

MEDIA RELEASE

Hello Koalas is Australia's Best Sculpture Trail Experience

A trail of over-sized artistic koalas through the Greater port Macquarie and Mid North Coast of NSW has been named as the best sculpture trail experience in Australia.

Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail, established 2014, has received the Gold Award for Best Sculpture Park or Trail at the 2022 Australian Street Art Awards announced from Queensland's Sunshine Coast last night.

The Australian Street Art Awards, a tourism awards for public art program, encourage Australians to explore the world-class street and public art that is freely accessible all year round and found in every corner of the country.

There are 83 one-metre-high painted koalas on this cultural tourism public art adventure. Each has been hand painted by local artists and forms part of the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail. It is supported by an annual festival, gift shop, travelling exhibitions with a free Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail Guide and Map plus 60 artists, sponsors, suppliers and supporters.

Awards Director Liz Rivers said, "This unique trail contributes significantly to making Australia a more vibrant, creative and interesting country – somewhere visitors want to explore more keenly."

"Smart communities promote their outdoor art as a unique landmark – an attraction that visitors can see in only place, and that makes their destination immediately identifiable, highly attractive and a drawcard for art-loving tourists," Ms Rivers said.

"Investing in outdoor art as an attraction mechanism also makes economic sense as art is typically less expensive to create than more traditional tourism attractions while the pay-off is handsome," she said.

Domestic arts tourists are high value visitors – they stay almost one-and-a-half times longer and spend about one-and-a-half times more per day than domestic tourists overall, according to an Australia Council for the Arts' Domestic Art Tourism: Connecting the Country Report.

In commenting on *Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail's* win, the judges congratulated the dozens of people and businesses that have been involved in creating this extraordinary trail.

"We love that while Hello Koalas started as a celebration of our furry friends, it has evolved into a project of national significance which not only promotes and supports art tourism but also importantly raises awareness of the need to protect koalas and their disappearing habitat," the judges said.

Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail's biggest addition, 'The Big Koala, The Spirit of All Koalas', also snagged the Silver Award in Best Landmark Sculpture category. This 2.5-metre-high golden beauty has joined the Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail as the 84th sculpture and is the face of the ground-breaking Guulabaa (Place of Koala) tourism and educational precinct in Cowarra State Forest.



Best Entrance Art: Burwood Chinatown Precinct Project, Sophi Odling and Christina Huynh (Burwood, Sydney NSW)
Best External Mural: 'Sanctum', Andrew Bourke and Jesse Bell (Darwin NT)
Best Landmark Sculpture: 'Dyipni--Da King of Da Road', 14 Filipino metal workers (The Horsepower Highway, WA)
Best Mega Mural: Quorn Silo Light Show, Illuminart (Southern Flinders Ranges SA)
Best Monument or Memorial: Southern Aurora Memorial Violet Town, Tim Bowtell, Lach Cummings and Chris Mann (Violet Town VIC)
Best Rural Art: Bute Silo Art, Scott Nagy and Krimstone (Top of the Yorke SA)
Best Sculpture Park or Trail: Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail, various (Port Macquarie NSW)
Best Street Art Festival or Event: SWELL Sculpture Festival 2022, various (Gold Coast QLD)
Best Street Art Laneway: Banna Lane, various (Griffith NSW)
Best Street Art Tour: Frankston Street Art Walking Tours, various (Frankston VIC)
Best Street Art Trail: Tongala Street Art Trail, Tongala volunteer artists (Goulburn Valley VIC)

2022 **Silver** winners are:

Best Entrance Art: Darwin Diggeridoo, Anthony Duwan Lee (Darwin Airport NT)
Best External Mural: Nonna's Table, Claire Foxtton (Griffith NSW)
Best Landmark Sculpture: The Big Koala, Spirit of All Koalas, Pauline Roods and John Belfield (Greater Port Macquarie NSW)
Best Mega Mural: Bute Silo Art, Scott Nagy and Krimstone (Top of the Yorke SA)
Best Monument or Memorial: Wandoan Soldier Settlers Precinct, various (Western Downs QLD)
Best Rural Art: Digging up the Past, The Zookeeper and DRAPL (Hughenden QLD)
Best Street Art Festival or Event: Banna Lane Festival, various (Griffith NSW)
Best Street Art Laneway: Austin Lane, various (Darwin NT)
Best Street Art Tour: Oh Hey WA NMBW Street Art Tour (Perth WA)
Best Street Art Trail: The Maryborough Mural Project, various (Fraser Coast QLD)

2022 **Bronze** winners are:

Best External Mural: Painting Our Future, Julian Clavijo and Camilo Delgado (Hastings VIC)
Best Landmark Sculpture: Let's Get Crabby in a Big Way, Brendon Tohill (Capricorn Coast QLD)
Best Mega Mural: Stay Grounded, Kitt Bennett (Darwin NT)
Best Monument or Memorial: Neighbour, Jesse Belle (Katherine NT)
Best Rural Art: The Golden Clydesdale, Dylan Butler (Coobowie SA)
Best Street Art Festival or Event: No More Blank Walls Street Art Festival, Blank Walls (Osborne Park WA)
Best Street Art Laneway: Bidencopes Lane, various (Hobart TAS)
Best Street Art Trail: Little Finds, various (Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA)

Media comment: Liz Rivers liz@awardsabsolute.com / 0409 071 816

High res images: 1300 88 22 59 / 07 5446 4299

- ENDS -