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CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PRACTITIONER INTERVIEWS

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains summaries of 104 in-depth interviews with research participants representing all the Creative Industries (CI) sectors: Architecture, Advertising and Marketing, Events and Electronic Games and Interactive Content, Fashion, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Radio, Film and Television and Video and Visual Arts.

The research found that much of the Hunter’s regional activity is focused in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The surprise was to find a regional hotspot occurring in the Upper Hunter in Murrurundi, as Philip Adams described:

And there, in itself, is this little festering hot spot of all sorts of very eccentric creative people living in a town which is almost ruined by poverty, and which is now being recycled as a cheap and interesting place to live by artists. (see page. 36 for more)

Adams went on to say about the Creative Industries:

I am totally bewildered by the new technologies and the disruptors and all the rest of it that’s happening. But on the other hand, as I pointed out the other day on some public occasion, we’re still doing exactly the same things we did 3,000 years ago; we’re painting our faces, walking onto wooden platforms and doing something called acting. We’re still blowing and tooting and plucking at musical instruments as we’ve done for thousands of years. We’re still doing all the ancient things. We’re still stringing words together, making pots. So, there’s a paradox; the new technologies come rushing forward, and yet if anything, well, every reaction has an equal reaction, and the equal reaction is to preserve continuity and the old. So, I suppose they’ll both coexist like the double helix, circling around each other. (see page. 36 for more)

Many regional Creative Industries workers have found that they must supplement their incomes with other paid work, with some feeling very strongly that the term “industry” is inaccurate:

We talk about the industry a lot but in actual fact it’s not an industry, because people who work in industry get paid, and they get paid properly, and they get paid fairly I assume, so I don’t really think of it as accurate (see page. 158 for more).

Many of those interviewed felt that it was better to collaborate than to compete, with VR and 3D animators Tim Davidson and Ivan Demidov realizing that as collaborators they are better off because they can build an “eco-system so that as a community we’re not always competing” (see page. 189 for more).

Many CI workers subscribe to the mantra “Live locally, work globally”. As Karl Brandstater, film and television director said, “It was always assumed that you would travel to do work” (see page. 171 for more).
1.2 INTERVIEW HEADLINES

Brief quotes from the interviews, arranged by sectors, give some of the headline statements relevant to each sector and these provide some insights into the commonalities and experiences of these regional CI practitioners.

Interviews with architects raised many issues around ‘smart cities’, with one of the perennial issues for architects being the relationship with Councils and Governments, and how that affects creative architectural designs. Edward Duc argues that ‘they constrain creativity and cost’ (p. 197). Debra McKendry is the Chair of Australian Institute of Architects, Newcastle Division and her take on building regulations and councils is more progressive, in that conservation management plans mean architects are required to “bring it together, it’s a lot more complex that just doing a house that is not in a heritage conservation area” (p. 198). McKendry goes on to say that her work is context driven, “A building must sit comfortably in its setting as well as being functional and appealing – translating that to a form is creative. In Australia people want identity, character and self-expression – not cookie-cutter designs” (p. 198). Cassie Stronach studied architecture at the University of Newcastle, worked in Sydney after her degree and has now returned to work in Newcastle. She has set up a collaborative working space for built environment professionals. Her career trajectory is typical for young, creative industry professionals.

Interviews in the advertising and marketing sector included Kristie Ferguson who feels that work in the creative industries can be isolating. “When you are doing things, individually and on your own, it can be hard to build momentum and maintain it. But when people come together and share their ideas and develop their ideas I think that’s where the strength lies” (p. 63). Jamie Lewis from Out of the Square Media, took a long time to understand the power of collaboration. “I was terrible at collaboration. I had always thought “it’s my idea, I have to make it.” So, the collaborative, to me, was quite wrong, in that it was really just having people to help fulfil your vision” (p. 64). When Lewis worked with Ian Hamilton at Limelight Creative Media he found a new way to collaborate. It was “very intense but I saw the benefit of that” (p. 64). Kara Sullivan’s business is Guts Creative. When she started it, she found that “Even people you might think would be competitors were really keen to find out about what I was doing. Now I collaborate with lots of creatives” (p. 69). Craig Wilson is from Sticky - a digital agency that focuses on what they call “inbound marketing” as opposed to advertising. The old model, he said, was advertising which is “outbound” - TV, press, radio and so on” (p. 70). Kent Woodcock has worked in advertising for decades and finds that “with the ease of digital software a lot of people who don’t have expertise are trying to block the way of people who do” (p. 74).

Within the public relations and events interviews, Paul Tibbles organizes cultural events. He feels that “Creativity is more conceptual … Innovation is the technique you use to create that. Everything that you say about innovation - well, it’s about applying things to a new situation. To a new context. A new problem” (p. 96). Melanie James from the University of Newcastle sees the digital and social media as being very important for the public relations sector and Heidi Pollard
has focused her energy on building networks, local and international networks, that empower individuals to do more.

In the design interviews Liz Anelli talks about the value of establishing networks for studio work and with professionals. “I would never say I am a Newcastle artist, I would have never said I am a Leicestershire artist. I am an artist who happens to live in Newcastle” (p. 77). Tina Elliott owns The House of Elliott, a retail outlet for home interiors. She has found that “Newcastle is growing. Design is emerging here. People are becoming aware of the benefits of it, but they don’t want to particularly pay for it!” (p. 83). Trevor Dickinson goes on to assess the number of artists working in Newcastle. “there’s that thing about Newcastle having more artists per capita than any other place. Bullshit! More people say they are artists, but you know, to actually be out there doing the work is something different” (p. 81). Dickinson is a textile designer and illustrator and discusses how impossible it is to control copyright. In the UK he did lots of licensed work including Simpsons t-shirts which he says “were totally ripped off by Australian companies. I came here and saw my designs in all the shops!” (p. 81). Sophia Emmett, designer and maker says of the unauthorised copying of her designs, “It’s an issue but it’s just part of the culture and the industry… you just cop it on the chin, don’t you? Like you have to” (p. 84). Sophie enjoys the process of design even more than making “Once you design a product, making it over and over again – although each piece is different - it’s laborious” (p. 84). Jono Everett is a designer and fabricator using timber, steel and acrylics, he worked as the lead carpenter at Parliament House in Canberra and says that “versatility is the key to survival” (p. 86) when moving between carpentry and fine woodworking. Graham Wilson is a designer and a stone-mason. He had a retail outlet at the Emporium, run by Renew Newcastle where he sold mugs and t-shirts to the public. He found pricing in the shop especially difficult, “there can be a mixture between people who can’t understand why your stuff’s so cheap [and] people who can’t understand why your stuff is so expensive” (p. 94). The financial income from his stone masonry work was also limited because ‘stone carving is really labour intensive, and people aren’t really willing to pay for your time” (p. 56). Shannon Roman owns Crackler, a branding and digital marketing business. They have clients from Canada, Bermuda and New Zealand and are collaborating “with other agencies in an open collaboration, not so much sub-contracting” (p. 91). Roman says that digital opportunities are not personally threatening. “If you are interested in technology and like keeping on top of what is happening, change is welcome” (p. 92). Professor Mario Minichiello from the University of Newcastle recognises that it is important to create ‘the conditions for creativity” (p. 89) and that there are opportunities; for example, ‘the ability to scale has been extraordinary with digitization. You can scale things globally, faster” (p. 90), and this presents enormous potential for the design sector. Hunter Design School owner, Donna Burrell says, “Graphic design is huge, the fastest-growing industry” (p. 79) and they are aiming to recruit international students.

Electronic games and interactive content is a nascent sector in Newcastle, Dr Karen Blackmore from the University of Newcastle, School of Electrical Engineering and Computing believes, ‘the future here is not in gaming, but in simulation” (p. 188) and this is becoming more evident as the
use of simulation and virtual worlds is becoming more widespread. NSW Mines Rescue Services, a division of Coal Services NSW has been using VR for mine safety for decades. Matthew Farrelly is the team leader, and he thinks that VR “fills the gap to safe practices … where people can fight 20 virtual fires in different circumstances … so they can react quickly if something goes wrong” (p. 193). Tim Davidson is a VR and 3D animator. Previously he did industrial visualization but is now running a start-up business with Ivan Demidov. Together they realised they are better as collaborators than competitors because they are interested in building an “eco-system, so that as a community we’re not always competing” (p. 190). Ivan says ‘Tim and I operate three different businesses out of this workshop. The three businesses reflect how our story happened” (p. 191). James Vidler is the Chair of Hunter DiGiT and he believes that “IP is similar to privacy – it’s on its last legs, especially in the digital space. You can’t patent Spotify – none of these things – it’s all about first mover” (p. 196). Cameron Baker is an interactive games developer who is a graduate from a Sydney university and has now realised that “the pool of opportunities in Sydney is limited. Most of the big players have left” (p. 188). Emma Leggett is a digital marketer and web developer. She works with digital agencies and is in the process of transitioning back to Newcastle because there are less and less opportunities in Sydney for games development.

In the Fashion sector, Jean Bas has been operating in Newcastle for 35 years. The business is managed by Kevin Coffey, who sees the “Hollywood model” (p. 221) suiting the region because it is project based, specialist focused and allows for collaboration and versatility with distribution. Three sisters run High Tea with Mrs Woo and their business experience has led them to make sustainable choices. “But the choice also means that we live like poor artists! It’s more expensive to do everything ‘less’, but it means we are not adding to this madness of excess production, excess fabric” (p. 222). Studio Melt is a Renew Newcastle “graduate”. Ange Hailey says they were only with Renew for six months but it offered that connection between garage and shopfront because making things at home can be an “isolating experience” (p. 110). Lara Lupish is a creative director for fashion. She has strong ties with Sydney and regularly works there to supplement her start-up “Facon in Newcastle is still not really making money, so I need to supplement my income… The last year and a half, two years I’ve probably actually paid to work here which is sad” (p. 113).

The visual arts sector is anecdotally thought of as typifying the creative industries. Landscape artist John Bradley has made a living through painting investment art for decades, but he has noticed the volatility in the market. “About six years ago I could certainly gross thirty-odd thousand (dollars) on a two-day show. We have held shows recently, where we’ve got nothing” (p. 116). Kerrie Coles is an artist, who moved to Newcastle in the 1980s. She feels that “artists in Newcastle are very lucky. The city reveres its artists” (p. 119). Peter Lankas was with Newcastle Community Arts Centre (NCAC) for 13 years and he feels that “art in many ways, like anything else, is a process” (p. 120). John Lechner from Maitland, is a photographer and he set-up a new business called The Office Art Specialist. He is consciously avoiding the term “photography” because he believes there is “a perception that photography is cheap while if you buy art there is no price limit” (p. 122). Rachel Milne is an impressionistic painter who had a studio at NCAC. Milne has worked hard to
achieve and make a living out of her painting, ‘so, when I hear myself sometimes say “Oh, I’ve got so much work on!”, I just want to slap myself in the face because it’s taken me so long to get to this point’” (p. 126). Jo O’Toole is self-employed as a sculptor, painter and furniture designer. She says “It’s not a conventional business. You don’t know what your market is. You don’t know who the people are that want something until they arrive on your doorstep” (p. 130). An investment art gallery director, Trevor Richards is based at Morpeth and knows that traditional and wildlife art increases annually by 10%. He says that “art doesn’t go up like the stock market, but it doesn’t crash!” (p. 134). The University of Newcastle’s Art Gallery Director Gillean Shaw sees the term creative industries as being problematic. “For those like us it’s more about what the creative industries will bring in terms of quality of life and depth of thought and ways of doing and being” (p. 137). The Strutt sisters have had to work hard to make their art a sustainable business and Jennifer feels that if they were sports people they’d be sitting pretty. They are no longer doing jobs for free (p. 138). Textile artist, Meredith Woolnough, draws with a sewing machine. She says, “I think a lot of people undervalue the work that artists do. Some people I know see my work as a hobby and they think that I’ll grow out of it and go and do something else and get another real job” (p. 140).

The performing arts sector encompasses theatre, dance and musicals. The Metropolitan Players is the largest non-professional theatre company in the region. Graeme Black says, “It would be good to have at least one professional theatre company in Newcastle – the skills and training that they could bring would have a flow-on effect” (p. 145). Playwright Carl Caulfield, sees rule breaking as important “… the thing about being creative is that you need to probably know the rules and then know where to break them... any good playwright has usually broken the rules” (p. 146). Dancer, Timothy Gordon teaches at the National College of Dance in Lambton. He believes the future of dance in Australia is in the regional centres. Their graduates gain places with Sydney Dance Co. or Queensland Ballet and some audition for big shows such as Disneyland or the Moulin Rouge, “98% of them are placed” (p. 151). Paper Cut: Contemporary Performance Collective is run by three talented female performers. Sarah Coffee says of the work, “it’s risky and unpredictable and you don’t make a lot of money” (p. 149); Tamara Gazzard says “It’s a little bit DIY” (p. 149); and Lucy Shepherd thinks the term “creative industries” is useful, “… as a recognition of the fact that it’s work, people aren’t just doing it out of the goodness of their hearts” (p. 148). Stooged Theatre’s artistic director, Mat Lee says ‘sadly, the nature of working in the arts means one must work three jobs at times” (p. 156). Hunter Drama’s artistic director, Daniel Stoddard says “in terms of theatre, there doesn’t seem to be any kind of measuring stick for that sort of thing in Newcastle. There seems to be a mentality that effort equals quality but that’s not always the case” (p. 162). Amy Hardingham, artistic director for Tantrum Youth Arts, moved from Sydney to take up the position thinking that she was entering a hotbed of contemporary performance, “and I got here and was really confused because the actual theatre community is completely separate and different to what is represented outside of Newcastle” (p. 155).
Newcastle had a thriving live music industry in the 70’s and 80’s. Unfortunately, this has retracted over the decades. Morgan Evans is a self-employed country music performer now based in Nashville, USA. Performing in Newcastle at weddings taught him how to work the crowd. “When the PA broke [we] had to jump into the crowd and sing to people. You know, it’s like, what’s the worst that can happen? It’s already happened, you know?” (p. 15). Tim McPhee is a musician in the Firekites and he has also composed work for the cabaret show ‘the Spiegeltent’, that was at The Sydney Festival in 2015 and toured to Newcastle in 2017. Capree Gaul is a social entrepreneur. She volunteers and has set up several not-for-profit organisations, collaborating with others to create Newcastle Improvised Music Association and Newcastle Youth Orchestra. David Fitzgerald is a pianist, a musical director and an audio engineer. He works on ‘Circus 1903’ an illusionist series performed at the Opera House and on Broadway and he was fortunate to be able to take some of his Australian musicians with him to Broadway where usually the visas are very strict (p. 19). Phillip Matthias is a composer working at the University of Newcastle. In 2016 he composed a song for an indigenous fellow, David Leha, to sing at the UN General Assembly Hall in 2016, and “the song is designed for speaking and not for performance”. But because of David’s way of singing, naturally, it’s not going to fit into our “One, two, three, four, duff, duff, duff, duff, duff”. His is… naturally freer” (p. 26). Frank Millward, a musician who worked in the UK as an academic for decades said “there are very few practicing creative artists who make more than $200,000 a year. Most doctors make more than that. So, it’s understandable that every mother wants their children to be doctors (or lawyers)” (p. 31). Steven Pickett is a music entrepreneur, and he knows that the “publishing is where all the money is” (p. 32). His advice is “I’d be pushing people into the world of song writing … my business would be based around publishing and social media” (p. 32).

The publishing industry is facing some well-known challenges and Marilyn and Phil Collins who publish the magazine Hunter Lifestyle know their magazine demographic. “It started out being baby boomers but now we have 30-year olds buying the magazine because they are all renovating houses and they want to get ideas from the up-market houses we feature. We have widened our demographic” (p. 53). On the other hand, Hunter Press, run by Mark McLean, believes in being local, even though he sees the “international opportunity to sell internationally, but we don’t consider ourselves to be anything other than a local publisher” (p. 56). Rosemary Milsom, former journalist with The Newcastle Herald, participated in an interview at the time she was leaving The Herald. She realized that she wasn’t able to “remain as a community service” (p. 60).

Working in Radio is the public intellectual Philip Adams, who astutely assesses the benefits of coming from a regional area. “Being local is probably the best way to have a hope of being international” (p. 37). Philip Ashley-Brown from ABC Radio points out the radical changes in the modes of delivery the ABC has embraced, particularly that, “during emergencies, stations like this are the hub of the community, and we work really hard to make sure that what we’re doing here reflects truly what’s going on” (p. 41). Wayne Stamm, 2NURFM Station Manager believes “radio is reasonably healthy” particularly when it reflects “a big part of your local community” (p. 51).
Anthony Scully, an ABC Open producer says, “I think media is more of a dirty, dusty area, less romantic than creative industries, but it is creative, and you do forget sometimes, it’s pretty cool - my job” (p.63). Sean Ison, an entrepreneur in radio has found that the copyright laws are not keeping up with what is going on with music copyright in podcasts. “APRA says most podcasts are illegal, that everybody’s doing the wrong thing because they’re breaching the mechanical copyright of the musicians or whatnot” (p.11).

In film and television there are businesses and agencies. Screen Hunter is the longest serving regional film agency in NSW and it brings in an $8 million income to the Hunter region (p. 175). NBN News produces over 20,000 news stories annually and has 60 employees working as news producers, journalists, camera, production and administrative staff (p. 177). One80 Post Production facility is situated in the same building as NBN, their outside broadcast services are hired by Channel 9 Sports and Fox Sport and in 2016 they did more than 70 outside broadcasts (p. 183). BarTV Sports has been able to stream sporting games from over 900 sporting fixtures across Australia, the UK and Europe, and is located in Newcastle (p. 179). Good Eye Deer is a company that knows where it wants to be. As Gavin Banks explains, “Projects come and go. It can be feast or famine. As principals, we’ve always got lots to do regardless because we’re ambitious and because we have a master plan that we’re working towards. We are heading towards episodic television” (p. 170). Good Eye Deer’s creative producer is Olivia Olley, who also manages a co-working space ‘the Production Hub”. Olley is committed to building their reputation as a business that offers high-net worth projects (p. 187). Karl Brandstater from Storyhaus subscribes to the mantra “Live locally, work globally”. He says, “It was always assumed that you would travel to do work” (p. 171). Film producer Anna Kelly from Limelight Creative Media explains “a lot of our commercial work is about making a difference to people’s lives, so we really enjoy doing that type of work” (p.173). Freelance film and television screenwriter, Vanessa Alexander says “most of the writers that I meet here and who are working don’t have an agent and that makes my life easier. You don’t have to cold call people, you kind of hear what’s going on” (p.165).

In the Upper Hunter there is a committed group of artists, writers, photographers, musicians, public and commercial gallery owners who focus on regional creative industries. Arts Upper Hunter is funded to run programs in Muswellbrook, Scone, Singleton, Merriwa and Murrurundi (p. 207). Muswellbrook has a Conservatorium of Music, which provides music tuition and programs and Muswellbrook Regional Art Centre is Council run and offers a range of exhibitions throughout the year. Brad Franks, the gallery’s director, says, “a lot of what we’ve done together here in the Upper Hunter for the visual artists is to try and promote and educate the Sunday painters and the ones who would like to break out of being Sunday painters, as to how to publicise themselves” (p. 206). In Murrurundi, Haydon Hall is run by Peter Carlin and they have noticed that Murrurundi attracts a lot of passing trade, particularly from Armidale. A couple dropped in for a cup of coffee and cake and “left with a $1,500.00 painting” (p. 204). Freelance artist Andrew Davis is a mural artist and works with local communities while Simone Bailey, is a writer, who has published four novels, available through Zeus Publishing. Roger Skinner is a photographer from Scone who has self-
funded his photography career through his day job in the mines. “I’ve been in an extraordinary position earning big money for a significant period. That’s just made me able to buy flash cameras and to make big prints, and frame big prints and go in exhibitions” (p.214). Further down the valley, David Williams is a dairy farmer in Vacy who has 1,800 twitter followers and does cow memes on Facebook.

There are several practitioners who enable the creative industries sectors, including Newcastle City Council’s Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes, and the cultural director, Liz Burcham. Newcastle Now’s Michael Neilson and Todd Williams who was the CEO for Hunter Regional Development Australia (Hunter); Renew Newcastle’s Marcus Westbury and General Manager Christopher Saunders; Gordon Whitehead who formed Lunatics Society; Shane Brandson who is a CONDA judge, educator and performer; Harry Balding who manages DASH (a co-working space at Lake Macquarie); Steph Hinds a business consultant from Growthwise; and Christina Gerakiteys from Ideation.

The research team would like to thank all the people who gave them time and provided their insights into on what they do and observe within the creative industries in the Hunter Region.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study used an ethnographic methodology with all the team members being active practitioners in various creative sectors. The team, Phillip McIntyre, Susan Kerrigan, Claire Williams and Evelyn King used their networks, observed what was going on and interviewed businesses and practitioners working in all the CI sectors.

The conduct of in-depth interviews was one element of the research methodology used, with the team conducting 115 interviews between 2014 to 2017 with practitioners who operate businesses and work across all the CI sectors in the Hunter. In addition to these in-depth interviews there were 16 filmed interviews representing a cross-section of the sector in the Hunter and these can be viewed on the project website. Extensive desk and statistical research was also conducted.

This document contains summaries of 104 interviews, with the remaining people either electing to be anonymous or not yet approving their interview transcript for use. A guide list of questions provided consistency across the interviews. The questions were designed around the theoretical framework of the Creative Systems, which has three components. The Domain is the generalised knowledge of the sector and its business structures, the Field is the social network of peers, collaborators and employees and the Individual focuses on the practitioners, their formal and informal education, training, skill development and careers. A list of the questions used as a guide can be found in Appendix 1 – Practitioner Questions.

The interviews typically ran for an hour and each was transcribed with interviewees being given the opportunity to review and redact any material that was inaccurate. Summaries of these interviews appear below and include direct quotes that have been organized into six creative
themes although not every interviewee provided quotes on all themes. Categorisation into themes applied the following definitions.

**Creative Career** addressed portfolio careers, work life balance, longitudinal careers, formal and informal training, expert skills and knowledge, digital skill.

**Creative Labour** enquired as to business size, (employees or freelancer), assembling skilled workers, upskilling, what it feels like to do what you do, how to manage creative activities, making decisions.

**Creative Networking** asked questions about individual, business or company reputation, awards or peer recognition, support networks from government and industry, professional development, collaborating with others, freelancing networks, internet and globalisation.

**Creative Futures** explored the future of the creative industries, what role creatives can have in future economies and global economies, how creativity fits into the future, and the future seen for creative business?

**Creative Entrepreneurship and IP** sought insights into whether people were turning a dollar or working in the gift economy, how they went about sourcing finding clients and contracts, whether they were working locally, nationally and internationally, and what they found to be barriers to work - e.g. insurances, technology, legal issues and copyright.

**Creative Products** dealt with views on product type (form, format, materials or media), audiences, client satisfaction, awards and peer recognition.

These themes were common to each sector with the CI professionals describing how they navigate their lived professional and personal creative pursuits.
Morgan Evans grew up in Newcastle in NSW. He undertook work experience in his final year at UON working for Foxtel as a production assistant. This led to full time work at Foxtel. In 2013, after releasing two hit EPs that yielded three #1 singles, Morgan was named New Oz Artist of the Year at the CMC Music Awards. This was followed by four more trophies over the next two years, including back-to-back Male Oz Artist of the Year awards. He returned to Nashville to record his debut album with an all-star group of A-list musicians and Nashville based Aussie ex-pat producer Jedd Hughes. The album, released in March 2014, immediately shot to #1 on the iTunes and ARIA Country Album Charts and debuted at #20 on the ARIA Mainstream Album Chart. The album garnered 3 #1 singles and his first APRA nominations. He was invited to return to perform at Nashville’s CMA Music Festival again and at the legendary Grand Ole Opry, which prompted William Morris Endeavor – the world’s largest talent agency – to sign Morgan up for international representation. He was signed as the face of Foxtel’s Country Music Channel, which had nominated him for an Astra Award and a TV Week Logie Award – a first for an Australian country music star. He hosts television coverage of the CMC Rocks music festival, artist interviews and the CMC Music Awards. Morgan received a message from Grammy-winners Lady Antebellum informing him that he’d been awarded the prestigious 2015 CMA Global Artist Award. The award recognizes outstanding achievement by an international country star in furthering the popularity of country music in their home country. Morgan joins an exceptional list of previous winners including Tommy Emmanuel, Kasey Chambers and Lee Kernaghan. Morgan has relocated to Music City (Nashville).

CI Business

Morgan Evans is a self-employed musician. His team is typical of musicians working at this level. For the recording side of his business he is contracted to Warner Bros Records and this entity derives income from direct sale of product such as CDs and incurs costs through recording, distribution and marketing. As a result of digital distribution retail income has moved from stores to web-based outlets. Evans maintains his own website http://morganevans.com.au/ Morgan Evans receives recoupable advances to make recordings and repays this loan before receiving income. Royalties are also paid to the owners of the mechanical rights of the recordings, in this case Warner Bros, in addition to other rights. With digital distribution becoming dominant in the form of streaming, the income from the mechanicals is now superseding direct sales as the dominant form of income for this sector. However, overall income has diminished for the recording sector as a result of this supersession. Evan’s publisher is Warner Music. Publishers are concerned with the copyright of songs as opposed to the rights derived from the mechanical recording of those songs. A songwriter like Evans sells or licenses a song to other parties usually through a publisher. In
doing so they agree to write songs in exchange for an advance (loan) from the publisher and the publisher agrees to promote and sell the songs usually in exchange for 50% of the copyright royalty income on the song. Royalties are required to be paid by law on each public performance of the song wherever that might occur i.e. in concert, broadcast, as part of film soundtrack, played as a ring tone or streamed. Morgan Evans’ live performance booking agent is William Morris Endeavor. Income here is derived primarily from direct ticketing and merchandising sales. Risk is spread across agents and promoters who generally operate on a percentage of the derived income from performances. He is co-managed by Kerry Roberts and Rob Potts who would nominally receive 20% of all income derived.

Creative Labour

What skills did you bring from the local environment to the big stage?

*I think the biggest skill that you can take from those, apart from obviously like being able to play a guitar and sing, is the ability to deal with the unknown and I think that’s probably the only one that translates. Like everything about the performance is different, except for that when you walk out there for the first time you have no idea what to do. I think that prepares you. And then every time you get on a big stage after that you obviously have that knowledge from the one before. I see that a lot here in Nashville. There’s sort of two ways you can come up here and it’s either through playing or touring like crazy - like we did in Newcastle or in Australia, or you write songs until you get a hit and then you go on the road. And it’s so obvious especially in the first year or two of people’s career which way they came up and how they deal with live situations. You need to connect with 50 000 people instead of five, or 50 you know. If there’s 50 people in a room you sing a song and make eye contact with every single one of them. You can actually point to every single one of them. But with 50 000 there’s a certain - not that I’m any expert at this either. I feel like I might be trying to sound like I am, but I’m not. But it’s a totally different experience and level of connection that you have to try to reach those people up the back and I think you notice it when you go to see, you know, whoever - your favourite arena or stadium acts. They can do it you know. I think the biggest thing from those bar gigs and it’s like, there’s a big sort of culture as well as that collaboration in song writing there. Also, I’ve got a bunch of mates here and they’re playing in town, they’re like, “Hey come, jump up and sing a song with us.” And I’m totally comfortable in situations like that because I’ve done it a million times at Wellsies gigs and Wellsies’ done it a million times with me and we’ve played weddings when the PA broke down and we had to jump into the crowd and sing to people. You know it’s like what’s the worst that can happen? It’s already happened, you know.

Creative Networks

*The first recording I did for Warner Music in Australia, was a five-track EP and I recorded one of Jedd Hughes’ songs, which I’d never done before. I didn’t write it at all and we played a festival, maybe a year later and he was on the same festival and I met him at that festival and I told him, we were playing his song and I said, “Hey do you want to come up and play with us?” And, he did, and we’ve been mates ever since
actually. And, yeah, we did an EP together and an album together. We’re not working together on the next one, but it was a great time and he’s an amazing musician.

The competition is like, much stiffer here in the States because people come from all over the world to live here and do it. And I guess that means if you’re more successful here then you’re more successful in general. But, I mean, I guess the other thing is, because the business is so much bigger here and the financial rewards are, bigger, those pieces of the pie are bigger. For example, APRA who are a great organisation, like ASCAP or BMI would have, probably 15 or 20 times the amount of people working for them. So, you’re going to get more attention if you’re up in the top tier of those writers. One of my favourite stories is mirrored in all the relationships you have with like ASCAP or BMI or a publisher or a record label or someone like that. One of my mates set up his first bank account here in the US and they invited him in, and if you say you’re a song writer in Australia, usually the question is, “What else do you do?” The, question here is, “Oh that’s great, where are you from?” I remember this guy who first started here, and he had 20 bucks and now he’s got, you know, whatever. He’s got the house on the hill for example. And, I always like that story because I think that’s sort of how this town welcomes new people and, it’s just like anyone could be anyone with the right song, and that’s also exciting, and it keeps you going, and it keeps you motivated.

What’s next?

Country music is - I think it's the biggest genre of music here in America. And, it’s the biggest radio format but it’s also by the far the biggest touring, thing. So, country music is pretty healthy in that respect just because there’s so much of America to go to and there’s so much country. You know it’s like - yeah it just makes sense. You can tour all year around here playing country music if you want to.

2. DAVID FITZGERALD, MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND AUDIO ENGINEER

Full Fat Jazz, 26 June 2017

Creative Career

David is a Tamworth boy. When he was a teenager he played in an 18-piece swing band in Tamworth called the Johnny Muller Big Band. In 1990 he moved to Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne and completed a Bachelor of Music. David was trained as a concert pianist. He has always been an ensemble player and went on to work with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and in musical theatre. In 1992 he played in ‘Phantom of the Opera’. During his Honours year he relocated to Sydney to continue his work with Phantom and then he completed a Diploma of Education. He was awarded the Millfield Fellowship and went to the United Kingdom for 12 months.

And whilst I was in the United Kingdom on a student visa I applied for a permanent visa based on my technical abilities, partly to do with Cameron McIntosh being UK-based and my love of synthesising. Even though I was a classical concert pianist I’ve always had a love of technology.
David returned from the UK in 1999 and began an MBA in Arts and Media Management. For five years whilst studying he managed serviced offices in Sydney. They have since become Lindfield Executive Centre - one of the largest independent serviced office frameworks. In 2007 he returned to his musical roots and worked on the first Le Grand Cirque. David worked on a few more shows as well as some Illusion shows. Most recently, he did Circus 1903 at the Opera House, the Illusionist series, specifically the third one which had a live band. This show travelled to Broadway. Last year David completed a Graduate Certificate from the University of Sydney. David and his wife flipped a coin and decided to move to Newcastle. They have a toddler. David works in Newcastle as an accompanying pianist and he works regionally, in New South Wales, with a company called Loud and Clear, mixing 12 shows a year for them as an audio engineer.

**CI Business**

David works as a sole trader. Full Fat Jazz is a trading name that he uses, and he is Musical Director and Head of Audio managing both onstage and audio front of house. He also works in theatre, and has funded, organised, managed, directed and produced theatre under that Full Fat trading name.

> Well I’d call myself an engineer more than a pianist nowadays although I still do a lot of accompanying here at the Conservatorium in Newcastle and I travel as an MD primarily but the income I derive is more from an engineering perspective.

**Creative Labour**

As it currently stands I am both a performer and a manager. Being a Musical Director and Head of Audio, you have not only a performance role for which I regularly get dressed up and get on stage but then I have also recruited band members that I take with me into that performance which is a part of a larger performance because I’m involved with Circus and Illusions and those sorts of things. I’ve been charged from those above me with the gamut of recruitment, of taking the music, you know getting the musicians I like, of supplying tech specs for the audio parameters, and I switch between both being and MD onstage or an MD at the audio, front of house audio position.

David discusses the relationship between the audio engineer and musical director.

> Look I think there’s a strong one. There should be a strong one, although I don’t know that there is a defined role. Having just come from Broadway and watching how the Americans work they are still very much defined by the unions, the red tape, and what they should and shouldn’t do. And so, an audio engineer’s role over there is a bit like what we’d consider a lighting person’s role is - push go, push go, push go. They expect it to be right, coming out of the orchestra. What I love is the ability, having been an MD, to give suggestions to a musical director and say how about you swing this person to this position, how about you place the amp that way - that way you get the fold back and I can control what’s happening with one of ours. So, there’s a lot of those techniques used by an audio engineer, especially because a lot of it is not working in professional theatre, we’re not talking about every show being mixed in the Opera House with a great d&b line array.
If I was to go in to do a show in Civic as an MD where I need a music stand and a light / sconce to go on that to plug it in, I can ask one person to do that and someone will come down or they’ll turn around and say, ‘Dave you know where it is, go and do it yourself’. You get a music stand, you put a sconce on, you plug it in, you turn it on. For example, in America that was a three-day process whereby property brought you the stand, electrics plugged it all in, lighting brought you the bulb and eventually my musos got to play three days after they’re in the theatre. So, there’s a lot of sitting around and a lot of frustration and then that’s where you turn into an HR manager to manage not only the technical process to make it happen but also those players who are slowly getting jaded about a process.

Even semi-pro has a wide gamut in terms of their production qualities nowadays but even at the top end I’ve taken shows into Seymour Centre and into Civic Theatre, here, where the music director actually has no idea what happens past their baton. Let alone how what they’re doing in the pit affects what’s happening in a reinforced perspective. And often that’s because they’re used to band programs or orchestral programs where reinforcement is not part of their sphere.

Creative Networking

David is a self-confessed collaborator.

I love it. I’m a team player. I’m often one that will play devil’s advocate, because I love thinking of the 10 possibilities as opposed to what the director might be thinking of. But even with sound, because I have that musical director background, I can get into artistic meetings as a soundperson whereas often sound is left out and they’ll come in on Thursday night and just plug and play. It’s like well at least I’m here. So, no I totally believe in it.

Now whilst I was there I was working as a professional, so my first gig was probably at the age of 14 or 15 with what was then - I’m just trying to remember its name [laughing], it was one of the local big bands, a typical 18-piece swing band. And my saxophone tutor was playing reeds at that stage and needed a fill in. So, this was an adult band to which my parents gave consent and in the mid-80s I travelled with them right around New South Wales for things like the Policeman’s Ball. You know, they were major functions like that as a young kid, getting paid the commensurate rate with the rest of the musicians to play alto 2. So that’s where I really started, you know, understanding what music could bring in as an income. But my professional career really was in Melbourne. I went down there to study at VCA post school and within 18 months of being in Melbourne I was working on Phantom of the Opera so that was my first introduction to the big world of performance.

I love the academic side, but I love then putting that into perspective with the practical realities and working out well this is one way, this is another way and what is the, the current way, what is the wrong way, you know all those sorts of questions.

When I came back to Australia following my stint in the UK I was MD-ing in Sydney quite heavily, music directing, for a lot of shows and Loud and Clear was the preferred supplier and that’s when I struck a friendship with a couple of the engineers at Loud and Clear and after so many years I turned to the boss and said, you know, I’d love to
get behind a desk and just understand the musical direction perspective, as in an audio
engineer enhancing what I’m doing, destroying what I’m doing, those sort of
questions.

I’m now regularly mixing 12 shows a year for them which I absolutely, you know,
enjoy but I push boundaries and I’m seen a little bit as a renegade but by the same
token I’m also seen as a mentor for the lot of the younger engineers.

A lot of performers, a lot of artists and a lot of technicals are again a bunch of Aussies
or UK personnel who have all come with this background and that attitude of ‘let’s
make it happen’.

David explains how he came to live in Newcastle.

I was living in Sydney, I was working as an MD in Sydney and just as I was starting to
work as an audio engineer for Loud and Clear we sort of flipped a coin, I met Wendy,
my wife, who’s a Novocastrian, and we flipped a coin where would we live, and it
made sense to go to Newcastle for a lot of different reasons. Has it hindered me? No
except to say that there’s a few jobs I’ve said no to just because of proximity. if I was
in Sydney I’d be full time stuck in that Loud and Clear mentality or the back-office
system and I wouldn’t have the opportunities that I’ve had by being a freelance artist.
So, I think in hindsight, yes, it’s allowed me a lot of great experiences. How that
changes now I’ve got a young daughter I’m not so sure.

Creative Products

What motivates and inspires you?

I love doing it first, whether I do it right is not really a design goal for me, I love
leaving a legacy for the people that follow. And so, when you look at that and you look
at then things like The Full Monty in Sydney and Sunday in the Park with George
which was a ‘professional’ in Sydney, again up here with things like The Wild Party,
I love doing it first, I love trialling stuff. That’s just my interest area.

Which goes right down the line with what I, you know I’ve been doing for the last 10
years with Cirque and Illusionists. I guess that’s a whole new chapter we’ll talk about
shortly.

David worked on the Illusionist series for the Opera House show called Circus 1903. David
describes that these shows are developed in Australia and then taken to Broadway.

They actually build their shows out here. Just because of the way we work as opposed
to the rigours of unions and red tape in the States and then from here shows often go
Asia, American, Europe or, you know, wherever the case may be.... I took a band
across to Dubai which is where we re-built this show and then over 18 months we’ve
had it back through Australia. I’ve done Mexico City, although that was without band,
so I just naturally slotted into front of house even though I’m still controlling all the
playback files and Ableton files I just did it behind the audio desk and mixed at the
same time. The only change in personnel really has been the American side. I had to
train four new musicians over there because we couldn’t get visas, they’re very strict
on Broadway, for my Australian crew. So that’s the first time the Aussie crew haven’t
travelled with me.
So, I mean you’ve pointed to several similarities and difference between working local, national and global, so can you tell us something about the similarities between those three things and then we’ll get onto the differences?

The similarities are the fact that you’re producing a performance every time. I do not change my approach whether I’m mixing or music directing. I will garner the best players I can get, and I have players that will come with me from regional to professional to international settings. They enjoy what I give back to them, and our approach to whatever that show is from preproduction planning through to getting on stage is the same. That doesn’t change globally.

Each of these shows has a writer, as David explains:

A technical writer and that goes a lot to the fact that especially with Illusion shows there are things that must be technically perfect, or the illusions don’t work. More specifically with lighting but there are some illusions which are audio-based which I have a lot of fun with. But even though you might specify a desk or a PA scenario or fold-back to make things happen you don’t always get that on the ground, and so that’s where you have to be creative, you know in a timeframe of making it work.

If the creative industries can garner as much respect as say the word ‘arts’ does in terms of government and funding I’m all for using that term. I think where it gets a little bit, from my perspective, wide ranging is that it includes a lot. Oh, I guess that’s the changing world we live in, the newer, the renewed aspects, a wider thing than what is just art, be it fine art or performing arts. Should technology, film and TV be within that? Or is that a whole other gamut? I mean it’s a massive industry, but where does it fit. Considering I now do so much stuff with vision.

What’s next?

Funnily enough the last 18 months I’ve been on the road pretty much continuously and even that’s been enjoyable even with a young daughter at home because I know I’m doing something to support the family unit. Often there is a frustrating time when you’re waiting… when is the next job and what is the next job? I mean my pianist work is great but it’s cyclical and regular, you know when university exams are, you know when AMEB exams are, you know when the HSC is, two weeks here, two weeks there, and that’s regular as clockwork.

3. CAPREE GAUL, LIVE MUSIC PRODUCER

15 September 2015

Creative Career

Capree Gaul grew up in Maitland, NSW and began her musical performance career at the Sisters of Mercy Convent in East Maitland where she learnt piano. At 16 she performed in a Duo at the Coach House Restaurant in her home town. Singing with her school friend, Kym Collins, they wore batik skirts and sang Neil Young songs, playing a tambourine and singing ‘lots of thirds’ like “Hey, Hey, My, My,” and “Needle and the Damage Done”. Gaul’s musical performances
continued throughout her twenties as she played in original rock bands, Amos Keeto and the Insex, Happy Dials, Lipp System, When in Rome, Beat Goes Public, and toured the country performing keyboards in rock bands. A career highlight was appearing on the national television in ‘Hey, Hey, It’s Saturday’ and rock program ‘Countdown’ in “Koo De Tah”, Gaul played keyboard and sang harmonies as the band performed their 1986 hit “Too Young for Promises”.

Gaul feels all her live performance experiences contribute to her career as a social entrepreneur, where she creates opportunities for other musicians to showcase their talents in live venues. Gaul’s current band is ‘Trancemission’ and they play alternate 80’s and David Bowie sets in local pubs around Newcastle.

Capree Gaul’s musical performance background has led to her role as a live music producer and she has instigated a number of not-for-profit musical organisations in Newcastle like NIMA, Newcastle Improvised Music Association and NYO, Newcastle Youth Orchestra. Gaul has worked as a volunteer and has been a key player in mobilising others to commit venues and time to host a variety of live performance music for classical, jazz and emerging contemporary musicians and audiences. Gaul was formally trained as a High School Music teacher. She has worked as Head of Music at Hunter School of Performing Arts, and she has been a consultant for University of Newcastle, TAFE, and Newcastle City Council, developing educational programs, concert series and booking musical acts for various programs and events. The volunteer nature of her work means she is a social entrepreneur, doing this work to continue to contribute to the growth of the local music scene. Gaul understands how to harness the social networking aspect of live performance and she works closely with others to create not-for-profit organisations that connect individuals through their common interests in performing a range of new and improvised music, in particular, live jazz.

CI Business

As a social entrepreneur, Capree Gaul has adopted what is called a Community Business Model which means there is a high personal investment of time and emotion. Gaul calls herself a Music Manager but in fact she does much more than this. She is an enabler of live musical performances and uses her social networks to create opportunities for musicians and live performances which harness the collaborative nature of music. She often sees many musicians gift their time, voluntarily to create opportunities for themselves and other musicians.

Gaul was formally trained as a High School Music teacher and that type of employment offers her the freedom to move into short-term contracts as a live music producer in Newcastle. When those opportunities concluded, Gaul has been able to return to teaching as a means to support herself and her family.

Creative Labour

Gaul reflects on her musicianship and why she does what she does.

I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing I think, if I hadn't done all the things that happened beforehand. I think being a performer was really important because then you see what you do as a performer as well as just a creative director or whatever you want to call it. When it comes to programming acts or programming entertainment you sort of think about it more from a different perspective, I guess. Yeah, I don't really know what else,
I guess having, worked in teaching and education for a long time has shaped a lot of things too; I think about what’s important for all that stuff.

Gaul explains why orchestras are so important to the creative careers of young classical musicians.

I think it’s to give young musicians a bit of a foothold to be part of the industry internationally, because globally the only jobs are out there. I mean jobs are just getting so hard to get for young people and if they’re incredibly talented as an oboist, for example, then they have got a pretty fair chance of finding some work if they get themselves over to Berlin, and into that marketplace. So, I think a youth orchestra’s really important as a springboard for them to work as a professional player.

Creative Networking

From 2012 to 2014 Gaul was working as a Regional Coordinator for ‘The Song Room’ which was a not-for-profit based in Melbourne that ran a musical program running for 15 Schools in the Hunter Valley. The program was funded by mining companies with a specific focus on bringing music and the arts to regional Hunter Valley Schools like Bulga near Milbrodale, Broke, Jerrys Plains, Singleton and Muswellbrook South. Gaul’s job was to take musical performance into schools.

So, I went around all the schools and set up these teachers to go in and perform, basically perform for the kids, but to get them involved as well in music making stuff, and not always music making. Sometimes it was drama or art, because they didn’t get anything in their school. They didn’t have anyone on staff who could do it, so they were totally missing out.

The result was a big festival called the ‘True Colours Festival ’where all the schools came and performed, it was like a mini Star Struck, and it was very well received. Sadly, the contract ended and so the program will not run again.

Gaul has identified a more fundamental issue with the music curriculum in school, which is an area of deeper concern.

It just gets to the point where now in schools, there’s no music happening unless the staff that feel confident enough to teach music. And people aren’t made accountable to make it part of their program. They can do 25 hours or whatever of art, and it could be any art.

Creative Entrepreneurship

The social entrepreneur work that Gaul has done has often been in collaboration with other key people.

Each time there’s been a project that I’ve done there has always been another person that I know I can totally trust who wants to do the same thing. And it’s usually a small group of people who are really driven to see it happen, but they’re never the same people because - the jazz was very different to the orchestra, which was different to the L'viesites stuff and so on. But I usually go to other musicians who are around the place and it’s usually to do with renewing something or wanting to build something else for the city.
NIMA, the association that hosts live jazz performances in Newcastle every Tuesday evening at the Grand Hotel now has two Artistic Directors, Adam Miller and Jeremy Borthwick.

NIMA works without money, which is why it’s still going strong after four years. So, we don’t rely on any funding.

Adam Miller, one of NIMA’s Artistic Directors, is a guitarist who has an international profile through his albums and he’s rated third in the world as best emerging guitarist and has been featured on “Guitar” magazine in America. Jeremy Borthwick, the other Artistic Director, has a great national network too. Together they draw four or five international acts throughout the year from countries like Netherlands, Austria, Germany and France. Mainly NIMA attracts acts touring the east coast, like national bands from Perth or Melbourne. At least Newcastle’s featured on all the posters now for the National Jazz Acts, previously it was not. The Grand Hotel gives NIMA access to their basement space and audiences pay a cover charge at the door, $15 or $10 and they get to see some amazing live national and international acts. The door charge is divided up ‘80% will go straight to the musicians, and 20% is used for our production costs, mainly flyers and posters, print media. We’ve got an accountant that runs all of that side of things who pays our artists electronically and that seems to work really well.’ (Gaul, 15 September 2017). The Venue is at maximum capacity with 110, which is standing room only, but the usual crowd size is 50 to 60. In 2015 NIMA had generated $30,000 which goes towards jazz musician wages so that’s a big achievement.

The NIMA audience is very varied …

from uni students right through to retirees; they come and it’s just a real, big mix of people … I guess it’s got a reputation now overseas as well. So, we’re booked a long way ahead, and there’s unfortunately not enough dates for us to fill the demand coming, not so much locally but now nationally. To try and keep up with that, there’s other options now for venues for bigger spaces.

Gaul was a key player in setting up Newcastle Youth Orchestra. She saw a real need for it having taught music at both the Conservatorium of Music and at the Hunter School of the Performing Arts.

Newcastle has a population of 650,000 people and it didn’t have a youth orchestra and it wasn’t just me, it was a small group of us all who started it off who really wanted to see it work because there was a real need.

Gaul assisted by arranging the museum as the venue and in setting up the concert series. The small dedicated team of volunteers also appointed a principal conductor, artistic director, general manager and an accountant. As Gaul says it was ‘again not-for-profit, and it’s all rolling along and I’m not facilitating that anymore, but it’s really nice to see that it’s still working.’ (Gaul, 15 September 2015). The Orchestra was set up for 50 players from 14 to 25. Its members are University students who were attending the Conservatorium of Music in Newcastle as well as High School students mainly from Newcastle but also from surrounding regions and towns like Lake Macquarie, Maitland and further into the Hunter Region. Gaul was working at the Conservatorium as lecturer and she identified a need for an Orchestra for the classical players who were from Newcastle who would otherwise have had to travel to Sydney to be involved in a youth orchestra.
I was able to see a lot of kids who were amazing on their instruments and they had to go to Sydney Youth Orchestra because there’s nothing locally, and I mean yes, there are community orchestras locally which are wonderful and they’re doing well, all of them are. They’re quite strong but for the kids who were really achieving on their instrument, they really needed something to utilise their skill but also to give them that social thing which often they really need because they spend four hours a day practicing an instrument, so socialising can be awkward.

The NYO now has paid positions for the core staff. Initially Michael Power was GM. He was replaced in 2015 with Laura Dawson and the conductor was Jack Machin. These core positions are paid through the students’ fees which makes it sustainable. There are still volunteers working with the orchestra, but they’re there mainly to help with administrative tasks rather than the core creative roles. The artistic decisions are made by the conductor and a small group. The NYO runs a series of concerts. For example, they have done a ‘Classic Kids’ Concert at the Civic theatre which has some giant oversized puppets that add a visual element to the performance. They have also held a concert and have showcased new work that has been written by a local composer.

So, William Jeffrey was our Composer in Residence - he was an up and coming, still doing amazing things. He was commissioned to write some work for NYO, so with NYO again, it starts to create jobs for people.

When asked if she identified with the term Creative Industries, Gaul was reticent. “It’s just a broad term, I guess. It doesn’t really sit with me.” Her final comment about Newcastle’s Music Industry was that it is very fragmented. ‘There are agencies, for example, there are artists, there are recording studios, there are a lot of really good people but it’s very disconnected as an industry’.

Creative Products

Gaul worked for L!vesites, booking musical acts for families who performed live throughout the city.

I was booking acts for L!vesites; that’s a shame that it went. That was $150,000 a year that council didn’t get in funding for live entertainment for families around the city. That’s another story. But anyway, I’d be very keen to keep that going, if that ever happened again. There’s just too many local, emerging acts coming through with nowhere to play; that’s still a real concern.

In the 1970 and 80’s Newcastle was well known as a town for live rock music.

Newcastle was such a musical place in our youth. It was incredibly musical, pub rock theme. Like that’s what you did when you went out. You went to see a band at a pub and it was a local band and was generally playing originals. I know that stuff still happens but it’s not happening to the rate that it was back in those days.

Gaul described the experience of live musical performance, and why it’s so different to digital experience of listening to a song through iTunes:

I think live performances embodies you, it’s part of you and you’re part of the audience and it’s a connection between you and what’s going on musically on the stage in front of you, that you can’t experience digitally. Yeah, it’s just the live experience, and it’s just, I mean I know with the NIMA at the Grand, it’s not just about the music that’s
playing on the stage. It’s the connection with the whole space, the tea light candles or the projections on the wall or whatever it is, but the whole room’s important. I mean the musician’s always ultimately the most important. [laughs]. But the room, that whole experience is important for people, and they’re missing out on it and they’re not supporting enough live music locally, at all. Venues have seen a real decline in crowds across the whole city, so it’s not just in one space. Everyone still has their good nights; people still do go out, but I guess it’s the consistency of it that’s changed. People used to go out every weekend to see a live band; that doesn’t happen these days.

What’s next?

In 2015 Gaul returned to teaching Music at Whitebridge High School.

That’s been a really nice thing to do, to get back into a classroom with kids who are passionate about music, so that’s been good. Again, there are things to do out there with string groups and stuff that I’m trying to set up. But it’s a great place and it’s been nice to have some permanency with my work too. As you know, music managers don’t get paid very much. Some do, perhaps if you’ve got Taylor Swift on the books!

Capree has future aspirations to replicate a large live performance venue in Newcastle, that is similar to the Carriageworks in Sydney, something that can accommodate live performing arts events in the round.

In Newcastle, we’ve got the Roundhouse which is where all the carriages were repaired on this round thing which just spins, and that area now, it’s not residential, it’ll never be residential because of the lead in the soil or whatever that they’ve tried to get rid of. So, it’s not a great spot to live but it wouldn’t be bad to visit every now and then for a performing arts event, maybe, if they treated it. I think it just kind of stagnated. I would love to do the Roundhouse; it’d be awesome to have something to do with that. Not on my own, no way, but with a few other people, I’d love to see the Roundhouse brought back to life.

4. PHILIP MATTHIAS, ACADEMIC AND COMPOSER

21 July 2016

Creative Career

Philip Matthias is from the UK, he went to college in London and trained as a High School teacher. After he completed his degree he did a year’s teaching in an Australian High School and then travelled overseas where he performed as a musician. He returned to a position at the Newcastle Cathedral and later joined the Conservatorium when it was called the Faculty of Music. He entered academia through the Conservatorium and has worked in the academy for more than 25 years.

Philip Matthias is a specialist in Australian church music and composition, especially new liturgies and he leads the Universities Chamber Choir – Echology. Over the last few years he has developed a range of works with Torres Straight Islanders and Indigenous singers and this has led to a performance at the UN General Assembly in 2016.

Phillip describes his industry as the ‘Music Industry’ and he remembers being at college in London and looking through a book that had just been released that told students what their professions
could be ‘And it was really interesting I can remember poring through this thinking “where do I fit? What am I going to do?”’

Philip describes himself as a musician or an academic or a conductor he says, ‘If I wasn’t in the university then I’d probably be writing more music and doing more playing and all that.’

When asked about the Conservatorium of Music Phillip says that it has suffered from an identity crisis:

*The Con’s gone through all these things of identity, you know, like it used to be a Faculty of Music, School of Music. And then Music and Fine Art. And then Music, Fine Art and Drama. Then Creative Arts, and you know, so, it’s had this identity crisis in a way.*

**Creative Labour**

In 2015 Newcastle’s Cathedral asked Philip to write a piece for their choir and organ. They gave him some text and a really short timeframe. He completed the task and it was performed in 2015 and in 2016 it was sung in the UK, in London and then in Norwich. This shows the efforts of a composer’s creative labour, writing a piece of music that can be performed around the world. Currently Philip has turned his attention to the Australian Indigenous community.

*Currently, my main work is with Torres Strait community in writing songs for them and working with groups up in Cairns and Townsville. The Queensland diocese want to print this stuff up in Queensland, for use throughout the diocese.*

Philip has also done a lot of work with Echology, the University’s chamber choir. In 2010 they competed in a competition in China. Then the following year they were in a festival in New York, two years later, 2012 they did “Rhythms of One World” in Geneva. The choir was then invited to perform at the UN Assembly in the “Youth Assembly” where about 1000 young kids from all around the globe are invited to perform each year.

Philip musical compositions are for choirs, for churches like psalms or anthems, for individual performers and for films. When reflecting on the range of ‘gigs’ he undertakes he acknowledges the difference elements to each ‘gig’ and what motivates him.

*If I wrote a piece of music that I want to write, for me, I’ll do my best to be creative and put my all into it, and my skills. And if it’s not for myself but it’s to give to others like for a film, I’ll do it as well as the other pieces but there’s a difference. I put myself into it but at the same time it’s a job, it’s like doing anything else, like fixing plumbing or whatever. (Philip Matthias, July 16, 2016)*

*Musicians play gig’s a lot and often it is not ‘what is created’ but it is process of creation. Maybe it’s just a mindset around the deadline. A composer thinks, ‘I’ve got this deadline, I’ve got to have this product. But great pianists, play fantastical music, they put their heart and soul into it. And they’ll say, “it’s just a gig”, which is true as well, so it’s that dichotomy.’*

**Creative Products**

Phillip composed a song, for an Indigenous fellow David Leha to sing at the UN General Assembly Hall in 2016. Philip was asked to compose it for a bassoon, a horn, a bass and a saxophone and because it was to be performed in this particular space he decided to compose on a Roland
keyboard. Roland’s are saying “this is a big gig”, and they want to be part of it. Philip used some new software to write this song with the assistance of Muso’s Corner, a musical store in Newcastle, who have been critical in securing sponsorship for the UN performance.

The song is designed for speaking and not for performance. But because of this because of David’s way of singing, naturally, it’s not going to fit into our “One, two, three, four, duff, duff, duff, duff, duff”. His is… naturally freer. So, and I’ve tried to keep that freedom. Which means, for instance, you can’t have a backing track. Because a backing track confines you to what it’s doing.

And I can feel there’s a difference in us writing that song, because I want to do that. It’s a new beast, it’s a sort of mix in some way of Western and Indigenous ways of thinking about music. And I’m trying to work through it. And thinking, “what am I creating here?” To give David his culture through it, but it’s also got to weave some western stuff in there as well. And in a way, they’re both the same, those two scenarios, two songs, same singer.

5. TIM MCPHEE MUSICIAN
29 May 2015

Creative Career

Tim McPhee is a musician, playing in Firekites and The Instant. He is also a screen composer, designer, and fashion retailer.

The value of self-sufficiency, Tim has no formal training. He learnt

Just by getting in there. I think in any field, just spending time on tools is what really defines who you are as an artist. And how hungry you are to learn influences, what you write and how much you write. Yeah – for everything that I’ve done in all my creative fields, it’s all been self-taught.

Creative Networking

Well, I love collaborative work and I love working solo as well. It all depends on what project it is. Playing in the bands – Firekites and The Instant – so much of that is about collaboration, live and spontaneous collaboration… And so often you’re left with really special and unique results [but] often it takes up more time…the last Firekites record…ended up costing us four years … whereas we did a show with Firekites earlier in the year… live and improvised…in this tiny, tiny room …and we recorded that, and it’s just come out so special.

Creative Products

Talking of his experience composing for the TV series Barinia, Tim says:

there’s something so liberating about being able to continue working on an idea without having to send it off to one of your other collaborators and waiting a week or waiting a month until your next rehearsal. Just being able to finish a piece while it’s completely top of mind, when you’re in the moment, it’s the best thing.
Being precious and being passionate is a different thing... going into a collaboration you need to be really open to the possibility of everything that you do not being used... you could spend all night on a piece that you think is just absolutely perfect, but then it goes back to the other person, they add some more things, and then all of a sudden, what you put down, whilst it inspired the next layer of music that was put on, or next layer of instrumentation that was put on, with that removed, that’s where the truth lies in the piece, and you have to be okay with that. It’s hard, but yeah...

There’s such a close relationship between music and art. Both inspire and feed off each other without a doubt”.

For their show in the Spiegeltent at The Sydney Festival, they played in front of a large art work by artist Aaron Kinnane which they commissioned for the event.

At the time of their first album, ‘the only way of promoting shows ... was with press ads in Drum Media, and wall posters but for the new show [five years on], well, we did no wall posters, no pole posters or café posters, it was all on social media. And having knowledge of that for any artist I think, particularly in music, is important now. So, skill sets have kind of widened. So now, everyone is now expected to have a really strong level of promotion and sufficiency in those mediums

Creative Labour

Tim records ideas and musical pieces onto his iPhone, and some ended up being on the album.

We ended up duplicating the channels, because when you record on your iPhone it’s in mono, so I just doubled the channels, and EQ’d each channel differently, and then we added bass and it was done. We did try and re-record that, but it just didn’t have the same sparkle or magic at all... The original phone recording is what’s on the album.

The iPhone is important for capturing ideas quickly when you’re on the fly, or on the go but you do need quite a lot of gear. I need a lot of instruments and, thankfully, I’ve been able to build a beautiful home studio over the year. But you don’t actually need heaps of gear to be able to record with now, which would be more than adequate to record – you’ve got two stereo channels in and a field mic for recording. You could do soundtrack work on that. With ProTools and interfaces and computers now, you’re able to work in studio environments that would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars only a decade ago.

Globally, within the music industry, a lot has changed over the last three years, last 18 months, last year, with things like Spotify and file-sharing and file-streaming. That’s definitely influenced the way we’re considering our next step forward, in terms of releasing music

In terms of what it feels like to be in the creative flow: Tim said of writing all of the music for “Barinia”:

All of the music just poured out. I’ve never had an experience like it... I wouldn’t say it was effortless, but it was the first time that music and finished arrangements came to fruition so quickly. Like in one night I’d have a complete arrangement with multi channels of guitars and bass and percussion, and field recordings. And it was just the
most satisfying and exciting project. Yeah, a real turning point for me musically, having spent all these years labouring over these Firekites tracks, where four years of work funnelled down to seven songs and 40-plus minutes of music. Whereas with Barinia, working on that for a year, I ended up with 140 tracks and I got eight hours of music tracked and mixed.

The Firekites album got “lots of really amazing reviews ... lots of four and a half stars and four-star. But it was more about what they wrote than the star rating, about the colours and how the music made them feel, and that’s an important thing for me, people reacting to the music in a kind of personal and physical way. That’s such a special thing and if any art can evoke or provoke that kind of physical feeling, that’s quite possibly the most important part of any art, really.

I guess an element of audience preference may have been considered with Barinia but actually, I don’t think it was, because all those pieces kind of poured out and it was about what Karl and I were feeling, what was working for the pictures, and we never really considered the audience. And certainly, with recording tracks for The Instant or Firekites, we never consider whether it’s a radio-friendly length or ... you know, a lot of what I do is instrumental and instrumental music is not really a commercially viable format in the context of Australian radio or anything like that.

With Barinia, he chose to ‘take shares in the project as opposed to an up-front payment... it was definitely a gamble, putting in thousands of hours for potentially zero return.”

We’ve had a combination of elements fund the last Firekites record, a lot of my money, a portion from the record label and a small contribution from the Australia Council, which came from a grant we applied for through the record label.

Creative Futures

there are lot of bands, and unfortunately not enough venues to accommodate these bands. In fact, a friend of mine, Liz Pike ...exhibited some of her art at an interesting show last weekend, which was at a house in Merewether, and they had eight artists and eight bands over the weekend. And so, they turned the house, a residential house, into a live installation of music and art. And I just thought-- they don’t need to pay for a commercial gallery space or a venue, they’re just transforming a house, and apparently there were hundreds of people, and yes, the house did get destroyed [laughs] ...
specific performances. Past projects are richly diverse and include elements of musical performance and multimedia experiences with *Dining with Alice*, an interactive dining experience and *A Perfect Day*, an outdoor mixed media event. Millward’s last collaboration was *London Memories*, a project funded through Creativeworks London (AHRC). This project allowed STROMATOLITE and Kingston University to collaborate on a location-based project where mobile technologies were used to celebrate the personal narrative of London communities.

Millward’s research expertise is in the relationship between the acoustic and the visual. This enquiry began and during his PhD in music and applied technologies at the University of Queensland (2001), where his practice-led research explored the digital editing processes through the production of music and video. Millward’s Masters was undertaken in computer music composition at the City University of New York. Professionally Millward has managed his own recording studio and has worked freelance as a composer, musician and producer and as a tour manager for Arts Council Queensland.

**Creative Education**

Returning to Australia, after living and working in the UK for decades was an experience. Millward comments

Australia has never been good at understanding the value of culture. People often send it up when they mockingly say ‘Kult Cha’.

> The difference between here and the UK in terms of Creative Industries is that they talk about economies there...the term ‘industries’ has sort of been superseded by the term ‘economies’ – the economic unit can be considered to include a person with a camera and a bedroom and a computer. I think that this situation is also political because there’s a sourness about Blair as ‘creative industries’ comes from Blair along with that smart country, cool Britannia stuff.

Millward has grave reservations about the future of art’s schools in Australian universities:

> The worst thing you can do to an art school, or to so called ‘creatives’, is put them into a university environment. The worst thing you can do to in a university is put an art school at a place where it’s not actually valued for what it is.

The academy’s being commercialised. There are big ethical questions involved here.

> Australia’s always been a protectionist country and Newcastle carries on that protectionist tradition. It’s very difficult for anybody coming in to do anything that isn’t sanctioned by the ideas police. There are a lot of ‘blockers’ here in Newcastle. In fact, it’s very hard for anybody to come in to do much at all. Even though I’m an Australian, people still ask me if I’m English, even though I have an Australian accent. What I left behind in the UK were all those day-to-day contacts that aren’t relevant or functional here in Newcastle. It’s taken me two years to reconnect with people that I know here in Australia. It’s a big country but small in terms of numbers of people.

**Creative Networks**

Millward can provide some perspectives on Newcastle’s creative networks and its reputation

> I hooked up with people from UTS and UNSW Art and Design talking about all the things that I think are important in an industrial context: place making, whether you’re
talking about Newcastle Now or Renew, or both. And people said “You’re in Newcastle. Wow, it’s really happening in Newcastle”. So, Newcastle is perceived to be successful, strangely, as a creative place. People keep saying how many artists there are in this area.

It’s important for people to come together, like NCAC, putting together a model that connects in the real world with what it is that creativity and all those things are about in whatever form, in whatever expressive form, in whatever engaged output. And not bound by the constrictions of protocols involving indicators of ‘performance’ and I guess laws, rules, whatever, policy applied from completely different sets of circumstances.

Creative Future

Can artist make a living from their creativity?

But look, no one really makes a living out of being a creative artist. There’s like a pyramid with a pinpoint at the top, and on the pinpoint are the number of people who make about $150,000 a year or more. There are a lot of people who live on thirty, fifty, sixty, seventy thousand. If they’re really good and they’re really commercial they’ll make $120,000. There are very few practicing creative artists who make more than $200,000 a year. Most doctors make more than that. So, it’s understandable that every mother wants their children to be doctors (or lawyers) because they make loads as well.

A lot of success in the creative arts is about personality, luck, and in certain circumstances it’s about skill, it’s about being virtuosic, being different, having something to say. In a sense that’s something that still continues to be dominant, actually having something to say, which is very difficult to get students to understand. What do you want to say? You got anything to say? What are you going to say? What about? That’s the first question, they ask “What about?” “I don’t know, the world, what you think? What do you think?

If you have something to say and the passion to keep saying it because it’s important then you will always be successful. You will become your own industry, generate your own audience and live off the returns that such energy and relevance create.

7. STEVEN PICKETT, MUSIC ENTREPRENEUR

EAO Entertainment, 10 October 2015

Creative Career

Steven grew up in Taree and always wanted to open a recording studio in Newcastle. His parents encouraged him to become a teacher, because of the risky nature of the music business. So, Steven studied at the Newcastle College of Advanced Education and completed a Diploma in Teaching. He calculated that he needed $120,000 to open a studio and he worked during the day as a teacher, in the evening in part-time fast food outlets and at night mixing live bands to save enough money over five years. With some assistance from a friend he opened EARS, Eastern Acoustic Recording
Studio, in late 1988. Eventually EARS became EAO, the Eastern Acoustic Organisation and Pickett continues to be its Managing Director today. He also is Managing Director of Newcastle Live and a director of advertising agency Brand Pool.

**CI Business**

Steven Pickett runs three businesses. He is Managing Director of EAO Entertainment that is Newcastle and the Hunter's leading Entertainment Agency. EAO was established in 1988 and it represents the region's artists and venues, as well as promoting tours by national and international artists.

Pickett is Managing Director of Newcastle Live (NL), which is a digital and creative music business reaching over 500,000 people every month via website and social media channels and an emailed Newsletter. NL claims to be ‘the Hunter’s premier online music, entertainment and lifestyle guide’ (NL 2017, online). It delivers a comprehensive online environment where those seeking what’s going on in the valley ‘keep up to date with the latest local entertainment and lifestyle news, reviews, features, and giveaways’ (ibid). It delivers a very comprehensive gig and events guide which is updated every week and performers can submit information about their shows. Venues can register to be included.

The final business Pickett is involved in is Brand Pool, an advertising agency where he is a Director. Pickett is also a partner in two Newcastle music venues, The Star Hotel and Five Sawyers.

**Creative Labour**

In looking at the income musicians derive Steven Pickett suggests that in terms of comparative incomes between the 1980s and now, for a four-piece band:

> there’d be lucky to be 10%/20% difference. It’s changed very little. Strangely the soloists get a bit more. The soloists I think back then were happy with $100.00/$150.00. They’re now around $300.00/$350.00 - a majority of them, with some of the better ones at $400.00/$450.00. Bands are still, we still get hotels wanting to be able to book bands for $600.00 and “We want a six-piece band, $600.00, supply your own PA”. [Laughing] Yeah. But that’s still, we get requests. Now we’re lucky, we’re quite choosy about what we do. We have bands now going out for $1,200.00. $1,200.00, once upon a time, would have been the very top-level bands...There’s a local band called The Rumour, which has some amazing musicians including Marty Worrall who appears on The Voice as a backup singer for the Voice, not as a contestant, an absolutely superb band. They’re worth $2,500.00/$3,000.00. But you can’t get that locally. You just can’t. You can in functions, but you can’t in local gigs week to week. You just can’t do it. There have been increases but it’s in no way kept up with everybody else’s wage increases.

**Creative Futures**

Given these circumstances Steven Pickett thinks:

> publishing is where all the money is. And I think if you can get a song and get it out there and someone else records it or it gets put on a compilation CD that’s where the money is. If I was 20 now I’d be pushing people into the world of song writing, and I’d
be working on social media as a, my business would be based around publishing and social media. I would start a completely different business model now, and I think actually, that musicians have more power now because they can. Realistically you can buy what I spent my life building, $120,000.00, that could equip you with four studios nowadays basically. You can buy great equipment, you can record with the ability to edit and enhance it digitally, and then you’ve got the internet to take it worldwide.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Newcastle based music entrepreneur, Steven Pickett, comments on the lock out laws that venues have faced in the Hunter:

The lock out laws in my opinion did nothing but decimate the Newcastle social scene. What was 30,000 people went down to 3,000 people who had to be shared among what venues there were...I’m passionate about giving local musicians somewhere to show their wares but it’s being strangled. And it’s being strangled by so many things that we’ve all documented and now it’s still happening in the year 2015, and it really needs to change. So, the legal framework now is absolutely against anything live in Newcastle and it needs to change, and in the last three weeks two instances, the CBD and the Terrace, are prime instances… they’ve been holding music there [at the CBD], live and DJ and recorded music, for at least 30 years that I know of and probably longer. Sometime in the late 1990s they built a block of apartments at the back. The other day a person in that block of apartments made a complaint and said that their mental health was being affected by the volume of music, and so the CBD Hotel is not allowed to have music or patrons in their courtyard after 10:00 pm. Now to give you an idea of the framework, the legal framework... Newcastle City Council started to receive a lot of noise complaints and I have only learnt this recently from an acoustician, a professional, a person who goes and measures sound for a living. He said to me that Newcastle City Council has the strictest noise conditions in the State, if not Australia, and they came about because their mission was not to manage the noise complaints more efficiently but to eliminate the noise complaints, so that if someone complained about the noise they needed a mechanism where they could shut the pub down. That was easier. And that’s what’s happened...There needs to be two things: number one, entertainment precincts that are protected from that type of thing. And secondly, a first occupancy rule I believe should be brought into New South Wales where if you’ve moved next door to a pub that has live music you know that you can’t do anything about that. Move somewhere else...cities that have experienced the decline and then gone ‘Well uh oh we’ve done something wrong here’ have reinvigorated, and they’re Melbourne and Brisbane with Fortitude Valley, they’ve actually got three entertainment precincts that have protected venues.

Creative Career

Growing up in Taree in the 1970’s and 1980’s Steven got his fix of music from television. I really fell in love with music watching Countdown and particularly a band called Kiss, who I got to see last Monday night. When I saw that, the theatre of it engaged me, and then the more I delved into it I discovered people like Bob Dylan and the depth of literature and ‘literariness’ within the music. And then there was, I just fell in love
with Australian music. Anyway, at that point I was a young boy in Taree, and there were only a couple of music stores in town so there wasn’t a lot to feed my soul. So, I ordered from the newsagency a magazine called The Mix, and it was about recording studios. And I basically learnt how to build and operate a recording studio by reading magazines, because there was nothing else. I decided that that’s what I wanted to do. In the year of my HSC I got Kevin Borich’s debut album Celebration and the Best of the Doobie Brothers. And then proceeded to fail the HSC because I didn’t do anything other than listen to those records. I then went back to Year 12 and did it again and became first in English and so on. My parents said to me that “The music industry is quite fickle, you should do something else”, which I think a lot of people are told. My backstop was to, because I love creativity and literature was my backstop, become a teacher. I loved English and I love the opportunity to go and share literature with kids. And I loved the teaching period, so I went to the Newcastle College of Advanced Education, got my Diploma in Teaching, and started teaching, eventually got a job at Kotara High School. My long-term aim was always to open a recording studio.

Pickett was motivated at one period to operate as a regional record label would:

_We even started up our own distribution network in Newcastle, the Newcastle Music Network where we had bins made, and we took them around to all the local record stores. There were about 30 of them then. And Terry, who became my business partner, and I used to get in the van one day a month and travel around all the record stores and put local product in. we invested in a number of original music acts over a ten-year period, and we’d spent, we’d lost well over a million dollars over that period, that we’d invested in local musicians only to have them, like Bliss for example, I don’t know if you remember them. But we got them to the stage where Polygram were ready to sign them and then the guitarist didn’t want to work with the lead singer ever again. And this sort of stuff, and it just, Terry just came to me one day and said, “From a business point of view mate, we need to look at this” and virtually from the end of one year to the start of the next, EAO turned from being recording studio, managing original artists, and supporting original artists financially, to becoming a cover agency. And financially it was the best thing we ever did. For the soul I’m not sure. But I mean there was a lot of grief and we were worried about things. Terry and I were living on, we had the business running and we were going at, our only wage could be $98.00 a week because at $99.00 you had to pay tax and we couldn’t afford it. So, we’d get $98.00 a week from this business which was probably, I don’t know, probably six/seven/eight years old by this point, and we’re on $98.00 a week for a long time each. And he was going out and doing load ins at the Entertainment Centre or the Workers Club back in the day, and I was doing sound at the Castle. And that’s how we made our money to live._

**Creative Products**

Newcastle Live has become an important media outlet for many regional performers and the touring acts which are promoted through the site. Pickett suggests that:

_the media in this town is, particularly the radio stations, once they became conglomerated into the bigger picture of the world, once that happened I was in a situation where I was pushing local music to local radio stations and I had a program_
on New FM to start with, and NX FM...and 2NUR before that. But it was very hard to get support from the local paper, from the local radio stations, and virtually impossible from the local TV stations. It was hard. But I guess one of the things that, as the 21st Century dawned, the digital world came into being, and it occurred to me that I might be able to create something and invest in the creation of something, that could support local music without having to rely on those big media, and become the media. And some quarter of a million dollars later Newcastle Live was born. If I was 20 now and was starting a business, my business would be based on that creativity, that heart, so I would have a studio, a digital studio so I could record and produce the music, and then there needs to be a way that that could go out to the world [which is] now social media, the internet itself. So, you’ve got a website, created a website, having a website’s critical. And then there’s things like iTunes where you can put a song on iTunes and people can buy it from there, all around the world. So, you just need to find a way to get it all around the world. How can you do that? If you’ve got somebody supporting you, you can spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on social media like Facebook and get it and target audiences. I don’t know if you know much about Facebook, but you can actually go in and target 55 to 65-year-old people that live within 25 miles of Newcastle that have an interest in 1970’s music. Which I’ve just done for a Black Feather concert which went from three tables to almost sold out. Newcastle Live did that as an experiment to see if we could do it, and we did. So, I think the opportunity for musicians now is to be able to, to have that, is enormous.

What’s next?

I’m hoping, that there’s enough talent, and enough passionate people, that do the business side of things and the venues, and that side of things, that somehow provide a platform that allows a renaissance to occur. Because something is in the Hunter water, there is something unique about this. And I know it’s an absurd comment to say something’s in the water, but there is something about growing up in a working-class place that has such exposure from outside influences. We’re not that far from Sydney but we’re never Sydney, ever. And that working-class thing where you get to experience the real lows of life, of having no money and having to work so hard, for an artist, for me that’s, if they can bring that out in themselves that’s going to connect with a whole lot of other people that have had similar experiences, that get it, right around the world.
Radio

8. Philip Adams, Public Intellectual

12 April 2016

Philip Adams owns an agricultural property in the Upper Hunter and broadcasts *Late Night Live*, his long-running radio program for Radio National, from the ABC Upper Hunter radio studio.

Adams has always had an insatiable curiosity and was self-educated. As a young journalist he wrote for the *Eltham* magazine, reviewed films for the *Communist Weekly* (under a pseudonym) and became a fill-in critic for *The Bulletin*. He also covered for many journalists in Melbourne. As Adams describes it:

*at the age of 15 or 16 I’m starting to review everything from plays to concerts, not that I was competent to do so but no one seemed to notice. So that was my first, if you like, professional engagement, once again under the guise of anonymity but in that case using other people’s by-lines. So that’s pretty much what happened. I then got into *The Bulletin* under my own name when Donald Horne took over as editor.*

Adams was given a full column at *The Australian* newspaper before joining *Nation Review*. He then moved between Fairfax and News Corp as a writer for some time. Adams, however, hasn’t always told stories for the ABC: he began his creative career in advertising, where he found himself:

*in the company of people like Bruce Petty, Fred Schepisi (who would go on to become a significant film-maker), Peter Carey et al. There were a lot of us. We didn’t know each other necessarily at the time, and nor had we confessed our creative ambitions to each other, but advertising gave us a home long before the government got interested in setting up funding bodies. So that’s how I started.*

While working in advertising, he made his first feature film with a budget of $6,000. With his business partner Brian Robinson, he won several film awards. At that time, he says, he ‘became absolutely determined that we should have a film industry’. Along with his friend, politician Barry Jones, he convinced Prime Minister John Gorton to initiate a program of film funding.

Creative career

Adams went on to be not only an advertising executive and journalist but also a film producer, author and radio broadcaster. He is now known as a social commentator and public intellectual. He sits on many prestigious not-for-profit boards, predominantly in the cultural sphere, and has been awarded several honorary doctorates as well as an Order of Australia (AO) and a number of other prestigious honours. The National Trust has named him a National Living Treasure.

*I was juggling an awful lot of stuff, and it seemed I was working 24/7, as they say now, juggling business career, journalism, film, etc. etc. But at that stage of my life I seemed to have boundless energy so it wasn’t much of an issue…I was [also] writing two columns a week, and these were not the 1,000 worders or the 600 worders you get these days, we’re talking thousands of words. But I did that through the simple process of dictation; for about 40 years I never physically wrote a word, I simply dictated, on*
everything, everything from film scripts to newspaper columns to correspondence to shopping lists.

Creative Products

As a film producer Philip Adams is responsible for some of the most iconic Australian feature films ever made: *The Adventures of Bazza Mackenzie*, *We of the Never Never* and *Don’s Party*. He was also instrumental in setting up the Australian Film Commission. He authored over 20 books and still writes a column for *The Australian* newspaper. He began his radio career on commercial station 2UE, working the late shift in the 80s and 90s.

*The great thing about late night is they didn’t give a fuck what I did. So, there I am on 2UE interviewing Manning Clark, for Christ’s sake. They’d never heard of him but it seemed to rate okay so they left me alone.*

He then moved to ABC Radio, taking over Radio National’s *Late Night Live* program which was also broadcast on Radio Australia. It is now heard globally via the Internet, yet it originates in a small regional studio in the Upper Hunter. Adams calls himself ‘a Luddite’, saying ‘that’s tactical as much as anything – I refuse to be multi-skilled’ and explains:

*I just wander in and sit down at this dazzling array of screens and knobs, but have others do it. I’d suddenly discovered that the new technologies were quite advantageous and miraculously for quite a long time we were the biggest podcast program in the country.*

This move into the digital realm has been very successful for Adams. He suggests that his success, where he now attracts not only a sizable international audience but many other authors and public intellectuals from around the world who clamour to be part of his radio program, is attributable to one important paradox:

*I’ve always taken the view, whether you’re making a film or writing a column, that in a sense this is cultural specificity. Being local is probably the best way to have a hope of being international. The great cinema isn’t the cinema of genre that tries very much to be mid-Atlantic or mid-Pacific; it’s in every country. It’s when you do a fucking good Italian film or French film, Russian, that you’ve got a hope of universality. You don’t get it out of any other sort of route.*

Adams, then, is both locally and globally focused; he looks for the universal in the specific.

Adams also realises how important his team is to him and understands the difficulties his style of locally-rooted but globally-oriented broadcasting presents to them.

*Look, at Late Night Live I sing the praises of the team every Thursday night, and I do it from the bottom of my heart. But the fact is I’ve had dozens and dozens and dozens of producers... On the record, I have to say, that a great deal of their efforts are wasted; they slave over a brief, they’ll produce masses of research material which I very rarely read, they’ll give me a long list of questions which I very, very rarely use because I prefer to go into the thing almost blissfully ignorant, because I don’t have interviews, I have conversations, and so it’s a different approach to the material.*

During his broadcasts, Adams makes idiosyncratic references to his listeners as “Gladdies” and “Poddies”: the first is his traditional listener, sitting beside the radio, and the latter is his more modern listener tuning in online. Adams observes:
And of course, the jokes about Gladdies and Poddies aren’t entirely jokes; they're quite serious. The Gladdy is quite a serious point that to me the trick has always been to imagine that there’s just one person listening.

This traditional way of engaging with the radio listener has not gone out of vogue as yet on the commercial stations and most definitely not at the ABC. It is one of radio’s enduring attractions. However, for Adams and many others at the national broadcaster, the financial remuneration is the least of radio’s attractions:

The ABC doesn’t pay anything, but of course it’s a job for which there’s a queue around the block. It’s regarded, widely regarded. I remember, yeah, quite a few people have said ‘this is the best job in media; who else can sit and talk to anyone pretty much around the world, on any topic?’ There is no other job like that. And there’s always three or four hard working people who will track these characters down, get them in the studio, and off we go. So, I am inordinately fortunate to have it. But what the ABC does, or what it did, it does it less and less now because it’s so fucking broke, is it compensates me in other ways. For example, they upgraded the studio in Muswellbrook for me, so I can do the program at least once a week in the bush, which helps me enormously, because as you may know, I live an awful long way from Sydney.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Adams observes that he is not the only person of stature in what is now called the creative industries, to reside in or come from the Upper Hunter. His proximity not only to Muswellbrook but also Scone gives him a unique perspective. Murrurundi in the Upper Hunter is a case in point. ‘And there, in itself, is this little festering hot spot of all sorts of very eccentric creative people living in a town which is almost ruined by poverty, and which is now being recycled as a cheap and interesting place to live by artists’.

When asked about the term ‘industry’ in the creative industries Adams is pragmatic:

Well, I find the notion of industry and art slightly tense, but it was ever thus. Look at the lives of the good and the great over the millennia; they’ve always needed a wealthy patron to write out the cheques, whether they’re Imhotep building a pyramid or Michelangelo painting a ceiling. Art or painting has for centuries, of course, been a commercial practice. It’s not just contemporary artists ramping up the price at Sotheby’s or Christies though, by getting their wives to bid; it’s a business, and all forms of art, it seems, are now businesses. So, I suppose ‘creative industries’ is okay; it’s as accurate a term as any. But it is a bit devoid of sentiment.

Creative Futures

I am totally bewildered by the new technologies and the disruptors and all the rest of it that’s happening. But on the other hand, as I pointed out the other day on some public occasion, we’re still doing exactly the same things as we did 3,000 years ago: we’re painting our faces; walking onto wooden platforms and doing something called acting; we’re still blowing and tooting and plucking at musical instruments, as we’ve done for thousands of years; we’re still doing all the ancient things. We’re still stringing words together, making pots. So there’s a paradox: the new technologies come rushing forward and yet, if anything, well, every reaction has an equal reaction,
and the equal reaction is to preserve continuity and the old. So I suppose they’ll coexist like the double helix circling around each other.

9. PHIL ASHLEY-BROWN, NATIONAL RADIO MANAGER

ABC Radio, 22 September 2015

Creative Careers

Phil Ashley-Brown grew up in Muswellbrook, NSW and completed a degree in Communication at The University of Newcastle. His final year major project - a five-minute package focused on Revhead culture in Newcastle - was bought by both Triple J and Radio National. After a period of unemployment, he began voluntary work for a local MP which led to a paid role as a speechwriter lasting for three years. This involved not only constituent work but also media work. He says:

Radio was the one thing that had always interested me. I was inspired by what you could do with radio, with the intimacy of radio, with the scope, where you can go.

Ashley Brown says that in his holidays he would do work experience in different ABC stations around the country. After applying for ten different positions, he eventually gained a journalist role in radio in Muswellbrook.

His Linked In professional profile (as at September 2015) states that Ashley-Brown is ‘the ABC's Manager of Broadcast Content Quality. ... He works with teams on the ground in a newly created national role for the ABC's Regional Division. ... Phil Ashley-Brown was the station manager for 1233 ABC Newcastle from January 2008 through to July 2015. His main focus in the institution has been on radio journalism and his personal skill set includes interviewing, editing and writing which merged into multi-track editing and mixing.’

CI Business

1233 ABC Newcastle broadcasts from a studio in Newcastle CBD. The business has seen significant change. ‘ABC Local Radio’ has become ‘ABC Regional’ whose function is delivering content that has a ‘distinctive mix of news, views, current affairs, talkback, entertainment, sport, music, and rural issues’ (ABC 2006, online). Further detail is provided on the ABC website:

In 2014, the Corporation created two new divisions - Digital Network, to drive new digital capabilities, and ABC Regional, to ensure the needs of audiences in rural and regional Australia were being met. ABC Regional officially launched in July 2015. New investment in digital platforms including apps, the ABC Radio Player and better streaming facilities have enabled the ABC to meet audience expectation in the digital age (ABC 2017a, online).

Podcasts and iView first-release productions have become important points of audience contact for the ABC. Following a restructure, ABC Radio has integrated its digital and broadcast platforms more fully and has taken on an audience-centric rather than a platform-centric approach, which means that ABC radio employees now need to be multi-skilled.
Creative Networks

Ashley-Brown describes how radio has always inspired him:

*I was inspired to go into radio as a 13-year-old. I remember saving up to buy my very first radio. It was a little transistor, it cost $13.00, and I bought it from one of the stores in the main street of Muswellbrook. And I used to love listening to radio. I used to love hearing voices from all over the place, and listening to different music. And I think I got the radio bug then as a child. And then as I grew up I experienced radio in different ways. Another turning point was in 1989 and tuning into this radio station and hearing the coverage of the earthquake, and thinking “Wow, there’s something extraordinary about that radio station, the fact that it is really at this point in time the central hub of this community, it’s bringing everyone together, it’s telling everyone what’s going on”. And at that point I was a 19-year-old, I really knew that’s what I wanted to do. I was quite inspired by that point to really get into it.*

Creative Career

After completing his degree at The University of Newcastle, Ashley-Brown was working his phone contacts, looking for a job:

*And one day out of the blue I rang the Newcastle News Editor, Nick Talbot his name was, and said “Do you have any jobs going?” I’d phoned him many times; he knew who I was by this point. I was just ringing up out of the blue. He’d found out about an hour before that his journalist in Muswellbrook was leaving, and he didn’t know how to fill the vacancy. He couldn’t find anyone who knew the place, he couldn’t find anyone who wanted to go there, and I said to him “I grew up in Muswellbrook, I know the place well, I’d love to go back”, and he said he nearly fell off his chair, he was so excited that he’d found someone. So that’s how I started. So, I started in the Muswellbrook newsroom reading news and writing news as a one-person journalist newsroom with the rural reporter up there, and that’s how it started, so it was a good place to start, because you’ve got to generate all your own contacts and all your own stories, and it’s still a place that I fondly remember, and when I go there I still bump into a lot of the people that I interviewed all those years ago.*

Ashley-Brown observes of ABC employees ‘everyone here has to be able to take a photo, everyone here has to be able to shoot some basic video, we have to know how to post onto Facebook, we have to know how to be strategic with social media, so we’re all across that at varying levels’. He also points out that in this workplace ‘some people are great at one thing and others are great at another. So we work together to maximise the use of those skills. But personally, my skill level has increased over time and evolves constantly’.

Creative Products

Ashley-Brown created a radio series called *River Stories* that reflects the heart of the region:

*River Stories is a story about the Hunter River starting from the beginning of the river in the Barrington Tops all the way down to Newcastle Harbour. And this is a story that*
started when I first joined the ABC in Muswellbrook. I got this idea about the river. I wanted to do something on the river. And as someone who’d grown up in Muswellbrook, I’d experienced the river in floods, I’d seen fires rage around the river, I’d met farmers who’d worked on the river, and so I came up with this idea of doing a radio series. So, in 2001 I did a bunch of stories that ran from the beginning of the river all the way down, and I recorded those over a couple of years, and they went to air in 2003. And they were hugely popular because they connected people to the river, which is the lifeblood of the Hunter Valley. And then 10 years later I wanted to go back and see what had happened. How had the river changed, how had the people changed, what were the economic changes and the social changes in the community? And so I went back but this time I went back with a film crew, and we filmed the river, and we did a real focus on the river from not just a radio point of view, but from a multimedia point of view, which culminated in an exhibition in the Maitland Regional Art Gallery. So it was a much different approach. And I think the changes in the river are also reflected in the changes in the approach we had. So, we were not just a radio station anymore, we were a multimedia centre with so many different ways of telling the same story.

These radical changes in the modes of delivery the ABC now embraces are still, however, coupled with what can be seen as one of the ABC’s more traditionally important functions:

During emergencies, stations like this are the hub of the community, and we work really hard to make sure that what we’re doing here reflects truly what’s going on. And we use every single element of the radio station and of the people who work here. We use our multimedia capabilities, we get out and we take photos, we make sure that the audience is involved. And interestingly we use the skills of the people here, but the skills of our audience are really where the power is. So, our power isn’t here, it’s out in the community, it’s people ringing in, it’s people sending texts in, information.

What’s next?

The ABC’s focus is to be innovative and to really be at the forefront of digital storytelling, and storytelling of any type. And that is something that has been driven very, very hard within this organisation. So we have been at the forefront of using social media from the get go, and all our staff are trained in social media. But we think creatively as much as we can about how to connect with our audience. So for us it’s all about the audience and how can we reach the biggest audience possible. At the end of the day taxpayers pay for the service here and we want to make sure that service gets out to as many people as possible, whether they’re in Newcastle or in Lake Macquarie, or whether they’re in the Hunter Valley or even overseas, we want to try and broaden out that appeal as much as we can.

A video interview was recorded with Phil Ashley-Brown and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
10. SEAN ISON, RADIO ENTREPRENEUR

Ison Live Radio, 20 May 2016

Creative Career

Sean Ison began his career in radio 25 years ago as a cart boy, working at various stations in the production side of commercial radio. Later he spent a number of years on air on community radio and narrowcast broadcasting. He has a BA (Com. Stud.) completed in 2004. He is currently the president of The Independent Australian Radio Broadcasters Association. Currently he concentrates on successful syndicated programming and developing new technologies in radio production. He is the Product Manager for Australian Broadcasting Media, which was originally set up as Ison Live Radio and owns half of that company. He oversees the music coming in from all online sources and the music going out in terms of the products and programs the company creates. He says: ‘Every product that’s created has to be saleable, it has to have a dollar value attached to it. It has to be something we can either fly with advertising or something we can sell as a package to other radio stations or TV stations.’

CI Business

Ison Live Radio [http://www.isonliveradio.com/about.html](http://www.isonliveradio.com/about.html) produces weekly radio programs for radio stations all around the world. In a range of formats, our shows are heard by over a million free-to-air radio listeners each week. We also produce direct-to-radio programming from our studios 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is non-stop music programming in nine different formats, delivered via the Internet or via satellite straight through the mixing desks of Australian radio stations hooked up to our own ILR Media Server. Although web casting is a somewhat minor concern with us, we also have a substantial share in online radio in Australia with our daily webcasts reporting listeners from one end of the country to the other.

Creative Entrepreneurship

I actually own half of Australian Broadcasting Media; I set it up with a guy and we went and got investors from Israel to set it up and we bought a stack of stations, they’re all country music stations, they go down the Hume Highway, and there’s a bunch of them in towards the Riverina. That’s basically where they’re running. There’s about 40 of them, I think. They’re all ... narrowcasts; they’re low-power FM, although we don’t run them quite at low power. But if you chain it together you end up with one big sort of radio station, and we bought those in 2008 and set them up. So our business is sort of two-tiered now: we’re still doing syndicated programming but we’re also now able to put the same resources that we had coming into this syndicated side of things into actual radio stations of our own, and we play quite a lot of syndicated shows as well, we have a lot of syndicated shows coming in now. The way they’re set up, they go into independent mode where it’s all computerised. They basically play, do their own thing at certain times of the day, because I decided it wasn’t worth networking automation basically through the satellite link, it wasn’t worth paying for it. And then at particular times we have a nationally-syndicated morning show. That goes out, that’s all in real time. I do an overnight show which is voice-tracked most of the time because I’m not usually creeping around at midnight anymore! And what else do we
do? We have a drive time program. So, there’s certain times of the day when it’s the same program going throughout the whole thing, covering the whole region, and then other times they’re doing their own little thing, playing local advertising and stuff like that.

Creative Networks

I would say that we use the internet to great advantage. I mean I had no real use for the internet, no experience of it until I went back to university, and it opened up a whole world for me. And I was able to contact a lot of people and to make friends, also sometimes our products, like our shows, the actual specific shows carried word of mouth with other stations. We also were working with a lot of musicians for the music to come in from the musicians, and a lot of them actually put us on to stations, believe it or not, which was pretty good... The main thing was that we set up an industry website called Ausradiosearch (http://www.ausradiosearch.com) and offered all kinds of free services and content as a package they could signup up for free. This attracted a lot of Australian and overseas traffic from radio stations (about 800 visitors a day at its peak). We then hitched onto this and offered them shows. As I recall now this is the main way we made the initial contacts.

Creative IP

Australian Broadcasting Media has an arrangement with APRA which we negotiated, so I mean of old we didn’t worry about this, but we had to, especially once we started getting terrestrial radio stations, so we negotiate a special arrangement with them. But we started a thing called Radio Sydney which is 250-odd streams of internet radio, and we had to negotiate a special arrangement for that as well. I mean we’ve got a lawyer and we do play it close to the wind sometimes and interpret the law our way. I think the thing with this whole, even just radio itself, the whole, like terrestrial radio, the whole industry legally is in a state of flux. There’s this changing technology. I mean this all came to light in that court case about, simulcasting... there were several concepts that were simply outdated, that just didn’t really apply. The wording of the legislation didn’t cover what was being said or it may have covered it, but it didn’t cover it accurately. This is one of the things that came to light with APRA; they were quoting swathes of legislation at us and we were saying, “Yes, but it doesn’t say that. Yes, but it doesn’t cover that,” and this sort of thing. They’re quite good, I will say, they’re not quite the bogeyman I used to think they were. They’re quite reasonable about negotiating things. But I mean fortunately APRA’s open enough, for example, for people like us to come along and say, “Well, we want to do this. What will this cost? And what about 20% of this?” and that sort of thing. And that’s a situation that should exist, rather than arguing in the copyright tribunal, which is where it was going to end up, but I think we avoided that.

What’s next?

You have these different models overseas; I think we just need to catch up. It’s a hostile situation because the technology’s in flux, and APRA is saying, “Well, this applies. This law still applies, and this law still applies,” but they don’t really. No one’s actually clarified and sat down and defined it, and I mean it’s not just legally the nature
of things are changing... I was talking to someone yesterday about [this]. For us, one of the major things that we get listeners from is podcasts, and the whole idea of on-demand entertainment where people (same as with television or whatever) people can choose what they want to hear when they want to hear it. That is changing, yet APRA ...says most podcasts are illegal, that everybody’s doing the wrong thing because they’re breaching the mechanical copyright of the musicians or whatnot. Others say that’s not the case, so ultimately this will sort itself out and the technology will get to a stable point where it’s not progressing.

11. ANTHONY SCULLY, MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCER

ABC Open, 31 August 2015

Creative Career

Anthony Scully began his career as a print journalist in 1995 with Newcastle’s ‘Post’ newspaper, part of the Fairfax stable. In 2001, he enrolled at university to study journalism and later transferred to The University of Newcastle to complete his degree. An internship with Newcastle’s ABC Radio led to full-time employment producing live radio from 2002 to 2010. Anthony worked as a Cross Media Reporter, doing stories for ABC Newcastle’s website including photo stories, print features and videos, at the same time as producing live radio or working on longer stories. His role naturally evolved, and he became the ABC Open producer for Newcastle and the Hunter Region. ABC Open is a dedicated community space for community-made stories.

CI Business

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is funded by the Australian Government. Its Charter dictates that it create and disseminate content for all cultural groups across television, radio and online media. ABC Open is part of the ABC’s digital services and it aims for community engagement with the tag line ‘Real stories made by read people all around Australia’. In 2017 there were over 140,000 community contributions on ABC Open’s website. In the Hunter Region, it provides an opportunity for communities to connect digitally, work on a project and share work with others. ABC Open’s website provides instruction sheets for how to go about creating content for its projects. Each project has a theme designed to inspire writers, photographers and video makers to create content, essentially creating a big regional book club, camera club or video club. The ABC Open Project Director was keen to ensure it would facilitate a skills-exchange, where community members are given opportunities to learn digital media skills which improves their media literacy and their ability to create media content. The ABC Open Producers also moderate and curate each community story which may include a mix of text, image or video. All ABC Open content is created by the community and published on the ABC Open website across a range of themed projects, offered in order to attract new communities both as content creators and as content consumers.

As an ABC Open Producer, Scully’s job is to connect with community through meetings and workshops to assist them in making their own stories. ABC Open works with external partners, generally not-for-profit or community organisations, and Scully’s role as Producer is to find community organisations to partner with. In the Hunter Region, these have included The
University of Newcastle and Hunter TAFE as well as community groups for writing, filmmaking and photography such as ‘Brook and Beyond’ (Muswellbrook’s writers group) and ‘Warra Writers’ from Scone and Murrurundi. ABC Open’s content is promoted via social media to broader networks and some of the video content is pitched to the Executive Producer who has dedicated national television broadcast slots on ABC News 24.

The ABC Open’s website isn’t a destination: most users discover content in their social media feeds which directs them to the website. The Hunter Region has contributed hundreds of short video stories between two and four minutes long, and part of Scully’s work as a Producer has been to reach out into regional communities where the ABC can’t do live broadcasts. Those areas include Port Stephens, Maitland, South Lake Macquarie and West Lake Macquarie, as well as the Upper Hunter towns of Singleton, Scone and Muswellbrook. The ABC Open’s aim is to engage with community in those areas where there is potential audience growth.

Scully says that ABC Open has ‘been good value for money’:

... it's also found us new audience members. Engaging in the community in this way puts us in contact with people who may not have realised that there was a local ABC, who might not have ordinarily listened to local radio or turn on ABC television but just through the act of engaging with community, doing community engagement stuff have found the ABC and have liked and enjoyed the experience of writing a story, taking a photo or making a video for the ABC.

Creative Labour

Scully mentions former ABC Managing Director Mark Scott’s reference to ‘the people formerly known as the audience’ and says:

The audience are not behaving just as an audience anymore. They can pick up a camera or they can do something very much like a reporting job. So it's a bit of a double-edged sword. The way that it has impacted on the jobs of the people who work in the ABC is that ... you do have the tools on you at all times to gather stories, take photos and do interviews so that is really powerful - it's empowering.

Scully continues:

Mark Scott has got a good way of expressing the vision as well. Mark Scott just repeats and repeats the mantra about this town square, and he wants the ABC to be the place where people come and tell their stories. He says what the ABC's strengths are which is to be everywhere in Australia even if it's not commercially viable to be there, but being in all those regions and he refers to the local stations as being the spine. He has been saying that for years but now it's playing out, particularly with the beginning of this regional division. And making ways for those stories that are gathered in the most remote parts of Australia to find their way to a national audience.

I never really thought about radio as an avenue and I went back to study because I wanted to finish my education but also was interested in the video editing and that technology side of things, so I wanted to broaden my skills out from print, and writing for newspapers. I was interested in photography as well and back then there was a big demarcation between journos who weren't allowed to pick up cameras and the photographers who would get very cross.
Creativity

I think what I do is creative but then if I picture it, I think of, you know beautiful art, or arty film, you know, books and literature and things like that are part of the creative industries. I think media is more of a dirty, dusty area, less romantic than creative industries, but it is creative, and you do forget sometimes, it's pretty cool, my job.

Collaboration is very important to this particular job. It's a large part of what I do all the time.

It is seen as being much more important now to be produce mobile first content or web first content.

Creative IP & Copyright

By registering as a contributor and uploading, you give the ABC a nonexclusive license. So, we don't own the content. There are a few different scenarios around video production for example where, if the ABC Open producer does the majority of the camera work and edit and/or editing or is the driving force behind the story there is production credit sharing. My job is to mentor people, in the case of video, to mentor them through the process so they've got the idea for the video, they'll pitch it and then prepare a shooting script so that they can provide a strong idea of what the pictures are going to be and what you're going to hear and then they'll go and shoot it. We assist with that and we can even assist with video editing but it's still their production, we are quite clear about that.

Creative Products

In 2012, University of Newcastle students Josh King and Ian Harvey created a video called ‘Umbrella Man’ for a first-year assignment. They submitted it to ABC Open for the theme ‘My Crazy Passion’. In it, the main character, Umbrella Man, walks about wearing a gas mask, long black coat and hat in the interests of a social experiment, to see what reaction he will get. The concept was to explore how people in the community react to the alien, strangeness or something that puts them out of their comfort zone.

Anthony Scully says:

it was really well shot, it was just a really strong visual story. So I'm not sure if it was ever screened on TV, but I did pitch it to them, but it was definitely screened at the Tower Cinema as part of Flickr Fest and at the Real Film Festival too. I think the Flickr festival films were screened in the foyer at the Tower Cinema… ABC Splash is an educational portal [and] I got an email asking about the rights to the music, because ABC Splash wanted to use it on the ABC Splash site teaching the part of HSC curriculum around different and identity.

Another UON student, Sam Carmen, created a video in 2012 about Motorcross.

Scully was inspired by the ‘Aftermath’ project begun after floods in Queensland floods and replicated after bushfires in Victoria. He explains:

Aftermath is a project where stories of disaster, resilience and discover can be told. It became a really good way of engaging with communities beyond the 24-hour news cycle of,
something terrible that had happened. We show them that three months, six months and 12 months down the track you can continue to work with contributors, so that it wouldn’t just be a one off.

In April 2015 Scully decided to collect some community stories about the Dungog Flood experience. With the help of Anne Fisher, a community artist, he arranged a meeting of stakeholders in Dungog which was attended by University of Newcastle student Sam Rayfield. Sam’s images of where he lived at “Wallalong”, near Maitland, were used for a poster to promote the project. Scully adds:

Sam was great in terms of being a field producer on the day because we couldn’t leave the site. But there were still people living out of their homes, they were living in the pub down the road …. Jared Ritz took the video of the house floating away that went viral round the world. Jared was living at the pub so Sam - because he was a young guy of 22 - went down and with his laid-back style (he’s very personable bloke) said, ‘You know, come on, come on up and bring your mate and share your story [of] what happened after the video went viral’ and so Jared came up, we put him in front of the camera and got him to hold the phone up and then ... we had a wide shot of him standing in from of the black backdrop, so we cut to the actual footage of the house floating away with his voice going under and, that was a nice story. So all those stories are on the ‘Aftermath’ website and a lot of the most popular stories have just been text and photo. For whatever reason, we found the best method of distribution was social media, but we were also able to play the audio on the radio as a way of generating awareness of the project. We created an on-air promo for the 'Aftermath' project that we ran for about five to six weeks.

What’s next?

After five years we’re starting to see some of these timeless stories that are just really interesting Australian stories ... around different themes or from different genres... We now have a project called Open Drum which is a partnership with The Drum which is on ABC television. It’s Commentary, Opinion and Analysis which they made a completely new way for us to gain entry into commentary on news analysis. So, we partner with The Drum and we will have questions in consultation with The Drum editor, and we’ll have a question that will launch on Monday and have open for a couple weeks... down the track we'll know that in a couple of weeks there will be a particular topic that is going to be interesting for whatever reason and we’ll pitch that to our community of people interested in writing. But we’ll also go into the archives of stories, because we can search by topic and we can find people who have written about a topic previously and we can invite them to update or extend that topic or use that contribution and then get that onto The Drum website which gets a lot of traffic and has a national audience. So, this long tail is where it is at with ABC Open.
12. WAYNE STAMM, RADIO MANAGER
2NURFM Station Manager, 12 April 2016

Creative Career

Wayne Stamm is the station manager at community radio station 2NURFM which began broadcasting in 1987 from The University of Newcastle. Stamm’s career began in radio in the late seventies in Cairns, after which he was at various stations ‘up and down the east coast’. He worked in Townsville, Foster (at Great Lakes FM) and in Melbourne where he worked briefly at 3KZ. He then moved to NEWFM in Newcastle doing news and for the last 13 years has been at 2NURFM.

Everything that I’ve picked up about the industry is by working in the industry. I was lucky enough to start in those days where you could run off and work at a commercial station in the bush somewhere, and learn how to apply your trade there, making a thousand mistakes on air and not having anybody worry about it too much, and you know once you perfected that they gave you an opportunity to move on. I’ve been lucky in that I’ve been reasonably good at what I’ve been able to do.

Having worked in news, in sales, on air and now in management, Stamm has a wide set of skills and experiences to draw on and consequently is able to provide a good overview of what it takes to make a radio station work.

CI Business

2NURFM is a community radio station situated at The University of Newcastle. It is locally owned and funded by listener donations and sponsorship from businesses across Newcastle and the greater Hunter area. It has been operating since 1978 and is an ‘easy listening’ station that offers a local news service. The station provides community updates every hour and the station is staffed by over 70 volunteers supported by a professional team consisting of the General Manager, Wayne Stamm, and a Program Director, announcers, Production Manager, News Director Ian Crouch, and a sales team.

Creative Networks

[It’s getting] bigger and bigger all the time and especially now over the last four or five years, trying to keep up with the change in the industry. To stay ahead of the change that we’re seeing in society has been a big driving force for most radio stations. That’s one of the reasons that I go to conferences on a regular basis and talk to people all the time. I’m just back from NAB [a radio conference] in the States. I only got back in the country a couple of days ago. That’s the biggest one in the world and you’ve got 100,000 people from the industry who get together to take an in-depth look at what’s happening and there’s a lot of discussion about it. The contacts that you get from those people and the things that you learn from them is incredible.

Stamm says of the industry:

It’s still sectionalised which I think is really interesting. There’s still a number of divisions within the industry itself. So, you see that between Commercial Radio Australia and the Community Broadcasting, Association. I don’t think you see that
quite as much overseas, which is one of the reasons I like going to the NAB conference each year because you know radio is radio, in the US.

However, he says that given the nature of radio as a creative medium, in the studio ‘there has to be an awful lot of collaboration’:

We’re seeing a lot more of that than we’ve ever seen before. And also, that cooperation between the different levels, the sales and promotions and the on-air team about, you know, what happens on air…I think that that collaboration becomes even better in that everybody has a common goal and the common goal is to produce a good sound for the radio station because if you produce a good sound for the radio station then you can sell sponsorship for it which means that we all exist.

Creative Futures

There was a belief that streaming services such as Pandora and Spotify would have a large impact on the radio industry, but having just returned from a radio conference in the United States called NAB, Stamm feels that Pandora and Spotify ‘have well and truly peaked’.

In the US there are still 91% of people listening to their radio and if you’re looking at media usage, television is the highest at 92%. Radio runs second at 91% and then after that you’ve got things like text and social networks, smart phones, tablets, streaming video and streaming audio. The things that we’re seeing a bigger growth in now are things like podcasting.

For Stamm, ‘that’s one of those things that really has started to pick up in the last few years. There are a lot more people podcasting now than ever had before’. He asserts that over the twelve months of 2015-16 in the United States ‘the number of people who listen to podcasts has gone from 21% to 28% and that’s one of the biggest jumps’.

Stamm also asserts that in the US a considerable number of home stations stream where, for example, a Winamp plugin is used to play music from someone’s playlist, another plugin like Edcast is used to stream it, and this is routed through a server such as Icecast.

We thought that was going to have a huge impact on what we were doing but what’s happened is that we’ve changed the way that we do radio so that now it’s become much more of an interactive medium than it ever has before. We’ve still got the same number of people that are listening. People aren’t listening any less to radio. They do listen a bit differently in that most listening these days seems to happen in vehicles. Home and work you know around about a quarter, vehicles at least 50% of people are listening in their cars. Streaming online I think from memory was down to around about 30% or thereabouts. So again, you’ve still got that thing where there’s still a lot of people listening. The Gen Ys and the Millennials are the ones that are dropping off things like Pandora and Spotify and are going somewhere else. We’re just doing it differently. The interaction is a lot different than it ever was… Facebook and Twitter and Instagram to a certain extent are ways that we now communicate with the audience. We never did that before.

The station Stamm manages has moved into the social media sphere and towards podcasting:

What we’re doing now is posting interviews that we do but we’ve not gone into podcasting in terms of specific programs, but it is certainly something that we are
looking at very seriously now because we think again there’s a market for it and a lot of interest for it.

When he was starting out it wasn’t unusual to have an announcing team, scheduling and traffic people and ‘you would have a copywriter who would write the commercials for you. You’d have a program director, and a music director and your news team and the sales team’.

So, you know finding a job and progressing through the industry hasn’t been particularly difficult... There’s some good formal training that’s available and we’re seeing a lot more people come out of Communication courses now. There are some terrific programs where there is a little bit more formal training that’s been applied and more of those people are getting into the industry now. They never have before. For those places that are lucky enough to have a radio station like this attached to their Uni or college I think that makes a huge difference to the quality of people that we get.

Creative Products

But audience growth has not expanded in a commensurate way, in terms of rating figures. As Stamm says ‘the amount of money that we’re paying for our online stream per listener is significantly higher than what it is we’re paying for our terrestrial signal. And whilst it’s a nice idea to think that that’s going to allow you to have expansion, you can probably count them in tens or 20s’.

Hybrid radio is radio that would work on your smart phone so that you would get the metadata which will give you the album cover notes, an opportunity to download the song, and maybe even give you concert information if there was a concert by the artist coming up in your area with a link to the ticket holders. So that would come up as part of your data feed, whereas the FM signal would come through the FM chip in the smart phone.

In this case hybrid radio may be one of the ways to overcome one of the major problems of digital radio:

The problem with digital radio is, right now it’s restricted very much to the capital cities where they’re talking about maybe launching it. I think Darwin and Hobart in the next couple of years with possibly Newcastle included in that but there are no firm plans at this point in time. The biggest drama of course is that digital unlike FM doesn’t fade. Digital stops. So you’ve got to get the infill right and that’s the problem with infill transmitters. Where do you locate them? How much is that going to cost? And then there is a fairly substantial cost for community broadcasters in particular to be able to be part of the digital.

Stamm comments that ‘The transfer across to mobile phones kind of solves the problem of getting people to buy a new set’: the FM chips in smartphones should be activated. If this is the case, ‘hybrid radio is the right way to go ... Digital though is a better technology but you know rolling it out and making it work is a bit difficult’.

If you look at the reason why people listen to radio in the first place, you know first and foremost [it’s] because they’re hearing the song that they really want to hear. Radio being company is in the top four or five (from memory) of things that people
listen to the radio for. It’s because they like it. It’s something that they know and they love and understand and has always been a part of their lives. For some people it’s habit. And news, you know, and that big one, as I said, “It keeps me company”. And then what’s going on locally and behind that as well. So, you know they’re the top six or seven reasons why people listen.

What’s next?

Stamm concludes that ‘radio is reasonably healthy’. He suggests that best is for radio to be ‘a big part of your local community. I’ve always thought that that was incredibly important. But that’s not to say that online we’re not seeing some great things happening. You know there’s some wonderful talent that are producing some terrific things online as well. So, I guess you know you lose one, you pick it up in other ways. I think we’re in reasonable shape.’
13. MARILYN COLLINS, MAGAZINE PUBLISHER

14. PHIL COLLINS, MAGAZINE PUBLISHER

Hunter Lifestyle Magazine, 4 November 2016

Creative Career

Phil and Marilyn moved to Morisset in the Hunter Region from Sydney in August 1980. Four years later they started a local newspaper because there was no newspaper on the western side of Lake Macquarie at that time. They ran that for ten years.

_Marilyn worked as a newspaper journalist but says she has no formal qualifications in journalism:

_No! [laughs] I learnt the hard way. When we started our newspaper, I was a trained legal secretary and my husband had the philosophy - he was always selling things - _he said to me if you can write a good letter, you can write a good editorial. Lucky I could, I suppose!_

Phil has a background in marketing and promotion. He started the Newcastle Home Show and ran that and five other home shows around regional NSW for twenty years but sold that business in 2012. As PJ Promotions, he also did the marketing and promotions for a number of shopping centres in the region.

CI Business

The magazine was inspired by High Life Magazine which Phil had seen in Bowral. He said, “This area needs a high-profile presence like this magazine. I think we’ll start one”. So they did. The first edition was March/April 2003.

Marilyn is Co-editor and Editorial Editor of _Hunter Lifestyle_ magazine which means that she is responsible for planning and sourcing the editorial content of the magazine. For the first five years or so, she actually wrote everything but as the magazine grew this was not possible and now she uses freelance writers. Marilyn still writes most of the house stories, however, and takes the photographs for those stories. Phil’s role is advertising and marketing, including selling the advertising, getting the copy and getting the approvals.

The company is a proprietary limited.

Creative Networking

Phil has had a long-standing involvement in music - in his early years he was in a band – and for many years he has supported a group of local singers - Daniel Stoddard, Rob McDougall and Stevie Hudson - and produced several shows for them at Civic Theatre Newcastle and touring. The show is called UltraSwing Lounge. He says: ‘And as the boys matured, their talent was incredible’.

They are also interested in visual arts and theatre and say:
In respect to our journey with the magazine and the people we meet in those industries, whether it be stage or art or authors, we are incredibly lucky to have the people that we have living in this region who are so talented. It’s incredible.

Creative Products

*Hunter Lifestyle* magazine is described on its website ([https://hunterlifestyle.com.au](https://hunterlifestyle.com.au)) as ‘a bi-monthly, up market, glossy magazine …showcasing the people, places and lifestyle products and services available in the region’ It is published six times a year. It is designed to appeal to both men and women. It has a print run of about 5000 and while the first edition was 80 pages, it is now 180 pages. In terms of distribution:

It goes into more than 300 newsagents state-wide including farmers out at Dubbo and the remoter country areas. We sell very well, of course, here in the Hunter, and in the Mountains area, North Sydney and the Eastern Suburbs and we have a subscription base of 1000 that goes right round Australia - South Australia and Norfolk Island, all different places.

Their readership has changed. Marilyn says:

> It started out being baby boomers but now we have 30-year olds buying the magazine because they are all renovating houses and they want to get ideas from the up-market houses we feature. We have widened our demographic.

Creative Entrepreneurship

They use freelancers – a graphic designer for the advertising, a graphic designer who works with Marilyn on the layout, and three freelance writers, one based in Gresford writing rural stories including stories about horses and cattle-breeding and two based in Newcastle writing the arts and human-interest stories.

Marilyn says ‘It’s very hard for magazines at the present moment. We’re all having a bit of a downtime now’. They have cut costs by closing their office and running the business from their home in Clarence Town.

Creative Futures

The magazine is described on its website as ‘an exceptional promotional vehicle for leading Hunter-based businesses and regional tourism’. Marilyn gives an additional dimension: ‘I’m a story-teller and a history-recorder … I’m recording what happens here in the Hunter’. They also have a Facebook page with 1274 likes.

Marilyn and Phil have a commitment to promoting and supporting creative talent, including mentoring and financial support. They are proud to say, ‘we are showcasing these people in the magazine’.
15. MARK MCLEAN, PUBLISHER, WRITER AND EDITOR

Hunter Press, 12 September 2016

Creative Career

Mark McLean is a writer, editor and high school teacher from Newcastle, NSW. He runs Hunter Press and is the former owner of McLean Books in Hamilton, NSW. He was born in Cumbria in the UK and began an apprenticeship as an electrician in a shipyard. While on a one year, round the world working holiday he met his future partner in Alice Springs. They travelled together arriving back in the UK. She came back to Australia and Mark followed her and migrated to Australia. He lived in Central Australia learning to write. He got a job working in the publishing department of the Institute for Aboriginal Development which is an Aboriginal-controlled adult education college in Alice Springs. He worked with linguists and editors of Indigenous languages and in the process learned to write and edit. He then moved to Newcastle, starting McLean’s Book store. This is where he leaned about book publishing, promotion, distribution, retail and the audiences for books. He sold the business and set up the Hunter Press as a web based publishing business.

CI Business

The Hunter Press [http://hunterpress.com.au/index.html](http://hunterpress.com.au/index.html) is a small online publishing house which publishes books and stories with relevance and connection to the Newcastle and Hunter region of New South Wales, Australia. It sells both hard copy books and e-books via its website and offers editing and self-publishing services for a fee.

Creative Entrepreneurship

At the time there was I think three - Angus & Robertson’s, a Collins, Dymocks, as well as all the independents, Pepperina. I think there were about nine bookshops, nine places selling new books at the time. And we thought this is a big deal, but we decided to do it. We just decided, we put the life savings on the line and thought we’ll do it. And so, we rented a place on Beaumont Street, but even at the time and I remember saying to Christine, “There’s a five-year limit on this”. I did not see my life as being in retail...It was almost five years to the day that we sold it. It was - we did the five hardest years of any business I suppose, complete idiots, and then sold it as a really great going concern. But it was incredibly rewarding and for me it was an incredibly important learning experience because now, if I meet anybody in publishing I say, “Don’t try and publish another book until you’ve tried to sell one”. You’ve got on the one hand publishing, which is a kind of weird hybrid of massive business and cottage industry. And at the time you had this kind of massive book audience and everything met through the prism of the bookshop. I’ve never been so focussed on so many different things, on any day. When you think you’re widely read you’d think “I can handle a bookshop” and then you go and actually what you find is that you have a narrow vertical interest and what you’re dealing with is everybody’s narrow vertical interests that spreads out.

Creative Labour
I think it’s very difficult to work just as an editor and for Christine just to work as a designer, but we have a range of skills. And a lot of those skills we learnt when we had a bookshop. We can immediately give publishers feedback if they’ve got this idea, because to them every book is their baby and their authors are really enthused about it, and sometimes we can just look at it and just say “Well you did know that there was a book on this last year did you?” and they don’t know that, or you just say “Look nobody’s going to buy that at that price point” or “Why have you got this on the cover?”

The bookshop was fantastic for that. It was a brilliant education...The Hunter Press has been one of those things that it’s been a kind of double edged sword in a sense. Really for Christine it’s been an awful lot more work than we ever imagined, so just something like Howard and Nancy’s book, Smoky City - we thought we’d sell 200 copies. Howard and Nancy thought they could sell more so they chipped in a bit of money to make 300 copies and I think 200 would have been about right but it is ticking over. Howard’s an amazing self-promoter in that sense. He will go to Rotary with 20 copies and sell 20 copies. He’s just amazing that way. So eventually it’ll sell out but the whole deal is that Christine just spent this entire weekend getting the reflow version for a fixed format version of the Smoky City eBook, and these things just consume every minute of your life if you let them.

The Hunter Press is a commercial proposition that has a cultural aspect to it. Ruth Cotton’s Hidden Hamilton book was just extraordinarily successful. We completely underestimated how many we should have printed. We had phone calls and phone calls. And this comes back a little bit to, without getting off to too much of a tangent, Ruth had had a Facebook, had a blog and then a Facebook page, and we approached Ruth. Ruth came to one of our Writer’s Centre workshops and Ruth came up afterwards and said, “Look I’ve got this blog” and we said “Yeah, we’ve been following it. It looks interesting”. And we had a conversation about how we might turn into a book, and it was quite a learning curve for all of us. With Hidden Hamilton we had to really rewrite the blog posts and we could, because we’re saying, “Well if somebody’s read the blog they’re going to buy the book” and then there was the feedback to the blog that we had to somehow incorporate. It was an interesting example of how rather than a book coming out and having a social media aspect, this was social media that then became a published artefact which was quite different to the original social media thing. I don’t know what it was about... Year Down the Drain, well that clicked with so many people. I originally printed 100 copies thinking I would sell 60 or 70, and within two weeks we’d reprinted another 100, and then another 200, then 500. It just kept going. It was just one of those things that to this day I don’t know what it was that connected with people, but the initial impetus was definitely aided by this parallel blog.

Creative Networks

Getting connected with schools - the kind of things that you need to do to get a good launch group or getting book groups going, is a really, really tough process. For me I was new to town, so I didn’t have all those long connections. Christine did but even then, it’s a bit like... I had a friend who went into real estate and he said “You think
you’ve got lots of connections until you go into real estate. You just need massive numbers”. It was a bit the same with the bookshop. We were one of the first ones to get a website going and we ended up being part of a buying group so that we could sell books online, and we had a newsletter, and these days the bookshop has a Facebook presence I think. They’ve got a Twitter account and everything. These things are absolutely essential…We were in Alice Springs catching up with some friends and there was a gallery launch. And we went there, and everybody was about the same age as us. From everywhere, the youngest were in their mid-40s through to mid-60s. And it was all very nice and everything, but two weeks later we came down to Newcastle for a launch, similar kind of medium. While in Alice Springs the launch had been done by posting invitations out and putting an advert in the Centralian Advocate. Down here it was all Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and it was a completely different crowd. We looked at that and said “Wow”. It was a real light-on moment when you realise that this is how modern connections are made.

What’s next?

We have taken a decision to be local. We’re not called the Hunter Press for nothing. It is about this area of mid north coast, Hunter Valley, Central Coast, whatever you want to call it. Yes, there is the opportunity to sell internationally and we’ve published Five Boxes in the UK and we have an E-Book version that’s been bought in a number of countries. So, there is the international opportunity to sell internationally but we don’t consider ourselves to be anything other than a local publisher. I do see immense opportunities in the way that software and hardware and networks are all colliding at the moment. I wouldn’t say coming together, colliding.

There are some fantastic opportunities and people are doing some amazing things, but I think we’re also in a period of transition where we are slightly bewildered by the possibilities of what could be, as against what is. There are certain things that still need to happen and in the creative industries there are still things that need to be done, and because we’ve got more people able to do more things it doesn’t mean that things are being done better. Some of those core skills don’t always get taught. If you are going to do work in an industry where, even if you’re doing websites, really just think about your background colour. Just think about the typeface you’re choosing. The users can now pick their own font, they can pick their own background colour, and it’s presented to us as some kind of freedom. I really don’t think that’s the case. I think it’s making it more difficult to communicate and articulate messages.

So, the creative industries themselves on the one hand are not necessarily always keeping in mind what the end point is which is to communicate ideas. And because of the proliferation of devices and that whole concept of “This is what we can do”, as against what is, I think, as I say, it’s in a fairly jumbled period. I think there’ll be a shake-down period, in 20 years’ time it will be quite different, but right now we’re in this period where lots of things are possible and everyone’s trying to think what could be possible. But just think about what is.
26 September 2015

Creative Career

Rosemarie was born to an Australian mother in Bosnia. Her father’s family are Bosnian Muslims and she came to Australia as a three-month-old. Rosemarie grew up in Sydney in a single parent family. Her mother was an occupational therapist who studied remotely to complete an Arts degree in English Literature. At 17 Rosemarie’s family moved to Newcastle where she completed her schooling and at University she studied Arts and then did a Diploma of Education. For a brief while she taught English/Drama at high school before becoming a cadet journalist at The Newcastle Herald. In 2000 she returned to Sydney to work at The Sun-Herald. In 2009 Milsom and her family, returned to Newcastle to live. Rosemarie has been a journalist for 21 years, mostly with Fairfax Media. She has been a section editor at The Sun-Herald and features editor at Sunday Life magazine. Her work has also been published in Vogue, Medical Observer and Qantas’ in-flight magazine. She has been a finalist in the United Nations Association of Australia’s Peace Media Awards and the Kennedy Awards for Excellence in NSW Journalism. Rosemarie was named Journalist of the Year at the 45th annual Northern NSW Media Awards in 2012. In 2014, she received the MEAA’s NSW Regional Feature Award for her profile of golfer Jack Newton. Rosemarie was employed by as a senior feature writer at The Newcastle Herald for three years and she left in 2015. In the following year, she joined ABC Newcastle as a freelance radio presenter. Rosemarie became the Founding Director of the Newcastle Writers Festival in 2013 and has watched it grow over the last 5 years.

CI Business

Rosemarie Milsom is a freelance writer, an award-winning journalist, a festival director and a radio presenter. Her story of her journalistic career is indicative of the disruptive changes that have beset the newspaper sector of the publishing industry.

Creative Labour

Rosemarie graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from University of Newcastle and was unsuccessful on her first cadetship application with The Newcastle Herald. It took 18 months for them to offer her a cadetship and in 1995 she joined six other cadets who were supervised by a senior sub-editor:

There were two strands of cadets; there were three-year cadets, and they were non-graduates, so they usually came straight from school. They started at around 18, and did a three-year cadetship all on the job, with no academic study behind them. And I was a one-year cadet because I had my degree. But I didn’t have Communications, so I remember that to get the job I had to do quite a detailed application process which included a resume, interview, a spelling and phrasing test, and, I had to go away and write a story about pollution in Lake Macquarie. And I produced a 1,500-word kind of analysis of the history of pollution in the Hunter. I took a very academic approach and I missed out the first time I applied for a cadetship. The person who got the cadetship ahead of me had contacts in journalism; her uncle is well-known journalist who had then gone into PR, and I think that’s what let me down. So, I think the first time I missed out on my cadetship was because I wrote something that just wasn’t
suitable, but I didn’t know what else, I didn’t know any other way. And so, then they said, “Look, you came second in line. We’ll call you if another job comes up.” So, to cut a long story short, another job did come up and I managed to get in here about 18 months later.

Rosemarie can’t remember learning to write a news story, but she did enjoy the daily reporting of news.

"I didn’t want to go to features; the cut and thrust of news, the adrenalin - I quite liked that. Every day was different, there was variety. And one of the feature writers went on maternity leave for six months I think, and our editor decided that news journalists would rotate through that job. They weren’t going to fill it full-time, and you’d have to do a four to six-week stint, and I was first cab off the rank. I argued with the editor and said, “I don’t want to go to features.” And he said, “Well, you’re going,” and I resisted and resisted, but I think in hindsight he must have seen something in me that he thought would lend itself to features. But I got over there, and it was almost like the years at uni and the skills I’d learnt on the job in news melded, so I had more time. I could expand on thoughts, I could talk to different people which in a sense, like with a university essay, you’re looking at different sources. I could research. I mean with news, research is pretty much non-existent, if you’re on a job that happened that day it’s quickly get out there, read the media release or quickly glance at some facts, but there’s not that luxury of going into a subject necessarily very deeply. If you’re going into investigations, yes of course, you can often spend weeks or months on a story, but I really liked it. I really liked it, and I never went back. That was it, I never went back to news after all that time. I’ve been a journalist for 20 years, and then it’s been features ever since."

**Creative Futures**

Rosemarie reflects on the changes in her industry and the disruption currently faced by newspapers.

"What’s happened is there’s been this fast-paced revolution in terms of information and how people access it. This is compounded and puts stress on newspapers because by the very nature of the printing, the 24-hour cycle of a newspaper is slower and clunkier. So, media outlets have obviously got websites, and there’s information on the websites, and it’s all now about SEO and clickbait and all those sorts of clichés that don’t sit next to the printed-out newspaper, but we’re in a really dramatic transition. Newspapers will go. They are going. I mean they’re closing all the time in America and the UK; they are going. I don’t think they’re all going to go. Do I think “The Hunter” will be affected? Yes, down the track I think the smaller papers will go, and Fairfax just announced its rollout, this national plan that it’s rolling out to all their regional media. They’re shutting some papers in Western Australia and I think that’s inevitable in New South Wales. And the pressure on me as a journalist is that we’re being told about, “Social media, Twitter, dah, dah, dah, you’ve got to be engaged, you’ve got to be connected, and we’re going to train you how to use video, and we want you to record your interviews, etc.”"
In October 2015 Milsom left The Herald, with plans to shift the focus of her writing away from journalism.

I’m going to be shifting from journalism writing into my own writing when I depart “The Herald” in a few weeks. It’s very hard to do your own writing when you write all day in your main job. I mean I know, look, journalists do, do it: Malcolm Knox, former colleague of mine in Sydney. There are journalists, Caroline Overington, Chris Uhlmann, Steve Lewis who manage to do it. I really don’t know how. I find when I’m writing 2,000-word stories, feature stories, and if they’re being very demanding that can wipe me out for a few days. I need time to just pick myself up again, get refocused, getting excited about another story, and the amount of words I write in a year, it’d be well over 100,000 words. And I organise the Newcastle Writers’ Festival, and that requires a lot of reading, a lot of thinking, so as well as the thought process at work and having to put some energy into a narrative structure in my features at work, I just find I’m depleted and my brain just cannot then turn to another creative project, because they’re all creative. I mean coming up with the festival program and ideas for that, every feature I do - most of them I generate myself, initiating interviews, doing the research, and then of course creating that narrative is draining. So, I just haven’t, and I’ve got small children as well which adds to the mix. So yes, I want to do more of my own writing, and I think it’s probably taken me to now believe that I can do it.

Creative Entrepreneurship

There are a few freelancer feature writing opportunities out there for someone with Rosemarie’s talents.

I’ll probably write for, I mean I used to work at “Sunday Life” magazine, which is in the “Sun Herald” which is a women’s magazine essentially. But the editor of that is a protégé of mine and she’s desperate to have me write for them... but I also hope to write for “Good Weekend” and places like that. It just depends. I mean the pay’s atrocious, 65 cents a word is Fairfax’s going rate for freelancer.

“Good Weekend” always traditionally had a good base of staff reporters, six to eight, and then they culled them all, and now they don’t have any. So, it exists mainly on freelance copy, and I think you can tell the depth. Staff reporting is a luxury, but what it enables you to do is invest in really, really good writing that a freelancer won’t be able to pull off because they’re not going to spend three weeks on a story and get paid 65 cents a word. It’s just not worth their while.

Part of Rosemarie’s struggle to change her writing style has to do with journalism being seen as a trade.

And so, I think that transition is from being a journalist. We don’t call ourselves “writers”; we see it as a trade. And I’ve been grappling with that cultural shift. I did a writing course in Sydney last year and Catherine Hayman who took the course, a very respected writer, said to me, “Will you just get over this? Just let it go. You know how to write. You’re just shifting direction. Just get over this stuff. You’re just as entitled to write a book as anybody. Because you’re a journalist doesn’t mean you can’t write a book.” Because then I was grappling with fiction versus non-fiction, and look, it’s ridiculous, just up in my own head. And all the while I was probably just
putting off actually doing something. Once I am not working four days a week at “The Herald”, I might be freed up a bit more to focus my energies on my own writing.

Creative Products

I think being a journalist is solitary. Culturally journalists are solitary creatures. You do team up occasionally with people, but no one else writes the story, you write. Someone has to write that story. You might have a few people writing elements of a whole investigative package, but ultimately you are responsible for your part of that story. We operate quite in isolation, and the festival director’s job is like that in a sense; I mean I’m the one up at night coming up with that program and pulling all those elements together.

This interview was conducted weeks before Rosemarie departed The Herald and it was a perfect time for her to describe the situation that faced her Herald colleagues and the newspaper industry.

I think it’s been a hard process to decide to go because I like what I do, and I value what I do, and I do know it’s valued by the readership. But I suppose I don’t sense it’s valued by my employer. I think my boss values it, but I’m talking big picture, media company picture, the fact that in the new model for the new news room with our new publishing platform which is online first, features don’t factor into their organisation chart.

No one’s irreplaceable, and I’m not suggesting that, but I just think given my life experience and my interests and I read widely, and I think that the direction I take with what I write probably won’t be able to be replicated by a news reporter being told, “By the way, you’ve got to write a 2,000-word cover story this week.” It’s disrespectful of feature writing and long form journalism, and it’s going to be challenging for that news reporter to do that. And so, I had to weigh up, but I had to come down to the fact that I can’t remain as a community service, I just can’t.

In 2015 Rosemarie was working two days a week, as the Director of the Newcastle Writer’s Festival.

Writers’ festivals are thriving! I mean there was a new one that’s the first year this year at St Albans, Hawksbury River, Wiseman’s Ferry area; there’s more than 150 writers’ festivals in this country, and that’s growing. Every year more are added, and everywhere from Mildura, Perth, Margaret River, Cairns, Darwin, Alice Springs, Newcastle, Wollongong’s got a small one.

Before finalising the program, she felt obliged to read the work of the writers that she was wanting to invite.

I know another festival director said to me, “You’re pretty unique. You do more reading than most of the festival directors I know.” But I don’t know, I just think you should if you’re going to invite someone - you kind of want to know how they’re going to fit into the program. I think there’ll be a point where I step away from the festival, I mean there will be anyway. We’re coming up to the fourth year and being the founding director, to just start it alone was very, very draining and exhausting, and getting connections and building it, and it’ll need new blood. I think that I would want it re-energised with a fresh person. I think I will always remain on the board and
connected, but not necessarily as the director. And there hopefully will be a point where it is a paid two-day a week job, ideally even three, where then we can advertise and pay someone to do that job. That’s been my path - to build a sustainable festival where if I step away the whole thing won’t come crumbling down, because essentially that’s probably what would happen at the moment.

Creative Newcastle

Newcastle City Council has just released its draft Cultural Strategy, and I think it’s good. I mean it’s not a weighty document, it’s easily understood, it’s quite accessible, and it creates a list of priorities and a plan for the next three years. And there are a couple of elements to that which I think are quite exciting. I mean it’s needing to engage the digital world and embrace that, and also the notion that they can support flagship events for two to three years in a bigger, more significant way, and I think that’s where we need to be headed. I think that so many events and festivals don’t sustain themselves. The people burn out or the foundation’s not solid enough in the beginning to give the event longevity. Look at all the music festivals that are coming and going in the past few years.

What’s next?

After leaving the Herald, Rosemarie entered local radio as a presenter and then ran the 2016 and 2017 Newcastle Writer’s Festival. The festival website indicates that she will be also directing the 2018 festival too.

A video interview was recorded with Rosemarie and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

17. KRISTIE FERGUSON, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Newcastle Now, 20 September 2016

Creative Career

I did Communication at Newcastle Uni and graduated in 1998. I majored in photography and graphic design. When I finished Uni my husband and I moved to Tamworth and it just happened that the local entertainment group (like Wests here) was advertising for a marketing position and I put in and got the job. And then they realized I had a lot of skills that they needed so they bought me a Mac computer and all the software and set me up to do their graphic work and photography. Then along the way I learned marketing communications and started to draw that in.

I have worked for an arts/performance organisation, for local government and for the ABC. I now work for a business association.

Creative Industries Business

The business I work in is a not-for-profit organisation that has a membership base. We are contracted to Council to deliver economic development projects. I deliver on the marketing and communications initiatives of our events, public domain programs, advocacy and issues – everything we do.

Creative Labour

My role is defined as marketing and communications coordinator. But I’m trying to fit in to do everything from managing the brand and community engagement to managing the contents of our digital platform, like our social media platforms and e-newsletters. And then a lot of what I have done since I started has been to set up those channels. I am basically communicating all the things that are happening at our organisation to get our name further out there.

I find that I’m the one that’s writing the brief and managing that. For example, if we have an advertising campaign I will write a campaign brief and share that with an agency. Or if we have a project in house – e.g. with membership and how we are going to try and engage all the businesses in our footprint and activate their membership – I’m the one that writes the plan and then I drive it.

For me the creativity falls into when I’m developing a brief or an agency plan and how that is going to roll out. And then choosing the channels I’m going to roll it out through. And then probably writing the content side of it as well. So, if we’ve got a project that’s going on and we have to communicate it to our key audiences – coming up with angles and ideas about how that is going to be communicated.

It’s great when you are feeling that things are happening, when you feel that growth is on the way. I also like to be able to help businesses and people to be part of that change and recognize what’s going on.
Creative Networking

The feedback I get from the staff that I work with is probably what I value most because they’ve got the most experience; and then from going around and attending the stakeholder meetings and getting their feedback, and by attending events. It is part of our plan to go out and do a ‘needs and wants’ program so we can get a better understanding of our members’ interests or expectations.

In the end, you network and collaborate with everyone involved. It depends on what the task is. It is those people who are engaged who are keen collaborators. Face to face interactions are best.

My boss is the closest collaborator. Usually he comes up with the new ideas and it’s my job to turn that into a workable project from a marketing sense.

I think collaboration helps people to be motivated in this work. When you are working in the creative industries – when you are doing things individually and on your own it can be hard to build momentum and maintain it. But when people come together and share it – their ideas and develop their ideas I think that’s where the strength lies.

I love listening to people talk about their work and how they go about it. I like the people side of it – it’s really interesting.

Creative Futures

The global environment is already impacting in terms of the sort of work I do.

You always have to be aware of the digital technology, the new platforms that are coming in and the best ways to utilize them and to work them into strategies that are going to be beneficial to the organisation. And because that changes so often, keeping abreast of that is important.

I am trying to learn about all the digital and on-line tools and I find myself looking to overseas businesses more often and using their resources. HubSpot – an organisation – I use their resources all the time and use them for training. And the same with HootSuite – an American organisation. They offer, as part of your subscription with them, the opportunity to upgrade your skills and become certified with them. I’m always looking to overseas companies because I think they may be further ahead than we are here. And we don’t necessarily have that offering available in Australia.

What’s next?

For the organisation, I don’t know. We are an association with members and they will always remain the primary audience, so they will direct how we move our focus.

For me - when I was Uni I found I loved the graphic and media design and website design side of it. I would like to go on and do a post-graduate qualification in digital media. I find that side of it lots of fun.
18. JAMIE LEWIS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

OOTAS, 11 May 2015.

Creative Career

Jamie Lewis is creative director at Out of the Square Media (OOTAS) in Newcastle. He has worked in advertising for 17 years for national and international clients in the hospitality industry, telcos, educational sectors, financial institutions and social movements. Jamie worked as a creative director with Enigma Communication from 2003 to 2012. There he learned the process of working from idea to execution to client delivery and produced tightly scripted commercial and advertising content. In 2012, he moved to Out of the Square Media. Jamie is a graduate from University of Newcastle, Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) program. During his studies he was a member of Footlice Theatre Company, and he began work at the Media Communication’s unit in Newcastle. In 1996 he started in advertising in a junior role as a copywriter/production assistant with a local company. Jamie is also an independent filmmaker. A feature film that he wrote, directed, edited and co-produced, ‘Mikey’s Extreme Romance’, was released in 2013. It is a romantic comedy with a twist.

Creative Industries Business

Jamie Lewis works at Out of the Square Media, which is a Newcastle advertising agency owned by Marty Adnum. Adnum and Lewis are both creative directors at OOTS, and the senior art director is Michael Newton. Jamie Lewis describes OOTS as being a very collaborative business where:

You can be a receptionist and still take part in coming up with ideas. I don't want that to sound derogatory to receptionists in any way, but you know it's open slather for anyone because we are just searching for good ideas. I love it because sometimes you hear people say something at random and it's like 'holy-shit' that is actually the answer. It's not the line, it's this little lead up word that is the crux of a whole campaign. Those few magic words - that is what resonates with a human so it's... I think that is what I like to do, to try and find the gems from anywhere.

Creative Newcastle

In Newcastle, we often have many hats and I do a lot of copywriting as well as directing commercials, corporate videos and different forms of content as well as presenting to clients. That is kind of my role in a nut shell as a creative director, but as a creative practitioner I just call myself a writer and director and I just love creating fantasy stories in terms of anything that has a twist on reality. I love to take something that is quite normal and put a spin on it in some way.

Creative Labour

I was terrible at collaboration. I had always thought ‘It's my idea, I have to make it and the collaborative, to me, was quite wrong, in that it was really just having people to help fulfil your vision. Which isn't collaboration. I've got this bloody big idea and you will do this, this and this. Then working with Ian Hamilton (Limelight Creative Media), was the first time that I had probably met someone where collaboration was
very intense, but I saw the benefit of that, in a much better way. And I think, too, in the earlier advertising days where I worked, a lot of it was people defending their ideas rather than people working collaboratively.

I think it’s that magic light bulb moment. Or the 'click' moment when something interesting has happened and it works. They are the moments that you cling on to. Or when you have conceived something and 'Ahhh' that is so on the brief that is required, and it is so correct for that client or business now. In another two years it may not be but at this point it is... So, they are things that motivate me, when the clincher moment happens and whether that is for myself or for the team and when it pops into the ether and you get it, it's like 'Ahhhh - that's really good'. Wonderful mistakes and surprises inspire me when you see something that someone has done, and you go, 'ahhh, that is brilliant, that is superb. We can do so much with that thing, or that look, or whatever it is'.

Creative Futures

I'm trying to be more conscious. It's terrible on families, some time, the creative industries. When I was doing my stuff, we always joked about the 'brides' of filmmakers and you know the 'widows and widowers' of filmmakers, and that is why. My next project is writing, because writing is so much easier because I can still be with family and I can just write at night. Unlike a film where it's that you wave goodbye, or where you're editing. And my wife always joked if she saw me, she said 'oh are you rendering something now?' because you've popped your head up out of the edit suite and you're having a cup of tea and you're talking with me'. And it was like 'yeah, we have a 10-minute render window, so let’s chat!' She was just joking about it, the render times we had together.

What’s next?

Jamie is very happy working as a creative director at OOTS and he is doing more writing now as it balances better with his family life. He and his daughter are working on a book idea, amongst other things.

The problem is for me and for the creative projects especially, is to actually finish doing them. There is never a shortage of ideas or concepts. It is which one should I do and then, 'but just fucken finish it!' Don't start it and then go, oh I'll move onto another one, because I've seen a lifetime of people who never completed a project because they go, 'I've got a new idea' and my theory is the brain is a beautiful muscle and the more you flex it in one direction the more it gives you. And creative are good at coming up with ideas, but they need someone to make it finish because their brain isn't exercising in the art of finishing and completion. So, it’s like, OK you want an idea and you reward me, as a brain, because you’re happy with an idea, good. So, I'll just keep giving you ideas.
19. PRACTITIONER 1, ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

16 May 2016

Creative Industries Business

Practitioner 1 runs a small business in communication, branding and marketing.

Creative Networking

Practitioner 1 works with film makers, graphic designers and IT people and says,

*I definitely prefer to work in collaboration with people. As for the who, it’s with people that I think have the skills I don’t possess. I never, ever presume to be an expert in most of the areas I work in. I know what I am good at and I know what I’m not good at and I’ve always believed in the power of surrounding yourself with people more talented than yourself.*

Practitioner 1 defines collaboration and what it means on a day-to-day basis:

*It’s about constant and open and honest dialogue that says we are able to comment on each other’s work, we are able to expand on ideas, we are able to trigger new levels of work from each other, to inspire each other. And we are also able to criticise each other without fear of repercussion or insult. It’s that real sense of knowing you’re on the same page as someone and not always having the same vision but being able to work together to the point where everybody is happy – mainly the client.*

Creative Entrepreneurship

Practitioner 1 says that people ask, ‘Do you want to grow your business? Do you want to employ staff? Do you want to be bigger than you currently are? Do you want to form an agency?’ but they can see many benefits in being a small company, for the clients as well.

*I am actually quite happy with the size and scope of what I am doing now, and I look around and see these agencies and I think as a client I can sense the difference between a sole trader and a big company and something in between. It always struck me with a large company you are paying for the Boardroom, you are paying for the premises, you are paying for all of these things.*

By way of illustration, P1 recalls being in meetings -

*I’d look around and think “There are ten people in this meeting and I don’t need ten people in the meeting. I need the one or two creatives I’m working with. How many of these people am I paying for? Am I paying for the coffee you bought me on the way in as you noted what I drank last meeting? Am I paying for the catering and for all of these extras?” and I thought there must be a market for something that’s much more affordable and scaled down, so I positioned myself for the affordable end of the market. I don’t want to charge more than I’m currently charging. I don’t want to grow immeasurably from what I am and I’m quite happy collaborating with people in a partnership format whereby each expert is fulfilling their own part of the job.*
Practitioner 1 is interested in global best practice. A recent study tour in New York brought the realisation that many people with businesses like this one did not have an office, but worked from home and that is what Practitioner 1 now does. Another observation was that:

*It was interesting to see how people in that environment worked creatively and worked collaboratively, worked smarter, not harder, all that sort of stuff; it was a fascinating experience. And what I really brought back was the lack of competition. When you travel to the other side of the world and ask for advice or information or assistance with your own business, how much more comes back to you. The generosity of what I received in New York was outstanding and I think it’s because there wasn’t that sense of competition that far too many people here have. If I give you my information or my insight, then somehow you are going to benefit from it whereas the experience I got in New York was one of just complete and utter generosity and it didn’t matter that I learnt from them, it was almost like they were pleased to be able to pass on some knowledge. If I scribbled down an insight I got, they were really happy that I had scribbled it down and like ‘Please use that back home!’ It was fascinating. It was great!*

Practitioner 1 believes that ‘business is potentially at its best when it’s being creative’. People argue that ‘You don’t have to have a financial OR a creative brain, a communications and/or creative brain… they can be one and the same…’ but I can recall my experience at the senior level in the corporate world.

*It’s interesting that people who are creative are often put in a box to the left of business that says “Oh, it’s great that you are creative, but it doesn’t stack up business-wise” … Having been at executive level of a major charity, there have been times when creativity has come in at boardroom level and I know there can be a roll of the eye and a condescending attitude as soon as creativity comes into the conversation – “Oh, we’ll discuss that later” whereas if it was to be brought right forward to being “Let’s use this as the seed for planning”, you have to wonder how much more innovative things would be.*

**Creative Futures**

Practitioner 1 says

*For me coming back to Newcastle after 10 years away, I can see there’s a real push to have a solid sense of what creative industries mean in Newcastle. I can remember sitting at a business lunch where the Vice Chancellor presented some research that had been done on creative industries and what income could be returned to the city if there could be, for example, a creative industries hub in the CBD … that was really inspiring to hear presented at a Business Club event full of grey suits and potentially conservative views, but it was really well received. It would be phenomenal if that could be achieved and we could see that kind of focus in the city. I think whenever you look at cities around the world that have that kind of focus, it’s not just the creative sector that benefits. There’s all sorts of surrounding industries around it that benefit from it financially and from a tourism point of view as well as culturally. The health of a city can be defined by its level of cultural activity and cultural health.*
To foster that environment whereby people who do work creatively can work together and not in isolation ... particularly in a place like Newcastle which already has a huge number of artists of all different descriptions and across a huge range of disciplines ... if they could be given an environment where they can work collaboratively together and not so much in competition when it comes to funding and with resources and infrastructure, it could be an amazing future for Newcastle.

20. KARA SULLIVAN, BRAND STRATEGIST

Guts Creative, 12 December 2016

Creative Career

Kara Sullivan is Principal of Guts Creative, a small agency that focusses on strategy, a focus based on her qualifications, not only in marketing, but in also in organisational behaviour and psychology, a program of study chosen “even before I knew I wanted to be a strategist, but that course was perfect for it - understanding people and human behaviour.”

Creative Industries Business

Kara explains that ‘the symbolism about “Guts is about making some bold move and being brave”.

I started the business because I was working at a major agency but when I had my little boy and had a little break I started to think I wanted to do my own thing. And started to think that I didn’t just want to sell stuff but wanted to work with brands that make a positive difference. That was about wanting to change the world and that you needed courage to do that. I have one employee now and work in a company structure.

Creative Labour

Now, in my own business, as well as the creative, I also do all the company work.

The business is based on fees I earn. So, I set myself an ambitious target for Year One to achieve what I would have if I went back to work at the agency – at my old salary but for 3 days a week because I have my little boy now. I achieved that, so I was really lucky in that sense. I think I can definitely do better – but in Year 1 I have been happy with my result.

I’m a brand strategist so my background is that I’ve worked mostly with advertising agencies. When you are with an agency you do the full gamut- half brand strategy, half strategic planning. I started Guts to focus on brand strategy – helping clients to understand who they are and what they stand for. What I really like, is not just doing the research but turning that strategy into something creative and communicating it. That’s where the partnership comes in – when the client comes to know what they stand for. Then we might do an animated video for that message, or even do an event, or roll out some new brand collateral.
My clients are higher education, ecology health and charities around Australia. I would like to continue that way – that’s one advantage of being small. I can pick and choose.

Creative Networking

When I started Guts, I made a conscious effort to go around and meet all the other creative industries and freelancers. I needed to because I knew I was on my own and I couldn’t do everything, but also, I did miss that creative process that I loved when I was working in an agency – bouncing ideas off other creatives – I really enjoy that. Everyone seems very open to collaboration. Even people you might think would be competitors were keen to find out what I was doing.

Now, I collaborate with lots of other creatives. Locally I might partner up with other agencies, or work as a sub-contractor. I work with web designers, or on video projects, or graphic designers overseas and in Sydney too.

Creative Future

I think the creative industries are thriving in this region at the moment. There’s heaps more potential as well. There are lots of people doing lots of interesting things. Perhaps it’s a bit fragmented as well. Not just the creative industries, but in general. Lots of people doing their own little thing. However, there are lots of opportunities in Newcastle with the revitalization programs and the decision of the University with the Innovation Hub.

What’s next?

I am thinking of moving into different premises so that there is more room if I need other staff or to share space with other creatives. Co-working spaces are becoming better recognised now and I think they are a good solution for creative people.

I hope what my agency is doing is looking at the future. I am trying to do things differently and to be more collaborative. I think sometimes in agencies it’s like a box model, you take the brief and go away and try to come up with all the answers yourself and go back as ‘tah-dah, here it is’. But I think that clients like to be involved in the planning and they have lots of ideas and I’m trying to do things without the ego. I don’t care if the idea is mine or not. If I can help them get to that, it means we will have the best result. That’s what I’m interested in.

That said, it’s always a challenge to remain competitive and try to overcome being based in Newcastle if you are trying to work with national or international companies. But with the NBN and technology that changes all of that and distance is not so much of a barrier.
21. CRAIG WILSON, DIGITAL ADVERTISING CREATIVE

Sticky 10 May 2016

Creative Career

Craig worked in radio, in sales but was ‘a frustrated creative’. He wrote copy and produced advertisements and promotions and that’s what led him into the world of advertising. He founded a digital agency called Sticky.

In terms of the creative industries, Craig says ‘We probably only exist on the edge of it… we are technically not that creative, we fall on the edge of it, but we help facilitate a lot of it, I guess.’ One way Craig does this is through his work with the DIG Festival which he co-founded in order to ‘support and encourage the growth of the creative industries and the digital economy’.

Creative Industries Business

Sticky is a private company with seven full-time, permanent staff including Craig who is the Managing Director, a Financial Controller, Account Managers who deal directly with clients and one or two internal suppliers, for example, a designer. In addition, there are ten or so people working with Sticky every month on a freelance basis.

Sticky is a digital agency with an office on the waterfront, close to Newcastle’s CBD. Craig estimates that 30-50% of their business is in the Hunter Region.

Sticky focuses on what they call ‘inbound marketing’ as opposed to advertising. The old model was advertising which is ‘outbound’ - TV, press, radio and so on. Inbound marketing is where the potential customer is looking for a solution. Craig says “People don’t like to be advertised to as much these days. They want to be in control of the information they are sourcing so our job is to make sure they find the right information”. Sticky might provide for customers, for example, a new website with written content sharable on Facebook and Twitter.

Sticky’s approach differs -

Most other agencies seem to be saying, ‘You need to spend more money on ads to get that customer aware’. No, you don’t. You need to own the content, own the farm, so that when the customer is ready, you will be there for them. That’s our approach.... It’s really not about the clients, it’s about the client’s customers.

Creative Labour

Sticky employs seven people on the regular payroll – ‘a diverse team’. Three are international - an American graduate of The University of Newcastle, a Canadian who came from the music industry and worked with a competitor, and a Brazilian who did a marketing degree in Brazil and then married an Australian and lives in Newcastle.

In addition, at any time, Sticky employs ten or so freelancers, some of whom are local and some from Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, the Philippines and the US. They are writers and web developers. He says,

We’ve now got the ability in the last decade to work with talent across the world which is good. We are able to get more cost-effective resources at times... Australia is a very high-cost country. Labour costs are very high. We’ve got the ability to work with
anyone. That certainly affects how we perform as a business and how we structure our business.

Craig says, however, that most of the web developers are local now. ‘There’s now such a good freelance economy here in NSW … With timeframes and things like that, it’s easier to deal with those suppliers’.

Since 2010, Sticky has run an internship program for students from The University of Newcastle. Craig says that he is concerned that ‘there are too many people coming out of Marketing and PR into this marketplace and there’s not enough jobs. And then the best of them are going to leave town and go to Sydney’. He saw the internship program as one way to ‘keep some of the talent in town.’ Sticky has hired three of those interns over the years and placed several others into companies, including some of their own customers. Some he has referred to competitors.

Creative Networking

Craig says they are ‘big fans of collaboration’ and ‘It’s something that I’ve seen changing a lot in the town in the last decade or so. When we first got into the business it was very hard to talk to other businesses, other competitors … Not many people were interested in that conversation at that time. More so now’.

They collaborate with people in Newcastle, NSW and overseas ‘in order to deliver a really good result for our clients … It’s about picking the right people for each job getting really good results together’.

Craig believes that collaboration is needed for the growth of creative industries in the region

*I think there are some great opportunities. I don’t think it’s very cohesive at all. I’ve been critical of the fact that there’s a lot of small groups - and I’ve been one of them – that are all probably running their own agenda. Everyone is trying to do the right thing, I think. But because they are all very small, it ends up being ineffective. We need more collaboration and cohesion and a masterplan of some description on how we can all work together and build the community. It’s a bit of a Newcastle disease in that I see it everywhere, people tend to run their own race, they are secretive, they don’t want to collaborate with anyone."

He mentions HunterNet, a leading network of manufacturing and engineering companies which was established over twenty years ago to support small to medium companies in the aftermath of the closure of BHP

*I think we need to get our creative industries working together so that we can collectively win a bigger slice of the economic pie for the region. Some of the opportunities out there could be coming to Newcastle but it’s a bit like our tourism industry at times - we don’t present a cohesive or coordinated approach, so we don’t tend to win. HunterNet did a really good job in heavy industry back in the day doing that and I think we need to do something similar."

Creative Entrepreneurship

Sticky not only sources labour internationally; it serves a global market, mainly with web-design and search engine optimisation. These customers are generally in the software or finance sectors.
A decade ago it wasn’t feasible to say a Newcastle-based agency could be doing business with a client in Poland, Germany, or England or the USA or New Zealand, but we are doing all of that. The playing field has been flattened by the Internet and the easier transfer of finances.

Creative Futures

In part, that focus on international markets reflected a lack of opportunities locally, but Craig says that is changing.

What I saw less than ten years ago was that an agency like ours had to look outside the region to survive, because the local economy wasn’t up to speed in innovation and technology and whatnot. Increasingly it is starting to happen and that’s encouraging. There are more opportunities for a business like us in Newcastle.

I think there are some good opportunities coming to Newcastle. As loose as the term is, the creative industries are growing. I’d like to see a more coordinated approach. There are opportunities back in the region now. We’d like to see more of it and I think everyone would like to see more of it. It will happen but sometimes it doesn’t happen fast enough.

22. KENT WOODCOCK, ADVERTISING CREATIVE

Kent Woodcock Creative, 7 September 2016

Creative Career

Kent Woodcock is Principal of one of the region’s most respected small creative agencies with a blue-chip clientele, local and national.

I started off in window dressing, as a junior display person at Grace Bros. in Chatswood. I couldn’t get into the advertising industry (which is what I wanted to do) coming from a country town. It was difficult, but the display manager must have liked the smile on my face. He knew I eventually wanted to get into the advertising department in Grace Bros and window dressing was a pathway. One year later I did become a junior production assistant in the advertising department. I then did a marketing course at TAFE, but I didn’t know what I wanted to do so I did ticket writing which was useful to have at Grace Bros. Later, I went on and did sign writing and then screen printing. I did a whole lot of practical skills because I didn’t know what would happen in the advertising industry. Those practical skills have benefited me in so many ways. The marketing qualifications – the course I did at TAFE was wild, but I think I was too young when I was doing it. And the principles of the teaching were not relevant to me at that young age and it wasn’t until I finished my course and started working that they started to make sense.

Then I moved into a Junior Art Director roll and was mentored well. I worked on campaigns there with people who were big names and with some of Sydney’s best photographers and artists. Then I worked my way up from suburban newspapers into mainstream advertising, and went to catalogues within the agency. After that I set up
my own little design business and began supplying shops with screen printed clothing competing against Ken Done in Sydney. I also had my own space at Paddington markets that I ran that for a few years. Then I ran into a telegraph pole and nearly killed myself, so it was time to get out. That’s when I came to Newcastle.

Creative Industries Business

My business is a private company. I prefer to work collaboratively with other people with the special expertise needed for each project.

I secure projects, I drive the creative strategy, manage the activities, work with the client, deliver the outcomes and manage the business. Everything. I know people say you should specialise, but I think that because of what I’ve done over my career I have become multi-skilled. You can’t just do logos without knowing how to sell what your idea is. So, whether it’s doing ads for print or magazines or TV commercials and digital communications – throw yourself in there and have a good crack at it.

Creative Career

Due to the help I had had in my early days with the manager at Grace Bros. I was able to get through the front door. I got that first job and two guys there took me under their wing and helped me. Not just in the job but in educating me in life. They were both artists and we used to go out for dinner and had some fun. Drank a lot of beer together. They mentored me.

One way to enjoy what you do is to have young people helping you. It’s awesome. And there’s not enough of that happening now – not enough mentoring. So, they can get isolated. They come out of Uni and love to set up their own shop but it’s hard on their own without any help. Take one young man I regard as a star. There was a lovely lady at TAFE, Head of Department, and I asked her to send me the names of 10 of her students so I could contact them – people she thought had capability. I gave a few of them some work but Shannon just landed at the right time. We got together over a coffee and we started working together – for six months we worked together on some pretty big accounts, and he was there at the right time.

I told him I would never employ him because I thought he had a lot of potential, but he would want to go in a different direction and when that happens you just have to let go. It is easier to set that up early. So, when that happened he had such good relationships with several of my clients that he took over their work. What he learned from me was the financial benefits of doing things really well, of doing things collaboratively which can be very rewarding. And he’s probably one of the best young guys I ever helped.

From Uni young graduates come out without being work ready and I advise them all to go and get work with a printer to get some skills to make sure they are productive and can output their work because you are going to start off with the lower end and if you don’t have your skills ready to print or for digital or whatever. Just having a pretty design doesn’t cut it anymore. You’ve got to have it ready for whatever the end output
is intended to be. Shannon, who I mentioned before, was a mature-age student going into TAFE. I think he was a qualified printer. He had worked with Village Roadshow in Sydney doing their designs for packaging and printing, CD’s and stuff so he understood the work environment and he really wanted to have a crack at this design area. So, he knew that you don’t always get the best job all the time, but his ability was just phenomenal.

Creative Futures

There are a lot of independent people out there. There are agencies trying to provide everything - it’s just become so sporadic it’s difficult to figure out where it’s heading. I think that with going to the digital space, it’s going so quickly not everyone knows how to keep up with it. I keep playing in the traditional areas. But with the ease of digital software now I find that a lot of people who don’t have expertise are trying to block the way of people who do. So, you have that tension that comes from people being able to use software but who don’t have training in design or other fields of expertise that is needed to do the job.

The skills that I have were developed as a Creative Director in a big agency. But what we have now are people who call themselves Creative Directors without any depth of background – they are everywhere. A role like that is about the experience you bring to the table, not just a title.

The other problem we see more of these days are companies that have people working part-time in a marketing role. Trying to organize around that is an absolute nightmare. So, is trying to get a thorough brief - ‘Would you write me a brief for that photography shoot, so I know what we’re trying to capture?’ Then you can’t talk to them for the next three days because they aren’t their work days. That is a major difficulty and it’s one of the things about young kids getting into the industry – if you want to have a good crack at this industry you’ve got to be available. Because part-time you can’t say ‘well I’m available Monday and Tuesday’. To coordinate with someone like that to track down a brief in a timely fashion is just too hard.

Another thing is that you must be able to do is good stakeholder participation workshops, community groups. What we usually do to prepare, is to get the best brief we can possibly get and that happens when you engage with more people. So basically, you are going there to work out ‘What’s their personality? What are they driving to achieve? What is the message by the time it gets to market?’ And if you’ve been talking to stakeholders – part of it is peer groups and part of its community – you get a really good insight as to what they perceive to be their strengths and weaknesses. And then when you go back to them with your creative solutions, they all have part ownership, particularly of the creative direction and that comes as part of the community engagement. It’s not all about being creative – you must do your research.

Creative Networking

It is essential. At the moment, I have 8 people who are working on different projects with me - a photographer, a talent scout, 2 graphic designers, an editor, and audio, with another small company handling the website with three staff. You have to freely share information and ideas – it doesn’t work otherwise.
What’s next?

My personal goals haven’t changed greatly. When you help an organisation set its goals you go on a journey with them. My business is secure, so it becomes about the roles you take. Continuing to help businesses grow – the dollar value you can contribute to them is amazing. And you become quite friendly with people there. That’s what it is about – the client – always the client.
23. LIZ ANELLI, ILLUSTRATOR

Children’s Book Illustrator, 14 May 2015

Creative Career

Liz was born in the UK and graduated with a degree in graphic design from Leicester Polytechnic in 1986. She worked in London at the Natural History Museum and for the Radio Times, as a freelance illustrator and as a University teacher. She came to Newcastle with her husband, Mario Minichiello, in 2012 and in that year re-joined the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, attended their Sydney conference, and was picked up by leading children’s book publisher Walker Books. Liz works with schools and libraries as well as corporate clients. She has a studio through Renew Newcastle in the city centre which she finds helpful for collaboration, events and shared learning. Liz has permanent resident status.

CI Business

Children’s book illustration is her major focus but even though she is successful, this does not provide a living wage – she receives approximately one dollar per book and a book will sell 6000 copies at best. She does paid workshops, and lectures at schools with the Australian Society of Authors (ASA). Their daily rate is $600. Liz also does corporate design work such as illustrations and animations for websites, and screen-based apps including for Child Protection Agency and Education Services Australia, as well as speed drawing for events such as NSW UrbanGrowth’s consultation day.

She has received grants securing an ASA (Australian Society of Authors) grant of $10,000 for research and travel associated with her work for a book on Lake Eyre. For the large exterior Newcastle Port map at the Maritime Centre she sought a grant from Newcastle City Council and received support from HDC, Port Corp, Port Waratah Coal Services, Orica and Newcastle Now.

Creative Products

Liz says, “I make illustrations – mostly for books, websites & newspapers – using a mixture of drawing, paint, printmaking, collage and computer ‘colouring in’. Every now and then I get out of the studio and draw what I see. My first project in Newcastle was a huge illustrated map covering the side of the Maritime Centre on Honeysuckle Wharf that grew from these drawings.” She also does “Picture storybooks and more illustrated maps, mostly, and creating a body of prints to sell on-line and at Studio Melt on Hunter St Mall. My present book is about Lake Eyre for Walker Books. The artwork will be exhibited at The Lovett Gallery, Newcastle Region Library in 2016.

Liz says that while technology has had an impact on the techniques she uses for creating illustrations, the popularity of eBooks has not adversely affected the children’s book industry:

*The children’s book industry is still healthy. It hasn’t been adversely affected by technology because little kids and carers like the physical thing of sharing a book.*

Creative Networking

Liz says that networking is essential, and the mode is not only on-line but face-to-face. Connecting is easier in Australia because the industry is smaller:

*I used to belong to the Society of Authors in England. But meetings there were either enormous, so there’s be 150 people there and you wouldn’t be able to get to talk to anyone who you thought might be a good person to connect with, or, you know, just like tiny. Whereas I go to the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators meetings down in Sydney and I’m sitting in the room with probably the key 15 publishers, authors, illustrators*
Because of technology, living in a regional city is not an impediment to career success:

*I would never say I am a Newcastle artist, I would have never said I am a Leicestershire artist. I am an artist who happens to live in Newcastle. It doesn’t matter where you live now, absolutely doesn’t matter at all. Most websites don’t even have a ‘uk’ or an ‘au’ at the end of them. My website just says “.com” at the end...It’s not relevant where you live because you can easily communicate and send images all over the world, via Dropbox or email or something like that.*

Social media is an important way of connecting with peers and her market as well:

*it is important to build up your media profile and become a desirable speaker at festivals and Book Week events.

It’s important to have a strong social media profile, be seen at industry events, write a blog that doesn’t just advertise your own work but celebrates the world of children’s books, writing, drawing and creativity.

Liz has a studio through Renew Newcastle:

*I was working in our tiny second bedroom with no room for the large-scale drawings I was working on and going stir crazy. I love the idea of bringing an empty space to life and of sharing creativity (even if it’s just the occasional stop for a cup of tea) with fellow professionals. It’s great to be part of an organisation that is patiently building such a strong arts network in Newcastle.*

**Creative Entrepreneurship**

Networking is a key way to connect with peers and the market and Liz also actively seeks specific grants and sponsorship:

*If I have a commission for a book or something like that, that’s straightforward: there’s a standard fee that you know you are going to get and there’s not much bargaining power on that. But for things like the Port Map project, I went out and got my own funding. So, I knew that there was a Council grant for community assistance projects. And then I went to see Phil Ashley-Brown who runs the ABC radio and sat down and had a chat with him, and said ‘Who should I go to and tap for money?’ and he gave me a list of names. And some of them had official application systems that you could go through and others I just wrote to them and said, ‘I’m doing this project, it’d be really good for your company, please give me so much amount of money’. And, when you ask, a lot of the time they’ve got money sitting there, and they like community projects... It was Hunter Development Corporation, and then the Port Corporation, Port Waratah Coal, Orica, people like that. I can take money from people [laughs].*

**What’s next?**

Liz thinks Newcastle would be a perfect centre for modern animation industry, but infrastructure is needed – the NBN, a faster train to Sydney, and better connection to the airport. Liz would love to have an award-winning picture storybook.
24. DONNA BURRELL, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL

Hunter Design School, 5 April 2016

Creative Career

Donna is a builder, a painter, an interior designer. She manages projects and she is the Principal of the Hunter Design School (HDS). She previously worked with disadvantaged youths, working in music, dance, drama and vocals. She has worked in Japan.

CI Business

The Hunter Design School is a private college which has been operating for six years. Apart from Donna, there is one admin person employed full-time, one person working on business development for one day a week, another working on compliance one day a week and six contracted trainers.

The HDC offers Interior Design and Graphic Design training up to Diploma level. Government loans (VET Fee-Help) are not available but students may make interest-free payments over twelve months. Students come from Port Macquarie, Muswellbrook and the Central Coast and most are mid-20s to 40s.

The School is located in a dynamic area of the city with lots of people working in the creative industries - The Edwards café across the road hosts events such as launches, ideas bombing and the Impossible Markets. Earp’s Tiles and Classic Blinds service the interior design and architecture sectors. Next door is the INXX Hub where approx. 50 creatives work - from photography, sound engineering, film and television, graphic design, industrial design and White Magazine [bridal magazine]. Next door is the Tap Pups dance school.

Creative Entrepreneurship

On the issues of globalisation, HDC students are encouraged to learn about international design, for example, through study tours to Japan.

Asian design and especially Japanese design [is different]... they are perfectionists. Everything they do is articulated so well. And they have an amazing skill to work in asymmetrical design. European design is symmetrical. For me, to take students over there, to see that, to just live in their culture - we stay in ryokans... It’s so cheap to travel now, it’s easy to communicate, so that opens up opportunities for us. It’s easy. So we can take students over and they can be exposed to this amazing culture and these amazing design elements...I have worked over in Japan so again that opportunity to go into architectural studios and work and see what they are doing, and experience that, it’s been amazing.

Donna believes that there are job opportunities for her graduates internationally, ‘If you really want to work overseas, you’ll make it happen. There are opportunities anywhere. You just have to have passion and love what you are doing and do it well’.

Getting back to people who I meet every day, every week, people that I speak to...people who are coming up with ideas, manufacturing locally but selling globally."  

She gave examples of laminate manufacturers and modular bathroom manufacturers and then went on to identify something about the history and character of the city that makes it especially good for creative people or new businesses:

Who are creating from nothing. There’s the background of Newcastle. There’s been people here who work hard. It hasn’t always been easy, and I think out of that problem comes these amazing solutions...We don’t live in a big city where there’s huge amounts of people or resources. Sometimes we have to make our own. I think that’s what’s really birthed this underground creative field.

Creative Labour
Practical experience while studying is important. HDC students have had placements with local companies such as Mezzanine Media, White Magazine and Headjam who are located next door in the INXX Hub. HDC graduates often start their own businesses because, Donna says, they value the flexibility this offers. Some have collaborated to establish joint businesses.

Donna says that there are good job prospects for HDC graduates, especially for graphic designers as embedded creatives:

*Graphic design is huge, the fastest-growing industry. Everybody wants a graphic designer now. People are not so much going to agencies, but they want to employ those sorts of people because everything is about design. It could be desktop publishing in an accountancy firm, web designers, they need back ends on their webs - the interface, people are needing brochures, they are needing advertisements, they are needing design-thinking in their companies.*

Interior design and architecture are not so strong but still are growing, in part because of television shows like “The Block” and DIY shows. She says, ‘People are seeing it on TV and thinking, ‘It’s easy. I can do that. I want it’ and so they try, or they just employ someone, so it’s actually benefitted our industry…’

Newcastle offers creatives and others work-life balance. Donna says

*I think the potential of this city is second to none...it is more relaxed, housing is affordable, it’s a beautiful city, we have everything here, we have the beaches, we have the port, we have the vineyards. The weather here is amazing... Where else on earth do you get that?*

Donna is of the view that Council presents barriers to creative work. She compares the local council unfavourably with Melbourne with its pop-up events …

*They just happen! Things like that! Council is actually part of and initiating it in Melbourne...I feel that in Newcastle, Council is so uptight and wants to control every little thing that the outcomes we are getting are not the best and I think that is really disappointing because there’s much development and so much stuff happening that could be better but it’s being restricted by the work of Council. Even in this street here, it’s a concrete jungle and we want to put in plants and trees and benches. We have an amazing big footpath to do so however, the Council has a landscaping plan for this area – and please tell me when that is going to happen! I have no idea. So, it’s almost like, well, we just need to make it happen for ourselves, so we put our own pots out there. Council hasn’t said anything yet. [laughs]. It’s just a little thing but I think it’s a big stopping point for Newcastle as far as becoming creative on the outside.*

What’s next?

Enrolments of international students:

*You know we are going to have people travelling from all over the world to study here! We’ve started some background work, researching all that. It will happen, I know it will happen.*

Donna suggests she has a social mission. She wishes to continue to help other people reach their potential, saying that the school is not so much about,

*‘Come in and learn a skill’ but actually ‘Develop as a person’. This is what I have to work with my trainers about, for them to recognise those little seeds of greatness in everybody and that it’s our role to encourage that and to pull it out of people. And I think that’s going to be a growing thing. I’m just looking at the current generation that is coming through that is very un-social, very un-confident. We have this incredible... sad growth of mental illness and I feel all people need is somebody to believe in them, we all want to be loved and we all want to feel significant’.*
25. TREVOR DICKINSON, MURALIST AND DESIGNER

26 February 2015

Creative Career

Trevor was born in the UK and came to Newcastle thirteen years ago with his Australian wife. He trained as a printed textile designer at Camberwell School of Art in London.

In London, he was a textile designer, usually working on contract for the big shops like BHS, Next and Marks and Spencers. He also did lots of freelance work including designing merchandise for ‘The Rolling Stones’ 2003 tour.

Trevor has always made a living from his creative work, mostly as a designer but he has also done some teaching in art schools in England and at NSW TAFE in Design. For the past ten years he worked for a company called Fred Bare in Sydney as their main designer.

CI Business

Trevor’s company name is “Trevor Dickinson and Jo Steel”. His work is branded “Newcastle Productions”.

Trevor is a freelance designer and muralist and says: ‘I draw cities and make prints of that work - tea-towels, cards - the product that I sell in shops with my drawings. I kind of exploit the drawings as much as possible. And I do mural work as well, which is done directly from those drawings of the cities. Also, I’m a textile designer and I do work in the textile industry - T-shirt designing, specialising in children’s wear’.

Trevor had an artist’s residency in Megalo Print Studio in Canberra which introduced him to the Canberra market. His subsequent success there, where his products now sell in the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum and the National Library, as well as the bigger shops, has meant he has been able to give up textiles and work full-time on design.

Trevor has a Renew Newcastle studio space where he is co-located with other creatives including designer and illustrator, Liz Anelli.

Creative Entrepreneurship and IP

Trevor has significant experience in the fashion industry both in the UK and Australia. He did lots of licensed work including Simpsons T shirts which he says ‘were totally ripped off by Australian companies. I would come here and see my designs in all the shops!’ He says, ‘When I came to Australia it was clear that there was no industry - for me anyway, because they’d ripped off stuff so much. So really it was just children’s wear and textiles’.

He says copying is endemic and there’s little that can be done about it:

Well, it’s the fashion industry. They rip off everything! There is a copyright protection if it’s localised. So for instance, Fred Bare has been ripped off by Target. An Australian company ripping off an Australian company is very rude, but they get away with it because the turnaround time for fashion is so quick. By the time it gets spotted and things get off the shelf, so many have sold. The big companies have a lot of power.

Australia is perhaps more prone to copying because of its isolation from the main markets (and regulators):

Especially since I’ve been in Australia, I’ve regularly been given jobs that are almost ripping off designs because I think Australia feels like it’s so far away - or it used to before the Internet took over. So, it’s just copies all the time. You see it all the time - the big companies copying smaller companies. In the fashion industry it’s just rife.
Textile designers do not have the rights of an illustrator. When he sells a design, he has sold all rights to it. This is not the case with illustration. If you sell an illustration you are only selling it for that usage. Trevor in fact feels that there are some benefits to this situation:

*Even my pictures that I put online, and I never put watermarks on them or anything like that. I kind of like them being shared. Nowadays you can’t fight it. It’s a way of getting work out there and shared.*

Trevor makes a living from his creative work and says: ‘What I do think is amazing though, that in a place the size of Newcastle, I can make a living by drawing Newcastle. In England it would be very different.’

In terms of his design work, Trevor’s business model is an example of vertical integration as he manufactures, distributes and promotes his work as well as designing it. He says:

*I do find now that a lot of my time is spent manufacturing: packing cards, printing tea towels, packing stuff, going to the post office. To maintain a living as an artist who manufactures, I have less and less time for creativity. It’s just me to do the work...All that time-consuming stuff ... can be drudgery.*

*I do like the fact that after all these years of people commissioning me, I’m the boss. Everything is my decision. It’s like I’ve got this pretend company. Well, it’s a real company but it feels like an art project. The packaging, promotions, everything I do is completely for me. The whole thing is overarching, this sort of brand.*

Trevor says, ‘Social media is a huge thing for what I do, and I use it as much as possible’. His Facebook posts created a lot of interest in the Aquarium mural and over a period of weeks the Likes on his page almost doubled as people started sharing pictures and then other people went there and shared their pictures.

Trevor is able to work globally from his Newcastle base. He says it does not bother his clients that he is living in Australia. Technology makes it possible:

*They would email me the brief, I might email questions, then I’d do the final design, send them the work. We didn’t even speak on the phone - half the people I’ve never met or spoken to. Often, you don’t need to. If you are experienced and you are working with someone who is experienced with briefs, then it works well.*

It is essential, however, that the person he is dealing with is good at briefing and at giving feedback. This has not always been the case, but he says the Disney person he is working with is ‘fantastic at briefing’.

**Creative Networking**

Trevor says that when he first arrived in Newcastle, he went looking for ‘a creative hub’ but found that the creative sector is ‘really quite diverse’. He was initially misled:

When I was first looking around for what people were doing, there seemed to be a lot of people talking about it and ‘being artists’, that sort of ‘I am an artist’ thing. There’s that thing about Newcastle having more artists per capita than any other place. Bullshit! More people say they are artists, but you know, to actually be out there doing the work is something different. I really appreciate it when I see people just working hard, pushing themselves and coming up with stuff and I think we are seeing a few more of them at the moment.

Trevor thinks that Renew Newcastle has made an important difference to the city, ‘certainly since Renew Newcastle, it does feel like a good place to be creative and there’s always stuff going on and quite a wide range of people doing work here’.

Trevor enjoys having a studio co-located with other creatives, not least because he found working from home rather isolating, but he does not enjoy artistic collaboration:
I’m not really into collaboration, I tend to want to do things my way. That’s probably why it works. I am focussed, and I work really hard and I just want to get things done my way. I’m good at following a brief – I’m good at working with people that way. I have had people ask me to collaborate on a mural and things, but I think I don’t really want to do that.

Creative Products

Trevor sells ‘alternative tourist products’ such as prints, cards, T shirts and posters in shops and on consignment and he has an on-line shop. The work is quirky and off-beat. His success in the Canberra market meant he was able to be full-time and give up textiles.

Trevor paints murals on commission. His first was on the Lucky Country Hotel in Newcastle but it was painted over. He was then commissioned by Newcastle Council to paint the Newcastle Beach Tunnel and since then others, because of a tender process including a tunnel leading to Merewether Beach which Trevor whimsically named “the Merewether Aquarium”. This is a very labour-intensive process as Trevor paints with a brush, not spray paint. He says ‘I’m not like the Hit the Bricks people who can come in two and a half days and do their big murals. That took ten weeks of painting, the beach tunnel, but it was a huge painting’.

Trevor has painted photo walls at Newcastle Museum which are very popular. These are interactive murals that people pose in front of. For instance, there is “The Best-Looking Couple in Newcastle” and people stand underneath the sign with their partner and pose for a picture. Trevor says: ‘It’s almost like a theatre set or something you are painting. I thought it would be really good to do walls specifically for that, especially as everybody has a camera now, everybody’s phone has a camera. It’s a way of getting the work out there and sharing it’. He also did a series of portable, vinyl photo walls for Grooving in the Moo, the music festival - done on vinyl to be portable.

What’s next?

In October 2016, Trevor Dickinson is opening a show at Maitland Gallery where he will do a series of drawings and turn them into prints. In Canberra he will work on a series of murals and there is a job in London with Disney ‘so I’ll be doing some work for them later in the month’.

26. TINA ELLIOTT, INTERIOR DESIGNER

The House of Elliott, 13 May 2016

Creative Career

Tina was born in the UK and attended Eastbourne College of Art and Design where she studied Interior Design. She moved to Australia twenty years ago and Newcastle five years later. In Newcastle, Tina owned a furniture shop for 15 years with her then husband.

CI Business

Tina owns and operates The House of Elliott, a retail outlet in Perkins St, Newcastle which sells homewares, furniture and accessories. Tina also offers a design consultancy.

Creative Products

Tina’s retail outlet is successful, and she has a busy design consultancy business without advertising her services. The ‘short consulting’ involves a visit to a person’s home for two hours to advise them on how they can change their home while ‘staging’ a home means preparing it prior to sale.

There is a growing market for design services in the city but a reluctance to pay:
Newcastle is growing. Design is emerging here. People are becoming aware of the benefits of it, but they don’t want to particularly pay for it and unfortunately because the television is full of design shows, everybody thinks they can do it, but they don’t teach you any of the design rules… there are certain rules of design which nobody knows unless you get taught them, so they don’t see the value in it.

This change is associated with the development of the city, but Tina has concerns about this. She says:

When I came to Newcastle about 15 years ago I was quite shocked at the culture that was here. I thought I quite like this! There were people with red, spiky hair on the street which tells me that there is individual creativity... So that’s why I came here. I think that started to grow and it was really blossoming but for some reason it seems to have been tarnished with a superficial gloss which may be the money that’s come into Newcastle over the past 15 years. The new money, materialistic desire is overshadowing that deep culture that is in Newcastle. It has great history and particularly Newcastle city is surrounded by water so naturally people with deep soul and creativity are drawn towards that... So, you know, there are a lot of individual people and I hope it doesn’t get killed with the money people coming in, with no depth.

Creative Labour

Tina has chosen simplicity, eschewing material rewards for “lifestyle”, saying:

I’ve had my own business since I was 18 and I’m now 50. I’m sort of at the end of working for myself and working for a very long time so I don’t chase business, I wait for people to come to me. There’s no arrogance in this. And then the question is, ‘Can I do it? Can I fit it in? Do I want to do it?’ so it’s not all about money. It’s about creating a lifestyle that suits me and allows me to look after my children, keeping it contained, whereas if I was 20 years younger and had more time I could do so much more with my business. I choose not to.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Tina is not keen on using social media such as Facebook to promote her business but has reluctantly employed someone to manage this:

I was hoping that I could get away with not going into the whole social media market but at the moment I’m having to give in and I’m doing the website and Instagram because people don’t need it, but they expect it, and this is the thing I struggle with. I’m extremely private and for me I am all about creativity and the general market, but now they expect a piece of you. They have this need and hunger for information, so they have to know who you are, and you have to give it to them. So that’s where I am at the moment. Which is really difficult for me because I am really private...

What’s next?

Tina plans only to have her business for five years because she wishes to retire when she is 55. She is developing a social media strategy.

27. SOPHIA EMMETT, DESIGNER & MAKER

The Soap Factory, 24 September 2015

Creative Career

Sophia’s parents were ceramicists. She did a traineeship at The Jam Factory, then studied at Monash University in Melbourne. She worked as an assistant in glass workshops in America and taught at the
glass school at ANU. Sophia has worked in galleries and currently works part-time at Newcastle Museum.

**CI Business**

With her partner Jono Everett, Sophia established The Soap Factory in George St, Mayfield in late 2014. This is 600-sq. m. industrial shed housing nine artists including Sophia and Jono.

As an independent practitioner, Sophia designs products and makes and sells them, mainly to retail outlets and galleries. She works with glass, objects and functional items, and in the last five years has started making jewellery, notably earrings made from coal. She began selling through a Renew Newcastle shop and has sold online into USA and Japan.

**Creative Labour**

Sophia’s work has changed with the move to Newcastle. She uses different materials and works in a different way. As well, she has decided to explore the politics of materials and encourage people to think differently:

> Moving to Newcastle and moving away from the glass world – which is very studio-focused - you need particular equipment so you’re very restricted. So, coming here I wanted to use resources that were readily available to me and that were around, so that’s how the coal... well it’s kind of a political statement but it’s also an aesthetic, using the material. At the moment I’m working on prototyping jewellery, which is made from graffiti that falls off near the skate park and using that with plastics that I find on the beach. So, I guess I’m trying to work with materials that are just readily available but also by working with those materials, encouraging people to look at things, give value to things that are around us and maybe just thinking. “What if we change the context and the way they’re put together?” - that can totally change the value of something.

She enjoys the process of design even more than making:

> I really enjoy designing. Once you design a product, making it over and over again – although each piece is different - it’s laborious but it’s the design process that I am most interested in, working out how to resolve problems, how to put things together, that sort of thing.

High standards are important:

> The respect for material and yourself and your work. And also, if your training is hard earned then you feel a responsibility to be good at what you do and consider everything. “That’ll do” isn’t good enough, it’s got to be good.

**Creative Entrepreneurship and IP**

Sophia says of the unauthorised copying of her designs, “It’s an issue but it’s just part of the culture and the industry… you just cop it on the chin, don’t you? Like you have to. There’s not much I can do about it. You just have to keep evolving and hoping that you come up with something else so that you’ve got something else to sell …”

Sophia sees a need to balance her values with commercial realities:

I want to like what I’m making, I want it to be as ethical as it can be, and I also want to sell it, so I can keep making things, so there’s a fine balance. You know, there’s something things people will say, “Have you tried this or that, or if you did this I’d buy it”, but I say I’m not prepared to do that because I’m not comfortable with that process. There are certain guidelines that I try to work within for my own self, I guess.

Funding brings not only the wherewithal to get work done but also prestige. Speaking of herself and her partner, Jono Everett, Sophia says:
In the past both of us have had funding and it’s been really important. But now... you don’t have time to put a proposal together for a certain project and so sometimes it’s just not worth that time or even worth researching what’s available because by the time you write it... but it definitely has a place and it’s very prestigious too. Like if you can say, ‘I’ve got funding to do this and that’, it sounds better than saying, ‘I’ve had to work X number of hours, so I could do it’, so there’s status involved.

Prizes also provide status as well as money and Sophia has pursued these in the past:

Some years I will and some years... I’ve gone through big chunks of not doing it, mainly because it takes money and time, like you’ve got to put that money and time aside to do it, and if it’s not available, it’s not available.

Creative Networking

Talking about setting up The Soap Factory, Sophia says working with others was crucial, and knowing who those people were even more so:

We were here for five years, living in Newcastle, because we had to find out who those other people could be or how we could structure it. So, I guess part of what is happening in Newcastle is that if Jono and I came into this shed and went, “Oh yeah, we want this space”, we couldn’t afford it. But because we knew the community a bit and we knew there was potential to get people in and we kind of knew who those people were, that made a huge difference. So, I can imagine that there’s all this potential and it’s all great, but unless you’ve got a collective of people to move in you can’t take it on by yourself, or with two people.

28. JONO EVERETT, DESIGNER & MAKER

The Soap Factory, 24 September 2015

Creative Career

Jono began as a carpenter after completing a TAFE qualification but when he realised that building sites were not for him, he retrained as a furniture maker at the Art School at ANU. He has been employed by the National Library and Parliament House in Canberra, initially as the Leading Hand Carpenter.

CI Business

With his partner Sophia Emmett, Jono established The Soap Factory in George St, Mayfield in late 2014. This is 600-sq. m industrial shed housing nine artists including Sophia and Jono.

As an independent practitioner, Jono is a designer and fabricator, principally using timber but also steel, acrylic and other materials. He works on commission. His focus is ‘to establish clients that are galleries or small museums’ and to provide services including interpretation, graphic design, computing and electronics, and super-fine metal work, which require the input of specialists from all over the country. He says, “collaboration is an absolutely critical part of my working method”. Technology facilitates such collaboration through mobile phones.

Creative Labour

Jono says that ‘versatility is the key to survival’ and it is handy to be able to move between carpentry and fine woodworking. He is enthusiastic about what he does:

I’m just excited by life and I’m excited by making things. And I love being engaged in projects that challenge me, so if there’s something I haven’t done before, or I have to fudge my way into getting that project and I feel it’s dangerous because it might be outside my
ability so it’s going to challenge me, I get really excited by that. And I kind of wonder why other people don’t do that. I can’t understand, when there is so much to do in life, if I wasn’t doing this, there’d be a hundred other things to do.

Being self-employed gives artistic freedom especially in regard to decision-making:

... working for someone else as opposed to working for myself is massively different and I found it quite frustrating, straight away, and confronting and difficult, having to work within parameters and work to people’s timeframe. I’m sounding a bit bratty, but I think there’s such a big difference between having a conventional job and working for yourself. No matter what that job would be there’s constraints on it, as opposed to working for yourself in that you design the parameters of where you are going, and you decide how much you are going to work and how much you are going to charge for your work and the style of your work. You’re constantly making those decisions about where to start and stop and you don’t have that ability in an employed environment. So, if you’re accustomed to working for yourself, it’s a real challenge to work in an employed environment. I’ve tried both and I am much happier working for myself.

Jono expressed concerns about changes in the training environment. Quality training is important and cannot be replaced by quick online tutorials:

I think it’s a bit frightening what’s happening with TAFE and universities. If those things are being eroded, then they need to be replaced. I think, you know, handing on high level skill sets in all mediums is a really important for the future of arts and crafts, and society in general. I think a lot of people are YouTubing how to make stuff and that’s great, people are having a crack, and there’s that whole burgeoning industry of craft and it’s got a place. But I also think it’s really important that we don’t lose sight of that fact that it’s not as easy as just YouTubing how to do something and 20 minutes later you’re doing it. There’s a lifetime – I’m still learning, I wouldn’t consider myself a great woodworker by any stretch of the imagination. There’s a lifetime of learning and I’m constantly learning and I’m seeking that knowledge actively.

Defending his intellectual property is not a concern:

I’ve had some of my work plagiarised and I was really flattered by it. So, it really didn’t bother me because I know it’s not going to affect my business.

Creative Entrepreneurship

The business model of The Soap Factory is carefully thought-out. They were keen to avoid the dangers of collaboration where it brings together competitors:

For young punters, I think they need to be fairly cautious about collaborating or setting up workshops, you know, collaborative spaces, with people you’re in direct competition with. I think it’s a mistake that people make fairly regularly. We were very conscious not to do that this time, and I think it’s taken me this many years, and I’ve been practising for over 25 years - but it’s taken me this long to realise that’s a problem. Because effectively what you can do is set yourself a framework, a structure in a workshop, that puts you in direct competition with people who are at the next bench to you. And that can be really very subtly problematic. And you can make documents and have understandings and that kind of thing, but it will eat away at you slowly that there’s a problem with that kind of arrangement. So, we were quite deliberate in the members we selected for this workshop here so that’s not happening. We’ve got a variety – a whole spread of different mediums – glass, ceramics, silver-smithing and wood.

Sophia and Jono are co-managers of The Soap Factory and invite artists to join them. They started with a document that they distributed through social media outlining the ‘ethos’ of what they were trying to do, as opposed, Jono says, ‘to just offering space and [saying] how much the rent was. We didn’t even
put numbers on it – it was more about what we’re trying to do here, to sort of attract the right type of people’. What was important was that the artists were not in direct competition with any of the others, but that they were ‘enthusiastic, they work to a high level, they’re in the creative industries, they’re not going to use the space for self-storage, and that they’re proactive in their business.’ Jono explains:

We sort of had a collective ethos about acknowledging where Newcastle is at the moment and the possibilities of that, and as it grew – even though everyone would be running their own individual businesses – that we might be able to promote each business as a collective through, you know, tapping into what’s happening in terms of the changes that are happening to the Newcastle scene, in terms of the burgeoning craft and design industries that are popping up. So, everybody has a set of keys here and they’re welcome to come and go. We don’t work as a co-op if you like. Everyone can run their own business and I think that freedom is really important. So, when I say we manage it, Sophia and I facilitate that structure – the facilities side of it – as opposed to interfering with anyone’s practices. And I think that sense of freedom is really important for people renting this space. So, we’re nearly a year in and it seems to be working well so far... I think the way we’ve set it up seems to be working really well so far.

Creative Futures

Jono is concerned that the potential of the city is not being realised and that there is a lack of leadership and vision:

I just see so much opportunity in Newcastle. I just can’t get my head around how it’s not being seized by the business community and by Council and powers that be, that organically there is a real movement of crafted objects, food, fashion, design, just happening under their feet, and I’m still seeing a huge amount of empty office spaces, shop frontages and gigantic industrial sheds, that it seems if there was a collective understanding of what the potential is that we could really put Newcastle on the map as Australia’s own creative city. We could do it right now with a handful of shakers and movers.

What’s next?

Jono wants to establish the Soap Factory more firmly. He says, “we’re trying to establish … an entity that’s… got sustainability”. Funding could be part of that:

I would love some funding. I think this place has the opportunity for some funding, so we’ll look at that next year. …if you’re talking about arts funding or whatever, you know, we just haven’t sought it because we haven’t had time.

He is also interested in establishing artist-in-residence programs and offering classes including for children, doing talks and engaging artists from around the Newcastle community as well as visiting artists.

29. JEFF JULIAN, DESIGNER

Pendulum 28 October 2015

Creative Career

Jeff was trained at the Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, graduating with a Bachelor of Science with Honors in Industrial Design.

CI Business
I have worked with some high-profile companies including BMW, Designworks, Gucci, Rolls Royce, Oakley and Siemens and before coming to Australia I worked in the film industry as a character designer and for other more technical assets – on The Minority Report, IRobot, 2012, Superman Returns and many more.

In that time, I have worked for Steven Spielberg, Disney, Dreamworks, James Cameron and others.

I have developed content and intellectual property for international corporates.

My goals have never changed. I don’t have specific interests in one particular field. I love problems and challenges. I like to do things that make a difference, so it’s a legacy kind of thing.

Sometimes my work is classifies as being ‘a futurist’. I have been fortunate to have been involved in innovation and disruptive start-ups in Australia and overseas.

Creatively? I like the process. That’s the part people might find hard to understand. Because I like the process it is sometimes hard to pin down precisely what it is my business does. I’ll do stuff because I enjoy it, and enjoy the process.

Creative Product

Jeff has a long record of involvement with the creation of new products and thinks there are some clear questions to answer as you develop them.

What does the product look like? What are you trying to do? What is the outcome you are looking for? What’s the goal? And the final one is ‘meaning’. Meaning is about effecting change. What you are trying to do is change something, or improve something or drive a new idea. You are trying to create meaning. The rest of the terms – innovation, invention, research – they are just tools in your kit to eventually reach that goal.

Creative IP

Collaboration is critical.

We need creative people – the dreamers, the ones who pose the questions. We also need those with depth of experience and knowledge – the researchers. And we need the connectors – the diagonals who bridge the gap between the others. They are the ones (sometimes policy people) who can take the vision and pull teams together to make things happen. It’s not that you are changing what you do. It’s that you are changing what you think about what you do.

Creative Career

The word ‘industry’ relates to real jobs and life-long careers.

I struggle with the term ‘creative industries’. To say that you actually have an industry, you need third party full-time employment and job growth. If you have artist groups are you really supporting the second-tier groups? Do you have lithographic shops that hire people full time? Are they growing? Without that second-tier level and support mechanisms, you don’t have an industry. There are a lot of creative people, but many are not working full-time. They are struggling. The creative industries are tough to articulate.

What’s next?

I have spent increasing amounts of time in recent years working on innovative design and as a consultant to corporations looking to shape the future through their products. It may sound corny, but the future is yet to come.
My own future will probably be back in the States. There is a lot of development work happening there – whether it is in movies or with the global corporates who invest in the future.

30. MARIO MINICHIELLO, ILLUSTRATOR AND DESIGNER

Professor of Design, University of Newcastle 26 September 2016

Creative Career

Mario Minichiello was born in Italy but studied in the United Kingdom. He completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from Leicester Polytechnic and his career as an illustrator began.

For 15 years Mario worked as a reportage illustrator for the Guardian, The FT, Amnesty International, the Terence Higgins Trust, BBC Enterprises, Longmans, The Times and ITN News. Highlights include seven years with BBC Newsnight where he illustrated events from the House of Commons, as at that time television cameras were not permitted inside. Mario illustrated the Guildford Four appeals, the Beirut Hostage releases and the Spycatcher Trials. Mario created the book ‘The Art of Conflict?’ which is a visual record of the Afghanistan War. In 2007 he was in Australia and covering the APEC Summit in Sydney and his drawings were published in the Sun Herald. In 1993 Mario began work at Loughborough University where he became Head of Department of the College of Art and Design and he held the position as Academic Director of Loughborough College of Art and Design at Loughborough University and in 2007 he moved to Birmingham City University where he was Chair of Visual Communication. Mario completed his PhD from Loughborough University before coming to Australia in 2012 where he took up the Chair of Design with the School of Design, Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle. Professor Minichiello has held a research fellow with the University of Sydney and holds a Fellowship with Birmingham Children's Hospital as a visiting Professor in Design Communication.

Creative Labour

To assume that people are not creative simply because they come from a certain social class or a certain background is to deny Maslow’s model of the hierarchy of needs which is really a description of how people develop themselves into fully-fledged, grown up human beings. So, the core thing about creativity is that it’s actually part of what makes us human.

So, to me, creating the conditions for creativity means to recognise the steps, to recognise your community, to recognise your role as the agent of change, to recognise that as a leader you bring the good weather. You can’t bring the misery, you bring the good weather. No leader brought the bad weather. Leadership’s important because you’re modelling behaviour at every level for everyone else. So, first thing, be aware of that process, bring the love, do the hard yards, do your homework and be prepared to fail. And reward people for trying again.

It’s also bound up with our personality and our sense of habitus - the externalised world and the internal world. Sometimes creativity is emotionally spurred and that allows us to be, to work outside reason, to work in an unreasonable way with ourselves, and drive ourselves in a way that’s outside of logic.

Creative Futures

I think the important thing to say right from the beginning is that the university, when it works properly, is an agent of change. Now change is constant anyway, so it sounds a little contradictory. The forces of change that are happening here are not merely regional or even
national, they’re global. And they are a mix of trying to solve problems about our environment, our humanity, our business models.

The fact that industry now thinks we’re cool is evidence it’s working. So is the fact that our Vice Chancellor wants to actually put money into the creative industries, whether we would do it differently or not. And also, the fact that she asked for the latest university strategic plan to be illustrated, to be animated, to be filmed. That’s a huge shift in the corporate approach. So there’s a sense of the impact and value. It may not be 100% realized or understood but it’s way, way better than it was.

The ability to scale has been extraordinary with digitization. You can scale things globally faster. The positives are the scaling and the democratizing of certain things. With that democratic paradigm comes other questions to do with expertise and appropriateness.

Creative Products

Shakespeare didn’t interest me when I was a teenager, but I read Romeo and Juliet, and where Juliet said that Romeo’s death had sucked the honey from her breath, I just thought, that was the most extraordinary thing. Talk about why creativity, and the arts and literature are important! I still actually feel that is just extraordinary, even now. Because it was so painful and yet it was so erotic. You know, the idea that you had sucked the breath, the honeyed breath from someone. But then it’s all gone, with him. And I just thought this is such a powerful way of getting into people’s minds.

And that was the first moment I realized you could change people’s behaviour, which is really what design does and what we all do. Why would you design something? Why would you create something? To affect the way things are.

31. SHANNON ROMAN, BRANDING AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Director of Crackler, 1 September 2016

Creative Career

Initially I worked and trained in print – I did a trade in graphic arts & printing. Then I completed a TAFE Design Diploma. After that, I first worked as a sub-contractor and freelancer for Kent Woodcock – for 6 or 7 years till I got interested in forming a business.

CI Business

Crackler is a private company. I have had the business in its current form for over two years. We now have five professional staff. We specialise in branding and digital marketing services, print art production & SEO.

Of our staff, Luke, our digital lead completed a Design Diploma and also teaches design in a private design school. He also has a background in commercial print as well. Kia has a background in architecture and graphic design. Danielle studied at a design school in Europe. Raihana manages marketing and communications, and is studying comms at the University of Newcastle majoring in radio. She also has experience in events.

Creative Labour

We still collaborate with other creatives and agencies, but predominantly we are doing all our own work now – working with businesses from Newcastle and Sydney, tenders and government contracts. Now collaboration with other agencies is an open collaboration, not so much sub-contracting.
Being a digital marketing company, we of course have a website which we manage in-house. We also use Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn & the Behance Network. Major tools/apps include Basecamp (project management tool), Harvest (time-tracking tool), Xero (invoicing & accounting software), Google Apps, Dropbox & the Adobe Creative Suite.

Our work is becoming more and more digital – digital set-ups. And not just a website but optimizing the whole digital environment for the client and making sure they have a clear strategy on how to move forward. We are getting more and more work from Government agencies now. A couple of big e-commerce sites for retail corporates, stuff like that.

Creative Entrepreneurship

I think the fact that every project is different keeps things interesting & inspiring. We have standard formulas and standard processes, but every client is different. Every business is different, so working with that business to attain their goals and requirements helps to keep things fun and fresh. That is one motivating factor. The other motivating factor is that I’ve really grown to like building a business - creating our own work environment and creating an environment for others. That’s interesting and a fun thing to do.

We have clients from Canada and Bermuda and New Zealand. There are not really any problems working globally. There are sometimes when it is difficult because there is a lot that can be gained from a face-to-face meeting – it takes a bit longer to get that information from people over Skype or phone calls, but we have been successfully working with businesses located overseas for years.

We generally get the jobs by referral or sometimes an enquiry. They might be looking for specific products which they have searched for and found we have provided to others. So they contact us.

A key factor is definitely clear scoping. Having a clearly defined brief/proposal is essential, especially when you get into the bigger projects – otherwise it hurts the pocket. That’s to do a lot with communicating and workshopping with stakeholder groups. Often you find that a business will have in-house departments managing the PR and that sort of thing, and they have a clear idea of what their target audiences are and what needs to happen. But then other ones where they haven’t done it before, you often need to do some research into the different vertical markets they need to be targeting.

We finish most projects with a project evaluation – that’s important for your own development.

Creative Futures

I think there are a lot of opportunities for the Creative Industries in the Hunter at the moment. There is a lot of growth happening, a lot of big businesses moving here, a lot of initiatives happening with government & industry. I think it is in quite a healthy state. There has been a transition obviously from the big top-of-town full-service agencies. There are now a lot of small, nimble agencies providing niche services.

Technology is always changing the landscape of our industry. It depends on how you position yourself alongside those technologies. People who traditionally built websites and weren’t involved in design or communications may struggle more nowadays due to the plethora of website building tools available. We are focused on branding, communications and marketing, so we use a lot of technologies, but we utilize them for a purpose.

Change is not something I feel personally threatened about - it’s just something you work with in our industry. If you are interested in technology and like keeping on top of what is happening, change is welcome.
However, oversaturation is a potential problem. There are definitely a lot of creatives and small businesses offering creative services popping up. There are a lot I am aware of that are really struggling – due to saturation. You know how Newcastle operates. If you come in without having any connections, thinking that you are going to take things over, you probably have another think coming. Although Newcastle is in a pretty healthy spot now – local businesses seem to be outsourcing services back to local providers. We are getting a lot of enquiries, businesses saying they want to move from their Sydney agencies back to a local provider. I think we are finding that a lot of Sydney businesses are also looking outside Sydney.

What’s next?

We are on a steady growth trend which is what I am looking and planning for. It’s not a fast-growth plan – we are playing safe and growing steadily.

Our major markets include fashion / consumer goods, health, governments & industry. I don’t believe this will change as we grow.

I like my job. I am happy working about 30 hours a week – that seems to be my good spot where I feel I can maintain creativity. I would like to build the business to the point where it can be self-sufficient and can be sold. That has always been my goal – not that I would necessarily sell it, but it has always been a goal. I think it’s a good, safe way to approach a business.

32. GRAHAM WILSON, DESIGNER

The Carved Greenman, 4 June 2015

Creative Career

Graham did a certificate in art at TAFE in Armidale and Newcastle and then completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at The University of Newcastle. He began teaching art at Ron Hartree’s school and went on to teach Design at Hunter TAFE for almost 20 years. He also worked at the University of Newcastle as a demonstrator in print making and at Newcastle Art School (TAFE) teaching art classes including drawing.

CI Business

Graham’s business is called “The Carved Greenman” and offers stone carving and graphic design. Since 2012 he has had a retail outlet and small workshop demonstration area along with other creatives at “The Emporium” at 185 Hunter St Mall, Newcastle which was in the former David Jones building which Renew Newcastle managed. The shop sold T shirts, mugs, prints, posters, cards and small sculptures. He also sold his products at “Art Bazaar”, a local market for craft and art.

Graham is an unusually talented artist whose practice is very diverse. He comments:

I think it would be best described by an individual who came into the shop a few months ago, who said, “So who did the wood carvings?” I said, “Well, I did those”. He said, “Well, who did the t-shirts?” I said, “Oh, I did those as well”. He said: “Well who did the graphics?” “Well, I did them too.” “Who does the stone carving?” “That was me, too.” He said: “You’re really hard to pigeonhole.”

Graham has expertise and professional experience in visual arts (as a painter and printmaker), graphic design, interior design, set design and stonemasonry (he has a trade certificate in stonemasonry and has worked internationally). In addition, he is an award-winning actor. He also has qualifications in film-
making, having completed a Certificate 3 in Screen Studies. He also has a teaching qualification – a Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment.

Creative Entrepreneurship

In 2009, Graham was invited to a stone carving festival in Trondheim, in Norway. The organisers found him by Googling “stone carver, stone mason” and his website came up. Graham says he is only the second stonemason in the world to have a website. Through people he met in Trondheim, Graham was invited to go to the York Minster stone carving festival in the UK the following year. He was then asked to return to Trondheim for the European stone carving festival, which he won with a carving of Odin the Norse god with a blackbird on either side, Huginn and Muninn, forming part of his helmet. He was also invited by Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim to work there for three months in their cathedral workshop, where there was not only stone masonry but also carpentry, a blacksmith, a stained-glass section and a mould-making section where they mould all the carvings. Graham said:

And it’s all traditional. You have big powered saws for cutting stone but everything else is done by hand – there’s no sort of compressed air tools or anything like that. So, you feel like you’re carrying on a noble medieval tradition ... The cathedral there is 900 years old and I got to work on a part that’s going to go back into the cathedral.

Selling his work has presented the challenge of trying to understand the market:

It’s really hard in retail to understand what people like. And just when you think you do understand what they like – I think “Okay, I’ve sold a few of those, I’ll order another ten of those” or “I’ll make another ten of those”, and then they’ll sit there for ages and no one will want to buy them. And then something that’s been sitting there for ages previously, someone will suddenly come in and say, “I want that”, or “Where’s that thing that you used to make?”. So it’s a bit hard [laughs].

Pricing in the shop is especially difficult. He says that within the public, ‘there can be a mixture between people who can’t understand why your stuff’s so cheap [and] people who can’t understand why your stuff is so expensive’. He has used his TAFE pay rate as a model for pricing his work for commissions, for example an interior design job for a restaurant, and he says this is well-accepted.

Creative Labour

The creative work that Graham does is both demanding and poorly paid:

One of the limitations is that stone carving is really labour intensive, and people aren’t really willing to pay for your time. And I’m a hopeless capitalist in that sense that I often don’t charge well for my time.

Graham’s experience of the theatre has influenced his performative sense of what it is to have a retail outlet. He says:

I feel that the shop really is like a set, because I do set design for the theatre. And I feel like the shop is a set that looks like a shop, but the annoying thing is that people keep coming in and taking the props and I’ve got to make them again. It’s like, “Oh, I just made it look like a shop and now...” [laughs]... I’m acting as a shopkeeper and pretending that I’ve got a little shop... And sometimes it does feel like pretending because the income can be very low.

Graham is aware as well as low incomes, artists often have low status. He says he recently took his children to see a movie and when they saw the credits:

I used the opportunity to say to my kids “Look at all of those names, all of those people – hundreds of people who have made this thing happen that we have enjoyed, that’s made money for this shopping centre, this theatre, all the actors... the thing is that this is a massive creative concern... and it’s one of the hugest industries, the film industry and the gaming industry is even bigger apparently....theatre and music, all of those things that make our
culture worthwhile, there are all of these people beavering away behind the scenes to make it happen, so I said, “Don’t ever let anyone tell you that being in the creative industries is a lesser position, even if the income is less.” Without it this would be a very sad world, I think.

Creative Career

Graham earned a reasonable income when he was teaching Graphic Design at TAFE but since leaving there he works in a private school a few hours a week, and has a modest income from the shop and commissions. He comments on the importance of his wife’s full-time income to the family: “She makes a living and I augment that living”.

... the income can be very low. But just when I’m thinking “This is hopeless, why am I here, I’m not making money” – then I’ll have a good week and sales go up or I’ll get a commission, or something like that. So, you know, it’s sometimes one step forward, two steps back, but sometimes it’s three steps forward, every now and then, so I manage to keep my head above water.

He says:

Well I think I’ve long ago given up on the idea that I’m going to be world-famous or rich – I’m realistic enough to understand that. But I would just like to be able to have enough spare time that I could focus on a lot of those backup ideas that I’ve talked about – the things that I’d really like to do. But because you’ve got to make money, you’ve got to do commissions. Although I do like the challenge of them, I’d like to be able to commission myself, in a way. I’d like to have the time to be able to do that, and have a studio. It’s one of the things my wife and I keep talking about – we’ll build a studio in the backyard and I’ll be able to work there. But then we’ve got to fix the plumbing, or something happens to the car or, you know, or I get asked to go to Europe and I’ve got to pay for that. So, it’s always put on the backburner.

Graham uses specialist tools and techniques for his work, some of which have been unchanged for centuries and some of which are cutting-edge technology. For stone masonry, the chisel and the mallets he uses look very similar to medieval tools, but with stronger materials. For wood cuts he uses Japanese wood carving chisels that haven’t changed for centuries, and when he does oil paintings he uses materials and techniques that also go back centuries. For graphic design, however, he uses new technology, programs like Illustrator and Photoshop as well as SketchUp.

What’s next?

Graham’s goal is ‘to have enough time and a space to make things that I’d like to make’ and to have his own studio.
Public Relations and Events

33. Paul Tibbles, Cultural Events

Freelance, 20 March 2017

Creative Career

I started off as a school teacher and was always interested in the dramatic arts. When I moved to a Western Sydney school as Head Teacher of History there was a strong performing arts reputation there, so I gradually moved more into that area and ran a lot of the performing arts programs - then into the eisteddfod, and into the school play and musical. The school was nominated for an award in the performing arts but some changes there meant that the person who had been my main collaborator left and went into the industry and called me and said, ‘swing across to the industry – there is plenty of space for you’.

So, my first job was with “One Extra Company” and my first job was as stage manager. It was a very interesting experience to move from the amateur world to the professional world.

Then, before long, I had about a year’s worth of work backed up. I worked for the Sydney Film Festival, One Extra and Newtown Theatre and I just started my own little production and events company. I think it was basically my skills as a teacher – dealing with people - which made the new role effective for me. And my skills as an amateur theatre person in terms of scheduling and programming and organising things was also useful.

Then I came to L!vesites in Newcastle. It was a pretty good brand that I inherited. I had been working as a contractor at a theatre in Gosford and I saw the ad as being for external events – an interesting job. So, I applied, and I was lucky enough to get it.

Creative Labour

It’s not easy. I reckon the best example of local performing artists is the Sydney Dance Café where it is full of beautiful young women who want to be dancers. They work in the café or they work in local bars, so they can pay for their lessons at the Sydney Dance Company. Then they work for free for Short and Sweet Dance or any of the dance competitions just to get some exposure. Or they work for nothing for choreographers who give them a chance. The whole idea is that they’ll get seen. So, most people in the performing arts who aren’t at a fully professional level support their art through work of another kind.

They are motivated by an absolute passion for what they do. I know people who have paid $30,000 to go to RADA and have graduated at the top of their class and come back here and can’t get a full-time job in Australia, or can’t break into the scene here because they are a little bit older and not well known. They just work in bars or coffee shops and pick up bits of roles. It’s the same motivation that amateurs have – a real passion for the role.

Some people say that some artistic people are disorganized and use their creative interests as an excuse. Invoicing and business activities can be difficult. But I find that people who have been in the industry for longer don’t do that. One of the things I believe L!vesites did well was to take those people and say to them ‘this is the way we need to do these things, work in this context, do it in this format.’ That way, the time you might have to spend chasing people at the end is better invested in chasing them at the start. We got it to happen more effectively – it was our core business and we had to fix it.

Those sorts of problems aren’t just with creative people. Lots of small business are like that. It might be chronic with creatives, but it’s not restricted to just them.
Creative Entrepreneurship

Creativity is more conceptual to me. If we take the example of painting – you can create a new concept about painting. Innovation is the technique you use to create that. Innovation is really about applying things to a new situation. To a new context. A new problem. To me the difference between creativity and innovation is always about people who can see things in a different way. Someone like David Bowie when he did Ziggy Stardust – or someone who comes up with a completely new artistic concept – the world was just getting used to those big stage shows when Bowie created something completely different. That brought together his creativity and his innovation. And then he meets someone like Brian Eno and the music changes - it was completely different in the way the music was built and understood. Leonard Cohen is another innovator in a very different way. You listen to Leonard Cohen’s music and you say, ‘I want to kill myself, it’s awful’ but he’s made 70 albums. And he’s an innovator because he put poetry to music in a new way. You see him perform and he just stands in the light with his hat on and he just moans into the microphone. He’s not an innovative performer. He didn’t even have a good voice. But I love him.

There are some creative organisations where it’s open plan and people have their dogs in there and there’s a play area. Or you might work for some government agencies where there’s a sign-in and a sign-out and it’s really strict. I don’t think the defining factor is necessarily whether it’s creative or not. I think it’s about how people establish an organisation to facilitate the best outcomes for what they want.

To make things happen, no matter what they are, it’s always got to be on budget. On time. Within constraints.

Creative IP

It’s not about how you can make something fantastic and just expect people to buy it. There are lots of fantastic ideas that people don’t want to buy. And you can go bust trying to do it. You have to look at what you feel inspired to do and think about the business model that can make it work. People sometimes don’t have any idea of how they can translate their skill into a business. A lot of people put the 100% into the art and the talent. You might see people who get a grant to, say, develop a dance piece. And the choreographer – the person who got the grant, won’t take any money from it but will pay the other creatives – the dancers, say, rather than saying – this is how the budget should work. They might think about the costumes but not about the lights or a lighting designer. Then you mention it and they go ‘shit’. People overlook things like road closures, insurance.

Everyone in the organisation needs to know the process. You have to be able to back-fill in a crisis. You need a creative team where it doesn’t all come from one person - the thing to avoid is where people aren’t achieving their potential because they aren’t being given a chance to do so.

What’s next

For me? I don’t know. Family comes first, and my family needs some help right now. After that, we’ll see.

34. MELANIE JAMES, PR ACADEMIC
University of Newcastle, 19 October 2016

Creative Career
Melanie has worked professionally as a Public Relations practitioner for Federal Government campaigns and for NGO’s. In 2003 she was the Marketing Communications Manager at the Newcastle Permanent and in 2006 she joined the University of Newcastle, where she is a Senior Lecturer in Communication in the School of Creative Industries. She designed the curriculum for the Public Relations Major that is a professionally accredited with Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRiA). In addition to a string of teaching commendations and industry awards, in 2015 she won the Public Relations Institute of Australia’s “National PR Educator of the Year 2015” Award. In 2016 James chaired the University committee for Mass Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and was involved in the highly successful delivery of the Natural History Illustration MOOC that was partnered with edX.

As a researcher, she has authored four books, numerous journals articles, book chapters and conference papers. Her most recent book, "Positioning Theory and Strategic Communication: A new approach to public relations research and practice" was published by Routledge in 2014. James continues to consult in PR and strategic communication whilst working at the University. Melanie holds a PhD in Communication and Media, a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching Practice from the University of Newcastle and a Masters of Arts (Journalism) from the University of Technology, Sydney. In a past life she worked in the Health sector.

**Creative Labour**

In 2003, Melanie reactivated her business:

I thought I’ll do websites for businesses, there’s so many businesses up here that need websites and little marketing plans and stuff. I was 10 years too early. And I set up a business called hunterkids.com.au and it was a portal for a one stop shop for parents. And I had it going for about 18 months. I had something like 2000 businesses on board. Then I got the full-time job at the University and I ended up putting in a manager and they ran it into the ground. So, it folded.

**Creative Networking**

How do you see yourself fitting into the Creative Industries?

I’ve always seen myself as creative person. And that comes from my creative writing and I’ve always approached my communications work from a creative perspective. I see myself as a constructor of meaning and a creator of, a social creator of, meaning. And so therefore I see that as sitting as a creative industry. I can see why people wouldn’t see my areas as creative from the fine art space, or performing arts space. But a lot of what public relations people do is quite performative and it’s also, I think, creative in the worst and best possible ways. A lot of it is not what I would call the copyright industries, but a lot of it is about working on proprietary products and services, if you know what I mean.

**Creative Futures**

Can you describe what is happening in Newcastle in terms of PR and communication practice?

I think Newcastle creative agencies in terms of PR and the established organisations are probably at least 10 years behind in their thinking. Probably 15, and maybe even 20, in how their executives think - I’m talking here about major utility companies, major financial services, major councils and stuff like that. There are some exceptions to that. But the people that are making decisions, even if the people in their comms department or their creative areas in their organisations, the people are actually making decisions and taking, judging the risks, aren’t across the changes. And they are very ripe for disruption by new players.

I think that’s the risk to the regions from new players, because new players can come in from anywhere in the world and there are lucrative regions in Australia, like Newcastle, like Geelong and like a lot of the regional cities in Queensland and stuff that could be very easily disrupted by a major player with good technology. And basically, they could have the carpet
ripped out from under them. I think that could happen in Newcastle and they’re not ready. And I think I saw that very much at the Hunter business breakfast that I organised earlier in the year with a guest speaker talking about Social Media. He asked some pretty basic but provocative questions about it of all those business men in that room and only about 10% of people were putting up their hands. He was asking who’s ready for this, who’s ready for that, whose business is ready for this? And less than 10% out of those 300 people in that Starlight room were putting up their hands. And most of them didn’t know what he was talking about. And they were the captains of industry in this area!

Researching how business uses social media was a project Melanie did with Honours student Ailee Laws.

We looked at three businesses in Newcastle and how they were learning on the job, using social media. I think that can demonstrate the value of engaging in global social media, especially when people put their efforts into one platform. Holding up examples to local business is one way to help and to do it through communities of practice and interest groups as I’ve been trying to get that happening in Newcastle in various ways for about 10 years. The thing is that I have found about small businesses in Newcastle is that they are not sharers. They are highly competitive, and secret-keepers and they don’t see that by sharing they could grow the pie so there’s more of the pie to split. For example, cafes saw themselves competing with other cafes.

Merril DeFiddes is the CEO of The Social Media Training School, based in East Maitland. She travels out and teaches small to medium business how to set up their Facebook page or their LinkedIn account for their business. She’s making a nice little living doing that.

Creative Products

The education sector is also moving into digital delivery of courses, and in 2016 the University of Newcastle partnered with edX to deliver four Mass Open Online Courses (MOOC). Melanie chaired the University MOOC committee that oversaw the design and production of this online curriculum. As Melanie states:

It’s an evolving and fast-moving market. So, after the initial exuberance for MOOCs from 5 years ago, (while there’s still a lot of enthusiasm worldwide), there’s now a tempering off. So, the space that Newcastle as a university has entered is still an uncertain one, but not as an uncertain globally as it was 6 years ago.

The evidence shows that MOOCs don’t make money directly, but people report quite widely in the academic literature that they drive traffic into other courses for the university; they’re great for global branding. They generally are good for getting academics thinking about online delivery and generally they have the knock-on effects of bringing more online and blended learning into the university-accredited courses, because people start thinking ‘oh, okay, I can see how that’s worked’.

The first MOOC off the rank here is Natural History Illustration which I’m project managing. Most MOOCs are based around a subject where people learn about something. Whereas this MOOC is teaching people how to do something. And that’s quite unusual, especially in the creative space. And so, what we’re doing is really quite ground-breaking in that it’s really developing a whole new way of teaching drawing. And that’s why it’s taking so long, and it’s taking quite a bit of money and time and resources to really break down. And I think once we’ve done it, it will potentially create a model for delivering more of the creative subjects online.

The first delivery of the Natural History Illustration MOOC attracted 17,000 enrolments. It was so successful that people were completing after the official enrolment period had closed. The university will offer the MOOC for a second time in 2017.
What’s next?

In 2016 Melanie took on an interim position as Head of School of Design Communication and IT and in 2017 she is a visiting research fellow at UTS Sydney.

35. HEIDI POLLARD, ENTREPRENEUR AND LEADERSHIP COACH

UQ Power, CEO, 3 May 2016

Creative Career

Heidi Pollard learnt her customer service skills early, working part-time at Toronto Henny Penny when she was at High School. She had three jobs as a teenager. Her formal education includes TAFE certificates, a Bachelor degree, a graduate diploma and a Masters. Heidi completed a Bachelor degree in Arts Communication Studies from the University of Newcastle. She also has a Graduate Diploma in Professional Communication and a Masters in Professional Communication from University of Southern Queensland.

Heidi’s first job was at the John Hunter Hospital as a Public Relations Manager. She then moved onto TAFE NSW where she was the Marketing / Public Affairs Director and next she was at WorkCover NSW as the Director of Communications. Heidi was CEO of her own company, Leading Value, and was Director of First Firm, a property management business. She is Chair of the Professional Communicators Network, based in Newcastle and founded by herself, and is Chief Leading Lady of the Leading Ladies International - another networking organisation that does global programs for women. She was a foundation member of the Hunter Medical Research institute at the John Hunter, and she is currently Chair of the Bachelor of Communication Advisory Board, for the University of Newcastle.

Heidi is an entrepreneur and her talents include being an international company culture coach, a property investor, motivational speaker, philanthropist, humanist author and leadership advocate. Her day job at the moment is Chief Empowerment Officer of UQ Power.

CI Business

UQ Power is aimed at future-proofing businesses, empowering people and leveraging business leadership. UQ Power runs a number of business services for the Leaders, HR Professionals and Event Planners.

Creative Career

Heidi started the Professional Communicators Network to help professionals develop their emotional intelligence to improve how we communicate and relate to other people.

I started the Professional Communicators Network for that reason, and you’re all welcome to join it. The student membership is $10. We meet every two months, go to different workplaces, and talk about PR and Communication issues, campaigns, challenges. It’s very open and free. We actually have quite a few students come from time to time. It was all about how can we support each other professionally, because what I found through conversations with Angela who was at that time at ABC Radio, and Jodie McKay who’s now a minister, that, once you leave your degree how do you measure your work? How do you know if it’s still cutting edge? How do you improve? And so, we set that network up to be able to share that.

But I would say (in answer to that), if you are thinking about who your clients are, or who you want to work with – go and hang out where they are. So, I don’t go to the Public Relations Institute Australia (PRIA) sessions, for example, in Sydney, because I find it’s a whole heap of other practitioners and you can find other ways to keep up to date with the
industry. I’m more likely to go to an EO or CEO forum or conference. I’m speaking at one in Washington in July, and that’s the World Futures Society. I do a lot of work in the futures space.

In 2016, Heidi was part of a Business Chicks and Virgin Unite program hosted by Richard Branson on Necker Island in the Caribbean.

It was a hugely inspiring and energising experience. The theme was about when bold minds and big thinkers come together. Aside from hearing from Richard Branson, and staying in the most beautiful location imaginable, here is where the networking kicks in. We listened to a mix of other global influencers and leaders, such as Matt Mullenweg, who is the founder of WordPress, as well as Jane Wurwand, the founder of Dermalogica, which is a skincare company.

The program was a five-and-a-half-day leadership retreat on Branson’s private Island and the day after the retreat ended it was to be Branson’s birthday.

So, his grandkids and everyone was there as well, for his 65th birthday. We met his whole family, and it was just interesting to watch how he integrates life and work. And a lot of people might say that’s because he’s a billionaire now, but from what I can understand and everything I talked to him about, he’s been doing that since he was 18, 19. And he says there’s no such thing as work and life. It’s all living.

And so instead of trying to get balance or make those equal, he asks how can you weave what you love to do as a business into your life, and make that part of what you do. So, he would get up at about five most mornings. He’d play tennis for an hour - he has a professional Wimbledon coach who lives on the island just to play tennis with him every day. He spends a lot of time with nature and says it’s important to have fresh air and sunlight, and to feel alive in what you’re doing, not stuck in an office. And he, in particular, has never had an office in his whole career. He runs 400 and something companies, and he’s never had an office. And he said, when I go to the office I’m just a disruption because then people want to ask me questions and get my approval. He said it’s far better for me to manage from afar, so they can get their stuff done.

Creative Entrepreneurship

I’d always been a bit entrepreneurial I think, even though I didn’t know what that meant back then. I’d always had three jobs from age 14. I had three going through uni. I was always, you know, interested in business and the world. And it was probably realising that as much as I went straight out of uni into a decent salary, I wasn’t going to build wealth that way and I wasn’t going to be able to change the world with a day job. And so, I started investigating property, and I went to heaps of seminars and things on my weekends, and read every book I could on the subject.

So, I probably self-educated a lot, in a lot of those topics early on. I bought my property when I think I was 22, and then I pretty well bought at least one or two a year from then on. So, I kind of learnt in the flow of it. It actually added a lot to what I was doing professionally, because it taught me to negotiate. It taught me to have influence to communicate with people because while you’re going through property purchases and things like that, there’s loads of ways that can go.

I learnt pretty quick that I wasn’t great at detail. I had to do it, and particularly in the first probably 10 years of my career, I did heaps of detail. But probably why I pushed for more senior positions was that I am far more strategic, and I am better at the big picture. I always sought advice and found other people who were good at that stuff, and hired them in, paid for their services - lawyers, accountants. Whatever I needed, I would get that support.
Here is a small example where Heidi remembers that taking a bit more time to proofread would have saved her embarrassment.

Public relations... when you’re typing fast can often be typed as ‘pubic relations’. And I have sent out several media releases with ‘pubic relations manager’ at the bottom, and had the media call and go, ‘Can I speak to the pubic relations manager?’.

After at the end of her WorkCover NSW job, Heidi took six months leave to change her career direction.

I went to the States and studied to be a business coach. I went to Texas and did this course in a compressed way. It was a three-year course and I did it in six months, because what I found more and more, was that it felt a bit like Groundhog Day in that in comms, you can often see the same themes every year, and seasonal things. So, I started going ‘I could do that with my eyes shut – what do I really love about what I do?’ And what I loved was developing people. And, I found that I’d had staff who had worked for me at John Hunter who’d followed me to TAFE, who’d followed me to WorkCover.

So, people would keep going ‘I want to work with you!’. So, I said ‘There’s something in that, you know?’. I actually love the human side of what we do, connecting people, developing. So, I did the coaching course, and then in my last year at WorkCover I negotiated to be able to work a four-day week. I worked compressed hours, so I worked five days in four, and then would have the fifth day off every week to start coaching. I did that pro bono for a year for free, just for people to kind of get my coaching hours up, and get practised at it. So, Leading Value is essentially a leadership kind of coaching company.

Creative Labour

I remember my first job out of uni, was the Public Relations Manager at the John Hunter Hospital.

My very first day I had a car accident on the way to work. So, I actually arrived via an ambulance to the Emergency Department. I had to ring my brand-new boss and say I’m going to be a little bit late, and I’m going to be coming via Emergency. Maybe it was first day nerves, but I remember saying about three months into the job that I’d learnt more in the three months than I felt I’d learnt in three years of the degree.

It wasn’t until I was probably into my career about three years that when I was managing strategies and actually doing campaigns that I started going ‘oh, now my university knowledge is coming to help me’. And I would go and get old textbooks and things out, and draw on them then. But in the first probably three to six months of my career, it was more just learning office politics – how to work with an executive, how to deal with the media when you get 15 calls within 10 minutes from different media outlets and you’re like, ‘I wasn’t really prepared for this’. I used to spend a whole day to write a media release and now I have to punch something in 10 seconds, and get it approved by an executive and minister, and get it out to the media.

Can you describe what PR is?

I used to say all the time to my team that we had a sign above our door that said, ‘dump your shit here’. Because in PR, it seems like anything that doesn’t fit in an organisation neatly, into Finance, Accounts, HR, they go ‘give it to the PR people, they will sort something out’. So, I learnt really quickly just how to be ambidextrous, and deal with lots of different things, from bikies turning up with guns strapped to their ankles that want to donate to children, to you know, media, or to a Policeman getting shot in the back and you know, helicopters landing and massive coverage. So, you just kind of learnt to roll with it.

As CEO of UQ Power, Heidi uses a number of virtual services that help her stay on top of her commitments. One of these is a Virtual Assistant, Claire who is paid $65 an hour to manage Heidi’s diary and help with highly technical tasks. Clare lives in Queensland and they have only met once in seven years.
But some of the stuff that she does for me would take me three hours, while it takes her 10 minutes because, like I said, I’m not great at the detail. But I now also have a subscription to a service in the US called Fancy Hands. And it’s about $6-8 per task US, so still really cheap for us, and a task is sort of 20 minutes’ allotment. So, I’m going to Vegas next week for a conference that I’m speaking at, and so I wanted to check out what are the co-working spaces over there. So, I just shoot a task on my Fancy Hands page, and say can someone do some research for me. And within 10 minutes, I get back an email with all the different services and companies, here’s their contact details, opening hours, all of that. If I go onto the internet, I go down the rabbit hole and I won’t come out for three hours, you know. I am easily distracted by bright, shiny objects. For me, it’s all about controlling that.

**Creative Products**

Heidi found that her leadership skills developed because people above her supported her ideas,

> I was really fortunate when I was at John Hunter in that first position, that our executive, the CEO there, was brilliant - a really good leader. He taught me very early on what a good leader does. And he really supported and empowered me, even for things like when we had three fatalities that came about for people who had had open heart surgery, and I was still pretty new in the manager role. We’d been doing a values program with staff about what’s important, and one of those things was honesty, and patient care. So, I felt the need to go public, and actually talk about having an issue the fact that we were investigating it. The surgeons wanted to keep it quiet and manage it in-house.

So, I ran a press conference with Channel 9, Channel 7, Channel 10, the Australian, all of those people where I’d never done anything like that in my life. But it actually ended up being in our favour, cos they appreciated that we were on the front foot about it. So, I was really lucky to have someone like him in the beginning. I used to get quite overwhelmed because of the amount of detail and the volume that you deal with in PR. And he used to always come in at night and just say ‘eat it like an elephant, one chunk at a time’.

For six years Heidi has run a program called Leading Ladies International. It is a support program that helps budding entrepreneurs identify their strengths and get assistance for areas where they can buy in expertise.

> So that had international women involved and it’s a mix of online and in-person training. It’s a 12-week program and it’s usually for women who have been in start-up mode for at least a year. So, they’ve established their brand, they know what they want to be, and what their product is. But it’s more about how do they leverage, how do they monetise, how do they become more efficient themselves, what’s their mindset like, what systems do they have, what support do they have, do they have a bookkeeper, a BA, you know - all of those kinds of things.

And also, it has created a network in connectivity. So, with the six years we’ve been running it means we’ve now got an alumnus of people who have been through the program and we’ve got a private chat group online, and so every day there’s activity where people are launching something or asking for help like running a social media campaign.

Heidi describes the Sista Code,

> The Sista Code started just from that, as a blog, and an online space. And Mel Histon manages that fulltime now. This year we just launched a charity called Got Your Back Sista, and we held a function on Sunday actually, with 270 women and raised $13,000. What we do with our funding is we get approached by refuges here in the Hunter and around NSW, where women have fled domestic violence. And so, what we do is support them and their children to start their life again, whether that’s household items, clothing, groceries or helping them with getting their first lease and rent and those sorts of things. So, yeah.
What’s next?

Heidi’s advice for the future is to create some daily rituals and to stick to them,

For me, it’s yoga and meditation every single morning. And even if I’m travelling and I have to get up at 3:30 or 4, I still make the buffer of an hour to do half hour yoga, 20 minutes’ meditation. We clean our body to get rid of the dirt from the day before, but too many people don’t clean their mind out. So, they carry a lot of garbage in their head. So, meditation, for me is the cleansing of that.
Creative Career

As well as managing the Jean Bas fashion business and “144: A Style Collective”, Kevin teaches Communications at Hunter TAFE and teaches Information Design, Graphic Design and Creative Cultures/Studies at NIC, the international college at The University of Newcastle.

Kevin is on the Board of Newcastle Now, a Business Improvement Association and is active in the Darby St traders’ association. He is especially interested in the ‘smart cities’ concept.

CI Business

The Jean Bas business has been operating for about 35 years in fashion design and manufacture. Jean and Kevin, her partner, run a retail outlet in Darby St Newcastle where they also host other businesses. Hence Kevin calls himself a ‘Collaborative Choreographer’ of the space. They previously sold to David Jones department store and designed and manufactured clothing ranges for corporates, especially in the finance sector.

Creative Products

Jean Bas does what Kevin calls ‘culturally important clothing’ like mother of the bride and outfits for business women in the public eye. These are top end, bespoke made-to-measure garments which have top-end prices, necessary because of the high costs of their business including the rates they pay to experienced seamstress/tailoresses who work on-site.

Jean Bas produces high-end clothing at prices unmatched in the city. The company previously worked in the corporate wardrobes area and has produced uniforms for Hunter School of the Performing Arts as well as a number of financial institutions. They lost contracts and were on the verge of re-locating to Sydney where they felt the market would be more welcoming when a shopfront in busy, fashionable Darby St became available. They have been surprised by their success, as have observers who were not of the view that there was a market locally for clothing costing up to several thousand dollars per piece. Instrumental has been their focus on the customer experience and relationship-building.

Creative Entrepreneurship

The collective approach to retail represents a new model and there are barriers to it. Kevin explains:

It depends a lot on landlords who will allow you to sublease. Fortunately, we have a great relationship with our landlord and all she said was “As long as you are one of the players, do what you like and as long as it is fashion”. So, we got the OK ... but in many cases the legal structure of leasing premises restricts people from sharing. That needs to change. In Europe it is changing a lot. The share economy is strong. In the States, in New York, you can have a boutique that’s a wine bar at night. The natural sense about all that is that if your risk is lower, you can afford to be more adventurous with what you offer.

He sees promise in a model of work that is collaborative and distributed and explains:

I see so many creatives that work one off; or ... they are project-based jobs...So when a client says, “I have these needs”, they call in the other specialist that they trust. They work together. It’s called the Hollywood model... once the project is complete they break up and work on the next one that comes along and they all sing out to each other when something comes up that suits. I think that’s the business structure or model that regions like Newcastle
are in a beautiful position to take advantage of. This type of economy that is coming, it’s on us but it will grow a lot more.

The company’s work providing corporate wardrobes presented several issues, including the matter of intellectual property rights:

It’s a very delicate space, where companies say, “Come and show us what you would do for us” and we say “Well, the problem is that if we show you something really good (which we will), you can’t help but be influenced by it and you may not choose us to supply what we will show you during the design or concept phase”. I wasn’t trying to be smart or nasty and it’s not a case of the company trying to con you either, it’s just like everything else, if you see something, hear something or read something that impresses you it sticks in there and you are influenced from that point on. And that is the difficulty with the creatives - unless they have a bit of protection at that point where they can talk freely and work with a client knowing that their idea is their idea, it becomes a bit of a stand-off...

Kevin explains:

In fashion there is no protection for a three-dimensional product. There is protection for the sketches you make, strangely enough, under standard copyright but as soon as it goes three dimensional it’s considered a utilitarian product and the only protection say for a label like Chanel is that the person cannot use the label ‘Chanel’ on the garment they copy from Chanel’s. That’s why you see much of the top end branded, say handbags covered in logos, Louis Vuitton, Chanel etc. They are covered in the logos because the logo is trademark protected. So, if someone copies the bag with the logo, the two CC or the Dior whatever, they are actually infringing the trademark and can be prosecuted that way.

Creative Networking

The Style Collective relies on the effective participation of a number of partners working collaboratively. Kevin says:

The collaboration side of it has been a fascinating practical study in that you want people who are motivated or self-motivated and you want them to come into a team that is aiming at a collective motivation. So, it is easier said than done! But in regard to human nature, it is almost a clash of passions... It’s simple really but we can’t just promote ourselves as ourselves, we have to promote ourselves as a collective and that message to the market at the moment is very new. It’s very difficult to clearly state. You have to be very careful about the message you send out.

Creative Labour

Kevin suggests that there are flaws in the business model for independent fashion designers working with corporates, providing this example of the difficulty of managing creative activities and making decisions:

... we worked with a large company here in Newcastle and knew the people very well. They said “We are going to tender for a new uniform. Are you interested in working for us?” and I said “Yes, certainly ... [but] I’m not prepared to tender unless you have a design you want us to produce because that’s what a tender is, you are giving us specifications” and they stopped and went “OK, well you sound like you have done this before. What should we do?” and I said “Well, you should do an expression of interest, ask various companies, give them a rough brief of your company, numbers etc, timeframes, maybe even a rough budget, and then see what comes in ... Then go and build a relationship with those organisations and interview them, look at their operations and see if they are a fit with your company. Instead of “So, well, here are three quotes. Who is going to win?” , “Here is a number of people and who do we want to work with?” Because I got to the stage where I was working with companies like this and got to contracts and supply agreements and whatever, I would sit
on their side of the desk when we signed them, and they would often get a little bit uncomfortable and would question it. I would say to them “Well, we are going to be working together here now for the next few years on a project and we need to work together ... It’s not a case of you and I sort of standing off trying to satisfy each other and play the budgetary game and all that sort of thing.”

I’m not sure that the corporate world really gets any of that yet because they are sort of two opposing worlds. You are often times a creative person trying to go in and form a relationship with someone who is a finance director and they probably couldn’t be further fields apart - polar opposites.

Kevin talks about the importance of place, despite this being a globalised world, and the appeal of regional areas for creatives:

I find the weirdest thing about creatives is that they like to congregate together physically ... It has global impact, but the strange thing is that you would think with our internet services and our data streaming and so on that you could operate anywhere but creatives when they stop want to be in a really lovely place and it is not always a big city so regions like Newcastle are coming up really strongly for building creative cities because of the lifestyle. Creatives when they clunk, they stop, they have to rest, they have to recharge and places like Berlin and New York could be pretty cool ...but nothing beats eyeballing the client, eyeballing the team you are working with, the project members.

What’s next?

The focus on customer experience and relationship-building will continue. Kevin says of their product:

We want to fine tune it to the market, get the feedback, find out what they need. Essentially what stops them from driving down the freeway [to Sydney]? So that is the intent. As a brand positioning it would be something in the nature of ‘providing fashion solutions to people who have a cultural challenge, be it a wedding or as a wedding guest or something important they have to go to’ but then again, we will also do some of the easy care casual pieces that people like for travel.

37. ANGELA FOONG, FASHION DESIGNER

38. ROWENA FOONG, FASHION DESIGNER

High Tea with Mrs Woo 31 March 2016

Creative Careers

The company is owned and run by three Australian sisters: Angela, Rowena and Juliana Foong whose parents migrated from Malaysia. The sisters are very close and share all decisions in the company, saying “the unit of three is actually the power of one...We are just one entity for the public, the outside world.”

Rowena and Juliana studied Graphic Design and Angela studied Economics and Commerce. Angela worked for Deloittes in San Francisco. They are self-taught in clothing design and manufacture apart from a short course in pattern-making which Rowena did. “We have always made clothing for ourselves - we were taught how to when we were young”.

CI Business

They started 15 years ago with a second-hand clothing store in Darby St, Newcastle which they purchased from a friend. They found that ‘there were a lot of distinct sub-cultures so there was a market for the styles of clothing we were making at the time’. They thought, ‘We’ll do this for a while whilst
we are deciding what to do after university’, and then a few years into it we thought, ‘OK. We’ll give it a go. We’ll work the fashion industry to see what it’s like and whether we want to have a career in it – see how long it lasts.’ They received a government grant which paid for an industry mentor, ‘because we are a regional business you have a little bit more leverage… it works well, living in Newcastle.’ Support from government in the form of three TCF (Textile, Clothing and Footwear) grants has totalled nearly $90,000, the largest to pay for a full retail / manufacturing point-of-sale system to manage the manufacturing, the fabric, and sales.

When High Tea with Mrs Woo was established in 2004 it was as a Family Trust. Most fashion labels have a backer – an investor or family backing – but they do not. At their peak, they showed at Sydney Fashion Week and had up to 35 retailers selling their work. They had a store in Paddington in Sydney for five years where they employed ten staff and had a turnover of $700,000 pa. Then “the GFC happened, rent was too high in Sydney, a lot of our retailers closed their stores, so we had to leave. We are still recovering from that.” Their current turnover is less than half what it was at the peak ($300,000).

They have chosen simplicity. “We can pay ourselves, we can pay our staff and we can put aside a bit of money so that’s OK”.

Angela manages the finances and legal matters while Rowena looks after the graphics and marketing side of things including websites, corporate identity and imagery. Juliana is the retail manager and does a lot of the pattern-making. All collaborate on design and manufacturing. All work in the store ‘because that’s the best way you can interact with your customer’.

They are inspired by travel (especially to Japan), cinema, nature, bushwalking and their Malaysian cultural background. The business is committed to sustainability.

Creative Labour

The Foong sisters have clear and unusual views about managing their creative activities. To begin with, they are three individuals working extremely closely so that they feel they are one entity. Second, they have chosen simplicity or ‘lifestyle’ over money and status.

The decisions they make are shaped by their values which are very much about environmental sustainability. Rowena says:

Sustainability is for us not just how we work or move through the world but what we are as people. It has to be holistic... We try our very best in the way that we manage our waste and source our fabrics and for the sustainability of our business, all of it has to work in together. It’s a challenge...

But the choice also means that we live like poor artists! It’s more expensive to do everything less but it means we are not adding to this madness of excess production, excess fabric......

At the end of the day, we aren’t in this business to be millionaires. We’re just in it because we love what we do, and we can live a simple and affordable lifestyle in Newcastle, which means we only need to make what can sustain that.

On their website they say, “A sustainable business to us is not that we have craploads of money.” Angela contrasts her previous job at Deloittes with what she is doing now:

It didn’t have any flexibility, and I thought that even though it was a great opportunity - I could probably travel and earn heaps of money - you were going to spend twelve hours of your day for what? What reason? To serve somebody else to make more money? You’re not really that interested in the company.

What we’re doing is so small. It’s a little seed. You can do whatever you want. I get to work with my sisters. I get to stay in Newcastle. We can then make it whatever we want to.

Creative Products
As well as their retail outlet, the Foong sisters sell their work at markets, beginning with Youngblood in Sydney at the Powerhouse Museum in 2007 and now Finders Keepers in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide; The Big Design Market in Melbourne and Sydney; markets in Canberra and little local markets like Olive Tree in Newcastle. ‘They are just popping up everywhere’. They love the interaction with customers and say that ‘markets mean that more people who may not have been interested in creative work now get exposed to that as a shopping avenue’.

However, markets and the online store Etsy attract hobby makers and therefore ‘tend to lower the value of work [and the financial return]’.

**Creative Entrepreneurship**

Copyright is an issue, but it is too expensive to protect designs and the protection is limited.

*The design copyright stuff is silly, like if this top had a pocket on it, it wouldn’t be the same. Someone could just take that exact design, tweak it by 2% or something and that wouldn’t be considered a copyright breach...I guess you just need to be strong in your brand, confident in your work and do your best. It would be nice to protect our main designs, but we just can’t afford it and most people can’t unless you are a huge company like Prada or Gucci or something... We’d rather put money into awesome fabrics than I.P.*

The Foong sisters have worked internationally, selling through a retail outlet in Treviso, Italy and sourcing fabrics overseas but they do not manufacture overseas, for reasons that concern quality, sustainability and lifestyle.

*Most of our colleagues have gone offshore to produce their work and we are one of a few to insist on staying here. That means to us a lifestyle choice and it’s also a sustainability choice because we don’t want to go and spend three quarters of the year or whatever managing production overseas. The quality comes back as terrible, and it’s also the mileage thing. You are sending stuff there, they are sending it back. But all those costs are not truly captured. There are also environmental costs... [and] it is a lifestyle choice. We are not interested in spending half our life in China chasing issues... when you produce overseas, the minimum quantities are high. That means you are producing more than you need and all that excess ends up going on sale ... and anything that doesn’t get sold gets dumped. We don’t want to be part of that process.*

They have online sales, including some customers in Europe and USA but this represents probably only 5% of their business. They say of internet shopping: “in the last five years it’s gone gangbusters” but “We didn’t really want to have an online shop. We wanted people to come in, feel the fabrics and wear the clothes. We’ve had to adapt because we were missing out on a market…”

But not all online customers live far away, and the personal and local dimension of the business persists in this mode of sale.

*Lately we’ve had a lot of online customers from down the road. We had a customer who bought who lives around the corner in Dawson St... because people are time-poor, and if they have kids, or who knows? If they can’t come in during store hours, they are ordering very late at night...And if it’s over $100 purchase we offer free delivery anywhere in Australia so if someone has ordered from Hamilton or New Lambton ...we might just drop it off. And we’ve had customers then who say, ‘You came and dropped it off at my house? That’s amazing service!’ We live down the road. Why would we send Australia Post to drop it at your house? It’s just hilarious.*

They have chosen to live and work locally in a regional city. This means that they can afford to live “on the minimum wage… we earn enough to be able to live in Newcastle. We wouldn’t earn enough to live in Sydney”.

They say of working locally in Newcastle:
Space and affordability is the thing... we really like working away from the noise... the great thing about Newcastle is that it’s not so isolated that you can’t access anything, like you can drive to Sydney it’s two to three hours, you fly to Melbourne and it’s an hour and a half... And I guess also in Newcastle we are in this ideal situation where there’s the sea and then you’ve also got the bush - it doesn’t take long to get out somewhere where you can be out amongst trees - then you’ve got the Valley and you’ve got the countryside like around Maitland...It is more expensive to live here now but it is still affordable. It gives you everything you need and that’s pretty amazing.

They say of the creative industries sector: “It feels like it’s growing and it’s quite strong and it’s quite supported in this region” and that initiatives like the markets and Renew Newcastle have “definitely made an awareness of this whole local creative industry stronger”. However, doing business in the city is difficult:

If you live in Newcastle running your own show you have to be pretty self-motivated...It’s a tough market here. And also, you can get lost in a bit of a black hole. You try doing something and you get rejected, and you feel down about it and you just stop. Or you get stuck. For us, our solution to that is to travel, even just to go interstate once in a while, or go camping or do other things that don’t make you feel that you are just here. It is good in a way to be isolated from the fashion industry, but you also need to keep...feeding yourself with goodness from elsewhere.

What’s next?

They are looking to grow the online market, ‘going to work with Headjam locally to revamp our site and make it more efficient to manage the online marketing... we are going to aim to get that online section 20% or more of our sales...’

They are also looking to grow their international market.

They are trying to move away from the fashion business cycle of three buying and selling seasons each year ‘and just do it the way that fits us and our lifestyle and the way we work’.

We did that for many, many years and it was ridiculous. Like we didn’t sleep, we couldn’t keep up with it, it was so stressful... And it’s not that sustainable...because you are making so much all the time.

Having to come up with designs so quickly and I guess we were thinking, “This just doesn’t feel great”. And you don’t want to make crap. It felt like we were designing things and making them just to fill the range. What was the point? A lot of designers seem to do that. A lot of big fashion designers might have 30 pieces in their collection but really a retailer might buy five garments out of 30 and there’s all this waste.’

39. ANGELA HAILEY, JEWELLER

Studio Melt, 23rd September 2015

Creative Career

Angela Hailey is a jeweller. She has a Marketing degree and worked in that field first, but she returned to Art School to study jewellery and object design. Ange says it was a pragmatic decision to study jewellery making ‘I thought maybe that would be an easier way to make a living’. After completing Art School, she experienced work in a communal jewellery space in Piermont, Sydney which accommodated about ten jewellers and everyone shared facilities. Ange found this a very creatively rewarding experience. About the same time as her move to Newcastle, Ange had children, so she began working from home and in her garage. This allowed her to make jewellery which she sold at weekend
markets. Renew Newcastle offered her and her friend Suzy Manning an opportunity to set up a studio space/shop front that wasn’t in their garages. In 2012 Studio Melt began and within six months they commercially leased their shop which is where Studio Melt remains today, 119 Hunter Street, Newcastle.

CI Business

Studio Melt was to set up as a working studio space where Ange and Suzy could make and sell their own jewellery. Within six months of leasing the space through Renew Newcastle, they decided to commercially lease the premises they were in. The idea was to have a space that served many purposes, and it’s an engaging space and it's evolved over time. Ange and Suzy started to take work from other jewellery designers and local artists and they also began running jewellery making classes in the evenings and at weekends. Melt Jewellery School is primarily run by Susie Manning, the other jeweller. She has been teaching adult jewellery classes in Sydney for a decade before she moved to Newcastle.

Today Studio Melt sells a lot of studio made work, mostly locally made but there are some international artists that are also stocked, and products include ceramics, limited-edition art, cards, handbags and soft furnishings and plenty of jewellery.

Creative Networking

Renew Newcastle created a networking of like-minded people that helped jeweller’s Ange Hailey and Suzy Manning, to get out of their garages

*I think that Renew is fantastic, one of the best things we got out of it I suppose was meeting a whole bunch of other creative people trying to do what you were trying to do in the same town. As I said before it, it can be an isolating experience making things from home and potentially you're only contact with the community and other people who are making or buying your products could be at a market but Renew gives you access to a whole bunch of other people doing similar things and it's, it's nice to be part of that community and meet people through that.*

The markets provided an opportunity for Hailey to sell her jewellery and to interact with people.

*I went to the markets so that I could have more interaction with people and I think that really serves a great purpose. Markets in Newcastle are really, really popular and I guess we’re in a way, a permanent store version of that, where people can come to you 7 days a week in between all those markets and they can buy independent stuff from independent makers.*

Creative Entrepreneurship

Working from her garage was a means to an ends, and Hailey was keen to move on when the time was right

*When I finish my jewellery degree I actually had small kids quite soon after. So, I set up a studio at home and worked part-time while my kids were at home and I suppose it was that point when they both went to school and I thought I don't need to be at home anymore and I don't want to be at home. It was kind of those years where I was working, working from home you can picture me in a garage next to a lawnmower on a bench by myself. So, it was really functional, and it suited my lifestyle, but it wasn't a set up that I wanted to have for the ongoing future.*

*So, Renew I guess offered us the opportunity to set up a workshop and give something a go without any financial risk. So perhaps we wouldn't have really done it if we had to find $30-$50,000 to kind of take out a least and fit our shop. We could do it through Renew in gradual steps. We started off with just a desk and just a couple of cabinets and we built up our stock over time.*
The CBD of Newcastle was still in its improvements stage, shall we say the rent wasn’t exorbitant. So, we could afford it and we did, we did get a really strong response in that first six months. Enough to think that we could commercially be viable.

When we first arrived there just weren’t the locals filtering through, I think a lot of people who work in the city had kind of given up coming to the mall for their lunch break. There just wasn’t really anything to come for but as more cafes have come and more foot traffic has increased, not only with the people who work around here during their lunch break, but people are coming in here, parking their cars, going for a wander and a shop. So that has changed significantly in the three years since we’ve been open.

The jewellery classes for adults have been very popular, only advertised on the sandwich board outside the shop, they have grown into a successful part of the business, the Melt Jewellery School.

The good think about contemporary jewellery is there is no strict rules about sticking to sterling silver or setting a stone in a traditional format so there is no end to the types of courses that we can run, we can run some for example using precious metal clay which is literally a clay product that is heavily impregnated with silver and you work with it fire it and all the clay disappears and you are left with just silver.

Creative Products

A lot of Studio Melt’s clientele are people buying gifts for other people who want to buy something unique.

People who want to and are refreshed at seeing something that they don’t see anywhere else that is handmade that’s not 1 million of them, that don’t come out of a factory and have a good strong element of creativity in them.

The types of creative products that are stocked by Melt do vary

We try and stick to supporting studio based-makers and we’re more sympathetic to locals but were not trying to be localised only.

Studio Melt has a strong Instagram and Facebook presence

The more we talk about the makers, the more we tell the story behind the products and behind the person making the products the more people like that I think.

Every second day we have a box of stuff that we’ve never stock before that comes in and that is a great way for us to do new product shots. So, we’ve gotten so many one-off products in here that we never run out of things to photograph. We get people calling up and going, oh I saw this that you posted or that and it works really well for us.

What’s next?

Studio Melt may face a few changes with the Hunter Street Mall being redeveloped in the near future.

Whether we move into a side street, you know or go for larger premises and incorporated some more working space where we could invite other artists to come and work with us. I think one big challenge for creative people is they, more often than not they work from home which is quite an isolating experience and I was lucky enough to work in a jewellery space in Piermont in Sydney that had been set up properly. That was incredibly well kitted out and there were about eight or 10 jewellers who worked communally in that space and shared their facilities and was you know the probably the most rewarding creative experience I’ve ever had so you know if we got access to more space that would be something that we could do is to offer a communal working space for people.

A video interview was recorded with Ange Hailey in 2015 and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
40. LARA LUPISH, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Facon, 27 October 2016

Creative Career

Lara was born in Newcastle to immigrant parents and completed a degree at The University of Newcastle in Psychology. Soon after she finished her degree she moved overseas and lived and worked in Vancouver, Canada where she started work in the creative industries. She also worked in UK. All her fashion training has been through experience – ‘being thrown in the deep end and having to learn how to swim really fast!’

Returning to Australia, she worked as a fashion editor and a celebrity stylist in Sydney where she was ‘at the top of the celebrity styling pile’ with clients such as Megan Gale, Jen Hawkins and Delta Goodrem. She says ‘a normal shoot for me was a cover shoot for multiple magazines’. Her husband was a marketing manager in the music industry. In mid-2013 they moved to Newcastle, so their children could be closer to their grandparents and because housing was more affordable.

CI Business

Lara’s business is Facon and until 2015 it was called Styling by Lara Lupish. It includes Facon Magazine, Facon Creative (a creative agency) and Facon workshops and runways. On Facebook, Facon is described as “a collaboration of creative people producing world-class advertising imagery and a high-end fashion publication, Facon Book”.

The business premises in Greenaway St, Wickham, Newcastle also house the Models and Actors agency. There is a mezzanine level with an office upstairs and on the ground floor a professional photographic studio with a cyclorama (a professional studio wall), one of only two in the city, the other being at NBN Television.

Facon does work for creative agencies “brands come to us and ask us to create their imagery for their campaigns or their advertising or their social media to help them develop a brand strategy…” She has published two issues of a glossy fashion magazine “Facon” with a print run of 5000 and distribution nationally and in Hong Kong, Dubai, Malaysia and Singapore. Facon Book Three is due out in May 2017. Lara brings together a creative team of local people for the magazine ‘a photographer, hair and make-up, model or celebrity or talent’. Lara is the creative director and would like to have a fashion director as well as she currently does that too.

In terms of staffing, Lara has a Marketing Manager one day a week on contract. Currently, she has three interns from the Fashion Institute in Sydney, girls from Newcastle and the Central Coast. While an internship in Sydney would likely have meant they ‘stand in the wardrobe cupboard and check in shoes’, Lara says at Facon, ‘because we are so low on staff with so much to do, they are across everything, so the interns are styling shoots, they are doing mood boards, doing call sheets, they are grabbing coffees, they’re driving to Sydney to pick up product, they’re across everything’. She has now hired one of the first interns part-time.

Creative Career

Lara and her husband both left established careers and networks in Sydney to move to Newcastle but she has retained her Sydney links as the income they provide is needed

*My husband and I both had very successful careers. We left very established careers for a city where there weren’t any creative jobs. We took a punt. He got a job and that moved us here. It was within the creative realms. I had to start again really. I didn’t know where it would take me, but I started doing runways and still worked with all the fashion brands that I had a very long relationship with in Sydney and nationally, kept that connection, did runways, threw my net out really wide in Newcastle with all the different industries that I could tap into as far as styling went and it just developed from there…. I still work in Sydney*
to make money because Facon in Newcastle is still not really making money, so I need to supplement my income...The last year and a half, two years I’ve probably actually paid to work here which is sad. But I can see that we are turning a corner and we are just getting up on that wave. I can feel it. We’ve had great response to both books.

In an article in The Newcastle Herald (29 Nov 2013) Lara said of Newcastle ‘It’s has changed so much, there are so many international and well-travelled people who are converging here, it’s such a cool town’.

Living in Newcastle, however, seemed to present a difficulty in terms of perceptions

I wanted to keep my relationships with those brands in Sydney ...although I did keep it quiet that I had moved to Newcastle for probably a whole year. I rented a studio in Sydney because I was still involved in the Sydney market as far as styling went and I needed that as back-up.

Lara found that she wasn’t alone in working with ‘Novocastrians’ working undercover in the capital

When I worked with Sydney creatives on a shoot and I finally felt comfortable enough to say that I was from Newcastle, I realised that a lot of Sydney creatives are from Newcastle but we all keep quiet about it because we are embarrassed about it. Because it’s almost that if you’re a creative and you are not from Sydney or a metropolitan area, you are not cool enough or you’re not good enough or you don’t know what you are doing. But there were this top editorial hairstylist and some make-up people, and they are like, “Oh, I’m from Newcastle too!” And I say “Well, I’ve been working with you for eight years and I didn’t know that!” It’s like a dirty secret. With here, I’m trying to draw an eye to Newcastle with this magazine and hopefully with the creative agency, to show what people can get out of this city.

While Sydney has the status, Newcastle is more liveable

I think still big cities dominate. Absolutely. I’m saying it loud and proud because there are a lot of Sydneysiders I work with who are struggling with the cost of Sydney and what it is to live there. I like to boast now that I have a nice home in Newcastle and we go to the beach after school and it’s affordable, all that kind of stuff. Now I’m proud of it. But I have to admit that there are a lot of times I am doing business in Newcastle that I’m reminded of why I left, and it happens every week...

Creative Entrepreneurship

Lara has worked hard to find a market in the Newcastle and has had to be flexible and recognise that her initial expectations were not well-founded

When I did those runways, I invited the Newcastle City Council people and the Museum people and the Art Gallery people, footballers’ wives and the socialites of the city because I thought I’d do personal styling or I might dress them for events. I think I still wanted to be at that point what I was in Sydney to an extent, but the cards just laid down differently to what I thought, and it pushed me in a different direction.

She is surprised that her Sydney network continues to provide work for her

all the brands that I’d built a really strong relationship with in Sydney were still quite prepared to work with me and when Giorgio Armani would call me – not him personally but the brand – and say, “Look Lara, the new collection is here, do you want to shoot something?” And they would courier it to my door in Wickham I was quite astonished and that’s how Facon started, actually.

This is important because she finds that the market in Newcastle is not conducive to creative careers. She believes the industrial ethos of the city prevents an appreciation of beauty and the worth of those who create it
There’s not a lot of value here yet for creatives and what they do. It’s like, if you hired a plumber, you are not going to ask him to fix your blocked toilet for free because they need the experience. They’ve got the experience! It’s the same with creatives. But people are used to paying either nothing or very low prices for things. It’s not the case all round.

I just think it’s a cultural thing. That’s not really what we do here. It’s an industrial city. That will do. We don’t really deserve better. Why should we make things beautiful and why should we pay for it?

Social media is important. Lara’s company has 1220 followers on Facebook (as at 15 April 2017) and over 7000 on Instagram (as at 15 April 2017). The magazine Facon in fact emerged from the popularity of the company’s Instagram posts

We started an Instagram page we started shooting material for the Instagram page and I guess from there we spruiked the magazine because I thought that we should turn it into a hard copy.

Creative Labour

Lara decided to use local creatives “It’s my rule that I am not using anyone externally at all.” This is despite the fact that she says

There are maybe 10% of the creative industry in Newcastle are creative people that are amazing and have a great standard but the other 90% stinks! And I am quite happy to say that.

While she says, ‘there’s a lot of good creative stuff happening in Newcastle’, she says ‘the imagery that is created here is quite sub-standard’

You know, your boyfriend’s sister’s girlfriend is modelling and your sister’s doing the make-up and it all just seemed quite low

Lara saw an opportunity to bring her skills and knowledge to bear to raise the standard of work

I just wanted to take what I have learnt and the standards I have and lift everything up. The whole thing was working with local brands and local people and sharing even just industry stuff like having a call sheet for a shoot and having a creative mood board for a shoot and teaching people that this is how the process goes.

She was delighted to find an ‘amazing’ photographer in Newcastle - Matt Briggs – saying ‘I was surprised that there was someone of that standard here’. Lara says ‘I’m collecting a creative stable with really great hair people, editorial people, photographers’. This has required Lara to take a training and mentoring role as she is operating at such a high professional level

For me, it was also about creating a professional studio environment ... so that when the talent and the celebs came we didn’t just walk into someone’s house and say, “We’re going to shoot over here”. It’s all about creating the image and having people feel like they could be in Sydney or London or New York or wherever. I make my staff laugh by saying, “Pretend you are in New York”! And I hope it’s not just about the look of the place but also the way we work, the way we behave and the image we project to the industry as well.

What’s next?

The third issue of the Facon Book (glossy magazine) is due out in May 2017. Lara sees a change in Newcastle and a need for higher standards of professionalism in the creative sphere

There’s a big influx of people from metropolitan areas who expect a better standard and I think it has to change. It’s just what Newcastle is used to and culturally it’s not known for that. But it won’t be taken seriously until people up their game.

In a newspaper interview in 2013, Lara expressed commitment that she still harbourss “There’s so much talent here and unfortunately many people do leave, but I want to help change that … I want to give it a metropolitan spin”. iv
VISUAL ARTS

41. JOHN BRADLEY, LANDSCAPE ARTIST

John Bradley Studio, 7th and 22nd September 2015

Creative Career

John Bradley is a prominent Australian landscape artist. He has been painting for 35 years and lived in Vacy in the Paterson Allyn Valley of the Hunter Valley for more than a decade. As a published artist, Bradley’s original paintings can fetch $20,000, and he has over 400 images in print in Australia and Internationally. His work has featured in Prestige Calendars for the last 15 years. He has two books ‘Blue Mountains Magic’ and ‘A Journey through Time’ and a range of jigsaw puzzles. He is known internationally for his Australian Landscapes, and also paints railways and trains, seascapes, cityscapes, maritime and military craft.

John is formally trained as an aircraft engineer in avionics and worked as a national marketing manager for a large group in Chatswood for a few years before becoming an artist full time. One of the first jobs he had after leaving marketing was to teach art and he often runs master classes in Newcastle. John feels his inspiration comes from meditation which he has been practicing for over 50 years. All these interests have converged and given John a finely-tuned understanding of creativity.

Creativity implies that it is original so it's not working from someone else's work or simply modifying or changing, which a lot of artists do. It means being willing to explore new areas, experiment if it doesn't work well, refine and keep working till we get what we want.

CI Business

John Bradley Studio’s website allows the public to purchase original works or prints directly from John. His originals are for sale in two Australian galleries. One is the Morpeth Investment Art Gallery, run by Trevor Richards and the other is Articles Gallery in on the South Coast. John also exhibits with Kevin Hills Top 10 Group, doing between five and six travelling exhibitions a year. In addition to painting John runs two other businesses, one in photographing and printing artwork and another in framing artwork.

Creative Products

John has noticed the subtle changes in the market for original art, with the mid-range buyers disappearing.

We used to have the bulk of our sales ... $2,000 to $5000 bracket. What we're finding now is that they were getting back down into the $1000- $1500 and then they jumped to the investors. We are still selling $10,000 and $20,000 pieces but not a lot. The middle ground is gone.

In the better days, I'm only going back around about six years ago, I could certainly gross thirty-odd thousands on a two-day show. We have had shows recently, where we've got nothing, from all of us or maybe just a few thousand. But lately we've been picking up around about $12,000 to $14,000 a show. I have anyway. Not everyone has and who knows if that's going to continue. It's very volatile.

Touring regularly keeps John in touch with buyers’ tastes and he notes that older audiences want traditional artworks whereas younger audiences’ preferences have changed and there is more interest in nightscapes. So, John is now working in monochrome and has started to paint nightscapes and lighthouses.

Even the galleries are noticing it. You have to reinvent yourself all the time. So, basically, I used to paint a lot of Blue Mountains scenes, river scenes just Australian scenes and
gumtrees, old building scenes etcetera. But what I'm finding now is that I'm doing more narrowly-focused things so I'm doing Australian Lighthouses at the moment. It's really great. I'm enjoying it and they're very different - people like light houses for some reason or another. I never used to paint night scenes but I'm now doing a lot of them. No other artist I know paints them so, it's something different and they sell well. Vertical paintings rather than horizontal paintings. I'm just trying to think of other things: small paintings - much smaller than we ever used to paint. So, we're right down into the 5 or 600-dollar prices - ones that are affordable. Entry-level people buy them and later they might buy a bigger one. Or they might buy a print and move up to an original. But it's reinventing and watching and framing.

By re-inventing his portfolio, John is trying to stay in touch with aesthetic preferences because art is considered to be a disposable decoration.

They can buy a Chinese print from $100 or $200 bucks, hang it on the wall, as a decoration; then throw it away next year to buy another one. So, they're not really collecting our work at all.

Creative Labour

Probably you know what you're feeling while you’re painting it. I actually think the best part of any painting is the white canvas. Most people will hate that, they think it's the worst. At that point, I can really get started and it has a joyous content. It becomes not timeless, but you know time just sort of goes. I'm there for five or six hours but it feels like I've been there for an hour. I can paint 12 hours a day no trouble. That might be drawing and then painting. It's something that I love to do, I really enjoy it. I enjoy painting light, the interplay of light.

I do a lot of commission work and I know the people, so I really want to do something that people are going to love.

John explains the process of working on a commissioned piece of art.

Well I go and have meetings with them and I just let them talk, tell me what it is they're looking for and if they don't really know, then I ask questions of them. Get a few steering sorts of guiding answers and then I'll do a drawing. I'll show them the drawing and ask is this what you're after? "Oh yeah that is great, but could you change this, could you add that?", I say no problem then I get stuck into it and usually about that point I would ask for a deposit of 50% on it unless it's a really big one. And at the finish they will pay the balance. So that has worked well whether it’s a portrait or a log cabin on a hill somewhere.

Creative Entrepreneurship and IP

Artists are supposed to receive 5% commission on the resale of their artwork, but there are some issues in tracking how original art works change hands, as John points out.

There’s a bit of an issue around the resale of paintings. We're all supposed to be getting 5% or something on the resales, but I've never yet seen it. But then they said it was really for the indigenous people that we brought it in. I said, ‘But that is still beside the point if these works are being resold,’ and I know they are being resold. There could be hundreds and thousands of dollars by now, but we don't see anything. We've all just basically written it off as if it's not going to happen.

John is a published artist, this means he has licensed his artwork to a North American printing company. They sell the rights of John’s images in the US, Russia, England and Hong Kong and John receives a passive income from these sales.

I got approached by an art licensing firm in North America. It’s one of the biggest. Anyway, the CEO actually rang me and said, ‘We really like your work, we'd like to represent you worldwide’. I said, ‘That is fine, send me the papers and we'll have a look.’ And we checked
to make sure they were okay. They've licensed over 140 images, to the biggest print company in the world and just recently they have sold another 120 to the largest curated printing company in the world.

They reproduce them, mainly wall hangings, canvases, prints, train prints et cetera. Some of them go in to jigsaws and stuff like that. One of the companies supplies three-quarters of America’s prints. So, it's a big company.

While this is an impressive example of globalization, John points out that the returns are small.

They are only licensed for a year with an option to renew at the end of it. You always keep the IP on it - that's pretty much how I think most of them work. There is not a lot of money, but the publicity is fantastic, and they split the commission between them and me. So, as passive income, there is a few thousand a year in it.

What does the artist’s signature mean on an original artwork?

In signing the work we're saying it's finished. The signature on it makes it worth a lot more obviously. An unsigned painting might be worth $500 and with a signature it might be worth $8000. So, it does have a value of some sort as a collector's item or an investment item even though the investment side of things is pretty dead at the moment. Once it's signed I'm saying I'm happy with it, and then you can do prints from it. So, you multiple it, you leverage it and then of course you hand sign every print and put a number on them if they form part of a limited edition.

What we usually do if they are on paper as most my prints are, the original signature will be in the image, but it is quite small, and we tend to sign in the white margin around it. If it's on canvas I use a gold or some other pen and if the signature is quite visible I'll simply do my initials JB and then the edition number, over the other side.

What’s next?

A video interview was recorded with John Bradley and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website. During the interviews conducted in 2015, John expressed concern that the investment art market was changing and that sales of originals were slow. In 2016, he left Vacy and moved to Murrurundi. His art continues to be available on his website and at the Morpeth Investment Art Gallery.

42. KERRIE COLES, ARTIST

22 September 2016

Creative Career

Kerrie was born in Sydney and moved to Newcastle in 1980. She completed a Diploma in Painting at the National Art School in Sydney and a Diploma of Education (Art Specialist) at Sydney Teacher's College. From 1970 to 1999 she worked as a secondary school visual arts teacher employed by the Department of Education. She also worked as a curator and as Director of the John Paynter Gallery at The Lock-Up in Hunter St, Newcastle. She has served on numerous art committees and Boards and was a founder and Director of Newcastle Art Space at Newcastle Community Art Centre. She has worked as an artist full time since February 2015.

CI Business

Kerrie is a landscape painter and also enjoys painting portraits. She works in oils, water colour and pastels. She has had two works selected for the Portia Geach exhibition in Sydney and her work is represented in the collections of Newcastle Art Gallery, The University of Newcastle, The Newcastle Club and HMRI Art Series, as well as in private collections in Australia, Italy, Japan, America, Canada,
Switzerland and New Zealand. She has held eleven solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group shows in Newcastle, Sydney and the Hunter Valley. Kerrie does commissions for private clients and for corporates including Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Kerrie believes that artists in Newcastle have a privileged position, building on a history of achievement and recognition:

Artists in Newcastle are very lucky. The city reveres its artists and there have been some very significant artists working here including Molvig, Passmore, Dobell and Shay Docking whose husband Gil was the first Director of Newcastle Region Art Gallery. Newcastle always was creative in dance and other areas of the arts as well as painting.

Creative Labour

A challenge faced by artists is the availability of galleries.

Spaces to show can be an issue and we are losing spaces. That’s why I was especially keen to set up Newcastle Art Space as an artist-run gallery.

Creative Networking

Kerrie moved from Sydney in 1980. She says:

In Sydney the opportunities seem greater and more diverse, but I wonder if I would have had the same connections there as I have enjoyed here. Perhaps there are actually more opportunities here. Newcastle has become very important to me.

What’s next?

Kerrie will continue working as an artist, fulfilling commissions, working towards a solo exhibition, and contributing to group shows including fundraisers (Samaritans’ Collectors Care and Newcastle Grammar School Nexus).

43. PETER LANKAS, ARTIST

10 December 2014

Creative Career

Peter grew up in a family of artists. In the 1980s he completed undergraduate studies at Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education (later COFA) and post grad studies in visual arts. He also has a Masters degree from The University of Newcastle completed in 2005.

After graduation, he travelled overseas and on his return taught himself the Old Masters techniques and colour theories. He took ten years off from painting from 1988-1997 and lived in a Buddhist meditation centre, after which he lived in Cairns for three years. In 2001 he took up an opportunity to house-sit in Newcastle and he has lived in the city ever since.

CI Business

Peter has had a studio at Newcastle Community Arts Centre, a collaborative arts workplace in Parry St, Newcastle, for 13 years. Peter is a painter and teaches painting and drawing at Newcastle Art School (TAFE). Peter has one or two solo shows a year as well as two or three group shows. He exhibits at Art Systems Wickham and Gallery 139 in Hamilton.
Creative Labour

Peter manages his creative activities in a very disciplined manner. It is almost a business-like approach to his work, although Peter prefers to call it ‘selective’.

There is an on and off button where you have been creative, where you have the eyes of an artist and where you switch it off; you just go Mr Normal, kind of mundane and don’t think of the creative process at all. But sometimes it is switched on more so than others … for me the creative process or creativity is being mindful, being observant, switching on your senses. Whether you are an actor or a painter or any other performer or musician you must work with all your senses, you must consciously switch them on.

I always say to my students, if you are not plugged in, then the electricity is not flowing and the hair’s not standing on your arms and on the back of your neck … it’s gotta be full-on impact concentration. It is a thing of choice where you say, “alright I’m plugging in now and Boom! we are off” and if I walk out of the studio I say, “Right, well I’m off now, I switch it off: I’m in my car now listening to the radio and I can really switch it off: I no longer think about my work”. Because for many years, my mind … you are working, and your mind is going 24/7 about your artwork and you drive yourself nuts because there are too many ideas and they are not being put down on paper. So, I think to reach that balance, so all your ideas are being balanced with things that actually eventuate and creatively hit the paper, you’ve gotta turn them off and only switch them on when you want to put them down... it is being selective and … being practical and pragmatic... It is ... conserving your creative juices for when you want them... it is about mindfulness so if you are mindful of what is happening in your head and what is happening in your body as far as tuning in and deciding I want to tune in now and tune out’ - that’s the switching on and switching off.

Peter adds:

I do have a very organised schedule when I am teaching, I have some free and available time, I have very clear working times in the studio, I clock on and I clock off and I am strict about my work ethic. I say to my wife, I say to people... I’m going to work. If someone says to me “Can you do blah-blah for me?” I say, “Sorry I can’t cos I’m at work”. So, I look at it as my job even though it is a very creative and rewarding thing to do, because if you don’t see it as a job then you never get anything done, you just fluff around and get to it later. I’m very disciplined in that respect.

Peter doesn’t necessarily think that working in the creative industries is different from other jobs. He says, “in some ways it is and in some ways, it isn’t”.

Art in many ways, like anything else is a process. As you would know from theatre too, you have to memorise your lines, a lot of it isn’t all fun and games and a lot of it is hard work. Unlike anything else, if you work as a cleaner or a dishwasher or as a chef or as a teacher, its hard work, you’ve got to prepare, you have certain things you need to memorise in advance and a lot of laborious tasks that need to be done like mixing paint, filling in the layers. You see the finished image and you want to get there quickly. So, I don’t see it any differently. It is just process and as long as you are involved in the process and mindful of the moment while you are doing it, whether you are cleaning a toilet or mixing paint from your palette - for me it is exactly the same, it’s just something you do, and you do it with mindful, positive energy.

Creative Networking

Peter says that while he has collaborated with other artists including his twin brother on murals and paintings, “I do prefer to work alone on my ideas and my concepts”. He says, “I think it is helpful for artists to work together to swap ideas, to swap technical skills or ideas the way of seeing things and it is
also a way of presenting a show where you have two different viewpoints on the same idea or the same concept” and he has done this with artist Dino Consalvo.

Peter can see the value of creatives connecting more with each other:

*I think we need to work together a lot more... I think we need to share a lot more, work together across defined boundaries of how things should be or could be done. I think the artist evenings that Newcastle Region Art Gallery has introduced are fantastic in bringing us together. There should be more of this kind of networking.*

Peter believes that Newcastle, like other working-class towns, is very creative, with many artists and a high level of artistic activity, but he regrets the lack of support for creative industries in the city, especially from local government.

*I think this town should be ashamed of itself for the way it uses creative industries or uses the creative processes or creative juices of the town but doesn’t support it enough. I don’t know what is in the water here, but I have always wondered why working towns, whether it be Glasgow, Newcastle or Wollongong, have this a high concentrated creative drive and a lot of people from this place kind of explode with this creative energy and ideas. I think Newcastle has more artists than flies... I think the local council or the local government like to say Newcastle is an art town but then usually when they want artists to do something they say, “well would you like to donate some work?” [laughs]. It isn’t about using the creative industries or using creative work, it’s not about using creativity in this town for a positive outcome... artists could be used so much more in society for very little output and then be so much more a part of what’s happening and feel valued and therefore put more into the fibre of society. I just think artists are always side lined ... I don’t think local government supports artists enough. You only need to look at this place and what could be done with a place like this...*

The corporate sector could also do more.

*There is a lot business can do to support artists and really bathe in the beauty that artists can create for their environments whether it be sculptures or garden or installations or public art or art on the walls. I just don’t think people think enough about that support, like tax offsets, or a little bit of support with all this big money that is supposedly being earned by mining etc. Well, let’s put back a little but into the creative processes.*

*I think artists are not being utilized and supported enough by big business or small business for that matter. The creative mind unleashed can produce amazing stuff. If everyone spent time being creative even for a short time in their busy lives, there would be an improvement in the welfare of society at large. Prescribing drugs for welfare does not seem the answer. There is a lot of movement in art playing a bigger role in healing or giving quality to the disabled and disadvantaged...*

*I think local government has to start recognizing the wealth and importance of the creative talent in this region, what it has to offer and the long-term benefits of its involvement.*

Creative Career

Peter speaks highly of the art training provided by Newcastle Art School: “I think it works really well, it’s very well balanced in delivering the technical skills that you do need to develop as a young artist”. Government funding cuts, however, have meant higher fees, the loss of courses and reduced hours of delivery:

...because of the cutbacks we have had we have lost a lot of training, life drawing has gone, such an important thing in training in regards of your visual development. A course that was once two years is now one ... we are losing some of the good developments...

The monetary rewards for artists in Newcastle are less than in the capital cities:
Living in Newcastle you do tend to be priced a bit lower than you would living in Sydney or Melbourne. I am working class, so I tend to price my work a lot of the time on the hours I have spent on it and I say well what do I get as a teacher say fifty bucks an hour and how long have I spent on that painting and I price it accordingly. Again, I am quite organised in the way I will price things and I am quite happy and say well I would rather spend my time in the studio and get fifty bucks an hour than wash dishes or be teaching somewhere I would rather not be teaching, not that that ever happens.

Being outside the big city networks also makes it difficult. I think regional artists have a tougher gig to get on board. Because I have been a Sydney artist and while you are there in contact and networking, people know you, people know your work.

The art market has declined since the 1990s. Peter’s larger works used to sell for four and a half thousand dollars and now sell for two and a half. While sales used to provide fifty per cent of his income and teaching fifty per cent, teaching now provides three quarters of his income. He says he doesn’t apply for grants or residencies: “basically I don’t have the headspace or the time available to do it”. From time to time he enters prizes but says:

Look, it’s a bit like a lottery, so I probably enter an art prize with the same mental attitude as I would in walking into a newsagent and deciding to buy a Lotto ticket. I certainly don’t expect to win.

What’s next?

Peter simply wishes to keep working. He is not ambitious for material rewards or status. I don’t have any aspirations for fame and fortune or be well known. All of that seems to have passed. I don’t know if it is maturity or old age, but I just don’t desire it. I’m happy to get my work done as long as long as I come into the studio on my work days and do my work and am just involved in my process, moment to moment, involved in my process I leave with a grin, because I have done my day’s work and I don’t look at it as good or bad, it’s just that the job has been done and when the 4, 6, 8 hours are up I go home and I feel elated and happy and that’s what really concerns me. Where it may lead me, I mean I don’t know. Who knows?

Like so many artists, Peter has had health problems arising from the use of painting materials, hence his use of natural products, so one hope is that he will continue to be well enough to keep working:

I’ve come so close to not being able to paint of late because of my allergies to acrylics and solvent-based products etc, that tomorrow I may not be able to work. I could be blind, I could be crippled, so I don’t really look into the future. I just try and keep my nose on what needs to be done here and now.

44. JOHN LECHNER, PHOTOGRAPHER

The Office Art Specialist and John Lechner Art, 4 September 2015

Creative Career

John Lechner is an Artist, he sells his landscape photography as prints, through his business John Lechner Art. Lechner markets himself as an artist not as a photographer. He is consciously avoiding the term photography because he believes there is ‘a perception that photography is cheap, if you buy art there is no price limit’. John has a sound technical understanding of his medium, and though he avoided the term craft, he talked about capturing light.
CI Business

John’s business has been running since 2014. In 2015 he was working three days a week on his photography and 2 days week at Mai Wel as the Business Development Manager. One of John’s main tasks there is fundraising. John has worked professionally as a fundraiser, working for charities like Ronald McDonald House, Red Cross Door Knock appeal and the State Library of NSW.

In 2017 John established a new business ‘The Office Art Specialist’, that provides office art to corporations and small to medium enterprises.

Creative Career

_I’ve done a Diploma in Management a couple of years ago. My fundraising training has come from industry training and experience. I started and was a volunteer fundraiser as a 17-year-old, making really good money for Ronald McDonald House and then they couldn’t work out what to do with me, because I was sort of out there on my own doing my own thing, so they dragged me into Sydney to work with the Ronald McDonald House Ball Committee. I was the only male on the committee and the only non-millionaire committee member. The rest of the ladies were all millionaires who ran this Ball._

In 2015 John was working part-time in business development with Mai Well and has been with them for 8 years.

_So, the day job is very much part-time, I used to be full-time working for Mai Well, which is a disability support service and I am in business development. My professional background is as a professional fundraiser. So, when I moved to the Hunter I was hoping for a fundraising role. There isn’t a lot of fundraising roles in the whole of the Hunter, there is probably about 10 and at senior management level there were even less, but Mai Well was looking for someone, to help grow their businesses at the time and the skills are very similar and the alignment was good because it was disability and not-for profit._

Creative Entrepreneurship

John’s deep understanding of how to fundraise influences every business decision he makes with _John Lechner Art_. His price range for prints is from $195, with most expensive $11,500. He prints on cotton paper and also on glass. The glass printing option offers a unique opportunity to bring depth to his artwork, and John sees these products as being unique and lucrative product in his range, which includes small cards and calendars. Developing the business over the last 18 months John has had 3 exhibitions, two in Australia – Newcastle (in a Renew gallery), the vineyards (a pop-up shop at Pokolbin) and Chelsea in New York City. He exhibited in New York for 4 weeks in June 2015.

The New York exhibition cost over $10,000 to mount. He took $20,000 of stock and didn’t sell any works but he built relationships with art networks and with clients. Since his return he has had follow up enquiries but still no sales. In Australia he is focusing on Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Internationally John is aiming to set-up his future markets in Dubai and China over the next two years. He sees these as art markets where he feels his product will sell.

Creative Products

Using an example of his recent work called ‘Sunset Sentinel’ shot in the Hunter Valley, with a limited-edition price tag of $2,450, John states that it took him ‘a year to take that shot’. It was taken 5 minutes away from his house, one afternoon when walking the dog. John could see the light was going to be perfect, to really make a tree that was struck by lightning look beautiful. John says, ‘To me the art is to capture the perfect moment, and it doesn’t always happen.’

John also offers photographs printed on glass,
So, we do a different print that is basically fused to the glass and all you see on the wall is the glass and the print. There are no fittings or fixtures - all you see is the glass, it just floats on the wall.

When you use glass, glass is green. So, we have to use a special type of glass to deal with a pure white image and that glass is more expensive - that one tops out at $11 grand. But that is if it is delivered internationally, so in Australia it is about $7,000, but we have to price for the glass prints to be delivered internationally, so it's door-to-door including shipping, packing, insurance - the whole bit.

What’s next?

John has some unique strategies for building his business and he says it is about developing relationships with people. He also clearly stated that he is in it for the long run, not the short term. John exploits social media - he has a program that posts to Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and Tumblr but he sees Twitter as being less effective for his products and in-terms of building his reputation. A video interview was recorded with John and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.

John is throwing himself into his new business ‘The Office Art Specialist’ and says he thrives on helping "create great workspaces with a positive culture" (ABC Open, online).\textsuperscript{vi}

45. RACHEL MILNE, ARTIST

25\textsuperscript{th} September 2015.

Creative Career

Rachel Milne is an oil painter. She describes her style as impressionistic, figurative and painterly. Milne won the ‘Singleton Portrait Prize’ in 2013 and since her work has received a number of Highly Commended prizes in art competitions. Rachel went to Art School in England when there was a strong emphasis on the intellectual side of art called ‘New British Art’. Painting in the figurative sense was considered highly unfashionable or not relevant and Rachel was disillusioned with her college education. She wanted to paint figuratively and didn’t want to intellectualise or philosophise her work. When she left Art College she went into set painting with companies who were contracted to the BBC like Aardman, the animation company who made ‘Wallace and Gromit’. Beside painting sets, she worked for 15 years in part-time jobs to support her art, any type of work that could give her three days in the studio and two days paid work. She has been a cleaner, delivered toilets, worked at the Crown Court and ran an Art Gallery. As Rachel says ‘everything was all about facilitating the painting, painting, painting. It really didn't matter what I did as long as it brought enough money to paint’.

Rachel is now located at Newcastle Community Art Centre, in New South Wales where she has a small studio space and is painting full-time. In October 2015 Rachel opened her first solo Sydney show at King Street Gallery in Darlinghurst. She created 30 artworks which ranged in price from $880 to $4,800. In October 2017 Rachel mounted her second solo exhibition at King Street Gallery in Darlinghurst.

CI Business

Rachel is working as an artist out of a studio at Newcastle Community Arts Centre. She is focused on making a living as a painter and has held one solo exhibition in Sydney in 2015 and has another planned for October 2017.

Creative Labour
Rachel spent many years working as a set painter for a small company, Cod Steaks, who painted animation sets for ‘Wallace and Gromit’.

I was very lucky to get the job on ‘Curse of the Were Rabbit’ which was a Wallace and Gromit film. Set painting is the making of a beautiful thing, and a lot of the sets that get made just don’t get seen or they are destroyed. But you have to do it, because the filmmakers are like ‘this is what we need’, so just get on with it and you make it happen. That type of work has been great training for my artistic practice because you don’t get time to be precious, you can’t be weird about it, you just have to crack on. And why shouldn’t you, just do it.

When there wasn’t much animation work Cod Steaks created another company ‘The Undeteables’ who disguised mobile phone antenna.

I worked for on company called ‘The Undeteables’, who disguised mobile phone antenna with fake hollow fiberglass chimney pots. They employed all these female artists, I think there was one bloke, but eventually it was almost a female painting crew and we would travel around the country working on building sites, at the top of building, at heights, in all weathers painting these chimney pots to look like the original buildings. That was an amazing training - working that hard. It was physically hard work and having to colour match quickly and that was brilliant. So, in that sense it was great. It was really hard graft but also you just had to smash it out and get on with it.

Rachel is inspired by the beauty of reality, and here she describes what drives her to paint.

That reality is so beautiful when you really look at it, light on surfaces and the way edges disappear and colours and tones. You sort of get a feel for a scene and you just desperately want to capture it. All you’ve got really are your two hands, your brain and some sticks with hairs on the ends and some colours. Your colours will never replicate the colours in reality, and your hands and your brain will never quite capture what’s in front of you because it is kind of impossible, but you can try because trying is exciting! Even if you just get a little sense, a little touch of what it is that you feel, and you translate it and you can say it but it’s never satisfying enough. And that is what drives me. I guess it’s like anyone, like a musician playing a piece of music he learns the notes and once he knows the notes really well he can express emotion and he can say things with his music. So, I'm thinking with my..., with looking at tone, I'm trying to learn the notes and hopefully I can say something. And when I manage to say something it's really exciting and it's a relief and I think ‘Oh I've said something, so what's next’.

Rachel describes what motivates her to paint.

Painting is almost a physical thing. In a sense I’m thinking intellectually about what I'm doing. In another way I'm just looking as hard as I can and trying to translate the beauty that is in front of me from a three-dimensional scene onto a two-dimensional canvas. That's what I'm doing, concentrating as hard as I can, and it's like a performance I guess, because I do everything so quickly and it either works or it doesn't. Then at the end, it never matches up, I never quite get it and that is what keep me going. I never quite capture the beauty of what is in front of me but that's why I do it.

You feel like you have said something. You are telling the world how you see the world, though your eyes. I love it and I hate it. It's like a passion and an obsession and sometimes it's just so hard and you're like - ahhh, you just can't get it. It's a bit torturous but sometimes you can just do something that works. Like when I went to the exhibition, you don't really know what you are going to see. You have all these paintings strewn all over the floor and you're giving them to the gallery in batches and you see them on the wall and although as soon as I've painted something I've kind of let it go. You're like 'oh cool, I did that, and somebody wants it'. I captured that moment, I put it down, I made it permanent. I imagine
it's a bit like writing a book, you have you have said something, told a story, and there it is in the world as a solid thing.

Creative Labour

I would like to call myself a painter just because that's what I do. That does confuse a lot of people because they think I decorate, but I am a painter and I paint from life as much as I possibly can. I paint using oil on board and I paint mundane subject matter in oils and it’s a slight obsession, of mine. I want to paint all the time; therefore, I have to make money out of it. That's been my I way of thinking I guess.

Do you see your painting as a business?

A lot more than I used to. Partly from the sense that if I think of it as a business it protects my heart from getting bashed about in the art world. If I think about it as a business, then I can paint what I want to paint and sell it and move on more quickly. In another sense it is a necessity, if I want to paint I need to make money, if I want to make money I have to think like a business. I think the idea of the artist as someone who is drinking and crying and having massive ups and downs is a myth. I think if you want to be an artist you have to be professional, but you have to work very hard, you have to be at the top of your game and you have to understand it as a business to an extent because if you want to sell something it has to look good. Like framing and stuff, you have to think about that carefully you can't just throw something on the wall. I mean why would you buy something that wasn't professionally finished. So, I have my artistic side and I have to keep that in check and look after it in order to sell and in order to produce. So, I have to take care of my mental health, in a sense, in order to be a successful artist and I have to be aware of that.

How hard was it to get into the position you’re in now – having a studio and painting full time?

You are surrounded by people in the studio who have made it, who are making a living and just hearing them complain used to drive me crackers. So, I hear myself now sometimes saying “oh, I've got so much work on!”, and I just want to slap myself in the face because it's taken me so long to get to this point. The studio is a funny environment - a mixed studio is very intense, I worked in a mixed studio previously. It was open-plan, and everyone commented on everyone else’s work. It was quite hard. I think I found it hard because I didn't quite have my own voice at that point. I wasn't completely confident in what I wanted to do. I'd get very swayed by what was happening in fashion and should I be doing this, should I be doing that, what should I do. I was constantly thinking what should I be doing, to get to where I wanted to be? I think it took the move to Australia to clear up my head and just do I wanted to do. Somehow that new start, that fresh start, helped me, massively.

There are 40 artists at Newcastle Community Art Centre, and Rachel’s studio is in a corridor of 40 other artists. NCAC charges a small amount of rent in return for administration support and marketing co-ordination, electricity and internet access and 24-hour access to the studio.

I think naturally I'm a bit of a loner and I have to be forced to come out and socialise. Especially when I'm working I often don't feel that I have time to even speak to anyone and that is probably not healthy. But I think a community is incredibly important because you're bouncing ideas off each other all the time. You're really inspired by other artists who are doing well, and the artists here are incredibly friendly and always available for advice and help with things like galleries, and finances and pricing. All of these areas are important and it's incredibly helpful to have a supportive community to help with those things.

When asked what creativity is, Rachel replied:

I think it's just an expression of your humanity. Especially in the Western world, we're too quick to dismiss it and its all around you and also, I think it is a massive mistake to dismiss its financial potential.
Is the Creative Industries a term you are familiar with?

I’m happy to be thought of as part of the Creative Industries. We’re creative and very industrious so, yes, that sounds good.

What’s next?

Rachel started a family in 2016 and is working on her second solo exhibition for October 2017 at King Street Gallery in Darlinghurst.

46. PRACTITIONER 2, ART GALLERY DIRECTOR

17 October 2015

Creative Career

This Art Gallery Director (ADG) is Creative Director and co-owner of a leading independent gallery in Newcastle, having lived and worked in Sydney and overseas. ADG moved to Newcastle with her partner some years ago, attracted by what the city had to offer:

Newcastle - a port city, they’ve often had downturns, and ...that’s where the creative people now have the opportunity to come in. So, it’s something very different to an established market, let’s say Sydney, Melbourne, or in the UK, London. And so, when you’re wanting to work directly with others in a relationship/dialogue way, smaller regional cities are much better for that.

AGD has lived and worked internationally in a number of roles in hospitality and finance as well as in the areas of design, architecture and art and says:

I think that in a global market, a broad experience allows you avoid being pigeonholed into thinking that art is a career or a profession. It runs much more horizontally than vertically...I think it gets increasingly difficult, particularly for artists who only have one particular practice, because arts are very much crossover, and I think even those artists who have a successful career in one art form – whether it be performance or painting – they are now collaborating to expand what they do and bring something different.

CI Business

AGD is Creative Director of the sole-trader company and is a full-time, professional gallerist and curator. Her partner is part-time Director of the company. In addition, they have a number of ‘amazing volunteers’ who assist in a range of ways. The gallery has a presence on Facebook and Twitter.

AGD owns and operates a small independent professional gallery in the city that shows exhibitions of local, national and international artists, as well as related arts events, for example small theatre performances. She also does curating work for other galleries.

Creative Networking

The relationship with artists is central to AGD’s ethos:

… you’re often motivated by passionate artists. In a gallery situation, the trust that goes on, the dialogue, the ideas, all of that is an inspiring relationship.

AGD says being a successful artist is not just about creating work; it is important for them to be connected, to have a profile, and this is one of the roles of a gallerist:

...often, they spend so much time alone to create the work but then have to be, in a way, all-singing and all-dancing once that work’s completed. Because if they’re not they don’t have a profile. So, it can be quite difficult, especially as we move further and further towards
contemporary practice. If those artists are not in some way connected or increasing their profile, then it’s really difficult to gain audience for that artist, and really as a gallery that’s your main objective for the artist, to promote them to the audience you have and to a new audience... once you have a profile within a smaller regional city, the opportunities become larger. And often you’re given opportunities that are coming from places where you may have only touched that person once or twice...

Collaboration is at the heart of exhibition practice:

Every exhibition is a collaboration, but you also do collaborate with curators and arts organisations and festival directors.

This will increasingly be the case as visual art broadens to become multi-disciplinary:

For the future, I think there’s a huge crossover between design and art, architecture and art, furniture and art, and engaging with those more established arts like theatre and performance, engaging them within the visual arts more.

Creative Labour

AGD’s work is professional curating and installing of art work. In this they are assisted for artists doing major public art works by their partner who has a background in engineering.

AGD speaks about the difference between visual art and performance art:

...why is art free? Theatre’s not free. People expect to pay a ticket price. And then they have an expectation. Well they also have an expectation when you host an exhibition, but they’re not ticketed.

Work in the creative industries is ‘very different’ from other work not only because of the poor monetary returns but also because:

they’re much more flexible and much more conversation-based, much more ideas-based. Not that galleries don’t have structure, just as most normal professions do – structures, deadlines, targets – but the environment is very different... Creative industries are constantly taking risks.

Creative Entrepreneurship

AGD believes that it is important for Newcastle not to be insular, but to be open to people and trends internationally. AGD shows artists from the UK as well as Sydney in the gallery and maintains links with artists overseas, in part because audiences expect change and excitement:

“Think globally and act locally” – I think that’s really important in a city like Newcastle. There’s great things going on but it’s always important to raise the bar, so that you’re not just recycling within your city. Because the audience in your city, if they’re tapped into what you’re doing, expect it to be going somewhere, being progressive. So, I think that – yeah, it is important because you need to have an awareness of what’s coming...because galleries and creative industries, like anything, are not future proof. You can keep working away at what you’re doing but if you don’t have a world view, you may end up with that static thing happening but you’re unaware of it. I think you really do need to be aware.

Keeping up with trends in the contemporary arts scene is important, but new developments require a focus on showing work that is not actually saleable:

it’s important to stay relevant in this fast-moving environment ...contemporary practice is going more into film, performance-based, installation-based. So, for a small independent gallery, some people would say, “Yeah, but where’s the selling point?”. But it’s more important to be relevant and self-sustaining with that relationship with that artist than it is to say, “We only show work that has a price”. Whereas I think it’s important that you have
the crossover going on, and if you’re a contemporary gallery you have to be showing contemporary practice.

AGD says ‘it’s a terrible indictment in a way on Australia’s culture of what’s going on with traditional funding in the arts’. They don’t seek grants. The business’ income comes from commissions on sales and venue hiring fees. They say:

*I think for small independent galleries, to keep your autonomy as well, and your ability to take the risks that you would like to take, you have to look at self-sustaining what you’re doing. And I think that’s future business as well.*

AGD feels, however, that ‘there are a lot of small creative businesses that with a tiny little bit of help could also be self-sustaining and self-sufficient’.

AGD nevertheless points to the growth and potential of the creative industries in the Hunter Region and refers to the emergence of new businesses.

*I think it’s very strong and yet it’s still emerging. I think one of the things ...that we’ve really enjoyed in Newcastle is seeing the growth that’s coming, other smaller galleries opening, more workshops, other artists taking the leap outside their studio and into retail with artist-run spaces, or doing little pop-ups that are exciting, showing work in a different way ... there’s room for growth in Newcastle.*

AGD says that Newcastle has become a destination. The gallery has ‘a lot of visitors from Sydney or Melbourne who may not have been to Newcastle for twenty years but they’re coming back’.

AGD speaks of the appeal of Newcastle for artists in terms of its geography, youth culture, educational facilities, the port and its size.

*Geographically it’s an amazing place. Why would artists not want to be here? ... you’ve got a great youth culture, we’ve got a fantastic university, the TAFE. And I think port cities have a different edge to other cities. They’re more reactive to change. I think that with Newcastle being a smaller city centre as well, population-wise at the moment there’s great room for growth. So, I see the arts in Newcastle very positively. And there’s been a lot of changes even in the last two years with the arts...*

**What’s next?**

*To have the gallery self-sustainable.*

*A presence on Instagram as well as Facebook and Twitter because ‘social media just broadens what you do, and it’s working when you’re not at work’.*

*To see and foster ‘engagement – engagement between the university, the Council, the TAFE, the established creatives that are here. And actually listening and acting. I think there can be a lot of consultation going on, but more action – more implementation is what’s needed’.*

**47. JO O’TOOLE, ARTIST**

**9 October 2015**

**Creative Career**

Jo completed a Bachelor degree studying Fine Arts at RMIT (Melbourne) and postgraduate studies at Sydney College of the Arts. She and her husband established a furniture-making business in Sydney. Jo moved to Newcastle in 2007 and studied at Newcastle Art School (TAFE) where she completed an Advanced Diploma in Fine Art, majoring in sculpture.
CI Business

Jo is a self-employed artist with her own ABN and insurance. Her studio is located in a new industrial workshop on Edge St, Boolaroo which is home to Woodmakers, a business she runs with her husband, furniture maker Warwick O’Toole, and his brother. The workshop is fully equipped with woodworking tools and machinery for cutting timber. Jo says: “You need your tools. You can’t work without them. And we also have a metalwork area as well to do welding. It’s great!” She also has a small art workshop at Belmont on Lake Macquarie where she teaches children’s art classes. Jo’s income comes from sales of her work, teaching and art prizes. She says, “I work really hard and I’ve always had a part-time job and I just use that money to buy art supplies”.

Creative Products

Jo is a sculptor, painter and furniture designer. “My job is to put that into public spaces, to exhibit in galleries and sell my work”. Jo uses mostly timber and recycled materials.

I love 3-D form – sculpture - and I will always try to choose a material like timber or metal, recycled metal because it has character and I like working with those materials. There’s a lot of satisfaction working with timber, steaming it and bending it and making it work in a different way to what you see as a conventional piece of furniture. Sculpture is different.

The materials needed for sculpture can be costly. Jo responds to this challenge in an innovative and environmentally-friendly manner.

I approach everyone! I don’t see the harm in it. I know how it is in industry - you use material and you have scrap material left over and that scrap material goes into a bin and they throw it out. So, if you let people know – and we work in an industrial area, so people do know - they’ll often ring me and say ‘Look, we’ve got this material. Do you want it?’ So, for a sculptor it’s fantastic. Sometimes I say ‘no’; often I say ‘yes’. I needed a whole lot of pallets the other day to do a project, so I went around the industrial area and asked, and I came back with more than enough. So, if you let people know what you do, and if you state that it’s for art and it’s not for personal gain, it’s for sharing with the community through art projects, they are quite often willing to help.

Jo says of art.

It’s not a conventional business. You don’t know what your market is. You don’t know who the people are that want something until they arrive on your doorstep really, or you have that conversation, or they walk into a gallery and like your work and buy it. I don’t do it to be commercial, that’s probably a difference.

Jo has won many art prizes including the Sculpture section of the Gosford Art Prize when she was still a student at TAFE. She also won the Newcastle Emerging Artist Prize and the Ford Grant Scholarship funded by local art patrons Chris and Helen Ford which allowed Jo to buy all of the materials for a big sculpture outside Newcastle Art Gallery. She also won the Artist in Residency Prize at Sculpture in the Vineyards which funded a week in the vineyards to do research. The work from that was exhibited in the next year’s Sculpture in the Vineyards.

She says that winning a prize ‘helps immensely’.

To win a prize and get some money in a bulk form is fantastic as it just means you can put that money into buying more expensive materials to do the next sculpture.

Jo gets feedback on her work not only from art prize judges but also from gallerists and art buyers as well as art critics (Jill Stowell and Una Rey in The Newcastle Herald). Social media is increasingly important.

There are people who have their own blogs and with social media now they will tag you in their blogs and they will do reviews. And I think some of the independent galleries will go
and ask someone to write a piece and then blog about it. That’s a great way to get your work onto social media and out into the public...There’s a woman who also works for Curve Gallery and she’ll do all the local exhibitions and blog about them. There’s a few in Melbourne too when I’ve been in sculpture prizes down there and they tag me in their blogs.

**Creative Labour**

Jo has developed her skills informally as well as through formal training. Having her sculpture studio located close to manufacturing businesses has provided access to materials for her sculpture – timber and metal off-cuts that would otherwise be waste – but also skills. Jo’s open and friendly personality has no doubt played a role in facilitating productive relationships:

*Just working with trades, learning a lot from industry and tradesmen, metalworkers, welders, just being surrounded by them and learning their techniques and they are quite friendly so if you asked them about a skill they would usually show you.*

In Sydney, she says:

*We were in an industrial estate so there would be other factories around us that had different skills, different trades and we would share our trades and learn from each other, help each other out... The factory doors often open into a car park or a courtyard so there would be people coming and going all the time and you would have conversations with them. I find I’m interested in what they make, and they would come in and you show them what you are making. You bounce off each other.*

Jo’s environmental concerns are reflected not only in her choice of materials but also in her subject-matter. She says:

*As an artist I think you can make these.... I don’t like to make big broad statements about environment, but I like to make subtle ones....I like to make little ephemeral works, really, to do with the Lake and climate change and the way I see and document that in film or photograph it.*

Her recent exhibition “Windshear” was at Curve Gallery in Newcastle. She explains her creative process and the decision-making that led to the exhibition.

*I stood out in the elements ... it was about feeling the wind, feeling the emotion, being in a moment of being swept by the wind and what happens in that? Well, birds are swept by the wind. So, then I thought, well, I’m going to use a flock of birds to create this windshear effect, this gust of wind. And how am I going to do that? Well, I want to use drawing and I want to use line, but I wanted it to be 3D, so I decided to use wire. I would have used a thousand metres of wire and made 70 birds out of wire and then connected them all up in the gallery space so that they were floating through the air like a sweep of wind...I like to make little ephemeral works really to do with the Lake and climate change and the way I see and document that in film or photograph it...*

*When you exhibit, it’s about working with the space as much as anything else. People can put things up on any wall and not think about it. They’ll be thinking about the piece of work and just hanging it. I think about the space as being the work. That’s how I think about an exhibition. So, I’ll get the gallery dimensions – that’s the floor space, the height of the walls, everything, I’ll visit the space a number of times before I start doing the work and I will work out what's behind the walls, what fixing points I can have. I ask a lot of questions about the structure of the building and then I’ll work with that to create an environment within that space.*

**Creative Futures**

Jo notes the growing interest in crafts and the handmade which she believes may be related to the popularity of home renovation shows on television. They may not be telling the whole story, however.
I do see a strong pull back to the handmade which I think is essential and I think a lot of people want that... I don’t know whether that’s from watching TV shows... It’s a great thing. It’s a fantastic thing. And they are looking at the handmade, especially at the furniture as well...I think in a way they are educating people who are not educated about creative industries which is good [but] I hear a lot of people say, “Oh that painting, that’s like on The Block” and I kind of go .... “Well, I don’t know about that...” I think they are seeing the art work that is shown on those TV shows and this is where people don’t understand they can’t go into Ikea to get that art work. They can’t go into Freedom to get that art work. They can’t make their homes look like what’s on that TV show because what’s on the walls in that TV show has been purchased from galleries.

What’s next?

Working collaboratively with Warwick on furniture design and manufacture.

Developing an industrial arts workshop area or creative hub on the property with the workshop open every day apart from Sunday, small artists cottages available to rent, and possibly a café. A project with Lake Macquarie Gallery with AIR (Arts in Recovery) Health with artists including John Cliff, Jane Lander and Helene Leane. This will involve workshops and an exhibition in 2017 for Mental Health Week.

48. TREVOR RICHARDS, ART GALLERY DIRECTOR

Morpeth Investment Art Gallery, 22 September 2015

Creative Career

Trevor Richards has been specializing in investment art since 1991, when he opened the Morpeth Investment Art Gallery. Richards originally came from South Australia and selected the Hunter Valley as a place to establish a business because of the wineries. Richards said:

The Hunter Valley had the second biggest tourist destination in New South Wales after Sydney, and at that time, all that was out there were sheds at the wineries, no golf courses, virtually no accommodation and no restaurants. I felt that because it had this huge tourist visitation already, then there was a logical need for village like Morpeth to complement the wineries, because while I love my wine, after a day’s wine tasting you’re looking for something else to do.

Morpeth is now made up of 17 eating houses, a dozen dress shops that are complemented with art galleries and other businesses.

CI Business

Trevor owns and runs Morpeth Investment Art Gallery and Campbells Store Craft Centre Complex with over 31 employees and an international reputation in the investment art world. Morpeth Art Gallery has an international reputation for its impressive collection of Australian landscape and wildlife art. Exhibiting over 150 original artworks it specializes in traditional Australian art - landscapes, seascapes & wildlife, by some of Australia’s most renowned artists. Original artworks are sold for between $5,000 and $50,000. For those who can’t afford such an outlay, they can purchase a Giclee limited edition print, open edition prints or other giftware such as greeting cards, children’s books, illustrated books, mugs, coasters & snack trays which feature the work of the artists represented at the gallery. As the Morpeth Gallery website says ‘Art is not a hobby for these artists, it’s a business’ (Morpeth Gallery, online). The current list of Australian artists includes Ann Morton, Bill Freeman, Bret “Mon” Garling, D’Arcy W Doyle, Edward Spessot, Garry Fleming, Gordon Hanley, Graham Cox, Heidi Willis, Helen Fitzgerald, James Hough, John Bradley, John Cornwell, John McCartin and William T Cooper.
Campbells Store complex is made up of a dozen shops with a gourmet food area, a cordial factory, a jam pantry and a jewellery section. Each of these areas appears to the public as stand-alone businesses, while they are operated as stand-alone business they are owned by one person. Trevor notes that these businesses are complementary.

For example, when people are making a decision on a painting sometimes I will send them to the tea room for morning tea or lunch while they make their decision - so the whole system is balanced so that each interacts with the other.

Creative Labour

Trevor Richards describes the type of art that is on sale in the Gallery.

We started off with local artists and we still have local artists and gradually we continued to build with more and more artists wanting to be involved. It's almost self-perpetuating.

Morpeth Gallery holds the work of internationally renowned metalpoint artist Gordon Hanley, who has been given the status of “Living Master” by the US Art Renewal Centre (ARC). Hanley is Australia’s only “Living Master”. He resides in Queensland and draws with a special 18 carat gold pen. His work includes ballerinas and Australia wildlife and he is the most published print artist in Australia over the last 20 years. Morpeth Gallery holds the largest collection of Hanley’s work and it is shipped world-wide to exhibitions and investors.

The work of William T Cooper, aka Bill Cooper, is another internationally renowned wildlife artist exhibiting at Morpeth Gallery. Hailed by Sir David Attenborough as ‘Australia’s greatest living scientific painter of birds; he is possibly the best in the world’. Bill Cooper’s last exhibition was held in Morpeth in 2013, and in 11 minutes all 31 arts works were sold for a next worth over $200,000.

Richards quotes the ABS statistics when talking about the number of artist who earn a living from their art. ‘It's only about 0.04% that earn a living and then it's only about .001% who earn a really substantial living from that and they are the artists we deal with’.

I see probably two or three resumes a week. Artists are sending me their work by email, by link, a DVD or sometimes a profile and so I'm always assessing artists who put their works forward. Well 11.4% of the Australian population claims that their prime income is from being an artist. Yet the next question on the ABS form is have much do you earn from your prime source of income, and it goes from zero to $10,000 and so and so, and 11.2% of those people earn nought to $10,000 from their art. So immediately, you take out 99.9% of all Artists.

Creative IP

Morpeth Investment Art Gallery sells artworks that are reproduced on domestic products like coffee mugs and placemats. These products allow the artist to receive a passive income. As Trevor explains:

Most people think that the creative industry or artists make their money from selling pictures but really the big income is from the passive income. That’s where they're getting royalties on the reproductions of their work. So, if John Bradley has jigsaw puzzles, then every quarter there is a cheque that comes in from Modern Brands for the royalties from the jigsaw puzzles. Every quarter John gets a cheque from each of the two American companies that are publishing his images. Every quarter Natalie Jane Parker gets a cheque from Ashdene for the royalties on the coffee mugs, plates and trays and they are selling hundreds of thousands of those worldwide. Some artists can receive more than $60,000 a year in royalties from one company without lifting a brush.

Gary Fleming one of our Wildlife Artists is earning a quarter of a $1 million a year in passive income from the products. When he looks at doing an image for a new painting,
while most artists go out and say that they might do an image 'of you' for example, Gary says no that's the wrong way to do it, he says 'what do I need', 'what does the industry need an image of'. Then he does the image of whatever that happens to be and that goes into that book and that jigsaw puzzle and that placemat. And so that image continues to roll out on products. So, it's a whole different way of looking at things. And then if the original sells, that's just the cream on the cake. He is not dependent on the sales of an original artwork; William T Cooper was the same. William T Cooper made his money from the publishing of the books, not the originals.

My aim with my team members is to have people understand that the average person can enjoy investment in art. They don't have to spend $1 million or $10 million to buy a painting to invest in art. If they are careful and they buy the right artist they can, and it's all relative, buy for a relatively small amount of money. Now that might be $1000 or a few thousand dollars which is a lot of money to a lot of people. They can still buy something really nice that will hang on their wall but still have it there as an investment as well. So, my role has always been about educating people, so part of the role of my team members here is that when people come into the gallery we talk to them about why these artists are here, and why the paintings cost so much compared to what they can buy at a market or somewhere else - 99% of people don't understand that.

Richards explains the return that people might expect to receive on investment art.

The rule of thumb is about 10% per annum. So, art doesn't go up like the stock market, but it doesn't crash. Art usually is fairly stable in good times and bad. In good times, like we had about 10 or 15 years ago through the John Howard period, art was a very mediocre investment because it was only going up 10% but the stock market was going up 20 to 30%. The housing market was booming it was going up 15 to 20%. So, in those times, the good times, it is often difficult to sell a lot of paintings but when the GFC came, I actually had a customer, (you meet some funny people in this business), and this particular chap was unusual was because he manages super funds. So, he manages people’s money, advises on what they should invest in. Now his super fund was geared with 80% towards stocks on the stock market and real estate and 20% for other items. He had about 12% invested in art and the way his super fund was constructed was that he had to keep that 80% as stocks or real estate. So, the GFC came, his stocks crashed, and he had to sell his entire art collection to prop up his super fund, and he had averaged 74% capital gain over five years on the art pieces that he purchased. I just thought it was rather ironic that here is a person advising other people about what they should invest in for the super fund and yet here he is getting all the sums the wrong way around.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Morpeth Gallery is part of an overall complex. It is split into two galleries. There is a landscape and still life gallery and right next door to it, connected by an overhead walkway, is a Wildlife Gallery. We just specialise in published artists because it is the published artist right back through history - Australian, European and American art – who are marketed well through the reproductions of their work. Invariably they're the ones whose original paintings continue to increase in value - because of the reproduction not because of the originals. Most people think that if they own an original painting one day it will be worth a million dollars. Unfortunately, that is quite a fallacy. It only occurs with artists who are being marketed and that marketing is done through the reproductions of their work to a much wider cross-section of the general public. So, if you look at an Australian artist like Frederick McCubbin, you will find his works published as prints on greeting cards and on all sorts of products. In fact, one, 'The Pioneers' was even used in a Kit-Kat add are some 10 or 15 years ago on TV. So as a result, Fred's work is seen by a lot of people and he is extremely well known. Darcy W. Doyle - one in four houses in Australia has a reproduction of Doyle's work, as a print, a dinner placemat, a coffee mug, a plate, whatever. So once
again you will pay quite a lot of money for a Doyle painting because there are very few originals that are being marketed through their reproductions.

We have buyers come from throughout the Hunter Valley and from obviously the major capital cities around Australia and we sell more and more now overseas as well

Creative Products

First of all, we're a traditional Gallery and the reason for that is, when AC Nelson started doing their surveys on what Australians wanted in art some 60 years ago now, 82% of people wanted traditional art. So that left 18% wanting modern art. That has only dropped 3% in nine surveys by AC Nelson over 64 years. So, because I've got to make a profit to pay my team members, electricity, insurances etc to pay all my overheads I've got to be in the area of art that is the most profitable for me. I've got to be supplying the majority rather than the minority, and so that is why we are a traditional gallery - that's what people still want. When people buy a picture, they want the picture to tell a story as opposed to just being a picture. So, the purists, and there are not many of them, will want a painting of a koala’s head or a study of the tiger’s head but the average person wants a painting that tells a story and so that's what we have. So, 99% of wildlife artists who send me their product, send what I call 'birds on a stick'. I don't want birds on a stick. The customers don't want birds on a stick. They want a bird that's telling a story, that’s doing something.

What’s next?

Well, I'd like to have another gallery and make it bigger because I can't hang everything that I've got. But it's very difficult with Maitland City Council - they are very restrictive. I've had to fight them every inch of the way, always, even after 29 years. When I first bought Campbell's Store we wanted to put the awning back on the front of the building as it was originally, and I had to take them to the Land and Environment Court before I was allowed to do that. I beat them, and I've been fighting them ever since.

A video interview was recorded with Trevor Richards and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.

49. GILLEAN SHAW, ART GALLERY DIRECTOR

21 May 2015

Creative Career

Gillean grew up in Sydney where her father was a gallerist and commercial artist and her mother was the curator of the Ivan Dougherty Gallery at College of Fine Arts, UNSW (COFA) and a sculptor. Talking of a creative career, she says: ‘I was possibly born into it, I suppose’.

Gillean completed art studies at Hunter TAFE (‘which I absolutely loved’) and at The University of Newcastle. She has teaching qualifications.

Gillean has worked and exhibited professionally as a photographer. She has also taught at Newcastle Art School (Hunter TAFE) and The University of Newcastle. She is currently a Trustee looking after The Lock-Up Cultural Centre.

CI Business

Gillean is Art Curator at The University of Newcastle which includes managing the University art collection which has more than a thousand pieces, being Director of the University Gallery and managing the Senta Taft-Hendry Museum, which was established in 2011.
The Gallery was built in 1995 as a showcase for post graduate exhibitions and that has been part of the core business of the gallery since with between four and eight PhD or RHD (research higher degree) shows a year.

Gillean is employed in a permanent, full-time position consistent with industry wages and from time to time there are casuals employed an example of this would be for the University’s 50-year anniversary.

The role was too disparate and too large for one person to manage so that’s why I decided to split it. Each person, each casual has their own area of focus.

As well, Gillean has interns. Her operational budget has recently gone up to nearly $50,000 a year.

She says that in the job there are ‘a lot of expectations, a lot of KPIs to be met, and a lot of reporting has to be done.’ The KPIs particularly relate to ‘connections and building community and building collections, providing a cultural hub within the Institution’.

Creative Products

Gillean is employed by the University and she talks about the challenge of meeting the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set for her role. Some creative thinking was required to align the work with the University’s framework.

I think in the creative industries there is often a need for validation, particularly if you are the person who is working in an organisation that has a different charter than the one that is often given to creative industries.

The KPI’s test one’s mettle to see how I fit as a ‘cultural’ … within a very corporate landscape. That has become easier over time. Though sometimes when you see a KPI for say community engagement, then you work out that you can actually make that fit, something of personal interest. Like ‘The LockUp’, which I have been so involved in for so many years now. So that’s one of my KPI’s and I operate that as an ex-officio role as part of my job. So that’s joy! It’s also quite a lot of work but that is really great.

Exhibitions are held in the University Gallery and shows often change every three weeks. Gillean says: ‘It’s a very public space, everyone is aware of what goes on, so I do feel a responsibility to keep it buoyant and best practice and varied’.

There are student shows, shows that are about the University community including those profiling University research, shows that are purely for community interest. Gillean says she tries to have one ‘blockbuster’ every year. A major show she worked on with local arts identity Kate Croll and the University’s Confucius Institute exhibited the work of two generations of Chinese artists. It subsequently toured Australia. A very well-attended recent show was with the Wollotuka Institute, which focussed on indigenous art and history related to the Hunter region - ‘something that is so dear to the hearts and minds of many Novocastrians.

Gillean says that the University’s art collection is the second most important collection in the Newcastle region, worth close to $3million. They have some ‘fantastic gems… particularly of mid-century Australian art’ including a Margaret Preston that went on loan to the Art Gallery of NSW for her retrospective and a Margaret Olley that went to the Queensland Gallery for her retrospective as well as a John Olsen and John Coburn.

Gillean has done quite a lot of work developing collection management policies. She has no budget for acquisitions so relies on donations. The collection began in the 1960s when the first teaching graduates decided to buy a gift for the university and this was a small Margaret Preston now worth over a quarter of a million dollars. Relying on donations means a ‘raggy’ collection with some ‘holes’. Gillean says the current focus is on collecting indigenous art work.

One recent acquisition was the Roxanis Collection of indigenous bark art works collected in the 1960s and 70s. Gillean says, ‘It is very, very precious stuff but the market for it is not buoyant at the moment and [the owner] didn’t want to sell it so he gave it to us. So that was an easy win for me. He is totally
satisfied’. Importantly, Gillean was able to speak to the owner about the University’s Wollotuka Institute and give him an assurance that the work would be culturally respected.

*Because the collection is appreciating in value, Gillean says ‘It’s seen that I actually make an income …I’m not seen as a drain, I’m actually promoting an asset…The fact that it is an asset that is rising in value is important.*

**Creative Labour**

Gillean developed the skills she needs for her role through her formal study at TAFE and the University, but also informally. She managed her father’s galleries when she was quite young which she describes as ‘Very much learning on the job and very much learning as an apprentice’.

*I didn't realise how much I was learning, you know, until much later ... He had galleries at a time in Sydney when it was a boom time and there were very few commercial galleries.*

Gillean is a natural educator and says that she always wanted to be a teacher. Her work with interns and casuals is ‘a kind of mentorship’: they often ‘own’ a project and she guides and supports them in that.

Gillean says that because of the demands of her job, she has been unable to continue with her own professional practice, but she did recently create an artwork by invitation for the retirement of Joe Eisenberg, Director of Maitland Gallery.

Creatives have expert knowledge and skills which sets them apart from others, specifically resourcefulness, commitment and self-motivation.

*I think the resourcefulness of anyone working in a creative area is an inherent part of their DNA that I don’t often see in other areas. There’s much more of a ‘work to rule’ ethos operating in more corporate life. In any creative industry, whether it’s design, architecture or whatever, there’s a lot incumbent on the individual to make things successful.*

Gillean notes the Vice Chancellor’s support for creative industries as a generator of employment and GDP. Gillean believes, however, that the term ‘creative industries’ is ‘problematic’.

*I think that the best thing about the term is that it gets people to think about what it is. And perhaps what creative industries do more beyond the physical… For those like us it's more about what creative industries will bring in terms of quality of life and depth of thought and ways of doing and being. So, I guess the ‘industries’ is the thing, and the word ‘industry’ is validating the work ‘creative’, and that is where I think the wrangle will continue to be.*

**Creative Networks**

When asked to describe the creative industries in the Hunter region, Gillean says:

*I think it's a little bit dislocated...It’s in how we connect or interconnect that perhaps there is a bit of disjunction [but] if we can pull it together, we will recognise that collectively we have what makes Newcastle really special.*

*It’s important that the people, the personalities, the artists and the designers, the whoever, all know who each other are. There are little satellites and there has to be some way to bring all of that together. Even if we're not relating constantly it is an acknowledgement of a collective, with a single idea really’.*

**What’s next?**

*Collect more indigenous art work. We had next to nothing - perhaps two pieces - in the collection and yet the University has more indigenous staff and students than any other university in Australia. Our collection didn’t reflect that in any way, so it was important for us to address that.*
The Strutt Sisters, 26 September 2016

Creative Career

The Strutt Sisters are Jennifer and Catherine Strutt. They love colour and are well known for their Lightweight Funky Jewelry and Bespoke Surface Design products for commercial and residential interiors. Jennifer and Catherine are recognised as the most successful female collaborators in handmade designs. They have been finalists in NSW Art Gallery’s prestigious Sulman Art Prize, have won the Muswellbrook Art prize and exhibit in Sydney with sell out shows. The Strutt Sisters work from a studio at Newcastle Community Art Centre (NCAC), they have been there for 20 years and are the longest tenants at NCAC.

Our market found us originally. People who love quirky stuff, colour and humour. Normally they have a bit of spare cash or know they can pay it off with future spare cash and truly understand and appreciate what we are trying to do.

Our jewellery ranges from maybe nearly 20s to late or mid-60s, women, which is pretty large. And it’s the same kind of people whether you’re in Newcastle, Sydney – we haven’t tried Melbourne – but generally the same kind of people, where they’re leaning towards the art and craft and design movements or interests and are a bit open to colour and design.

The Strutt Sisters want to wear their art. That is how the funky lightweight jewellery began and this idea has further developed. Now they want to live in their art! They have moved their colour and design skills across to bespoke products for commercial and residential interiors

CI Business

The Strutt Sisters run two businesses - Lightweight Funky Jewelry and Bespoke Surface Design. An example of the Bespoke interiors can be found on a shop counter for “Goodness me Organics” in Adamstown. In 2015 their bespoke products were included in the Grand Designs exhibition in Sydney, where Kevin McCloud, presenter for the program showed great interest in their work.

The thing is, the people who actually see our work, in real life and have a fiddle and can talk to it, they’re the ones who are really pumped. We had a stand at the Grand Designs trade show and it was really good. We weren’t there to sell, we were there to gather interest – and what we got was really good. And from that we got into two magazines, which was good. It was only a little bit it was better than nothing, and their feedback was genuine, and we took it on board and we thought ‘well we are doing the right thing’ for the people who can look at it in person.

The Strutt Sisters have realised that the Funky Lightweight Jewelry is seasonal, it is more of a summer product, great at Christmas time, and it can be purchased through their online webpage.

Creative Products

The Strutt sisters have had to work hard to make their art a sustainable business and Jennifer says if we were sports people we’d be sitting pretty. They are no longer doing jobs for free and they have taken that economic concept a step further and removed their art works from galleries. There are several reasons for this as they explain.

First of all, we collaborate, and we’ve collaborated since about 1995. And therefore, anything we make and sell we have to halve.
Newcastle seems to cap their total spend on an artwork at about $600-$800 and that’s it. That’s their limit and on the odd occasion they may stretch to $1500 but only if they can justify the spend.

That’s not our limit, so they’re not our customers, those ones. Our customers may not even be here in Newcastle.

Then if we have an art dealer they’re going to take 40%. So, we have to share 60% which leaves us each personally with 30%.

So, in reality, the gallery is getting MORE than us. And the exhibition goes for 2 or 3 weeks and then you’re in a hole again.

The Strutt Sisters have had to find a more reliable income stream, and their jewellery has provided one avenue. Funky Lightweight Jewelry is sold annually at Newcastle Olive Tree Markets and there is a website where jewellery can be purchased. But the financial returns for their time are still not enough to sustain the two of them.

**What’s next?**

They have moved into creating their new business venture is Bespoke Surface Designs.

*If only we had thought of this 10, 15 years ago, we wouldn’t be in galleries. But we studied fine art, we didn’t do graphic art, we didn’t do interior design. We did fine art. So, we’ve got to try and make good with what we know – we have a product, but we don’t have that way of thinking. So, with the product, we’ve got to think differently and look at different people and the way they work now. Like more commercially.*

That’s exactly where we are now. We want to aim our product at interior designers and architects and developers – they’re the three groups of people we need to pitch our ideas and work to now, not so much galleries.

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**52. MEREDITH WOOLNOUGH, TEXTILE ARTIST**

21st September 2015

**Creative Career**

Meredith is a textile artist. She says she ‘draws with a sewing machine’. Using a quilting machine Meredith stitches freehand with polyester threads, on fabric. The fabric is washed away leaving behind a colourful embroidered three-dimensional piece, which is mounted and framed behind glass. Meredith has been making a sustainable living from her art since 2013. In a past life Meredith worked as a fulltime secondary school teacher but she developed this striking embroidery technique 10 years ago during her Bachelor of Fine Art Honours year. Meredith’s draws inspiration from nature and says that scuba diving is a great place to discover new designs. Recently she has returned to study in the specialised Natural History Illustration degree at the University of Newcastle.

**CI Business**

Meredith’s work is in demand, she holds regular solo exhibitions and in 2015 she held an exhibition in Bowral at The Milk Factory, as well as having up to 6 other exhibitions at places like Timeless Textiles in Newcastle and Arcadian Artists’ Trail in Dural. The smallest art sells for $250 and generally the biggest ones are between $3,000 and $5,000, with some commissioned work selling for $10,000. Since 2013 Meredith has worked full-time making her textile art and if sales continue she will need to register her business for GST. (registering for GST is for business earning an income over $75,000). Meredith’s work as an artist has meant she has had to learn to photograph her work, and to blog about her work and to promote her work via social media. The other interesting thing is that ‘people don’t see it as a real job
- they think it is a hobby’ and because of this it’s not taken seriously. To be successful she has had to treat is as a business, though she admits that she has never had any trouble selling her artworks.

**Creative Labour**

How did you being this unique art practice and turn it into a business?

*When I started to do this type of work, I found that the response was good, people were really interested in it, they were really fascinated by it, and it was selling, and I was getting this interest. So, I was actually doing other work. Following art school, I did what a lot of art students do and became a teacher, and I was a full-time secondary school teacher for Art and Design for about four years, and there were parts of that I really loved, parts of it I didn’t like so much. And while I was teaching I was still doing this on the side, so my school holidays were like hard core art-making sessions and I had exhibitions happening, and as that side of my life, which I was passionate about grew in interest and popularity I started to step back from the teaching a little bit. And then it’s kept going and I guess I’m kind of lucky about that.*

Do you think people understand what you do as an artist?

*I think a lot of people undervalue the work that artists do. I still have people quite close to me, they don’t mean to, but they still probably see what I’m doing as a bit of a hobby and they think that I’ll grow out of it and go and do something else and get another real job. And they don’t mean to be insulting but I think there’s just a real lack of understanding that this is my job, this is how I make my living now and it’s a real thing [laughs], even if it’s not a real common thing. I’m lucky that (I think) because I produce such a particular product and people can see what it costs and how I sell it, I haven’t had too many people approach me and want the free job or the job for exposure or things like that ... I think a lot of creative people don’t take themselves seriously or have a hard time doing that, maybe because they enjoy it and it’s seen as a hobby in some areas, so taking that step from hobby to professional is sometimes a hard thing to allow yourself to do.*

What is the difference between art and craft?

*I think the difference between art and craft is probably the originality that comes in art. I think perhaps, and I’m probably completely paraphrasing this, but I think craft is often more just about usage and technique, while art is more about creating something new and interesting, and I guess I might kind of walk somewhere in the middle. So much of my work is about my technique; I’ve developed this technique to a point where I can draw pretty much anything with a sewing machine, which is a weird thing to do, but I sell it as artwork. I don’t sell them as something that’s easily replicated which I think a lot of crafts are designed to be replicated by many people, maybe. I think I might have just insulted some people. I hope not, in saying that.*

**Creative Networking**

Meredith worked from her home studio for two and half years before a space became available at Newcastle Community Arts Centre. Meredith feels that working from her home wasn’t the most productive experience.

*I don’t know if it was really the most productive way for me; I need to go to work. I work best with that kind of structure. So, getting a space at Newcastle Community Arts Centre, has been great for me. I come, I do roughly a 9:00 to 5:00 day. All my work is here, I can leave it in whatever state, and then leave the door and I’ve left work behind, rather than constantly going upstairs after dinner and working on things and never leaving work. So, it’s been a really good thing. And then when I’m here I’m just doing work, there’s no other distraction, not even a cat.*
My studio space is part of the Newcastle Community Art Centre. It’s a great space but I don’t think many people know about it. It’s basically a huge building full of artists and it’s a heavily subsidised rent so that artists can afford to have a professional space to work in. I got a studio space here about two years ago, beginning of last year, and it was a really big step for me and a really positive step for my business and my practice to have that professional space. The Community Art Centre has many other functions; it’s got a gallery attached to it and it’s got rooms that people can hire out to teach workshops and run events. There’s a theatre downstairs, so it’s got all sorts of things going on in the broader art community, but it’s also a community of artists within itself.

Which base is better for you, Newcastle or Sydney?

Not that much of my exhibiting life is focused in Newcastle, but all the making is. Most of the other things that I do are Sydney-based still, but it’s just a couple of hours down the freeway. The thing that I do like probably about working from Newcastle is that everything’s quite accessible; it’s like this little city and there’s still a lot here, but unfortunately some of my old habits - I have my framer for example, are still down in Sydney so I’m often making trips backwards and forwards to them. I still haven’t quite developed the same sort of relationship with a business up here.

Meredith has enjoyed working in Newcastle.

It seems to be a very nurturing environment in Newcastle. I think I heard recently someone said there’s more artists in Newcastle per capita than anywhere else, and I’d believe it. Everywhere you seem to bump into an artist, and it’s so nice. [laughs] But there is that support between the artists and everyone’s interested in what everyone else is doing rather than in being competitive about it, which is really encouraging. I think that’s maybe why so many artists are thriving in Newcastle because they support each other and as I said earlier, I think that support and that collegial support’s really important in these kinds of industries because otherwise it feels lonely when you’re just working for yourself and working on your own things.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Meredith is living proof that being a professional artist is a real job as she defends her choice to make a living as an artist.

It’s very much a real job. It’s not a typical job, it’s not as stable as other things, it’s not as predictable, but it’s definitely a job. It’s my job.

I think artists need support of other artists as well because you’re your own boss. If I was doing a job for someone else they kind of go, “Yeah, you’re on the right track. You’re doing a good job.” I think it’s really hard when you’re working for yourself, you’ve just got yourself and your work to know if you’re on the right track and if you are creating something good, and it’s easy to be self-critical; I think a lot of artists are. I certainly am, so it’s really good to have the support of other people to kind of, even just as a gentle encouragement, “You’re doing a good job. Keep going. Good stuff,” that kind of thing.

I’m lucky that I’ve always had the support of my family when I decided to study art and things like that, and my husband’s usually supportive of me moving up here and basically leaving a stable job and diving head-first into a career path that might or might not work out. So, I think that was a huge part in balancing it and understanding that there might be months when you’re preparing for a show that there’s no income coming in but there’s lots going out because there’s lots of framing costs and things like that. And then you just hope it’s going to pay off and that show’s going to go well. And so being able to juggle that financially can be a challenge, and I think that’s where having the support of other people, is needed. And I’m really lucky that my husband supports me in a way, not in a way that I’m
financially dependent on him, we’re a team, but having his income that’s regular allows for my rather fluctuating income to weave in and out as it’s needed rather than having several months with no rent paid or no food to eat, if that makes sense. It’d be tough to do on my own.

Creative Products

Is all your work based off the natural world?

At the moment it is. I’ve fallen in love with structures and patterns, and I think that might come from the fact that I’m creating structures when I’m sewing. When you do this type of technique everything’s got to be connected at least to a certain degree because otherwise when you wash away that base fabric it just turns into a big mess and a spider web of knots, basically. So, I’ve been really interested in structures - the way things grow, and the way things work, so a lot of my work are things like coral fans, the internal structures of leaves and things like that that kind of interconnect and interlock.

Where do you exhibit your textile art?

I have a couple of galleries that tend to try to have an exhibition with me every year or so. I just finished up a big solo show that’s down in Bowral in the Southern Highlands in the Milk Factory Gallery there; Timeless Textiles Gallery here in Newcastle that I mentioned, they tend to have a show with me every two years, so I’ve got one booked in for next year, and that’ll be my third solo show with them. And then I tend to have other shows that I’m a part of; not as solos because they’re very draining, but more, bigger group shows, so for example, later in the year I’ve got something at the Botanic Gardens, they have an Artisans in the Garden exhibition that I’ve been involved with every other year. Again, this is my third time. And then there’s other things that pop up; there’s a trail called the Arcadian Artists’ Trail which is the Dural area of Sydney, that I’m involved in every year, although I don’t live from that area I come in as a guest artist and that’s a really good one because that’s direct selling rather than going through a gallery, so that has its pluses and minuses. And occasionally a group of artists will get together and hire a space to have a show; there’s quite a few in Sydney that are good for that. I haven’t done that for a few years though, I just haven’t needed to. I’ve been busy enough with everything else.

So, my tiniest, tiniest little works, I’ve got one just behind you I think, starts at about $250 for a little baby one, and then they go up to, my biggest work is generally between $3,000 and $5,000, but I’ve done work that’s been up to $10,000 for a special on-off commission. I tend to not go past a certain size for some technical reasons.

What’s next?

Meredith moved into her own studio at Wickham in 2016 when NCAC moved to the TAFE campus at Tighes’ Hill. A video interview was recorded with Meredith and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
PERFORMING ARTS

53. JULIE BLACK, MUSICAL THEATRE DIRECTOR

54. GRAEEME BLACK, STAGE MANAGER AND SET DESIGNER

Metropolitan Players Inc 3 May 2017

Creative Career

Julie Black has a background as a singer/dancer/actress in Newcastle. After she underwent spinal fusion and was unable to continue, she turned to directing which turned out to be even more successful for her. Graeme Black was always interested in theatre and was introduced to the Independent Theatre Company by Barbara Delaney in 1972 (Metropolitan Players grew out of this company). Graeme is on the Committee for the City of Newcastle Drama Awards (CONDAs). He was President for some years and is now Secretary.

CI Business

Metropolitan Players Inc is a non-professional theatre company that has been operating in Newcastle for 40 years. The Company was formed in 1977 and produces musicals. Julie and Graeme were original members of Metropolitan Players and are the only originals still involved. Julie is Artistic Director of the company and Graeme is often Set Designer and Stage Manager for productions.

Metropolitan Players is an incorporated association with a Committee elected each year at the Annual General Meeting in February. Julie is Secretary of the Committee while Graeme is President. The Committee also includes a Treasurer, Vice President and five Members.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Business Model: Metropolitan Players is a social enterprise, and everybody involved works on a voluntary basis: no-one is paid. Graeme explains that this allows them to work on a scale and to the quality that would be impossible if they had the expense of paying people. As Julie says, they all do it for the love of it. The company has no permanent base. Administration is run from Julie and Graeme’s home, rehearsals are held at Glendale High School, sets are constructed at their rented warehouse in Cardiff which also provides storage, and productions are staged at hired theatres, most recently Civic Theatre Newcastle.

Metropolitan Players’ budgets are the highest of any theatre company in the region. The budget for the 2017 production - Les Misérables – is sitting at $380,000. Graeme says, ‘It’s a huge financial risk. It could be the last show every time ….’ They are not due any box office income until Civic Theatre does the reconciliation, often 2-3 weeks after the show finishes, but sometimes Civic Theatre will give them an advance, so they can pay bills. Les Misérables will be the ninth show they have done at the Civic, so they’ve built a reputation for quality and reliability, ‘for doing things correctly’.

Last year’s production took nearly $500,000 at the box office but the costs are significant. Julie explains, for example, that they pay 16-18% of gross for performing rights which was $80,000 last year. Civic Theatre hire was $140,000, $80,000 was spent on sound and lighting hire and $8,000 on billboards. Last year a new system was introduced by Civic Theatre whereby a hire fee of approximately $4000 per performance (apart from staffing) was payable OR 11% of gross takings, whichever was the larger. The company has additional expenses including insurances and phones, and they need to maintain a decent balance for the next show.

The company turnover is more than $500,000 per year. Any surplus is invested in the company. Income comes from box office and a small amount from costume hire – they make all their own costumes for shows and have over 2000 items in the wardrobe. Julie explains that they don’t run the costume hire as a business but to help the local theatre community. Companies from outside are charged commercial rates. They have in the past run one or two fundraisers a year – trivia nights or Bunnings BBqs.
Metropolitan Players currently receive neither government nor corporate support. They have had some in-kind support from Newcastle City Council in the past but were unsuccessful last year in their application for event funding which offered up to $20,000. They have applied again this year and are waiting to hear. They have in the past approached corporates without success. They plan to apply for registration as a charity so that they have DGR (deductible gift recipient) status as they expect that this will assist in securing sponsorship ‘but there’s a huge amount of work to be done for that’.

One challenge they identify for theatre companies working in the region is the lack of an intermediate size theatre e.g. 5-600 seats to allow people ‘to run more artistic risks, to be more experimental’.

Creative Products

Metropolitan Players produce one major musical each year at Newcastle's premier theatre, the 1400-seat Civic Theatre. Each season comprises nine shows. Graeme points out that their choice of production is very much about commercial viability. They choose shows that have had recent professional productions. Such is their reputation that they have been granted rights over companies in Sydney.

Over the years Metropolitan Players’ productions have received many City of Newcastle Drama Awards (CONDAs). The most successful was their 2014 production of "The Phantom of the Opera" which won seven awards. With "Wicked" in 2016, the Company has won the CONDA for Best Musical Production five years in a row.

When asked if it would be easier to work in a capital city, Graeme responds that, ‘There’s more competition in the big city but more people to draw from’. He likes the ‘community feel’ in Newcastle and says that while there are 30 companies in town, there is not a lot of duplication or competition. ‘The size of Newcastle is right.’ He would, however, like to see more collaboration within the sector and he believes that the company can have a significant role in that: ‘As one group we can have more muscle.’

Graeme says that Newcastle is ‘traditionally a sporting town – we need to build audiences’.

Julie sees Metropolitan Players as part of an ‘active and vibrant’ performing arts scene in the region and Graeme comments that, ‘Newcastle is getting a reputation for the quality of work’.

Creative Career

Roles with the Players’ shows are hotly contested: in 2016, 207 people auditioned for 50 roles, only nine of which were leads. The appeal of working with the company is multi-faceted. Performers enjoy the experience, and this is undoubtedly related to Julie’s view that ‘every person is important. No-one is on a pedestal. Ensembles get treated the same as the leads’. It is for good reason that Julie Black is so widely admired and loved. Graeme continues: ‘We have a family-oriented approach and make the experience inclusive’.

Importantly, experience with Metropolitan Players can assist performers develop the skills and knowledge they need for professional careers. Graeme says the company tries to give performers ‘as close to a professional experience as possible and a rare opportunity to work in a theatre such as the Civic Theatre’. He says, ‘That helps them decide on their future – they understand the amount of work involved. Some observe the way the theatre works and decide that they’d rather pursue the technical side’.

Several performers who have worked with Metropolitan Players have gone on to significant professional careers. Jye Frasca came to the company as a young tap dancer and is now working in shows in the West End, David Harris has had professional leads in Australian musicals and now lives and works in Los Angeles, Costa Nicholas worked as a singer/dancer and now runs a casting agency in USA, Nigel Turner Carroll directs shows nationally, and Tyran Parke and Seth Drury are both currently appearing in the musical “Big Fish” at the Hayes Theatre in Sydney.

When asked where they see Metropolitan Players in relation to the performing arts sector in the region, Graeme responds that he sees them as a ‘large component, supporting the sector and setting an example to help other companies’. For example, the Company uses a fully auditioned process, so they maximise opportunities for the widest range of performers. This means that there is a transfer of knowledge and
skills: performers learn from the experience and can take that back to their work with other companies. It also means that they bring new knowledge and skills with them – it’s ‘two-way learning’.

Graeme says, ‘It would be good to have at least one professional theatre company in Newcastle – the skills and training that they could bring would have a flow-on effect’.

What’s next?
They intend to apply for DGR (deductible gift recipient) status and to work on succession planning – especially in relation to technical and administrative roles.

55. CARL CAULFIELD PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR AND ACTOR
Stray Dogs Theatre Company, 29 May 2015
Creative Career
Carl was born in the UK. After an early passion for soccer he followed his interest in writing and performing. He completed a BA in English and Drama at Leeds University where he met his wife, Felicity Biggins. Carl has also completed a Masters in Creative Arts at UNSW, where he also taught, and a PhD at UTS.

When he moved to Australia in the 1980s, he first worked on building sites and selling pies at footy shows.

Carl has taught drama and creative writing for many years - fiction, radio, stage drama. He currently teaches screenwriting at the University of Newcastle and screen studies at NIDA. He has also worked as a dramaturg (script consultant). He performed his play Being Sellers at the Edinburgh Festival and the show had a season in London.

CI Business
Carl and Felicity are co-artistic directors of Stray Dogs Theatre Company which is a co-operative that stages new plays written by Carl, most recently ‘Where Late the Songbird’ which was part of the Civic Theatre’s Subscription Series in 2015. Performing Arts Newcastle (PAN) provides insurance coverage for the company. Both Felicity and Carl have paying jobs outside of the Company.

Creative Networking
Playwriting ... is a collaborative venture, unlike, say writing a novel or writing a poem. The writer works with a director, actors, set designers, lighting and costume people and others.

Carl warns, however, that collaboration is not always easy, nor positive.

Collaboration can be a terrific thing, but it can also be toxic. I mean, you know, people talk about collaboration as if, as if it’s this kind of easy thing, that everybody’s gonna get along swell. This is not always the case, given the fact that people inhabit their own ego and their own subjectivity. And, you know, some working collaborations can be awful...The word ‘collaboration’ gets bandied about, and it’s like a kind of rosy-hued view people have. And they throw in the word ‘community’ and we’re all meant to feel rather good, but collaboration can be a nightmare and it needs, kind of, contracts, and an understanding of how we go about it. And it can be fraught, it can be very fraught.

There’s a lot at stake because the people involved are serious about what they do.

Carl and Felicity received government support to establish Stray Dogs through a grant from the NSW Ministry of the Arts. Their first show was a new play called ‘Angel of Mercy’.

Creative Labour
Carl says that Brett Whitely used to talk about painting as a “difficult pleasure” and for him playwriting is the same.

Writing for the theatre is different from other jobs.

\[I \text{ guess the thing about what I do is ... not there in other jobs... when [you] perform and you put on plays, you're in this strange ... position where you're taking a solitary experience and you're making it public, and that's not there in any of those other jobs... I mean there is a different thing where you are imbuing it with something, you know, from deep within you, your soul or whatever you want to call it... the nature of the communication with creativity goes very deep, so it even involves... connecting to one's deeper impulses, and even the racial memory... To me it connects to something that goes right back in our cultures, ... if you go back to those Greeks, it was connected to religious ceremonies... theatre seems to me to be about that, so that it is a kind of sacred space where we can explore ideas, our dreams, our fears, our anxieties. And that's what I think, that's not like any other job, is it?\]

Breaking the rules is important “… the thing about being creative is that you need to probably know the rules and then know where to break them... any good playwright has usually broken the rules”.

When asked about the state of theatre in Newcastle, Carl responded.

\[From the inside, I think it’s exciting... what I've always been amazed at is ... the kind of ferocity that people have here, the passion that people have here, and that's for real... there is this strong tradition here of doing good theatre. It’s been around a hell of a long time, and it's one of the best things about this city, to me. I mean, I think it’s very easy to get projects up here... but on another level, I have to be frank with you and say, it’s as depressing as it ever was. And the lack of support is just as it ever was, if not getting worse, in a way... I think we’re moving into a kind of brutal, corporate kind of mindset... But at the same time there’s all this talk. So, we’re getting all the feel-good talk about how creative a place it is... There’s not enough ... people putting their money where their mouth is.\]

Creative Products

Playwrights’ work is constrained by the limited budgets theatre companies have to work with. Carl comments that:

\[Theatre companies won’t look at your work if you’re writing for more than seven actors anyway... nobody is putting on these large-scale plays unless you’re the National Theatre... I mean it’s great to have the chamber pieces, but we also want to see the large-scale work that deals with big social issues, you know, or the movements of history.\]

The lack of good criticism is an issue.

\[My view has always been that one of the problems in this town is that you get one critic’s perspective in the paper, and there’s probably a lot I could say about that but it’s probably not wise. But I think you have a healthy theatre when you have ... many critics reviewing your work. And the fact that there is probably only one, and a couple of others ad hoc, I think it’s a sign that the theatre is not that healthy probably.\]

Creative Futures

Carl is somewhat cynical about the term ‘creative industries’ and regrets that the arts is often valued only in terms of its benefit to other businesses.

\[I’ve heard a lot about creative industries ... it seemed to be a word that came after creativity, they started to kind of use that one as a mantra, and then eventually they thought industries is a good one, because value of the creativity, once you started analysing it, it goes up its own bum, now we can talk about the economy and even if we can’t talk about playwriting and the theatre, we can talk about how much they’ve made at the restaurant nearby.\]
What’s next?

Carl will keep writing. For him it is an important social project.

The playwright’s job is to kind of get inside there and get the audience thinking and feeling again … play-writing [sic] has always been in my view a humane project, it’s a humanitarian project, there’s no doubt about it. And you may spend your time trying to get inside the mind of a monster, you may be trying to evoke a character who is repellent, you may be doing any number of things but ultimately it is a project that I trust as being a humane project.

He is aware of the limitations of the theatre industry in the city but is sanguine about it.

I mean, the theatre has always been dying, yeah, there’s nothing new about that. And all of these technologies that people mention and the bright new things… nothing is going to replace live performance, and I think ultimately people will come back to it, just as they come back to reading the novel.

56. SARAH COFFEE, PERFORMER

57. TAMARA GAZZARD, PERFORMER

58. LUCY SHEPHERD, PERFORMER

Paper Cut Theatre Company, 5 May 2016

Creative Career

Sarah Coffee completed a Communication degree with performing arts electives and was in several productions before she joined Tantrum Theatre. She is in another live art collective called Big One, Little One with Rachel Jackett, Brendan O’Connell and Penelope Kentish who were also part of Tantrum Theatre. Sarah completed a PhD in Communication and Media Arts and teaches at University in Communication and Media and Creative and Performing Arts.

Tamara Gazzard did a six-month course in acting at the Actors College of Theatre and Television, then a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Drama and English at The University of Newcastle (UoN). After she completed a Grad. Dip. Ed. in 2009 she became a high school drama teacher for a couple of years and then did a Masters in Applied Theatre from UNE by distance. She started working with Tantrum in 2013 as a tutor and then in 2014 as a Teaching Artist (a part-time role). She has also taught at UoN in Creative and Performing Arts.

Lucy Shepherd did a Bachelor of Creative Arts at Macquarie University with electives in performance and Honours in Performance at UNSW. Lucy worked in arts administration at NIDA Open Program for four years and with the Australia Council in an administrative role, part-time. She did productions with ATYP and did a year-long training program one day per week with the PACT Centre for Emerging Artists. Lucy has been Associate Director at Tantrum for three years and is currently acting as the Artistic Director while Amy Hardingham is on leave.

CI Business

Their business is called Paper Cut: Contemporary Performance Collective. The three met in June 2012 when Tamara asked for Tantrum’s help in putting out a call for people to be involved in a new work she was creating for her University Masters project. That play was called The Past is a Foreign Country and it was staged at the Civic Playhouse in 2013. Each year since then, Paper Cut has created a new work and produced it themselves. That work has included ‘Spent’ which was about consumer culture and was performed in an abandoned retail store, ‘Hello Stranger’ about social isolation, and ‘No-one Cares about your Cat’ about social media.
They operate as three sole traders with their own ABN but are looking to establish a formal business entity. Tamara says ‘we three share the leadership and direction of Paper Cut and we consult each other about everything. Just about everything we do is collaborative…’

**Creative Labour**

Tamara says:

*One thing I think that characterises working in the creative industries is unpredictability. The work doesn’t happen nine to five, five days a week, and you don’t get paid a regular wage. While it’s unpredictable, it also involves a lot of planning. We had to get used to planning 18 to 24 months into the future to make things happen. That was a big shift as well. I guess for me it’s the unpredictability and the haphazard nature of it all sometimes…there are those periods of like amazing energetic creation of things and then there’s nothing for a while, so you have to ride those waves. And when a production finishes, that’s when you feel it the most because all of a sudden there’s this void until you’ve got something else to do.*

Lucy agrees: ‘I guess what I think of when I think of a business is nine to five, regular pay checks, stability … we don’t work regular hours, we don’t have regular pay checks, we do make the decisions’. The notion of business efficiency doesn’t really apply.

*We spend so much time talking things through, whether it be the way we are going to spend the budget or the creative ideas in our shows like “Why are we doing this? What does it mean? Is this the right choice?” We spend a lot of time collaboratively discussing all these things. That’s how we get to the end product in all our ventures, whether it’s a new show or how we are going to raise money or how do we articulate this show, this idea? That’s our strength as well, we don’t just make something up, we have considered it and that’s what we feel is the best way to do it or we feel comfortable doing something.*

Creatives need to be self-starters: ‘Working in the creative industries, you’ve got to motivate yourself. No-one else is going to do it for you. So, you basically have to make it happen’ and the ‘emotional investment’ required in creative industries also sets the work apart.

*You do what you do not for the pay check but because you believe in it or because you really want to do it… And because you are passionate about what you do, you do work beyond the hours that you are meant to ….*

It does offer flexibility, as well, and that is valued.

*We can decide when we do the work and how we do the work. There’s a lot of it [laughs] but we can make that work around other things that we are doing and that’s an advantage, I think.*

Lucy agrees with Sarah that the term ‘creative industries’ is useful:

*… as a recognition of the fact that it’s work, people aren’t just doing it out of the goodness of their hearts. It’s a recognition of the labour involved, all those similarities with other forms of work and I think that’s important. There are all sorts of issues that arise when you think that people don’t deserve to be paid for their artistic endeavour…*

Tamara adds:

*I think it’s a legitimising term. You can say, “I’m in the arts” a lot of people just go, “What does that even mean?” but ‘creative industries’ sounds better. It sounds as if what we do is meaningful and valuable.*

**Creative Entrepreneurship**

*Paper Cut* has been the beneficiary of a number of grants, often auspiced by Tantrum. The first was a production grant of $15,000 from the Australia Council for their first show ‘The Past is a Foreign
Country’. That funding allowed them to pay everyone in the production and the venue hire but they were still required to provide private funding which they were, however, able to recoup. For ‘Spent’ they got a grant from ArtsNSW for part of the creative development of the work. ‘No-one Cares about Your Cat’ was commissioned by Tantrum so they were paid a commission fee. With ‘Hello Stranger’, the whole project was funded by Arts NSW with total funding of about $60,000. Then they applied again and got production funding and touring funding. They comment “we weren’t out of pocket in any way, shape or form…That’s the dream”. Grants are important but generally only cover half of the costs of a production. Tantrum’s shows attract fairly modest box office takings, for example, approximately $6000 for ‘Hello Stranger’.

Sarah says of the work ‘it’s risky and unpredictable and you don’t make a lot of money’. Other sources of income are essential for them to survive. Tamara and Sarah both have supportive partners. Tamara says: ‘Personally, I couldn’t do this if I wasn’t married and he didn’t have a decent income. I used to be a teacher and I used to make a decent amount of money and we were quite comfortable then I went, “No, I’m not going to do that anymore, by the way [laughs]. I’m going to go off and do this and try to make some money”. Luckily, he was very supportive’.

Tamara says of the creative industries in the city:

> It’s a little bit DIY… I feel that there’s a lot of creative people in Newcastle across art forms and disciplines but a lot of people doing it themselves, working out their own pathway into a career into the industry themselves. There’s not a lot of established pathways or structures, companies or organisations that you can go and get a job with in the creative industries...

Lucy adds that perhaps this is intrinsic to the sector: ‘…I think in a way the nature of the creative industries defies specific structures. There’s always going be new ways of doing things and I think the DIY nature is always going to be apparent’. She feels that industry placements such as she did as part of her degree are essential to secure employment.

> You go to interview for paid jobs in the arts and there are so many people competing for each job who are overqualified and to even get a foot in the door you need to demonstrate what you’ve done…. I feel that unpaid internships really pay their way.

Lucy points to the issue that in the performing arts:

> a lot of people do it for free, they do it as a passion and they do it for the high they get from it but when does that line cross over to professionalism? When do you start getting paid? It’s because there’s not enough opportunities that you have to have that level of experience and training to say, “I’m worth payment”, even if it’s a small amount, whereas if you are someone straight out of Uni going, “I want to be paid for this”, it’s “Well, get in line!” Other people who have done so much more, they are going to get the paid position ahead of you because I guess supply and demand is out of whack.

Sarah says that more thought needs to be put into creating professional opportunities for people in Newcastle ‘instead of just talking about the lack of them’. For example, she would like others to be as committed as Paper Cut to paying creatives for their work: ‘there’s that expectation associated with the creative industries that you should be doing it for free. That’s not sustainable. You can’t do that. No wonder people are leaving…’

Lucy comments that a strong creative strategic goal of Tantrum over the last three years has been to be able to create more of these paid professional opportunities for artists, for example, the introduction of paid part-time teaching positions, as opposed to casual engagements. Tantrum partners with Newcastle City Library for the ‘Stories Come Alive’ program which employs one emerging artist to devise and present performances for children. As well, Tantrum has a program called ‘Opening Doors’ whereby emerging artists are commissioned to create work. Tamara was a participant in this program and wrote a half hour play to tour to schools. Tantrum has continued to win funding for this program, meaning that Tamara is continuing to be paid for it. She says: ‘truthfully, that sustains me. This year, it’s a really big
part of my income...’ In addition, Tantrum runs Hissyfest, a short playwriting competition, and the Hissyfest Producer is paid as an Emerging Artist.

Tamara hopes that their work can start to cultivate a professional theatre industry in Newcastle as currently ‘there isn’t much happening here that people get paid for’. She explains:

We definitely just started out trying to make our work happen and did whatever it took – whether it was getting grants or crowd-funding or whatever but also now we’d love it if people looked at what we are doing and thought ‘I could do that too’ and then started doing it. That would be wonderful, to have a lot of contemporary theatre work being made here and even going other places too, other people learning about Newcastle through that.

Creative Products

Lucy says that theatre scene in Newcastle is changing. When she first arrived, musicals and traditional plays were dominant. She enjoyed working with Tantrum who were ‘pushing the boundaries’. Paper Cut likes to do innovative work that often includes collaborations with creatives from other areas, for example, music and dance. Their audiences are small, and they are aware that ‘there’s a lot of shows on’ which means competition for patrons.

Paper Cut often use alternative venues for the performance of their work. Lucy says ‘I think it encourages the kind of relationship we want between the performers and the audience. When you are in a traditional theatre space there’s a divide … an additional barrier.’ Hiring traditional theatre spaces is very expensive but negotiating to use alternative venues is often ‘quite difficult and takes a long time. You have to have conversations with people, see if things are available, are they willing to do this? It’s harder in that way but it serves the work that we do’.

Alternative venues have an effect on audiences, setting up a different expectation: “Oh, we’re not in a traditional theatre space, this isn’t going to be a traditional theatre show”. They say ‘It’s also a little bit exciting as well, discovering these hidden spaces’. Different audiences attend when they use an alternative venue, often people who have never been to see theatre before. This is partly because the shows are promoted as an experience that is out of the ordinary.

What’s next?

They plan to establish Paper Cut as a formal business entity. Sarah says her personal goal is ‘making a career in performing arts and making that sustainable… a full-time job… not having to supplement it with other types of work. Tamara says ‘it would be great if one day Paper Cut could support other artists into a career. That would be fantastic’.

59. TIMOTHY GORDON, DANCER

National College of Dance and Junior Academy, 17 Aug 2016

Creative Career

Timothy is an international dancer, choreographer, coach and teacher who has worked in Europe and lived in New Zealand for the past 12 years where he ran his own dance school. He was a choreographer for the Australian ballet and has worked in opera. He now works in Lambton at the National College of Dance and Junior Academy.

CI Business

Timothy teaches dance at the National College of Dance and Junior Academy in Lambton, Newcastle, which was formerly the renowned Marie Walton Mahon dance school. It was bought in 2012 by Brett Morgan, former Associate Director of Sydney Dance Company, and his wife Vicki who is CEO.

NCD teaches classical and contemporary dance and jazz from Certificate to Diploma (semi-professional) level. It is a private company and is an RTO (Registered Training Organisation). The
school is artistically-focussed rather than technically focussed. The Diploma course is one year, and students work long hours, from 8.15 in the morning until 5/or even 6.30 at night. They often do night classes as well and at the weekends they may be performing or engaged in competitions. Students come from the Hunter Region but also Coffs Harbour, Mudgee, Orange, and western NSW.

Their graduates gain places in professional dance schools or into a junior company such as with Sydney Dance Co or Queensland Ballet and some audition for big shows, Disneyland, Moulin Rouge. 98% of them are placed.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Tim believes “Isolation is great for creativity”. He points to the success of New Zealand.

NZ is a very isolated country and it has very little population and very little money for the arts, but they produce incredible work, in theatre, in music, in writing, in painting, in dance – fantastic! They don’t have any money and they do everything extraordinarily well, including film, and it’s not fun. It takes tremendous intelligence which they have and incredible determination which they have and courage which they have... in Europe, because of the state system, all the arts are supported and subsidised. In dance especially there’s an incredible amount of laziness, stultification, a sort of deadness in some of these theatres in Europe where they have their opera and their ballet, the drama, and that’s fine, it’s all part of their tradition but they just rest on their laurels. They offer nothing but what they are told to do, so they are great automatons.

Tim agrees that Newcastle punches above its weight in terms of dancers succeeding at the highest level and says this is ‘because there’s nothing else to do here, except go to the beach!’ More seriously, he speaks of the difference in culture, especially youth culture, in Newcastle.

These kids in Sydney, you can tell from the way they look, the way they walk, how snooty they are. And how their parents mollycoddle them, driving from this thing to that, never working, never having to lift a finger, living in their pink palace of privilege! Whereas these kids come from the country, way out in NSW, Coffs Harbour, Mudgee, Orange, the outback, all of that western country area. They would rather come to us than go to Sydney. Their parents would rather them be here than in Sydney. By far. And one of the good things about Newcastle - and there aren’t many good things, ha! - is that one feels safe. The kids feel safe here. They can wander around and do all sorts of things outdoors. They don’t always have to be around shops and having to compete with each other’s clothes and shoes and handbags, all that junk. They don’t have those distractions here. They look after each other. They have an amazing camaraderie. They hug each other, they get into groups before they perform, they encircle each other, hold each other, they are amazingly good...Of course they are going to succeed, because people want to work with them. Because they are so likeable, so unselfish about their talent and their abilities, and fun to be around.

Timothy agrees with a comment made by Dame Peggy van Praagh, the founder of the Australian Ballet. He says she said that the future of dance in Australia would not be in the main centres; the future of dance in Australia would be in the regional centres. He adds “I think the future will be here and will be in Brisbane and …in the smaller cities.” In the regions, he says:

things are not yet set, you don’t have politics driving everything, it’s the true and hard-working creatives that will drive everything, not the bureaucrats...and isolation can be tremendously positive because you can focus and not be distracted by all the ridiculous nonsense that goes on in the huge big centres of economic privilege.

Creative Labour

It’s very difficult. The hours are extraordinarily long, the material rewards are not great, and it is wearisome.
Tim says that artists ‘believe in a very romantic ideal of what they do but it doesn’t work anymore… It was a wonderful ideal but like all romantic periods they always come to a short, abrupt and often tragic end! Like the operas, La Boheme is one!”

**Creative Networking**

Tim says that collaboration, flexibility and innovative self-promotion are key to success.

> You have to be self-reliant ... find different platforms to engage with people who might be sponsors or support you in whatever way they can... and there are ways online that allow you to do that. The most important thing is to build in as many collaborative forces as possible ...rather than relying on just what you do. “I’m a good singer. I’m going to sing. That’s all I’m going to do.” No! It’s not possible any more. “I’m a great dancer. That’s all I’m going to do”. No! It means nothing.

He mentions Patreon.com, a crowd-funding website where people can put up an artistic idea and see if they can attract bidders.

What’s next?

> The college may look into VET Fee Help.

Tim would like to see the arts in a different position, with more dynamic, and better funding and marketing. When asked about the state of the creative industries in the region, Tim says:

> Well, I don’t really get a sense of it, to be honest. I think it is here and it’s very underground. It’s obviously not promoted well - or very little. In a very stagnant kind of way. There’s no splash. There’s no dynamic, even with festivals and things like that. It’s quite hard to get information about what’s actually going on. I look out for it, in the various magazines and websites but somehow it doesn’t pop out. It doesn’t have the presence it needs to have...The arts need to be in a different position than they are. They are in a very subjugated position. They need to be more splashed out, they need to be more dynamic because they are about dynamic. The mainstream dullness of everything around puts this blanket and cloud over us and you have to get out your microscope to see what’s happening. So, I think the way it’s marketed, the way it’s publicised is obviously poverty-stricken and lacks taste and imagination. They need a lot more funding for those things. It should come out of the pool, the wallet.

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**60. AMY HARDINGHAM, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

CEO Tantrum Youth Arts, 23 Nov 2015

**Creative Career**

Amy did a BA at The University of Sydney majoring in performance studies. She was attracted by the active student drama group Sydney University Drama Society (SUDS). She was President of SUDS for two years. She developed important skills and connections there including with playwright Tommy Murphy and Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP).

Amy’s first job was at Regional Arts NSW as part-time administrative officer, next door to ATYP where she was initially an assistant directing shows on a voluntary basis and then later she was paid. She was mentored by leading director, Marion Potts. Amy completed a Grad. Dip. of Arts Management at UTS and a Dip. Ed. in Drama from Charles Sturt University.

At 25, Amy took a job running Outback Theatre, a youth theatre company based at Hay in south-west NSW where she learnt about site-specific work because there were no theatres out there. “I don’t really know what to do in a proper theatre, that’s the truth”. After five years she moved back to Sydney and took a job at ATYP for two years as the Regional Manager where she ran programs mainly in Tennant
Creek and Palm Island. The she had her son Leo, and taught workshops at ATYP and worked two days a week as an associate producer with the arts company Big hArt.

**CI Business**

*Tantrum Youth Arts* is a not-for-profit with tax concession status, which enables them to apply for certain grants from philanthropic foundations. Their website says:

“*Tantrum Youth Arts is the leading professional youth arts company in the Hunter region. We develop new, innovative and inclusive contemporary performing arts projects characterised by collaborative processes and participation. Our work is inspired by our local communities and generated through community partnerships.*”

Amy says that Tantrum is:

*one of the few funded youth theatre companies in Australia that is run by professionals and in a professional way, and works with young people to do a range of things – one is to help them be the best they can be. So, to improve their confidence, communication, teamwork, all those things...But on the other hand, I think we also exist to give people a head start with their careers. And I think that’s a responsibility that we have because we are a funded organisation...people should be looking to us if they are interested in actually building a career. And so that’s why we have things like the emerging artist teaching position, and a range of initiatives for emerging theatre makers.*

Amy’s position is Artistic Director and CEO of *Tantrum Youth Arts*, a funded company that has been operating for over 40 years. She is responsible for the overall artistic direction of the company, the creative vision, and also the strategic direction of the company. She is responsible for the staff, the finances and the functioning of the company.

Staff comprises a part-time administrator (Tristram Baumber), a part-time marketing manager (Claire Albrecht), a part-time associate director [Lucy Shepherd, who took over from her when she went on maternity leave], and two teaching artists, one early career and one who is more advanced in her career and has teaching qualifications.

Amy reports to a Board of voluntary directors which includes a human resources expert, an accountant, and an education expert.

Amy says “at Tantrum we really just survive. You know, we work so hard on these tiny grants and it’s constantly like riding a bike, we’re constantly peddling the bike to create the power to run the company, and there’s never any respite...” Their main income comprises operational funding from Arts NSW of $240,000 over three years, workshop fees of $50-60,000 dollars pa and ticket sales of perhaps $25-30,000 pa.

**Creative Career**

Creative careers are often fragmented with multiple short-term engagements. Amy has done a lot of part-time, casual and contract work including grant writing ‘as a gun for hire’ and she says at one point “I was sick of it – and I was sick of having such complicated tax returns! And I felt very lonely...I really hated not having one workplace that I was still connected to.”

Amy observes ‘people do it quite tough to make a living from the arts’. She herself earns $50,000 a year while her staff earn as little as $21 an hour. When asked about her personal goals for her work, Amy responded:

*Hmm, that’s so hard. Because you know, I’ll be honest, everything I do I’ve fallen into or come across or it’s happened.*

Practitioners looking to make an income need to be self-reliant.
There is a contemporary theatre scene here, it’s very small and it’s growing, and we want to equip emerging artists with the skills to be making their own work and there really isn’t much else happening. Like I tried to make an economic argument in terms of their careers and how they would benefit from doing that show, because it was a year and a half process, and they really learnt hardcore skills, really good skills...there’s just so few grants out there that are not for the social benefit stuff whereas this is about career development in a place where there’s not a lot of career opportunities.

Creative careers increasingly demand good technology and transport infrastructure. Amy moved to Newcastle from Sydney to take up the position with Tantrum but her partner, a film editor, cannot work in the city so Amy lives here as a single parent during the week.

I hear people say oh look it’s just around the corner – we’re just along there and we’re going to be the burgeoning place of new media and everything else. And who knows, maybe once we get the NBN that will really change. It’s a big thing that impacts my partner’s ability to work, the internet is too slow to transfer the files – he can’t work like that. But that could change and that would be amazing. If the future involved a fast train and very fast internet, then yes. Just two specific things would change the whole situation. But if those things don’t change then I don’t see how we’re going to be the creative industries centre that everyone says we are. Like, how is it physically possible? ... I can’t see an enormous amount of growth without those areas of structural change.

Creative Products

Tantrum run after-school workshops and mount shows that involve students aged 3 to 28.

‘Romeo and Juliet’ was the first show Amy did with Tantrum and it was staged outdoors in Pacific Park in the city. Then a new work suggested by Lachlan Philpott ‘Diving off the Edge of the World’ was staged at Newcastle Ocean Baths. Amy comments that it was ‘so enormously successful, and people really loved it, it really struck a chord, and it feels great, we had people saying, ‘We loved that, we found out things we didn’t know about our own town.’ Then there was another multi-site, new work staged in and around Watt St in the city. ‘Stories in Our Steps’ was in part about the girls’ institute which was located at the James Fletcher hospital site.

Tantrum commission plays, including ‘Trailer’ by Vanessa Bates in 2016: “we do have resources that other companies don’t have locally, but we’re using it to commission a play from a very renowned local writer”.

‘No One Cares about Your Cat’ was a new work which included collaboration with University of Newcastle Music students. For ‘Stories in our Steps’ and ‘Manning the Fort’, Tantrum collaborated with Cadi McCarthy’s Catapult Theatre and also with indigenous musicians.

Tantrum is perhaps best known for its site-specific work. Board member Christopher Saunders had said to Amy, “People in Newcastle don’t want to sit inside a theatre – and this is probably not the theatre community people but just generally – you know, it’s an outdoors town, it’s a beach town, it’s an event town, people go to events, but they don’t go to plays really”.

Amy points out that the reason for eschewing traditional theatre spaces is not cost: “venue costs are enormous but site-specific work isn’t necessarily free”. She speaks of ‘Manning the Fort’ which was staged at Fort Scratchley in 2016. In the lead-up, she was aware of the problems.

Speaking of ‘Diving off the Edge of the World’, Amy says:
Timing was so hard, particularly with tides and weather, and Council people – they’re the swimming pool people and you know, they think you’re crazy. ‘Stories’ was also very tough because you’re dealing with Council but you’re also dealing with business owners. NSW Department of Health runs that top site. So, from several of the sites the first answer was “No”. And I had to really persist to get access to those sites and it was very draining.

The site-specific work is unique to Tantrum in the region:

We’re in a very crowded marketplace here in Newcastle. So, for us to do something that other people enjoy but don’t want to do themselves is a good niche for us. And so, the site-specific work or devised work is very clearly what we should do. Having said that, it is so resource-intensive, so labour-intensive...

Creative Networking

Support from government has been very important to Tantrum but arts funding has proven problematic. Amy is of the view that in terms of arts funding ‘Newcastle is very overlooked’. Further, ‘the arts funding in NSW just isn’t allocated proportionally at all. And it’s such a shame that Newcastle has missed out on a real investment’. Amy says that government funding bodies “are really aware that there’s not enough money coming into Newcastle and that Newcastle is important. But you know, it’s also important to say that policies do direct who gets what money”.

Amy says, ‘There’s a huge gap between what the funding bodies want to see and, I think, what audiences in Newcastle want to see’ and gives as an example the Australia Council’s refusal to fund ‘No One Cares about Your Cat’ on the grounds that the lead artists (Paper Cut) were not high calibre enough and were still emerging themselves. Amy’s response was “But in Newcastle they’re the leading contemporary theatre makers. Yes, compared to Sydney they might be still emerging, but they continually deliver, and we should be employing local artists”. The argument was not successful, and the show was eventually funded through crowd funding. Tantrum at any one time probably has two or three funding applications in and Amy says, ‘We have a pretty good hit rate’.

In addition, the image of Newcastle as a successful arts centre may work against it, and may not reflect the reality.

I came from Sydney thinking that Newcastle was this absolute hot bed of contemporary performance and I got here and was like really confused because the actual theatre community is completely separate and different to what is represented outside of Newcastle, which is really contemporary, really cutting edge, you know you hear about Octopod, it’s that kind of real zeitgeist stuff, and that’s what you hear about if you live in Sydney or Melbourne, but when you get here the actual theatre sector has no relationship to any of that, it’s so weird.

Council support is also important. ‘Trailer’ was entirely funded through an Arts NSW regional theatre grant after Tantrum became aware that the Central Coast was a priority area. They partnered with Wyong Council. Amy says that while ‘Newcastle Council has often been challenging to work with over time because of the constant changes in the organisation, Wyong has been really easy because it’s stable and there’s a huge amount of support from the councillors for the art house development and therefore for projects that will benefit it. So, all along the way we’ve had little grants from them to run workshops and things that there’s just no avenue for funding in Newcastle.’

What’s next?

Obviously, a strong artistic program and a meaningful artistic program. I guess the next goal is to communicate that to the community and for that to translate into people coming to shows, because I think we struggle with that. But then I also think we always will. A lot of the time I think Tantrum occupies a niche, which is the outsider niche, and someone needs to fill that niche, it’s a necessary niche, because there are lots of people that identify with that. So, if we ever became too popular then that wouldn’t serve that purpose, I suppose.
Amy says, ‘I would love for us to do more and more to actually create jobs. And that’s something we’re always thinking about and trying to do. And so, there’s things like ‘Opening Doors’, which is our domestic violence theatre in education project, and that employs actors. So again, that’s a specific initiative that any time there is any possibility to access a little bit of funding to employ good young and emerging artists – and a criterion for us is that they actually want to have careers in the arts. And you know there are some people ... it’s just their hobby. And then there’s people that really do and can articulate that, which is why we’re going to back those people.

I’d love for Tantrum to have much more aboriginal involvement but it’s hard. Newcastle Council employed Ray Kelly as the aboriginal arts youth officer. He’s since left, and I don’t think he’s been replaced...You know because there are a lot of aboriginal people in Newcastle who I’m sure are enormously talented but ... we really did need Ray as an aboriginal arts leader to do that component, and if we weren’t able to do that we wouldn’t have had any aboriginal representation at all. And it’s a huge gap.

61. MAT LEE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Stooged Theatre, 1 April 2017

Creative Career

Mat Lee is an actor and Artistic Director of Newcastle-based independent theatre company Stooged Theatre. He grew up in Newcastle and studied here before moving to Sydney for further study and work. He continues to work in Newcastle as well as Sydney and his family is here.

CI Business

Stooged Theatre began in 2003 under the leadership of Carl Young who remains on the Committee as Treasurer. In 2013 it became an incorporated, not-for-profit company that operates on a profit-share basis. The company was established with an initial government grant, but funding now comes from earnings from productions and fundraising. Personnel include an Artistic Director, Associate Director, Literary and Development Manager, Treasurers, Head of Ensemble, Production Manager, Technical Manager and an ensemble of actors and other creatives.

It was formed by a group of young adults who had a desire to write, produce and create their own performances around Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia. In their early years, the group was best known for radical Shakespeare adaptations and comedies before a decision was made in 2009 to start focusing on their craft and operate as a profit-share. Since then, Stooged has become Newcastle’s leading independent theatre company, staging challenging contemporary texts and engaging some of the city’s best professional actors in high-quality productions.

Creative Labour

Mat says “Sadly, the nature of working in the arts means one must work three jobs at times”.

I am a humour therapist for people with dementia in aged care (sometimes referred to as a clown-doctor, we call ourselves “Humour Valets”) for the Arts Health Institute (AHI). Performing and engaging with people with dementia to bring happiness, laughter and memory back into their lives. Most of my work with AHI is intimate, in-the-room connection...

My second job is working as a concierge in services apartments in Barangaroo, Sydney.
My third job is being the Artistic Director of Newcastle-based independent theatre company *Stooged Theatre*. This is deciding and overseeing our theatrical seasons, directing and performing in work in Newcastle, and the many admin tasks that arise – and there are many!

Mat says that all the core Stooged team – the Committee and Ensemble - work for free ‘unless they are working on a production and that production makes money … a “profit-share” system’.

Working in the creative industries has been different to other jobs he’s had.

*Completely different. Although there will always be a sense of stress and deadline with any job, the deadlines and stress that come with working in the arts or the creative industries are different – they are fuelled by a passion! When I’d work in a café growing up, the stress would be just stress (and I never wanted to be there), whereas for me, my creative work has a stress that is built on wanting to make something the best it can be, always. There is that desire for the creative work to be perfect, in a way.*

**Creative Products**

Since 2011, Stooged has staged three or four shows a year, generally at the Civic Playhouse. They have been the recipient of numerous CONDAs (City of Newcastle Drama Awards) including Best production in 2011, 2012 and 2014. Their most recent production was ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ by Lally Katz and directed by Danie Cottier. Stooged is known for its innovative marketing which includes video trailers distributed via social media.

Mat explains:

*Our product is bringing contemporary international and Australian plays to Newcastle that other companies have not yet staged, or classical/modern work that has a social message. We aim to produce a high-quality standard of theatre and aim to work with the brilliant actors Newcastle has on offer.*

**Creative Career**

Mat speaks of the importance of professional training of theatre workers for professional careers. Within the *Stooged Ensemble* are creatives who are graduates or students of The Actors Centre Australia, The University of Wollongong, The University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE’s Regional Institute of Performing Arts (RIPA). Relevant areas of study include acting and performance as well as dance, movement, voice and singing training. Actors from the Ensemble have gone on to study at NIDA, Central School in London, and other schools.

Mat talks of the strong talent base and high degree of theatre-related activity in the city. He points, however, to the lack of theatre training on offer, and indeed, its decline with the loss of the TAFE drama school RIPA (Regional Institute of Performing Arts) and the reduced offerings at The University of Newcastle.

*Within the theatre world – Newcastle is both thriving and at a loss. We currently have more companies producing contemporary work and theatre in general, than I think we ever had before (especially in the case of dramatic theatre). We have a great assortment of up-and-coming talent graduating high school and producing or performing in excellent work. Though with recent finding cuts, we have seen RIPA close its doors after many years of successful operation. In terms of dramatic actors, there isn’t really another viable avenue to study theatre in Newcastle (this is not including musical theatre with many options available). The University doesn’t really offer real acting training like it once did, and young actors – if they wish to pursue a career in this field – have to study in Sydney.*

In terms of grassroots companies springing up and staging great work, Newcastle is in abundance. But in terms of study (bar Pantseat and Hunter Drama as external after-school courses where a student can receive a Diploma), there isn’t much on offer.
62. PLAYWRIGHT ANONYMOUS, ACTOR AND SCREENWRITER

2015

Creative Career

The interviewee is a graduate of both The University of Newcastle (Drama and English) and NIDA and has completed short courses with AFTRS. A successful playwright, he has had work performed at the Ensemble Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company as well as writing for television and radio drama programs and documentaries. He primarily has been freelance, but have also been employed by television companies Beyond and Southern Star, and worked at Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and at BigArt. They have had their work published both on-line and in hard-copy format, and they have had a work of fiction published which was based on their popular blog. As an actor, they have worked for Footlce and professionally with Freewheels Theatre Company and Hunter Valley Theatre Company, all in Newcastle.

CI Business

The interviewee is a writer, predominantly a playwright but also writes for television and radio drama. He has had a work of fiction published based on a blog and has received grants including one to fund an international six-month trip to write two plays. He has been commissioned to write theatre pieces, though payment has been small - $500-$1000. He receives some royalties, teaches workshops and has done fill-in teaching at university.

Creative Labour

The creative industries are not an industry:

We talk about the industry a lot but in actual fact it's not an industry, because people who work in industry get paid, and they get paid properly, and they get paid fairly, I assume, so I don’t really think of it as accurate.

In the Creative Industries are you expected to work for nothing?

Yeah, I have worked other jobs. When I was in high school I worked at a donut shop and I got paid for the hours I worked. Bang! End of story! That is, really in the creative industries you work a lot of free. Less so in TV, I have to say... but certainly in theatre. Because theatre is meant to be so marvellous and we're all meant to be doing it because we love it and it’s so nurturing... and blah, blah, blah ... I think that there is often a thought that anyone can do this, anyone who wants to can write a play, anyone who wants to can get up on stage and act.

Creative Networking

I always have to tout for business... I'm constantly having to get out there and spruik my work. It seems like with other companies and other careers ... I've been working since I was nineteen. I've been a full-time playwright or writer since then, and I'm over forty now. You kind of go, 'Shouldn't there be a certain amount of security in your job? You know, an income, assured income. Oh yes, you have written X amount of plays and X amount of television and yes, therefore you will be given a play at blah, blah, blah? No, no, not at all. So, you're always competing with people who are right at the beginning or you're always having to... it totally sucks.

... it does make you suspect that this kind of career is only for young, fit people who don’t have kids and frankly have some other source of income -perhaps their parents.

Well, I mean, if you're a playwright that writes for TV as well, then you're making a living, so Tommy Murphy would be an example of that. And then if you're a younger playwright who is maybe getting a lot of awards and grants and commissions, particularly if a theatre company has invested in you, like Nakkiah Lui with Belvoir... and there is also Lachlan

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Philpott who has just come back from being overseas as a Fulbright Scholar.... I think I make an income, but I don't make a huge income.

Criticism of creatives’ work is unique and uniquely personal and wounding.

You get reviewed and that can be really, really horrible. I really don’t know what other career there is where someone’s work gets an article about them in the newspaper or blogged, more often or not, where someone goes to town on you and your horrible or dreadful work. Where else does that happen? ... Sometimes it can be quite personal, and you have to, I think, you need to be able to just go, ‘That is just bollocks, really’.

Creative Products

Newcastle needs a professional theatre company

There are a lot of people interested in the theatre in Newcastle, but my perception is that they are doing stuff here until they can go somewhere else. So, there is either kind of more amateur stuff or they are emerging/preparing to leave, I don’t know. It's very tempting to say that I want the Hunter Valley Theatre Company back and that we need a professional theatre company here in Newcastle. Why don't I just say that? Yes, I think that would be good, if there was a professional theatre company here in Newcastle.

What’s next?

I want to keep writing for both theatre and for television. For television, I would like to be a writer/producer and rather than working on someone else’s idea, I would like to come up with my own idea, my own screenplay and my own show. So that is what I want to do TV-wise. In terms of theatre, I just want to write more theatre and to make a living from it.

The interviewee would like to have their work performed overseas and to have more work published:

... work that is published is more likely to be seen because of the huge barrage of plays and play scripts that companies go through.

63. DANIEL STODDARD, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Hunter Drama 13 Oct 2015

Creative Career

Daniel Stoddard has always been involved in the arts. In primary school, he was in Starstruck, the annual state schools’ extravaganza, and when he was high school he had his Year 12 art work shown in Art Express.

In 2005, Daniel graduated from The University of Newcastle with a BA majoring in Drama. He also completed one year of Honours. He declined the offer of a place at NIDA [National Institute of Dramatic Art] ‘because I got a bit scared about moving to Sydney and I couldn’t afford the fees upfront at the time’.

For two years, Daniel worked as the Assistant Program Director at L’vesites, a place activation strategy co-funded by Newcastle City Council, Honeysuckle Development Corporation and Newcastle Alliance, under Artistic Director Michael Cohen. He developed a concept called The Ultra-Swing Lounge which was a ‘Ratpack’ inspired 1950s jazz music extravaganza staged at Civic Theatre Newcastle. That was very successful and ran for nine years, touring to Sydney and performing with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra.

Daniel is a sole trader with an ABN. He is an award-winning actor and singer, he hosts and compères events and he is currently Co-Artistic Director of the Popular Theatre Company with Victor Emeljanow.
(Their last production was Charley’s Aunt at Civic Playhouse in 2015.) His full-time, paid job is as Artistic Director of *Hunter Drama*.

**CI Business**

*Hunter Drama* was established in April 2007. Its office is in Beaumont St, Hamilton while the two teaching venues are Hamilton Public School and Hamilton Baptist Church.

It is an out-of-school hours academy for young people aged from three years to 21, teaching acting for theatre, screen and musical theatre. Daniel says, ‘we are promoting a new wave of creative people’. *Hunter Drama* is about providing ‘real, personalised attention one-on-one to each kid and identifying exactly what that kid is on this earth to do. And nurturing and boosting that kid up to believe that and to understand how they can use that to affect other people in turn. I think that’s what’s different about what we do’. Daniel says:

> Our standard, the bar that we set is really high. It’s really professional, it’s up there for a reason, not just to get kids industry-ready or whatever you want to call it but it’s teaching them to have a sense of pride in their work and teaching them about punctuality and reliability and being part of a team and being accountable for their behaviour and contributions, all those sorts of things. So, I think that level of professionalism and attitude is probably what sets us apart a little bit.

*Hunter Drama* has a turnover of just under $370,000 a year. Daniel is full-time Artistic Director while the Assistant Program Director [Chloe Perrett] is 24 hours a week, permanent part-time. At the time of the interview (October 2015) interns from the University were about to begin, one in Accounting and one in Marketing. About twelve tutors are employed to teach up to ten classes a week at a pay rate of $50 an hour. Hunter Drama’s wages bill is $135,000 a year.

**Creative Labour**

Daniel learnt his skills from a number of influential creatives. Working with Michael Cohen at *L'vesites*, he learnt on the job about budgets, marketing plans and strategies for events. Victor Emeljanow, the head of the Drama Department at The University of Newcastle when he was a student, continues to be important in his life. John Deacon, the producer of Starstruck, and director Peter Ross were also important in demonstrating what it is to work professionally. Daniel says he liked ‘watching how they interacted with actors and their creative team members’.

Not so much watching how they come up with their creative ideas but watching how they managed it as a profession. The goalposts were just like any other job: they would turn up with a folder with the rehearsal schedule and expect people to be punctual and start at this time and finish at this time and work to deadlines, all those things; and communicating and watching their leadership and their mentorship of other people like myself. I found that really inspiring. What made them inspiring leaders was only 50% creative while the other half was 50% people skills and interactions with their team and all that other stuff which is not dissimilar from any other industry. I guess watching them and respecting their professional integrity in the creative world, I learnt a lot from that, I think.

Phil Collins, who backed *The Ultra Swing Lounge*, was also influential.

> Communicating and brokering leverages and leading and communicating with people, those are the skills I’ve learnt through Phil Collins who used to run PJ Promotions and is one of the editors of Hunter Lifestyle magazine. He has had a profound impact on my life for a long period of time.

There is little professional work available for theatre workers in the region. Even a high-quality show like Metropolitan Players’ 2015 production of Mary Poppins at Civic Theatre which had a very large budget, relies on volunteer labour. Daniel, who was in the cast of the show, says:

> Yeah, well they say every one of those people who were working on the show - and that could be a hundred people when you include the backstage, the hair people, probably more
than a hundred - everyone in that building was working for free except for the people that are employed in that Council venue...

There seems to be little alternative, however. Unlike musicians, actors seem happy to work for nothing, especially on a successful, high quality show where the experience promises to be rewarding in other ways (socially, for example, or in terms of skill development or profile). Daniel says that to ask for pay would be ‘pricing yourself out of the market’ and says:

Why would Metropolitan Players pay you if there are ten other people lined up who are happy to do it for nothing?

Creative Entrepreneurship

When asked if there is certain knowledge or skills needed to work in performing arts sector, Daniel says:

I think so. I think the ability to make something from nothing, the ability to think laterally about problems and other things, the ability to communicate would probably be assets you need to work in the creative industries.

He identifies a lack of suitable venues as a problem for performing arts in Newcastle.

It’s the age-old problem that always pops up – the need for a medium size theatre. We’ve got the Civic Theatre which is lovely and is really nice and fun to use but it suits 1400 people and it’s pretty expensive to use and then on the other end of the scale there’s The Civic Playhouse which holds less than 200, a very cheap space to use. I love using The Playhouse but something in the middle is needed as a stepping stone to get on to that bigger venue, to the next level business for local producers in terms of growing our economy, that would be so useful, but we don’t have that.

Staging productions is expensive and risky. In 2014, Hunter Drama staged Disney’s ‘The Little Mermaid Jr’ last year at the Civic Theatre. They needed 6000 tickets to cover costs but fell short by five hundred. ‘It lost a lot of money. So … when we do another show next year at the Civic Theatre … it needs to be more commercial than a Disney show would be and, let’s face it, what is more commercial than Disney? How do you top something like that?’ Hire of the Civic Theatre is ‘horribly expensive’, Daniel says, because of the need to pay for staff and a minimum four-hour call-out. He says for The Little Mermaid they needed to pay for twelve people – front of house people, the Duty Manager and others – in order to meet their obligations. He estimates that the venue hire was $50,000 while the marketing was about $40,000, sound and lighting cost $30,000, the set $20,000 and the costumes $10,000. Royalties of approximately 16.5% on a show’s gross also apply.

Hire of the Civic Playhouse, however, is cheap and there are no staffing costs but because it is a small venue, the income from ticket sales is limited.

Daniel notes the increasing popularity of alternative venues for performance.

What seems to be happening at the moment (which is really exciting) is that people are realizing, particularly in theatre, that you don’t need a venue, you can just go to a café and stick somebody in the corner and as long as you have got somebody doing something and if you have at least one person there to watch, you have a theatrical event. I think that people are really starting to enjoy the freedom of that and I think that younger audiences and younger creative people coming straight out of school like Hunter School of the Performing Arts and the people I work with at Hunter Drama are currently taking ownership of that and really enjoying the opportunity to take risks and to enjoy having no budget to spend and seeing what they can do. Like the Crack Theatre Festival and the Micro Theatre Festival which had theatre in a gallery, café and bookshop.

Theatre is an international industry and there are employment opportunities for local creatives in other countries. In recognition of this, Hunter Drama in 2014 conducted a three-week tour of the USA for students, parents, and tutors. They went to New York to see Broadway shows and did workshops and masterclasses with Broadway artists, and they went to Atlanta for the Junior Drama Festival where they
won an award for ‘Most Outstanding Production’. In Los Angeles they met up with some casting agents and did some workshops. Daniel says, ‘It really put us out there as offering quite unique opportunities that are not offered anywhere else’ and it made him realise that ‘the world is not really that big and going there is perfectly achievable and we’ll probably do it again next year…Taking the kids over there makes them reach out and touch it and go, “Wait a minute, I can do this!”’.

**Creative Products**

Daniel argues that in creating theatre productions, creatives have a significant economic impact. He says, ‘We are industrious, we create jobs, we create money’.

Daniel took a lead role in Metropolitan Players’ 2015 production of Mary Poppins at Civic Theatre. That company has budgets in excess of $400,000 for these large-scale shows. Daniel estimates that there were 50 people in the cast, probably 100 people working on the show and he says:

> Each of those people was going into town for up to two weeks. They were all putting money in the parking meters, they were all going into the little shop next door buying ice blocks. How much money did they spend on petrol to get their car into town? How much money was spent on buying stockings for that production from Lowes up the road, and costumes, fabric, wood from Bunnings to make sets and things? If there was some way of quantifying that in a tangible, practical way and saying the arts contribute X amount of revenue to the local economy … comparing that to a packed-out Newcastle Knights stadium, I think we would probably give them a red hot run their money.

For this reason, he favours the term ‘creative industries’.

> Creating a creative industries identity is really good in terms of PR, working in the community, to suggest that we are industrious, and we are an industry just like the building industry, just like the sporting industry, just like any other industry.

Daniel regrets the lack of commitment to professionalism within the sector.

> There seems to be a lot of back-patting, … there are lots of self-appointed professionals but in terms of wanting to further their own skills and in terms of pushing their own boundaries and professional development, well I suppose in terms of theatre, there doesn’t seem to be any kind of measuring stick for that sort of thing in Newcastle. There seems to be a mentality that effort equals quality but that’s not always the case. You can put in all the effort in the world, but it doesn’t always equal quality or a good show at the end of the day. It’s very hard to quantify if you are doing a good job or not. There’s the City of Newcastle Drama Awards and over the years, the credibility of the recipients of those awards always come into question. Any awards would suffer the same kind of slings and arrows, I suppose, but I’m not too sure how you would quantify if you are doing a good job as an actor or a director, producer or lighting designer or a singer.

**What’s next?**

I would like to see Hunter Drama in all parts of Australia and I would really like to see an Aussie Kids on Broadway program. I’d like to take a group of Australian kids and have them do their own Broadway showcase that people from all over the world can watch in one of the biggest entertainment hubs in the world. That’s my big goal, yes.

Broadening our outreach and offering a series of online masterclasses and webinars that you can be involved in, getting people like Kelly Abbey from So You Think You Can Dance to do a musical theatre workshop and Paul Lobb from NBN to do a public speaking and presenting to camera course. And setting up a series of 6-12 of those masterclasses a year that our students here can participate in, but we also feel that people anywhere in the world really could register and become a member, sign up and pay their money to participate in the online webinars.
64. ANONYMOUS DANCE TEACHER

2016

Biography
Anonymous dance teacher (ADT) has been in the dance industry for 20 years including teaching at the tertiary level. They have four degrees – BA Dance, Graduate Diploma in Education, a Masters in Education for Special Needs and Dance.
ADT used to run a professional dance company and was a professional dancer for many years. ADT worked internationally as an independent choreographer and was the recipient of a Churchill Fellowship.
ADT is the director and founder of a new business in Newcastle that ‘is a professional arts organisation that’s looking at contemporary dance and interdisciplinary arts practice’.

Creative Business
The business is a not-for-profit with staffing of two, ADT and one marketing person (two days a week). In addition, there are volunteers including students from the University who come in and help out. The business is not yet paying its way.
The business includes three parts:

• A program which brings the highest calibre professional dance artists from across Australia to the city on a three-week residency to collaborate with Newcastle-based interdisciplinary artists. This has been funded by the Australia Council for the Arts for the past six months. There have been six in the past year.
• A youth program supported by the NSW Education Department and ArtsNSW.
• Community classes in the evening for adults
They offer drop-in classes at a cost of $10 per class as part of their community reach. ‘It’s not meant to be in competition with dance schools. People don’t have to pay for terms, they come when they can’.

Creative careers
ADT refers to the high level of arts activity in Newcastle but the lack of a professional profile:

There’s a lot of highly respected training institutions and dance schools but there’s not a place for professional artists to work – ours is the only one in the Hunter, that is for professional dance artists. These artists are paid. They are paid MEAA rates. Every one. They are artists at the top of their game, they are the highest calibre artists in Australia.

There is also an issue with the understanding of the art form. ADT says:

I’ve been trying to educate ... to bring in these artists who are doing experimental dance practice, who work in companies across the globe to show people this is what contemporary dance can be.

ADT regrets the lack of status of dancers in the city.

But it’s about the artist feeling valued in their own community by getting paid and having somewhere to take that.

They say that Newcastle needs to raise its professional level and a large part of that is remuneration.

It needs to start paying its artists at a higher rate. I’ve always paid my artists MEAA rates...Artists will come here and get $1500 a week to work ...That changes the playing field. Artists think, “I’m here to work. It’s not a hobby, it’s work” but there’s still passion
about it. Then the funding bodies take you seriously if you do everything in a way that’s transparent, and the wages are good, you’ve got grants, then you are taken seriously.

Uniquely, ADT pays the artists who come on residencies full time and at the union rate - approximately a thousand dollars a week. The union is the MEAA (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance). ADT says, ‘Mostly residency programs just provide a space and don’t provide a wage’.

ADT says that ‘the hardest thing as an artist is to get started’ and it can be enormously helpful for someone to say, “Here’s a space, here’s some money, so you are safe”. ADT provides an artist apartment for the artists to stay in and a well-equipped studio to work in. Spaces are important. ADT explains:

*Especially dance because it’s not like visual arts or theatre. You need space. You can’t do it in your bedroom, you can’t do it in your lounge room, you have to have space and it’s really hard. That’s where it’s unique.*

**Creative networking**

ADT says that ‘resource-sharing and skill-sharing are the key to success’. ADT collaborates with other arts companies, art galleries and educational institutions on projects.

*Any kind of link where there is an exchange is going to make it succeed... With funded projects you do things more on your own or you bring people in but here it definitely feels the more partnerships we develop the better it will be and that’s what I’ve been trying to do.*

The dancers brought in on residencies are challenged to work in new ways and to experiment, and they bring a level of professionalism that benefits the local people they work with.

*All the collaborating artists they work with, most haven’t worked with contemporary dance before because it hasn’t been here at that level. It’s a springboard for new things. So, we have had composers, fashion designers, interdisciplinary visual designers, multi-media artists from Newcastle working in this way.*

ADT also uses their links nationally with dance companies. They explain:

*The contemporary dance industry is not so much about how well you audition but who you know. So, Joshua Thomson has now worked with composer Zachari Watt. They had a really great relationship. Joshua is going to tell people that there’s this fantastic composer in Newcastle to create work and I’ll recommend him. That’s how it works. It’s about that networking. It’s like a spider’s web; that makes a difference*

**What’s next?**

*I want there to be contemporary professional practice here. Eventually I would like to get to the point where I could start my own choreographic practice again and have a company here...*

*I would like a professional dance course here – a WAAPA here, a VCA here... There’s no tertiary institution for dance here in NSW... where you can get a BA in Dance... there’s a lot of dance schools that do the Diploma in Dance, Brent St and places like that which is great for a commercial industry but if you want to be a contemporary arts practitioner, work with Sydney Dance, work with Expressions, work with ADT you need to have a BA in Dance. ‘Can it happen in Newcastle? It’s a good University town. It can happen...We could be the centre of contemporary dance practice here in NSW’.*

*The other goal is to get a professional dance company happening here but at the moment that’s not viable.*
Creative Career
Vanessa Alexander was born to Kiwi parents in New Zealand. She has lived in the US and NZ and now resides in Newcastle, Australia. Vanessa is currently working as a freelance writer and director for film and television. She works as a story liner for a variety of programs. As a mother of six, she has a special interest in work for and about women.

Alexander’s education began in the US but she completed her final year of school in NZ at Oamaru High School. She completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English in 1992 at The University of Otago and in 1995 a Graduate Diploma at VCA (The Victorian College of Arts) at The University of Melbourne. In 2000 she completed an MA (with first class Honours) in Film, Television and Media Studies at The University of Auckland.

Alexander secured a British Council internship with Working Title, a leading UK film production house, and she worked on the script development team. In 2004, on the basis of her screenplay A Life in Romance, she was invited to join European screenwriting lab eQuinoxe. She has also done workshops with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Script Factory, and interned as a director with America's Steven Bochco Productions on television series Murder One and NYPD Blue.

The feature film Alexander wrote and directed – Magik and Rose - was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2001 and also won the Jury Prize at Oporto Film Festival. The film won for her the SPADA New Filmmaker of the Year Award in 2000. Her work was nominated for an International Emmy Award as producer, director and writer on Being Eve I and II (2002-2005). She also received Gold and Silver Medals at the New York Festival and the Grand Prix at the Danube Television Festival. In 2013 Vanessa worked as co-creator/ writer/director on Agent Anna, a TVNZ comedy series which went on to win Best Comedy in the NZ Writers Awards and was New Zealand’s highest rating local comedy ever.

Vanessa held part-time lecturing appointments from 2001 and at The University of Auckland was Director of Screen Production and Senior Lecturer from 2008-2011. In 2000 she won The University of Auckland Arts and Culture Prize.

CI Business
As a freelance film and television writer, director and producer, Vanessa Alexander operates as a sole trader. She is represented by an agent in Sydney who helps her source work, for example by sending examples of her work to film producers or broadcasters for consideration. The agent charges a commission on any work that is secured. Alexander observes that having an agent means:

You don't have to cold call people, you kind of hear what's going on. I mean it's not a guarantee that you're going to get work but that support structure enables it and enables me to live in Newcastle. I think it would be quite hard for me to be here and not have an agent.

Creative Labour
Alexander brings a unique perspective to her screen writing because she has been a director of television:

The thing that I have that is different to a lot of other TV writer/directors is a dual experience in both roles. It's common in film but not in TV. In fact, I'm yet to meet a person on a TV writers table who has any directing background. So that's a unique thing, and it's surprisingly useful, especially once you get down to beating out episodes storylines.

She comments that 'most of the writers that I meet here [in Newcastle] that are working don't have an agent’. She says of having an agent ‘It makes my life easier… I think it would be quite hard for me to be here and not have an agent’.

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I'm currently mostly working as a writer because I did some work as a director last year after having a baby and it was just so incredibly difficult to do, from Newcastle. I thought that I just must try and cope with writing, which I can kind of at least half do at home.

I'm a Creative Producer because within the industry itself that makes it quite clear that you are not the person who is going out and organising the bank financing or whatever. So you've managed the budget maybe but you're not putting together the finance or the sales agents. Creative is telling the story properly.

Creative Networking

Working in a freelance environment means that creatives must put themselves out there and build connections. She was unsure when she was first invited to a meeting:

I remember working out what the point of the meeting was. You know cause when you first go and have a meeting, you think ‘Well are they going to offer me work?’ Then eventually you realise that the meeting is an interview for some imaginary thing that might happen in the future. It's really just about do you like each other, and you know because it's such a collaborative industry nobody wants to work with people that they don't have any connection with. And just navigating that is a minefield, if you can become relaxed with that it is easier. Whereas I know people who get very tense in those environments and it might unfairly disadvantage them.

Creative Career

Alexander identified the need to access money to make films and television programs well:

You need a lot of money. I mean that is the problem. Writing is a blueprint for something else that doesn't exist yet. So you create this blueprint as the first part of your job for which you don't need that much money... but then you need this very large sum of money to build the house. So, you end up drawing lots of pictures of houses which are never going to be lived in. That is essentially the job of a writer, and you go, ‘Oh that would have been a nice house! I'm glad someone paid me to draw it’.

Alexander explains why she chose to work on a TV series for teenagers:

John Barnet at South Pacific Pictures offered me a job as a producer and that is how I was given 'Being Eve'. That was really my first paid job in the film and TV industry. So I produced and directed a series for Nickelodeon that was made in New Zealand. And mmm, it was funny because people were kind of “Why are you doing TV?” There was a big gap between the film and TV back then. ‘Why are you doing TV, TV is really bad.’ It's not just the TV people, film people were a bit snooty about it, ‘You're making TV for teenage girls?’ I was like, ‘Yeah, I need a job I have kids.’ Whereas most of my film friends at that point were single with no children, and so they didn't care about being broke. I needed the money and thought TV offered more reliable work. And besides it's a series about teenage girls, and I had been a teenage girl. I was quite devoted to that series.

Alexander worked on the TV series Being Eve when she was twenty-nine. She was given charge of the production and she re-made the pilot episode:

When I started the show had already nearly been ditched by Nickelodeon because they hated the pilot that had been shot. I re-made it - same script, but the show is completely different because they'd hired these fifty-five-year-old men to make it. They knew nothing about being a teenage girl, and what they made was just diabolically awful and dull and a bit patronising in tone. And Nickelodeon were not happy [with] how their money had been spent – they wanted a fresh innovative show.

As a first-time producer, Alexander took an innovative approach to the production and she blew the budget but Nickelodeon liked what she was doing:
I hired short film makers, because I liked them better creatively and I got rid of all the studio cameras. Hilariously I never bothered to consider how it would affect the budget to build the additional walls we needed to shoot on steadicam. Like just naively, I thought we could shoot the whole series on steadicam and ... yes, so I blew the budget and the schedule every single day for six weeks. But Nickelodeon was happy with our rushes – and the show went on to be nominated for an International Emmy and won a bunch of awards including a Gold Medal at the New York festival. So I think everyone forgave me.

What’s next?

Vanessa Alexander continues to work as a freelance film and television writer/director from her home in Newcastle. When looking to the future of film and television, Alexander was mindful of the impact that streaming services like Netflix and Stan may have on the industry:

They won't have to abide by local content laws, so it's not clear whether that's going to be better or worse. Or whether that is going to mean the market is flooded with American product. But the current and future markets are poised on the brink of the most enormous change in television and I really hope that it crushes the dull crap that we've been forced to suffer through from broadcasters for so many years. I also think a lot of executives have been in great positions, earning their $250,000 a year while the freelance industry has struggled.

66. GAVIN BANKS, DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER & EDITOR,

Good Eye Deer, 18 May 2015

Creative Career

Gavin Banks grew up as the child of missionaries. The family was not well-off but they understood how to be creative and this background has given him resilience and tolerance, useful qualities in his chosen career. Banks attended The University of Newcastle as a mature-aged student, completing a Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) in the late 1990’s. He graduated with a University Prize and established the company Good Eye Deer in 1998. Gavin has worked on feature films as a cinematographer, edited multiple broadcast documentaries, and co-created an independent documentary entitled Face of Birth (2013). Other formal training includes short courses at the Australian Film Television and Radio School. Banks says that he has had no business training, but his strategic attitude has helped to establish Good Eye Deer as a leading video production house operating out of Newcastle and working nationally. Banks is a member of the Australian Screen Editors Association and the quality of his work has been recognised through national awards including from the Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS).

CI Business

Good Eye Deer provides Australia-wide professional video production services. Established in 1998 by Gavin Banks, this company has grown through a passion for storytelling and filmmaking. In 2012 Olivia Olley joined the business as a Creative Film Producer. As at 2017, the business employed an Editor, DP/Camera Assistant and Production Assistant as well as freelancers on a project-by-project basis to do television commercials, branded content and corporate work. In 2016 Good Eye Deer won both Best TV Commercial and Best Corporate Video at the Australian Video Producers Association Awards. In 2015 they produced the Police Citizens Youth Community (PCYC) educational resource for the NSW Traffic Offenders Intervention Program which won an Australian Teachers of Media Award for Best Training/Instructional Resource and Best Educational Series (Personal Growth & Development) in the US International Film & Video Awards.

In 2015 Good Eye Deer was aspiring to work in Melbourne and by 2017 they have achieved that goal and they believe the distance is not a barrier with high-speed internet and mobile communication Newcastle is a great place to base themselves.
Creative Networking

*Good Eye Deer* originally found its clients through word of mouth and worked with advertising agencies in Newcastle, the Central Coast and Sydney. Expansion has meant that they now have a studio in Sydney and are taking on Melbourne work. One of their recent campaigns was for Destination NSW and it showcased the Coffs Harbour region. Banks explains why they are based in Newcastle:

*I'm in Newcastle for personal reasons - I have family here. Clearly, we've made a big investment in Newcastle. Almost two years ago we made the decision to not only have our business work from here but to open The Production Hub.*

The Production Hub is a shared co-working studio space in the heart of Newcastle. It is the home of *Good Eye Deer* and it also accommodates other digital SME’s who want the benefits of a professional office without the price tag. Banks explains:

*What Newcastle affords us is a place where there is a lifestyle, where we can control a massive office in the middle of the city at very affordable prices. There is a local culture and community that we have discovered is full of ‘creatives’ doing amazing things. And we decided that instead of bitching about what wasn't here, it was time to build what we thought it [Newcastle] needed. And we’ve seen lots of people around town do that: Shane Burrell and Luke Burrell building INNX, us (Good Eye Deer) with the Production Hub [and] there are many small businesses, you know.*

The Production Hub offers an opportunity to network with a range of digital creatives and this has benefits for *Good Eye Deer*, as Banks explains:

*It's my belief as an artist - because as a filmmaker that is how I see myself - it's the only way that we can remain commercially viable. Gone are the days of philanthropists and being ‘discovered’, I believe. It may happen for a few people but for me it's all about networks, it's all about hard work in letting people know what you do, what you can do, what you're good at. Again, it's about being strategic about what you choose to do and don't do. So our business has grown, and we've doubled or maybe tripled our turnover in the last three years. That is since Olivia has come on board but not because Olivia is a business genius, it's about us getting the word out about what we're doing, so the people know what we're doing. It's not just about us doing good work but people hearing about it and having more of a strategic approach to being able, again, to make people aware. So, we started applying for awards to benchmark ourselves.*

Submitting their work for national awards was a strategic move. In 2016 *Good Eye Deer* won both Best TV Commercial and Best Corporate Video at the Australian Video Producers Association Awards. In 2015, they produced a Police Citizens Youth Community (PCYC) educational resource for the NSW Traffic Offenders Intervention Program, which has won an Australian Teachers of Media Award for Best Training/Instructional Resource and Best Educational Series (Personal Growth & Development), US International Film & Video Awards.

In 2015 *Good Eye Deer* sponsored a networking initiative called the ‘The Writers Room’ designed to assist the development of local ideas towards a broadcast pitch. With the idea in mind that stories need better development, The Writer’s Room provided an opportunity for local screen writers and filmmakers to pitch their script ideas for a reading and workshop:

*Part of that is The Writers Room developing local screenwriters and bringing in the expertise from outside. Peter Jackson could make Lord of the Rings because Americans had made TV (like Xena and Hercules) in NZ and had developed local skill. Those locals then started to take over all the key creative roles. In time they had the team to create The Lord of the Rings. We'll do the same here. We'll start off with who is good, we'll use those people and bring in expertise to supplement all that. Maybe it means that all the key creatives are imports but come Series Two, Series Three, the locals start to take those roles and start to sing in their own right.*
Screen Hunter, I think, is vital, but more in creating the space (or opportunity) for people to come together. There have been other initiatives like Film Republic which have largely been patronised by students. We're trying to do something similar with Industry drinks, we're trying to get away from it being just about kids (Uni/TAFE students) and about it being about real practitioners who actually are doing, and getting them to talk and share and know what others are doing.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Creative Film Producer Olivia Olley joined the company in 2013 and together she and Gavin realised that developing their business was a responsibility. Banks explains:

I've realised how vital business skills are. I've been trying to ignore it and trying to stick my head in the sand and walk away from the responsibility that all that entails... Oh, you know, if I'm a good enough craftsman I'll just be discovered. But no, it doesn't happen that way.

Good Eye Deer pride themselves on making a social contribution:

What we give back varies from project to project. We've done a project that was about $110,000 and the client valued the work at closer to $300,000. That was a very costly series (for us) but we're leveraging it well at the moment.

Banks is very focused on producing a quality product and he believes that in order to achieve this he has to engage the audience in the storytelling. He sees this as a main point of difference compared with their competitors:

If a film is good enough people will watch it, but for a film to be good enough my belief is you have to be emotionally engaged. So the focus for our films is that we involve people. And we've been quoting Confucius for the last few years. He had made this great statement, 'Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I'll understand'. Our crew consists of DP, Gaffer, Best boy, Makeup and camera assistants. We also have a composer / sound designer that we work with very regularly and he does all our work. We have a 3D artist that we work with, and a range of editors that we work with based on the project.

Creative Products

The quality of their products is measured in a number of ways. Banks speaks of ‘acknowledgement by our peers in the form of awards’ but observes that:

... our clients are also coming back with stories of their own about the success of our films. Lions Australia, for example. We made a series of commercials to increase membership. They resulted in a 60% increase in membership enquiries which put them number one in the world for membership enquiries. We made another film for a Childhood Cancer Research Foundation using our ‘emotionally engaging’ angle - we knew people needed to feel hope and needed to feel empowered so we made it a story about hope. That film helped them take their annual subscription from half a million to million in a year.

In 2015 Good Eye Deer produced a Police Citizens Youth Community (PCYC) educational resource for the NSW Traffic Offenders Intervention Program, which has won an Australian Teachers of Media Award for Best Training/Instructional Resource and Best Educational Series (Personal Growth & Development), US International Film & Video Awards.

A traffic cop said that in 25 years of delivering lectures to traffic offenders, he had never seen something that was as powerful. So for us, emotional engagement is the angle that we're pushing and the reason that the films will work. As people open up to the message it becomes something that moves them.

Banks has worked on feature films as a cinematographer, edited multiple broadcast documentaries and co-created an independent documentary Face of Birth (2013), a community-funded documentary about
pregnancy, childbirth and the power of choice. Released globally in 2013 and translated into 12 languages, this compelling documentary was created to advocate for changes to the Australia’s maternity policy. Gavin describes what brought him to the point of making this documentary.

...it came to a point where I quite literally thought, ‘Fuck it!’, I just have to make this film. I met another woman who had a passion to make a film on the same topic just as home birth was about to become illegal. So, we decided to join forces - to shoot enough footage to put together a teaser to see if we could raise some cash. And that is what we did. We spent five days filming in Melbourne because that is where our contacts were. We shot it and we cut a teaser. Within a week of uploading the teaser we had six thousand views which at the time was really big, and big interest from all over the world - ‘How outrageous Australia’s going to make home birth illegal!’ And so from there, we realised, we’d seen indigo-go-go campaigns. They were very much at the beginning in Australia at that stage.

The film’s Director was Kate Gorman and Banks worked a technical producer. They used social media and private financing to get the project up:

So we launched our teaser and kept on making posts on Facebook to build a Facebook profile and to build a Facebook following. We got an injection of cash through the other director when an opportunity came up. I was going to the UK for a family holiday. We thought hey, what if we use the opportunity to film some extra stuff. We got an injection of cash by selling a portion of the film to an investor who believed in the other director ... that was really master-minded by the other Director, Kate Gorman. Ultimately in that year we turned over about a quarter of a million dollars ($250,000).

Completing and distributing the Face of Birth was an enormous undertaking. Unfortunately, they didn’t cover their costs – Banks says ‘not even close’ but he appreciates it as ‘an invaluable learning experience. We do get a little bit of income from it in dribs and drabs. But what it did teach me, was I started to realise the importance of the business side of filmmaking’. He contrasts film production with corporate work:

In our corporate work when we hand over a film, we don't have to do anything more. That is the end of our contract. Whereas when you produce a film, everyone thinks ‘if I make a great film people will buy it’ - not so. The Face of Birth has been described as ‘the best educational and inspirational film on childbirth ever made’. But even with a quarter of a million dollars’ worth of sales and all that anecdotal success (translated into twelve languages) and viewed across the world, the film had not paid for itself.

What’s next?

Banks expresses his motivation:

The reason we want to tell our own stories is because we want to talk about the things that are real. We want to talk about the stuff of life and address those things, bring it out and put it in people faces. To challenge people, to amuse people, to open discussion about things that are taboo. But we want to do it in a way that is not preachy or judgemental. Not like a documentary where it’s issues based, and it gets really heavy.

Good Eye Deer is a company that knows what it is doing and where it wants to be. As Banks explains: Projects come and go. It can be feast or famine. As principals, we've always got lots to do regardless because we're ambitious and because we have a master plan that we're working towards. We are heading towards episodic television.
Karl Brandstater, Film and TV Writer and Director,

Storyhaus, 26 Oct 2016

Creative Career

Brandstater was born in Sydney, lived in Europe and US for a period and moved to Newcastle in 2000. He was introduced to the industry by his father who was a multi-cam director for TV. Brandstater completed a Science degree but could not ‘fight [the] desire to capture imagery and tell those stories’. He started in documentary, working overseas in Tahiti and USA, and has since worked extensively overseas, including 14 trips to Russia. Brandstater has worked with Universal Music, Disney, Village Roadshow and Sony Music – on music video clips. For six years he was at Warner Brothers on contract cutting movie trailers for cinema and TV and he was there when they launched home entertainment.

CI Business

Brandstater owns his company – Storyhaus. His most recent project was a 16-part documentary series Barinia: Food and People of the Mediterranean which has screened in France, Italy, Poland, Russia and Brazil. Brandstater worked with an all-Newcastle team including Headjam who did the charts; Tim McPhee who composed, played and recorded all the music; Mike Preston who provided creative support and helped write the accompanying book; and Rob Preston who did the sound mixes.

Creative entrepreneurship

Brandstater subscribes to the mantra ‘Live locally, work globally’. He says, ‘It was always assumed that you would travel to do work’. He does not believe this is a difficult challenge for people living in Newcastle:

Novocastrians need to play on the international stage and they can, especially in my game. There’s not enough work locally in television and film... there aren’t enough projects locally for all the people we are pushing out of Uni that want jobs, it’s not going to support them.

Newcastle brings that wonderful balance of authentic art and creativity and processes and I think the future of taking good IP and ideas and craft needs to then extend to other markets... our ideas have to be considered when we think of other territories whether it is Asia or Americas. We’ve got to have the courage to think that way...

... we came to Newcastle and it was the best decision we made in every respect. It’s easy to live here. It’s still got that village feel. As an independent practitioner, you fly. You shoot for a few weeks overseas, you come back here for months and edit. It’s not difficult to work internationally and live in Newcastle.

Brandstater believes that regional cities are particularly productive of hard-working and effective creatives. He recalls the Head of Music Publishing at EMI (with whom he has worked) saying:

We have found that most of the writers that came out of Newcastle were very productive and focussed. When we signed publishing deals with regional cities we found that people in Newcastle were focussed. We couldn’t get our publishing contracts to work in big metro cities. They were too distracted. We couldn’t get them to work and be productive but consistently over the years we found that the smaller regional cities were very conducive to creativity and focus, having the space to think, to locate original thought.

He agrees with this view:

I think that’s what Newcastle brings. We have a really healthy environment. It’s still a village feel. We don’t have the problems with congestion and the artists that do well here value that, they have that space to locate their original thought and ideas and I think that’s why I’m here - I value that after living in LA where you had layer upon layer of fabricated promises and pitch lines and ideas and what they felt like they needed to do and say to be part of the Hollywood system ... We couldn’t wait to get back here .... Culturally we just had to come back to be with people who were on the level! Newcastle is extra good in that respect. All
the people I know in Newcastle are very real about who they are and what they do. They are very honest. They seek appraisal... and that’s important when you are working in the creative industries...

I would always choose a team locally because I think they are not distracted by the intensity of Sydney. There are some very professional outfits there, but they don’t have the contemplation consideration that locals have over their work. The team is very important. We have some very talented people locally.

**Creative products**

The industry is changing rapidly, and audiences have more power. Brandstater explains:

*The video on demand platform is really where the future is heading i.e. people are going to pay per view. Having control over what they consume is about the democratisation of content. This is good for content providers as it promotes diversity. So everyone is re-positioning themselves in this industry and I find that very exciting. So, when I said earlier that I have a very diverse range of experience in the industry, I am valuing that because that’s what the industry is now, it’s a multiplex of different platforms and screen-sizes and different modes of people consuming content. And we are going to see more and more of that. So, the formats, how long episodes should be, how they are crafted, it’s all very exciting because it’s all changing and dictated more by viewers.*

**Creative networking**

Most of his work is referral and he doesn’t market his business at all, not even through social media: ‘the most important thing for your business is the conversations you have’.

*The commercialisation of creativity is about partnerships... ‘Creative industry’ implies it can grow and become its own thing but it’s not like that. You have to be good at forming partnerships with the larger world and industry in general, whether it’s clean industry, whether it’s education, entertainment, whatever the industry is, we need to be part of that conversation...*

The network is critically important for the work itself. Brandstater says:

*The core of all of this is your team. Newcastle has such wonderful people. For example, Tim McPhee is an amazing practitioner. He’s not just a musician. The guy actually watches images and really becomes part of the narrative when he works. What he did with our series, you can hear the water in his notes! He crafts it - he plays with sound in a way that is beyond being a musician...Mike Preston is another very experienced creative practitioner. He’s been a good creative support for the team in reviewing and critiquing work. Because of his background in creative direction, we often gave him things to give us a point of view on. He helped with the writing of the book for this TV series. We are releasing a food and culture, high quality coffee table book series. And the team over at Headjam with Nicola Xavier with Luke and Sarah and Josh who did the chart animations featured in the TV series.*

**What’s next?**

Storyhaus has just completed another eight-part series that focuses on food. It was launched at BITCOM by his distributor at Fox Studios. He plans to crowd-fund a series about the young minds that are changing the world. Storyhaus is focussing on video on demand as the new market.
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68. IAN HAMILTON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND CINEMATOGRAPHER

69. ANNA KELLY, FILM PRODUCER, DIRECTOR AND WRITER

Limelight Creative Media 4 May 2015 and 16 September 2015

Creative Careers

Ian Hamilton grew up in Maitland, completed an apprenticeship as a printer and then studied photography at University, completing a Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies) at The University of Newcastle in 1989. He worked as a freelancer filmmaker in Sydney throughout the 1990’s and specialised as a First Assistant Director and Art Director in drama and documentary productions. In the late 1990’s he and his wife Anna Kelly returned to Maitland to raise their family. Limelight Creative Media was established in 2000 and began with local advertising, photography and film projects. Hamilton is now the Creative Director at Limelight and is the main producer, director and cinematographer. Limelight has become an award-winning multi-media production house that makes independent documentaries and works on high-end educational campaigns and initiatives.

Anna Kelly is from New Zealand. Her family moved to Maitland where she attended high school. After studying medicine at The University of Newcastle, she worked as a G.P. in Sydney, where she owned a medical practice. Kelly continued to follow her passion in film and has acted with Naomi Watts. Kelly and Hamilton returned to the Hunter to raise their family and while she has continued to practice as a G.P., Kelly has become a film producer, writer and presenter at Limelight Creative Media.

CI Business

Limelight Creative Media is a boutique communication studio which has been operating in Newcastle for 15 years. It offers a fully integrated communication service including film production, writing, photography, time lapse and design. Company Directors Dr Anna Kelly and Ian Hamilton share a passion for producing content that makes a positive difference in the community, with a strong focus on health and education.

What is significant about Limelight is they win national tenders to film educational and health, corporate and training videos as well as producing broadcast documentary projects. Hamilton explains that their competitors are really in Sydney and the other capital cities. ‘That is where a lot of the major work that we're interested in is funded’.

Their approach to all of their projects is specialised as they work from creative concept to completion across a number of creative areas. As Hamilton explains:

We offer a range of creative services including filmmaking, web-design, still photography and instructional design. Most of our work, our bread and butter, is in large national initiatives into health and education so often those involve a whole strategy and a whole campaign, so it's everything from copyrighting, instructional design, filmmaking, design so that the work that we like to do is integrated. So, you're not just making a film, you are just creating a whole experience for the audience, which is what we have come to do.

Creative Products

Their past television work includes making four broadcast documentaries for the ABC Series Australian Story. An extreme adventure documentary made by Limelight, Honeymoon in Kabul, was also broadcast nationally on the ABC. This feature-length documentary won the People's Choice Award at the Zero Film Festival in both New York and Los Angeles. In terms of health and education, they undertake ground-breaking work. Their Pain Management Network films won a national ATOM award in 2014 for Best Instruction/Training Resource. Kelly explains ‘a lot of our commercial work is about making a difference to people's lives, so we really enjoy doing that type of work’.

To create their award-winning work, Limelight employs six fulltime staff who work as an ensemble team. Hamilton believes that not only must his team be multi-skilled, they must have a certain knowledge of the subject matter:
...because I want the so-called technicians to be actual storyteller filmmakers and we’re all collaborating because I know, in the best of worlds, that happens with specialists as well.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Hamilton and Kelly have ensured that their staff are well trained, highly skilled, and extremely versatile. As well, that they have an opinion on not only the technical aspects of a production but how the content that is being filmed should be approached. Their company’s ethos is about agility, diversity and creativity.

Hamilton is the Creative Director and he works as a producer/director/cinematographer while Kelly also operates as a producer/writer/presenter and can step into the role of director when needed. As she states ‘We know we can have three separate crews out on the same day filming three different jobs and we have the people that can do it’.

Though both are satisfied with the work they do, the current size of their company and the direction their business is headed, from time to-time they employ freelancers on an ‘as-needs’ basis from within the city, across the state and even inter-state. Kelly explains that they have made a conscious decision to stay the size they are now for reasons to do with family and work satisfaction:

As you become commercially more successful that can leave less time to spend on independent projects and obviously as a business you need to have an income, and when you’ve got a family you need to think about how you live. But the things that we are very aware of is making sure that we keep doing the types of activities that we really enjoy doing. We enjoy making films that make a difference.

Creative Networking

For Limelight Creative Media, collaboration is an essential part of making films. As Hamilton asserts:

It's impossible, I would have thought, to work in the film industry, particularly in the film industry, and not to be collaborative. I collaborate with research academics, with participants in the films I make. There is a collaboration between you and the audience. Just at every level. I couldn’t see how I do what I do without collaboration.

Limelight’s positive attitude to collaborative practice is something that has influenced others that Hamilton has formed working relationships in Newcastle. He explains:

one thing is the environment. We actually have some really highly skilled and interesting collaborators in Newcastle and we have our relationships still that exist in Sydney. We’re talking about independent projects. If it's commercial projects we've got enough IP here to deal with that. If it’s independent film, and I want to speak to a distributor then or someone who I respect in terms of documentary broadcast filmmakers, I'll speak to them here and I'll speak to people in Sydney. The fact is, Sydney is two hours away, it's not very far. We go to sign contracts in Sydney and Melbourne but most of the films that we make are all over. We spend half our time in rural and remote Australia.

Hamilton and Kelly firmly believe that their business is part of the Hunter’s Creative Industries.

What’s next?

Angels Gather Here is their latest independent documentary, directed by Hamilton. It follows Jacki Trapman’s journey back to her hometown of Brewarrina to celebrate her parents’, Bill and Barbara’s, 60th wedding anniversary. Going home is never easy for Jacki. Amidst the family celebrations she reflects on her life. Her story symbolises the strength, dignity and resilience of many Aboriginal people in the face of adversity. The film will be distributed internationally by Ronin.
70. ANNETTE HUBBER, REGIONAL SCREEN AGENCY & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Screen Hunter and Real Film Festival, 6 August 2015

Creative Career

Annette Hubber started with Screen Hunter Central Coast in March 2008. She completed a course in Producing at AFTRS and began her career in advertising, working for John Singleton’s company in the 1980s. Annette worked in advertising for over two decades, developing and executing projects, brand building and positioning, and working in community collaboration and engagement. On her return to the Hunter, where she grew up, Annette secured the Manager’s job at Screen Hunter Central Coast. She is committed to making a difference and supporting the creative industries through skills development, festivals and events.

CI Business

Filming brings in $8 million every year to the Hunter Region and Screen Hunter contributes to that by connecting film industry productions with regional communities, providing assistance and advice in relation to accommodation, catering, hire-cars and local talent. Screen Hunter is the longest-serving regional film agency in NSW. Its primary goal is to build and help sustain the local industry in a regional area. It has been operational since 2003, originally established as Film Hunter then Screen Hunter Central Coast. Initially it received several seed funding rounds from The NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) to help build the business.

Hubber has been the Manager of Screen Hunter since 2008. She has developed Screen Hunter’s networking functions both inbound and outbound by servicing filming enquiries for the region. Hubber states:

A lot of the production companies come to the Hunter because of our proximity to Sydney and our stunning locations. As well, they know they can rely on Screen Hunter to link them in with almost anyone they need, both stakeholders and local crew.

Productions that have been shot in the region include Tomorrow when the War Began (2010), Air Rescue, Baggage Handlers, My Kitchen Rules (Channel 7) and Farmer Wants a Wife (Channel 9). Many advertisements also come to the region to film with Stockton sand dunes being a primary location because of its desert appeal and proximity to major facilities. Many international film and television productions have scouted the Hunter’s filming locations but eventually decided to film elsewhere including Angelina Jolie’s Unbroken (2015), Mel Gibson’s Hacksaw Ridge (2016) and the US sitcom Modern Family (2015). When a producer decides to film elsewhere, the hours Screen Hunter has spent with the producers and location scouts go unpaid. This is one of the reasons that the organisation operates at a loss, as many hours are spent enticing the producers to film here and payment only comes when they decided they will. Hubber remains optimistic about the jobs that go elsewhere to film, saying ‘We might have lost the job this time around, however they did ‘recce’ a number of locations in the region so there is always the potential they’ll come back.’

Screen Hunter has had a number of managerial arrangements. Initially it was set up through Newcastle City Council, and funding from DSRD helped it to be independent for about six years. Currently it is managed by Hunter Councils which also manages Regional Procurement, HC Environmental Division, Legal Services, Hunter Records and HC Tourism (which has been on hold while they sort out local state and federal funding). Many of these satellite companies make a profit and the finances are pooled so that those that produce a deficit – such as Screen Hunter - can be supported.

Screen Hunter has a great reputation in the industry, with Manager Annette Hubber working to ensure that the service is consistent. Managing the brand well is crucial for sustainability. Screen Hunter supports many local filmmakers through film industry forums and by supporting locally-produced projects like the ABC broadcast documentary Honeymoon in Kabul made by Limelight Creative Media and the independent feature film Mikey’s Extreme Romance created by Jamie Lewis.
The production of local content would slow down if Screen Hunter wasn’t operating. A film industry event in 2015 with Screen NSW identified Screen Hunter as a great model for a regional film office, but the irony is that it is struggling for funding and it is difficult to find funding and investors to back this so called ‘great model’.

Creative Labour

Screen Hunter negotiates with local councils, for example so that film and television productions can film late into the evening, or can close access to a street so a major scene can be staged. They manage all the logistical requirements of each production by leveraging relationships to make the production happen. They also find local crew: there is a database that local creatives can register on to be considered for jobs.

Screen Hunter’s core business is responding to filming enquiries for the Hunter Region. Stockton Sand Dunes, owned by Worimi Lands Council, is an extremely popular filming location because it looks like a desert but is very close to all facilities that a film crew requires.

In 2015 Screen Hunter was working on securing a major job from Korea that Hubber says would have injected between $200K and $300K over a week of filming/set building, but the job was lost to Dubai. Hubber says ‘we had put in between 40 to 45 hours of work to secure the job and then it’s gone.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Annette Hubber monitors the value of the dollar in relation to the filming enquiries:

...when the Australian dollar is trading around seventy cents US, we have an opportunity to pitch for a lot more O/S work. The film industry thrives in Australia when the dollar drops, so it’s a good thing for Screen Hunter but when the dollar value increases against the US, jobs evaporate. We quoted for an American job when the Aussie dollar was trading low and then it bounced back, and we lost it. It was a huge blockbuster, which is disappointing but that is the landscape we live in.

The processing of film permits represents more than 80% of the administrative work done by Screen Hunter. In 2014, the office processed 360 filming permits, each of which had different variables depending on the production. For example, Channel 7 Reality TV show My Kitchen Rules might film for a week in the region while A Farmer Wants a Wife might film for several weeks and the feature film Tomorrow when the War Began (shot in 2009), filmed for 32 days across various regional towns including Dungog, Raymond Terrace and Maitland. That was considered to be one filming permit. An example of the complexity of film permitting is Channel 7’s Air Rescue. They had an annual blanket permit that gave them permission to film throughout the year. This was a complex film permit that carried over 100 variables for filming consent because of the emergency and time-sensitive nature of each rescue. Another example of one filming permit was the seven-month shoot for reality TV show Baggage Handlers, shot at Cessnock airstrip. They required locals to work on their production and Screen Hunter spent a lot of time crewing the productions.

Even with this range of productions coming to the region, Screen Hunter has struggled to turn a profit and in 2014 they produced a deficit of $3K that was absorbed by the overall finances of Hunter Councils. Ongoing support from that organisation is critical to the sustainability of Screen Hunter as a regional film office. In 2015 the ‘fee for service’ model was introduced which means Councils annually pay a fee for the services Screen Hunter provides to their area.

Creative Networking

The Real Film Festival (RFF) is an initiative of Screen Hunter which has been running for a number of years. It is a three-day festival that focuses on films based on real events. Documentary and independent films are screened and there is a short film competition and a one-day workshop program where local high school, TAFE and university students can attend directing, editing, mobile filmmaking, and make-up workshops. The Festival has a community impact as it has been designed to promote skills development and inspire film productions in regional areas.
What’s next?

Screen Hunter’s financial model is only viable because it is supported by Hunter Councils. The Real Film Festival is one way to bring in another income for Screen Hunter.

71. NBN TELEVISION

15 December 2016

CI Business

NBN’s broadcasting footprint covers a large area of New South Wales and southern Queensland, from the Central Coast to the Gold Coast and out west to Moree and Narrabri. This market has 1.9 million people and is the fourth largest television market in Australia behind Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane (NBN online). (http://www.nbnnews.com.au/about-us/). One of NBN’s core businesses is the production of its nightly, one-hour news bulletin.

NBN News produces over 20,000 news stories annually and has 60 employees working as news producers, journalists, camera and production staff, and administrative staff. There is a daily, one-hour news broadcast each weekday and a half hour broadcast on weekends into six regional markets: Newcastle, Central Coast, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Gold Coast and Armidale. NBN’s news production is sophisticated and complex and it ensures regional audiences are receiving state, national and international news alongside local and regional news. This is all done seamlessly and is daily managed by NBN’s news production team at the hub in Newcastle. This news production model has been recognised as a success and in 2016 Southern Cross Austereo announced they would be rolling out similar models to 15 regional markets in Queensland, Southern New South Wales and regional Victoria (online: 16 November 2016). x

NBN has been operating in Newcastle and the Hunter region since Sunday 4 March 1962. The call letter means Newcastle Broadcasting New South Wales. It was originally an independent station but has been a Channel 9 affiliate station for some years and in 2014 was rebranded and is now part of Channel 9’s network. NBN also creates Community Service Announcements, approximately 2000 spots per month. They run a Kids Project featuring the Junior Journo program.

The production facilities at Mosbri Crescent in central Newcastle are capable of producing both live and pre-recorded television but these facilities are only used for news production. The last live broadcast program was in 2007 - Today Extra, a morning television talk show, which ran for 15 years. In the 70’s and 80’s a number of children’s programs were made including Romper Room and Big Dog as well as an annual telethon that raised money for local charities.

Creative Labour

Newcastle is the main news hub and is supported by six regional offices located at the Central Coast, Coffs Harbour, Gold Coast, Lismore, Tamworth and Taree. Each regional office has a journalist and a news cameraperson/editor who create local news stories. In Newcastle there are four TV News crews operating daily. The Newcastle newsroom is led by the News Line up producer and a Windows producer. The News Line up producer co-ordinates the national and international news from Channel 9 and its affiliates while the Windows producer coordinates the local news from the five regional journalists. Regional content is produced as two local news ‘windows’, of up to six minutes in length and one weather report. To ensure that the daily News is broadcast live out of Newcastle at 6pm, the studio crew and news presenters begin pre-recording at 4pm. This ensures that each of the 15 regional segments are pre-recorded in time to playback into the live news bulletin broadcast at 6pm.

Creative Futures

NBN has focused on having a digital online presence and over the last five years they have had a Web Producer creating content specifically for their website. This means that when something happens they can take ownership of the story and attempt be the first to get the information out there. For example,
during the Dungog Floods in 2014, NBN were doing online updates every 15 to 20 minutes. NBN also uses social media with about 160,000 Facebook ‘friends’. The Newsroom uses the Facebook page to drive traffic to their website.

**Creative Entrepreneurship**

The Creative Industries has become more than just the Arts, as a wider descriptor it can include journalism as the creative industries is about the creation of anything, and that can include news. The NBN journalists focus on presenting factual and balanced news stories. A journalist may go to the graphics department, which is probably the most creative department in the news, to collaborate on how they can visually explain details of a news story. Another example of creativity in news production is how NBN has developed the Windows model: it is an innovative and creative way to present regional and local news alongside national and international news content.

**Creative Careers**

Regional journalism is not well-paid and people often move across into PR after only a few years as a journalist. NBN offers starting positions for journalist and production staff particularly in the regional officers. NBN also has a healthy mix of new and very experienced staff who have settled down with families and have chosen to stay in Newcastle and the regional area, rather than move to live in Sydney and never be able to afford to buy a house. NBN takes a lot of people straight out of University, and this creates a big ‘churn’ as many move on after a year or so, although over the last two years this seems to have slowed down a little. The understanding is that you're not going to retire rich after working in regional news at any level.

**Creative Products**

NBN has broadcast an hour of news for about 40 years. Historically it used to receive news stories from other commercial networks. Then aggregation occurred and NBN created the ‘Windows’ news production model as a way of integrating local news with national and international news. This model allows the bulletins to remain local and to keep the content relevant to everybody watching in the different markets. The news producers realised that what interests somebody in Tamworth is of little consequence to somebody in Coffs Harbour and Lismore unless it's a national story. When the ‘Windows’ model began there were four markets: Newcastle, the Hunter and Lake Macquarie as one market, then North Coast, Lismore and Tamworth. That has since been expanded to include Gold Coast and Central Coast. There are now six markets with NBN producing a nightly news program which is 48 minutes of news but it is in fact more likely to be about 1 hour and 20 minutes of content because of the windows model. Each news bulletin has five commercial breaks that also advertise to a local audience. Much as Windows are made for each market, so too advertisements are scheduled for each market, so in Newcastle you might have an ad for a Holden car and in Lismore you might have an ad for a local boutique. But more importantly, news and advertising don't really meet: the news team doesn’t have anything to do with how advertising content is created or sold.

**What’s next?**

NBN Newcastle will be relocating to new facilities at Honeysuckle on the Newcastle waterfront as their Mosbri Crescent site has been re-zoned for development. The move, scheduled for some time in the future, will allow the news room to update its reliable yet out of date production equipment.

72. BRENDAN MCCORMICK, TV COMPANY DIRECTOR

73. JOSH MASON, TV COMPANY DIRECTOR

Bar TV Sports, 24 August 2015 & 28 October 2016

Creative Career
Brendan McCormick grew up in Newcastle. He attended St Francis Xavier School and was a baker whilst studying teaching at The University of Newcastle. In 2001 he began hosting trivia nights for Quiz Masters at the Delany Hotel and in 2003 he and school friend Josh Mason launched an SMS game called ‘Pubtriv’ into the local hotel market. The idea for Bar TV emerged from that partnership and venture. McCormick and Mason launched Bar TV in 2013 and the business has grown from filming grassroots sporting games to being sub-contracted to film national sporting codes for Fox Sports. McCormick lives between Australia and Sweden and has taken the Bar TV model into the international sporting market, filming a number of events in Europe and the UK including the European AFL Championships.

Josh Mason grew up in Newcastle and went to school with McCormick at St Frances Xavier High School in Newcastle. Mason and McCormick started working for local businessman Mark Priest, hosting pub trivia competitions at the Delany Hotel for his company Quiz Masters. Pubtriv was launched in 2003 and even though the idea failed, it led Mason and McCormick to the Bar TV sports broadcasting idea. Josh Mason lives in Newcastle and is working as a Director at Bar TV.

CI Business

Bar TV Sports began by filming grassroots sports in a very cost-effective way and distributing it through a closed-circuit network of pubs and hotels. After four years it has become a hybrid sports broadcaster specialising in creating and streaming high definition sporting games for mid-tier and grassroots competitions. Using social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook, Bar TV Sports has been able to stream sporting games from over 900 sporting fixtures across Australia, the UK and Europe. As a distributor of sporting content, Bar TV offers a variety of stakeholders including supporters, sponsors and advertisers a cost-effective way for sporting fans to view local competitions. As a content creator, Bar TV Sports offers pathways for production staff, commentators and camera operators to enter the sporting media market.

Bar TV emerged from within Quiz Masters, which is one of Australia’s leading entertainment companies specialising in trivia nights and on-line quiz games. Quiz Masters owner Mark Priest worked closely with Brendan McCormick and Josh Mason to establish Bar TV. On 13 April 2013, a Newcastle Rugby League game was recorded for the club, for the referees and for audiences who were able to view the game through the Quizmasters closed-circuit hotel subscription service. Bar TV predicted that television, particularly sport was going to be a big disrupter. Four years on, Bar TV Sports have become a sub-contractor to Fox Sports:

...we’re at that new media side, so we can adapt quicker than the TV networks. And because of that, we can keep things under budget, you know, $60,000 to film at Fox for one game of football, and we can do the equivalent for, let’s say, $5000. And it’s mainly because of technology.

In 2017 the Newcastle Herald reported that ‘BarTV have attracted more than 1.04 million views for the first quarter of 2017 and are expected to reach four to five million by the end of the year’ (Leeson, 31st March 2017).

Creative Labour

In 2015, for Bar TV, a typical weekend’s sports coverage included the logistical co-ordination of 40-45 staff including commentators and producers travelling to cover local sporting games. To find production staff, Bar TV pitched a 20-hour work experience opportunity to Communication students at The University of Newcastle. This work experience was attached to a television production course and it gave university students an opportunity to experience filming in an outside broadcast situation. McCormick explains:

We tapped into the university system, tried to encourage some students to come do some work experience with us, and then through that work experience, offer them jobs. Now, to pay a second and third year communications student who’s trying to get his foot in the door or her foot in the door ... $30 an hour, as opposed to paying an established camera operator a $700-day rate. Because that just - you can't film local sport at that level. Hence, that's why
Foxtel and Channel 9 can't film that lower level, because they have to pay so much for their equipment, so much for their operators. So, what we've done is, being a lot smaller, BarTV's been able to use motivated and passionate staff but also keep that cost level down which then allows us to then get more and more sports. And as we make profit, we then buy more and more equipment and expand into other sports as opposed to making a profit and just, sort of, sitting tight. We want to keep growing.

Such work experience has led two graduates based in London to be working part time for Bar TV Sports. Justin Cassel and Briana Fergusson both filmed the European AFL Championships in Lisbon, Portugal in 2016.

Bar TV has also covered University Games. When in 2015 Gold Coast hosted the national event, a team of five travelled from Newcastle to cover it and they included camera operators, producers and commentators. When the South Australian Regional University Games were held, BarTV used local university students in Adelaide:

So yeah, we're slowly tapping into making ourselves - not so much franchised out, but essentially that's what it is. If we've got camera operators and people there, then we can approach lower level sport and get them that exposure that we're offering here in the Hunter, that's what it is.

Creative Networking

Bar TV emerged from within a Hunter business called Quiz Masters, which has been running for 23 years and is well-established in clubs and bars in the Hunter Region. In 2003 McCormick and Mason created an SMS-based trivia game called Pubtriv which is now a smartphone app. Bar TV was born from a connection between Quizmasters owner Mark Priest and McCormick and Mason. It was a simple idea: to film local sports and screened them through the closed-circuit hotel channels.

McCormick and Mason also realised there was another need to film football matches for rugby codes. As McCormick explains, ‘Somebody had high tackled somebody, they needed proof to say, ‘You head high tackled, you’re going to miss the next three weeks’. So there was a legitimate reason to film a whole game, and anyone with a handi-cam was paid about $250 to film. Bar TV offered to film ‘with good quality equipment and we would not only film it for judiciary purposes at a low resolution, …we'd also film it at, you know, 50 frames, or whatever it was, so that we could then broadcast the same footage and overlay it with score boards and clocks and logos, and actually make it look legit’. The other important detail that came from filming for the judiciary was that it permitted Bar TV to mic-up the referees and to record all the referee’s calls. From the idea to repurpose this judicial content Bar TV emerged.

Eventually McCormick and Mason realised that loading the footage onto YouTube made it more accessible. ‘Free to air is commercial TV, but you can only watch it there but if you put it on YouTube, it's archived and anybody can watch it at a later date. As at October 2014, ‘Bar TV Sports – Media’ on YouTube has 561 subscribers with 162,680 views. Bar TV is always chasing new audiences. They approached The Newcastle Herald to live stream local sports games and The Herald TV was created. McCormick explains that he knew that The Herald was always looking to modernise:

So we approached them and said that we would give them access to our live games. So they put our games on their website - on the Newcastle Herald website. So, all of a sudden, it opens up a brand-new audience, it opens up the Fairfax readership.

This is a contra-deal for the sporting association:

We say not only will Bar TV film you, but we will also advertise you and your sponsors around the grounds, on the signage and things like, all of that's going to be run through the Newcastle Herald website or the Maitland Mercury website, etcetera, down the Illawarra, in Wollongong they have also their own newspaper, but we also allow WIN television to use our highlights on there. We give them a clean feed. And we allow them to ‘over the top’ their
own graphic and their own commentator over the top. And the main reason is because we want to allow the exposure to the association.

Creative Futures

McCormick was contacted in 2016 to provide an update on Bar TV sports activities:

In 2016, one of the areas of growth has been within the realms of women's sport. We have been commissioned to film and broadcast the Women's Domestic Twenty20 cricket tournament (Women's Big Bash League) which is a national competition, as well as filming and broadcasting all the Australian Women's cricket internationals verses South Africa. We are now Cricket Australia's exclusive Live Streaming provider (we film all the non-free-to-air matches including the Sheffield Shield Final).

Another milestone has been the implementation of BarTV into the international sporting market with a number of events filmed in Europe. Both Justin Cassel and Briana Fergusson were in Lisbon, Portugal two weekends ago filming the European AFL Championships. They are both stationed in London and are working part-time for us there as we continue to grow our brand.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Bar TV had worked out that their relationship with sporting associations was critical to them having access to film weekend games. This all unravelled in early 2015 when Fox Sports blockaded the live streaming of an Australian Rugby Union game in Campbelltown. It was a Waratahs pre-season game that was to feature the return of Sonny Bill Williams from Rugby League back to Rugby Union. Bar TV had been employed by the ARU and had a deal with Fairfax to live stream the game. Fox Sports turned up and shut down Bar TV’s live stream just before the game started. Josh Mason from Bar TV explains what happened:

Half an hour before we went live we got a call from Fox Sports and then SANZA, which is the global governing body for Rugby - it’s the South African, New Zealand, Australian Rugby Association. They said, 'You can't do this.' And we said, 'Well, we're doing it. You've got to talk to the Waratahs, it's not us', and then it was, 'Can we geo-block?' and all this stuff, sort of happened in the space of half an hour. They blocked it. We didn't stream. We streamed to a private link because we just thought 'we're going to do it'. Then there were tweets saying sorry to the fans due to technical difficulties - so we had to say, 'Well, you told us to remove tweets saying that due to broadcasting rights we can't do it.' They said, 'Take that down,' and then they came back with, 'technical,' and we said, 'Well, you take that down,' you know, because that's our business.

The fans really reacted to the stream being shut down and Fox were ravaged by social media comments that pointed out they had 50 channels but didn’t even have a camera operator at the game to film it. As Josh Mason explains 'Not only are you not showing it, you're going to stop someone else from showing it. So, you're all about the game and the fans, but you're not.'

While this was a very unfortunate incident it made Foxtel realise that there was a company that existed who could cover several games that were included as part of the digital rights for the Rugby Union. When Foxtel realised that, they made an offer to Bar TV Sports, who eventually became a sub-contractor to Foxtel and they were offered contracts to cover the Rugby Union and the Soccer as well as the Cricket.

Besides delivering national games of cricket and football to Foxtel’s sports network, Bar TV has also been an advocate for women’s sports and local sports. In 2015 Bar TV was able to monitor IP addresses and they could discern who was watching what content and for how long. This kind of extremely detailed data has been very valuable and could be used to help monetize a very niche market. But what they know is that they have a product that a lot of niche markets want: ‘The coaches want footage, the referees want footage, the broadcasters want footage, the judiciary wants footage’. From this perspective, the future of BarTV seems bright.
In 2015 Bar TV began creating content for their Fox Sports contract. It originally ran for six weeks beginning in August, a national contract which covered Rugby League games in Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane. At the same time Bar TV was also managing a contract with the FFA Cup soccer that started in June. These contracts have allowed Bar TV to alter their operating model: ‘it's allowed us to establish camera operators in the various capital cities’. A team of up to five people including producers and commentators travel to venues and local crews are used on the ground in those cities.

**Creative Products**

Bar TV began operations in Newcastle and initially offered a service to Rugby League, to film games for the club, for the judiciary and for a subscription service that was available in local hotels. These humble beginnings offered real benefits:

... the luxury of us starting in Newcastle allowed us to really debug ourselves. We were hidden away, and it allowed us to kind of be a new business in a new market. And if any errors occurred or things like that, we could adjust them and make them better the following week. And sort of skim under that radar. And then, we had to fundamentally get all the local guys on side before we even went to Sydney, for example. So, I think that helped us because by the time we did go to Sydney, we’d already had an established brand, we already had an established workflow, and we had a successful model. And then that allowed us to then sit down with some of these bigger networks, bigger sporting associations, and then say to them - actually give them some real advice to say stop chasing this top tier coverage, because you're not going to get it. You know, 2.5 billion for the AFL rights, you know, the difference between a VFL player and an AFL player is TV rights deals, which hence, is a $400,000 contract or a $40,000 contract. So you know, the big thing for us is that sport is so immediate, the television networks are now dependent on reality TV or live sport. Well, we only do live sport. So not only are we going after that upper tier, we're also going for that lower tier, and mid-tier, even to the point where we can do the upper tier, but there's too many hoops to jump through and the profit margins aren't really there, and things like that. So for us, grassroots sport is where we're going to be based, really.

In 2015 Bar TV was charging Newcastle sporting associations between $400 and $800 a game. The difference in pricing is due to the style of coverage, single camera coverage being the cheapest with two or three camera coverage being the more expense options. A typical weekend involved filming in NSW and interstate:

So this weekend we had three sets of game days in the Illawarra and up to Wollongong. We had one game on the Gold Coast, two games in Sydney, so we covered all sports from Rugby Union, Rugby League, AFL, Soccer, to the point where we had our biggest viewership online that was the women's football Grand Final held on Sunday at Match Park here in Newcastle, and they had over 1200 viewers live. So that was quite good. And also, you might have - one computer has an IP address, but there might be three or four people watching on their smart TV or whatever device they use.

**What’s next?**

Bar TV continues to grow their brand throughout the UK and Europe. Indeed, they have found a gap in the market where there is an audience for mid-tier sport. Their contract with Foxtel means they are working as a production company but their own outlets and business arrangements with local sporting associations and Fairfax shows that they are also a distributor of locally-recorded sporting content. As McCormick states, ‘Being low level, we're actually a marketing company, we're a promotions company, we're a live streaming company, you know, we wear many hats’.
74. ONE80, PRODUCTION AND POST PRODUCTION FACILITY

3 November 2016

CI Business

*One80 Digital Post* is situated within NBN television in Newcastle and it offers three services: a production service, facilities provision and an outside broadcast service (OB). *One80* has 13 fulltime employees - producers, editors and directors who create television content. The production service offers companies a complete solution by making commercial, web content, corporate work and TV programs. The facilities provision has been a declining service because a lot of the local agencies now have their own editing and audio postproduction facilities. The OB service offers live coverage of events for networks like Channel 9 and Fox Sports. From March till September 2016 they completed 70 outside broadcasts.

One80 attracts three types of client. The first are broadcast industries - other networks wanting outside broadcast production services for sporting or cultural events. These types of jobs are done through tenders. The second are national or local companies wanting to promote their business. They may have a concept and they need some expertise to bring it into reality. The third group of clients are national clients that *One80* does work for including training videos and internal communications.

Creative Products

*One80* has a national reputation in the outside broadcast market. For the last 10 years they have been making a sports program that is broadcast nationally and delivered to 910 stations around the world. The production includes three helicopters, four motorbikes and eight cameramen.

*One80* was the first business in Australia to hire out a High Definition OB van. Their van takes 14 cameras and they have two full time employees with freelancers crewing on an as needs basis. The OB van is frequently operating interstate for broadcasts. There is a continuing demand for tier one sports coverage like AFL and NRL and some demand for tier two sports like netball and tier three sports like local sporting competitions which can be found on social media. Locally, *One80* broadcasts the ANZCA Day Dawn service from Newcastle’s Nobbys Beach for NBN.

What’s next?

*One80* will relocate along with NBN to new facilities at Honeysuckle on the waterfront in Newcastle.

75. OLIVIA OLLY, CREATIVE FILM PRODUCER,

Good Eye Deer, 18 May 2015

Creative Career

In 2002 Olivia Olley’s creative career began in a cadetship with Sydney’s Opera House. She moved to London and worked in post-production houses and then returned to Australia to study at La Trobe University. Olivia graduated in 2011 with Honours in Documentary Production as part of her Bachelor of Creative Arts, specialising in Media Production and Screenwriting. In 2012 she came to Newcastle and was employed at *Good Eye Deer* as a Creative Producer. In the last five years the company has won 12 national and international awards for branded films, corporate videos, educational series and TV commercials. In 2015 Olley co-ordinated an independent screenwriting initiative called ‘Newcastle’s Writers Room’ where local screenwriters could put forward scripts for peer-review and critique. In 2014 she launched ‘The Production Hub’, a co-working space that offers creative professionals a shared, open-plan working space. Feeling part of Newcastle’s Creative Industries and *Good Eye Deer* very much, she states ‘we run a creative business and we own a studio positioned for other creative small business to work from.'
**CI Business**

*Good Eye Deer* provides Australia-wide professional video production services. Established in 1998 by Gavin Banks, this company has grown through a passion for storytelling and filmmaking. In 2012 Olivia Olley joined the business as a Creative Film Producer. As at 2017, the business employed an Editor, DP/Camera Assistant and Production Assistant as well as freelancers on a project-by-project basis to do television commercials, branded content and corporate work. In 2016 *Good Eye Deer* won both Best TV Commercial and Best Corporate Video at the Australian Video Producers Association Awards. In 2015 they produced the Police Citizens Youth Community (PCYC) educational resource for the NSW Traffic Offenders Intervention Program which won an Australian Teachers of Media Award for Best Training/Instructional Resource and Best Educational Series (Personal Growth & Dev) in the US International Film & Video Awards.

In 2015 *Good Eye Deer* was aspiring to work in Melbourne and by 2017 they have achieved that goal and they believe the distance is not a barrier with high-speed internet and mobile communication Newcastle is a great place to base themselves.

**Creative Newcastle**

*Good Eye Deer* has been based in Newcastle since Gavin Banks created the business in 1998. As *Good Eye Deer* expanded, its clientele became state-wide and inter-state, but they strategically decided to keep the office location off their website. While they believed that this digital age enabled them to make films for anyone, anywhere, they realised that others might not see it in the same way. Their regional location may have limited potential client enquiries as travel to meetings might have been seen as constraining and limiting their overall project availability. Olivia describes one meeting with a client from 2015:

> One of our clients was located in the Sydney World Square building. We went to meeting after meeting, and finally, after we delivered the project the CEO said, ‘By the way where is your office?’ and we went ‘It’s in Newcastle’. And they went, ‘Oh I’m so sorry that you have had to travel so far for all this.’ We were like, ‘Well, that is not an issue at all for us’.

*Good Eye Deer* have since realised the need to ‘own’ the Newcastle address, especially as they are wanting to be vocal about supporting Newcastle’s Creative Industries.

**Creative Labour**

My undergraduate [course] was great, but it was really the process of doing a documentary for my Honours that took me up for the work I do now. I find that a lot of corporate videos we produce are a little bit like a mini documentary as you’re working with people to tell their story (or their brand’s story), all for a particular target audience and objective.

**Creative Networking**

Olley describes her journey and how her networking led her to a career as a Creative Producer at *Good Eye Deer* in Newcastle.

*Before I went to uni I was making short films and I studied acting at TAFE and theatre performance and things like that. So I knew I had the skills. I just wasn't quite sure how to get a job in the industry. So the Honours very much led me to doing some freelance things in Melbourne. I then met Gavin (Banks) through my Honours documentary. I was looking for a cinematographer and he was in my network, so we spoke about the project. He really liked the creative ideas that I'd imposed on the theme and how it ran across the story visually and that was the beginning of our professional relationship. In January 2012 Gavin had a big project on at Good Eye Deer, so I moved to Newcastle and quite luckily, walked straight out of uni into a job.*

*I guess I’m motivated by how far we can take Good Eye Deer. Within three years we've been recognised nationally and internationally for our work which is great. So I’m applying some of the strategies that have been put into place for our corporate work to help build the entertainment side of the business. So, at the minute, business strategy and creative*
development is really inspiring me. And I think because I studied Screenwriting I really value the development process.

In 2015, Olley also managed a 12-month initiative called the Newcastle Writer’s Room which allowed local script writers to test their script ideas and receive peer feedback to help them develop their ideas into a pitch document for film producers.

I’m running the Newcastle Writers’ Room - where scripted content is being developed either internally for Good Eye Deer or as a free service to other screenwriters in the area. Running the Writers Room is great as it allows me to flex my muscles as a writer and a producer.

*Good Eye Deer* operates from a co-working office space in the heart of Newcastle called *The Production Hub*. Launched in August 2014, *The Production Hub* is a low-cost way for small digital agencies or digital creatives to work in the CBD with like-minded professionals.

So I think while co-working spaces are very popular across the world I think it’s also a new concept and people are still trying to work it out if they want to enter such a working environment. For example, we’re an open-plan co-working office and that ‘open-ness’ frightens some owners who are used to working behind closed doors. But I certainly don’t think that anyone in here is out to steal another person’s creative IP.

The day before we officially launched in August 2014 I sold the last two desks. And since then, we’ve had people come and go due to a range of circumstances - my favourite reason for why people leave is because they grow their business. We’ve seen one person take his business from just himself to a staff of six. He’s now running from his own office and has around 10 employees. It’s exciting because in some way, we were able to help that business grow.

They love it. They love it. We have clients who, in the normal structure of the relationship, we would go to them, but often they want to come to us as they’ve heard of *The Pro Hub* and want to see it. It’s great, a lot of people say ‘wow’ when they walk in the door - which of course is fantastic as the Hub reflects Good Eye Deer’s brand.

In 2015 there were 15 desk spaces for contractual lease, with 12 occupied. Though this is in a state of flux with contracts ending or being renewed. The Production Hub Website provides information including rates and options. Most of the clients reside in Newcastle with head offices elsewhere so fast internet speed is extremely important. Some clients are individual freelancers while others are employees working remotely.

We have incredible people working here with a range of skills from software development and graphic design to professional services such as property development. Many people who work here are working with companies outside of Newcastle. This includes a senior designer of a Sydney-based media agency and a project manager for a South Australian not-for-profit.

There is a girl who three days a week works for a digital agency in Sydney but she lives here in Newcastle and then the other two days a week she freelances for her own design business. There is another client who is the senior designer for his own Sydney-based company and he lives in Newcastle with his family. One day a week he will travel to Sydney to keep in contact with his staff and his clients. Another client does property development. He used to work for a large Newcastle-based property development firm and he has gone out on his own. And another client who works for a not-for-profit in Adelaide. So, it’s the digital age.

**Creative Futures**

Olley came to live in Newcastle after living in London and Melbourne and her original perception was that Newcastle offered a great beach culture. She has watched the city transform over the last few years.
I think the city has a great vibe at the moment. I absolutely love seeing the initiatives like Hit the Bricks graffiti weekend - it's great to walk around the city and see such inspiring art work. I loved the TINA Festival when I first came here and am enjoying seeing that blossom. I'm loving seeing the cafes and bars popping up, just because that brings people to the city. And it's great to see so many people get behind Newcastle and support its growth and help it succeed as a creative city.

I've also discovered that in Newcastle I have the opportunity to do something that I cannot do in Melbourne and that is actively contribute to transitioning the city and that excites me beyond belief. At first, I struggled with Newcastle, you know, it's hard to buy shoes in the CBD, there's no supermarket near Hunter St Mall, those kinds of things are a bit annoying, but the people who are helping the CBD grow are just great and I love that the city is small enough for you to get to know who's doing what and you can easily call them up for a coffee - and that's great!

### Creative Entrepreneurship

There are all sorts of project management tools that you can have but when you run a small business, there is a bit of trial and error to work out how to put efficient systems in place. We usually have about four projects on the go. My goal at the minute is to work out how to not only manage these projects, [but to] improve the quality of the product we're delivering and improve our internal systems of communication and workflow. I'm also working on creating more time to pursue the next step and the next evolution for our company.

My goal right now is to structure the business so that it is sustainable without losing quality. It's been hard for us to find staff who have attention to detail at the level we require but we're getting there and as we grow our staff (or contractors) grow with us, learning more about how we function as a company and what our expectations are.

### Creative Products

*Good Eye Deer* produced the PCYC Traffic Offender intervention project in 2014, and Olivia describes the series and why it was such a key piece of work for their business:

*We not only delivered on brief, we saw it as a breakthrough piece for Good Eye Deer as the client was giving us creative freedom from beginning to end.*

The project was a 7-part educational series where traffic offenders in NSW we ordered by court to attend the program. When tendering for the project, we proposed a personal-story, documentary-style approach rather than the scare tactic approach that was currently in place. Each episode had to cover a certain module of training with titles such as The Accident Scene, The Legal System, The Police Force, Driving Facts, etcetera. Gavin and I worked hard to secure 12 state-wide government departments including Police New South Wales, Ambulance New South Wales, Corrective Services, The Judiciary System and NDARC.

The biggest achievement for me as a producer was producing an accident scene with only 24 hours-notice. I wasn’t sure if Ambulance Media was going to approve the concept or the script, but at the last minute our approval came through, and we filmed one of the most visually exciting moments in the series. I then secured two actors, 12 extras, two police, two police cars, the two paramedics and the ambulance vehicle and a private country road to film the ‘crash’.

The whole project took 12 months (part -time) to produce. We filmed in prison, in a courtroom, inside a police car and ambulance vehicle, plus we captured amazing, emotional stories from victims of road trauma, experts and convicted perpetrators.

By 2015, that series has won one state, three national and two international awards.
What’s next?

Olley is a creative producer working full time for Good Eye Deer but also managing The Production Hub co-working spaces. She is committed to building Good Eye Deer’s reputation as a business that offers high-net worth projects and she joins Gavin Banks in his interests to pursue episodic television made in the region.
ELECTRONIC GAMES AND INTERACTIVE CONTENT

76. CAMERON BAKER, INTERACTIVE GAMES DEVELOPER,

28 November 2016

Creative Careers

I work in game development. I’m a graduate in the field and work for a Sydney firm but from home in Newcastle.

I had to move from Newcastle to Sydney - at Newcastle Uni training in game production was pretty well non-existent. I needed to get some of that under my belt and that was only available in Sydney. And then, staying in Sydney was safety because there are no opportunities in Newcastle. I knew people getting jobs down here. Getting a job was organized through networking. I knew a couple of people and got some projects, then I moved around a bit and picked up a couple of projects, most of which had a bit of weird technology – augmented reality type games. Educational. Then some solution work.

But now I have left and come home. The pool of opportunities in Sydney is limited. Most of the big players have left.

Creative Futures

In Australia, working in gaming means a variety of things - generally any interactive technology. That can encompass anything from traditional games to mobile games and apps, to installations at museums and exhibitions.

For gaming, museum stuff is a big market – we’ve just finished a major project at the Powerhouse. The last big installation job we had was for ANZ. We do a lot of automotive shows in America – installations and interactives. That’s probably the biggest market we cater for.

In the US there are more opportunities because the market itself is just that much bigger. It’s kind of strange because Australia has really always been post-production.

What’s next?

In terms of personal goals, the industry in Australia isn’t there for big-budget games. So, I’m trying to get as much experience as I can – building up my portfolio and skill set to make me a more attractive recruit for an overseas company.

I probably get most motivated when I get to work on something completely creative; when I get a lot of game design work. Or really tricky work, something that’s going to be a lot of fun for people.

77. KAREN BLACKMORE, IT ACADEMIC

Senior Lecturer, University of Newcastle, 21 September 2016

Creative Career

Dr. Blackmore is a senior lecturer in Information Technology at the University of Newcastle and undertakes research in the use of simulations in immersive, virtual worlds and its efficacy for training purposes. She started as a map maker with a focus on I.T., beginning work as a spatial scientist in environmental management and undertaking post graduate study in climate change.
Creative Labour

The use of simulations and virtual worlds is becoming widespread.

I have a particular interest in finding ways to establish the efficacy of simulation as a means of teaching skills, particularly for people who will be placed into dangerous situations or where life can hang in the balance if decisions are poorly made.

With increasingly sophisticated software easily available globally, and with the skills to use it now readily available through its similarities to the gaming phenomenon, the critical issue is efficacy and how do you measure that.

Creative Futures

This region has considerable depth of skills in the application of these technologies to training. However, career opportunities will not reside in gaming as the world is full of unemployed game developers. Unity make their game engines free and it’s what every little kid wants to do. Furthermore, the nature of that work force is entirely project based. So, the future here is not in gaming. But in simulation – absolutely. Totally. It’s ongoing so it encapsulates many of the skills we see in game development, particularly in asset generation – that kind of thing. But simply because of the co-location of Hunter Medical Research Institute, the Coal Rescue and Defence in this region, we have the benefit of specific industry-based development. What we have is a unique opportunity to create a hub that is broader based.

What’s next?

We would like to establish a Simulation Training Centre, not to innovate and create new product or commercialise it. But we see the need to really understand the efficacy of training based on these approaches – how does it work best? How can you be sure that people are really learning what they need to know?”

78. TIM DAVIDSON, VR AND 3D ANIMATOR

Visualise Media and Virtual Perspective 21 July 2016

Creative Career

Tim Davidson completed a bachelor of multi-media design and majored in digital, virtual heritage and archaeology. His company Visualised Media specialises in 3D animation and in virtual and augmented reality. He has been working for himself for about 18 months although he has been working in the industry of animation for about 10 years for other people. He has recently teamed up with Ivan Demidov to deliver Virtual Reality solutions.

CI Business

My core business is called Visualised Media – which is a 3D animation company. Visual Perspective takes this into a broader field which we can do by bringing in Ivan’s skills.

Basically, we work for clients. We feel secure in the finances. Outside of what we have already been paid, the pipeline is enormous now for us so that is good. We do need to get some further finances in, so we can grow the business to handle what is out there to be done. That’s the problem – there’s so much work that it’s sometimes hard to keep up. We keep our overheads as low as possible, so we can afford to do research and development and keep prices low for our clients. We don’t want to just give our services to the BHP’s and Rio Tintos. We want the guy like my friend who is a bike builder to be able to use our services.
Creative Entrepreneurship

The decision to go out on my own was easy. I was working with a large engineering company, and then went overseas for 2.5 years when I was working in Europe. When I came back to Australia the mining engineering industry had completely dried up. When I was looking for work, several places said ‘we’re interested in your skills but we’re not hiring anyone to do that specifically. Several people told me that if I started my own business they might be very interested. I was doing industrial visualization and that’s what led me to start my own business.

Professional indemnity is important because we’re representing a client’s concept. And if that is misrepresented it could have ramifications for them and for us. You must have basic public liability – if someone puts it on and falls over or has an epileptic fit (from using V.R.). It is also important that we maintain a high-level health and safety plan because it’s very important that everyone who puts that head set on knows that there are certain risks because you can’t see anything when you put it on – you are absorbed by your surroundings. When you are wearing headphones you sometimes can’t hear anything either.

Creative Networking

When Ivan and I met, he was working on 3D technology from a programming perspective and I was working on 3D scenes – that’s what I do, I build scenes. We were a perfect match – so we started working together. I build scenes and then Ivan works with them for the VR.

We work with others to increase our capabilities – we work with a guy in Sydney who does 3D scanning and photogrammetry. We also have contacts who do drone flyover footage. One of the things my other business does is to take that drone footage and I superimpose a 3D object building on drone footage. That allows real estate companies to show their investors what the building will look like when it is finished, when it is in that location with the existing cityscape around it.

We work with others - mainly 3D scanning through other companies that offer that. The same with photography – we don’t personally do it. I don’t have the eye of a professional photographer. The same with drones – there are a lot of people out there with drones now and we thought about getting into it, but we thought why take business away from them when we could be working on a project with them and then we don’t have to learn to fly a drone with CASA approval. Better to work and make money together.

It’s about forming an eco-system so that as a community we’re not always competing. It’s one of the first things Ivan and I said together. We could compete with one another but then you’ve got two people offering two sub-par products. Why not come together and make a much better service?

Creative Products

We’re working on one project right now that is a site hazard checklist for an engineering firm. They worked with notebooks to write things and then had to go back to the office and write it all up. With what we are developing, they can take photos, record audio with some text. Then as soon as they tap send, it emails the site coordinator with everything they have identified.

We have also developed a system where the phone can recognise a landscape or a building rather than requiring a code.

So, we will develop anything from basic CRM to a full-fledged game. If someone came to us and said, ‘I’ve got this game idea’, if someone is willing to pay for it, we’ll do it.

What’s next?
I have a history interest. One of the other ideas that I’ve got is to set up training facility as well and rather than being a typical training facility – where people pay to do a course – I would rather set up something where people are sponsored – people from an underprivileged area or difficult life situations where people maybe can’t afford to do a course or maybe they can’t get into Uni for some reason or other.

One of my long-term visions – I have spent a lot of time in the Balkans – my wife grew up in Croatia and Bosnia – we have a heart for those regions. Bosnia has 50% unemployment so one of my visions is to start a secondary office over there because I speak the language after living there for a while and to have a training facility there, for unemployed people to be sponsored to be trained and then for those who make the grade, to employ them in the office over there with a proportion of what we are doing here to then go to operating costs of that facility. A way of giving back to the world.

79. IVAN DEMIDOV, VR AND 3D ANIMATOR

Virtual Perspectives and Demidov Innovations 21 July 2016

Creative Career

Ivan Demidov is Principal in his own business - Demidov Innovations which is about 4 years old. He has recently teamed up with Tim Davidson to deliver virtual reality solutions through the company “Virtual Perspectives.”

My training was I.T. all the way. I went to TAFE and studied systems administration. I went to Sydney as a career move to get a bit of a leg up, but I’ve been in the industry for over 10 years now, all the way from technical support to developing software, and I’ve built my capabilities through a mixture of industry qualifications and experiences – things like the Cisco -certified qualifications and Microsoft qualifications. Being self-taught and watching the sausage being built so to speak, I thought I could probably do better if I had control over the process. And I’ve been proving myself right ever since.

CI Business

Tim and I operate three different businesses out of this workshop. The three businesses reflect how our story happened. I have Demidov Innovations which is an IT technology company. Together, we provide services through Virtual Perspectives. Working together, I work to build the engine and Tim makes them look good, so we bring together visualisation and fly-through or walk through. Smart phone app development too. That ties in with virtual and augmented reality – because that’s what those apps do.

As a small business, we do everything – some things we’d rather be doing than others. The thing is, that when you are a small business, you are focusing on lots of things, I think it helps you to become better at your focus areas. You have to use your brain in areas that you would never have to do in a big machine, you have to take the blinkers off to see a much grander perspective.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Because a lot of the time entrepreneurs or small businesses, particularly the ones I work for, they have a lot of big ideas, but they don’t know how to implement them. Or it is too expensive or too difficult to do. So, that’s where we come in. We build custom software, custom solutions, all sorts of random things you would think weren’t possible, but when you sit down in a room and someone says, I’ve got this problem, there’s usually a technical solution. So, all they need to do is ask the question.
For me, I always felt that unlike working in large organisations, in small businesses even doing similar types of stuff, it was as if I had more control over what was going on. I could effect change to improve the process or people’s experience or stability – or whatever it happened to be, because big organisations take a long time to turn around. They are big machines that take a long time to change direction. I thought, knowing what I know about how all that works, and knowing what I can do – knowing what my capabilities are, if I could apply those things to small business in the Hunter I could make a difference, so I thought ‘why not?’ So, that’s what I did.

What would help companies like us would be something that brings in awareness of companies like ours. You can have the best capabilities in the world or the best service but if you don’t know about it it’s not going to do anyone any good. We’ve been battling to get the message out that virtual reality is out there and that it is easy to do, and we are doing it here in the Hunter. If there was a way to let start-ups show their work – because everyone I talk to – capital was their problem. A way of raising funds in other ways so start-ups don’t have to pay so much, because some of the trade shows out there are very expensive. It would mean some guy who’s got a great idea and is working from his shed, could come and share his idea with the world without needing to mortgage his house.

Working in a small business is so much more rewarding. You may not make as much money, guaranteed income but being a start-up is exciting. I wake up every day and look forward to going to work. And I talk to my mates and they wake up every day and think – oh I don’t want to go to work today.

Creative Networking

We met at DASH – a concept launch for the DANTIA co-working space. We had both been commissioned to do projects for them separately (a virtual reality walk-through plus a 3D fly-through of something else they were working on) and we were invited along.

Creative Labour

We work mainly on our own with external collaborators or use others who have specialist skills. We have an intern starting with us in a few weeks, so we can teach her all these things we do so she can do it herself and then go on to maybe end up working for us one day. We would like to get to a stage where we could employ people who are also passionate about this technology. And have an office, like the company on the Central Coast that is pretty well the largest host provider in Australia now. Started out on a garage on the Central coast – so that is possible now.

I think I would also love to see learning institutions like TAFE or the University get in touch with local businesses and rather than seeing local R and D businesses almost as a competitor, viewing us as an asset to their community. We’re in Newcastle. We’re proud to be in Newcastle. We’re proud of having a University here and we’d love to see more collaboration between local entrepreneurial businesses and academics because those academics can bring a wealth of knowledge to the businesses and apply that knowledge in the industry field. And I’d like to see more work experience programs with local businesses taking in students. When I left Uni, I couldn’t get a job because I couldn’t get experience and I couldn’t get experience because I couldn’t get a job. A vicious cycle. It took me six months out of Uni to get a job. Once I got a job it wasn’t a problem after that. For me, I went around businesses and said I’d work for them for two weeks without pay – doing a minor job. All I want is a reference. Once I got enough of those, I was okay. That’s how I got my first job.
What’s next?

We are interested in pursuing technical areas allowing people to review something that has happened and then to be able to re-build the scene and watch the incident such as an emergency ‘take place’, to see the variables. It may help them to see the missing pieces, or to consider an alternative scenario. Because humans think in spatial terms – abstract concepts are hard to visualize. That’s the sort of things this can help with. Reading history through a textbook, or talking about mathematics – things like vectors, you can just create a program that you could spend five minutes in and you would instantly get it. It has great potential for training.

80. MATTHEW FARRELLY, VR AND SERIOUS GAMES

NSW Mines Rescue Services, 26 April 2016

Creative Career

Matthew Farrelly is a team leader at NSW Mines Rescue Services which is a division of Coal Services NSW.

My basic training was in I.T. I then ran my own consultancy, so I had responsibility for all aspects of a small company – finances, the projects, the customers. Over time, I found I had an increasing interest in R&D and from there into the emerging field of virtual reality. I was able to leverage the skills I had developed and these new and interests to join CSIRO as a VR technician. From there I moved to Mines Rescue Services where the training programs include virtual reality simulations. The CSIRO experience let me bring together the entrepreneurial mindset of a small business operator with enterprise level understanding of governance. I think that’s what all companies are after.

CI Business

Mines Rescue Services sits within an industry/union organisation that can proudly lay claim to having built the NSW mining industry as the safest in the world.

Coal Services NSW, the parent body, has recognised the central place of innovative training alongside its mandatory roles of compliance, regulation, insurance and health and welfare.

Creative Products

This team delivers programs to 100% of NSW miners within what we term the ‘knowledge triangle’ – information, skills and problem solving. We have repeatedly won awards. Our strength lies in linking an understanding of learning to the use of IT and creative scenarios built into Virtual Reality, as a tool.

We don’t know if there is a perfect way of training, so we need to be able to meet our mission which is to protect mine workers. But a proportion of my time can be spent looking over the fence to see what else could be done - we should always be open to something new.

There are about 300 people in Mines Rescue. Our trainers have 10, 20 or 30 years of experience in the industry so they have street cred. We have classrooms for knowledge transfer. Then we have practical training done underground in our simulator where people can light a fire and put a real one out; or pick a person up and put them on a stretcher. It looks and feels like a mine – that’s the practical tasks – you need the muscle memory. You want people to know what smoke smells like, to know the heat from the fire, what it feels like to use an extinguisher. It’s resource intensive but you have to do it.
Then we’ve got V.R. which fills the gap to safe practices … where people can fight 20 virtual fires in different circumstances … so they can react quickly if something goes wrong.

Creative IP

Because of the safety achievements of the NSW mining industry, Mines Rescue operates in a global environment. The I.P. that has been developed is recognised as significant.

When you go to other countries it’s very different. In fact, we’ve had most other countries come over to look at our systems. You know an incident will happen – Chile, or America. Or a Russian mine blows up or in Turkey a flood. So, they check out what other countries are doing.

And who is the safest? Australia. But for Russia or some places in Europe – they can’t replicate what we have here – the regulations and so on. There’s too big a gap to cross. Or for places like Turkey - they come across to learn but they can’t bridge the gap of technology and skills.

In 2011, we had 16 teams from all over the world here for safety training. They could come into the facility and be entirely surrounded in the V.R. facility. The Polish team won the competition even though they didn’t speak English. It’s that good. That’s what we can offer.

Creative Futures

When we started ten years ago. V.R. was much like playing a video – simple and rigid, but still better than NOT playing a video.

Then came second generation where in effect we had a whole Lego box but every time we wanted to do something new, we had to construct a whole scenario and build the assets from scratch. To deal with that, we built the environment once and just changed the assets.

Then came third generation. We took the assets and broke them into small blocks but even then, we had to keep going back and having it hard coded – we still needed to control each scenario and still needed a programmer to compile things.

So, there was one step to go. We felt the user should be able to make their own scenarios. It was like in the old days when you had a specialist who knew how to make a presentation and they did it for you. And then Microsoft developed PowerPoint and you think ‘where has this been all my life?’ So that became the gold standard - an agnostic tool that lets people create assets and drag and drop things around. Easy to use. You don’t need skills – you just drag the asset around - paint something here; put a truck over there and then ‘set’ it on fire. Or maybe put in a guy who’s collapsed. We can do that in real time now which allows the users themselves to create the story. That’s fourth generation. That will let us use our skills to work with other people to develop V.R. solutions to their training needs.

What’s next?

This team has spent 10 years developing software to reach the point where we now run 4 major installations using underground ‘mines’; projection domes and 360° immersion technology.

Our next steps will be to develop partnerships with Universities and other industries where our skills with virtual reality can be used.
81. EMMA LEGGETT, DIGITAL MARKETER & WEB DEVELOPER

28 November, 2016

Creative Career

*I work as a producer in a traditional and digital marketing company, currently in Sydney but moving back home to Newcastle. I studied interactive entertainment, but I work in a digital agency with marketing material - website production, and videos and website assets. Creative content for a brand. My role is a producer. I’m kind of management for the creatives.*

CI Business

*We work with large and varied clients, a lot of print ads and web-sites for banks, luxury cars. We have recently done some work for a gaming publisher – promotional stuff. My market is more traditional or with companies who want to do more digital work.*

*My personal goal is to work with gaming focus companies. I might have to go overseas, but I’d like to work in games production, marketing production. At the moment I am gathering experience in production.*

*I think I’m most motivated when my team is happy. When all the creative people in my team are getting a chance to be creative and to enjoy themselves. Otherwise, when we are working on a brief that is different – doing something different for a client. That also makes me motivated.*

*I graduated from a Sydney university, so I left Newcastle a while ago. But I remember at the beginning it was very stressful, trying to find a job because they wanted juniors with two or three years’ experience. I applied for a lot of different jobs. I got lucky because I know people from Uni who still don’t have a job in the industry. Being in Sydney there are a lot of bills to pay and if you are in a casual job it’s stressful. But I was lucky, I got my job and have been holding onto it.*

What’s next?

*I am thinking of leaving Sydney because there aren’t many games opportunities here. I am coming back to Newcastle to live but I’m still going to work in Sydney. If I have to live somewhere in Australia, I think I’d prefer Melbourne. There might be opportunities there in the games industry. Living expenses, and commute times and crowds and being very competitive for jobs makes Sydney not very desirable any more.*

82. JAMES VIDLER, I.T. CONSULTANT & MUSICIAN

Chair Hunter DiGiT 23 January 2015

Creative Career

*My professional training was in I.T. where I have worked at a senior corporate level and as a consultant to industry. My ‘love’, however, has always been music.*

*I’ve been a music practitioner since I was a teenager. I make modest amounts of money from my live work, but not from publishing. That’s what I would like to do – be a professional musician. I did aspire to be a ‘rock star’ in my 20s. But there was a point when I didn’t want that life anymore. I wanted certainty. So, I made other choices.*

CI Business
The company I work for now has operated for 30 years across Australia providing I.T. services to develop and grow businesses.

I.T. systems are essential in business today. Unfortunately, not all problems can be solved that way.

I sometimes feel like asking customers, “What say you get a bit more innovative with your business process rather than just ask I.T. to solve it?” “How about you ring people up to ask them? That would be innovative.” It’s not always an I.T. solution that is needed.

Creative Labour

In I.T. there is a clear process, which is different to how I approach music. Both are creative in their own way; outcomes are achieved in quite different ways.

In I.T. there was always a clear process: a scope, then a business analysis leading to a functional specification, then onto a minimum viable product (MVP) which would become a project with milestones and maybe 18 months later a product. Now, it’s ‘AGILE’ where you build the MVP and then develop it further, maybe going back to fix earlier versions. Then you bundle it up to deliver early benefit but keep building.

In music, I start with an acoustic guitar in my hand. Playing. Fiddling about. The MVP is when you can sit down and hum something in your head. It’s when you record it that it becomes something. And then when it’s almost finished you spend just as much time on the last 5% as you did on the first 95% - getting it exactly the way you want. That’s a compulsive, obsessive thing, it’s never finished. At some point you just stop.

Creative I.P.

I have an open mind on the Intellectual Property debate in the digital age.

I.P. is similar to privacy – it’s on its last legs. Especially in the digital space. You can’t patent Spotify – none of these things – it’s all about first mover. Who does it at the beginning – the first mover. But there will always be the second mover – the person who comes around with a lot more.

What’s next?

I think I will continue as I am – working in I.T. and enjoying the smaller wins with my music. There are many opportunities in the digital age but there are also high risks. I don’t think I’m the personality type that can put $50,000 into something. I look at my wife and kids and think - you know, this could be a sinkhole that could ruin us, and I can’t. A certain type of person can do it. I’m not that type of person.
ARCHITECTURE

83. EDWARD DUC, ARCHITECT
Duc Associates, 24 March 2014

Creative Career

Architecture is a degree-based profession. Edward Duc began his training at the University of Newcastle but transferred to University of NSW as a part-time student. While still a student, he worked with some famous Australian architects – Allen, Jack and Cottier and Harry Seidler. However, where they concentrated on design, he focused on structural and construction issues, completing a Masters in Urban Design. Now, with a strong interest in cities he is undertaking research towards a doctorate in housing systems, believing that in the construction industry there are problems with productivity, quality and cost. He is committed to a career model where people are employed on a permanent basis, not under casualised working conditions.

Creative Futures

Edward’s choice of a career as an architect was serendipitous. His father insisted he become an architect and fortunately, he loved it. For him, cities are interesting places. He believes Newcastle suffers because of its proximity to Sydney, a huge metropolis, and hopes that Newcastle can get a better deal and make a place where kids are happy to stay. A considers that a perennial issue for architects is the relationship with Councils and Governments with the consequent barriers and resistance to change. “They constrain creativity and create costs.”

Another issue is the cost of insurance which is an expensive minefield and liability never ceases.

Creative Networking

Edward holds the view that with architecture things are better now than they have historically been and that Newcastle architects now influence other places. He argues that the creative industries will keep growing here, partly because in a smaller place you can have influence. Art, music, architecture and IT – he sees that they are all prominent here.

In I.T., as in architecture, we respond to a problem. I don’t think that’s necessarily true in music or sculpture. For architecture, there’s a problem. You need to get a brief, then break it down. Find out what the real question is. Seek an answer to the real question.

The I.T. stuff that is around now to support architectural work is just amazing with technology enabling 3D renderings and a program for building management.

Asked about client feedback, the answer was succinct. ‘They pay your bill. They are happy or not happy.’ Regarding whether architects feel pressure to develop creative and innovative solutions, the answer was pragmatic – ‘Not really, because you are solving a problem. Every project is different, so every solution is different.’

84. DEBRA MCKENDRY- HUNT, ARCHITECT

Creative Career

Debra McKendry-Hunt has been a practising architect for twenty years. At the time of the interview, she was Chair of the Australian Institute of Architects, Newcastle Division, and an Associate member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architect. She is the Principal at McKendry-Hunt Architects in
Newcastle. Debra has worked as a Senior Architect and Associate Director for two large local architectural practices, DWP Suters and EJE Architects.

She graduated from the University of Newcastle in 1990, and became a registered architect in 1996. In 2002 she opened her own architectural firm called McKendry Hunt Architects. Situated in Bar Beach, Debra works out of her studio office and employs one draftsperson.

**Creative Industries Business**

In her boutique practice Debra offers architectural services for commercial and residential work and has designed a multi-story building in Belmont. Working in a small firm has meant the company undertakes a diverse volume of work. Often architects end up specializing in one area because they understand the specificities and compliance issues for that type of building or area, she considers. For these reasons, Debra only works with local clients. It could be said that she is becoming a specialist for the Newcastle region. Having broad industry experience, she has chosen to work locally, and this gives her great scope as an architect where she is able to work on large commercial projects as well as designing childcare centres, houses and doing office fit outs. Debra points out that:

> Newcastle has strong conservation management plans in place in Cooks Hill, Hamilton South and Newcastle East. That requires the services of an architect to try and bring it together. It's a lot more complex than just working on a house that is outside a heritage conservation area.

**Creative Labour**

Debra explains that architects work to long time frames with projects being in gestation for a year or longer. Architects design buildings for specific sites. They are constantly complying with various regulations and codes – council regulations, building codes and approvals, clients’ briefs and the geographical specifications of the site.

> I really think that every site, whether it's a house, office building or apartments, the structure should be designed for that site, for that environment, for that brief. It's not something that you can transport to another site.

Once the construction process begins Debra becomes a superintendent over the contract and undertakes site visits and site inspections as she knows the ‘design process continues during construction’.

> For feedback, client satisfaction is first. We also give clients a 3D program to explore the building project - like a play station to walk through, turn layers off, go inside and check it all out. That gives you real feedback at the point you need it.

**Creative Networking**

Some of my personal goals relate to my role with the Institute of Architects. I like to give back, to recognise the wider issues facing the profession. Policy and regulation are becoming more and more complex, but technology is making it easier.

The Registration Board tells us 98% of registered architects in NSW work within ninety minutes of Sydney. It’s amazing how many are in Newcastle - I think maybe 15 or 20 practices.

I’m concerned about where training is heading with less emphasis on technical skills. In architecture, people work as a team - a surveyor, a geo-tech engineer, a structural engineer - so you must talk knowledgeably to those professions as well as having design and aesthetics. I also don’t think that it’s good for Australia, or for quality, that so many big practices outsource work to places like the Philippines.

Motivation is a funny thing. I get a bit antsy, a bit irritated if I haven’t got a design project going. Something about that hand-to-eye thing where you can just sit and sketch and work...
something out. If I’ve got all my projects in the construction phase (which is stressful with paperwork and contractual things) – I need something else to balance it.

In architecture, there is often strong lineage – third generations even, and strong collaborative networks. Nurturing young women coming into the profession is a challenge. The participation rate is low. Maybe 50% representation in University translates to less than 30% in practice and even less than that become registered. There is a lack of flexibility and the early workloads are unworkable. It is difficult for women with a caring role.

My work as an architect is creative because it is context driven. A building must sit comfortably in its setting as well as being functional and appealing – translating that to a form is creative. In Australia people want identity, character and self-expression – not cookie-cutter designs.

A video interview was recorded with Debra McKendry-Hunt and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.

85. CASSIE STRONACH, ARCHITECT

Group D Creative - Architect, interior designer, installation art, 7 May 2014

Creative Career

Cassie Stronach is a born and bred Novocastrian. She studied architecture at the University of Newcastle and worked in Sydney after her degree. Cassie explains why she moved back:

I moved back to Newcastle from Sydney to be part of this city’s history and my family’s history. I became an architect through watching my father, my grandfather and my great grandfather.

When Cassie moved back to Newcastle she set up a collaborative working space for built environment professionals, called D-Space.

Creative Industries Business

I am a sole trader working in architecture, building design, interior design, art. I’ve got one more exam to be a registered architect. I started in the industry because my family has been involved in building and development.

Creative Products

A lot of my projects come from good relationships with real estate agents. We would like to get into bespoke buildings with developers who will spend a bit more and really craft things. Development gives a better financial return because architecture is a service industry and we quote a lump sum. Whereas with development – the better you set it up, and the better quality you deliver, that can affect financial return and you have more control of the creation.

For feedback, I just like to see happy clients and get a nice result. While we are all used to working with engineers, I’m find I’m getting artists involved now. Finding creative solutions is one of the biggest pressures because creativity is not on tap.

Creative Networking

There are two sides to the creative industries I think – the creative professionals and the creative spirits - the artists. I have the two degrees in architecture but as for experience - I am still a bit naive. But I know who to talk to - Newcastle Now, The Institute and the Business
Centre and I’ve got a good accountant. I also run a co-working space for six professional people in related fields.

Newcastle is a city where – wow, there is so much happening. It’s small enough here that you can make a mark, get to know people and make things happen.

I love what I do. I get a lot of energy from good clients.

Creative Entrepreneurship

I think of the creative industries as those that deal with the arts or creation of things. It also crosses into the building industry, film, music, graphics, media and marketing. It’s hard to define and there’s a lot of trial and error as there is no backbone to the creation side of things. Time management is always a problem.

Insurance is onerous and expensive. There are a lot of guides for architects – development control plans, State and local LEPs, the building code and Australian Standards. Technology helps.

A video interview was recorded with Cassie Stronach and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
Creative Careers

Simone Bailey was raised in Merriwa in the Upper Hunter Valley of New South Wales and has worked in Sydney.

I’ve worked in the legal industry. I did consider getting a Diploma in Law. I was a secretary/paralegal for many years, and I went so far as to attend the University of Sydney and get the enrolment forms, and wrote my name out and then thought ‘What the hell am I doing? I don’t want to be a lawyer, I want to be a writer.

After receiving several awards for short stories, she decided to tackle the novel and today has three published books:

I’m an author. And I have three published novels and the fourth one in the process of edit. I’ve always loved writing and always been a creative person but my background’s criminal law, and currently working in the care industry to help subsidise myself as a writer and help feed my kids.

Creative Products


Creative Labour

It’s something I’ve always enjoyed doing. I started writing pretty much as soon as I knew how to structure a sentence and I’ve always loved to create with words, and when I was about six I used to write first person narratives from the point of view of my father’s horse, which used to go out and save people. I used to write these little stories when I was a kid. And my mum always, and dad too, always encouraged me to do it and I realised through school that English was my forte and I had a bit of a knack for doing this, and when I was in my early 20s I enrolled in playwriting groups. I was always involved with the Australian Theatre for Young People as well and I did playwriting courses, and work on a few projects with people, and over the years became more serious about getting into my writing, and eventually, I’d enter little, I was in writing groups and I’d enter short story contests and won a few awards through those, and eventually tackled the Everest being the novel, and eventually completed one and went through the Australian Publishers Association directory and I think the very last entry, being Zeus are the ones who took me on...

Simone describes the edit she is now doing on her fourth book: ‘I’ve just received the edited manuscript from the publisher so I’m going back and forth with her about what’s to be done with it.’ Simone’s editor is based in Queensland:

She’s emailed me the edited manuscript and that makes it very easy, and I’m just going through it now to see anything she’s missed or anything I don’t like that she’s done. I’ll do some more work on that tomorrow, and then I’ll give her a list of corrections I want her to make and she’ll do them and send me the re-edited manuscript. Then I’ll have to go through it again and find more things that I missed the first time around. This is the very tedious part of a book that I hate. But it’s got to be done, it’s important. And they do a bit of promotion, the publishing house they do what promotions they can. They don’t sell paperbacks overseas
because it’s not worth the freight cost for them, but they do have overseas buyers for E-books.

87. PETER CARLIN, DESIGNER AND GALLERY OWNER

Murrurundi, 29 August 2016

Creative Career:

Peter Carlin has a background in industrial design, having trained in Copenhagen, Denmark. He worked as an industrial designer throughout Asia and Australia. In 2007 he moved into marketing and design, and management of design when he moved to Murrurundi as a city escapee and he now owns and runs an art gallery called Haydon Hall.

I was fortunate enough to have a mother who made a study of us four children, so she turned the shed into an arts studio for me as a young child, so I could paint in there. Across the road we had an artist living, Roman Norman, who introduced me to oils and acrylics, and my background was water colours which I preferred. And Roman Norman had galleries in Newcastle, as my haunt as a child growing up. My grandfather, being Lord Mayor of Newcastle, got me involved very much in the Mattara Festival and he was going to the library and the art gallery ... so fortunately [I] had a background in art. My grandfather on my father’s side was an architect builder, or builder architect. So I've had this interest in art from early days and I knew from a very early day that was what I wanted to go into. I wasn’t one of these students finishing and saying, “What am I going to do?” I knew where I was heading, and that’s why I ended up in Copenhagen, Denmark, because there were no industrial design courses in Australia. I was very fortunate that they let me through there. And in the different places I’ve lived, I’ve always made sure I got involved with the arts community, When I was working up in New Guinea, I was very much involved in the villages and the arts self-help programs there.

CI Business

Haydon Hall offers art, design and cuisine: it has a gift shop and a restaurant/café as well as exhibition space. Built in 1937, Haydon Hall is on the New England Highway at Murrurundi and was originally the home of a branch of The Commercial Bank of Sydney. Established as an art gallery in 2007, it opens four days a week and showcases ceramics, paintings, glass and other art works from regional and national artists as well as holding special exhibitions throughout the year. The gift shop sells jewellery, gift cards and handmade paper from Australian and international designers.

The gallery attracts those people who are travelling through Murrurundi. It’s half way between Moree and Sydney, and a lot of people travel from the New England region because the Hunter Express way offers a quicker route to Newcastle and Sydney.

People don’t buy small hobby farms anymore. They now buy hundreds and hundreds of acres for their hobby farm, and Armidale is just becoming one of the richest regional centres outside of Sydney, and of course those people are going to walk up to our gallery ... they’re buying art, they’re going to openings.

Just recently a husband and wife came into the Gallery from Armidale, and they’d never met us before. They walked down the back and the side way, they paid $14.60 for a cup of coffee and a cake each, and came in and bought a $1,500 painting. It was a local artist, and the thing was that they had no intention, it was an impulse purchase which is ideal.

Carlin describes how, as a regional gallery owner, he advertises:
It’s tricky in this area because we’re at the epicentre of three weather regions, several geographical regions, several tourist regions. You have those glossy quarterlies - you’ve got three of them now, the Hunter, the New England, and the Central West one, all vying to get advertising from the Upper Hunter, from the three Shires.

We don’t use newspapers at all very much because our area has a local radius, say from Tamworth to Muswellbrook which unfortunately takes in three newspapers, all owned by the same company but they won’t do a deal with me to do three ads at any special rate, so I’ve got to deal with each individual paper, at $358 an ad, a small ad. So, my mailing list of about 250 people at the present moment is more valuable.

The Upper Hunter area takes in 11 different shires, and come right down to Muswellbrook, and goes across to Lake Macquarie. So what’s we’re finding now is that digital will cover down this way and a little bit up north, but a lot of our business are now coming from up north so the New England magazine is ideal for me. Because for $500 I can put an ad in there which will last for three months, and it’s a glossy magazine that people refer to.

What’s next?

Haydon Hall will continue to sell art and hold special exhibitions of local artists, with the mix of gift shop, café and gallery offering enough for the clientele passing through.

88. ANDREW ROSS DAVIS, ARTIST

Madmuralandy, 29 August 2016

Creative Career

Andrew is a freelance mural artist working on community art projects and murals. His past work includes a mural project for Overton Hours and the Oscar community mural at the Muswellbrook Workers Club. He uses acrylics, pencils and mixed media.

I do a number of different community projects across the region, mainly focussed around Aberdeen, Muswellbrook and Scone. I try to involve as many different people as I can from different organisations in the projects I do. Mainly mural-type projects on buildings or inside premises of some of the organisations I’ve worked with. I’ve worked with probably just over 30 organisations up here, mostly in the Upper Hunter.

Creative Labour

Andrew describes his educational experience:

I think my learning experience has been a bit of a different one. And I think it’s been pushed that way by two things. Firstly, being a first-generation immigrant to Australia - I moved over with my parents when I was about three. And also, being [on the] autistic spectrum, which has made some standard methods of learning difficult for me, like I’ve never been really good in a classroom sort of setting, or whatever, whereas I’ve learnt far more effectively doing what do you call it, distance education and things like that, and also learning visually. So currently I do most of my learning just from watching documentaries. Reading books, it rattles me, so I don’t do a lot of learning that way.

Andrew began a music degree at Canberra School of Music, but for health reasons he wasn’t able to complete it. His family moved to Geelong where he complete a Diploma of Accounting and Secretarial Studies where he received the student of the year award from TAFE.

Creative Networking
Andrew described local festivals as providing opportunities to showcase his work and connect with others:

... there’s also a lot of beautiful festivals for all the people travelling from Sydney and from further abroad, even from overseas, to attend like the Celtic Festival, the Festival of the Fleeces, the one at Scone, the horse festival, the Denman food and wine affair. There’s probably a few others, some of the young indigenous sort of festivals that they hold here as well. And I think [with] each of them it’s always difficult, yeah, like I say when you’re dealing with the committee they have limited funding and stuff, and quite often you end up in this setting footing a lot of the bill yourself to get your work out there ..., but I think as an artist you’d be more visible out here than if you were attempting to do the same thing in Sydney or Melbourne or something like that, because you’re competing with so many other people whose standard of their work is obviously very high.

Creative Products

My focus at the moment is ... town master plans which they’ve been doing in the Upper Hunter Shire. The Council handed me copies of these and I’m trying to find commonalities between the works that I’m doing, major works, and what they want to do to keep the towns alive after they’ve put highway bypasses through and stuff like that. So that’s a direction that I’m taking with that as proposals of works. And I do have some existing works that I’m doing that are, I guess, on the highway as well, in hope of sort of building culture and economy in small towns that are up here and stuff. I’m also (I originally come from a music background) writing musicals for schools and stuff like that, and recently I met another local author who might have an interest in doing a musical with me, so I might be doing a bit of that as well. And I’m also currently making a short film with a filmmaker from Newcastle about my arts practice, and specifically about disability, because myself being a sufferer of a disability, and how arts can help you manage that so that’s something we’re working on with a bit of assistance from ABC Open and mentoring from them to do that, yeah.

What’s next?

I am currently working on a sports-themed mural at Aberdeen. Mountains of red tape getting permissions from local sports teams, to represent their likeness. I guess the problem is I don’t look like a football player! I also have another opportunity in the pipeline, a sports organisation that are getting a container to store their equipment in, and they have to spend the whole grant and they got a big discount on the container, so I might be doing an artwork on the side of their container and it’ll be in a public space. I think arts sports collaborations are worth the effort. Sport is culture after all.

89. BRAD FRANKS, ART GALLERY DIRECTOR
Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, 29 August 2016

Creative Career:

Brad Franks is Manager of the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre. He grew up in Carlingford, then a low-income area of Sydney:

But you would get these little interventions and we had a couple of artists come and attempt to teach us impressionistic techniques in about fourth or fifth class. Anyway, it ... had a particularly big impact on me. Then I got to go to high school at The James [James Ruse Agricultural High School] in Carlingford, which was the complete opposite, with tons of money pouring in from the Department of Education, massive resources, money, TV studio,
cameras, lights, it was an extraordinary place to go to school in the 1970s because it was just, they were just pumping money into that school.

What he remembers most from high school was great art teachers.

CI Business

We’re owned and operated by Muswellbrook Shire Council, we’re a member of the Regional and Public Galleries Association of New South Wales. There’s nearly 50 regional galleries across New South Wales now, public galleries, public regional galleries. I have a very old-fashioned view of what a regional gallery should do. It should support artists in the local region, for us that’s Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shires. We should also link to our greater region, so we exhibit a couple of artists per year from the Lower Hunter, bring them up to the Upper Hunter, for our audience, which is predominantly locals, still. Not tourists. So we have to have a much bigger changeover of exhibitions than say a gallery in Sydney or Newcastle. We can’t have a show that lasts for six months. Because our audience will come a couple of times. We do a lot of selling shows, but we only sell local artists. It sounds harsh, but it depends a lot on pricing too. I mean we sell as part, and we’re a public gallery.

We bring in artists from Sydney. We bring in touring shows, etcetera, and sometimes touring shows will be works for sale. But most of the time those artists have an agent, they have a gallery in Sydney, another gallery in Melbourne, a gallery, whoever they are, and they have agents... it’s too hard to try and enter into commercial arrangements with those commercial galleries. They’re just too difficult to deal with.

The Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre manages the Muswellbrook Art Prize, one of the richest in Australia, which attracts entries from all over Australia. The Prize has been running since 1958 and offers over $70,000 in prize money including $50,000 for the Painting Prize. It is an annual, acquisitive prize which has contributed significantly to the gallery’s collection.

Creative Networking

In the Muswellbrook Regional Gallery as part of our exhibition program, Roger Skinner, a photographer from Scone, curated a couple of shows that utilised artists that he had found through the internet, through photography-specific sites that feature photographers from all over the world, it was called ‘Worlds Apart’. We had a photographer from Germany, a photographer from New Zealand and a photographer based in Ireland. And so, because we could, in the end, use the files to print from, for some of those works.

The internet does mean that the works can be sent electronically. We can print them here, put them on the wall or in the case of one of those three photographers they just sent a Blu-ray disc because they’re also a musician and so they accompanied their images with their own composition, electronic compositions, so that was, yeah, so that was the first of those shows. And there was another one featuring an artist from Eastern Europe too.

Franks represents the Aboriginal Community Development Fund (ACDF):

Well there’s also the Aboriginal dance as well. I mean I represent Muswellbrook and the ACF, the Aboriginal Community Development Fund, which ... is now in a state of transition, is withdrawing from the region virtually entirely. They’ve sold up to, they’ve sold the actual mine that relates to the land rights claim that relates to the ACF funding.

There are new players coming on board but that aside the ACF over a number of years now has been bringing up the people from NAISDA at Gosford, and bringing Bangarra dancers up into the schools and there’s been quite a number of Aboriginal kids have gone
from the high schools here in the Upper Hunter to ... NAISDA as well. So, there’s been a bit of fertilisation, cross stuff there as well in the dance thing.

When asked about his thoughts on Creative Industries, Franks said:

*I think the problem is we don’t have creative industries. We have uncreative industries, that is what we have now, and the creativity has been removed from everything over the past sort of 30 or 40 years, slowly but surely by an obsession with economics. And then there doesn’t seem to be any creativity in economics. I reckon creatives would be perfectly happy to make their money in a commercial way, if that was possible. And I think plenty of people do.*

**Creative Labour**

*If you look at the stats, less than 1% of Australian artists across the board, in music or whatever it is, make a full-time living out of their art. They all have a part-time job or whatever, they’re teaching, but ... if they’re lucky they’ve got a job like us that relates to what they like to do. But if they’re not so lucky then they’re still doing what we did as students, they’re still cleaning toilets.*

**Creative Products**

*I don’t like to talk about particular artists but there are artists who, yes, would tell you they paint purely what they like to paint, but are also incredible self-publicists, who are incredibly assertive in their self-publicity, and connected with, got themselves connected with commercial galleries et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I mean a lot of what we’ve done together here in the Upper Hunter, for the visual artists, is to try and promote and educate the Sunday painters, and the ones who would like to break out of being Sunday painters, into how to publicise themselves, how to sell their work, how to photograph their freaking paintings so they’re not just a bloody blur, with a flash on the glass. How to enter prizes, how to apply for grants, how to, all that stuff, because how to approach a gallery in Sydney, because unless you’re with a gallery in Sydney you’re basically f**ked. Because what we have up here is, apart from Peter [Carlin, of Haydon Hall] and the branch of Michael Reid [private gallery], and now a nice little, basically artist-run space, if you like.*

**Creative Futures**

Over 3,000 galleries have closed in New South Wales. Brook Gallery at Denman is one of the few remaining in the Upper Hunter. As Franks states:

*There is a dearth, an incredible dearth of commercial outlets. It’s been a problem, well it wasn’t a problem, I mean it didn’t used to be such a big problem. Rents were lower. We had a terrific commercial gallery here in town when I first came to town - the Murulla Gallery opposite Eaton’s Hotel. Very well run, but very localised, showed a lot of local artists, when they weren’t showing local artists like ..., Haydon Hall, they would show other regional artists, not artists from Sydney or any other capital city. And of course, even now when you go down the Valley most of the small commercial galleries in Newcastle have closed since the GFC.*

... the GFC hit the arts probably a little bit later than it hit a lot of industries but it hit it very, very hard, and it’s the slowest industry to recover... I mean auction prices are just starting to recover now. And that’s at the high, mid to high tend. And patrons are very hard to find around here, very, very, very hard to find.
90. MARK REEDMAN, ARTS UPPER HUNTER

Executive Director of Arts Upper Hunter, 13 August 2015

Creative Career

Mark Reedman trained as a High School Drama Teacher. He taught for a few years and then moved into theatre education working as an acting musician. In the 1980’s he did Community Theatre and toured schools and workplaces as part of the Art and Working Life movement. From 1993 till 2004 he worked with ‘2-5 Theatre Company’, a funded youth theatre company in Newcastle which has become Tantrum Youth Arts. He then began working for Singleton Council in the Upper Hunter as a Youth Programs Coordinator. After three and a half years he took a job with Eastern Riverina Arts in Wagga Wagga which is part of the Regional Arts New South Wales Network. Since 2003 Reedman has been the Executive Director for Arts Upper Hunter based in Muswellbrook.

Creative organisation:

There are 14 regional Arts Boards, all funded by Create NSW (formerly Arts New South Wales) across regional New South Wales. Arts Upper Hunter has a mission statement - ‘we provide support and promote opportunities for all people in the Upper Hunter to participate creatively in the lives of the communities they live in’. Reedman outlines the types of activities that they undertake:

the ‘provide’ bit is we run workshops. For example, a couple of days this week we ran two ‘plays in a day’ workshops in two high schools where a professional youth theatre worker went in and worked with the kids to create short plays. We are in the process of running song writing workshops with a professional singer songwriter from Newcastle.

The song-writing workshop was run in Muswellbrook by Amy Vee while Cadi McCarthy from Catapult Dance ran another workshop. There are other activities:

We run things like workshops for visual artists to take decent photographs of their work. We run workshops for visual artists to improve their business skills. We’re going this year, later in the year, to run a couple of volunteer forums because volunteers are really crucial in the fabric of the arts in the Upper Hunter, well everywhere, really, and a lot of the volunteer cultural groups, arts groups, are having trouble attracting and retaining volunteers because they’re all getting a bit older, including the museum sector. There’s probably eight/nine historical, volunteer-run historical museums in the Upper Hunter and they rely very heavily on volunteers.

In 2015 Arts Upper Hunter which covers Singleton, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter Shire signed a three-year agreement with Arts New South Wales and at that time the organisation was supported by five regional councils based on a per capita amount, dependent on the population of each local government area. Mark goes on to explain how amalgamations of local government areas have affected the service:

We had Gloucester, but it was lost, we’ve lost it because they have amalgamated with Greater Taree and Great Lakes. We’ve still got Dungog, but it will amalgamate with either Maitland or Port Stephens. Gloucester went to one of our sister regional arts boards, Arts Mid North Coast. Dungog will not go to any other regional arts board because neither Port Stephens nor Maitland are in the regional arts network [because] they’re kind of considered to be not sort of regional.

In 2017 the Arts Upper Hunter website lists the board members as Cr Sue Abbott from Upper Hunter Shire Council; Pam Saunders-McLeay as the community representative for the Shire; Cr Danny Thompson from Singleton Council; Roger Skinner from Scone Shire; Carolyn O’Brien, Muswellbrook Council representative; and Katherine Sullivan, a community representative from Dungog Shire (Arts Upper Hunter: online).
Arts New South Wales wanted all of the regional arts boards to move to a skills-based model which means that instead of having a representative in the region they have someone who’s got financial, public relations, marketing, legal or HR skills. Reedman acknowledges that artists aren’t always very good at the business side of things:

*I mean, some are, some aren’t. It’s a bit of a changing world because of the internet for visual artists. See, for example, a lot of prizes that artists enter [require you] to send in an image of your work before you get accepted into the prize, before you get hung, and if that’s not a decent photo then they’re not going to pick you. So, I mean, that’s just an example and it’s the same, you know, a lot of artists publicise their work online these days. A lot of artists sell their work internationally now. I know of one fabric artist in Dungog who sells most of her work in the United States and it’s all done online.*

**Arts Upper Hunter Activities:**

Reedman describes the galleries that are operating in the region.

*There’s the Muswellbrook Regional Art Centre which is a Council-owned and run facility. It’s got, I think, like 2.5 staff, something like that. It has a range of excellent exhibitions during the year. I mean it’s a regional gallery, and certainly the biggest, well it’s the only regional gallery until you get to Newcastle.*

*Singleton doesn’t have a gallery, Dungog doesn’t have a gallery as such, the Art Society in Dungog has kind of got a workshop space. Gloucester, which we had [in our region but has now gone], has a small but very well-run community gallery run by Gloucester Arts & Cultural Council Inc. (GACCI) which is a sort of an Arts Council and they, in fact, employ a part-time Director. There’s no other galleries. Scone doesn’t have a gallery, but once you get to Murrurundi which is half an hour up the New England Highway from Scone, there’s a high-end private gallery called Michael Reid that employs a Director who works there I think Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, something like that, but that’s a private gallery. Michael Reid’s got a high-end gallery in Sydney and a high-end gallery in Berlin.*

There are also Art Societies too:

*Each LGA has … I guess you could call it an art society. The slightly unusual one is Scone Arts and Crafts because they’ve got their own gallery which is an old church hall. None of the others have their own space, well, not exhibition space, I mean, they have a kind of a workshop space where they meet and paint.*

Art Upper Hunter offers small grants of up to $3,000 through the Country Arts Support Program (CASP) and funded programs included holiday visual arts workshops for kids. The Singleton Writers’ Group is also active and has used CASP funding to bring a visiting writer in to run a workshop. Reedman comments ‘The one in Singleton is very active and has published a couple of anthologies’. In Scone, a writers’ festival called The Scone Literary Long Weekend was held in 2014 and 2015. Gloucester also has run a writer’s festival from time to time. In 2015 the last Shakespeare Festival was held. It ran for 16 years, since 1998, and had a number of theatre companies travelling from Newcastle including Shakespeare et al, Newcastle University Drama, Stray Dogs Theatre, Stooged Theatre and Tantrum Theatre.

For musicians, there is the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music, which in 2015 moved into brand new Council-owned and funded premises in the main street of Muswellbrook which Reedman describes as ‘fantastic premises’ where there is a great deal of activity: ‘They, like other conservatoriums, run a multitude of classes … I think they’ve got a round about 20 teachers, some might only teach 1 or 2 hours a week, some are almost full-time and everything in between’. The Conservatorium offers classes across the region, in Merriwa and up to Murrurundi.

Reedman is of the view that Murrurundi is presenting as a hot spot for creative industry activity:
Murrurundi’s about half an hour up the New England Highway from Scone. It’s pretty much right on the edge of the Upper Hunter Shire. It’s a very pretty, small town with more than its share of visual artists. There’s at least three kinds of, and probably more, but three quite clearly fully professional visual artists who work there. One’s got a huge studio, one’s got a studio and a shopfront, or two have really got a studio and shopfront ... there’s more who would make a bit of a living and then there’s quite a few who might sell a few paintings here and there but there’s certainly a very strong visual arts community in Murrurundi. Apart from Michel Reid, there’s also a privately-owned gallery/cafe called Haydon Hall which sells quite high quality visual art and ceramics plus good pens and painting gear but I think they would, they wouldn’t survive on the gallery [alone].

Michael Reid Murrurundi is represented online, through their website. In past years Michael Reid’s gallery only had paintings valued at $10,000 and above but they have changed strategy over recent years and are now also selling art priced at as little as $1,200.

In terms of indigenous art, the Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation in Singleton run an annual Aboriginal visual arts exhibition each year. There is also the Singleton Art Prize run by Singleton Rotary which, like much cultural activity in the region, is supported by the coal mining industry:

It’s in the Singleton Civic Centre, there’s zillions of paintings, you can barely move for the number of paintings [...] I mean every man and his dog enters so it’s really about quantity ... the prizes are pretty decent and it’s probably worth mentioning which I should have mentioned, that a lot of the prize money for the art prizes and things like the Singleton writers publishing their little anthologies, is coal money.

It’s getting a bit harder to get because coal’s not worth much these days but certainly a lot of the prizes exists and that also goes for the Muswellbrook Regional Gallery, money for their prizes comes from coal which creates a strange sort of tension.

The other creative arts performer who has engaged with Arts Upper Hunter is Cadi McCarthy who is a Contemporary Dance Practitioner and Choreographer. When Cadi arrived in Newcastle she started a not-for-profit organisation, which means she can apply for funding. Reedman says:

She had a very strong collaboration with the Newcastle Conservatorium. It’s all new work that she creates so she’s got a very strong relationship with them. She works a lot with kids and the Flipside Project is a youth arm. We’re hoping to get her up here to do some work.

There are some dance schools offering private dance lessons after school and on Saturday mornings, but most businesses don’t make any money out of it, as Reedman attests:

...they do it for the love of it because they love dance and because they want to do it for kids but they pay their teachers. They probably pay the teachers more than they pay themselves a lot of the time and so they’re probably really the only, apart from the Conservatorium, the only truly kind of broad creative industry in its true sense up here.

The Singleton Youth Venue runs a Friday afternoon after-school drama workshop, the only one in the region. Reedman explains:

It was actually started by a couple of older high school kids who went to the venue, in fact, where I used to work when I worked for Council, and said, ‘Can we run some drama workshops for other kids?’ Which they did for a while, and it kind of was successful.

Singleton Council employed Dan Stranger to run some more workshops and this led to some small performances. Reedman explains:

... we kind of recognised how valuable it was and we arranged for Tantrum Youth Arts to come up and work with the group for a day. We paid for it and they did, and pretty much on the strength of that, Tantrum applied for a regional arts fund grant to run a project with that group in Singleton which they did. It was a project called Singleton Tales, it was a verbatim
theatre project and, I mean, that happened, but the group is still going. So that’s an important little phenomenon because theatre-wise Muswellbrook and Singleton do a large musical every year. This year up here it’s Sound of Music and I don’t know, Wizard of Oz I think in Singleton, you know, it’s big deal, full cast. Other regional areas like Gloucester and Dungog don’t have any amateur theatre of any kind and Scone has a small group who do a little show once a year.

Mark knew of two filmmakers. Leslie Wand from Murrurundi is a documentary filmmaker who shoots for the horse festival in Scone and has made a documentary about his partner Hannah Kaye’s visual art work. The other filmmaker is Michael Winchester from Dungog who wrote and co-produced *Bathing Frankie*, a feature film directed by Owen Elliott, in 2012.

The Dungog Film Festival ran from 2007 till 2012. The project was initiated by film-makers Allanah Zitserman and Stavros Kazantzidis and at its peak in 2010 it attracted over 9,000 people to the town. The festival aimed to showcase Australian films for Australian audiences and was run as a not-for-profit venture in the James Theatre in Dungog.

In 2014 the Dungog Festival was launched by the Dungog Arts Foundation with a focus on film, food and fresh-air and in 2016 it included a major short film prize of $30,000 and a program of documentaries, feature films and screen industry workshops and panels. A key feature of the Dungog Festival is the Long Table Dinner where the main street is blocked off for a long table banquet where local produce and wine are served.

Mark Reedman couldn’t comment on designers working in the region but he did mention there were several quilting shows held in Dungog and Aberdeen and a very strong culture of quilting which has been in Australia since colonial times:

> the interesting thing is the technique probably hasn’t changed much but the design has. I mean some of the quilts I saw at a show recently, they’re very contemporary kind of designs. They were pretty groovy. Some of them were pretty sort of traditional but some of them are really out there, but, again, they’re a kind of a bit of an aging demographic but they seem to be pretty healthy. I suppose, yeah, it’s just I’m sort of planning to do a bit of work looking into how it’s passed on, and I do know, for example, that one Council ran a quilting workshop for kids which the Country Arts Support program funded a year or two ago.

> There is also an annual Australasian Quilt Show held in Melbourne which is sponsored by manufacturers of sewing machines, for example, Pfaff as well as wool and cotton manufacturers. Reedman says ‘...it’s quite a kind of ... industry because making a quilt isn’t necessarily all that cheap.’ In Dungog there is an artist collective called Dungog by Design located in Dungog’s main street. Their Facebook page shows textile art, visual art, print makers, ceramics, jewellery and furniture makers.

Another active group is the Muswellbrook Ceramic Group which has a building called *The Pot House*. There are also a couple of ceramicists in the region, one of whom is in Murrurundi.

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**91. ROGER SKINNER, PHOTOGRAPHER**

Scone, 29 August 2016

Roger Skinner has had a long-time passion for arts and culture:

> I’m a practising photographer. I’m a former employee and volunteer at the Regional Arts Centre for 35 years. I’m currently the secretary of Scone Arts and Crafts. I’m also the secretary of Muswellbrook Districts Camera Club. And I’m also a musician and I’ve released five albums on the Oblivion label with my band Your Brother Jack.
I was complaining to my wife one day as I was looking at this book of photographs, and a competition was being held, and I said “These guys are idiots. They couldn’t take a photograph if they tried” and she said, “Well why don’t you go in that competition and see how you go?” and so I just went in and I didn’t get anything for a long time and then I won $2 which is still nailed up on the darkroom wall because it was a two-dollar note. And so from there my career began in about 1970. Frank Watters came up here and had the environmental exhibition in 1979/1980 and I was appointed by Frank to photograph all the exhibitions, all the people involved with it and all that kind of stuff... I met people like John Delacour, Reg Mombassa all those kind of guys, and my head was ripped open, completely ripped open. I mean Frank Watters is probably the guy that I would attribute my arts education entirely to because he just said “Roger, forget about all those silly cows with Elioth Gruner and all that kind of silly light. Think about abstract” and I mean the world just exploded, and everything just got better, and Tony Tuxan still God.

CI Business

When asked about what the term Creative Industries means to him, Skinner replied:

Sorry but it just means nothing to me. I mean I’ve been completely self-funded. I mean I work for a coal mining company and I made $120,000 a year and I’ve got a fat Rio Tinto superannuation fund that’s paying me $30,000 a year and I’m getting money from my shares, and I’m as rich as a pig in mud, and I’m as happy as a pig in mud, and it’s all been self-funded. I mean the book cost $17,000 but I make enough money out of my superannuation to pay for projects like that.

I’ve been in an extraordinary position earning big money for a significant period of time, that’s just made me able to buy flash cameras and to make big prints, and frame big prints and go in exhibitions. We’re going in a show at Westford with Peter Eastway and David Oliver in two weeks’ time and that’s probably going to be just yet another opportunity to spend money and have fun.

Creative Labour

My formal schooling has absolutely nothing to do with my career as a photographer. In fact, my science teacher, Mr Thorbin, said that “Roger’s consistent determination to resist authority will always prevent him from being a success”. So, I’m still alive and he’s dead so that’s one for me and none to him. But as a segue to that, my sister wrote a preamble, I self-published a book of 50 years of photography last year, and my sister recalled a conversation that she had with my mother, who after a particularly bad exam result ... was talking to me about what I was going to do, and I said at 16 that I was going to be a photographer, and so I’d mapped out this career for myself. I don’t recall this conversation and I don’t recall any of that. I’ve just had no formal education in arts at all. My father and my grandfather were both successful photographers, my brother is a successful photographer, so I guess there’s a bit of it in the blood though my kids don’t practise any of that.

Doug Spowart who’s a photographer from Queensland, he’s in the top 100 photographers in Australia, he’s actually established the Centre for Regional Arts Practice, or CRAP. And he ... wrote the introduction into my book ... that regional artists do struggle because we are in the regions. We have to get to the big cities. If we were in the big cities we’d probably be making a name for ourselves, but because we’re not and we are centred in the regions, we struggle. And it was a kind of nice summation to say, “Well that’s why you’re not getting anywhere”.

Creative Networks

Networks provide opportunities for creative practitioners as Skinner’s comments indicated.
But one thing that struck me was that within a two-hour radius we’ve got five regional galleries which is quite amazing. There is more access, sorry as a humble person like me, there’s more access for an artist in this region to get their work exhibited, if one gallery follows the correct charter and promotes regional work, then there’s more opportunities for regional artist here, than there is Sydney. In Sydney you’re really struggling. I mean I got a couple of, got other friends in Sydney who don’t exhibit in Sydney. They can’t get into a gallery. They get it in Perth, Moree, Darwin and Melbourne but they can’t get in, in Sydney.

Roger has worked with Muswellbrook Regional Gallery to curate exhibitions of photographic artists from around the world. It was possible because the images were sent as files which were printed for the exhibition “The first one was called Worlds Apart. We had a photographer from Germany, a photographer from New Zealand and a photographer based in Ireland”.

Creative Products

Well, the speed that you can get stuff out is remarkable. I mean I’m also in Toastmasters. I went to an area competition yesterday. I took some photographs for them, and I came home and within 15 minutes they were on her desk down in Newcastle. I mean they’re on the Facebook page now. It’s all there, and so the whole world can go in and see that stuff. I mean the dissemination of photography is just absolutely exploded... A lot of people are critical about photography being digitised and all that kind of stuff, but I think in terms of speed it’s just way, way better. In 20 minutes I can be in dark room and produce a print, but I’ve still got to produce a print, but it takes me ten minutes to do it with digital. It’s just so much faster.

What next?

Yes, I’ve recently made a decision that I will collect photography even more aggressively than I have in the past. I’ve got a photography collection. And I donated all the paintings to the Art Centre.

92. DAVID WILLIAMS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Vacy, 18 September 2015

Creative Career

David Williams contributes to ABC Open. An amateur photographer, he is known at ABC Newcastle as ‘Captain Cow’ because he is a fourth-generation dairy farmer. He is also heavily involved in social media and recently went to a Dairy Australia thinktank in Melbourne to discuss social media usage.

Williams’ runs a dairy farm which has been a family run business for 60 years. The cows are milked twice a day, 365 days a year. There are 340 milking cows with another 300 cows that are breeding stock and calves. The farm produces over two million litres of milk a year.

Most of our cows are Jerseys, about 90% of them... Then we’ve got a few Holsteins, which are the black and white ones. And we have a few cross breeds. But predominantly Jerseys, and actually we’re - going back to the Jerseys.

A normal day for David Williams varies from day to day; sometimes he milks the herd and some days he checks the cows.

Basically at 5 o’clock, the cows come in, and we start milking them. Put the cups on them. Like we have milking machines. And then we can milk 30 cows at a time. It’s what you call a herringbone dairy, where the cows come in. 15 cows come into each side, and you stand in a pit, you put the cups on. Our dairy’s fairly automated. We have automatic cup removers, and every cow is microchipped so that when they come in they automatically get fed by the computer - set to feed them with the grain, ration that they get. And if I want to collect a cow
after milking to either treat - do a veterinary treatment on or artificially inseminate, I can automatically draft them off as well.

We do have a little side line of roses, just as a side line, 1000 bushes, which is not a lot in the scheme of things but-- And my wife does some arrangements and sells them to the local shops. And she does a few weddings as well. So yeah, it value-adds a bit.

Creative Products

David has 1,800 Twitter followers. He explains how he began:

I got into Twitter mainly through the local ABC radio station. And he was looking for a friend on Twitter. So I started following him. And then every morning I'd just send in a weather report to the radio station. And then I started sending in sunset photos. Just with my mobile phone, I just started taking photos. And yeah, it just seemed that I had a bit of a natural talent for it. And people seemed to like it. It kind of grew from there. I put a lot on Twitter, and I use Facebook. Exhibit a few at the local show, and won a couple of prizes there. So yeah, was - it's been an interesting experience.

I've exhibited up at the Gallery at Dungog and at a gallery in Newcastle. I also exhibited at the three village art shows that they had in the local area here. One of my photos got in the ABC Portrait prize competition once. And I was a finalist in that and with ABC Open, they have exhibited a couple of my photos, at a couple of exhibitions they've had.

He was not involved in photography when he was growing up, saying:

Oh no! We hardly ever took any photos because well... when I was really little, we were fairly poor. So getting photos developed was fairly expensive. So basically, we only ever took a photo of your birthday or Christmas time or something like that. And so, yeah no, I was never really into photography. And it wasn't really until digital cameras came out that I really started taking them. And it hasn't been until social media came along that I've really got serious about it.

I used to use the camera a fair bit. But since the phones have got better, I'm using that more and more. You can get nearly as good a quality photo with the phone as long as you're up close. I've got Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. Mostly Twitter though. I'm a big fan.

Creative Network

There's a huge number of farmers on social media. I'd say, probably a quarter of my followers would be farmers. And a fair few of them are dairy farmers. But they're not Australian dairy farmers. Like I've got dairy farmer friends that are in America and Ireland, England and New Zealand. Pretty well all over the world. The thing is, you can see what's happening in the markets over there, what their problems are, whether there's any issues that are rising that can affect us as well.

David Williams is known on the ABC Radio station as Captain Cow, saying ‘I'm kind of a very minor celebrity in a way’.

Well that came about through tweeting in the rainfall and weather report every morning. The local breakfast announcer, he decided to give some of these people nicknames as they tweeted in their weather report. And yeah, mine seems to have stuck.

And, I kind of like it because of the connection to the local area. Because yeah, it gives some recognition to the people that live in this area.

Dairy Australia conducts the research for Dairy Farmers and David was invited to participate in a social media thinktank.
Their role is dairy research and they do marketing as well. So they’re always on the lookout for any problems that might reduce people’s drinking milk habits. So, they decided that - they just picked out some people who were prominent on social media, and they invited them down to Melbourne to the head office to have a bit of a think tank. And so, we spent the day there just looking at the pros and cons of social media. How we could use it better. How we could use it to promote the industry better. What we should do if there is a - some, some people start tweeting something, or something ends up on social media that’s, that’s attacking the dairy industry.

The main thing from the think tanks was probably, sometimes you should keep your mouth shut. And ’cause like, some people put comments on social media, and you’re never going to change their mind no matter what you do. So sometimes you’re better just to let them have their rant and just go off ’cause sometimes you can inflame the situation by chatting to them. So, you try to post good stuff as well. Which is what I do with my social media, is I try to post nice photos of cows. And just show them they’re out grazing pasture and looking good.

What’s next?

William’s is concerned about the future for the dairy industry in Australia

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depends on which part of the area you live in. It’s probably fairly strong overall. Number of farmers keep declining, but the actual amount of milk is staying the same. The future is probably going to be robotics - less farmers, more milk per cow, bigger farms. It’s a pretty expensive industry to get into. So, it’s very hard to get started.

In 2015 a video interview was recorded with David Williams about his digital life and it can be viewed on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
SECTOR ENABLERS

93. SHANE BRANSDON, JUDGE, EDUCATOR & PERFORMER

City of Newcastle Drama Awards Judge 9 December 2014

Creative Career

Shane has been a practitioner in acting, singing and dancing since he was five years old. His interest in the performing arts is broad and active. Shane is a judge for the City of Newcastle Drama Awards (CONDA). His day job is working as a Primary School teacher, currently he is Deputy Principal at Redhead Public School. Shane is also enrolled in a PhD looking at the Newcastle’s drama sector.

CI Business

Shane is an individual who has several roles related to performing arts. He sees himself as a facilitator. His paid position is as an educator (currently a Vice-Principal at Waratah Public School) and he has lectured at The University of Newcastle Drama Department. He is a judge of the City of Newcastle Drama Awards (CONDAS) which entailed seeing 60 shows in the previous year. He is also Chair of the Newcastle Performing Arts Taskforce established in 2012. He is the drama rep on the arts funding body for the NSW Department of Education which in 2014 disbursed approx. $230,000 in the region.

Shane’s commitment to being a facilitator may be linked to his comments on the lack of support for performing arts:

“whether it is infrastructure, huge issues with rehearsal spaces, performance spaces and storage spaces, workshop spaces to build things, that’s a significant area that has popped up with my work. Support in terms of grants that either lend towards that or support other organisations such as Tantrum and not-for-profit things. Also within the media the support is minimal. I think the media is an important element within our ecosystem because we can’t get audiences without getting the message out there.”

Creative Products

Participation is not matched by audience numbers “it is a very vibrant performing arts industry… we have essentially more performances, productions happening than we have room for in terms of audiences… In the last twelve months there were 25 active theatre companies” and as a CONDA judge, Shane himself saw 60 productions. He says that “audience development is a huge area of need. As I said, we have more shows than audiences. As a judge, sometimes I go to shows and I am one of five people in the audience which is very sad when we do have such a large city that could be supporting”.

He mentions the annual state schools’ production “Starstruck” which involves 3600 children.

Creative Career

Shane estimates that few people in the city make a liveable income from the performing arts, apart from teachers. [Drama teachers are employed in schools, TAFE and the University sector]. He lists:

- the Artistic Director of Tantrum,
- voiceover artists who do regular work for radio,
- children’s entertainers such as Ship o’Fools, Ruby the Clown and Joel Howlett… “those who are willing to get out there and create work for themselves, do pub gigs, children’s parties, corporate parties and suit characters in the Darby St Fair”
- those who run or work at drama schools, some of them private and some of them not for profit e.g. Hunter Drama.

But apart from that, for all the other participants, everyone has to have other jobs.
Musicians in stage shows are paid: “And musicians, they just don’t work for free. In all our theatre productions, if you have orchestras and bands they will always be paid. It might not be equity rates but, they don’t work for free in Newcastle. Actors you get scores and scores of. If an actor was to say, “I won’t work unless you pay me” there would be ten lined up behind them who would be willing to do it for free.”

Of dance: “Newcastle is the dance capital of Australia. There is a dance school on every second corner and parents send their boys to sport and they send their girls to dance in a very stereotypical way in Newcastle…I think when we are talking about the representation of performing arts as a subsector of the creative industries in Newcastle I think dance will be the biggest chunk of the pie. If we can somehow capture the economy created just by parents taking their kids to dance class every week, creating costumes and performances! I know that every theatre is booked out entirely at this time of year [December] because of the dance concerts.”

Newcastle creatives often have to leave the city to find work “A lot of people move out of town and we are very successful at producing quality performers and directors” - e.g. Jonathan Biggins, Erin James and Tom Handley. He says “we do produce a lot of talent. A lot of it goes away but some of it comes back” and mentions playwright Vanessa Bates who has now returned to Newcastle with an established position in the industry.

He identifies a need for systems to support professional development.

People do generally operate on a sole trader basis. However, we do have theatre companies like NTC (Newcastle Theatre Company) that do have the potential to say, ‘We have all these shows coming up this year, we have 6, 7, 8 directors, let’s send them to do some professional learning’. This just doesn’t seem to happen. We all know in every other industry that professional learning is a significant ongoing part of being able to keep with the times, produce quality work economically. That is another area I feel is lacking.

Creative Labour

Lighting designers are now using wonderful moving lights, mechanisms. What that means in the long run is that you can save a lot of money because one light can be any colour in the rainbow and they can point in any direction. For instance, with the Civic Theatre having 300 lights above the stage, it’s saving money because you are paying for rehearsal days, but it also allows them to be more creative...The use of technology onstage as well is significant with things like projections, animations and this is still emerging and being experimented with”. He mentions a Tantrum production “at the Newcastle Baths, where they made a wonderful documentary where they had interview people and then projected this onto the side of the wall of the Baths.

Creative Networking

Shane says of collaboration:

It’s really important because a lot of us are individuals who look after our own craft, whether it’s development or seeking employment, creating work for ourselves, collaboration has to happen... There aren’t too many one-man shows, and even the ones with a single performer onstage usually have an external director or the play has been written by somebody else.

For a stage show, the people involved are numerous: performers, musicians, dancers, choreographers, directors, producers, possibly a writer or a dramaturg, lighting designers and operators, set and costume designers, makeup, hair and wig designers. Also, there is set construction and graphic designers who design advertising posters and digital.

Every show that you do creates a little family of people who must collaborate. The wonderful director Julie Black [from Metropolitan Players] always describes it to me as a jigsaw
puzzle. She says to me “I treat the ushers the same as I do my lead actors because we are all pieces in the jigsaw puzzle. Without all the jigsaw pieces we are not complete.

Theatre companies in Newcastle are using social media to promote their shows... I’ve looked elsewhere in Australia and they are not doing it, but Newcastle theatre companies are producing film trailers in an effort to promote their shows. Stooged Theatre is a wonderful example of companies that go to a lot of effort to stage elements of their show for film.

We do have a wonderful community. In Newcastle theatre everybody is linked into social media, regardless of age... Being able to tag people, share the experience. People can instantly access five or six hundred of their friends by making a single post. I am the coordinator of the CONDA Facebook page and I can see using data how many people are exposed to our posts. When I posted about the CONDA winners it was in the vicinity of 900 people that that post reached, just by typing in a sentence and adding an attachment and clicking post. Stooged Theatre have in particular - and I’m not sure if it is entirely social media but I believe that is a significant factor - been able to access an entirely new young audience that nobody else has been able to capture. It is also because they are doing 21st century plays but they are definitely bringing in new audiences.

Creative Entrepreneurship

That’s always the advice I give my students, if you want to be successful in performing arts in Newcastle you have to be able to create your own work. You can’t simply rely as an actor on someone giving you a role, you need to audition and audition and be persistent in that but in your down time you need to be making your own work.

We’ve got wonderful opportunities popping up where we have festivals of short run pieces, Hissyfest, Wowfest, TAFE’s Clegg Festival... It’s a wonderful opportunity for people to be creative.

For most local productions money is very tight. People produce wonderful quality and, you know what, it does make people more creative. The lack of space means people are taking their shows to quite unusual places to perform, outdoors, abandoned shops, things like that so in many ways it is making people more creative.

What’s next?

The aim of Shane’s work is to “boost audiences, boost the number of successful productions that we have, to build the capacity of artists and to make the work of a higher quality. That is the aim of my work, but it is interesting that along the way there have been people who have said, ‘We are really happy with what we are doing’ and it just goes to show that people do it for passion and not money.”

In my research, I am looking at how we can boost that capacity in Newcastle, but a lot of people are satisfied with the capacity of what they are doing at the moment.

94. LIZ BURCHAM, CULTURAL DIRECTOR

Newcastle City Council 15 April 2016

Creative Career

Liz studied linguistics, education and librarianship at University. She later worked at the CSIRO library, then in publishing, in multimedia where she made some of the first Australian titles on CD Rom/interactive books, and then newspapers. Later she worked at the Seven Network when interactive first started (AFL and Olympics).
Liz moved from Sydney to Brisbane and took up the position of CEO of Metro Arts which she held for ten years.

She then came to Newcastle to take up the newly-created position of Cultural Director in mid-2014.

*I’m a producer, I make things happen, I lead people to make things. The other common theme is new business, change in markets, taking new product to markets.*

**CI Business**

Liz leads the Council-owned cultural institutions: Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle Museum, Civic Theatre, City Hall, Wheeler Place and Fort Scratchley (NCC owns the site but day-to-day it is operated by the Fort Scratchley Historical Society).

She has four teams of people working in the department: Museum, Newcastle Art Gallery, Civic Theatre and Business Services (includes commercial elements e.g. events and venue hire. *“We are actually a significant commercial business of Council”*).

Liz notes that it’s not unusual for Councils to own venues - something like 90% of performing arts venues are owned by Councils.

Liz sees her role as:

*Providing vision and leadership to guide culture in the city and guide the development of those facilities and provide leadership to Council’s investment in culture in the city” and “building a foundation upon which culture can grow. I believe that in Council our job is that of facilitator and enabler … And the third role is joining the gaps.*

**Creative Networking**

*I think the creative industries [are] alive and well in Newcastle. I think what is happening here is exciting… arts and culture and creative industries [are] an ecosystem. And you need artists making and producing the ideas and doing the research and development, you need the individuals, you need the people applying that, you need those who are commercialising, you need the educational institutions teaching etc… It’s not about one part over another. They feed and intersect and fuel each other.*

*I am really surprised at the level of incubation here. And that’s exciting and really Newcastle is well known for its artists and its making. I think it’s strong in the visual arts. Museums and historians are slightly different. But I will say it’s very alive and it’s very strong here as a post-industrial city, as a city with such a rich history. I think the performing arts is the weakness and that unfortunately some sustained lack of investment in the performing arts really has done some damage so that’s an area of concern and needs attention… we are missing in the contemporary performing area, but you can’t blame audiences for that.*

Newcastle City Council’s Cultural Strategy was endorsed by Council in November 2015 and focuses on partnership, collaboration and engagement.

*Council has a responsibility as the major presenter and producer in this town; we have a responsibility to our local artists, our local makers and producers. So, we have got to work with them, to open our facilities to those parties, but we can’t do that at a cost to those institutions operating at the level they need to*

*Collaborations need to happen locally, and they need to happen nationally and that needs to be a two-way traffic – people coming in and people coming out. We can’t do it all ourselves and we shouldn’t do it all ourselves. Vibrant institutions have multiple voices so real commitment to working more actively with curators, presenters, producers, makers so that we create a diversity of a product we present.*
I think that within this industry, we have to respect each other better... We have to work together better, we have to create those “1+1=3” … and we have to get behind those who are making work. Not be so separate. In some areas we want to be very individual and separate but well, actually, let’s collaborate and see what we can do together.

Creative entrepreneurship

We have got this wonderful commercial layer right from the Olive Tree Markets and Hunter and Gather which are these wonderful connectors between the artists and audience and the general public.

Newcastle has a long history of people working here and servicing wider markets... There are some wonderful case studies of companies who are practising here but are servicing bigger markets - film-makers, musicians etc. The reality of the creative industries is I don’t believe a sustainable industry is ever in one market. To be a sustainable artist, to be a creative entrepreneur, decide where you live and have a travel budget because you are going to have to leave. It doesn’t matter where you are based, suddenly the market is somewhere else. Your market is bigger than the place you live and that doesn’t matter whether you are in Sydney or Melbourne so believing it’s just going to happen in Newcastle is naive. But we’ve got some smart, savvy people who are engaging wider and with incubation and greater activity, I think we can get greater connectivity.

We have got audiences that are just extraordinary. Newcastle has an appetite for arts and culture... Newcastle people go out, they consume, and that’s vital for a vibrant creative industry.

Creative Products

I think we need to get more money into Newcastle. Arts funding is in disarray but there’s a phenomenally low rate of NSW and Federal money coming into Newcastle and we have to address that.” How can we do that? “Start applying, for starters! But we also have to make work that engages with those markets. The Australia Council is about creating work that sits on a national stage, so we have got to make work that sits on a national stage...We have to be relevant. We have to make product and operate relevant to people who potentially fund and that’s private as well as public...And we have to get behind this region and open it up to wider markets, so they want to come here and place money here.

What’s next?

What I hope to achieve while I’m in the role is seeing more work and quality work come to Newcastle. I want to see greater connectivity between the elements that are here because there are such fantastic ingredients, as they say... really connect with the people of Newcastle.

I want to make a difference... I’m an enabler and a facilitator and what I love most is bringing ideas to fruition and making things happen, enabling ideas to come to life.

Ultimately, we are only here for the people of Newcastle. And it is for the artists, artists getting an opportunity to do their work, putting their work in front of an audience. [This] is absolutely vital for their practice. Us filling these venues and opening the doors is about audience.

Council significantly subsidises its cultural institutions and yes, I have objectives to minimise that subsidy. What’s been here is a very significant dependency on Council self-funding. I had objectives set for me to bring in new income streams... For example, we now have ArtsNSW money back into the art gallery. That’s new money. ...we are [also] being supported by Museums and Galleries NSW, Arts NSW, Copyright Agency Limited and Gordon Darling Foundation.
95. GUNILLA BURROWES, ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

Blue Zone Group, 2 September 2016

Creative Careers

Gunilla is an electrical engineer who initially worked in the renewable energy field. After some years the family moved to the Hunter, with Gunilla’s husband working on a naval project and Gunilla working at the University in the fields of engineering and gender.

Gunilla’s PhD studies were in the field of underwater technology as she and her husband had gone into business servicing and providing engineering support for the Australian Navy’s remotely-controlled underwater vehicles. Their experience in starting up a technical company led them to later become involved in Angel Investing for technically orientated start-ups and scale-ups.

CI Business

Gunilla is a Director of the Blue Zone Group – a company developing and commercialising underwater technologies. She is also a founding member of Rights House – a Hunter angel investment organisation, and she chairs Eighteen04 – an industry incubator focused on clean tech and smart city innovations. She is actively involved in regional economic strategy.

Creative Entrepreneurship

Gunilla is committed to working through networks such as Rights House as an investor because of the advantages it brings from the diversity of ideas and experience.

These advantages are also gained for start-ups and entrepreneurs through co-working spaces such as Eighteen04. Community networks are also important for the innovation ecosystem to grow and this is where the contribution of the creative industries is so important for technical based start-ups. Whether you are investing in a start-up or starting a business, it is so important to have input from a diversity of people who can together create the best solutions.

There is a diversity of ways you can find a product or service on which to base starting a business. The science and engineering approach is through research and analysis of known problems or from fundamental discoveries. A more generalist approach is related to seeing better ways of doing things where it can be simply utilizing existing solution in different ways to seeing easier ways of doing things in your own life; – ‘I wish that there was an easier way’ or ‘that would make sense to do differently’.

There are ideas and the motivation, but you also need the technical understanding to make something new happen, which reinforces the need to form a team. It is generally accepted that the team must have a hacker, hustler and hipster. Creative people are key to a good team.

Creative IP

Gunilla’s experience has shown her that IP issues can be problematic.

“We’ve not tended to go down the IP side so much. It’s an expensive legal field for start-ups. It’s more about being first to market. That’s where branding becomes important. You need the genius creatives to come up with the brand and get it to market – that’s as important as the IP. It’s one of the problems we have in Australia – the I.P. fixation. How precious are ideas? Well, they are no good on the shelf! We rank very low on the global innovation index because people won’t release IP. We need to encourage, support and motivate researchers to go on the commercialisation journey.” Sometimes it seems that there is a belief that having idea (even if it is brilliant) is all that it takes. But “you’re not going to get rich if your idea is sitting on a shelf.”

Commercialisation means taking risks.
Creative Futures

Gunilla’s business is solid and she ‘gives back’ by investing in start-ups. She is very aware of the impact of globalization and the need to help start-ups get local clients first. ‘Having a client lets you learn and survive in the early years’, she said.

96. CHRISTINA GERAKITEYS, EVENTS COORDINATOR; TRAINER

Ideation Pty Ltd. 13 March 2015

Creative Career

I left school and started studying law, which I found to be creative in all the wrong ways for me, so I exited that profession, and went and studied full time. I did 2 full time degrees, one majoring in drama and writing and a second full-time degree in performance. So, I was majoring in piano and singing in one, while I majored in writing and drama and a BA. And I was playing in a band.

So, when I first got into the industry I was employed as a do-whatever-you-can sort of person to get things done but then I moved into running the whole production aspect of the company. For example, I had an editor who didn’t turn up a lot, so I learned how to edit to save embarrassment with clients. A lot of it is self-learned, self-taught. Then I learned how to use a camera because the cameraman was sick. That’s how it works in the creative industries.

I am however now studying at PhD level.

CI Business

I’m a sole operator. I contract myself out to other people and I contract other people to work with me. So, if I’m making a video for example, then I might be contracted in as the producer and then I will contract other people in as I need. So, I will get the camera person and the audio. I might know how to set something as a tonal quality, but I prefer to get an expert in.

I have to be creative about my administration. I don’t enjoy it and I don’t like it and I’m sure other people don’t either. But I guess you either must be disciplined about it or to outsource it. What I often say in my role as an advisor to creative industries – pick the things you don’t like and outsource them if you can.

Creative Networking

You might contrast the way I work with an agency where they might have all the skills in-house. I have heard it called the Hollywood model – you pull in the expertise in as and when you need it. But it’s also so budget-dependent these days. So, I might pull in a cameraman who is also a sound recordist and an editor. If someone doesn’t have much of a budget then I will do the creative things myself – the concept, the script, the organising, the logistics but I would contract in the technical skills I need - sound recordist, the lighting. So, it depends on budget.

If money is tight, there are other exchanges that aren’t just money. For example, a bookkeeper might need a website fixed up, so I could maybe negotiate with a bookkeeper to do my books for twelve months and I might fix their website. Or I might just pay them. It would take me a whole day to do that admin job, so it is money well spent. And, I believe you must be task driven in this industry (or in my experience in the industry).

I believe different people bring different things to the table. It’s not just the different actors you bring together. It’s the actors and the musicians and the executive working with the advertising guru so it’s that whole thing. I have a network of people that I trust. And you
only get to know if you trust someone by working with them to see if it’s a fit or not. That’s how I pick the people I want to work with I guess, but if it doesn’t work the first time, or it’s too much trouble or it’s all wrong – you don’t go back for more.

Creative Labour

It doesn’t feel like work even though you might be rehearsing until mid-night and that kind of thing, which is quite common in the creative industries. You don’t necessarily do a job and do it 9-5. You do a job till you’re satisfied. We’ve done jobs with midnight to dawn shoots because that’s when you needed space or factory space and if it’s midnight to dawn you can get it - you just do it. I think that’s it about someone in the creative industries. When you get your head in that space you don’t care how long you have to stay there, physically in that space. So, I think you just get that energy burst where you are happy to keep going and you’re in the flow of what you need to do.

It’s like any professional really – you have to act with honesty and integrity, you have to be proud of what you do. If you’re not proud of it no-one else will be proud of it. And I don’t think, or at least I’m hoping, that’s not just creative industries people. I’m hoping that’s across the board.

To be of service is part of it for me, and to see the outcome. I used to say to people, when I was working in TV - putting out 30 or 40 commercials a day, (and some of them were nasty as you can imagine at that rate), at least you saw something from beginning to end – that constant – you can tick that off, that’s ticked off. In contrast to another sort of job where you never get that satisfaction of having ticked it off at the end.

For me personally there is a great satisfaction and that feeling of having been of service to other people or other organisations.

I guess I am in some commercial relationships because of my brainstorming ability and my skill sets which are quite broad. I was telling someone the other day that I was quite upset because I used to consider myself a Jill-of-All-Trades-Master of None. But the more I read of the creative industries, the more I realise that is a good thing. I wish I had realised that years ago when I was beating myself up about not mastering in one area. But now I realise that it is the whole creative industries experience that has allowed me to work with a whole lot of different people in a whole lot of different ways.

I don’t think we own (that mindset) exclusively in the creative industries but perhaps we are used to it more. We are used to coming up with different ideas and coming out with different concepts – whether it’s for a video or an architectural design or designing a new shirt or a new fabric or a new pattern. I think we are used to coming up with new ideas. We get a buzz out of that achievement. And we get a buzz out of helping other people come up with different ideas.

It’s problem solving. In the creative industries, it’s often problem-solving. You are always trying to solve a problem for someone. In a context.

Creative IP

If IP is crucial, then I usually send people to a specialist. There is usually a free half-hour consultation and then they tell you it’s going to cost you $5K or $15K or whatever.

But there are two schools of thought these days. If you go to the trouble of copywriting everything then someone else is going to be caught up to you by the time you have the paperwork done, so you just go out and say you are the first in your field that’s done it and if someone copies you then you can either prove that you did it first or you just go, well that’s a compliment.
The other thing I have learned – If I have something that is copy able, then I don’t have the resources to sue anyway. If I don’t have the resources to see it through with 100% chance of recovery, then I can’t do it anyway. I struggle with that whole IP thing anyway. I work a lot on values and ethics and a handshake and I’ve been called a mug because I do that, but I prefer to do that anyway, really. That sounds quite naïve, doesn’t it?

What’s next?

For me it’s not about work-life balance, it’s about work/life enjoyment. I work with an accountant who is creative (in a good way), and he talks about how if you are happy in your work life, you are happy when you go home. And if you are happy when you go home you are happy in your work life. So, it’s that balance.

For me it’s about that satisfaction, about knowing that I’ve contributed. It’s being of service in some way. I need to make sure that it’s the best it can be. But not just the best it can be for me but the best it can be for everyone else.

97. STEPH HINDS, BUSINESS CONSULTANT

Growthwise, 3 November 2015

Creative Career

Steph Hinds is the Director at Growthwise, a business consulting firm.

I am an accountant and have been a principal of Growthwise for over six years. My technical training is all accounting and business. But I love reading and learning and I liked reading about technology and start-ups and that developed as an interest. It’s interesting. I sit on advisory panels, globally for XERO – nationally for some other things.

CI Business

When I originally started, we didn’t have any focus on who we wanted to work with. We just wanted to change the life of small business. My view is that small business drives the entire Australian economy. Therefore, small business shapes how Australia looks, how it is perceived in the rest of the world.

About 12 months in, we decided that focus was something we needed just because the big, bad world of small business is just so big. So, the creative industries were something that personally I had an interest in and there seemed to be a lot in Newcastle. So, I delved into the questions of how to work with the creative industries. How can we get them ingrained into business in the same way they are into their creativity?

For me, I didn’t want to leave Newcastle, so that’s why Growthwise started. But I also enjoy the challenge of ‘globalness’ as far as the business is concerned. It’s fantastic that you can do that as a small business in a very small city.

Creative Entrepreneurship

The more we delved into things, the more it was apparent that for most people in the creative industries from web to all the way to artists and to theatre – they were all exceptionally talented at what they did, but most of them had no want or desire or hadn’t done any training in relation to business. So, I thought what a brilliant opportunity to impart our knowledge into an entire industry that is a big part of everyday life but a big part of the economy as well. Because one of the things we found was that a lot of them were only around for a couple of years. A lot of them would embark on this nice, next new step and then they would
realise that there might not be enough money in it, and they would move on or go back to their original jobs and I found that terrible. Our question became how could we help with what we do to be a continuation of their business and get them to make profit at the same time.

So, what was missing? The same as is missing for every small business owner. If you want to become a doctor, you go to Uni for say 7 years, or something ridiculous like that. And then you have a whole lot of practical experience and that’s literally to become a GP. To become a surgeon, you have to go for extra study. But most doctors don’t have any idea how to run a business. And it’s the same for any small business owner. They don’t go to small business school. They just go to whatever their trade or craft is.

And to run a business you must have those business skills behind you so that’s a big part of the missing puzzle. And nowhere do you get that help. You just go on line and get an ABN and you are in business.

It’s terrifying. For me that’s terrifying because how can anyone be expected to know everything about even the simple things like GST? Or about employing people? Let alone about running a business.

Creative Futures

It’s funny that you ask that, because I think that it’s in the creative industries that I see the biggest potential. For so many people as well. That’s part of why we were drawn to those industries in this business.

As an example, the trades are generally location based. Someone might have a humungous business with branches all over the place, but it is still location based. Whereas you look at the best creative people they will be doing film, or web-based, or design projects all over the world. I have seen some great creatives who are building or designing products to sell, and they are selling them to the rest of the world. That’s very exciting.

What we try and do for creatives is if they are really creative people, we try to bring that down into a business sense. What are your aspirations? Where do you want to go? Do you want to be selling it at the markets in Newcastle every weekend? Do you want more than that? Do you want a presence in Newcastle? Do you want to be known Australia wide? World wide? Where’s the best market for you? And really bring that vision to life. And everything in between. How are we going to get from point A to point B? What are the steps you have to take? Letting their creativity come in along the way and then reeling them back into reality. And I think the biggest thing we provide is discipline. And keeping people accountable.

The biggest problem most creative people have is that they don’t understand profitability from the point of time or manufacturing or that process of, if you’re going to be invoicing – what is your time worth? What is this product worth? AND we can certainly help in that sort of thing as well.

Creative Networking

The biggest thing we try to get people to do is that networking thing - getting involved with things that are outside your own business and the norm for what you are trying to do. People need to collaborate in partnership with other businesses - that could really make sure they are sustainable for the long term

A lot of people are happy to pay for advice. It’s the rest of support that is missing. We have too many fragmented groups and networks – we need some overarching approach for networking and advice. That’s part of what we are trying to do with DigFest. And Newie Starts-ups is just all about having a chat.
I think the big things is, having been involved with Lunaticks, and 1804 and a hundred groups in between, how does one know what is happening. We literally search for it, but unless you have resources to do that, how can you know? That was part of getting Newie Start-ups and the web site going – so if you are around Newcastle, this is what is going on – where is the networking? who is getting awards? who is working overseas? The big question is “who will help this happen?” And I think that’s what is missing - that’s where other organisations could come into support.

There’s not enough collaboration. People still think of themselves as competitors here in Newcastle and not collaborators and I think that is a very big thing. If we want to continue to grow there needs to be a lot more collaborations.

What’s next?

Personal goals? I’m really passionate about Newcastle. I don’t want to leave. And I’m passionate about what’s here. And what it’s possible to be here. I’m lucky to be able to travel a lot for work – and I get to see different parts of the world and how they have grown and what changes have happened over the course of a few years. Austin is the best example I can use. I’m back every year and every year there is more and more happening. It’s fascinating. One of the things I would like to do is help Newcastle transform into what it could be, into its actual potential. And this little town outside Sydney that no-one knows about into the best place to live and the best place to work at the same time.

98. HARRY BALDING, COMMUNITY MANAGER

Dash Manager, 11 January 2017

Creative Career

Harry Balding studied communications and then worked in marketing, sales and business development for a manufacturer.

I manage DASH – a co-working space in Lake Macquarie. My interest lies in tech start-ups so being able to tie my interest into my employment is ridiculously good. This is the best job I’ve ever had. It’s the most fun, the most interesting and the most fulfilling.

Here, we’ve got media producers, website designers, graphic designers – quite a few working in the creative sector but that’s not our sole client group. Within the Hunter you’ve got the Roost, Production Hub, and INNX, Newcleus. So, there are plenty of options specifically for the creative sector.

DANTIA, the vehicle for Lake Macquarie’s economic development strategy, is DASH’s parent company. We thought to set up a place for people in the knowledge economy to thrive and to meet, and to collaborate and connect. We also feature in Council’s smart cities and ecosystem management strategies.

Newie Start-ups is a meet-up group that has just grown. For each event we have held, there have been more attendees. We did a pitch event last October and had 85 people come and 8 start-ups pitched. The University provided the prizes. It’s one of a whole lot of innovative meet-up groups in Newcastle – Agile Newcastle, Newcastle Intracoders; Newcastle Ruby Developers, Hunter Young Professionals; UON Bizcom; UON Computing Society; others.

Within Newie Start-ups and DASH there is now lots of informal and social mentoring around.
Creative IP

I.P.? It’s a rookie entrepreneur who wants someone to sign a non-disclosure agreement before talking about an idea. If it’s just an idea and you don’t have a product or customers people are not going to sign themselves into secrecy.

Creative Futures

My main KPIs would be -how many people are using DASH? How many are we helping? And, are they the right sort of people, trying to grow their business?

99. NUATALI NELMES, LORD MAYOR, NEWCASTLE

Newcastle City Council Lord Mayor 2014 – 2018, 15 September 2015

Creative Career

Nuatali Nelmes grew up in Newcastle and played representative basketball in her youth. She is a graduate from the University of Newcastle, with a Business degree, that has a double major in Industrial Relations/Human resource management and Marketing. Nuatali worked in small business in Newcastle and she is married and has three children. In 2008 she was elected to Newcastle City Council as a Labour Councillor and has served on a number of boards and committees overseeing urban planning, design, recreation and catchment management. Nuatali held the position of Deputy Lord Mayor prior to being elected as Lord Mayor in 2014 in a bi-election where she secured 42% of the vote. Nuatali, is the second female to be Newcastle’s Lord Mayor.

Creative Futures

How do you see the Creative Industries?

It’s very broad and includes all the media outlets, but it is a lot deeper than that. I believe in Newcastle and it includes the Museum and Art Gallery, Libraries all those services as well as the small companies that are working in that sector in terms of producing a video.

There is a lot of research done around artists in this city and it’s a well-known area for emerging artists and that’s not just in traditional forms like painting. That’s in creative industries like the digital economy, making videos ... that is an industry in itself in this country and also in Newcastle.

I think overseas you’ve seen the digital economy and the creative industries really merged to create a whole new sector of economic growth and there is a huge opportunity in this country and for the city of Newcastle, I believe to be a foundation for this country’s growth in creative industries. There are a lot of stars that need to align to make that happen. That is very much working in partnership with places like the University and the consideration of stand-alone degrees in this industry; but also having a City Council and a Government that supports the development of creative industries.

Understanding that importance is key because to make it all happen, we need the hardware as well in the city, and that infrastructure is often delivered by government or in partnership with government or its on government property or land. So, governments need to be a partner in that process.

And then there is the creative thinking that is so important and the really exciting part, I think, of the puzzle around creative industries is that you don’t know where the future will be and that’s what I find exciting. I know people who are in my generation or younger who
find that exciting, and we are used to not knowing what the future will hold and embracing change as it comes.

What measures is NCC putting in place as support mechanisms for developing an innovation ecosystem?

To me that phrase ‘the Smart City’ encompasses both getting the hardware for a smart city right but also getting the creative spaces as a place of incubators for fantastic ideas of the future.

The conference I just came from was talking about how to structurally adjust the economy in Newcastle and the Hunter, particularly when you look at post-1999 when steelmaking left the Hunter. We’ve seen a huge amount of job losses in the manufacturing sector in, in Newcastle and Hunter about 150,000 jobs and when you look at where you could go with smart manufacturing linked to creative industries these can be the smart high skilled jobs of the future.

To achieve that you need government working with educational institutions and industry, all aligning around the future of the economy in this region which is a future of the economy in the world. If you are at the forefront of that and you can make your mark in Newcastle and it can make its mark in creative industries as well is smart manufacturing, we are protecting the jobs the future for this region.

In 2015 there was an opportunity for the Newcastle City Council and the University to develop a funding application for the Hunter Infrastructural Group, can you explain a bit about that process?

So, we were partnering with the University and several other key stakeholders to put in for a Hunter infrastructure Funding bid. It was a grant application essentially, to create an innovation hub in, in the city centre.

The grant application was lodged last Friday, last week so it’ll be up to the Hunter Infrastructural Group Board to go through all the applications. They would have received them from across the Hunter for different projects. There was a lot of empirical evidence to support the economic benefit of our application, but it also ticks the criteria about major players in the city (for example the University and Newcastle City Council) working together. So, it does meet a lot of the criteria and I’m very hopeful that that project will get the funding and will provide the basis of creating the hard infrastructure as well as the soft in terms of the spaces to facilitate the creative industries development.

I'm the Lord Mayor and I've chosen to live here for most of my life. You can't go and buy that experience. You can't pay for that depth of understanding of what creativity is. I did allude to a number of studies and research being done that we have the most artist per capita compared to any other city in the country and if you take that artistic culture and that passion which goes through many different disciplines, you have a city that is fantastic to live in. It's a city that has a beautiful working harbour on one side and world-class surfing beaches on the other. You have median house prices that are still affordable, and you can still walk to the city or drive and park in the city. In coming years that may be a challenge for the City Council to deal with but it's a challenge that I welcome.

You have a fantastic world-class university in the city. So, what we have is the absolute bones to make this work. You have artists who want to live here and want to work here anyway so creating an innovation hub is based on the foundation of decades of creative artists. Add to that a wonderful culture in the City which has been fostered for many years by the Council.

We are willing to put money into the best Regional Art Gallery in the country, as well as a significant amount of funding to set up a new museum in the heart of the city. You know, for regional cities, that funding doesn't come easily for state and federal governments and it is often local government that must pick up the slack. So, the cultural policy that will be
discussed at Council next week is hugely important and it also marries to our economic development policy.

You know sometimes we can describe the city as an adolescent - sometimes not unhappy with itself and arguing with itself and not sure of its own identity, but I can see a very clear path for the future. We have an amazing future in Newcastle as we grow into a world-class city. And our urban revitalisation plans to partner with the university and the industry and business to create innovation hubs. It is all about setting ourselves up as a global city in the city for the future, and I think that by doing that were not just competing with other cities for high skilled high waged jobs we are competing with the rest of the world. And with bones like Newcastle I think we’re a very strong contender for the future.

In 2015 a video interview was recorded with the Lord Mayor and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.

100. MICHAEL NEILSON, EXECUTIVE MANAGER BUSINESS ORGANISATION

Newcastle Now, 22 November 2016

Creative Career

Michael is C.E.O. of one of the industry partners that support this study.

He began his career in industrial relations in local government having also completed post-graduate studies in entrepreneurship and innovation. In recent years, he has established and expanded his own small business interests and has become keenly involved in a range of projects linked to encouraging economic development in Newcastle. Those projects form a comprehensive strategy for growth ranging from the specific initiatives of the business organisation to others focused on social welfare, sporting and tourism initiatives, cultural heritage, infrastructure and smart city projects. Underpinning much of his work is a commitment to the creative industries as an approach to city activation, a safe and vibrant night-time economy, enhanced public spaces, jobs growth and community well-being.

Michael sees a major opportunity for the creative industries in the role it can play in enabling innovation across other sectors – health, manufacturing, professional services, tourism. The organisation he works for has been a significant supporter of creative projects over twenty years both by sponsoring projects and programs and by directly delivering events, commissioning public art and initiating new works.

As a member organisation, the business group works within a strategic plan that is supported by research, consultation and collaboration with stakeholder groups. With a stable income, the major concern is to make sure that projects do the work they are designed to do. Creativity and innovation are often a key element of ensuring that that happens.

Creative Futures

With an I.R. background, Michael believes that there is a major issue developing through the changing nature of the workforce but that people working in the creative industries are uniquely positioned to move seamlessly into the future as they are already familiar with the newer models of workforce participation.
Creative Career

Christopher trained in Western Australia at what is now Curtin University, with a major in theatre arts. His first professional job as an actor was in 1983 and he worked for 25 years as a freelance actor in WA, Sydney and Melbourne including a short stint on Home and Away and work with Hunter Valley Theatre Company where he met his wife, playwright Vanessa Bates. Christopher also worked with a company called Big hART which uses the arts and narrative to tell stories from the fringes of Australia and bring those stories to the mainstream. Christopher moved with his family to Newcastle in 2011 and was Property Coordinator and Project Support for Renew Newcastle from 2012. He has been General Manager since 2014, replacing Marni Jackson who was in the role from 2008.

Christopher also worked as the project manager for the restoration of the Regal Cinema in Birmingham Gardens which was officially re-opened in early 2014. He is currently Chair of Tantrum Youth Arts

CI Business

Renew Newcastle is an activation strategy which was founded by Marcus Westbury with the invaluable support of Rod Smith. Their website says:

The organisation has been established to find short and medium term uses for buildings in Newcastle’s CBD that are currently vacant, disused, or awaiting redevelopment. Renew Newcastle aims to find artists, cultural projects and community groups to use and maintain these buildings until they become commercially viable or are redeveloped.

Renew provides spaces for creatives in unused city buildings, with a 30-day license on a property. They work with five property owners, the largest of which is GPT Property Group. Another is Newcastle Council. Tenants pay $25 a week and are required to open their spaces (retail outlets, workshops, galleries) at least four days a week: “The space needs to be open more than it’s closed”. There are currently 23 properties accommodating 50 Renew projects, many of them collaborative, and only ten of these are shops. Christopher describes Renew Newcastle as ‘a social and cultural experiment’.

Renew Newcastle is a not-for-profit organisation and has an office at 170 Hunter St Newcastle. Renew has one full-time General Manager and four part-time staff, an Admin Assistant for 10 hours a week, a PR and cost manager about 10 hours a week, a project advocacy person for 200 hours over the next six months and a visual design consultant whose background is in visual merchandising (to work with the retail tenants, predominantly at The Emporium). A bookkeeper comes in once a month. Marcus Westbury is the Creative Director of the organisation and is on no fixed hours as such but maintains a close connection.

Christopher’s role involves managing the operations of the company in all aspects, staffing, funding applications, reporting including an annual operation report that’s required, managing the secretariat of the Board, managing stakeholder relationships, managing the day-to-day finances of the company, developing and managing budgets, facilitating the media and publicity, working closely with participants, selecting participants, matching participants to suitable properties, advertising, going through their application process, interviewing them, managing their career trajectory through mentoring and supporting, and liaising with property owners, notably GPT Property Group, to find suitable spaces.

Creative Futures

Christopher believes that ‘there’s an enormous opportunity for creative people to play a part in shaping the future of this city’ and that Renew is playing an important role in this as ‘an enabler’. He says:
there’s a history in the world of creatives coming in when a place has fallen into disrepair, if you like, as Newcastle ... has been since earthquake and BHP closure. I think that creatives are very good at taking advantage of opportunities and bringing something new to a place and I think that’s what’s happened in Newcastle.

That’s certainly the space that Renew Newcastle operates in - to provide those opportunities, to nurture, to incubate those people who are bringing some alternative activities into a city.

I think that’s what happened, I think that’s largely what’s bringing the life back into a place like Newcastle. I think there are many examples around the world where things like this have happened before, and then what we see is a place becomes gentrified and those creatives are pushed out to the margins and they do it all over again

there is a lot of interest from other cities around the world who are looking at what we’ve been doing here in Newcastle

I think it’s a cultural shift that needs to happen, and it all comes down to the valuing of creatives.

When asked where he thinks the creative industries are in this city, Christopher says the issue is not just how the creatives are valued but how creatives value themselves.

I think we’re emerging... I think we’ve go a long way to go because there’s a lot that we, as creatives, need to do in terms of valuing ourselves, and making ourselves invaluable, particularly in light of Renew Newcastle.

He warns of the danger of creatives being priced out of the City, as they were in Fremantle and in Paddington in Sydney.

You know, I don’t want to see us squeezed out and moved out west. I want to see that we can retain our place within this evolving city because I think that’s what makes Newcastle so vibrant and the place that it is...

Creative Career

Christopher says that he has always worked in the creative industries and has always made a living. Until his current position, the work has been freelancing or part-time. He includes in this his work as a carpenter/builder, as he sees that as a ‘creative pursuit’.

... I have seen people who’ve worked in areas like local government and I think, I don’t think I could do that. I don’t think I could work within the constraints of that level of bureaucracy and authority. There, I said it – authority!

He moved here in 2011 and says ‘I’ve chosen to live here and bring my family up here. I want to live in a dynamic place, I want it to be a place that’s full of surprises and full of creative people…’

Creative Entrepreneurialism

Christopher says that ‘Renew is a creative incubator, we support. We don’t just put people in a space and leave them to do their thing’. He adds:

one of the great things about Renew is that it really encourages failure and supports failure... And opportunity is a key word with Renew. I mean the whole thing is about opportunities and taking advantage of opportunities, and enabling... you have an opportunity to try something because there’s not a great financial risk. It’s not like you’re signing a five-year lease that you’re paying 400 bucks a week ... But have a go and do it and make use of that. And see if you can make something of it, or see if you will fail ...

Christopher says that Renew’s annual budget is approx. $250,000 per year. In the last three years Renew has had funding from the state government but that ended in late 2014. Arts NSW changed the criteria and that excluded Renew from funding. Instead, Renew plans to encourage and support individual
tenants to apply for funding. Newcastle Council has recently come on board with a commitment of $30,000 a year. In 2015 Urban Growth NSW committed to one year of funding. HDC – Hunter Development Corporation has renewed their triennial funding agreement with Renew but reduced it from $50,000 a year to $30,000. Newcastle Now [Business Improvement Association] provided the first funding for Renew and continues to provide funding but on an application process.

Renew generates income through the ‘participation fee’ charged to tenants, currently $25 a week which totals $70 - $80,000 a year.

Renew functions in part as a business incubator and as such it is committed to mentoring and moving people on to the next stage. Christopher says one way to judge their success is to look at the number of projects that have become commercial tenants, and so far, that is 26. In addition, 39 properties have been leased on a commercial basis, some to Renew participants.

Renew is also a property strategy in that it improves and enlivens spaces and makes them more appealing for a commercial tenant. Christopher explains:

Any empty building doesn’t look appealing, so, by putting an enterprise in there, suddenly, it’s inspiring. And particularly a creative enterprise because creative people tend to have a way of presenting things that is not just drab and ordinary.

He summarises:

it’s about filling empty space. Yes, it’s about providing opportunities, seeing ... an empty space as an opportunity for a creative enterprise to flourish, to either succeed or fail, but at the same time creating an opportunity for a commercial business to see the potential of what was formerly an empty building or an empty streetscape, and to encourage them to be part of something bigger.

Christopher likes the term ‘creative industries’, saying:

I think it’s useful is to move away from the expression ‘the arts’, which I think has had such negative connotations and been derided as being the freeloaders who don’t really add any value. Of course, I would argue very strongly against that. But I think by rebadging it as ‘creative industries’, to have the word ‘industry’ there indicates that we are economically contributing, which we are.

He is of the view that the ‘gift economy’ is no friend of the sector.

I think in the arts we’re our own worst enemies at devaluing ourselves in many ways because we’re constantly saying we’ll do stuff for nothing, we always do stuff for nothing, and that’s a great mistake. We should up our prices. I always believe that people should continue to do things for altruistic purposes, but we need to stop devaluing ourselves, and I think the use of the term ‘creative industries’ adds value from that perspective. That’s the positive for it.

What’s next?

Renew as an organisation has lost Arts NSW funding and their new approach is encouraging and supporting individual artists to apply for funding with Renew as the auspicing organisation, taking a small percentage to do the administration.

In 2015 a video interview was recorded with Christopher Saunders and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.
Creative Career

Marcus Westbury grew up in Newcastle. He attended Jesmond High School and used to walk through the University grounds as he lived on the other side of the campus. Marcus got a lot of being a student at the University of Newcastle though he never completed his Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies). Marcus was, however, a very active Uni student, as the activities officer for the student association he organised events, edited the student newspaper and was part of an organization that became Octapod. Marcus was a founder of Newcastle’s This is Not Art festival, which has become one of the largest media arts events in Australia. Marcus is a festival director and has produced some of the largest cultural festivals in Australia. He was Artistic Director of Melbourne’s Next Wave Festival in 2002-2006, was director of Festival Melbourne 2006, the Cultural Program for Australia’s 2006 Commonwealth Games.

In 2008 Marcus founded Renew Newcastle with Marni Jackson and Rod Smith, a lawyer. The aim was to reactivate the vacant properties in Newcastle by making these spaces available as artists’ studios. Renew’s website states that ‘In December 2008, the General Properties Trust (GPT) signed on as the first property partner, and Renew Newcastle took its first steps towards change in the city centre’ (Renew Online). Renew Newcastle went on to be managed by Marni Jackson and is now managed by Christopher Saunders. In total Renew has completed 256 projects in 81 properties and in July 2017 they had 15 active properties with 34 active projects. Marcus is the founder of Renew Australia that has assisted with Renew Adelaide, Renew Townsville, Made in Geelong and Pop-up Parramatta (Renew Australia Online).

Marcus is also a writer for all forms of media and has made, written and presented two television series for the ABC – Not Quite Art (2007) and Bespoke (2015). His book Creating Cities (2015) tells his story of the genesis for the urban renewal program, Renew Newcastle, and sets up a scenario that underpins his and his team’s efforts to generate small business in the urban heart of the city. Westbury has also written a guidebook on how to manage festivals for the Australia Council. His other media writing includes The Age, Griffith REVIEW, Meanjin, Crikey, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian.

Marcus’s social enterprise approach was recognized as valuable and he worked at QUT’s ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation and he is a fellow for the Centre for Policy Development, a think tank that is promoting Australian public debate. During the Rudd era Marcus was a member of the Labour Governments’ Creative Australia Advisory Panel and he has been on various boards and committees like The Australia Council, Arts Victoria, NSW Ministry for the Arts and The Australian Film Commission.

Marcus is currently based in Melbourne with his family and continues to be committed to Renew Newcastle and Renew Australia and in 2016 he began running the Contemporary Arts Projects Inc (CAP) in Collingwood, Melbourne which is another social enterprise scheme backed by the Victorian government and private investors to reactivate spaces and support community and artistic pursuits.

Creative Networking

Essentially what I’ve always done is organise my creative community, whatever that is, in some way, into some sort of outcomes, events, festivals; and the scale of that and the nature of that has changed probably over the last couple of decades to what it is now.

I mean there is a whole bunch of people whose work inspires me in different ways, shapes or forms, but I think I’ve always been interested in the culture around me. I’m not really looking over the horizon or trying to emulate some other thing. It’s that I’m really interested in literally what the ingredients in front of me are, and if they are a bunch of empty shops in Newcastle then they are a bunch of empty shops in Newcastle. You know if it’s the cultural
context of bringing a national community together around a Young Writers Festival or whatever. All those things are directly the result of an interest in my own culture and over time I think what has happened is that I've taken on some degree of a spokesperson role or an advocate role for my culture.

While Renew Newcastle has been very successful, Marcus realizes that there are a number of components that are needed to make something like Renew work in a community.

It's not as simple as just going to every community and going 'here is the stuff, go and do it'. ... To be honest. I think that I underestimated the need for ... a lot of it's based on quite complex relationships and nuances that people know, it's about having the right champions in the local community. I think I'd probably underestimated that aspect of it.

Creative Digital

Marcus sees the digital era of connectivity as being a catalyst for change.

My interest in is in small-scale cultural production, small-scale cultural production can now thrive because it's connected to global markets and audience are networks of support, which wasn't possible 5-10 or 15 years ago.

And the connectivity provided through social media demonstrated to Marcus the community’s support for an idea that was to become Renew Newcastle.

Renew Newcastle would not have happened if it wasn't for social media ...just a couple of years before we would not have got the critical mass to demonstrate the idea works. The first thing I did when starting Renew Newcastle was start a Facebook group and the fact that that Facebook group had 3,500 members within a few weeks made me realise that this wasn't a stupid idea, you know? And I think if I’d been operating in isolation I probably wouldn't have liked the idea and it was even just the Catch-22, as I had raised the expectations of a whole bunch of people, so I had to keep going.

Creative Entrepreneurship

I don't really like the word entrepreneur. It just sort of feels like bad .. sort of... The language is so loaded depending on the context in which you came to it. It’s like the talk of disruption today - I don't really like that word either. I just got back from the States and I just heard too many bullshit spie... the word disruption in it for me to listen to that word anymore .... it was a vacuous and hollow.

In mid-2015, Marcus was waiting for a few of his projects to be released, his book and Bespoke, another television series. At the time of our interview with him he claimed to be unemployed in a few months’ time.

I'm really interested in small-scale creativity basically whether that's record labels, computer game designers, or makers or craftspeople. I’m really interested in that small-scale layer - the layer that doesn't really figure on the radar of sort of policymakers and big institutions that I've always worked with. The same basic model is in everything I've ever done, which is collecting up lots of interesting small-scale things and putting them together in a way that adds up to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. And that's what a festival is. To some extent that is what Renew is. Even the TV series is - like I constructed that. Even the book is probably constructed in a similar way where it is a series of little observations and arcs that add up to a big thing.

The best thing you can possibly do is find someone else who is passionate about doing something and help them [....] I find that great because I'm constantly surrounded by people who are doing something that they're passionate about and inevitably that rubs off on me, ... I feel it and it bubbles up.
My great skills are not actually spending large amounts of money on great events. It’s on trying to pull together things on no money. So, Renew Newcastle was seed funded on my credit card - I just paid for it. I made 40 trips to Newcastle before I got paid - literally 40 trips from Melbourne. It was like ‘nuts’ absolutely stupid! But if I’d waited for the funding it would never have happened which just wasn’t an option. I was in discussions about funding with the council and the state Government or whatever, but their time cycles are so slow/and I was trying to catch a moment where there was a period of initiative and momentum and letting that go was much worse than then not having any money.

Creative Career

Marcus feels that his whole is in “inverted commas” because it has been about his cultural context. His media projects attest to that because every story starts in Newcastle and, as he claims, there is no point in anyone trying to emulate that.

I never wanted to be somewhere else, you know. The most interesting place in the world is where you are. Be interested in what is going on around you. Make things out of what is going on around you. That has always been my observation and has been my sort of starting point.

I was saying to someone I cheated - that’s a list of all the successful things I’ve ever done. At some point I’d like to get an opportunity to come in and do the alternate version, you know, which is like a list of every dumb idea that I had that didn’t go anywhere; every failed project; everything that ever stuffed up; basically to get to cheat narratively, and stand up and say ‘of course’ in retrospect, like it made sense.

Creative IP

My view is that ideas are best shared. I’m not territorial about my ideas at all. I’ve got so many - you know it would relieve a burden on me if someone else would do some of them for a while […] So I come out of that culture of the open source sharing Creative Commons idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and by bringing together lots of small-scale things it can add up to something bigger.

I’m not someone who is dependent on selling units of things to make a living.

Creative Products

I’ve made every mistake you can possibly make a least once. The only thing I’m good at is not repeating my mistakes. I’ve done a lot of projects over a lot of years and to varying degrees, they have always become more complicated.

Thoughts on the beginning of Renew Newcastle

Is it individually rational for 150 property owners to leave their properties empty right now? It’s collectively insane because they, are, all collectively driving down the value of the properties they are working with. So that is a function of a set of problems in a system. What I was trying to do with Renew was ‘OK so how do you get into the nuts and bolts of that system and actually change it?’

Renew is an exercise in essentially taking a bunch of dysfunctional systems and trying to insert a functional layer into them […] It literally began with an experience of me try to start a small bar about five or six years ago realising that real estate agents weren’t returning my phone calls and […] that they didn’t take people like me very seriously.

The rest, as they say, is history.
What’s next?

Mid 2015 Marcus was waiting for the release of his TV series ‘Bespoke’ and his book ‘Creating Cities’ and waiting to be ‘unemployed again’,

*I'm skipping from project to project. I don’t have a plan. I think there's a bit of international interest in my work now. I've been to the States and I've been doing about three overseas trips in the last few month, so I’m interested in exploring that more.*

In 2016 Westbury was heading up the Collingwood Arts Precinct and he became the inaugural chief executive of the Contemporary Arts Projects Inc (CAP). This project was backed by $4 million from the previous Victorian State government and by private donations. The planned model is to use social enterprise to charge below-market rents to give artists and organisations secure and affordable access to space. As Westbury has claimed, his technique is to repeat his approach and scale it up.

A video interview was recorded with Marcus Westbury in 2015 and can be found on the Hunter Creative Industries website.

103. GORDON WHITEHEAD, MARKETING CONSULTANCY

1 September 2016

Creative Career

Gordon Whitehead is the Chair of the Lunaticks Society and since September 2016, he has been a Business Advisor at The Business Centre. Gordon has a Masters Degree in Marketing.

*I have a degree in marketing, but my early background was as a Royal Airforce technician. Then I got into I.T. Services and from there into Business Development Management.*

CI Business

My own business is a marketing consultancy. But recently I was offered the opportunity to work within a business advisory capacity which also gives me a role in regional planning in the sphere of innovation. It brings together my experience and training but also my passion to make a difference.

Creative Futures

*I have come to the view that the methodologies of business development are wrong – archaic. So, I started to look at one-to-one marketing, data bases and so on because the traditional marketing agency model was broken. There are new models, new revenue models. What I used to do for businesses isn’t useful any more. Now I work as a business advisor and can use all that experience to help others.*

Creative Networking

*I helped form the Lunaticks Society (named after the Lunar Society of Birmingham) which is dedicated to digital innovation and new ideas in Regional Australia. One program is the annual Newi Awards for digital creativity based on a whole range of technologies – social media, new technology solutions, agency work, start-ups, solutions for government and tourism. It has been running for five years now and has become a significant event – entries from around Australia, even overseas. We’ve run Coffee Mornings and evening sessions where we talk about creative topics. We are trying out a more TV-style program approach with our goal to do more consumable programs.*

*It’s all about collaboration – agencies, suppliers, clients. At Lunaticks – it’s everyone who is involved. Stop the competitive stuff. Collectively we can lift the bar.*
Creative Labour

My main role is as the painter who paints a picture of the city – I know the organisations, the people, what makes them tick. When people come to me, I can introduce them to technology partners and to where they can get advice. We can work in the global environment now. The major constraints that used to be there are blown away.

What’s next?

My goal is to generate optimism. It’s an exciting time. We are in an age of experimentation and innovation we have never seen before. The big issue is the transition from traditional businesses on the street corner to the new services, as well as the new industries and the businesses that support them.

104. TODD WILLIAMS, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
CEO Hunter Regional Development Authority, 16 November 2016

Creative Career

At the moment I am CEO of Regional Development Australia – Hunter (RDA). “My first degree was in Business and then a Masters qualification in Business. I am also on the Board of NSW TAFE and have a conjoint role at RMIT.

I have also completed other postgraduate studies in leadership, so it has all been about business.

CI Business

The role is about economic development for the Hunter, researching the possibilities, understanding the metrics, recommending strategies and trying to gather support and partnerships.

The organisation is concerned with economic development - jobs and prosperity. We (at RDA) have been strong to find ways to market without marketing the region for livability. If you ask someone who already lives here, they will probably have livability in their top five – if not their number 1. Jobs don’t come up all that much because there aren’t that many jobs. That’s the reality.

Creative Labour

The strength of I.T. is that if you know what to do with it, you could live here and work elsewhere, but most people choose to go to a bigger centre – the urbanization that is happening globally – to get jobs. That’s the game that Newcastle and the Hunter is in – global talent issues – how to attract and retain talent. And I.T. is a part of that, but you’ve got to start a critical mass somehow. It’s an interesting quandary.

Somehow, also, for the region to go ahead, we need Head Offices to be established here – that’s where decisions get made.

Creative Futures

I remember early on in RDA we paid a lot of money to a national consultancy firm to do a fore-sighting study and I was quite disappointed because they used old headings and fiddled around with the numbers under the old headings. Nothing about the creative industries, or the emerging economy or the knowledge economy. It was like mining was going to go up but at a lesser rate. It was all stuff where you could go ‘well I can see that myself’.
I think that the creative industries are more of an enabler than an industry as such. It would be hard to measure it because it’s more the opportunity cost of not doing it in your business that could really differentiate your business in the Hunter. I’m probably completely wrong but the opportunity to use technology and creativity in your business IS the creative industries. If you are an IT business or in film, those industries exist but to do it better you use those key enablers. And I think some businesses are doing an absolutely fabulous job of that and there are case studies around which you probably already know – already mapped. Start the narrative in and around that. From a selfish economic development point of view, to be known as a region where we can get our technology organized around creativity and bring them together better than most other places in Australia – that would really differentiate us.

In terms of differentiation, we can’t copy anyone. And that’s what leads to smart specialization. And also the creative industries. It’s about finding that point of difference and really hammering that home.

**Creative Products**

The creative industries sector is of key importance as an enabler of growth through design thinking and a creative approach to problem solving.

In terms of having to tap into overseas markets – you need I.T. to help you with that. I think that focusing on areas that are more willing to accept change is probably the way to go. However, the weakest is the I.T. area – the Hunter is possibly the worst region in the country. We need to fix that. There was a report in the paper 2 weeks ago about digital – not sure what the title was, but the Hunter was the worst region in Australia for digital – 3 measures – one was accessibility; one was pricing and the third was ‘do you know what to do with IT?’ And the Hunter was the lowest in Australia. Newcastle was all right if you took that in isolation. So, in terms of digital literacy there’s a long way to go.

In a perfect world I would like to build better links between manufacturing and creative industries – certainly. And I think, medicine and education – from the perspective of economic development – high value jobs and growth. And like before - the creative industries really put the after-burners on something like that. Defence. Agriculture – I am thinking of a story I was told about a corn picker.

There was a farmer in the Upper Hunter who bought a half million-dollar corn picker. And then proceeded to cut it apart and put it back together again. It picks 40% more corn. He doesn’t want to do anything with it. He just wants to pick corn better. It’s how to use things a bit differently. Also, new markets. So, it’s new markets and tailor making the products to market. For that, you maybe need a design-thinking type of person and maybe a plain-speaking technology person. That would really help. To help introduce people to the world of technology.

**What’s next?**

I have achieved the goals that the Board and I set for the role. The organisation is in good shape – it’s time to look at the next stage of my career. I have indicated to the Board that I feel that I have accomplished what I set out to do, and that it is time for them to look for someone to take the organisation to the next step.
FOOTNOTES

v The interview was conducted in December 2014. NCAC relocated to a site on the Hunter TAFE Campus in Chinchen St, Islington in early 2017
vi https://open.abc.net.au/people/2167
ix Renew Newcastle Background - http://renewnewcastle.org/about/background/