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Australian Cultural and Creative Activity: A Population and Hotspot Analysis

Albany and Denmark

Western Australia



AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY: A POPULATION AND HOTSPOT ANALYSIS: Albany and Denmark



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



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Strategic Summary

The City of Albany and the Shire of Denmark, approximately a 45-minute drive apart, are located in Western Australia's Great Southern region. The region covers 39,000 square kilometres along a stretch of coastline adjacent to the Southern Ocean and is bordered by the South West region, the Wheatbelt region to the north, and the Goldfields-Esperance region to the east.

With an estimated residential population of 38,053 in 2019, the City of Albany is one of the largest regional cities in WA. A port city, Albany is the services hub for the Great Southern region. In 2020, Albany's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was \$2.15 billion, representing 0.7 per cent of WA's Gross State Product (GSP) (.id 2020a). In comparison, Denmark is a small rural town—a satellite, and a former milling, town—with its local government area containing a population of just over 6,000 people. In 2020, the Shire's GRP was \$0.26 billion, roughly one tenth of Albany's GRP, and representing 0.1 per cent of the state's GSP (.id 2020c).

Creative practitioners are drawn to both Albany and Denmark for a sea and/or tree-change and a country lifestyle away from the city, the region's natural beauty, and other intangibles such as the intrinsic value of creative inspiration. Environmental sustainability and a community of like-minded creatives are also important factors in attracting practitioners to Denmark. Creatives in Denmark experience difficulties in securing full-time employment. Interviewees felt as though they could earn more income if they lived elsewhere but choose to live in the region for lifestyle reasons.

Albany is the centre for the creative economy in the Great Southern. Most of the creative practitioners living and working in the region are based in Albany. As a regional services hub, Albany has a robust creative services presence. The city has a legacy media sector that functions as a hub for public and commercial media organisations broadcasting or circulating local news throughout

the Great Southern and the Wheatbelt. Denmark, a much smaller town, has a higher creative intensity—a measure of creative occupations as a portion of the overall workforce—than Albany and the shire is renowned nationally as an enclave for locally, nationally, and internationally acclaimed artists and creatives.

Creative occupations and creative activities in Albany and Denmark are predominantly cultural production. Many creatives in the region have portfolio careers with multiple creative and non-creative roles. Albany and Denmark have, to an extent, hidden creative workforces that are not fully captured by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. Census counts only record employment in respondents' main source of income but fails to capture people relying on work in other industries to support their practice, nor is the large amount of volunteer activity in the region.

The creative industries ecosystem in Denmark relies on and are to an extent supported by the services and cultural amenities of Albany. Indeed, it could be argued that Denmark's creative industries ecosystem may not be as vibrant if Albany were not a 40-minute drive away. For professional writers and film and television professionals living in Denmark, full-time employment in the media sector is concentrated in Albany. Albany offers larger-scale cultural infrastructure, and performance and rehearsal spaces, that professional performance artists from Denmark require to maintain the standards of their practice. Indeed, high-profile practitioners from Denmark produce works for the Albany Entertainment Centre, while other practitioners stay up to date with national and international trends in their field by attending the latest touring theatre and live music performances at the centre. As Denmark is home to high-profile and successful creatives, some of these professionals rely on the Albany Regional Airport for interstate, national, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel (Carmichael 2019).

Denmark

Many of the creative practitioners who reside in Denmark have come from elsewhere in WA, some have come from across Australia, while others have come from overseas.

Creative activity in Denmark is largely cultural production—visual arts and sculpture, performance and theatre, and live music among others—rather than employment in creative services such as design, advertising, or architecture.

There is an unusually high number of established creative practitioners who are highly acclaimed—receiving national and in some cases international recognition for their work—living and working in Denmark. For some, Denmark is a local base for artists who work nationally and internationally. Conversely, other artists reach a point in their careers when they must leave Denmark to be closer to the centres of their industry. Some high-profile creatives in Denmark produce large-scale work that involve large teams of performers, and in some cases this work is toured or exhibited state-wide and nationally.

The arts/creative ecosystem is experimental and underpinned by an ethos of 'art for art's sake'. Artists produce works for commercial markets. Yet overall, the creative ecosystem in Denmark is strongly focussed on experimental, collaborative, and community-based creative activity. There is a strong culture of community arts participation among retirees, people who have just moved to town, and mothers.

For some practitioners, the Shire's isolation is a double-edged sword: some feel as though they are more competitive for funding due to a lack of competition and because they are regional artists, but they also feel disconnected from national networks and funding bodies.

Funding and cultural infrastructure

There is a perception among creatives that the Shire of Denmark (the Shire) does not do enough to support local artists. The creative industries receive public support from the Shire and Denmark Arts. Creative industries are a strategic priority for the Shire and 'creativity' is central to how the local community views itself in the Shire's forward-looking *Denmark 2027* strategy document. The Shire directly funds Denmark Arts, the primary development agency for arts in the area, as well as two major festivals and several smaller arts markets supporting the local creative ecology.

Notwithstanding, a relatively small amount of public money—coming from Local, State, and Federal Governments—is invested in the arts/creative industries in Denmark annually.

There is also limited cultural infrastructure to support the level of professional and community-arts cultural production occurring in Denmark. Interviewees observe a lack of professional performance and exhibition spaces in Denmark and some established practitioners are forced to hire rehearsal and performance facilities in Albany.

Albany

Albany's creative industries ecosystem is characterised by:

- A system predominantly engaged in cultural production and a hidden creative workforce that is estimated to be at least double the size captured in official ABS statistics (Creative Albany 2015).
- A vibrant and highly active grassroots community-arts, craft and performance scene supported by the Vancouver Arts Centre (VAC), an organisation funded by the City, and via other forms of direct support administered by the City.
- Barriers to professionalisation for visual artists and performing artists. There is a perception in the creative community that the professionalisation of local artists and performers has been stymied by the absence of high-quality exhibition spaces and professional but affordable performance spaces that are of a higher quality than those offered by community-arts performance spaces.
- The absence of an overarching heritage-informed cultural tourism strategy that harnesses the city's unique built-environment, history, and identity.

The creative industries in Albany are a combination of established commercial creative industries, and vibrant, largely grassroots, experimental and community arts and performance activities. Key creative sectors in Albany, include visual arts and crafts, photography, music, theatre, filmmaking and television news production, and creative writing and publishing. Although most of these occupations are based in cultural production, Albany's much larger population and status as a services hub means there is also strong employment in creative services. At the 2016 Census, Albany had higher proportions of architects, graphic and web designers, photographers, software and application programmers, creative and performing artists and writers than the average across the rest of regional WA (Appendix A.6).

Although ABS Census employment counts do not fully capture the extent of creative employment, they show that creative employment in Albany is growing. Employment in business-to-business creative services industries grew at rates at least 50 per cent higher than that in other industries, while in consumer-oriented cultural production, it grew by as much as three times the rate of other industries (Figure 8, Appendix A.1).

There is an active Aboriginal creative community in Albany supported by the City, the regional museum and an Aboriginal-run gallery selling local artwork.

In Albany, the festival economy is not central to fuelling commercial activity in the local creative ecosystem and is not as focussed on the tourism market as it is in the City of Busselton, for example. While some festivals showcase the local creative industries or target the tourism market, most of the events run by the City throughout the year are chiefly focussed on encouraging community participation in the arts and social cohesion.

Policy and cultural infrastructure

As a hub for creative industries in the region, the City of Albany supports a diverse range of cultural infrastructure and amenities, including: the renovation of the heritage listed Town Hall to create an exhibition space capable of holding Class A exhibitions and a multi-purpose performance space; The Vancouver Arts Centre; the contribution of operational funding as a civic partner of the Albany Entertainment Centre; and maintaining the facilities of the National Anzac Centre and several community-arts theatres and performance spaces.

There are plentiful rehearsal and performance spaces for live performance artists, and studio spaces for community-arts and craft groups in Albany. The large number of local community-arts groups and their activity is to an extent influenced by the availability of affordable spaces in heritage buildings owned by the City of Albany.

Some interviewees indicated that there is a disconnect between the scale and aspirations of local performance groups and producers, and the size and commercial focus of the Albany Entertainment Centre. Regional creative practitioners perceive that while the Albany Entertainment Centre is a high-quality performance facility, and is sorely needed in the region, it prioritises attracting touring acts, commercial performances, or commercial events such as conferences, rather than supporting local grassroots production and performance. Its facilities were also viewed as too expensive for local performers to hire or use.

Until recently, a major barrier to professionalisation for visual artists has been the lack of a Class A regional exhibition space. Although Albany's visual arts community has a reputation for being innovative and experimental, there is a perception that opportunities for professional artists and artists attempting to professionalise had in past been stymied by a lack of a high-quality exhibition space. The creation of a new exhibition space in the Town Hall is aimed at addressing this issue.

In comparison to Denmark, creativity or the creative industries are less central to the City of Albany's overarching strategies and how the locals view themselves. This is not to suggest that the City of Albany does not value the creative industries. The City financially supports numerous large cultural facilities and institutions; it renovated the City's Town Hall to address critical exhibition and live entertainment infrastructure needs; and it commissioned the scoping report *Creative*

Industries: Analysis and Potential Strategic Directions for the City of Albany (SC Lennon and Associates 2014) to audit the local creative workforce. Yet, although Albany is currently developing a cultural heritage and broader creative industries strategy, the City did not have specific strategies for either at the time of writing.

Interviewees, in a criticism of support for the creative industries, suggested that policy-making impacting the creatives industries regionally can be too Perth-centric and is often led by people and institutions based in Perth. Interviewees argued that more policy development and decision-making needs to be made by people living in the Great Southern.

There is a significant opportunity for Albany to develop a heritage and cultural tourism strategy that capitalises on Albany's Victorian-style built environment, its significant history, and its local place identity.

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Methodological notes

This study is a top-line analysis of key elements of Denmark and Albany's creative ecosystems, and some of the drivers that make them significant regional Australian 'creative hotspots'. It is important to foreground that this study is not an exhaustive inventory of arts and culture in Denmark and Albany. This study provides key statistics, examines notable drivers of the creative industries and cultural production in the region, and offers mini case studies that exemplify key points and offer insight into the forces at play in the 'hotspot'. The report draws on a national socio-economic data base for every LGA in Australia compiled for our national study of [Australia's creative hotspots](#), fieldwork and interviews with a small sample of informant interviews in Denmark and Albany in July 2019. Denmark and Albany together are one of the 17 creative and cultural activity hotspots examined for a funded ARC Linkage Project. Consequently, comparison with other Australian regions and towns studied, based on socioeconomic data and more than 450 interviews, is an important component of how our views have been shaped in this report.

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Denmark

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Holii Carmody, Director Holii Carmody Creative Studio

Tim Dunn, Independent Filmmaker

Silvia Lehmann, Theatre Director and Producer

Tim Maisey, Independent Filmmaker

Claudia Simpson, Community Development Officer, Shire of Denmark

Denmark

Denmark, a small rural country town on the South Coast of Western Australia surrounded by rugged beaches and unique tall-timber forests, is an enclave for artists and creative practitioners. With an estimated residential population of 6,215 in 2019, a disproportionately high 4.0 per cent of the workforce is in creative employment and a number of these creatives are nationally and/or internationally acclaimed. In the 1960s, Denmark was largely a conservative farming and milling town until it experienced an influx of people from the ‘hippie’ alternative lifestyle movement resulting in a marked diversification of the town’s cultural milieu. Many of these original migrants, while not initially well received, have since become respected community members and leaders, businesspeople, and politicians, contributing to the town’s ‘greeny’ and ‘arty’ identity. Even though the town is nationally renowned for its concentration of creative practitioners, the creative class is only one segment of the broader community, and not everyone in the town celebrates Denmark’s strong artistic community.

Many of the creative practitioners who reside in Denmark have come from elsewhere in WA, some have come from across Australia, while others have come from overseas. Interviewees indicated that they were not necessarily attracted to Denmark as a town because of its reputation as an artist enclave, nor for its vibrant creative community, even though established creatives living in the region do value being part of a tight-knit creative community. Rather interviewees were drawn to the region looking for a tree and/or sea-change, and a country lifestyle away from the bustle of the city to raise a family. Others suggested that the natural environment—particularly the unique forests and the southern coastline—and an environmentally-aware lifestyle were important factors influencing their decision to move to the town (Simpson 2019; Lehmann 2019; Carmichael 2019). There is a strong commitment to environmental sustainability in Denmark; and this attracts like-minded creatives to the region. Moreover, the theatre director Silvia Lehmann (2019) and her family moved to Denmark after her close friend, and like-minded collaborator, Annette Carmichael had recently moved there with her family. In summary, lifestyle, the environment, and social relations are important factors driving the migration of creatives to Denmark.

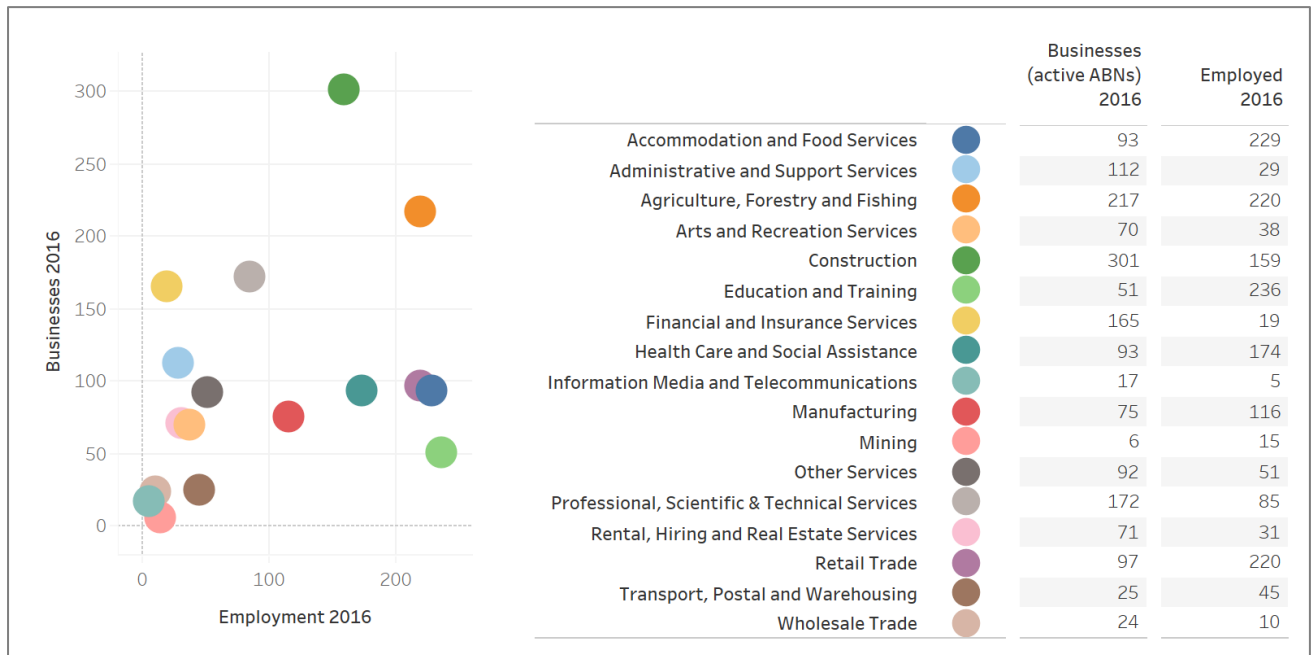
General economy and demographic background

Denmark’s economy has few major industries and tourism is seasonal. According to the 2016 ABS Census, Education and Training accounted for 12.5 per cent of employment, Construction for 10.6 per cent, Retail Trade made up 9.7 per cent, Accommodation and Food Services for 9.3 per cent, and Agriculture accounted for 9.2 per cent (ABS 2016; See Figure 1 below). Furthermore, Healthcare and Residential Care for elderly residents could also be regarded as a key economic sector in Denmark (Simpson 2019). Over half of all businesses in Denmark are non-employing sole traders. In 2019, 470 businesses, or 65 per cent of the 722 total businesses, were non-employing businesses; 175 (24.2 per cent) businesses employed between 1-4 people; 60 businesses (8.3 per cent) employed between 5-19 people; and just 16 businesses had more than 20 employees (2.2 per cent) (ABS 2019b).

As indicated in Figure 2, Denmark’s population is bifurcated, with 24.0 per cent under 20 years of age, and 62.5 per cent over the age of 40. The 13.6 per cent aged 20-39 years is approximately half that of the 25.3 per cent average for all of regional WA (ABS 2016). As this suggests, young people

in their late teens leave Denmark after high school for university or in search of full-time employment, while aspiring creatives leave for professional opportunities in larger population centres. While the town’s community of creative practitioners have typically come from somewhere else, in a similar vein to Busselton (Ryan et al. 2020), some of those who leave Denmark after high school return to Denmark to raise a family, or to retire.

Figure 1: Economic activity by ANZSIC subdivision, Denmark local government area



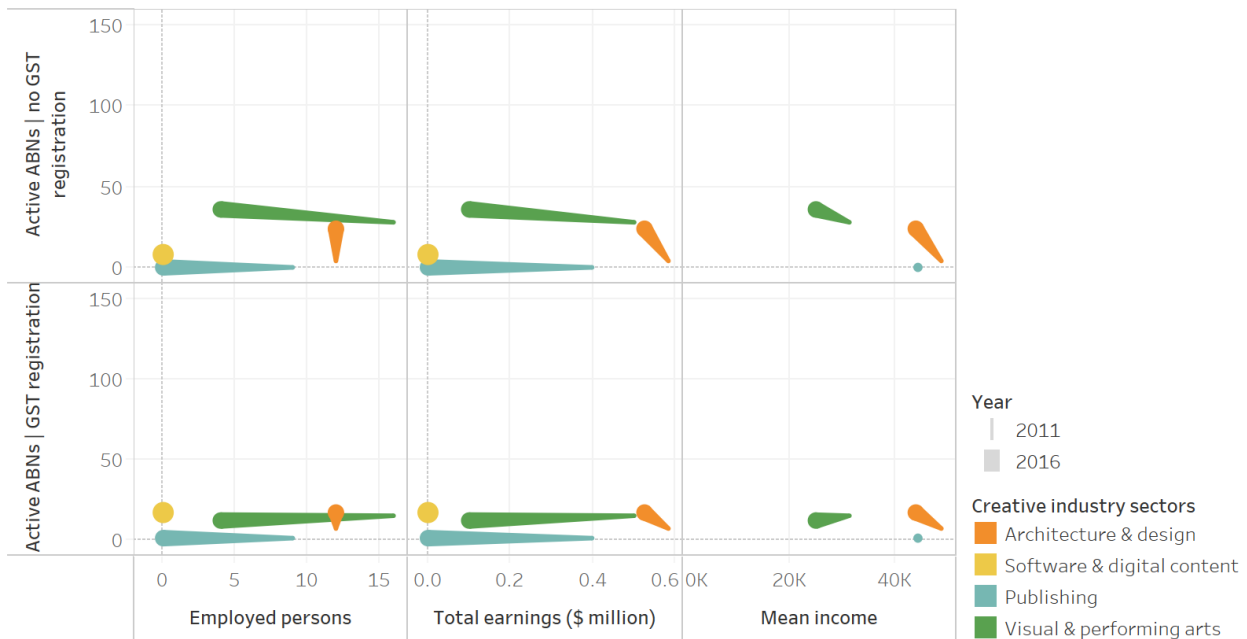
Source: ABS (2016), .idcommunity (2019)

Denmark’s creative economy

The Shire of Denmark can be characterised as an enclave for well-established and nationally or internationally renowned artists and creative practitioners, community-based arts practitioners, as well as aspiring creatives who embrace their inner-artist after relocating to town. There are a diverse range of creative practitioners living in Denmark, specialising in most key areas of cultural production, including visual arts and sculpture, dance and performing arts, live music, creative writing, and filmmaking.

Creative employment in Denmark’s Architecture and Design, Software and Digital Content, Publishing and Visual and Performing Arts sectors is not expanding, and incomes are not growing (Figure 2, Appendices A.1 and A.3). Many of the creative practitioners who live and work in the Shire suggest that it is harder for them to earn a living in Denmark than it would be if they lived elsewhere. Some interviewees indicated that they would be better off financially if they lived in Perth. However, the cost of living in Denmark is relatively affordable, and creative practitioners value the opportunity to work part-time while dedicating time to their craft and passion projects (Lehmann 2019; Dunn 2019; Maisey 2019).

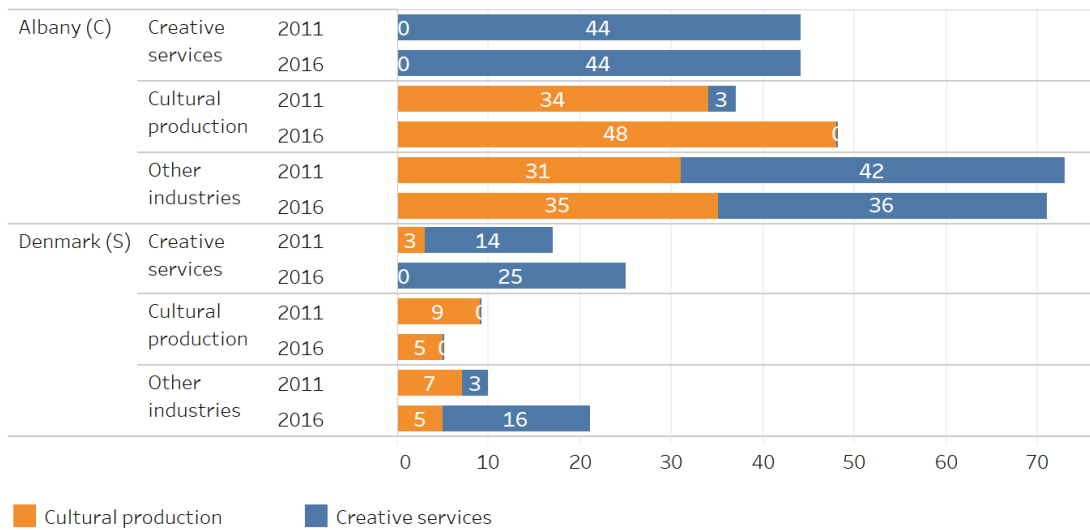
Figure 2: Denmark: Creative industry employment, total earnings and mean income by place of work compared with business registrations, 2011 and 2016



Sources: ABS (2016), Australian Business Register (2019)

While some creatives work in creative services such as design, web design, and photography, there are few large-scale creative service companies in Denmark, and most creative practitioners specialise in creative arts or cultural production. While Census employment data suggests that there are more people working in business-to-business oriented creative services than consumer-focused cultural production roles, 33 compared with 20 in 2016 (Figure 3, Appendix A.1), this likely underestimates the scale of creative employment in the region as Census counts only record employment in respondents' main source of income. People relying on work in other industries to support their creative practice are not captured in the Census data, nor is the volunteer activity that underpins many not-for-profit community organisations—the ABS's Cultural Participation survey points to an average of 1.9 per cent of the population in South Western WA earning an income from creative activities (Table 2, ABS 2019b).

Figure 3: Creative service and cultural production employment by industry and occupation, 2011 and 2016, Albany and Denmark local government areas

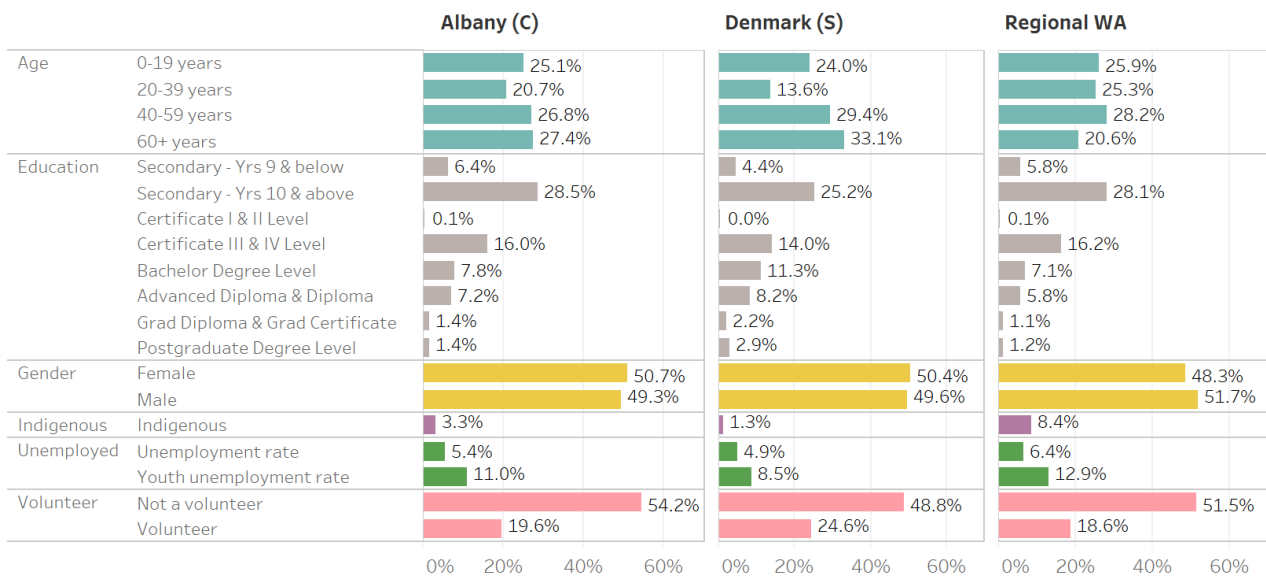


Sources: ABS (2016); ABS (2019a); Regional Australia Institute (2014).

Artists and creatives in the region are a combination of well-established professionals, professional-amateurs, and community-based artists or hobbyists. There are numerous creative practitioners who are well established and highly acclaimed—receiving both national and international recognition for their work—living and working in Denmark. Despite living in a small, remote, rural town, many of these artists and performers are applying for, and securing, public funding from national bodies such as the Australia Council for the Arts, or State Government funding agencies to produce creative works. For some of the most prominent artists and performers, their creative projects are either state-wide projects that involve participants from around WA, or projects that may exhibit or tour nationally. In short, for a small town, there are an unusually high number of nationally or internationally acclaimed visual artists and sculptors, performers, choreographers, musicians, and screen workers with professional television series credits living in Denmark.

As Denmark has a small jobs market, creatives experience difficulties in securing full-time employment. Outside of local education, healthcare, and government services, among a handful of other examples, interviewees suggested that most Denmark residents find full-time employment in the nearby City of Albany (Carmody 2019; Simpson 2019). Consequently, the choice to stay in the Shire is directly influenced by intangible lifestyle and environmental factors and the intrinsic value of being part of a vibrant creative community.

Figure 2: Demographic profile by place of residence, Albany and Denmark local government areas compared with regional WA, 2016



Source: ABS (2016)

Practitioners working in Denmark’s creative industries ecosystem

There are numerous examples of high-profile creative practitioners with acclaimed careers based in Denmark. Three key examples of nationally or internationally successful creative professionals are Annette Carmichael, Cecile Williams, and Maaïke ‘Kito’ Lebbing.

Annette Carmichael is a nationally renowned choreographer and creative producer who regularly creates large-scale contemporary dance performances and community-based arts projects financed by national competitive funding. She has worked with the West Australian Ballet, Perth Festival, the City of Albany, and Denmark Arts, among many others. Her productions are performed in Denmark, Albany and nationally. [A light Shade of Red](https://annettecarmichael.com.au/past-projects/a-light-shade-of-red/) was developed and performed for ‘the centenary of Armistice Day and premiered’ at ‘other state-owned public, and partly council owned, cultural institutions such as the Albany Entertainment Centre (Albany Entertainment Centre) in October 2018’.¹ The project was supported by local councils and arts bodies, including the City of Albany Vancouver Arts Centre (VAC) and Denmark Arts; state funding from Lotterywest and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries - Culture and the Arts (WA); and federal support from the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts. People travel interstate to Denmark to see her work (Carmichael 2019).

Cecile Williams is a sculptor and a visual artist who has practiced a wide range of arts from theatre and set design to sculpture. Her artworks have been exhibited locally, interstate, and overseas, and she has received residencies in Switzerland, Vietnam, and Fiji. Her works have been acquired by the

¹ See <https://annettecarmichael.com.au/past-projects/a-light-shade-of-red/>.

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, and numerous private collections such as Kerry Stokes and Janet Holmes à Court.

Maaïke 'Kito' Lebbing, known professionally as Kito, is an Australian electronic pop songwriter and record producer who relocated to Los Angeles in 2018. She grew up in Denmark, moved to Perth after high school, travelled overseas, and returned to Denmark in 2017, before relocating to Los Angeles after the success of her first solo EP *Haani* in 2018. Kito has an impressive international resume. She has produced music for popular international artists such as Mabel, Jorja Smith, Banks, and Ruel, and recorded official mixes for Beyoncé's *Run the World (Girls)* (2011), Broods' *Too Proud* (2019), and Wafia's *Flowers and Superpowers* (2019). Kito was nominated for the Breakthrough Songwriter of the Year (Los Angeles) at the [2020 Global APRA Music Awards](#).

There are also well-known regional practitioners who are strongly engaged with and have influenced the quality and professionalism of community arts practice in Denmark. Silvia Lehmann, for example, is a professional theatre director and writer who has specialised in collaborative community performance practices since moving to Denmark in 2008. Together with local creative writing teacher Nicola-Jane le Breton (who has since relocated back to Perth) she co-invented 'collaborative scripting', which empowers a community to shape writing from many different voices into a cohesive performance script. The collaborative scripting technique has been used on numerous performance projects, both Silvia's and others'. Her rich collaborations with other professional local artists, like Cecile Williams, are a defining feature of her practice (*Living Testament*, 2016 and *The Fisherman and his Wife*, 2018). Locally, Silvia and Cecile have been praised for their collaborations (directing and set design) as 'the dream team' (Lehmann 2019). In 2019 Silvia was working on a storytelling development program for community participants in Denmark.

Many creatives in the region have a portfolio career with multiple roles. An example is Holii Carmody, a designer, photographer and online content entrepreneur; one of a handful of creative designers in town. At the time of the interview, she co-leased an office with Carmichael, in the very heart of town where commercial tenancy vacancies are high and office spaces are affordable. For Holii, working in a small town is beneficial because everyone knows her. 'I can get a lot of work done just by walking down the street' (Carmody 2019). In terms of graphic design, she creates 'branding for small businesses, mostly feminine things like candles, and just little things that ... stay-at-home moms, and ladies wanting to work from home' create as a 'side hustle' (Carmody 2019). She designs logos, packaging, and websites. Holii is also a photographer and a digital content entrepreneur. She began taking photographs of local flora and created a commercial image library to sell images internationally:

I'll go out and collect leaves and flowers and things from my backyard and take photos of them and then sell them online. Which seems like a weird thing, but they sell really well. Overseas, there's a demand for [the images] ... Basically what I'll do is take photos of leaves or flowers, cut them out in Photoshop, so I've got a transparent background, and then, make arrangements out of them, and then sell the individual pieces. People download it, and ... use them for branding and illustration, or just projects where they need an illustration at the top (Carmody 2019).

Characteristics of Denmark's creative ecosystem

Some of Denmark's most established creative practitioners develop and produce ambitious, large-scale projects. In 2010, Silvia Lehmann, a theatre director and writer, for example, collaborated on the live performance *Our Secret River* (produced by Carmichael) about the impact of European settlement that involved 68 performers. The performance explored the original cross-cultural, turbulent, and largely unknown history of Denmark. Several creatives in Denmark create works that involve regional community participation, bringing together people from local towns across the Great Southern, and in some cases community participants and performers from around WA. The scale of these performances can be too large for the performance / rehearsal infrastructure in Denmark, and are sometimes rehearsed outdoors, or in makeshift rehearsal facilities including farmland and sheds (Lehmann 2019). Carmichael (2019) regularly develops large scale performances too large to be performed in Denmark, and as a result, she performs some of these at the Albany Entertainment Centre.

Due to the town's isolation and distance from the state's capital Perth, and like other regional creative hotspots in WA such as Geraldton (Hearn et al. 2020a), Busselton (Ryan et al. 2020) and Fremantle (Hearn et al. 2020b), there is an independent, do-it-yourself ethos and entrepreneurialism driving creative endeavours. At the same time, **for some practitioners, the Shire's isolation is a double-edged sword**. On the one hand, some feel as though they are more competitive for state and national grant funding because there is less competition, and there are few restrictions on their creativity (Carmichael 2019; Lehmann 2019). Yet, others also face limitations in terms of access to cultural amenities and infrastructure, with accessing performance and rehearsal spaces in nearby Albany often cost-prohibitive. Artists also feel disconnected from national networks and funding bodies.

In Denmark, there is a deep commitment to experimental arts, creative experimentation and pushing creative boundaries. **A key ethos underpinning creative activity in Denmark could be described as 'art-for-art's sake'**. Although some practitioners in the region are commercial artists attempting to earn a living from their creative work, for others making money is not their main priority. Rather, developing new and exciting creative ideas, working with others to realise these ideas, and developing works that push norms and artistic boundaries, are driving motivations for local professional and community-based artists (Dunn 2019; Lehmann 2019; Maisey 2019; Carmichael 2019).

Denmark's creative ecosystem is highly collaborative, and there are strong social networks between creative workers across different crafts and professions. Creative practitioners regularly work together on cross-disciplinary projects. Because there is a relatively large pool of accomplished creatives based in Denmark, creative producers work with highly skilled talent. The creative ecosystem is also very supportive of individual community members wanting to experiment with creative ideas, or aspiring creatives trying to professionalise. Festivals such as Brave New Works, funded by the Shire and Denmark Arts, function as important developmental platforms that encourage and showcase individual creativity. Silvia Lehmann's (2019) husband is a case in point:

My husband [is] an electronic engineer. He works from home ... he writes software for little black boxes, electronic controllers... he makes ships, buses and trucks work with better emissions. I mean he's also a very creative person, he's ... an amateur musician as well. He has a lot of creativity in him and since we've lived in Denmark he's put his name down for lots of different experiences ... So for Brave New Works, he makes crazy machines and contraptions and he uses his programming skills to make something creative. So he's invented for example ... the 'sand printer' which he's made out of Tip shop [parts] ... so you put some clean, dry sand into a funnel and you can program words or large pictures and it prints it out in like a dot matrix print along the road, little dots of sand. You can write pre-programmed poetry or pictures or you can actually type into a mobile phone ... you know, 'Hello Mark' and it'll print out 'Hello Mark' in sand on the bitumen of the road. So, he wrote a very long poem along a footpath by the river and people were actually walking along reading.

Two local filmmakers Tim Dunn (2019), a writer/director, and Tim Maisey (2019), a producer and editor, provide an example of how collaborative and supportive the local community is of creative activity. At the time of the interview, Dunn and Maisey were finishing a short film they commenced 10 years earlier and were brainstorming new projects. Dunn and Maisey also worked on separate projects over that period. Dunn, a retired professional filmmaker, worked as a grip on season one of Channel 9's *Lockie Leonard* (2007) and now works on personal creative projects. Dunn and Maisey began working together on the short film after Tim Maisey responded to a community call for crew members. At the time, Maisey was an aspiring filmmaker who had recently moved to Denmark from the United Kingdom. Maisey has since produced the 40-minute documentary *Music from Manus: 5 days not 5 years* (2018) screening at numerous WA film festivals. The documentary follows the story of Maisey and contemporary folk singer Dawn Barrington who 'went to Manus Island to play music' for refugees on Manus Island to promote awareness of the Australian Federal Government's policy of offshore refugee processing.² To fund flights to Papua New Guinea and Manus Island, Maisey and Barrington established an online crowdfunding page that raised \$6,000 largely from Denmark's local community to finance the project.

The creative industries ecosystem in Denmark are strongly community-based and participatory. Throughout a calendar year, few touring acts travel to the town and there is little in the way of regular live entertainment, or nightlife. Consequently, there is lively community arts participation. Participants range from creative practitioners to everyday community members who attend or participate in community-arts performances and events (Lehmann 2019; Carmichael 2019). During a calendar year, various community performances and festivals, supported by Denmark Arts and the Shire, are held for the local community. Local practitioners also offer free creative workshops to encourage community participation in arts/creative activities. Silvia Lehmann (2019), who now focusses largely on delivering community-arts performances, regularly delivers theatre workshops at the civic centre. Her workshops attract retirees, mothers, some teenagers, and although some men participate, they are less likely to be involved (Lehmann 2019). Peter Keelan—a creative festival director and manager who has previously directed Festival Fremantle and is currently the

² See: <https://www.tmcgproductions.com/blog/2018/5/24/music-from-manus-5-days-not-5-years>.

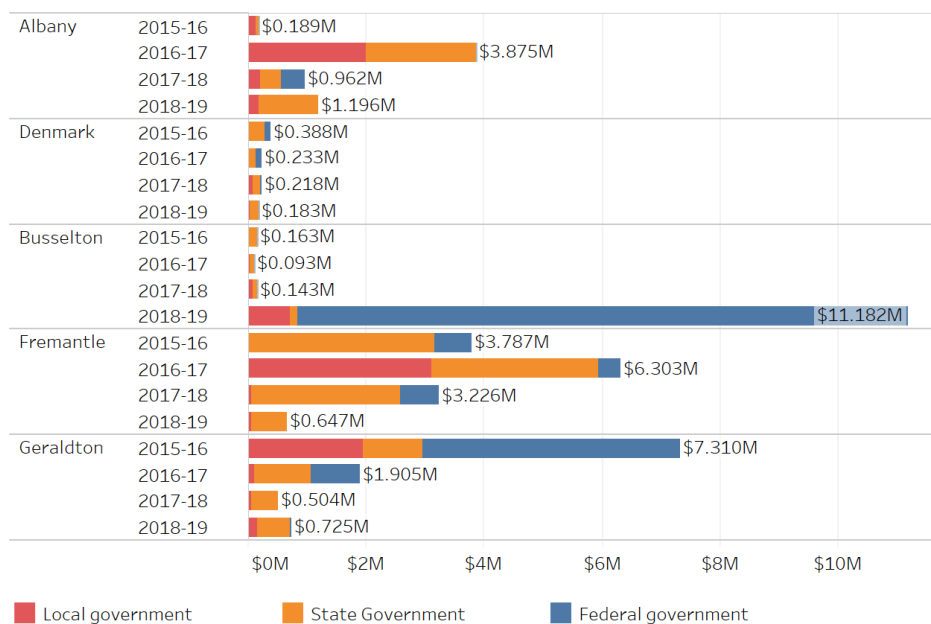
manager of Brave New Works—and Dunn, have each offered separate filmmaking workshops for the local community. Such workshops provide skills for aspiring creatives and general community members, and work alongside Denmark Arts’ festivals such as Brave New Works.

Policy, public funding and cultural amenities

The immense geography in WA makes arts and cultural provision challenging, and the state’s small population brings with it the potential for market failure. Funding flows to the arts, creative industries and screen production through unique state programs such as the Western Australian Screen Fund (formerly the Western Australian Regional Film Fund) supported by Royalties for Regions, Screenwest and Lotterywest. This public funding regime is paralleled by councils in WA hotspots that tend to own and deliver cultural services (art centres, for example) rather than outsource. In Denmark, the Shire of Denmark and Denmark Arts are the two main supporters and market organisers for creative industries in the Shire.

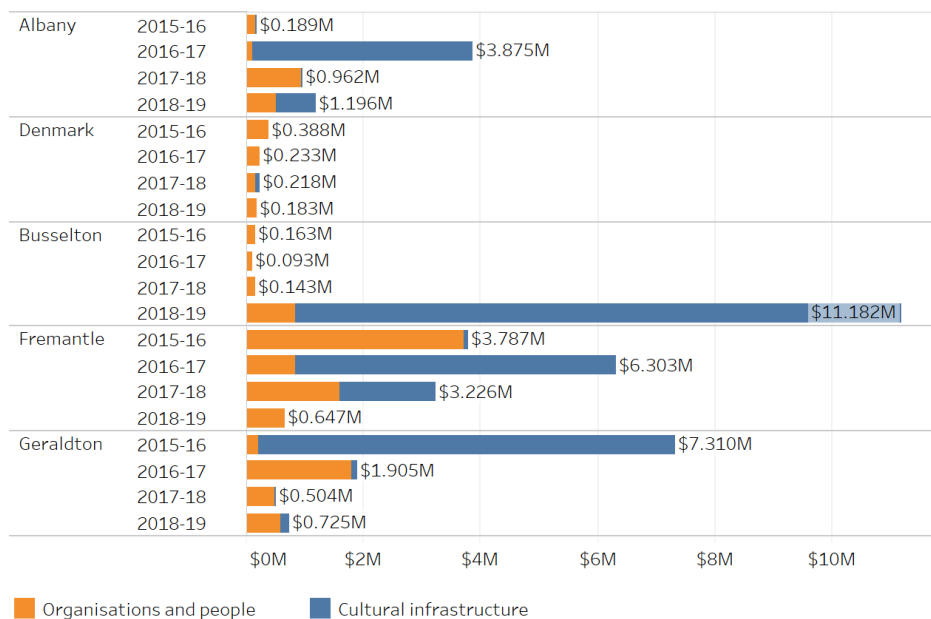
As indicated in Figures 4 and 5, based on primary analysis of published grants data, the vast majority of public funding that was secured by organisations or by residents of Denmark was allocated to Denmark Arts, for infrastructure, operating costs, and specific projects. While cultural or creative industries receive Federal, State, and Local government support, between 2015 and 2019, Denmark received, on average, a small amount of public grant funding to support the creative or cultural industries—on average \$200, 000 per annum. Federal funding came from the Australia Council for the Arts, and State grants and investment came largely via Regional Arts WA and from Lotterywest. In 2018-19, funding from the Shire of Denmark went to funding a diverse range of broad cultural activities such as the Historical Society, a library connection project, and the Southern Art and Craft Trail. Between 2015-16 and 2017-18, the choreographer/theatre producer Annette Carmichael, the wood artisan Chris Reid, and the record producer/songwriter Maaiké ‘Kito’ Lebbing all won Australia Council funding.

Figure 4: Cultural grants and infrastructure investments by government type



Sources: Local government annual reports and web sites, Department of Local Government, Sport and Creative Industries, Lotterywest, Regional Development Commissions, Regional Arts WA, Australia Council, Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Regional Development Australia

Figure 5: Cultural grants and infrastructure investments by funding type



Sources: Local government annual reports and web sites, Department of Local Government, Sport and Creative Industries, Lotterywest, Regional Development Commissions, Regional Arts WA, Australia Council, Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Regional Development Australia

In a small rural town, there are myriad competing demands for the expenditure of ratepayers' monies from maintaining local roads, providing and managing public recreational facilities, and fostering local community cohesion, among many others. In Denmark, the arts or creative

industries are viewed as integral to the town's identity and are important for fostering social cohesion. As Claudia Simpson (2019), a Community Development Officer for the Shire of Denmark, observes: 'Obviously the arts are a huge part ... of what Denmark is'. The shire's Strategic Community Plan, *Denmark 2027*, guides the Council's strategic priorities over the next seven years (Shire of Denmark 2017: 3). While the arts or creative industries are not listed directly as a priority area, 'creativity' and a 'creative community' are central to the community and council's overall vision. As a quote on the report's front cover indicates, 'Denmark 2027: A happy, healthy and eclectic community *that embraces creativity* [emphasis added], celebrates the natural environment and is invested in a strong local economy' (Shire of Denmark 2017).

In fostering a community that embraces creativity, the Council supports the local creatives in various ways. They provide core funding for Denmark Arts, the peak body fostering the arts in the shire, and specific arts programs that support community development and tourism. These arts programs include Denmark's two major arts festivals, [Brave New Works](#) and [Denmark Festival of Voice](#). A community arts festival, Brave New Works encourages local artists and community members to create new, thought-provoking and innovative creative works, thereby building a sense of community and offering employment and training to local artists. The Brave New Works festival supports creative practice across visual artists, theatre, creative writing, film, and music. Most creatives interviewed for this study had either produced creative works for, or were part of, collaborative teams who participated in the festival. On the other hand, the Denmark Festival of Voice targets the tourism market and aims to bring visitors to the region. The festival brings together 'local, national and international artists to celebrate the power and beauty of the human voice through song, story-telling and spoken word' (N.A. N.D.b). This festival primarily supports musicians (groups, solo performers, choirs), live performers, and writers. In addition to these two major festivals, the Shire funds four [arts markets](#) run by Denmark Arts. These markets encourage tourism in the area and provide commercial opportunities for artists and artisans who sell work to visitors.

There are limited opportunities for the Denmark's youth to perform and gain experience in the creative industries. Consequently, the Shire works with high schools to produce creative events that support young creatives. The Shire also provides 'opportunities for young emerging artists ... in music and art.' As Simpson (2019) explains 'If I have a community event ... we'll give them a chance to perform and get a bit of experience and be mentored'.

Despite the various ways that the Shire supports the creative industries, some interviewees for this study, although they acknowledge the Shire's support, were also critical of a perceived lack of investment in, and a lack of appreciation for, Denmark's creative industries. Interviewees noted that funding had been cut to community and arts programs, and they felt that the arts were taken for granted by the Shire even though the town's creative community is a key driver of tourism. For Carmichael (2019):

[The Shire is] cutting funding to many community organisations, because they are financially challenged. Basically, they give core funding to Denmark Arts Council. Then Denmark Arts Council does two festivals a year, Brave New Works Festival, and the Festival of Voice. And they also host four markets plus a variety of workshops and small events. The Shire funds them, and then the Shire also has this pot of money which is now called the Community

Financial Assistance (CFA) grants. It [discontinued] its cultural development fund this year. It's been absorbed into the CFA but we have lost our dedicated \$6,000 annual cultural fund. In the past, as a local artist we could apply for up to \$2,000.

An observation is that because there are practitioners based in Denmark who are well-established and have been successful in securing public funding from local, or state, or national funding bodies, there is a large—and even disproportionate—demand for public subsidy in a small town. To an extent, this creates expectations for public investment in the arts that cannot necessarily be supported by the Shire, even though the arts are indeed an important drawcard for tourism to the region.

Denmark Arts

[Denmark Arts](#), officially the Denmark Arts Council, is the peak body for creative industries within the region and is a Regional Arts Hub for the Great Southern region. Denmark Arts is funded by the State Government through [Regional Arts WA](#), the Shire of Denmark, and various project and event-oriented grants. The organisation administers the town's Brave New Works Arts festival and the Denmark Festival of Voice, and the Denmark Arts Markets. As well as the organisation's main office, the Artshouse building houses artist residence rooms and a workshop, and studio and performance spaces. The residency program also strives to attract international artists to the region, and hosted Sir Bob Geldof in 2019. The organisation offers in-kind support for artists developing a project, including access to venue hire, rehearsal space, marketing support, and networking opportunities (Denmark Arts Council 2019). Denmark Arts also supports numerous community groups.

***Breath* (2017)**

Based on Australian author Tim Winton's 2008 novel by the same title, the Australian feature film *Breath* was filmed on the southwest coast of Australia, largely in Denmark, over six weeks in 2016. Australian expatriate and now Hollywood mainstay Simon Baker both directed and starred in the film. The production team was lured to region in part by the region's 'incredible beauty, but also an attachment to nature' and a \$2.3 million investment from the Western Australian Government to encourage film production in the regions. \$1.5 million of this funding came from the state government's Royalties for Regions program, while WA's peak development agency, Screenwest, invested \$800,000. Former Regional Development Minister Terry Redman anticipated that filming *Breath* in Denmark 'would directly generate around \$4.3 million, with further economic benefits expected to flow to the local community' (quoted in Screenwest, 2015).

As well as a direct boost for local creatives, it was envisaged that the town would also benefit from a boost to tourism after the rugged beauty of Denmark was showcased on screen. Denmark Shire President Ceinwen Gearon (quoted in Gubana, 2018), recognised the opportunity went beyond the direct expenditure of the film's budget in the Shire, stating that 'there's an opportunity ... to look to see if we can offer our location for other films and other activities around filming'. The Chair of the Great Southern Development Commission Ross Thornton believed *Breath* could have more impact than Roger Federer's selfie with a quokka that was taken during the tennis star's visit to Rottneest Island while in Perth for the Hopman Cup in 2018 (Gubana, 2018).

According to Dunn, *Breath's* production, 'provided a lot of job opportunities here to people who have gone on to ... seek ... more film work or considered doing film work in their own practice' (Dunn 2019). He referred to the work and collaboration of carpenters, sculptors, set dressers, fashion and makeup artists who through working on this larger project developed 'confidence ... to produce their own [works] and then go on to making their own dance shows or start getting into projections or branching out into theatre' (Dunn 2019).

Cultural amenities and infrastructure

There are limited cultural amenities in the Shire of Denmark. The town has a handful of commercial art galleries, including Michael Cartwright Gallery 2, Riverfront Gallery, Mill Art Group (at the Denmark Community Resource Centre Gallery), and the Butter Factory Studios. However, the Shire does not have a purpose-built, professional grade public gallery and performing arts avenue, with its public cultural amenities and infrastructure including the Community Resource Centre (with its multi-purpose public gallery), the Artshouse building and artist studio spaces, and the Denmark Civic Centre.

Interviewees spoke about a critical lack of public galleries and performance spaces in Denmark. The Community Resource Centre houses a multi-purpose gallery space, yet, as Carmichael observes, the 'lighting and hanging systems need improving for it to be considered a proper gallery' (Carmichael 2019). The Denmark Civic Centre, with a 300-seat capacity, is the town's main performance venue, and it is regularly used for community arts and local school performances. However, the space is not a professional performance venue. As the Civic Centre's website puts it: 'The building has ... a modern and *generally adequate* [emphasis added] facility for live performance and AV/film presentations' (Denmark Shire N.D.). As Carmichael (2019) states, 'we don't have a proper performance space here. We have a Civic Centre which has a very small stage and a couple of lighting bars. But no backstage space, making it difficult to achieve professional level production values for dance.' There is also a scarcity of rehearsal spaces in town. The Denmark Arts Arthouse building has a rehearsal space, but these spaces are limited for performance artists. According to Carmichael (2019), 'There's actually quite a few dance artists and theatre artists that live here. We're competing with many other activities for space. It's really hard to get space here if you want to rehearse. We're booking a year in advance to get what we need'. A professional theatre producer and choreographer, Carmichael rents rehearsal spaces in Albany, and produces some of her performances for the Albany Entertainment Centre. Yet, the costs of hiring both the rehearsal and performance spaces at the Albany Entertainment Centre are often cost-prohibitive, even though her work is funded by state and federal grants. 'And if I want to go use the beautiful dance studio there [in Albany], it [costs] \$1,000 a week. It's so much money for a single artist' (Carmichael 2019).

Tourism

Tourism is a key priority for the Shire of Denmark. It is, however, seasonal, and many creative practitioners selling goods and services into the tourism market cannot rely on this source of income all year-round. Following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, tourism in the region was severely impacted, further compounding declines in 2019 due to weak intra-state tourism.

The Shire of Denmark work with both the State Government and other regional councils in the Great Southern to create a coordinated tourism strategy to attract visitors to the region. As Simpson (2019) puts it, 'definitely tourism is a big priority' for Denmark and there is 'an Alliance [between] Denmark, Albany, and Plantagenet ... the [councils] together have a new kind of marketing for tourism'. With financial investment from the State Government, central to this collaboration has been the launch of a shared marketing campaign to promote the region called [The Amazing South Coast](#). The emphasis for this marketing brand, in an attempt to differentiate the Great Southern from WA's South West and the rest of WA, 'is ... eco-tourism, new regional walking trails, and 'high energy, high intensity tourism' (Simpson 2019). The strategy focusses on attracting the 'very high-end kind of tourist' who is a bit more rugged and 'want[s] to get in and walk in the forest (Simpson 2019). The Tingle Forest only grows in this part of the country, and the rugged coastlines of the region are breathtaking. This strategy attempts to capitalise on these comparative advantages.

The primary focus of this strategy is thus eco-tourism. However, the arts and culture are a small component of this broader strategy, revolving around The Great Southern Art and Craft Trail and the Denmark Food and Wine Trail. The [Southern Art and Craft Trail](#) is a self-guided tour of art galleries, artists' studios, and venues displaying art in towns regionally, including Denmark. As the trail's website describes:

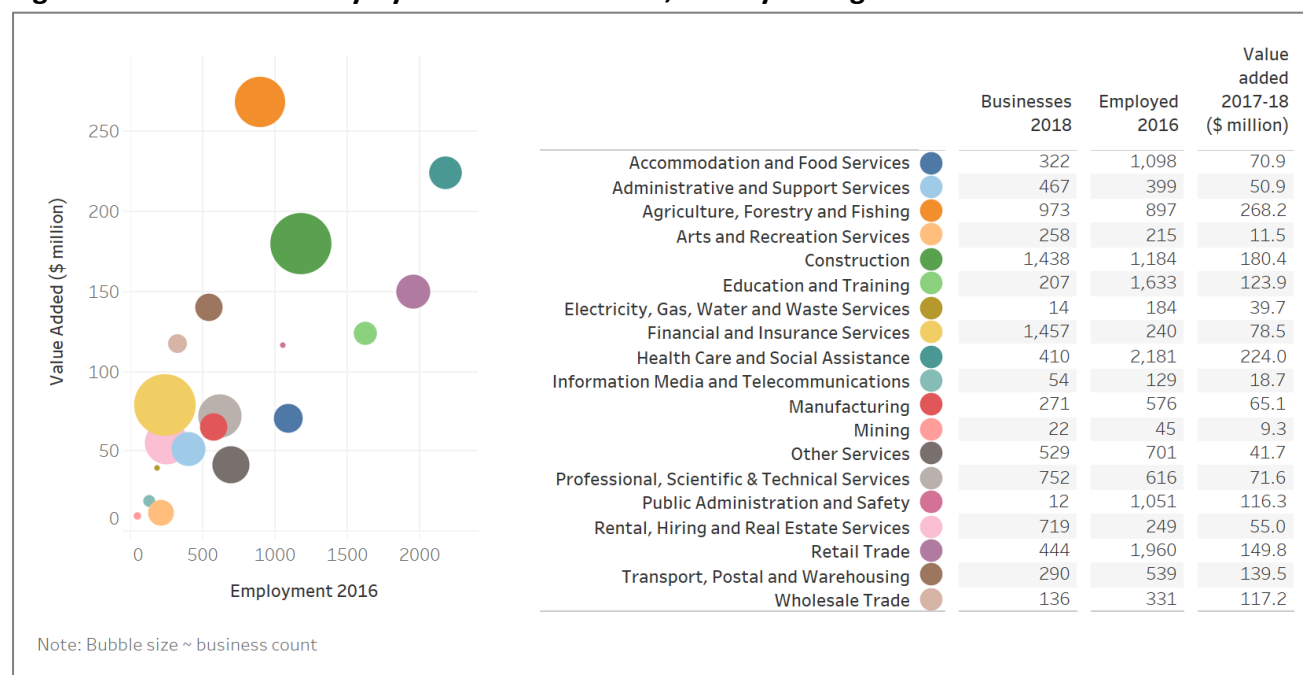
over 80 different venues, including cafes, wineries, galleries, local businesses, community halls, libraries, art centres, studios and pop-up spaces will exhibit artworks. The variety of Venues and range of professional Artists will show huge diversity. From textiles, painting, sculpture and jewellery, to printmaking, photography, pottery and woodcraft are on display ('Southern Arts and Crafts Trail' <https://artsouthwa.com.au/southern-art-and-craft-trail/>).

The art trail is closely associated with food and wine trails, and as the description above suggests, these wine and food trails include venues that exhibit art or hold art-based workshops.

Albany: the city and an overview of its creative industries

The City of Albany is a port city approximately a five-hour drive from Perth. Albany’s largest industries in terms of employment are Health Care and Social Assistance accounting for 13.1 per cent of the city’s total employment, Retail Trade accounting for 11.5 per cent, Education and Training 9.8 per cent, construction 9.4 per cent, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing comprising 7.8 per cent of employment (Figure 7, .id 2020b).

Figure 7: Economic activity by ANZSIC subdivision, Albany local government area



Source: ABS (2016); .idcommunity (2019).

The City of Albany has a long and significant colonial history. Albany was the first major European settlement in WA founded in 1826, three years before the establishment of the Swan River Colony in 1829; a colony later renamed Perth, and now WA’s capital city. King George’s Sound and Princess Royal Harbour were explored by both British and French explorers, and the harbour became a centre for Australia’s whaling industry soon after Albany’s settlement. The city had the longest running, and the nation’s last, commercial whaling operation when the Cheynes Beach Whaling Station closed in 1978. Albany also has a strong connection to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC): the Princess Royal Harbour served as the departure point for two convoys of ANZAC soldiers sent to battlefronts during WW1. The largely preserved Stirling Terrace, overlooking the harbour, is a historical street that contains numerous heritage-listed cottages and buildings that, from the harbour, give Albany an old-worldly Victorian façade.

In a similar vein to Denmark, creative practitioners are drawn to Albany for a tree and/or sea-change and the region’s natural beauty, a smaller city lifestyle, and other intangibles such as the intrinsic value of creative inspiration they experience by living in the city (Sorenson 2019; Montefiore 2019; Salmaggi 2019). While Denmark’s population has a higher percentage of retirees, over 55 per cent of Albany’s population is between the ages of 40 and over 60 (Figure 2). Albany experiences fluctuations in population during the winter months, and tourism numbers decline.

Those retirees who can afford to, often leave Albany for the winter. The Amazing South Coast regional tourism strategy is an attempt to increase tourist numbers to the region during the low season.

To an extent, some of Albany's workforce are transient; a phenomenon that is not uncommon for regional towns. As such, a portion of the city's workforce employed in areas such as local government, the police force, or education among other sectors, move to work in Albany for a contracted period before they leave for employment elsewhere (Montefiore 2019). While universities offer a limited range of tertiary courses in Albany, at the time of writing there were no tertiary-level undergraduate courses available in the creative industries. In Albany, a single Technical and Further Education (TAFE) course, a Certificate II in Applied Fashion Design and Technology, is offered for study, although the South Regional TAFE (Denmark) offers various creative courses. Consequently, many young aspiring artists or creative practitioners must leave the region to undertake further training and education.

Characteristics of Albany's creative economy

The creative industries in Albany combine commercial creative industries, and vibrant, largely grassroots, experimental and community arts and performance activities.

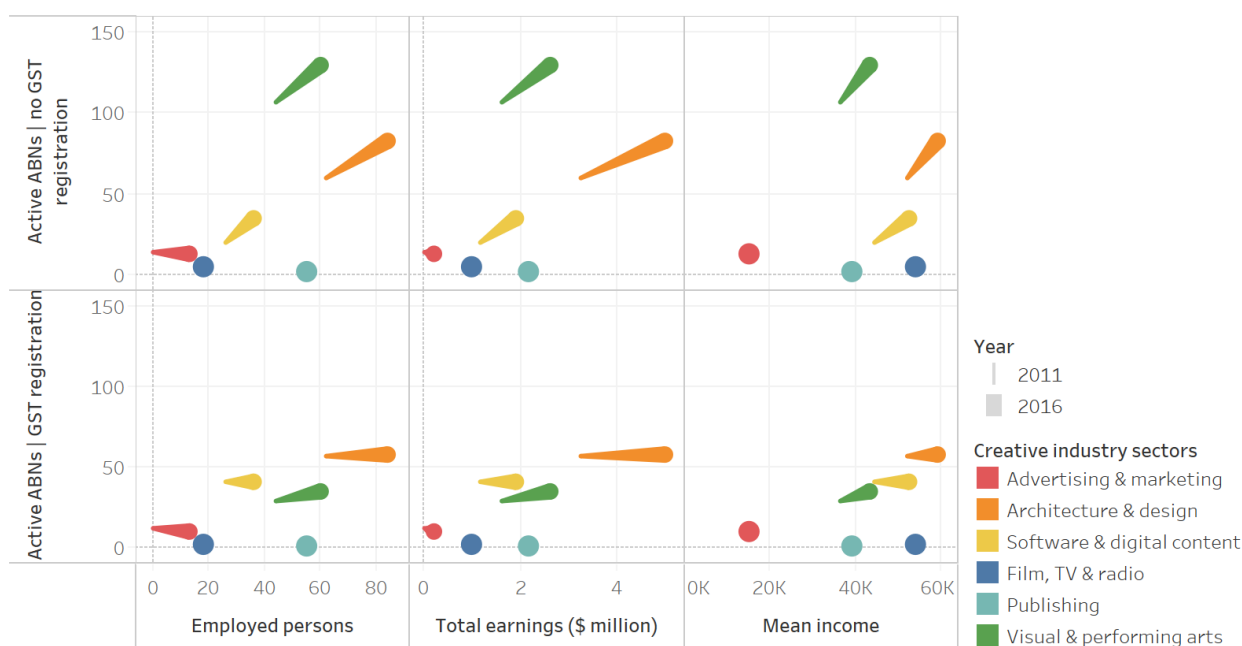
The creative ecosystem in Albany is characterised by concentrations of professional and amateur-professional practitioners specialising in cultural production such as visual arts and crafts, photography—drawn by the rugged beauty of the region and competing for national and international prizes—music (including choirs and choral theatre), community-based theatre, filmmaking and television news production, and creative writing and publishing. In terms of creative services, there is a strong group of architecture and design professionals living in the city. A primary survey of the Great Southern's creative workforce conducted by Creative Albany in 2015, found that the region had a higher proportion of architects, visual artists, musicians, performers and writers than state and national averages (Creative Albany 2015, 32). Moreover, the region's creative industries are largely concentrated in Albany, Denmark, and The Shire of Plantagenet. At the 2016 Census, Albany continued to host higher proportions of architects, graphic and web designers, photographers, software and application programmers, creative and performing artists and writers than the average across the rest of regional WA (Appendix A.6).

The Creative Albany survey also indicates there are numerous workers with a second job in a creative industry, estimating that the total creative workforce is at least double that of the official figures captures by the ABS Census, particularly in cultural production (Creative Albany 2015, 34). It found that 37 per cent of survey respondents 'identified their creative work as their main source of income', while 63 per cent 'relied on another source of income that was not from creative work' (Creative Albany 2015, 31). Anne Sorenson (2019), the Artistic Director of Southern Edge Arts, notes, for example, that many talented and accomplished live performance artists in Albany work full-time as teachers, as these practitioners can earn much higher salaries in the education sector than they can in the creative arts. These creatives, for example, would not be counted as a creative worker in the ABS census.

These higher-than average proportions of creative workers also appear to be growing strongly. Although it does not fully capture the extent of creative employment, the Census employment

counts show that creative employment in Albany is growing. Employment in business-to-business creative services industries grew at rates at least 50 per cent higher than that in other industries, while in consumer-oriented cultural production, it grew by as much as three times the rate of other industries (Figure 8, Appendix A.1). Much of this employment growth is occurring in micro businesses, businesses that are not registered for GST, with an annual turnover of less than \$75,000 per annum. In Visual and Performing Arts, Architecture and Design, and Software and Digital Content, significant increases in the numbers of registrations of businesses not paying GST between 2011 and 2016 was correlated with increases in mean income recorded by the Census (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Creative industry employment, total earnings and mean income by place of work compared with business registrations, 2011 and 2016, Albany



Sources: ABS (2016), Australian Business Register (2019)

Elements of Albany’s creative ecosystem

There are numerous professional creative practitioners and artists living and working in Albany across a range of commercial creative industries and cultural production professions including in photography, film and television, and creative writing and publishing. At the same time, many creatives in the region working in the visual and performing arts are professional-amateurs, community-based artists, or hobbyists. There are plentiful active community creative groups and collectives in Albany, many of which are crafts-focused. Examples include the Albany Weavers, Felters in the Great Southern, the Albany Spinners, the Albany Art Group, and the Albany Potters among other examples. There is a large amount of volunteerism in the region.

In Albany, the festival economy does not play as a central role in fuelling commercial activity in the local creative ecosystem and is not as focussed on the tourism market as it is, for example, in the City of Busselton (Ryan et al 2020). Albany does have an annual schedule of creative events or cultural festivals, but unlike Busselton, creative festivals are not offered all year round. While some

festivals such as Albany Town Hall Relaunch Festival showcase the local creative industries, and the Albany Arts Festival targets the tourism market, most of the events run by the City throughout the year are chiefly focussed on encouraging community participation in the arts and social cohesion.

The Albany Town Hall Relaunch Festival held between March and April included the following key events showcasing the local creative industries:

- Breaksea Film Art Trail, an event presenting an innovative Film Art Trail.
- Poets and Performers Night.
- Heritage Tours with Malcolm Traill.
- *H is for Happiness* movie screening; a feature film shot in Albany.
- Southern Edge Arts Aerials Performances and Workshops.
- Albany Town Hall Relaunch Photo Booth to commemorate the town's rich history.

Other key creative events or festivals held throughout the year in 2021, include:

- Albany Art Workshops: Kid's Craft Activities (April).
- Movie Night: *Weathering With You*; an international movie screening night (April).
- Book Chat, City of Albany Library (April).
- Cinefest Oz Albany Film Festival (April to May).
- The Musical of Musicals (April to May).
- The [Southern Art and Craft Trail](#), promoting artist studios, venues selling art and art workshops, encourages tourism to the region and presents commercial opportunities for local artists (September to October).

There is an active Aboriginal creative community in Albany. The VAC regularly supports Aboriginal creative projects and has funded several large Aboriginal programs including sculptures and live performances, including, for example, its \$40,000 investment in the 'Mokare Project', commissioning 'five permanent public artworks by local Menang artists to be installed in the Albany Cultural Centre. The artworks explore Menang cultural stories and interpret and respond to Mokare's life and legacy' (Australian Leisure Management 2018).

[Kurrah Mia](#), opened in 2019 and located in the town's centre, is Albany's first Aboriginal art gallery and retail store and sells local Indigenous art and crafts and offers Aboriginal cultural tours throughout the region. The venture, established by Vernice Gillies, her son Larry Blight and other associates, aims to provide a commercial outlet for local Noongar artists. For Gillies, 'we needed to give these artists an outlet ... Not all of our people are comfortable going online and selling their works, so they have a physical place here that they can bring their work' (Gillies quoted in Smith 2019).

The Museum of the Great Southern, which has an Aboriginal Learning and Community Liaison Officer, works closely with the Aboriginal Heritage Reference Group to ensure that local Aboriginal culture, stories and significant sites are adequately documented, represented and displayed in the museum. As Catherine Salmaggi, the Regional Manager explained, the museum works 'closely with the Aboriginal Heritage Reference Group' to deliver 'the messages that [the Aboriginal community] would like us to deliver' about these places and sites (Salmaggi 2019).

Albany has a cohesive legacy media presence. Unlike other creative hotspots studied such as Cairns which over the last five years have experienced a significant contraction and fragmentation of legacy media organisations (Cunningham et al 2019), the City of Albany retains its local newspapers including *Albany Advertiser*, *Albany Extra* (both available in Denmark), *Great Southern Herald*, and the *Great Southern Weekender*. (Other than the local newspaper, the *Denmark Bulletin*, Denmark has no major local media organisations and largely relies on local media content from Albany). Albany also functions as a hub for public and commercial media organisations broadcasting or circulating local news throughout the Great Southern and the Wheat Belt. Broadcasters servicing the region include ABC Great Southern (an ABC Local Radio station broadcasting local programs to the region, as well as relaying broadcasts from 720 ABC Perth) and GWN7 (a regional Australian television network owned by the Prime Media Group previously part of the Golden West network³). GWN7 provides local news and current affairs programs to regional WA. While the nightly bulletin is largely produced, and broadcast from GWN7's newsroom in Bunbury in the South West, reporters and camera crews are also based at newsrooms in Albany, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Geraldton and Broome.

Cultural infrastructure, amenities and space

Key organisations supporting the development of creative industries in the region, include:

- The Vancouver Arts Centre: a community arts centre, and a development body for the creative industries owned and operated by the City of Albany.
- Museum of the Great Southern: a regional site for the Western Australian Museum with multipurpose facilities supporting creative practice and exhibition.
- ArtSouth WA: a volunteer run not-for-profit organisation that manages the Southern Art and Craft Trail.
- Creative Albany: an organisation established to identify Albany's hidden creative workforce and to develop initiatives and a network that develops social capital, digital skills, and capacity in the region.
- [Southern Edge Arts](#): a youth arts community organisation established in 1985 that offers community events, festivals, workshops (including in schools), arts workshops, skills development, arts engagement, performances, youth development performances and community arts projects (Sorenson 2019).
- [Regional Arts WA](#): a key state-based organisation that invests in and support local arts and creative industries organisations in Albany and across WA.

The City of Albany supports a diverse range of cultural infrastructure and amenities. Key examples include:

- The Town Hall renovation resulting in exhibition space capable of Class A exhibitions and a 'multi-functional flat floor space to support a range of arts and cultural events, civic events, performances and exhibitions'.⁴

³ The Golden West Network was a merged group of four stations in regional Western Australia; BTW-3 Bunbury, VEW-8 Kalgoorlie, GTW-11 Geraldton and GSW-9 Albany.

⁴ See <https://artsandculture.albany.wa.gov.au/venue-info/albany-town-hall.aspx>

- The Vancouver Arts Centre, with exhibition, rehearsal and performance spaces.
- Several community-arts theatres and performance spaces.

The City of Albany is a civic partner contributing operational funding to the Albany Entertainment Centre, a large purpose-built performing arts venue that is owned by State Government and managed by the Perth Theatre Trust, a Western Australian Government statutory authority. The City also regularly sponsors festivals held at the Entertainment Centre.

The City also works closely with the Museum of the Great Southern, a regional site of the Western Australian Museum, which offers multipurpose studio and exhibition spaces.

There are plentiful rehearsal and performance spaces for performers, and studios spaces for community-arts and craft groups. The sheer number and vibrancy of local community arts groups is to an extent influenced by the availability of affordable spaces for creative activities. In a similar vein to trends identified in Fremantle, due to the large number of heritage buildings owned by the City of Albany, there are numerous spaces available for individual artistic practice and community groups (See Hearn et al 2020: 11-12). In other instances, unused port buildings have been repurposed as performance spaces. Key examples of heritage-listed buildings that function as spaces or venues for creative industries, include:

- The Vancouver Arts Centre, the former Albany Cottage Hospital. The building is a community arts-centre and a hive for creative and activity.
- Spectrum Theatre is a 50-seat theatre located under the heritage-listed Albany Post Office, a former colonial-era post office and customs office. The theatre is used by an amateur repertory theatre group.
- Albany Town Hall, first built in 1888, contains the aforementioned multipurpose exhibition and performance space.
- The Museum of the Great Southern building, originally completed in 1850 and serving as a store and office for the nearby convict-hiring depot, offers multipurpose studio and exhibition spaces.

Though not a heritage listed building, another key example is the Albany Port Theatre. Located in the Port of Albany, across from the Albany Entertainment Centre, the Albany Port Theatre is a specialist performing arts space for the Albany Light Opera and Theatre Company, a repurposed transit shed donated by the Albany Port Authority.

A major barrier has been the lack of a Class A regional exhibition space. Although Albany's visual arts community has a reputation for being innovative and experimental, there is a perception that opportunities for professional artists and artists attempting to professionalise had in past been stymied by a lack of a high-quality exhibition space (Launay 2019; Sorenson 2019):

You have some very innovative work happening, and there's everything from hobbyists, amateurs, and it goes right up to really high-level innovative work ... There is a lot of [it] ... when the town hall opens, I think we'll get to see more work presented by local professional visual artists ... who have historically ... not really bothered to exhibit locally, because there isn't anywhere that's actually good enough (Launay 2019).

The organisation NewArts campaigned for over 30 years to lobby the Council to invest in the development of a high-quality exhibition gallery in Albany (Launay 2019).

To address the critical need for this space, the 133-year-old Albany Town Hall was renovated and restored to create the city's first premium art exhibition gallery and a multi-purpose performance space. The hall has since been billed by the City of Albany as 'the region's flagship arts and community events venue' (N.A. 2021). Commencing in December 2019, the newly renovated Town Hall's will 'host a wide variety of visual and performance arts, collections, exhibitions and community needs' (N.A. 2020). The project was completed with a State Government grant of \$1 million from Lotterywest and a partnership between the City of Albany and the Great Southern Development Commission (via the Regional Economic Development Scheme). Albany's Mayor Dennis Wellington stated that, 'We have so many talented artists across the Great Southern ... and we now have a state-of-the-art venue to host them' (N.A. 2020). To mark the hall's reopening, the Council launched the Albany Town Hall Relaunch Festival. The hall will also host the Great Southern Art Award exhibition for the first time between April and May 2021.

The Museum of the Great Southern, one of several regional sites for the Western Australian Museum, is a natural history museum offering exhibitions, educational programs, lectures, and tours detailing Albany's natural and social history. The museum displays artefacts curated principally by the Western Australian Museum based in Perth, although the museum's core program is supplemented by local artefacts and exhibits curated in consultation with experts and local community groups (Salmaggi 2019). Although the museum's primary function is preserving and displaying the state's natural history and heritage, it also plays a role in supporting local visual artists. As Salmaggi observes, 'In 2010, we had a renovation of one of the buildings, which left four rooms vacant'. The rooms were subsequently converted into 'creative spaces' and made available 'to the community as an opportunity for up-and-coming artists, or creatives to ... exhibit or create things within those spaces' (Salmaggi 2019). Moreover, the museum partners 'with artists ... and creative groups to produce exhibition standard work. We have a community access agreement. So people will come to us with their ideas of holding an exhibition ... And then we would work with them to support their idea, to culminate in an exhibition that we would hold for them' (Salmaggi 2019).

Policy-making that impacts the creatives industries in the region can be Perth-centric.

Interviewees also noted that policy development and decision-making impacting the creative industries in the region are to an extent Perth-centric. Furthermore, the head offices for some development agencies for the creative industries are based in Perth. Examples include the Museum of the Great Southern's main program and the National Anzac Centre's displays and objects, both being curated from Perth; the Albany Entertainment Centre is owned by a State Government statutory authority based in Perth; Screenwest operates from Perth, to name a few examples. Interviewees also noted that the *Field of Light: Avenue of Honour* art exhibition by Bruce Munro, paying homage to the ANZACs to mark the ANZAC Centenary commemorations from October 2018 through to April 2019, was commissioned by FORM, a Perth based not-for-profit organisation. Both Sorenson (2019) and Colin Montefiore (2019) questioned why a Perth-based organisation was tasked with commissioning a permanent installation in Albany when various high-quality local

artists or groups could have managed the project. Interviewees argued that more policy development and decision-making needs to be made by people living in the Great Southern.

Albany Entertainment Centre

The Albany Entertainment Centre is a high-end, commercially driven, performing arts venue built to provide residents of the Great Southern with access to high-quality performing arts. The Centre hosts touring performances—largely from Perth but also national and international touring acts—and other forms of live entertainment such as music and comedy acts. The Albany Entertainment Centre comprises a 600-seat theatre, and a smaller 250-seat studio space for performances conferences, or seminars (Dymond 2019). The venue is a purpose-built performing arts venue, rather than a multi-purpose entertainment centre designed to support a variety of creative forms in a similar vein to the planned Busselton Entertainment, Arts and Cultural Hub (See Ryan et al 2020: 11).

Built in 2010, located on the waterfront of Albany Harbour, the Centre was commissioned by WA's Department of Treasury and Finance and the Building Management and Works, costing approximately \$70 million for construction. The centre is now run by the Perth Theatre Trust, a WA State Government statutory authority. Drew Dymond (2019), Albany Entertainment Centre's Manager, explained that:

The State Government built this facility in Albany, and then they were initially hoping that the local Council could run it. After some negotiation with how it was going to be managed, it was decided the state would manage it, and the local Council would contribute to approximately half of the operational requirement and the state contributes to the other half ... So there's an operational fund that's required every year. Then on top of that, we [receive] project specific funding (Dymond 2019).

Diversity 'is a key guiding principle of the centre's programming' and Dymond attempts to 'cater to a broad range of taste, and account for the [largest] cross-section of the community' as possible:

We do a variety of things, we are a venue for hire, for commercial shows that are on tour that could be a commercial success. Particularly tribute bands and things like country and western singers, John Williamson, that sort of show would be a regular client of this building. Then we program our own events where we fund performance to happen. We would try to bring down the state theatre company from time to time. Other touring performance from around Australia from independent companies, or even dance theatre, music, as per funding will allow ... Again, we're trying to have a balance of it all.

A key objective of the Albany Entertainment Centre, other than delivering high-quality performances for local audiences, is generating commercial profit to contribute to covering operational costs. Consequently, the Centre is less focussed on developing local talent or supporting the city's rich community-based performance culture.

As a consequence, there is a disconnect between the scale and aspirations of local performance groups and producers, and the size and commercial focus of the Albany Entertainment Centre. There is a perception among regional practitioners that while the Albany Entertainment Centre is a

high-quality performance facility, one that is sorely needed, it prioritises attracting touring acts and commercial performances or events such as conferences, rather than supporting local grassroots production and performance, and its facilities are too expensive for local performers to hire or use (Sorenson 2019; Montefiore 2019; Launay 2019; Carmichael 2019; Lehmann 2019). As Dymond (2019) acknowledges, 'I think the local artist, for them, if they're producing their own performance they find it a little bit difficult to do it here, because it's ... expensive to rent'. Moreover, Dymond (2019) explained that because the Centre is a purpose-built performing arts space with two theatres, the main theatre is typically booked for touring shows, while the 250-seat theatre—best suited for shows and workshops developed by local performers—is often booked for conferences or other commercial events, and therefore cannot be hired out for use by local producers or community groups.

The centre does undertake co-productions with local theatre producers or live performance groups so long as the show is potentially commercially viable. As Dymond (2019) states, 'There is one group, the local Albany City Wind Ensemble, who perform here every second year, and they sell out three shows. They're well-attended, they've been an economical success'.

Sorenson, the Artistic Director of Southern Edge Arts, recognised this tension, describing the Centre as receptive to local performers, but observed that its commercial priorities sometimes clash with the needs and schedules of local performers and community-arts organisations:

They have to run it as a commercial business and ... [Southern Edge Arts] can't take our programs and run them there because ... they've got a wedding booking or conference booking or something that's going to make money. I mean, having said that, they have been really open to us using the space when we have asked them, for little things here and there (Sorenson 2019).

A key benefit of the Perth Theatre Trust's management of the Albany Entertainment Centre management is that this relationship results in ongoing State Government support for various community partnerships and it brings local Western Australian art organisations and First Nations artists to the Centre. In 2019 and 2020, the Perth Theatre Trust supported an artist-in-residence partnership with a Great Southern secondary school. The Perth Theatre Trust also provided support for the Albany Arts Festival and the Harbourside program – a live music event at the centre that showcases local artists – as well as performances by Ilbijerri Theatre Company and Bangarra Dance Theatre, and numerous WA acts including Barking Gecko Theatre, Spare Parts Theatre, Ochre Dance Company, Sensorium Theatre, Performing Lines, and The Last Great Hunt.

Vancouver Arts Centre

Wholly owned and operated by The City of Albany, the [Vancouver Arts Centre](#) is a significant institution at the core of Albany's creative industries ecosystem. It plays a major role in fostering arts participation in the region as a creative hub and stimulating the growth of the creative industries as a de facto development body. A unique and multifaceted organisation, it is first and foremost a community arts centre, with an overarching aim 'To present a multi art form program of cultural and creative events that challenge, excite, inspire and engage local community and visitors to the region' (N.A. N.D.c). This institutional remit is also embedded within the City of Albany's broader goal of offering the population 'a range of arts and cultural services aimed at building the

cultural and social fabric of our community and reflecting Albany's identity as a highly creative and arts-engaged regional hub' (N.A. N.D.c). Consequently, VAC has several distinct functions, some of which are typically the responsibility of separate government institutions or non-for-profit organisations in other states, with its objectives being to encourage participation in the creative industries to foster social cohesion for the local community, foster the city's local identity and cultural heritage, support the development of creative practitioners, promote excellence in the arts, and stimulate the development of the creative industries (N.A. N.D.c).

VAC supports both community-based arts and professional creative practice, as well as commercial (music and screen production) and non-commercial creative activities (such as community-based weaving groups) (Launay 2019).

Amber Launay (2019), the centre's Coordinator until late 2020, acknowledges that it is 'quite unique' for a community arts centre to be owned and operated by a local council. For Launay, this model provides an unusual level of 'security' for a community arts centre that allows the VAC to be more strategic:

We can continue to provide a consistent level of service. We do not limp along wondering if we've got funding to actually survive for ... beyond the next six months. I have a 10-year financial plan. I mean, our program budgets are smallish ... But we have a building, the heating is paid for, the electricity's paid for, our staffing, and salaries are covered, and I'll have a small program budget ... being able to plan ahead, is really amazing (Launay 2019).

The VAC building, while serving as the organisation's offices, also contains numerous studio spaces that are sub-leased to community-art groups, including physical performance, rehearsal, and exhibition spaces and residency accommodation. Because the Centre is fully funded, and the organisation owns its own building, it provides community groups with low-cost rooms and studios and functions as a 'home for a whole' range of 'smaller community art ... and craft groups' (Launay 2019). The Centre has accommodation (five rooms), three studio spaces, and a residential cottage. The organisation also runs its own 'artist in residence programs.

As a council-owned not-for-profit organisation, the VAC works closely with other state-owned, and partly council owned, cultural institutions such as the Albany Entertainment Centre. On the one hand, VAC invests in community arts projects that are exhibited in the foyer of the Albany Entertainment Centre. In recent years, this has included a children's holiday art program coordinated by the centre and displayed as an installation in the Albany Entertainment Centre's foyer (Launay 2019). More importantly, by financially supporting local and regional artists (from Denmark for example) to develop shows to be performed at the Albany Entertainment Centre, it helps them cover the prohibitive costs of accessing the Albany Entertainment Centre (Carmichael 2019; Lehmann 2019; Simpson 2019). In the words of Launay (2019):

[VAC are] also invested in making sure and helping that the [Albany] Entertainment Centre is viable ... We see them as ... part of the broader arts sector. So we work with Drew [Dymond, Manager of the centre] ... Obviously, Drew takes the commercial shows like the stand-up comics, and those things too because they hire them, and they make money from those things. And that allows him to program perhaps some more

challenging shows, that he might put on for audience development purposes. And so, Annette [Carmichael from Denmark] is a key example of an artist, slash creative producer that we would partner with. So, in the past, [there's several] projects we've helped get up and over the line by partnering financially.

Cultural tourism and heritage

At the time of the writing in March 2021, the City of Albany and the Great Southern Development Commission were developing a cultural tourism strategy that has yet to be released. To date, however, despite the city's rich colonial history, historic built environment and thriving grassroots creative industries ecosystem, heritage and cultural tourism have not been central to how the city is promoted in state or national tourism campaigns. The National Anzac Centre is at the forefront of how the Shire markets the city, but the centre is also largely promoted in terms of *national* military history and ANZAC mythology, rather than the city's own unique local culture and heritage more specifically. The city's branding strategy is integrated into the Great Southern region's amalgamated marketing approach and thus the [Amazing South Coast](#) campaign, a specific marketing strategy emphasising the outdoors, hiking, and the region's natural beauty.

The absence of a cultural tourism and heritage strategy is important for several reasons. Albany arguably has a significant and impressive concentration of heritage-listed Victorian-era buildings. Looking back at the town from the harbour's waterfront, the nearby hillside has a European, old-worldly appearance that is unlike most cities in Australia. As Salmaggi (2019) notes in relation to the City's famous Stirling Terrace:

I think what people respond to when they come here and look back up the hill and see lots of old cottages and 1900 buildings, and there's numbers still on the buildings. And it's not even to the point of like Fremantle, that knock down behind the building and leave a façade, these are the actual buildings, you can actually go in.

Although Albany may not have the same level of convict history as Tasmania, Albany has a rich colonial-settler and Aboriginal history with the potential to form the basis of a compelling marketing narrative for encouraging tourism. French and British exploration was common in the area. Albany's museum houses a full sail ship, the brig Amity, in a dry-dock; there are the ruins of colonial lighthouses (such as Point King Lighthouse); local community groups sing sea shanties (Salmaggi 2021); there is a rich seafaring and whaling history; and there are various local folk tales about lighthouses around the harbour and their interactions with ships passing through the sound (Dymond 2019). However, at the time of writing there are few cultural heritage trails. Nor are there any substantive public history, or community storytelling projects that document and preserve the local place identity of individual heritage buildings or streets similar to the [East Fremantle Heritage Trail](#) or the [Streets of Freo](#) initiatives implemented by the Town of East Fremantle (See Hearn et al 2019).

As this suggests, the city's architecture, heritage and place identity is not as highly valued as it perhaps could be, nor has it been viewed as a strategic asset to exploit for the tourism market in the past. Developing a robust and comprehensive cultural tourism and heritage strategy that attempts to capitalise on the town's rich colonial heritage, architecture, and substantive cultural

amenities is a major opportunity for the City of Albany to develop cultural tourism as a major reason why tourists should visit the city in the future.

National Anzac Centre

The National Anzac Centre is an innovative interactive memorial and commemorative history centre that uses ‘multimedia, interactive technology and historical artefacts to create a deeply personal connection with the past’.⁵ The centre celebrates national ANZAC history and is deeply rooted in Albany’s unique connection with ANZAC history. During WW1, two convoys of ANZAC troops gathered in King George Sound—protected by the Princess Royal Fortress—left Australian shores for the battle fronts in Gallipoli, the Middle East, and the Western Front. The two convoys comprised ‘36 ships carrying 29,000 Australian and New Zealand men and women’ (Hunter 2019).

The National Anzac Centre, built on Mt. Clarence overlooking the harbour from which the convoys departed, offers patrons an interactive experience following the storylines of individuals aboard the convoys. Upon arrival, patrons are randomly given one of 32 characters cards. The cards revolve around a specific character’s story—from recruitment and basic training to life on the convoys and their personal experiences in different theatres of war—and guides patrons around the museum. Patrons interact with characters via interactive panels, touch screens, re-enactments and audio recordings, and the display of physical objectives. With 32 characters to follow, the centre is designed to encourage repeat visits. As Polly Smith (2021), the centre’s Project Officer from the Western Australian Museum notes, the patron’s experience is deeply personal ‘by being able to follow an individual that really individualizes the story of the Great War’.

While the National Anzac Centre celebrates Albany’s historic connection with the two convoys, its overarching objective is the national commemoration of the ANZAC’s. The centre attracts tourists from across Australia and New Zealand as part of a broader ‘pilgrimage’ by people travelling to significant ANZAC sites (Smith 2021), by relatives, fellow service men / women, and ordinary citizens to commemorate the nations’ fallen soldiers.

Opening on the 1 November 2014, the centre’s \$10.6 million construction costs were funded by the Federal and Western Australian Governments. The centre receives no ongoing public funding and revenue from entry fees covers the centre’s maintenance and operational costs. The Western Australian Museum and the Australian War Memorial oversaw the development of the centre’s interactive content and was responsible for the curation of physical artefacts. The WA Museum has a service level agreement with the City of Albany stipulating ‘that the [WA Museum] is responsible for all curatorial content, as well as object loans, and exhibition design’, while the ANZAC centre’s day-to-day operations from electricity and building maintenance is operated by the City (Smith 2021). The interactive panels, touchscreens and software were developed by Mental Media in New South Wales and the Gibson Group from New Zealand. The hiring of these companies was based on the level of sophistication and scale required to complete the project (Smith 2021). All the physical objects are loaned to the WA Museum, with loan agreement between lender and the museum, from a range of lenders including, individuals and estates, the Australian War Memorial, the

⁵ See <https://www.nationalanzaccentre.com.au/about>.

Auckland War Memorial Museum and community organisations and Retired Services Leagues. Some individuals and community groups from Albany have contributed to the collections.

Hotspot comparison tables

Table 1 Western Australia hotspot comparisons

	Fremantle & East Fremantle	Greater Geraldton	Busselton	Albany	Denmark
ASGS remoteness category	Major cities of Australia	Remote Australia	Inner regional Australia	Outer regional Australia	Outer regional Australia
RAI region type	Major metropolitan	Industry & service hub	Industry & service hub	Industry & service hub	Heartland region
Resident population, 2016 ^a	36,268	38,632	36,688	36,585	5,850
Employed persons, 2016 ^b	26,662	15,702	13,638	14,821	1,902
Total creative employment, 2016 ^b	1,045	231	288	339	79
Total earnings from creative employment, 2016 ^b	\$63.6m	\$13.6m	\$14.9m	\$16.6m	\$3.0m
Total businesses, 2016	17,044	8,946	10,884	9,074	1,761
Total creative businesses, 2016	1,891	369	611	443	139
Proportion of all businesses registered for GST, 2016	51.1%	53.3%	52.7%	54.4%	51.6%
Proportion of creative businesses registered for GST, 2016	40.3%	37.9%	41.7%	36.5%	39.8%
Regional domestic product, 2017-18	\$4,995m	\$2,396m	\$2,222m	\$2,201m	\$290m
Mean age ^a	41.6	38.0	40.7	41.7	44.7
Unemployment rate ^a	7.5%	9.6%	6.1%	5.4%	4.9%
Youth unemployment rate ^{a,c}	13.6%	15.8%	11.1%	11.0%	8.5%
Youth unemployment ratio ^{a,c}	44.1%	48.7%	42.3%	44.3%	53.2%
Indigenous ^a	1.4%	9.7%	1.7%	3.3%	1.3%
Volunteer ^a	19.0%	16.2%	19.7%	19.6%	24.6%

Note a. These statistics are provided by place of residence, and b. are by place of work

c. The youth unemployment rate is the ratio of unemployed youth aged 15-24 to all youth in the workforce, while the youth unemployment ratio is unemployed youth as a ratio of all youth regardless of whether they are seeking work.

Source: ABS (2016), ABR (2019), .idcommunity (2019), Regional Australia Institute (2014)

Table 2 Participation in cultural activities 2018, Western Australia

	Participated in at least one cultural activity in the last 12 mths	Received income from at least one cultural activity in the last 12 mths
Perth – Inner	39.7%	5.6%
Perth – North East	26.7%	3.0%
Perth – North West	28.3%	1.9%
Perth – South East	28.4%	2.3%
Perth – South West	34.0%	3.7%
Western Australia – Outback	25.8%	1.9%
Western Australia – Wheat Belt	38.2%	1.9%

Source Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019)

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Appendices

Data tables and heat maps are available via the following hyperlinks:

Appendix A: Census data

Appendix A.1 [Creative employment: counts, growth rates, intensities and heat maps](#)

Appendix A.2 [Creative earnings: total earnings, growth rates, intensities and heat maps](#)

Appendix A.3 [Creative incomes: mean incomes, growth rates, intensities and heat maps](#)

Appendix A.4 [Creative employment by sector, heat maps](#)

Appendix A.5 [Creative employment by ANZSIC4 industry category, state comparisons](#)

Appendix A.6 [Creative employment by ANZCO4 occupation category, state comparisons](#)

Appendix B Australian Business Register data

Appendix B.1 Creative businesses: counts, growth rates, intensities and heat maps (forthcoming)