

Arts Revival



What happens when regional Australia loses its artisans?

This is the first in a series of *Eumundi Voice* articles by local writer Stephanie Ryder to engage community discussion on how to revive the once-thriving arts culture in Eumundi. Readers are encouraged to contribute to the discussion.

Tucked away in a picturesque valley in SW NSW is a small village with a constant flow of tourists

as it is a well-known artisan enclave. Like many such communities it is facing a huge cultural change through population increase and the slow retraction of artisans once prominent in the village. This is a cautionary tale of a group of artisans and their struggle to maintain the heart of their culture.

Not long ago a small group of artisans banded together to provide a space in their village for people to connect with them and their art through weekly open studios and workshops. Their small workshop studio quickly became a gathering space. Ironically, the success of these workshops also caused the demise of the group as it struggled to cope with the pressures of growing interest and paying commercial rent.



Reluctantly they closed down and began to seek a space that might be sponsored by local or state governments. This search proved to be “heartbreaking” when their hard work to identify unused government-owned properties was continually greeted with comments such as: “We didn’t know we had that property on our books, it would be more valuable if we sold it rather than provided it for public use” or, “What a great plan to develop this space but we will not be able to support your proposal”.

Dejected and disbelieving, the group disbanded, retreating to their own studios and spaces and depriving the village of what was once a promising creative hub. When I spoke recently to one of the artisans about the lasting impact of this closure her response was: “The loss of opportunity for young and developing artists. Where do they go to share with other artists?”

I leave that question with you, the reader. Where do artists in our community go to communicate with other artists and share their experience in art creation with us? **Stephanie Ryder**

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