

**CITY OF DARWIN**

# **CREATIVE STRATEGY**

**2024 - 2030**



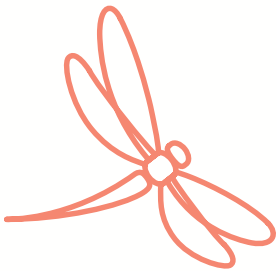




Festival Park entrance to Civic Park, Darwin Festival 2022.  
Cover image: Playhouse audience, Darwin Entertainment Centre.



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Amber Shepherd, Jarrah Watson and Ifa Shiddiq , emerging artists in LAUNCH Darwin’s mural mentoring project, Casuarina Library.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LARRAKIA COUNTRY

City of Darwin acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of all the land and waters of the Greater Darwin region.

To the Larrakia Darwin is known as Garramilla. The original language of the Larrakia is Gulumirgin (pronounced Goo-loo-midgin).

Often referred to as “Saltwater People”, the Larrakia lived, loved, birthed, hunted, and survived on pristine coastal and inland areas. Established songlines connecting Larrakia people to Country penetrate throughout their land and sea, allowing stories and histories to be told and retold for future generations.

The Larrakia culture and identity is rich and vibrant. In the footsteps of the Larrakia people, City of Darwin will continue to foster this culture and identity by creating a vibrant community together.



Larrakia artist Trent Lee performing a smoking ceremony at the launch of mirragma gunugurr-wa, The Esplanade.



# LORD MAYOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOREWORD

We are proud to present City of Darwin's Creative Strategy 2024-2030.

We know creativity makes this city a better place; we know it impacts tourism and economic development, as well as our sense of who we are.

Our strategy aims to be broad enough to include cultural practices – such as traditional dance, music, song, ceremony, arts and crafts – and practices that are newer like digital art and games design.

Darwin's vibrant creative sector includes individual artists at all levels of practice, organisations and businesses who work across creative industries, as well as those who rely on creative people for their success. Our strategy also considers audiences who are drawn to creative work made and shared here.

Our Creative Strategy 2024-2030 leads us from today to our future vision where creativity is more highly valued, embedded and visible in the Darwin community. This strategy is flexible and responsive to unplanned opportunities over its seven-year life, as well as being part of the considered plans we have for our city moving forward.



The Honorable Lord Mayor Kon Vatskalis and Chief Executive Officer Simone Saunders, Civic Centre.

**The Hon. Lord Mayor  
Kon Vatskalis**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Simone Saunders**





Tim Minchin at the Amphitheatre, Darwin Festival 2022.

# CITY OF DARWIN'S ROLE IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR

Our Creative Strategy 2024-2030 aligns with and builds upon the strategic directions of *Darwin 2030 — City for People, City of Colour*:

- A capital city with best practice and sustainable infrastructure
- A safe, liveable and healthy city
- A cool, clean and green city
- A smart and prosperous city
- A vibrant and creative city.

City of Darwin supports and invests in creative people and organisations across our municipality. We do this in a range of ways including through public art commissions, sponsorship, community grants, direct engagement, venues, exhibitions, creative enhancements, operating subsidies and significant in-kind support for festivals and events.

We provide internal and external art consultancy services through two part-time Arts and Cultural Development Officers and City of Darwin's Arts and Cultural Development Advisory Committee (ACDAC) meets at least four times each year to provide specialist advice to Council.

City of Darwin invests in the creative sector to provide industry development outcomes, enhance tourism opportunities, and deliver to audiences. We invest because we understand that creativity is inherent to community wellbeing and cohesion, and we are committed to being a vibrant and creative capital city.

City of Darwin has a unique function in supporting arts and creativity, fulfilling the six distinct roles specified in City of Darwin's Strategic Plan *Darwin 2030 — City for People, City of Colour*: partner, advocate, facilitator, provider, regulator and funder, as outlined in the following table. This strategy intersects with other strategies across City of Darwin including our Reconciliation Action Plan, Economic Development Strategy and others.

Through our Creative Strategy, City of Darwin takes on these roles to maximise outcomes and capitalise on emerging opportunities for creative people, arts organisations, events, and audiences and respond to the needs, interests, and aspirations of the community.

CITY OF DARWIN		DARWIN 2030	CREATIVE STRATEGY 2024-2030
	<b>PROVIDER</b>	Directly delivering services	Supply services and facilities such as libraries, venues, spaces. Deliver creative projects such as the Lightbox Exhibitions Program or major public art commissions.
	<b>FUNDER</b>	Funding other organisations to deliver services	Co-invest to build capacity such as the shared investment with Northern Territory Government for the Darwin Entertainment Centre. Sponsorship and in-kind support of festivals, events and creative programs.
	<b>REGULATOR</b>	Regulating some public activities through legislation	Support the regulation of fundamental risk, safety and compliance frameworks, making it safe and easier for creative projects to happen, such as permits for public art or busking.
	<b>PARTNER</b>	Forming partnerships and strategic alliances with other parties in the interests of the community	Leverage opportunities to deliver programs and maximise impact such as LAUNCH X Darwin Festival Young Musicians Showcase supported by an industry mentor.
	<b>FACILITATOR</b>	Assisting others to be involved in activities by bringing groups and interested parties together	Arts and Cultural Development Officers act as arts consultants to provide professional advice and support, facilitate pathways and bring people together to support creative initiatives. This might include directing emerging artists to resources or opportunities or connecting artists with opportunities across property or infrastructure.
	<b>ADVOCATE</b>	Promoting the interests of the community to decision makers and influencers	Advocate for creativity, for employment of artists, and for creative businesses across all areas of City of Darwin operations, with the community and with stakeholders, as demonstrated through our work with the Nightcliff Village public art project.



Angelique Martin from Free Space Studio Collective with one of the Gurumbai (mangrove) designs along Rapid Creek Foreshore.



# DEVELOPING OUR CREATIVE STRATEGY

This strategy has benefited from the guidance of Council's Arts and Cultural Development Advisory Committee (ACDAC) and its Creative Strategy Working Group.

Our strategy is informed by extensive engagement with the community, stakeholders and the Darwin creative sector across the period of March-April 2023. Matrix on Board were brought on board to work with City of Darwin on this engagement process and development of our Creative Strategy 2024-2030.

## Engagement included:

- 174 detailed responses through public survey of artists, audiences, people in arts organisations, the general public and from businesses across the municipality
- 11 specialty and open focus groups involving 133 people
- 17 City of Darwin staff participated in a focus group
- 16 individual interviews with artists, arts organisations, arts businesses, national peak bodies and funding agencies
- City of Darwin Elected Members participated in a focus group.

Across the engagement process, people were asked to consider the six roles of City of Darwin and how we could best support creatives and foster a strong and sustainable creative community across Darwin.

This Creative Strategy draws from the Darwin community's participation and wisdom, the current local and national policy environment, and City of Darwin's Strategic Plan to nurture and grow the creative lives of all who live, work, play and study across the municipality.

The timing for the delivery of City of Darwin's Creative Strategy is apt, as it closely follows the release of the National Cultural Policy: Revive. It is in line with an increased investment in, and a growing profile of, regional arts due to the advocacy work of Regional Arts Australia. Creative Australia is in its establishment phase and locally there is considerable investment in the Northern Territory Art Gallery and the Larrakia Cultural Centre.

City of Darwin will continue to work alongside other local government areas through Capital City Council of Lord Mayors Culture and the Arts Working Group and with our colleagues at Territory and Federal Government levels to leverage better outcomes for our creative community.



Gloria Richards, artist and designer for Happy Place 2.0, an art project at East Point. Studio G Darwin, Fannie Bay.





Top: Flowers Underwater art and fashion runway show, Darwin Festival 2023, Melaleuca Australia courtyard.  
Above: Hala Bira House Band, Hala Bira Festival 2022.

# OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY

“Celebration of our diverse community in permanent outdoor spaces, programs and events, indoor spaces, better opportunities for artists of colour”.

## Audience member

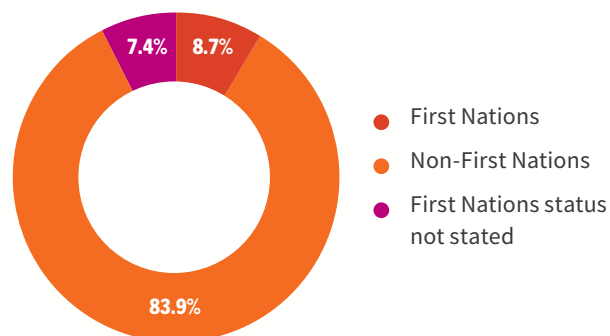
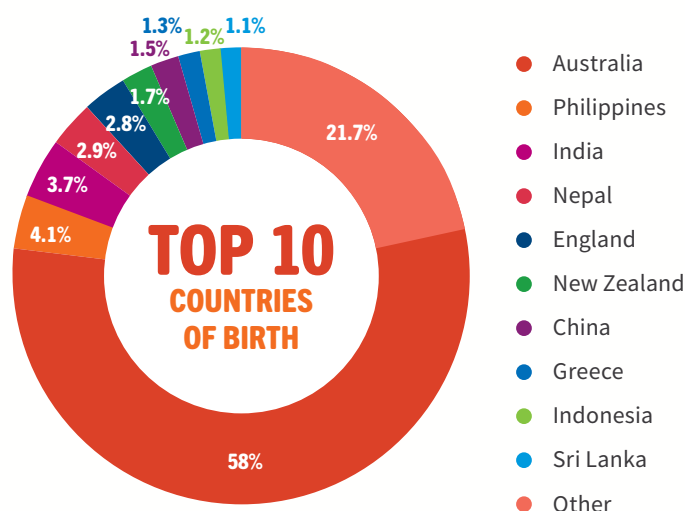
There is a keen appetite to “*make more of the gold that we already have*” (engagement participant): there is an ambition to increase local content and provide greater visibility to Darwin’s strong cultural identities to engage our audiences.

People across the wider community expressed a desire to work with Larrakia artists and explore greater

opportunities as audiences to Larrakia culture and cross-cultural learning opportunities. Larrakia artists voiced a desire for presentation opportunities, greater profile through festivals, and access to creative spaces.

The contribution and value of our multicultural communities was also recognised as key to the cultural fabric of Darwin. A long history of people choosing to call Darwin home as migrants or refugees has created a city rich in linguistic, artistic, culinary and celebratory traditions. These traditions are central to the Darwin lifestyle and the qualities community members hold dear; there is also growing audience demand for this creative work. Our proximity to Asia is also critical to how we understand ourselves as a city and influences our creative and cultural community.

## DARWIN POPULATION



Australian Bureau of Statistics (Census 2021)



**MEDIAN AGE DARWIN:**

**35 YEARS**

**285,000**

**VISITORS ENGAGED ANNUALLY  
IN CREATIVE, ARTS OR CULTURAL  
EXPERIENCES IN DARWIN**

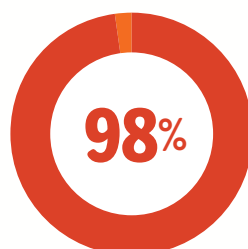
Tourism Research Australia 2023



**MEDIAN AGE AUSTRALIA:**

**38 YEARS**

Australian Bureau of Statistics



98 per cent of Australians engage with arts and culture in some way, be it through listening to music, reading, dancing, DJing, clubbing, accessing screen and online content and visual arts, comedy, fashion, attending cultural events or interacting with our cultural heritage.

Australia Council for the Arts 2020





M3 Dance Association perform onstage, World Music Festival 2023, Jingili Watergardens.

The engagement process highlighted that creatives in Darwin seek greater support, connection and professional opportunities, this was coupled with a keen appetite from First Nations and multicultural artists to present and share skills, traditions and artforms through mainstream platforms. There was acknowledgment of the support provided by Arts and Cultural Development Officers and appreciation for existing opportunities such as the Lightbox Exhibitions Program, major public art commissions, collaborations with LAUNCH and the sponsorship of festivals and events.

People recognised a need for mentoring, skills building, and professional development as part of producing and developing career pathways and new creative works. Young people (12–25-years) named mentoring and joint practice opportunities as a way to support their trajectory from youth arts through to early career opportunities. Elevating creativity and providing access to opportunities for all ages was a consistent feedback theme throughout the engagement process.

Every group we engaged with identified an opportunity to leverage existing arts events and projects that happen within City of Darwin's footprint even where not produced by City of Darwin. Specifically mentioned examples that consistently delight audiences were the Darwin Street Art

Festival, Darwin Festival and Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair which can be leveraged to generate greater outcomes for local creatives and generate rich and diverse audience experiences.

A need for more creative spaces, places and venues, with an emphasis on studio, rehearsal, workshop, presentation and performance spaces were shared. Many people spoke about underutilised City of Darwin-owned venues which could be repurposed for artists and creative entrepreneurs. The desire for flexible outdoor presentation spaces is high as is the desire for spaces that enable access to new technologies and pathways for current and future generations of digital creatives.

Audiences and artists described a need for more arts events, creative spaces, and initiatives across the suburbs, speaking to both where audiences are, where diverse communities live, and to reduce the costs for audiences, participants and artists in travelling to the CBD.

Increasing accessibility for performers, presenters, or audience members to venues and events was a request across the engagement. Greater awareness of access requirements by the sector, ranging from cost of hire, timing, accessible parking, affordable ticket prices and better promotion of ticket subsidies is needed.

**“Darwin is the cultural capital of Northern Australia. A place where artists and arts workers are drawn to being and working because of robust opportunities and a thriving community. Darwin should be a huge drawcard for interstate and international cultural tourism”.**

**Member of the public**

# OUR VISION

We want a capital city where creativity is amplified.

Where talent, skill and tradition are nurtured and elevated for the enrichment of all.

# OUR STRATEGY

This is a seven-year, place-based strategy structured around three focus areas.

- **Celebrating Larrakia**
- **Distinctly Darwin**
- **Invigorating Spaces**

Across these three focus areas we have outlined our priorities and the short, medium and long-term outcomes we have made a commitment to.

Six guiding principles underpin the three priorities across the life of the strategy.

## RELATIONSHIPS

We will continue to build new relationships to assist the creative sector, locally, Territory wide, nationally and internationally. We will strengthen and monitor existing relationships internally and externally for the benefit of our creative sector and the broader community.

## PARTNERING

We will partner to increase opportunities to engage, fund and elevate creativity for the benefit of creators and audiences. Partnerships will be across tiers of government and with cultural and creative organisations.

## ADDING VALUE

We will add value for the creatives involved in our projects. This may involve capacity building activity added to events and projects to foster creative practice, particularly for young and emerging artists.

## DIVERSITY

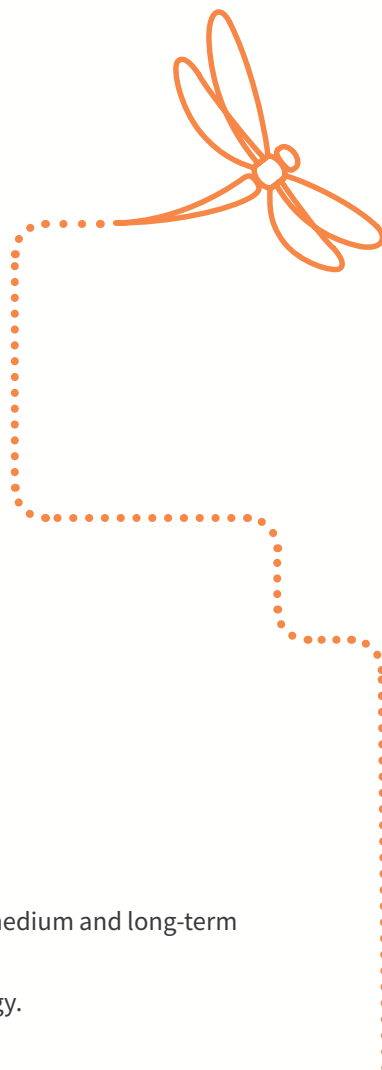
We will consider the diversity of our city when designing, planning and delivering each initiative within this strategy.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

We will facilitate relationships, provide support and enable initiatives to have a life of their own beyond our investment.

## MUNICIPALITY-WIDE REACH

This Creative Strategy extends across the whole of the Darwin municipality. Everywhere that residents live, work, study, play and engage will benefit from increased creative opportunities.





# CELEBRATING LARRAKIA

Larrakia people are the Traditional Owners of the Darwin region. We aim to celebrate Larrakia culture, story, places of significance, artists and creativity and increase understanding and visibility.

While many First Nations people call Darwin home, it is the Larrakia who welcome them during their stay. City of Darwin will work with Larrakia people and organisations to deliver initiatives to strengthen the sharing of Larrakia creativity and culture.



Garramilla Larrakia Dancers at the opening of Garrmalang Festival 2022, Darwin Entertainment Centre.

**“A broader representation of First Nations stories, with higher visibility. Interactive art in unusual spaces”.**  
**Creative sector worker**

PRIORITY	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Collaborate with Larrakia on creative initiatives	Establish an additional Arts and Cultural Development Officer position that focuses on outcomes for Larrakia and multicultural communities	Use the position to build capacity and develop new collaboration opportunities with Larrakia and other organisations and creatives	Maintain the position and increase focus on the delivery of significant creative offerings with Larrakia and other organisations and creatives
	Deliver an annual program of tailored industry site visits and connections between Larrakia artists and creative organisations		
	Advocate for increased visibility and support of Larrakia creatives		
Elevate Larrakia stories, culture and creativity through increased audience exposure	Map existing Larrakia artworks, add digital assets and promote to local and visiting audiences		
	Set up commissioning agreements with up to three Larrakia artists each year	Utilise commissions across a variety of outcomes	Utilise commissions across a variety of outcomes
	Advocate for a cultural coastal track that connects sites and creative works of significance by Larrakia		
Partner with Larrakia organisations and external funders for the long-term development of Larrakia creatives	Work with Larrakia organisations and national partners to develop an annual Larrakia Creative Fellowship		
	Support applications by Larrakia creatives for national opportunities		





“Putting local arts and storytelling at the forefront of everything we do. Celebrating Larrakia artists and culture in a bigger way”.  
**Artist**

Larrakia artist Denise Quall from Minbani Arts and designer Ciella Williams of Creepy Curlew with their Gakinga (magpie goose) artwork, Anula oval water tank.



# DISTINCTLY DARWIN

Darwin people know our home is more than crocodiles, sunsets and humidity.

Darwin is the relaxed interplay between different cultures, and strong cultural identities shared. It is creative entrepreneurs making high fashion from the Territory’s First Nations textiles, it is inventive outdoor live performance spaces lit by a full moon. It is the magic in the build-up lightning and in deluges of monsoonal rain. It is biodiversity-rich, dramatic natural environments and iconic landscapes. It is the peak season of arts and cultural festivals and events of national and international significance luring visitors and art lovers from across the globe.

We recognise these qualities of place and encourage creatives to breathe life into the stories, places, and culture for our audiences.

“The strength of our city and its people lies in the diversity of intersecting cultures. Creativity is how we share that. We want a city with a robust, interconnected artistic community with clear channels for creatives to progress from early career to high-level opportunities”.

**Creative sector worker**

PRIORITY	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Support creative initiatives that promote and celebrate Darwin	Promote and champion local creatives through a variety of digital communication channels		
	LAUNCH program continues to develop pathways in creative industries for young people including through the use of technology		
	Deliver an annual program for creative enhancement of street furniture or other assets across the municipality		
	Partner to co-design and deliver opportunities for young artists based around the clusters of textiles, music, digital and performance		
	Extend and develop the Lightbox Exhibitions Program, including installations in additional locations		
	Continue to prioritise creative work that responds to the cultural and natural environment		
	Deliver an annual sector connect event for creatives that includes professional development opportunities		

“A sustainable, green, cool, colourful, environmentally friendly place showcasing music, art, entertainment from around the world - just like the diverse communities that make this beautiful city fun and interesting”.

**Audience member**

PRIORITY	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Increase opportunities for multicultural communities to participate in creative initiatives	Connect a multicultural organisation with First Nations artists to develop a creative project	Support creative projects between First Nations and multicultural community artists	Support creative projects between First Nations and multicultural community artists
	Explore partnership opportunities between multicultural creatives and key creative events across the city		Deliver on partnership opportunities between multicultural creatives and key creative events across the city
Increase opportunities for multicultural communities to lead creative initiatives	Leverage funding to support delivery of a major commission	Scope a Sound Art commission with Darwin's multicultural creatives	Deliver a Sound Art commission with Darwin's multicultural creatives
	Promote commission opportunity specifically for a multicultural creative organisation or individual	Deliver on commission opportunity for multicultural creative organisation or individual	
	Develop collaborative project with local and international creatives	Deliver collaborative project with local and international creatives	
Support major local arts festivals and creative events	Continue to support major arts festivals and creative events through operating subsidies, sponsorship and in-kind support programs		
	Encourage and incentivise major arts festivals and creative events to deliver across the year and into Darwin suburbs		
	Continue to elevate art by artists with disability and provide showcase opportunities		
	Trial extension project addressing building new audiences with a major arts festival or event	Implement extension project focused on building new audiences with a different major arts organisation or event	Implement extension project focused on building new audiences with a different major arts organisation or event

Below: Guitarist Duval Guterres busking in Tamarind Park, Darwin City.



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Top: Reverie, LAUNCH x Darwin Festival 2023, Bamboo Stage, Civic Park.

Middle left: Deepak Lal, World Music Festival 2023, Jingili Watergardens.

Middle right: Sigulempong Dance (North Sumatra) Consulate of The Republic of Indonesia staff, Festival of Us 2023, Territory Netball Stadium.

Bottom: Opa Dance Darwin, Festival of Us 2023, Territory Netball Stadium.







Street artist Caleb Dude with his mural at the tennis courts in Bill Bell Park, Nightcliff.

# INVIGORATING SPACES

While Darwin is already a place of diverse creative spaces, niche galleries, and inventive outdoor performance locations, we will be more ambitious, investing in the built environment to support creative opportunities.

We want to reimagine existing, unused and unconventional spaces to better support creative development and creative sustainability.

“Pockets of wildly creative groups are enabled to meet, share and develop skills and concepts. Higher level of skill shown in the resulting art due to affordable spaces for development. A city that provides creative spaces for people to use. Unique architecture, displays and exhibits that foster creativity”.

**Creative sector worker**

PRIORITY	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Embed the arts in City of Darwin’s major projects	Develop a Percentage for Arts Policy that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates City of Darwin major public realm construction projects with budgets over \$500,000</li> <li>is scalable</li> <li>provides public art opportunities and/or performing arts infrastructure</li> </ul>	Implement Percentage for Arts Policy Promote outcomes	
	Any suitable sales or transfers of land by City of Darwin to embed opportunities to include creative spaces in agreement with developers		



PRIORITY	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Maximise access to existing or repurposed spaces	Promote the use of the Companion Card to increase access opportunities to attend arts events		
	Support improvement plans for City of Darwin community centres with creative lead tenants and explore co-funding opportunities		
	Identify City of Darwin properties that may be repurposed for creative opportunities		
	Investigate use of a booking database or platform for City of Darwin’s creative spaces	Add City of Darwin creative space listings to booking database and promote the platform as a resource	Review effectiveness of City of Darwin listings on booking database
	Continue to streamline permit and application processes to minimise barriers to making and presenting art in public spaces		
	Develop and implement an annual program in unused or available City of Darwin properties, such as West Lane or alternative locations, for creatives		
Refine our approach to maintenance, upgrades and enhancement of our existing creative and cultural assets	Review, refine and integrate City of Darwin’s Creative and Cultural Asset Management Plan into maintenance and upgrade schedules		
	Create a digital public art register		Publish a version of the public art register to promote these cultural assets to audiences
	Establish a new agreement to partner with the Northern Territory Government to support the Darwin Entertainment Centre	Undertake a review of the Darwin Entertainment Centre complex	Plan for performing arts cultural infrastructure that is suitable to meet existing and future needs of Darwin
	Review the Amphitheatre long-term viability and associated business case	Seek funding for infrastructure improvements to Amphitheatre	
Increase flexibility and accessibility for outdoor short term creative opportunities	Explore options for temporary venues to complement parklets, food vans, markets or other outdoor activity		
	Fund an accessibility audit for a major event or festival each year		
	Fund an accessibility audit for a City of Darwin signature event each year		



Dancer from Australia China Friendship Society NT at the 2023 Darwin International Dragon Boat Festival .



# MEASURING SUCCESS

City of Darwin, with support from the Arts and Cultural Development Advisory Committee (ACDAC) and other relevant Advisory Committees or groups, will lead three reviews over the life of this creative strategy:

**Review 1** - after Year Two 2026

**Review 2** - after Year Four 2028

**Review 3** - after Year Six 2030, which will form part of the engagement for the development of the next strategy.

Actions for the following two years will be set at each review. This approach enables flexibility to respond to local and industry challenges and opportunities. The review will be timed to coincide with budget cycles.

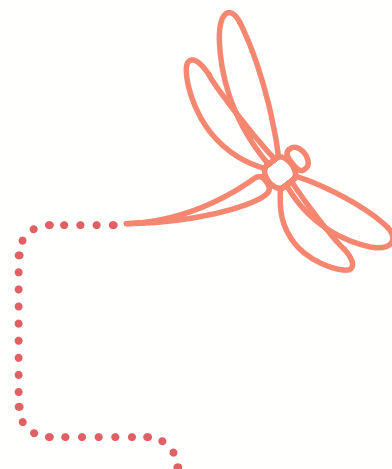
City of Darwin's Creative Strategy will also be reviewed in the context of the performance measurement framework in the City of Darwin Strategic Plan, *Darwin 2030 — City for People, City of Colour*.



Artworks from 'Looking Forward' series, curated by Proper Creative for the Lightbox Exhibitions Program 2022, Nightcliff Pool.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

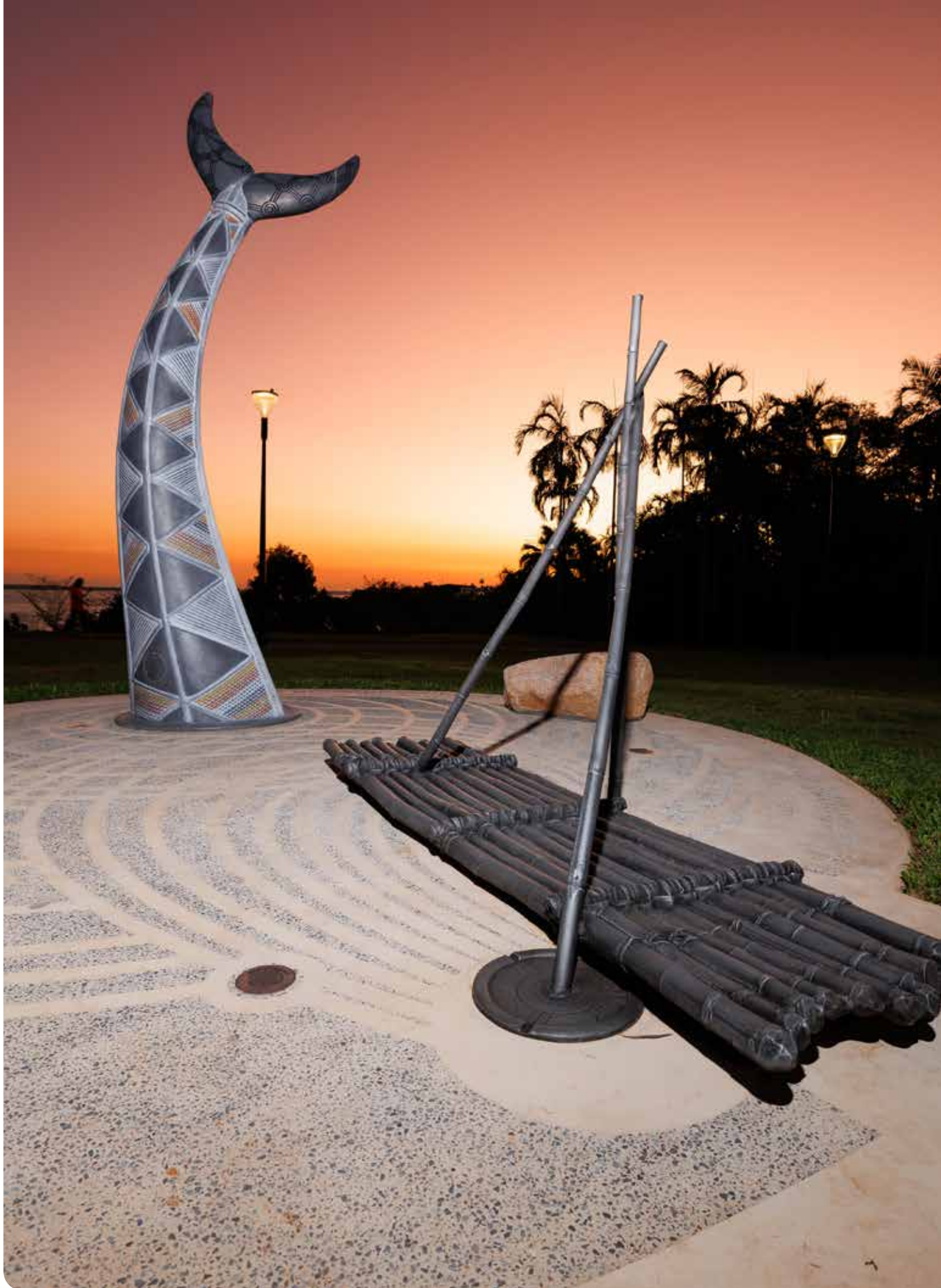
City of Darwin wishes to acknowledge the participation by the creative community in the development of this Strategy. We also extend thanks to Matrix on Board consulting and to the Arts and Cultural Development Advisory Committee members, in particular the Creative Strategy Working Group.



Darwin Street Art Festival 2022 comes to a close, Austin Lane.







mirragma gunugurr-wa (bamboo raft) by Larrakia artists Uncle Roque Lee and Trent Lee. A public art collaboration between City of Darwin, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and GARUWA Creative.

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