

# OUR CULTURAL COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITY

Culture is the way we express who we are and how we live as individuals, as families and as communities

'CREATIVE NATION'  
COMMONWEALTH  
CULTURAL POLICY, 1994  
(PREV) DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNICATIONS AND  
THE ARTS

“Culture arises from the community.... it encompasses our entire mode of life, our ethics, our institutions, our manners and our routines, not only interpreting our world but shaping it.”



## OVERVIEW

A vibrant, cultural life plays a key role in strengthening citizenship, affirming diversity and providing a safe environment where a broad range of activities can be enjoyed. Council recognises and acknowledges the fundamental role culture plays in defining dynamic, sustainable, healthy communities. Involvement in culture contributes enormously to personal wellbeing and vibrant communities. Cultural engagement and activity, in any form, is how people make sense of their environment, articulate their aspirations and celebrate their uniqueness.

The Bega Valley hosts a comprehensive network of community organisations and individuals actively engaged in all facets of community and cultural life including markets, dance and performing art groups, health, food, wine and local produce, environment, regional development, tourism and special interests. All of these organisations and individuals contribute to the wellbeing and cultural diversity of the Shire's community



## DANCE & THEATRE

There are a number of active amateur dance and theatre companies in the Shire. They present regular annual programs that feature repertory and original plays and musicals, as well as skills development workshops. These companies operate within the constraints of limited cultural infrastructure, which also impacts on the opportunity for touring theatre through the region.

### fLiNG Physical Theatre

One of the key successes in the performing arts is fLiNG Physical Theatre (<http://www.flingphysicaltheatre.com.au>) a youth performance ensemble, which celebrated 10 years in 2011. Under the guidance of a professional artistic director, fLiNG creates and performs original dance based physical theatre that is alive with character and vigour. It is the only funded youth dance company in NSW and its mission is to inspire young

people through original, contemporary physical theatre.

fLiNG's performances have attracted audience numbers as high as 1,200 over its tour period. In addition to fLiNG, there are a number of private dance studios that present classes, workshops and performances.

### Gulaga Dancers

Traditional Aboriginal dance and song is upheld through the Gulaga Dancers from the Wallaga Lake and Narooma area. The Gulaga Dancers perform at a variety of functions through the region.

### Footprint Theatre

Footprint Theatre (<http://www.footprint.org.au>) is a touring company based in Pambula who have been performing theatre at outdoor events and festivals since 2009. In addition to live performances, Footprint

Theatre delivers workshops with regional and interstate tutors for the community.

### Spectrum Theatre Group Inc

The Spectrum Theatre Group Inc (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/spectrumtheatre.html>) was formed in 1972 and has performed successful original scripts, winning the best original work in 2010 in the Canberra Area Theatre (CAT) awards. Spectrum Theatre Group utilise the unique character of our Shires halls through the use of Twyford Hall, Merimbula.

### Theatre Onset

Theatre Onset (<http://theatreonset.com.au>) and its youth branch In Theatre is a Bega based theatre company that utilises Thimble Theatre at Bega High School.

## MARKETS

“A good market is not only an economic engine, it’s also a social gathering place which builds the community.” BENJAMIN FRIED, 2002, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

Farmers’ markets and local arts and crafts markets can revitalise town and public space, regenerate the community spirit of the host community, make rural and urban links, and benefit health through access to fresh and local produce. In research down in Victoria, consumers are spending more than \$13 million per annum at Farmers markets because they are able to access the freshest produce, support their local farmers and purchase market goods at competitive prices.<sup>1</sup>

It is recognised that the success of local markets is having the market community owned and community organised. Across the Bega Valley there are 15 community run regular markets. These range from the large scale market at Candelo held once a month,

to the local producers market in Bega held bi-monthly to seasonal markets such as ones held in Nethercote and Quaama.

Local markets within the Valley provide the opportunity for local artists and local producers to gain exposure and to generate income. Products available from local markets in the Shire include jewellery, leatherwork, feltwork, artwork, gourmet food products, local produce of fruit, vegetable, herbs and organic meat, seed collections, woodwork, and photography. The vast range of products available of is an indication of the diverse skills within our community.

## MUSIC

Of all art forms in the Shire, music has the highest number of participants and audiences. Music in all forms is an integral part of social life for the Bega Valley community. The professional music scene is





supported through performing opportunities at clubs, pubs, cafes, festivals and outdoor venues. This is assisted through the summer tourism markets and access to winter tourism markets in the high country. There are a number of community organisations, such as the Sapphire Coast Music Society and Candelo Arts Society (CAS) that present annual programs of touring musical performances in a range of genres.

In recent years, the CAS has created a dynamic creative hub in the town, nurturing and attracting a range of professional musicians in alternative contemporary musical genres. The professional music scene is also serviced by a number of commercial recording studios and equipment hire companies.

There are many active community music groups, choirs, orchestras, ensembles and bands within the Shire. Some of these groups provide tuition and training opportunities, such as the annual South

Coast Music Camp which gives young musicians an opportunity to learn from and play with professional musicians. Music tuition is strong across the Shire through commercial outlets and private music teachers, as well as active music programs in many of the government and non-government schools.

### The Bega Chamber Orchestra

The Bega Chamber Orchestra (<https://sites.google.com/a/begachamberorchestra.org/bega-chamber-orchestra>) is a major local orchestra which enriches the life of the whole community. Through the orchestra, local music students gain the experience of playing in an orchestra and local professionals have the opportunity to 'keep in practice' and have the stimulation and satisfaction of playing with others.

### The Heartsong Choir

The Heartsong Choir (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/heartsongchoir.html>) is an inspiring community choir that performs outdoors, in churches and schools and at music events in the Bega Valley. The Heartsong Choir has in the past joined with the Bega Chamber Orchestra to present a series of concerts which were extremely popular.

### Sapphire Coast Concert Band and Big Band

Another dynamic initiative within the Bega Valley is the Sapphire Coast Concert Band and Big Band (<http://sapphirecoastconcertband.org.au>) who have been active in the Shire for over 10 years. The band is made up of approximately 45 members from Bega High School, Eden Marine High School, Lumen Christi Catholic College, and a number of adults as mentors. The vision of the band is to bring together the diverse and rich musical talents of local residents and encourage the ongoing development of our young musicians.

## Other Groups

There are also numerous smaller based active groups include the Southern Valley folk club, Yuin folk club, Down South Jazz club, Kameruka Bush Band who perform on a monthly basis, The Belles and Beaux of St Clements, The Nomads, Bega Valley children's choir, the Ukele Akolele Ladies and many more.

Bringing together the musical energy within the Shire are Magpie Music and other music studios, and groups such as Momentum Music and Media who are a not for profit group of young volunteers that support the sharing of information of local gigs, profiling local artists and supporting music within the Shire.

## WRITERS GROUPS

The Bega Valley has produced a considerable number of notable authors in its time. To nurture this art the Writers of the Far South Coast (<http://writersfsc.org.au/writers.html>) are a local group that provide support to local writers through training, seminars, workshops and writing festivals. The group meets on a monthly basis and is a valuable resource for writers in the region.

## COMMUNITY BASED ART AND CRAFT GROUPS

Pioneers in nurturing the arts on the far south coast are the members of the Bega Valley Art and Craft Society (BVACS) (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/bvacs.html>) established in 1946 and the oldest art society in regional NSW. There are several groups which operate under the umbrella of BVACS including The Valley Potters and The Sapphire Water Colourists. The active society holds exhibitions, meetings and workshops by skilled teachers to further develop the skills of the group and any participants.

The Bermagui Country Club and Amateur Art & Craft Group (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/10840.html>) is an art and craft group under the umbrella of the Bermagui Country Club. The large group is made up of several smaller groups practicing different crafts : art, china painting, pottery, leadlight, quilting and wood turning.

The long established art of weaving and spinning is not lost in the Bega Valley, with the Bega Valley Weavers (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/weavers.html>) the Eden Spinners (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/edenspinners.html>) and the Towamba Spinners (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/13639.98.html>) Also in the 'fabric' art is the Towamba Valley Feltmakers (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/felt.html>).

The Bega District Woodcraft Association (<http://thebegavalley.org.au/bdwa.html>) is an active skilled community group involved in scroll sawing, small joinery, woodturning and



pyrography. Members use wood from local sources and are often to be found at markets and shows selling their craft.

## NGO SUPPORTED ART GROUPS

### Art in the Garage

'Art in the Garage' provides a safe and supportive Art Studio for people with a disability living in the Bega Valley Shire. The project was initiated nine years ago and supports 22 artists with disability in their art making. Local artist and musician Matthew Perry has been the driving force behind the successful venture which began in 2000.

The inspiration for developing 'Art in the Garage' came from seeing how when making sets for performances the participants with a disability had 'strong story telling abilities and were very uninhibited about their emotional approach to art making.'

Local artists work as educators in 'one on one' art making sessions giving sensitive support and technical assistance that fosters the unique creativity of individuals.

**"There's a rawness and potency, and it allows those works to really stand outside time and culture, and that is their strength."** – ART IN THE GARAGE – FOUNDER - MATTHEW PERRY

## CULTURAL NETWORKS

### Candelo Arts Society

The Bega Valley community has a huge diversity in artistic talent and activity. It is an ongoing challenge to promote, support and share skills, resources and contacts in a regional area. Many networks within the community have successfully overcome this and through their commitment to the cultural community. The Candelo Arts Society ([http://candelovillagefestival.org/wordpress\\_CAS](http://candelovillagefestival.org/wordpress_CAS)) was established in 1986,

and is a part of Regional Arts NSW. For over twenty years, Candelo Arts Society has promoted art of all facets in the Bega Valley, supporting poets, musicians, theatre acts or performances of any kind.

### Momentum Music & Media

Momentum Music & Media is a not-for-profit group of young volunteers keen on getting good music to everyone in the Bega Valley Shire. Through the network, young people can get access to mentoring by industry professionals to help develop and stage music event, young musicians can get support in exposure and supports to provide safe events that appeal to young people.

### South East Arts

South East Arts (<http://southeastarts.org.au>) is supported by the local councils of the South East region; Bega Valley, Bombala, Cooma-Monaro, Eurobodalla and Snowy River. South East arts core supporter funding is provided by the NSW Government through Arts NSW and project funding through Regional Arts NSW, the Australian Cultural Foundation and Industry and Investment NSW.

In 2011 South East Arts celebrated 10 years as a regional arts organisation supporting arts and cultural development across the south east region of NSW. In this time, South East Arts has secured \$1.1 million in funding to develop arts and cultural activities, presented over 300 performances and exhibitions for over 30,000 audience members and employed over 250 artists, technicians and designers in a diverse range of art forms.

South East Arts makes a significant contribution to the strategic development of arts and culture in the region, establishing partnerships with the Australian Business Arts Foundation, NSW TAFE and Museums & Galleries NSW to deliver a range of projects, including:



**Visual Arts South East:** Visual Arts South East (VASE) initiative has been established to support the business skills development of visual artists in the region.

**Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Action Plan:** The development of the Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Action Plan sets a strategic direction for South East Arts in the region.

**Museum and gallery support:** The Museums and Galleries NSW Standards Program run in the region with 11 participating museums.

**Short theatre:** Past Present developed short theatre scripts through interviews with elderly local residents to explore personal and social narratives that reflect the region's history.

**Arts and environment:** The 2010 arts and environment project, Now You See Us, was recognised with the NSW/ACT VISY Arts

and Environment Award, presented by the Australian Business Arts Foundation.

In the Bega Valley, South East Arts plays a key role in supporting and encouraging our creative sector has a strong presence with the hosting of South East Arts provided through Bega Valley Shire Council.

## References

1. <http://www.urbanecology.org.au/topics/farmersmarkets.html>

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### CULTURAL SETTING REPORT

The Cultural Setting Report is available via the Council website [www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au](http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au). Hard copies are available on request.

### CONTACT

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