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# Greater Shepparton – a Creative City Community Consultation

*Promotion of Greater Shepparton as a Nationally Significant Creative and Cultural City*

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Author: Anne McCamish on behalf of Committee for Greater Shepparton

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# 01 Creative City:

The concept for one city to be creative has been developed by David Yencken (Australian) in 1988 and his opinion is that the city need to inspire its citizens with emotional experiences, so that talents and creative organisations can mobilize ideas. 'And they have been the places which allow people room to live out their ideas, needs, aspirations, dreams, projects, conflicts, memories, anxieties, loves, passions, obsessions and fears'

*(Landry, C. and Bianchini F. , 1995)*

# 02 Forward:

Greater Shepparton is alive with creativity, and the pictures in words in this document illustrate that point. Our challenge as a region is to both harness and nurture that creativity, via a strategy that promotes imagination leading to expression of the people who reside here. I strongly believe that there is a deep commitment among community leaders to embrace creativity in Greater Shepparton, and some of the recommendations in this publication have already been acted upon by the Greater Shepparton City Council. The new Shepparton Art Museum will be a watershed in the life of our creative community, and momentum of creativity in all its forms will flow from this. I congratulate Anne McCamish on her significant engagement with the community to produce what is a thought provoking and action inspiring examination of creativity in the region.

*(Sam Birrell CEO Committee for Greater Shepparton)*

# 03 Background:

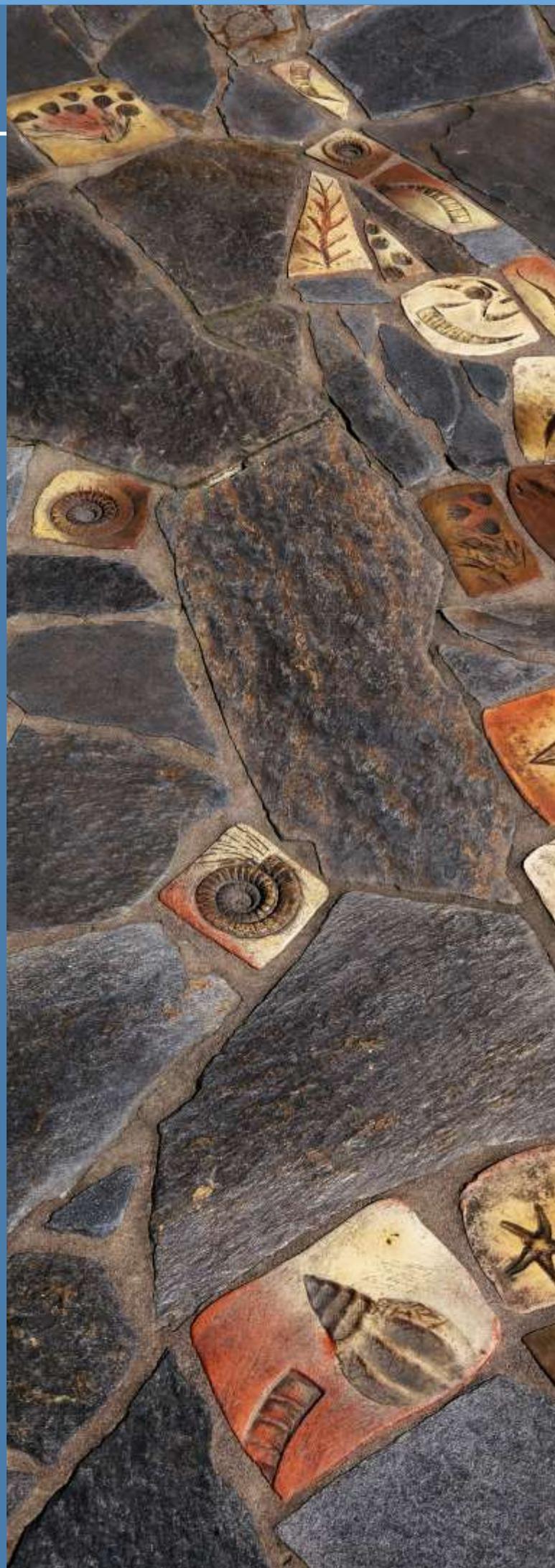
In its Strategic Directions 2014 to 2016 document, the Committee for Greater Shepparton (C4GS) declared the following aspirations for 2016 for its key focus area #2 entitled Creative Community – a National Reputation.

- ◆ The Shepparton Art Museum recognised as a national icon, featuring ceramics, indigenous and multicultural arts and major exhibitions
- ◆ Greater Shepparton is recognised nationally as a creative and cultural city
- ◆ The region celebrates and embraces the beauty and recreational values of the Goulburn River, and is a regional centre for sporting, cultural and community events

In the efforts being made to promote and facilitate the building of a new Shepparton Art Museum, it is imperative that this project be within the context of the creative community strategy.

It became clear that C4GS could make its most positive and apolitical contribution to the creative community, by putting in place structures and processes which would draw together all the threads which constitute the fabric of our own unique cultural context and output.

Greater Shepparton City Council has an Arts Policy however it is acknowledged that this is outdated and needs review and update. As such it was agreed that the Committee take on the task of consultation and conversation which will ultimately and ideally provide the data on which to base a Greater Shepparton Creative City Hub – physically to be located in the new SAM, but also virtually, by means of a web-based information exchange and clearing house, consistent with published aspirations for Focus Area #2.





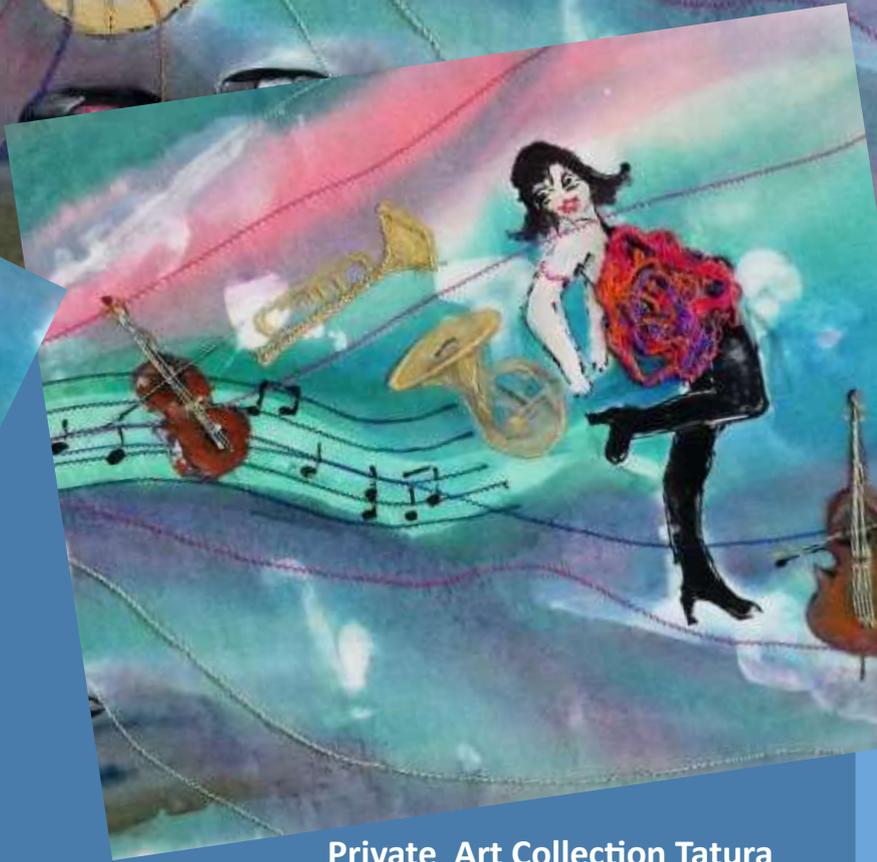
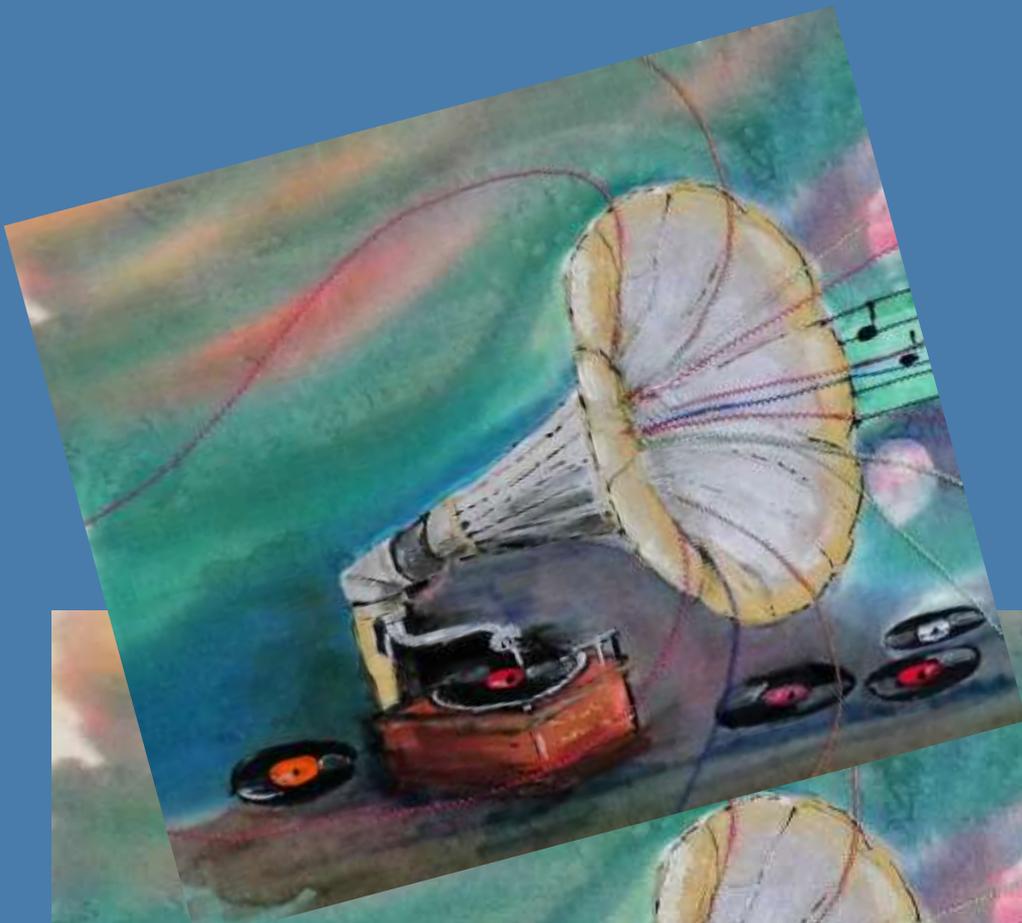
Through a virtual hub, progress towards the new Museum could be reported and disseminated to interested persons; feedback could be sought by the Project Board to guide its deliberations and planning; the Arts Advisory Committee could share information about its issues, its acquisitions and its specific requests of the community – for volunteer guides, donations and so on; planned events and exhibitions could be posted to avoid clashing with each other and dividing a limited audience; those artists and their supporters who are apprehensive about contributing at a public meeting, could post comments and observations and ideas, and initiate useful conversation and feedback.

It is evident from the Shepparton Festival programme for 2016, that a wealth of talent, initiative and diversity characterises our creative community; at the same time, some thought should be given to all those who are beginning their creative careers, or whose passion for art and design is expressed through activities as diverse as gardening, cake-decoration or knitting, and what they could contribute to a creative community-wide conversation – if there was an opportunity for them to do so.

Initially it would be useful to get an on-line discussion underway, by posing key questions to those individuals and organisations on our data-base. What would you like to know about the proposed new SAM? What could be done in the meantime to promote and enhance, to encourage and unify, to respect and celebrate our creative community? In the meantime, I agreed to personally meet with creative groups and individuals to provide them with the opportunity to talk about creativity – what is it, where do they see it, and how is it supported/not supported by the community in which they work?

There is an aspiration among creative people in the community to have an exhibition space to show their work as there are currently limited opportunities. What is currently offered by Council and Shepparton Art Museum is seen as financially restrictive. There needs to be a constructive solution.

This report attempts to provide some measure of the current situation as it is perceived and experienced by the creative hobbyists in the arts – in painting, textile and ceramics. One hundred and thirty-six individuals were interviewed throughout the later part of 2016.



# 04 Creative City Consultation:



When I embarked on this creativity project, it seemed like an ideal opportunity to engage and hopefully raise community awareness of the new SAM, and to try to determine attitudes in the creative community towards SAM and Council support for creativity generally. I understand Council to be thinking about promoting Greater Shepparton as a creative, innovative and entrepreneurial community, a broad policy umbrella under which an updated and properly informed Arts Policy would sit.

My task was to engage and consult with the wide variety of creative artists in our community, to ask them four key questions, to frame several recommendations for Council policy writers to consider.

1. What do you understand by the word creativity?
2. Where do you see creativity in our community?
3. How is creativity supported in the community of Greater Shepparton?
4. What obstacles stand in the way of creativity in Greater Shepparton?

At the same time, I determined a structure for my consultations within a 3D matrix, reflecting;

- ◆ A range of abilities and opportunities to have a voice in policy making for the community.
- ◆ A range of artists, from those who work for pleasure, to those who seek to make and sell as emerging artists, to those who work to sell and make a living from their efforts.
- ◆ Representation of as many geographic communities across the municipality as possible.

All comments and notes are presented here in exactly the words they were presented to me. At all times I resisted any temptation to put words into the mouths of the participants, and also the temptation to debate an opinion, or correct it. My job is to record, not defend. This means that many statements recorded here are ill or misinformed – an issue for policy makers to note rather than dismiss.

Inevitably as part of the consultations, individuals made recommendations about useful actions that could be adopted by Council. These are documented here in my own words. I have also classified them as being of different degrees of priority and their impact on the goals of the project, according to my reading of the context, tone and spirit in which the recommendations were made.

# 05 Summary of Responses:

## How would you define creativity?

### An Experience

- ◆ An individual and personal experience.
- ◆ Addictive, peaceful, all-consuming, spiritual, calming, self-actualising, mindful activity.
- ◆ “You don’t have to be world class to be creative.”
- ◆ Creativity raises self-esteem.
- ◆ A social experience, belonging to a community of the like-minded.
- ◆ Creates opportunities to meet new people and develop a sense of belonging.
- ◆ Belonging to a creative group helps members to broaden their skills and knowledge in lots of unrelated areas.



Private Art Collection Tatura

### A Process

- ◆ Able to source different, often discarded materials, and find uses for them.
- ◆ (Engages) imagination and visualisation.
- ◆ Making things is easier than expression in words.
- ◆ A lens through which we understand and participate in our community.

### A Product

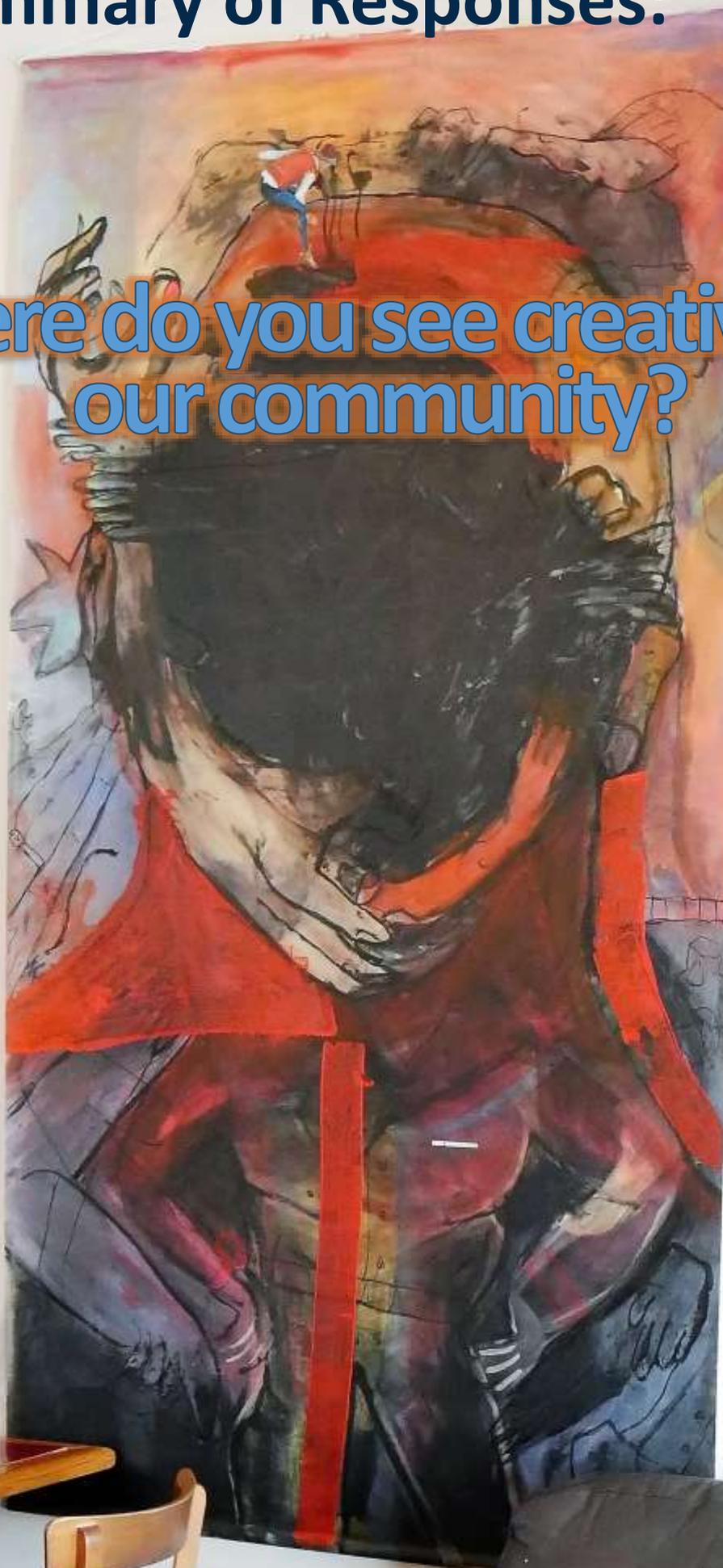
- ◆ Much broader than the traditional arts.
- ◆ Appreciation is subjective, so there is room for all kinds of creative expression.

### Evokes a response from the ultimate audience/consumer

- ◆ The product inspires an emotional response, for the betterment of society.
- ◆ Creativity brings joy to other people.

## 05 Summary of Responses:

Where do you see creativity in our community?



Art displayed in Twobo  
Café Mooropna



Art displayed in Twobo  
Café Mooroopna

## In the creation of place in the community

- ◆ Mock Place, Tatura.
- ◆ Lake redevelopment.
- ◆ River Connect.
- ◆ Local historical museums – Merrigum, Tatura War Camps.

## In industrial settings

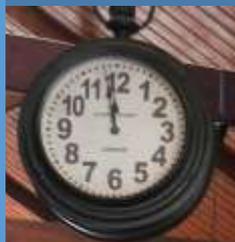
- ◆ Rubicon Water technology.
- ◆ Coomboona Dairies –advanced dairy technology.

## In commercial spaces

- ◆ Robyn Glasson’s Gallery.
- ◆ In cafes – Little Lipari, Café 3629, Bill and Beats.

## In public spaces

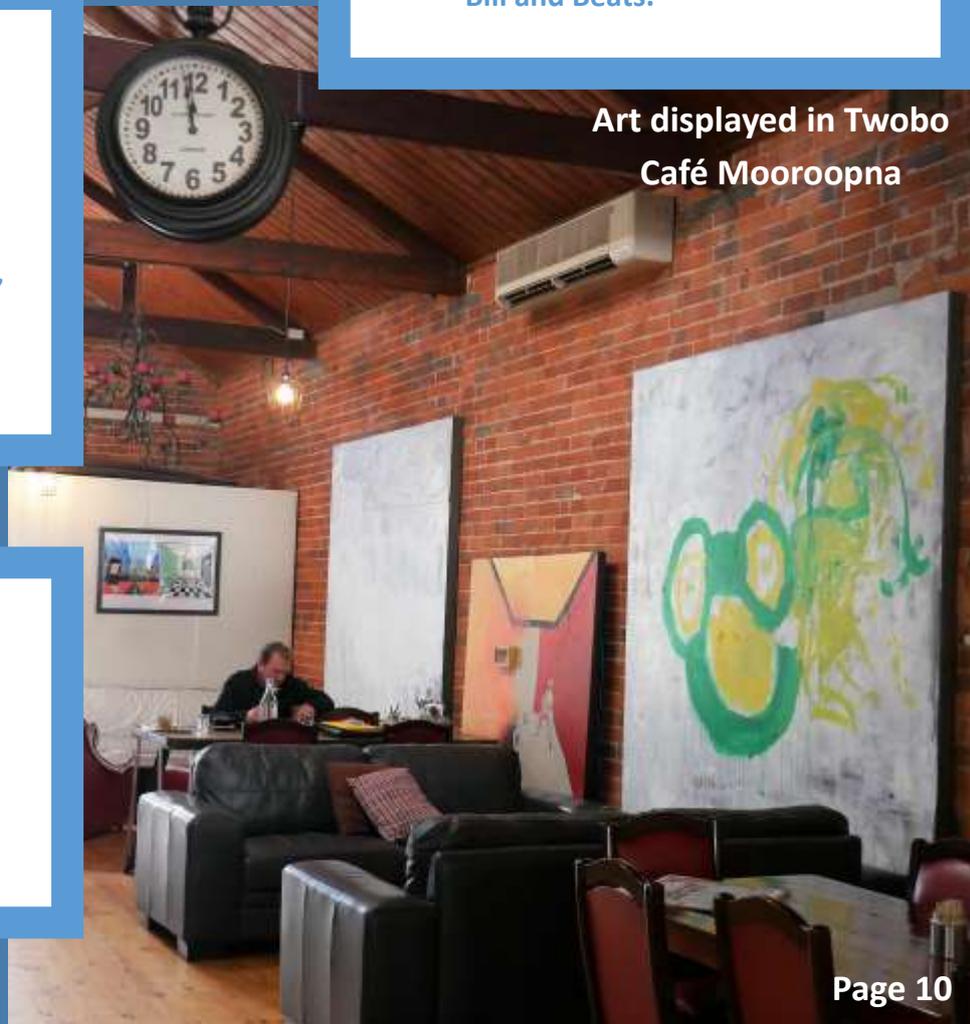
- ◆ In the ethnic community – food, dress, music.
- ◆ Parks, gardens, roundabouts.
- ◆ Exhibitions, festivals, concerts, performing arts, SAM in groups where creativity is practised.



Art displayed in Twobo  
Café Mooroopna

## In fundraising, charity projects

- ◆ Ducat currency.
- ◆ “Doing it for Dairy” – Shepp. South Community House.



## 05 Summary of Responses:

How is creativity supported  
in the community of Greater  
Shepparton?





Private Art Collection Tatura

## Community support

- ◆ Jill Hayes & Felicia Dean – The Connection.
- ◆ Angie Russi at Kaiela Gallery.
- ◆ Volunteers.
- ◆ Men’s sheds.

## Private enterprise

- ◆ Individuals who buy creative product.
- ◆ Investment capital in industry
- ◆ Cafes and businesses that show creative work on their premises.

## Council support

- ◆ Community and neighbourhood houses – venues, workplaces, social contact.
- ◆ Community Arts Grants.
- ◆ Enablers at Council – Planning Department identified as proactive supporters.

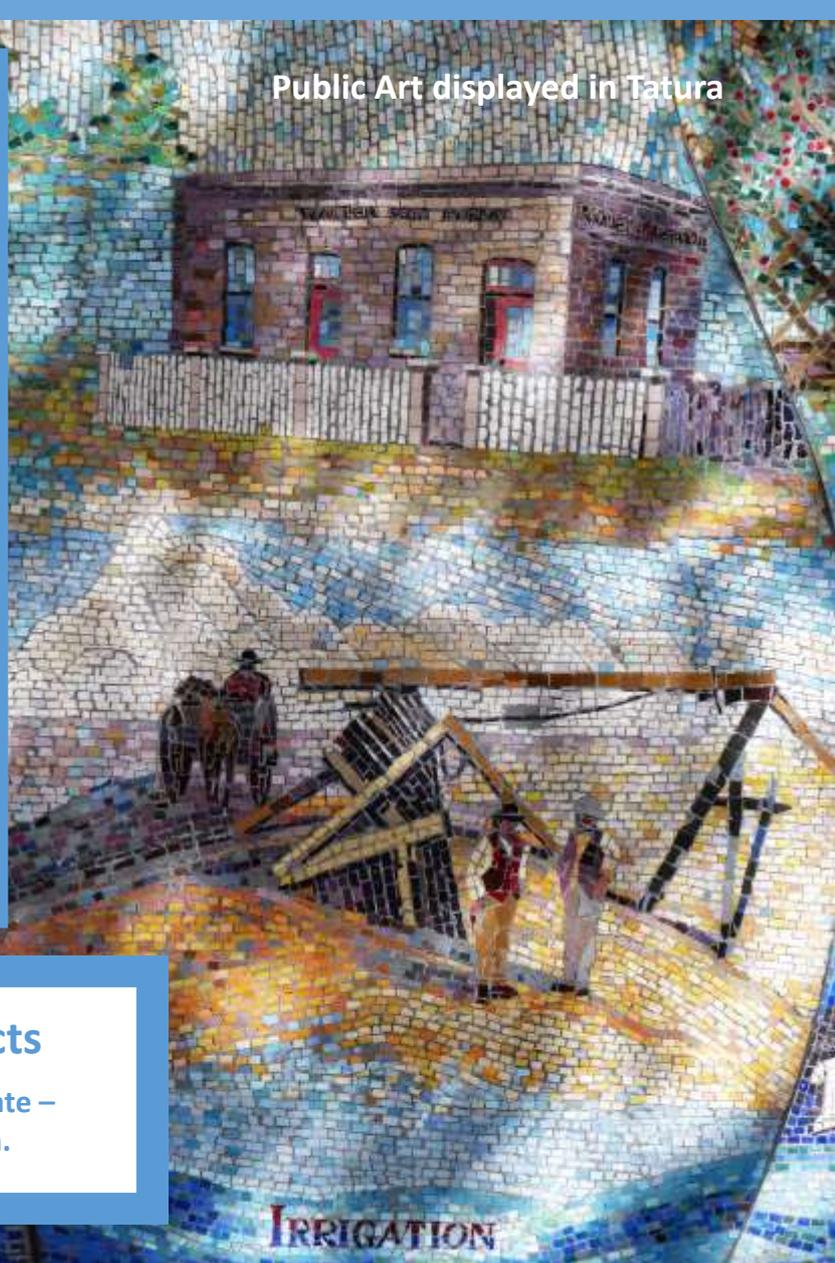


## 05 Summary of Responses:

What obstacles stand in the way of creativity in Greater Shepparton?

## Cost and availability of community exhibition space

- ◆ Cost of public space – CWA have a state-wide art and craft competition attended by visitors from inter-state as well as Victoria. They cannot have it here because of the venue costs (both Eastbank and RSL) .
- ◆ Nowhere in Shepparton for not-for-profit groups to meet, workshop and exhibit at a minimal fee.
- ◆ Prohibitive guidelines and general conditions for community exhibitions in Eastbank Foyer.



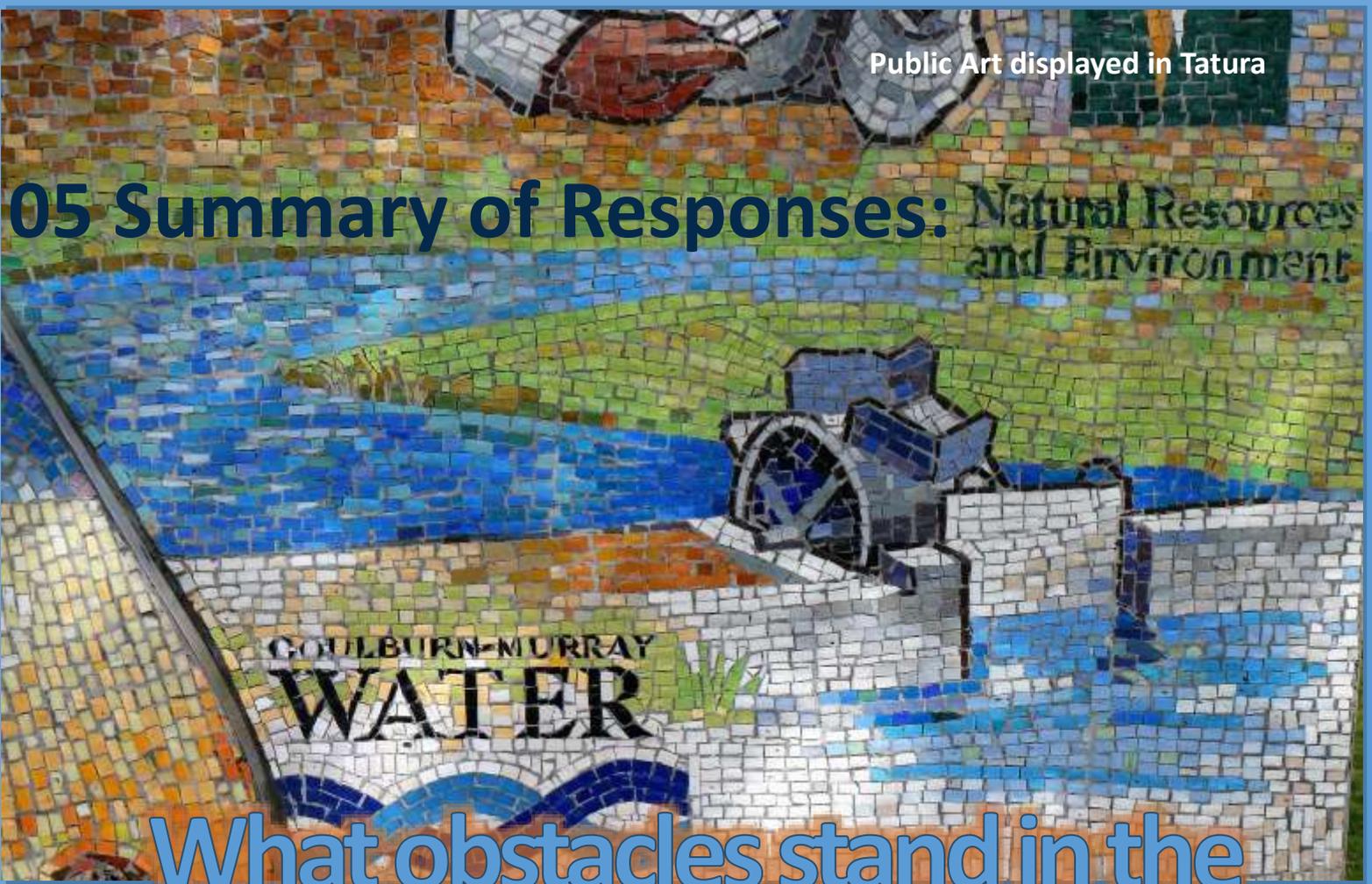
## Cost of finished creative products

- ◆ “Mind set” of spenders – public and private – limits opportunities for innovative design.

## Various comments

- ◆ Not much support for young people under the age of 21.
- ◆ Nowhere to buy local art work – Kaiela Gallery has limited opening hours.
- ◆ Ugly toilets opposite SAM suggest a serious lack of creativity in the design of a creative art precinct.
- ◆ Financial pressure on participants as materials and equipment expensive.
- ◆ “I knew the National Piano Competition was on, but I did not know why I would want to go.”
- ◆ Why does the Lake sculpture not work?
- ◆ Some groups are limited in their work by the interests of their members.
- ◆ Same people are expected to do everything for community events eg, Taste of Tatura, Tomato Festival. Eventually events are discontinued through lack of volunteers.
- ◆ Botanic Gardens, great idea but inaccessible to wheelchair users.
- ◆ Lack of access across the municipality via public transport discourages engagement.
- ◆ Lack of spaces/places for young people to be creative.
- ◆ Young people have little understanding of their creativity, as there is little overt community appreciation of what is of value in terms other than economic.
- ◆ Lots of work, support and commitment from volunteers often leads to burn-out. Groups do not have the resources for promotion.

# 05 Summary of Responses: Natural Resources and Environment



## What obstacles stand in the way of creativity in Greater Shepparton? Council and SAM factors

- ◆ National Skate Competition held at the Skate Park 2015, initiated by Skate Park Reference Group. Now disbanded having served its purpose, but not before making recommendations to Council as requested. To date, none of them have been acted on or responded to.
- ◆ SAM is good, but there is not enough to interest young people. More exhibitions relevant to young people and more exhibitions of the work of young people should be considered.
- ◆ “Art” has an elitist image, targeted at a limited audience.
- ◆ Council make it very difficult to stage exhibitions –there is a charge for everything.
- ◆ Why is the tower not open at weekends, or beyond restrictive times?
- ◆ Council staff do not promote Shepparton as a creative place, do not know what is going on, often neither friendly nor welcoming.
- ◆ Information about exhibitions at SAM is written in inaccessible, if not unintelligible, language, eg, Nell postcard.
- ◆ There is no community arts directory, no Council sponsored advertising of community groups for visitors and newcomers – is there a welcome pack for new residents?
- ◆ The workshop space at SAM is far too small to be useful, despite promises when the space was renovated 15 years ago.
- ◆ No lights at the Skate Park, no kiosk or speakers for music as originally planned.



- ◆ Nobody at Council or the Information Centre familiar with local creative groups. This limits opportunities for interested persons to locate and join existing groups.
- ◆ Lack of information and publicity about events, often find out after event is over.
- ◆ No acknowledgement or appreciation by Council of well-established groups in the community.
- ◆ There is a big disconnect between SAM and the general community.
- ◆ Need to belong to the Tourist Information Centre to leave pamphlets there.
- ◆ Council bureaucracy imposes elitist standards on work to be displayed in Eastbank generally.
- ◆ Personal relationships often impose obstacles.
- ◆ Application and acquittal forms are too long and arduous for many community groups.
- ◆ SAM does not have a data base of creative groups and contacts for the promotion of events.
- ◆ If there is a calendar of events, how do we get our activities listed?
- ◆ There are no brochures promoting creative activities at the Information Centre.
- ◆ SAM calls itself a museum, but is not used for the purpose of a museum, with a focus on who we are, how we got here... Aboriginal custodianship, immigration, irrigation.
- ◆ There is no-one at Council dedicated to community-based creative arts. We need a RADO.
- ◆ Difficult to get cows for events in Tatura.
- ◆ Failure of Council to respond to correspondence, even when feedback is sought by Council
- ◆ Shepparton Writers Festival, Taste of Tatura ceased, no support from Council at most basic level.
- ◆ Constant harassment of young skaters by Council staff.
- ◆ Confusion between Shepparton, Tatura, Merrigum Historical Museums and SAM.
- ◆ No central public space for community exhibitions.
- ◆ More money to provide no-cost creative activities at the discretion of the Community/Neighbourhood House Managers, and maintain and replace out-dated necessary equipment.
- ◆ Gallery staff do not know what workshops are coming up, to promote to Museum visitors. Where is the replacement of the dog sculpture that was located in front of Council until it was destroyed by a car? Surely insurance would have covered a replacement?

*Many of these responses re direct and spontaneous comments from individuals and each one deserves attention from policy-makers, and a respectful response from the officers responsible – though I understand that in some cases, it will necessarily be to correct misinformation.*



# 06 Recommendations:

## High Priority

*Note: All recommendations that were suggested have been included. These are not the considered recommendations of C4GS.*

- ◆ Council investigate the establishment of a “creative community” department, independent of SAM, which sits horizontally across the organisation.
- ◆ The employment of a Regional Arts Development Officer be undertaken.
- ◆ Continue to support community arts through an expanded Community Arts Grant, with simpler application and acquittal requirements, and more sympathetic conditions attached.
- ◆ The C4GS and the Council co-employ another person – in addition to a RADO – for perhaps 2 days a week. That person would be required to seek funding through philanthropy, arts grants and state and national funding programs to support and increase his/her own employment, at the same time serving as the one central resource for the entire creative community, working as an arts facilitator in much the same way as an events coordinator does at present for the sporting sector.
- ◆ Continue to support SAM, Shepparton Festival, Emerge, National Piano Awards, International and Indigenous Ceramic Awards.
- ◆ Demonstrate our communal gratitude to those volunteers who freely give of their time and resources, by offering short term support and relief to avoid the inevitable burn-out when all is left to the few to make events happen.
- ◆ Make the Mall available to provide opportunities for people to sell, exhibit, teach their skills. Invite young musicians to play after school and at weekends without imposing onerous permit conditions. Invite gardeners to sell their produce, cooks to provide street food, ethnic groups to sing and dance - all of which would illustrate how our diversity is itself an example of the creativity that surrounds us.





Private Art Collection Shepparton

- ◆ Invite and facilitate Council staff to volunteer for meaningful, not mandatory, cross-cultural training.
- ◆ There is a need for an Aboriginal story-teller/oral historian to collect stories and work in collaboration with the winning architect.
- ◆ The Council and community must look for a way to further embrace and formally recognise indigenous culture.



Private Art Collection Shepparton

- ◆ There can be no economic benefit to the city unless it is demonstrably for the entire community, and respectful of culture.
- ◆ Council should require a certain percentage of development costs be directed to artists? Eg, Dean Bowen sculpture at the showgrounds?
- ◆ There should be a requirement of developers to allocate a fixed percentage of their costs to art and design.
- ◆ We need to create welcoming, safe and friendly environments for meeting across cultural and ethnic boundaries, and present/demonstrate a willingness to participate without identity being the primary reason.

# 06 Recommendations:

## Further Recommendations

*Note: All recommendations that were suggested have been included. These are not the considered recommendations of C4GS.*

- ◆ A display of civic pride in creative residents and their skills, by providing exhibition spaces in prominent places throughout the municipality – hanging systems and appropriate lighting in Council-owned properties, for example, MEAC.
- ◆ Acknowledge and respect the outlying communities, and continue to support Neighbourhood and Community Centres which provide individuals and groups with space, resources and a social setting in which to exercise their creativity, and to belong.
- ◆ Some sort of contingency funding for Neighbourhood and Community Centres to provide materials free of charge – at the discretion of the manager – to the many creatives out there who cannot afford to engage at present.
- ◆ Recognise that everyone is creative – whether they are engaged as professionals, as hobbyists, as members of a group or for their own well-being.
- ◆ Abandon the tendency towards a Shepparton-centric view of what is possible, by investigating and documenting the success of our small towns in their celebration of creativity.
- ◆ Invite the Aboriginal community to provide story-tellers to children and adults, seated comfortably on desperately needed grassed areas beneath shade trees – again the Mall could serve the purpose.
- ◆ Empty and unkempt shops in the CBD are unattractive for locals and visitors alike. Could these be re-purposed as temporary exhibition and workshop spaces?
- ◆ Would it be possible for Council to facilitate pop-up creative installations in vacant shops?
- ◆ Could Council prepare an Arts Trail brochure for visitors?
- ◆ There is a need for a community directory of creative groups.
- ◆ Council should investigate the idea of a “creative cooperative?”
- ◆ Artists need a Council-supported forum to show and sell their work.
- ◆ Set up an Art Bank – Campaspe Council is doing so.
- ◆ Council could consult creative groups to make better use of the Mall.
- ◆ On the webpage, publish vignettes of local creative success stories.
- ◆ Wall in the Welsford St carpark should be up-dated or replaced with new street art.



Private Art Collection Shep

# Inexpensive, short-term Recommendations

- ◆ Creating space on the Council web-page to include photographs of creative work – not “high art” in many cases, but creative, expressive and original nevertheless, beginning with selected works from the Friends exhibition 2016.
- ◆ Immediately task a staff member with a calendar responsibility, to ensure that community initiated and registered exhibitions, markets and creative events do not clash with each other, and that each is publicised widely and in a timely manner.
- ◆ Could vacant Council land be used to grow indigenous food crops, thereby promoting cross-cultural unity of purpose?
- ◆ Could Piano Competition and Ceramic Awards organisers, explain the joy and excitement and rewards for attending such events, to people who have no appreciation of or experience in the arts?
- ◆ More pots of plants, succulents especially, around the CBD.
- ◆ Make a positive effort to engage the ethnic community in a unique craft (r/t food) Festival?

# SAM specific Recommendations

- ◆ Better publicity for the wonderful SAM collections, even locals do not know what is here.
- ◆ Could SAM initiate regular exhibitions of the collection which allow it to be viewed through different eyes? Eg, Aboriginal, young people, ethnic groups.
- ◆ The new SAM and its operations, must reflect the heritage and character of the community it serves.
- ◆ Reserve space at the current SAM for the creative community.
- ◆ Exhibitions of works from the SAM collection, be changed more frequently.
- ◆ “I knew the National Piano Competition was on, but I did not know why I would want to go.” This question needs to be understood and addressed in relation to SAM as soon as possible.
- ◆ SAM could be more proactive in its attempt to engage more local visitors.
- ◆ The Director and the Curator should meet occasionally with community groups to ascertain what exhibitions would be appreciated locally.



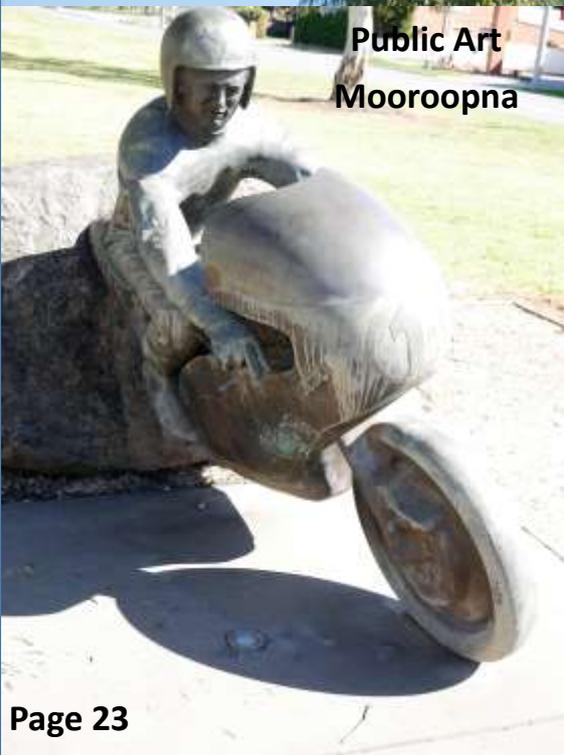
# SAM

“Our design is characterised by simplicity and clarity with compelling imagery creating a landmark cultural destination. By making the building small and tall we maximise parkland around the gallery and incorporate numerous places for community interaction, including a Sculpture Forecourt, Community Arbour, Art Hill, cafe and roof top event venue along with sheltering verandahs to all four sides of the building. It will be an art museum that is a delight to work in and a pleasure to visit – again and again.  
(Denton Corker Marshall Design Director Adrian FitzGerald)





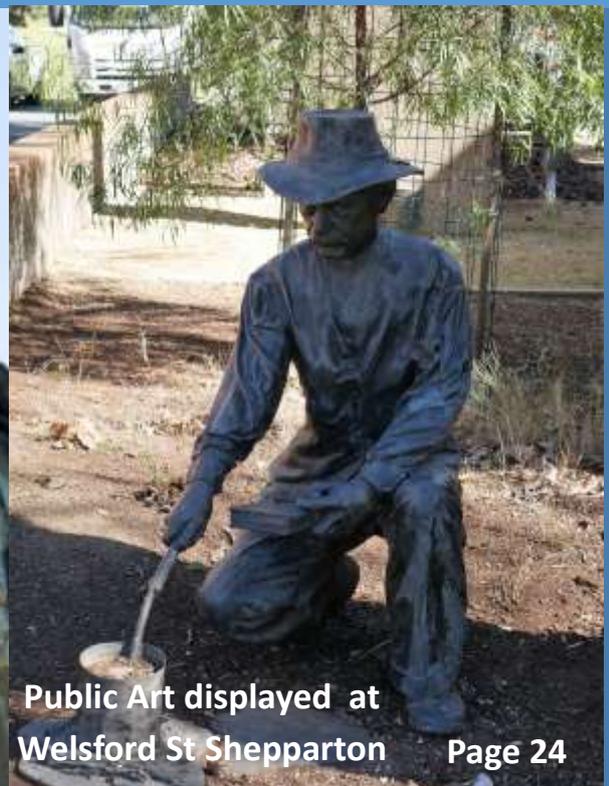
Public Art  
Mooroopna



# 07 Creative City, a Vision:

The Age newspaper, in its “Spectrum” supplement (p 8-9) on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2016, asked a number of people to describe the characteristics of a creative city. These may be used as a measure by which to evaluate Greater Shepparton’s claim to be a creative city. Each of them emerged – singly, not together – as recommendations from meetings with more than one hundred members of our “creative community”.

- ◆ **Musician Sophie Brous** - “It’s about creating opportunities for conversations between different voices and different cultures, not just preaching to the converted. The more people who can be involved ... inspiring and challenging and provocative, the better.”
- ◆ **Tom Mosby, Chief Executive Koori Heritage Trust** – “Indigenous culture should be seen as very much central to society, not sitting on the fringes where Indigenous issues have traditionally been.”
- ◆ **Marcos Davidson, goldsmith** – “incentives from local government to create more studio space in the central city, such as using empty floors creating temporary working spaces open to the public...when the creative community is all in one place together, or in one neighbourhood, there is brilliant cross-pollination ... and what about street food?”
- ◆ **Jonathon Holloway, artistic director for the Melbourne Festival** – “my dream for the future is that (the city) continues to be welcoming and inclusive...That we continue to see past, present and future co-existing, that it evolves and doesn’t transform.”
- ◆ **Michael Leunig, artist** – more trees and native birds ...benches to sit on ... spaces for people to make connections.”
- ◆ **Uncle Jack Charles, actor, musician, Aboriginal elder** – “A future (Shepparton) pay more respect to its indigenous heritage, starting with teaching new immigrants about our indigenous history.”
- ◆ **Alice Pung, writer** – “quiet places where people are welcome to sit and reflect...conversation booths.”



Public Art  
War Memorial Shepparton

Public Art displayed at  
Welsford St Shepparton Page 24

# 08 Conclusion:

## A Creative City—from the perspective of the community I consulted

- ◆ Is proud of itself and its achievements.
- ◆ Looks like an innovative and creative place to visitors, who immediately notice street art, good design in the built landscape, and the beauty of natural attributes.
- ◆ Feels like a place where respect for others and their abilities is tangible.
- ◆ Is clean, shady, provides seating, good pedestrian access, fully occupied shops and inner city residential opportunities.
- ◆ Is a city where young people gather in safety, where interaction and social connection is fostered.
- ◆ Is a place where well-being is achieved through a commonly shared pride in identity and belonging.
- ◆ Greater Shepparton has come a long way down the path towards presenting itself to the nation as a “creative city.” There are lots of people, with lots of ideas and goodwill, who will assist it in its further journey.





# 09 Art in our Community:



# Mooroopna Art



Art displayed in Twobo  
Café Mooroopna

Private Pottery  
Collection Mooroopna



Community House  
Mooroopna



# Tatura Art



Private Art Collection  
Tatura



Public Art Tatura



Public Art Tatura

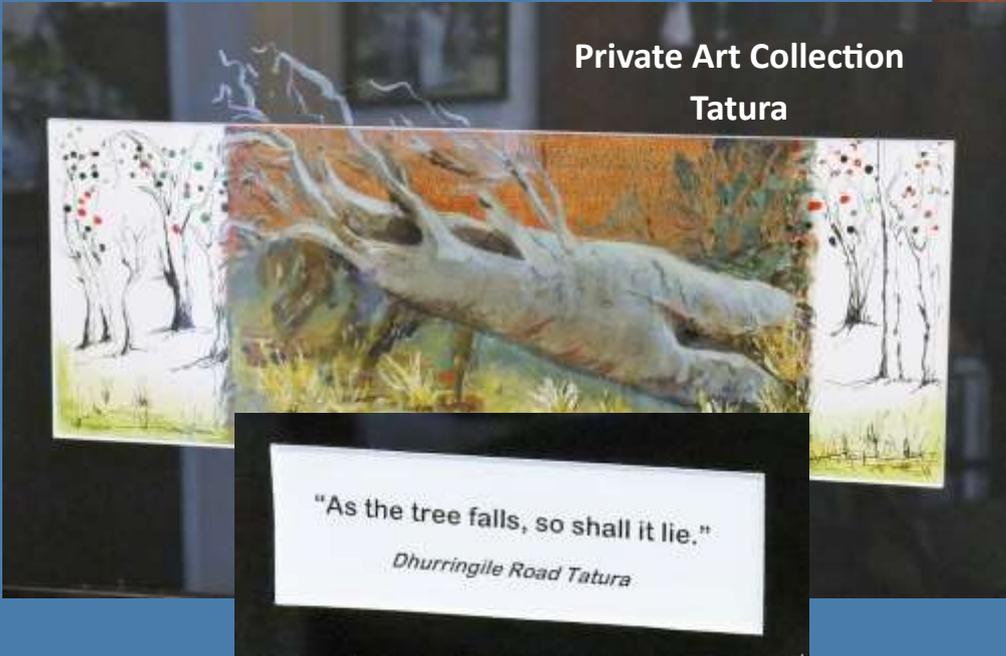


Private Art Collection Tatura



Private Art Collection Tatura

Private Art Collection Tatura



"As the tree falls, so shall it lie."  
Dhurringile Road Tatura



# Shepparton Art





Private Art Collection  
Shepparton

# Shepparton Art



Private Art Collection  
Shepparton



Wall Art by Mimi Leung  
High St Shepparton



### **Author Anne McCamish**

This project was undertaken to explore the range and depth of interest in encouraging community decision makers to more actively and positively support our creative community. The time and resources available for the project limited it to just some of those groups and individuals involved in painting, pottery and textiles as hobbyists and/or emerging artists. It should be noted however, that creative pursuits as diverse as sculpture, tattoo art, gardening, cake decorating and writing were frequently cited by interviewees as being equally relevant to the notion of a creative community.

In the past twelve months there has been progress on many of the ideas and suggestions that emerged from participants in the project. Most importantly, discussion around the notion of a creative city and how it might be realised in Greater Shepparton, has been both passionate and stimulating. It remains for key links to be made and facilitated within the community and its agencies, so that everybody who participates in a creative activity – and by definition, that includes every person who makes something new and interesting to satisfy an inner drive to express their individuality – has the opportunity to contribute to the public good.

I thank all those people who attended individual and group meetings, for their honesty and trust in this research, initiated and supported by the Committee for Greater Shepparton, whose focus on promoting Greater Shepparton as a creative city provided the rationale for the work in the first place. I do not expect every recommendation included within this report to be adopted, but hopefully each one will be given the respect and consideration that it merits, and that responses to the document acknowledge the passion that has been recorded within.

