



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Centres Industry Report

2004/05 > 2024/25

Data analysed – March/April 2026

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# Financial Snapshot of Art Centres

2004/05 > 2024/25

## Introduction

Culture first and industry best practice is the foundation of Desart's mission in supporting art centres to continue important cultural practice and to share their art with the world. As part of this support, Desart also advocates for the 'business of art' – the important work art centres do in running a social enterprise and providing culturally appropriate and locally-owned economic opportunities. This report is one expression of this support.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art centres

Aboriginal and Torres Strait art centres reflect the priorities and aspirations of their communities, incorporating the language, culture, history and stories that make each unique. This variety is also reflected in the wide spectrum of creative practice fostered by art centres. But, underneath this diversity is a business model and operational arrangements that are consistent across this widely distributed national network.

At the core of this business model is the work art centres do in linking artists with the market by promoting and selling works of art to national and international audiences. This creates independent income and employment for artists and art centre workers, with any profits re-invested into the art centre. This cooperative model means art centres can support the long-term work of developing artists' careers and contributing to the cultural and social wellbeing of their communities.

This report focusses on analysing and understanding the long-term financial and production trends of First Nations art centres across Australia. The findings are intended for use by art centres, peak bodies and other stakeholders. Desart commissions this financial snapshot to provide transparency of, and accessibility to, the sector, with the aim of enabling informed decision-making.

This update adds two years of new results (2023/24 and 2024/25) to the long-term data, enabling trends and changes to be tracked and contextualised.

## Accounting for Inflation

Costs increase over time. To account for this inflation, adjustments can be made to the yearly data reported by art centres; these 'adjusted' figures enable accurate comparisons over time.

As such, all financial data in this report (sales, payments etc.) are shown as 'adjusted' amounts. This means that when looking at historical data all the information is comparable and recorded in today's money.

## Key Findings

*Average art centre sales have fallen 27% since 2021/22. Average art centre sales are now back to pre-COVID levels.*

*Artist payments have fallen 24% since 2021/22, with almost all that decline occurring between 2023/24 and 2024/25.*

*The proportion of average total art centre income from sales is falling, while the proportion coming from funding is increasing for the first time in five years.*

*Around four in five artworks are created by female artists.*

*Female artists over 50 years old produce nearly four out of 10 artworks.*

*The number of art centre artists is declining. In 2024/25, there were 5,360 artists across 91 art centres; this is the lowest number of artists for almost ten years.*

*The number of new artists at art centres in 2024/25 is at its lowest level in almost 15 years.*

*Core artists – those who sell more than 10 artworks in a year – make up around 20% of artists but generate around 80% sales.*

*While almost six out of 10 artworks sell for less than \$250, this has fallen to its lowest level. Less than 2% of artworks sell for more than \$5,000.*

*In 2024/25, 52,764 artworks were created – similar to levels recorded before COVID-19 and a 29% fall from 2021/22.*

*Around six in ten artworks were produced in the NT, two in ten in WA, one in ten in SA and the remainder in QLD and other regions.*

*Product sales have continued to grow and now make up 18% (almost one fifth) of art centre sales, up from less than 5% around ten years earlier.*

## Sales

Art centre sales have seen sustained falls, dropping 27% since their post COVID-19 peak around 2022. In 2024/25, average art centre sales were \$555,176, as seen in Figure 1. After 11 years of steady sales growth, peaking at over \$760,000 in 2021/22, average art centre sales have returned to pre-COVID levels.

Art centres returned an average of 71% to artists from 2024/25 sales, the second highest proportion of artists income recorded. As seen in Figure 2, this translates to average artist payments per art centre of \$395,573, a 24% fall since the 2021/22 highs, though almost all of that decline occurred over the previous year. It is notable that, despite falling sales over the last three years, the proportion paid to artists remains historically high.

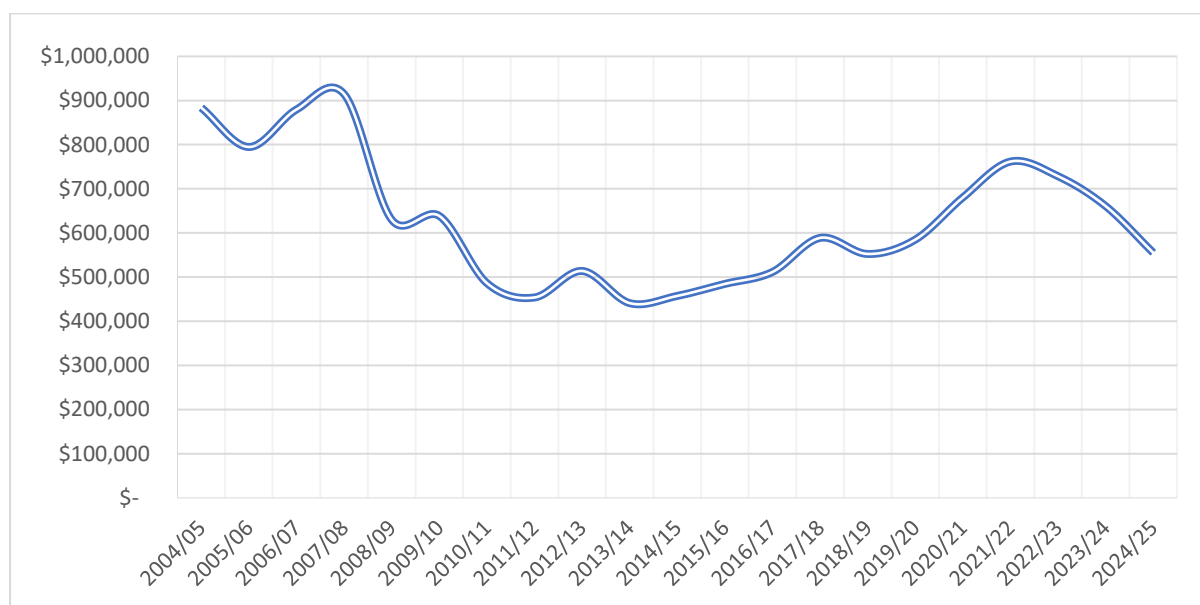


Figure 1: Average annual sales for art centres, 2004/05 to 2024/25 - adjusted.

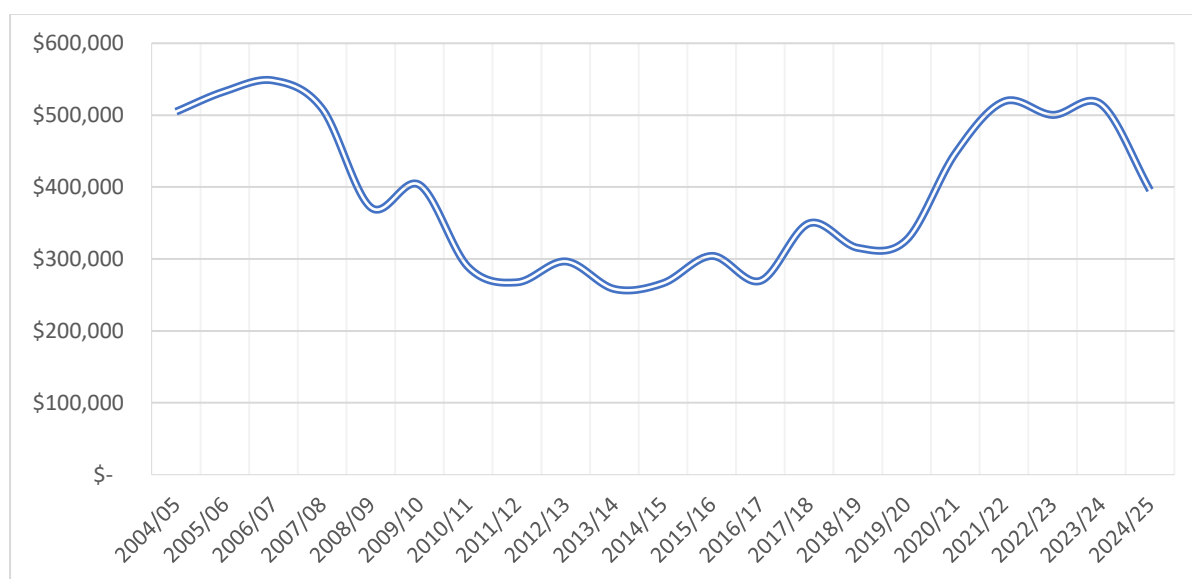


Figure 2: average annual artist payments, 2004/05 > 2024/25 - adjusted.

Average total income (sales, grants and other revenue) for art centres in 2024/25 was \$1,261,222. While this is a return to similar levels before the COVID-19 pandemic, the fall since 2022 is less than half of the fall in average sales, at 10%. This indicates that art centres, having become larger enterprises over time, may have some resilience in coping with a shrinking and uncertain market.

Average sales generated by art centres are different across the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, the states/Territory that are home to nearly all art centres, as seen in Figure 3.

Average sales in each state/Territory generally peaked around 2021 or 2022 and have been falling since then. Average sales at South Australian art centres have fallen steeply recently, having declined 34% between 2023/24 and 2024/25 alone. This has seen SA art centres fall to be lower than the average sales recorded by NT art centres, the first time this has occurred in ten years.

Art centres in the NT saw sales peak later than other regions (around 2023/24) but have recorded steep falls since then. Average sales at Queensland art centres increased during the early COVID years, but the long-term trend shows a sustained decline in average sales. Queensland art centres also recorded the largest fall in average sales between 2021/22 and 2024/25, falling 55% from \$298,088 to \$122,020.

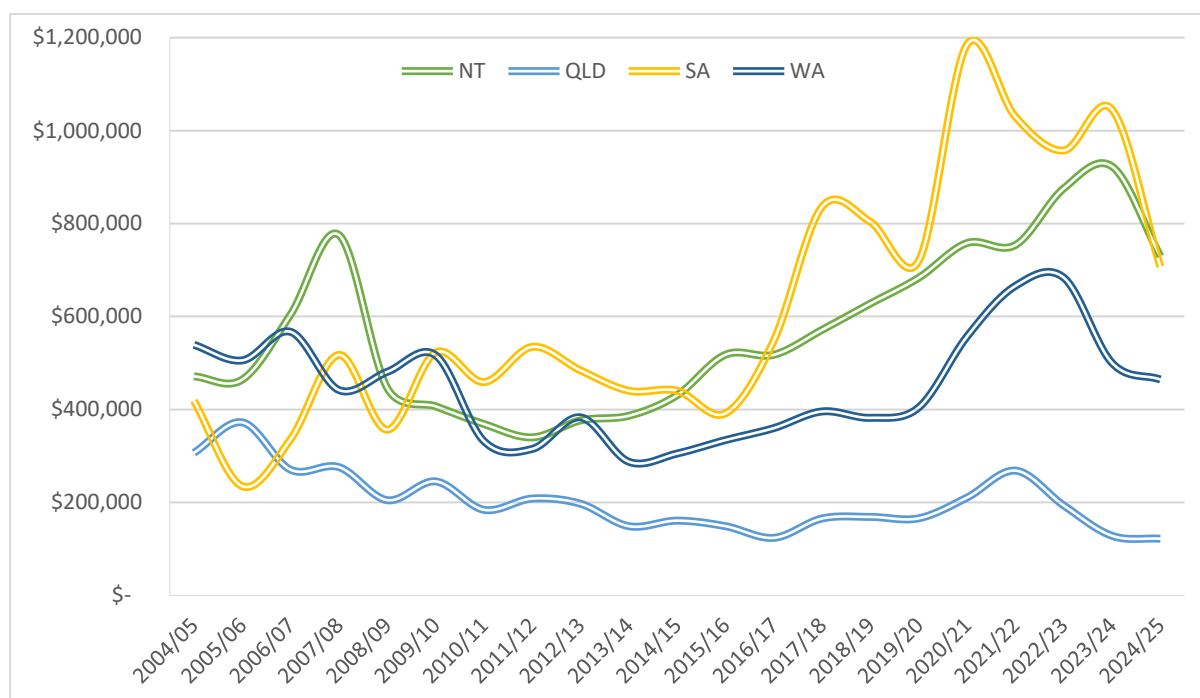


Figure 3: Average annual sales by art centres in each state/Territory, 2004/05 to 2024/25 – adjusted.

## Grants

While all art centres receive some grant funding, the levels of this funding have changed over the 21 years of records, as seen in Figure 4. Earlier years are characterized by grants making a relatively small contribution to art centres' total revenue. Around 2010 this situation changed significantly, triggered by new funding priorities (particularly around employment and training of arts workers) and a growing number of new and smaller art centres with a greater reliance on funding.

The proportion of total income generated by sales has changed. While early years saw around 70% of income from sales, this has more recently fallen to between 42% in 2013/14 and a peak of 55% in 2021/22. Recent market conditions have decreased the proportion of total income from sales; in 2024/25 this has returned to pre-COVID levels of around 47%.

Over the last decade, reliance on grants has generally been declining, aside from a short spike during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. A greater proportion of self-generated income means art centres increase their financial autonomy and are less bound to the requirements of grant funding. However, 2024/25 has seen a significant increase in the share of total income from grants, climbing from 33% to over 40% of total income from grants over the previous year.

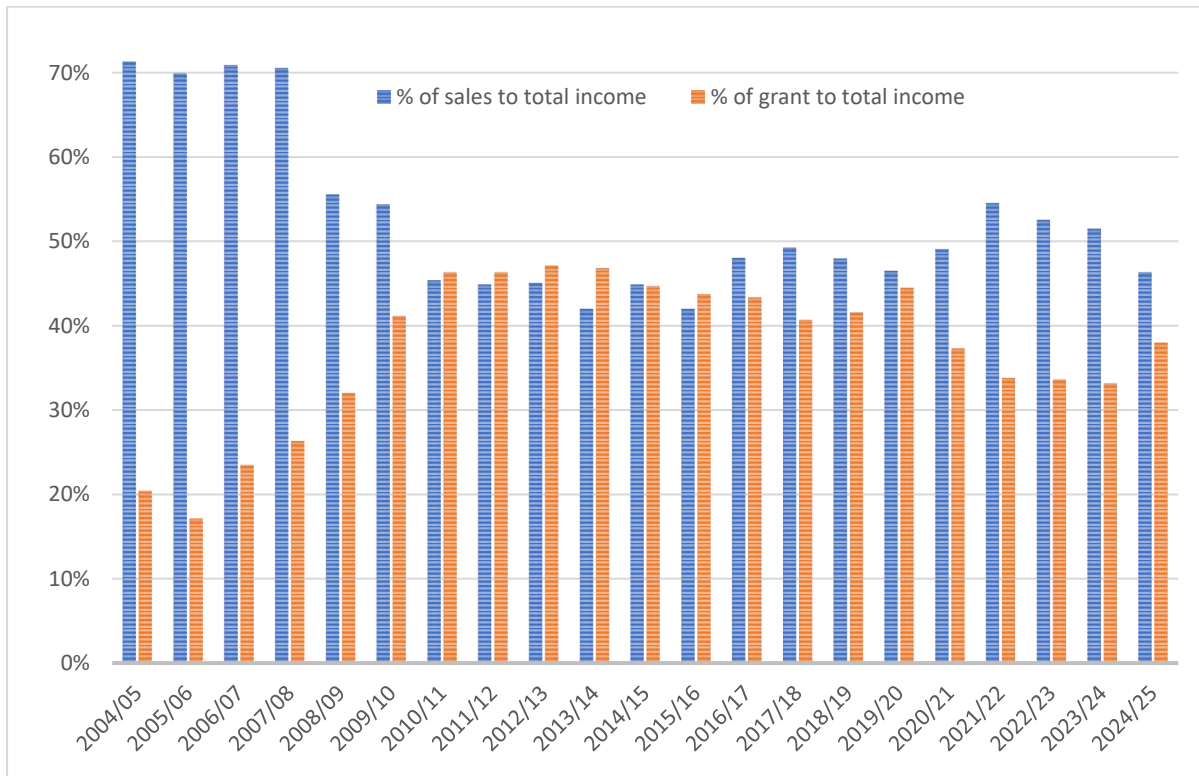


Figure 4: Income mix: the proportion of average art centre income that is generated from sales vs grants.

However, as seen in Figure 5, falling levels of grant income may also be linked to the static level of funding available to the sector. For example, in the ten years between 2014/15 and 2024/25, art centre sales grew by 28% and total revenue by 24%, while art centre funding increased by 6%. This finding could benefit from further analysis.

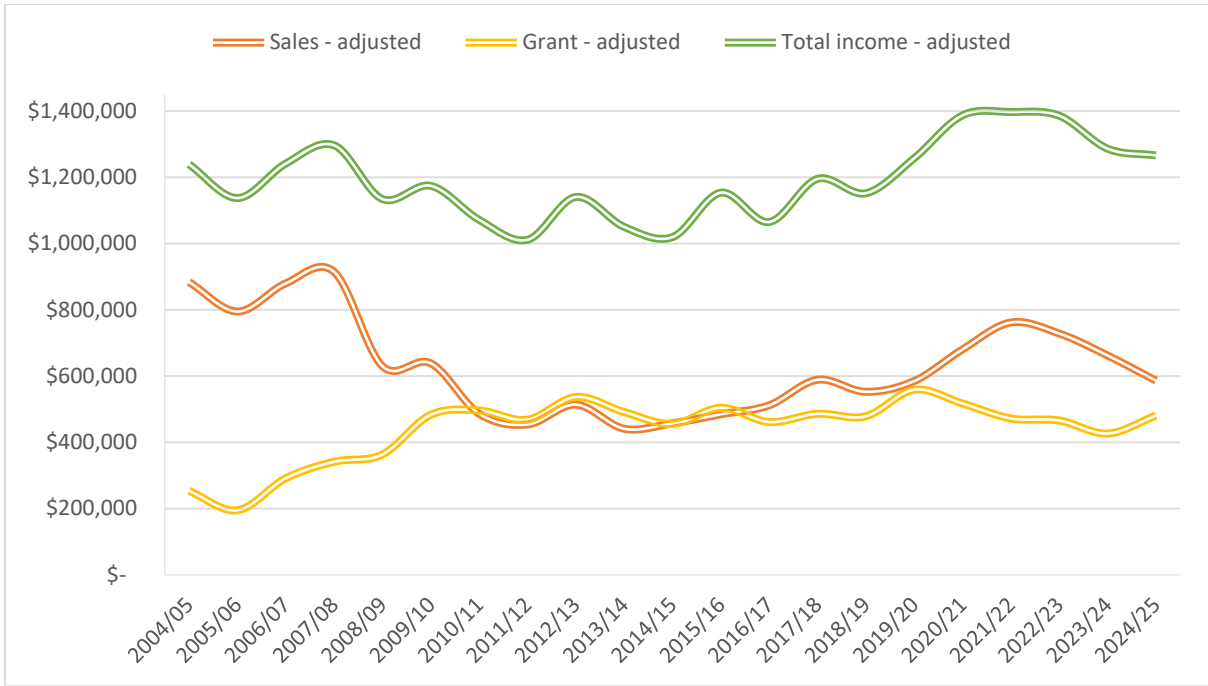


Figure 5: Changes to sales income, grant income and total income, 2004/05 to 2024/25 - adjusted.

The proportion of total revenue coming from grants varies across the three states and the Northern Territory; however, and consistent with the trends shown in Figures 4 and 5, all have seen this increase in recent years. Queensland art centres continue to have the highest proportion of their revenue coming from grants, at 72% in 2024/25. South Australian art centres have the lowest proportion, at 29% in 2024/25.

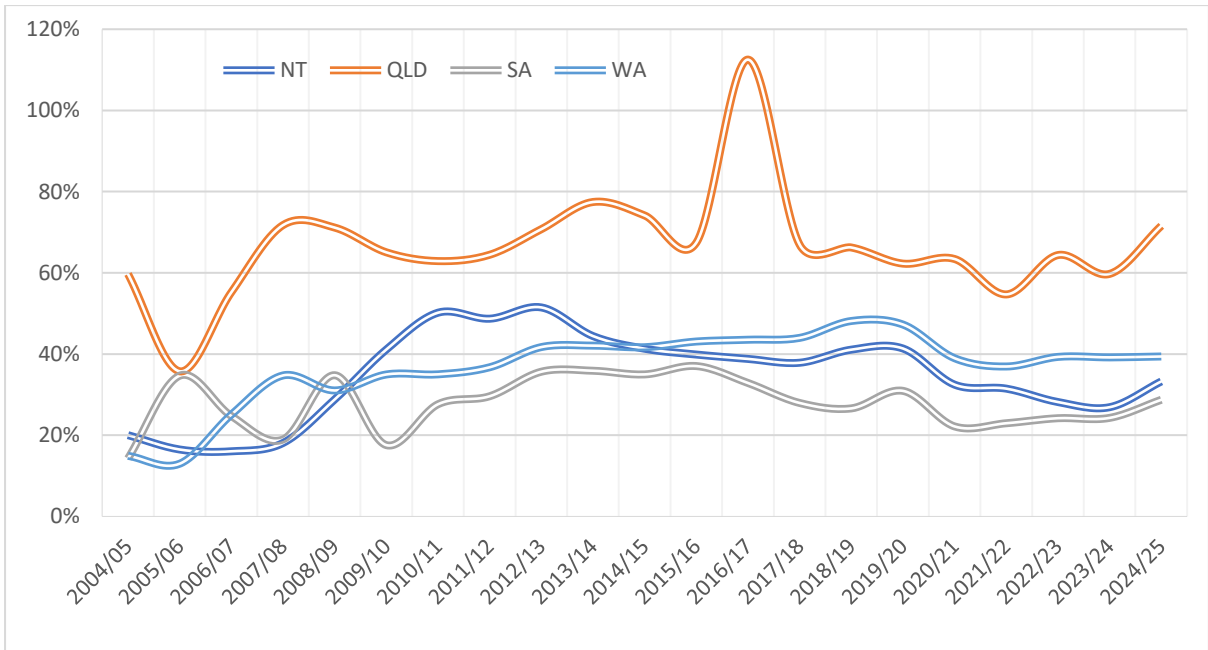


Figure 6: Proportion of an art centre's average total income from grants, by state/Territory, 2004/05 to 2024/25.

## Artists

Over the 13 years between 2012/13 and 2024/25<sup>1</sup>, female artists produced an average of 76% of all artworks. In 2024/25, 79% of all artworks were produced by female artists, a slight fall from the 2019/20 high of almost 82%.

The proportion of artworks produced by female artists over the last 13 years varies with location, with Queensland have a notably lower proportion of female artists.

State/Territory	% of works produced by female artists
NT	76%
QLD	68%
SA	82%
WA	81%

The proportion of artworks produced by female and male artists also changes with age, as seen in Figure 8. In total, artists aged 60 or more produce 28% of all artworks, while female artists aged 50 or more produce 39% of all artworks.

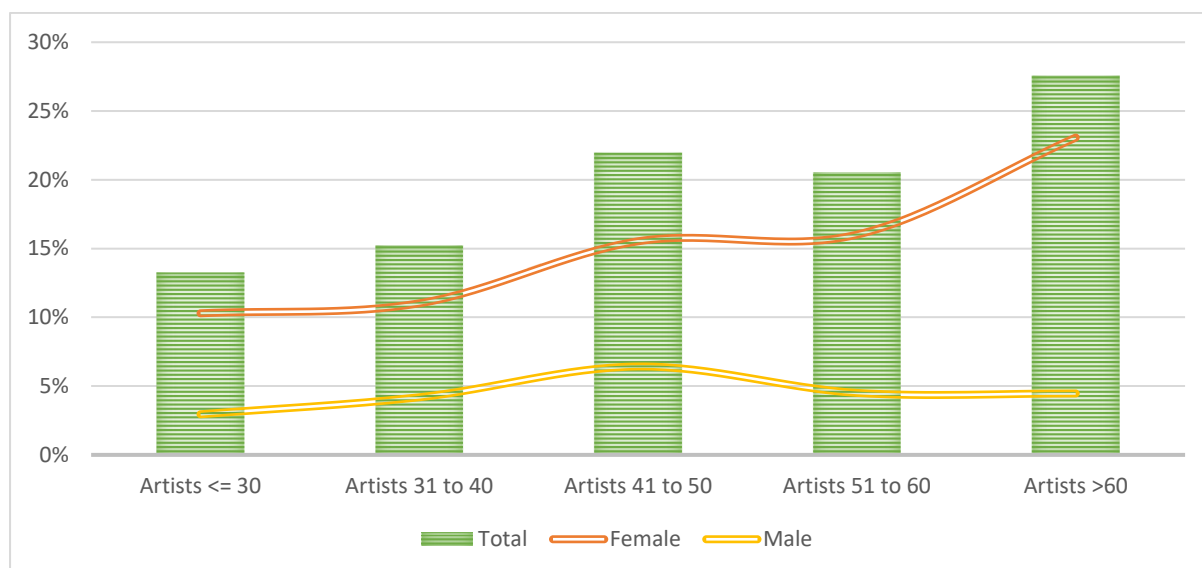


Figure 7: Artwork production by age group and gender, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

The proportion of artworks produced by each age group and gender varies considerably between each state and Territory, as seen in Figures 9 > 12. Western Australian is the most reliant on older artists, with artists over 50 producing 58% of all artworks, considerably higher than other regions. Except for artists over 60, Queensland has the most even gender balance in the production of artworks; around two-thirds of Queensland artists are female, compared to 75-80% or more for WA, SA and the NT.

<sup>1</sup> This is the date range for which reliable gender, age and production data is available. This shorter date range is due to changes in the SAM database made in 2012/13.

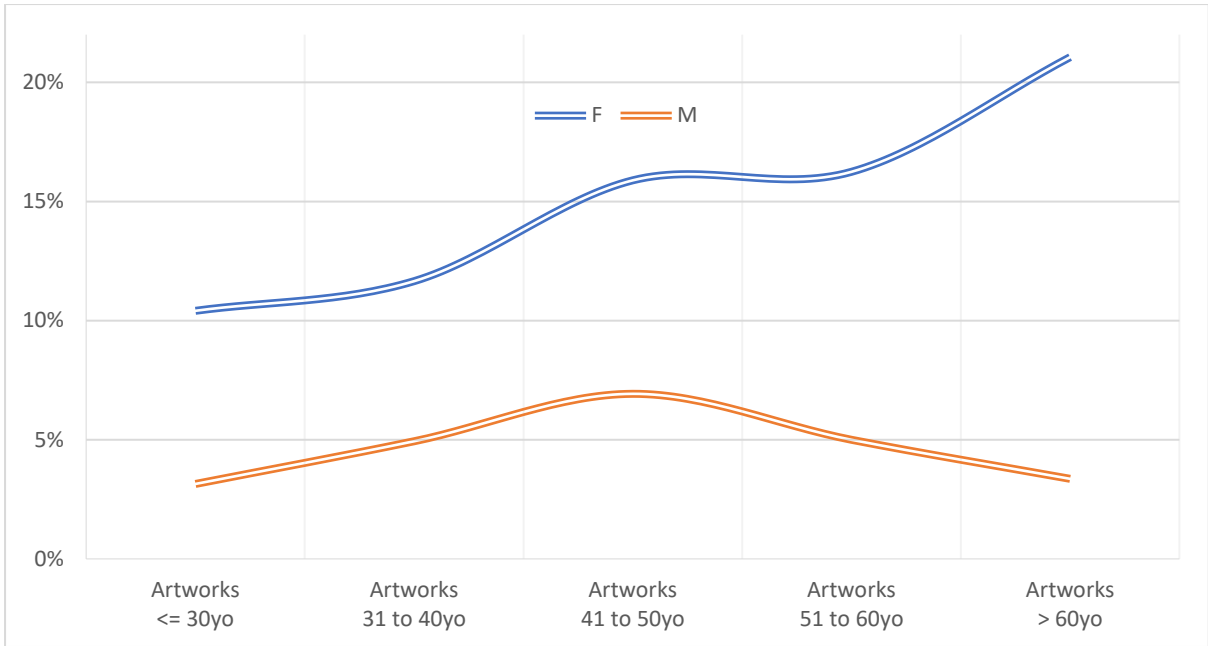


Figure 8: Artwork production by age group and gender in the Northern Territory, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

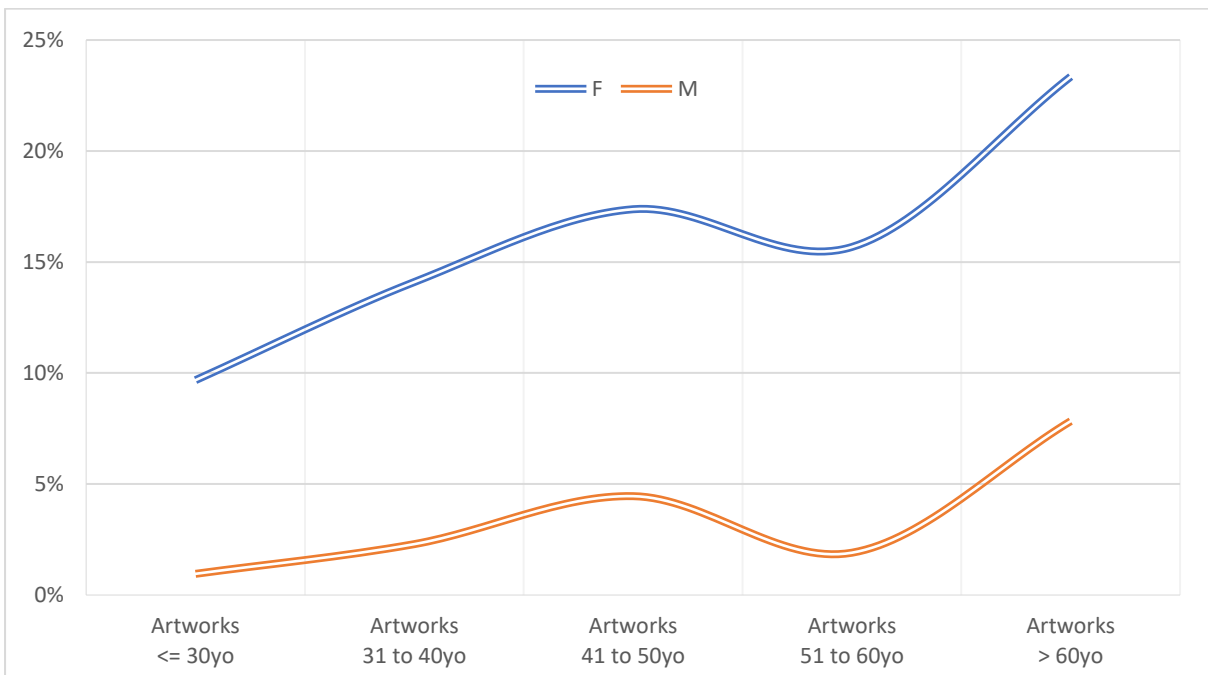


Figure 9: Artwork production by age group and gender in South Australia, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

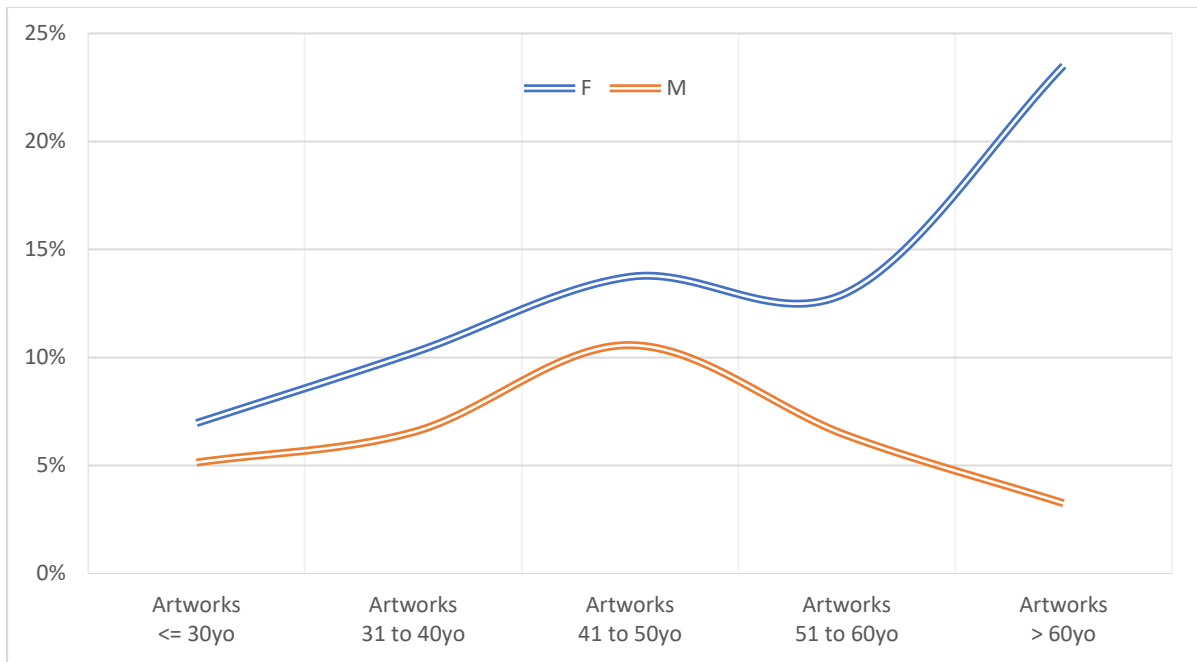


Figure 10: Artwork production by age group and gender in Queensland, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

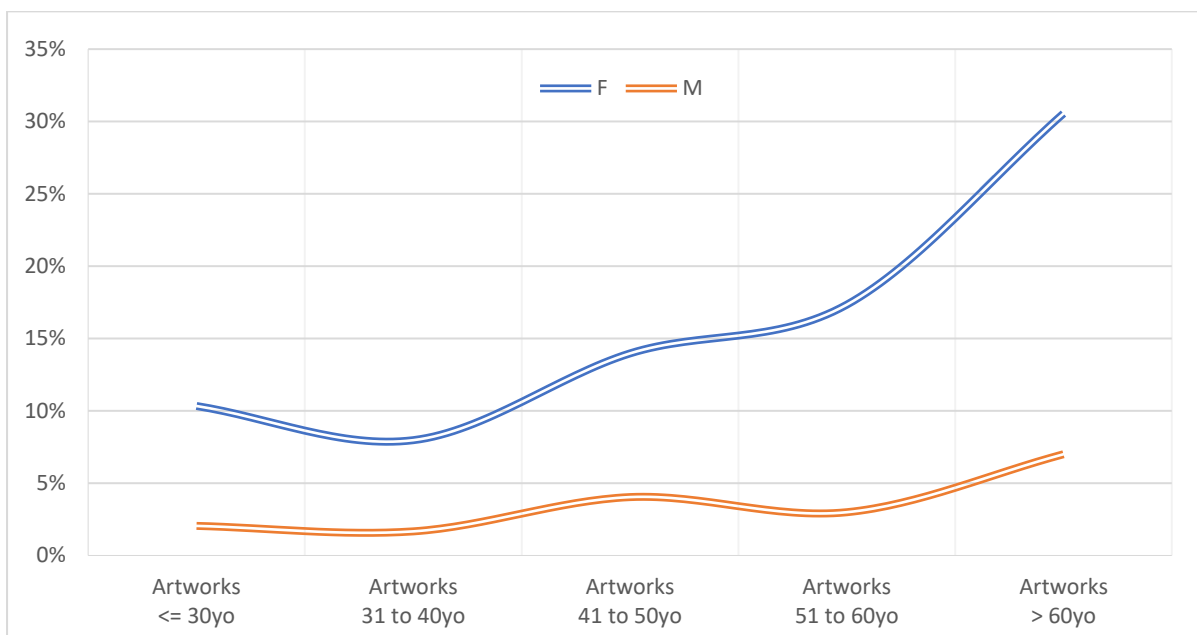


Figure 11: Artwork production by age group and gender Western Australia, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

### Artists: Participation and Production

Understanding the participation and production of artists helps to understand the contribution different types of artists make to the art centre. In part, this recognises that all art centres rely on a small group of committed artists, with these core artists generating around 80 % of an art centre’s sales. Data on the contribution of all artists is important if art centres (and others) are to respond to changes within art centre demographics and productivity.

For this analysis, five categories of artists are used, all based on the sale of a catalogued artwork:

- Core and new: first year with the art centre and sold more than 10 artworks in a year.
- New: first year with the art centre and sold 10 or fewer artworks in a year.
- Core: sold more than 10 artworks in a year.
- Active: produced artworks but sold 10 or fewer artworks in a year.
- Other: did not produce any artworks but sold 10 or fewer artworks in a year.

As seen in Figure 13, there was significant growth in the total number of artists producing and selling works between 2015 and 2019, peaking pre-pandemic (late 2019), with over 6,000 artists. In line with other findings in this report, a second peak occurred in 2022/23; however, the following two years have seen a 16% decline, with the 5,360 artists in 2024/25, the lowest for nearly ten years.

Within the overall decline since 2022/23, some artist categories have been more significantly affected. In particular, the number of new artists has fallen to the lowest level in almost 15 years, with 2024/25 having less than half the number of new artists recorded in 2022/23.

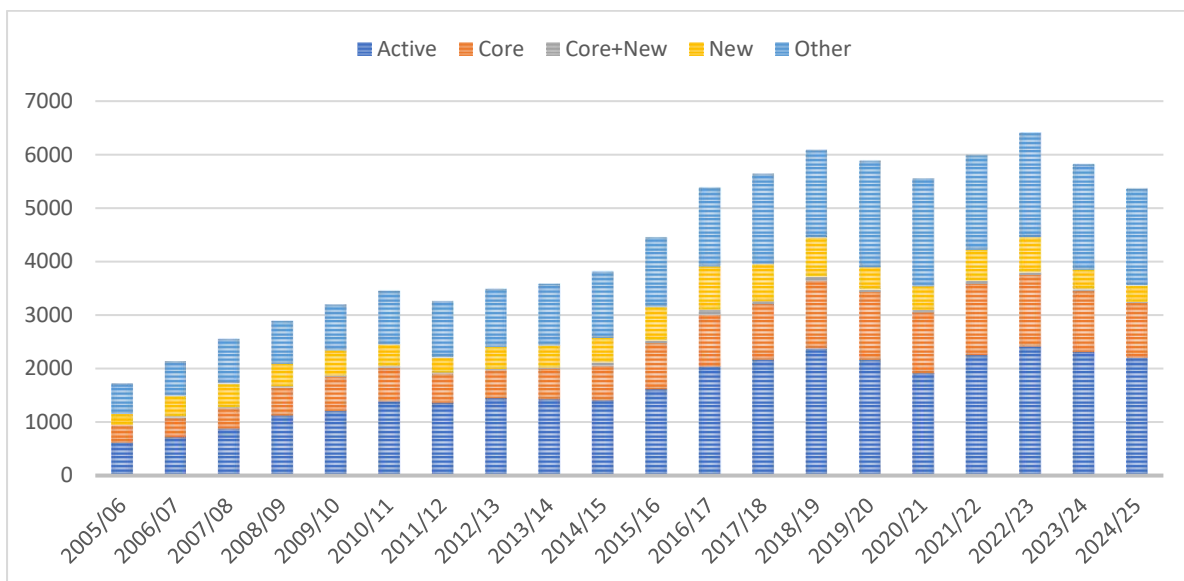


Figure 12: the number of artists in each category, 2005/06 to 2024/25.

The proportion of each artist category has also changed over time, as shown in Figure 14. The disruption caused by the pandemic to normal patterns of participation by artists can be seen, with recent years seeing a reset to pre-pandemic levels. The decline in the proportion of new artists, noted above, is also notable.

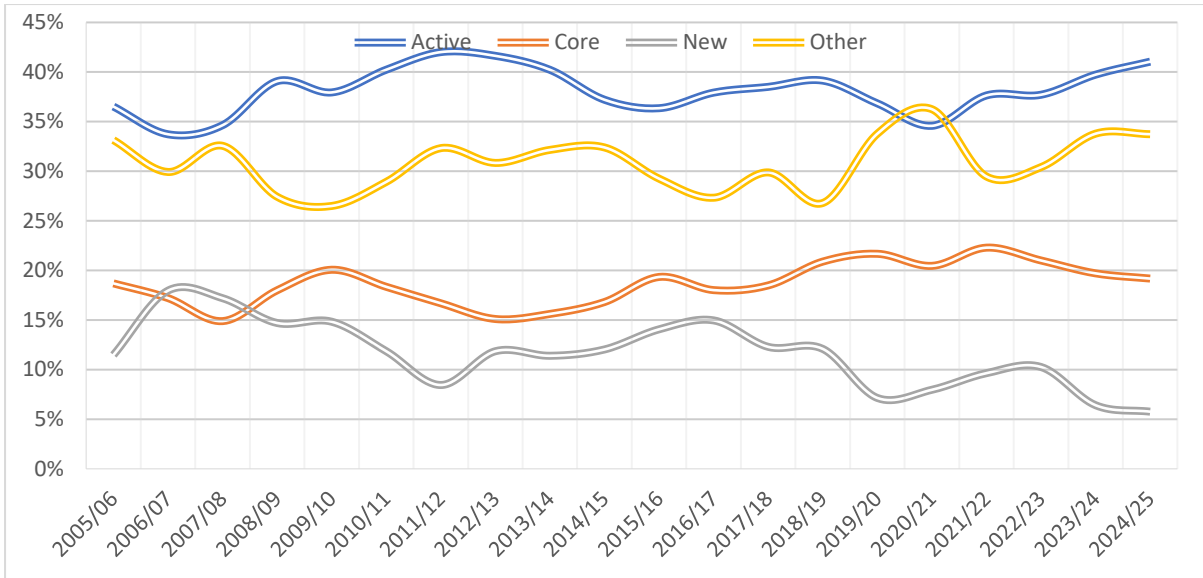


Figure 13: changing mix of artists across art centres, 2005/06 to 2024/25 (excludes core + new artists as it is less than 1%).

Also recorded in SAM is an additional artist category; this tallies all artists that recorded any transaction (sale, catalogued work, payment etc.) other than a consignment – a more general and inclusive way to measure artist participation or activity. The trends, shown in Figure 15 are broadly the same as for the categorised artists above, but the number of artists in this category is significantly higher. Overall, around six in ten artists are from the NT, two in ten from WA and one in ten from SA and the remainder shared between QLD and other regions.

Reflecting other findings in this report, artist numbers have declining over recent years. The 19,678 artists recorded in 2024/25 is 14% lower than in 2022/23 and broadly similar to pre-COVID levels.

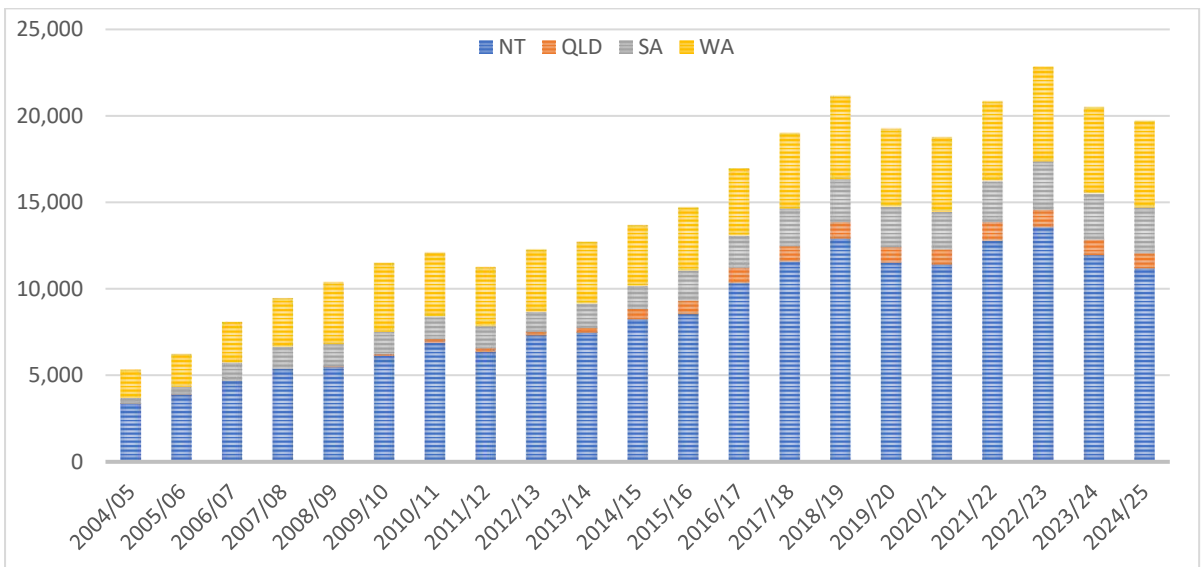


Figure 14: the number of artists with any activity, by state and territory, 2004/05 to 2024/25.

The importance of core artists to economic activity at art centres is shown in Figure 16. Of the \$36.0 million in sales generated by 3,552 categorised artists in 2024/25, 83%, or \$29.8 million was generated by 1,028 core artists (or 19% of all categorised artists).

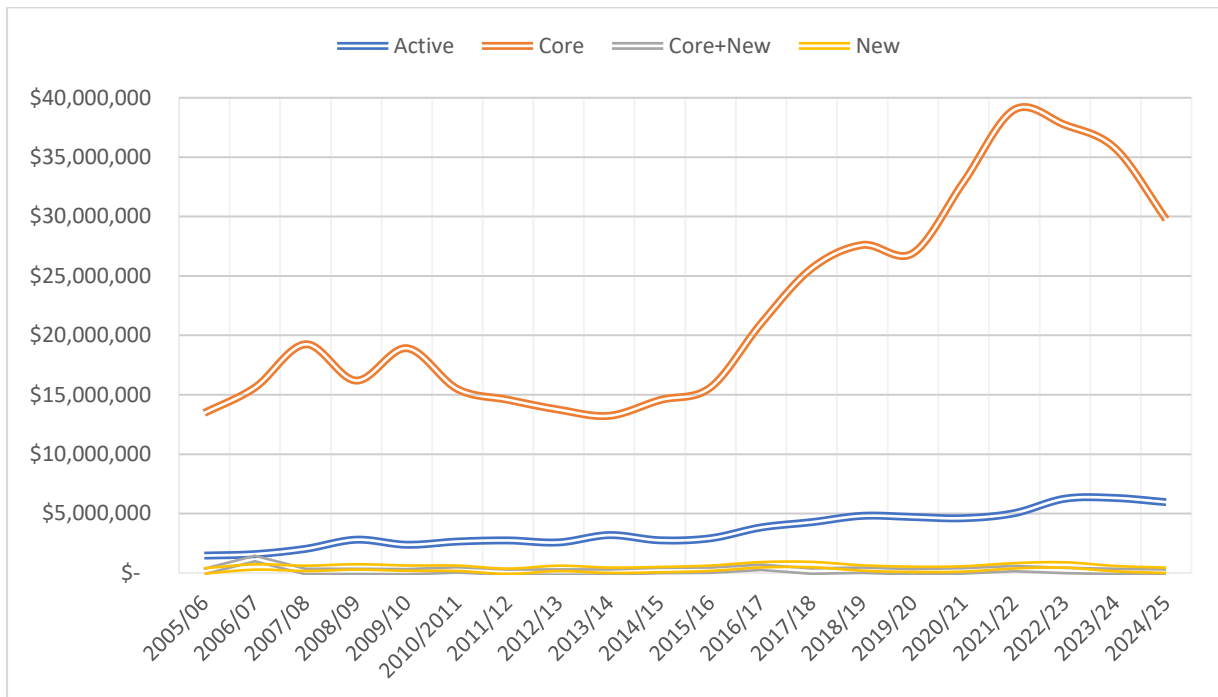


Figure 15: average sales income generated by artists at art centres in each state/Territory, 2005/06 to 2024/25 – adjusted figures.

The distribution of artist categories across the different states and the NT varies, as shown in Figures 17 > 20. Each state/Territory has distinct characteristics for each category of artist.

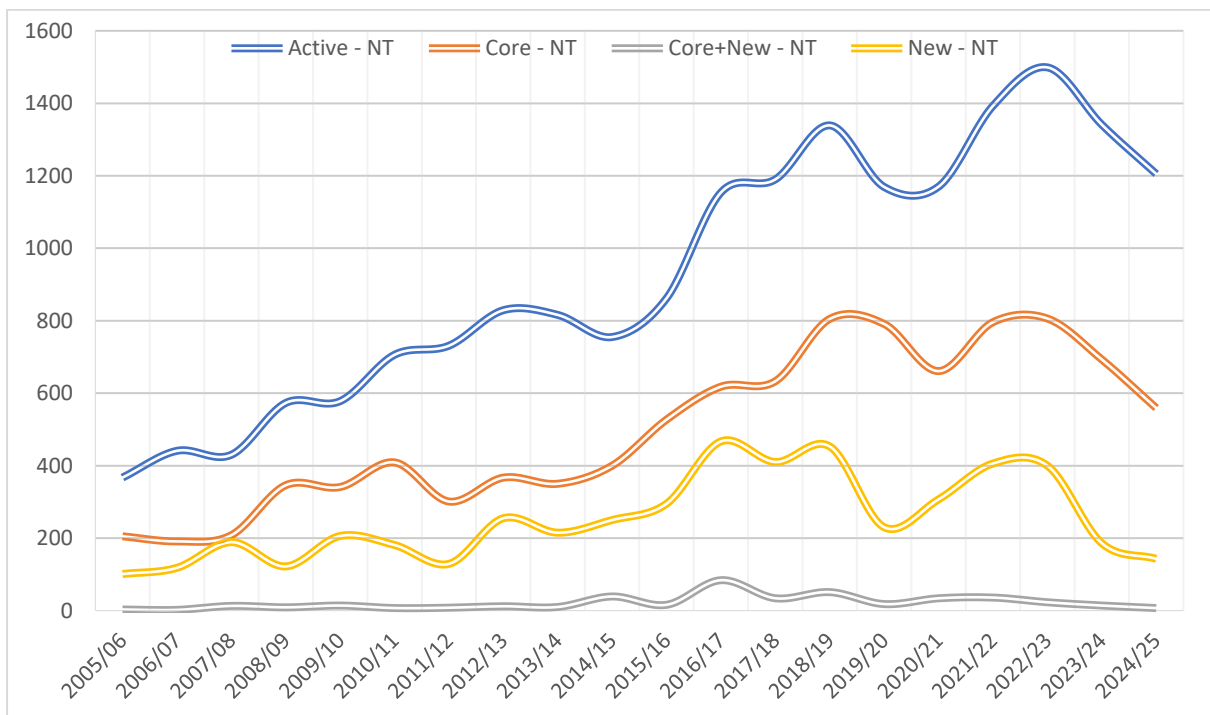


Figure 16: the number of categorised artists in the Northern Territory, 2005/06 to 2024/25.

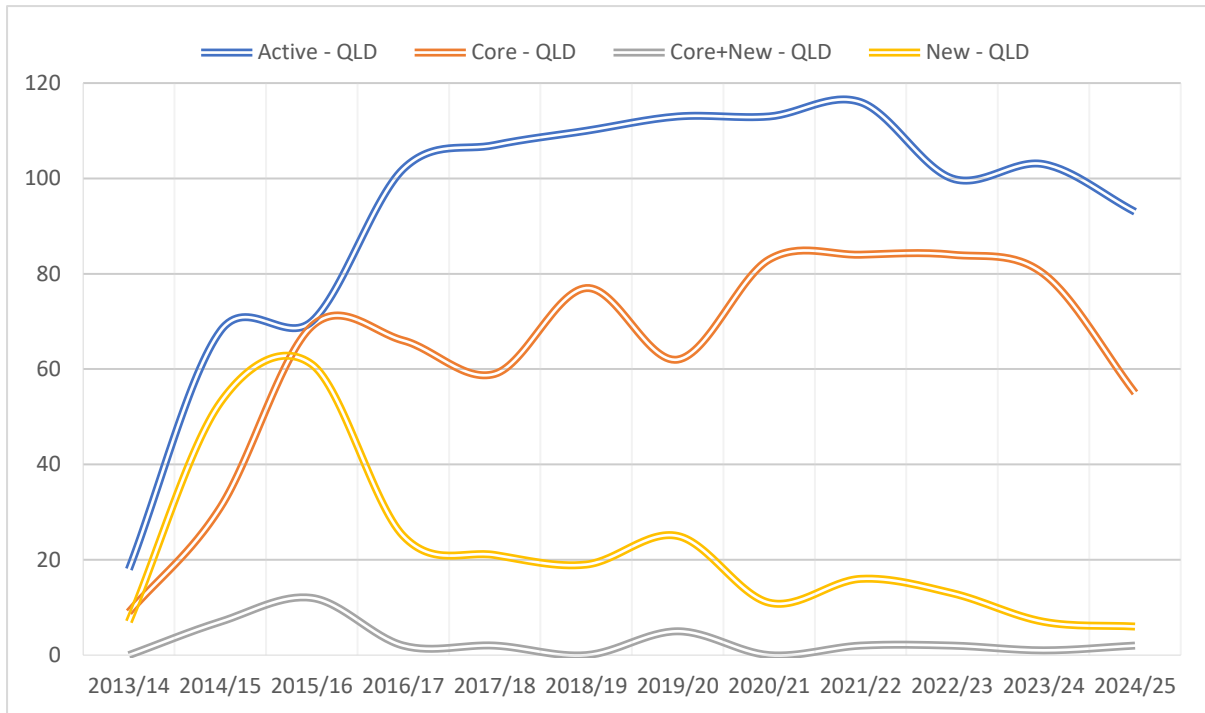


Figure 17: the number of categorised artists in Queensland, 2013/14 to 2024/25.

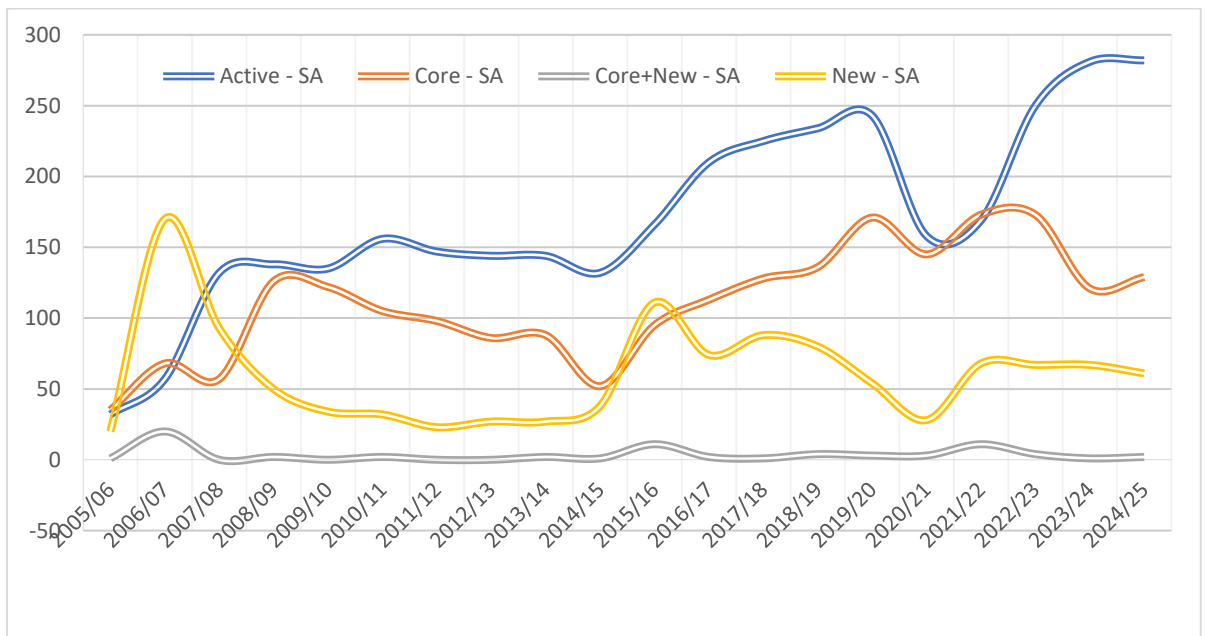


Figure 18: the number of categorised artists in South Australia, 2005/06 to 2024/25.

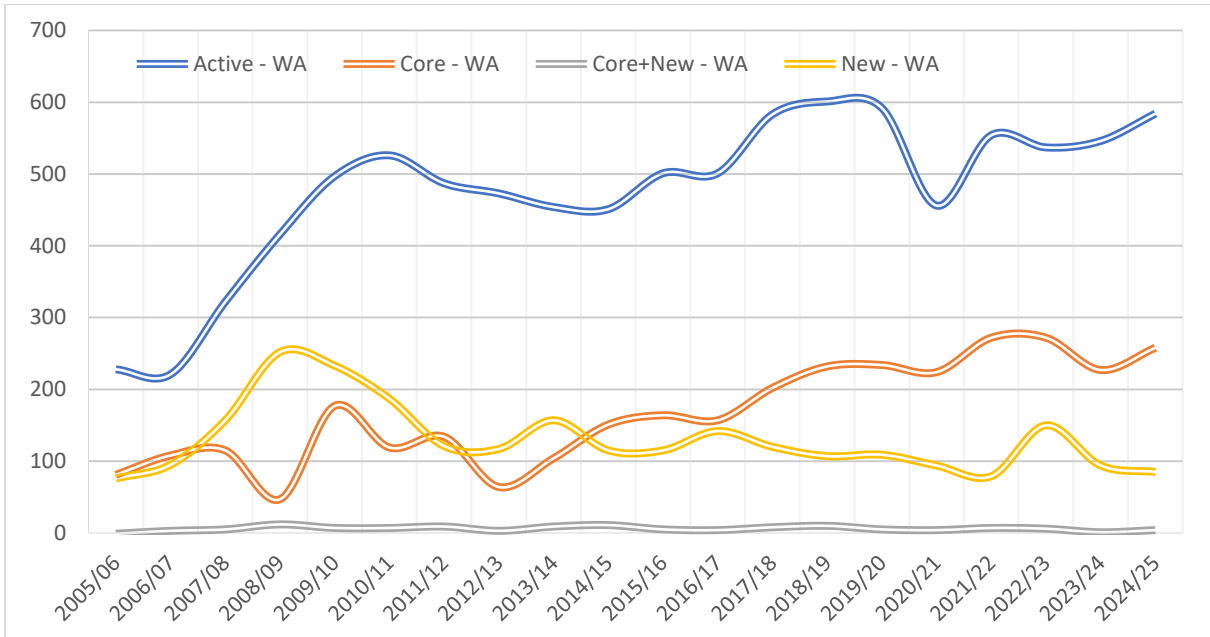


Figure 19: the number of categorised artists in Western Australia, 2005/06 to 2024/25.

### Artworks

In 2024/25, 47% of all artworks sold for less than \$250 and 2% for \$5,000 or more. After more than a decade of relative stability in the proportion of artworks selling for different price points, recent years have seen considerable change. Artworks under \$250 is the only category that has fallen, dropping 30% between 2018/19 and 2024/25. All other categories have increased, including a near tripling of artworks selling for over \$10,000 – albeit from a small base, that has seen growth from 0.2% to 0.6% of all artworks sold.

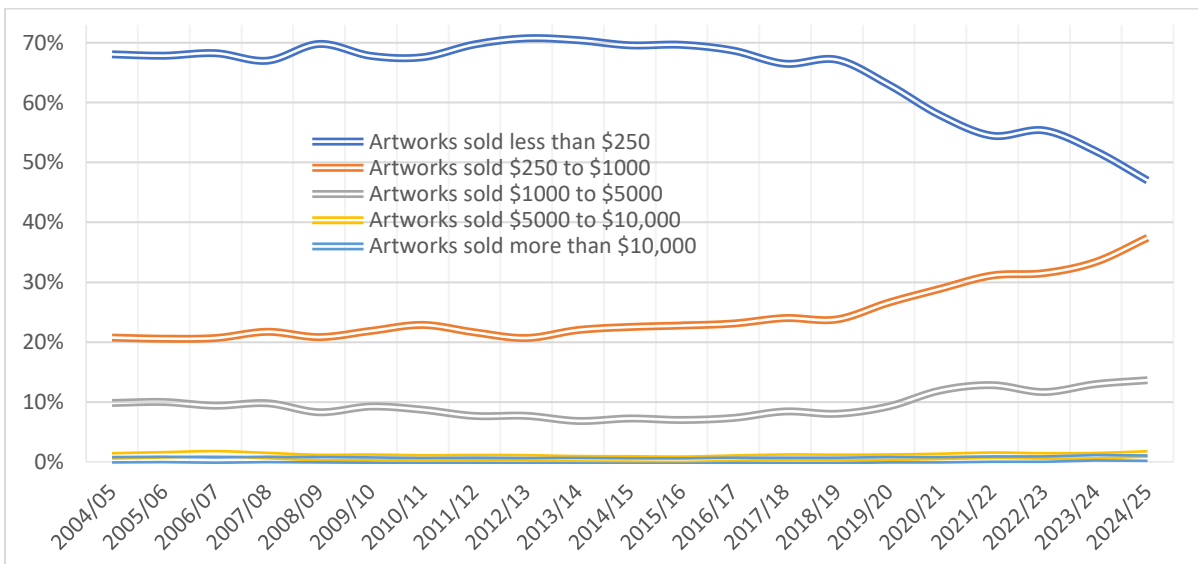


Figure 20: percentage of artworks sold at different price points, 2004/05 to 2024/25.

The changes noted in Figure 21 are also seen in Figure 22, which shows the volume of artworks sold at different price points. Sales of artworks under \$250, after falling during the pandemic years (likely

due to the cancellation of art fairs and markets, a key market for this price point) recovered, before the most recent market peak in around 2022. Since then, the volume of artworks sold at all price points has fallen. Artworks under \$250 have fallen 41% in the last two years; the mid-range price points have fallen around 18% while the two higher price points declined around 7%.

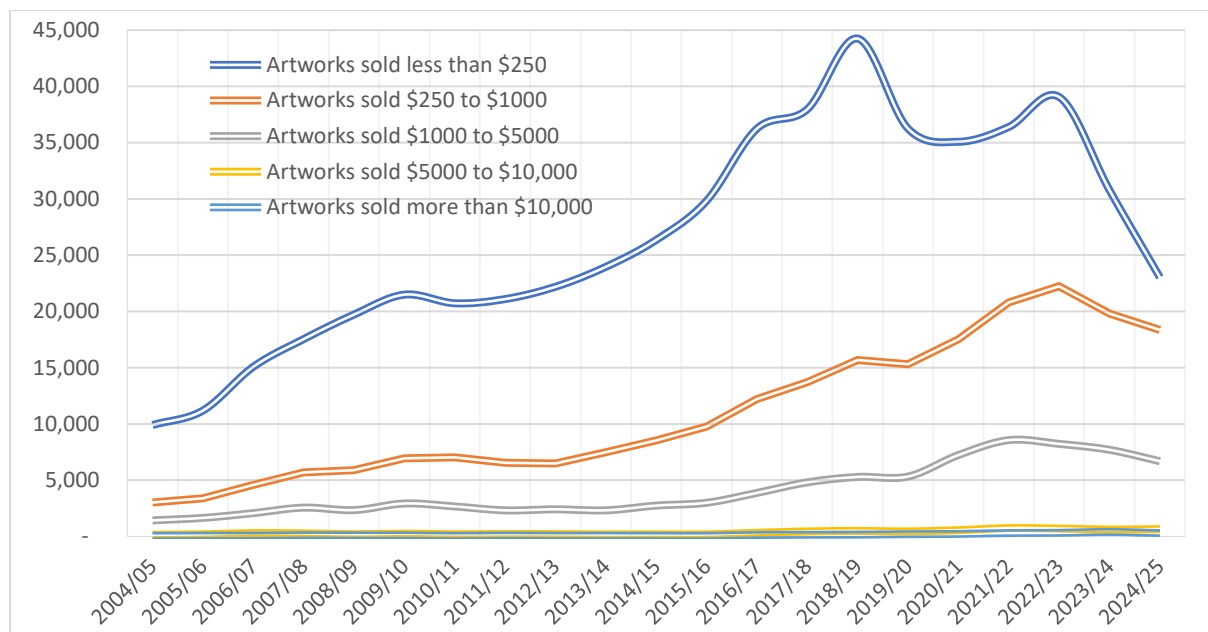


Figure 21: number of artworks sold at different price points, 2004/05 to 2024/25.

Another of the factors influencing artwork price points is the location of the art centres, as shown in Figure 23. More than two-thirds (70%) of all artworks sold by Northern Territory art centres are under \$250; at the other end of the spectrum, 45% all artworks sold by SA art centres are under \$250. South Australian art centres also have the highest proportion of artwork sales for over \$5,000, with around 3% selling at higher price points, compared to WA at 1.6% and the NT and QLD at less than 1%. However, the much higher total number of artworks (produced and) sold in the NT means that more than half of all higher priced artworks are from there.

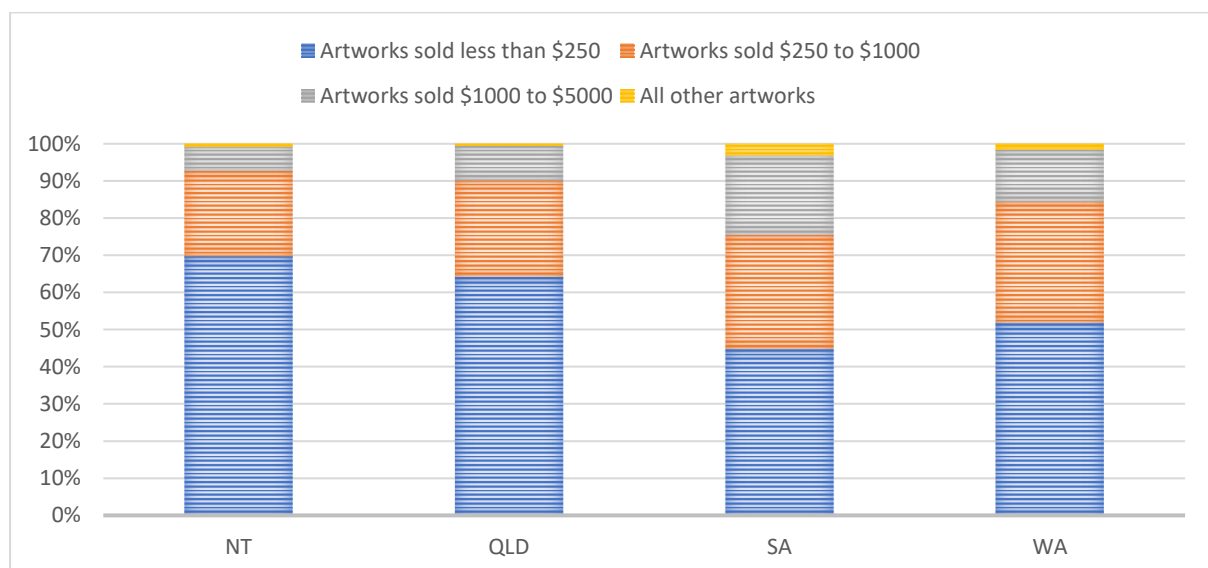


Figure 22: proportion of artworks sold at different price points in each state/NT.

Between 2012/13 and 2024/25 (the date range for which there is comparable data), art centre productivity – the total number of catalogued artworks produced by art centres – has varied, as shown in Figure 24. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts are obvious, as is the fall since around 2022. In 2024/25, 52,764 artworks were catalogued, a return to pre-COVID levels and a 29% drop from 2021 and 2022. With data from 91 art centres in 2024/25, this is an average of 580 artworks catalogued per art centre.

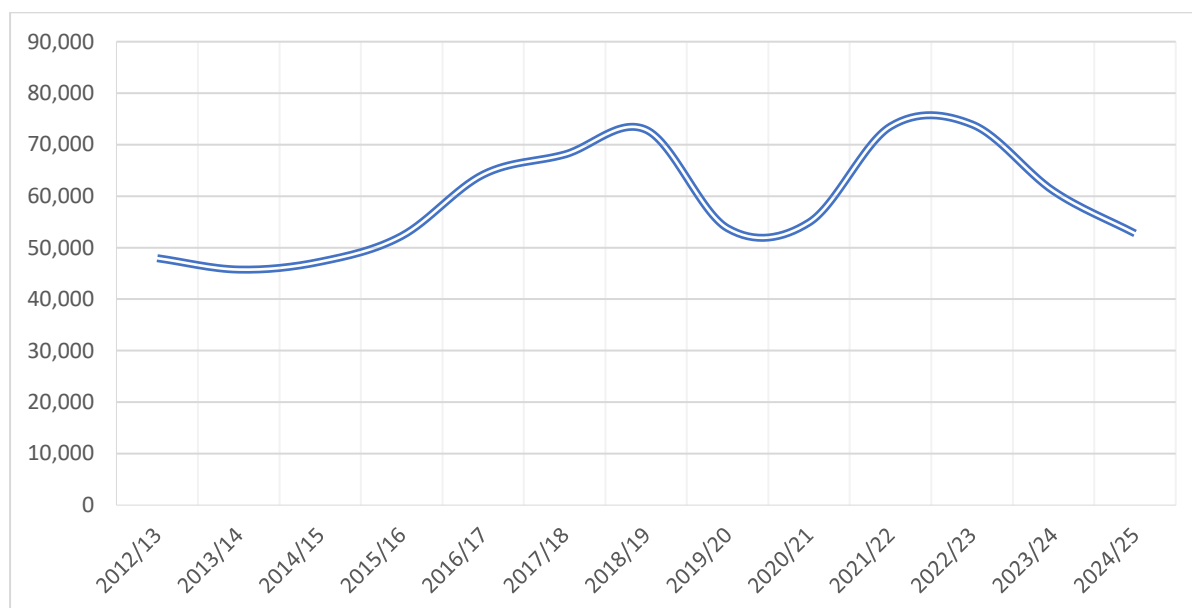


Figure 23: average number of catalogued artworks produced by art centres, 2012/13 > 2024/25.

Artwork production for 2024/25 across the three states and the Northern Territory are shown in the following table:

Location	Artwork production	% of total artwork production	% of total artists
NT	31,504	59%	57%
QLD	3,694	7%	5%
SA	6,188	12%	13%
WA	11,378	21%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,764</b>		

The size of paintings produced by art centres has also undergone change, as seen in Figure 25. While smaller sized artworks (30x30cm, 50x50cm and 75x75cm or less) continue to account for around three quarters of all artworks produced, the decline in production over the last three years is notable. Artworks 50x50cm have had the smallest decline (7% fall between 2021/22 and 2024/25), while all other categories have seen falls of between 23% and 34%. Overall, total artwork production is down 24% - corresponding to the scale of change noted in other areas of this report.

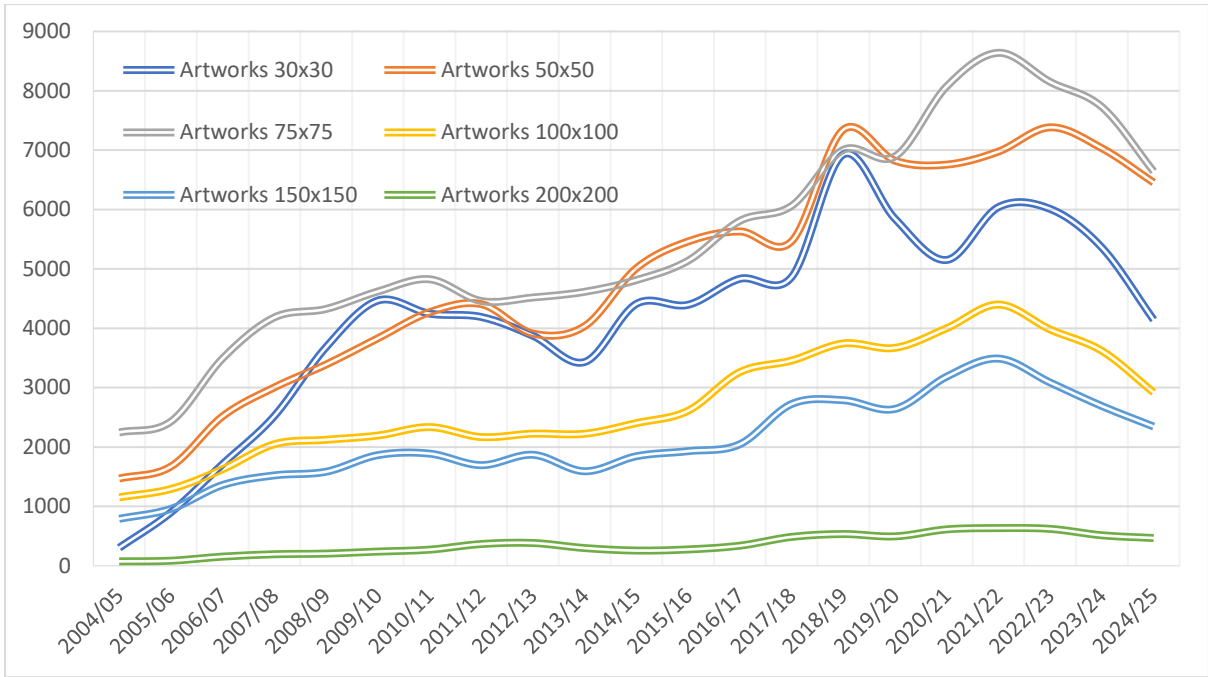


Figure 24: number of artworks produced at different sizes, 2004/05 > 2024/25.

The volume and value of artworks sold in different categories is seen in Figure 26. More than one third of the total value is generated by sales between \$1,000 and \$4,999, while almost 70% of the works sold are under \$500.



Figure 25: the volume and value of artworks sold at different price points, 2024/25.

## Products<sup>2</sup>

Alongside the production and sale of artworks, art centres also make and/or sell products. Products cover an increasingly wide range of items, from merchandise and artefacts, to clothing, homewares and more. Products are a growing part of art centre sales, with product sales increasing at a faster rate than artwork sales and have not seen a decline over recent years – though total product sales are still relatively small, as shown in Figure 27. The proportion of income generated from products has increased from 4% to 18% of total sales, with product generating \$8 million in 2024/25, the highest levels recorded.

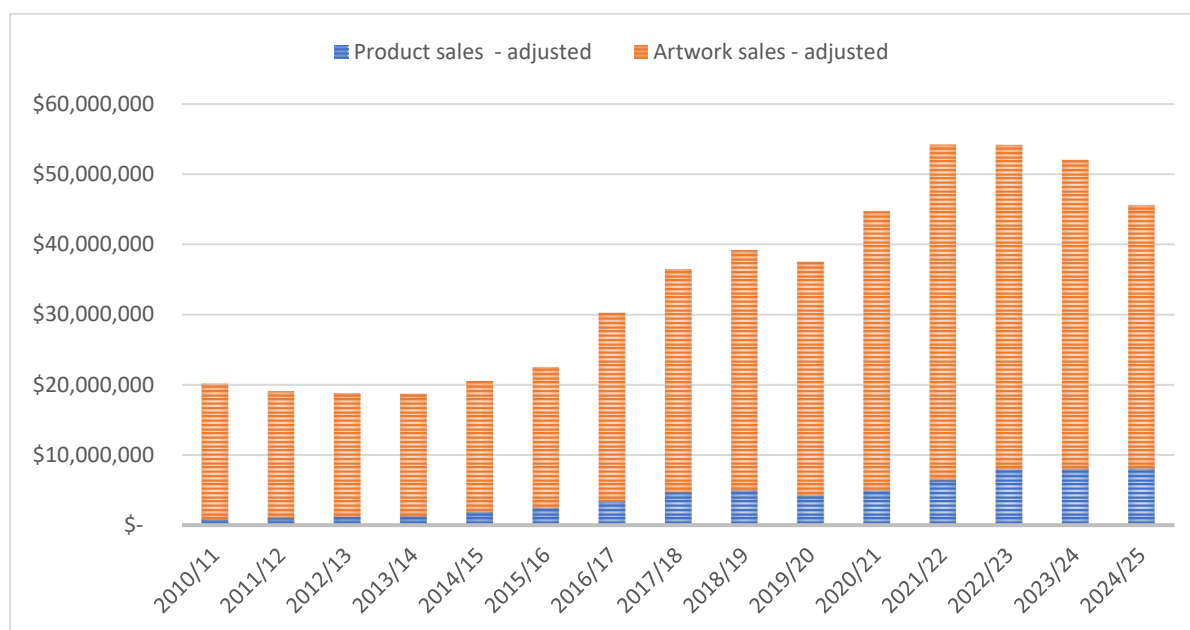


Figure 26: sales of artworks and products, 2004/05 to 2024/25 - adjusted.

Figure 28 shows the distribution of price points for product sales. While almost half of all products (22,298) products were sold at the \$21 to \$50 price point, the income generated was broadly similar (around \$800,000) to each of the next three higher price points. However, products for over \$500 generate half of total product sales, despite being only 2% of the volume of sales. A total of 51,325 products were sold in 2024/25, generating \$5,982,663 in sales income.

<sup>2</sup> Data for the volume and value of product sales has been refined since the 2021/22 report. As such, the product sale amounts listed in Figure 27 are different; however, observations about the increasing proportion of art centre income generated from products are consistent.

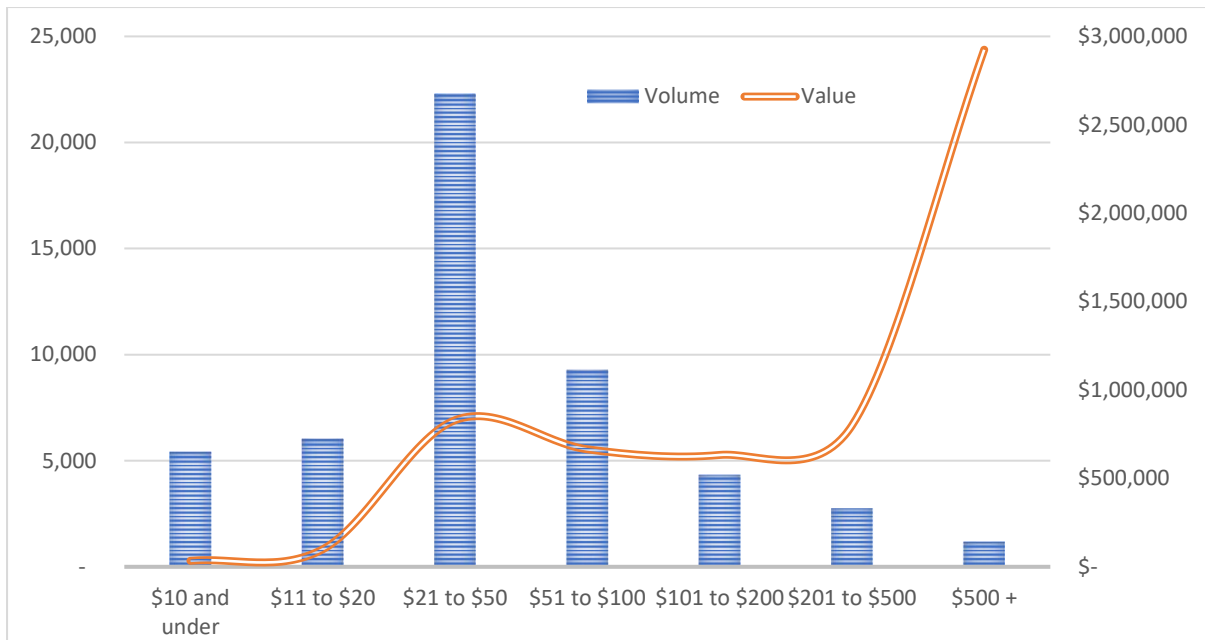


Figure 27: the volume and value of products sold at different price points, 2024/25.

## Methodology

This report is based on information from two sources, art centre audits and extracts from their operational database. While this data does not include every art centre, it covers a statistically significant sample and provides a reasonable picture of art centre performance:

1. Art centre financial audits: many art centres complete an annual audit and the majority of these are publicly available. The number of art centres whose audit is publicly available or who provide their audit report varies over time, as shown on the following table. A total of 803 audits were analysed for this report for sales and grant income.

2004/05	19
2005/06	29
2006/07	31
2007/08	31
2008/09	49
2009/10	50
2010/11	56
2011/12	59
2012/13	47
2013/14	56
2014/15	56
2015/16	52
2016/17	55
2017/18	56
2018/19	58
2019/20	52
2020/21	50
2021/22	60
2022/23	51

2023/24	55
2024/25	55

2. Art centre operational data: most art centres use an operational database, SAM (Stories Art Money). SAM provides data on production and participation. The number of art centre datasets analysed each year varies as shown on the following table. A total of 1,456 art centres datasets were analysed.

2004/05	42
2005/06	48
2006/07	52
2007/08	55
2008/09	61
w2009/10	66
2010/11	69
2011/12	70
2012/13	77
2013/14	83
2014/15	82
2015/16	87
2016/17	92
2017/18	96
2018/19	100
2019/20	101
2020/21	91
2021/22	91
2024/25	93
2023/24	94
2024/25	91

3. Some data was available for art centres outside of the three states and the Northern Territory; however, this data only provided around 1-2% of results and was thus excluded in the analysis.
4. Some data in this report has updated results from previous years. This is the result of improved and more accurate reports being generated from the SAM database.
5. Rounding is used in this report; as such, some analysis will not add up to 100%.

All data used for this update is fully de-identified.

All adjusted figures are calculated using the Wage Price Index, as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics: WPI series – ABS 6345.0, using the hourly rates of pay reported in the public and private arts and recreation services category (June quarter of each year).

This update draws on, and extends, the data and analysis generated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies Project, which concluded in 2015. This data is available at:

<https://old.crc-rep.com/research/enterprise-development/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-art-economies/project-outputs>

### Disclaimer

This report is based on third party data representing a sample of the art centres in remote and regional Australia. While Desart is not in a position to verify the accuracy of that data or determine how representative it is, Desart has no reason to believe that the data on which this report is based is not accurate or broadly representative of the sector as at the date of publication. The information in this report is provided by Desart in good faith but is of a general nature and should not be relied on in lieu of appropriate professional advice. Desart does not warrant or guarantee its reliability, accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose and accepts no liability whatsoever arising from, or connected to, the use of any material in this report.