



Blackbutt
ARTS STRATEGY

Blackbutt ARTS STRATEGY 2026

Developed in collaboration with the Blackbutt community. Formally endorsed by Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival Inc. (Blackbutt Avocado Festival) in November 2021.

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Stakeholders

Project Contributors



Funding Partners



FRRR
Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

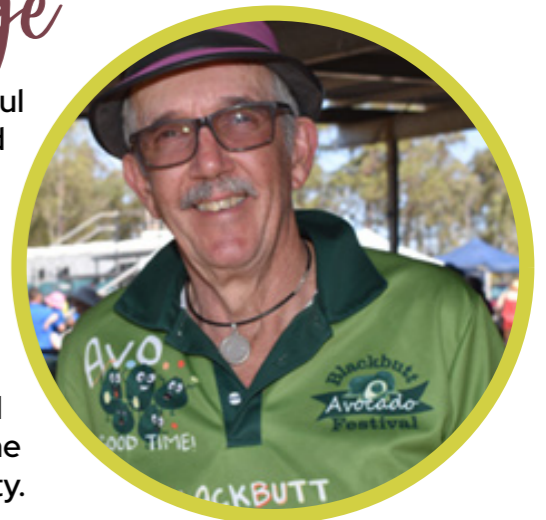


SOUTH BURNETT
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country
**BLACKBUTT AVOCADO FESTIVAL WOULD LIKE TO
 ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS
 OF THE BLACKBUTT DISTRICT.
 WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS
 PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING.**

Chairperson’s Message

It has been a long trip from the first Bloomin Beautiful Blackbutt Festival in 2009 when a band of motivated locals took the Blackbutt Benarkin Garden Club Inc and Friends of Cultcha Inc initiative and grew a “floral festival” into a regional spring festival. The Blackbutt Avocado Festival today still celebrates art, garden, history and country and showcases Blackbutt as the gateway to the Great South Burnett. Blossom, the rare and precious mascot for the annual Festival was born and continues to welcome locals and visitors to experience the sounds, tastes, smells and flavours of our local community.



Blackbutt is enjoying a “growth spurt”. With the planned main street revitalization projects and property sales going through boom times; sporting, arts, cultural, business and tourism organisations are revelling in the hustle and bustle of Queensland travellers to Blackbutt. One festival has grown and evolved annually to now include the Blackbutt Avocado Festival and the Blackbutt Music Festival - Country and Blue Grass. It seems very appropriate that we should be planning ahead for the future of our small rural community with the timely development of a document that will provide direction and support local arts initiatives.

I’d like to acknowledge our many supporters that have made the development of the Blackbutt Arts Strategy possible. This includes not only our funding partners, the Foundational for Rural Regional Renewal and South Burnett Regional Council, but also the many stakeholders, community organisations and Blackbutt district residents who contributed to the consultation process in April – August 2021.

Your perspectives, passion for our community and optimism for the future is threaded throughout the Blackbutt Arts Strategy and we look forward to working together to achieve the aspirations outlined in the Strategy.

Jeff Connor (Chairman)
Bloomin Beautiful Blackbutt Festival Inc (t/a Blackbutt Avocado Festival)

Our Community

Blackbutt is a proud rural community of 836 people¹ situated at the southern end of the South Burnett region and broader Wide Bay Burnett part of Queensland. The South Burnett has a diverse economic profile with key industries including agriculture, mining, manufacturing, health/social services and retail². The key employment areas for Blackbutt residents are in farming or agricultural industries, and local government³.

The Blackbutt district's geographical positioning presents a range of opportunities for future cultural, social and economic development. Located just a two-hour drive north-west of Brisbane, Blackbutt is considered the gateway into the South Burnett region, which is home to a number of natural tourism assets such as the Boondooma, Bjelke-Peterson and Gordonbrook Dams and associated water recreation and fishing sites, Boat Mountain Conservation Park and places of local Indigenous significance such as the Bunya Mountains and Coomba Falls.

Blackbutt is also a key connection point to the Brisbane Valley Rail Rail and host to a number of local events and attractions such as the annual Blackbutt Avocado Festival, Roy Emerson Museum and Blackbutt Art Gallery. Additionally, Blackbutt and the surrounding district boasts a vast number of volunteer-led arts, cultural and community organisations that provide important opportunities for social connection and creative skills building (refer to Existing Strengths: Arts and Cultural Assets for further information). Blackbutt is home to the award-winning Blackbutt Bakery, and has a range of essential services, cafes and retail outlets located in town, and enjoys a flow of 'grey nomad' visitors and cycling tourism.

Blackbutt District Map



¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016
² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018
³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016

About Blackbutt Avocado Festival

Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival Inc. (trading as Blackbutt Avocado Festival) was formed by the community in 2009 in response to a desire to encourage Blackbutt's development, and to drive the creation of a signature festival event. In 2016 the Festival rebranded to the 'Blackbutt Avocado Festival' to highlight and celebrate famous local produce – Blackbutt avocados.

The Festival has continued to grow over the years and was attended by over 4000 people in 2019. The complexities and public health risk of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of both the 2020 and 2021 Blackbutt Avocado Festivals, however plans are underway for its return in September 2022.

Held annually in September, Blackbutt Avocado Festival incorporates a parachute drop, market stalls, local food precinct, a street parade, avocado-themed competitions, children's activities, live music, roving entertainment and food vendors. Blackbutt Avocado Festival enjoys a range of sponsors from the local business community and has also attracted investment from Tourism & Events Queensland, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, and other local, state and national funding programs. To encourage longer stays in the region, an additional festival Blackbutt Music Festival - Country and Bluegrass has been added in the lead-up to the Festival. To encourage more regular contact with their visiting audience, the festival also has founded seasonal Bazaar markets.

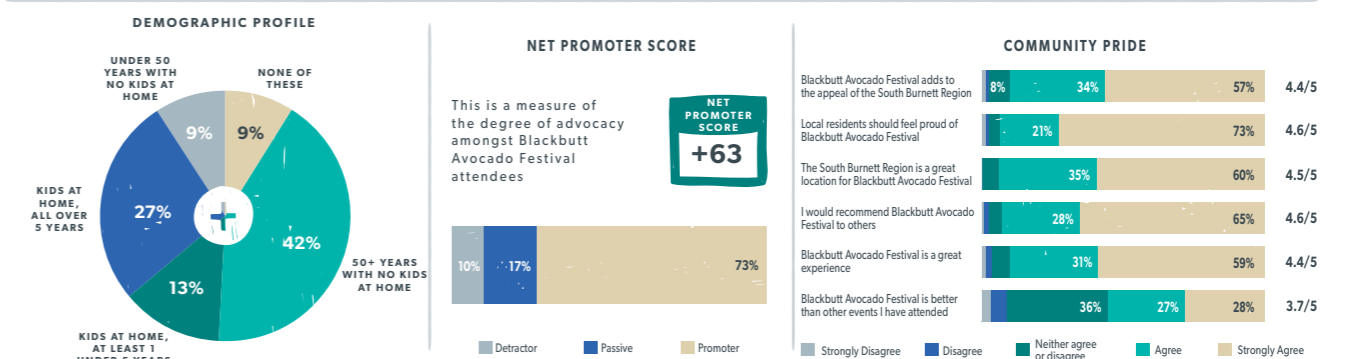
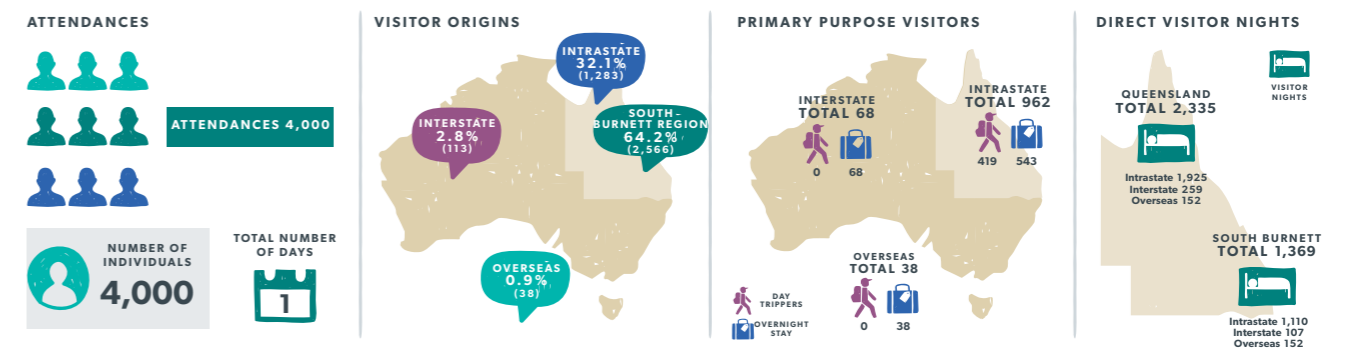


BLACKBUTT AVOCADO FESTIVAL SNAPSHOT

Blackbutt Avocado Festival

14 SEPTEMBER 2019

Queensland



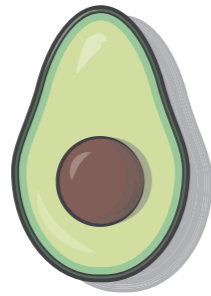
Infographic courtesy of IER



Strategic Context

In 2020, the Blackbutt Avocado Festival Committee identified an opportunity to strategically leverage arts initiatives to:

- ➔ enhance tourism and economic outcomes for the district
- ➔ strengthen community identity and sense of place
- ➔ play a role in solving local problems identified by the community
- ➔ support the existing activities of the Blackbutt Avocado Festival and other active community groups to ensure sustainability and maximum localised impact
- ➔ progress with the development and delivery of a "Big Avocado" for Blackbutt



In developing and implementing the Blackbutt Arts Strategy 2026, this strategy seeks to align itself with other local strategic frameworks, including South Burnett Regional Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 and Visit South Burnett's Regional Tourism Strategy. Additionally, the Blackbutt Arts Strategy looks to support the priorities identified by Arts Queensland's Creative Together Roadmap 2020-2030 to⁴:



⁴ Creative Together Roadmap 2020-2030 – hyperlink: https://www.arts.qld.gov.au/images/documents/artsqld/creativetogether/Roadmap_Final.pdf



Community Engagement



Widespread engagement with regional and local stakeholders was undertaken between April to August 2021. Engagement culminated in **27** meetings, representing **55** voices and **20** organisations from across the arts, heritage, tourism, economic and community development sectors. Additionally, a community survey was made available online and in Blackbutt locations during July-August 2021 and attracted **59** responses.

An example of how we engaged with community during the consultation process.

Survey closes 11 August 2021. More info: avofest.com.au/blackbuttarts

BLACKBUTT ARTS STRATEGY have your say!

What **arts activities** would you like to see in the Blackbutt district? Would you support the idea of a **Big Avocado** tourist attraction? ...and more!

- 1 Take our 10 minute survey online (scan QR code) 
- 2 Chat to Olivia - Friday 6 August @ Blackbutt Library  Book an appointment with our Arts Project Officer: 0432 556 830



The consultation process was designed to capture input from a broad range of community members and key stakeholders. It identified:

- ➔ Existing strengths including current arts and cultural assets
- ➔ Local and regionally-relevant opportunities, both now and into the future, that could provide investment, leverage or platforms for arts initiatives
- ➔ Challenges and gaps that may inhibit planning arts activities and/or community access to the arts

The strengths, challenges and opportunities on the next page have been identified by the community and key stakeholders during the consultation process:

Existing Strengths: Arts & Cultural Assets

- Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival Inc.'s annual Blackbutt Avocado Festival, seasonal markets, Australia Day events and coordination of other significant community celebrations
- Blackbutt Art Gallery, showcasing local artists, craftspeople and acting as a point of sale for locally-produced creative products
- Blackbutt District Community Organisation (BDCO) and associated 'A Night of Culture' annual events
- Roy Emerson Museum and associated historical events celebrating local stories
- Taromeo Country Music Club, providing opportunities to learn, practice, connect with others and hold concerts
- Blackbutt Singers Inc. celebrating 30 years in 2021, providing opportunities for social connection and public performance
- Annual Blackbutt Show coordinated by the Blackbutt Agricultural Show Society
- Blackbutt Camera Club
- Blackbutt-Yarraman branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association
- Blackbutt & Benarkin Lions Club and existing community and youth development activities, including the annual Peace Poster Competition
- Works from the South Burnett Regional Council art collection on display at the Blackbutt Library (Archie Muir Centre)



Challenges & Gaps

- Lack of arts-specific investment available from local government outside of the Regional Arts Development Fund
- Community perception that the Blackbutt-end of the South Burnett region receives less funding support than elsewhere in the South Burnett
- Need for cohesive marketing and promotion of existing arts and cultural assets and activities in Blackbutt as a package/arts itinerary
- Tourism & Events Queensland's Strategic Plan 2020-24 doesn't prioritise cultural tourism as a core pillar for the state's tourism sector
- Limited access to First Nations arts and cultural experiences within the Blackbutt district
- Blackbutt Visitor Information Centre is currently closed and lacks with vibrancy of other information centers located in the South Burnett
- Limited accommodation options for travelers
- Lack of opportunities for youth and youth disengagement
- Need for upskilling in digital, cultural and business capabilities for artists and cultural workers

Current & Future Opportunities

- Blackbutt's locality in relation to Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast (the majority of Queensland's population) provides access to the 'day trippers' tourist market, as well as large 'family and friends' visitation
- Proximity to Rail Trail networks (Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and South Burnett Rail Trail) and associated cycling tourism
- Proximity to the Big Peanut (Lions Park, Kingaroy), \$1.6million Building Better Regions Fund supported fossil museum and art gallery development (Murgon) and other arts and cultural events and spaces across the South Burnett region, including a range of museums, galleries and numerous community markets/festivals
- Access to Central Queensland Regional Arts Service Network (CQ RASN) programs and artist/arts worker support and mentoring, and the continuation of this program with \$6million investment from the State Government to support RASN from 2021-2025⁵
- Blackbutt CBD redevelopment scheduled for 2021/2022
- \$5.63million investment from the State Government for the South Burnett through Round Four of the Works for Queensland Program 2021-24⁶
- Adoption of South Burnett Regional Council's renewed Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy in January 2021⁷
- Upcoming formation of a Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee to South Burnett Regional Council, which will include representation from Blackbutt Art Gallery⁸
- Proposed development of town-specific Community Plans by South Burnett Regional Council
- Potential to strengthen collaboration with other regional festivals, particularly neighboring events in Kingaroy BaconFest and Goomeri Pumpkin Festival
- Existing public art and mural trails in other rural towns and along major highway 'drive tourism' routes
- Feasibility investigation into a 'Big Avocado' for Blackbutt
- Opportunity to maximize on the growth of the domestic arts tourism market, with 'arts day trips' in Queensland increasing by 20% since 2014⁹
- Creating opportunities to share stories from Blackbutt that haven't been told yet, including all First Nations stories that are relevant to the area
- Change in tourism markets with travelers expecting and seeking transformational experiences.



⁵ Arts Queensland: Regional Arts Service Network (hyperlink: <https://www.arts.qld.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/regional-arts-services-network-outcomes>).

⁶ South Burnett Regional Council Media Release – 2 August 2021 (hyperlink: <https://www.southburnett.qld.gov.au/news/article/1487/council-receives-w4q-funding-to-progress-projects-over-the-next-3-years>).

⁷ South Burnett Regional Council Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy, adopted 20 January 2021 (hyperlink: <https://www.southburnett.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4791/arts-culture-heritage-policy-strategic-009>).

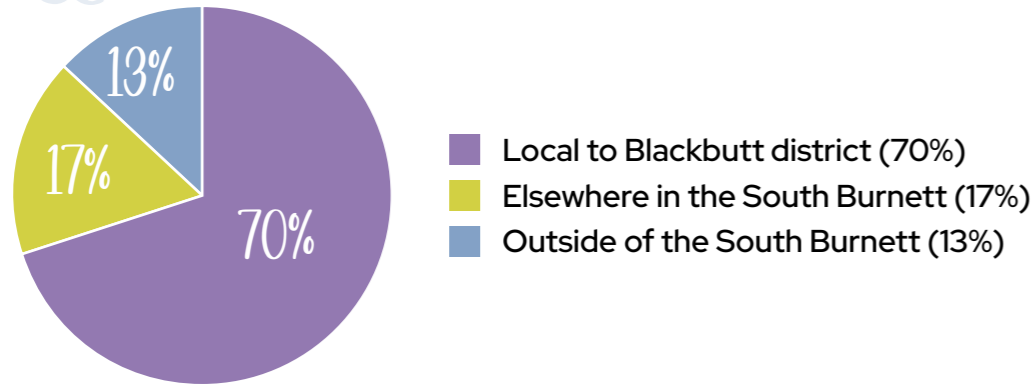
⁸ South Burnett Regional Council Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee: Terms of Reference, adopted 24 March 2021 (hyperlink: <https://www.southburnett.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4967/arts-culture-and-heritage-terms-of-reference%02statutory-045>).

⁹ Australia Council for the Arts, Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country Report (2020): hyperlink <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/domestic-arts-tourism-connecting-the-country/>

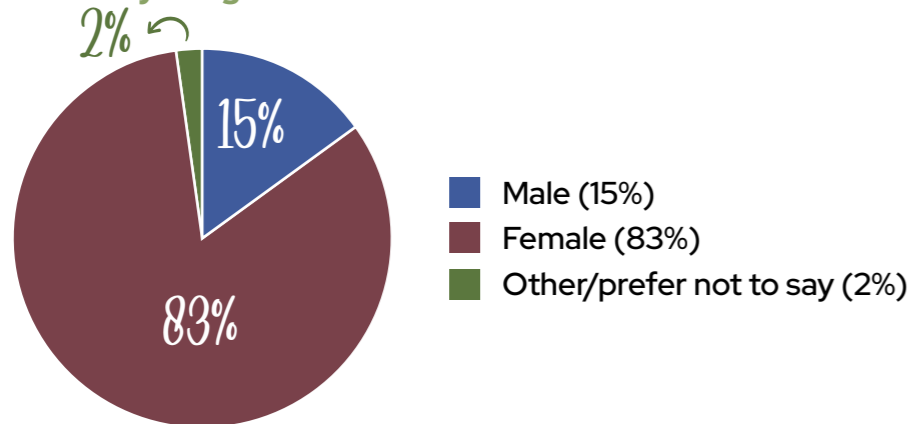
Survey Insights:

59 respondents participated in a public community survey during July–August 2021 and provided a range of insights to help inform the development of the Blackbutt Arts Strategy. The responses received were:

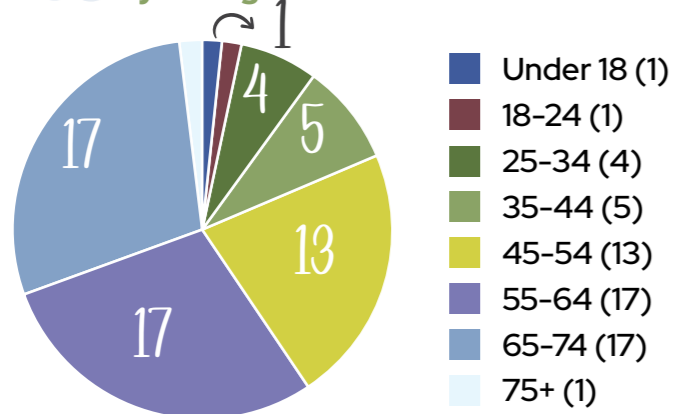
Where do you live?



What is your gender?

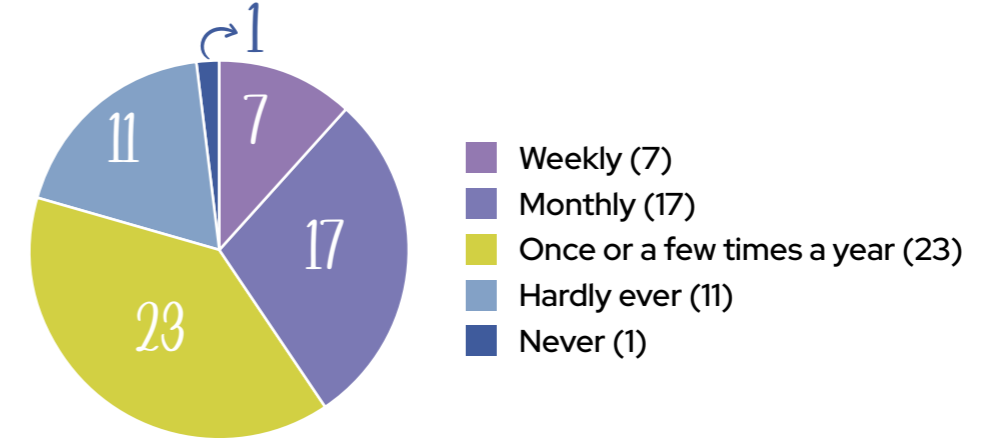


What is your age?



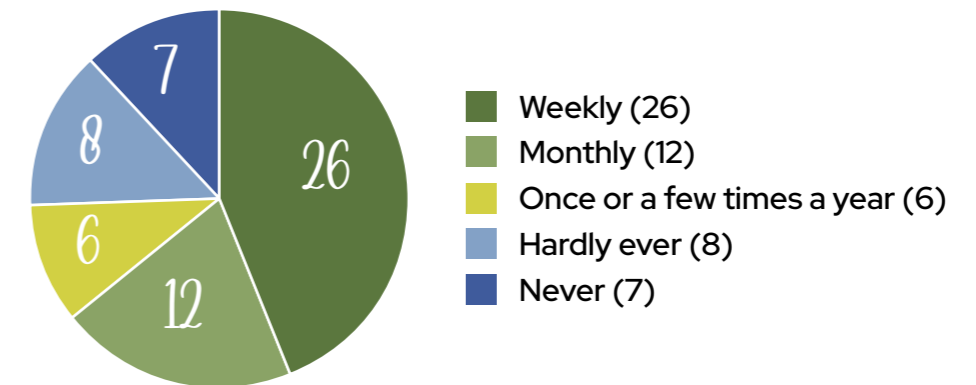
How often do you participate in an arts experience as an audience member?

For example – this could be visiting an art gallery, watching live music, attending a theatre performance, arts festival or creative workshop.



How often do you participate in creating art yourself?

For example – this could be writing a poem, doing photography or painting or sewing, learning an instrument, acting in a play.



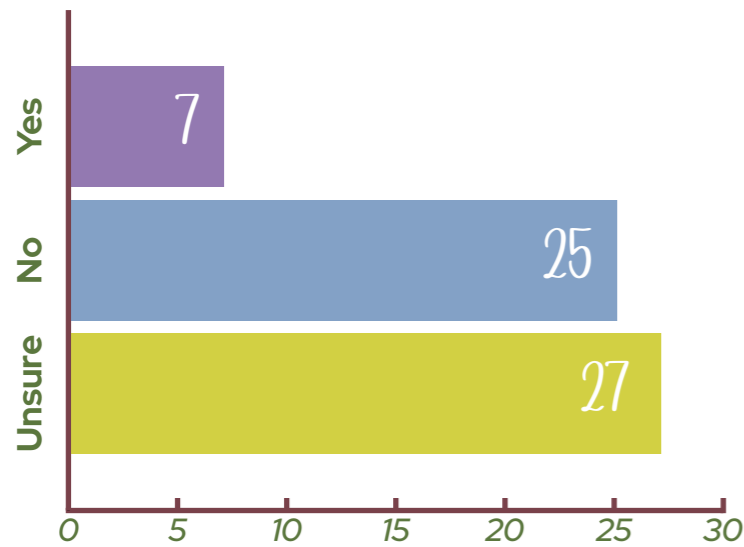
What are the barriers for you participating in or creating art?

Top two responses:

54% of respondents indicated 'lack of time'

42% of respondents indicated 'lack of options locally'

Is there enough access to the arts in the Blackbutt district?



"I'm new to the area but attended a Culture and Conversation evening in June where I met some locals and had an enjoyable evening."

"I have been to the Avocado Festival a couple of times. This event is special as it has a great community atmosphere and supports and showcases local creatives and performers."

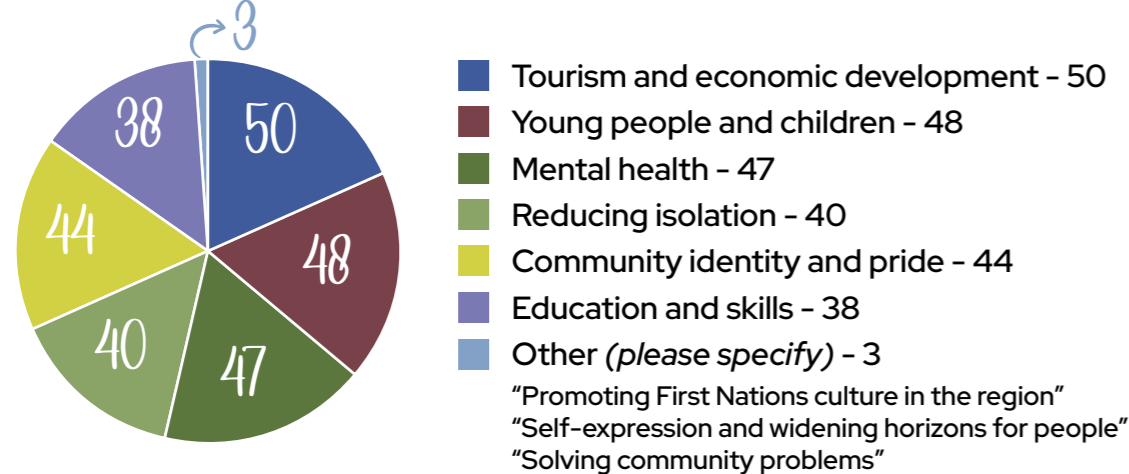
What has been your favourite or most memorable arts experience in the Blackbutt district? What made it special?

"The gallery is good, as is the music group. Some good art at the markets."

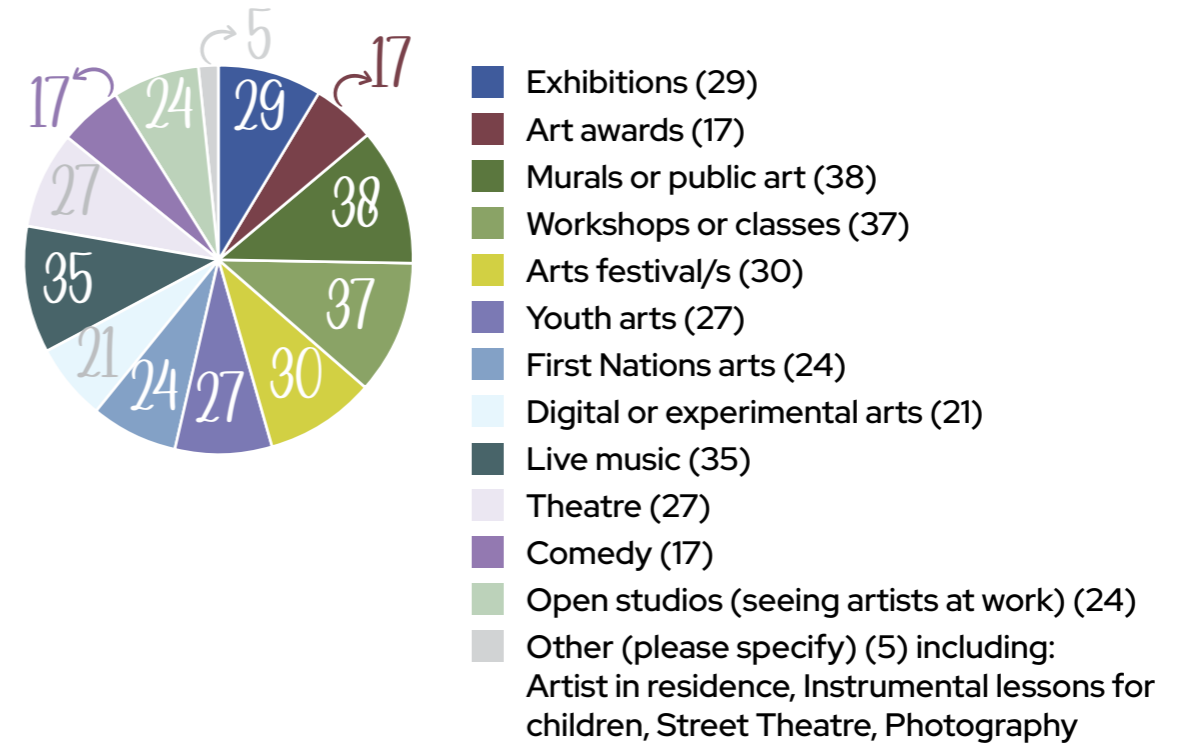
"Blackbutt art gallery. Great affordable art on show."

"Pottery class. It was made special by the facilitator and interaction within the group."

I believe that the arts can have a positive impact on....
(Number of respondents that agree)



What arts activities or experiences would you like to see more of in the Blackbutt district in the future?



"First Nations welcome to country and ceremonial involvement"

"Short art workshops so you have time to do other things at the festival"

"More for kids"

"Dinner theatre"

"Photo display or competition"

"Fibre art"

What are activities would you like to see at the Blackbutt Avocado Festival in future?

"Mural painting on buildings at Showgrounds"

"Art and wine"

"Upcycled art"

"Interactive art for children"

"Footpath 3D artwork"

"More music involvement"

How important is tourism to Blackbutt?



"We need something that would appeal to families"

"Artistically, have buskers around on the weekend. Allow popups in the empty shops! These could be art or produce based, to promote local talent, food and give people something unique. Have markets with a theme..."

What would you do to attract more visitors to the Blackbutt district?

"Offer more opportunities for live music"

"Promote activities"

"I would suggest an App about everything Blackbutt and surrounds."

"Develop a unique experience for visitors - share stories of the town's history and history, characters and identities, features and trails"

"Lack of accommodation options"

"No public transport"

Are there any inhibitors for visitors to the Blackbutt district?

"Cost"

"COVID-19"

"It's not about visitors coming through, there are plenty - but we need them to stop and stay, we need more activities in town"

Have you or someone you know visited a 'Big Thing' tourist attraction elsewhere in Australia?

46 Yes
12 No
1 Unsure

Would you support the idea of the Big Avocado tourist attraction for Blackbutt?

36 Yes 12 No 11 Neutral

Why/why not?

"Would rather see support for young people to do art"

"Depends what it looked like"

"Big" attractions can be hit or miss generally, if not done correctly they can become eyesores"

"Too many Big Things already, we need something new"

"Great idea- keep going with the proposal"

"It would be fun and bring more visitors to the region"

"In front of the squash courts on the way into town"

"The water tank as you drive into town"

"Near Memorial Hall"

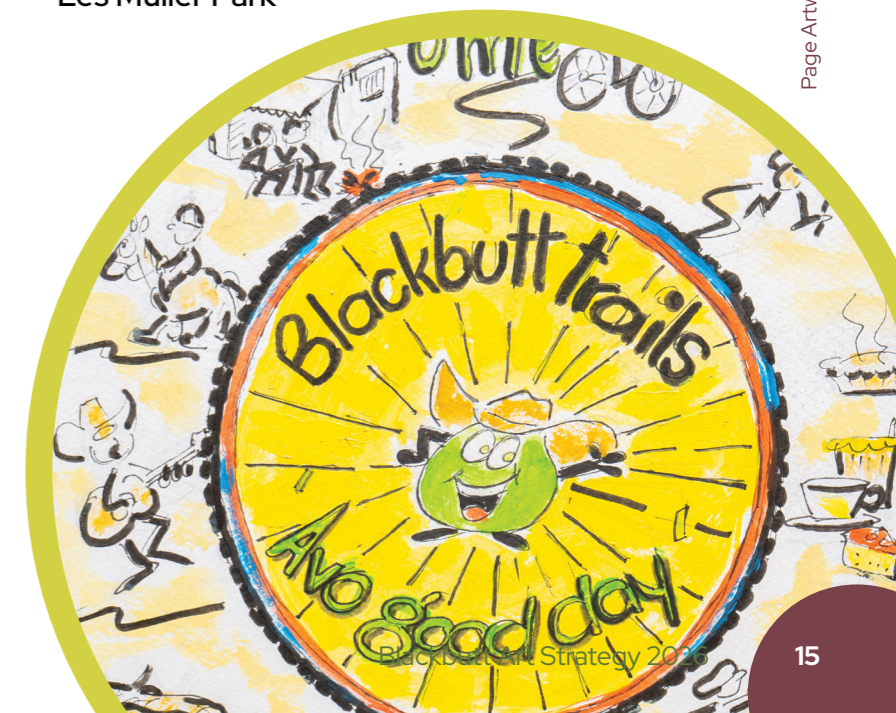
"Rail trail entrance"

If you support the idea of a Big Avocado tourist attraction, where would you like to see it go?

"At the showgrounds"

"Les Muller Park"

"As close to the centre of town as possible"





Arts Strategy

Vision

BLACKBUTT WILL BE THE SOUTH BURNETT REGION'S MAJOR HUB FOR ARTS AND CREATIVITY, INSPIRING POSITIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Strategic Priorities:

OUR COLLECTIVE GOALS AND WHAT WE'RE AIMING TO ACHIEVE

Input from key stakeholders and community during the public consultation process has helped inform three core goals for the next five years.



Goal 1 IDENTITY

We will share our unique local stories by creating new, place-based arts initiatives and adding value to existing activities

1.1

Provide opportunities to celebrate local stories and storytellers, including First Nations arts and culture, European settlement history and stories from the avocado, timber and broader agriculture sectors

1.2

Add value to existing arts experiences and other community-based activities to support legacy outcomes of these initiatives

1.3

Activate public spaces through the delivery of arts programs, public art and showcase opportunities emphasizing local talent and narratives



Goal 2 PEOPLE

We will build capacity and leadership in the local arts sector and use the arts to connect our community

2.1

Facilitate opportunities for leadership and professional skills development in the local arts and cultural sector and further opportunities for creative practitioners and craftspeople to exhibit and showcase their talents.

2.2

Provide targeted entry points for local youth to participate in and design community-based arts initiatives

2.3

Use best practice community engagement methods to inform the development of arts programs delivered under the Strategy

2.4

Support community members to explore local issues and challenges through arts-based problem solving

2.5

Initiate succession and sustainability planning for the Blackbutt Avocado Festival and associated community-based events

2.6

Advocate for the arts across local, state and federal levels of government to attract increased investment and grant funding for arts programs, infrastructure, and in support of individual artists in the Blackbutt district

2.7

Explore opportunities to collaborate with other South Burnett arts and community organisations to achieve positive outcomes within the broader region



Goal 3 IMPACT

We will harness the arts as a tool to strengthen and build economic and social resilience in our local community

- 3.1 Embed the arts and local cultural tourism experiences in the Blackbutt district's destination marketing
- 3.2 Strengthen collaboration with local government and the Blackbutt district's business community to ensure access to the arts is available to residents and visitors in a range of public and private spaces
- 3.3 Foster strategic partnerships with tourism and economic development agencies to seek new opportunities to collaborate on arts tourism initiatives
- 3.4 Build on the initial community consultation phase and Big Avocado Project Plan to progress with the delivery of a Big Avocado tourist attraction for Blackbutt
- 3.5 Design data collection processes in conjunction with arts programs delivered under the Strategy to track economic and social development outcomes
- 3.6 Create a business case for further investment in the Blackbutt Arts Strategy beyond the initial investment provided by FRRR until June 2022

Implementation

Strategic initiatives and arts experiences will be developed by the Blackbutt Avocado Festival in collaboration with partners and stakeholders to support the delivery of Blackbutt Arts Strategy 2026.

The Blackbutt Avocado Festival Committee will review and provide a public outcomes report on an annual basis, which will be available to review at www.avofest.com.au.

A separate project plan addressing the feasibility of a Big Avocado tourist attraction is currently being developed, led by the Blackbutt Avocado Festival Committee.

Case Study

Blackbutt Shopfront Art Trail

Seed funding from FRRR for the development of the Blackbutt Arts Strategy was leveraged to attract additional investment from the Regional Arts Fund to develop and deliver an art trail initiative in Blackbutt's CBD during September–November 2021.

Six South Burnett-based artists were commissioned to create new artworks that were digitised, printed on adhesive decal and installed in the shopfronts of local businesses.

Strategic Alignment:

- 1.3 Activate public spaces through the delivery of arts programs, public art and showcase opportunities emphasizing local talent and narratives
- 2.1 Facilitate opportunities for leadership and professional skills development in the local arts and cultural sector and further opportunities for creative practitioners and craftspeople to exhibit and showcase their talents.
- 3.2 Strengthen collaboration with local government and the Blackbutt district's business community to ensure access to the arts is available to residents and visitors in a range of public and private spaces

"I found the project gave me a springboard to get me focused and committed. I have now applied for another opportunity as I enjoyed this so much." - Participating artist

Exhibiting artists:

- Lynette Mcaskill, Harlin Rail Bridge
- Robyn Dower, Ray of Hope
- Sharon Grant, The Harvest
- Pam Ettridge, Family Giggles
- Patricia van Kempen, Bunya Rainforest Foliage
- David Daniel, Welcome to Blackbutt

With thanks to participating businesses:

- Roy Emerson Museum (Blackbutt and District Heritage and Tourism Association)
- Blackbutt Library (Archie Muir Centre)
- Blackbutt Hardware
- Blackbutt Art Gallery
- Bunyanut Café
- Hotel Radnor

This project was made possible by the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund, which supports the arts in regional and remote Australia.



Blackbutt ARTS STRATEGY 2026

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