundation.

**Creative State 2025** The Victorian Government's Creative Industries Strategy.

**Experience Victoria 2033** The Victorian Government's strategic plan to shape the future of Victoria's visitor economy over the next ten years.



# Partners and stakeholders

Warrnambool City's Creative Strategy 2025 – 2029 will be implemented in partnership with:

- Creative Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria
- State and Commonwealth Governments
- creative industry, artists and cultural workers
- Indigenous communities and artists
- business and education sectors including Deakin University and SW TAFE
- community arts organisations such as The F-Project, Find Your Voice Collective, The Multicultural Association, Blak Markets, One-Day Studios and The Warrnambool Artists Society
- other Council departments, including City Futures, City Infrastructure, Warrnambool Art Gallery, The Lighthouse Theatre and Warrnambool Library and Learning Centre; and,
- the broader community as consumers, participants and supporters of the arts.

## Definitions

In this Strategy, 'creativity' encompasses all forms of arts & culture, including performing arts, visual arts, screen and digital arts, literary arts.

'Culture' refers to the values, ideas, customs, attitudes and physical artefacts of a particular people or society. Our culture is how we express who we are, as a member of a group.

The term 'artists', 'creatives' or 'creative practitioners' are used interchangeably to describe those engaged in artistic and cultural activity.

**Population:** Warrnambool's population is approaching 36,000 and growing at about one per cent annually.

**Demographics:** The median age in Warrnambool is 42 years, older than the national median age of 38. The percentage of Warrnambool's community 60 years or older is 27.8%. For the Great South Coast region this is 28.09%.

**Cultural diversity:** At the 2016 census 683 people identified as Aboriginal, 13 identified as Torres Strait Islanders and a further 13 as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. English is the most common language followed by Mandarin and Korean. Australia is the most popular birthplace of Warrnambool residents followed by England, New Zealand and Taiwan.

**Employment and industry in Arts and Culture:** At the 2016 census - 232 people worked in the arts and recreation services sector or approximately 3.1% of the population.



# Warrnambool's cultural landscape

Our home in the South West has a long history of creative innovation.

The Maar Nation peoples are artists, musicians, storytellers and inventors. They have lived on and cared for country with deep and complex cultural practices for 65,000 years. Budj Bim is the site where the Gunditjmara people made the world's first aqueducts so that they could harvest Kuyang (short finned eels), over 6000 years ago. Their artworks use unique cross-hatching and linear techniques to tell stories and convey knowledge.

More recently, though still some time ago, the oldest musical recording in Australia was recorded in Timor St. In 1896, John Villiers sang 'The Hen Convention', and Tommy Rome recorded it on his new Edison Phonograph (perhaps they might have chosen a different song, had they known it would go down in history). Later, the tune for Waltzing Matilda was composed here, and later still Shane Howard and Archie Roach would change the world with their own Aussie anthems, 'Standing on Solid Rock' and 'Took the Children Away' respectively. Our long connection to music continues to foster incredible talent today, with many contemporary Warrnambool musicians performing to huge audiences around the world. You may have even heard Warrnambool band Airborne provide the perfect backing track to the finale of a 40 year old feud in the Karate Kid Netflix show, Cobra Kai?

We're home to some of the country's finest performers, designers, movie makers, musicians, fashion designers, milliners, painters, sculptors, street performers, comedians, photographers and writers. Albert Namatjira was taught to paint by Warrnambool artists, John Gardner and Rex Battarbee. The Fletcher Jones and Gorman fashion labels arose from here. Paul Jennings immortalised our people and places in some of the most popular children's books and television shows Australia has produced. Our creatives contribute to the global stage in gaming, in hit ABC productions, and in films like George Miller's Furiosa and Guillermo del Toro's 'Pinnocchio'.

## Warrnambool's creativity is everywhere.

The creative industries form a significant part of the Australian workforce, with about 7% of Australians working professionally as creatives. Despite achieving much, Warrnambool's creatives only make up 3.1% of local jobs. The Creative Warrnambool Strategy 2025 - 2029 aims to help to boost that figure and provide support for embedding creativity in our community.

We have work to do. Our young people need us to create new pathways for them into the creative industries of the future. We need studios and stages, galleries and spaces

for them to develop and showcase their skills. We need to draw on the knowledge and experience of our existing arts community to lead the way for emerging generations.

Already there are a number of people and organisations helping to foster opportunities. The Primary Performers, Holiday Actors, FReeZA, Find Your Voice Collective, Warrnambool Art Gallery, the Whalers Bandroom, the Dart & Marlin, Goomfest, One Day Studios, Warrnambool Theatre Company, the Lighthouse Theatre, The F Project, MFA, Warrnambool School of Art, Flagstaff Hill, Factory Arts and a host of other local providers are demonstrating the economic and social benefits of a healthy arts and culture ecology.

Once creative innovation takes hold in a place, it is easy to build upon. We develop a sense of community pride, we connect, collaborate and share resources. It becomes part of how we think of ourselves, and the personality by which the world knows us. That identity attracts others and the cycle continues. Our strength lies in our stories, and in their ability to provide a foundation that we may use to create a better future together.



# Background:

## how did we get here?

Over the past eight years the Warrnambool arts and culture community - and the community at large - have generously provided their ideas, vision, needs and desires through a range of community consultation processes including:

- In 2017 and 2018 the community vision, Warrnambool 2040, was developed through an extensive community engagement process. Thousands of residents and hundreds of clubs, groups and organisations shared their 'Wishes for Warrnambool' and their aspirations for the future of the city. At the time Warrnambool was recognised as Australia's most liveable city and went on to secure major infrastructure projects such as the \$10.7 million Reid Oval redevelopment and the \$22.8 million new Learning and Library Hub.
- In 2020 Regional Arts Victoria released the first-of-its-kind Creative Industries Strategy for South West Victoria, providing a unifying plan for arts & culture across five LGAs. The CIS has informed recent strategic plans for Southern Grampians, Corangamite, Glenelg and Moyne and aligns with this Creative Strategy.
- In 2019 the Warrnambool Art Gallery held strategic planning workshops.
- 2023: Interim evaluation of the Creative Industries Strategy 2020 - 2024
- 2025: South West Creative Industries 2025 - 2029 Strategy joint consultation
- In 2021 the Warrnambool community participated in engagement for the development of a new Council Plan 2021-2025, now formally adopted by Council.





# Vision

Warrnambool inspires innovation and creativity and thrives on curiosity and critical conversations.

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Invite the Peek Whurrong, Maar Nation and the Aboriginal community for feedback on all strategic objectives.

KEY ACTIONS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Ask EMAC for preferred process and partner to provide meaningful opportunities for WCC to deliver on First Nations led strategies.	●	●	●	●
Spend time building relationships with local mob.	●	●	●	●
Develop a plan to establish processes that embed cultural training.			●	
Invite conversation with EMAC towards integrating Culture into the 2029 – 2033 Strategic Plan.			●	●

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Champion the vital role that arts & culture plays in the wellbeing of our community and liveability of our City.

KEY ACTIONS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Encourage creative thinking in Council's planning, policies and strategies.	●	●	●	●
Increase awareness of Council's programs and support frameworks for supporting local artistic projects and organisations.	●	●		
Develop infrastructure to hear and capture local stories.			●	
Continue to build Council resources to support the outcomes of this plan.		●		
Identify and implement systems for arts organisations to measure their value to the local and wider community.			●	
Develop marketing plan for the Creative Warrnambool brand.	●			
Identify opportunities for participation of disabled and neuro-divergent creatives.	●	●	●	●





# Vision Continued

Warrnambool inspires innovation and creativity and thrives on curiosity and critical conversations.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Warrnambool City is a regional centre for Arts and Culture and a cultivator of creative industries

KEY ACTIONS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Inspire the community with creative leadership, providing curious, meaningful and creative events, exhibitions and performances.	●	●	●	●
Complete an Arts and Culture Audit of the City to clearly identify its strengths and opportunities.	●			
Capture and analyse the data that demonstrates the economic impact of the Arts.		●		
Develop a Live Music Action Plan		●		
Build partnerships with key stakeholders to support opportunities for young people to explore and develop creative capacity.	●	●	●	●
Explore opportunities for the City to be a centre for music education and production.		●	●	●
Continue working with Regional Arts Victoria in the delivery of the South West Creative Industries	●	●	●	●

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Capitalise on our City's cultural heritage as a source of pride for our residents and to create a sense of place and identity.

KEY ACTIONS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Celebrate and highlight the culture and art of Peek Whurrong and Gunditjmarra peoples in civic buildings and public spaces.	●	●	●	●
Provide opportunities and platforms to hear and share stories of our cultures and histories. Store and use these stories in future projects to share and build on the awareness of our shared identity.			●	
Continue to identify our heritage sites including indigenous placenames.			●	
Identify local multicultural organisations and representatives and provide connections to existing support structures (Multicultural Association, Community Development Fund, etc).	●			



# Vision Continued

Warrnambool inspires innovation and creativity and thrives on curiosity and critical conversations.

**OBJECTIVE 5:** Build the capacity of our creatives and develop an environment in which creativity, arts & culture are able to thrive.

## KEY ACTIONS

Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4

Develop and activate a Creative Warrnambool online portal for upskilling, networking and promotion of the creative community.



Identify spaces available for creatives to work, perform, rehearse and gather.



Facilitate networking activities between our creative, education and business communities to encourage partnerships and collaboration.



Foster and actively support the inclusion of local content in festivals and facilities supported by Council.



Build a database of local creatives in our tourism, economic development and other communications.



Facilitate skills development programs for organisations, artists and cultural groups to strengthen marketing, entrepreneurial and presentation capabilities.





# How will we measure our success?

## Measures: how we will know we've made progress on this plan

- We will have a good understanding of the existing creative sector to measure growth against.
- The sector will attract increased funding and provide increased employment.
- The sector will be better connected and feel supported and valued.
- Our diverse communities will be included and represented in local creative outcomes.
- Key actions will be completed.

### Image credits

Cover Page - Sunflower Fest - Kirsty Hill  
Page 1 - Solstice Search Party - Canterbury Creative  
Page 3 - Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Conference  
Page 3 - Lisa Gorman at WAG  
Page 3 - Fabric of Life Festival - Janek Krause  
Page 4 - Sunflower Fest - Kirsty Hill  
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This Creative Strategy has been a collaborative effort over several years, and Council would like to acknowledge and offer our gratitude to the hundreds of people who have contributed to it. It's a recognition of the value our community places on arts & culture, and we look forward to building on the amazing work of our creative community.

