DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
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MACQUARIE University

Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Western Australia

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 seven 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
Region 7: South Australia outside APY Lands

Implementation of the National Survey in Region 1 was completed in 2016, with the rollout continuing in Regions 2–7 during the period from 2017 to date.[1] The present Report relates to the implementation of the National Survey in Region 5: Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA. Initial scoping trips to the region were undertaken in July and August 2019. Survey interviews began in the Pilbara in March 2020 but were interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic with its associated lockdowns. Interviewing resumed in November 2022 (Pilbara) and March 2023 (Ngaanyatjarra Lands), 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 this Western Australian 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 the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), WA Government.

Several former and present staff members in these departments and agencies were especially helpful, including Jacqueline Gropp, Laurine Kelson, Brooke Kelly, Libby Lawler, Karena Knudsen, Georgie Croft, Rebecca Kite and Callum Featherstone (IVAIS team, Office for the Arts); Roz Lipscombe, Colin Walker, Marty Cunningham, Rebecca Sheardown, Melissa McGrath, and Tina Askam (Culture and the Arts, DLGSC WA); and Rebecca Mostyn, Christen Cornell, Patricia Adjei and Franchesca Cubillo (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 Desmond Taylor (Martumili Artists); Lorna Dawson (Spinifex Hill Studio); Joy Lyons (Papulankutja Artists); and Carol Giles (Tjukurla/Docker River). In addition, a number of informal conversations were held with senior artists in many of the locations visited during the survey fieldwork.

[1] Reports to date are published as Macquarie University Economics Research Papers: *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Kimberley* (No. 2/2016); *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Central Desert (NT) and the APY Lands (SA)* (No. 1/2019); *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in North West NT and the Tiwi Islands* (No. 2/2019); *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in Arnhem Land (NT)* (No.2/ 2019); and *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in Far North Queensland* (No. 1/2024).

We would also like to thank the former and present managers and staff of the following art centres and other organisations in the region who cooperated with us and assisted in implementing the survey. They include: **Pilbara**: Spinifex Hill Studio, South Hedland (Maddie Sharrock, Greg Taylor); Juluwarlu Art Group, Roebourne (Michael Woodley, Lorrine Copley); Yinjaa-Barni Art, Roebourne (Patricia Floyd); Roebourne Art Group (Linda Rowlands); Cheeditha Art Group, Roebourne (Carrie McDowell); Martmili Artists, Newman (Amy Mukherjee, Carly Day), Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, South Hedland (Bruce Thomas, Janet Stewart); Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ), Newman (Tristan Cole); Ganalili Centre, Roebourne (Samantha Donaldson); BighART, Roebourne (Aimee Kepa, Patrick Wundke, Patrick Churnside); Ngaarda Media, Roebourne (Ryan Drechsler). **Ng Lands:** Tjarlirli Art, Tjukurla (Rosie Frecheville); Warakurna Artists, Warakurna (Jacob Gerrard-Brown, Lara Smith, Marlon Lambe); Tjanpi Centre Warakurna; Wilurarra Creative, Milyirrtjarra -Warburton (Deborah Grant, Silvano Giordano); Papulankutja Artists, Blackstone (Jennifer Mitchell); Kaltukatjara Art, Docker River; Minyma Kutjara Arts, Irrunytju – Wingellina (Claire Freer, Sally Foster); NG Media, Irrunytju – Wingellina (Indie Wood); Ngaannyatjarra Health Clinic, Wanarn; Janet Forbes, Jamieson; Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, Warburton (Damien McLean).

In addition, a number of organisations and individuals were helpful in our work. We extend our gratitude to Tim Pearn for his valuable guidance and fieldwork involvement in the early stages of this project, including the initial scoping trip; and to Jenna Dodge (Pilbara Development Commission) who provided advice and insights at several stages of the project. We would also like to thank Chad Creighton, CEO of AACHWA (Aboriginal Art Centre Hub Western Australia), who provided us with invaluable advice and assistance in many meetings during the course of the survey.

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 Western Australian artists and cultural producers who gave up their time to be interviewed for this survey and its piloting during 2019–2023.

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
March 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this Report we present 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 seven regions in remote Australia. The present Report relates to the implementation of the National Survey in Region 5: the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands of Western Australia.

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[2] 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 this region comprises adult Indigenous artists residing in remote and very remote areas in the region. Our estimates show that there are about 2,100 Indigenous adult practising artists in the study region.

The research team undertook scoping trips to the region in July and August 2019. Survey interviews began in the Pilbara in March 2020 but were interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic with its associated lockdowns. Interviewing resumed in November 2022 (Pilbara) and March 2023 (Ngaanyatjarra Lands). In the implementation of the survey, a total of 122 artists were interviewed, 77 in Pilbara and 45 in the NG Lands.

Socio-demographic characteristics of artists in the region

The average age of an Indigenous artist in the region is 51 years. The use of traditional language by artists is high in the region; 69 percent use their traditional language most these days, with 12 percent using Aboriginal English, and about 13 percent using English.

In terms of domestic arrangements, the largest group among artists in the region comprises single individuals with no dependent children (39 percent of artists). Just under one-third of artists in the survey region live with a disability or long-term illness. Around one-third of these artists said that this disability or illness had no effect on their practice as an artist and

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

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 region is visual arts, with about 85 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 making Indigenous medicines/cosmetics, as well as the continuing process of passing on cultural knowledge and artistic skills to others.

On average, an artist in the Pilbara and NG Lands region has engaged in almost seven 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 their 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 about 70 percent 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 some other cultural activities are currently engaged for one reason or another, including cultural archiving and record keeping. In aggregate these data point to the availability of significant levels of cultural and human capital in the Pilbara and NG Lands region that might be capable of further deployment in art and cultural production.

Seasonality has a minor impact on some cultural activities, particularly those requiring access to country 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 Pilbara and Ng Land acquire cultural knowledge from family members (93 percent) and from elders and community members (70 percent). The single most important pathway to learn culture is through a family member (for 77 percent of artists). In regard to the acquisition of artistic skills, the most common pathways are through learning from a family member (63 percent) and self-learning/learning on the job (46 percent). The single most important avenue for the largest proportion of artists is observing and practising with a family member (43 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 per week (average 18 hours per week); indeed around one-quarter work at visual arts more or less full time. In contrast, the largest proportion of performing artists (58 percent) work on their practice on average only one to two full days per month or less. An average artist's working week consists of 39 hours divided between the range of 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 creative activities (54 percent of their working week) than on cultural activities that support and maintain their culture (33 percent) or non-cultural work (13 percent).

Financial circumstances

Paid and unpaid activities

The great majority (94 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. However, only two out of five 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 arts management, interpreting/translating/consulting, and being on a board or committee; in all of these activities more than 40 percent of artists' involvement is reimbursed.

Sources of payment

Artists receive art and culture 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. Most payments for visual artists are derived from Indigenous corporations (56 percent of visual artists), while the majority of performing artists (55 percent) receive their income from commercial sources. Artists being paid for other cultural activities receive income mainly from Indigenous corporations.

Methods of payment

Works of visual artists are usually paid per piece (91 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 (81 percent). Salaries, fees for service, and casual wages are the most common methods of payment for other cultural activities.

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 in five of visual artists see their creative income as major income and a similar number of performing artists. 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

Many artists in the region (88 percent) rely on other income sources for support. The main source is government benefits (76 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 ten (12 percent) of artists, with a similar number pointing to other cultural activities as their main source of income. Three out of five artists nominated other sources (mainly government benefits) as their principal source of income in the last twelve months.

Mean and median incomes

Among those artists currently earning income from creative activities, the income from this work in the last twelve months averaged $5,300 (median $3,000). The mean income from other cultural activities among those being paid for these activities was $6,900 (median $500). When all sources of income are included, the total income was $33,600 in the last twelve months (median $33,700).

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. The sample sizes for other art forms are too small to provide for a similar analysis.

Artists' years of experience

The majority of artists in the region have been practising in the arts for over 20 years (36 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 region that comprises a major resource contributing to the generation of economic benefit for communities.

Work location

Most visual artists (87 percent) work in an art centre, and for two-thirds of them, the art centre is the location where they spend most time for art production. By contrast, most performing artists (57 percent) work in their own or a family member's home; for one-third of them this is the location where they spend most of their working time. It is noteworthy that around 30 percent of both visual artists and performing artists work on country occasionally, with almost nine in ten performing artists indicating working on country as their main work location.

Management of art practice

The great majority of visual artists (96 percent) have some form of management arrangement for their creative practice, mostly through an art centre. By contrast, only two in five performers have some management arrangement, with the majority working independently and without any specific arrangement for managing their creative practice.

Professional experiences

An important experience for many artists is to have their work showcased in a capital city or overseas. About two-thirds of remotely practising artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region have had their work shown in capital cities, and about 14 percent have had some exposure overseas. Another significant experience for some artists is to win an award in a competition. Our data show that just under one quarter of artists (23 percent) have won an award or prize. The impact of all these experiences on artists' careers are mostly described as "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 two out of five respondents (39 percent) said they are happy with the status quo, while more than half (56 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 lack of time and a lack of financial return from artistic work. The next most commonly cited reasons were family or health issues.

Use of technologies

Artists use a variety of digital technologies in the process of creating their art. About one-third of remote Indigenous artists in the region (36 percent) use some form of digital technology, mainly a mobile or smart phone, used by 22 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, filmmaking, and audio-visual production generally.

Copyright issues

A large proportion of artists in the region (87 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 13 percent stated they did not know or were not sure if their copyright has been infringed. Of the small number of artists who thought their work had been copied or used in some inappropriate way (9 percent), we found that few took action (25 percent), too small a number to allow any conclusion to be drawn as to the success or otherwise of such action.

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 49 and 63 percent of artists respectively. Similarly, the processes of cultural teaching and cultural learning were noted by many artists (37 and 17 percent respectively), 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

Among the statements regarding the impact of arts and cultural activities on the economic sustainability of remote communities, the potential for art production to provide jobs and incomes for young people was very strongly endorsed (94 percent of artists), as was the role of artists and writers in training young people in the arts. The underlying importance of bilingual education was also recognised. Cultural tourism was seen by many artists as having significant potential in the future development of both the Pilbara and the NG Lands. The economic contribution of tourism was recognised (89 percent of respondents) and the cultural dimension – enabling tourists to experience Indigenous culture at first hand – was also endorsed.

The results show that there is 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 these remote communities.

Gender differences

The women/men gender ratio in the Pilbara and NG Lands 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 about half of women being over age 55 compared to 30 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 (27 percent compared to 13 percent). For male artists, education levels are somewhat lower than for the Indigenous population overall in remote and very remote areas across Australia, and lower than those for all Australian professional artists. Similar numbers of man and women artists gain their cultural knowledge from family members, but more men than women learn their culture from elders or community members. In the case of skill acquisition, learning from a family member is more important for male artists that female (61 vs. 41 percent). It is also noteworthy that almost 30 percent of women artists see self learning/learning on the job as their most important pathway for gaining industry skills and experience compared to only 6 percent of men.

There is a stronger presence of women than of men in the visual arts, with the reverse being true for the performing arts. In terms of being paid, a larger proportion of women than men in the visual arts are currently being paid (92 vs. 67 percent), whereas in the performing arts more men than women are currently receiving and income (30 vs. 8 percent).

Turning to gender differences in financial circumstances, we note that the proportion of women artists for whom income from creative activities is their primary income source is significantly greater than for men (17 vs. 6 percent). By contrast, the data show that proportionately more men than women identify income from other activities, both cultural and non-cultural, as their main source of income.

In the Australian workforce at large, and also for mainstream professional artists, there exists a gender gap in incomes, with females earning less than their male counterparts. However, our data indicate that for First Nations artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region, the reverse is true for creative incomes, total income from work, and total income. For example, the mean annual total income of women artists is about 35 percent greater than the total incomes for men.

Regional differences

The region covered by this component of the National Survey of Remote Indigenous Artists falls partly in the Pilbara and partly in the NG Lands. 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 the two areas are as follows:

- The First Nations artists in the Pilbara are on average older than their counterparts in the NG Lands.
- The use of the traditional language in everyday life is more pronounced in the NG Lands than in the Pilbara, with the reverse being true for English.
- Pilbara artists are generally better educated in formal terms than are NG Lands artists.
- Pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge and skills are similar in the two areas.
- Among the artforms, the visual arts is more prominent as an area of practice in the Pilbara than in the NG Lands.

- Across almost all cultural activities that artists are engaged in or paid for, Pilbara artists figure more prominently than NG Lands artists.
- There are significant differences in incomes across all income categories, with Pilbara artists being in a generally more favourable financial situation than NG Lands artists.
- These results may reflect differences in accessibility to markets and other remoteness issues, as well as the differential impact of Covid-19 on art practice in the region.

Conclusions and policy issues

There is considerable variation across Western Australia 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.

(1) Infrastructure needs

Art centres

Artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region recognise 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 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.

Language centres

The preservation of language is fundamental to cultural maintenance in First Nations communities. Language centres have a specific objective of documenting local languages and providing opportunities for writers and storytellers to create works in their local tongue. They may also produce dictionaries, grammars, storybooks, recordings and other resources that promote the preservation and use of Indigenous languages. There is scope for the establishment of more language support in the region if resources permit.

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 Western Australia that support the work of artists. The most important of these are the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of WA (AACHWA), Desart, and ANKA (Association of Northern and Kimberley Artists). Of these the first two are the most relevant to the Pilbara and NG Lands region. 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.

(2) Expanding economic opportunities

Earning income from culture-related activities

In addition to the creative arts there are several other culture-related activities that generate income for artists, 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

Opportunities exist for artists and creative workers 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 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 constraint on the growth of such initiatives is likely to be a lack of 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. Opportunities exist for organisations in the Pilbara and NG Lands region to support the development of First Nations creative businesses more widely, a process that would contribute to enhancing the sustainability of remote communities in the region.

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. These aspects are strongly supported by art fairs and festivals, an important component of the market structure of the art economy in the region.

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.

(3) 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

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. 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. Exposure to and participation in art centre activities can provide 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

Virtually all artists spend some part of their time caring for country, and many rely on accessing their ancestral land 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 if art and culture are to become a stronger source of economic empowerment for remote Aboriginal communities in the Pilbara and NG Lands 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.

(4) Cultural tourism

Tourism in Western Australia forms part of the Commonwealth Government's strategy for growing the tourism market nationally, as administered through Tourism Australia. Within Western Australia, the art and culture of remote First Nations communities is featured in the tourism marketing opportunities promoted by the WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council.

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.

Cultural tourism opportunities differ significantly between the two areas covered by our study. Tourism represents an important market for First Nations art from the Pilbara, with

galleries in South Hedland, Roebourne and Newman. There are some organised tours that focus on Indigenous culture. In the NG Lands, by contrast, opportunities for tourism are very limited because of the area's remoteness, the permit requirements for access, and the lack of restaurants, cafes and other facilities that tourists require. Some sales of art works to visitors occur through the region's art centres.

(5) Concluding remarks

There is considerable variation across the region covered by this study in the economic, social and cultural circumstances in the various communities and in their potential for future development. It is unlikely that a single policy measure will be found to address all the issues we have identified; rather, a mix of complementary measures will be needed to address different aspects.

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 Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Western Australia

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 two areas in Western Australia, the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands. 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 cultural 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.[3] 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 study 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 seven 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
- Region 7: South Australia outside the APY Lands, SA

[3] The most recent survey was undertaken in 2021–22; 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.[4] 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. Region 6 was completed in 2024 and publication of the present report marks the completion of the project in Region 5. 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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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 WA. 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 WA Government in general, and of Arts WA 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 in the State as well as in commercial and non-government sectors. Likewise at the Federal level, the outcomes from this study provide essential data for the implementation of the Australia Government's recent cultural policy *Revive*, with its emphasis on strengthening First Nations arts and culture.

[4] 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. The report for Region 6 has been published as Research Report No. 1 of 2024, in the same series and under the same authorship as in earlier reports.

2. ART AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study examines how art and cultural production can economically empower remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We recognise the vital importance of culture in First Nations peoples' lives. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote areas, their intangible cultural capital is a key resource, underpinning both daily life and creative pursuits. We argue that by leveraging their cultural and natural resources, these communities have the best chance of achieving long-term economic and cultural sustainability.

2.1 Analytical framework

To analyse this complex issue, we have developed a model that captures the essence of the First Nations art and cultural economy in remote regions. This model differs from standard economic frameworks, as it is grounded in First Nations' understanding of sustainability. For Indigenous peoples worldwide, the interconnected roles of land, cultural law and language are fundamental to economic, social and cultural life[5]. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities exemplify these principles, which have sustained their culture for thousands of years[6].

Our study focuses on individual artists and cultural producers within this unique economy. We propose a model that expands on the traditional three-sector framework (government, commercial and non-profit) by adding a fourth sector: community/family. This fourth sector interacts with all others, reflecting the reality of First Nations life.

Organisations in this economy often operate as 'hybrid' entities, blending elements from several two sectors – state, market, non-profit and community. The boundaries between these sectors are fluid, changing with time and circumstances. This concept of organisational hybridity, which emerged in the mid-1990s, has gained traction in what is now called the "hybrid movement" (Battilana et al. 2012). We noted that our use of "hybrid" differs from Jon Altman's concept of the 'hybrid economy' (Altman 2007), which comprises state, market and customary sectors.

In remote First Nations communities, hybrid organisations take various forms. These include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned corporations, social enterprises, community-run initiatives, and commercial businesses with corporate social responsibility programs. Individual First Nations arts and cultural practitioners also embody this hybrid approach, as they work across all sectors.

Art centres in remote First Nations communities exemplify hybrid organisations. These Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned, managed and governed enterprises often receive state support, yet must operate as profit-generating businesses. Many art centres also fill gaps in social welfare services, providing services like account management for artists liaison with government services for artists and their families, training and education for community members, and documentation and archiving of culturally significant material. Often, an art centre might be the only local organisation with functional equipment like

[5] See the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007). Also, for a discussion of these issues, see Throsby and Petetskaya (2016).

[6] A note on terminology. In the broad public discussion about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, different organisations, agencies, institutions and individuals use different terms. In this Report we use First Nations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous interchangeably, without implying any priority order.

internet, phone, printer, or transport. It can serve as a vital link between the community and outside agencies, acting as a broker between artists and external stakeholders.

Ranger groups offer another example of hybrid organisations. While they receive government support for environmental services, they also engage in market activities. These might include plant harvesting, producing bush medicines or cosmetics for retail sale, and trading Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). Despite these commercial aspects, ranger programs fundamentally extend the long-standing Indigenous practice of caring for country. For example, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) is a Martu organisation in Pilbara that was established in 2005. It works towards three complementary objectives to achieve a more sustainable future: supporting Martu to look after culture and country; building a viable economy in Martu communities; and building pathways for young Martu to a healthy future. Martu expertise in traditional land management techniques is enhanced by collaboration with specialists from WA's Parks and Wildlife Service and arid zone ecologists. These partnerships have enabled the program to explore and apply innovative methods that integrate Western science with traditional Martu knowledge.

There are, however, other types of hybrid organisations. An example from the NG Lands is NG Media, a multimedia organisation. This independent Yarnangu corporation employs over 35 Yarnangu workers and its Board of Directors consists of Yarnangu members. Additionally, it hires non-Indigenous producers, coordinators and directors from across Australia who share their skills with the Yarnangu. This skill exchange happens through collaborative work and more formal media training sessions.

Our analytical framework places the individual cultural producer at the heart of the system, engaging in cultural production and transmission across all four sectors. This producer is seen as a community member with various responsibilities – cultural, social, environmental and others – operating in an environment influenced by often competing values, agendas and rationalities from each sector.

The hybrid nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in remote areas allows for overlapping and sharing of services between organisations. This structure allows for broader community access and engagement. For example, collaborations between Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) and Martumili Artists in the Pilbara allow these organisations to involve nearly all senior cultural producers simultaneously in making important decisions. Cooperation and interaction between organisations in the region can be reached in a variety of ways:

- Tourist operations partnering with art centres or ranger groups.
- Art centres benefiting from tourist influx brought by tour operators.
- Artists collaborating with rangers to gather materials on country (e.g. grass, bush beads, wood).
- Artists cooperating with local organisations which can take artists on country to collect materials and create new work.
- Community groups using local multimedia centres for event documentation and promotion.
- Dancers and musicians utilising empty school spaces for rehearsals and performances.
- Art centres acting as auspicing bodies for local dance troupes or other art groups.
- Local libraries collaborating with artists on archives or artwork descriptions.
- Artists earning income through school-run cultural programs.

- Rangers assisting tourists in various ways, including: giving talks at tourist sites; coordinating with emergency services to help locate tourists who stray off track; checking tourists' permits; and so on.

Importantly, the strong interconnections between sectors mean that boosting one or more sectors in remote First Nations communities can potentially stimulate overall local economic growth.

In summary, this hybrid model allows First Nations communities to balance cultural preservation with economic participation, creating unique organisations that serve multiple purposes in remote areas. This interconnected approach reflects the holistic nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and economy, where art, environment, education, and community are deeply intertwined. It highlights the potential for targeted support to have wide-reaching benefits across remote First Nations communities.

2.2 Particularities of employment

A central focus of this study is exploring job creation through art and cultural production in remote First Nations' communities in the Pilbara and the NG Lands. Employment opportunities in these areas are typically scarce, especially for younger generations, often forcing them to seek work in larger centres. Remote jobs face unique challenges for Indigenous workers including:

- Limited accessibility, resources, services, infrastructure, and communication.
- Restricted access to professional development, training, and education.
- Seasonal work and extreme climatic conditions.
- Balancing cultural and other work obligations.

There is a pressing need for culturally appropriate and/or flexible jobs that can accommodate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural requirements and obligations.

2.3 Government initiatives

The Community Development Program (CDP), which operated from the 1970s until 2021[7], aimed to address remote Indigenous employment issues. This program has been directed at tackling employment problems in remote First Nations communities, applying an approach involving training individuals for potential jobs. An alternative is to recognise that significant skills and employment options already exist in the region. 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. This Survey directly addresses this need.

The Australian Government is now developing a new Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program (RJED) to replace the CDP. Set to launch in the second half of 2024, the RJED promises to deliver "meaningful jobs with fair pay and conditions", backed by comprehensive employment services. A key feature of the RJED is its emphasis on community empowerment. The program will support remote communities in identifying and prioritising local projects and job opportunities, aiming to boost economic prospects in their regions. The RJED is distinctive because of its collaborative approach – being developed in partnership with First Nations people, it marks a shift in addressing employment challenges in remote First Nations areas. It reflects a growing recognition of the importance of First

[7] CDP services will continue through an extension of most CDP provider agreements until 30 June 2025.

Nations self-determination in shaping effective and culturally appropriate employment solutions. By prioritising local input and fair working conditions, the RJED represents a promising step towards more sustainable and community-driven economic development in remote Indigenous Australia.

2.4 Remote living and cultural engagement

Contrary to the belief that jobs in remote areas should be concentrated in larger communities, 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 First Nations unemployment.

The most recent NATSISS data show that 44 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote and very remote areas live in small homelands/outstations. Another 40 percent visit these areas periodically for activities such as fishing, hunting, collecting bush medicines and art materials, creating art, and participating in ceremonies (NATSISS 2014–15). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples there are many economic, health, social and cultural benefits that living in small homelands/outstations can provide (Altman and Taylor 1989; McDermott et al. 1998; Rowley et al. 2008). When living on their country, "people feel that they have a degree of autonomy, of control over their own destiny" (Morphy 2008, p. 388).

One example from this survey region is the case of the Martu people:

> "The return of people to live on the country has supported the maintenance of law and custom among [the Martu people]. They remain one of the most strongly "tradition-oriented" groups of Aboriginal people in Australia today partly because of the protection that their physical environment gave them against non-Aboriginal intruders. It is not a welcoming environment for those who do not know how to locate and use its resources for survival. Of great importance is the continuing strength of their belief in the Dreaming." – Federal Court of Australia, James on behalf of the Martu People v State of Western Australia, 2002 FCA 1208 (French, J).

Importantly, remote living does not mean isolation. Many artists working from remote locations engage with national and international audiences. Cultural tourism brings global visitors to experience authentic Indigenous culture. Remote First Nations communities also participate in research collaborations and commercial ventures with diverse stakeholders located elsewhere in Australia or overseas.[8]

Our analytical framework acknowledges these diverse realities for First Nations cultural producers living and working in remote locations, recognising the unique challenges and opportunities they face.

2.5 Mapping remote Indigenous cultural production

The National Survey, of which this study is a part, has developed a broad conceptual framework that aims to define the nature and extent of Indigenous cultural production in remote and very remote locations. The mapping of cultural-economic activities contributing to art and cultural production in Pilbara and the NG Lands has been based on similar exercises conducted by our team in East Arnhem Land (2012–2014) and other regions (2015–2019) as part of the National Survey.

[8] 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).

This ongoing mapping has helped identify major cultural-economic activities in remote areas, broadly classified into two categories:

- Creative artistic activities.
- Cultural continuation, maintenance, and applied cultural activities (referred to as "other cultural activities").

These activities, along with corresponding occupations, are defined as follows:

Creative artistic activities:

- Visual arts (painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, punu, tjanpi, recycled art etc.)
- Performing arts (acting, dancing, music)
- Composing or choreographing
- Writing or storytelling
- Film, TV, radio, or multimedia production

Cultural maintenance and applied cultural activities:

- Teaching arts and culture
- Caring for country
- Cultural governance (boards, committees, councils)
- Interpreting, translating, cross-cultural consulting
- Making Indigenous medicine, cosmetics, providing health services
- Traditional food practices (fishing, hunting, bush food)
- Ceremonial participation
- Cultural tourism
- Arts administration
- Arts management
- Cultural archiving and record keeping

All these activities align with standard industrial definitions under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 (Revision 2.0).

There are some key definitional issues in interpreting the above list of activities:

- "Performing arts" differs from "Participating in ceremonies". We classified activities as "performing arts" if they involved showcasing local culture to outsiders.
- "Fishing, hunting, collecting bush food" and "Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics" require in-depth knowledge of the local environment, including seasons, ecology, flora, and fauna (Morphy 2008).

"Caring for country" encompasses various land and sea management practices using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ecological knowledge. This includes day-to-day activities while living on country and may also refer to formal ranger activities.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

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

The National Survey, of which this study is a part, aims to create a representative database on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote Australia develop their professional practice. This database will provide insights into the transmission of cultural knowledge and creative skills across generations in different remote regions. It will also show how First Nations artists use their expertise for both cultural and economic purposes while pursuing their artistic goals. The database will cover major remote art-producing regions in Australia and can be updated over time.

The survey's results are already informing policy decisions for various stakeholders, including artists, community organisations, art businesses, art centres, peak bodies, and government agencies. Key policy areas benefiting from this data include:

- Expanding economic opportunities through cultural capital in remote First Nations communities.
- Education, training, and skill development.
- Infrastructure requirements.
- The role of art centres and non-government organisations.
- Cultural tourism.
- Long-term sustainability of remote First Nations communities.

The survey's policy impact is expected to grow from local to national levels as the database expands.

3.2 The survey in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands region

In the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands region, the survey maintains its overall objectives while examining various aspects of art and cultural production, including:

- The range and extent of artists' cultural-economic activities.
- How artists acquire knowledge and skills (the cultural capital) in remote areas.
- Current economic engagement with arts and cultural production.
- Distribution of paid and unpaid work, time allocation, and income earned.
- Professional creative art practices in the region.
- Cultural production's role in sustainable community development.

The report's structure includes a methodology chapter, followed by detailed survey findings, a policy discussion and conclusions.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods utilised in this study, focusing on the implementation of this regional survey. Initially, the geographical scope of the study is defined. Subsequently, the procedures for identifying the target population and calculating the necessary sample size for the survey are explained. Following this, a comprehensive account of the survey procedures is provided, along with an explanation of the statistical weights applied in the analysis to standardise the findings according to the known demographic characteristics of the target population.

4.1 Definition of study area

The designated region for this survey, identified as the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands study area, is defined by several Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) areas as recognised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). These areas encompass: Ashburton (WA), East Pilbara, Port Hedland, South Hedland, Roebourne, Karratha, Newman and Leinster – Leonora SA2 areas. The study is confined to those localities within these SA2 boundaries that are categorised as either "remote" or "very remote" in alignment with the classifications provided by the ASGS Remoteness Structure.

4.2 Target population

The study's target population includes adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists living in the remote and very remote areas of the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands[9] region. The region is culturally and linguistically diverse, home to various First Nations communities, including those of the Ngaanyatjarra, Yindjibarndi, Pitjantjatjara, Ngayarda, Manyjiljarra, Martu Wangka, Walmajarri, Nyangumarta andKariyarra peoples.

Participants were chosen based on four key criteria. To qualify for the survey, individuals had 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 Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands 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

Precise data on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists involved in various artistic activities in Australia's remote regions are largely unavailable. To conduct our survey, we relied 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.

[9] We use the common abbreviation NG Lands in this Report.

Our survey employs a broader definition of an artist, including additional art forms such as composing, choreography, filmmaking, and multimedia art. As a result, the artist population figures from NATSISS are likely to underestimate the number of artists according to our survey's criteria. In view of the lack of alternative data, we relied on the NATSISS figures. Our classification includes individuals with expertise in specific art forms, not just those active in the past year, which is the primary focus of NATSISS. For comparison, we used data from our own survey of artists engaged in at least one of five creative activities "within the last 12 months" of the reference year for this study.

An analysis of the 2014–15 NATSISS data indicates that in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, 31.4 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote areas and 31.2 percent in very remote areas engaged in at least one of the specified artistic activities (see Table 4.1). We use these percentages to estimate the total population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote and very remote areas of the Pilbara and NG Lands region, based on the 2021 Australian Census, to arrive at a minimum estimate of the artist population in the region, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Population distribution and size

ABS 2021 Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (15+)						
	Population[a]		Participated in selected artistic activities in 2014–15[b]				
	Remote	Very remote	Remote	Very remote	Remote	Very remote	Total
	N		%		N		
Ashburton (WA)	-	540			-	168	168
East Pilbara	-	1,007			-	314	314
Karratha	976	-			306	-	306
Leinster – Leonora	-	1,299			-	405	405
Newman	-	338	31.4	31.2	-	105	105
Port Hedland	221	-			69	-	69
Roebourne	807	16			253	5	258
South Hedland	1,651	-			518	-	518
Total	**3,655**	**3,200**			**1,148**	**998**	**2,146**

[a] Source: ABS 2021 Census.
[b] Source: NATSISS 2014–15.
-Indicates nil responses in this sample.

These calculations result in an estimate of approximately 2,100 adult (aged 15 and over) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists participating in the specified arts activities in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands study region. While recognising that this estimate may not fully capture the actual number, we use it to determine a rough sample size for further analysis. Our calculations indicate that a sample size of 92 individuals would be necessary to achieve a 10 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level. In our survey, we achieved a sample size of 122 participants in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands region, meeting the statistical requirements for the study.

4.4 Survey procedure

Due to the absence of a comprehensive list of individual adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the study area, creating a traditional sample frame for this research was not feasible. As a result, we employed a non-probability sampling approach, identifying potential participants through various regional entities involved in artistic and cultural production. These entities included a diverse range of organisations such as art and cultural centres, galleries, community centres, educational institutions, healthcare and aged care facilities, youth centres, men's sheds, women's centres, TV and radio stations, 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 the inclusivity of all individuals from the target population, our recruitment strategies were diverse and comprehensive:

- We contacted potential survey participants through their affiliations with the abovementioned organisations or via their family connections within these groups.
- Interviewers explained the survey's purpose and scope to potential participants to determine their willingness to participate.
- A series of screening questions were administered to confirm the eligibility of respondents, thereby refining the participant pool.

Upon completing the survey, the collected data enabled us to align the sample's attributes with those of the broader target demographic, allowing us to assign appropriate statistical weights as detailed 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: Port Hedland, South Hedland, Roebourne, Cheeditha and Newman in the Pilbara; and Blackstone Tjukurla, Warakurna, Warburton, Wingellina and other communities in the NG Lands.

Scoping trips conducted in July and August 2019 allowed the research team to test and refine the survey tool with input from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors, ensuring it accurately reflected the region's unique artistic and cultural context.

The main data collection took place in three phases. Survey interviews in Pilbara were completed in March 2020 (Phase 1). However fieldwork in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands had to be postponed due to the COVID pandemic, because lockdowns in remote communities made access to the region impossible. The project timeline was adjusted to accommodate these changes, ensuring our research goals were met while prioritising the health and safety of the communities involved. Further interviews were conducted in November 2022 in Pilbara (Phase 2) and in March 2023 in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Phase 3).

All survey interviews were conducted face-to-face, facilitated by computer-assisted methods. Survey questionnaires were administered in English, or with a translator in the relatively few cases where translation was needed.

4.5 Calculation of weights

Our survey collected data from 122 regional artists, with 77 from Pilbara and 45 from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. To evaluate how representative our sample was compared to the broader community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in 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 data. This reference group included

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adults from Western Australia's very remote and remote areas who engage in the creative artistic activities described in section 4.3.

The NATSISS data for most regions enabled detailed stratification based on age, sex, and varying levels of residential remoteness. However, due to high relative standard errors in age statistics in the 2014–15 NATSISS data for Western Australia, our analysis restricted the comparison of our sample to the NATSISS data focusing solely on sex and remoteness. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that all weights in our study are calculated with an adjustment solely for sex and the degree of disparity in residential remoteness, without accounting for variations in age.

Using the NATSISS data as a benchmark, Table 4.2 outlines our weighting calculations. These calculations show that adjustments were necessary to correct for disparities between our sample and the target demographic. The final row of the table displays the weights applied to the survey data to produce estimates that align with the sex and remoteness distribution of the target population. These weighting procedures have adjusted our findings to represent more accurately the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artist population in Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Nonetheless, standard statistical disclaimers apply. Note that the data presented in the subsequent tables of our report are the adjusted (weighted) data.

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

	Very remote		Remote		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Our sample, %	17	40	10	33	100
NATSISS 14–15, %	30	22	16	31	100
Weights applied in the survey	**1.73**	**0.56**	**1.67**	**0.96**	**1.00**

5. ARTISTS' SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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

Table 5.1 displays the gender, family circumstances and disability characteristics of our sample of remote First Nations artists in Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, compared to all Australian artists. Notably, there are more female than male artists among the artists in Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, though the proportion of females is smaller than in the broader population of Australian professional artists. A detailed examination of gender characteristics in our sample is provided in Chapter 12 of this Report.

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and all Australian artists (percent of artists) [(a)]

	Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in Pilbara & the NG Lands	All Australian artists*
Sex [(b)]		
Female	54	65
Male	46	35
Total	100	100
Family circumstances		
Single, no dependent children	39	27
Single, with dependent children	16	4
Married/living with partner, no dependent children	22	39
Married/living with partner, with dependent children	23	30
Total	**100**	**100**
Disability/ impairment that affects artists' work		
Yes	31	17
No	69	83
Total	100	100

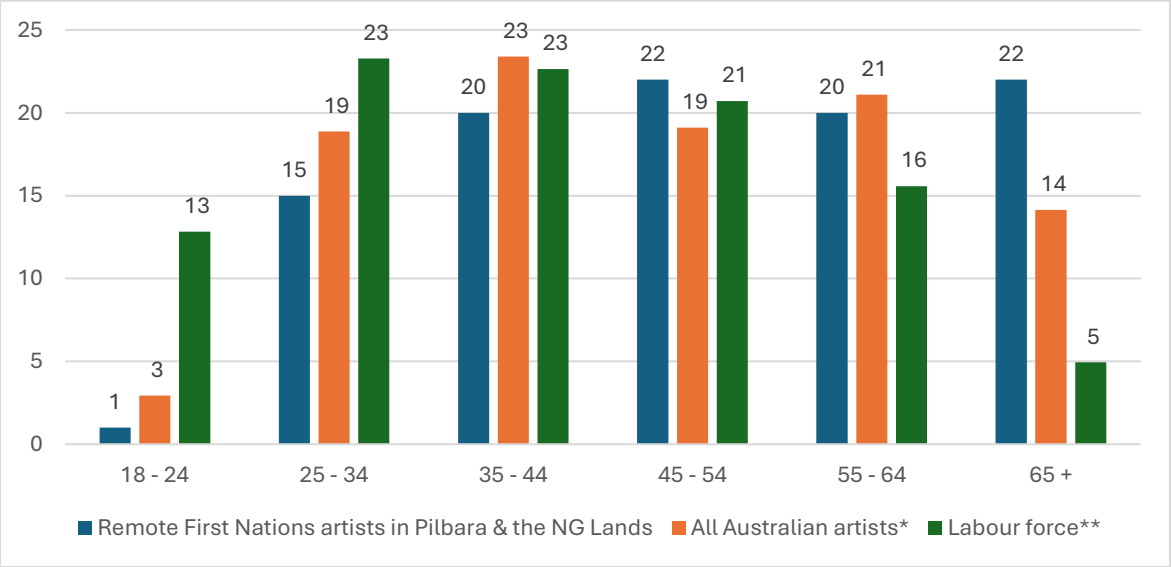
*Artists' Survey 2023.
[(a)] Excludes "Prefer not to say" responses.
[(b)] Excludes "Gender non-binary/ fluid" and "Other" responses for All Artists.

Regarding family circumstances, the most common domestic arrangement for all Australian artists is being married or living with a partner without dependent children. In contrast, the largest group among First Nations artists in the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands region consists of single individuals without dependent children. Among First Nations artists in the region, 39 percent have dependent children. On average, these artists are the primary caregivers for about 3.5 children each.

In terms of disability, nearly a third (31 percent) of First Nations artists in the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands region experience some form of impairment that has an impact on their work, compared to 17 percent of all Australian artists. Among those with a disability or long-term illness in the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands region, approximately 35 percent report that their impairment does not negatively affect their artistic practice. For the others, 58 percent indicate that it sometimes affects them, and seven percent report being negatively affected by their disability all the time.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the age distribution of artists in the region compared to all practising professional artists in Australia and the overall Australian labour force. The age distribution of the Australian labour force generally follows the typical life cycle of the average worker. In contrast, practising professional artists often continue working beyond the usual retirement age. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the study region, as with all Australian artists, tend to begin their artistic careers later and continue working into older ages compared to the average labour force. Notably, a higher percentage of Indigenous artists in the region continue working in their older age compared to all Australian artists and the overall labour force. For those aged 65 and older, 22 percent of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the region continue work in their creative practice, compared to 14 percent of all Australian artists and just five percent of the Australian labour force.

Figure 5.1 Age distribution of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, 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 April 2024.

Indigenous artists in the region reside in a variety of locations from regional towns to remote outstations, as Table 5.2 demonstrates. The highest proportion of artists reside in regional towns (60 percent). A substantial portion of artists (50 percent) also live in communities. A smaller percentage spend some of their time living in capital cities (15 percent) and outstations/homelands/on country (nine percent). The average time spent residing in a regional town is the highest, indicating that artists in the region tend to have more extended residency stays in regional towns compared to other locations. The average time residing in communities is less than the time spent in regional towns. Artists spend very little time in capital cities and outstations.

Table 5.2 Artists residing in their usual place of residence and length of their residence (percent of artists)

(n=122)	Capital city	Regional town	Commu-nity	Outstation/ homeland/ on country	Overseas
Artists residing in locations* (percent)	15	60	50	9	-
Average time residing in locations (months)					
Mean	0.2	6.5	5.1	0.4	-
Median	-	11	-	-	-

*Multiple responses allowed.

For many regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, their artistic and cultural activities extend beyond their remote communities to other parts of the region, across Australia, and even internationally. Our data indicate that 38 percent of remote Indigenous artists in the region travelled for arts and cultural purposes within the last twelve months, as shown in Table 5.3. The most common destination for these artists was a capital city, with 55 percent of those who travelled visiting one. On average, these artists spent about one month engaged in travel outside their place of residence for artistic purposes in the past year.

While many artists in the region speak multiple Indigenous languages as well as English, the survey asked artists to identify the single language group to which they belong. The results are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.3 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 (n=122) (%)	
Yes	38
No	59
Don't know/ Not sure	3
Total	**100**
Travel destinations (n=46) (%)*	
Capital city	55
Regional Town	37
Community	28
Outstation/ homeland/ on country	5
Overseas	-
Total	**100**
Average time spent travelling (months)*	
Mean	1.1
Median	1.0

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

Table 5.4 Language group (percent of artists)

Language group (n=122)	%
Ngaanyatjarra	22
Yindjibarndi	20
Pitjantjatjara	14
Ngayarda	7
Manyjiljarra	6
Martu Wangka	6
Walmajarri	4
Nyangumarta	3
Kariyarra	2
Other	16
Total	**100**

Concerning the language most used in daily life, we found that 69 percent primarily use their traditional language, 12 Percent use Aboriginal English, and 13 percent primarily use English. These figures can be compared with the 2014–15 NATSISS data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote or very remote areas in Australia. According to the NATSISS data, artists in these areas Australia-wide use their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language more frequently than non-artists (48 percent compared to 38 percent, respectively).

Table 5.5 Language most used these days (percent of artists)

Language used most these days	%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language	69
English	13
Aboriginal English	12
Other^	6
Total	**100**

^Those respondents who could not identify one language as the most used one, selected “Other”.

6. ARTISTS' CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In this chapter, we explore the characteristics of artistic and cultural work among artists in the Pilbara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands region of WA, 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 artists 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 94 percent of artists have had experience in visual arts, whilst 78 percent have been engaged in caring for country at some time in their lives, and a similar number have been engaged in fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food. At the other end of the scale, it is noteworthy that just over a quarter (27 percent) have experience in the specialised area of filmmaking and multimedia work, and a similar proportion (26 percent) have engaged in writing/storytelling. Composing and choreographing has the smallest proportion of regional artists with experience; even so, more than one in ten (11 percent) have had such experience at some point in their artistic practice. These areas contribute to the diversity of cultural practice in the region, despite their relatively small numbers of experienced practitioners.

The diversity and breadth of cultural practices among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions of WA is further demonstrated by the high number of cultural activities each artist has engaged in throughout their 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. Examples of cross-art form practice include musicians who not only perform but also compose and write lyrics for their compositions, and visual artists who 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.

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

Activities* (n=122)	Have ever engaged in activity	Currently engaged in activity**	Currently being paid for activity**
		%	
Creative artistic			
Visual arts	94	85	80
Performing arts	49	35	18
Writing/ storytelling	26	21	7
Composing/ choreographing	11	9	7
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	27	9	5
Other cultural			
Arts administration	25	22	20
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	39	29	17
Teaching others in arts and culture	58	49	16
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	40	27	11
Caring for country	78	68	11
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	57	49	6
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	78	70	5
Providing cultural tourism services	31	20	2
Arts management	2	2	2
Ceremonies	46	30	1
Cultural archiving, record keeping	16	5	1

*Multiple responses allowed.
**In the last 12 months.

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

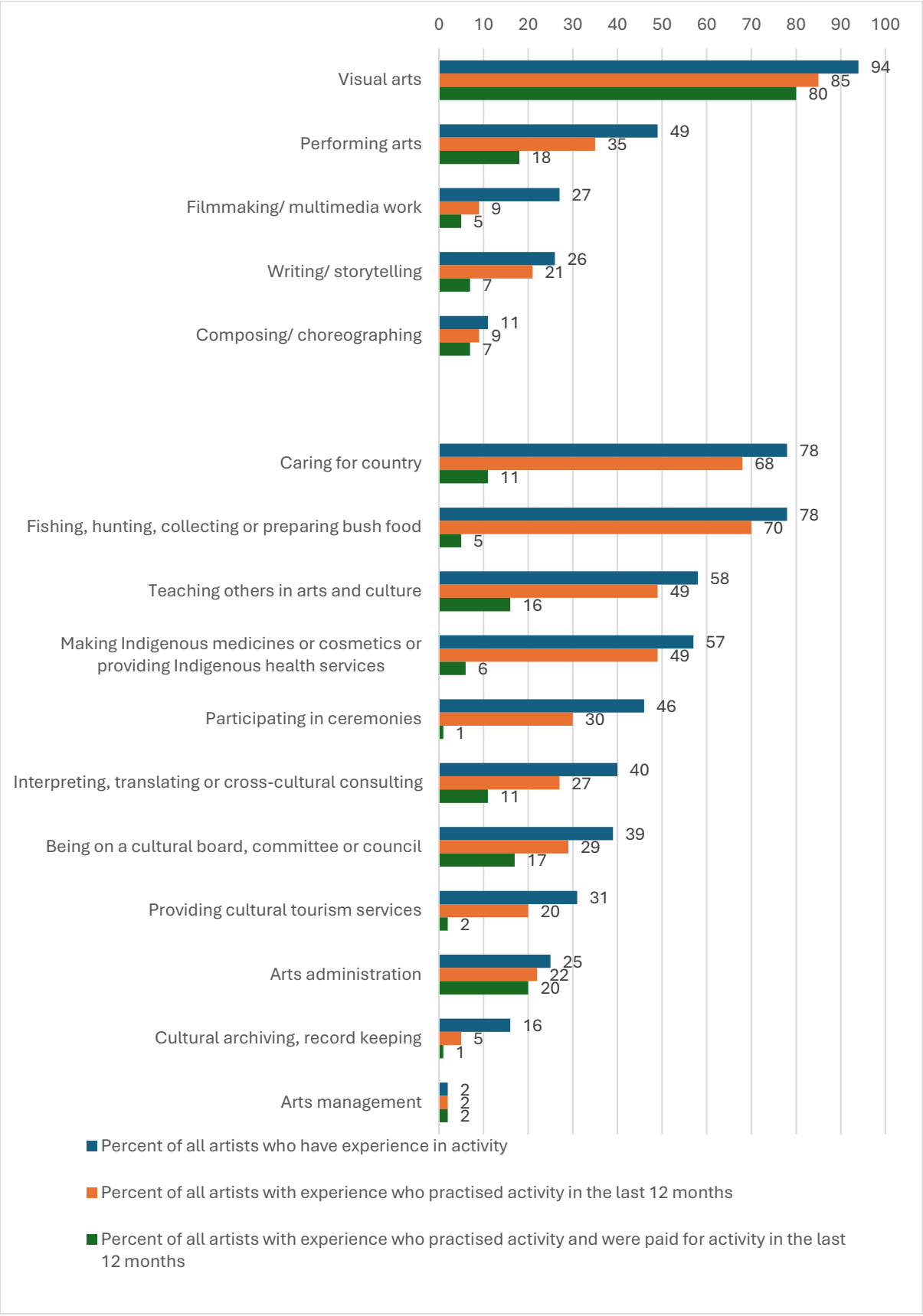


Table 6.2 Mean and median number of cultural economic activities undertaken by artists (number of activities)

Activities	Have ever done	Currently doing*	Currently being paid*
		(n=122)	
Mean			
Creative artistic	2.1	1.6	1.2
Other cultural	4.8	3.7	0.9
All cultural activities	**6.9**	**5.3**	**2.1**
Median			
Creative artistic	2.0	1.0	1.0
Other cultural	5.0	4.0	1.0
All cultural activities	**7.0**	**5.0**	**1.0**

*In the last 12 months.

On average, an artist in the region has been involved in approximately seven different cultural-economic activities throughout their lifetime. This typically includes engagement in two artistic activities and in five other cultural activities. Currently, an average artist is actively engaged in just less than two artistic activities and approximately four 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 about 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, such as caring for country, fishing and hunting, making bush medicines (e.g. using a Bloodwood sap for healing wounds and sores) and participating in ceremonies currently involve large numbers of artists. Despite this, only a small fraction receives economic rewards for their involvement. Examples of artists whose cultural activities do earn revenue for them include some women artists in Warakurna who sell their bush medicine through Tjanpi Desert Weavers. Regardless of whether or not artists' cultural activities yield income, the substantial level of both experience and ongoing engagement in them underscores their enduring significance in the lives of artists and their role in maintaining and transmitting cultural knowledge.

Gaps between current engagement and payment are also evident for some of the creative activities shown in Table 6.1. For example, many current involvements in performing arts and writing/storytelling (35 and 21 percent respectively) do not translate into ongoing paid work in these creative activities (18 and 7 percent respectively). Likewise, gaps are also observed in teaching, interpreting, and providing tourism services.

As well as the gap between engagement and financial reward, there is also a notable disparity between the number of artists with experience in a particular activity and those currently practicing 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.

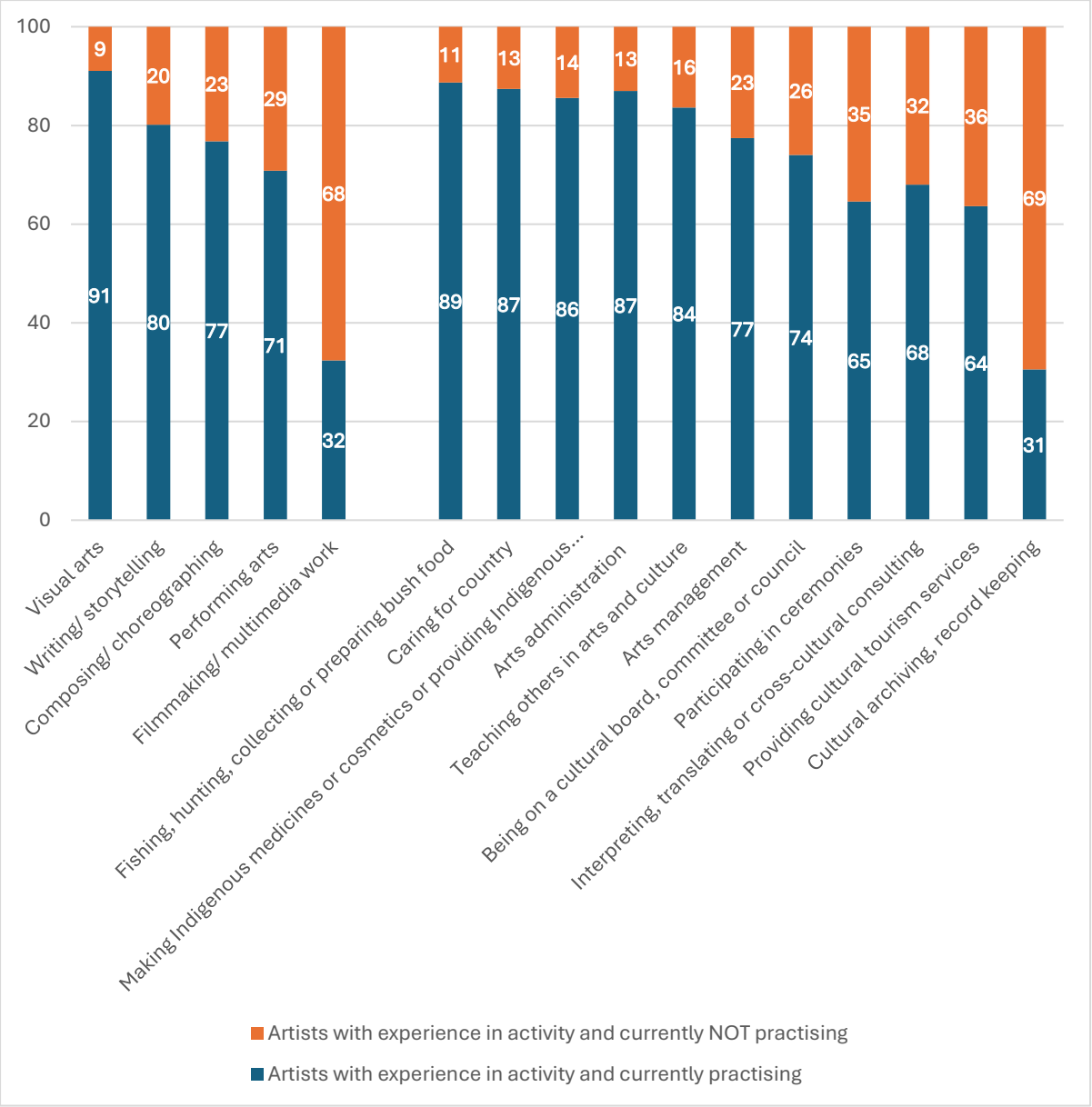
In the case of the creative arts, the data show that a high percentage of those with experience in visual arts – about nine in ten – continue their active engagement in this artform. In contrast, only about 70 percent of those with a background in performing arts are presently practising. In the artforms of filmmaking and multimedia work, the division is more pronounced – only one-third (32 percent) of those with experience in these areas are currently active in this work.

In the case of other cultural activities, there is a significant and sustained involvement among individuals experienced in essential cultural practices, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering bush food, as well as in caring for the country and teaching arts and culture, with more than 80 percent of experienced artists in these activities 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 two-thirds (69 percent) of those experienced in cultural archiving and record-keeping are not currently engaged in this activity for one reason or another. This lack of engagement could be attributed to the limited opportunities available to regional cultural producers in this field. While some cultural archiving and language initiatives are taking place in the region, such as Juluwarlu's Language Preservation and Archiving in Roebourne[10], there is potential to create more opportunities for engaging artists and cultural producers in these activities.

Individual circumstances vary widely, and there are many reasons why artists might not currently be engaged in practices in which they were previously involved. Some may have been unable to find work in a particular area, others may have shifted their focus to different art forms or cultural activities, and some may have experienced changing interests. Regardless of the reason, our data reveal a considerable amount of under-utilised cultural and human capital in the region. This untapped potential could be seen as an opportunity to increase involvement in artistic and cultural production, suggesting that with the right conditions, the region's artistic and cultural output could be significantly enhanced.

[10] Juluwarlu's cultural recording and archiving project started by Lorraine Coppin with elder Woodley King and his grandson, Michael Woodley, in the Ngurrawaana community in 1998. Juluwarlu's purpose is to collect, sustain and promote knowledge of Yindjibarndi culture, and its objective is "to provide a sustainable, professional, institutional structure, which reinforces, engages and allows access to Ngaarda heritage, history and language, effectively empowering Aboriginal people in our cultural, artistic, social, economic, political and environmental pursuits". https://juluwarlu.com.au/our-work/archiving/ Accessed on 12 July 2024.

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



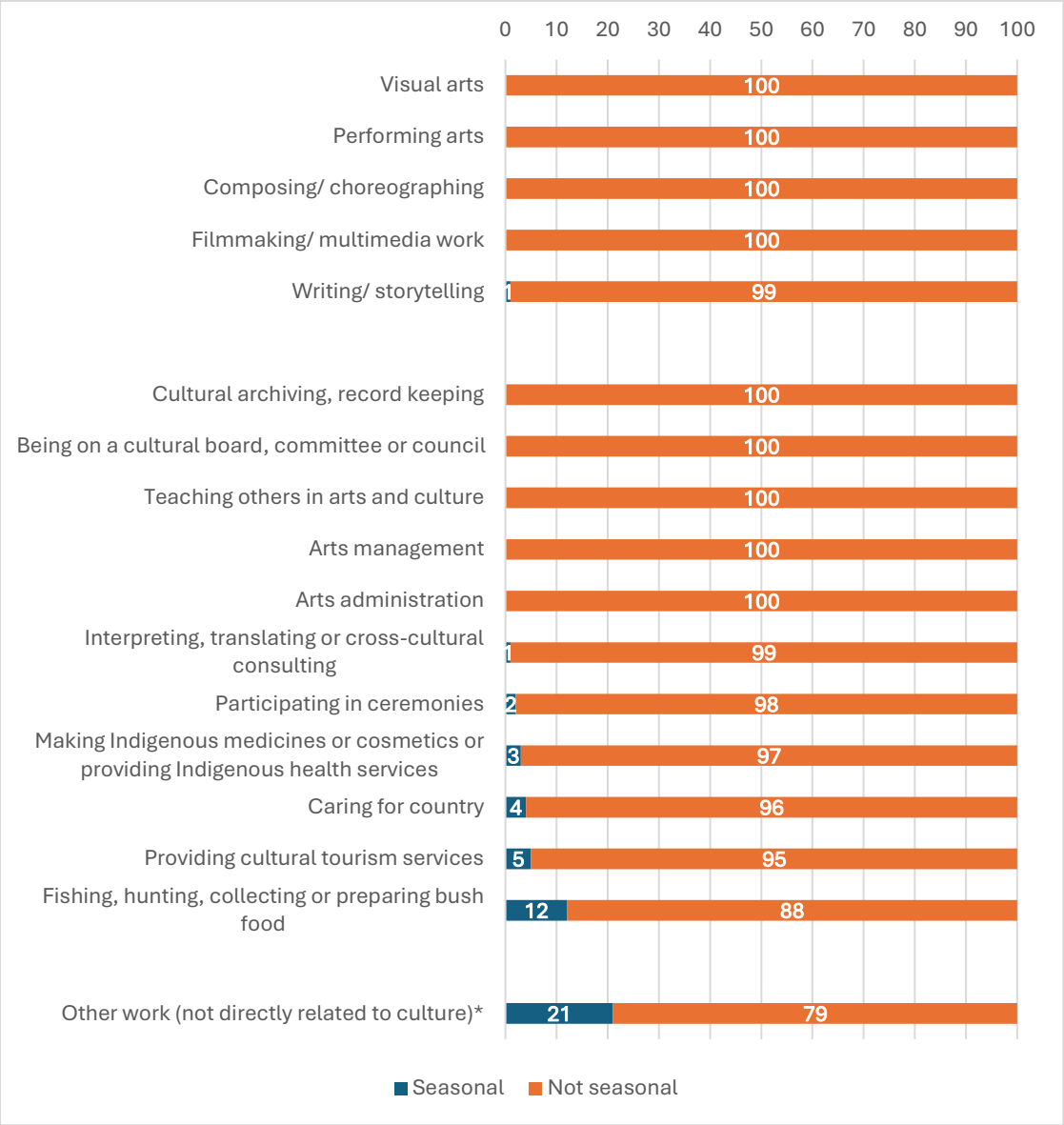
* Multiple responses allowed.

Finally, in examining the cultural activities of artists, we consider the seasonality of art and cultural production in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions. The region experiences dramatic temperature fluctuations, ranging from under 5°C to over 40°C, resulting in two distinct seasons, characteristic of much of northern Australia. The summer or wet season runs from November to April, while the winter or dry season occurs between May and October[11].. This climatic pattern significantly influences accessibility, community activities and, to a certain

[11] Aboriginal communities in the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands have their own definitions of seasons, based on local environmental and ecological knowledge. For example, in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, the seasons are defined as Kurli (January to March), Nyinnga (April to August), Pirriya (September and October), and Wiltjanyina (November and December).

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. The data show that artists manage to carry nearly all artistic and cultural activities year-round. This adaptability demonstrates resilience and flexibility in the region's artistic and cultural production, enabling continuous engagement despite seasonal challenges. The work most impacted by seasonality in the region is unrelated to arts and cultural production, such as roles as chefs, cleaners, or council field staff. Among artists engaged in such work over the last 12 months, 21 percent reported that it was affected by seasonality.

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. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND THE ACQUISITION OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

First Nations 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, and during cultural ceremonies. Our survey delineates three main educational categories:

Formal Education: This includes traditional schooling and general education, providing a broad range of knowledge and skills.

Cultural Education: This involves acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for engaging in cultural activities, together with obtaining the permissions required to practice within specific cultural laws.

Occupation-Specific Training: This training focuses on developing skills needed for specific artistic professions.

It is important to note that these categories are not rigidly separate. The knowledge and skills obtained often overlap and can be applied in various contexts. For instance, formal education settings like schools 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 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 the remote Pilbara and NG Lands regions.

7.1 Formal education

The journey of formal education generally begins with primary and secondary schooling, where foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are cultivated. This stage may also incorporate specialised artistic and cultural education. For example, schools might formally or informally invite senior artists and cultural producers to teach students about culture and language. Additionally, schools may arrange visits to local art centres, providing students with hands-on experience alongside professional artists. Opportunities may also arise for students to learn from visiting art professionals from outside their community.

Some artists continue their formal education beyond school, progressing to advanced 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult population in the labour force, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults not in the labour force, in the remote and very remote areas of Western Australia, as indicated in the 2014–15 NATSISS data. Because of differences in mode of practice and other respects, the results reported in Table 7.1 and subsequent tables in this chapter are divided into artists who are primarily visual artists and those who are primarily performing artists. The all-artists data in these tables represents all interviewed artists, including the small number of other artists in our sample.

Table 7.1 Highest levels of formal education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (15+ years old) (percent)

Level of education	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the NG Lands & Pilbara region			Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (15+) in Remote/Very Remote WA[a]	
	Visual artists (n=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)	In labour force	NOT in labour force
	%				
No schooling	8	-	8	-	-
Completed Year 9 (or equivalent) and below	36	28	34	15	33
Completed Year 10 (or equivalent)	17	28	18	18	26
Completed Year 11 (or equivalent)	7	-	5	14	15
Completed Year 12 (or equivalent)	15	10	15	13	13
Certificates I/II, not defined certificates	13[b]	34[b]	16[b]	2**	3*
Certificates III/IV or Diploma				23	8*
Completed bachelor's degree	1	-	1	2**	-
Completed postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate	3	-	3	1**	-
Other	-	-	-	6*	3**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

[a] Source: NATSISS 2014–15.
[b] Combined responses for "Certificates I/II, not defined certificates" and "Certificates III/ IV or Diploma" in the Survey as "Completed Diploma or Certificate".
-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.

Table 7.1 shows that a significantly higher percentage of artists in Pilbara and the NG Lands have not completed formal schooling beyond Year 9 compared to the general Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander population in remote and very remote Western Australia. For two out of five artists in the region (42 percent), their highest educational level is year 9 or below. This this level of attainment is more common amongst visual artists than among performers. In comparison, only 15 percent of adult First Nations population in remote/very remote WA in the labour force and 33 percent not in the labour force completed up to Year 9.

Overall, artists in the region tend to have lower levels of formal education compared to the general First Nations population in the labour force in remote and very remote WA. We note that a larger proportion of performing artists goes on to gain some post-school qualification, although few artists in the region attend university.

When these statistics 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

There are several different 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 shown in Table 7.2 reveal a clear pattern for artists in the 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 93 percent of artists report learning about their culture directly from family members, and 70 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. Almost four in five (77 percent) acknowledge these sources as highly significant, with 14 percent viewing them as the foremost in their cultural learning. These findings highlight the deep-rooted and community-centric nature of cultural education among First Nations artists in this region.

It is important to note that, as in other regions included in the National Survey, many respondents in this survey encountered 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. 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 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 and most important pathways for acquiring cultural knowledge (percent of artists)

Cultural knowledge pathways	Visual artists (n=99)		Performing artists (n=20)		All artists (n=122)	
	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway
	%		%		%	
Directly from family members	93	77	91	78	93	77
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	69	13	74	13	70	14
From artworks, songs or stories	43	5	40	-	44	4
From being on country	45	-	35	9	45	1
From participating in ceremonies	31	-	31	-	33	-
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/archives	16	-	5	-	15	-
From festivals or other cultural events	13	-	14	-	14	-
Some other way	9	4	34	-	13	4
Total		**100**		**100**		**100**

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

There are few significant differences between visual and performing artists in the pathways they experienced in acquiring their cultural knowledge. Table 7.2 shows that although acquiring knowledge through being on country was regarded as somewhat more important amongst visual artists, a larger proportion of performing artists nominated this as the *most* important pathway. It also appears that more visual artists than performers learnt their culture from books, archives, libraries, and online sources. Overall, however, the patterns of knowledge acquisition are largely the same for both types of artists.

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 First Nations communities in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions. Figure 7.1 shows the proportions of artists who are both learning and teaching others about cultural knowledge. The data show that 79 percent of artists indicate they are actively engaged in learning the cultural knowledge necessary for their cultural activities, while a larger majority, 81 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 and teaching others (percent of artists)

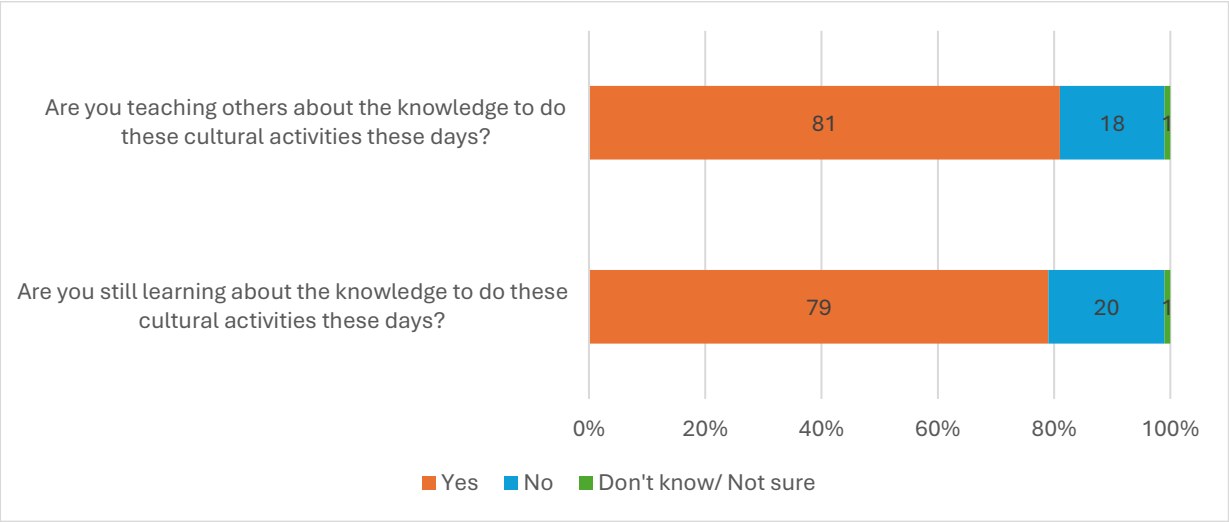


Table 7.3 provides an alternative interpretation of the data schematically presented in Figure 7.1. As shown in the table, artists who are currently engaged in both learning and teaching about their culture form the largest group by far (67 percent). This contrasts with those solely learning (12 percent) and those solely teaching (14 percent). Notably, only a small proportion (6 percent) of artists in the region are not engaged in either learning or teaching others.

This ongoing 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 involves a wide array of industry skills, including the manipulation of various materials like paint, wood, clay or fibre, as well as the use of different types of equipment, such as video cameras, screen-printing tools, sound systems, and editing software. For Indigenous artists residing in remote parts of the Pilbara and NG Lands regions there is an array of avenues in which they can acquire the necessary skills for their artistic practice. Table 7.4 shows the different pathways for the acquisition of industry skills and their prominence based on the responses from the artist population surveyed.

The most cited pathways for acquiring cultural skills were learning from a family member, self-learning and/or learning on the job, as well as learning from a friend or community member. By far the largest proportion of artists (50 percent) nominated learning from a family member as the *most* important pathway. There was a difference between visual and performing artists in this respect – whereas more than half of visual artists (54 percent) regarded learning from a family member as their most important pathway, only one-third of performing artists (34 percent) were of this view. In contrast, a significantly larger proportion of performing artists compared to visual artists identified learning from a friend or community member as the most important pathway (31 percent vs. 12 percent). This underscores the crucial role of peer learning among performing artists in the region.

Table 7.3 Proportions of artists who are still learning about cultural knowledge and teaching others (percent of artists)

n=122	%
Still learning, not teaching others	12
Still learning, and teaching others	67
Not learning, teaching others	14
Not learning, not teaching others	6
Don't know/ Not sure	1
Total	**100**

Table 7.4 Important and most important pathways for gaining industry skills and experience (percent of artists)

Industry skills pathways	Visual artists (n=99)		Performing artists (n=20)		All artists (n=122)	
	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway	Important pathways*	Most important pathway
	%		%		%	
Learning from a family member:	68	54	40	34	63	50
Observing and practising with a family member	*57*	*47*	*31*	*26*	*52*	*43*
Observing only a family member	*11*	*7*	*8*	*8*	*11*	*7*
Self-learning/ learning on the job	47	19	40	17	46	18
Learning from a friend or community member:	35	12	57	31	38	15
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	*25*	*8*	*40*	*22*	*26*	*10*
Observing only a friend or community member	*11*	*4*	*17*	*9*	*11*	*5*
School	25	3	35	-	29	4
Feedback and advice from an art professional	21	3	14	-	20	2
Workshops/ short courses	10	1	14	-	11	1
Vocational training	2	1	5	-	1	1
Online sources	4	-	14	-	16	-
University program	1	-	5	-	1	-
Some other way	22	7	43	17	25	9
Total		**100**		**100**		**100**

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

There are two distinct ways that respondents identify when learning from a family or community member: (1) learning by observing and practising and (2) learning only by observing. The first is a hands-on approach where learners are engaged in the process and apply what they observe in practical situations. In the second method, learners observe skilled practitioners without immediate active participation. The emphasis is on careful observation, often over a prolonged period, to gain a deep understanding of the techniques and processes before attempting them. Some examples of the learning by observing only include ceremonial practices, where young or less experienced individuals may watch the elders or designated practitioners until they have gained sufficient understanding and respect for the traditions. Another example is storytelling and oral history, where listening and absorbing the narratives told by elders is crucial before the learners are allowed to share or retell those stories.

The data in Table 7.4 show that learning by observing and practising with a family member is the pathway experienced by the largest group of artists, and is also the most important pathway nominated. Self-learning, or learning on the job, are next in order of importance, followed by learning from a friend or community member. In the latter case, again it is observing and practising rather than simply observing that comprises the most significant avenue.

During interviews, some visual artists explained that watching and listening to senior artists first is required before asking for permission to paint. Once permission is granted, an artist can proceed to develop their own style. Corrections to an artist's work are mostly about cultural appropriateness rather than their style. It is possible for artists to stay in 'the queue' for some time, waiting to receive permission to paint.

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 (one to four percent) indicating that these relatively more formal educational structures represented the most important pathways to acquire artistic skills for them.

As can be seen in Table 7.4, 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 regarding cultural knowledge. Figure 7.2 shows that a significant majority of artists (77 percent) are still actively engaged in learning the skills necessary for their artistic activities, whilst 72 percent of artists are also involved in teaching these skills to others. We also present these findings in Table 7.5, which shows that the majority of regional artists are currently engaged in both learning and teaching artistic skills (59 percent), and only 9 percent of artists in the region are not engaged in either learning or teaching. These results confirm the robust tradition of knowledge sharing that exists in remote First Nations communities in the region and point to the dual role that artists play as both learners and teachers in their everyday artistic lives.

Figure 7.2 Proportions of artists who are still learning cultural skills and teaching others (percent of artists)

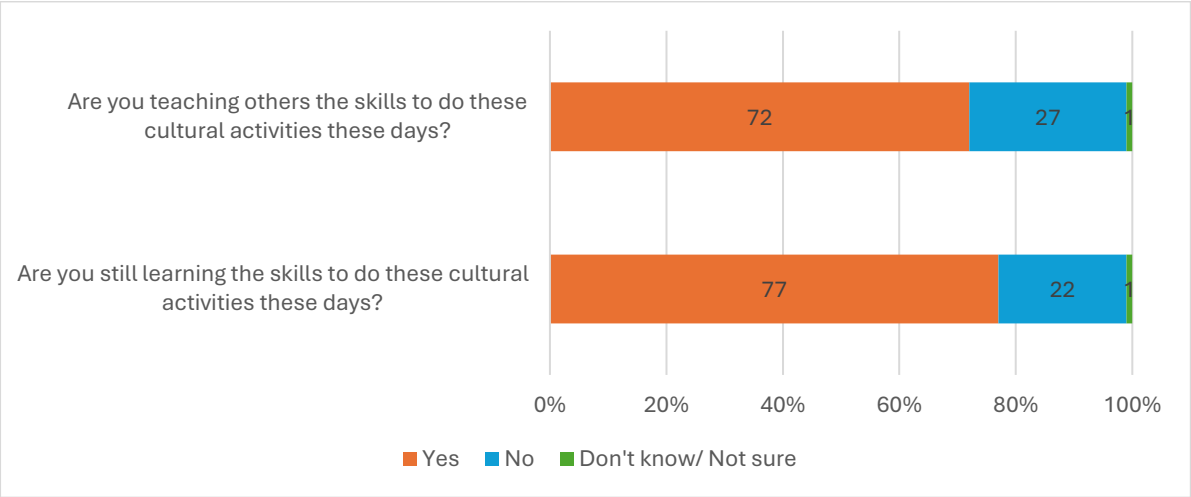


Table 7.5 Proportions of artists who are still learning artistic skills and teaching others (percent of artists)

n=122	%
Still learning, not teaching others	18
Still learning, and teaching others	59
Not learning, teaching others	13
Not learning, not teaching others	9
Don't know/not sure	-
Total	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The survey data illustrate that while Indigenous artists in remote Pilbara and NG Lands 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 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.

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 survey data on the average time artists spend teaching arts and cultural skills, both paid and unpaid, as well as the incomes they generate from these teaching activities.

8. TIME ALLOCATION

We noted in Chapter 6 above that artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions of WA 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 First Nations 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 First Nations 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 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. Note that a small number of activities where N<10 have been omitted from the table.

In the practice of creative artistic activities, Table 8.1 shows that most visual artists (78 percent) spend 2–3 days per week or more at this work, whereas performing artists on average spend between 1 and 2 full days per month to 1 full day a week engaged in this artistic practice (the weighted average score of 2.5). The difference reflects the general regularity with which work is available to visual artists, especially if they are in the habit of attending an art centre, compared with the higher irregularity and unpredictability of work opportunities in the performing arts in the region.

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

Activities	N	Few full days/ year (1 to 11)	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	104	5	5	12	52	26	**100**	**3.9**
Composing/ choreographing	10	-	17	17	50	16	**100**	**3.7**
Performing arts	42	42	16	5	24	12	**100**	**2.5**
Writing/ storytelling	22	46	27	4	15	7	**100**	**2.1**
Other cultural activities								
Arts administration	26	16	23	24	35	2	**100**	**2.8**
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	76	22	44	32	2	-	**100**	**2.1**
Caring for country	80	29	44	19	2	6	**100**	**2.1**
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	28	45	29	13	11	2	**100**	**2.0**
Teaching others in arts and culture	53	35	50	14	-	1	**100**	**1.8**
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	50	61	36	2	-	1	**100**	**1.4**
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	32	85	6	5	3	-	**100**	**1.3**
Providing cultural tourism services	23	85	15	-	-	-	**100**	**1.2**
Participating in ceremonies	36	94	2	5	-	-	**100**	**1.1**
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)								
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	32	8	22	11	15	44	**100**	**3.6**

-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.

Apart from arts administration, few of the other cultural activities listed in Table 8.1 involve significant amounts of time for those engaged in them. For those engaged in arts administration, such as artists employed on a part-time or casual basis as arts workers in an art centre, their time allocation to this activity amounts to almost one full day per week on average. Caring for country and going out bush for fishing, hunting and collecting food absorb around 1–2 full days per month on average among the regional artists. Interpreting, translating, cross-cultural consulting and teaching others in arts and culture also take 1–2 full days per month on average. Artists' allocation of time to other cultural activities is mostly sporadic. For example, being on a board or a committee, providing tourism services, or participating in ceremonies take up only a few full days in a year on average.

For "other work activities (not directly related to culture)", there is a significant commitment of full-time work (44 percent), indicating that these activities may be the primary occupation for the artists who are engaged in them measured in terms of time spent, with a weighted average score of 3.6. Overall, the data reveal a spectrum of engagement across artistic and cultural work, reflecting the multiplicity of activities that artists participate in, averaging seven cultural-economic activities per artist in the 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 21 hours a week to creative artistic work, 13 hours spent on cultural activities that support and maintain their culture, and five hours on other work. The average total hours among artists in the region is 39 hours per week.

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

Hours spent on... (n=122)	Mean	Median
	Hours	
Creative artistic activities	21	18
Other cultural activities	13	10
Total arts and cultural activities	34	33
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	5	-*
Total working hours	39	37

-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.

The data in Table 8.2 are expressed as averages across all artists in our sample. The mean and median hours can also be calculated for each separate activity for those artists engaged in that activity. The results are shown in Table 8.3. We can see that visual artists spend on average 18 hours at their creative work per week, whereas performing artists and writers spend only nine and six hours respectively. Artists involved in some aspect of arts administration spend nine hours per week on average at this work, but time spent in other cultural activities among those who are engaged in them amounts to five hours per week or less. Artists undertaking non-cultural work, such as in employment as a council worker, spend an average of 17 hours per week at this work.

Table 8.3 Mean and median number of weekly hours spent on activities by artists engaged in the activity in the last 12 months (hours per week)

Activities	N	Mean	Median
		Hours	
Creative artistic activities			
Visual arts	104	18	18
Composing/ choreographing	10	16	18
Performing arts	42	9	3
Writing/ storytelling	22	6	3
Other cultural activities			
Arts administration	26	9	7
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	76	4	3
Caring for country	80	5	3
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	28	5	3
Teaching others in arts and culture	53	3	3
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	50	2	1
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	32	2	1
Providing cultural tourism services	23	1	1
Participating in ceremonies	36	1	1
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)			
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	39	17	18

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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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

A key objective of the National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists is to evaluate how art and cultural production can facilitate employment creation and income generation for First Nations people in remote communities. To address this objective, detailed information is required on the financial circumstances of arts and cultural producers, including the extent to which their various cultural activities are paid, their main sources of income, and the composition of their total income from all sources. This chapter presents the survey results on these topics for the Pilbara and NG Lands region.

9.1 Paid and unpaid activities

As previously discussed in this Report, artists in the region dedicate time to both paid and unpaid or voluntary activities. Table 9.1 shows the proportions of artists who were compensated or uncompensated for their artistic, cultural, or non-cultural work over the past 12 months. These data are also depicted in Figure 9.1, which arranges creative and other cultural activities in descending order based on the proportion of artists who received payment. It is important to note that being paid for a certain activity does not imply that all of an individual's work in that activity was compensated; it simply means that the artist received some form of payment for at least some of their work.

The pattern of paid and unpaid work across different artistic and cultural activities varies significantly. Among creative artistic activities, a vast majority (94 percent) of visual artists who practiced their art in the last 12 months were financially compensated in some form. Additionally, nearly four out of five composers and choreographers (79 percent) and about half of performing artists (52 percent) were paid. However, most authors (62 percent) did not receive any financial compensation for their work. There are few opportunities for authors in the region, though some exist through language centres, such as Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre in South Hedland.

There are several reasons why artists might engage in creative artistic work without payment, such as passing on knowledge to others, learning about their culture or artistic skills, fulfilling cultural obligations, developing a new body of work, or simply for personal enjoyment or enjoyment shared with others. During interviews, respondents cited various motivations for their artistic activities, including "keeping culture strong", "sharing culture with others", or "my culture is my identity" (refer to Table 10.9 for a comprehensive list of reasons why artists participate in arts and cultural activities). On the other hand, some unpaid work might be due to the artist's inability to find a market for their output or their services. Additionally, artists are sometimes expected to offer their services for free, such as performing at a ceremony for the opening of a new local business or organisation.

For other cultural activities, a significantly higher proportion remain unpaid. However, activities typically undertaken on an employment basis, such as arts administration, are usually compensated. For example, 91 percent of arts administration work is paid. For other cultural services provided by artists – including serving on boards, committees, or councils and work in interpreting/translating/consulting – more than 40 percent of artist involvement is reimbursed. In contrast, only about a third of artists receive payment for their working time in teaching in arts and culture.

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

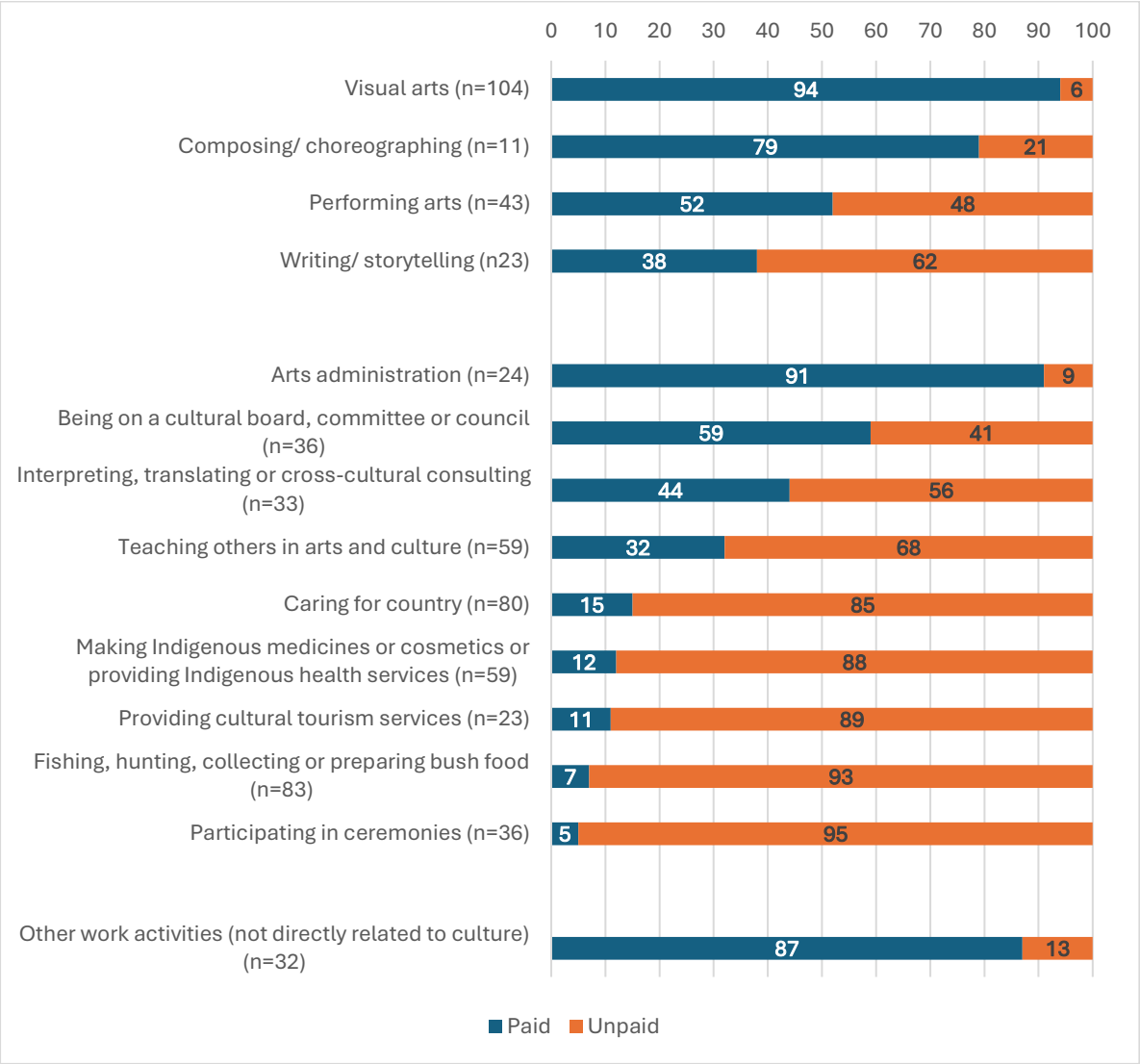
Activities	N	Paid	Unpaid	Total
		%		
Creative artistic activities				
Visual arts	104	94	6	**100**
Composing/ choreographing	11	79	21	**100**
Performing arts	43	52	48	**100**
Writing/ storytelling	23	38	62	**100**
Other cultural activities				
Arts administration	24	91	9	**100**
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	36	59	41	**100**
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	33	44	56	**100**
Teaching others in arts and culture	59	32	68	**100**
Caring for country	80	15	85	**100**
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	59	12	88	**100**
Providing cultural tourism services	23	11	89	**100**
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	83	7	93	**100**
Participating in ceremonies	36	5	95	**100**
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)				
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)	32	87	13	**100**

[(a)]Multiple responses allowed. Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.

Only 15 percent artists engaged in caring for country activities last year were paid. Compensation for these activities usually occurs when they are part of a formal ranger program or when providing environmental management advice to agencies, often resulting in consulting fees. Many cultural activities, such as fishing/hunting/collecting bush food, ceremonies, and Indigenous medicine, are primarily unpaid and conducted for individual, family, or community reasons, as shown in Table 9.2. Nonetheless, some artists do find ways to earn from these activities also. For example, Martu Farm (Red Dirt Blue Sky Inc.), a community development organisation in Newman, has conducted several trials of farming native bush foods. Unlike in other survey regions, only 11 percent of First Nations artists who provide tourism services in remote Pilbara and the NG Lands receive payment for their work.

For work activities not directly related to culture, the data reveal that 86 percent of artists engaged in such work are paid.

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. Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.

9.2 Sources and methods of payment

Whether paid or unpaid, artists' work arrangements may be organised through various types of organisations spanning several sectors: the private sector, the government, the not-for-profit and non-government sector (including Indigenous corporations), and the informal family/community sector. Table 9.2 shows the distribution of artists' working time across these sectors over the last 12 months, while Table 9.3 presents the distribution of their 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	Not-for-profit organisation	Government or public organisation	Family/ community	Other	Don't know/ Not sure
	%						
Creative artistic activities							
Visual arts (n=104)	12	55	40	-	2	-	1
Performing arts (n=43)	28	13	8	8	39	4	8
Composing/ choreographing (n=11)	63	16	-	16	21	-	-
Writing/ storytelling (n=26)	23	24	7	4	29	6	23
Filmmaking/ multimedia work (n=11)	35	14	14	30	-	-	16
Other cultural activities							
Arts administration (n=27)	-	60	18	9	-	-	13
Being on a cultural board, committee or council (n=36)	3	47	31	3	14	-	5
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=33)	10	36	11	22	33	3	3
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=60)	5	18	5	18	51	7	13
Caring for country (n=83)	-	14	-	3	70	1	19
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services (n=60)	4	8	-	-	65	4	20
Providing cultural tourism services (n=24)	8	23	4	-	20	-	49
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food (n=85)	1	7	-	-	75	2	15
Participating in ceremonies (n=36)	-	5	-	-	80	4	11
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)							
Other work activities (n=32)	22	19	6	34	-	19	-

* Multiple responses allowed. Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 9.2 shows that just over half of the work in the visual arts in the region is undertaken within Indigenous organisations or not-for-profit organisations such as art centres. Most regional art centres are registered as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations owned and governed by First Nations people, and operate as social enterprises. In these centres, most of the proceeds from art sales go directly to the artists, with the remaining funds reinvested into the art centre's operations and growth. However, some organisations working with visual artists in the region operate as not-for-profit entities. For example, Spinifex Hill Studio is not an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporation and does not have an Indigenous board, but it does have an Indigenous advisory committee. It is managed by the non-profit cultural organization FORM.

Similarly, almost a third of writers create their work for Indigenous and not-for-profit organisations. Performing artists primarily work within a family or community context (39 percent) or for commercial companies or as individual entrepreneurs (28 percent). The third sector provides work for about a fifth of performing artists, often through Indigenous art centres or not-for-profit organisations such as Big hART and their New Roebourne project.[12] Most composers and choreographers work in the private sector (63 percent).

The third sector is the largest provider of work in arts administration, in serving on cultural boards, committees, or councils, and in interpreting, translating, or cross-cultural consulting. Other cultural activities predominantly occur in the informal sector, with activities such as participating in ceremonies, caring for country, and making Indigenous medicines mostly undertaken on an individual or family basis. Nearly half of the artists involved in providing tourism services (49 percent) were unable to identify the specific work arrangement under which their services were provided. This may be indicative of the nascent stage of tourism development in these remote communities. However, among those who were aware, the third sector was identified as the major provider of work in tourism. Non-cultural work in the region is generally undertaken for the government (34 percent). Nevertheless, the data in Table 9.2 demonstrate that most arts and cultural activities in remote Pilbara and the NG Lands engage all four sectors.

Table 9.3 differs from the previous table as it focuses on paid work. The third sector, comprising Indigenous-owned and non-profit organisations, is the most important source of income for visual artists' creative work. For performing artists, the primary income source is the commercial sector. Third sector organisations also provide significant income for other cultural activities, including arts administration, cultural governance, translating, interpreting, cross-cultural consulting, and caring for country (mainly through ranger programs). Income from teaching arts and culture mainly comes from the public sector (41 percent) and the third sector (37 percent). Artists' paid non-cultural work is distributed across various organisations within the public/government sector, the third sector, and the commercial/private sector, each accounting for about a quarter of the paid work.

[12] New Roebourne is an intergenerational arts and social change project created in Roebourne and delivered by Big hART in collaboration with Roebourne and surrounding communities.

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	Not-for-profit organisation	Government or public organisation	Family/ community	Other	Don't know/ Not sure
	%						
Creative artistic activities							
Visual arts (n=98)	11	56	41	-	-	-	-
Performing arts (n=22)	55	15	7	8	24	8	-
Other cultural activities							
Arts administration (n=21)	-	64	19	9	-	-	7
Being on a cultural board, committee or council (n=21)	5	66	26	-	8	-	-
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=13)	12	78	-	29	8	-	-
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=19)	10	32	5	41	19	-	3
Caring for country (n=12)	-	86	-	14	29	-	-
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)							
Other work activities (n=35)	25	20	7	26	-	22	-

* Multiple responses allowed. Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Artists receive income for their work through various payment methods. Table 9.4 illustrates the most common payment methods for different arts and cultural activities, as well as non-cultural work. Visual artists are primarily paid per piece, with 91 percent receiving this type of payment. While some visual artists get paid directly by individual buyers or from dealers and galleries, most sell their work through community or non-profit organisations, primarily art centres. Art centres in the region use different payment systems, as approved by their boards and artists. Some art centres pay artists upon the sale of their work, while others pay an agreed price upon receipt of the work. Additionally, some art centres implement an income management system, providing artists with a weekly allowance in cash. These payments are then debited from the artist's account held by the centre. This system requires approval from the board and the artists. Although it adds extra work for art centre staff, it benefits artists by providing a regular and reliable income stream for their daily expenses, with the hope that their balance remains in credit through ongoing sales of their work.

Most performing artists are paid on a fee-for-service basis (81 percent), including performance fees. This payment arrangement also applies to some other cultural activities where the artist's engagement is occasional, such as cultural governance (e.g. sitting fees). When the work is more formally organised, such as in arts administration, teaching, or caring for country (rangers), payment is typically in the form of wages or salaries. For

example, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) provides flexible employment for rangers working with the organisation. While there are about 30 core staff members, there are 360 Martu on their books who are employed as casuals or on short-term contracts, such as three-month terms. Regional artists involved in interpreting, translating, and cross-cultural consulting also tend to be reimbursed through wages and salaries.

Few royalties, license fees, or advances for artists' work exist in the region. Although such arrangements may be relevant for authors, our sample size for authors is too small to allow us to draw definitive conclusions.

Table 9.4 Main method of payment (percent of artists paid for each activity in the last 12 months)[a]

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
								%							
Creative artistic activities															
Visual arts (n=98)	*	*	-	91	6	-	2	-	-	*		-		-	100
Performing arts (n=22)	3	-	4	8	81	-	-		-	4	-	-	-	-	100
Other cultural activities															
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=14)	15	31	16	-	19	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	100
Being on a cultural board, committee or council (n=21)	8	-	3	-	85	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	100
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=19)	5	35	29	-	25	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Caring for country (n=13)	7	18	57	-	13	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Arts administration (n=24)	7	58	33	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)															
Other work activities (n=28)	25	38	34	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	100

[a] Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.
* less than 1%.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

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)[(a)]

Activities*	Major income	Extra income	Incidental income	Total	Weighted average score**
	%				
Creative artistic activities					
Visual arts (n=96)	22	39	39	**100**	**1.8**
Performing arts (n=22)	23	18	59	**100**	**1.6**
Other cultural activities					
Caring for country (n=13)	23	68	9	**100**	**2.2**
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting (n=14)	43	27	30	**100**	**2.1**
Arts administration (n=24)	32	37	31	**100**	**2.0**
Teaching others in arts and culture (n=19)	12	53	35	**100**	**1.8**
Being on a cultural board, committee or council (n=19)	-	12	88	**100**	**1.1**
Other work activities (not directly related to culture)					
Other work activities (n=28)	62	35	3	**100**	**2.6**

[(a)]Details for some activities are unavailable due to insufficient sample sizes.
*Excludes activities with insufficient sample sizes. Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.
** Scores: 1 – "Incidental income"; 2 – "Extra income"; 3 – "Major income". Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.

For those involved in visual arts, it is significant that despite the substantial time invested in their work, only 22 percent of these artists consider the income from their art to be their primary source of earnings. A similar proportion of performing artists (23 percent) view the income from their artistic work as a major income source, while the majority (60 percent) see it as incidental. In other cultural activities, most artists who engage in paid roles such as caring for country and teaching arts and culture regard the income from these activities as "extra" income, with 68 percent and 53 percent respectively holding this view. Moreover, the

income received by artists from cultural governance activities is largely seen as incidental by the majority of those involved.

We asked artists to identify their primary source of income over the past 12 months, consolidating the income from various activities into several income categories. Table 9.6 presents their responses. Three out of five artists (60 percent) indicated that "other sources" were their main revenue stream. The data in the table reveal that only about one in ten artists (12 percent) relied on creative artistic activities as their primary income source, with another 12 percent drawing their principal income from other cultural work, and another 15 percent from other work activities (not directly related to culture).

Table 9.6 The main income source in the last 12 months as perceived by artists (percent of artists)

Income sources (n=122)	**%**
Income from creative artistic activities	12
Income from other cultural activities	12
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture)	15
Income from other sources	60
Don't know/Not sure	*
Total	**100**

*Indicates less than 0.5%.

9.4 Other sources of Income and artists supporting others

In addition to the creative and cultural activities previously discussed, there are two other revenue sources contributing to an artist's total income. The first is other paid or unpaid work outside the arts and cultural sector, undertaken by 26 percent of the artists in our sample, in addition to their arts and cultural activities over the past 12 months. Notably, most artists who engage in non-cultural work are compensated for it (87 percent), as shown in Table 9.1. Among those engaged in paid non-cultural activities, a quarter work full-time, around two in five (38 percent) work part-time, and a third work on a casual basis, as detailed in Table 9.4. Approximately one-third of these non-cultural jobs are within the government sector (34 percent), and a quarter (25 percent) are in the third sector, as shown in Table 9.2. However, when it comes to financial rewards for this type of work, the third sector leads, with 27 percent of artists earning income from non-cultural activities within this sector, followed by the government and commercial sectors, each accounting for 25 percent and 24 percent respectively (see Table 9.3).

The second additional source of income involves financial support received from non-work activities, such as government benefits, financial assistance from a partner or other family members, or payments from community trust funds. As detailed in Table 9.7, only 12 percent of artists in the region do not receive any form of support from these non-work sources. Among those who do rely on external sources, government benefits are the primary non-work income for artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region, with three-quarters receiving some form of financial assistance through a government benefit program. Additionally, two

in five artists received financial support from their family and/or partner in the past year. Among those receiving government benefits, about one-third receive unemployment benefits, and another third rely on a disability support pension, as shown in Table 9.8.

Table 9.7 Artists receiving support from other income sources in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

Other income sources (n=122)	%
Artists not relying on other income sources	**12**
Artists relying on other income sources	**88**
Total	**100**
Type of income support received by artists* (n=108):	
Government benefits, such as unemployment or other benefits	76
Money received from family (other than partner)	26
Partner income	14
Park/ mining royalties (community trust)	5
A loan from a financial institution	1
Other loans, such as Indigenous Business Network	-
Other	1

* Multiple responses allowed. Percent of artists who received income support.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

As previously mentioned, 40 percent of artists rely on financial support from their families. However, the flow of funds often goes in the opposite direction—three-quarters of artists provide financial assistance to others in some form, as shown in Table 9.9. Unsurprisingly, the primary beneficiaries of this income redistribution are close family members, including children and grandchildren. These figures highlight the demand-sharing economy that is characteristic of Indigenous communities in remote areas (Peterson 1993).

Table 9.8 Government benefits received by artists in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

(n=122)	%
Artists not receiving government benefits	**24**
Artists receiving government benefits	**76**
Total	**100**
Type of government benefits received by artists (n=93)*	
Unemployment benefits, such as Newstart or Youth Allowance	33
Disability Support Pension	31
Age pension	14
Work for the Dole with CDP activities	7
Carer payment	4
Parenting Payment	3
Family tax benefit	3
Work for the Dole without CDP activities	2
New Enterprise Incentive Scheme	-
Other	3

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

Table 9.9 Artists supporting others in the last 12 months (percent of artists)

(n=122)	%
Did not support others	**25**
Supported others	**75**
Total	**100**
Artists financially supporting others (n=91)*	
Dependent children/grandchildren	74
Artist's partner	28
Other close family (immediate family, other than artist's partner)	46
Extended family members (outside of immediate family)	18
Other community members (not family)	11

* Multiple responses allowed. Percentages are of artists who supported others.

9.5 Mean and median incomes

We turn finally to the annual income levels of artists practising in the Pilbara and NG Lands. Gathering accurate income data through any form of population survey presents challenges, as financial details are private, and respondents may be reluctant to share them. This sensitivity applies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists as well. However, in our survey, nearly all respondents in provided income information to the best of their ability.

Despite this cooperation, accurately capturing income data remained difficult as most respondents lacked detailed financial records. Many artists receiving income from multiple sources also struggled to recall exact amounts and timings. For visual artists whose income was managed through organisations like art centres or galleries, we obtained accurate data from these organisations with the artists' permission. For artists paid as employees, salaries could also be determined. However, for other cultural and non-cultural activities, income recollection was more challenging. Our estimates of non-work income such as government benefits or family support should be treated cautiously. We estimated government benefit amounts based on standard payment rates, but the lack of precise information means some overestimations are possible. Irregular income from partners or family was especially hard to track.

Overall, precise dollar figures were rarely possible; instead, respondents selected income ranges, and we used the mid-point of these ranges for data compilation. Despite these challenges, the available data provide a general understanding of artists' incomes. Table 9.9 shows the mean and median annual incomes of artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region. 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 or uncertain.

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=102)	5.3	3.0
Income from other cultural activities (n=26)	6.9	0.5
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=122)	3.7	-*
Total income from work (n=22)	**20.1**	**8.0**
Income from other sources (n=122)	14.2	18.4
Total income (n=22)	**33.6**	**33.7**

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

As shown in the table, on average, artistic activities contribute $5,300 to an artist's income in the Pilbara and NG Lands region, requiring 21 hours of work per week (see also Table 8.2). The largest portion of artists' average work income in this region comes from participating in other cultural activities, generating an average of $6,900 in gross income, while taking up 13 hours of work per week. Income from work outside the arts and cultural sector accounts for $3,700 (gross). Altogether, the average artist in the region earns $20,100 from work, supplemented by an additional $14,200 per year from other sources. These figures average $33,600 and have a median of $33,700 in gross annual income for individual First Nations artists in the region.

We can compare the creative and total income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the study region with similar data for all Australian artists. According to the *Artists as Workers (*2024) report, the median gross creative income for a practising professional artist in Australia in 2021-22 was $11,000, and their median gross income from all work sources was $44,500. These figures are significantly higher than the corresponding median earnings of First Nations artists in the survey region, as shown in Table 9.10. However, it appears that artists in this region may still be better off on average compared to other First Nations people in the area.

Two comparisons can be made: (1) against the incomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (15 years and older) in general, and (2) against those who are in the labour force. Given that a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practising artists in the region are not in the labour force, our estimate of the median annual income for artists in the region ($33,700) is significantly higher than the approximate median personal income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals not in the labour force in remote and very remote areas of Western Australia, which stands at about $11,700 per annum, according to 2021 ABS Census data. However, the median income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the region is lower than that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote and very remote areas of Western Australia who are in the labour force, where the median personal income is about $46,800 per annum.[13]

[13] Derived from estimates of weekly personal incomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons (15 +) in general and in the labour force in Remote and Very Remote Western Australia 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 12 June 2024.

10. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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. 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.[14] 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.

The issues relating to professional practice covered in the survey and reported on in this chapter include: the years of experience in art production; art 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.[15]

10.1 Years of experience as an artist

More than a third of artists in the region have been practising in the arts for over 20 years (36 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 Pilbara and NG Lands regions of WA 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. Despite the predominance of older artists in the population, it is also notable that there is a significant number of early career artists among the visual arts practitioners (about one-quarter of the artist population).

10.2 Work locations

Artists in the region work, by choice or necessity, in a variety of different places. 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. For most regional visual artists, an art centre is an important work location. Almost nine out of ten visual artists in the region (87 percent) have been able to practise in an arts centre, and for two-thirds of them, arts centres are where they spend most of their working time. The data also highlight the importance of working on country,

[14] For a discussion of the definition of professional practice in the arts, see *Artists as Workers* (2024).
[15] 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.

not only for the purposes of collecting materials but also for making work, with 30 percent of all artists in the region making their work and practising there at some time.

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

Years of experience	Visual artists (n=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)
	%	%	%
1–2 years	10	-	10
3–5 years	14	-	14
6–10 years	13	18	13
11–20 years	26	35	26
20+ years	36	48	36
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

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=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)	Visual artists (n=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)
	%			%		
Art centre	87	5	71	66	-	53
Home or family member's home	62	57	61	32	34	32
Dedicated studio space, such as artist studio, recording studio or editing suite	1	39	8	1	26	5
Community space or facility	6	31	10	-	14	3
On country	28	31	30	-	9	2
Educational institution (such as school, TAFE, etc.)	4	14	6	-	9	1
Other	4	26	8	2	9	3
Total				**100**	**100**	**100**

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

Almost 40 percent of performing artists indicated they have access to a dedicated studio space, such as an artist studio, recording studio, or editing suite for making their art, with 26 percent saying these spaces are where they spend most of their time on art production. In the Pilbara, performing artists and filmmakers can access such facilities at Ngaarda Media. In the NG Lands, NG Media and Wilurarra Creative provide facilities for local musicians, filmmakers and multimedia artists.

Ngaarda Media is a news broadcaster and local content producer created by the Yindjibarndi community for all Aboriginal people of the Pilbara region. Originally established as Juluwarlu Media (the publishing arm of Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation), its initial mission was to document and archive Yindjibarndi language, culture, and law. Today, Ngaarda Media's purpose remains to preserve and promote Aboriginal languages and culture across the Pilbara.

NG Media is based in Wingellina (Irrunytju). It is equipped for both short-term and long-term production projects, meeting National Broadcast Standards, and serves 15 Ngaanyatjarra communities. The studio at NG Media offers a space for musicians from surrounding communities to practise working with instruments, equipment and each other. They train musicians in using recording equipment and music editing. In film, NG Media handles content creation for their TV and film productions, using the studio for indoor shots and the editing suites to produce work. They train their Yarnangu staff in scriptwriting, filming and film production, teaching new ways of storytelling to preserve the Yarnangu culture. NG Media also organises festivals and concerts around the NG Lands, creating more opportunities for the regional performing artists.

Wilurarra Creative is a community hub and incubator located in Warburton. It offers a diverse range of creative programs and self-directed learning opportunities for Ngaanyatjarra people aged 17-30. It serves the Warburton and surrounding communities with facilities including a music studio, workshops, arts space, library, internet café, and even a fashion studio and a hair salon. Their project-based music production, such as the Wilurarra Desert Reggae Project, has supported 50 musicians over 12 months, providing expertise in audio engineering, design, photography, recording, branding, marketing, logos, merchandise, and production workshops.

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 visual artists are managed by an art centre, local gallery or other local organisation, some performing artists have an agent or manager, while some work independently. Table 10.3 shows that the great majority (96 percent) of visual artists have a management arrangement of some sort (mostly an art centre), while more than half of performing artists (60 percent) do not have any arrangement for managing their professional work.

10.4 Professional experiences and impacts

In this section we look at some of the professional experiences that artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions have had and ask artists about the impact that these experiences have had on their artistic practice. The experiences we consider are: collaborations; interstate and overseas exposure; and winning the award or prize. Data relating to these experiences are presented in Table 10.4.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the professional practice of some artists 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 about one-tenth (9 percent) of artists in our sample have assisted or collaborated with an established artist from within their community at some time, and 8 percent have been engaged in such arrangements with an artist from outside.

Secondly, 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 in Table 10.4 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. The impacts of these forms of exposure have been uniformly positive.

Finally, around one-quarter (24 percent) of artists in our sample have won an award or prize during their career. It is hardly surprising that the impact of such an experience on an artist's career is judged by artists in the region to be very positive in almost all cases. Given that the visibility of an artist's creative work in the marketplace can be significantly enhanced by the award of a prize, the reputational impact of this experience is likely to lead in due course to improved volume and value of sales in the case of visual art, or a greater number of potentially lucrative engagements for performing artists.

Table 10.3 Artists' management arrangements (percent of artists)

Professional experiences*	Visual artists (n=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)
		%	
Artists who have management arrangements	**96**	**40**	**85**
Managed by:			
Art centre	70	5	58
Community organisation or artist-run initiative	-	5	1
Private company	3	5	3
Artists who do not have management arrangements	**4**	**60**	**15**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

Table 10.4 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=12)	9	75	25	-	-	-	**100**	**4.8**
Working with an established artist/author from outside of artist's community (assisting or collaborating) (n=9)	8	63	37	-	-	-	**100**	**4.6**
Showing work in capital cities (n=80)	66	94	3	3	-	-	**100**	**4.9**
Showing work overseas (n=17)	14	100	-	-	-	-	**100**	**5.0**
Winning an award or prize (n=29)	23	97	3	-	-	-	**100**	**5.0**

* Multiple responses allowed. Excludes "Don't know/Not sure" responses. Note: some experiences are not listed due to insufficient sample sizes.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.
** 5 – "Very positive"; 4 – "Fairly positive"; 3 – "No effect"; 2 – "Fairly negative"; 1 – "Very negative".

10.5 Grant funding

Artists may benefit from financial support coming to them from a competitive grant program provided by a public or private organisation. Data presented in Table 10.5 show the proportions of artists who applied for funding in the previous 12 months, and the success rates amongst those who applied. Excluding the "Don't know" responses, we estimate that just under one-half of artists in the region (49 percent) applied for grant funding last year, either on their own or as part of a group such as all those represented by an art centre or other organisation which applied on the artists' behalf. Again, excluding the "Don't know" responses, the data indicate a confirmed success rate of just under 80 percent. Given that much of the success observed here relates to funding being sought by an arts centre, these results re-affirm the significance of arts centres in the region in sustaining the work of regional artists.

Table 10.5 Application for funding and success rate in the last year (percent of artists)

	%
Of all artists (n=122)	
An art centre or community organisation applied on behalf of the group of artists, including myself	29
Applied myself	2
Someone else applied on my behalf	3
Did not apply	36
Don't know/ Not sure	30
Total	**100**
Of those who applied – whether themselves or someone/organisation applied on their behalf (n=41)	
Yes	59
No	8
Unknown/Application still being processed	9
Don't know/Not sure	24
Total	**100**

10.6 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 more than half (56 percent) of artists would like to spend more time, and about two in five (39 percent) were happy with the way things were. Only a negligible proportion (5 percent) expressed a preference for less creative work.

Among those artists who would like to spend more time at their artistic 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 the main ones can be grouped under two headings: economic and personal. The former comprise the familiar obstacles confronting professional artists in all genres, namely lack of time and lack of financial return from artistic work. For visual and performing artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands the principal reason why artists who would like to spend more time at arts work are not able to do so is that they have too much non-arts work that they have responsibilities for. In the case of personal reasons for not being able to spend more time at the arts, the two significant ones are family and health issues, which together are identified by almost one-quarter of respondents (23 percent) as the main considerations affecting their work-time choices.

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

Reasons (n=69)	Reasons*	The main reason
	%	
Too much non-arts work that I have responsibilities for	33	24
Family issues	20	12
Health issues	16	11
Little income from this work/Need to earn more income elsewhere	18	9
Balancing my work with community or cultural responsibilities	13	6
Lack of skills/experience	5	4
No time because have to fulfil requirements in order to receive government benefits	5	4
Lack of materials, equipment and/or facilities	6	3
New thing, just starting it out	9	3
Difficulties with promoting my work/getting my work to market	2	2
Discouragement of others	1	-
Lack of access to country	-	-
Other	15	22
Don't know/ Not sure	5	-
Total		**100**

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

10.7 Use of technologies

Artists use a variety of digital technologies in the process of creating their art. About one-third of remote Indigenous artists in the region (36 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 22 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 are specific to music-making, filmmaking, and audio-visual production generally. Individual promotion of an artist's work via the internet is not common in the region; only 3 percent of artists have a personal website that they manage themselves, although 14 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. This is particularly the case for performing artists, more than half of whom (52 percent) use such websites.

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

	Visual artists (n=99)	Performing artists (n=20)	All artists (n=122)
	%		
Use some of these:*	**24**	**82**	**36**
Mobile or smart phones	16	39	22
Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or others	12	34	16
Third-party websites, such as YouTube, Vimeo or others	6	52	14
Desktop computer, laptop computer, iPad, etc.	3	48	13
Sound recording or playing equipment	-	69	13
Still photography camera	8	9	9
Video editing/graphic/sound manipulation/music composition software	-	34	6
Video or film equipment	-	9	4
Personal website	2	9	3
Other			
Do not use any of these	**76**	**18**	**64**
Don't know/ Not sure	**1**	**-**	**-**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

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

10.8 Economic rights of artists

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 (87 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 13 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 the small number of artists who thought their work had been copied or used in some inappropriate way (9 percent), we found that few took action (25 percent), too small a number to allow any conclusion to be drawn as to the success of otherwise of such action.

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

	First Nations artists in the survey region (n=122)	All artists Australia-wide[a]
	%	
Copyright infringement (n=122)		
No	78	51
Yes	9	19
Don't know/ Not sure	13	30
Total	**100**	**100**
Action taken to stop copyright infringement or seek compensation (n=11)*		
Yes	25	48
No	66	48
Don't know/ Not sure	9	4
Total	**100**	**100**

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

We can compare the data for Indigenous artists in the remote Pilbara and NG Lands with corresponding data for all artists Australia-wide, as shown in Table 10.8. It appears that the First Nations artists are more aware of copyright infringement than their mainstream colleagues, and their experience of infringement is considerably lower. However, their willingness to take action against unauthorised use of their work appears to be less.

The important role of copyright in the functioning of artistic markets is to provide remuneration to creators and to allow 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.

10.9 Artists' motivations for working in the arts

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 Pilbara and NG Lands regions. 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 – keeping culture strong and sharing culture with others; these were referred to by 63 and 49 percent of artists respectively. Similarly, the processes of cultural teaching and cultural learning were noted by many artists (37 and 17 percent respectively), 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, about half of artists mentioned a financial motive ("get money as income"), whilst a significant 12 percent linked their cultural motivation to the issue of their identity. The role of becoming involved in artmaking as a means of "keeping out of trouble" was also mentioned by up to one-quarter of all respondents.

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

Reasons*	%
Own enjoyment/love doing it	84
Sharing culture with others	49
Enjoyment/fun with others	57
Keep culture strong	63
Cultural teaching	37
Cultural learning	17
Keep me away from trouble	23
Get money as income	51
Can live/work on country	17
Community/cultural obligations	11
Keep others away from trouble	14
Flexible work arrangements	8
Subsistence, i.e. food or medicine	2
My identity	12
Other	6
Don't know/Not sure	-

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

11. ART AND CULTURE IN COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

We noted in the Introduction that an important purpose 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 First Nations communities in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions. As a component of the survey, we presented respondents with a series of statements, both positive and negative, relating to the question of long-term community sustainability 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 the respondents' community;
- 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 respondents endorsed the importance of bilingual education in school (95 percent of respondents agreeing with this proposition); not only is this essential for the maintenance of Indigenous languages, but the dual nature of such educational programs is also seen to help young people in the community to get jobs and earn incomes later on. The second 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 intragenerational cultural transmission in skill development that we have noted earlier in this Report.

Secondly, tourism figures predominantly in artists' perceptions of the prospects for communities' sustainability. A large majority of artists (91 percent) expressed the positive view that it would be good for tourists to visit their community to experience Indigenous culture at first hand. Furthermore, 89 percent believed that such tourist visitation could generate incomes and employment in the region. 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[16], this does not appear to be the case in the Pilbara and NG Lands regions. Nevertheless, with significant expansion of the tourism industry expected in Western Australia in the coming years, it is crucial to remain mindful that, if not managed appropriately, increased tourist numbers could potentially have negative impacts on some remote communities in the region.

Thirdly, there was strong support for the importance of art centres, with 87 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 for those artists from communities without such a facility, having an art centre would be expected potentially to create economic opportunity in their community. The latter artists could in many cases see the benefits

[16] For example, as occurs when cruise ships bring large number of visitors to a site for a short period; see Brida, J.G. and Zapata-Aguirre, S. (2009)

provided by an art centre in neighbouring communities, prompting a hope that they could have one too. Nevertheless, there appears to be overall satisfaction with the level of infrastructure supporting artists in the region, with 58 percent disagreeing with the suggestion that facilities such as community centres and venues in the region were not enough to support more artistic activity.

Finally, a fourth 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 (94 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.

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

Statements (sample sizes)	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know/No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Weighted average score*
Bilingual education in the school can help young people in my community with jobs and incomes later on (n=114)	74	21	5	-	-	**100**	**4.7**
Artists/writers like myself can train young people in the community to become artists/writers (n=119)	69	28	3	1	-	**100**	**4.6**
It is good (would be good) for tourists to visit our community to see our culture at first hand (n=115)	68	23	5	3	-	**100**	**4.6**
Artistic activities like painting, music, dance, writing, can provide jobs and incomes for young people in my community (n=116)	61	33	6	-	-	**100**	**4.5**
Tourists can bring jobs and incomes to my community (n=116)	63	26	7	3	-	**100**	**4.5**
Having an art centre creates (could create) jobs and incomes in my community (n=114)	61	26	12	-	1	**100**	**4.5**
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=116)	57	29	13	-	-	**100**	**4.4**
Over the long term, sales of art and other cultural activities could bring in enough money to make our community sustainable (n=116)	57	31	10	2	-	**100**	**4.4**
Sending young people to study in TAFE or university can help them to become artists/writers (n=113)	59	21	19	1	-	**100**	**4.4**
Arts-practice workshops can provide people in my community with necessary skills to do more artistic activities (n=112)	57	22	21	-	-	**100**	**4.4**
The facilities in my community, such as community centres, venues, are not enough to support more artistic activity (n=116)	13	18	11	33	25	**100**	**2.6**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

* Scores: 5 – "Strongly agree"; 4 – "Agree"; 3 – Don't know/No opinion"; 2 – "Disagree"; 1 – "Strongly disagree".

12. GENDER DIFFERENCES

In this chapter we look at similarities and differences in the circumstances of female and male First Nations artists in the remote Pilbara and NG Lands region of Western Australia. 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. We consider a range of issues including demographics, education pathways, paid and unpaid economic activities undertaken, and financial circumstances.

12.1 Demographics

Demographic characteristics of the female and male artist population in the Pilbara and NG Lands 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, 24 percent of men in our sample are aged less than 35, compared to only 10 percent of women; at the other end of the age distribution, one half (51 percent) of women are aged more than 55, whereas only 30 percent of male artists fall into this older age category.

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

	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)
Age distribution*		
15–24	-	3
25–34	24	7
35–44	21	19
45–54	24	20
55–64	9	28
65+	21	23
Total	**100**	**100**
Family circumstances		
Single no children	42	36
Single with children	6	25
Partner no children	24	20
Partner with children	28	19
Total	**100**	**100**
Number of dependent children (principal carer)		
Mean	3.4	3.6
Median	2.0	3.0
Living with disability, long-term illness		
Yes	30	31
No	70	69
Total	**100**	**100**

* Excludes "Don't know/Not sure" responses.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

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 (6 percent vs. 25 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? In this section, we compare where possible the data for the Pilbara/NG Lands 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* (Throsby and Petetskaya 2024).

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

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists residing in remote & very remote areas in Pilbara & the NG Lands		Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults residing in remote & very remote areas Australia-wide[a]		All artists Australia-wide[b]	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
			%			
Never attended	10	6	2	2	-	*
Year 10 (or equivalent) and below	40	66	49	52	1	5
Year 11 and Year 12 (or equivalent)	27	13	26	23	6	11
Completed diploma or certificate	19	12	21	22	15	20
Completed bachelor's degree	2	-	1	-	34	31
Completed postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate, or doctorate degree	2	3	1	1	44	33
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**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.

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 years 11 and 12 of high school than do men (27 vs. 13 percent), and a larger proportion go on to gain a post-school diploma, certificate or university degree (23 percent compared to 15 percent). A gender-based comparison between the educational levels of artists in the survey region with Indigenous adults in remote areas of Australia shows minor differences at some educational levels but overall these results are broadly similar. However, the educational attainments of mainstream artists as revealed in the 2023 survey reported in *Artists as Workers* are significantly higher across the board.

The role of family members as the most important pathway through which artists in the region gain their cultural knowledge is evident for both genders in Table 12.3. Second in order of importance are elders and/or other community members, relied upon by somewhat more women (17 percent) than men (9 percent). These pathways are also evident in Table 12.4, which shows the most important ways in which artists in the region acquire their industry skills and experience. The data show that a larger proportion of male artists (61 percent) learn from a family member, either by observing and practising with a family member or simply observing, than is the case for female artists (41 percent). However, more men than artists learn by observing only, either from peers or family members. It is also apparent that more women than men teach themselves or learn the skills for their creative work on the job (29 vs. 6 percent).

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

Cultural knowledge pathways	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)
	%	
Directly from family members	79	76
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	9	17
From artworks, songs or stories	6	3
From being on country	3	-
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/archives	-	-
From participating in ceremonies	-	-
From festivals or other cultural events	-	-
Some other way	3	4
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

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

Industry skills pathways	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)
	%	
Learning from a family member:	**61**	**41**
Observing and practising with a family member	*49*	*39*
Observing a family member	*12*	*2*
Learning from a friend or community member:	**15**	**14**
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	*9*	*11*
Observing a friend or community member	*6*	*3*
Self-learning/Learning on the job	6	29
School	6	2
Feedback and advice from an art professional	-	5
Workshops/Short courses	-	2
Vocational training	-	1
University program	-	-
Online sources	-	-
Some other way	12	6
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

As noted in Chapter 7, significant numbers of artists in the region are still learning about cultural knowledge and artistic skills and are teaching others. A breakdown by gender of the data for these learning/teaching characteristics shown in Tables 7.4 (cultural knowledge) and 7.5 (cultural skills) reveals little difference between male and female artists. The same proportions (79 percent) are still learning their culture, although slightly larger numbers of men are still learning their artistic skills (81 vs. 74 percent).

12.3 Engagement in cultural-economic activities

Table 12.5 shows the range of creative and other cultural activities engaged in by female and male artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region. 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 representation of men in the creative activities of composing/choreographing, and writing/storytelling. Among the other cultural activities shown in Table 12.5, there are mostly only minor differences between the genders, although there appear to be somewhat larger proportions of women engaged in the activities of making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics, providing Indigenous health services, and fishing/hunting/preparing bush food. It is noteworthy that the proportions of men who are being paid for their engagement in most of the creative and cultural activities shown in the table are greater than the corresponding proportions for women, except for the visual arts, where 92 percent of women are being paid compared to only 67 percent of men. We return to the paid/unpaid data in more detail below.

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

Activities*	Have ever engaged in activity		Currently engaged in activity**		Currently being paid for activity**	
	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)
	%					
Creative artistic						
Visual arts	88	99	70	99	67	92
Performing arts	73	29	58	15	30	8
Composing/choreographing	21	3	18	1	15	-
Writing/storytelling	36	18	30	13	12	3
Filmmaking/multimedia work	36	19	9	9	6	4
Other cultural						
Participating in ceremonies	42	49	27	32	3	-
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	45	35	27	27	12	9
Cultural archiving, record keeping	15	16	6	4	-	1
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	42	37	27	31	15	19
Teaching others in arts and culture	60	57	45	52	18	13
Caring for country	79	77	66	69	15	5
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	73	83	61	77	9	1
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	45	67	39	57	6	6
Arts management	-	4	-	3	-	3
Arts administration	27	24	24	20	21	13
Providing cultural tourism services	36	27	24	17	-	4
Other cultural activities	6	6	3	1	3	-

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

The diversity of artistic and other cultural activities that male and female artists in the region have been involved in or are currently engaged with is indicated in Table 12.6, which shows the mean and median numbers of separate activities that artists have ever done, are currently doing, and are currently being paid for. The data suggest that men generally appear to experience a somewhat broader range of engagements with such activities across the board.

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

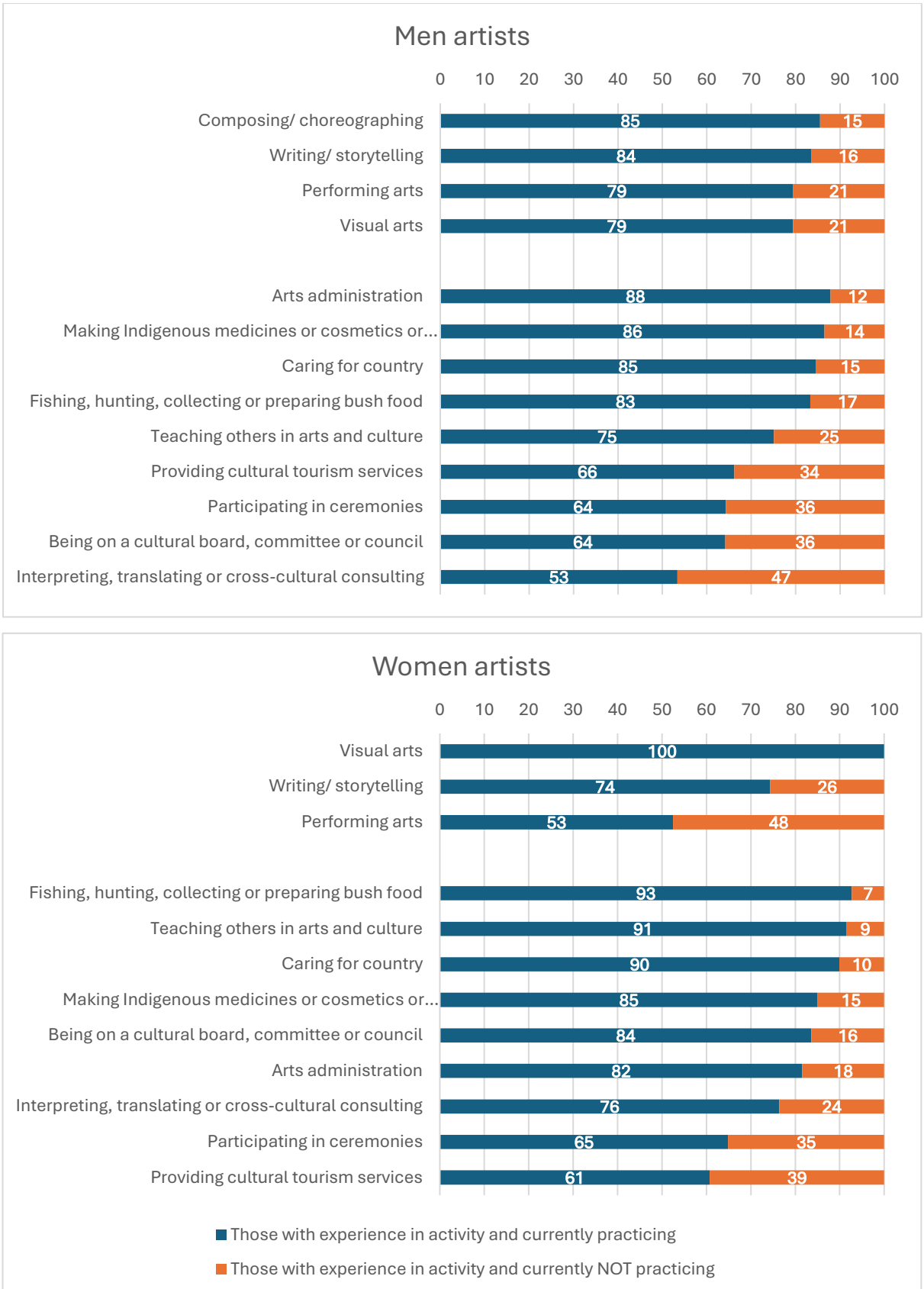
Activities	Have ever done		Currently doing*		Currently being paid*	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
			Mean			
Creative artistic	2.5	1.7	1.9	1.4	1.3	1.1
Other cultural	4.7	4.8	3.4	3.9	1.1	0.8
All cultural activities	**7.2**	**6.5**	**5.3**	**5.3**	**2.4**	**1.9**
			Median			
Creative artistic	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other cultural	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	1.0	-
All cultural activities	**7.0**	**6.0**	**5.0**	**5.0**	**2.0**	**1.0**

-Indicates nil responses in this sample.
* 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.

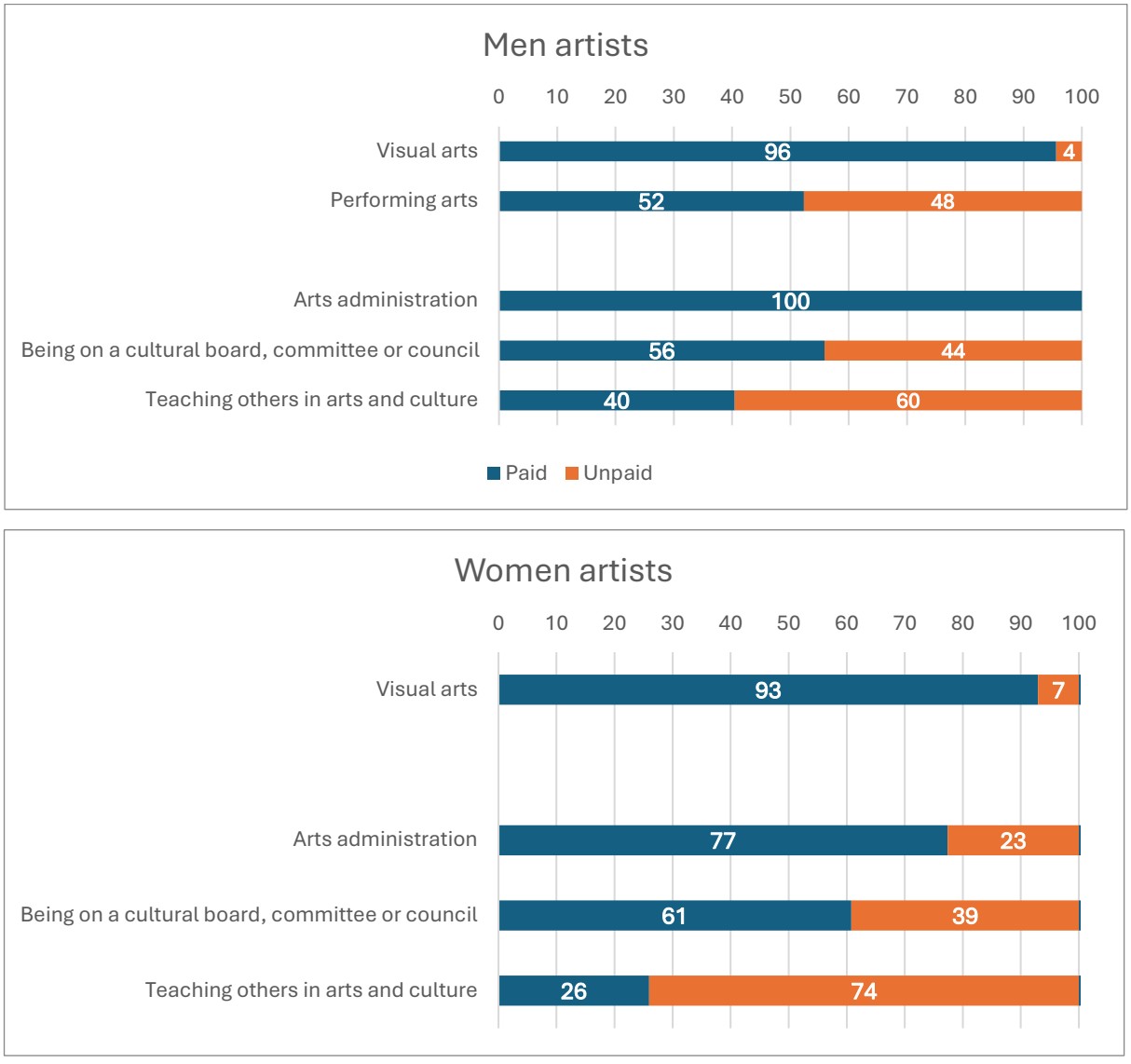
We note that for some activities shown in Figure 12.1, sample numbers are too small to enable firm conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, we note the substantially larger proportions of women than men with experience in the visual arts who are currently engaged in the activity. There appear to be significant levels of underutilised human capital resources among women in several other creative fields including the performing arts and writing/ storytelling. Levels of underutilised skills and experience among the other cultural activities also vary between the genders; for example, more women than men are currently using their experience in interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting, cultural governance and teaching others in arts and culture.

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



Regarding the proportions of artists being paid for their engagement in various activities, the data in Figure 12.2 show that more than 90 percent of both male and female artists in the visual arts are paid, with a slightly larger proportion for male artists. In other cultural activities, such as arts administration and teaching arts and culture, men are more often paid than women. Conversely, women are more likely to be paid for cultural governance roles. Please note that the sample sizes for other paid/unpaid activities divided by gender are too small to allow for valid inferences and have been excluded from the analysis.

Figure 12.2 Artists paid per activity in the last 12 months, by gender (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 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 among artists men and women travel for creative work purposes in roughly similar proportions, but that men spend more time travelling than women. Differences in the proportions of artists whose travel takes them to a regional town or community are likely to be determined largely by the proximity of such destinations within the region.

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

	Men (n=55)	Women (n=64)
Travelled in the last 12 months to undertake arts/cultural activities elsewhere (%)*		
Yes	37	40
No	63	60
Total	**100**	**100**
Destinations (%)**		
Capital city	50	58
Regional town	58	20
Community	24	31
Outstation/homeland/on country	-	9
Overseas	-	-
Total	**100**	**100**
Time spent travelling (months)*		
Mean	1.5	0.8
Median	1.0	0.5

-Indicates nil responses in this sample.
*Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.
**Only artists who travelled to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere.

12.5 Financial circumstances

The proportions of male and female artists nominating various income sources as their most important source of income in the last 12 months are shown in Table 12.8. The differences in levels of importance between income sources was discussed in Chapter 9 earlier. It appears that income from creative activities comprises the main income source for more women artists than for men, whereas income from other cultural and non-cultural activities is a more important source for a larger proportion of men than women. However, income from other sources is by far the most important revenue component for both genders; this income also includes government benefits of various sorts, as discussed in Chapter 9.

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

Income sources	Men (n=56)	Women (n=66)
	%	
Income from creative artistic activities	6	17
Income from other cultural activities	21	4
Income from other activities (not directly related to culture)	21	10
Income from other sources	52	68
Don't know/ Not sure	-	1
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

The annual incomes of male and female artists in the region are shown in Table 12.9. Note that the individual income items in the table are based on different sample sizes, corresponding to differences in the valid responses for each item. Hence the data for any item cannot be combined with results for any other item to provide specific totals. Consider the figures for creative income, income from work, and total income. It appears that, unlike other artists in Australia where a significant gender gap in income exists, no such gap is evident in the incomes of First Nations artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region. In fact, if anything, the gap appears to exist in the opposite direction.

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

Income sources (Nm= men sample size, Nw=women sample size)	Men		Women	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	$'000 p.a.		$'000 p.a.	
Income from creative artistic activities (n=48, n=54)	3.1	0.5	7.2	3.0
Income from other cultural activities (n=14, n=15)	8.7	0.5	7.2	3.0
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=56. n=66)	4.0	-*	2.8	-*
Total income from work (n=10, n=13)	**10.4**	**6.0**	**28.6**	**15.5**
Income from other sources (n=56, n=66)	14.2	18.7	14.1	18.4
Total income (n=10, n=13)	**27.8**	**29.6**	**38.3**	**35.3**

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

[(a)]The sample sizes for different types of income include zero income cases but exclude missing or incomplete data cases.

13. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

The survey region spans both the Pilbara and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in Western Australia. These two areas vary in several aspects, including geography, land use, ethnic backgrounds, settlement patterns, and economic size. In this section, we present key survey results separately for the Pilbara and the NG Lands. This breakdown helps us determine if the differences between the two regions could influence any major variables under study, potentially having some impact on policy development in the regions.

13.1 Demographics

Table 13.1 displays some demographic characteristics of artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands. In the Pilbara, there are proportionately more women artists than men, with a 56/44 ratio, whereas in the NG Lands, the gender ratio is evenly split at 50/50. Regarding age, artists in the NG Lands tend to be younger, with nearly 30 percent under the age of 35, compared to just 10 percent in the Pilbara. Conversely, over half of the artists in the Pilbara (52 percent) are over 55 years old, while only 22 percent of artists in the NG Lands fall into this age group.

There are similarities in the family circumstances of artists in both regions, with the largest group in both samples being single individuals with no children. However, there are significantly more single parents in the NG Lands (25 percent) compared to Pilbara (6 percent). Additionally, a larger proportion of artists in the Pilbara live with a disability or long-term illness (33 percent) compared to 27 percent in the NG Lands.

The final demographic statistic relates to the language used most frequently. In the NG Lands, nearly nine out of ten artists primarily use an Indigenous language (87 percent), compared to 58 percent in the Pilbara. English is the main language for 19 percent of artists in the Pilbara, but only 4 percent in the NG Lands. These statistics highlight the strong prevalence of local languages in both regions, and particularly in the NG Lands.

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

	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
Gender		
Women	56	50
Men	44	50
Age distribution		
15–24	-	4
25–34	10	25
35–44	19	22
45–54	19	27
55–64	23	13
65+	29	9
Total	**100**	**100**
Family circumstances		
Single no children	42	36
Single with children	6	25
Partner no children	24	20
Partner with children	28	19
Total	**100**	**100**
Number of dependent children (principal carer)		
Mean	4.6	2.2
Median	3.0	2.0
Living with disability, long-term illness		
Yes	33	27
No	67	73
Total	**100**	**100**
Language used most these days		
Indigenous language	58	87
English	19	4
Aboriginal English	14	8
Other	9	1
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.
* In the last 12 months.
** Multiple response allowed.
^ Those respondents who could not identify one language as the most used one, selected “Other”.

13.2 Education and training

The educational backgrounds of artists in the two locations are presented in Table 13.2. On average, artists in both regions have similar levels of formal education. However, more artists in the NG Lands have completed higher levels of school education (Year 11 or Year 12), while a greater proportion of artists in the Pilbara have completed diplomas or certificates.

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

	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=40)
Never attended	10	6
Year 10 (or equivalent) and below	45	65
Year 11 and Year 12 (or equivalent)	18	24
Completed diploma or certificate	22	4
Completed bachelor's degree	1	-
Completed postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate or doctorate degree	3	1
Total	**100**	**100**

^Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.
-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Tables 13.3 and 13.4 outline the key pathways identified by artists in Pilbara and the NG Lands for acquiring cultural capital and the skills necessary to practise as artists. Table 13.3 focuses on the acquisition of cultural knowledge, while Table 13.4 details the ways in which artists have gained their artistic skills and competencies. The patterns in Table 13.3 are quite similar for both regions, with learning directly from family members being the predominant pathway (76 percent in the NG Lands and 78 percent in Pilbara). However, a greater proportion of artists in the Pilbara area regard learning from elders or other community members as the most important pathway compared to those in the NG Lands (16 percent versus 9 percent).

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

Cultural knowledge pathways	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
	%	
Directly from family members	78	76
Directly from elders and/ or other community members	16	9
From being on country	-	4
From books, archives, libraries, including online libraries/archives	-	-
From participating in ceremonies	-	-
From artworks, songs or stories	5	4
From festivals or other cultural events	-	-
Some other way	1	7
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 13.4 reveals some differences in the pathways for acquiring cultural skills. About half of the artists in both regions learned their industry skills from a family member, but the methods of learning differed. In the NG Lands, nearly all artists who learned from a family member did so through hands-on participation – watching and doing art together. In Pilbara, about a fifth of these artists learned by observing only. Additionally, more artists in Pilbara reported acquiring their artistic skills from a friend or community member (19 percent) compared to 12 percent in the NG Lands. However, in Pilbara, this skills-transfer mostly occurred through observing and practising, whereas in the NG Lands, about half of the training was by observation alone.

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

Industry skills pathways	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
	%	
Learning from a family member:	**48**	**53**
Observing and practising with a family member	*38*	*52*
Observing a family member	*10*	*1*
Learning from a friend or community member:	**12**	**19**
Observing and practising with a friend or community member	*11*	*9*
Observing a friend or community member	*1*	*10*
Self-learning/learning on the job	20	15
School	2	8
Feedback and advice from an art professional	3	3
Workshops/short courses	-	2
Vocational training	1	-
University program	-	-
Online sources	-	-
Some other way	14	-
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 13.5 shows proportions of artists who are still learning about their cultural knowledge and artistic skills and those who are teaching others. The data suggest that artists in the NG Lands are more likely to be still learning cultural knowledge and artistic skills without teaching others compared to their counterparts in Pilbara. However, a larger proportion of artists in Pilbara are simultaneously learning and teaching others. The proportion of artists who are only teaching is higher in the NG Lands for both cultural knowledge and artistic skills.

Table 13.5 Proportions of artists who are still learning about the cultural knowledge and artistic skills and teaching others, by area (percent of artists)

	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
	%	
And these days are you still learning or are you teaching others this cultural knowledge how to do these cultural activities?		
I am still learning, not teaching others	4	25
I am still learning, and teaching others	75	52
I am not learning, I am teaching others	11	20
I am not learning, not teaching others	8	2
Don't know/ Not sure	2	-
Total	**100**	**100**
And these days are you still learning or are you teaching others these artistic skills how to do these cultural activities?		
I am still learning, not teaching others	9	34
I am still learning, and teaching others	69	42
I am not learning, I am teaching others	11	16
I am not learning, not teaching others	10	6
Don't know/ Not sure	-	1
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

13.3 Cultural activities undertaken

Table 13.6 presents the range of cultural-economic activities that artists in the two regions have ever undertaken, are currently engaged in, and are currently being paid for, with percentages calculated for all artists in the samples. Table 13.7 displays the mean and median number of activities undertaken by artists in both areas. Figure 13.1 illustrates the proportions of artists in each jurisdiction who are presently involved in activities, shown as percentages of those with experience in various activities. For those artists who are currently engaged in activities, Figure 13.2 shows the proportions that are currently being paid.

The data presented in Table 13.6 depict a general tendency towards higher levels of experience (those who have ever engaged in activity) and current participation in arts and cultural activities among Pilbara artists compared to their NG Lands counterparts, across all activities except arts administration. This also corresponds to higher percentages of Pilbara artists being paid for these activities compared to those in the NG Lands, with the same exception of arts administration. This pattern is also reflected in the number of activities experienced and undertaken by artists, as well as the number of activities for which artists are being paid in the two areas, as shown in Table 13.7.

Table 13.6 Cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists, by area (percent of all artists)

Activities*	Have ever engaged in activity		Currently engaged in activity**		Currently being paid for activity**	
	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
	%					
Creative artistic						
Visual arts	99	85	88	81	84	73
Performing arts	50	47	33	38	20	14
Composing/ choreographing	13	9	11	5	9	4
Writing/ storytelling	38	6	30	5	9	4
Filmmaking/ multimedia work	28	25	9	9	3	8
Other cultural						
Participating in ceremonies	60	23	38	15	2	-
Interpreting, translating or cross-cultural consulting	50	23	34	15	12	9
Cultural archiving, record keeping	24	1	7	1	1	-
Being on a cultural board, committee or council	53	16	40	11	22	9
Teaching others in arts and culture	68	42	60	29	19	10
Caring for country	91	56	81	45	13	6
Fishing, hunting, collecting or preparing bush food	87	64	76	58	5	4
Making Indigenous medicines or cosmetics or providing Indigenous health services	69	38	61	28	6	5
Arts management	2	1	2	-	2	-
Arts administration	22	30	18	29	15	28
Providing cultural tourism services	42	13	28	6	2	1
Other cultural activities	6	6	1	4	-	4

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

Table 13.7 Mean and median number of cultural-economic activities undertaken by artists (number of activities)

Activities	Have ever done		Currently doing*		Currently being paid*	
	Pilbara	NG Lands	Pilbara	NG Lands	Pilbara	NG Lands
Mean						
Creative artistic	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.0
Other cultural	5.7	3.1	4.5	2.4	1.0	0.8
All cultural activities	**8.0**	**4.8**	**6.2**	**3.8**	**2.3**	**1.8**
Median						
Creative artistic	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Other cultural	6.0	3.0	5.0	2.0	1.0	1.0
All cultural activities	**8.0**	**5.0**	**6.0**	**3.0**	**2.0**	**1.0**

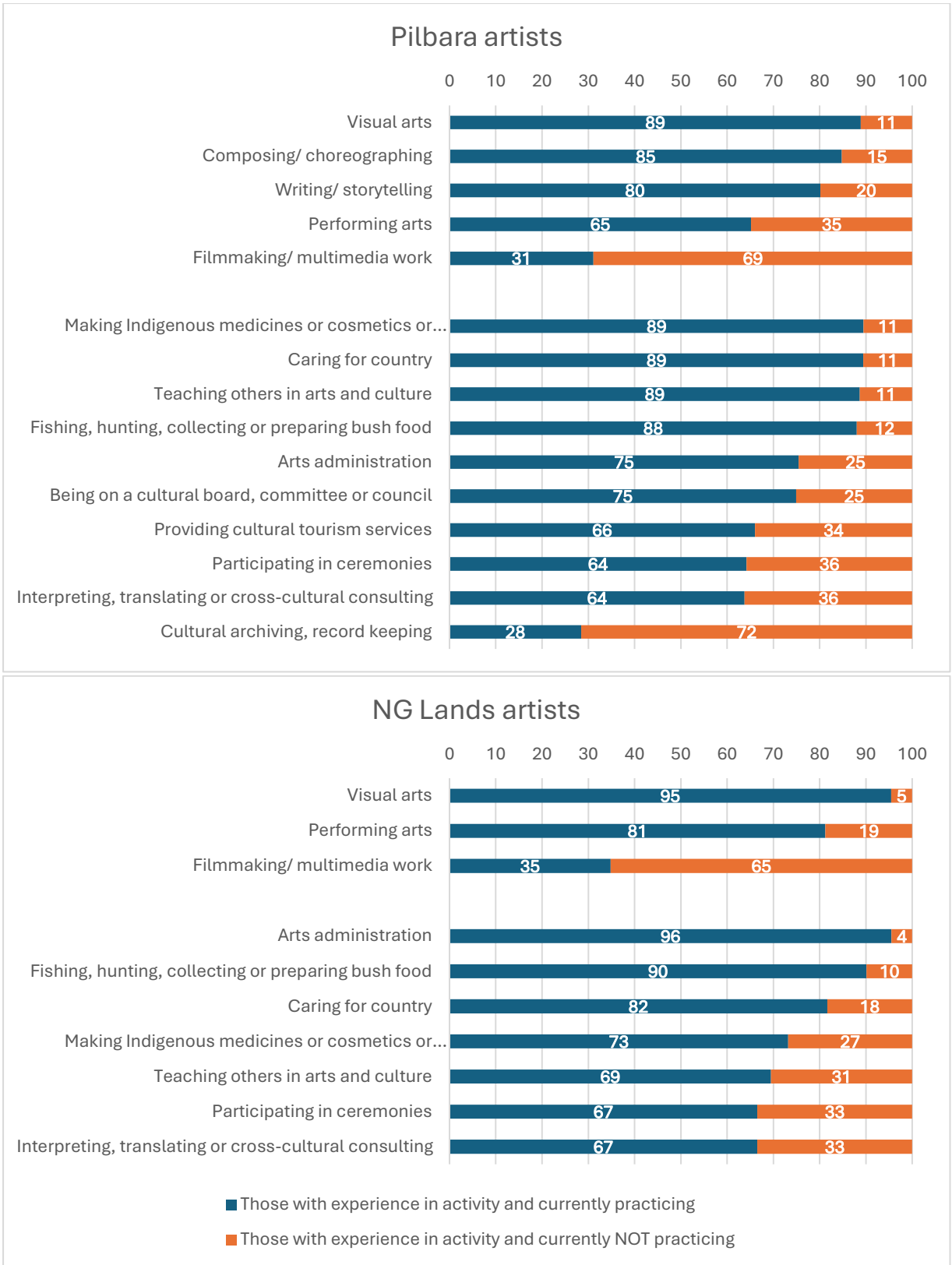
* In the last 12 months.

Turning to the engagements among experienced artists as depicted in Figure 13.1, we see a more complex picture. For visual artists and filmmakers, the levels of engagement are higher in the NG Lands compared to Pilbara. Conversely, the reverse is true for performing artists.

In arts administration nearly all experienced artists in the NG Lands are currently engaged, compared to three-quarters in the Pilbara. Otherwise, the engagement levels of Pilbara artists generally surpass those of NG Lands artists. This indicates that there is untapped creative potential in the NG Lands that could be harnessed if circumstances allowed. It should be noted that for some of the activities sample sizes are too small for valid inference to be drawn.

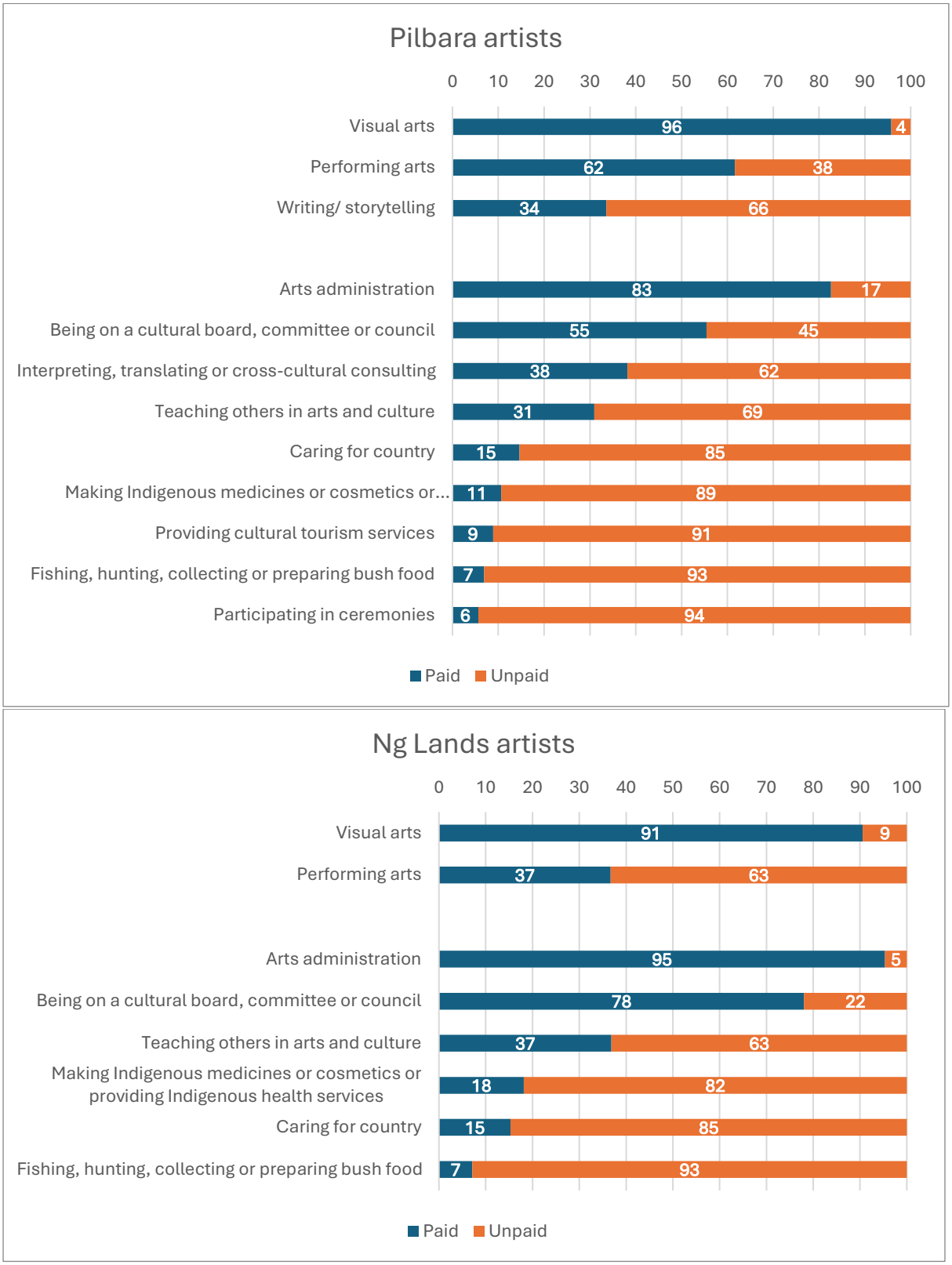
Figure 13.2 shows the proportions of artists who are being paid for various activities. We note that significantly higher proportions of experienced visual and performing artists in the Pilbara receive payment compared to those in the NG Lands. This may suggest a broader range of arts market opportunities in Pilbara than in the NG Lands. Conversely, for other cultural activities like cultural governance, arts administration, teaching in arts and culture, and making Indigenous medicine/providing health services, the NG Lands seem to have a more diversified cultural economy. This allows artists in the NG Lands greater access to payment for their cultural work compared to their counterparts in the Pilbara.

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



*Multiple response allowed. Some activities are not shown due to small sample sizes for these activities.

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)



*Multiple response allowed. Some activities are not shown due to small sample sizes for these activities.

13.4 Mobility

Table 13.8 highlights the extent to which artists in the two regions travelled for their cultural activities over the past 12 months. The data show that a higher proportion of artists in the NG Lands travelled for cultural and artistic purposes compared to those in the Pilbara (43 percent vs. 37 percent). Travel destinations also varied between the regions. Notably, a larger percentage of Pilbara artists reached a capital city (62 percent) compared to artists from the NG Lands (44 percent). Additionally, twice as many artists in the NG Lands travelled to other communities for their artistic purposes (40 percent vs. 20 percent in Pilbara). Furthermore, more than one in ten artists from the NG Lands visited their outstations and homelands in pursuit of their artistic and cultural practices.

Table 13.8 Artists' mobility in pursuit of their cultural-economic activities, by area (percent of artists, months)

	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=42)
Travelled in the last 12 months to undertake arts/cultural activities elsewhere (%)*		
Yes	37	43
No	63	57
Total	**100**	**100**
Destinations (%)**		
Capital city	62	44
Regional town	37	38
Community	20	40
Outstation/ homeland/ on country	-	12
Overseas	-	-
Total	**100**	**100**
Time spent travelling (months)**		
Mean	1.0	1.4
Median	0.3	1.0

-Indicates nil responses in this sample.

* Excludes "Don't know/ Not sure" responses.
** Only artists who travelled to undertake their arts/cultural activities elsewhere. Multiple response allowed.

13.5 Financial circumstances

Table 13.9 displays artists' perceptions of their main income sources. The most frequently cited source for both NG Lands and Pilbara artists is income from other sources (65 percent and 58 percent, respectively). A similar proportion of artists from both areas also identified income from cultural activities, excluding creative arts, as their primary income source (13 percent in the NG Lands and 12 percent in the Pilbara). However, a higher percentage of NG Lands artists reported their creative income as their main source of income (15 percent) compared to Pilbara artists (10 percent). Conversely, more Pilbara artists indicated that income from other sources was their most important income source (20 percent), compared to only 6 percent in the NG Lands.

Table 13.9 The main income source in the last 12 months as perceived by respondents, by area (percent of artists)

Income sources	Pilbara (n=77)	NG Lands (n=45)
	%	
Income from creative artistic activities	10	15
Income from other cultural activities	12	13
Income from other activities (not directly related to culture)	20	6
Income from other sources	58	65
Don't know/ Not sure	-	1
Total	**100**	**100**

-Indicates nil response in this sample.

Finally, we examine the income differences between the two areas. Table 13.10 displays the mean and median annual incomes of artists in Pilbara and the NG Lands. There are significant differences in incomes across all categories, with Pilbara artists generally being in a better financial position than those in the NG Lands. These results may reflect differences in accessibility to markets and other issues associated with the more widely scattered locations of artists in the NG Lands compared to the Pilbara. There may also have been some differences in the impact of Covid-19 on the two regions, which experienced different degrees of lockdown during 2020–2022.

Table 13.10 Artists' mean and median annual income, by area ($'000 p.a.)[(a)]

Income sources	Pilbara		NG Lands	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
	$'000 p.a.		$'000 p.a.	
Income from creative artistic activities (n=63, n=39)	6.5	3.0	3.3	0.5
Income from other cultural activities (n=22, n=6)	9.8	3.0	1.5	0.5
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=77, n=45)	5.3	-^	*	-^
Income from other work activities (not directly related to culture) (n=18, n=4)	23.2	7.5	0.2	-^
Total income from work (n=17, n=6)	**26.7**	**15.5**	**4.0**	**1.0**
Income from other sources (n=77, n=45)	13.5	18.2	15.3	18.7
Total income (n=17, n=6)	**37.5**	**35.8**	**23.2**	**21.0**

* Less than $500.
^The absence of a median value in this case indicates that most artists do not receive income from other work activities.
[(a)]The sample sizes for different types of income include zero income cases but exclude missing on incomplete data cases.

14. CONCLUSIONS: POLICY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary objective of the National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists is to investigate the extent to which art and cultural production can lead to economic empowerment for remote cultural producers and contribute to improving the sustainability of remote Indigenous communities. The data assembled in the present study for the Pilbara and NG Lands regions of WA give a comprehensive account of the economic and cultural circumstances of First Nations artists in these regions. These data provide the sort of evidence that is essential for any consideration of policy measures to support art and cultural production in remote Australia.

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 Pilbara and NG Lands regions.[17] 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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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 Revealed, held annually in Fremantle, and the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair. Art centres also maintain relationships with dealers, galleries and museums in Australia and abroad, and have a significant marketing presence on the Internet. They 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 art and culture 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 have

[17] The issues relate directly to WA policy for First Nations people in a number of areas including health, employment, workforce development, community affairs, culture and heritage, and other areas. See https://www.wa.gov.au/service/aboriginal-affairs

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 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.

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. For example, artists in Tjukurla, a community that started as an outstation of Docker River, do not have access to transportation and therefore cannot collect art materials, such as bush seeds to make beads or native desert grasses and feathers for tjanpi, or wood for punu. The local store sells commercially produced raffia to artists.

Providing services to artists is particularly challenging for art centres serving multiple communities. An example is Martumili Artists, which is based in Newman in the East Pilbara, and which serves six other remote communities in the region. The art centre delivers materials and services to these communities, as often as resources permit. In some communities like Parrngurr (approximately five hours drive from Newman), Martumili operates an art shed where artists can work. Martu artists working with Martumili are given the opportunities throughout the year to travel to one of these remote communities across the Pilbara to spend time with their families, paint at one of the community art sheds, and reconnect to their country. The arrangement works on many levels, particularly for the transient lifestyle of many artists who live on the move.

The Martumili example is an illustration of a hub-and-spokes model in which a central organisation (the hub) provides services to a number of widely scattered communities (the spokes). The model works as an effective means to provide art centre services to very remote communities which are too small and too remote to support an art centre of their own. Not only does the model provide support for artists, it also facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills between cultural producers. However, there are obvious costs in operating such a

model, including the expense of travelling long distances in difficult road conditions, and the additional problems of coordination an d management that are imposed on art centre administration. While such a model may have strong support within the involved communities and from the wider public, their long-term sustainability depends on the availability of funding and partnerships with other organisations.

Art centres may be seen as important representatives and custodians of the culture of the region in which they are located. As such they may take on a role of representing the First Nations peoples in the region in discussions or disputes on matters such as land rights negotiations. An example in the Pilbara is the Juluwarlu Art Group which has been involved in a lengthy Federal Court dispute with the Fortescue Metals Group over land title for the Yindjibarndi people.[18]

As one of their principal functions in supporting their artists, most art centres in the 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.

Language centres

The preservation of Indigenous languages is one of the most important aspects of cultural maintenance in First Nations communities. In some parts of remote Australia, language centres exist which have a specific objective of documenting local languages and providing opportunities for writers and storytellers to create works in their local tongue. They may also generate job opportunities for cultural producers engaged in archiving, record keeping, translation, creative writing in Aboriginal languages, and cross-cultural consulting, including the delivery of cultural awareness training. For example, Wangka Maya Language Centre in South Hedland collaborates with Pilbara Aboriginal language communities to produce dictionaries, grammars, storybooks, recordings, and other resources that promote the preservation and use of the 31 languages of the Pilbara region. They also document historical events and produce books, video documentation, and educational materials related to these events.

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 musicians, for example, their main place of work was at home. Significant numbers of performing artists in the region also face

[18]See https://juluwarlu.com.au/our-story/native-title-standing/

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.

Support organisations

There are several cultural organisations in the Western Australia that support the work of artists. The most important of these are the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of WA (AACHWA), Desart, and ANKA (Association of Northern and Kimberley Artists). Of these the first two are the most relevant to the Pilbara and NG Lands region. The financial and governance structures of 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. The data presented in this report show that the knowledge and skills of artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region represent a rich resource of cultural capital which is the source of the art and cultural production in the region. But the data also show that there is a considerable untapped potential – experienced artists who are willing to work in cultural production but who for various reasons may not be able to participate fully in the art economy at the present time. In this section we consider several means to expand economic opportunities for artists in the survey region.

Earning income from culture-related activities

In addition to earning income from their creative work, artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region 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, there is a very close connection between the Martumili Art Centre and the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) rangers, as discussed in section 2.1 above. There is much crossover between the two groups, with many artists working with both organisations. It is observed that the connections between art work and ranger work yield synergies that are productive in both fields, in particular through access to country that ranger work provides.

Through their caring for country activities, ranger organisations exemplify the indissoluble connections between the land and the culture of Indigenous people. Thus, some ranger groups run cultural programs that reflect these connections. For example, the KJ organisation has a Cultural Program that undertakes a wide range of cultural archiving activities, such as organising return to country trips and camps, collating genealogical information, mapping Martu country, recording oral histories from both Martu and people who have worked with them, researching and collecting historical material, collecting a vast digital archive of photos, recordings and films, and working with Martu to preserve the rich language of elders. The success of KJ is described in the words of Thelma Judson, a Martu elder from the Parnngurr community, as follows:[19]

> It's good because it belongs to all of us Martu, it belongs to all of the people. It is our organisation. It does what we want and need to do. It listens to Martu and grows with us. We try new programs and keep growing. KJ listens to Martu. It comes from Martu. We grow up our young people and teach them how to learn about companies so we know how to understand the mainstream world. The young ones are growing to be strong in both worlds.

As noted earlier, 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 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

[19] See https://www.bhp.com/news/bhp-insights/2019/08/inside-the-martulu-palyalu-partnership-with-a-martu-elder. *Accessed on July 25, 2024.*

their board directors and members, at times due to legislation,[20] and some can only afford token amounts.

Many experienced First Nations artists in the Pilbara and NG Lands region engage in arts and culture training which 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 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 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.

An area which is growing in importance for some Indigenous communities in remote Australia is fashion. An example in the NG Lands is the Wilurarra Creative centre based in the Warburton Community, whose activities in the fashion area include performing for live audiences and camera, styling up with makeup, doing haircuts and colours, and making jewellery and clothing. In other centres the opportunity exists for small business development to commercialise and market distinctive local designs and fabrics.

There are many other opportunities for the development of small Indigenous businesses in the Pilbara and NG Lands region in areas such as music production, film and video, and tourism. A constraint on the growth of such initiatives is likely to be a lack of 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. Opportunities exist for organisations in the Pilbara and NG Lands region to support the development of First Nations creative businesses more widely, a process that would contribute to enhancing the sustainability of remote communities in the region.

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.

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

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, fairs and festivals are important components of the market structure supporting the sale of First Nations creative output including paintings, other art works, and performance. One of the most important such events in WA is the annual Revealed art fair. Not only does this event provide an important marketplace for Indigenous art, it is also an occasion for extensive discussion sessions dealing with a range of issues of concern to First Nations artists.

An example of a local festival in the Pilbara is the Songs for Peace festival in Roebourne, described as "community response to decades of community conflict and reputational damage. Each year, Songs for Peace begins as a series of music and songwriting workshops in the community and prison, and ends in a large outdoor annual concert featuring nationally celebrated artists from a range of cultural backgrounds, collaborating with local musicians. The concert weaves music, local languages, image, short film, spoken word, tea making, Tjaabi, dance and fire into a peaceful evening under the stars, hosted by local young people and elders."[21] In the NG Lands, the Blackstone Festival has been a focus for a range of cultural activities including music, art, cooking, weaving, language and other aspects of the local culture.

An issue in the operation of Indigenous art markets that has been of concern in recent years is the matter of ethically sourced art (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2018). It is well known that sales of fake Indigenous art tend to be more prevalent in areas with high levels of international tourist visitation. 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

In section 2.1 of Chapter 2 of this Report, we introduced the concept of hybrid organisations which blend elements from different sectors, and which bring different skills and resources into play in 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.

[21] See https://newroebourne.bighart.org/projects/songs-for-peace/ *Accessed on August 1st, 2024.*

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.

In addition to the examples cited in Chapter 2, we can also draw attention to several others involving cooperation between cultural organisations. Firstly, a major partnership has developed between the art centre Spinifex Hill in South Hedland and the Perth-based cultural organisation FORM. In March 2014, the Spinifex Hill Artists group took up residence in a purpose-built home in South Hedland, the Spinifex Hill Studio. This was made possible through FORM's long-term partnership with BHP and the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia Fund, with the land being donated by the Department of Lands. In 2021, the Spinifex Hill Project Space was built as a place for the local community and visitors to connect with the Pilbara's dynamic creative practice, and to further the preservation and promotion of the local culture, heritage, and traditions[22].

Secondly, some art centres service artists from more remote communities through cooperation with local organisations. An example is the art centre in Warakurna in the NG Lands, which provides materials and personnel support for artists in Wanarn, a community 100 km away. This connection is made possible through the assistance of the Ngaannyatjarra Health Clinic in Wanarn, where a number of senior artists are located.

A third example is the work of the cultural organisation BighART in Roebourne in the Pilbara. BighART is an Australian cultural organisation which has been involved in promoting community development and social change for more than thirty years. One of its most recent projects is New Roebourne, delivered by Big hART in collaboration with Roebourne and surrounding communities. It builds on the strengths of Roebourne to create high quality content, build skills, and boost pride and wellbeing in the local community. Content includes digital art, theatre, music, interactive comics, dance, visual art, documentaries, short films and more. In its educational and work-related activities, the project develops new skills and capacity, promotes intergenerational exchange between elders and young people, supports agency for young women, and encourages intercultural dialogue to assist the community to thrive[23].

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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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

[22] See further in https://www.spinifexhillstudio.com.au/
[23] See https://newroebourne.bighart.org/

imparting cultural knowledge and artistic 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 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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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. 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 is Creative Australia's Chosen program, which is dedicated to financially supporting the dissemination of skills and knowledge within communities, 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, but it is a function that needs support, especially in centres with only a single manager. These activities may be supplemented by more formal training initiatives such as workshops. For some artists, becoming an arts worker at their art centre can be their first job that allows them to transition to art making. In some communities, the art centre serves as the only platform for individuals to gain their initial work experience. Exposure to and participation in art centre activities can provide individuals with valuable work experience, subsequently facilitating their transition to employment opportunities in other sectors of the economy.

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.

Access to country

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 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, if art and culture are to become a stronger source of economic empowerment for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the region.

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 AACHWA can play 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.

Tourism in Western Australia forms part of the Commonwealth Government's strategy for growing the tourism market nationally, as administered through Tourism Australia. Within Western Australia, the art and culture of remote First Nations communities is featured in the tourism marketing opportunities promoted by the WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council[24].

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

[24] See https://www.waitoc.com/

communities there are likely to be experienced cultural producers who are good storytellers 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.

Pilbara

There are several destinations and activities in the Pilbara that attract tourists, including some that are important to the local art economy such as music festivals and exhibitions of Indigenous art. The tourism organisation Destination Pilbara, an operator-driven local tourism association, provides information on attractions, tours and accommodation throughout the region, and there are visitor centres in Karratha, Port Hedland and Newman. Important destinations include the Burrup Peninsula, the Murujuga National Park, and the many islands of the Dampier Archipelago.

Tourism represents an important market for First Nations art from the region, with galleries in the Spinifex Hill art centre in South Hedland, the Martumili art centre in Newman, and several sales outlets in Roebourne. Apart from self-guided touring, there are some organised tours that focus on Indigenous culture. For example, Ngurrangga is a fully Aboriginal-owned and operated company that offers cultural services and tours throughout the Pilbara region. Our data indicate a generally positive attitude towards tourism amongst artists in the region, as reported in Chapter 13 above.

The region is visited by tourists passing through on longer self-drive trips around the State or around Australia – many in the “grey-nomad” category of retirees on the “trip of a lifetime”. Some of these tourists follow the Warlu Way, the region’s drive trail which traces the path of the Warlu, or Dreamtime sea serpent. It traverses northwest Australia from Murujuga, home of many of the most important stories of Aboriginal culture, throughout the Pilbara and on to both the Kimberley and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia.

NG Lands

Opportunities for tourism in the NG Lands are very limited because of the area’s remoteness and the permit requirements for access. In addition, accommodation options are few. There are roadhouses at Warburton and Warakurna, and there may be availability at the mining camp in Wingellina. Furthermore, apart from the roadhouses, there are no restaurants or cafes in the region, or other facilities that tourists require. There may be occasional visitors to the Lands interested in engaging with Ngaanyatjarra culture, but otherwise the main source of tourists comprises those driving through the region en route from the Northern Territory to points further west in WA, or vice versa. The main highways which stretch from Docker River or Kalka in the NT to Warburton and beyond are maintained in fair condition subject to the weather, but the few minor roads are variable in quality.

There are some limited attractions for travellers, including the Giles Weather Station, the Tjulyuru Cultural and Civic Centre in Warburton, and the Surveyor-General's Corner where three State/Territory boundaries intersect. Also, there may be opportunities to see Aboriginal artists at work in the art centres at Warakurna, Tjukurla, Wingellina and Blackstone, and there are art works for sale at these locations. Other possibilities promoted by the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku lie in eco-tourism, drawing on the rich and varied ecology of the Western desert.

Nevertheless, despite these possibilities, tourism does not figure prominently in the economy of the NG Lands, and there appears little prospect of growth in the tourist industry in the region in the short- or medium-term. As a result, marketing of the distinctive art of Aboriginal communities in the Lands is likely to continue to occur through online sales, and representation of the art centres at fairs and festivals in capital cities, including Perth, Darwin and Adelaide.

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 Pilbara and NG Lands 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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