

Public Art Masterplan 2020 – 2030

Alice Springs Town Council



Atyunpe by Dan Murphy, 2015



Yeperenye Moth Shade Structure by Pip McManus

Acknowledgement of Country and Traditional Owners

This Public Art Masterplan respectfully acknowledges the past and present traditional owners and custodians of Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

This plan carries a commitment of working together with the Central Arrernte people.



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Introduction



Ross Park Oval Shed by Melanie Gunner, 2018

At the heart of the continent, Alice Springs (Mparntwe) occupies a central place in Australia's cultural landscape. Recognised around the world for its unique character, Alice Springs draws its creative inspiration equally from its desert setting and vibrant community.

As a world leader in innovation, research and creative endeavours Alice Springs continues to surprise and delight audiences with its extensive collection of public art.

Over the next ten years, Alice Springs Town Council will commission new work for public places, buildings and infrastructure around the town with the aim of encouraging people to visit, and activating spaces.

These works will promote opportunities for public discourse, reflect the aspirations of community members, and showcase the talents of local and interstate artists.

Council's focus will be on transforming the Todd River frontage and connecting it with CBD through a Public Art Trail that links art sites and cultural and heritage venues throughout the town. Work on this has already begun with a public art map

available. Our vision is to also bring more art into the 80 public parks managed by Council and to integrate it into future infrastructure developments and town amenities.

Alice Springs Town Council already has an extensive public art collection. The works reflect the astonishing richness of the town's landscape, people and stories. Mostly designed and created by local artists, these artworks enliven the town, transforming public spaces across Alice Springs into sites of reflection, discussion and celebration.

Alice Springs Town Council has developed this 10-year Public Art Masterplan after extensive consultations with residents and the creative and cultural sector.

This Public Art Masterplan defines the vision, principles and a framework to guide decision-making on future public art. It builds on existing public art practices and policies and will help the Council to *support the development of a relevant, diverse and exciting collection of public art in Alice Springs that is recognised as being of a high standard within Australia and abroad*¹.

¹ Alice Springs Town Council, Public Art Policy

Setting

What is Public Art

Public art is art for everybody and can be:

- Any kind of media or a performance.
- Temporary or permanent.
- Inside or outside.
- 3 dimensional or 2 dimensional.

Public art should change the way audiences perceive their environment by:

- Surprising or beguiling.
- Engaging one or more of the senses.
- Stimulating discussion.
- Heightening awareness.
- Reflecting community aspirations and values.
- Transforming spaces.

Public art can be integrated as part of an environment or structure such as buildings, paving, street furniture, handrails, fencing, lighting or other features.

The social and economic benefits of public art are significant and art in public spaces can engage communities and draw domestic and international visitors to a place.

Vision

Alice Springs Town Council will continue to support the creation of outstanding public art that:

- Celebrates Alice Springs' identity and creativity.
- Inspires audiences.
- Transforms spaces.
- Tells local stories.
- Showcases local talent.
- Inspires civic pride.

Principles

These principles reflect community priorities for public art and will guide the commissioning of new works.

- Respect: celebrate Aboriginal culture and identity, and acknowledge the Arrernte people as the traditional owners of Alice Springs.
- Reflect: bring public art into everyday life and reflect local diversity, stories and identity.
- Connect: commission public art that is site-specific and enhances the local environment.
- Be excellent: support creative excellence, best practice and innovation.
- Be ambitious: commission public art that is distinctive and bold.
- Be environmentally conscious: raise awareness of the potential environmental impacts of public art.
- Inclusive: engage with people of all ages and cultures.

Supporting Principles

- Promote renewal: revitalise and revive public spaces through the sensitive and strategic deployment of public art, including temporary and event-based art forms.
- Support professional development: support creative and professional development pathways for local artists and arts groups.
- Pursue best practice: follow nationally set best practice guidelines.
- Build partnerships: identify and secure partnerships with people, organisations and businesses that contribute to dynamic, relevant public art in Alice Springs.
- Foster community cohesion: incorporate the views of the Alice Springs community into public art commissions and support the development of community concepts.

Curatorial Themes

The Masterplan's curatorial themes are drawn from community meetings, interviews and survey responses. They interpret the priorities and distinctive character of Alice Springs' people, stories and landscape.

Continuity & Change: the People of Alice Springs

The diversity and richness of community life in Alice Springs is an important and ongoing story to tell. The population of Alice Springs is made up of an abundance of different cultural groups and perspectives, ranging from life-long residents to recent arrivals. 2016 census figures show that nearly a quarter of Alice Springs' population are migrants.

Though its public art program Alice Springs Town Council will explore the contribution people make to the character and development of the town, both past and future. The public art program will celebrate the leaders who have carved out new paths or ways of thinking and, collectively, forged the town's unique identity.

Arrernte people are the traditional owners of Alice Springs and the town is a focal point for an extraordinary wealth of Aboriginal knowledge, history and creativity. Of the many things that characterise Alice Springs, its location on Arrernte land is one of the most distinctive. When designing public art projects, the views of traditional owners will be canvassed to ensure projects are responsive and sensitive to the complex, shared history of the town.

- *There is a significant opportunity for commissioning works that are made by, with and about Arrernte people. Strong investment in the commissioning of ambitious public work by local Arrernte artists will contribute to a local sense of pride and create interest locally, nationally and internationally.*
- *Updating signage for sacred and significant sites around the town will contribute to the storytelling, civic pride, and space transformation of all public art projects.*

Our Voice: Local Stories

Alice Springs is a complex, dynamic town – isolated yet connected, a modern and forward-looking community with a strong sense of belonging and connection to place. Local stories are both a source of pride for Alice Springs and rich material for artists to work with.

Alice Springs and its surrounds have experienced dramatic changes since the town was established in 1872. The stories of early exploration, settlement, Afghan cameleers and the pastoral industry have shaped people's lives, families and communities, becoming central the town's personality.

While Alice Springs is famous for its past, the story of the town is still unfolding and continues to change and develop as new people arrive, opportunities arise and the town grows.

- *Alice Springs is famous for Aboriginal art, drawing visitors from around the world. The contemporary Aboriginal art movement was born in Alice Springs and surrounding communities and the remarkable story of how this movement developed and continues to grow is an important part of the town's history.*
- *Transport and aviation have had a major impact on the town including the Afghan Cameleers, the railway and the introduction of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.*



1888 Benches by Elliot Rich

A Thriving Landscape

The unmistakable desert setting of Alice Springs is fundamental to the character and identity of the town. The experience of nature in Alice Springs is marked by its intensity; the climate dominates, and people have a passionate connection and response to the exceptional, epic landscapes in and around town.

To thrive in the continent's centre requires innovative approaches, energy and resilience. Increasingly recognised as a leading centre of arid lands and environmental research, Alice Springs is rich with information and knowledge of landscapes, ranging from Aboriginal people's knowledge of country through to the study of ecosystems and their flora and fauna.

- *Local plants and wildlife: Alice Springs is home to many unique species.*
- *Climate change: the shifting climate is impacting on Alice Springs' unique landscape and community, and triggers innovative responses to this challenge, including the increasing use of solar power and the future of Alice Springs as a solar city.*
- *Living water: water continues to shape Alice Springs and its people.*

Priority Locations for New Work

Recent years has seen significant investment in the rejuvenation of Alice Springs to improve liveability and increase its appeal for residents and visitors. Public art is an important part of this urban renewal and ties in with the Northern Territory Government's Revitalising Alice initiative.

The further development of an art and culture trail, linking significant artworks, venues and sites across the town was identified as a priority by the community. The trail will link with the Alice Springs Heritage trail.

Participants in the consultations for this plan identified the following locations as community priorities for the location of new public art in the future.

- Alice Springs' central business district, primarily Todd Mall and surrounding streets.
- Alice Springs Town Council lawns.
- Todd River corridor to enhance links and connectivity between the Todd River, the CBD and the train station.
- Suburban locations and public spaces, including parks and pathways.
- New Alice Springs Town Council capital works locations.

Visibility and accessibility by the community are important considerations and will determine how locations are prioritised.



Recyclator (at RWMF) by J9 Stanton



Types of Public Art

The Alice Springs community has a strong preference for public art that is permanent and site-specific. Free standing sculptures, integrated design² and street art (murals in particular) were nominated as priorities for public art commissions. Central Australia's climate poses particular challenges and the intense heat, sunlight and exposure to the elements can seriously impact the lifespan and condition of public art in Alice Springs and will need to be considered during the design, fabrication, installation and ongoing maintenance of public artworks.

The use of digital technologies, either as public art, or, more commonly, to add depth and richness to audience experience of public artworks was also highlighted. With Alice Springs' rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and the variety of international visitors, there is a significant opportunity for integration of technology and digital elements (in both new and existing public art) to increase accessibility in multiple languages (including Arrernte) and the ability to tell more complex stories. This could take the form of accompanying mobile apps, walking tours, podcasts, interactive graphics and more.

2 Public art that is built into infrastructure such as footpaths, bus stops, etc.

Community Concepts



Patchwork Tiles (at ASALC) by Elliot Rich

The following table summarises community feedback about potential public art pieces and their location.

Medium	Possible Locations	Subject / Theme
Murals	Various – CBD focus with outreach to suburban/community locations where appropriate. Alice Springs Town Council Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Arrernte/Aboriginal stories. Community diversity and identity.
Light installation	Various: locations on the edge of Alice Springs including parts of ranges; environmental theme to use Todd River corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoral industry Water and environmental themes.
Digital / interactive	CBD and/or Araluen – potentially a series of linked sites for audiences to ‘travel’ along. Create connections to locations outside of Alice Springs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social history and genesis of Aboriginal art movement in Central Australia.
Audio tour and location markers	Various locations around the CBD and Todd River corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrernte language, place names and socio-cultural stories, including oral histories.
Functional / sculpture	Todd River corridor with potential links to CBD and/or other sites such as Telegraph Station, Olive Pink and The Gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental and/or landscape theme, exploring life in the desert.
Sculpture	CBD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directional pointer for origins of cultural groups in Alice Springs.
Temporary exhibitions	Various – pop up venues and temporary exhibition spaces. Outdoor sculpture festival.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various
Footpaths	Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water and environmental themes.

Strategies

This Public Art Masterplan proposes the following strategies in the planning and commissioning of public art for Alice Springs. These strategies reflect the current funding and policy context for public art within Alice Springs Town Council.

Policy Activation and Ambition

- Implement Alice Springs Town Council's existing Public Art Policy for capital works projects.
- Advocate for an increase to the public art budget to better meet the reality of commissioning distinctive public art and to realise the benefits generated by public art for community wellbeing, liveability, and tourism.
- Identify appropriate projects and ensure quality, consistent advertising, selection and commissioning processes are in place and followed.
- Appoint experienced project managers (between artist and building services) wherever possible.
- Consider the environmental impacts of all public art, as per Council's Climate Action Plan, Strategic Plan, Municipal Plan and any other action plans.

Increased Knowledge

- Improve the knowledge of Alice Springs Town Council personnel responsible for public art and the 'per cent for public art' scheme on public art practices and working with artists.

- Engage experienced public artist/s to present to a workshop of relevant staff on the artistic and practical considerations when creating public art. Consider creating documentation or repeating these workshops as needed to address staff turnover.

Consolidation

- Focus on a smaller number of high-quality projects. Pool funding over more than one year before commissioning artworks.
- Consider implementing a two-year timeline, whereby a major new commission occurs every two years, allowing for consultation design and installation.
- Build maintenance and decommissioning timelines and costs into all future planned projects.

Partnerships

- Establish a checklist and calendar of funding opportunities in order to identify new partnerships that extend Alice Springs Town Council's funding.
- Partnerships should be both Northern Territory and national.
- Identify and capitalise on opportunities for local agencies and businesses to support (directly or via in-kind contributions) public art projects.



Caterpillar Dreaming by Pat Perrule Ansell

Upskilling and Supporting Artists

Many of the local artists approached expressed interest in designing and creating public art. However, one of the recurring themes of the feedback was the need for training and support to help artists gain the practical and technical skills required to produce long lasting and iconic public art pieces. Some of the suggestions were:

- To team up local artists with artists experienced in making public art.
- Delivering workshops including:
 - The stages from concept to construction.
 - Preparing a concept proposal.
 - Your rights and responsibilities as an artist.
 - Costing public art projects.
 - Presentations from specialists working in a variety of media (including casting and construction, digital media etc).

Professional Pathways

National standards are currently being developed by the National Association for the Visual Arts. These standards will apply to all stages of the commissioning, creation and maintenance of public artwork.

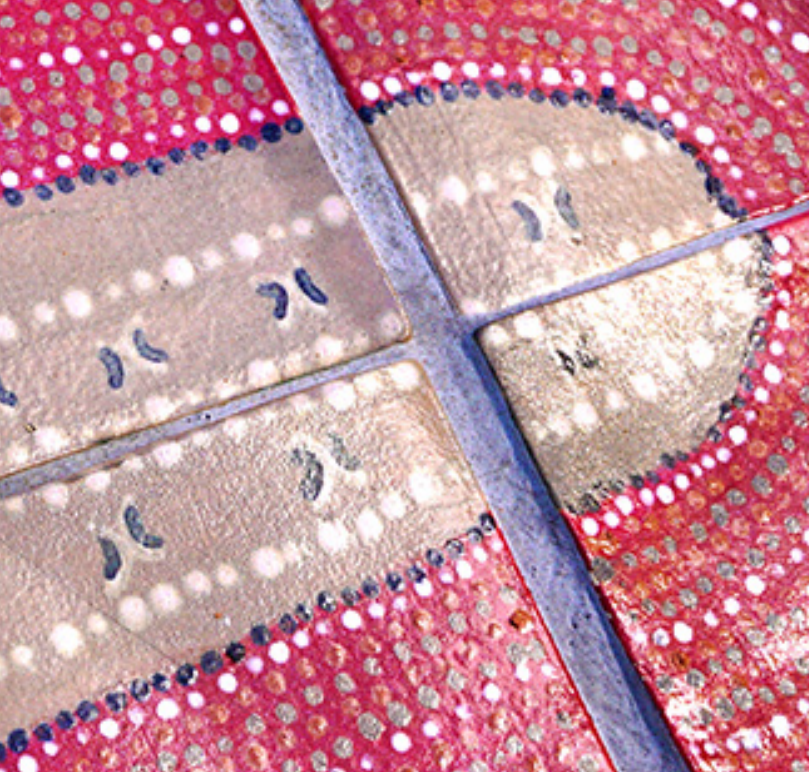
Some of the key early recommendations coming out of these consultations can be adopted by Alice Springs Town Council.

These include:

- Investing time and resources in getting project briefs right. Understanding the project requirements at an early stage is essential and will save time later in the process.
- Tailor contracts to ensure all areas are adequately addressed.
- Appoint experienced project managers to oversee fabrication and completion of commissioned works.

Better pathways for new and emerging artists to access public art opportunities should also be considered. While there is a small base of artists working in Alice Springs with experience producing public art, there are still many independent artists and arts groups who are interested in creating public art but lack the skills to deliver a project from concept to fabrication without some support and training.

Making public art is a highly specialised field requiring a broad range of design, technical and budgeting skills. Partnerships with other arts organisations should be developed to ensure artists and arts groups can access the training and mentoring support they require.



Community Collaborations

There are many community agencies in Alice Springs that Alice Springs Town Council can collaborate with to deliver public art projects and create stories that inform these projects. These agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Northern Territory Government
- Commonwealth Government
- Watch this Space
- Batchelor Institute for Tertiary Education
- Red Hot Arts
- Tangentyere Council
- Akeyulerre Inc
- Desart
- Alice Springs Art Foundation
- Central Australian Art Society
- Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia
- Local independent artists
- Itja Ntjarra / Many Hands Art Centre
- Bindi Mwerre Anthurre Artists, Bindi Enterprises
- Charles Darwin University
- Tourism Central Australia
- Tourism NT
- Central Craft
- Museum of Central Australia
- Incite Arts

Alice Springs Town Council should also continue to maintain and grow its list of stakeholders when considering public art projects.

Support and Resources

Alice Springs Town Council annually allocates capital and operational budgets for the management and development of public art projects. Council uses a 'Percent for Art' scheme – a set provision for art infrastructure based on a percentage of the total capital works budget for major capital works.

Council's Public Art Advisory Committee provides advice to Council on how best to invest the budget allocation. Council will also work actively to identify funding from grants.

Context

Associated Policies & Plans

This Public Art Masterplan has been guided by existing Alice Springs Town Council policies and plans:

- Arts & Cultural Policy and Plan 2017 – 2021.
- Public Art Policy.
- Public Art Commissioning Process Operations Manual.
- Gifts Policy: Procedures for Consideration of a Possible Gift or Donation of a Work of Art, Craft; or Item of Heritage Significance to the Council.
- Climate Action Plan 2018 – 2021.

“A great place to live that attracts and retains residents because of our unmatched leisure and healthy living opportunities and embracing our unique landscape and culture.” **Objective 2: Alice Springs Town Council’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

A public art masterplan was identified as a priority in the Arts and Cultural Plan and re-stated as a progress indicator for Objective 2 (A great place to live) in Alice Springs Town Council’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The following indicators will be used to measure progress:

- Development and implementation of a Public Art Master Plan.
- Development and implementation of a Public Art Interpretation Plan.
- Strengthen existing strategic relationships across arts and culture, education, health, tourism, community and local enterprise.
- Place-making strategies are to be implemented in 20 per cent of Council controlled open spaces by the end of 2018/19, 30 per cent by the end of 2019/20 and 40 per cent by the end of 2020/21.³

The development and implementation of a Public Art Interpretation Plan is already underway

3 Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalises on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being.

with 16 interpretive signs for existing public art in development, as well as digital and printed versions of the Alice Springs Public Art Map.

The Public Art Policy was adopted by Alice Springs Town Council in 2019, setting guidelines for the commissioning and maintenance of public art. This document’s purpose is:

- Achieve a standard of professional excellence in the planning and execution of all public art projects.
- Support the development of a relevant, diverse and exciting collection of public art in Alice Springs that is recognised as being of a high standard within Australia and abroad.
- Ensure sustainable and adequate funding is allocated towards Council public art projects within the Alice Springs municipality.
- Position Alice Springs as an arts and cultural hub, with vibrant and contemporary public art, through a planned and decisive public art program that reflects the unique characteristics of Alice Springs.

The Public Art Policy sets an important baseline for Elected Members, and the work of Council staff, the Public Art Advisory Committee and other stakeholders, including the following commitments to:

- Identify sources of funding for the creation of new works of public art.
- Identify opportunities for including public art and employing artists.
- Consult the community appropriately.
- Engage the best artists to create the best works, ensuring that their vision is fully realised and maintained.
- Create and install the work in timely, efficient and safe manner, within an identified budget
- Maintain and conserve the Public Art collection in professional manner.



Ghost Gum Mosaic by Alison Hittmann, 2017

- Ensure that public artworks are attributed, promoted and recorded correctly.
- Provide education and information regarding public art in the region.
- Identify when and how an item of artwork should be dealt with when it is considered to no longer be appropriate to its location.
- Encourage private and commercial businesses to adopt and apply a 'Percent for Art' public art policy.

Public Art Advisory Committee

Alice Springs Town Council's Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) was established in 2008 and provides advice on the management and planning of public art for the Alice Springs Town Council. The objectives of the Committee are to:

- Formulate a Public Art Master Plan for Alice Springs.
- Identify opportunities for public art and incorporating artists into projects.
- Identify sources of funding for public art.
- Appoint and provide support to reference groups and all stakeholders for identified projects.
- Create a public art operating manual for Alice Springs.
- Establish a register of artists and artworks.
- Develop a public art maintenance strategy.

- Advise on the ongoing maintenance of public art in Alice Springs
- Monitor the progress of all public art activities and provide advice/support as required.

Existing Collection

Alice Springs Town Council has two artwork collections: the Alice Springs Town Council Art Collection and the Public Art Collection of Alice Springs. There are approximately 350 works in the Town's Art Collection, which is housed at the Araluen Arts Centre. These works are used in a range of ways, including being displayed at the Alice Springs Town Council Civic Centre and through a casual program of pop-up exhibitions in different venues around Alice Springs, curated by the Araluen Arts Centre.

As at Monday 14 September 2020, the Town Council's Public Art Collection comprises 28 artworks; these are complemented by a further 30 pieces of public art that were commissioned, and are owned, by other groups. The 58 public art pieces range from large scale murals and metal sculptures, through to small painted tiles and street furniture. More than 60 different artists and art groups created these artworks. Most works are in the CBD area, with 20 works located elsewhere, primarily in a narrow corridor south of the CBD⁴. A majority of the non-CBD works are murals. Of the 58 public art pieces, 19 have signage and almost half (26 works) were made within the last five years.

⁴ The Alice Springs Aquatic & Leisure Centre has five works.

Methodology

This Public Art Masterplan was developed using the following methodology:

- Review of existing documentation, including Alice Springs Town Council's existing policies and plans, complemented by public art plans and projects in other locations and towns.
- Public art survey distributed by Alice Springs Town Council. This survey:
 - Had 15 questions, with a mix of ranking, multiple choice and open-ended questions, as well as inviting comment and feedback.
 - Generated 67 responses, 66 of which were from residents. Of the respondents, 53 per cent did not work in the arts and cultural sector while 75% said they 'liked Alice Springs' public art.
- Consultations directly with the Alice Springs community, including:
 - One-on-one and small group meetings with arts and cultural agencies and interested practitioners and artists.
 - Public meeting open to all interested people.
 - Meetings with the Public Art Advisory Committee.
 - Meeting with Alice Springs Town Council Councillors.
 - Meeting with relevant Alice Springs Town Council staff.
- The following is a list of agencies consulted during the development of this Masterplan:
 - Watch this Space
 - Incite Arts
 - Desart
 - Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia
 - National Trust – Alice Springs branch
 - Akeyulerre Inc.
 - Iltja Ntjarra / Many Hands Art Centre
 - Tangentyere Artists
 - Araluen Arts Centre
 - Arts NT
 - Artback
 - Independent artists, practitioners and writers
- The draft Masterplan was circulated for public comment. Feedback was incorporated into the final Public Art Masterplan.



Historic Flood Marker by J9, 2015



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