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BERRI BARMERA COUNCIL ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY

2022- 2026



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR MAYOR

It is with great pleasure that I introduce Berri Barmera Council's first Arts and Culture Strategy - an important step for our community in formalising our recognition of and support for the role that Arts and Culture has and will play in the Berri Barmera District into the future.

This Arts and Culture Strategy outlines Council's commitment to the sector over the next five years. It highlights a vision which promotes the arts as being accessible to everyone, demonstrates an investment in people and helps to recognise our heritage and to "tell our story".

Arts are a wonderful tool for engaging members of the community encompassing diverse avenues of expressions, covering: visual arts, music, literature, performing arts, film, radio and television. They also play a significant role in contributing to our overall health and wellbeing.

With appropriate support and the community's embrace, our arts and culture will help create a stronger, more prosperous region; a more resilient and cohesive community; and enrich this region as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Importantly, we would like to take the opportunity with this strategy to engage members of the community who think art is "not their thing". I encourage everyone in the broader Berri Barmera community, not just the artists, to tap into their imagination and make the time to appreciate the unique creativity of our artists to make living in this naturally stunning environment even more colourful and vibrant.

PETER HUNT
MAYOR, Berri Barmera Council



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Berri Barmera Council acknowledges the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region – the Ngaiaawang, Ngawait, Nganguruku, Erawirung, Ngintait, Ngaralte, and Ngarkat peoples – as the traditional custodians of our land. We respect their cultural beliefs, and value their past, present and ongoing spiritual connection with the lands and waters of our region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

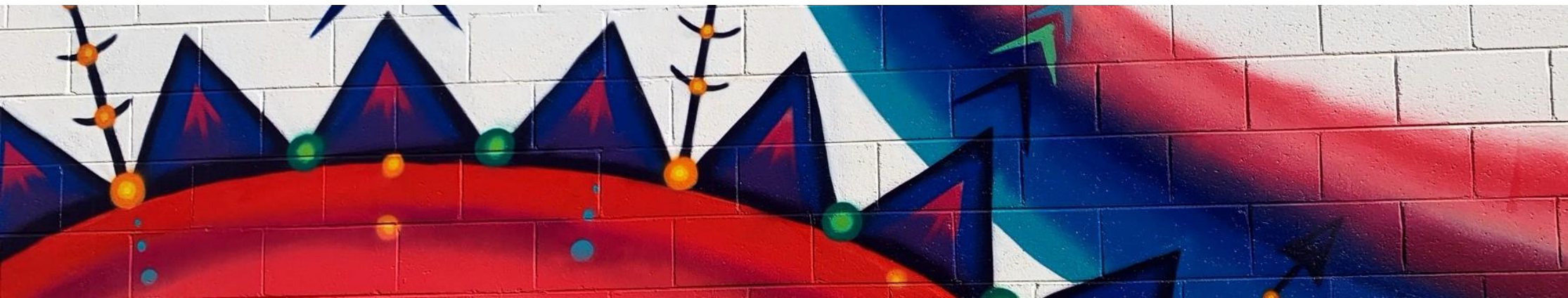
This document provides a roadmap for Berri Barmera Council and the residents who live and work in the region. This is a Council strategy but as is the case with all Council plans, its implementation requires partnerships and collaborations with the community and other stakeholders to achieve the vision and goals.

The document outlines key strategic goals, which present a vision for a thriving community that is creatively and culturally vital. It details how arts and cultural activities will connect people with each other and place, strengthen the local economy and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The strategy provides an opportunity for Berri Barmera Council to continue its work with the community and leverage its investment in arts and culture, locally and regionally.

The document details new strategic actions to support creative development and opportunities to further build on existing initiatives including support for Riverland Youth Theatre, the activation of the Bonney Theatre and Council's ongoing engagement with local First Nations groups provide a strong foundation for continued development.

The Key Goals included in the strategy are centred on **cultural capacity building, vibrant places and spaces** and **cultural participation and activation**.



WHAT IS ARTS + CULTURE

Culture

Culture is expressed and acknowledged in a variety of ways on a collective and individual level. It is closely related to art because we often experience and/or participate in culture through engagement with creativity, interacting with art and social exchanges.

It evolves and changes and is shaped by local and global influences, our education, history and engagement with each other.

It includes customs, values, traditions and social norms and is often reflected in art as well as:

Language	Stories
Cuisine	Festivals
Architecture	Rituals
Fashion	Celebrations
Urban design	Social structures
Ethnicity	

Art / The Arts

A way of articulating imagined ideas both real and unreal using a variety of media to create something that can be experienced temporarily, ongoing or permanent way.

It includes but is not limited to:

Film	Television
Drawing	Production
Painting	Architecture
Music	Fashion
Poetry	Design
Literature	Crafts
Theatre	Textiles
Comedy	Dance
Circus	Digital media
Puppetry	Photography
Storytelling	Sculpture

VALUE OF ARTS + CULTURE

Communities all over the world invest in the arts to develop and strengthen communities from a cultural and economic perspective and there is strong evidence to suggest these activities have a significant positive impact. Arts and cultural activities help communities to showcase their unique qualities, improve lifestyle, increase a sense of wellbeing and add to the vitality and vibrancy of places.

Every dollar in turnover generated by creative industries (i.e. initial revenue stimulus) results in 3.76 times the total revenue for all other industries in the Australian economy.

(From the Creative Industries Innovation Centre report Valuing Creative Industries Final Report.

<https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/Valuing-Australias-Creative-Industries-Final-Report.pdf>

From a health perspective people who participate in 2 or more hours of arts-based activities per week experience significantly better mental wellbeing

(From Research undertaken by Dr Christina Davies 2016.

<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-2672-7>)

Nationally, an estimated 65,000 full and part-time jobs are created by monies spent on live music.

Music SA www.music.sa.gov.au/about

The creative sector adds almost \$46 billion in GDP for the Australian economy.

(From the Creative Industries Innovation Centre report Valuing Creative Industries Final Report.

<https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/Valuing-Australias-Creative-Industries-Final-Report.pdf>)

A study of 12 regional performing arts venues, public art galleries and museums indicate that collectively these facilities create an additional 8.5 jobs outside the cultural sector for every 10 full time positions within the cultural sector and add over \$14 million to the local economy in 07/08 FY

(From Museum & Galleries NSW report Value Added <https://mg.nsw.gov.au/sector/resources/online-resources/research/adding-value/>)



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

VISION

Berri Barmera Council is vibrant place where residents and visitors to the region enjoy cultural experiences, participate in creativity and celebrate heritage.

GOALS

1.

Cultural Capacity Building

2.

Vibrant Places + Spaces

3.

Cultural Participation & Activation

STRATEGIC FOCUS

- Artist development
- Creative industries
- Culturally confident organisations
- Education

- Public art and urban design
- Facilities
- Festivals, Live Music + Events
- Built + natural environments

- Community arts
- Storytelling
- Cultural tourism
- Arts + health

ABOUT BERRI BARMERA

KEY CULTURAL THEMES

The Berri Barmera district is rich in stories, history and landscape, all of which offer cultural characteristics that the local community value, identify with and are protective of. These provide key themes that influence the art and creative activities in the region. They can also be a strong foundation when considering community and cultural development in a range of environments. Public art, festivals and events, exhibitions, storytelling projects and community arts initiatives often gravitate towards these themes, which provide participants and audiences with a sense of familiarity and give the outcomes a greater sense of authenticity.

It is important to note that arts and cultural activity in the Berri Barmera district should not be defined entirely by the themes detailed above. Other core characteristics will emerge and the themes can shift and change over time - particularly when working with diverse groups of people. Projects can be developed within the context of existing themes but must also be open to new ones.

Water

Water is significant to the region on a range of levels. The lakes and rivers are the lifeblood of local industry, recreation and they maintain great significance for First Nations people. Lake Bonney is a known culturally significant for the traditional owners and would have been a rich hunting ground.

Lake Bonney and the River Murray are major bodies of water that local residents and visitors to the region gravitate towards. As Australia's largest river, which is connected across three states, the Murray River in particular offers a unique connection to a greater national environmental and cultural landscape. Environmentally and aesthetically, local water ways are a key focus offering rich biospheres, extraordinary light and contrast against the red dirt of the predominant landscape. The local waterways are a great source of community pride, and the rivers and lakes are a significant tourism attraction. From camping, kayaking and fishing to water-skiing, bushwalking and swimming, Lake Bonney and the Murray River are ever-present in the life of the Berri Barmera region for locals and visitors.

Like all of regional Australia, water also looms large from an agricultural perspective. For the Berri Barmera district, the vast water resources are the reason such a strong agricultural industry has developed. Within the context of climate change however, the reliable supply of fresh water for industrial reasons is carefully balanced with environmental, recreational and cultural needs.

Agriculture

Some may not recognise agriculture as a cultural theme but its value and prevalence within the lifestyles and habits of local reflects cultural significance. Berri Barmera Council enjoys a Mediterranean climate, and the seemingly abundant water supply has positioned the region as a sought-after place for agricultural activity.

The townships as we know them today, largely exists because of the rich growing lands situated across the region. Its reputation for great fruit (citrus and stone fruit) dates back decades and it is a significant grape growing region, supplying large amounts of Australia's bulk wine supplies. Stories spanning across working and family lives, migration and celebrations are often centred around the agricultural prosperity of the region. The name "Berri" is synonymous with a nationally recognised juice brand, which originated from the Berri township, when Berri Ltd was established in 1943. By the 1950s Berri and other Riverland towns dominated the local economy with fruit and their products.

First Nations

Unlike some other parts of Australia the presence of Berri Barmera's ancient indigenous history is still recognisable. The First Nations of Ngaiawang, Ngawait, Nganguruku, Erawirung, Ngintait, Ngaralte and Ngarkat are considered the traditional owners across the region and their relationship with the land, water, flora and fauna dates back many thousands of years. As is common, after European settlement in the mid 1800's these nations were irreversibly changed and since that time Aboriginal people in the Berri Barmera district have had to work hard to keep their cultural heritage and knowledge alive. Many stories, cultural norms and creative skills reside within the First Nation's heritage of the region and it continues to be an important part of the local character and identity. Many well-known Aboriginal artists hark from the region.

Heritage

The region's history offers a range of interesting stories, which add to the identity and character of the region. This will continue to grow and change but it is important to acknowledge key elements of the region's history – in addition to its First Nations heritage. The area was explored by European settlers when Charles Sturt navigated the Murray River. It eventually became an important refuelling location for paddle steamers venturing further down the river.

Soldier Settlers

Growth of the Berri Barmera region in the 1920s was largely driven by a Soldier Settlers Program. The scheme, which resulted in the settlement of land throughout parts of Australia by returning discharged soldiers was delivered by the state government. The irrigation activity that had taken place along the river in the 25 years leading up to the first world war made the likes of Cobdogla, Monash, Glossop and Berri (among others) ideal for a soldier settler program. The plantings of fruit trees and vineyards by the soldier settlers are the precursor to the region's contemporary agricultural industry and they contributed greatly to the social and cultural fabric of Berri Barmera district. They contributed to the establishment of and volunteered to support the RSL, local schools and sporting clubs. The repatriation of returning soldiers continued after World War II and several local families that reside in the area today, are direct descendants of returning soldiers that took up land in the district.

Migration and Diversity

Berri Barmera Council hosts 5 times as many residents that have Greek ancestry than the rest of regional SA and approximately 25% more with Italian ancestry. This is largely due to the significant migration that occurred in the region in the 1950s. Many of the traditions and norms of the settlers from Europe have influenced the culture of the region indelibly and up until recently a multicultural festival was a key event on the local festival calendar.

Based on 2016 Census results the region continues to host a variety of ethnic groups including people born in Philippines, India, Germany and the United Kingdom. Over the last two decades a Sikh community has emerged in the region with the establishment of the Riverland Sikh Society in Glossop.

Multiculturalism is an important part of the region's heritage and is embedded within the community's identity and character. It continues to shape the nature and culture of the community on a cultural level.

ARTS + CULTURAL PAST AND PRESENT

Berri Barmera Council resides squarely at the centre of the Riverland Region with Renmark Paringa Council to the North East and Loxton Waikerie Council to the South / West. Renmark is the largest town within the region and hosts the region's largest and most active arts and cultural facility, the Chaffey Theatre, managed by Country Arts South Australia. Many from the Berri Barmera district travel to the Chaffey to enjoy touring arts content and projects that emerge from the venue.

The Riverland Youth Theatre has a base in Renmark although with support from all three of the Riverland Councils including Berri Barmera Council, it services young people from across the region. The Riverland Artist Hub is also situated in Renmark with a gallery, studio and retail space in the local shopping precinct. This is a key place for artists from across the region to reach audiences, sell their work and to interact with other artists who live in the Riverland Region.

To the south there is a community run gallery in Waikerie, the Rain Moth Gallery and a large Silo Mural was completed in the town recently. The privately owned Riverglens View Gallery and Glass Studio is situated between Barmera and Waikerie and there is renewed interest in arts and cultural development in Loxton with community members working on arts projects.

Within Berri Barmera Council district there are a number of groups and arts-based assets and resources. The Bonney Theatre Complex is a versatile space, situated in the main street, it hosts a small amateur arts group that exhibits on the landing upstairs and has a small arts and crafts retail space within the facility. The local Riverland Musical Society also have a home at the Theatre, presenting two shows per year along with some youth / children's programs to attract Riverland wide audiences. Most recently, as part of the Council facility activation strategy *Part of Things* has established itself at the Bonney Theatre building. This collective of artists are building a diverse arts program that supports activities across the region. A permanent projection exhibition space has also been installed to provide digital creations to be displayed on the external wall of the Bonney Theatre.

Cumulatively these groups and activities with support from Council are transforming the space into a cultural hub.

Council boasts an eclectic public art collection – from recently developed murals and heritage-based works to more contemporary urban design interventions, mosaics and place-based sculptures. Council is currently working on further town beautification projects that will add to this collection.

Over the years there have been several community-based arts projects that have been presented by a number of stakeholders including Council, Riverland Multicultural Forum, Carclew, professional artists, Country Arts SA and local schools. The Riverland Country Music Festival, which wound up in 2020 has been hugely popular in the past with the legacy of founder Dean “Rocky” Page still evident in the region. From a visual arts perspective Council has recently developed a SALA subsidy program to support participating artists and organisations to register.

From a First Nations perspective what was originally known as the Jerry Mason Centre (1980s) in Glossop continues to be a home for Aboriginal culture and development for the district. The facility is now managed by the Aboriginal Sobriety Group with plans to further invigorate the site and build on the rich First Nations culture of the region.

The Berri Barmera district is an attractive prospect for professional practicing artists with a rich natural environment, access to space and lower living expenses. Those currently operating in the region are eager to grow their businesses, develop sustainable careers and better connect with the broader community and other artists. Like most small regional communities there are a number of heritage and amateur arts groups that operate in the region – mostly catering to the needs of older residents on a recreational level. For example, the local U3A group presents a range of creative based workshops.



DETAILED STRATEGY

OUR VISION

Berri Barmera Council is vibrant place where residents and visitors to the region enjoy cultural experiences, participate in creativity and celebrate heritage.

GOAL ONE: Cultural Capacity Building

We will support the development of a skilled community of artists and organisations who are able to lead and develop arts and cultural programs and activities and foster stronger and more resilient creative industries.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

- Artist development
- Creative industries
- Culturally confident organisations
- Education

KEY STRATEGIES

1.1 Increase connectivity between artists and arts groups and the broader community.

This strategic action relates to activities like:

- Development of a regular arts / cultural newsletter or inclusion of “arts section” in existing Council newsletter.
- Online Arts and Cultural space – either as a page on Council’s website or separately
- Development of an online database of artists, activities, resources and facilities.

1.2 Provide incentives / support for the growth and development of Creative Industries – particularly those that are able to contribute to the cultural tourism of the region or involve business / arts partnerships.

This strategic action relates to activities like:

- Allocate funding from community grants specifically for artists developing business initiatives.
- Work with RDA or other work force development agency to develop annual arts business incubator program – in partnership with surrounding regions.
- Develop an annual business to artist / arts group mentoring or incubation program.

1.3 Support young people to actively participate in initiatives which support the culture of the region.

This strategic action relates to activities like:

- Re-establish the Year 12 Exhibition as a Youth Arts Showcase
- Engage young people both in and out of schools to volunteer/participate in cultural development through project steering groups, Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and other youth-based organisations.
- Allocate one community grant amount per year to a young artist or organisation to work with young people on a cultural activity

1.4 Identify support and training opportunities for artists and cultural organisations to work on a regional level in collaboration with neighbouring Councils, Country Arts SA and State organisations such as SA Tourism.

GOAL TWO: Vibrant Places + Spaces

We will develop and manage indoor and outdoor facilities that convey the unique character of the region, encourage a sense of belonging and support the creative and cultural needs of the community.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

- Public art + Urban Design
- Facilities
- Festivals + Events
- Built + natural environments

KEY STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Develop Public Art Policy and Guidelines which guide Council and the community in the development of a public art collection that is thematically cohesive, high-quality and aligned with broader urban design and place-making principles.
- 2.2 Increase access to local facilities for art and cultural activities and artists.
- 2.3 Develop a database of suitable existing facilities for artists and arts groups to utilise for the development and delivery of a range of arts programs, exhibitions, installations and performances. Ensure affordability and accessibility.
- 2.4 Undertake feasibility for a permanent cultural facility that services the Council area – suitable for exhibitions, workshops, studio activities and small performances.
- 2.5 Identify opportunities to deliver good quality events and festivals in collaboration with surrounding Councils and consider developing regional events and work within Council to achieve a strategy that instigates the inclusion of art and cultural elements within existing and new events and increase creative inclusion in Councils Urban Design and activation.
- 2.6 Integrate best practice place making principles within Council operations including community development, planning and asset management.
- 2.7 Work closely with local business owners / business development / improvement committees and main street groups to broker relationships with artists that are able to contribute to main-street activation including a continuation of mural development and “pop up” activities including exhibitions, retail spaces and street performances.
- 2.8 Continue to support facility activation activities that encompass arts and cultural activities including the Bonney Theatre and the newly developed projection space at the site.

GOAL THREE: Cultural Participation / Activation

We will encourage involvement in creative activities and cultural celebrations that foster wellbeing and provide economic benefit for individuals and the region as a whole.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

- Community arts
- Storytelling
- Cultural tourism
- Arts + health

KEY STRATEGIES

3.1 Work closely with Aboriginal Elders and Stakeholder Groups to promote the First Nation's heritage of the region for both locals and visitors to enjoy.

This strategic action relates to activities like:

- Partner with First Nations to explore an Interpretive Trail that showcases local flora and fauna, cultural sites and local dreaming stories. It could incorporate a digital content that can be accessed remotely.
- Scoping of First Nations Cultural Tourism opportunities e.g. market, tours, workshops,

3.2 Increase the visibility of the region's heritage through contemporary storytelling projects that engage people of all ages and can enhance public art, festivals and other programs.

3.3 Provide in-kind support existing and emerging arts and cultural groups to develop community arts activities that support social connectedness and health/wellbeing outcomes.

3.4 Increase awareness and capacity for tourism operators, artists and community to develop cultural tourism.

This strategic action relates to activities like:

- Present a cultural tourism forum to foster relationships, increase knowledge and encourage activities – in collaboration with neighbouring Councils and Destination Riverland
- Provide funding incentives for tourism operators and artists/arts organisations to partner on cultural tourism initiatives.

3.5 Review state / federal thematic events such as SALA, Fringe, Fashion Week, NAIDOC Week etc and identify opportunities for local engagement and storytelling in collaboration with artists, schools and community organisations

3.6 Work closely with community and welfare agencies to develop cultural projects/events that encourage participation in community and that deal with local social issues.

CURRENT + FUTURE RESOURCING CONSIDERATIONS

The resourcing of Berri Barmera Council arts and cultural strategy requires diverse and innovative approaches by Council but the investment in these types of activities provide considerable economic, cultural and social value. If Council continues to invest the same amount of funding and resources in the same way the results will remain the same. This strategy provides an opportunity to do things differently and the following provides some recommendations to guide Council moving forward.

Build Capacity

Developing the skills of others in the community to lead, develop and foster arts and cultural activities is an important strategy for Council. Working collaboratively with others not only reduces Council's resource burden but also encourages ownership and opens up potentially new funding sources. This is a particular focus of Goal 1.

Think & Act Regionally

Berri Barmera Council is part of the Riverland region and it already funds initiatives on a regional level. The same approach can apply to arts and cultural development. Both locals and visitors identify with the Riverland as a region on cultural, destination and service delivery level – above each of the individual Councils. It is strategically advantageous for Berri Barmera Council to collaborate with neighbouring Councils on cultural tourism, festivals + events and creative industry development. Collectively the Council's offer a better case for investment in arts and culture in terms of funding, private investment and visitor engagement.

Appointment of an Arts & Cultural Officer

This potential role would focus on realising the vision detailed in this document in collaboration with other stakeholders on a local regional and state level. It would approach development from the perspective of “doing with” rather than “doing for” the community and build the capacity of the community to lead and develop programs in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders.

Funding, Funding, Funding

Investment in attracting funding from a variety of sources is imperative for regional cultural development programs. Some consideration needs to be given to the time and effort required to foster strong funding opportunities but should be seen as an investment into attracting further funds. A community foundation, sponsorship opportunities and looking at diverse funding sources as well as generating income are all important aspects. Arts South Australia, the Australia Council for the Arts, Country Arts SA are obvious sources for funding but other sources across

tourism, health, education and youth as well as private and philanthropic bodies should be in the mix. Keeping in mind that innovation is king when it comes to funding.

Evaluate and measure

Understanding the return on investment is imperative from a resourcing perspective. There are a range of models that guide evaluation and impact assessment and it is important to build it into the plan from the beginning. The measurement of value should cross into a range of areas – not just economic value but also social and cultural value. Arts can have value on a range of levels and whilst the returns might not be immediate or financially based, they are still valuable and should be assessed for their direct and indirect income potential (multiplier effect), for their benefit for health, wellbeing and for long-term innovation.

APPENDIX

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

COUNCIL

Further development of arts and cultural activity aligns with **Berri Barmera's Strategic Community Plan** and it is anticipated that the Arts Plan will respond directly to the following strategies:

- L2 Foster local Aboriginal heritage and ongoing connections to the land.
- L8 Partner with others to support and maintain a vibrant and arts, cultural, heritage and events sector.
- L9 Enhance utilisation of Council-owned recreation facilities for a more diverse range of activities aligned to community and cultural needs.
- B1 Work with State and Local Government and the RDA to foster and encourage all sizes of business and innovation in business.
- B2 Work with partners to attract business not reliant on the river.
- B6 Support economic growth through events.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Arts & Cultural Plan South Australia 2019 – 2024

Goal 1 – To promote the role of arts and culture in enriching the lives of all South Australians.

- Build capacity and create opportunities for artists in community, so that communities can benefit from deep and rich experiences.
- Ensure communities across SA have access to diversity of stories, demographics, cultures, arts experience, practices and performances, through exchanges, residencies, partnerships and touring, and through local creative facilities or 'hubs'.

Goal 2 – To empower South Australia's makers and creators

- Establish communities that collaborate across artforms and industries. Support the sector to develop expertise in curation and contemporary programming, as well as business and entrepreneurial skills.
- Optimise existing spaces to nurture the independent and small to medium sector.
- Ensure artists can earn income from developing and presenting their work locally and state-wide, as well as on the national and international stage.

Country Arts SA Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

Goal 1 – Support and empower artists arts workers and organisations in regional South Australia to develop their practice, produce extraordinary arts experiences and share their unique stories.

This document has been developed by Play Your Part
Principal consultant Maz McGann facilitated
the Berri Barmera Council Arts and Culture Strategy 2021 - 2025
in collaboration with Berri Barmera Council Staff and
representatives from the community.

