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Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in Far North Queensland

NATIONAL SURVEY OF REMOTE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS

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National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists

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PREFACE

This Report presents the results of a study that forms one component of a major National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists. The National Survey is being undertaken in the Department of Economics at Macquarie University progressively across six regions in remote Australia. The regions are:

Region 1: Kimberley, WA
Region 2: East and West Arnhem Land, NT
Region 3: North-West NT and Tiwi Islands
Region 4: Central Desert, NT and APY Lands, SA
Region 5: Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA
Region 6: Far North Queensland

Implementation of the National Survey in Region 1 was completed in 2016, with the rollout continuing in Regions 2–6 during the period from 2017 to date. The present Report relates to the implementation of the National Survey in Region 6, Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Islands. Initial scoping trips to the region were undertaken in 2021 and the main fieldwork was carried out during March, April and July-August 2022 and February 2023, as discussed in more detail in the Report.

The National Survey is being financed in all regions by a series of grants from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and agencies, and with the support of Macquarie University. For the Far North Queensland region, we acknowledge with gratitude the financial support provided by the Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support scheme (IVAIS), the Australia Council for the Arts (now Creative Australia), and Arts Queensland through the Backing Indigenous Art program.

Several people in these departments and agencies were especially helpful, including Jacqueline Gropp, Laurine Kelson, Brooke Kelly, Libby Lawler, Karena Knudsen. Georgie Croft and Callum Featherstone (IVAIS team, Office for the Arts); Susan Richer, Julie Tanner, Jennifer Kalionis, Eddy Garcia and Ivy Hill (Arts Queensland), and Rebecca Mostyn, Wendy Were and Chris Pope (Australia Council/Creative Australia).

The collaboration of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, cultural consultants, translators and interpreters was an essential ingredient in designing and implementing the survey, including Rosie Ware (Thursday Island); Nancy Kiwat (Erub Island); George Garbey (Thursday Island); Marsha Hall (Napranum); Dan Gordon (Wujal Wujal); Philip Denham (Cardwell); and Josie Barrett and Margaret George (Innisfail). In addition, a number of informal conversations were held with senior artists in many of the locations visited during the survey fieldwork.

We would also like to thank the managers and staff of art centres and other organisations in the region who cooperated with us and assisted in implementing the survey, including: Laurie Nona and Joseph Au (Badu Art Centre, Badu Island); Vikki Burrows (Bana Yirriji Art Centre, Wujal Wujal); Diann Lui, Florence Gutchen and Racy Oui-Pitt (Erub Arts, Darnley Island); Anna Drummond and John Morseau (Gab Titui Cultural Centre, Thursday Island); Whitney Casey, Nephi Denham and Joann Russo (Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, Cardwell); Melanie Gibson (Hope Vale Art & Cultural Centre, Hope Vale); John Armstrong and Bereline Loogatha (Mornington Island Art, Mornington Island); Adam Boyd, Fiona Mosby, Solomon Booth and Babetha Nawia (Moa Arts, Kubin, Moa Island); Paul Jakubowski (Pormpuraaw Art & Culture Centre, Pormpuraaw); Kevin White, Daphne de Jersey, Luanna

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We would like to thank the board directors and staff of the Indigenous Art Centre Alliance (IACA), including the former managers Pam Bigelow and Fiona Hamilton, and former staff member Geraldine Henrici.

We are very grateful for the administrative assistance and support at all stages of the project provided by the Department of Economics at Macquarie University, and for the expertise and editorial assistance of Laura Billington from Fresh Editing.

Finally, we express our sincere gratitude to all the Far North Queensland artists and cultural producers who gave up their time to be interviewed for this survey and its piloting during 2021–2023.

In expressing our thanks to all the above, we make it clear that responsibility for the content of this Report and for the views expressed is entirely our own.

David Throsby

Katya Petetskaya

May 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report presents the results of a study that forms one component of a major National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists. The National Survey is being undertaken in the Department of Economics at Macquarie University progressively across six regions in remote Australia. The present Report relates to the implementation of the National Survey in Region 6: Far North Queensland (including mainland FNQ and the Torres Strait Islands).

Objectives of the study

The objective of the National Survey is to produce a nationally representative database on how individual First Nations artists in remote Australia establish, maintain and develop their professional arts practice. The survey aims to investigate and analyse the extent to which art and cultural production can provide a viable pathway towards economic empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples[1] living in remote towns, settlements, homelands and outstations.

The study covers the following major cultural-economic activities which are classified into two categories:

- *Creative artistic activities* including visual arts; performing arts; composing or choreographing; writing or storytelling; making a film, TV or radio program, or multimedia work.
- *Cultural maintenance and applied cultural activities* (referred as "other cultural activities") including teaching others in arts and cultural activities; caring for country; interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting; making indigenous medicines or cosmetics; fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food; participating in ceremonies; providing cultural tourism services; arts administration or management; cultural archiving and/or record keeping.

The target population for the implementation of the survey in the FNQ region comprises adult Indigenous artists residing in remote and very remote areas in the region. Our estimates show that there are about 3,600 Indigenous adult practising artists in the study region.

The research team undertook a scoping trip to the study region in April 2021. The main fieldwork involving interviews with artists in FNQ took place in March, April and July–August 2022 and February 2023. In the implementation of the survey, 94 interviews were achieved for this region.

Socio-demographic characteristics of artists in the FNQ region

The average age of an Indigenous artist in the region is 49 years. The use of traditional language by artists is high in the region; 40 percent use their traditional language most these days, with one-third using Kriol, and about one-quarter using English.

In terms of domestic arrangements, the largest group among artists in the region comprises single individuals with no dependent children (47 percent of artists). Just under one-quarter of artists in the survey region live with a disability or long-term illness. Around two out of five of these artists said that this disability or illness had no effect on their practice as an

[1] The words "Indigenous", "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" and "First Nations" are used interchangeably in this report.

artist and for the remaining artists in this group, living with a disability or long-term illness does impact their practice negatively.

Artists' cultural activities

Within creative art practices, the most prominent art form in the FNQ region is visual arts, with more than 80 percent of survey respondents currently working in this field. Among other cultural activities, the most prevalent are the traditional cultural practices of caring for country, fishing/hunting/collecting/preparing bush food, and participating in ceremonies, as well as the continuing process of passing on cultural knowledge and artistic skills to others.

On average, an artist in the FNQ region has engaged in almost ten cultural-economic activities at some time in their life. At the present time, she or he is engaged in about two artistic activities and about five other cultural activities. This average artist receives some form of income for her/his work in at least one of the artistic activities and in about the same number of other cultural activities.

About nine out of ten artists with experience in visual arts continue their active engagement in this artform. In contrast, only two-thirds of those with a background in performing arts are presently practising. The great majority of artists experienced in cultural practices such as fishing, hunting gathering bush food and caring for country and islands are currently practising these activities. However, only small proportions of artists with experience in other cultural activities are currently engaged for one reason or another, including cultural archiving, record keeping and providing cultural tourism services. In aggregate these data point to the availability of significant levels of cultural and human capital in the FNQ region that might be capable of further deployment in art and cultural production.

Seasonality has an impact on some cultural activities, particularly those requiring access to country or islands, or travel. Nevertheless, the data show that artists manage to carry out most of these activities all year round. This adaptability indicates a resilience and flexibility in the artistic and cultural production in the region, allowing for continuous engagement, despite the seasonal challenges.

Cultural knowledge and artistic skills

The survey findings show that the First Nations artists in remote FNQ acquire cultural knowledge from family members (98 percent) and from elders and community members (71 percent). The single most important pathway to learn culture is through a family member (for 83 percent of artists). In regard to the acquisition of artistic skills, the most common pathways are through self-learning/learning on the job (87 percent) and learning from a family member (70 percent). The single most important avenue for the largest proportion of artists is learning from a family member (41 percent).

Our data underscore the pivotal role of family and community in the acquisition of both cultural knowledge and practical industry skills which are essential for engaging in the arts and cultural sectors in remote Indigenous communities. Despite the dominance of these informal learning pathways, it is noteworthy that all educational routes, whether through formal schooling or the processes of inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission, can be seen to provide competencies that enable First Nations people to engage in productive activity in the remote cultural economy of the region. The skills and knowledge gained through these varied pathways are transferable and relevant to a wide array of jobs in the wider labour market.

Time allocation

Among the creative arts, the majority of visual artists work at their art-making for two to three full days (average 7.6 hours per day) per week or more; indeed around one-third work at visual arts more or less full time. In contrast, the largest proportion of performing artists (60 percent) work on average only one to two full days per month or less. An average FNQ artist's working week consists of 42 hours divided between the sixteen arts and cultural activities considered in this study, as well as non-cultural work. The data show that on average, artists in the region spend more time on cultural activities that support and maintain their culture (50 percent of their working week) than on artistic activities (42 percent) or non-cultural work (8 percent).

Financial circumstances

Paid and unpaid activities

The great majority (91 percent) of visual artists in the region who practised their art in the last 12 months were financially reimbursed for their work in one form or another. Just over half (52 percent) of filmmakers and multimedia artists were paid. However, only one-third of musicians, actors and other performers received some financial return from their work. In the case of other cultural activities, a significantly higher proportion of these activities is left unpaid. However, those activities that are generally undertaken on an employment basis such as arts administration are paid. Other cultural activities where artists are providing a cultural service are sometimes reimbursed, including work in tourism, arts management, interpreting/translating/consulting, and archiving work; in all of these activities more than 40 percent of artists' involvement is reimbursed.

Sources of payment

Artists receive work-related income from the private sector, the government, the third sector (includes Indigenous-owned and not-for-profit organisations) and the informal family/community sector. The great majority of payments for visual artists (91 percent of payments) and performers (70 percent) are derived from the third sector. Indigenous corporations are the main source of payments for arts administration (86 percent), while up to two-thirds of payments for interpreting and teaching are derived from government. The public sector is also the main source of payment for non-cultural activities (49 percent).

Methods of payment

Works of visual artists are usually paid per piece (97 percent of visual artists). Most sell their work through an art centre, which may pay an agreed price for the work on receipt, or more commonly will pay the artists when the work is sold. Most performing artists receive payments per service for their work (94 percent). Full-time and part-time salaries are the most common methods of payment for arts administration and translating and interpreting services.

Importance of income from cultural activities

Despite the amounts of time that artists in the region put into their artistic practice, most of them regard the income from their artistic work as extra income or "incidental income" only. Only about one quarter of visual artists see their creative income as major income. Among other cultural activities, arts administration and interpreting/translating provide a major source of income for those employed in these occupations.

Other sources of income

Around one-half of artists in the region (53 percent) rely on other income sources for support. The main source is government benefits (44 percent of artists), primarily the age pension or unemployment benefits. In the overall pattern of incomes received by artists in the region, income from creative work is nominated as their main income source by only one in five artists, with just over one-third (35 percent) pointing to other cultural activities as their most important source. Just under one-third (31 percent) relied on income from the other sources noted above in the last 12 months, primarily government benefits.

Mean and median incomes

Our data on the incomes of First Nations artists in the remote Far North Queensland region in the last twelve months indicate a mean income from creative activities of $8,400 (median $3,400). Mean incomes from other cultural activities and from other non-cultural activities were $23,400 and $7,200 respectively, giving a mean total income from work of $35,100 (median $30,000). Average income from other sources, as described above, was $8,500. We find the average artist's total income from all sources in the last 12 months was $40,400 (median $33,900).

These data show that artistic activities make up 21 percent of an average artist's total income, and about 25 percent of their work income. The largest component of artists' average work income comes from participation in other cultural activities, which comprises about 70 percent of an average artist's work income and about 60 percent of her/his total income.

Professional practice issues

In considering issues of art practice, we distinguish between those artists who are primarily *visual artists* engaged in activities including painting, printmaking, weaving, carving, and sculpting, and those who are *performing artists* engaged in music, dance, theatre, or film production.

Artists' years of experience

The majority of artists in the region have been practising in the arts for over 20 years (43 percent). This fact reflects both the age distribution of the artist population in the region, and the early age from which artists learn and practice their art. It also attests to the significant accumulation of human capital in the FNQ region that comprises a major resource contributing to the generation of economic benefit for communities in the region.

Work location

Around 87 percent of all artists in the region utilise their own or family member's home and for around 46 percent, private homes are the places where they spend the most of their time making work. More than four out of five visual artists in the region (83 percent) have been able to practise in an arts centre, and for more than half of them (55 percent), arts centres are where they spend most of their working time. About half of performing artists in the region (51 percent) also make use of other community spaces and facilities, such as community halls and recreation spaces.

Management of art practice

About two-thirds of artists in the FNQ region have had an experience of working with an art centre, and 16 percent have had some engagement with an artist-run initiative or other

community organisation. The split between visual and performing artists indicates that the great majority of visual artists in the region (87 percent) rely on their art centre to manage their work, while most performing artists work independently and are not involved in any specific management arrangement.

Professional experiences

An important experience for many artists is to have their work showcased in a capital city or overseas. About 70 percent of artists in the FNQ region have had their work shown in capital cities, and about 30 percent have been seen overseas. Another significant experience for some artists is to work with a more experienced practitioner at some point in their careers. We find that about one-fifth of artists have had such an experience. Just over two out of five artists (42 percent) have won an award or prize, and about 16 percent have received a grant or funding to continue artistic work.

The impacts on artists' professional careers of all these experiences have been mainly "fairly positive" or "very positive".

Preferences for time spent at artistic work

When asked whether they would like to spend more, less, or about the same amount of time at their art practice, about one-third of respondents said they are happy with the status quo, while just over 60 percent would like to spend more time on their artistic work. The main reasons why those artists who would like to allocate more time to their art do not do so relate to a need to spend time at work not connected to their art practice. The next most commonly cited reason was lack of facilities.

Use of technologies

Artists use a variety of digital technologies in the process of creating their art. About two-thirds of remote Indigenous artists in the region (65 percent) use some form of digital technology, mainly a mobile or smart phone, used by 62 percent of artists. It is noteworthy that performing artists are more technologically engaged than visual artists, a result that is hardly surprising considering the various devices and pieces of equipment that are specific to music-making, film-making, and audio-visual production generally.

Copyright issues

A large proportion of artists in the region (96 percent) are aware of copyright relating to their artistic work, and most of these artists do not think that their copyright had been infringed. Only 4 percent stated they did not know or were not sure if their copyright has been infringed. Of those artists who think their work had been copied or used in some inappropriate way (21 percent), we found that 65 percent had taken action to stop the practice or to seek compensation and of these, more than half (54 percent) had been successful, although small sample sizes for these results mean they must be treated with caution.

Motivation

In our survey, we asked respondents to think about why they pursued their creative practice. The most frequently nominated reason was simply the love of making art and the enjoyment they obtained from doing it, a reason identified by more than four out of five artists. Importantly, the role of art as an embodiment and expression of Aboriginal culture were among the next most often cited reasons; sharing culture with others, and keeping culture

strong were referred to by 60 and 44 percent of artists respectively. Similarly, the processes of cultural teaching and cultural learning were noted by just under one quarter of artists (23 percent in each case), reflecting motives concerning the maintenance and celebration of culture through art, and underlining the significant role of intergenerational cultural transmission in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Art and culture in community sustainability

We found artists agree unanimously with the proposition that art and cultural production has the potential to promote long-term sustainability of remote communities in the Far North Queensland region. In addition, there was very strong agreement that "Artists/writers like myself can train young people in the community to become artists/writers". Respondents also strongly endorsed the importance of bilingual education in school.

The results show that there was strong support for the importance of art centres, with almost unanimous agreement that "Having an art centre creates (could create) jobs and incomes in my community". There appears to be general satisfaction with the community facilities in remote communities. Almost all respondents in our survey expressed a positive attitude to having tourists visit to experience Aboriginal culture at first hand. Respondents also thought that tourists can bring incomes and employment to communities.

Gender differences

The female/male gender ratio in the FNQ region is roughly 55/45, with relatively larger proportions of women than of men in the artist population. Women artists in the region are generally older than men, with 25 percent over age 65 compared to only 10 percent of men. There is a much smaller proportion of single men with dependent children than there is of women.

A larger proportion of women artists complete high school than do men (24 percent compared to 16 percent), although somewhat more men than women complete a post-school diploma or certificate (42 percent compared to 39 percent). For both female and male artists in FNQ, education levels are somewhat higher than for the Indigenous population overall in remote and very remote areas across Australia, but lower than those for all Australian professional artists. Nine out of ten female artists gain their cultural knowledge from family members, whereas this is the case for only three-quarters of the men. Almost half (48 percent) of men identify learning from a family member as the most important pathway to acquire their industry skills, compared to only 35 percent of women, whereas 25 percent of women learn from peers or community members, compared to only 20 percent of men.

There is a stronger female then male presence in the visual arts, with the reverse being true for performing artists. In terms of being paid, in the visual arts similar proportions (about 90 percent) of men and women are paid for their engagement, but a larger proportion of men than women are paid in the performing arts (47 percent for men, compared to 14 percent for women).

In common with artists Australia-wide, there does exist a gender gap in creative incomes among Indigenous artists in remote FNQ. Moreover, mean male earnings are greater than for females in the case of income from other cultural and non-cultural activities. However, the relativity is reversed for income from other (non-work) sources. As a result, the male/female gap in total incomes is narrowed somewhat, from about 30 percent for creative incomes to less than 10 percent for total incomes.

Regional differences

The region covered by this component of the National Survey of Remote Indigenous Artists falls partly on the mainland of Far North Queensland and partly on the islands of the Torres Strait. Although the two areas are related to some extent in cultural terms, they differ in a number of respects. Some highlights of the differences between mainland and Torres Strait Islander artists are as follows:

- The ratio of women to men among mainland artists is greater than the ratio in the Torres Strait. Artists in the Torres Strait tend to be younger than on the mainland.
- On average, Torres Strait Islander artists have somewhat higher levels of formal education than their mainland counterparts.
- Pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge are similar between the two locations, but there are some differences in pathways for acquiring cultural skills – more mainland artists learn their skills from a family member, whereas more Torres Strait Islander artists learn from a friend or community member.
- Overall, there appears to be greater levels of engagement in cultural-economic activities among Torres Strait Islander artists, with larger proportions being paid except in the visual arts.
- These relativities may indicate a wider range of market opportunities and a more diversified art economy in mainland FNQ than in the Torres Strait, enabling artists in the mainland to access payment for their work more readily.
- There is virtually no difference between the two areas in the case of average creative incomes. However, the total work income of Torres Strait Islander artists is about 30 percent greater than for their mainland counterparts. Nevertheless, their income from other sources is considerably lower, making the total incomes of both groups roughly similar at around $40 thousand annually.

Policy issues

There is considerable variation across Far North Queensland in the economic, social and cultural circumstances in different communities and in their potential for future development. It is unlikely that a single policy measure will address all issues at once; rather, a mix of complementary measures is needed to deal with particular aspects. We do not suggest that art and cultural production on its own can transform any remote community. We argue that under the right conditions it can be an effective means for employment creation and income generation, and can help improve the long-term prospects for economic sustainability and social viability, while also respecting the fundamental importance of Indigenous culture. All policy recommendations that flow from this study are pointed in this direction.

Infrastructure needs

Art centres

Artists are unequivocal in their recognition of the vital role that art centres play in the functioning of the Indigenous arts economy in the region. Nevertheless, while the art centre model has been working, it is evident that some centres face significant challenges. Some art centres have facilities that are urgently in need of renovation, including the need to meet accessibility requirements. Moreover, provision of adequate workspace for artists may also be an issue.

Art centres provide many additional social services and other public benefits to their artists and the wider community for which they rarely receive any funding support. Often artists rely on the art centre staff (sometimes consisting of just an art centre manager) to assist them with financial and other matters. Whilst providing such support puts additional pressures on the art centre staff, it is crucial in enabling artists to continue their practice. It is important that funding arrangements for art centres recognise this reality for their ongoing sustainability. There may be opportunities for joint agreements between art centres and social service agencies to finance the provision of such services. An art centre may often be the best organisation in a community to recognise where needs are most urgently felt.

One of the features of organisations working to support art and cultural producers in remote Indigenous communities is the mixing of skills, experiences and knowledge of local Indigenous staff with those of non-Indigenous professionals coming from outside the communities.

Cultural centres

A distinct category of arts organisation in FNQ is provided by regional cultural centres, such as the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island and the Western Cape Cultural Centre Achimbun in Weipa. These centres serve as showcases of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture of their respective regions through their galleries, archives, and performance spaces. Beyond display, they play a significant role in supporting regional artists by hosting workshops and other cultural events; generating income to artists through sales of works, performance fees and workshop fees; and acting as custodians of artefacts and cultural knowledge. They may also facilitate access to art materials.

Resources for performing artists

Generally performing artists do not have access to widely available facilities to assist in the development of their creative work. Many also face problems finding opportunities to present their work because of a shortage of suitable venues or events. Sharing of resources between local organisations in provision of facilities could foster an expansion of musical and dance work by creative individuals.

Support organisations

There are several cultural organisations in the FNQ region that support the work of artists. A significant one for visual artists is IACA (Indigenous Art Centre Alliance), the peak body representing art centres in the region. In the Torres Strait, art centres, as well as artists working outside art centres, are supported by the Torres Strait Islands Regional Council (TSIRC). In addition, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) promotes cultural preservation and development through its Culture, Art, and Heritage Program. Another support organisation in the Torres Strait which provides services for musicians, media artists and filmmakers is the Torres Strait Islander Media Association (TSIMA), which has over 35 years of media experience in the region and is dedicated to supporting the creative industries.

The important role of these support organisations in facilitating the development of arts and cultural practice in the region needs full acknowledgement in the formulation of policy strategies at all levels of public and private sector engagement affecting arts and cultural producers.

Expanding economic opportunities

Earning income from culture-related activities

In addition to the creative arts there are several other culture-related activities including translation and interpretation services, cultural archiving, cross-cultural consulting, cultural governance services and providing cultural tourism services to visitors. Many artists in the region undertake these activities on a regular basis without being able to earn additional income from them. One of the most productive areas for extending the work engagements for cultural producers in many remote regions is through ranger activities, providing a more structured environment for their caring-for-country activities. Ranger jobs are a strong source of employment for young people, helping to overcome the sense of alienation and lack of opportunity affecting the younger generation in some communities.

It is important to acknowledge and remunerate appropriately the various cultural contributions that Indigenous artists and cultural producers have been providing. Effective awareness campaigns and the right support could significantly improve prospects for economic opportunities derived from these sorts of activities. Better awareness among organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region and among the general public is required to acknowledge and remunerate appropriately the various cultural contributions that First Nations artists and cultural producers have been providing. With the right support there could be significantly more economic opportunities derived from these sorts of activities, contributing in turn to developing a stronger arts and cultural sector in the region.

Small business development

A range of creative enterprises could be developed in the region. A major constraint appears to be guidance as to what is involved in setting up a small business, including accessing sources of financial support and understanding the regulatory requirements for independent business operations. IACA has helped to foster business understanding among regional visual artists and art centres, and there are opportunities for other organisations in the region to support the development of First Nations creative businesses more widely.

Market and supply-chain issues

Market development mostly takes place in response to commercial incentives, but there is a role for judicious policy interventions that provide market intelligence, export promotion programs, regulatory measures to prevent the sale of fake Indigenous art products, and promotion of best practice in certification of authenticity by all sellers of products purporting to come from Indigenous artists.

Learning from successes of hybrid organisations

Working in cross-cultural environments requires bridging different values, rationales, agendas and objectives. Enterprises and organisations that have understood and accommodated this, such as ranger programs and art centres, have been able to function and thrive in these conditions. Their structures allow them to operate within the hybrid realm of the market, embracing government, community/families and the not-for-profit sectors. There is an opportunity to acknowledge such working models and learn from their experiences.

Education, training and skill development

School

School education is recognised by artists as having some part to play in imparting cultural knowledge and skills that complement the essential role of family and community members. Some programs provide cooperation between an art centre and the local school, whereby children visit the centre on a regular basis, or where senior artists visit the school to teach arts and cultural skills to children. There is an opportunity to strengthen these educational pathways by acknowledging their long-term nature and providing appropriate funding support.

Inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission

At present the costs of arts training by family and community members are to a large extent borne by the community and in-kind payments. Very few funding streams acknowledge artists involved as teachers and reimburse their work accordingly. Other educational initiatives including training provided by arts centres, ranger organisations, culture and language centres and other organisations rarely have an appropriate budget or funding to support these activities, and workers are often unpaid. Our Report points to the need not only to acknowledge the long-term educational benefit that these organisations can provide, but also to ensure that they are properly supported.

A key resource in processes of inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission in the region is the knowledge, skills and status of senior artists. Possibilities exist to leverage the wealth of educational resources these senior artists possess, by establishing programs that facilitate the inter- and intra-generational transfer of knowledge. Such programs would need to provide the artists with appropriate financial incentives and remuneration.

The role of art centres in training and skill development

Art centres play an important part in training arts workers. In some communities, the art centre serves as the only platform for individuals to gain their initial work experience. Interviews revealed numerous instances where exposure to and participation in art centre activities provided individuals with valuable work experience, subsequently facilitating their transition to employment opportunities in other sectors such as construction, mining and so on.

Skill transfers from outside

Art professionals who come from outside to work in organisations that support art and cultural producers benefit from training and advice received from senior artists and local Indigenous staff. When these people leave, many years of valuable experience is lost. If there were a database of these culturally experienced professionals, they could be located and engaged as consultants later in the region in the arts and cultural sector or perhaps in other industries.

Access to country/islands

Virtually all artists spend some part of their time caring for country/islands, and many rely on accessing their ancestral land and water as a source of knowledge and creative inspiration, as places of practice or as sources of materials for their art production. The data provide compelling evidence in support of the need for securing artists' access to

country/islands if art and culture are to become a stronger source of economic empowerment for remote Aboriginal communities in the FNQ region.

Further education

Various opportunities exist for further education of artists in the region, such as short courses and workshops provided through an art centre, other organisation or agency. These activities may include hosting a visiting artist or educator to train local practitioners in particular techniques such as printmaking, fabric design, and so on, and specialised courses for film- and multi-media makers. There is a need for continued funding for such initiatives, including support for workshops and short courses taught by Indigenous senior artists and cultural producers from the region.

Business skills

There is a strong need for business training in remote communities so Indigenous artists, cultural producers and other community members better understand the business side of art and cultural production. Many art centres already educate their artists on business aspects of the arts. More could be done if dedicated funding and support materials could be provided for organisations to take on this function.

Cultural tourism

Tourism in Queensland forms part of the Commonwealth Government's strategy for growing the tourism market nationally, as administered through Tourism Australia. Within the State, the art and culture of remote First Nations communities is strongly featured in the marketing strategies promoting tourism in Tropical North Queensland, including through the recently established Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC).

There is considerable scope for small start-ups and local initiatives in the Indigenous cultural tourism space. In some locations, opportunities exist for the establishment of small family-based tourism enterprises involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and focussing on providing small-group art/culture/nature experiences for discriminating visitors. Prospective enterprises in this field will require basic business skills, indicating the need for skill development programs such as workshops, short-course training sessions, and/or small business incubators tailored to the needs of family-based tourism initiatives.

We turn now to a more detailed consideration of issues for cultural tourism in the two areas covered by our study.

Torres Strait Islands

Thursday Island (TI) is the main commercial centre for tourism in the Torres Strait, with both hotel and motel options for accommodation, and several cafes and restaurants. However, the expansion of tourism in the islands is constrained by the non-availability of many essential services that tourists require such as accommodation and restaurants. Nevertheless, the potential for expanding cultural tourism is vast. For example, the arrival of several cruise ship companies in the Torres Strait offers the prospect of increasing demand from visitors able to access some islands directly. The art centres in the Torres Strait have a gallery and shop selling a range of locally produced cultural goods and artworks of interest to tourists. There are also reports of traditional dancers being invited to perform onboard cruise ships. In this context, clearer guidelines are needed covering issues such as fair compensation, appropriate travel costs, and adherence to cultural protocols when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers from the region.

Mainland FNQ

The extent of tourist visitation in mainland FNQ varies widely across the region, depending on accessibility. Remote and very remote parts of the region are accessible via Cairns, with major tourist itineraries stretching up the coast, or inland as far as the top of Cape York. Some communities can be reached by scheduled air services from Cairns. Most communities with art centres in mainland FNQ have a gallery and shop that provide important retail outlets for local art and cultural production. Some art centres establish partnerships with travel firms, enabling them to organise visits for tourists.

Without exception, the art centres on the mainland in the FNQ region recognise the importance of tourism in providing a market for the goods and services they produce, including visitors accessing the centres online. In this regard there are incentives for art centres to develop their own distinct offerings to showcase the traditional culture of their local communities.

Concluding remarks

As noted above, it is important to bear in mind that we are not suggesting that art and cultural production can on its own transform any remote community; rather, we argue that in the right conditions it can be an effective avenue towards employment creation and income generation, helping to improve the long-term prospects for economic sustainability and social viability, and doing so in a way that respects the fundamental importance of First Nations culture. All the recommendations that flow from this study are pointed in this direction.

National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists

Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in Far North Queensland

1. BACKGROUND

The overarching purpose of the present study is to investigate and analyse the extent to which art and cultural production that has market potential can provide a viable pathway towards economic empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote towns, settlements, homelands and outstations across Far North Queensland (FNQ). These are areas where cultural production has the potential to be one of the most important means for providing a viable, sustainable and culturally relevant livelihood for members of the community. Cultural production is taken to include:

- creative artistic activities, such as the visual and performing arts, writing, composing/choreographing as well as film and audio-visual media;
- cultural continuation and maintenance activities, such as caring for country/islands or cultural archiving and record keeping; and
- applied cultural activities, such as providing tourism services.

Notwithstanding the wide range of cultural activities covered, the primary focus of this study is on the creative arts.

In any context the making of art begins with the individual artist working alone or as a member of a group. There is a lot of information about the working circumstances of professional artists in the mainstream in Australia, particularly from the series of surveys of practising professional artists undertaken by the Department of Economics at Macquarie University since the 1980s.[2] However, there are no reliable or comprehensive data on the conditions under which individual arts production occurs in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This deficiency is now being remedied by the National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists, of which the present project forms a part. The National Survey, which covers all forms of artistic and cultural production, is being undertaken in the Department of Economics at Macquarie University progressively across six regions in remote Australia. The regions are:

- Region 1: Kimberley, WA
- Region 2: East and West Arnhem Land, NT
- Region 3: North-West NT and Tiwi Islands, NT
- Region 4: Central Desert, NT and APY Lands, SA
- Region 5: Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA
- Region 6: Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Islands, Qld

[2] The most recent survey was undertaken in2021-22; see Throsby and Petetskaya (2024).

Implementation of the National Survey in Region 1 was completed in 2016, with the rollout continuing in Regions 2, 3 and 4 during 2017, 2018 and 2019.[3] Implementation of the survey in Regions 5 and 6 was disrupted between 2020 and 2023 by the COVID pandemic which prevented access to remote Indigenous communities for fieldwork purposes for various periods during these years. Publication of the present report completes the project in Region 6, and the report for Region 5 will be published shortly. It is expected that the project in Region 7 will be completed in 2024–25.

There are several reasons why implementation of the National Survey in the Far North Queensland region is important at the present time:

- The economic sustainability of remote Indigenous communities remains an issue of considerable concern in most parts of remote and very remote Australia, not least in Queensland. There is also an urgent need for a clearer understanding of the ways in which the production of cultural goods and services might be able to contribute to the long-term sustainability of these communities.
- There are a number of art centres and other cultural organisations in the region which comprise an important component of the infrastructure supporting the Indigenous art economy. Objective evidence is needed on the conditions of cultural production to enable a more effective deployment of infrastructure resources in supporting the work of the region's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, including the possibility of expanding the number of art centres in the State.
- The policy strategies of the Queensland Government in general, and of Arts Queensland in particular, have an extensive engagement with the issues that this project addresses, such that the results have the potential to make a significant contribution to policy formation at all levels of public administration as well as in commercial and non-government sectors.

[3] The report on the Kimberley region was published in 2016 as David Throsby and Ekaterina Petetskaya, *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Kimberley* (Macquarie University Economics Research Paper No. 2/2016, November 2016). Reports for the subsequent three regions have been published with similar titles, as Research Reports nos. 1, 2 and 3 of 2019 in the same series, under the authorship of David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya.

2. ART AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

As described in Chapter 1 of this Report, the aim of this study is to investigate and analyse the extent to which art and cultural production can provide a means towards economic empowerment for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The context within which the study is placed is one that recognises the fundamental significance of culture to the lives of Indigenous peoples. The intangible cultural capital possessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote communities is the fundamental resource upon which they can draw – both generally in their day-to-day lives, and specifically in their creative and culture-related activities. This study argues that it is through the use of their cultural and natural resources that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have their strongest opportunity to attain long-term economic and cultural sustainability.

2.1 Analytical framework

For the purposes of systematic analysis, we propose a model encapsulating the essential character of the Indigenous art and cultural economy in remote regions. Such a model will look somewhat different from standard economic models of industrial organisation, labour supply, profit-oriented production, entrepreneurial behaviour, and so on. An overarching framework for our model can be drawn from the concept of sustainability as understood by First Nations communities all around the world.[4] For these peoples, the basic premises governing economic, social and cultural life relate to the interconnected roles of land, cultural law and language.[5] The social norms and mode of governance for Indigenous communities in Australia exemplify these principles, which have underpinned the maintenance and transmission of their culture for thousands of years.

Our focus in this study is on the individual artist or cultural producer who lives and works within this Indigenous art and cultural economy. The model of the economy that we propose extends the conventional three-sector model (comprising a government sector, a commercial sector, and a non-profit "third" sector) by overlaying a fourth sector, a community/family sector, that has interactions with all three. Organisations operating within this economy can be seen as examples of "hybrid" organisations, which combine elements from at least two of the state, market, non-profit and community sectors.[6] The boundaries between the sectors are blurred and overlaps between the sectors can shift with time and changes of circumstances and will be specific to each particular hybrid organisation. The concept of hybridity in organisations emerged in the mid-1990s and has gradually gained in importance in what is now known as a "hybrid movement" (Battilana et al. 2012).

There are multiple definitions of hybridity. In the context of remote Indigenous communities, hybrids occur as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned corporations, social enterprises, community-run initiatives and commercial businesses that involve corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy. They embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural practitioners working as individuals. For our purposes, we can take an art centre in a remote Indigenous community as an example of a hybrid organisation. Art centres are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned, managed and governed enterprises that are often state supported, yet they also function as businesses

[4] See the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007).
[5] For a discussion of these issues, see Throsby and Petetskaya (2016).
[6] Use of the terms "hybrid" here is different from its application in Jon Altman's concept of the "hybrid economy" comprising state, market and customary sectors (see Altman, 2007).

that need to generate operating profits. In many communities, art centres also take on additional duties as social welfare distributors in the absence of such organisations in the community in which they operate. Such additional services include but are not limited to:

- account management for their artists;
- negotiating with Government services on behalf of the artists (and at times their family members);
- providing training and education to community members;
- documenting and archiving of material of cultural and social significance to the community, and so on.[7]

At times, an art centre might be the only organisation in a community that has functional equipment and facilities, such as an internet or phone connection, printer, or transportation resources. A remote art centre often also serves as an effective conduit for other organisations and agencies, enabling them better to serve the Indigenous community; in this respect these other organisations take advantage of the art centre's role as a broker between artists and outside stakeholders.

Ranger groups provide another example of hybrid organisations in remote Indigenous communities. These groups usually receive support from various Government programs for providing environmental services to the Australian community, yet some of their activities are market-based – plant harvesting enterprises, for example, or making bush medicine or cosmetic products for retail or wholesale sale via local markets, stores and online. These organisations may also participate in the market via trading in Australian Carbon Credit Units, although at the time of the survey interviews there were no arrangements for the carbon credit program in the Torres Strait .[8] Notwithstanding these commercial operations, ranger programs are an extension of existing practices of caring for country/islands that have been undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a continuous basis over many years in many parts of Australia. The Torres Strait Ranger Project began in 2009, and has grown from one Ranger group on Mabuiag to 13 Ranger groups in 14 communities across the region. The Ranger Project was originally funded by the Working on Country element of the Australian Government's former Caring for our Country program, now rolled into the National Landcare Program.[9]

Given the context of hybrid organisations as outlined above, the analytical framework that we propose involves the individual cultural producer placed at the centre of the system, engaging in cultural production and cultural transmission as an individual operating within all four sectors. The individual cultural producer is portrayed as a member of a community with cultural, social, environmental and other responsibilities, and functioning in circumstances affected by values, agendas and rationalities (often competing with each other) from all four sectors.

It is important to note that the hybridity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations operating in remote areas allows for overlapping and sharing of services between organisations. This happens in a variety of ways, including:

- when tourist operations cooperate and rely on services provided by art centres or ranger organisations;

[7] During the survey interviews, several respondents referred to art centres as "keeping places".
[8] Received for reducing carbon emissions via burning at the start of the dry season, which allows avoiding much bigger fires later on.
[9] https://www.tsra.gov.au/the-tsra/programmes/env-mgt-program/managing-our-islands-and-sea-country/land-and-sea-rangers

- when art centres rely on the stream of tourists being brought in by tourist operators;
- when artists cooperate with rangers for collecting materials on country/islands, such grass, wood or ghost nets;[10]
- when artists cooperate with local organisations to take them on country/islands to collect materials and create new work;
- when organisations or groups in a community rely on the services of a local multimedia centre for documentation of events and promotional material;
- when dancers and musicians benefit from using vacant spaces provided by a local school for rehearsals;
- when an art centre assumes the role of an auspicing body for local dance troupes/companies;
- when a shipping company cooperates with artists to deliver ghost nets[11] to an art centre;
- when a local library cooperate with artists to work on archives or describe artworks;
- when artists earn income from participating in culture programs run by a school; and so on.

Importantly, because there are strong interconnections between the sectors, boosting one or more of the sectors in remote Indigenous communities has the potential to contribute to the growth of the local economy overall.

2.2 Employment and unemployment

An essential concern of this study is with the prospects for employment creation through art and cultural production in remote Indigenous communities in the Far North Queensland region. It is well known, employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals living in remote areas of Australia, especially the younger generation, tend to be sparse, a fact that increases the pressure on young people to leave the community in search of employment in larger centres. Jobs in remote areas have particular challenges, such as constraints on accessibility, resources, services, infrastructure and communication, as well as limited access to professional development, training and education. In addition, in many remote areas in Australia, seasonality and having to work in a physical environment of climatic extremes add to the list of challenges. Moreover, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals experience difficulties when trying to balance their cultural and work obligations. The impact of this issue on the workplace is well known, such as when ceremonies interrupt work for several days or weeks. There is a strong need for culturally appropriate jobs in remote areas or at least jobs flexible enough to accommodate cultural requirements and obligations.

Since the 1970s the Community Development Program (CDP) and equivalent programs have been in operation. The CDP was closed in 2021. The Australian Government has committed to replacing the CDP with a new program which will deliver "good jobs, better pay and decent conditions. These reforms (will) offer an opportunity to support the rapid development of a care and support workforce and realise economic benefits for First Nations communities."[12]

[10] Sometimes, rangers transport materials directly to art centres, while at other times, they inform artists on where to find these resources.
[11] Ghost nets refer to fishing nets that are lost, abandoned, or discarded in the ocean once they sustain damage.
[12] See https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/draft-national-strategy-care-and-support-economy/goal-1-quality-care-and-support/building-capable-skilled-sufficiently-large-workforce.

These various programs have been directed at tackling employment problems in remote Indigenous communities, applying an approach involving training individuals for potential jobs. An alternative is to recognise that significant skills and even employment options already exist in the region. These resources can be utilised in creating incomes and further employment possibilities for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals in remote areas. Such an approach would seek to expand already existing opportunities proven to be working. For this approach to work, there is an urgent need to understand the scope of existing skills and experiences that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote regions have. The National Survey of Remote Indigenous Artists directly addresses this need.

2.3 Working in remote areas

There is a belief that jobs available in remote areas tend to concentrate in larger communities and hub settlements. To the extent that this has occurred, there is evidence that the movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into larger communities has created social, cultural and economic problems (see, for example, Morphy 2008), yet has not contributed to improving the situation of remote Indigenous unemployment. The most recent NATSISS data show that 44 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from remote and very remote areas Australia-wide lived outside such hub settlements and in small homelands/outstations in 2014–15. Another 40 percent visit homelands/outstations from time to time – places where they fish, hunt, collect bush medicines, collect materials for their art works and make art, and participate in ceremonies. Only four percent have never visited a homeland, or are not allowed to, or do not know if they are allowed to visit (NATSISS 2014–15). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples there are many economic, health, social and cultural benefits that living in smaller homelands/outstations can provide (Altman and Taylor 1989; McDermott et al. 1998; Rowley et al. 2008). When living on their country/islands, "people feel that they have a degree of autonomy, of control over their own destiny" (Morphy 2008, p. 388).

It is noteworthy that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals who are engaged in artistic activities have high levels of engagement in homelands/outstations – it is more common for artists than non-artists to live in such places. Living remotely also does not mean a lack of engagement with the outside world. Many artists who work from these locations also travel or send their work Australia-wide and internationally. Cultural tourism brings people from all over the world to places where Indigenous culture can be experienced in the most direct and authentic way. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals from these remote locations also participate in research, such as research into biodiversity undertaken in collaboration with different institutions in Australia and overseas – there are an array of examples of harvesting and cultivation of bush foods and medicine as commercial ventures in remote Indigenous communities.[13] Our analytical framework recognises all the various realities for Indigenous cultural producers of living and working in remote locations.

2.4 Mapping remote Indigenous cultural production

The broad conceptual framework within which this study is situated as outlined above also involves a delineation of the nature and extent of Indigenous cultural production in remote and very remote locations. In the present survey, mapping of cultural-economic activities that contribute to art and cultural production in the Far North Queensland region was undertaken by the research team in April 2021, based on the results of similar mapping

[13] See, for example, Altman et al. (1997); English and Baker (2003); Merne Altyerre-ipenhe (Food from the Creation Time) Reference Group et al. (2011); Walsh et al. (2014).

exercises of cultural-economic activities carried out by the present authors initially in the East Arnhem Land region in 2012–2014, and subsequently in the successive regional applications of the National Survey in 2015-2019.

The continuous mapping exercise allowed identification of the major cultural-economic activities being practised in remote areas, broadly classified into the following categories: (1) creative artistic activities; and (2) cultural continuation and maintenance and applied cultural activities, referred to simply as "other cultural activities". The activities identified (and corresponding occupations for the creative activities) are defined as follows:

Creative artistic activities

- Visual arts (painting, photography, printmaking, linocuts, making sculptures, ghost nets, textiles, carvings, weaving, ceramics, glass, feather, grass, jewellery)
- Performing arts (acting, dancing, playing musical instruments, singing)
- Composing or choreographing
- Writing or storytelling
- Making a film, TV or radio program, or multimedia work

Cultural maintenance and applied cultural activities

- Teaching others in arts and cultural activities
- Caring for country/islands
- Being on a cultural board, committee or council (i.e. cultural governance)
- Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting
- Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services
- Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food
- Participating in ceremonies
- Providing cultural tourism services
- Arts administration
- Arts management
- Cultural archiving, record keeping.

All cultural-economic activities listed above can be interpreted with reference to standard industrial definitions as determined under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 (Revision 2.0), as shown in Appendix 1.

Regarding definitional issues in interpreting the above list of activities, the following points should be noted:

- "Performing arts" is distinguished from "Participating in ceremonies". During survey interviews, respondents were asked if dance or music pieces that they were engaged in were performed to outsiders as part of showcasing local culture. In the case of a positive response the activity was defined as "performing arts".
- "Fishing, hunting, collecting bush food" and "Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services" involve participation in activities that require detailed knowledge of the local environment – its seasons, ecology, flora and fauna" (Morphy 2008).
- "Caring for country/islands" involves controlled burning, weed and feral species control, protecting marine life, the clearing of beaches, conservation and research of marine and terrestrial wildlife – in other words, land and sea management using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ecological knowledge. It does not refer necessarily to any formal ranger activities but is something that may be practised simply by living on country and carrying out normal day-to-day activities there.

Gathering materials from the country or islands is frequently considered a form of caring for country/islands, as it entails specific knowledge about the locations and methods of collection, as well as the appropriate quantities to be gathered. In some parts of Far North Queensland, the terms “caring for place”, “looking after our place”, “looking after our islands” are used.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 The National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists

The objectives of the National Survey of which this study forms a part is to produce a nationally representative database on how individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote Australia establish, maintain and develop their professional arts practice. This database aims to provide reliable data on how cultural knowledge and creative skills are accumulated and transmitted within and between generations in different remote regions and how individual Indigenous artists utilise their knowledge and skills to serve both cultural and economic purposes, while pursuing their artistic aspirations. The database is intended to cover all major remote regions of Indigenous art production in Australia and will be able to be updated over time to add further information and account for changing conditions.

The results of this work so far are already providing a solid evidence base helping to inform policymaking by a range of stakeholders including individual artists, community organisations, art and cultural businesses, art centres, peak bodies and government agencies. The policy areas for which the survey data are proving to be relevant include the following:

- avenues for expanding economic opportunities through mobilisation of the existing cultural capital in remote Indigenous communities;
- education, training and skills development;
- infrastructure needs;
- the role of art centres and other non-government (third sector) organisations;
- cultural tourism;
- the future sustainability of Indigenous communities in remote and very remote locations.

It is expected that the policy usefulness of the results of the National Survey will build up from local to regional to State/Territory and to national levels over time as the database is further developed.

3.2 The survey in the Far North Queensland region

In the implementation of the National Survey in the Far North Queensland region, the overall objectives remain as spelt out above. Since a basic premise of the survey is that art production must be seen in the context of the full extent of artists' cultural engagement, our survey in the Far North Queensland region investigates a range of aspects of art and cultural production including:

- the number and extent of cultural-economic activities that artists undertake or have undertaken;
- the pathways for acquiring the knowledge and skills (the cultural capital) to become an artist in remote areas;
- respondents' current economic engagement with arts and cultural production;
- the spread of paid and unpaid work of different types, the allocation of time to different activities, and the nature and amounts of income earned;
- aspects of professional creative art practice in the region; and
- the role of cultural production in sustainable community development.

This Report is structured as follows: In the next chapter (Chapter 4) the methodology used in the study is described. Then Chapters 5–13 discuss the detailed survey findings. Chapter 14 draws together the significant results of the study in an in-depth consideration of policy issues, and the final chapter presents some conclusions.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methods employed in study, detailing the execution of this regional survey. First, we establish the geographical scope of the study. We then elaborate on the procedures utilised to determine the target population and the required sample size for the survey. This is followed by a detailing of the survey's procedures, and an explanation of the statistical weights incorporated into the analysis to ensure that the findings are standardised in line with the known demographic characteristics of the target population.

4.1 Definition of study area

The designated region for this survey, identified as the Far North Queensland study area, is defined by several *Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3)* areas as recognised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). These areas encompass: Far North SA3; Innisfail–Cassowary Coast SA3; and Tablelands (East)–Kuranda SA3. The study is confined to those localities within these SA3 boundaries that are categorised as either "remote" or "very remote" in alignment with the classifications provided by the 2016 ASGS Remoteness Structure.

4.2 Target population

The target population for this study comprises adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists residing in the Far North Queensland region in remote and very remote areas. The region is rich in a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures, including those of the Kala Lagaw Ya, Meriam Mir, Guugu Yimithirr, Wik-Mungkan, Wik-Ngathan, Girramay, Kaiadilt, Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Kuku Yalanji, Kuuk Thaayorre, Warrgamay, Wik-Liyanh, Kuku Nyungkal, Yumplatok, Wikalkan, Thanakwith and Teapathiggi peoples.

Participants were selected based on a set of four essential criteria. To take part in the survey, individuals needed to:

(1) Identify themselves as either Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both.
(2) Be aged 15 years or older.
(3) Reside within the remote and very remote areas of the Far North Queensland region, as per the specified study area boundaries.
(4) Have experience in at least one out of the five art forms addressed in this research (see further in Chapter 6).

Screening questions were introduced in the survey to ensure the above criteria were met.

4.3 Artist population and sample size estimation

Accurate figures for the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists engaged in diverse artistic work within Australia's remote regions remain largely unknown. In conducting our survey, we had to base our estimates on the only accessible data source, the ABS's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Surveys (NATSISS). According to the latest 2014–15 NATSISS, certain percentages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 15 and over from remote and very remote areas reported engagement in at least one cultural artistic activity in 2014–15, including:

- making Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander arts or crafts;
- performing any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander music, dance, theatre, and/or;
- writing or telling Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander stories.

Our survey adopts a broader definition of an artist, encompassing additional art forms such as composing, choreography, filmmaking, and multimedia art. Consequently, the artist population figures from NATSISS are likely to underestimate the numbers of artists as defined for our survey. Nevertheless, lacking alternative data, we relied on the NATSISS figures. Our artist classification extends to individuals with expertise in specific art forms, rather than solely those who have been active in the past year, which is the focus of the NATSISS. For comparative purposes, we considered data from our own survey of artists active in at least one of five creative pursuits "within the last 12 months". The 2021 calendar year was used as the reference period in this study.

An examination of the 2014–15 NATSISS data reveals that in Far North Queensland, 18.8 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote areas and 35.9 percent in very remote areas participated in at least one of the listed artist activities (see Table 4.1). We apply these percentages to the whole population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote and very remote areas in the Far North Queensland region as per the 2021 Australian Census to arrive at a minimum estimate of the artist population in the region, as detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Population distribution and size

ABS 2021 Statistical Area Level 3	Remoteness[a]	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (15+)		
		Population[b]	Participated in selected artistic activities in 2014–15[c]	
		N	%	N
Far North	Remote	1,186	18.8	223
Far North	Very Remote	9,311	35.9	3,343
Innisfail–Cassowary Coast	Remote	148	18.8	28
Innisfail–Cassowary Coast	Very Remote	-	35.9	-
Tablelands (East)–Kuranda	Remote	141	18.8	27
Tablelands (East)–Kuranda	Very Remote	-	35.9	-
Total		10,786		3,620

[a] According to the ABS 2021 Remoteness Structure

[b] Source: ABS 2021 Census

[c] Source: NATSISS 2014–15

These calculations lead to a count of approximately 3,600 adult (aged 15 and over) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists participating in the specified arts activities in the FNQ study region. While acknowledging that this estimate may not fully capture the actual number, we utilise it to determine a rough sample size for further analysis. Our calculations suggested that a sample size of 94 individuals would be necessary to achieve a margin of error of 10 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. The sample size achieved in

our survey in the Far North Queensland region was exactly 94 participants, aligning with the statistical requirements for the study.

4.4 Survey procedure

Due to the lack of a comprehensive list of individual adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the study area, it was not feasible to create a traditional sample frame for this research. Consequently, we utilised a non-probability sampling approach, identifying potential participants through various regional entities involved with artistic and cultural production. These included a wide array of organisations such as art and cultural centres, galleries, community centres, educational institutions, health care and age care facilities, youth centres, men's sheds, women's centres, TV and radio stations and broadcasting corporations, Indigenous ranger organisations, publishing houses, culture and learning centres, language centres, archives and libraries, arts and cultural festivals, media production centres, peak bodies and relevant government agencies.

To ensure inclusivity of all individuals from the target population, our recruitment strategies were multifaceted:

- We reached out to potential survey participants through their affiliations with the-above-listed organisations or through their family connections within these groups.
- Interviewers detailed the survey's purpose and scope to the potential participants to ascertain their willingness to participate in the survey.
- A series of screening questions were posed to establish the eligibility of the respondents, thereby refining the participant pool.

When the survey was completed, the gathered data allowed us to align the sample's attributes with the broader target demographic to assign appropriate statistical weights, as outlined in section 4.5 below.

Fieldwork was carried out in several key locations within the study's geographic focus, with the researchers securing the necessary permissions and collaborating closely with local communities, organisations, and institutions. The interview locations included Aurukun, Mornington Island, Pormpuraaw, Badu, Erub, Kubin (Moa), St Pauls (Moa), Weipa, Napranum, Mapoon, Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal, Girringun, Innisfail, and other communities.

Scoping visits in April 2021 enabled the research team to test and refine the survey tool with input from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors, ensuring it reflected the region's unique artistic and cultural context. The main data collection occurred in three phases throughout 2022 (March, April and July–August) and early 2023 (February), with interviews facilitated by computer-assisted methods in English or with a translator in the relatively few cases where these methods were needed.

4.5 Calculation of weights

Our survey captured data from 94 regional artists. To assess the representativeness of our sample compared to the wider community of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artists within the surveyed region, we analysed how closely the socio-demographic profile of our respondents matched that of the broader artist population as depicted in the NATSISS. This reference group includes Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adults from Queensland's very remote and remote areas who engage in the creative artistic activities described in section 4.3.

The NATSISS data for most regions enable detailed stratification based on age, sex, and varying levels of residential remoteness. However, due to high relative standard errors ranging from 25 to 50 percent in age statistics in the 2014–15 NATSISS data for Queensland, our analysis restricts the comparison of our sample to the NATSISS data focusing solely on sex. Additionally, our survey data were unable to differentiate between "remote" and "very remote" areas since only two survey respondents were from remote areas, with the majority from very remote regions. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that all weights in our study are calculated with an adjustment solely for sex disparities, without being able to account for variations in age or the degree of residential remoteness.

Using the NATSISS data as a benchmark, Table 4.2 presents our weighting calculations. These calculations indicated that adjustments were necessary to correct for disparities in sex between our sample and the target demographic. The final row of the table presents the weights that were applied to the survey data to produce estimates that mirror the sex distribution of the target population. Through these weighting procedures, we have adjusted our findings to better represent the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artist population in Far North Queensland. However, the standard statistical disclaimers apply. The adjusted, or weighted, data are the figures presented in the subsequent tables of our report.

Table 4.2 Comparison of our sample with NATSISS data by sex showing calculation of weights

	Female	Male	Total
Our sample, %	67.0	33.0	100
NATSISS 14–15, %	54.9	45.1	100
Weights applied in the survey	0.82	1.37	1

5. ARTISTS' SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

In this chapter we discuss the main socio-demographic characteristics of our sample: gender, domestic arrangements, disability, age and language. Note that education, a major socio-demographic characteristic, is discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of this Report.

The characteristics of gender, family circumstances and disability are shown in Table 5.1 for our sample of remote First Nations artists in Far North Queensland, compared with the same characteristics for all Australian artists. We note firstly that there are more female than male artists among FNQ artists, a smaller proportion of females than exists in the population of Australian professional artists as a whole. We look more closely at gender characteristics of our sample in Chapter 12 of this Report.

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of remote FNQ First Nations artists and all Australian artists (percent of artists)[(a)]

	Remote FNQ First Nations artists	All Australian artists*
Sex[(b)]		
Female	55	65
Male	45	35
Total	100	100
Family circumstances		
Single, no dependent children	47	27
Single, with dependent children	17	4
Married/living with partner, no dependent children	8	39
Married/living with partner, dependent children	28	30
Total	100	100
Disability/ impairment that affects artists' work		
Yes	23	17
No	77	83
Total	100	100

*Artists' Survey 2023.

(a) Excludes "Prefer not to say" responses.

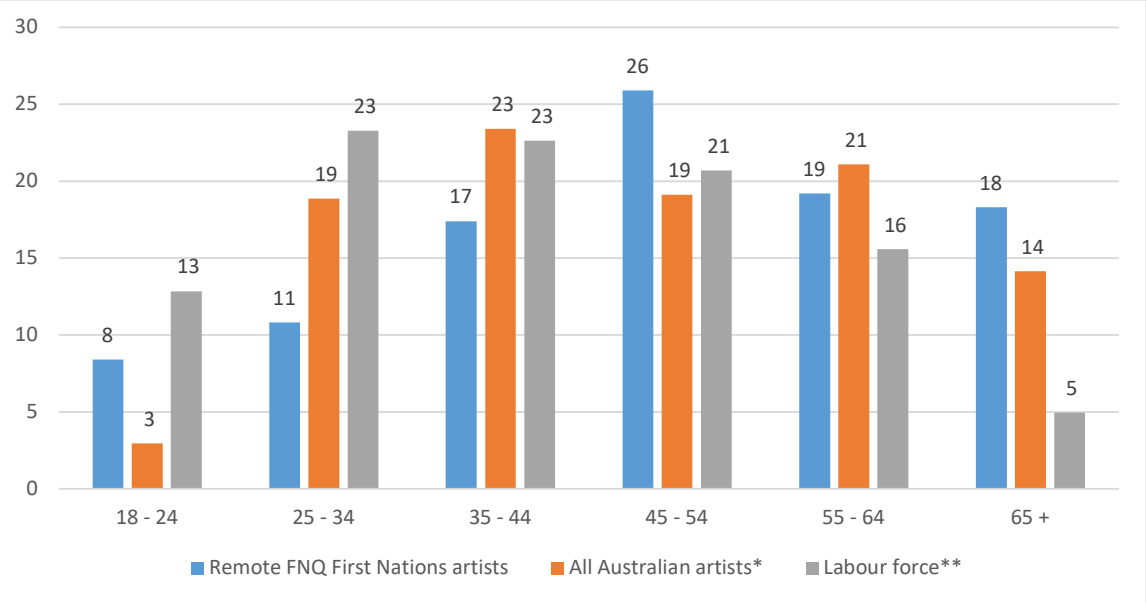
(b) Excludes "Gender non-binary/ fluid" and "Other" responses for All Artists.

Regarding family circumstances, the most common domestic arrangement for all Australian artists is married or living with partner with no dependent children; the largest group for Indigenous artists in the FNQ region comprises single individuals with no dependent children.

Turning to disability, we note that just less than one-quarter of First Nations artists in the FNQ region (23 percent) suffer from some form of impairment that affects their work, compared to 17 percent for all Australian artists. Among artists with a disability or long-term illness in our First Nations sample, around two out of five (42 percent) say their impairment does not have a negative impact on their practice as an artist/writer. For the others, 38 percent say it affects them sometimes, 16 percent indicate an effect most of the time, and four percent of respondents are negatively affected by their disability "all of the time".

The age distribution of artists in the region is shown in Figure 5.1 in comparison with all Australia practising professional artists and the Australian labour force as a whole. While the age distribution of the Australian labour force reflects the life cycle pattern of the average worker, practising professional artists are different in that they tend to continue working beyond the usual retirement age. Both Indigenous artists in the FNQ region and all Australian artists tend to start later at their artistic careers and continue working into older ages than the labour force on average.

Figure 5.1 Age distribution of remote FNQ first Nations artists, all Australian artists and Australian labour force (percent of artists and labour force)



*Artists' Survey 2023.

** Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census – *LFSP Labour Force Status by Age*, Census TableBuilder. accessed on 3 October 2023.

For many regional First Nations artists, their artistic and cultural activities take them outside their remote communities and settlements to other places within the region, as well as Australia-wide and internationally. Our data indicate that 44 percent of remote First Nations artists in the region travelled for arts and cultural purposes within the last twelve months, as shown in Table 5.2. The most common destination was a regional town (71 percent of artists who travelled). On average, artists spent about one and a half months engaged in travel in the last 12 months.

Table 5.2 Artists travelling outside of their usual place of residence to undertake arts/cultural activities elsewhere (percent of artists)

Travelled in the last 12 months to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere (%)	
Yes	44
No	56
Total	100
Travel destinations (%)*	
Capital city	20
Regional Town	71
Community	6
Outstation/ homeland/ on country	3
Overseas	-
Total	100
Average time spent travelling (months)*	
Mean	1.4
Median	1.0

*Only artists who travelled to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere.

While many artists in the region speak more than one Indigenous language as well as English, in the survey artists were asked to identify the single language group to which they belong. The results are shown in Table 5.3. Regarding the language most used in day-to-day living, we found that 40 percent use their traditional language most these days, just over one-third of artists use Kriol, with about one quarter (24 percent) saying they mostly used English. We can compare these figures with the 2014-15 NATSISS data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists[14] in remote/very remote areas of Australia. The NATSISS data show that artists in remote/very remote areas of Australia use their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language more than non-artists (48 percent compared to 38 percent respectively).

It is well known that language is an important carrier of culture and the data in this report illustrate the significant role that artists' traditional languages play in arts production and in the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the Far North Queensland region.

[14] Those individuals who participated in the creative artistic activities as defined by NATSISS in the last 12 months prior to the survey interviews.

Table 5.3 Language group (percent of artists)

Language group	%
Kala Lagaw Ya	30
Meriam Mir	14
Guugu Yimithirr	9
Girramay	5
Wik-Mungkan	4
Kaiadilt	4
Wik-Ngathan	4
Kuku Yalanji	4
Kalaw Kawaw Ya	3
Kuuk Thaayorre	3
Warrgamay	3
Wik-Liyanh	2
Yumplatok	1
Wikalkan	1
Kuku Nyungkal	1
Thanakwith	1
Teapathiggi	1
Other	9
Total	100

6. ARTISTS' CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

This chapter explores the dynamics of artistic and cultural work among artists in Far North Queensland, highlighting the diversity of cultural and artistic activities in the region. It also examines the importance of these cultural-economic activities as a source of income for the regional artists. As previously mentioned, the art production of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is interwoven with their broader cultural engagement, making it essential to consider these avenues of work within a comprehensive cultural context. In line with this approach, this study categorises a spectrum of art- and culture-related activities into two main categories: "creative artistic activities" and "other cultural activities" as was detailed in Chapter 2 above.

We first examine the existing artistic and cultural landscape in the region. Table 6.1 presents data on the region's artists, detailing the percentage who have engaged in various activities at any point in their lives, thereby gaining experience in those activities. The table also shows the percentages of all artists who have participated in these activities within the past 12 months, and the proportions who received payment. These data are also depicted in Figure 6.1 in descending order of those who have ever engaged in each activity and received some form of economic compensation for it.

Overall Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 demonstrate the wide diversity in cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists in the region. Looking first at the most important activities that artists have ever engaged in, we note that 91 percent of artists have had experience in visual arts, whilst 96 percent have been engaged in caring for country/ islands at some time in their lives, and 97 percent have been engaged in fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food. At the other end of the scale, it is noteworthy that nearly a quarter of all artists have experience in the specialised areas of filmmaking and arts management, while 16 percent have engaged in composing music or choreographing dance – these areas make a contribution to the diversity of cultural practice in the region, despite their relatively small numbers of experienced practitioners.

Dance productions are exceptionally popular in the Torres Strait,[15] with some communities having not one but several dance troupes, and each of these troupes may comprise 30 to 40 dancers. Such productions bring together many artists and many art forms – performing arts, composing/choreographing, visual arts, writing, filmmaking. Additionally, they necessitate the involvement of producers and, for performances outside the community, they depend on the expertise of individuals capable of managing travel logistics for participants. Artists of all genders engage in choreographing contemporary and traditional dances, composing music, creating elaborate dance costumes, "dance apparatus"[16] and "dance machines",[17] as well as writing songs in traditional languages.

[15] Different language groups have their own dances.
[16] Torres Strait Island communities use dance apparatus in their dance performances sometimes to create greater acoustic range.
[17] Dance machines used in the Torres Strait are objects that contain many parts that can be manipulated to enhance dance experience.

Table 6.1 Cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists (percent of all respondents)

Activities** (n=94)	Have ever engaged in activity	Currently engaged in activity*	Currently being paid for activity*
		%	
Creative artistic			
Visual arts	91	81	73
Performing arts	72	48	16
Composing/ choreographing	16	14	5
Writing/ storytelling	52	27	11
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	23	9	5
Other cultural			
Participating in ceremonies	75	47	1
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	63	48	23
Cultural archiving, record keeping	39	23	9
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	43	26	8
Teaching others in arts and culture	88	78	24
Caring for country	96	82	7
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	97	88	1
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	70	53	2
Arts management	23	16	7
Arts administration	50	37	29
Providing cultural tourism services	55	29	15
Other	-	-	-

- indicates nil response in this sample
* In the last 12 months
** Multiple response allowed

Figure 6.1 Cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists (percent of artists)

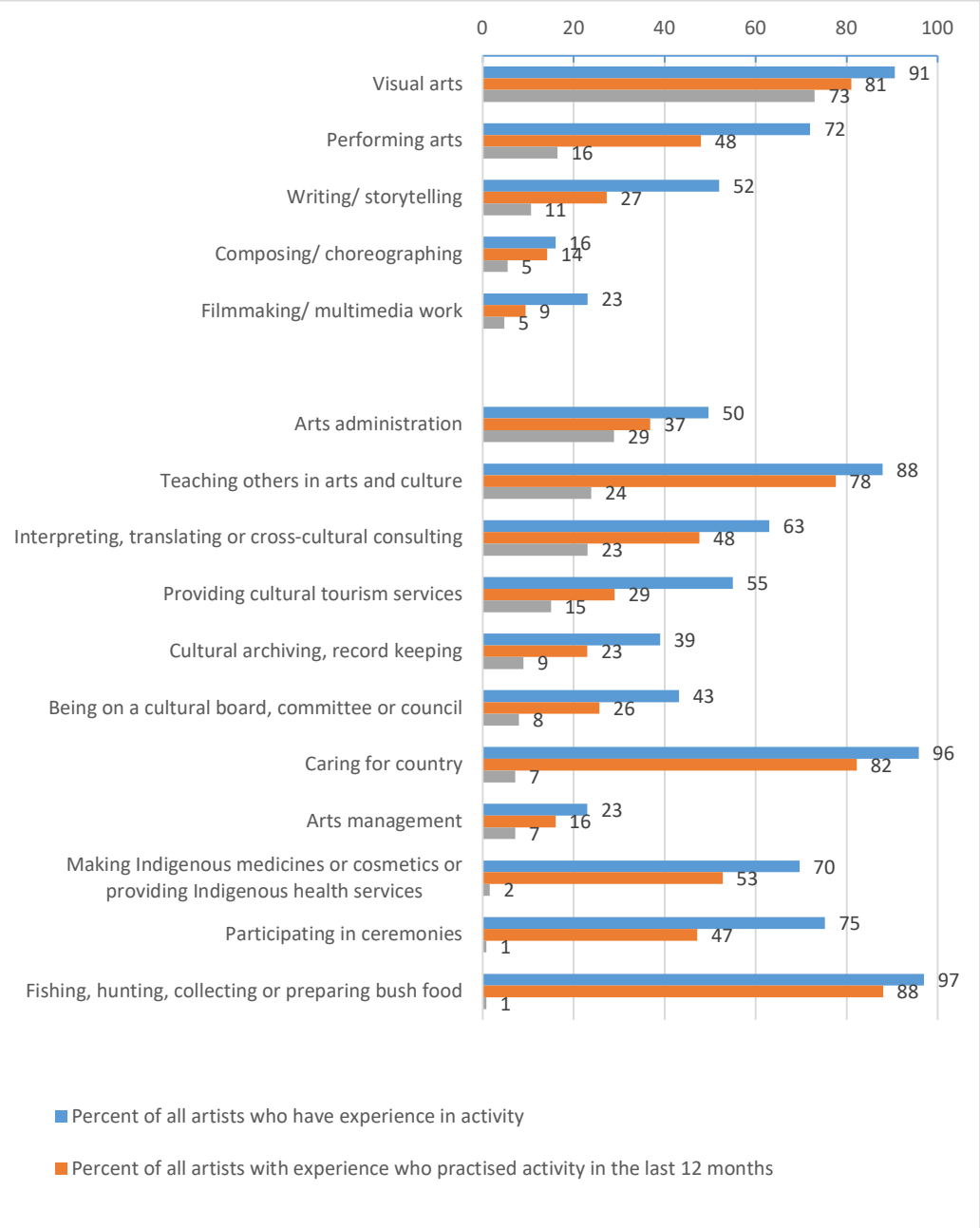


Table 6.2 Mean and median number of cultural economic activities undertaken by artists (number of activities)

Activities	Have ever done	Currently doing*	Currently being paid*
		(n=94)	
Mean			
Creative artistic	2.5	1.8	1.1
Other cultural	7.0	5.3	1.2
All cultural activities	9.5	7.1	2.3
Median			
Creative artistic	2.0	2.0	1.0
Other cultural	7.0	5.0	1.0
All cultural activities	9.0	7.0	2.0

* In the last 12 months

The diversity of cultural practice amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the Far North Queensland region is further illustrated by the number of different cultural activities that a given individual artist has engaged in during his or her lifetime. Table 6.2 shows the mean and median number of different cultural activities ever undertaken by an individual artist, as well as the number of activities the average artist is currently engaged in, and the number of activities yielding financial reward. The table illustrates that artists often engage in a variety of cultural activities, with many working across multiple art forms. A common example of such cross-art form practice includes dancers who not only perform but also take on roles in choreography. Furthermore, the same individuals may compose the music for the pieces they choreograph, in addition to designing and creating costumes and masks for their dance performances. Some visual artists also engage in writing, describing their work and interpreting its cultural significance, sometimes in their traditional language, sometimes translating these insights into English for broader understanding.

On average, an artist in the region has been involved in approximately ten different cultural-economic activities throughout their lifetime. This typically includes engagement in two to three artistic activities and in seven other cultural activities. Currently, an average artist is actively engaged in about two artistic activities and approximately five other cultural activities. In terms of economic compensation, an average artist in the region receives income for their work in at least one artistic activity and one other cultural activity.

There is a marked disparity between current cultural engagement and economic reward in several cultural activities shown in Table 6.1. Activities of higher cultural importance, like caring for country/islands and participating in ceremonies, involve large numbers of artists. Despite this, only a small fraction receives economic rewards for their involvement. Nevertheless, the substantial level of both experience and ongoing engagement in these activities underscores their enduring significance in the lives of artists and their role in maintaining and transmitting cultural heritage.

There is a noticeable gap in the art forms of performing arts and writing/storytelling, where relatively high current engagement (72 and 52 percent of all artists respectively) does not translate into ongoing paid work (16 and 11 percent of all artists respectively). Similar

substantial gaps are also observed in various of the cultural activities. These include teaching arts and culture, making Indigenous medicines or providing Indigenous health services, as well as interpreting, translating, cross-cultural consulting, and offering cultural tourism services.

Among artistic activities, the visual arts shows the highest engagement (91 percent), the highest proportion of all artists who continue their practice in this art form (81 percent), and the largest proportion of all artists (73 percent) for which it generates income. Performing arts is the second most engaged activity currently, with almost half of all artists indicating they have participated in this activity last year. However, among the five art forms, performing arts show the largest gap between engagement and economic compensation.

In addition to the gap between engagement and financial reward, there is also a significant disparity between the numbers of artists with experience in a given activity, and those currently practising it. Figure 6.2 shows artists with experience in an activity divided into those who are currently engaged in that activity, and the corresponding proportion who are not. The data are organised to show the percentages of currently active artists in descending order. In the case of the creative arts, the data show that a high percentage of those with experience in visual arts and composing/choreographing – about nine in ten – continue their active engagement in these art forms. In contrast, only about 67 percent of those with a background in performing arts are presently practising. In the art forms of writing/storytelling and filmmaking, the division is more pronounced; slightly over half of those with experience in writing are still engaged, while most filmmakers (60 percent) are not currently active in their art form.

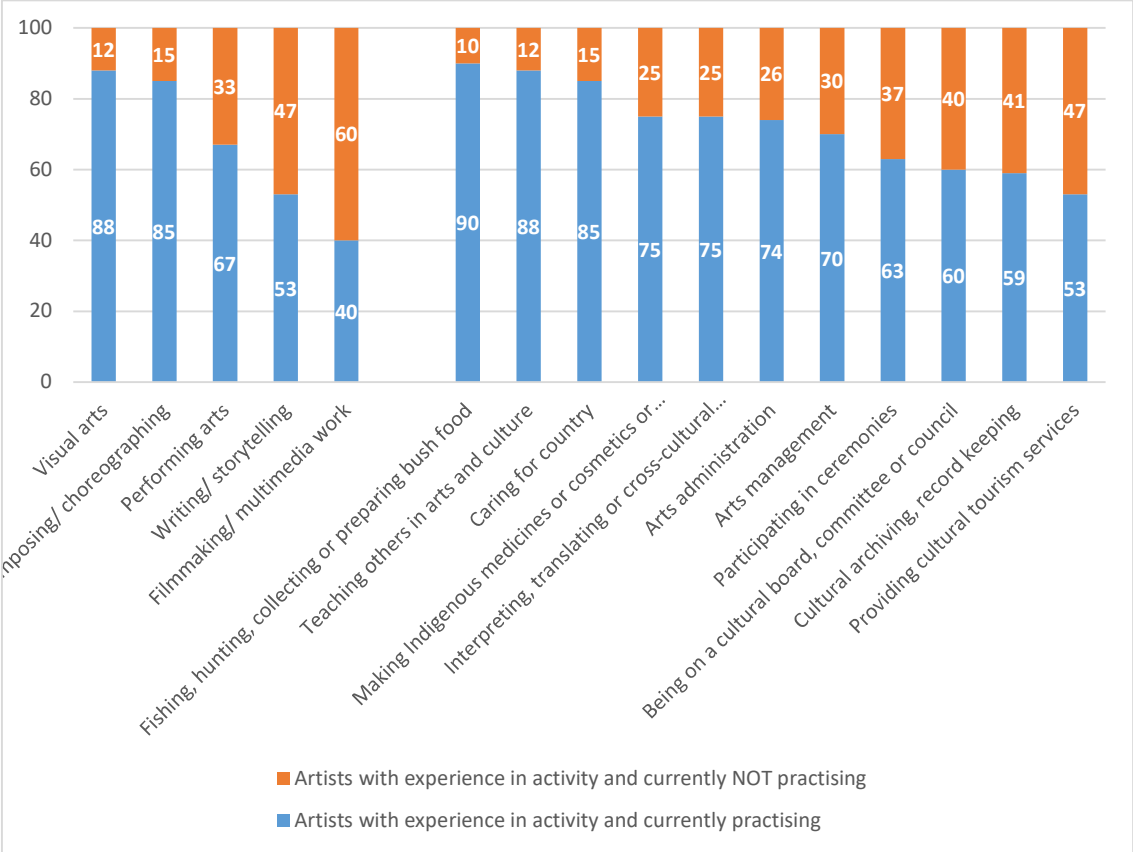
Turning to other cultural activities, we can see a strong ongoing involvement among those experienced in essential cultural practices, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering bush food, as well as in caring for the country/islands and teaching arts and culture, with around nine in ten remaining actively engaged. However, there are several activities in which artists are not practising at present, despite having had experience in those activities. For example, about one quarter of those experienced in Indigenous medicines and health, interpreting, translating, cross-cultural consulting and arts administration do not continue their practice. Cultural tourism, cultural governance and cultural archiving are activities where even fewer artists with experience are currently engaged for one reason or another.

Many regional artists (39 percent) have engaged in cultural archiving activities throughout the years. At times these activities occur through formal projects, such as those run by the artist's local arts centre or, in the island communities, by the Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Culture, Art and Heritage Program.[18] Their Music and Dance Audit project, for example, is dedicated to documenting languages and songs across the region. Independently, artists also undertake personal archiving initiatives. An example includes a choreographer who video records his family members over the years and uses this material as reference in creating new work. Another example is when a filmmaker documents conversations with grandparents to preserve vital cultural knowledge. Only about two out of five artists with experience in cultural archiving continue to engage in these activities presently, and, as we will explore in Chapter 9, most of this work is undertaken on an unpaid basis.

[18] TSRA's Culture, Art and Heritage Program works with communities to protect, promote revitalise and maintain Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal traditions and cultural heritage through cultural maintenance and arts development initiatives. See https://www.tsra.gov.au/?a=2360.

Individual circumstances vary greatly, and there are numerous reasons why artists might not currently be engaged in a practice in which they have been engaged in the past. Some may not have been able to find work in a given area, some may have chosen to focus their work in some other art form or cultural activity, and for some their interests may simply have changed. Whatever the reason, our data indicate a substantial under-utilised reservoir of cultural and human capital within the region. This untapped potential could be interpreted as representing an opportunity for increased involvement in artistic and cultural production, suggesting that with the right conditions, there could be a significant enhancement in the region's artistic and cultural output.

Figure 6.2 Artists' current engagement in cultural activities calculated as a proportion of artists who have ever engaged in each activity (percent of artists)*

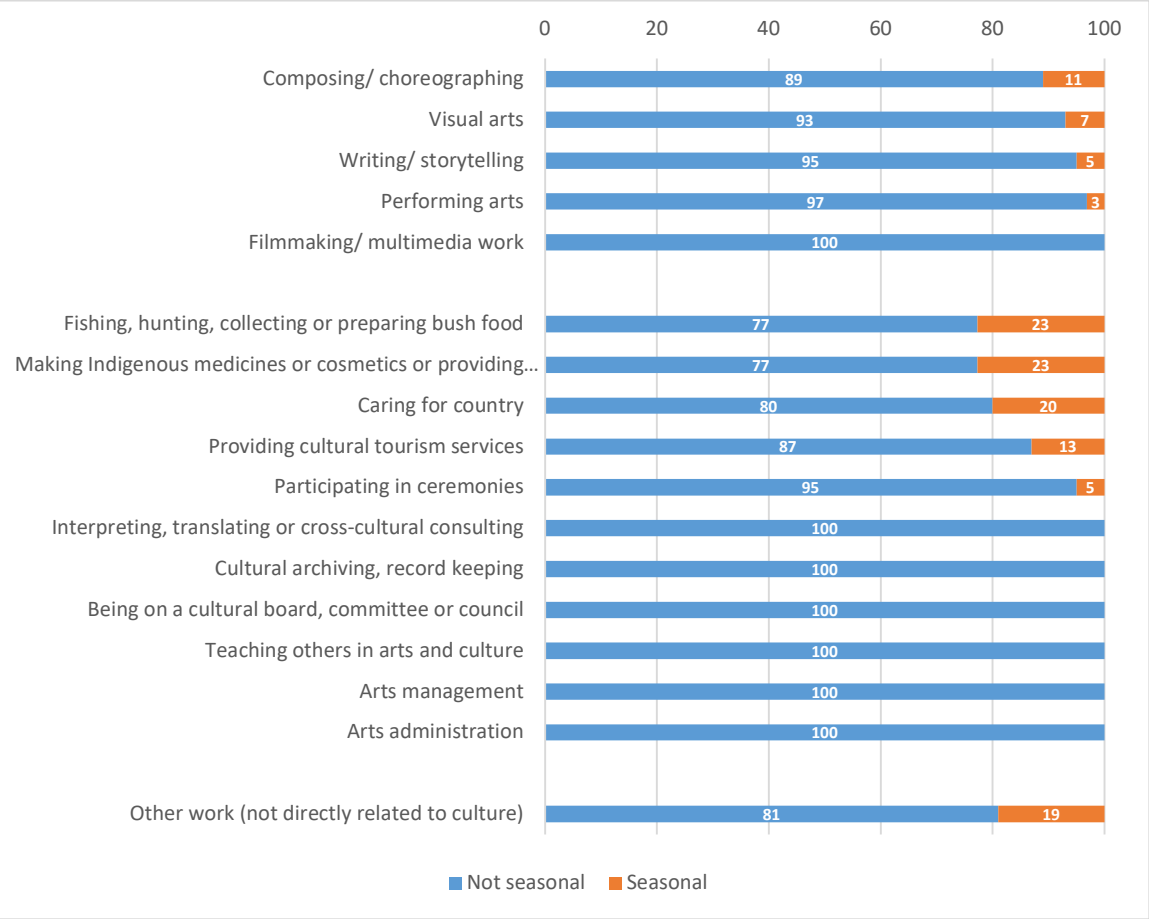


* Multiple responses allowed.

Finally in this consideration of artists' cultural activities, we turn to the seasonality of cultural production in Far North Queensland. The region experiences two distinct seasons: the wet season, which runs from November to April, and the dry season. During the wet season, average temperatures often exceed 30°C, accompanied by extremely high humidity. This climatic pattern significantly influences accessibility, community activities, and, to a certain extent, some regional arts and cultural production. Despite these seasonal variations, the creation of artistic work largely continues throughout the year, unaffected by the seasonal changes, as depicted in Figure 6.3. However, there are some impacts of seasonality

on a few cultural activities, particularly those requiring access to country/ islands or travel. Activities like fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food, making Indigenous medicines, and caring for country/islands are among the most affected during the wet season. Nevertheless, the data show that most artists manage to carry these activities out all year round. This adaptability indicates a resilience and flexibility in the artistic and cultural production of the region, allowing for continuous engagement despite the seasonal challenges.

Figure 6.3 Artists identifying impacts of seasonality on their cultural-economic activities (percent of artists who engaged in activity in the last 12 months)



7. ACQUISITION OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

Indigenous artists in remote Australia can acquire the education and training essential for their professional artistic practice through diverse means. This learning extends beyond formal education to include rich experiences within the family, community, art centres, schools, on country/islands, and during cultural ceremonies. Our survey delineates three distinct educational categories:

Formal Education: This encompasses traditional schooling and general education that imparts a broad range of knowledge and skills.

Cultural Education: The process of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for engaging in cultural activities, along with gaining the permissions required to practice within the confines of specific cultural laws.

Occupation-Specific Training: Training aimed at developing skills needed for specific artistic professions.

It is important to note, however, that these categories are not rigidly separate. The knowledge and skills obtained often overlap and can be applied in various contexts. For instance, education and training acquired through formal settings like schools or universities might include arts-related content. Similarly, cultural skills, such as body painting or language mastery, can enhance a range of artistic expressions and cultural practices. Professional artistic skills, like writing or filmmaking, have broader applications too, such as in cultural archiving or in creating audio-visual materials beyond those with purely cultural content.

In this chapter, we present data on these varied pathways, highlighting how artists develop their cultural capital, and demonstrating the multifaceted nature of artistic education and training within the Indigenous communities of remote Far North Queensland.

7.1 Formal education

The journey of formal education typically commences with primary and secondary schooling, where essential skills in literacy and numeracy are developed. This phase may also include specialised artistic and cultural education. For instance, schools might formally or informally invite senior artists and cultural producers to impart knowledge about culture and language to students. Alternatively, schools might organise visits to local art centres, allowing students to gain hands-on experience with professional artists. School may also present opportunities for students to learn from art professionals who visit from outside their community.

For some artists, the formal educational path extends beyond school, leading to further qualifications at colleges or universities. In our survey, we asked participants to specify the highest level of formal education or training they have completed. This encompasses both general education and formal training in arts that are not related to respondents' cultural knowledge. The findings are summarised in Table 7.1, which also compares these results to the general Indigenous adult population in remote and very remote areas of Queensland, as indicated in the 2014–15 NATSISS data.

Table 7.1 Highest levels of formal education (percent of respondents)

Level of education	Indigenous artists in the FNQ region			Indigenous adults (15+) in labour force in Remote/Very Remote QLD[(a)]
	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)	
	%			
No schooling	-	-	-	-
Completed Year 9 (or equivalent) and below	20	-	15	10*
Completed Year 10 (or equivalent)	21	7	17	18
Certificates I/II, not defined certificates	4	-	3	2**
Completed Year 11 (or equivalent)	9	15	10	6*
Completed Year 12 (or equivalent)	7	19	11	20
Certificates III/ IV or Diploma	33	51	37	38
Completed Bachelor Degree	4		3	2*
Completed Postgraduate Degree, Diploma or Certificate	-	7	4	*
Other	1	-	1	4*
Total	100	100	100	100

[(a)] Source: NATSISS 2014–15
- indicates nil response in this sample
* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution
** Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

The survey reveals some differences between art forms. Visual artists in the study region, for example, tend to have slightly lower levels of formal education compared to other First Nations artists, with one in five not advancing beyond Year 9. In contrast, performing artists tend to have higher levels of formal education.

The comparison of formal educational attainment levels between artists in remote For North Queensland and the broader Indigenous labour force in remote and very remote areas of Queensland reveals minor differences, with artists in the study region showing slightly lower overall educational levels, as illustrated in Table 7.1. When these figures are juxtaposed with formal educational statistics for artists across all of Australia, as drawn from the Artists' Survey 2023 study, a stark contrast emerges. Artists in mainstream Australia typically achieve much higher levels of formal education than the Australian labour force in general and significantly higher compared to their remote Indigenous counterparts. It is apparent that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists it is not formal education that provides the most essential training for participation in arts and cultural production, as it is demonstrated further below.

7.2 Cultural knowledge

Table 7.2 sheds light on the diverse pathways through which artists in the region acquire their cultural knowledge. In the survey, we asked respondents to list all the ways they learned about their culture and to pinpoint the single most important source. The data reveal a clear pattern for artists in the FNQ region: the primary channel for gaining cultural knowledge is direct learning from family members, elders, or other community members. This process of cultural transmission, both intergenerational and intragenerational, is predominant in the region, as we have found in all the other regions in the National Survey.

An overwhelming 97 percent of artists report learning about their culture primarily from family members, and 83 percent of respondents consider this the most crucial pathway for acquiring such knowledge. Additionally, elders and other community members play a significant role in imparting cultural education. About four in five of artists acknowledge these sources as highly significant, with nine percent viewing them as the foremost in their cultural learning. These findings highlight the deep-rooted and community-centric nature of cultural education among Indigenous artists in this region.

It should be noted that, in the other regions included in the National Survey, numerous respondents faced challenges in pinpointing the most significant pathway for their cultural education, especially when choosing between learning from family and community members and learning directly from the land or being on country/islands. This difficulty arises from the intertwined nature of these educational sources. Many respondents emphasised that these pathways often converge, as cultural education frequently takes place on country/ islands under the tutelage of family or community members. These considerations highlight the holistic approach to learning in Indigenous cultures, where education is not just about the transfer of knowledge, but also about the deep connection with the land and the community.

Table 7.2 Important pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge (percent of all respondents)

Cultural knowledge pathways	Visual artists (n=70)		Performing artists (n=19)		All artists (n=94)	
	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway
	%		%		%	
Directly from family members	98	88	93	71	97	83
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	71	4	100	29	79	9
From being on country	58	2	66	-	61	1
From participating in ceremonies	53	-	63	-	57	1
From artworks, songs or stories	35	-	78	-	44	-
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/ archives	30	1	59	-	36	2
From festivals or other cultural events	14	-	22	-	17	-
Some other way	9	4	7	-	8	3
Total		100		100		100

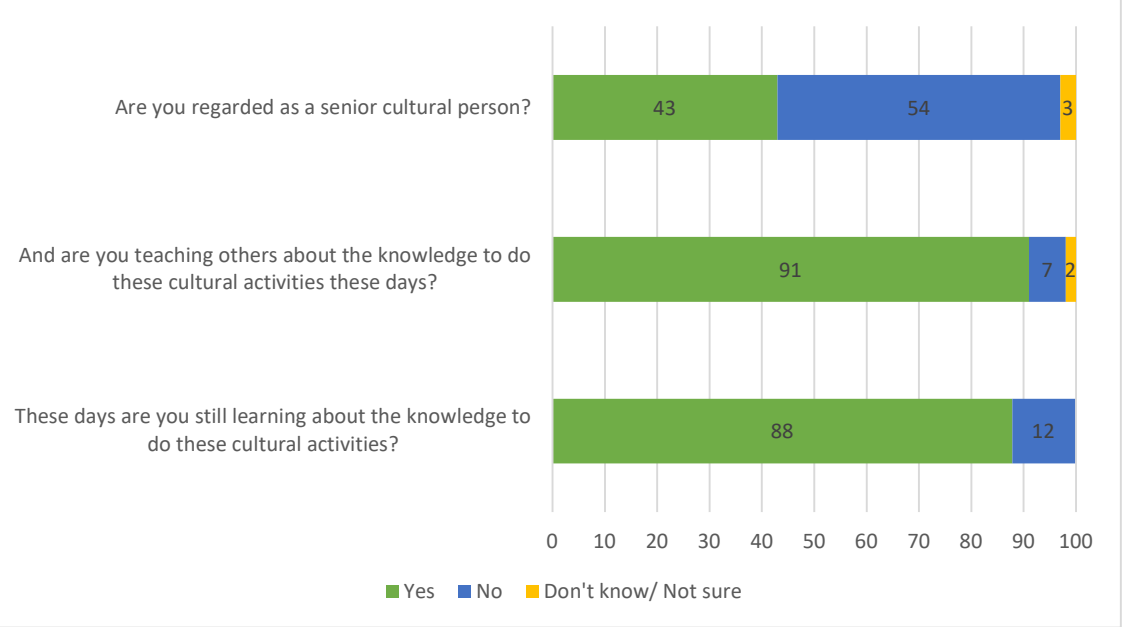
* Multiple response allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

There are some noticeable differences between visual and performing artists. The pathway most frequently nominated as important by visual artists is acquiring the cultural knowledge directly from family members (98 percent of artists), whereas the most frequently nominated pathway for performing artists is learning from elders and community members (100 percent of artists). Nevertheless, when asked to name the most important source, both types of artists pointed to family members as the single most important pathway. The importance of a wider community and peers is still the most important in acquiring cultural knowledge for almost a third of performing artists. The importance of learning on country/islands is slightly more pronounced among performing artists than among visual artists, although it is not the primary source for either group. Acquiring knowledge from artworks, songs or stories is noticeably more important for performing artists (78 percent) than for visual artists (35 percent).

Cultural knowledge acquisition is a lifelong process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as also is the practice of transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. Our data offer insight into the ongoing cultural development and the role of teaching within Indigenous communities in the Far North Queensland region. Figure 7.1 shows the proportions of artists who are both learning and teaching others about cultural knowledge.

The data show that 88 percent of artists indicate they are actively engaged in learning the cultural knowledge necessary for their cultural activities, while a substantial majority, 91 percent, are also involved in teaching the cultural knowledge to others. These data illustrate the dynamic nature of cultural knowledge transmission within the regional communities. The act of teaching cultural knowledge by such a large proportion of artists also highlights the critical importance of intergenerational and intragenerational knowledge transfer in preserving and maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Figure 7.1 Proportions of artists who are still learning about the cultural knowledge teaching others and those who are regarded as senior cultural practitioners (percent of all respondents)



A significant element in processes of cultural preservation, communication and transmission in remote Indigenous communities relate to the importance of senior cultural people in the community. These are experienced and respected cultural practitioners who often play a key role as repositories of cultural knowledge and as teachers of younger generations. Figure 7.1 shows that in the Far North Queensland region, 43 percent of artists are considered to be senior cultural practitioners.

This continual process of learning and teaching within the remote regional communities is analogous to the role of formal education in the broader labour market. Just as formal education equips individuals with a variety of skills for the job market, cultural education within these communities imparts knowledge with wide-ranging applications within the culture-based economy. It facilitates participation in numerous cultural-economic activities, showcasing the depth and adaptability of the knowledge passed down through generations.

7.3 Art industry skills

Artistic practice encompasses a diverse range of industry skills, which include the ability to manipulate various materials – such as paint, clay, fibre, or bark – and the proficiency to handle different types of equipment, from video cameras and screen-printing apparatus to sound systems and editing software. For Indigenous artists residing in remote parts of Far North Queensland there is an array of avenues to acquire the necessary skills for their artistic practice. Table 7.3 shows the different pathways for the acquisition of industry skills and their prominence based on the responses from the artist population surveyed.

Self-learning or learning on the job is the most commonly cited method for acquiring skills among all artists in FNQ, with 90 percent of visual artists and 78 percent of performing artists indicating this pathway. It is also considered the most significant pathway to acquiring industry skills by 23 percent of all artists in the region. Nevertheless, among all pathways it is learning from family members that the highest proportion of artists (41 percent of all artists) identify as the most important, indicating that family plays a crucial role in the transfer of industry skills in artistic practice.

There are two different ways that respondents identify when learning from a family or community member: (1) learning by observing and practising and (2) learning only by observing. Within families, the first way is the most common among artists. Over half have participated in this form of learning. Yet about a fifth of all artists indicated that they learnt by watching a family member only, without participation, and for one in ten of all artists this was the most important way to learn their artistic skills. Note that over half of performing artists (59 percent) engaged in watching and doing with family members, a higher percentage than among visual artists (47 percent). Learning from peers or community members, by both observing as well as observing and participating, also plays a substantial role, with more than half of all artists (56 percent) selecting this pathway as important to them.

Table 7.3 Important pathways for gaining industry skills and experience (percent of all respondents)

Industry skills pathways	Visual artists (n=70)		Performing artists (n=19)		All artists (n=94)	
	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway
	%		%		%	
Learning from a family member:	69	41	71	44	70	41
Observing and practising with a family member	47	29	59	44	52	32
Observing a family member	22	12	12	-	19	9
Learning from a friend or community member:	53	24	71	26	56	22
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	34	17	63	19	41	17
Observing a friend or community member	19	6	7	7	15	6
Self-learning/ learning on the job	90	22	78	15	87	23
Vocational training	20	5	22	-	21	4
Feedback and advice from an art professional	35	2	12	-	30	2
Workshops/ short courses	47	2	22	-	44	2
School	40	2	34	-	40	2
Online sources	36	-	29	-	35	-
University program	2	-	7	-	4	-
Some other way	7	1	22	15	11	5
Total		100		100		100

* Multiple response allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

Formal training options – including learning skills through vocational training, school, workshops/short courses and advice from an art professional – are less prominent, with only small numbers of artists (two to four percent) indicating that these relatively more formal educational structures represented the most important pathways to acquire artistic skills for them. Despite their limited popularity, such training opportunities exist regionally, including TAFE campuses on Thursday Island[19] and in Bamaga. However, for some artists seeking specialised education, such as dancers who attended NAISDA Dance College, travel outside

[19] The Thursday Island TAFE Campus was opened in 2019.

their region was necessary. Art skills and product development workshops are offered by art centres for their artists, and by several other organisations, such as the TSRA's Culture, Art and Heritage Program in the Torres Strait.[20] For some artists, learning from art professionals who come from beyond their local regions and cultural backgrounds – sometimes fortuitously, as in the case of one professional artist who happened to be the wife of a local priest – has been a significant method of skill acquisition.

As can be seen in Table 7.3, the important pathways for acquiring cultural skills are very similar to those discussed above for the transfer of cultural knowledge. Likewise, the extent to which artists learn and teach cultural skills reflects the corresponding proportions noted above in regard to cultural knowledge. Figure 7.2 shows that a significant majority of artists (88 percent) are still actively engaged in learning the skills necessary for their artistic activities, whilst 84 percent of artists are also involved in teaching these skills to others. These findings confirm the robust tradition of knowledge sharing that exists in remote Indigenous communities in the region and point to the dual role that artists play as both learners and teachers in their everyday artistic lives.

There is a distinction in communities between the roles of senior cultural persons, as discussed above, and senior artists. Some individuals may be identified as one or the other, and some as both. The recognition of a senior artist involves according them a level of respect and an acknowledgement of their mastery and experience in their area of artistic practice. Our data indicate that just over half (52 percent) of respondents in our sample would be regarded as senior artists, as shown in Figure 7.2.

7.4 Conclusion

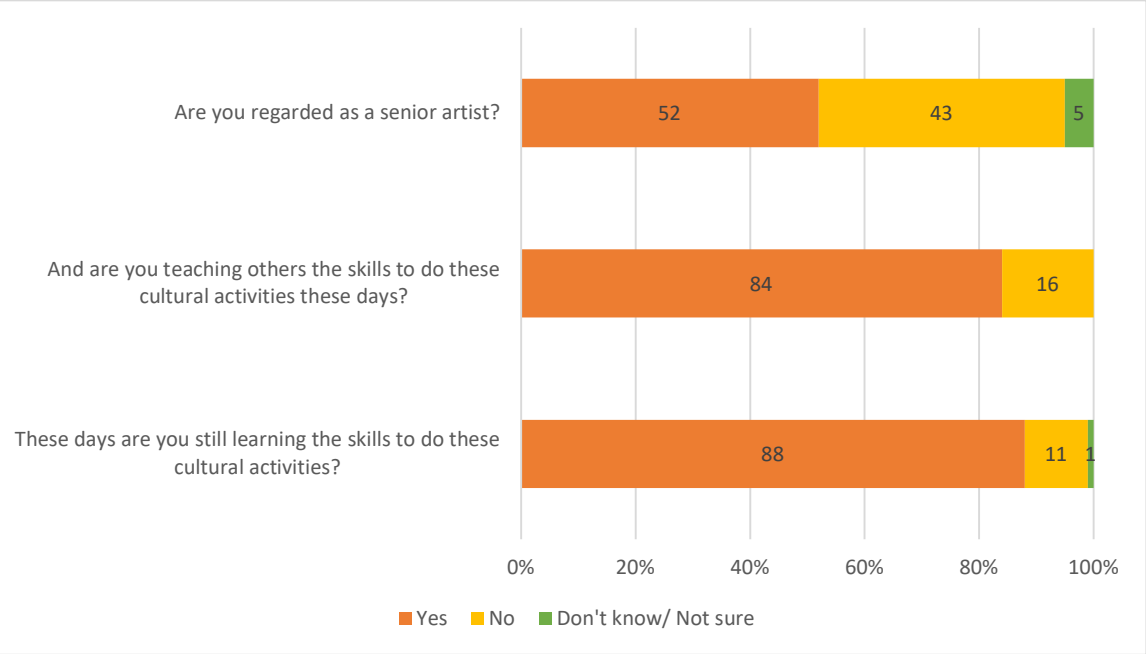
The data presented in this chapter underscore the pivotal role of family and community in the acquisition of both cultural knowledge and practical industry skills which are essential for engaging in the arts and cultural sectors in remote Indigenous communities. The survey data illustrate that while First Nations artists in remote Far North Queensland communities utilise a variety of pathways to develop their artistic skills, they predominantly rely on experiential learning – through self-directed practice, family, and community interaction. Formal education routes like vocational training and university programs play a much smaller role in their skill development, reflecting a strong community-oriented and practical approach to learning in the Far North Queensland region.

Despite the dominance of these informal learning pathways, it is noteworthy that all educational routes, whether through formal schooling or the processes of inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission, can be seen to provide competencies that enable First Nations people to engage in productive activity in the remote cultural economy of the region. These competencies not only facilitate their participation in the region's cultural economy but also ensure the preservation of their enduring cultural connections. Concurrently, the skills and knowledge gained through these varied pathways are transferable and relevant to a wide array of jobs in the wider labour market.

[20] The program facilitates training to build skills in communities and create economic opportunities for artists. Targeted workshops aim to develop intensive skills in areas appropriate to individual communities, determined by level of interest, access to resources and sustainability. New skills are applied to product development and market tested through the Gab Titui Cultural Centre Gallery Shop. Most recent skills development workshops have focused on the traditional skills of carving, weaving and drum making, and in the contemporary skills of painting, printing and 3D design.

Acquiring cultural knowledge and artistic skills takes a significant investment in time, both for the person who undertakes such training and for the person(s) who perform the training. The costs involved in producing a culturally educated person in remote First Nations communities in Australia are largely unknown. While some cultural education might occur within the formal educational system, for example via culture and language programs at school, most of the associated costs for young people's cultural education are likely to be incurred by the family and community members. In the following chapters, we discuss our data on the average amounts of time that artists spend in teaching others arts and cultural skills, as well as the incomes the artists generate from these teaching activities.

Figure 7.2 Proportions of artists who are still learning cultural skills, teaching others and those who are regarded as senior artists (percent of all respondents)



8. TIME ALLOCATION

As discussed in Chapter 6 above, artists in the Far North Queensland region engage in a diverse array of arts and cultural activities, often alongside non-cultural employment. Art production cannot be viewed in isolation; it is intrinsically linked with various cultural activities that maintain, support and contribute to continuous development of artistic work.

The blending of "work" and "life" is a distinctive characteristic of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural producers. For many First Nations people, cultural activities are perceived as forms of work (Austin-Broos 2006). This perspective is evident in the terminology used, where ceremonial activities are often referred to as "business", such as in "sorry business". However, it is noteworthy that some activities considered as work in the mainstream Australian economy, like tourism services or certain administrative tasks, may not be regarded similarly by First Nations cultural producers.

Understanding the work arrangements and time allocation strategies of remote Indigenous artists necessitates a holistic approach – balancing artistic aspirations, cultural obligations, personal needs, and financial commitments. To gain insights into these aspects, our survey posed questions regarding the amount of time spent on sixteen cultural-economic activities. In the interviews we asked whether terms like "every working day" implied a frequency of four to five days a week, or if "a full day" constituted working both morning and afternoon, amounting to an average of 7 hours in a typical day. For calculation purposes, we have assumed an average of 48 weeks of work per year.

In addition to understanding these time-use patterns, it is equally important to explore potential constraints affecting artists' time allocation across different activities. Such insights are vital for discussions about enhancing labour market participation and support mechanisms for Indigenous artists. By considering art production in the context of the artist's entire life and activity pattern, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the Far North Queensland region.

Table 8.1 presents a detailed breakdown of the time allocation for various activities, organised into three categories: "creative artistic", "other cultural" and "other work activities (not directly related to culture)". For each activity the table shows the percentage of artists engaging in that activity for the specified amount of time. The table also shows the weighted average score that reflects the frequency of engagement in each activity throughout the year; lower scores indicate less frequent activity, while higher scores indicate more frequent activity.

Table 8.1 Time spent on activities in the last 12 months (percent of artists currently engaged in the activity)

Activities	N	Few full days/ year	1–2 full days/ month	1 full day/ week	2–3 full days/ week	4–5 full days/ week	Total	Weighted average score[a]
		%						
Creative artistic activities								
Visual arts	76	7	9	21	33	30	100	3.7
Composing/ choreographing	8	26	26	32	16	-	100	2.4
Performing arts	44	32	28	34	6	-	100	2.1
Writing/ storytelling	22	40	34	26	-	-	100	1.9
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	8	54	46	-	-	-	100	1.5
Other cultural activities								
Arts administration	30	6	23	8	33	30	100	3.6
Arts management	15	30	30	10	21	9	100	2.5
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	72	15	37	38	10	-	100	2.4
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	41	25	37	36	2	-	100	2.1
Caring for country	76	24	51	19	5	1	100	2.1
Teaching others in arts and culture	70	43	34	17	6	-	100	1.9
Cultural archiving, record keeping	19	55	25	9	7	4	100	1.8
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	22	48	38	7	-	6	100	1.8
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	39	57	28	13	2	-	100	1.6
Providing cultural tourism services	27	66	24	10	-	-	100	1.4
Participating in ceremonies	41	73	22	5	-	-	100	1.3
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)								
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	26	9	3	34	13	41	100	3.8

- indicates nil response in this sample.
[a] Scores: 1 = "Few full days/year"; 2 = "1–2 full days/month"; 3 = "1 full day/week"; 4 = "2–3 full days/week"; 5 = "4–5 full days/week". Excludes "Don't know/Not sure" responses.

Visual arts has a relatively even spread across different engagement levels, with the highest engagement at 2–3 full workdays a week (33 percent of those engaged in visual arts). Visual arts is the only one among five artistic activities where some artists are engaged full-time, or 4 to 5 full workdays a week. Moreover, it has the highest weighted average score of 3.7 across all creative and cultural activities. Composing/choreographing, with a weighted average score of 2.4, has the second-highest engagement among artistic activities. This reflects a diverse engagement level, with nearly half of the artists who are engaged in this artistic practice (48 percent) dedicating between one and three full working days a week to it. Two in five performing artists also dedicate from one to three full working days a week to their practice. Taking dancers as an example, their practice and rehearsals typically span several nights a week. However, this schedule intensifies to nightly sessions lasting several hours, beginning one to two months before a performance, including both weekdays and weekends. Other creative artistic activities have relatively lower levels of working time among those artists who are currently engaged in them.

When it comes to other cultural activities, most artists engaged in ceremonies and cultural tourism services practice these activities only occasionally – about nine in ten are engaged in these from only a few full days a year to one or two full days a month. Note that ceremonies[21] such as tombstone openings, or "first shave" or "first hunt" initiations, could take one to two weeks. Arts administration is notable for having 30 percent of its participants engaged full-time, or four to five full days a week, and a further one-third working 2–3 days a week. Likewise, 30 percent of artists who work in arts management do so for two days or more per week.

For "other work activities (not directly related to culture)", there is a significant commitment of full-time work (41 percent), indicating that these activities may be the primary occupation for these artists measured in terms of time spent, with a weighted average score of 3.8. Overall, the data reveal a spectrum of engagement across artistic and cultural work, reflecting the multiplicity of activities that artists participate in, averaging seven per artist in the FNQ region as we saw in Table 6.2 earlier.

An alternative way of representing our data on time allocations to various activities is to convert the time estimates on which Table 8.1 is based into the equivalent in hours per week. This requires us to make a series of plausible assumptions as to the average weekly hours implied by each category of frequency of involvement, and to apply these assumptions to the individual response records to calculate hours spent by each respondent in each activity.

Calculated according to this procedure, the data in Table 8.2 show the number of hours per week that artists have spent on creative artistic activities, other cultural activities, and work activities not related to culture over the last 12 months. On average, artists devote 18 hours a week or about two and a half full workdays each week to creative artistic work, with even more time spent on cultural activities that support and maintain their culture. The fact that artists spend an average of three full working days a week on these other cultural activities reinforces the importance of cultural maintenance in the working lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the region.

[21] Sometimes also called "family sit downs".

Table 8.2 Mean and median number of weekly hours that artists spent on activities in the last 12 months (hours per week)

Hours spent on…	Mean	Median
	Hours	
Creative artistic activities (n=85)	18	18
Other cultural activities (n=66)	21	17
Total arts and cultural activities (n=64)	38	39
Other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=26)	5	-*
Total working hours (n=64)	42	43

- indicates nil response in this sample.
* The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most artists do not engage in non-cultural work activities.

There are many factors that affect how individual artists in the region allocate their time to different activities. Seasonal fluctuations in work availability, limited transportation, and inconsistent access to necessary facilities and equipment are just a few of the challenges that can disrupt an artist's schedule. Additionally, certain times of the year bring road closures which further complicate matters alongside the ebb and flow of demand for artistic services. Often, artists are required to juggle multiple activities simultaneously, a common factor that affects many artists throughout their career.

Artists with deep cultural expertise are usually subject to many competing demands on their knowledge and skills, emanating from within their family and community circles or from organisations that benefit from these cultural competencies. As artists' cultural knowledge, skills and reputations grow, these demands can increase. It is not uncommon for artists who are also senior cultural people in the community to reach the peak of their creative careers only to set aside their personal artistic projects in favour of more pressing cultural duties, such as cultural governance and leadership, educational commitments, providing cross-cultural guidance, and participating more extensively in ceremonial events.

Overall, our data indicate a complex and interwoven pattern in how remote FNQ artists apportion their time between their creative work, other cultural obligations and other work commitments not related to culture. Their time is a tapestry woven from strands of income-generating activities and those that fulfill cultural, artistic or social needs. Artists navigate this intricate balance to meet their financial, social and cultural objectives. The competing demands on an artist's time can limit their ability to create art and pursue more income-yielding opportunities.

In Chapter 10 of our report, we look more deeply into artists' preferences over ways they spend their time and examine specific constraints that shape their patterns of time allocation.

9. FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As noted in the Introduction to this Report, one of the most important objectives of the National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists is to assess the extent to which art and cultural production can provide a means towards employment creation and income generation for Indigenous people in remote communities. To consider this objective in empirical terms, a range of information is needed on the financial circumstances of arts and cultural producers – how many of their various cultural activities are paid, what are their main sources of income, and how is their total income from all sources comprised. This chapter presents the survey results on these issues for the Far North Queensland region.

9.1 Paid and unpaid activities

As we saw earlier in this Report, some of the time spent at various activities by artists in the region is paid and some is undertaken unpaid or on a voluntary basis. Table 9.1 shows the proportions of artists who were paid and not paid when they engaged in artistic or cultural activities or non-cultural work in the last 12 months. These data are also shown in a diagrammatic form in Figure 9.1, where the creative and other cultural activities respectively are arranged in descending order of the proportions of artists who are paid. It should be noted that being paid for a certain activity does not mean that all of that individual's work in that activity was financially rewarded, it simply means that an artist was paid for at least some of their work.

The pattern of paid and unpaid work for different artistic and cultural activities varies greatly. Among creative artistic activities, the great majority (91 percent) of visual artists who practised their art in the last 12 months were financially reimbursed for their work in one form or another. Just over half (52 percent) of filmmakers and multimedia artists were paid. However, only one-third of musicians, actors and other performers received some financial return from their work.

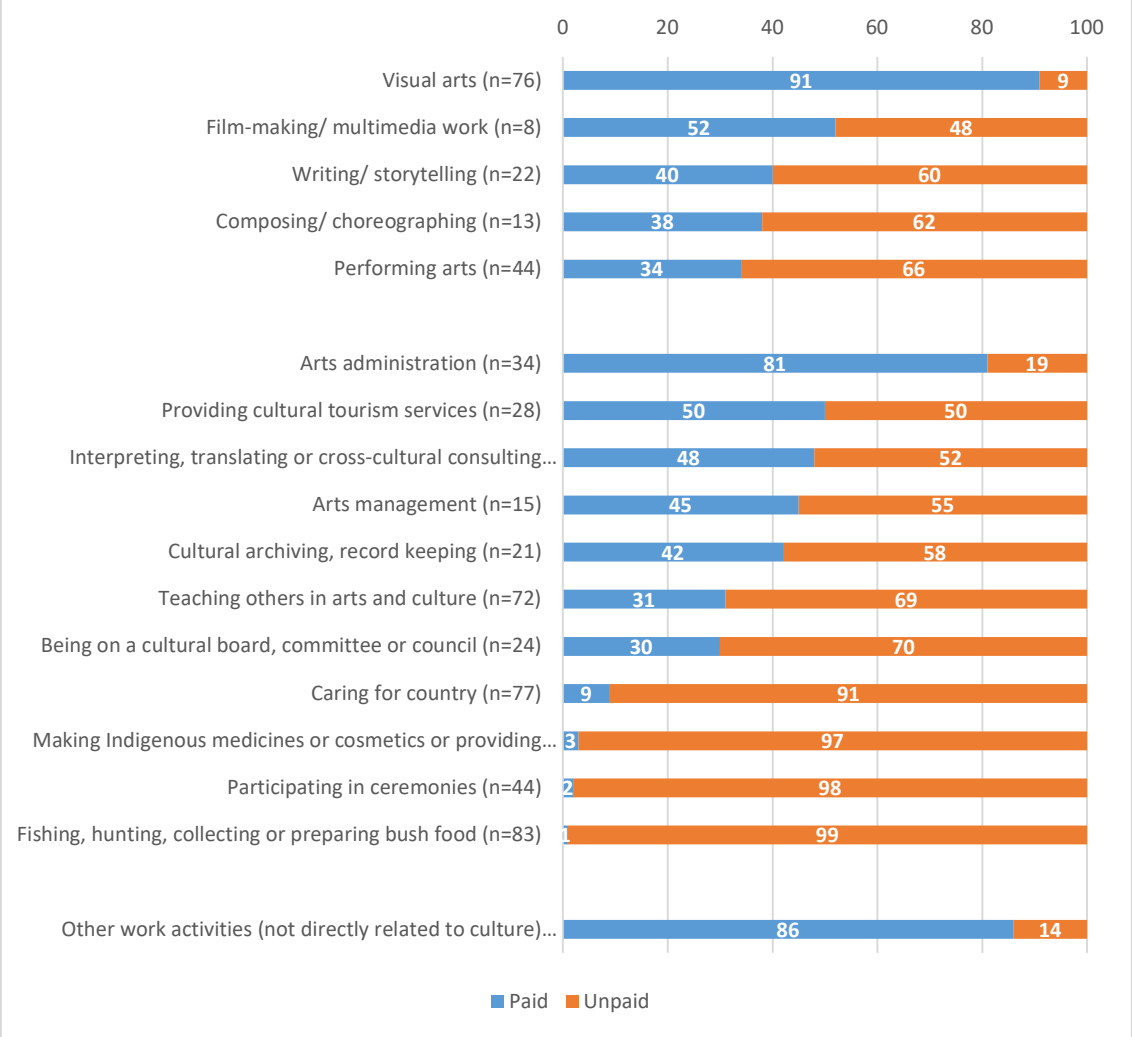
Table 9.1 Artists receiving economic compensation for activity last year (percent of artists who engaged in activity in the last 12 months)[a]

Activities	N	Paid	Unpaid	Total
		%		
Creative artistic activities				
Visual arts	76	91	9	100
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	8	52	48	100
Writing/ storytelling	22	40	60	100
Composing/ choreographing	13	38	62	100
Performing arts	44	34	66	100
Other cultural activities				
Arts administration	34	81	19	100
Providing cultural tourism services	28	50	50	100
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	44	48	52	100
Arts management	15	45	55	100
Cultural archiving, record keeping	21	42	58	100
Teaching others in arts and culture	72	31	69	100
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	24	30	70	100
Caring for country	77	9	91	100
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	50	3	97	100
Participating in ceremonies	44	2	98	100
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	83	1	99	100
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)				
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	26	86	14	100

[a] Multiple responses allowed.

There could be a number of reasons why artists undertake their creative artistic work unpaid, including: passing on their knowledge to others; learning their culture or artistic skills; cultural obligation reasons; developing a new body of work; or the artists' own enjoyment or enjoyment shared with others. During the interviews respondents cited diverse reasons for undertaking artistic activities such as "keeping my culture strong", "sharing my culture with others" or "keeping me and others positive" (see Table 10.9 for a full list of reasons why artists participate in arts and cultural activities). On the other hand, some of the work that remains unpaid could be interpreted as producing output for which the artist is unable to access a market. Moreover, at times artists are expected to provide their services free on a pro-bono basis – for example, when asked to perform at a ceremony for an opening of a new local business or organisation.

Figure 9.1 Artists receiving economic compensation for activity last year (percent of artists who engaged in activity in the last 12 months)[a]



[a] Multiple responses allowed.

In the case of other cultural activities, a significantly higher proportion of these activities is left unpaid. However, those activities that are generally undertaken on an employment basis such as arts administration are paid. Other cultural activities where artists are providing a cultural service are sometimes reimbursed, including work in tourism, arts management, interpreting/translating/consulting, and archiving work; in all of these activities more than 40 percent of artists' involvement is reimbursed. However, only 30 percent of artists serving on a board, committee or council were paid for their time, although in some cases where fees are not paid, the cost of travel might be reimbursed. Whilst most artists were engaged in caring for country/islands activities at some time last year, only nine percent of them were paid. Usually caring for country/islands activities are paid when undertaken as part of a formal ranger program or when they involve provision of environmental management advice to different agencies, in which case payment is likely to be made as consulting fees. Several cultural activities, such as fishing/ hunting, ceremonies and Indigenous medicine are mostly

unpaid and predominantly undertaken for individual, family or community reasons, as Table 9.2 shows. However, within these activities, certain artists do find avenues for compensation; for instance, some islander artists supplement their income by catching and selling crayfish. In the case of other work activities not directly related to culture, the data show that most artists engaged in such work (86 percent) are paid.

9.2 Sources and methods of payment

Whether paid or unpaid, artists' work arrangements may be organised through different types of organisations ranging across several sectors: the private sector, the government, the not-for-profit and non-government sector (the third sector) and the informal family/community sector. Table 9.2 shows the distribution of working time allocations by artists across these sectors in the last 12 months, and Table 9.3 shows the distribution of paid time.

Table 9.2 Work arrangements for artists undertaking various activities (percent of those participating in each activity in the last 12 months)*

	Commercial company, private sales, individual entrepreneur	Indigenous corporation or not-for-profit organisation	Government or public organisation	Family/ community	Other	Don't know/ Not sure
	%					
Creative artistic activities						
Visual arts (n=76)	9	91	2	3	-	-
Performing arts (n=45)	18	39	14	72	-	2
Composing/ choreographing (n=13)	21	45	11	62	-	-
Writing/ storytelling (n=26)	14	51	9	43	-	3
Other cultural activities						
Participating in ceremonies (n=44)	-	-	2	98	-	2
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=44)	16	32	42	66	-	2
Cultural archiving, record keeping (n=22)	-	34	35	43	-	-
Being on a cultural board, committee or council (n=24)	-	70	27	12	-	3
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=73)	4	22	25	70	-	1
Caring for country (n=77)	2	3	7	90	-	3
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food (n=83)	-	-	1	95	-	4
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services (n=50)	3	-	3	91	3	6
Arts management (n=15)	5	38	9	34	-	14
Arts administration (n=35)	2	78	6	11	-	2
Providing cultural tourism services (n=28)	41	22	16	28	5	-
Other activities (not directly related to culture)						
Other activities (n=27)	41	16	55	-	-	-

* Multiple responses allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

Regarding overall time allocation, Table 9.2 shows that most of the work in the visual arts is undertaken in the context of an Indigenous organisation, such as an art centre. While significant proportions of time to other creative arts are given to activities in a family or community context, 50 to 40 percent of artists who work in writing, composing/choreographing and performing arts also create their work for Indigenous and not-for-profit organisations. In the case of dance production, for example, these are arranged through organised dance companies, and in the case of musicians, hiring happens through churches, fairs and so on. This underscores the pivotal role of the "third sector" in facilitating regional arts production.

Much of the time devoted to other cultural activities relates to the informal sector – participating in ceremonies, caring for country/islands, or going out bush, for example, are mostly undertaken on an individual or family basis. Non-cultural work is generally undertaken for a private company or for government. Nevertheless, the data in Table 9.2 demonstrate that most arts and cultural activities in remote FNQ are being carried out engaging all four sectors.

Table 9.3 Paid work arrangements for artists undertaking various activities (percent of artists paid in each activity in the last 12 months)*

	Commercial company, private sales, individual entrepreneur	Indigenous corporation or not-for-profit	Government or public organisation	Family/ community	Other	Don't know/ Not sure
	%					
Creative artistic activities						
Visual arts (n=69)	10	91	2	2	-	-
Performing arts (n=15)	56	70	37	48	-	-
Writing/ storytelling (n=10)	21	92	21	13	-	-
Other cultural activities						
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=21)	26	53	63	49	-	4
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=22)	12	36	65	30	-	-
Arts administration (n=27)	3	86	8	3	-	-
Providing cultural tourism services (n=14)	60	10	20	10	-	-
Other activities (not directly related to culture)						
Other activities (n=24)	42	13	49	-	-	-

* Multiple response allowed. Note that some activities where the sample size was insufficient have not been included in this table.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

The patterns of paid work arrangements shown in Table 9.3 focuses attention on the sources that artists actually receive income from. It is the third sector that is the most important source of income for artists to be paid for their creative work, – i.e. an Indigenous-owned and/or non-profit organisation. Such organisations are also a significant income source for other cultural activities including those involving a formal employment arrangement, such as in arts administration and arts management. The public sector is an important source of income for other types of work such as archiving, teaching and interpreting/ translating/ consulting. It is also relevant for artists who undertake caring-for-country/islands activities as part of a ranger program. The table shows that artists' paid participation in the tourism sector is mostly undertaken with a commercial/private sector organisation.

Artists receive income for their work by different means of payment. Table 9.4 shows the most common payment methods for different arts and cultural activities and other activities not directly related to culture. Works of visual artists are primarily paid per piece (97 percent of all visual artists). While some visual artists receive payment directly from individual buyers of their work, or from dealers and galleries, the majority sell their work via a community or not-for-profit organisation, primarily an art centre. Different art centres in remote FNQ have different systems of payment, as approved by their respective boards and artists. Some will pay their artists when the work is sold, and some may pay the artist an agreed price for the work on receipt. Some art centres operate an income management arrangement for their artists, whereby the artist is paid a certain weekly allowance in cash and the amounts of these payments are then debited to the artist's account held by the centre. Implementation of this system is subject to the approval of the board and the artists. Although this procedure involves additional work for art centre staff, artists benefit by having a regular and reliable income stream for meeting their daily expenses, with their balance hopefully kept in credit through continuing sales of their work.

Most performing artists are paid on a fee for service arrangement, such as fees for a performance. The same is true for some of the other cultural activities where the artist's engagement is on an occasional basis. When the work is more formally organised, as in arts administration or management, payment tends to be in the form of wages or salaries.

Table 9.4 Most common method of payment (percent of artists paid for each activity in the last 12 months)

Activities*	Salaries/ wages full-time	Salaries/ wages part-time	Casual wages	Payments per piece	Fees per service	Hourly rate	Advances	Grants & prizes	Royalties/ licence fee	In-kind payments	Commissions	Profit from business	Other	Don't know/ Not sure	Total
Visual arts (n=69)	-	-	-	97	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	100
Performing arts (n=15)	-	-	-	-	94	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Writing/ storytelling (n=10)	16	-	-	71	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=21)	38	22	-	-	33	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	100
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=22)	17	21	-	-	52	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	4	100
Arts administration (n=27)	63	31	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Providing cultural tourism services (n=14)	20	-	20	-	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Other work activities (n=22)	47	7	26	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	100

9.3 Importance of income from cultural activities

Artists' perceptions vary as to the importance of various sources of income in their accumulated financial returns over time. To different artists one source may be seen as a major or primary source of income, while other sources are of lesser significance. In the survey, respondents were asked about the importance to them of the payments from various activities, i.e. whether according to their knowledge the revenue from these activities constituted a major income source or were smaller amounts of money that could be regarded as "extra" or "incidental" income. The results of the estimates as perceived by regional artists are shown in Table 9.5. Note that only several activities are shown in the table due to small sample sizes for some of the activities.

Table 9.5 Perceived importance of income from cultural activities (percent of those paid for each activity in the last 12 months)

Activities*	Major income	Extra income	Incidental income	Total	Weighted average score**
	%				
Creative artistic activities					
Visual arts (n=66)	24	52	24	100	2.0
Performing arts (n=15)	-	43	57	100	1.4
Writing/ storytelling (n=10)	32	29	29	100	2.0
Other cultural activities					
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=19)	59	9	33	100	2.3
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=22)	38	40	22	100	2.2
Arts administration (n=27)	81	16	3	100	2.8
Providing cultural tourism services (n=14)	40	30	30	100	2.1

* Excludes activities with insufficient sample sizes.
- indicates nil response in this sample.
** Scores: 1 – "Incidental income"; 2 – "Extra income"; 3 – "Major income". Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.

It is noteworthy that despite the amounts of time that artists in the region put into their artistic practice, most regard the income from their artistic work as "extra income" or "incidental income" only. Among other cultural activities, arts management and arts administration provide a major source of income for those employed in these occupations. Payments for some other cultural activities are sporadic, such as for translating, interpreting, cross-cultural consulting or cultural archiving, with some artists being able to generate "major income" from these activities, but many others earning only "incidental" incomes. For some artists, casual employment in other cultural activities on top of their artistic work is in fact advantageous, as it can fit in with their cultural and family obligations. When work in other cultural activities does not provide significant financial returns, we can assume that they are mostly undertaken for reasons related to the maintenance and continuation of culture.

9.4 Other sources of income

Apart from the income-earning activities discussed in the previous chapter, some artists also receive income support from other sources, including government benefits or money received from family or a partner. Table 9.6 shows that just over half of remote Indigenous artists (53 percent) in the Far North Queensland region rely on such other income sources. Government benefits comprise the most important source of support (44 percent of artists). Table 9.7 shows the types of benefits received. The age pension, and unemployment benefits such as Newstart and Youth Allowance, are the principal types of government benefit received, each reaching about 30 percent of those who receive government supports. These results indicate the importance of such income support in sustaining the livelihood of some Indigenous artists in the FNQ region.

Table 9.6 Artists receiving support from other income sources in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

Other income sources (n=94)	%
Artists not relying on other income sources	47
Artists relying on other income sources	53
Total	100
Type of income support received by artists*:	
Government benefits, such as unemployment or other benefits	44
Money received from family (other than partner)	16
Partner income	8
Park/ mining royalties (community trust)	-
A loan from a financial institution	-
Other loans, such as Indigenous Business Network	-
Other	1

* Multiple response allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

We note that the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme has not attracted any artists amongst our survey sample. There may be several reasons why this is so, including the possibility that the existence of the scheme is not well known, or because the scheme requires a level of entrepreneurial and business skills found among only a few individual artists in the region.

Income flows do not occur solely in one direction. Artists receiving money from whatever source are very likely to be involved in supporting others; indeed Table 9.8 shows that four out of five artists in our survey indicated that they were supporting other people in one way or another, confirming the importance of the sharing economy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The main recipients of monetary transfers from artists are family members – dependent children or grandchildren (56 percent), other immediate family (53 percent), extended family (40 percent) and/or a partner (29 percent).

9.5 The main source of income

Amongst the multiplicity of sources of income received by artists, which one is regarded as the single most important? Table 9.9 shows that it is not the creative arts but other cultural activities that provide artists with their main income – the data indicate that only one in five artists saw their creative artistic work as their main source of income in the last 12 months, whereas just over one-third of artists regarded other cultural activities as their principal source. Just under one-third of artists (31 percent) pointed to other sources as the most important; almost all of the artists in this group received some form of government benefit.

Overall, these results confirm once again the significance of the diversity of artists' cultural/ economic activities, ranging well beyond their immediate artistic practice to embrace a range of other cultural and non-cultural activities.

Table 9.7 Government benefits received by artists in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

(n=94)	%
Artists not receiving government benefits	56
Artists receiving government benefits:	44
Total	100
Type of government benefits received by artists (n=41)*	
Age pension	30
Unemployment benefits, such as Newstart or Youth Allowance	29
Parenting Payment	12
Work for the Dole with CDP activities	11
Carer payment	8
Work for the Dole without CDP activities	4
Family tax benefit	4
Disability Support Pension	2
New Enterprise Incentive Scheme	-
Other	7

* Multiple response allowed. Percentages are of artists who receive government benefits.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 9.8 Artists supporting others in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

(n=94)	%
Did not support others	20
Supported others	80
Total	100
Artists financially supporting others (n=75)*	
Dependent children/ grandchildren	56
Artist's partner	29
Other close family (immediate family, other than artist's partner)	53
Extended family members (outside of immediate family)	40

9.6 Mean and median incomes

We turn finally to the levels of income received in the last 12 months by artists practicing in remote FNQ. The use of population surveys as a means of collecting data about the monetary amounts of people's incomes and expenditures faces difficulties. Such information is private, and respondents are often sensitive about divulging details of their financial affairs. These considerations are just as relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists as they are to anyone else. However, as in other regions where the National Survey has already been carried out, we received almost no refusals from respondents in the FNQ region to provide information about their incomes, and all did so to the extent that they could. Despite such cooperation from interviewees, however, there remain serious constraints on deriving accurate income data in a survey such as this. Some of the respondents have low numeracy levels[22] and most do not keep accurate accounting records or do not lodge their tax returns every year. Many of the respondents also could not recall exactly how much they have received as income and when it might have been received, particularly as most receive income from a variety of sources. Moreover, monies paid to Indigenous artists could also be immediately shared with family members and others, so it is not clear how much of any payment actually accrues to the individual.

In our survey, we were able to deal with these problems for the component of income derived from artistic work through the following avenues. For those visual artists whose creative income was managed more or less solely through an organisation, such as an art centre or gallery, we were able to collect accurate statistics directly from these organisations with written permissions of the artists to allow us to access their income data. In regard to other artistic forms, some artists were paid as employees (e.g. some filmmakers and writers), so again their salaries could be determined.

For income from other cultural and non-cultural activities, recollection was often difficult, particularly as there were generally multiple sources of income in varying amounts during the period covered. In cases where the respondent received a reasonably consistent income through salary or wages (e.g. as rangers, arts and media workers, teachers) more precision was possible. Sitting fees, fees for performing and fees for consulting services were particularly hard to determine.

Other sources of income (non-work) were also difficult to pin down; not all respondents were able to provide figures and these data need to be treated with caution. In most cases where government benefits were received, the amounts could be estimated approximately from the standard payment rates for the different benefit types subject to respondent's circumstances, such as whether or not they had dependent children and how many, the respondent's age, their disability status, arrangements with partners, and so on. These amounts are approximations only because we did not have clear information on the continuity of these government payments in individual cases, such as whether respondents received these payments throughout the entire 12 months or during some months that year only. In the absence of this information, we had to make an assumption that all respondents who received government benefits received them for the entire 12 months and that no penalties were applied. This means that some overestimations are possible in these data. In the case of other sources, such as income from a partner or money received from family, these receipts

[22] For data on competency levels derived from a survey of a small sample of Indigenous arts workers carried out for Desart in 2014, see Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (2014); see also Wright (2000).

were likely to be irregular, such that respondents had difficulty nominating the total amount they would have received last year.

For all items of income it was generally not possible to obtain precise dollar figures; rather, we asked respondents to choose the range within which their income fell. In compiling tables from these data, we assume the point estimate to be the mid-point of the range.

Bearing the above-mentioned issues in mind, Table 9.10 presents the mean and median gross incomes of remote Indigenous artists in the FNQ region for the last 12 months. The table shows the means/medians calculated across all artists in the sample, including zero incomes wherever relevant, but not including cases where income information was incomplete, uncertain or missing.

As we can see from the table, on average artistic activities make up $8,400 for a regional artist in remote FNQ while taking 18 hours a week of their work time (see also Table 8.2) The largest component of artists' average work income in the FNQ region is income that comes from participation in other cultural activities, generating $23,400 in gross income to an artist on average, while also taking 21 hours weekly of their working time. Work outside the arts and cultural sector makes up $7,200 (gross). Overall, the income that an average artist in the region receives from work is roughly four times the income that is derived from other sources.

Table 9.10 Mean and median gross incomes for artists in the last 12 months ($'000 p.a.)[(a)]

Income sources	Mean	Median
	$'000 p.a.	
Income from creative artistic activities (n=76)	8.4	3.4
Income from other cultural activities (n=53)	23.4	15.0
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=90)	7.2	-*
Total income from work (n=45)	35.1	30.0
Income from other sources (n=94)	8.5	-**
Total income (n=45)	40.4	33.9

* The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most artists do not receive income from other work activities.
** The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most artists do not receive income from other sources.
(a) The sample sizes for different types of income include zero income cases but exclude missing on incomplete data cases.

We can compare the creative artistic income and total income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the FNQ region with the corresponding data for all Australian artists. The report *Artists as Workers* shows that for a practising professional artist in Australia, median gross creative income in 2021-22 was $11,000, and their median gross income from all work sources was $44,500. These incomes are considerably higher than the corresponding median

earnings of Indigenous artists in the survey region as shown in Table 9.10. However, it appears that artists in the region may nevertheless be better off on average than other Indigenous people in the region. Two comparisons are possible: given that our data show that a large proportion of Indigenous practising artists in the region are not in the labour force, we can compare incomes of artists in the region (1) against incomes of Indigenous adults (15 years old and older) in general, and (2) against incomes of Indigenous adults who are in the labour force. Our estimate of the median annual income of artists in the region of $33.9 thousand per annum is significantly higher than the approximate median personal income for Indigenous (15+) individuals not in the labour force residing in remote and very remote areas of Queensland (about $18.2 thousand p.a.) derived from 2021 ABS Census data. However, the median income of Indigenous artists in the region is lower than the median personal income of Indigenous people in remote and very areas of Queensland in the labour force (about $37.7 thousand p.a.).[23]

[23] Derived from estimates of weekly personal incomes for Indigenous persons (15 +) in general and in the labour force in Remote and Very Remote Queensland from the 2021 Census. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census – *INCP Total Personal Income (weekly) by INGP Indigenous Status, LFSP Labour Force Status and RA (UR),* Census TableBuilder, accessed on 22 January 2024.

10. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The National Survey of Remote Indigenous Artists, of which the survey in Far North Queensland is one component, covers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural producers practising art at a level that qualifies them as professionals according to the accepted standards of professionalism in the arts.[24] There is no single criterion for definition of professionalism in the arts; rather, a range of criteria can be used of which any one or combination can be regarded as sufficient. For remote First Nations artists these include: years of experience in artistic practice; education or training qualifications; production of cultural output of an appropriate professional standard; and other characteristics, as discussed in Chapter 4 of this Report where our survey methodology was outlined.

In the survey we asked respondents about several aspects of their working lives that are relevant in some way to their experience or practice as a professional artist. The resulting data provide insights into a range of issues relating to professional artistic practice, including: the years of experience in art production; spaces that are available to artists in the remote areas of the region; artists' preferences for spending more or less time in their artistic practice; and artists' use of technology.

In presenting the results, we distinguish between those artists who are primarily visual artists (activities including painting, printmaking, weaving, carving, sculpting and so on) and those who are performing artists (engaged in music, dance, theatre, or film production). We recognise that Indigenous artists, as all other artists, often work across artform boundaries, and we have documented these work patterns for our survey sample in Chapter 6 of this Report. Nevertheless, it is possible for artists to identify a mode of practice that takes up most of their time these days, and this is the basis of the distinction that we use here.[25]

10.1 Years of experience as an artist

The majority of artists in the region have been practising in the arts for over 20 years (43 percent), as shown in Table 10.1. This fact reflects both the age distribution of the artist population in the region, and the early age from which artists learn and practice their art. It also attests to the significant accumulation of human capital in the FNQ region that comprises a major resource contributing to the generation of economic benefit for communities in the region. Note that many artists begin their involvement with serious creative work in their teens or even earlier. Thus, the group with more than 20 years of experience will include a number who are by no means elderly.

[24] For a discussion of the definition of professional practice in the arts, see *Artists as Workers* (2024).

[25] Note that the same issue arises in the survey of all Australian artists as reported in *Artists as Workers* (2024). In that survey the specification used is of an artist's principal artistic occupation (PAO), defined as that art form in which the artist "mostly works these days in terms of time". Although many artists do engage in multi-artform practice, all have been able to identify one as their PAO.

Table 10.1 Artists' years of experience (percent of artists)

Years of experience	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)
	%	%	%
1–2 years	11	-	9
3–5 years	16	-	14
6–10 years	16	15	15
11–20 years	21	7	19
20+ years	36	78	43
Total	100	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample.

10.2 Work locations

In the survey we asked respondents to tell us about the places in which they have been making their work. Respondents were then asked to identify one place where they spend the most of their time on their artistic work. The results are summarised in Table 10.2. An artist's home, or the home of a family member, is a common location for their work. Almost nine out of ten (87 percent) of all artists in the region utilise their own or family member's home as a place for artistic practice and for almost half (46 percent) private homes are the places where they spend the most of their time making work. Homes as places of practice are used more often by performing artists than by visual artists, as can be seen in the Table.

For most visual artists, an art centre is likely to be an important work location. Around four out of five visual artists in the region (83 percent) have been able to practise in an arts centre, and for about half of them arts centres are where they spend most of their working time. The data also highlight the importance of working on country, not only for the purposes of collecting materials but also for making work, with 40 percent of all artists in the region making their work and practising there at some time.

Some performing artists in the region (15 percent) have had an opportunity to utilise a dedicated studio space, such as a recording studio or editing suite, although the availability such facilities in the region is limited. Just less than one-third of performing artists also have made use of educational facilities, such as schools, when making their art – in some communities, bands can come together in out-of-school hours to practise using space and equipment provided by the local school. Other locations nominated included donated office spaces, pubs and a bowling club.

Table 10.2 Places used for artistic practice by artists (percent of artists)

Place of artistic practice	Location used for producing art*			Location where most time for art production is spent		
	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)
	%			%		
Home or family member's home	83	100	87	38	63	46
Art centre	83	-	62	55	-	41
Community space or facility	7	51	17	2	15	5
On country	39	37	40	4	-	3
Dedicated studio space, such as artist studio, recording studio or editing suite	-	15	4	-	7	2
Educational institution (such as school, TAFE, etc.)	10	29	13	-	7	1
Other	5	29	9	1	7	2
Total				100	100	100

* Multiple responses allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

10.3 Management of art practice

Artists have different arrangements when it comes to the management of their practice and consequently the ways in which their work is promoted and sold. Some artists are managed by an art centre, local gallery or other local organisation, agent, manager or gallery dealer, while some work independently. Table 10.3 shows that about two-thirds of artists in the FNQ region have had an experience of working with an art centre, and 16 percent have had some engagement with an artist-run initiative or other community organisation. The split between visual and performing artists indicates that the great majority of visual artists in the region (87 percent) rely on their art centre to manage their work, while most performing artists work independently and are not involved in any specific management arrangement.

Table 10.3 Artists' management arrangements (percent of respondents)

Professional experiences*	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)
		%	
Being managed by an art centre	87	-	65
Being managed by a community organisation or artist-run initiative	8	15	10
Being managed by a private company	4	22	8

* Multiple responses allowed.

10.4 Professional experiences

In this section we look at some of the professional experiences that artists in the FNQ region have had and ask artists about the impact that these experiences have had on their artistic practice.

(1) Interstate and overseas exposure

An artist's reputation and professional standing can be importantly promoted when their work is showcased beyond the immediate location in which they work., particularly if this exposure takes place in an Australian capital city or overseas. In the survey artists were asked whether their work had been seen in exhibitions or performances or in other ways in capital cities or abroad. The results show that around 70 percent of all artists have had their work shown in capital cities, and about 30 percent have been seen overseas. These proportions are virtually identical for both visual and performing artists.

(2) Collaborations

For some artists, their professional practice may be advanced by the possibility of working at some point in their career with a more experienced artist in their artform; such collaborations may in some cases come from a mentor based within the artist's own community, in other cases the mentor may come from outside. Our data show that one-fifth (20 percent) of artists in our sample have assisted or collaborated with an established artist from within their community at some time, and 17 percent have been engaged in such arrangements with an artist from outside. Some collaborative experiences have been more common among performing than visual artists; more than one-third (37 percent) of performing artists have assisted or collaborated with an established performer from within the artist's community at some time, and 22 percent have experienced such collaborations with an artist from outside, whereas the corresponding proportions for visual artists are only 16 percent in both collaborative situations.

(3) External sources of support: grants and prizes

Artists may benefit from financial support coming to them from various external sources such as a competitive grant program provided by a public or private organisation. Our data show that in FNQ, 16 percent of remote Indigenous artists have at some time received a

grant or funding to continue their artistic work, with most of these going to performing artists (34 percent), compared to only 8 percent of visual artists. In the case of grant funding experiences in the last year, Table 10.4 shows the proportions of artists who applied for funding in the previous 12 months, and the success rates amongst those who applied. One-half of artists were involved in a grant application last year, mostly when an art centre or community organisation applied on behalf of a group. One-third of artists (34 percent) did not apply, and the remainder did not know or were unsure. The success rate among applicants was 54 percent, with again a substantial proportion (36 percent) being unsure about the outcome.

Table 10.4 Application for funding and success rate in the last year (percent of respondents)

	%
Of all artists (n=94)	
An art centre or community organisation applied on behalf of the group of artists, including myself	41
Applied myself	7
Someone applied on my behalf	2
Did not apply	34
Don't know/ Not sure	16
Total	100
Of those who applied whether themselves of someone/ organisation applied on their behalf (n=47)	
Yes	54
No	3
Unknown/ Application still being processed	7
Don't know/ Not sure	36
Total	100

(4) Impact

The impacts on artists' professional careers of the experiences discussed above are shown in Table 10.5. It is apparent that in all cases the outcomes have been largely positive, with no negative impacts reported for any of the experiences except in one minor instance. Notable examples of "very positive" impacts include the experience of working with an established artists from community (91 percent) and being managed by a community organisation or artist-run initiative (90 percent). For the largest group of artists in this list of experiences (those being managed by an art centre), 97 percent of artists reported fairly or very positive impacts.

Table 10.5 Professional experiences and their impact on artistic careers (percent of artists, weighted average score)

Professional experiences*	% of all artists	Very positive	Fairly positive	No effect	Fairly negative	Very negative	Total	Weighted average score**
		%						
Working with an established artist/ author from artist's community (assisting or collaborating) (n=19)	20	91	9	-	-	-	100	4.91
Working with an established artist/author from outside of artist's community (assisting or collaborating) (n=16)	17	86	13	-	-	-	100	4.86
Showing work in capital cities (n=63)	70	86	13	1	-	-	100	4.84
Showing work overseas (n=27)	30	87	10	3	-	-	100	4.84
Being managed by a community organisation or artist-run initiative (n=8)	10	90	-	10	-	-	100	4.80
Being managed by an art centre (n=60)	65	84	13	2	1	-	100	4.79
Receiving a grant or funding to continue artistic work (n=15)	16	77	23	-	-	-	100	4.77
Winning an award or prize (n=39)	42	69	29	2	-	-	100	4.67
Being managed by a private company (n=6)	8	44	44	13	-	-	100	4.30
Taking a loan to continue artistic work	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Multiple responses allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.
** 5 – "Very positive"; 4 – "Fairly positive"; 3 – "No effect"; 2 – "Fairly negative"; 1 – "Very negative".

10.5 Preferences for time spent at artistic work

In the survey, artists were asked whether they would prefer to spend more time, less time, or about the same amount of time, at their creative practice. We found that just less than two-thirds of artists (61 percent) would like to spend more time, and about one-third (34 percent) were happy with the way things were. Only a negligible proportion (1 percent) expressed a preference for less creative work. These proportions were roughly the same between visual and performing artists, although for the latter group several were not able to express a preference one way or the other (15 percent).

Among those artists who would like to spend more time at their art work, the question arises as to the reasons why they are not able to do so. The answers to this question are shown in Table 10.6. Many reasons were mentioned, but there are two that stand out: obligations imposed by having to do other non-arts work, and lack of facilities. Not only are these two obstacles the most commonly cited among reasons why more art work could not be taken on, they are also the *most important* obstacles for the largest proportions of respondents.

Artists who cite lack of equipment or facilities as being one of the obstacles to their being able to undertake more artistic work include performers who do not have access to recording facilities, studios, etc. Where a clear need for such facilities can be demonstrated in the region, these sorts of resource constraints could be mitigated through increased support measures and other forms of targeted assistance.

Table 10.6 Reasons for not being able to spend more time at art work (percent of those respondents who would prefer to spend more time on their artistic activities)

Reasons (n=57)	Reasons*	The main reason
	%	
Too much non-arts work that I have responsibilities for	38	24
Lack of facilities	19	13
Little income from this work/ Need to earn more income elsewhere	9	7
Family issues	7	6
Lack of materials	10	6
Health issues	5	4
New thing, just starting it out	4	3
Lack of skills/ experience	4	3
Balancing my work with community or cultural responsibilities	7	2
Lack of equipment	8	-
No time because have to fulfil requirements in order to receive government benefits	5	-
Difficulties with promoting my work/ getting my work to market	1	-
Lack of access to country	-	-
Other	43	32
Don't know/ Not sure	4	-
Total		100

* Multiple response allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

10.6 Use of technologies

Artists use a variety of digital technologies in the process of creating their art. About two-thirds of remote Indigenous artists in the region (65 percent) use some form of digital technology, as shown in Table 10.7. The most common form of digital equipment in use is a mobile or smart phone, used by 62 percent of artists. Desktop computers, laptop computers, iPads and so on are also relatively popular (23 percent). It is noteworthy that performing artists are more technologically engaged than visual artists, a result that is hardly surprising considering the various devices and pieces of equipment are specific to music-making, film-making, and audio-visual production generally. Individual promotion of an artist's work via the internet is not common in the region; only 2 percent of artists and no visual artists have a personal website that they manage themselves, although 6 percent of all artists indicate that they supply their artistic content to a third-party website, such as YouTube, Spotify and so on, to be promoted by them.

Table 10.7 Artists' use of technologies in the process of creating art (percent of artists)

	Visual artists (n=70)	Performing artists (n=19)	All artists (n=94)
		%	
Use some of these:*	65	63	65
Mobile or smart phones	60	63	62
Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or others	28	34	29
Desktop computer, laptop computer, iPad, etc.	19	26	23
Still photography camera	21	15	22
Video or film equipment	17	29	20
Sound recording or playing equipment	10	29	15
Third-party websites, such as YouTube, Vimeo or others	5	7	6
Personal website	2	4	2
Other	2	-	1
Do not use any of these	35	37	35
Total	100	100	100

* Multiple response allowed.
- indicates nil response in this sample.

10.7 Copyright issues

Intellectual property in general, and copyright in particular, are especially important matters to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, given the attention being paid at present to the widespread occurrence of unauthorised use of Indigenous creative work. In the survey, we asked respondents "As far as you are aware, has copyright of your creative work ever been infringed (i.e. an image of your work used without permission or payment) or has your work been pirated (i.e. used without your, or your art centre, or dealer's permission)?" The responses shown in Table 10.8 indicate that a large proportion of artists in the region (96 percent) were aware of copyright relating to their artistic work, and most of these artists did not think that their copyright had been infringed. Only 4 percent stated they did not know or were not sure if their copyright had been infringed, though it should be remembered that there are many circumstances where creative work is used without the knowledge or authorisation of the owner of the copyright in the work. Of those artists who thought their work had been copied or used in some inappropriate way (21 percent), we found that 65 percent had taken action to stop the practice or to seek compensation and of these, more than half (54 percent) had been successful, although small sample sizes for these results mean they must be treated with caution.

Table 10.8 also shows a comparison with corresponding data for all Australian artists. It appears that First Nations artists in the FNQ region are more aware than their mainstream colleagues of whether or not their copyright has been infringed, and more willing to take action if they believe misuse has occurred. Among those who have taken action, roughly the same proportions (just over half) have been successful.

Copyright is important as a means of providing remuneration to creators and of allowing consumers orderly access to creative work. There have been several awareness campaigns in recent years that have sought to educate Indigenous artists in remote parts of Australia on copyright issues. Given the vulnerability of the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to unauthorised exploitation or appropriation, it is essential that such education measures be maintained and extended.

Table 10.8 Infringement of economic rights of artists (percent of artists)

	First Nations artists in the FNQ region (n=94)	All artists Australia-wide[a]
	%	
Copyright infringement:*		
No	75	51
Yes	21	19
Don't know/ Not sure	4	30
Total	100	100
Action taken to stop copyright infringement or seek compensation:*		
Yes	65	48
No	28	48
Don't know/ Not sure	7	4
Total	100	100
Outcome of the action:**		
Successful	54	52
Unsuccessful	35	40
Don't know/ Not sure	11	8
Total	100	100

[a] Data from Throsby and Petetskaya (2024) *Artists as Workers*.
*Percentage of artists who have had their copyright infringed.
**Percentage of those artists who have taken action.

10.8 Motivations

An intriguing question in relation to professional artists in general is: Why do they do it? In our survey we posed this question to our sample of remote Indigenous artists in the FNQ region. Respondents were asked to think about why they pursued their creative practice in circumstances where other career paths were available to them. The range of motivations mentioned is shown in Table 10.9, together with the proportions of artists who recognised each one. The most frequently nominated reason why artists in the region get engaged in artistic and cultural activities was simply the love of making art and the enjoyment they obtained from doing it, a reason identified by more than four out of five artists. Importantly, the role of art as an embodiment and expression of Aboriginal culture were among the next most often cited reasons – sharing culture with others, and keeping culture strong; these were referred to by 60 and 44 percent of artists respectively. Similarly, the processes of cultural teaching and cultural learning were noted by just under one quarter of artists (23 percent in each case), reflecting motives concerning the maintenance and celebration of culture through art, and underlining the significant role of intergenerational cultural transmission in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Among many other responses, some related to personal feelings (“my passion”; “part of who I am”), some to connecting with others (“sharing stories”; “meeting people”), some related to family (“reminds me of my mother”; “following in father’s footsteps”), and some took a longer-term perspective (“preserving life”; “passing the culture on”).

Table 10.9 Reasons for participating in art and cultural activities (percent of artists)

Reasons*	%
Own enjoyment/ love doing it	85
Sharing culture with others	60
Enjoyment/ fun with others	47
Keep culture strong	44
Cultural teaching	23
Cultural learning	23
Keep me away from trouble	13
Get money as income	8
Can live/ work on country	2
Community/ cultural obligations	2
Keep others away from trouble	1
Flexible work arrangements	1
Other	51
Don't know/ Not sure	-

- indicates nil response in this sample.
* Multiple response allowed.

11. ART AND CULTURE IN COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

One of the important purposes of this study has been to consider the extent to which art and cultural production has the potential to promote the long-term sustainability of remote communities in the Far North Queensland region. As a component of the survey, we presented respondents with a series of statements, both positive and negative, relating to this question and sought the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement. The following aspects were considered:

- views on the role of art and cultural production as a source of income and employment in respondents' communities;
- needs for skill development;
- infrastructure issues; and
- tourism as a source of economic benefit.

Details of the statements and of the responses for each one are shown in Table 11.1. The summary scores shown are calculated according to the scale shown beneath the table. Note that the order of the statements was randomised in presenting them to respondents in the interviews.

We note firstly that the highest score was attributed to the statement that "Artists/writers like myself can train young people in the community to become artists/writers", attesting to the importance of intergenerational and intra-generational cultural transmission in skill development that we have noted earlier in this Report. Respondents also endorsed the importance of bilingual education in school (83 percent of respondents agreeing with this proposition); not only is this essential for the maintenance of Indigenous languages, the dual nature of such educational programs is seen to help young people in the community to get jobs and earn incomes later on. In a post-school context, the value of arts-practice workshops in providing people in the community with the skills to do more artistic activities was supported by 89 percent of respondents.

Secondly, there was strong support for the importance of art centres, with 96 percent of respondents agreeing that "Having an art centre creates (could create) jobs and incomes in my community". For those respondents from communities with an existing art centre, this importance was an observable reality, whereas those artists from communities without such a facility could only say that having an art centre would potentially create economic opportunity in their community. The latter artists could in many cases see the benefits provided by an art centre in a neighbouring community, prompting a hope that they could have one too. Nevertheless, there appears to be general support for the level of infrastructure supporting artists in the region, with 83 percent disagreeing with the suggestion that facilities such as community centres and venues in the region were not enough to support more artistic activity.

Table 11.1 Opinions regarding impact of arts and cultural activities on the economic sustainabilit communities (percent of artists, weighted average score)

Statements (sample sizes)	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know/No opinion	Disagree
Artists/ writers like myself can train young people in the community to become artists/ writers (n=80)	72	23	3	2
Having an art centre creates (could create) jobs and incomes in my community (n=76)	61	35	4	-
Artistic activities like painting, music, dance, writing, can provide jobs and incomes for young people in my community (n=81)	62	30	6	-
Arts-practice workshops can provide people in my community with necessary skills to do more artistic activities (n=71)	63	26	10	1
It is good (would be good) for tourists to visit our community to see our culture at first hand (n=76)	69	22	1	6
Bilingual education in the school can help young people in my community with jobs and incomes later on (n=82)	73	10	13	4
Cultural activities, such as translation or cultural consulting, caring for country, cultural tourism, can provide jobs and incomes for young people in my community (n=79)	54	28	18	-
Tourists can bring jobs and incomes to my community (n=76)	61	24	9	6
Over the long term, sales of art and other cultural activities could bring in enough money to make our community sustainable (n=64)	57	33	8	1
Sending young people to study in TAFE or university can help them to become artists/writers (n=78)	59	19	14	7
The facilities in my community, such as community centres, venues, are not enough to support more artistic activity (n=75)	4	10	2	38

- indicates nil response in this sample.
* Scores: 5 – "Strongly agree"; 4 – "Agree"; 3 – Don't know/ No opinion"; 2 – "Disagree"; 1 – "Strongly disagree"

A third observation relating to community sustainability concerns artists' views on the role of art and culture in generating incomes and employment. We note that a significant majority of artists agreed with the proposition that artistic activities can indeed be a source of economic benefit (90 percent of respondents agreeing with this proposition). There was a similar level of agreement that culture-related activities could also be beneficial. These attitudes extended to the long-term prospects for the role of art in community development, as can be seen in the table.

Finally, one of the most important actual and potential sources of economic benefit for the region is tourism. We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of tourism as a source of economic benefit to remote communities in the final Chapter of this Report. Here we simply consider the view of artists on this matter. Most respondents in our survey (91 percent) expressed a positive attitude to having tourists visit in order to experience Aboriginal culture at first hand, and most thought that tourists can bring incomes and employment to communities (85 percent). Although artists in some other regions in the National Survey have expressed a certain level of ambivalence towards tourism, particularly because high-volume mass tourism may be culturally insensitive or even damaging, this does not appear to be the case in FNQ, where tourist visitation does not reach the sort of scale experienced elsewhere. Nevertheless, with significant expansion of the tourism industry in Queensland expected in future years, the prospect must always be kept in mind that increased tourist numbers could bring the threat of negative impacts in some remote communities in the region.

12. GENDER DIFFERENCES

The position of women in Australian society in general and in the workforce in particular has been coming under increasing scrutiny in contemporary times. Questions relating to the continuing gap between female and male earning have been of particular concern. Many of the issues being raised are just as important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as for any other group. It is appropriate, therefore, that this study should take a closer look at the similarities and differences in the circumstances of female and male artists in the survey region. We do so in this section, comparing where possible the data for the FNQ artists with statistics for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults residing in remote and very remote areas Australia-wide, and for all Australian artists as shown in *Artists as Workers* (2024).

12.1 Demographics

Demographic characteristics of the female and male artist population in the FNQ region are shown in Table 12.1. It is clear from the age distribution presented in the table that women artists in the region are generally older than the men – for example, 29 percent of men in our sample are aged less than 35, compared to only 11 percent of women; at the other end of the age distribution, one quarter (25 percent) of women are aged more than 65, whereas only 10 percent of male artists fall into this older age category.

In regard to domestic circumstances, we note that there is a much smaller proportion of single men with dependent children than there is of women (3 percent vs 29 percent). This differential may reflect the common occurrence among families where parents have separated – casual observation suggests that it is more often the mother rather than the father who subsequently has care of the children after separation. The other statistics in Table 12.1 show only minor gender differences that are not statistically significant.

12.2 Education and training

How do female and male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote areas compare in terms of their levels of formal education, and are there any differences between men and women when learning about their culture or acquiring their industry training skills to work in the arts?

Table 12.1 Demographic characteristics of artists, by sex (percent of artists)

	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)
Age distribution		
15-24	13	5
25-34	16	6
35-44	19	16
45-54	23	29
55-64	19	19
65+	10	25
Total	100	100
Family circumstances		
Single no children	61	35
Single with children	3	29
Partner no children	6	10
Partner with children	29	27
Total	100	100
Number of dependent children		
Mean	1.0	1.6
Median	0.0	1.0
Living with disability, long-term illness		
Yes	23	24
No	77	76
Total	100	100

The highest levels of formal education received, the pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge, and the pathways for gaining industry skills are shown by gender in Tables 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4 respectively. It is apparent that a larger proportion of women artists complete high school than do men (24 percent compared to 16 percent), although somewhat more men than women complete a post-school diploma or certificate (42 percent compared to 39 percent). Similar proportions between the genders complete an undergraduate university degree, but a somewhat larger number of men than women go on to gain postgraduate qualifications. Overall, the results in Table 12.2 show that for both female and male artists in FNQ, education levels are somewhat higher than for the Indigenous population overall in remote and very remote areas across Australia, but lower than those for all Australian professional artists.

Table 12.2 Highest level of formal education, by sex (percent of artists)^

	Never attended	Year 10 (or equivalent) and below	Year 11 and Year 12 (or equivalent)	Completed diploma or certificate	Completed bachelor's degree	Completed postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate or doctorate degree	Total
				%			
Indigenous artists residing in remote and very remote areas in Far North Queensland							
Female	-	32	24	39	3	2	100
Male	-	32	16	42	3	7	100
Indigenous adults residing in remote and very remote areas Australia-wide[a]							
Female	2	49	26	21	1	1	100
Male	2	52	23	22	-	1	100
All artists Australia-wide[b]							
Female	-	1	6	15	34	44	100
Male	*	5	11	20	31	33	100

^ Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses
* Indicates less than 0.5%
[a] NATSISS 2014–15
[b] Artists' Survey 2023
- indicates nil response in this sample

Some gender differences appear in the tables showing pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge and skills. Nine out of ten female artists gain their cultural knowledge from family members as shown in Table 12.3, whereas this is the case for only three-quarters of the men. More men than women gain their knowledge from other than family members, such as community elders and peers.

Table 12.4 shows the most important pathways for acquiring artistic skills. Almost half (48 percent) of men identify learning from a family member as the most important pathway to acquire their industry skills, compared to only 35 percent of women, whereas 25 percent of women learn from peers or community members, compared to only 20 percent of men.

Table 12.3 Most important pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge, by sex (percent of artists)

Cultural knowledge pathways	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)
	%	
Directly from family members	74	90
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	16	3
From being on country	3	-
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/archives	3	2
From participating in ceremonies	-	2
From artworks, songs or stories	-	-
From festivals or other cultural events	-	-
Some other way	3	3
Total	100	100

Table 12.4 Most important pathways for gaining industry skills and experience, by sex (percent of all artists)

Industry skills pathways	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)
	%	
Learning from a family member:	48	35
Observing and practising with a family member	42	24
Observing a family member	6	11
Learning from a friend or community member:	20	25
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	10	22
Observing a friend or community member	10	3
Self-learning/ Learning on the job	19	25
Vocational training	6	2
Feedback and advice from an art professional	-	3
Workshops/ Short courses	-	3
School	-	3
Online sources	-	-
University program	-	-
Some other way	6	3
Total	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample

12.3 Engagement in cultural-economic activities

The range of creative and other cultural activities engaged in by female and male artists is shown in Table 12.5. This table gives the proportions of artists who have ever engaged in each activity, those currently engaged, and those being paid for that activity. The mean and median number of these engagements is shown in Table 12.6.

The data in these tables indicate several gender differences. Firstly, in the visual arts there is a stronger female than male presence, with the reverse being true for performing arts. There is also a greater male representation in the creative activities of composing/choreographing, and in the other cultural activities of interpreting, translating and consulting, and in cultural archiving, record keeping and arts management. However, for these and other activities shown in the table, sample numbers are too small to enable valid inference as to gender differences to be made.

Table 12.5 Cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists, by sex (percent of artists)

Activities*	Have ever engaged in activity		Currently engaged in activity**		Currently being paid for activity**	
	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)
	%					
Creative artistic						
Visual arts	84	97	65	94	58	86
Performing arts	84	62	65	35	29	5
Composing/ choreographing	26	8	23	6	10	2
Writing/ storytelling	52	52	26	29	3	17
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	29	17	16	3	6	3
Other cultural						
Participating in ceremonies	74	76	48	46	-	2
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	81	48	61	35	29	17
Cultural archiving, record keeping	55	25	35	13	13	6
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	45	41	23	29	10	6
Teaching others in arts and culture	90	86	77	78	29	19
Caring for country	100	92	90	75	10	5
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	100	95	87	89	-	2
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	68	71	55	51	3	-
Arts management	32	16	23	11	10	5
Arts administration	48	51	35	38	26	32
Providing cultural tourism services	68	44	42	19	32	-

- indicates nil response in this sample.
** In the last 12 months.
* Multiple response allowed.

Regarding the diversity of artistic and cultural activities that male and female artists have been involved in or are currently engaged with, Table 12.6 indicates that men generally appear to experience a somewhat broader range of such activities than women, both in terms of past experiences and ongoing participation. However, when it comes to paid engagements, the distribution is nearly equal between male and female artists.

Table 12.6 Mean and median number of cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists, by sex (number of activities)*

Activities	Have ever done		Currently doing*		Currently being paid*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mean						
Creative artistic	2.7	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.1	1.1
Other cultural	7.6	6.5	5.8	4.8	1.6	0.9
All cultural activities	10.4	8.8	7.7	6.5	2.7	2.1
Median						
Creative artistic	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other cultural	8.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	1.0	1.0
All cultural activities	11.0	9.0	8.0	6.0	2.0	2.0

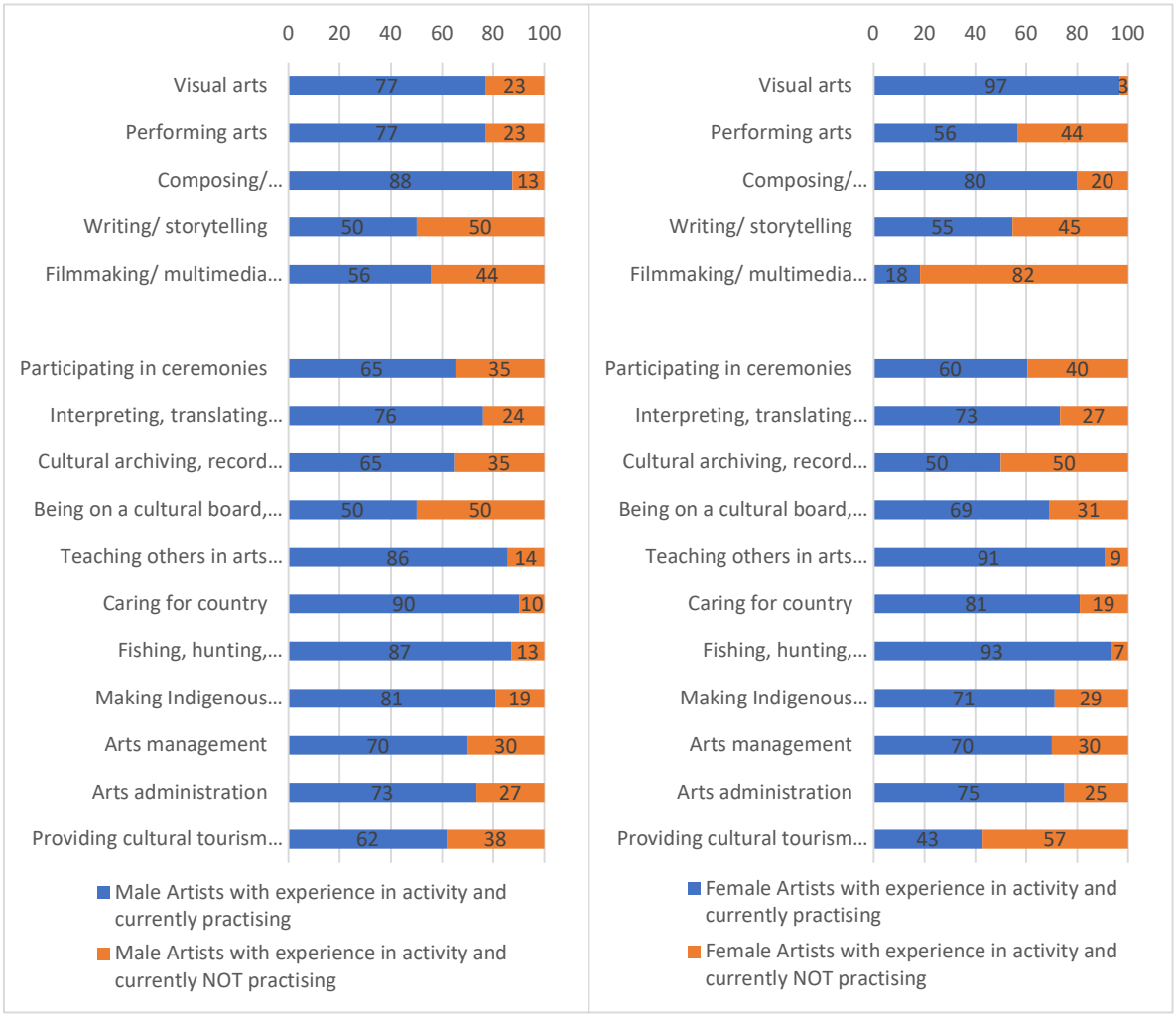
* In the last 12 months.

As we noted in Chapter 6 above, data on numbers of artists currently engaged in a cultural-economic activity as a proportion of artists who have experience in that activity provide an indication of underutilised human capital resources in the region. Figure 12.1 shows the proportions of male and female artists with experience in each activity who are currently practising or not practising, and Figure 12.2 shows gender differences in the proportions of those who are practising and currently being paid or not paid.

There are few significant gender differences to note in Figure 12.1, given that for many activities sample numbers are too small to enable firm conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, we note the substantially larger proportions of males than females with experience in filmmaking or multimedia work who are currently practising, suggesting there may be fewer opportunities for women than for men to work in these activities. The same might be true for the provision of cultural tourism services, where there appears to be a larger pool of experience among women that is not being utilised than is the case for men.

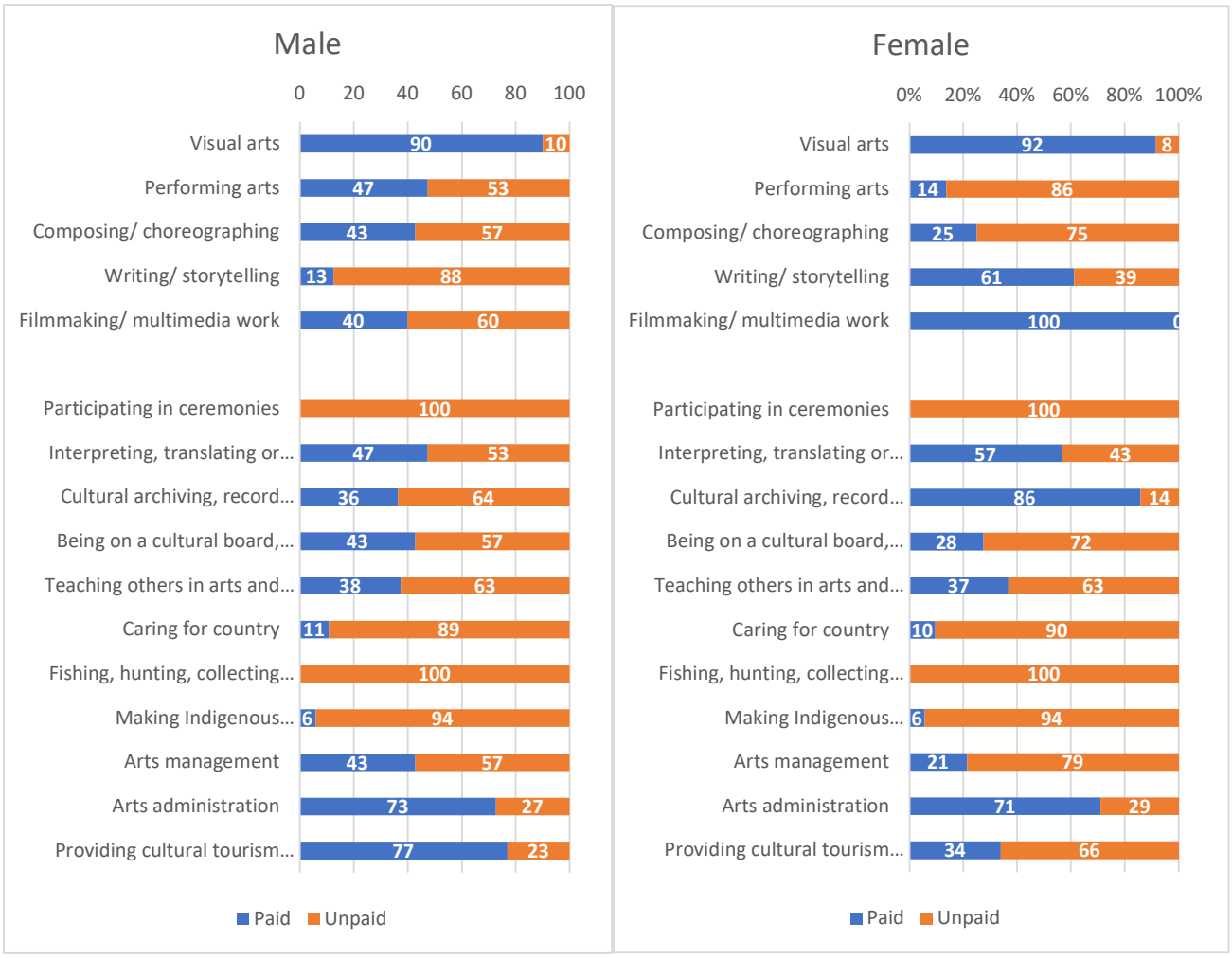
Regarding the proportions of artists being paid for their engagement in various activities, the data in Figure 12.2 show similar proportions of approximately 90 percent for both men and women artists in the visual arts, but a much larger proportion for men in the performing arts (47 percent for men compared to 14 percent for women). It also appears that a larger proportion of men engaged in arts management are paid for their work than is the case for women. Note that sample sizes for most of these paid/unpaid activities are small and need to be interpreted with caution.

Figure 12.1 Artists with experience in activity who engaged and those who did not engage in activity last year, by sex (percent of artists with experience in activity)*



* Multiple response allowed.

Figure 12.2 Artists paid per activity in the last 12 months, by sex (percent of artists engaged in activity in the last 12 months)



12.4 Mobility

We noted in Chapter 5 above that many artists travel beyond their usual place of residence in order to engage in arts/cultural activities elsewhere. Table 12.7 gives data on the gender of artists who have travelled in the last 12 months to undertake their artistic work. It appears that male artists tend to be more mobile and travel further and more often for these purposes, but their travel is for shorter periods than is the case for women.

Table 12.7 Artists' mobility in pursuit of their cultural-economic activities, by sex (percent of artists, months)

	Male	Female
Travelled in the last 12 months to undertake arts/cultural activities elsewhere (%)		
Yes	52	38
No	48	62
Total	100	100
Destinations (%)*		
Capital city	35	13
Regional town	35	87
Community	19	-
Outstation/ homeland/ on country	11	-
Overseas	-	-
Total	100	100
Time spent travelling (months)*		
Mean	1.2	1.7
Median	1.0	1.0

* Only artists who travelled to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere.

12.5 Financial circumstances

Table 12.8 shows the proportions of male and female artists nominating various income sources as their most important source of income in the last 12 months. The differences in levels of importance between income sources was discussed in Chapter 9 earlier, and Table 12.8 does not indicate any major differences between the genders in these statistics.

Table 12.9 details the annual incomes of male and female artists in the region, highlighting a gender gap in creative incomes among Indigenous artists in remote Far North Queensland. This finding aligns with the national trend observed among Australian artists but contrasts with other remote regions where little to no difference in earnings between genders is evident.

The mean earnings for male artists consistently exceed those for female artists across most categories, including income from both other cultural activities and non-cultural activities. There are significant disparities in creative artistic activities and total income, with male artists generally earning more than female artists.

Female artists derive a greater portion of their income from other (non-work) sources. Although they have a higher mean income from these sources, the low median value indicates significant variation among them. The absence of a median value for male artists suggests that most do not receive income from other sources.

In other cultural activities, male artists have a higher mean income compared to female artists. However, the median income for female artists is significantly higher. This indicates that while a few male artists may have high earnings in this category, a larger proportion of female artists earn a substantial amount from this type of work, suggesting a more consistent earnings distribution among female artists in other cultural activities and total work income compared to their male counterparts.

Overall, the gender gap in creative incomes stands at 34 percent, although the disparity in total incomes narrows to 12 percent. This analysis highlights the need to address gender-based income disparities within the regional artistic community.

Table 12.8 The main income source in the last 12 months as perceived by respondents, by sex (percent of artists)

Income sources	Male (n=42)	Female (n=52)
	%	
Income from creative artistic activities	16	22
Income from other cultural activities	39	32
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture)	16	11
Income from other sources	29	33
Don't know/ Not sure	-	2
Total	100	100

Table 12.9 Artists' mean and median annual income, by sex ($'000 p.a.)

Income sources	Male		Female	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	$'000 p.a.		$'000 p.a.	
Income from creative artistic activities (n=76)	10.4	5.2	6.9	3.0
Income from other cultural activities (n=53)	26.0	7.5	20.3	22.5
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=90)	9.4	-*	5.4	-*
Total income from work (n=45)	38.7	23.0	31.3	30.0
Income from other sources (n=94)	5.4	-**	11.0	0.5
Total income (n=45)	42.9	41.2	37.9	30.5

* The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most men and women artists do not receive income from other work activities.
** The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most men artists do not receive income from other sources.

13. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Torres Strait and mainland Far North Queensland

The region covered by this component of the National Survey of Remote Indigenous Artists falls partly on the mainland of Far North Queensland and partly on the islands of the Torres Strait. Although the two areas are related to some extent in cultural terms, they differ in a number of respects: their geography, their land use, their ethnic backgrounds, their pattern of settlement, and the size of their economies. In this section, we tabulate some of the main results from the survey broken down into mainland and Torres Strait Islands components, to assess whether any differences between the two areas may have some effect on any of the major variables under study in a way that might have implications for policy formation.

13.1 Demographics

Some demographic characteristics of artists in the two areas are shown in Table 13.1. The artist population in the mainland locations shows proportionately more female than male artists (an approximately 60/40 ratio), whereas in the Torres Strait the proportions are more equally balanced (an approximately 50/50 ratio). In regard to age, Torres Strait artists tend to be younger, with one-third (33 percent) under the age of 35, compared to only 6 percent for the mainland. About one-third of mainland artists (32 percent) are over 65 years of age, compared to only 4 percent in this age bracket in the Torres Strait.

There are differences in the family circumstances of artists in both regions – the largest groups in the mainland sample comprises single individuals with no children, whereas the largest group in the Torres Strait is made up of people living with a partner and with children. Differences also appear in the occurrence of disability – there is a larger proportion of artists living with disability or long-term illness in the mainland than in the islands. This differential is probably related to differences in the age distributions.

The final demographic statistic relates to the language used most these days. Kriol is the most widely used language in the Torres Strait, with about two-thirds of artists there using it, compared to fewer than ten percent of artists in the mainland. Among the latter artists, just less than half (48 percent) use their traditional language most.

Table 13.1 Demographic characteristics of artists, by area (percent of artists)

	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)
Sex		
Female	49	61
Male	51	39
Age distribution		
15–24	16	2
25–34	17	4
35–44	20	15
45–54	28	24
55–64	15	23
65+	4	32
Total	100	100
Family circumstances		
Single no children	28	64
Single with children	21	13
Partner no children	11	5
Partner with children	39	17
Total	100	100
Living with disability, long-term illness		
Yes	10	36
No	90	64
Total	100	100
Language used most these days		
English	4	43
ATSI language	32	48
Kriol	64	9
Total	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample.
* In the last 12 months.
** Multiple response allowed.

13.2 Education and training

The educational backgrounds of artists in the two locations are shown in Table 13.2. It appears that on average Torres Strait Islander artists have somewhat higher levels of formal education than their mainland counterparts, with the majority completing school or obtaining a post-school qualification. Among artists from the islands, 13 percent have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, compared to only 2 percent for mainland artists.

Table 13.2 Highest level of formal education, by area (percent of artists)^

	Never attended	Year 10 (or equivalent) and below	Year 11 and Year 12 (or equivalent)	Completed diploma or certificate	Completed bachelor's degree	Completed postgraduate degree, diploma/ certificate or doctorate degree	Total
				%			
Torres Strait (n=45)	-	12	20	55	5	8	100
Mainland (n=49)	-	51	21	26	2	-	100

^ Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.

The pathways identified by artists in the mainland and Torres Strait Islands as being the most important in the process of their acquiring their cultural capital are shown in Table 13.3 for the acquisition of their cultural knowledge, and in Table 13.4 for the ways in which they have gained the skills and competencies necessary to practise as an artist. The patterns and assessments of importance in Table 13.3 appear to be similar – as an explanation it can be argued that the basic means by which cultural knowledge is learned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are essentially the same for all, regardless of location. However, some differences are apparent in the pathways for acquiring cultural skills as shown in Table 13.4. About half of mainland artists learnt from a family member, compared to only one-third for the Torres Strait artists. By contrast, a larger proportion of the latter artists than of mainland artists learnt from a friend or family member (44 percent compared to 12 percent).

Table 13.3 Most important pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge, by area (percent of artists)

Cultural knowledge pathways	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)
	%	
Directly from family members	82	84
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	5	13
From being on country	-	3
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/archives	5	-
From participating in ceremonies	2	-
From artworks, songs or stories	-	-
From festivals or other cultural events	-	-
Some other way	6	-
Total	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 13.4 Most important pathways for gaining industry skills and experience (percent of artists)

Industry skills pathways	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)
	%	
Learning from a family member:	33	49
Observing and practising with a family member	31	33
Observing a family member	2	16
Learning from a friend or community member:	44	12
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	23	10
Observing a friend or community member	11	2
Self-learning/ Learning on the job	20	25
Vocational training	6	2
Feedback and advice from an art professional	-	3
Workshops/ short courses	2	2
School	-	3
Online sources	-	-
University program	-	-
Some other way	5	4
Total	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample.

13.3 Cultural activities undertaken

Table 13.5 shows the range of cultural-economic activities that artists in the two areas have ever done, are currently doing, and for which they are currently being paid, with percentages calculated across all artists in the sample. Table 13.6 shows the mean and median number of activities undertaken by artists in the two areas. Figure 13.1 shows the proportions of artists in the two jurisdictions who are currently engaged in activities, calculated as percentages of those with experience in the various activities. Of those artists who are currently engaged in activities, the proportions currently being paid are shown in Figure 13.2.

The data arrayed in these tables and diagrams convey an overall picture of greater levels of engagement in arts/cultural activities among Torres Strait Islander artists than among their mainland counterparts. Table 13.5 shows similar levels of engagement for artists involved in the visual arts, but for the other creative activities the proportions for islander artists are significantly greater than for mainland artists. These relativities carry through to the other cultural activities listed, where again in almost all cases the levels of engagement among Torres Strait Islander artists are greater. The same pattern is evident in the numbers of activities undertaken by artists in the two areas as seen in Table 13.6.

Table 13.5 Cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists, by area (percent of artists)

Activities*	Have ever engaged in activity		Currently engaged in activity**		Currently being paid for activity**	
	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)
	%					
Creative artistic						
Visual arts	90	92	75	86	63	83
Performing arts	91	54	74	25	17	15
Composing/ choreographing	25	7	25	3	8	3
Writing/ storytelling	60	45	42	13	14	8
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	33	13	16	3	10	-
Other cultural						
Participating in ceremonies	92	60	77	19	2	-
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	71	55	61	34	27	19
Cultural archiving, record keeping	46	31	33	13	8	10
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	46	40	30	22	10	6
Teaching others in arts and culture	92	84	87	69	22	25
Caring for country	95	97	88	76	7	7
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	98	97	98	79	2	-
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	69	71	55	50	-	3
Arts management	30	17	25	8	13	2
Arts administration	66	35	58	17	47	12
Providing cultural tourism services	60	51	25	33	18	11

- indicates nil response in this sample.
** In the last 12 months.
* Multiple response allowed.

Table 13.6 Mean and median number of cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists (number of activities)

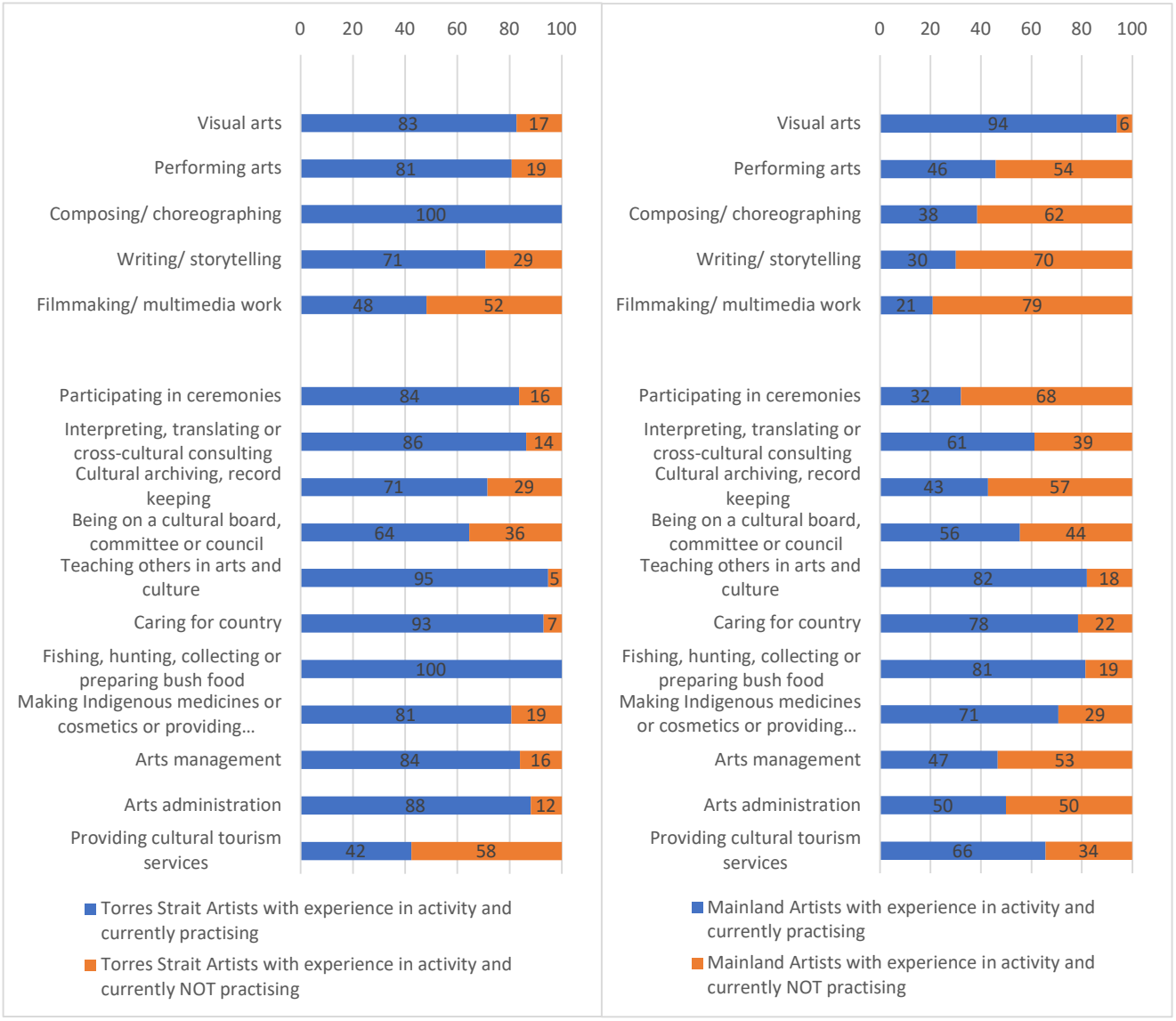
Activities	Have ever done		Currently doing*		Currently being paid*	
	Torres Strait	Mainland	Torres Strait	Mainland	Torres Strait	Mainland
Mean						
Creative artistic	3.0	2.1	2.3	1.3	1.1	1.1
Other cultural	7.6	6.4	6.4	4.2	1.6	1.0
All cultural activities	10.6	8.5	8.7	5.5	2.7	2.0
Median						
Creative artistic	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other cultural	8.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	1.0	-
All cultural activities	11.0	8.0	8.0	5.0	2.0	2.0

* In the last 12 months.

Turning to the engagements among experienced artists as depicted in Figure 13.1, we see relatively high levels of engagement by visual artists in both areas but, for the other areas of creative activity and other cultural activities, the levels of engagement of Torres Strait Islander artists are greater than the corresponding levels for mainland artists. These data appear to indicate a somewhat higher level of utilisation of human cultural capital resources in the islands. Conversely, it could be inferred that there is underutilised creative capacity in mainland FNQ that could be mobilised if circumstances permitted.

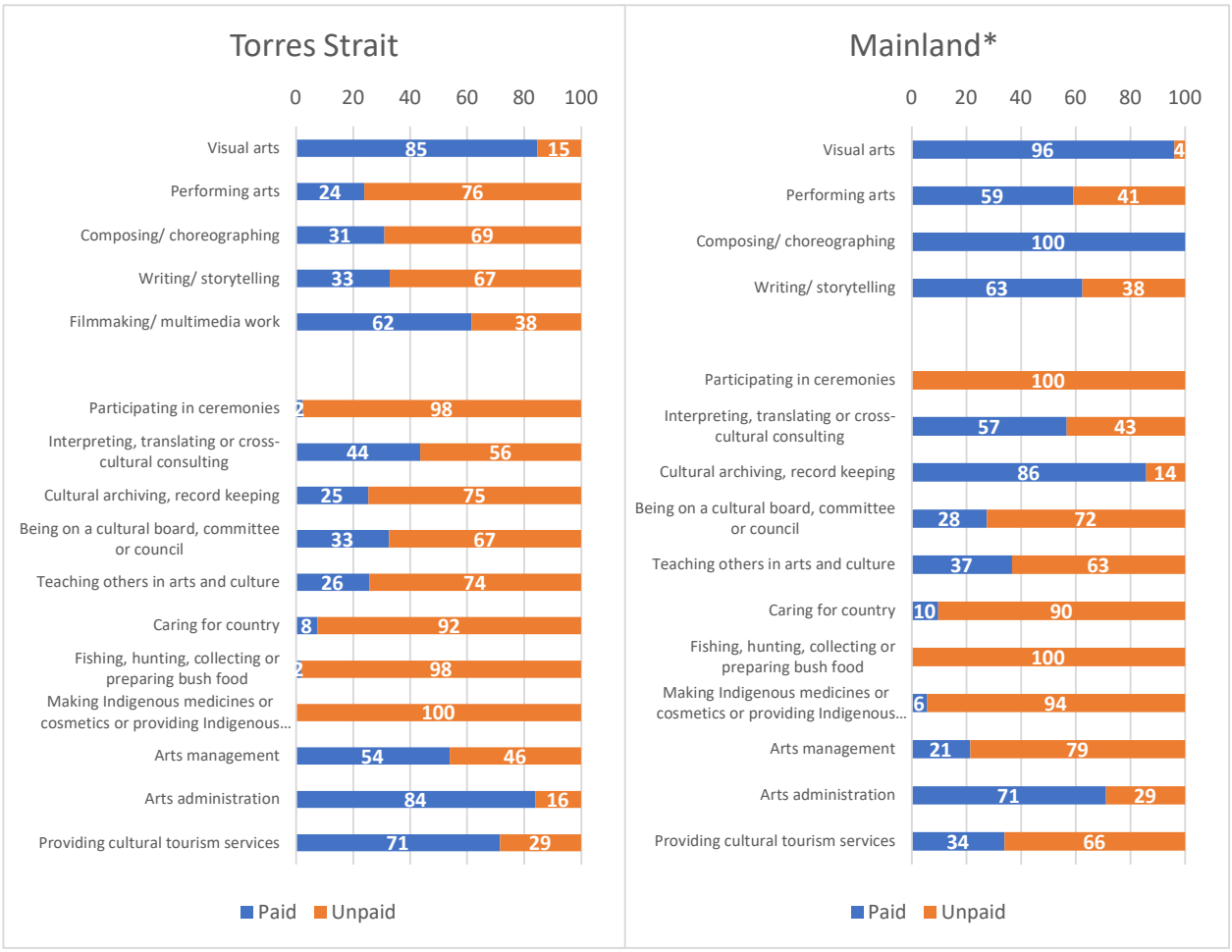
A somewhat different picture emerges when we compare the proportion of experienced artists who are paid in each of the locations, as shown in Figure 13.2. Bearing in mind that for some of the activities sample sizes are too small for valid inference to be drawn, we note that for about two-thirds of the activities the paid proportion among mainland artists is greater than the islander artists. These relativities may indicate a wider range of market opportunities and a more diversified art economy in mainland FNQ than in the Torres Strait, enabling artists in the mainland to access payment for their work more readily.

Figure 13.1 Artists with experience in activity who engaged and those who did not engage in activity last year, by area (percent of artists with experience in activity)*



* Multiple response allowed.

Figure 13.2 Artists paid per activity in the last 12 months, by area (percent of artists engaged in activity in the last 12 months)



* "Filmmaking/ multimedia work" excluded due to the insufficient sample for this activity.

Table 13.7 Artists' mobility in pursuit of their cultural-economic activities, by area (percent of artists, months)

	Torres Strait	Mainland
Travelled in the last 12 months to undertake arts/cultural activities elsewhere (%)		
Yes	42	47
No	58	53
Total	100	100
Destinations (%)*		
Capital city	11	39
Regional Town	69	58
Community	12	3
Outstation/ homeland/ on country	8	-
Overseas	-	-
Total	100	100
Time spent travelling (months)*		
Mean	1.8	1.1
Median	1.0	1.0

* Only artists who travelled to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere.

13.4 Financial circumstances

Artists' perceptions as to what is their main income source vary between the two locations in our survey, as shown in Table 13.8. The most often nominated source among Torres Strait artists is their income from cultural activities other than the creative arts (50 percent of artists). By contrast, the largest single group of mainland artists comprises those for whom income from other sources was the most important (47 percent of artists). A larger proportion of mainland than of islander artists said that income from creative artistic activities is their most important income source.

Finally, we turn to income differences between the islands and the mainland. Table 13.9 shows artists' mean and median annual incomes for the two areas. Mainland artists have slightly higher mean and significantly higher median incomes from creative artistic activities compared to Torres Strait artists. This suggests a more consistent and higher income distribution among mainland artists for their artistic work.

However, when it comes to incomes from other cultural work, while some mainland artists earn significantly higher incomes, a larger proportion of Torres Strait artists earn incomes from their other cultural work. Additionally, Torres Strait artists earn more from non-cultural work activities on average, but the absence of median values suggests that most artists in both areas do not engage in other work activities.

Mainland artists rely more on income from other sources, as indicated by the higher mean and median values in this category. The absence of a median value for Torres Strait artists suggests that most artists in the Torres Strait do not receive income from other sources.

Overall, both groups have roughly similar mean total incomes at around $40 thousand annually. However, mainland artists have a higher median income, indicating less income disparity among them. This analysis highlights the differences in income sources and distribution between Torres Strait and mainland artists, suggesting tailored support and opportunities might be needed to address the specific needs of each group.

Table 13.8 The main income source in the last 12 months as perceived by respondents, by area (percent of artists)

Income sources	Torres Strait (n=45)	Mainland (n=49)
	%	
Income from creative artistic activities	15	24
Income from other cultural activities	50	21
Income from other activities (not directly related to culture)	21	6
Income from other sources	14	47
Don't know/ Not sure	-	2
Total	100	100

- indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 13.9 Artists' mean and median annual income, by area ($'000 p.a.)

Income sources	Torres Strait (n=45)		Mainland (n=49)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	$'000 p.a.		$'000 p.a.	
Income from creative artistic activities (n=76)	8.3	3.0	8.5	7.5
Income from other cultural activities (n=53)	22.1	17.5	26.2	7.5
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=90)	9.6	-*	5.0	-*
Total income from work (n=45)	38.3	30.0	27.9	18.0
Income from other sources (n=94)	2.8	-**	13.8	17.8
Total income (n=45)	40.5	30.0	40.2	41.2

* The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most artists in both areas do not receive income from other work activities.

** The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most Torres Strait artists do not receive income from other sources.

14. CONCLUSIONS: POLICY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data from our survey of remote First Nations artists in Far North Queensland as presented in this Report have shown how the visual artists, performing artists, composers, writers, filmmakers and multimedia artists in the region represent a rich resource of cultural capital. The knowledge and skills of these artists already contribute significant levels of cultural goods and services to the regional economy. But the data show considerable untapped potential – experienced artists who are willing to work at cultural production but who for various reasons may not be able to participate fully in the art economy at the present time.

In this final chapter we identify a number of policy issues that arise in considering the present state and future potential of art and cultural production in the FNQ region.[26] The issues are grouped into the following categories: infrastructure needs; expanding economic opportunities; training and skill development; and cultural tourism. In considering policy development, it must be understood that there is unlikely to be a single one-size-fits-all strategy applicable to all regional remote communities. Rather, different needs can be identified in different locations depending on a range of factors. In these circumstances there is clearly a requirement for coordination between the decisions and actions of stakeholders at various levels in the policy process.

14.1 Infrastructure needs

The art economy in the Far North Queensland region depends on a wide variety of infrastructure that supports and facilitates its operation. Some of this infrastructure is general, and serves everyone in the region, such as transport and communication services. Other categories of infrastructure are specific to the arts and cultural sector, providing the necessary support to enable artists and cultural producers to pursue their work. The latter include: art centres; recording studios and other facilities for performing artists, filmmakers, multimedia and other artists; and cultural organisations of various sorts.

Art centres

Art centres play a vital role in the functioning of the Indigenous art economy in the region. They are active in the visual arts market, forming partnerships and making connections with buyers, art dealers, galleries and art institutions in the capital cities in Australia and overseas. They provide a first point of sale for the work of their artists and a channel linking artists to the wider art market through their participation in art fairs such as the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), their relationships with dealers, galleries and museums in Australia and abroad, and their marketing presence on the Internet. Art centres manage the quality and availability of art works, provide necessary spaces, materials and equipment for artists, promote and facilitate art skills and cultural knowledge sharing, support their artists in their career development and identify new talent. Importantly, Indigenous art centres engage in researching and understanding the arts production of the region in which they are located as well as of other regions, enabling them to help their artists to develop the unique art works and experiences that set them and their own region apart. Our data demonstrate that artists are unequivocal in their recognition of this role in affecting their own individual and community circumstances. We find that artists in communities which currently do not

[26] The issues relate directly to the strategy for the decade ahead articulated by Arts Queensland in 2022; see *Creative Together 2020–2030: A 10-Year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland*.

have an art centre recognise the benefits that might accrue if such a centre were to be established in their community.

Despite the overall success of the art centre model, it is evident that some centres face significant challenges. Some art centres have facilities that are urgently in need of renovation, including the need to meet accessibility requirements. Moreover, provision of adequate workspace for artists may also be an issue. In these circumstances, relying on artists' homes as a place where they can pursue their artistic practice may present particular challenges, especially in communities where domestic overcrowding is a problem.

The lack of facilities is a problem for a number of regional art centres, including the Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Centre. Here, a cramped single room serves multiple functions: gallery, archive, storage area, and the art centre office, housing ghost net sculptures, wood carvings, paintings, prints, artists' works, and vital archival materials. To alleviate the centre's shortage of space, negotiations with the local council have resulted in the art centre receiving permission to use surrounding sheds as artist studios. These sheds offer shaded work areas and serve as important artists' meeting points. However, they lack heat insulation and air conditioning and thus are only usable during morning hours for most of the year. While this arrangement demonstrates the art centre's ingenuity in adapting to challenging conditions, the long-term sustainability of such solutions must be questioned.

Another key factor contributing to challenges experienced by all regional art centres is the additional burden placed on many centres to deliver a range of social services and public benefits, especially where such services are unavailable from other sources. These services may include providing transportation, aiding in banking and interactions with government agencies, as well as offering disability and aged care support. In some areas, artists have to rely on their art centre even for basic necessities like accessing internet connections and making phone calls. Services like these extend well beyond the art centres' primary operational focus, diverting staff time which would otherwise be spent on the centre's core artistic and cultural functions. Generally, art centres are not separately funded to provide such additional services, yet the provision of these services often are crucial both for the community and for the continuous work of the centre's artists. There may be opportunities for joint agreements between art centres and social service agencies to finance the provision of such services. An art centre may often be the best organisation in a community to recognise where needs are most urgently felt.

Transportation is a significant element in the daily work patterns of art centres. Tasks include transporting and delivering artworks, procuring materials, bringing artists with access difficulties to the arts centre, attending to the transport needs of collectors or other visitors, and handling a variety of daily errands. When art centres are not in a position to own or maintain their own vehicle, they are either unable to perform these tasks, or are forced to bear substantial hiring costs.

An illustration of the importance of transportation services is provide by the Mornington Island artists at Mirndiyan Gununa, who rely heavily on the art centre's support. During our interviews, it was noted that virtually none of the artists had personal access to transportation. This is especially problematic as many artists are elderly, making it difficult for them to attend hospital appointments, do their shopping, or even reach the art centre without the transport services provided by the art centre.

Providing daily transportation services becomes particularly challenging for art centres catering to multiple communities such as the Girringun Art Centre in Cardwell, which

supports artists from nine Traditional Owner Groups[27] spanning approximately 25,000 square kilometres. The Girringun Aboriginal Corporation has equipped the art centre with a bus. However, on days when the studio is open, it requires roughly two hours for a staff member to collect the artists, and another two hours at day's end for drop-offs. Given the lack of funding for a dedicated driver, one of the centre's 2.5 staff members must assume this responsibility. This arrangement places additional strain on their other duties and consumes a considerable portion of the art centre's limited resources. Nonetheless, the vital role of artists in the art centre's operations makes these services indispensable.

It is not only people who require an art centre's transport services, it is also artworks. Transporting artworks to events such as art fairs and galleries poses a considerable challenge for remote Indigenous art centres in FNQ. The journey from remote locations to Cairns incurs the highest expenses, and the financial burden becomes particularly onerous when unsold artworks necessitate return trips. To mitigate these costs, some art centres have resorted to renting commercial storage spaces in Cairns. Following the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, for instance, the Pormpuraaw Centre not only stored unsold pieces in a hired storage space, but also used the space for private showings for potential buyers of these works. If it were possible to establish a storage facility in Cairns that could be shared by all regional art centres, the financial and logistical pressures could be alleviated, with possible benefits for the marketing of artists' output.

As one of their principal functions in supporting their artists, most art centres in the FNQ region operate a shop and/or a gallery on site. They may also offer additional services to visitors, such as cultural tours and other arts and cultural experiences. Such activities extend the functions of an art centre beyond simply providing the facilities and resources for artists to practice; they move their operations into other business activities. In this respect art centres function as not-for-profit enterprises, where any surplus generated by their sales or service provision are devoted to furthering their objectives and supporting their continuing operations. These aspects of an art centre's functions place a demand on management for commercial expertise; if resources permit, an art centre can outsource accounting or legal services and advice, or in some cases some of these services may be provided pro-bono by local firms. In general, however, it has to be recognised that efficient management of the commercial operations of an art centre is critical to the centre's sustainability. If an art centre takes on too many responsibilities or expands its business activities too quickly, the viability of the entire operation can be jeopardised.

Cultural centres

A distinct category of arts organisation in FNQ is provided by regional cultural centres, such as the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island and the Western Cape Cultural Centre Achimbun in Weipa. These centres serve as showcases of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture of their respective regions through their galleries, archives, and performance spaces. Beyond display, they play a significant role in supporting regional artists by hosting workshops and other cultural events; generating income to artists through sales of works, performance fees and workshop fees; and acting as custodians of artefacts and cultural knowledge. They may also facilitate access to art materials. For example, the Gab Titui Cultural Centre endeavours to lower the cost of art materials for artists by purchasing supplies at wholesale prices. By economising on transportation expenses, they are able to offer these materials to artists at cost price, making essential supplies more accessible and

[27] The Nywaigi, Gugu Badhan, Warrgamay, Warungnu, Bandjin, Girramay, Gulngay, Jirrbal and Djiru people.

affordable. The Art Materials Project began in 2007, when the Gab Titui Cultural Centre received funding through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board of the Australia Council. The Project enabled Gab Titui to sell professional quality art materials at a subsidised rate to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal artists in the region.

The contributions of these cultural centres are pivotal in preserving and maintaining the region's cultural heritage and traditional languages, while also promoting the sharing of knowledge and the development of skills among regional artists and cultural producers. They offer visitors unique insights into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, distinguishing themselves from art centres by focusing more on cultural and arts exhibition than on the direct production of art and crafts. Unlike art centres, cultural centres do not typically provide workspaces for artists. Rather they reflect a wider scope of art and cultural production and a more extensive regional coverage than is provided by a single art centre.

Resources for performing artists and film/media artists

Generally, musicians, dancers, filmmakers, and multi-media artists do not have access to widely available facilities to assist in the development of their creative work and must often rely on their own resources – we found that for many choreographers, dancers and musicians, for example, their main place of work was at home. Significant numbers of performing artists in the region also face problems with finding opportunities to present their work due to a lack of appropriate venues or events. Most individual performers do not have ready access to financial support and must rely on their own resources. Independent musicians in Thursday Island, for example, may have occasional access to the recording facilities at TSIMA, but they have to fend for themselves in arranging performance opportunities at local venues.

Support organisations

There are several cultural organisations in the FNQ region that support the work of artists. A significant one for visual artists is IACA (Indigenous Art Centre Alliance), the peak body representing art centres in the region. The objectives of IACA have been to provide advocacy and support services for First Nations artists in Far North Queensland through training, marketing, development and promotion.

In the Torres Strait, art centres, as well as artists working outside art centres, are supported by the Torres Strait Islands Regional Council (TSIRC). The Council has a range of functions including a grants program, advocacy work and community engagement initiatives. In addition, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) promotes cultural preservation and development through its Culture, Art, and Heritage Program. This program is dedicated to the preservation and revitalisation of cultural and linguistic heritage, the expansion of the regional arts industry, and education on cultural heritage. Key focuses include safeguarding Indigenous languages, protecting copyright and intellectual property rights, developing cultural values and protocols, and, where suitable, weaving community-based cultural and art activities into broader community and social services. Furthermore, the TSRA actively promotes the growth of the regional arts industry. This is achieved by supporting art centres and facilitating the development and education of artists' skills, alongside the initiatives undertaken by the Gab Titui Cultural Centre. Through these efforts, the TSRA aims to develop a cultural ecosystem in the region that nurtures artistic talent and ensures the longevity of Torres Strait traditions.

Another support organisation in the Torres Strait which provides services for musicians, media artists and filmmakers is the Torres Strait Islander Media Association (TSIMA), which has over 35 years of media experience in the region and is dedicated to supporting the creative industries. In 2020, TSIMA broadened its scope to encompass film and visual storytelling, introducing a range of services to support this expansion. These services include organising workshops, offering mentorship programs, providing access to recording studios, and assisting with production efforts.

The financial and governance structures of these support organisations differ from one to the other, but their important role in facilitating the development of arts and cultural practice in the region needs full acknowledgement in the formulation of policy strategies at all levels of public and private sector engagement affecting arts and cultural producers.

14.2 Expanding economic opportunities

A fundamental policy issue in addressing issues of disadvantage among remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities concerns how to open up opportunities for employment creation and income generation in the communities in a way that respects the needs and desires of the Indigenous people, with particular regard to employment that is both culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate. Here we consider several means to expand economic opportunities for artists in the survey region.

Earning income from culture-related activities

In addition to the creative arts, which yields about 25 percent on average of an artist's total income from work, artists in the region typically also undertake other culture-related activities which can generate an income for them. For example, First Nations cultural practitioners in remote communities can gain casual or longer-term employment in interpreting and translating to and from local Indigenous languages. There are several organisations that support such activities, including the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Indigenous Interpreting Project within the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). At regional, national and international levels some other cultural activities have also been generating economic opportunities for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural producers who engage in them, for example via cultural archiving and museology services to museums and galleries, or cultural and language education for students outside the region.

One of the most productive areas for extending the work engagements for cultural producers in many remote regions is through ranger activities, providing a more structured environment for their caring-for-country activities. In some communities, artists and rangers work together. For example, the Girringun Art Centre in Cardwell is located next to the Girringun Aboriginal Rangers, and this proximity provides opportunities for possible interaction. Both are components of the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation which represents the interests of traditional owners from nine tribal groups. A further illustration is provided by land and sea rangers from the Torres Strait Ranger Project who collaborate with their local art centres including those in Erub and Badu, collecting and bringing ghost nets (with the help of Sea Swift shipping company), cutting wood from fallen trees, and so on.

Some rangers are also artists. Most work arrangements for rangers in the region are full-time, and only a few manage to pursue their artistic and ranger work simultaneously. It is observed that the crossovers and connections between art work and ranger work yield synergies that are productive in both fields, in particular through access to country that a job as a ranger can provide. Ranger organisations in the region support art centres through

collecting or helping artists to locate art materials, such as ghost nets, wood, grass and so on. Ranger organisations are often better supported financially than art centres, and indeed may have access to sources of revenue that their counterparts in the arts do not have.

Ranger jobs are a strong source of employment for young people, who may be taken on as interns at a young age and may work through to becoming experienced rangers in due course. Working at caring for the land or the sea can provide a strong sense of connection with land and culture for young Indigenous people of all genders. It can help to overcome the sense of alienation and lack of opportunity affecting the younger generation in some communities.

Additional employment avenues for cultural practitioners with experience in caring for the country/islands include roles at nurseries. While these establishments function independently from ranger programs, they offer a variety of job opportunities that utilise the practitioners' cultural knowledge and skills. There exists significant potential for expanding these income streams, especially when these roles intersect with the production of Indigenous medicines or cosmetics, creating products and services with market potential.

Our survey showed that there are many artists who do not earn additional income through working at the sorts of other (non-creative) cultural activities considered in this study, despite having the skills and experience to do so. We have argued that there are opportunities for more artists and cultural producers in the FNQ region to obtain financial reimbursement for being engaged in these work activities. On a local level, these activities are often provided by artists on an unpaid basis, for example in the form of:

- translation and interpretation when dealing with service providers for family or other community members;
- cross-cultural consulting or language translation in a job that does not include such services in its job description;
- providing unpaid cultural tourism services for visitors to their communities;
- organising and performing welcoming ceremonies; and so on.

Several of these activities present opportunities for cultural practitioners to earn income. For example, some artists are already engaged in providing cross-cultural consulting services to organisations and companies through cultural awareness sessions for employees. These services are crucial for the onboarding and induction processes for new employees, deepening their engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and fostering respect and understanding within the workforce. Typically, cultural practitioners receive a one-time payment for providing a cultural awareness session of about two hours. There is potential to expand these offerings by including more comprehensive cultural awareness content and introducing follow-up sessions. Such enhancements could further assist in the ongoing integration of employees, smoothing their adjustment process and enriching the cultural competence of the regional organisations.

Cultural governance is another area that requires significant time and effort from local cultural producers, with some senior artists spending a great deal of time as directors and members of different boards and committees. A significant amount of this work is also performed on a voluntary basis; many organisations are not able to pay any sitting fees to their board directors and members, at times due to legislation,[28] and some can only afford token amounts.

[28] Not-for-profit organisations may not be allowed to pay their board directors and can only reimburse their directors' travel costs.

Currently, an estimated 70 percent of arts and culture training provided by experienced First Nations artists in the region is unpaid. This phenomenon extends to educational activities conducted in formal settings such as schools, where still significant numbers of artists do not receive financial compensation for their educational work, as discussed further below.

Better awareness among organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region and among the general public is required to acknowledge and remunerate appropriately the various cultural contributions that First Nations artists and cultural producers have been providing. With the right support there could be significantly more economic opportunities derived from these sorts of activities, contributing in turn to developing a stronger arts and cultural sector in the region.

Small business development

Most visual artists in the FNQ region work within the art centre framework. Artists working as independent individuals may take up opportunities to establish small creative enterprises, perhaps on a collaborative or cooperative basis, and perhaps engaged in collaboration with other industries or developing new modes of distribution. In policy terms, such initiatives can link into a broader innovation agenda associated with the development of cultural and creative industries. Smart policy measures that recognise talent in this field can provide seed funding or small business incubators to encourage creative enterprise development.

A range of creative enterprises could be developed in the region. From the interviews we observed the enthusiasm and commitment of some individuals to start such enterprises, particularly in tourism. A major constraint appears to be guidance as to what is involved in setting up a small business, including accessing sources of financial support and understanding the regulatory requirements for independent business operations. IACA has helped to foster business understanding among regional visual artists and art centres, and there are opportunities for other organisations in the region to support the development of First Nations creative businesses more widely. Such opportunities are particularly relevant for the growth of the tourist industry in FNQ, as discussed further below.

Market and supply-chain issues

An important avenue towards expanding economic opportunities for individual artists and cultural producers in the region lies in developing the distribution and marketing components of the value chain. These are parts of the supply chain for artistic goods and services that need to be well established if work produced is to find an appropriate market. The demand for the output of artists may be local; examples include a dance performance for visitors to an art centre or a community; sale of artworks, bush cosmetics or other cultural goods through local outlets; or musical performances in local venues such as pubs and clubs. Alternatively, markets may be found beyond the region, through sales of work or through presentation of performances interstate or internationally. Market development largely takes place in response to commercial incentives, but there is a place for more government support through expert advice, information and services – for example through provision of market intelligence, export promotion programs, support for fairs and festivals, and so on. In a commercial context, the latter are a particular avenue for attention since events such as CIAF or the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair are important channels for sales of creative output from the region.

An aspect of art market operations that has been of concern in recent years is the matter of ethically sourced Indigenous art. It is well known that sales of fake Indigenous art tend to be

more prevalent in areas with high levels of international tourist visitation.[29] Art centres and many galleries act responsibly in providing certificates of authenticity for works they sell, but further progress is needed in regulatory measures to prevent the sale of fake Indigenous art products of every sort, and to promote best practice in the certification of authenticity by all sellers of products purporting to come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists . Improvement in such measures will not only enhance the capability of these artists to assert their economic and moral rights, they would also give buyers added confidence in the functioning of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art market, with consequent positive effects on demand.

Learning from successes of hybrid organisations

Remote Indigenous communities provide cross-cultural environments. Working in these environments requires bridging diverse and often competing values, rationales, agendas and objectives that come from different sectors – family, community, market, government and the third sector. Enterprises and organisations that have understood and been able to accommodate this, such as ranger programs and art centres, have been able to function and thrive in these conditions. Their structures allow them to operate in the hybrid realm of the market within government funding requirements, while embracing community/family needs and diversity of the not-for-profit sector. There is an opportunity to acknowledge such working models and learn from their experiences.

Hybrid enterprises and organisations operating in the region are interconnected, such that activation of any of them may lead to increased activities in others. For example, a successful tourism enterprise could stimulate local production of visual and performing arts, as well as perhaps film and multimedia works. These activities could in turn have flow-on effects into cultural archiving, jobs in arts management and administration, sale of local art materials, or other impacts.

14.3 Education, training and skill development

One of the most important areas for policy formulation at all levels of public administration in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote communities is in education and training. Much of the policy attention in this area is devoted to formal education processes; nevertheless, although this Report has shown how these processes are significant, they are not necessarily the most important avenues of knowledge acquisition and skill development for artists in the region. In the following paragraphs we consider a range of formal and non-formal areas of policy concern for education, training and skill development for First Nations artists in the remote FNQ region.

School

The importance of schooling in preparing children for life is of course well understood. Our data show that school education is recognised by artists as having some part to play in imparting cultural knowledge and skills that can be complementary to the essential role of family and community members. In some parts of the region both formal and informal programs co-exist. Such programs could provide for cooperation between an art centre and the local school, for example, whereby children visit the centre on a regular basis to

[29] For example, large numbers of both domestic and international tourists pass through Cairns International Airport every year, many of whom are interested in buying art works by local Indigenous artists. Retail outlets at the airport are conscious of the need to offer authentic product to visitors that respects appropriate Indigenous protocols.

participate in hands-on creative activity under the guidance of senior artists, or where senior artists visit the school to teach kids arts and cultural skills and language. Either way, these initiatives serve a dual function in educating children and in providing incomes and employment for practising artists. Yet not all artists participating in these educational activities receive compensation, particularly in the absence of formal agreements and allocated budgets for arts and cultural educational activities. There is an opportunity to strengthen these educational pathways by acknowledging their long-term nature and providing appropriate funding support.

Inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission

The findings of this study show that the most important pathways for transfer of art and cultural skills and knowledge are found within the communities through family and other community members. Our results also show that for many arts and cultural jobs, Indigenous cultural producers are being educated within communities, with many already being job-ready and do not require a significant amount of additional training. The learning pathways for artists that have proved to be most successful in the FNQ region, as elsewhere, have been observing/participating with a family member; learning on the job/self-learning; and learning from friends and other community members. Family members are particularly important in this context and their role and that of the two other pathways need to be considered in the planning of training and educational programs in the region.

At present the costs of this sort of art and cultural teaching are largely borne by the community and via in-kind payments. Very few funding streams acknowledge local senior cultural producers and artists as teachers and therefore fund their work accordingly. For example, the sorts of culture programs in schools are generally not continuous; usually they rely on short- to mid-term funding arrangements and at times on the good will of artists to work with students on a voluntary basis. Other educational initiatives that involve family and community members include some training provided by arts centres, ranger organisations, culture and language centres and other hybrid organisations that have recognised the importance of inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission and have brought local artists and members of the community into their training processes. But these organisations rarely have an appropriate budget or funding to support these activities, so the workers are likely to go unpaid. Our Report points to the need to acknowledge the long-term educational benefit that local cultural producers and artists can provide via these organisations, and to ensure that the organisations that host them are properly supported.

As noted earlier, a key resource in processes of inter- and intra-generational cultural transmission in the region is the knowledge, skills and status of senior artists. During survey interviews, several senior artists expressed a keen interest in passing on their knowledge but they face significant challenges in finding regular opportunities to do so outside their immediate families. Possibilities exist to leverage the wealth of educational resources these senior artists possess, by establishing programs that facilitate the inter- and intra-generational transfer of knowledge. Such programs would need to provide the artists with appropriate financial incentives and remuneration. Illustrative of this approach, the Gab Titui Cultural Centre sets a notable example by compensating experienced Torres Strait Islander artists for leading workshops that disseminate artistic skills and traditional knowledge, highlighting a local model for supporting the invaluable work of cultural and skills transmission within communities. Similarly, Creative Australia's Chosen program represents another initiative dedicated to financially supporting the dissemination of skills and knowledge within communities, further evidencing the potential for structured programs to play a critical role in this context.

The role of art centres in training and skill development

Art centres play an important part in training arts workers. For example, the manager and staff at Moa Arts are engaged in a range of training activities to raise the competence levels of arts workers at the centre. The training function of arts centres needs support, especially in centres with only a single manager. These activities may be supplemented by more formal training initiatives, such as workshops that have been provided over recent years by IACA and others. For some artists, becoming an arts worker at their art centre was their first job that allowed them to transition to art making. For example, at Erub Arts a significant number of artists embarked on their creative careers by leveraging this pathway to join the art centre.

In some communities, the art centre serves as the only platform for individuals to gain their initial work experience. Interviews revealed numerous instances where exposure to and participation in art centre activities provided individuals with valuable work experience, subsequently facilitating their transition to employment opportunities in other sectors such as construction, mining and so on. As articulated by a staff member of the Badu Art Centre, "It is not merely about skill development; working here [at the art centre] empowers people with the confidence needed to succeed in diverse work environments." The Badu Art Centre has forged a partnership with JobSeeker to offer job training programs, a successful model that holds potential for implementation across other art centres.

Transfer of managerial skills from outside

Having to operate in an intercultural space explains why many organisations working to support art and cultural producers in remote Indigenous communities rely on non-Indigenous staff. For example, in many art centres, the managers come from outside the community. To some extent, it is important that an art centre receive all the industry knowledge it can get from someone with significant experience in the industry. On the other hand, concerns could be raised regarding building local capacity if the top jobs are filled externally. But it may also happen that local Indigenous staff, even those with a full range of required experience, may prefer not to take on managerial duties. This could be due to multi-cultural complexities, such as dealing with financial needs of the art centre or having to represent and service all the art centre's artists while being bound by obligations to family members. In these cases, the experienced local staff members may prefer simply to provide guidance to the non-Indigenous manager.

A decision to engage someone from outside who can contribute to an art centre in the hybrid space is always at the choice of the Indigenous Board Directors (the employer) who may benefit from such an engagement. These organisations bring together different cultures and values, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches are required to navigate through this process – indeed one of the features of these organisations is the mixing of skills, experiences and knowledge of local Indigenous staff with those of non-Indigenous professionals coming from outside the communities. These incoming professionals in turn benefit from training and advice received from senior artists and local Indigenous staff. While non-Indigenous managers come and go, art centre Directors and Indigenous arts workers are generally the keepers of the corporate knowledge. When the non-Indigenous professionals leave, many years of valuable experience also goes. Such experience is a valuable resource that could be utilised and built upon. There are examples of former art centre managers returning for short periods to the region to manage an art centre on an interim basis while its existing manager is on leave, or while its financial or governance affairs are sorted out, or in the period before a new manager is appointed. There are opportunities to harvest the knowledge and experience of former arts centre staff; for

example, if there were a database of these culturally experienced professionals, they could be located and engaged as consultants later on in the arts and cultural sector or perhaps in other industries in the region.

Transfer of artistic skills from outside

Exposure to the insights of external experts can play an important role in enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists working in remote art centres to adopt innovative techniques and skills. An example of this is the collaboration between Erub Arts and Ghost Nets Australia.[30] In 2010, Erub Arts hosted its inaugural workshop with Ghost Nets Australia, bringing artists from Perth who introduced the community to the initial techniques of repurposing ghost nets. This sparked widespread engagement within the community, leading to the development of unique methods by Erub artists, who ventured into creating sculptural works. Today, the ghost net sculptures crafted by Erub Arts are showcased in both national and international touring exhibitions and are featured in prestigious collections worldwide.

Access to country/islands

The fundamental relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the land and water is well understood and is reflected in our survey data – virtually all artists spend some part of their time caring for country, and many rely on accessing their country or their island as a source of knowledge and creative inspiration, or for gathering materials for their art production and at times as a place for creating work. However, access to country may sometimes be difficult, especially for artists who live in larger communities and those who do not have the resources to make regular visits to their homeland. The data provide compelling evidence in support of the need for securing artists' access to country/islands, if art and culture are to become a stronger source of economic empowerment for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the FNQ region. In this regard the issue of transport is again relevant, as many areas in the region can only be accessed cost-effectively by air.

Further education

Only relatively few artists in the study region continue beyond school to obtain tertiary level qualifications. There are some less formal post-school educational pathways for expanding artists' knowledge and skills, such as short courses and workshops provided through an art centre or other organisation or agency. A field of creative production where workshops conducted by experience practitioners could be of particular relevance is in film production; there is a strong interest in this field in the region, especially among younger Indigenous artists, but potential filmmakers need skills and facilities if their interest is to be developed. In the Torres Strait, filmmakers and musicians already benefit from accessible skills sharing programs, mentorships, and facilities provided by the Torres Strait Islander Media Association (TSIMA). With enhanced support, TSIMA has the potential to expand its services and make them available to a wider array of filmmakers and performing artists.

[30] "Historically, Erub relied on strong trade links and relationships with the people of Papua New Guinea and south to Cape York. Today, Erub Arts creative practice continues to evolve at a contemporary level by its willingness to collaborate with outside artists and celebrate cross cultural exchange." Erub Arts History https://erubarts.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/erub-stories-messages-2018-web.pdf. Accessed on March 3rd, 2024.

Business skills

In remote communities, there is a pressing need for business training to equip artists, cultural producers, and other community members with a thorough understanding of the business aspects of art and cultural production. A significant number of Indigenous artists in these areas lack a full grasp of the intricacies of the art business, including payment calculations, tax deductions, buyer sourcing, and market dynamics. Organisations like IACA have played a role in providing this essential business training to visual artists. Moreover, some art centres have embraced the responsibility of educating not only their artists but also the artists' families and the broader community about the commercial facets of the arts. It is important for performing artists in the region to be offered comparable support. Other organisations could also adopt a similar educational role, offering training to individuals, families, and companies in the region interested in launching business operations. More could be done if dedicated funding and support materials could be provided for such organisations to take on this function. Use of local examples and best practices elsewhere would be particularly beneficial. The resulting increase in business awareness and skills that might be expected to flow from these programs over time could encourage more Indigenous people in the region to start a business enterprise.

14.4 Cultural tourism

Sale of the goods and services produced by artists requires a market, and in remote locations accessible markets may exist only through channels leading to customers who may be located far away. However, tourism is a means to bring customers directly to the source of supply. Tourists who visit remote communities can engage with Indigenous culture at first hand and hopefully buy artworks or attend performances staged by local artists. There is a significant demand from both domestic and international tourists to experience Indigenous culture; for example, the art and culture of remote First Nations communities is strongly featured in the marketing strategies promoting tourism in Tropical North Queensland[31]. The Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC) was recently established as an independent peak industry body for First Nations Tourism in Queensland. It is a non-profit, membership-based association that supports the growth and elevation of Queensland's First Nations tourism sector.[32]

Tourism in Queensland also forms part of the Commonwealth Government's strategy for growing the tourism market nationally, as administered through Tourism Australia. For instance, the Discover Aboriginal Experiences program is a collection of specifically identified tours enabling visitors to experience Indigenous culture in the company of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guides. An example in the FNQ region is Jarramali Rock Art Tours, which operates full-day and overnight tours from Laura to visit a rock-art site that represents the ancient stories of the Kuku Yalanji people.

There is considerable scope for small start-ups and local initiatives in the Indigenous cultural tourism space. In some locations, opportunities exist for the establishment of small family-based tourism enterprises involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and focussing on providing small-group art/culture/nature experiences for discriminating visitors. There are many ways to increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities in these initiatives. For example, in some communities there are likely to be experienced cultural producers who are good storytellers

[31] See https://tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au/indigenous-culture/

[32] See https://www.qtic.com.au/indigenous-tourism/queensland-first-nations-tourism-council/

and who feel comfortable talking to visitors, enabling them to act as tour guides, interpreters and translators for tourists individually or in groups. Sometimes these activities can occur in association with the work of Indigenous rangers or art centres.

As noted earlier, prospective enterprises in this field will require basic business skills, indicating the need for skill development programs such as workshops, short-course training sessions, and/or small business incubators tailored to the needs of family-based tourism initiatives. For these developments to become a reality, a well-planned and adequately funded training strategy focussing on small Indigenous family- and community-run businesses is needed. If successful, these enterprises could become a prime example of a participatory economy in the region, engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities, and helping to reduce levels of welfare dependency among the Indigenous population.

We turn now to a more detailed consideration of issues for cultural tourism in the two areas covered by our study.

Torres Strait Islands

Thursday Island (TI) is the main commercial centre for tourism in the Torres Strait, accessible via the airport on neighbouring Horn Island which is served by regular flights from Cairns. Access to the outer islands is by boat or by scheduled or charter air services operating through the Horn Island airport. However, the expansion of tourism in the islands is constrained by the non-availability of many essential services that tourists require such as accommodation and restaurants. There is a motel on Badu Island but no readily available visitor accommodation on Moa (Kubin or St Paul) or Erub. Small mini-markets in the island communities provide some food supplies, but there are no cafes or restaurants.

Thursday Island has both hotel and motel options for accommodation, and several cafes and restaurants. Several tour possibilities exist, mainly fishing holidays and kitesurfing (Masig Island). Apart from some small retail outlets selling local products, the main cultural attraction is the Gab Titui Cultural Centre. As noted earlier, the centre hosts exhibitions and cultural events showcasing Torres Strait Islander culture, contemporary and traditional performances, featuring a gallery and shop where tourists can purchase art and crafts created by Torres Strait Islander artists.

Otherwise, the Torres Strait currently lacks additional cultural tourism attractions. Nevertheless, the potential for expanding cultural tourism is vast. For example, the arrival of several cruise ship companies in the Torres Strait offers the prospect of increasing demand from visitors able to access some islands directly. The art centres in the Torres Strait have a gallery and shop selling a range of locally-produced cultural goods and artworks of interest to tourists. Moreover, there are reports of traditional dancers being invited to perform onboard cruise ships. In fact, local dance groups from the Torres Strait are invited to perform elsewhere in Far North Queensland, in other Australian locations, and even internationally. A challenge these groups often encounter is determining appropriate fees that cover both production and travel expenses; for the clients, the challenge lies in understanding the cultural protocols. Clearer guidelines are needed covering issues such as fair compensation, appropriate travel costs, and adherence to cultural protocols when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers from the region.

The main festival celebrated in the islands is the Coming of the Light which is held on the first of July each year. This date commemorates the arrival of members of the London Missionary Society in the Torres Strait Islands in 1871. The main celebrations are held in Erub, the island where missionaries landed and introduced Christianity to the region.

Mainland FNQ

Remote and very remote parts of FNQ are accessible via Cairns, with major tourist itineraries stretching up the coast, or inland as far as the top of Cape York. Some communities, such as Aurukun, Pormpuraaw, Lockhart River and Mornington Island, can be reached by scheduled air services from Cairns. Most communities with art centres in mainland FNQ have a gallery and shop that provide important retail outlets for local art and cultural production.

The extent of tourist visitation varies widely across the region, depending on accessibility. An example of an art centre which benefits from a steady flow of tourists passing through is Wujal Wujal. Travellers through the Daintree heading to Cooktown and beyond pass through this rural town and many stop to buy works from the gallery shop. At the other extreme is Mornington Island which has no facilities for tourists.

Some art centres establish partnerships with travel firms, enabling them to organise visits for tourists. For example, Tropical Tourism has an arrangement with Girringun Art Centre to bring visitors to their studios. Similarly, Mornington Island Art Centre collaborates with Air Adventure, a luxury outback tour company based in Melbourne. Air Adventure organises several trips annually to the art centre, where visitors have the chance to view the artists' work and studios, and the art centre hosts lunch for them. There is potential to broaden these tourism offerings on the island as the art centre has received requests to give visitors a more wide-ranging experience. However, the lack of an available vehicle currently limits this expansion.

Cultural tourism in the Western Cape York region is likely to gain from new initiatives in this area, including the recent opening of the Mapoon Cultural Centre, located on the traditional lands of the Tjugundji people. Furthermore, the establishment and further development of Indigenous Knowledge Centres in Mapoon (New Mapoon Indigenous Knowledge Centre), Napranum (Mary Ann Coconut Library) and Aurukun (Wik Mungkan Indigenous Knowledge Centre) will not only serve the needs of the local Indigenous population, they also have the potential to provide resources of interest to visitors. The strategic integration of the Achimbun Cultural Precinct in Weipa with these regional arts and cultural initiatives could also markedly enhance tourism in the area.

Without exception, the art centres on the mainland in the FNQ region recognise the importance of tourism in providing a market for the goods and services they produce, including visitors accessing the centres online. In this regard there are incentives for art centres to develop their own distinct offerings to showcase the traditional culture of their local communities – for example, the Hope Vale Arts and Cultural Centre is considering introducing weaving workshops as a means of providing an interesting and attractive experience for visitors.

14.5 Concluding remarks

As outlined in Chapter 3 of this Report, our aim in carrying out this study has been to document the nature of art and cultural production by individual Indigenous cultural producers in the Far North Queensland region, and to assess the extent to which these activities might provide a means to integrate economic and cultural development in the region's remote communities. In this final section of this Report, we have drawn together some of the key policy issues that have emerged from the study. As we have noted, there is considerable variation across the region in existing economic, social and cultural circumstances and in different communities' potential for future development. It is unlikely

that a single policy measure can be found that will deal with all the issues at once; rather a mix of complementary measures will be needed to address different aspects.

It is important also to bear in mind that we are not suggesting that art and cultural production can on its own transform any remote community; rather, we argue that in the right conditions it can be an effective avenue towards employment creation and income generation, helping to improve the long-term prospects for economic sustainability and social viability, and doing so in a way that respects the fundamental importance of Indigenous culture. All the recommendations that flow from this study are pointed in this direction.

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