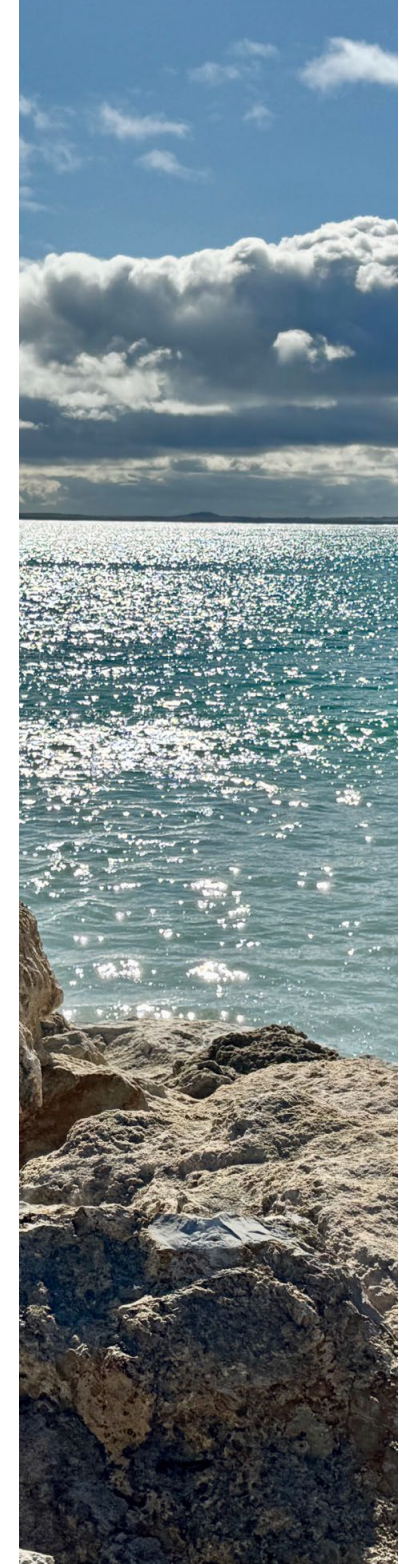
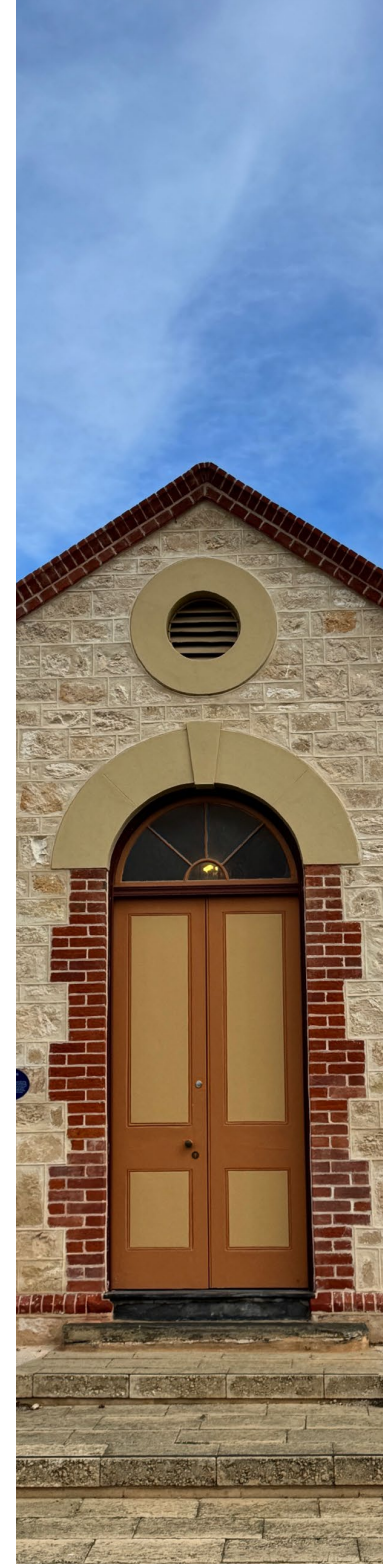
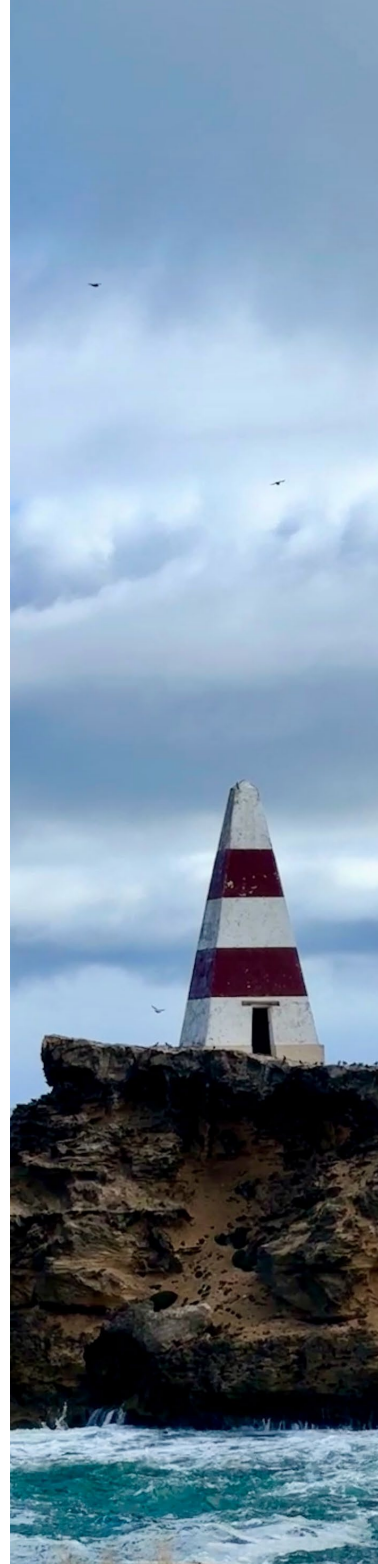




PUBLIC ART STRATEGY

2025 – 2030



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The District Council of Robe acknowledges that we are on the traditional lands of the Boandik people, and we respect their spiritual relationship with their Country. We also acknowledge the Boandik people's deep feelings of attachment and relationship with this land and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Boandik people today.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District Council of Robe Public Art Strategy 2025–2030 provides a practical and visionary framework to guide the development, integration, and management of public art across the district. This document outlines Council’s commitment to fostering creative expression in public spaces and recognises the many opportunities that public art presents—to reflect local identity, strengthen community connection, enhance amenity, and stimulate cultural and economic activity.

Shaped by meaningful community input, the strategy reflects Robe’s strong sense of place—defined by its maritime heritage, First Nations culture, early Chinese migration, natural beauty, and vibrant coastal lifestyle. It positions public art as a vital platform for dialogue, expression and placemaking, and establishes a consistent process for planning, commissioning, maintaining, and evaluating public art outcomes. By providing clear direction, it also encourages collaboration between artists, community members, businesses, and developers.

Five strategic goals underpin the delivery of public art in Robe:

- Celebrate Robe’s stories and environment through diverse, place-based works that resonate with the community.
- Foster creative partnerships and participation, enabling inclusive engagement across generations and cultural backgrounds.
- Embed public art in planning and development, integrating creativity into streetscapes, infrastructure, and open spaces.
- Ensure quality and sustainability, supporting long-term care and investment in well-crafted, meaningful artworks.
- Grow local creative capacity, cultivating opportunities for artists and strengthening Robe’s cultural sector.

Each goal is supported by detailed strategies and actions, providing a roadmap for implementation over the next 5–10 years. The Strategy also aligns with Council’s broader strategic objectives and investment priorities, reinforcing the value of arts and culture in shaping a liveable and connected community.

Public art offers more than visual enhancement—it activates spaces, tells local stories, encourages civic pride, supports cultural tourism, and fosters participation and inclusion. Through this strategy, the District Council of Robe affirms its leadership in creating a more vibrant, creative and culturally rich future—where public art is not only supported but celebrated as a defining feature of community life.



2. CONTEXT STATEMENT: DISTRICT COUNCIL OF ROBE'S CHARACTER, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

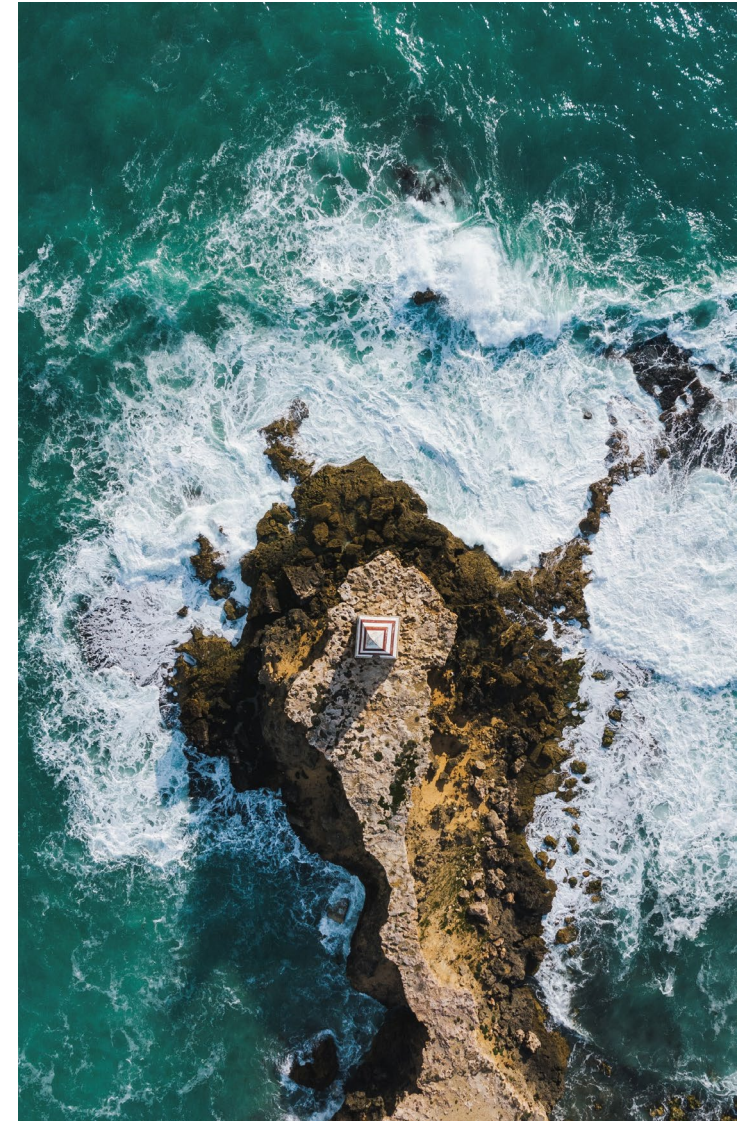
The development of public art should be undertaken in the context of the character, history and identity of the community where it is positioned. Understanding the nature of the landscape and the people who live and work in the region is foundational to creating public art which conveys a sense of authenticity and relevance.

The following statement is a starting point when considering this context.

District Council of Robe is a small, yet culturally rich coastal area located on South Australia's Limestone Coast, renowned for its dramatic natural landscapes, maritime history, and architectural heritage. With a permanent population of around 1,200 residents and a strong seasonal tourism presence, the township of Robe maintains a unique balance between historic preservation and contemporary lifestyle appeal.

Characterised by its rugged cliffs, pristine beaches, colonial stone buildings, and tranquil seaside atmosphere, Robe embodies a strong sense of place rooted in its past as South Australia's second major colonial port. The town's identity is deeply intertwined with stories of First Nations culture—particularly that of the Boandik people—its seafaring and fishing legacy, and its role in the 19th-century Chinese migration route to the Victorian goldfields.

Today, Robe is home to a diverse and growing community of long-time locals, creative entrepreneurs, returning families, and young business owners. It is a place where natural beauty, cultural heritage, and relaxed coastal living intersect. Public art in Robe must therefore be developed with sensitivity to the local landscape, community values, and historical narratives—enhancing rather than disrupting the town's aesthetic, and offering opportunities for storytelling, connection, and shared identity.



3. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

3.1 Vision

A public art collection that celebrates the District Council of Robe's unique character, stories, and landscapes. Artwork that reflects the region's heritage, engages the community, enhances public spaces, and strengthens Robe's identity as a vibrant coastal destination.

3.2 Goals

Goal 1: Celebrate the District Council of Robe's unique stories and environment through diverse public art.

Goal 2: Foster creative partnerships and participation across the community.

Goal 3: Embed public art in planning, development, and revitalisation projects.

Goal 4: Ensure Council's public art collection is high quality, sustainable and well maintained.

Goal 5: Grow local creative capacity and support emerging artists.

3.3 Guiding Principles

Place-based and story driven

Public art in the District Council of Robe should reflect the township's distinctive identity, its landscapes, history and cultural narratives.

Community-centred and inclusive

Artworks should be developed *with* the community and engage residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Respectful and culturally safe

All projects must respect the cultural heritage of the Boandik people and other historically significant communities. Collaboration with traditional owners is essential.

Creative excellence and sustainability

Public art should be of high artistic quality, demonstrating imagination, skill and professionalism. Materials + methods should be environmentally sustainable and durable.

Integrated + enduring

Public art should be thoughtfully integrated into public spaces and infrastructure, enhancing functionality where appropriate. Each project should consider long term care, value and relevance.

4. KEY THEMES

The following broad themes are provided as a starting point for the development of public art in the District Council of Robe. These are based on the consultation and engagement with the community, which was undertaken in the process of developing this strategy. They are designed to be a launchpad for interrogating local culture and storytelling which informs public art projects. They can be interpreted in a multitude of ways and provide a foundation for public art that supports the development of work that are relevant and can engage the community.

- **Maritime and fishing heritage (e.g., lighthouses, shipwrecks, sailing, customs house)**

Robe's relationship with the sea is significant from a variety of angles. From a commercial perspective, fishing has long been part of the region's economic landscape and the pristine seaside vistas, are critical to the region's tourism industry. From a more cultural perspective, locals have a great love of the sea and connect with it on both a wellbeing and recreational perspective. Architecturally, the town's establishment as a port has had a defining impact with buildings including Customs House, lighthouses and the Obelisk providing a distinctive architectural language, which has been preserved to this day. Historically, Robe has played an important part in South Australia's maritime past – as the second port established in the state and a stopping point for ships from around the world, travelling between Melbourne, Adelaide and beyond. The nearby shipwreck coast also provides a rich source of stories, both tragic and mysterious.

- **First Nations stories and Boandik totems (e.g., fire, fish, crow, black cockatoo)**

The District Council of Robe stands on the traditional lands of the Boandik people, whose presence in the region spans thousands of years. The natural features of the area—including freshwater sources, bushland, and coastal sites—carry cultural significance and ancestral stories. Boandik totems such as fire, fish, crow, and the black cockatoo represent deep connections to land, spirit, and identity. Incorporating First Nations narratives into public art offers an opportunity to acknowledge this enduring cultural legacy, strengthen relationships with Traditional Custodians, and share language and lore with the wider community in respectful and meaningful ways.

- **Chinese migrant heritage (e.g., walking journey to the goldfields, Pai Fang arch)**

In the 1850s, Robe became a gateway for Chinese migrants journeying to the Victorian goldfields to avoid heavy entry taxes in Victoria. Over 16,000 people passed through Robe during this time, many walking hundreds of kilometres inland. This unique and little-known chapter of Australian history has left a lasting imprint on the town's identity, symbolised by the Pai Fang arch and commemorative sites. Public art can illuminate this rich multicultural heritage, drawing attention to stories of endurance, cultural exchange, and the global connections embedded in Robe's past.

- **Natural beauty (e.g., cliffs, agricultural plains, Long Beach, birdlife, local flora and fauna)**

Robe's natural environment is one of its most defining assets. Towering cliffs, long stretches of white sand, wind-swept dunes, and biodiverse bushlands offer a dramatic backdrop for daily life and seasonal tourism. Native wildlife, birdlife, and marine species are central to the local ecology and identity. Artworks that reflect or interact with these elements—through materials, forms, or locations—can elevate public awareness, encourage environmental stewardship, and reinforce Robe's identity as a place of rare and fragile beauty.

- **Local life and youth culture (e.g., footy/netball, fishing, sailing beach culture, surfing)**

Beneath Robe's historic charm is a vibrant community that includes young families, teenagers, and active retirees who contribute to the town's evolving identity. Sport, particularly football and netball, is a cornerstone of community life. Beach culture—including surfing, fishing, and swimming—is a key part of growing up in Robe. Public art that captures these everyday experiences—joyful, informal, and familiar—can create points of recognition and pride for residents, particularly younger people. It also helps embed a sense of playfulness and authenticity in public space.

5. STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Goal 1: Celebrate the District Council of Robe’s unique stories and environment through diverse public art

Strategies

- G1.1 Honour Robe’s maritime, multicultural and First Nations heritage through site-responsive art.
- G1.2 Reflect Robe’s natural beauty and contemporary lifestyle through creative storytelling embedded within public art projects.

Actions

- Develop public art and interpretive trails which encourage residents and visitors to explore and engage with the Council region.
- Commission artworks inspired by iconic historic elements that resonate with the community in the region. This could include Chinese migration, maritime history, Boandik culture, local flora and fauna.
- Install beachside, bushland and/or street artworks that reflect community identity.

Goal 2: Foster creative partnerships and participation across the community

Strategies

- G2.1 Engage residents of all ages in art co-creation, consultation and celebration.
- G2.2 Promote inclusive processes that empower diverse voices and groups.

Actions

- Work closely with local schools to develop sculptures and murals that are relevant to current and future generations.
- Develop an annual community art project which has an intergenerational element.
- Create works that have an interactive element that encourages people of all ages to explore and engage with the culture of Robe.
- Establish community advisory groups on the development of major public art projects to ensure reach and engagement across different facets of the community.
- Encourage small groups and community organisations to develop public art through a community grants program.

Goal 3: Embed public art in planning, development, and revitalisation projects

Strategies

- G3.1 Integrate public art in Council infrastructure and streetscape upgrades.
- G3.2 Establish policy mechanisms to embed art into long term township growth.

Actions

- Integrate public art within new infrastructure plans/projects including urban design renewal or open space and placemaking strategies / upgrades.
- Work with artists to integrate bespoke creative elements into standard Council infrastructure including bins, seating, shelters, signage etc.
- Allocate funds to public art development on an annual basis.
- Ensure a percentage for art is allocated to all of Council's infrastructure projects above a certain threshold.
- Scope the development of public art along the foreshore to create a community gathering place.

Goal 4: Ensure Council's public art collection is high quality, sustainable and well maintained

Strategies

- G4.1 Create artworks that are environmentally appropriate, durable and reflect artistic excellence.
- G4.2 Ensure all works are considered in the context of management, maintenance and conservation.

Actions

- Engage professional artists in the development of all public art works.
- Apply environmentally sustainable design principles to all new commissions.
- Ensure all public artworks are registered on Council's asset register and appropriate maintenance and review schedules are in place.

Goal 5: Grow local creative capacity and support emerging artists

Strategies

- G5.1 Provide opportunities for professional development and skill-building.
- G5.2 Attract and retain creative talent through mentorship and artist in residence programs.

Actions

- Offer mentoring opportunities for local artists and creatives within public art projects.
- Establish and biennial artist in residency project that has a public art component to it.
- Encourage emerging artists to participate in commission through targeted EOI processes.
- Provide support and training on public art delivery and proposal writing.

6. POTENTIAL LOCATIONS

The development of public art can happen in a variety of places depending on the purpose and nature of the work. Based on the consultation several sites or types of “sites” were identified as places for public art. It is important to note that this list isn’t definitive and provides some suggested locations for public art, based on the feedback and that other locations and projects may emerge outside of these places over the next five – ten years.

- **Foreshore and Beaches** – this includes Front and Town Beach foreshores and the grassed area and play areas near the water. These locations are highly visible and popular with families and tourists, and could be ideal for murals, landmark pieces, and interactive or playful works that align with the coastal atmosphere.
- **Walking Trails and Coastal Routes** – this includes cliff top paths, coastal and bushland trails (e.g. Obelisk area, undeveloped paths) and tracks that lead outside the main townships.

These locations offer immersive experiences for both locals and visitors, providing discreet, nature-integrated sculptures that enhance the walking experience without disrupting natural beauty.

- **Marina and Waterfront** – this includes around the Marina including the entry, boat ramp and breakwater zones.

These areas are ideal for works tied to Robe’s maritime identity and potentially for landmark installations.

- **Town Centre and Retail Precincts** – this includes Main Street (Victoria Street) and shopping areas, in conjunction with the urban design work that is being proposed, public buildings, / toilet blocks, Visitor Information Centre and other community infrastructure.

Central civic and commercial areas provide opportunities for community-focused, story-rich artwork that connects with local heritage, enhances streetscapes, improves dwell time around retail and commercial precincts and supports economic vitality.

- **Parks and Playgrounds** – this includes Jenny Matthews Playground, Lannam Park and community gardens, Long Beach Reserve

These locations are family-friendly spaces present opportunities for interactive or community-made art that invites engagement, play, and local pride, especially from younger audiences.

- **Cultural and Historical Sites** – this includes the cemetery and old gaol, institute wall, and sites tied to First Nations heritage, maritime history and the heritage of the towns. Works here would be designed to complement the heritage infrastructure and focus on interpretation and storytelling.

These sites support the community’s desire to represent First Nations history and Robe’s broader heritage through meaningful public art.

7. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This strategy directly supports the following goals of the District Council of Robe Strategic Plan 2024–2028:

- **Strategic Plan Priority 1: Vibrant Communities**

Public art strengthens community identity, promotes intergenerational engagement, and provides opportunities for residents to actively participate in creative expression and local storytelling.

- **Strategic Plan Priority 2: Economic Growth and Local Business**

Artworks and creative experiences enhance Robe’s cultural tourism appeal, supporting local businesses and contributing to the township’s economic vitality.

- **Strategic Plan Priority 3: A Unique Coastal Lifestyle**

The integration of public art into coastal and recreational spaces reinforces Robe’s relaxed, scenic lifestyle and celebrates its distinctive character.

- **Strategic Plan Priority 4: Built and Natural Environment**

Public art contributes to the visual quality of the built environment while promoting sustainable design and a deeper appreciation for Robe’s natural landscapes.



8. APPENDIX

8.1 Value of Public Art

Public Art provides a range of benefits for communities and the work of local government. The following provides an overview of these benefits, which vary depending on the scale and nature of the public art projects.

- **Place Identity and Cultural Expression**

- Public art strengthens a community's sense of place by reflecting its stories, people, and landscapes.
- It can:
 - Celebrate cultural heritage and local histories (e.g. First Nations culture, migration stories, natural features).
 - Reinforce visual identity, particularly in townships and public precincts.
 - Distinguish a locality through unique, site-specific works that may become landmarks.
 - Community Engagement and Inclusion

- **Public art can be a powerful tool for community involvement and social cohesion.**

- Engages residents in creative dialogue and co-creation.
- Builds connections between different generations and cultural groups.
- Provides accessible cultural experiences for people who may not attend galleries or traditional venues.

- **Economic and Tourism Benefits**

- Public art contributes to economic development by:
 - Enhancing tourism through art trails, sculptures, murals, and events.
 - Supporting the local creative economy by commissioning artists and fabricators.
 - Increasing foot traffic and dwell time in commercial and civic areas.

- **Urban Renewal and Place Activation**

- Artworks can transform underused or transitional areas by:
 - Humanising built environments and softening infrastructure.
 - Providing focal points in streetscapes, parks, and civic centres.
 - Encouraging pedestrian movement and improved amenity.

- **Creative and Cultural Development**

- For councils, public art is a vehicle for:
 - Nurturing local creative talent and emerging artists.
 - Building capacity within the arts sector through skills development and mentorship.
 - Demonstrating leadership in cultural innovation

- **Environmental and Educational Impact**

- Public art can contribute to environmental awareness and learning by:
 - Highlighting natural systems, sustainability, and biodiversity.
 - Offering interpretive or didactic content about local landscapes.
 - Encouraging stewardship through creative storytelling.

8.2 Definition and Types of Public Art

Public art is an artwork in any medium planned and executed outside a gallery context and intended specifically for exhibition within the public space.

It can be made from any materials, be of any scale, stand alone or part of another structure, 2 or 3-dimensions, include digital and/or sound components and be static in nature or incorporate moving parts. The following is a definition of public art provided by Arts South Australia (Now Create SA):

“Public art is regarded as the artistic expression of a contemporary art practitioner presented within the public arena, outside the traditional gallery system, where it is accessible to a broad audience.

The public arena refers to both indoor and outdoor spaces that are accessible to a wide public and includes parks, open plazas, road reserves, civic centres and library foyers. Works of art in the public arena may take on many forms; including paintings, prints, murals, photography, sculpture, earthworks, details in streetscapes, performance, installation, sound works, text, audio or multimedia. They may be permanent, temporary or ephemeral.” Arts South Australia

There are several types of public art with work categorised according to its physicality, nature and purpose. Public artwork can be made from just about anything and designed to interpret, educate, commemorate, influence and/or beautify. The information below provides an overview of various types of public art. It is important to note that public artworks can reside within multiple categories. For example, a permanent artwork can also be an integrated or functional artwork and a temporary artwork may also be site specific.

- **Permanent:** Long-term works installed in public spaces, such as sculptures, mosaics, or integrated architectural features that remain for decades.
- **Temporary or ephemeral:** Short-term installations or performances designed for specific events, festivals, or time-limited community engagement.
- **Commemorative or memorial:** Artworks that honour people, events, or cultural milestones significant to the community's identity and heritage.
- **Site-specific or integrated:** Art that is created in response to the characteristics of a particular location, often incorporated into buildings, paths, or landscapes.
- **Decorative or iconic:** Artworks with aesthetic focus that contribute to the visual identity of a space, often serving as landmarks or wayfinding points.
- **Functional (e.g. benches, signage):** Artworks that provide utility as well as beauty, such as artistic seating, lighting, bike racks, or shelters.



8.3 Public Art Acquisition and Commissioning Models

There are a number of ways to acquire a public artwork. An artist can be commissioned to create a work based on specific details provided in an artistic brief, a ready-made work can be purchased from an artist or their representative, or an acquisitive prize or competition can be issued with the “winning” artwork acquired and installed. Commissioning an artwork that is created specifically increases the likelihood of the work being authentic to its environs and relevant to the audience it is designed to reach and is generally the preferred option for public art development.

- **Open Tender Commission:** A publicly advertised opportunity where any eligible artist can apply. Encourages diverse responses but requires thorough assessment processes.
- **Limited Tender Commission:** A select number of artists are invited to submit proposals. Offers control over quality while reducing administrative load.
- **Direct Commission:** An artist is approached directly due to their specific skills or prior community connection. Suitable for time-sensitive or culturally specific projects.

8.4 Site Selection and Considerations

- **Community access and visibility:** Sites should be easily accessible to a wide audience and offer visibility to ensure engagement and safety.
- **Cultural or historical relevance:** Sites with a story to tell offer an opportunity to reflect heritage and deepen local connection through art.
- **Safety and maintenance requirements:** Sites should be assessed for physical safety, accessibility for maintenance, and potential impact on surrounding infrastructure.
- **Environmental and planning constraints:** Artworks must consider coastal or bushfire zones, weather impacts, and relevant planning policies.
- **Alignment with town development and use:** Locations should fit into broader planning goals, infrastructure upgrades, or tourism development strategies.

8.5 Planning Milestones and Project Phases

The following provides an overview of a typical public art project process:

- **Concept development and stakeholder alignment:** Establish shared vision, themes, and roles with community, artists, and Council teams.
- **Site and budget confirmation:** Secure location permissions, assess site conditions, and finalise project funding and cost plan.
- **Artist selection and contracting:** Use open or direct commissioning models, and prepare formal contracts covering scope, Intellectual Property and payments.
- **Design and community consultation:** Develop concept designs and seek input from local groups, stakeholders, and Council for refinement.
- **Fabrication and installation:** Ensure construction aligns with safety and quality standards and supervise installation in accordance with approvals.
- **Launch, evaluation and documentation:** Host an official unveiling, gather feedback, and document the work's impact and asset details for future reference.

8.6 Existing District Council of Robe Public Art Collection

The following is a list of existing public artworks situated within the District Council of Robe:

- The Robe Entrance Statement (entrance to town)
- The Encounter Signal Memorial (Mundy Terrace)
- Pai Fang Archway (Chinese Migrant Memorial)
- Blue Plaque Trail (through township, various historic sites)
- Mural at Robe RSL (community-driven, historic themes)
- Decorative features at Lions Park
- Various private sculptures and signage in Robe township
- Metal Silhouette Art at Lannam Park