



BLACKWOOD RIVER ARTS TRAIL REPORT 2022



SEPTEMBER 1, 2022
BLACKWOOD RIVER ARTS TRAIL

Overview

In the second iteration of the Blackwood River Arts Trail (BRAT22) that ran from Sat 2 April – Sunday 17 April 2022, the area covered by the event expanded to include the Shire of Boyup Brook. Artists from four shires (Nannup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Donnybrook-Balingup and now Boyup Brook) were now able to participate in the event. In a bid to also expand the offerings available for visitors to enjoy the name was slightly changed to become 'ArtS' rather than just 'Art' trail. Major outcomes for this were the creation of Blackwood River Film Festival where two programs of short films were screened in Nannup town hall over the middle weekend of the festival and a collaboration with Adrenaline children's dance company that brought *Zombies the Musical* to Nannup Amphitheatre on the first weekend of the event.

Community grants to support the project were again obtained from three of the shires covered by the event: Nannup, Bridgetown-Greenbushes and Donnybrook-Balingup Shires. Talison Lithium in Greenbushes also provided a community grant/sponsorship, and two Regional Arts grants that provided funds for promotion and advertising were successful. The remainder of the funds to support the event were raised through participant fees and advertising in the trail guide.

Jacksons Drawing Supplies provided sponsorship through advertising and donations, paintbrushes for participant welcome kits and an easel that was a prize drawn from the pool of participants who provided full feedback at the conclusion of the event.

The purpose of expanding the event was to engage with a wider community of artists providing both an increased audience for regional artists and the opportunity for them to meet and network with their peers. It is hoped that the event will continue to expand and provide exposure for regional artists in an area that is not covered by other open studio/art trail events.

Establishment of BRAT Inc.

In 2021, following the success of the inaugural event, a non-profit incorporated organisation was established – Blackwood River Arts Trail Inc. (BRAT Inc.) with eight committee members. The major aims of BRAT Inc. are to organise the BRAT, including seeking funding from granting bodies, to identify additional opportunities for artists, and to provide professional development and networking opportunities

The organisation and coordination of the BRAT22 was undertaken by the committee that included four town coordinators who were located in the major townships of each of the four shires. This model appeared to work well as having local knowledge assisted broadening local understanding of the event within each shire and helped to share the coordination load.

The establishment of BRAT Inc. also meant it was easier to apply for and access funding for the event with a dedicated bank account for the organisation.

Membership of BRAT Inc. was a condition for applying to BRAT22 as a participant and was offered at no cost for the initial period. The current committee has agreed that a \$10 annual fee should be levied for the next year to assist with administrative costs.

The inaugural AGM has been set for 9 September 2022 to elect a new committee

BRAT Inc. Events

In its second year our primary event, the Arts Trail, grew from 21 to 30 venues and increased exhibiting artists from 32 to over 60. Those that participated for a second year found that visitor numbers increased, particularly those that were situated in main town precincts as these exhibitions benefit from walk by trade. Numbers to the film festival were low, but it is expected that these will increase over time as it becomes more widely known as a feature of the event. It has been given its own name – Blackwood River Film Festival, to provide the possibility of running additional film events throughout the year.

This year an additional event/opportunity was organised by BRAT Inc. – a group exhibition “A Glimpse of Blackwood River Art” held at Collie Art Gallery 4 June – 17 July. A Regional Arts WA Quick Response Grant application was partially funded and this subsidised the 15 artists’ costs and paid for some coordination fees.

A seminar about funding sources and networking event has also been arranged for those attending the AGM on Sept 9.

Budget

Organisers attempted to access grant funding from various organisations and were successful in gaining \$1000 grants from three of the shires involved, and advertising sponsorship from the fourth shire as well as a \$2000 grant from Talison Lithium Greenbushes.

BRAT Inc. was also funded by two Regional Arts special grants to assist with marketing (total \$12,500) which enabled both traditional and social media consultants to be engaged to assist with our marketing efforts. Reports from Tracey Routledge and Rachel Davison are attachments to this report. A graphic design consultant was also engaged.

In kind support with a total value \$346.20 was received from Jacksons Drawing Supplies in the form of advertising through their mailing lists, displaying posters and having guides available in their shops, and providing small gifts to include in artist welcome packs and an artist easel that was put into a draw for participants who provide complete feedback to the committee.

Additional income was accessed through participant fees and advertising in the guide. Details of income and expenditure are provided in the Treasurer’s report.

Evaluation

The purpose of evaluating this event is to inform all interested parties about how the event was organised, perceived and received by visitors, venues, general community and the artists themselves. A selection of forms was provided to artists and venues in the Welcome Packs. These were to assist artist and venues to collect visitor numbers, where they came from, sales and written comments. For some venues (such as businesses) it was not practical to collect all this information, so estimated increases in visitor numbers were sought rather than more detailed information. A feedback questionnaire for artists and venues was also included to complete at the conclusion of the event. Throughout the event, a prize of two night’s accommodation at a retreat in the region was offered to visitors who filled in an online feedback form – 78 responses were received.

Results

Collated Regional Numbers & Sales Totals (8 Responses)

Southwest	Country WA	Perth	Interstate/os	Unknown	Total	Sales total
67	1	19		13	100	13300
70	6	53	5	4	138	513
103	58	59	3		223	8043
64	2	26	1	3	96	950
69	7	11	1	4	92	1020
132	4	69	11	160	376	1098
124	8	48	4	11	195	2290
37	8	23	4	4	76	3240
				Totals	1296	30244

Collated Estimated Numbers & Sales Totals (7 responses)

Estimated Visitors	Sales total
726	806
512	42 sales
262	3095
72	2500
30	7 sales
568	2250
1600	3200
3770	11851

Total Visitor Numbers reported from 15 of 29 participating venues (1 late withdrawal): 5066

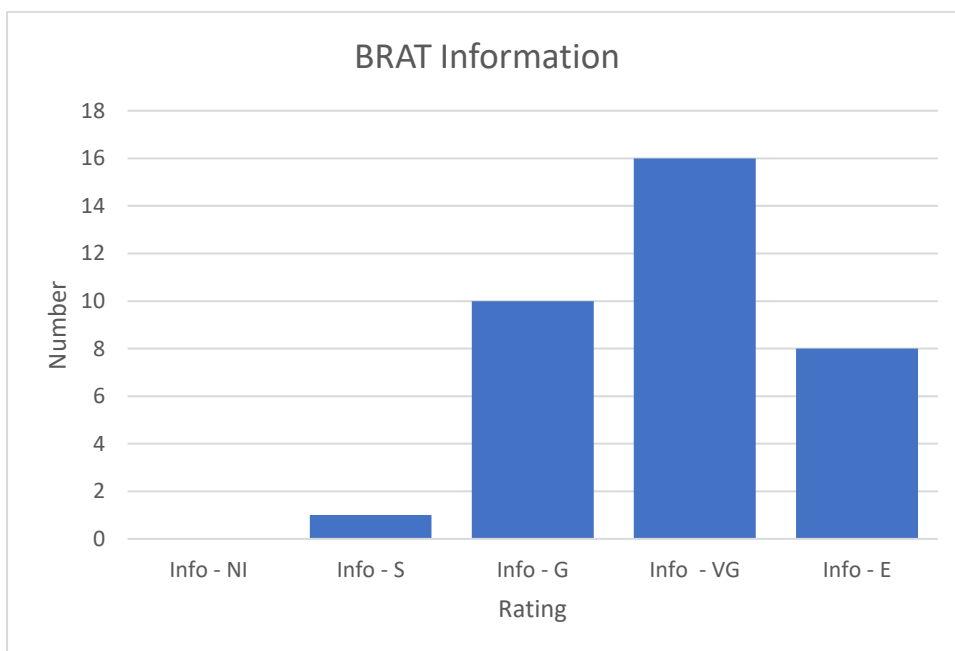
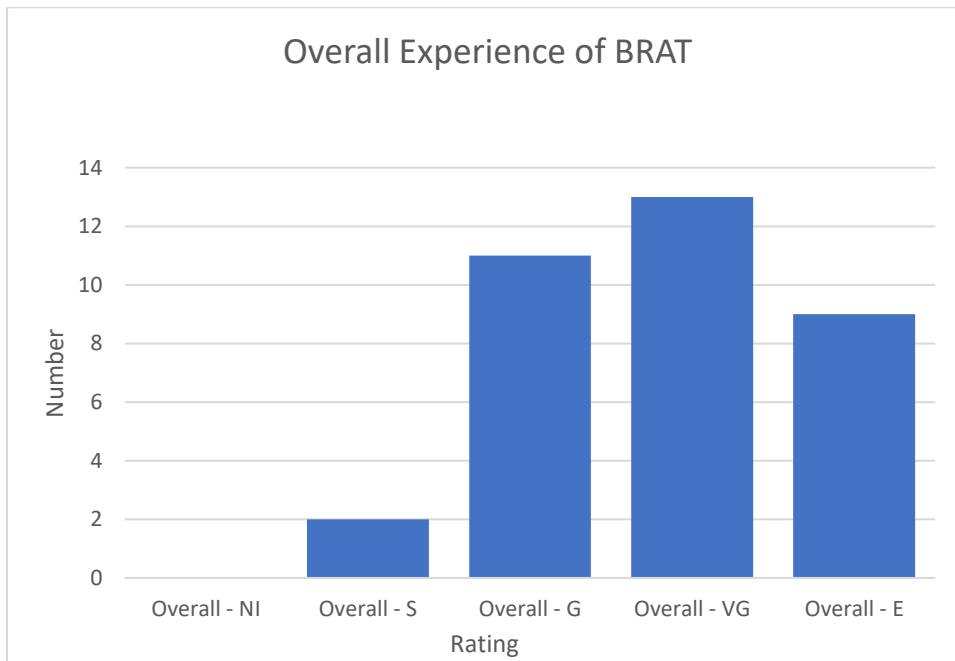
Total Sales Reported from 13 of 29 participating venues: \$42305

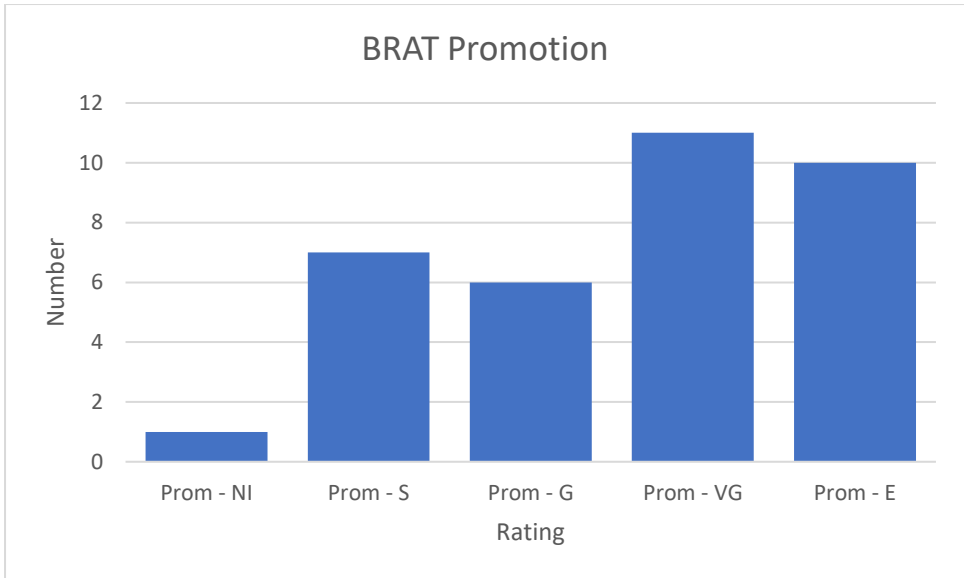
Feedback Forms

Received at total of 35 feedback forms from artist and venues with the following breakdown:

31 artists (approx. 50 % of total), 9 who identified as venue & artist and 4 forms from venues only. Responses for 13 venues.

The following graphs show responses to ratings of NI – needs improvement, S – satisfactory, G- good, VG – very good E - excellent





Additional Responses:

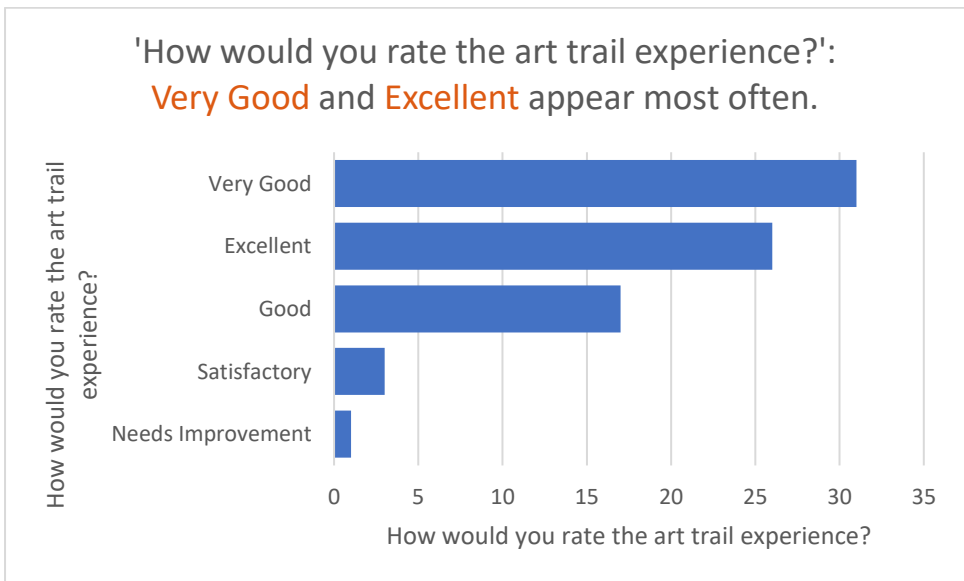
Increased Profile of artist Improved business at Venue
 23 of 31 12 of 13

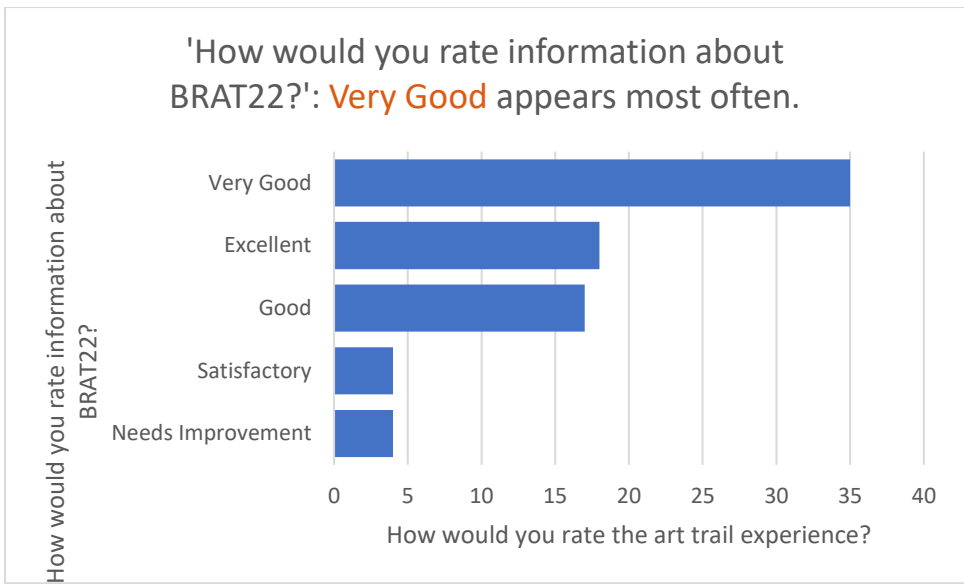
Increased Sales Future trails - Venue
 19 of 31 11 of 13

Increased Opportunities
 13 of 31

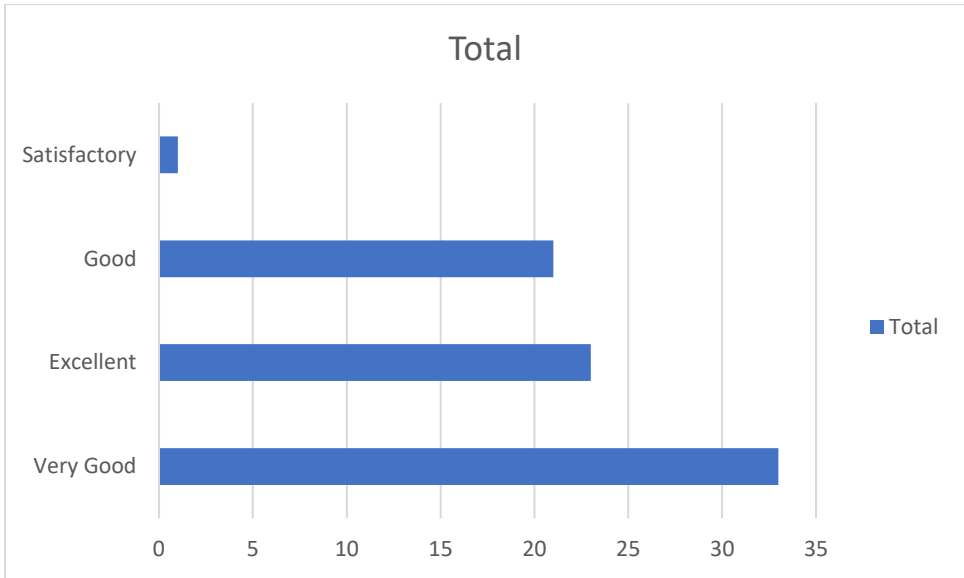
Future Trails - artist
 25 of 31

Online Visitor Feedback





How would you rate the facilities (food, accommodation) in the region?



Survey Comments

Fantastic

Fantastic

Was amazing to watch Cher Shackleton working on her pottery wheel. She is just so free and easy with her work and a very friendly and accommodating lady. Very inspiring.

Most enjoyable day

Great day out with family.

Incredible array of artists

Signage to gallery in Boyup Brook could be better.

My daughter had a chance to be a part of this by performing in the Zombies musical. We spent an amazing weekend at Nannup caravan Park and loved visiting the stores around town. The nannup amphitheatre is a gorgeous venue and we feel very privileged to have been a part of such a wonderful experience.

I enjoyed it so much I would recommend it to everyone I see. Thank you.

We were unaware of brat before we arrived in Nannup. It was a pleasant surprise. Spectacular getaway. Wonderful to be immersed in so much creativity in beautiful surroundings. Nannup is such a beautiful place and the people are so friendly. We took the kids to the zombie musical on Saturday 2nd 4pm-6pm which our 6-8 children loved but couldn't keep our 4 year old boy sitting still and there were no other events for children their age in for the rest of the weekend which was a shame as I thought the dance workshop would be on the same weekend.

The Nannup map for the outer artist studios including Josh Windram are inadequate. If you are not familiar with the region some directions are difficult because there are many major roads in eg from Busselton, Bunbury, Augusta etc. More wayfinding flags on poles would be a great help. Such a great way to see talents in the local area and meet many artists too. Some extra signage in more regional spots would be helpful

I know how much commitment goes into staging such an event. Congratulations to all the artists and organisers. Great that it is open two weekends and throughout the week. I would have liked to have been able to visit all but ran out of days. I will book myself in for more days next year. Some venues only open on weekends. It would be good to have a couple of weekdays open. All of the artists were extremely professional and giving with their expertise and provided an enjoyable experience in their studios.

amazed by the talent in the area. Such a great idea of having a trail around the area.

I live in Bridgetown and was proud to show my visitors some local artist's work, particularly the sculpture

Fantastic, great talking to artists, inspiring...

Enjoyed the event

Guide was very useful, bold flag signage out front of galleries was helpful, friendly artists, some lovely sights and great to travel thru the area and towns and see other attractions in addition to the art

Great initiative. Well done on pulling it together. We had a very enjoyable time.

Great to see works from local artists exhibited at or close to their home/place of making
The arts trail is fantastic. We actually discovered it by chance as we booked to spend the long weekend away with a few extra days on either side. Overall, we are so grateful to be able to experience all that that the Blackwood River Arts Trail had to offer, and we shall definitely be returning to see what the art that the various towns are exhibiting in the future!

Made a special trip to Balingup to see the quilt exhibition, in the rain, and it was not open. No signage on the door or anything. Very disappointed! All other venues were excellent.

The Quilt Showing in Balingup was non existent sadly after driving from Nannup for this.

It would be extremely helpful to have an interactive map of all the region, you then click on the town you are visiting and then it brings up a specific map that shows you all the events on in that area on that partic day, and you can then click on each individual one for info and location, so it is easy to find out, in one place, what is happening where and when I found it challenging and frustrating to try and find out what was happening between different websites / pages/ Facebook
One map is a simple and standard method that would be a great help

Found the artists we visited to be really interesting to talk to and very inspiring. Thank you
Website and guidebook could be improved to make it easier to see the maps.

It was a lovely day.

Great idea for showcasing local artists and the region

I only heard about the Art Trail event by picking up a card for this competition whilst visiting a local store in Bridgetown. I'm sorry I had not learnt of it sooner!! I saw the sculpture and murals in Boyup Brook incidentally whilst staying there. The murals are impressive!

Too many things happened only on the weekend. Also some studios that said they were open on the program ...were not open when we arrived. Confusing. I also found some of the flags difficult to locate - or belf we did see them and go inside - there was not a lot of interest in us being there - for the festival or not - not a lot of meet and promotion by the 'local artists - if they were around' . Best one was the smallest 'art' house in Balingup. Generally the program needed to have more happening in the school holiday weekdays at least - lost opportunity.

Over all an excellent arts trail. A shame that some venues were closed when actually the booklet said open but I understand how difficult it must be for the organisers to relay any last minute changes. The diversity or artwork was incredible and all the artists I met were very generous with their time and made us feel very welcome to their studios

I hadn't planned to visit but saw the info on my way through Nannup the weekend prior. And so I extended my trip to take in galleries through Bridgetown and Nannup, then went out to Balingup the next weekend. Had some great finds, but also disappointed by others. Some closed - please encourage them to have a backup support team. Others seemed half hearted about what they were doing. It really took the shine off the other excellent offerings. I like the brochure and relaxed feel overall. The extras looked interesting but as I hadn't planned for it, I just couldn't get to them. I would have loved to do the trails in Greenbushes and Boyup Brook but made unfortunate choices with opting for some of the Bridgetown offerings. Sue Berghuis-Garde and Ford house were fabulous!

Great advertising. All artists I visited were excellent hosts. Looking forward to seeing other towns next year. Would like to have been more short workshops as well to value add my experience. Well done to all concerned, a great event to highlight the region

Everyone we spoke to was warm and friendly and gave us some wonderful tips and advise. Thank you.

Visited the Nannup store and also viewed the lovely artwork with Leanne (I think I have the right name). Very impressive.

Wonderful event enjoyed by all who attended

Visited various artists studios. Very impressive and very enjoyable. Will definitely do more next year. Thanks to all involved.

Thank you for extending the event to the broader region. Well done to all involved.

Discussion

Feedback results give a picture of an event that has been generally well received and regarded by the participating artists and venues. Whilst a complete picture is difficult to gain given approximately only 50% of the participating artists and venues provided feedback, and some were reluctant to provide sales information, it is apparent that many artists feel that their profile, sales and opportunities are enhance by their participation and most will continue to participate. Venues in most cases reported increased visitor numbers and this is an encouraging result for tourism to the region.

The current BRAT committee learnt a considerable amount about how best to organise such an event and this knowledge and experience will be valuable to bring to further iterations of BRAT. With the increasing profile of the event and increased numbers of artists and venues involved, it is anticipated that more committee members and volunteers will come on board to assist in the coordination of BRAT23 and concurrent Blackwood River Film Festival.

Conclusion

The BRAT has proven to be a successful and desirable event for the Blackwood River Valley region due to the positive responses received from visitors, the local community, regional shires and participating venues and artists. Continuing expansion and provision of additional opportunities to local artists will provide many benefits to the community. All reasonable efforts were made to collect information and data to support these conclusions, however, it is not possible to ascertain every point of view with complete certainty so the results, discussion, and these conclusions should be viewed as reasonable representation of the event and its outcomes, but not as an absolute picture. That said, it seems fair to say that to continue with this event is to be encouraged and will have overall support of the Blackwood River Valley regional community.

Thank you to the BRAT 2022 Committee who made it all happen

Miranda Free – Chair

Meg Windram – Secretary (pt)

Steve Goble – Treasurer

Sam Bariesheff – Town Coordinator

Laurie Bullied – Town Coordinator

Lyn Willett – Town Coordinator

Leanne White – Town Coordinator

