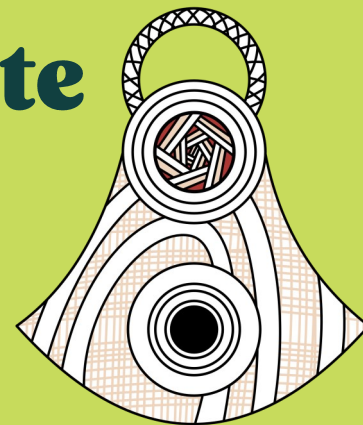


# Jawun Research Institute Seminar Series

## Guwal – language, culture and wellbeing

*This multidisciplinary seminar series aims to create a forum centres in Jawun. It is for researchers at CQUniversity, across Queensland and all over the world, as a forum to share their research findings and establish potential synergies, leading to joint grant applications, and partnerships that endeavor to advance knowledge in various disciplines.*



### Date and Time

Wednesday, 6 August 2025  
3:00pm to 5:00pm QLD time  
Light Refreshments provided

### In Person

Room 3.06, CQUniversity Cairns  
Campus, Corner Abbott and  
Shields Street

### Online

[Via Zoom](#)  
Passcode: 970273



## Seminar 56: Culture and the arts as critical infrastructure in Northern Australia: An analysis of cultural policy

### Speaker

Associate Professor Lisa Law  
A/Prof of Planning and Chair of the TUDLab at James Cook University

### Bio

Lisa Law is Associate Professor of Geography and Planning at James Cook University, where she brings an interdisciplinary approach to researching urban life in tropical Australia. Her research examines the possibilities of creating more liveable, resilient towns and cities through place-based urban design that embraces nature, arts and culture and community. As founder and Chair of the TUDLab, Lisa leads an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral team that collaborates with local governments, industries and communities to shape innovative futures. This seminar presents preliminary research by [LabNorth](#), a network of researchers and practitioners interested in the value of arts and culture in regional development--advocating for their wider inclusion in Northern Australian development policy.

### Abstract

Northern Australia is often framed in policy discourse as a frontier of economic development rather than a region of vibrant urban cultural landscapes. This article challenges that perception by turning to the small cities of Cairns, Townsville, Darwin and Broome, exploring their cultural vitality and the distinctive contribution arts and culture make to urban life across the region. Borrowing Gibson-Graham's (2015) rethinking of wellbeing, we re-cast arts and culture as essential urban infrastructure vital to the liveability of these cities. We analyse local government cultural strategies as an untapped data source, teasing out principles of cultural distinctiveness and exploring how strategies

measure the contribution of this infrastructure to liveability and wellbeing. The research demonstrates how cultural strategies collectively imagine the value of arts and culture infrastructure, from gallery precincts and libraries to Indigenous-led arts economies and writers festivals. In so doing, they envision alternative development pathways for these cities that extend beyond extractive industries and transport/power infrastructure investment in Australia's north. By foregrounding the importance of arts and culture infrastructure to urban vitality and liveability, we argue for wider recognition of their role in the Northern Australia development agenda.