

# New Bundaberg Hospital project

## Arts in Health survey report

### Introduction

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (WBHHS) launched a community survey titled 'New Bundaberg Hospital Arts in Health' on 17 December 2024. The survey was published online and promoted in local media and on social media.

The community was invited to provide feedback on the types of artwork and creative initiatives that would best support patients and staff in the new hospital, along with community views on the emotional significance of our beautiful region.

The survey ran for 26 days, closing on 12 January 2025. WBHHS received 172 responses to the survey. Findings will help guide the project's arts in health strategy, and ensure the approach reflects our shared values, our local history and our vision for the future.

### Purpose of the survey and report

WBHHS recognises the transformative power of artwork in healthcare settings – not only in enhancing the physical environment, but also in supporting the emotional and psychological health of patients and staff. Hearing from patients, visitors, staff, volunteers, local artists and the wider community is central to shaping the artistic vision for the new hospital and creating an environment that truly supports our local community.

This report includes a summary of the feedback we gathered. The full survey results have been provided to the project team overseeing the delivery of the project for consideration.

We also recently conducted a First Nations survey highlighted the important role of art in healing and cultural connection. You can view the survey results [here](#). Together, these two community surveys will help us create a hospital that is truly responsive to the needs of the community, blending cultural inclusivity with the healing power of art.



Scan to view  
our First  
Nations  
survey results



# Feedback summary



Most participants strongly felt that the new hospital's artwork should honour the region's history and stories, its people, and the hospital's role in the community.



Participants highlighted the importance of artwork in alleviating stress, offering comfort and hope, and creating calming, uplifting spaces that promote positivity and emotional wellbeing, for both patients and those that provide care to them.



Involving local artists was seen as an opportunity to enhance the hospital's atmosphere while also celebrating a diverse range of creative talent.



Many felt the new hospital's artwork should not only be visually stimulating but should also engage other senses, be interactive where possible, and be placed thoughtfully to ensure accessibility.



Participants expressed a preference for a diverse range of traditional and contemporary art forms and to use art strategically across the hospital spaces.

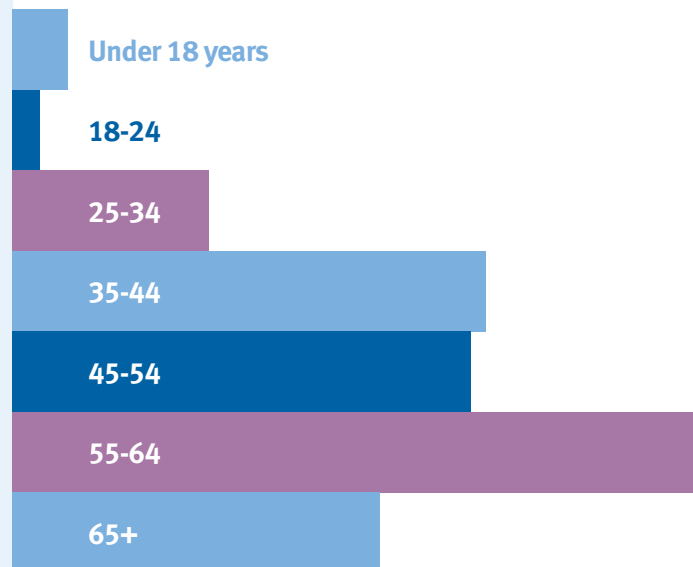
# Who we heard from

The survey captured the views and stories of 172 people from a range of age groups (see below), 16 of whom identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Most survey participants were from the Bundaberg Regional Council area (82 per cent), and other parts of the WBHHS catchment – North Burnett (2.34 per cent) Discovery Coast (1.7 per cent) and Fraser Coast (8.2 per cent). We also received responses from individuals outside the catchment area (3.51 per cent), all of whom had a connection to the region.

When asking survey participants about their connection to the hospital, we found a diverse range of responses. About half (53.5 per cent) identified as hospital staff, followed by interested artists (13.95 per cent), patients (8.7 per cent) and visitors (7 per cent). Additionally, we received responses in the 'other' category, which included community support organisations, general practitioners, former students, and medical representatives.

This broad mix of age groups and connections helps us better understand how different groups may engage with the arts in health strategy in the new hospital.



Queensland Children's Hospital, *Blak and Here*,  
Photographer: Sarah Osborn

# What we heard

## What makes our region special

We asked people why they were proud to live in or be connected to the region. The most common responses for what people found pride in related to:

### Sense of community and belonging

Individuals took pride in the region's strong sense of community and the warmth and kindness of its residents. It is a close-knit area where people know each other, support one another, and work together for the greater good. Many commented on the region's rich cultural heritage, along with its inclusiveness, with locals welcoming individuals from all walks of life, including those from different ethnicities, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

### Natural environment and iconic industries and attractions

People are proud of the region's stunning natural environment, which includes pristine coastline and waterways, a subtropical climate, farmlands and bush settings and native flora and fauna. There is a desire for artwork to evoke a sense of connection to the land, with suggestions to incorporate relevant meaningful symbols such as the sea turtles, which represent resilience and survival.

The region's agricultural heritage was also a point of pride for many, with the area being a

significant producer of fresh fruits, vegetables, and renowned local products like Bundaberg Rum and Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.

### Thriving creative community

People feel it is a culturally rich region, where the diversity of its people and landscapes creates a unique and thriving community. The vibrant arts scene was particularly notable, with a passionate and supportive hub of local artists and organisations that inspire one another. Several commented that the region had fostered the careers of many significant artists across the arts disciplines.

### Balanced lifestyle

The combination of urban, rural and coastal living makes the area appealing for families and those seeking a harmonious blend of nature and modern amenities. Many find the relaxed lifestyle and slower pace of life deeply fulfilling. Long-time residents are proud of the region's rich history and their family's connection to the land, while newcomers appreciate the tranquil lifestyle and the chance to build a future in a thriving community.

"This is the best place to live. The weather, people and history make it worth visiting. The food, parks, art and lifestyle make it worth staying."

"There is such beauty and hope, and possibilities reflected from the land, sea and people who live here. Because this is home."

"The vibrancy and cultural diversity of the local community brings a unique energy, which is also informed by the extraordinary, lush and productive landscape. The history of the region is embedded in the names and the faces of the people who live here."



Photo courtesy of Bundaberg Tourism.



Tony Albert (Girramay, Kuku Yalanji, Yidjiji), *The Glad Tomorrow*, Sculptural installation: hardwood, ochres and steel. Commissioned for Queensland Children's Hospital 2018.

# Artistic vision for the new hospital

We asked people what their greatest hopes were when considering the artwork strategy for the new hospital, common themes included:

## Stories of people and place

Survey responses highlighted a strong desire for the artwork strategy to reflect the region's history and rich cultural heritage. Participants expressed a wish for the artwork to celebrate inclusivity by showcasing the variety of cultures, ages, and communities that make up the region, while also honouring the local environment, farming traditions, wildlife, and iconic regional products. Many also expressed a desire to feature the hospital's history and recognise the contributions of its staff, including past nurses and other notable figures.

## Showcasing local creative talent

Many commented on the opportunity to showcase local creative talent by involving artists from all backgrounds and demographics, offering them professional opportunities and a platform to display their work. Participants noted that commissioning local artists would enhance the hospital's atmosphere and celebrate the community's diversity. Participants suggested that creative opportunities should be widely promoted to ensure all local artists have a chance to participate, fostering a sense of inclusion and community involvement.

"That a response is created, which is reflective of both the history and the contemporary life we live. Not simply a monument to the past, but a reflection on who we all are, together, now."

"I'd love the artwork to feel uplifting, so when patients and their families are walking through the hospital and feeling distressed or emotional, that they can glance at artwork and even for a moment, feel a sense of joy or distraction."

## Enhancing wellbeing through art

Survey responses reflected a strong belief in the transformative power of art to support the wellbeing of patients, staff, and visitors. The artwork should contribute to a positive atmosphere that promotes healing, connection, and inclusivity, while offering a meaningful distraction from the challenges of healthcare. There is a desire for art to be dynamic, colourful, and interactive, appealing to a broad audience, including children, families, and those with cognitive impairments.

## Embracing artistic diversity

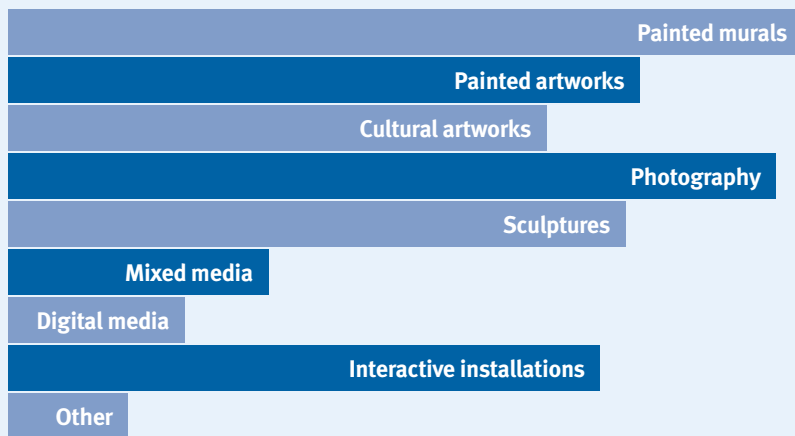
Survey responses emphasised the importance of incorporating a wide variety of traditional and contemporary art forms in the hospital, using different artistic styles, media, and techniques. Participants also highlighted the importance of making the artwork engaging for a broad audience, with a variety of pieces that appeal to different tastes and can be enjoyed repeatedly.

"I would love to see inspiring artwork from previous consumers that tells a story about their recovery journey. A piece of art that shares a recovery story would be a great conversation piece to have in the foyer or the family rooms. Would be nice to have a small paragraph about the recovery journey in the corner of the artwork too so that people can stop to read about it."

"I hope that arts will be recognised for more than its entertainment and decorative qualities and instead acknowledged for its value-add potential in mental health, rehabilitation and community inclusiveness to all staff, patients and visitors."

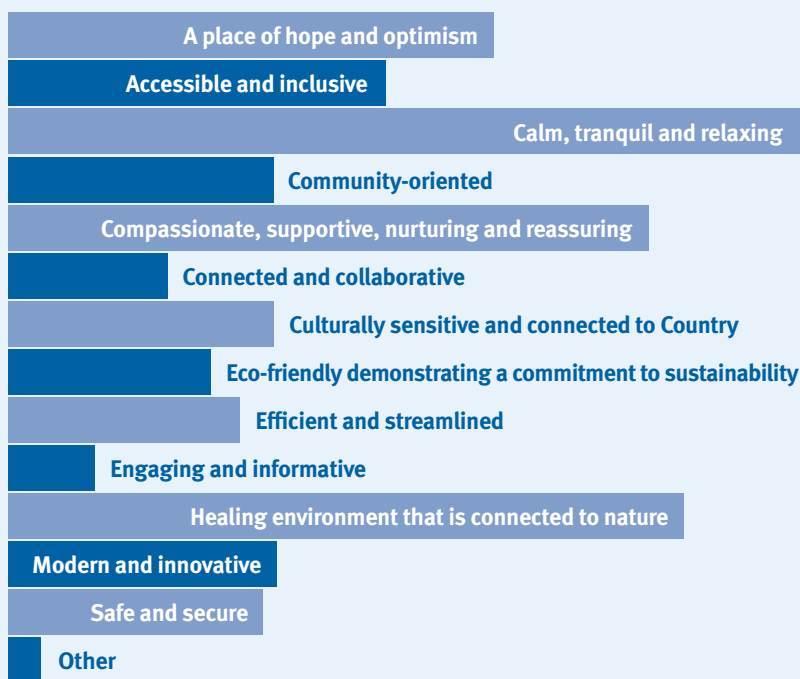
## What artwork would you like to see in the new Bundaberg Hospital?

When asked about the type of artwork they would like to see in the new hospital, participants expressed a strong preference for a diverse range of art forms, as shown below. Additional suggestions highlighted creative ideas for art placement further enriching the overall vision.



## How the new hospital should feel

Survey responses revealed that most people envision the hospital environment as being a calm, tranquil, and relaxing space. This suggests a strong desire for a peaceful atmosphere that fosters wellbeing and reduces stress. Closely following this, many prioritised the importance of creating healing environment connected to nature and the hospital being compassionate, supportive, nurturing, and reassuring.



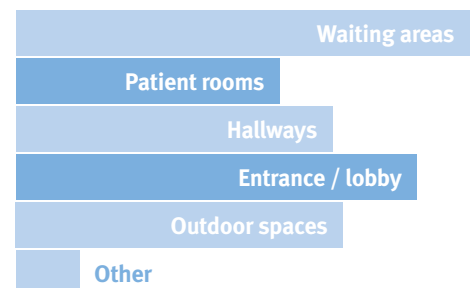
## How the artwork in the new hospital should make people feel

We asked people what emotions or feelings they would like the art in the new hospital to evoke. The most important emotions or feelings participants wished the art to evoke were calmness, safety, and hope.



## Where art should be placed

We asked people where they thought should be placed within the hospital for maximum impact. Waiting areas topped the list, reflecting the importance of creating a more engaging and soothing environment for patients and visitors who may experience stress or anxiety while awaiting treatment. This was closely followed by the entrance/lobby, indicating that first impressions are key, and art can help to set a positive tone as people enter the hospital. We also received additional suggestions reflecting other creative ideas for art placement.



# Making artwork accessible and inclusive for all

When asked how we could ensure that artwork was accessible to all to all patients and visitors, including those with disabilities, several key principles were highlighted:

## Multi-sensory engagement

Participants suggested that artwork should engage more than just the visual sense. For example, incorporating interactive installations, and soundscapes could help patients and visitors with sensory impairments. It was also noted that natural materials, such as plants that could be smelled or felt, would enhance the experience, especially in gardens and outdoor spaces.

## Strategic placement and accessibility

A recurring point was the importance of placing artwork at various heights to accommodate different mobility needs. For instance, larger pieces could be displayed higher for ambulatory visitors, while other artworks might be placed lower for wheelchair users, children, or seated individuals.

## Diverse and inclusive artwork

Feedback emphasised the need for artwork that represented a wide range of communities and experiences. It was also suggested that interactive or community-based art, such as murals or collaborative pieces could involve patients and staff in the creative process, fostering a sense of inclusion.

## Audio and digital enhancements

To improve accessibility for people with visual impairments, suggestions included adding QR codes next to artwork for audio descriptions or using augmented reality features. These technologies could provide additional context, stories from the artists, or even immersive experiences. Braille descriptions and high-contrast visuals were also recommended, particularly in areas with strong lighting.

## Sensory-friendly design

There was a clear request for art that avoids being overly busy or overwhelming, especially for those with sensory sensitivities. Quiet, calming spaces with subtle art, including sound-based works like whale songs or local acoustic music, were encouraged. Feedback indicated art should be visually appealing, while offering a soothing environment for patients and visitors.

## Practical considerations

When selecting artwork, several felt it important to consider infection control guidelines and physical accessibility. Artwork should be easy to clean and placed in areas where it won't interfere with medical equipment or staff/patient workflows.

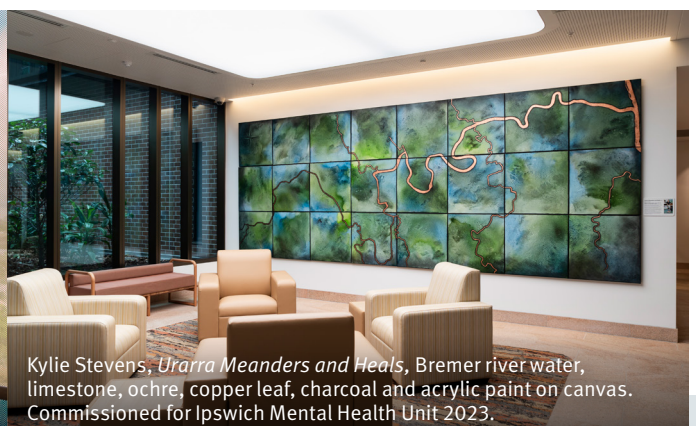
## Flexibility and rotation

To maintain interest and engagement, it was suggested that the artwork could be rotated or updated regularly. Changing the display of art every 12 months, for example, could keep the environment fresh and exciting, offering new experiences to patients and visitors.

“The great thing about artwork is that it is accessible to diverse abilities and backgrounds. I think there needs to be a variety of artworks and mediums used to ensure it is accessible to as wide an audience as possible.”



Rachael Sarra (Goreng Goreng), *Guidance of Country*, Vinyl Decal



Kylie Stevens, *Urarra Meanders and Heals*, Bremer river water, limestone, ochre, copper leaf, charcoal and acrylic paint on canvas. Commissioned for Ipswich Mental Health Unit 2023.

# Celebrating the legacy of the existing hospital

When asked about positive experiences that came to mind when thinking about the current Bundaberg Hospital, the key themes were below:

## Memorable moments and personal experiences

A key theme was the helpfulness, friendliness, and professionalism of the hospital staff. Many shared positive stories of life-saving care and cherished memories, particularly related to childbirth experiences. Participants also emphasised the strong sense of team spirit and unity among staff, with several noting the lasting connections and friendships formed with colleagues as positive experiences.

## Historical significance and architecture

The hospital's heritage and architecture were frequently mentioned as positive aspects. Participants recalled the hospital's historical features, such as the 'heritage-listed nurses' quarters' and the 'old buildings', remembered fondly for their uniqueness and the stories they hold. Many people expressed pride in the hospital's legacy and the historical artifacts on display that showcase its development and role in the community.

## Environmental and healing spaces

Several participants commented on the gardens, outdoor spaces, and natural surroundings of the hospital, which provide a calming and healing atmosphere. The connection to nature, through elements such as 'the river', 'gum trees', 'gardens' and 'view of the river', were often linked to the hospital's therapeutic environment.

"Seeing the artwork displayed around the hospital and reading the background behind them."

"The building has many stories and experiences that could be reflected in art."

# Your insights on effective artwork and artists

We were thrilled to receive an overwhelming number of fantastic suggestions for local artists or those with a connection to the region, along with examples of artwork that have positively influenced experiences in healthcare settings. The diversity and thoughtfulness of these recommendations will be invaluable as we explore future art opportunities. This feedback has been shared with our Arts in Health Program Working Group.

"The Children's Hospital Queensland artwork provides a sense of escapism. When you walk into the hospital, it doesn't feel like a hospital. It feels bright and modern and removes some of the scary feelings of usual hospitals. Their art tells a story too, so you're quite captivated with it. I think it helps patients, and their families forget, even for a moment, that they are in hospital."

# What we're doing next

We were excited to see a high level of interest in participating in community art initiatives for the project. Many individuals expressed enthusiasm about getting involved, and we look forward to exploring ways to collaborate with all those eager to contribute.

We will now incorporate this feedback into planning, including the development of the curatorial thematics and principles, the identification of artists and the finalisation of artwork opportunities and locations.



For more information on the new Bundaberg Hospital project, [visit the webpage](#) or contact our project team at [wbhhs-newhospital@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:wbhhs-newhospital@health.qld.gov.au)



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