



Creative  
Barkly

# SNAPSHOT

## of Arts and Health in the Barkly Region

The *Creative Barkly* research maps a broad range of art forms and creative practices, including commercial, amateur, and subsidised, representing the Barkly Region's multicultural population (both First Nations' and non-Indigenous). The team conducted face-to-face surveys with 120 artists in communities across the Barkly Region, as well as sector interviews with 36 key stakeholders and organisations. This snapshot focuses on the study's key findings in relation to arts and health in the Barkly Region.

### Benefits of the arts

- Over 36% of research respondents identified health and wellbeing benefits from the arts
- Arts participation and engagement has **intrinsic** individual health and wellbeing effects such as mental health and mindfulness, emotional regulation, enjoyment, and relief of physical and emotional pain and stress alongside promoting spiritual connection to self, other, and environment
- The arts can shape powerful **determinants** of health and wellbeing such as employment, poverty, racism, social inclusion, and natural and built environments
- The arts and creativity can provide a pathway to individual, familial, intercultural, community, and regional **healing** that ensures a strong and sustainable foundation for regional cultural, social, and economic development and removes barriers to arts participation
- The Barkly arts ecology features strong involvement from health and human service sectors which provides a strong foundation for inclusive, healing, and holistic regional development
- Due to intersectoral partnerships and programs, arts and creativity strongly support health promotion across the Barkly in areas such as eye health, domestic violence prevention, healthy eating, and accessing health services



## What do Barkly residents see as the main health and wellbeing benefits of their arts participation?

- Relaxation and stress relief
- Relief from distress and trauma
- Positive social connections
- Positive cultural, family, and intercultural connections that support healing
- Pride, confidence, self-esteem and a strong sense of identity for the Barkly region and artists
- Relief from boredom
- Art centres and community spaces provide safe spaces for artists
- Arts activities provide positive alternatives to negative coping strategies e.g. substance use

## Poor health impacts on arts participation in the Barkly

- Poor physical health is the number one factor stopping residents from engaging in arts activity and related employment
- Over 20% of respondents stated that health was the main factor impacting upon their ability to engage in arts and creative activity, followed by cultural factors (15.2%) and lack of funding (14.3%)
- First Nations' respondents were most impacted by health, family and cultural factors while non-Indigenous respondents were equally impacted across health, work, costs and finances and lack of time factors

## *Creative Barkly's* key recommendations for health and wellbeing

- The Barkly arts ecology should be positioned as a key asset in generating culturally safe, community-led, and strengths-based health and wellbeing policies and services
- Health and wellbeing policies and funding should continue to expand the role of arts in health promotion and addressing local determinants of health
- All levels of government and other agencies interested in Australia's long-term wellbeing and progress should continue to fund and support arts and creative activities that can heal cultural and political divides
- Regional health strategies, justice programs and larger initiatives should embed a healing centered development approach
- The arts sector should be recognised as having a significant influence on powerful health determinants such as employment and cultural and social connection in the Barkly region
- Further research into the value of arts ecologies for health and wellbeing in remote regions must be measured and developed using complex interdisciplinary approaches. This involves building interdisciplinary teams that include health economists, social and cultural geographers, creative and cultural industries researchers, human services and social work systems theorists, human rights scholars, and holistic regional development specialists

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For further information, visit: [creativebarkly.org](http://creativebarkly.org)