



Local Mudgee artist wins top prize at the prestigious Sculptures in the Garden 2026

MUDGEES, NSW – October 12, 2026: Local Mudgee sculptor Michael Ferris took home the top prize in a popular win at the 16th annual Mudgee [Sculptures in the Garden](#), (SIG) for his work 'River Bend' during a majestic opening weekend where 8 prizes winners were awarded part of the \$60K in prizemoney.

As hundreds of visitors flocked to the Rosby vineyard exhibition opening and prize giving, judges presented the \$30K **SIG and Mid-Western Regional Council Acquisition Prize** to Ferris some 14 years after he first entered an artwork aged 18.

"It's a testament to Mudgee and this event that we can have such a great local creative scene. This is a massive honour," Ferris said.

Head of Judges Bradley Hammond, Director of the Orange Regional Gallery, described the winning work as a "real stand-out". It will go on permanent public display at the Lawson Park Sculpture Walk, at the heart of Mudgee's thriving art scene.

Andrea Sardone from Mandurang in Victoria won the prestigious **Friends of the Sculptures in the Garden Prize** worth \$10K for his charming work 'Walter' which will also be acquired for permanent exhibition in the region.

The \$10K **Fernside Pastoral Company Prize** was won by Bob Teasdale from NSW Southern Tablelands for 'Penny For Your Thoughts' and the \$5K **Buchanan Mudgee Hospital Prize**, also an acquisition, was presented to locally based French artist Louis Liens for his work 'Stone Drift'.

Tammy Briggs of Killarney Vale won the \$2K **Cameron Anderson Architects Merit Prize** for her work 'Ground Colony' and the **Mudgee Region Small Sculpture Prize** for \$2K went to Nicole O'Regan from Hampton in the Central West for her evocative work in stone and steel 'The Tracker'.

Ellen King from Lawson won the **Sculptor's Society Sensory Sculpture Prize** for her tactile wool and wet felted artwork 'Turning Point'.

First-time artist Beau Rohr, also from Mudgee, won the **Young Sculptor Achievement Prize** for his work 'Aspiring'. The 20-year-old engineering welding apprentice's entry was inspired after attending previous SIG events – creating a life size bull sculptured in Corten steel.

With the highest number of entries and biggest prize money pool to date with over \$60K presented in prizes, contemporary sculpture artists from across Australia entered the competition with 132 finalists providing nearly 300 artworks now on exhibition for an excited audience of collectors, art lovers and visitors wanting to come and create at the Festival. A highlight event for attendees this year is an artist led, community made artwork project that kicked off on the weekend called [My Kingdom for a Horse](#) that will see a herd of life size horses created over the coming two weeks.

The 2026 selection committee was led by Guest Judge Bradley Hammond, who has championed regional and contemporary art for decades, and announced the winners and escorted an exhibition tour on the opening day. Fellow panel members are internationally revered sculptor Stephen King OAM, award-winning Mudgee architect Cameron Anderson, local artist and journalist Sam Paine and Director of Community at MWRC Rachel Gill.

Hammond told audiences the SIG competition and exhibition was exceptional and unusual in its extent of generous acquisitions provided to the region for permanent free public viewing in many locations and fostering the areas reputation for art led tourism and appreciation.

Long time supporter and donor Andrew Buchanan, a former ABC local radio GM, said the artworks never failed to surprise and inspire him, and he welcomed the continued celebration of art that the event provided for the community to get behind.

Festival visitors can vote throughout the next two weeks for the **\$500 People's Choice Prize**.

Founder and curator Kay Norton-Knight congratulated all the entrants saying the selection had been incredibly tough with such a high calibre of quality and creative sculptures in so many mediums.

Tickets are [online](#) or at the gate for just \$5 for adults and children free to come and participate in all the experiences and view the extensive outdoor and gallery exhibition.

Upcoming SIG Experiences;

- Gates open daily 10am to 4pm up to October 25.
- 'My Kingdom for a Horse' participation with artist led sessions from 11am daily
- Artist demonstrations free with entry each weekend
- Guided tour groups with the founder – bookings required online
- Children's story time and CARNIVAL creations session free 12pm Sat, October 17
- CARNIVAL Monsters, children's art transforming rubbish into art 12pm Sat, October 24
- Food and wine from a selection of local purveyors and Rosby's wines cellar door
- Live Music on weekends by Matt Boylan-Smith and friends
- All sculptures (not acquired) are available to purchase

There is plenty on offer to [plan your trip](#) with immersive art, wine and food and boutique accommodation, supported by [Mudgee Region Tourism](#).

Sculptures in the Garden is proudly supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW. **My Kingdom for a Horse** has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Festivals Australia program.

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Images from Opening [HERE](#). Media Video Clips [HERE](#)

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About Sculptures in the Garden

Sculptures in the Garden is an annual not-for-profit event that began in 2011. It brings together Australian artists, the local community and visitors in a stunning rural setting in Mudgee, NSW. The event is a significant cultural and social occasion for the region, contributing to its reputation as a vibrant artistic hub. It supports local charities and public art acquisition, making art accessible to the wider community.

Images Credit: Amber Creative

