

2025-2029

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Djali galangoor (Today good)

We, the Butchulla people, acknowledge the land on which the Brolga Theatre stands, as a place where cultures are shared, stories told, songs sung, and dances performed on Butchulla Country (land, sea and sky).

This land is part of our traditional Country, home to the Butchulla First Nations people, stretching across the Fraser Coast, including Moonaboola (Mary River), a lifeblood of the land that continues to connect us across generations.

For thousands of years, our people have followed songlines that connect the land, river, and sea living pathways that ensure the continuation of our culture. These songlines are etched in the land, sung in the winds, and carried through the river, guiding us through life and on Country (land, sea and sky). The Brolga Theatre serves as a space where the community can gather, much like our people have done for generations. It is here that stories are shared, cultures celebrated, and connections made, creating a vibrant fabric of voices and experiences.

We are honoured that this space continues to be a place where the spirits of our ancestors and the future of our people can meet and make special events happen.

May the Brolga Theatre remain a place of connection, creativity, and cultural exchange, where all people come together to create a deep sense of community that binds us all.

Shawn Wondunna-Foley

Director (Wondunna Family Group) on behalf of, and approved by, the Butchulla Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC)





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Message from the Mayor

For a quarter of a century the Brolga Theatre has been a special place in our community. It is a place of culture, creativity, and connection.

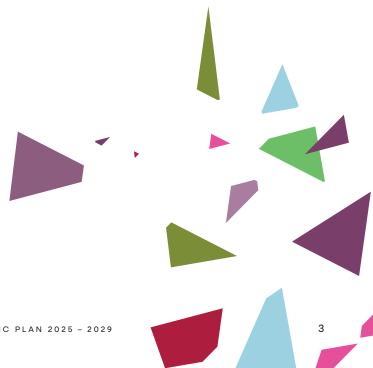
As you can see in this strategy, we want to continue to see the Brolga Theatre inspire and uplift, to showcase visiting artists as well as local performers, to be a place of vibrant events: to be at the heart of our community.

This theatre, high up on the banks of the Mary River came about through the collective contributions of the community of Maryborough. It was recognised that a facility like this would open up a wealth of engaging, meaningful and captivating experiences. The same spirit that founded it is the spirit that will guide it through the coming decades.

We have gained so much through the wise, progressive, and visionary work that brought this theatre into existence we have much to look forward to in how it will continue to serve at the heart of our community.

George Seymour Mayor – Fraser Coast Regional Council

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66 The money had been raised, the site found, the building designed. The choice of a name for the district's long-awaited entertainment and cultural centre was given over to the public who had so strongly got behind the project. A submission by Jocelyn Watts of Maryborough soared to the top of the list and the theatre had its name – Brolga. **9**

Fraser Coast Chronicle

Image: David Pierson Brolga Sculpture, 2000 Creative concept: Kataryne (Kasia) Hartmann Manufacture, donation of gear rim, materials: Walkers Pt

BROLGA THEATRE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2029

History and Context



Opened Friday 14 July 2000 as the Brolga Riverside Theatre and Convention Centre

Ownership and Management Originally owned by the Maryborough City Council and managed by the Brolga Theatre Board Inc. In 2013, management transitioned to the Cultural Services team of the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

Community Support and Industry Partnerships

The Brolga is bolstered by the support of over 80 volunteers, who contribute an average of 5,000 hours annually. Additionally, the *Friends of the Brolga Theatre* play a vital role, fundraising and supporting the theatre's operations and services. The theatre is a member of PAC Australia and Stage Queensland.

Original Vision

The idea for a modern entertainment venue emerged in 1989, driven by the challenges of poor acoustics at City Hall, which led performers to bypass Maryborough. The community launched a successful fundraising campaign, raising \$1 million, which, combined with contributions from local, state, and federal governments, helped fund the \$11 million project to construct the theatre.

Recent Challenges and Adaptations

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic led to the theatre's shutdown for five months, followed by implementation of strict regulations and the need to pivot to new technologies such as virtual conferencing and livestreaming. *Brolga Live*@ was introduced as an outdoor concert series providing audience outreach within our communities. Since reopening, the theatre has seen a resurgence in performance demand, with annual attendance now averaging 55% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Record-Breaking 2024

2024 marked the highest attendance and usage in the theatre's 25-year history, with 41,000 patrons attending 132 performances, up from 33,000 patrons attending 99 performances in 2023. This increased demand reinforces the critical role that the theatre plays to support the touring performance circuit. High attendance reflects the continued desire for quality entertainment presented locally to our regional audience. Highlights of the year included Queensland Ballet, Queensland Opera and Shake & Stir performances presented by the Brolga; and popular touring performances by Jimeoin, Ian Moss and Cirque Africa.

Local talent shone at the Maryborough Eisteddfod, the Queensland Band Championships and local productions presented by our 7 dance school companies and *Macabre* and *Accent* Theatre Companies.

The Brolga enabled partnerships and opportunities such as Macabre Theatre Company as Artist in Residence; Maryborough Regional Arts Council and Queensland Conservatorium classical concert series that showcased Queensland's finest young musicians; and hosting Maryborough State High School Creative Industry students to develop their technical theatre skills and deepen understanding of industry career options.

The Brolga also hosted 236 corporate events, attracting an additional 31,149 attendees and affirming its position as a community hub.

Currently, our audience comprises 41% from Maryborough, 39% from Hervey Bay, 3% from other areas of the Fraser Coast and 17% from outside the region.

Looking Ahead

The Brolga Theatre has successfully achieved and continues to uphold its original vision of **enriching** *the lives of our community*. However, as community needs and industry dynamics evolve, it is necessary to refocus our objectives and service delivery. The Brolga is transitioning from a multi-functional venue to a more focussed theatre operation.

As a regional theatre, our role is expanding beyond being a *home* for performing arts and a *host* for touring performances. We are embracing the expanded roles of *leader and enabler* of community arts development, fostering innovation and providing essential support for emerging ideas.

This ambition increases public value by delivering innovative experiences and opportunities, ensuring they are accessible to our diverse audiences.



Designed by Bligh Voller Nield, in association with Marian Graham Architects, to reflect and acknowledge the Wilson Hart Sawmill that previously operated on the site until 1986.

Methodology and Consultation

Council is committed to *building better communities together*. This means continuously improving our region to promote community wellbeing and prosperity, while protecting the unique natural environment and lifestyle we enjoy.

Strategic Alignment

This strategic plan complements Council's Corporate and Operational Plans and aligns with the *Fraser Coast Arts & Culture Strategy* 2022-2026. It will guide our decision-making, delivery of services, programming, and investment over the next five years, with a commitment to enriching the lives of our community.

Methodology

The process used to create this strategic plan in 2024/25 followed a clear and structured approach:

Stage 1

Background research, operational review, benchmarking and research

Stage 2

Internal and external stakeholder engagement

Stage 3

Analysis and strategy development

Stage 4

Community survey

Stage 5

Feedback review and strategy refinement

Stage 6

Council endorsement

Stage 7

Implementation, including annual action plans, performance monitoring and reporting

Consultation

The development of this plan was collaborative and inclusive, incorporating input from both internal and external stakeholders, as well as audiences and the broader community. The consultation process included:

- Engagement with all levels of Council, including Councillors, Executive Leadership team, staff and volunteers.
- Focus groups and workshops with more than 80 key stakeholders.
- A community survey, gathering feedback from arts-engaged residents, current ticket buyers, subscribers, and Friends of the Brolga.

This research-driven approach ensured a wellrounded and thoughtful plan, positioning the Brolga Theatre for growth and success by 2029.

Strategic framework

This strategic framework will serve as the foundation for guiding our work over the next five years, anchoring the expectations and desired outcomes for the Brolga Theatre. It articulates our core purpose — to deliver exceptional and engaging experiences to a diverse regional audience.

Our vision is clear: We are at the heart of performing arts on the Fraser Coast, enriching the lives of our community.

This framework not only strives to inspire our team but also provides clear direction for our decision-making and service delivery. It sets a course for the next five years, ensuring that our actions align with our overarching vision and objectives.

Our Vision

We are the heart of performing arts for the Fraser Coast, enriching the lives of our community.

OUR FOCUS AREAS

The following four areas of focus describe our aspirations for the Brolga Theatre and indicate what Council will focus on to bring our vision to life. The areas outline our objectives, key priorities and desired outcomes.

We offer an exceptional regional Theatre facility.

Our services enable community arts development.

Our Program is diverse and inspiring, enriching the cultural life of the community.

We are at the heart of the community – people feel welcome here.



5^{yr objective}

To focus our service delivery and manage and maintain our assets to make the best use of the Theatre and its setting.

66 We show people what excellence looks like. ??

Joyce Chorny Executive Manager Community and Culture Fraser Coast Regional Council THE BROLGA is an exceptional theatre facility, offering one of the best stages and technical resources in regional Queensland.

The facility has capacity to stage a wide range of performances from spectacle on the main proscenium stage, to intimate theatre in the Federation Room, cabaret in the Foyer and atmospheric outdoor productions.

Its award-winning design, by architects Bligh Voller Nield, and its spectacular placement high on the banks of the Mary River offer a standout destination experience in an exceptional environment.

The original vision for the Brolga was to become an expanded performing arts precinct – including theatre, outdoor public art, and a riverside amphitheatre.

By progressing this vision, the facility will remain the focal point for professional presentation of performing arts and events within the Fraser Coast region.

As the Brolga turns 25, we will prioritise our efforts first and foremost to drive high utilisation of our Theatre as well as our technical and operational expertise. We will focus our operations to ensure that the Brolga is valued, maintained, and activated.



Image: David Pierson

Our program is diverse and inspiring, enriching the cultural life of our community

Focus Area

2

5^{yr objective}

To positively impact the life of our residents by producing and presenting an inspiring program which considers our diverse audience needs and shares our community stories.

66 The Brolga offers a wide range of capacity to present performances from spectacle to intimate theatre and more. 99

Matthew King Company Director Macabre Theatre Company THE BROLGA THEATRE currently serves a dedicated audience with an average of over 34,000 ticket holders, attending more than 100 performances per year.

Our audience values the diversity and quality of the performances offered locally, often at the same level of production as in major centres. Our program brings national and international stars to the Fraser Coast and allows our regional talent to perform.

The Brolga Theatre serves diverse city and rural townships and their communities across a large geographic region. Our audience and volunteers travel up to 45 minutes to the Theatre. Understanding our audience and their interests is key to maintaining loyal, engaged patrons.

We will continue to review, adapt and develop our programming to respond to the diverse artistic needs of our community – maintaining our core audience and growing new audiences to better cater for the whole of our region.

By delivering inspiring experiences, both onstage and across all audience touchpoints, we enrich the cultural life of our community.

Our presence is a big part of what makes the Fraser Coast a great place to live and share with our visitors.



Image: David Pierson

We are at the heart of the community – people feel welcome here

Real Alfred States 8 March 1: 5 March Manufact 1: Friday 1 August 1: 5 Jack Accounts

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5^{yr objective}

To be a place of community belonging by providing welcoming and inclusive services supported by our community partners.

It will always be the people in the building who bring the place to life and welcome our patrons.

Rollo Nicholson Chair, original Maryborough and District Entertainment and Cultural Association THE BROLGA THEATRE was born through the collective vision and contributions of the community. More than 25 years ago, it was recognised that this facility would open up a wealth of engaging, meaningful and captivating experiences.

The Brolga has become a place of social interaction; not only enhancing creativity, but also fostering a sense of belonging and contributing to the wellbeing, inclusiveness and strength of our community. Our Theatre is a place of community pride; a place for gathering and celebration; a place where memories are made, and stories are shared. We aspire to be more inclusive and accessible – to truly be a place where people feel they belong.

We are focused on customer centricity. Overwhelmingly we have heard that our team of volunteers and staff offer exceptional service and extend a feeling of 'family'. Our core Council TRAITS values of *trust, respect, initiative, teamwork and service* drive the way we work. An engaged, motivated team ultimately translates to a better experience for everyone, especially our patrons.

We are supported by our Friends — *The Friends* of the Brolga have played a valued role supporting the ongoing success of the Theatre. We will foster and nurture this, and other key community relationships and partnerships. In doing this we aim to weave ourselves deeper into the fabric of our community and become an essential part of the lives of our residents.

That same community spirit that founded the Brolga is the community spirit that will guide us through the next five years as we continue to serve at the heart of our community.

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Our services enable community arts development



Image: David Pierson

5^{yr objective}

To maximise our impact by demonstrating leadership and enabling community arts development.

66 Performance Magic: that feeling of pride and excitement on children's faces as they first step on to that big stage — we share it too as we cheer them on from side of stage. ??

Nick Harry President, Maryborough Eisteddfod THE BROLGA THEATRE provides a collaborative, enabling environment for our community of artists, creatives, producers and industry professionals to collaborate, develop and succeed.

We aim to maximise our impact by delivering initiatives that allow people to connect and grow through creativity. We will demonstrate leadership in the Fraser Coast performing arts community by partnering with community and industry stakeholders to develop talent and build capability.

The Theatre enjoys collaborative partnerships with state arts entities such as Queensland Ballet, Opera Queensland, Queensland Conservatorium and Shake and Stir Theatre Company to present educational programming for our audience and community. We will further leverage industry networks and arts funding opportunities to increase our offering of support, platforms and spaces to practice and learn, and to create and perform artistic work.

We have an invested interest in fostering a life-long love for the performing arts and celebrating our regional talent and their professional achievements.

Every year more than 5,000 young residents attend the Brolga Theatre and a further 5,000 benefit from the opportunity to step onto the Brolga stage, through participation in the Maryborough Eisteddfod or performances by regional schools, dance schools and theatre organisations.

The Brolga has played a part in nurturing creative talent and professional achievement through initiatives such as community musicals, traineeships and hosting school-based training for attainment of Certificate II in Creative Industries. By expanding opportunities for young people's involvement at the Theatre, we aim to support personal and career pathways for the development of our young talent and support their progression beyond their time as participants.

Strategic Objectives

Focus Area 1

To focus our service delivery and manage and maintain our assets to make the best use of the Theatre and its setting.

Obj	ectives	Key Deliverables	Measures for Success
1.1	Focus on theatre services.	 Prioritise service delivery and use of the facility as a theatre. 	 Number of performances and public programs. High level of customer satisfaction. Maintained or increased range of high-profile artists touring to the region.
1.2	Provide a vibrant, performing arts precinct including optimised use of riverside setting.	 Complete a preliminary design and cost estimate for development of outdoor space including stage and riverside amphitheater Activate alternative and outdoor spaces for program presentation. Facilitate alternative configuration and use of spaces to support a diverse range of performance styles: e.g. Black box theatre, cabaret 	 Number of out-door performances and public programs held outdoors. Range of alternative uses of theatre spaces.
1.3	Enhance our spaces to provide a destination theatre experience in an exceptional environment.	 Complete auditorium and foyer renewal works. Instate an in-house restaurant and catering partner. 	 Works completed. Improved customer experience.
1.4	Effectively maintain and enhance our theatre assets.	 Establish the theatre as a key destination for touring productions. Profile the theatre to promoters and industry partners. 	 Strong industry relationships and partnerships. Number of performances
1.5	Effectively maintain and enhance our theatre assets.	 Prioritise ongoing inspection and maintenance program to maintain and develop the theatre facility and its assets. Maintain and invest in stage technology and theatre innovation that meets evolving industry expectations. 	 Facility and assets retain value and relevance. Reactive maintenance costs are reduced. High level of industry hirer satisfaction. High standard of technical services.
1.6	Manage our facility in a way that reduces our environmental footprint.	 Implement initiatives that further reduce reliance on single-use materials. Encourage our hirers to stage sustainable productions and events. Investigate energy options. Replace Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning system (HVAC) and Building Management system. 	 Efficient and effective use of resources. Reduction in waste to landfill. Increased efficiency and reliability of building management system.

Positively impact the life of our residents by producing and presenting an inspiring program which considers our diverse audience needs and shares our community stories.

Ob	jectives	Key Deliverables	Measures for Success
2.1	Understand and grow our audience.	 Implement annual audience engagement surveys to better understand expectations and inform program decisions. 	 Core audience maintained. Increase in new and diverse audiences.
2.2	Present an improved, creative and engaging program that considers diverse community expectations.	• Apply a curatorial framework to our programming to balance touring hire performances with performances that are purchased or produced specifically for our audience.	 Number of in-house productions presented. High audience satisfaction. Increased ticket sales.
2.3	Balance commercial with community- focused activities.	• Develop an allocation plan for programmed space to support community use.	 Ratio of commercial and community focussed activities.
2.4	Deliver accessible, affordable cultural experiences.	 Review production and programming plan to ensure offering provides for diverse audience needs -considering price points, styles of production and themes. 	 Improved accessibility. Growth in diversity of audience.
2.5	Increase outreach capabilities of our theatre services and grow audience reach.	 Establish key partnerships to: Utilise mobile technical services and assets to deliver out-reach programming to small communities. Co-produceand/or present program highlights for regional festivals. Establish partnerships to co-present performances in alternative spaces in Hervey Bay and small communities. Introduce transport solutions for non-Maryborough audience. 	 Services extended further within the regional community. Number of community/Brolga presenter partnerships. Growth in regional audience share.
2.6	Offer pre-show experiences.	 Partner with restaurant/catering supplier to package pre-show offering. 	 Increase visitor satisfaction. Number of pre-show bookings. Catering meets needs of theatre and patrons.
2.7	Strengthen alignment with regional tourism and economic objectives.	 Work with stakeholders to profile the Brolga Theatre as a key component of regional tourism, lifestyle and investment marketing. 	 Acknowledged as key regional asset that strengthens the region's economic and tourism offering.

Be a place of community belonging by providing welcoming and inclusive services supported by our community partners.

Ob	jectives	Key Deliverables	Measures for Success
3.1	Value Butchulla and other Indigenous cultures.	 Support programming and development of new creative work by Butchulla and Indigenous artists and creatives. Promote visibility through opportunities and partnerships with Butchulla and Indigenous artists. showcasing stories and culture. 	 Increased visibility of Butchulla and other Indigenous artists and arts initiatives.
3.2	Provide welcoming, inclusive customer- centric service.	 Develop a customer experience plan that acknowledges key touchpoints and defines opportunities to improve upon our service. 	• High levels of customer satisfaction.
3.3	Embed TRAITS values-based culture to enable our team to work to the peak of their ability.	 Engage our team in the action planning and support for shared objectives. Deliver improved volunteer training, engagement and recognition programs. Implement an annual volunteer engagement survey. 	 Increased employee and volunteer engagement. High levels of attraction and retention.
3.4	Undertake an accessibility review of our facility and services.	 Conduct accessibility review and develop an action plan, informed by customers with lived experience and their carers or support services. 	 Improved accessibility for our customers.
3.5	Foster and nurture strong, productive partnerships with community stakeholders.	 Engage community partners and stakeholders in the action planning and support for shared objectives. Identify new outcome-focused partnership opportunities. 	 Number of focussed partnership activities and quality of shared outcomes for, with and by the community.
3.6	Extend communication and marketing activities to grow digital engagement.	 Increase brand awareness and extend revised branding that communicates the vision and focus of this plan. Develop a digital marketing plan that addresses the digital footprint of the Brolga and identifies opportunities to grow awareness and engagement. Develop and share engaging content including behind the scenes stories and profiles of local and touring artists. 	 Increased awareness of the theatre, its purpose and services. Increased digital engagement. High levels of loyal brand advocates.
3.7	Provide affordable options for community celebrations and events.	• Extend Brolga services to provide affordable and alternative hire space for community events including City Hall and Pialba Hall.	 Increased hire options. Number of community events.

Maximise our impact by demonstrating leadership and enabling community arts development.

Objectives		Key Deliverables	Measures for Success
4.1	Champion the professional and personal growth of our employees and volunteers.	 Support mentorships within Stage Queensland and Australian Performing Arts Centre networks. Conduct training needs analysis to identify skills gap and develop individual training and development plans. 	 Increased skills and leadership capability within the team. Increased attraction and retention of skilled, engaged team members.
4.2	Partner with community and industry stakeholders to provide opportunities for our community to create and perform.	 Establish a residency program for performing artists and theatre companies at the Brolga Theatre. Present a biennial community production supported by professional Director and/or technical professionals. 	 Number and outcomes of residencies. Number of community participants and their personal experience and development outcomes.
4.3	Partner with community and industry stakeholders to increase participatory and education program.	 Develop program initiatives that offer professional and community performing arts appreciation and development. 	 Number of educational programs. Number of participants and their learning outcomes.
4.4	Maximise opportunities presented by national and state industry network and arts funding bodies.	 Research and share relevant opportunities with our community. Profile our regional talent and their pathways to success. 	 Increased awareness of opportunities and pathways.
4.5	Cultivate connections with schools and education providers to encourage youth participation in performing arts and support career pathways.	 Strengthen education network to align programming and services. Facilitate opportunities for student placements, traineeships and work experience. Host training for certificate qualifications. 	 Increased participation by young people. Increased training and education pathways.
4.6	Better provide for the growing needs of Hervey Bay performing arts community.	 Investigate alternative options for performance and rehearsal space in Hervey Bay. 	 Increased performing arts activity in alternative spaces.



Image: David Pierson

Commitment and Reporting

Through the implementation of this Strategic Plan, Council is committed to further establishing the Brolga Theatre as the heart of performing arts for the Fraser Coast, enriching the lives of our community.

As part of our ongoing commitment, we will:

- develop an annual action plan that aligns with broader corporate priorities, resourcing and budget allocation;
- monitor and review progress; and
- · report annually on outcomes.

This will include ongoing engagement with the community, staff and key stakeholders.

We acknowledge that some events or instances outside our control may impact Council's ability to fully implement some objectives. In these instances, Council will provide updated information to the community to reflect changes in priorities and/or external factors.

While it is widely understood that some measures of success for arts and cultural activities are quantifiable, many aspects are measured in qualitative data. Qualitative data provides an in-depth understanding of motivations, engagement and levels of satisfaction. To ensure the success of this Strategic Plan, a balanced set of measures will be put in place to accompany planning and reporting.



66 Here on the Fraser Coast, we don't need to travel to the cities or overseas. We have access to world class quality artists and performances right here. **99**

Gillian French, President, Maryborough Regional Arts Council.

Brolga audience member meeting former Artistic Director of Queensland Ballet, Li Cunxin, at a performance of Giselle.





Building Better Communities Together

brolga.ourfrasercoast.com.au

