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# INTRODUCTION

In Australia until recently, culture was not taken seriously and was seldom connected to economic development, urban design, quality of life and social justice. It was widely regarded by governments at all levels as the ‘icing on the cake’ and an activity to be considered when everything else on the list had been achieved.

Through recent research we also know that Australians in 2000 regard the arts and culture as very much part of Australian society but that their benefits are not enjoyed or recognised equally by everyone.<sup>1</sup> We also know that in Western Sydney, people are less often employed in cultural activity and participate less frequently as consumers across all art forms and across all age groups and backgrounds compared to the rest of Sydney.<sup>2</sup>

The Western Sydney Arts Strategy and its focus on the structural inequities impeding cultural development in Western Sydney, provide a number of opportunities to develop a sustainable, regional cultural life. Also, in order to address real funding inequities, the NSW Ministry for the Arts has established special funding programs aimed at supporting cultural development in Western Sydney local councils and Western Sydney artists.

Just as councils are now recognising that social and community development plans and programs are part of their core business, many councils have come to, or are coming to, the realisation that cultural policies, plans and programs are also critical to ensuring a good quality of life for residents and workers.

Councils can play a significant role in the cultural life of the community through a range of activities and services such as:

- Support for festivals and entertainment and the recreational aspects of culture and the arts including parks, gardens and recreation facilities
- Library services
- Civic, cultural and community facilities
- Special programs, skills development initiatives, grants and prizes
- Community development programs and services
- Economic strategies such as producers markets and other outlets
- Urban and landscape improvements
- Land use planning (eg creating city and neighbourhood cultural hubs)
- Heritage preservation

The NSW Local Government Act of 1993 encouraged councils to adopt new approaches to management planning and to the delivery of programs and services. In particular the legislation promoted an integrated and more systematic approach to planning at the local level, including the setting of clear goals and the development of strategies that could be addressed across the organisation. The legislation requires councils to develop social plans as a core business. In pursuing a more systematic and planned approach to the delivery of services,

<sup>1</sup> Saatchi & Saatchi, *Australians and the arts*, 2000. Sydney: Australia Council.

<sup>2</sup> *A Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney*, 1999. Sydney: NSW Ministry for the Arts & NSW Government” Office of Western Sydney.

many councils have also moved to ensure that cultural development is integrated into local planning. By linking cultural issues and other aspects of council activity in a strategic way local livability, well being and a sense of identity can be maximized.

Although most councils recognise the value to the community of this broad approach to culture, it requires the effective integration of diverse council responsibilities and a considerable realignment of process and practice within local government structures to succeed. Organisational change of this magnitude requires progressive implementation. Achieving acceptance and full integration also takes time.

In 1998 Blacktown City Council received funding from the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme to develop a Cultural Plan and Development Strategy for the City. The overall purpose of this Project was to:

*Prepare a Cultural Plan and Development Strategy which provides the City and its communities with a framework for supporting and developing cultural diversity and creativity, and reinforcing the unique character and environment of the City.*

Australia Street Company, working with Byron Harford, was commissioned to prepare the Plan and Development Strategy that is contained in this document. The Plan identifies projects across diverse disciplines which will, over time, encourage community cultural development whilst providing Council with integrated project management models. These models will provide staff and the community with opportunities to make the important links between cultural issues and other Council activities.

The involvement and participation of the Blacktown community is a crucial component of the Plan. The Council needs to travel on this journey in partnership with its community in order to ensure community ownership and commitment. The consultations associated with this Study provided opportunities for the community to participate. This needs to be continued since the community will contribute fresh perspectives and new knowledge to cultural projects thus enhancing opportunities for positive outcomes. It will also help to ensure that local cultural activities enrich community life and local identity and the establishment of solid partnerships based on community cultural development practice.

The Blacktown Cultural Policy Framework and Cultural Plan is presented in two volumes. Volume 1 consists of the Policy Framework and Plan including a 2020 vision and strategies and actions to 2010. Volume 2 incorporates an outline of the project methodology, the preliminary revised Discussion Paper incorporating key issues raised in consultations, stakeholder interviews and research, stakeholder and community wants and needs, an analysis of cultural policy trends, the Cultural Resources Overview and the Cultural Facilities Audit.

# WHAT IS CULTURE?

Recent debate indicates that the word ‘culture’ does not simply mean the arts. Although culture includes the arts it also incorporates aspects of participation, appreciation, local distinctiveness and identity, the physical and built environment and those activities which provide opportunities for learning and imaginative expression.

In Australia the word culture is accepted as a term which embraces quality cultural products produced by artists as well as the creative product of the community. In a 1996 survey by the Local Government and Shires Association, New South Wales’ councils across the board, including Blacktown, proposed that culture is principally ‘a way of life’.<sup>3</sup> They suggested that culture results from connections between place and people and that it evolves over time. They also recognised that culture refers to particular aspects of ‘way of life’. Some councils, mainly metropolitan, mentioned the arts whilst many rural councils mentioned heritage. Enlightenment and appreciation were highlighted as aspects of culture in many rural councils.

## DEFINING OUR TERMS

Despite the active debate there is no one accepted definition of culture. However, in order to prepare a cultural policy framework and plan for Blacktown, we need to define our terms so that it is clear what this Plan and Strategy address. These definitions are set out below.

## DEFINING CULTURE

In this Plan we are using culture to refer to the creative product of the community - both works produced by artists and also the creative expression of people’s way of life.

In this definition, culture includes, but is more than, the works of artists. The creative product of a community can be found in its works of art such as performance, writing, visual arts, popular music and dance, and in creative works that have often been termed crafts, such as pottery, fashion, photography, cuisine, story telling, needlework and gardening. These works may be new or cherished from a time in the past. They may be tangible products or passed down by word of mouth, ritual or teaching from one generation to the next.

At the same time the output of people’s creativity and imagination can also be found in elements of a community’s heritage, social customs and rituals, the design elements of streetscape and the imaginative use of active urban and neighbourhood spaces. Examples of these include locally produced festivals and pageants, decorative designs on housing and streetscape elements, designs and other works to support sporting groups and events, folk dancing and displays of cultural history and heritage, commemorative projects such as quilts,

<sup>3</sup> Regional Distinctiveness Project, 1996. Sydney: Local Government and Shires Associations.

photographic albums, local history recordings, and ceremonies designed to remember, celebrate acknowledge or develop important community events or values.

This definition focuses on the creativity, imagination and heritage of members of a community, which contribute to a sense of place and local distinctiveness. In a diverse community, such as Blacktown, comprising Indigenous Australians and people originally or recently from a wide range of countries, customs and beliefs, there is a wealth of creative product representing both diverse traditions and the diverse contemporary experiences of people residing in the local area.

## DEFINING CULTURAL RESOURCES

As part of the research associated with this Plan, a cultural resources overview has been prepared as well as a cultural facility audit. Both projects have required a thorough review of Blacktown's built and natural environment as well as an analysis of the urban fabric and amenity of the local government area. To ensure clarity and consistency in the use of terms in this document, we have defined the components of cultural resources.

One component of cultural resources is places, including topography, facilities and buildings, and the aesthetic qualities of these, which contribute to community cultural life, community identity and a sense of place. These places include heritage items, significant streetscapes, public art and monuments, public open space, views and lookouts, tourist attractions, sporting, recreation and leisure facilities, community meeting places such as churches, clubs and fast food outlets. These have been identified in the Cultural Resources Audit undertaken as a component of Stage 1 of this Study and documented in Volume 2.

Important cultural resources in this sense are cultural facilities. These are defined as those physical resources, held in the public domain, which are, or have potential for, accommodating cultural programs and activities. Cultural facilities therefore include community centres, halls, theatres, libraries, museums and galleries, heritage buildings and landmark sites including open space, parks and reserves. These have been identified and a preliminary audit undertaken during Stage 1 of the Study. Data related to the audit is provided in Volume 2.

Cultural resources in Blacktown are also those aspects of community life which utilise, or are presented in, these places, and include cultural businesses, cultural collections, networks of voluntary, socio-cultural and civic associations, cultural events, directories and databases, social and cultural services. The scale of Blacktown's cultural industry base has also been assessed and included as a cultural resource.

Cultural resources are an important element in community cultural development. Community cultural development has evolved over the past 15 years from community arts practice and both terms are defined below.

## DEFINING COMMUNITY ARTS

Individual arts projects which provide opportunities for communities to work with artists in order to express ideas and creativity, celebrate local identity, raise issues and make changes, or describe local conditions, usually come under the banner of community arts. In recent times, community arts have come to be seen as only one aspect of community cultural development.

## DEFINING COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Community cultural development is broader than community arts. Community cultural development refers to processes that utilise arts and other creative activities to promote creative expression, community well being and community health, foster social networks and sense of inclusion, and achieve improvements in such areas as education outcomes and crime rates. It has been described as “the purposeful and coordinated pursuit of these functions in order to enrich local identity, sense of place and quality of life”<sup>4</sup>. For example, community cultural development often involves a creative team working with local communities, or groups within communities such as young people or residents in a neighbourhood, to improve self-esteem and sense of belonging through community participation, involvement and enjoyment.

Community cultural development has been adopted by many councils as a key feature in their approach to improving local quality of life. By integrating community cultural development into their strategic planning, councils provide their local communities with a purposeful, sustained and coordinated pursuit of arts and cultural functions at the local level. This involves supporting entertainment, arts and cultural activities both *directly* through special programs in civic, cultural and community facilities, *and in an integrated way* as part of library services, community services, land use planning and development control, urban and landscape design, heritage conservation and the development of parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities.

Community cultural development is more strategic and more integrative and can achieve far more than community arts programs alone. The broader approach allows councils to adopt cultural policies focused on important outcomes of community wellbeing and to target their cultural plans to these kinds of objectives and outcomes.

## MEASURING CULTURE

Performance assessment, cultural benchmarking and the development of cultural indicators is in its infancy at the local government level in Australia. Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been collecting cultural statistics across the Australian cultural sector since 1985, detailed data relating to the performance of specific local government areas, other than

<sup>4</sup> Guppy, Marla 1997, *Better Places, richer communities*. Sydney: Australia Council 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

comparative data in relation to cultural funding levels, is not readily available. However employment profiles for cultural occupations for residents of specific local government areas is available through the regular Census of Population and Housing and has been used in this Study to inform the overview of Blacktown's cultural resources.

The area of public library performance has quite comprehensive data that has been developed over time. Comparative data relating to the performance of public libraries is available on a statewide basis and annual data is published by the State Library of New South Wales. Public library data is collected across a broad range of categories including per capita subsidy, expenditure, circulation of material (loans), total stock, borrower numbers, service points, staff levels, document delivery etc. Based on 1997/98 data Blacktown has the highest population for the Sydney Metropolitan area where there are 50 public library services. (Lake Macquarie, Wollongong and Newcastle public libraries are included in the Metropolitan category.) Blacktown ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in total actual expenditure on its Library Service and 50<sup>th</sup> for expenditure per capita. Blacktown also ranks 48<sup>th</sup> on expenditure on library materials per capita. Blacktown ranks 50<sup>th</sup> for loans per capita.

Making general comparisons however between library services can often be misleading and more research is needed to identify specific reasons for Blacktown's low ranking in overall performance. Expenditure levels over recent years in Blacktown may indicate that Council's priorities were focused on the development of infrastructure in new release areas rather than on services. The absence of library services in Blacktown's areas of growth is likely to be impacting on usage levels generally since customers from those areas need to travel to either Blacktown CBD or to Mt Druitt to access more than basic services. The Library's system-wide closure on Monday's would also be having an impact on overall loans and visitors. (Most metropolitan public library's now open 7 days per week). Research also indicates that there is a direct link between expenditure on new library material and loans. Timely access to up to date information is a key requirement for library users who very quickly turn to sources of information other than libraries, or go without, if their needs are not met. The economic, social and cultural impact of poor library service should also be considered in this regard.

In distinguishing cultural indicators from the general set of broad outcomes that society cares about and which contribute to the building of livable communities, a limited number of relevant cultural activities can be identified for attention. These include indicators relating to the production of music, dance, plays, operas, films, paintings, crafts and so on. They would also include indicators relating to the consumption of, or participation in, music, dance, art, theatre, film etc. Attendance data related to local venues such as museums, festivals, markets, libraries, galleries, cinemas would also be relevant. These activities complement broader social measures such as crime, health, discrimination, labour market, transport etc. Unfortunately cultural indicators for the areas identified above are not collected for the Blacktown local government area.

In 1997 the Australia Council conducted a benchmarking study into cultural development activities in 10 local government area across Australia. The Study identified potential areas for collaboration but ongoing programs have been slow to develop. It is useful to note here that recent experience in the United Kingdom has identified significant problems in undertaking comparative analysis of artistic-cultural service provision. The Audit Commission in 1991

proposed a set of evaluative indicators for local authorities 'artistic-cultural activities'.<sup>5</sup> The focus was on value for money and management rather than on gaps in service provision or policy prioritisation. A focus on monitoring performance in relation to policy and planning within the local authority rather than on comparative performance assessment across authorities seems to be a more useful activity at this stage.

In the United States the Urban Institute is conducting an Arts in Community Building Indicators Partnership as part of a wider study into National Neighbourhood Indicators development. Four inter-related areas of inquiry have been identified.

#### 1. PRESENCE OF ARTS AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Collecting information about various kinds of cultural organisations in the Local Government Area on a regular basis and based on an agreed template.

#### 2. CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Working with arts and cultural organizations to identify and measure the different types of cultural participation they support.

#### 3. IMPACTS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Developing methods to collect and assess data that identifies the economic, social and cultural value of different types of cultural participation.

#### 4. COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO PRODUCE CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Collecting information from individuals and organisations that provides data on the climate which encourages opportunities for cultural participation and production.

Since limited useful data, other than public library performance, is available to inform Blacktown City Council's decision making in the cultural field, the indicators developed by the Urban Institute Project could form the basis for similar data collection in Blacktown. The development of systems and resources for the ongoing collection of cultural indicators will be important elements in managing the revitalisation of Council's support for local cultural life.

<sup>5</sup> Local Authorities, entertainment and the arts, 1991. London: Audit Commission.

# OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

A city's culture and cultural life reflect the connections between its history, geography, traditions, technology, imagination and skill. It also reflects the effort, energy, creativity and share of financial resources committed to the positive advancement of cultural life.

Local councils are recognised as providing services at the 'grass roots' that have played an important role in encouraging their communities to shape their local futures. Traditionally those municipal services have focused in the areas of town planning, road maintenance, and rubbish management and in the cultural area through library provision. More recently local government has realised the strategic value of cultural institutions and programs in urban development projects. The strategic dividends have been demonstrated in a variety of ways including community development programs, urban design projects, tourism initiatives, local identity appreciation, technology awareness projects and general quality of life enrichment.

For a host of reasons it is generally acknowledged that young societies, settled from other countries relatively recently, tend to concentrate on basic physical and technical infrastructure in the early years. It is only later in their development that they focus on national or local identity, cultural awareness and creative expression. It has taken Australia a long time to reach this stage. There are many views about why this has been the case. Suffice it to say that Australia's unique mix of Indigenous and immigrating populations, climate, distance from the rest of the world and the struggle to survive may have influenced the late arrival of culture onto the government agenda.

Blacktown provides a case study in the evolution of cultural development. The local government area is rich in history with a strong Indigenous heritage and a unique story of very early European settlement. Until recently Blacktown remained largely rural and large areas of the City are only now being developed for housing. For 50 years, however, the City has attracted new residents. These have comprised people of largely English speaking background relocating from the inner city to Blacktown's wide open spaces as well as newly arrived non-English speaking migrant communities.

In the 1970s and 1980s Blacktown was very active in supporting community life through community arts projects and the city was widely recognised as a leader in applying community arts practice to addressing social issues. Extensive State government land releases in Blacktown over the past 20 years, however, have resulted in Council focusing on urgent and time consuming land planning needs. Changes in Council priorities in the mid 1980s around the time of the beginning of the establishment of new housing developments, resulted in other priorities taking the place of culture and the arts on Council's planning agenda.

However Blacktown is now investing again in its cultural life. The recent purchase of the former church as a community cultural centre, the review of the Showground and its arts and cultural infrastructure, the development of gateway sites incorporating the work of local artists, the review of the Heritage Plan and the development of the annual Art Exhibition all indicate a revival of interest in and a recognition of the importance of culture to Blacktown's quality of life. This Plan charts Council's commitment and is based on a strategic understanding of the issues and challenges which the City faces in actively investing in and promoting cultural development.

The following issues have been identified in research, discussions, interviews and workshops conducted as part of the development of Blacktown's cultural policy framework and plan. The key issues for Blacktown have been summarised below.

## FROM COMMUNITY ARTS TO COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the 1970s and early 1980s Blacktown LGA was at the centre of Australia's burgeoning community arts movement. A number of Council supported programs from that time have survived such as the Blacktown Festival, the Arts and Craft Huts at the Blacktown Showground and festivals in various town centres. More recently Council has supported the development of new community arts initiatives such as the development of the former church as a community cultural centre and the annual Blacktown Art Exhibition.

Over the last 20 years in Australia, however, there has been a shift from single project community arts practice to integrated community cultural planning and development. Many councils around Australia now recognise the benefits which the encouragement of a community/council partnership in arts development and the fostering of a strategic and integrated approach to the development of arts and culture bring. They encourage community cultural planning as an integral component of corporate planning with clearly identified aims, policies and strategies. Shifting from community arts practice to integrated community cultural development provides a focus for council investment and an umbrella for diverse cultural programs.

Twenty years on from its flourishing community arts period, Blacktown artists do not take centre stage. They are a hidden sub-culture operating across the city and linked by informal networks usually based on artforms. In these twenty years, Blacktown City Council has lost its leadership role in community arts, is not integrating artists and creative works into its major areas of activity, is not harnessing creative and cultural expression in the cause of social well being or to help deal with social issues, and rather than being focused on the processes – partnerships, programs and community based initiatives – which foster these benefits is mainly focused on resolving cultural questions by dealing with buildings and facilities.

Artists, thinkers and scientists are at the core of a society's creativity since they look at things from a new or different perspective. Artists engaged at the local level are lateral thinkers who bring fresh cultural perspectives to the identification of solutions to problems. Artists add value to communities and are assets to multidisciplinary teams working on community cultural development programs. Creative city and town cultures recognise innovation and leadership that provide the foundations for positive change.

**The issue is:** a shift from minor levels of support for community arts to a commitment to community cultural development in Blacktown would provide Council with an opportunity to integrate cultural planning into its strategic agenda and to establish active partnerships with Blacktown's artist community which focus on making major contributions to local identity, sense of place and quality of life.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** the suggestion that cultural expression and creative expression are a valued and exciting part of the way of life in Blacktown is almost

invisible in the City. The shortfall in opportunities for creative expression and an exploration of cultural experience is marked, and for those people whose primary means of self-expression and creativity is through the arts, this is a particularly significant shortfall. All residents are disadvantaged by the absence of a program that fosters community well being through cultural development.

**The kinds of strategies that could be considered include:**

- the establishment of a cultural development team within Council with associated skills development and awareness programs among a wide range of Council staff, and
- the development of an integrated and comprehensive cultural development program for the City.

## IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Notions of image and identity are crucial to considering the culture of a place. The image presented to the outside world is one perspective on who its residents are, it provides a picture of what is unique and distinctive about the local community and presents residents with opportunities for expressing pride and confidence in their locality.

Blacktown City Council in its latest Management Plan identified City Image as a Priority Planning Area and set Council a long-term goal of achieving ‘a strong sense of belonging and identity within the community – community pride and spirit’<sup>6</sup>. This objective responds to a number of social indicators and long standing perceptions of Blacktown, which are less positive than is consistent with a strong sense of community wellbeing and quality of life. In addition, in recent years, Blacktown has not generally been known for its arts and creative industries.

**The issue is:** Council should invest in Blacktown’s community cultural development as one of its initiatives to improve community self image, community pride and public perceptions of Blacktown.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** the provision of tutors and venues for community cultural development through creative arts and crafts programs are needed across the local government area since they encourage a sense of local identity and local distinctiveness. Gateway and imaginative public open space landscaping projects which integrate art and decorative design are needed to promote a sense of place and pride. Blacktown Festival and the Blacktown Art Exhibition are currently unmet opportunities to celebrate the high level creative skills and imagination of local residents.

**The kinds of strategies that could be considered include:**

- the identification of community centres and halls across the LGA as designated community cultural development centres with diverse roles in encouraging skills

<sup>6</sup> Draft Management Plan, 2000, Blacktown: Blacktown City Council.

development, performance and exhibition programs; their collective role would be to facilitate and develop creative expression and provide the grassroots basis for a rich cultural life in Blacktown

- the integration of locally developed themes into a cultural development program for Blacktown – the program would include local publicity strategies aimed at both encouraging local participation and informing all residents about the local cultural themes being pursued
- the planning of town centre festivals across Blacktown, encouraging a unique image and focus for each festival based on local cultures and unique aspects of local history and ways of life;
- the establishment of The Rooty Hill as a venue for community gatherings for outdoor performance;
- the review and upgrade of the Blacktown Festival and the Blacktown Art Prize as key cultural events in the region contributing to these general themes and cultural development programs.

## DISTRICT VS CENTRALISED SERVICES

Blacktown's nearly 250,00 residents live in 45 suburbs that are spread across a large local government area occupying 246.9 square kilometres. The built and natural features of this area - the motorways, highways, creeks, transport routes and power grids - dissect the physical area into its many suburbs and to make travel between them difficult, particularly for those relying on public transport.

For a host of reasons having to do with the way in which Blacktown has been developed, the city has tended to provide only its most basic services at local or neighbourhood level and to offer more complex services, such as libraries, at one or a few central locations. While cost factors seem to justify this distribution hierarchy, the focus on centralised service provision has some negative social impacts. These include unequal access to centralised services, particularly for those relying on public transport and those in the suburbs furthest away from the city centre.

Centralised service provision not only fails to take account of the physical geography of Blacktown's settlement patterns but also undermines relative social and economic equality in the local government area. Decades of social science research findings indicate that relative social and economic equality are *the* key ingredients in ensuring quality of life in communities.

Looking at this issue from another point of view, centralism sits uncomfortably in the world of the twenty first century, where globalism is pervasive and many people feel vulnerable to changes in global economic and other conditions. Globalism has been associated with the re-emergence of city-states and an increased interest in localism as a strategy which builds social cohesion, establishes a sense of community and strengthens community networks of support.

One of the ways of achieving a sense of the local is through the development of area/district or neighbourhood services and facilities rather than a reliance on centralised services. Decentralised services can provide access to local services on an equitable basis whilst at the

same time responding to specific district-wide needs. Many councils provide library, community centre and childcare services using a district or area approach.

**The issue is:** The City's physical divisions present considerable access and equity barriers which should be addressed by the planning and delivery of services and programs with a district focus wherever possible. These barriers are significant inhibitors to the development of a broad program of cultural activities and creative works across the local government area; i.e. they undermine the development of grassroots cultural activity and basic/local creative skill development in Blacktown.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** Some Blacktown residents are travelling out of the area to attend arts/cultural programs and courses and they need access to similar programs across the Blacktown area. Even library services are currently highly centralised, so that travel and cost barriers may be inhibiting library use for a significant proportion of residents<sup>7</sup>. Some Blacktown residents cannot afford to travel, or, for other reasons such as a disability, need locally provided activities in order to pursue cultural interests or develop creative skills. Most Blacktown residents live near a community centre, but these are not currently delivering aspects of a community cultural development program for Blacktown. The role of the library in delivering parts of community cultural development also needs development.

**The kinds of strategies which could be considered include:**

- the delivery of a locally provided, diverse, well resourced, imaginative and lively community cultural development program utilising in the first instance the community buildings which already exist in local neighbourhoods (these buildings might be community centres, community halls, sports venues, library buildings and so on)
- the development of more than one specialist community cultural development centres across the Blacktown local government area; i.e. some existing community buildings could be developed with specialist resources targeted to specific art forms and other could be focused on less resource intensive art forms, or 'first step' creative programs which require fewer resources;
- the development of upgraded Branch libraries in strategic population centres which themselves offer cultural programs and content as well as linking local communities to a wide range of cultural, leisure and education activities elsewhere, and
- providing more than one location focusing on Indigenous community cultural activities in recognition of the presence of significant Aboriginal communities in more than one local area in Blacktown.

## BUILDING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

In the early stages of relocation and settlement, minority groups often establish networks of association, which are focused on their membership of specific ethno-cultural groups – usually their groups of origin. It has been much easier, for example, across Australia, for each incoming community to develop their own newspapers, schools, cultural facilities and youth

<sup>7</sup> State Library of NSW, 1999. Public Library Statistics.

organisations etc and much harder for newcomers to merge into a so-called multicultural society.

In Blacktown, as in many communities, post-immigration patterns of social organisation have resulted in silos of ethno-cultural organisations existing side by side with each providing support and cultural vitality to their own community but encouraging little interaction between communities or between these ethno-cultural organisations. One of the successful exceptions to this practice in Blacktown is the Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency. It is the interaction between groups, which supports the emergence of a sense of community based on a positive appreciation of diversity – the aim of multiculturalism which is so rarely achieved.

Western Sydney including Blacktown does not score well on measures of racial tolerance.<sup>8</sup> This comes as no surprise since issues of intolerance along with inequities in socio-economic levels and access to services have plagued Sydney's Greater West for many decades. Acknowledging their presence and significance and that division is corrosive to the social and cultural fabric of communities, provides opportunities to address the situation in a positive and future focused way. Music, theatre, writing, dance, festivals and markets provide alternative ways of communicating and can help build positive attitudes through the development of improved and informed understanding of other people's lives and cultures.

The Cultural Plan provides Council and the Blacktown community with collaborative opportunities to work together. The identification and development of positive strategies will build networks and partnerships which bring people of different ethnic origins and traditions together to build a shared understanding through planning and participation. In so doing Council will be recognised as a leader in the development of cohesive and creative community building.

**The issue is:** a sense of belonging and a pride in local cultural diversity are only achieved through the practice and experience of common purpose. The local council is probably the only local agency in a position to foster this for all members of the community.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include :** Diverse multi-cultural groups are active across the Blacktown local government but they need to be provided with opportunities both to share their traditions and cultures with others and to appreciate the benefits of cultural diversity. Council needs to strengthen its links to the Migrant Resource Centre in order to foster a greater appreciation and tolerance of Blacktown's rich diversity. A facility/venue which focuses on the appreciation and performance of diverse ethnic music and performance is needed.

**The kinds of strategies which could be considered include :**

- the establishment of night food markets with local artist entertainment in key town centres;
- the conversion of a suitable community building to a performance space for rehearsal and performance for local musicians from ethnic and cultural groups in Blacktown, this performance space would need to be managed so as to ensure equitable access to

<sup>8</sup> Horin, Adele, 'Racists at home in the city' in Sydney Morning Herald 16 Oct, 2000.p.2

Blacktown's many ethnic groups and an overall program emphasising tolerance and cultural appreciation;

- the appointment of a Multicultural Arts Officer at Council to integrate and promote multicultural interests across Council programs; and

## BLACKTOWN'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Blacktown local government area now has the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales accounting for almost 5% of the total for the State. The Indigenous population is most concentrated in the Mt Druitt area and is relatively young with nearly 50% being under 14 years of age. 35.2% of the Indigenous population are women, incomes are generally low and the majority of the ATSI population lives in rental accommodation.

The Indigenous people of Blacktown are a significant group in the local area but they perceive that Council has been slow in responding to their interests. Council does not have a dedicated staff team<sup>9</sup> with a focus on local Indigenous issues and Indigenous initiatives are under-represented in Council activities. Despite a great deal of local interest, discussions which have been underway for some years regarding the establishment of an Aboriginal meeting place in the Blacktown area have not yet come to fruition. A range of issues still require resolution, for example, the local people would like the centre to be accessible by public transport and to act as a cultural keeping place, an arts workshop, a cultural showcase and an education centre, with other roles such as the tourist/education role of the centre regarded as secondary to the community development role. This range of unfulfilled needs strongly suggests that more than one venue should be being considered and considered as a matter of priority.

It was clear from discussions with Aboriginal stakeholders that the Blacktown Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community would like Blacktown City Council to further recognise the unique and rich contribution Indigenous peoples make to the social and cultural fabric of the city, to actively include the Indigenous community in Council programs and to provide specific resources to support Indigenous cultural projects.

**The issue is:** the survival and vitality of Blacktown's Indigenous cultures, is a litmus test of the cultural life of the City, its commitment to Reconciliation and to the well-being of its most disadvantaged, but most long standing inhabitants.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** Local Indigenous groups lack the most basic facilities for the conservation and practice of their culture, whether art forms, ceremonies, informal meetings and social traditions or for the conservation of their artifacts including those which are found in the landscape. Local Indigenous groups do not currently have facilities or programs which ensure the development of a sustainable cultural production chain – the creation, distribution, marketing and sale of artworks as well as the application of their cultural heritage to new media applications. There is also no facility which could be utilised as a

<sup>9</sup> With many years of EEO experience, we strongly recommend that Indigenous people employed to promote Indigenous issues/wellbeing should not be engaged in one-person teams.

Keeping Place or Interpretive Centre and there needs to be a series of places where Blacktown's Indigenous people can meet for both formal and informal cultural purposes.

Non-Indigenous residents also need to have contact with and access to the rich Indigenous cultural heritage in Blacktown.

**The kinds of strategies which could be considered include:**

- the establishment of at least two cultural facilities for local Indigenous groups; one could specialise in creative and contemporary Aboriginal arts, providing resources and skill development opportunities in both traditional and new media; a quite separate facility could function as a meeting place and a keeping place, eg with some archival/conservation capacity as well as meeting facilities;
- assistance with the provision of arts equipment, resources and skills development programs in the Indigenous cultural arts centre;
- the appointment of an Indigenous Cultural Development Team within Council consisting of at least two people;
- the development of a program to assist Aboriginal artists to market their works including the identification of a local art works outlet at a key mainstreet site, eg close to the station.

## INDIGENOUS AND EUROPEAN HERITAGE

Blacktown local government area has a rich Indigenous and post-European heritage. The area has a number of known and potential Aboriginal heritage sites and the Council is presently reviewing its sites of national, state, regional and local heritage significance. Blacktown has a number of active historical societies, which work with the Blacktown City Library to promote and research the history of the area.

Blacktown's heritage however is largely unrecognised. It has not been the focus of attention and has not had the benefit of a passionate advocate or champion with the capacity to promote its importance to the local community. Responsibilities for heritage are spread between the State and local government sectors and, in Blacktown, this has further diluted its status. Few people are aware of the diversity of Blacktown's heritage portfolio and there has been little opportunity for Council staff or local groups to build on aspects of local character and distinctiveness that heritage conservation programs provide.

**The issue is:** an equitable and generous recognition, conservation and promotion of the city's rich Indigenous and European heritage and character would assist residents understand Blacktown history and take pride in their mutual heritage.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** Resources which provide opportunities for local historical societies to work together to research and promote Blacktown's heritage are needed. Space for meeting rooms and storage for most of Blacktown's historical societies needs to be reviewed. The display of Blacktown's heritage needs to be upgraded and the richness of the area's heritage marketed widely through signposting, feature stories, festivals and interpretive displays in key centres. The active conservation of Indigenous sites needs to be undertaken.

**The kinds of strategies which could be considered include:**

- a review of storage needs for local historical archives could be reviewed with a view to strengthening collaborative project opportunities.
- the listing of significant items of European and Indigenous heritage, including sacred sites, carvings, houses, could be completed and strategies to conserve what remains put in place.

**FACILITATION VS PROVISION**

Local government in Australia has generally approached community services in one of two ways - by a facilitation approach or a provision approach. Traditionally councils have adopted a provision approach in the area of roads, rates, rubbish, land planning and health and building and more recently library services. However childcare, youth services, services to older adults, multicultural services, disability services, community centre programs and cultural services have generally been left in the hands of the community sector or other levels of government.

The new NSW Local Government Act, however, now requires councils to take a more active role in community building as a core business. The development of a Social Plan is a core legislative requirement. As a result, many councils now treat services, which sustain community well being as core business and take a more hands-on approach to the delivery of these services and programs. Community cultural development falls into this category.

Where a Council brings community cultural development into its core business, specialist staff are employed to coordinate programs, often in partnership with the community, and to manage program-based services which encourage community development and independent living. This approach usually brings with it a commitment to equality and access, to networking and information dissemination, which in turn promotes participation across the community.

**The issue is:** a facilitation model often puts the community at arm's length from council and works against the establishment of a cohesive and consistent strategic program, while a provision approach promotes active partnerships with the community and a shared strategic focus.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** Local community arts/cultural groups lack an advocate at Council to represent their issues e.g. their need for properly equipped facilities, locally provided programs, access to hall hire, access to materials and resources. Opportunities for Council to develop ongoing strategic partnerships with the cultural and arts communities are not realised. The major public funding sources for cultural programs and projects are not being accessed by Council on behalf of the community.

**The kinds of strategies that could be considered include:**

- the appointment of a Cultural Planner and a Cultural Development Officer by Council to leverage and integrate cultural development strategies across Council and into the community.

- A review of community centres/ halls in consultation with the arts community to identify from the pattern of current usage: opportunities for the provision of cultural and arts programs in community centres (in addition to the former Anglican Church), and opportunities to convert one (but preferably more than one) existing community facility into a specialist community cultural workshop.

## URBAN DESIGN

Urban design, or planning and designing the built environment with attention to safety and security, aesthetics and heritage, pedestrian and traffic needs and taking into account the relationships with the natural environment is a relatively new area of local government activity. However most councils now recognise that design plays an important role in contributing to a sense of place and local identity.

Streetscape beautification, town centre masterplanning, facility integration and landscape design linked to the integration of public art are all-important to the vitality of town and district centres. Opportunities to enhance public space, to encourage a vibrant and vital street life, and to sustain main street growth and development should be undertaken as part of community cultural development.

Urban design is also linked to economic development. Main street decline, usually as a result of the development of large shopping malls, is a critical contemporary urban issue and one which is the focus of attention locally as well as internationally. Large enclosed shopping malls with their controlled climates, safe public space, one stop shopping and easy parking siphon customers away from main street shops and these decline. Symptomatic of such decline is a high number of vacancies, opportunity shops, short lease and variety shops and fast food outlets. Main streets suffering from shopping mall 'starvation' often become unsafe and unattractive. However, unlike the enclosed mall, the main street is the principle public face of the local area. Most authorities<sup>10</sup> now recognise that the size and location of supermarket and mall developments are critical issues for the vitality of the town centre.

**The issue is:** Blacktown's main streets are the public face of Blacktown and convey first impressions about its community and its cultural life. To regenerate these streets will require more than a facelift. At the same time, other issues identified above, and the successful use of planning policies in the UK<sup>11</sup>, suggest that town centre strategies should be based on a planning policy which supports the development of central areas into cultural precincts supporting a vibrant street life.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** The mall development in Blacktown itself has resulted in a disintegration of sense of place in the town centre. The station while acting as a focal point does not give onto a lively main street, and the "main street" is hard to find. The

<sup>10</sup> For example, the UK Department of Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs introduced Planning Policies in 1996 to limit the number of out-of-town supermarkets and this has resulted in supermarket development being refocused on smaller, street-front stores on high streets. The UK Government's Select Committee (1999) to investigate the 'Environmental Impact of Supermarket Competition' found that these policies had been reasonably effective.

<sup>11</sup> See above footnote

outdoor/public streets and places in the town centre lack coherence of design and function. Residents also identified a need for the design of the streetscapes around local shopping centres to be upgraded to provide an attractive place to meet and to go about their daily business. The introduction and encouragement of outdoor, pavement cafes was needed. The integration of decorative design and artworks into landscaping was needed to encourage a sense of identity.

**The kinds of strategies that could be considered include:**

- the establishment of Main Street Projects in Blacktown's key shopping precincts;
- active promotion of pavement cafés in Blacktown;
- the development of a Public Art Policy and Plan for the City
- the development of gateway projects which encourage artists to collaborate with the community to identify aspects of local identity which promote community pride

## YOUTH CULTURE

Young people are very visible in the Blacktown local government area with 35% of Blacktown's population under 35 and 18% under 9 years of age. Young people in Blacktown are critical of the perceived imbalances in service provision across the Blacktown area and are concerned at the limited opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in the delivery of services to young people.<sup>12</sup>

Community centres with youth focused creative arts programs, aerosol art projects, movement and music projects would all provide opportunities for the young people of Blacktown to develop and showcase their talent. Emerging talent needs to be fostered and encouraged. At present youth arts programs are isolated and seldom promoted across the local government area.

**The issue is:** Blacktown's young people require imaginative, innovative and relevant services which respect their interests and needs and accord them status in their community. Arts and cultural programs coordinated at the local government level could provide such opportunities.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue:** An acoustic space for band rehearsals is needed along with youth oriented arts facilities which encourage dance and performance. Access to technology, including Internet access at youth centres, is needed. Shifting the focus from graffiti crime to aerosol art skill development is required. The provision of LGA wide youth arts programs supported and promoted by specialist Council staff are needed.

**The kinds of strategies that could be considered include:**

- the inclusion of acoustic performance and rehearsal spaces as part of the revitalisation of the Showground;
- the establishment of a Youth Arts Festival in diverse indoor and outdoor venues across the City to encourage the showcasing of emerging local and regional talent.

<sup>12</sup> Workshop with young people, 3 August, 2000.

## INNOVATIVE CULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Australia Bureau of Statistics data indicates that Blacktown LGA supports a number of media businesses (5), as well as 43 photographers, 101 graphic designers, 10 designers and illustrators and 9 specialist illustrators. This data illustrates a strong potential base for the encouragement of a specialist focus on media-based, cultural industries including graphic design studios and workshops, communications specialists, multi media labs and culture and technology based business incubators.

This potential was also identified in the 1999 Western Sydney Arts Strategy. The Nirimba Education precinct provides opportunities for active partnerships to be established with the education and business organisations located there which would encourage the development of innovative cultural industry initiatives.

**The issue is:** the ability of Council to adopt a broad approach to cultural industry development by establishing innovative and sustainable links with local business and education organisations.

**Unmet needs in relation to this issue include:** Access to auditoria in local high schools for use by community groups for theatre performance. Access to employment trends data in the multi-media new technology area which can inform the identification of opportunities for start up new media businesses.

**The kinds of strategies which could be considered include:**

- the establishment of strong partnerships between Council and local educational institutions including TAFE, UWS and the Department of Education and Training;
- the commissioning of a Cultural Industry Audit to establish the scale and potential of the cultural/ creative industries in Blacktown;
- the establishment of a creative industries business incubator to promote new business development in the area;
- the fostering of links between Council and organisations which promote employment opportunities in the cultural industries in Blacktown. e.g. GROW Employment Council, Blacktown Business Enterprise Centre and Nirimba Business Development Centre.

# CULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Blacktown Council does not have a Cultural Policy (although a Community Arts Policy was adopted in November 1983) and the development of a Cultural Policy was not required as part of this Project. However for the Cultural Plan to be adopted and integrated into Council activities and programs, it needs to be based on a firm policy foundation and for this reason the building blocks or framework for the development of a policy have been provided. Definitions of key terms have been crafted, and the Policy framework also incorporates Guiding Principles as well as the Hallmarks of Good Cultural Governance. The Cultural Vision and key Cultural Goals provided in the Cultural Plan will also contribute to policy development. The Policy framework has the following components:

- Definitions of key terms
- A statement about the hallmarks of good cultural governance to guide the identification of indicators of achievement.
- A statement of guiding principles.

# DEFINITIONS

In Blacktown the following definitions provide a context for the Cultural Policy and Plan.

## CULTURE

Culture refers to the creative product of the community - both works produced by artists and also the creative expression of people's way of life.

In this definition, culture includes, but is more than, the works of artists. The creative product of a community can be found in its works of art such as performance, writing, visual arts, popular music and dance, and in creative works that have often been termed crafts, such as pottery, fashion, photography, cuisine, story telling, needlework and gardening. These works may be new or cherished from a time in the past. They may be tangible products or passed down by word of mouth, ritual or teaching from one generation to the next. At the same time the output of people's creativity and imagination can also be found in elements of a community's heritage, social customs and rituals, the design elements of streetscape and the imaginative use of active urban and neighbourhood spaces. This definition focuses on the creativity, imagination and heritage of members of a community which contribute to a sense of place and local distinctiveness.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

To ensure clarity and consistency in the use of terms in this document, we have defined the components of cultural resources.

One component of cultural resources is places, including topography, facilities and buildings, and the aesthetic qualities of these, which contribute to community cultural life, community identity and a sense of place. These places include heritage items, significant streetscapes, public art and monuments, public open space, views and lookouts, tourist attractions, sporting, recreation and leisure facilities, community meeting places such as churches, clubs and fast food outlets.

Important cultural resources in this sense are cultural facilities. These are defined as those physical resources, held in the public domain, which are, or have potential for, accommodating cultural programs and activities. Cultural facilities therefore include community centres, halls, theatres, libraries, museums and galleries, heritage buildings and landmark sites including open space, parks and reserves.

Cultural resources in Blacktown are also those aspects of community life which utilise, or are presented in, these places, and include cultural businesses, cultural collections, networks of voluntary, socio-cultural and civic associations, cultural events, directories and databases, social and cultural services. The scale of Blacktown's cultural industry base has also been assessed and included as a cultural resource.

## COMMUNITY ARTS

Individual arts projects which provide opportunities for communities to work with artists in order to express ideas and creativity, celebrate local identity, raise issues and make changes, or describe local conditions, usually come under the banner of community arts. In recent times, community arts have come to be seen as only one aspect of community cultural development.

## COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Community cultural development refers to processes which utilise arts and other creative activities to promote creative expression, community well being and community health, foster social networks and sense of inclusion, and achieve improvements in such areas as education outcomes and crime rates. It can be seen as the purposeful and coordinated pursuit of these functions in order to enrich local identity, sense of place and quality of life<sup>13</sup>.

Community cultural development has been adopted by many councils as a key feature in their approach to improving local quality of life. Community cultural development is more strategic and more integrative and can achieve far more than community arts programs alone.

<sup>13</sup> Guppy, Marla 1997, Better Places, richer communities. Sydney: Australia Council 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

# HALLMARKS OF GOOD CULTURAL GOVERNANCE

Cities and towns which have a rich cultural life generally have a tradition of committed public and private support for the arts, urban design, heritage, traditions and ceremonies. A diverse mix of cultural programs which meets the needs of the community does not just happen as a result of market forces or the goodwill of occasional sponsors or patrons. Rather, they are based on firm policy and planning strategies and are consciously supported by the civic organisations of the city, and in particular, by local government. The following hallmarks of good cultural governance will provide a foundation for powerfully improving the cultural vitality of Blacktown.

## CONNECTING TO THE MAINSTREAM

It is essential that culture initiatives are not isolated from Blacktown Council's policy and planning agendas or from mainstream Council development programs. Sustained success in the cultural area will be experienced only where initiatives are firmly connected with other programs addressing a variety of objectives. Since culture is central to people's lives, policy which fails to make effective use of cultural issues will inevitably underachieve.

## LEADERSHIP

By taking the lead and investing energy and resources into broad-based cultural development, local government can dramatically improve the cultural life of its local area. This requires Council to encourage new forms of openness and participation, to share cultural resources and knowledge with adjacent councils in the Western Sydney region and to develop models which integrate culture into every aspect of community life.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Australian traditions of government, the private sector and the community have progressed along familiar paths for two centuries. Government has focused on sustaining and strengthening democracy and civil society whilst keeping an eye on economic development. The private sector has generally focused on business growth whilst the community sector has focused traditionally on well being and the pursuit of the good life. All have involved partnerships of some kind, but they have not always been based on the equitable distribution of risk and benefits among all those involved.

In a global world, however, culture and identity have come to assume increasing significance to national, regional and local development. The pursuit of sustainable democracy, sustainable economic development and improved quality of life has positioned culture as a central factor in development. The encouragement of equitable collaborative partnerships between the public, private and community sectors will provide a structure for sustainable cultural development incorporating a strong sense of place and local identity.

## CREATIVE EXPRESSION

The basis of cultural vitality is creative expression, innovation and imagination. These forms of creative energy can be expected to generate new ideas and, sometimes, to challenge and push the boundaries of expectation about art forms, leisure experience and neighbourhood life. Everyone should be given an opportunity to develop their talents and to broaden their horizons through cultural projects which deliver the highest quality of service to those they serve, discover and nurture talent and promote an appreciation of excellence. The positive contribution of Blacktown Council will be to endorse a readiness for innovation and new ideas and to value the energy and experiences it will bring.

## SECURING SUSTAINABILITY

The development of community cultural planning and development has been severely hampered in the past by a lack of sustained commitment and resourcing at all levels of government. Resourcing does not just mean more money, but importantly the development of systems of support for ongoing services and not just for one-off projects. A regime which only offers short-term projects and part-funding, and which requires that programs continually reinvent themselves to respond to the latest funding criteria, is always going to be inadequate and counterproductive.

Projects and initiatives must therefore be nurtured within a context of sustainable development where local capacity building is supported alongside the provision of tangible and direct services. Blacktown Council needs to invest in the short and long-term in the maintenance and development of the City's cultural infrastructure as building blocks for the quality of life across the LGA in the future.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Blacktown's Cultural Policy framework and Plan is underwritten by the following principles that provide best practice approaches to cultural development programs.

## VALUING DIVERSITY

The City's diversity of cultures is a profound strength and a rich source of ideas and practice that can enhance the cultural life of Blacktown. The City's diversity in terms of countries and cultures of origin, geographic location, leisure pursuits, social affiliations and the many forms of creative local expression, is a unique asset and worth celebrating.

## CHAMPIONING CREATIVITY

The nurturing of creative expression across generations, the encouragement of individuality, and the production of innovative new artistic work and practice is a tangible expression of the Council's commitment to the City's cultural life.

## INCLUSION

Participation in the cultural life of the City has a beneficial social impact which promotes social cohesion and a sense of belonging. The quality of cultural life in Blacktown is enhanced by participation, the enjoyment of creative expression and by ensuring the right and opportunity of all residents and visitors to access cultural experiences.

## RECONCILIATION

In fostering the common interests and shared futures of its residents, Council will, in consultation with the Indigenous community, encourage the support, interpretation and communication of Aboriginal cultural heritage and the fostering of its contemporary expression as an acknowledged aspect of the City's social and cultural fabric.

## COORDINATED PLANNING

Understanding the vast array of activities, assets and networks that form the cultural life of Blacktown is important for policy decisions, planning and development. A 'whole of government' approach to planning and priority setting in cultural development across Council is critical in order to maximise cultural opportunities and advance the community interest. Council will encourage the integration of culture and the arts into its broader programs including its economic and community development initiatives.

# THE CULTURAL PLAN

This Plan has been developed in consultation with the Cultural Plan Steering Committee members, key stakeholders and interested members of the Blacktown community. It is based on an analysis of demographic data and community feedback, an analysis of stakeholder and community wants and needs, a scan of cultural policy sector trends and an identification of issues relevant to Blacktown's cultural development. Blacktown's cultural resources and facilities have also been identified and assessed for their impact now and in the future on the cultural development of the City.

The Plan has also been prepared within the context of the range of planning projects currently in place or underway at Council such as the Blacktown Town Centre Masterplan, Blacktown Social Plan, Blacktown Showground Planning Study, the Mount Druitt Action Plan, the Management Plan 2000/2001-2002/3 and the Heritage Study Review. Links to each of these planning documents need to be identified and actively monitored.

The Plan is based on the following components:

- An overall vision for cultural development in Blacktown to 2020.
- Six broad goals and accompanying strategies and actions to enable Blacktown City Council to progress towards its vision.
- The identification of short, medium and long term priorities.

Note: The strategies and actions have been allocated indicative priority status based on the City's current and anticipated short, medium and long term needs. In this context therefore, short relates to 2001/2002; medium relates to 2003/2005 and long relates to 2006 and beyond.

Council's City - wide priorities, as contained in its Management Plan 2000/1-2002/3 are attached and are referred to where appropriate in the Goal statements. This Cultural Plan is intended to be a living document and will be updated and reviewed on a regular basis in line with Council's overall planning cycles.

# A CULTURAL VISION FOR BLACKTOWN

Blacktown's 20 year cultural vision is

*A city where culture and creativity enrich the lives of the whole community.*

Council's role in the achievement of this vision for the city is to provide leadership by integrating planning and service delivery and by developing and sustaining collaboration and partnerships with government, the business sector and with the community.

Council will provide a cutting edge cultural development program in partnership with the community which promotes participation and access, engages with Blacktown's multicultural and Indigenous community, advocates history and heritage, celebrates local identity, champions creativity and contributes to economic development

This Vision is consistent with Council's overall vision: To be a vibrant, healthy and safe City – "A City of Excellence", and with its mission 'to provide our community with the best living and working environment through commitment to service'.

# GOAL 1: THE SHIFT IS MADE TO COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Local government has traditionally had responsibility for high levels of service provision and more recently for facilitation and partnerships with other sectors and agencies. However although local government is no longer the only player and many other sectors can be called on to contribute to cultural services, local government remains the key to effective community cultural development.

Through cultural policy development and integrated cultural planning at the local level, programs and projects can be identified which provide the foundation for building creative communities. Cultural policies provide the framework for building a coalition of interest, for stimulating and sharing new ideas and for building partnerships across many sectors. The question is no longer “Can we afford to fund culture?” but “Can we afford not to?”

## OUR STRATEGY IS TO

create the management environment within Council where cultural development is an integrated part of Blacktown’s infrastructure investment taking an equal place alongside the City’s social, economic, and environmental considerations. As a first step, Council will build its cultural capacity by establishing a cultural development team to implement the Cultural Policy and Plan. (Links to Council’s Priority: Management and Performance of Council)

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Create a Cultural Development Unit with a team of staff responsible for cultural planning, cultural projects, alternate funding source identification and service provision particularly in the areas of Indigenous Arts, Youth Arts, Multicultural Arts. The Unit to include current and future staff responsible for cultural events such as the Blacktown Festival, Blacktown Art Exhibition and Prize and the former Blacktown Anglican Church Cultural Development Centre. The appointment of the Cultural Development Unit Coordinator is a first priority.	Short	Unit established and Cultural Plan implemented.
2. Develop the Blacktown Cultural Policy and adopt the Cultural Plan	Short	Policy finalised and Plan adopted
3. Develop a Marketing Strategy for the Cultural Plan including display at local shopping centres and clubs.	Short	Plan exhibited and contact made with interested community members.
4. Approach the Ministry for the Arts to support the establishment of a 3-year Cultural Development Unit Coordinator position.	Short	Application submitted and matching funding received.
5 Coordinate the Blacktown Cultural Network in order to provide opportunities for exchange of information and collaboration.	Short	Relaunch of the Blacktown Cultural Network.

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
6. Facilitate regular one day seminars/forums on “Creating a Climate for Culture” to encourage ideas, partnerships and a shared direction from key target groups across the LGA including local businesses and community organisations.	Short	Seminars held.
7. Develop a Public Art Policy in order to inform Council’s decision making in the enhancement of civic and public space.	Short	Policy developed and adopted. Policy applied to the Nurragingy Sculpture Project and its location.
8. Integrate the Public Art Policy into Council’s capital works/ improvement plans.	Short	Public art located throughout the City.
9. Submit a proposal for funding to the NSW Museums and Galleries Foundation for the appointment of a part time Museums Coordinator for the Region but based in Blacktown.	Short	Funding received and Coordinator appointed.
10. Council to investigate innovative ways of using the funds available annually from the Registered Clubs Levy for addressing cultural development priorities identified in the Council’s Cultural Plan.	Short	Integrate funding levies with the Council’s cultural priorities and actions implemented.
11. Establish a Cultural Plan Task Force with representatives from across Council staff to lead, advocate and integrate the Cultural Plan’s key actions into the City’s Management Plan and to provide 1/4ly progress reviews to the Executive and to actively implement key actions.	Short	Task Force established and actions monitored.
12. Work closely with the Office of Western Sydney, the Ministry for the Arts, the LGSA, Community Cultural Development NSW, WESROC, Artswest Foundation and other peak bodies in order to ensure that cultural development issues are on the planning agenda.	Short and ongoing	Regional cultural development initiatives are established.
13. Prepare an Art Collections Management policy for the Council’s Art Collection.	Medium	Policy based management of the Council’s Art Collection.
14. Establish a cultural indicators database such as that developed by the Urban Arts Institute Community Building Project or similar.	Medium	Database established, maintained and monitored.
15. Develop and maintain a Blacktown photographic image data base as a visual resource documenting cultural projects and programs across the City	Long	Database established and maintained.

## GOAL 2: A COHESIVE, CULTURALLY ACTIVE COMMUNITY

Culture and the arts enrich the quality of life but many local communities are constrained by factors such as low incomes, poor transport connection, isolation and loneliness from participating in community cultural life. Ethnic diversity is a defining feature in Blacktown and a primary cultural strength. Blacktown's rich diversity of cultures presents opportunities and challenges, on the one hand to understand, to enjoy and to learn from each other and, on the other, to integrate diverse cultural traditions without overwhelming them.

Participation in local arts and cultural projects can play a significant role in building social capital through the establishment of new community relationships and networks. Arts and cultural programs need to be widely promoted and available locally, in buildings accessible to people with a disability, and to provide for all groups in the community – young and old, skilled and unskilled, mainstream or minority cultural group, able bodied or physically or intellectually disabled.

### OUR STRATEGY IS TO

build social and community cultural capital by dealing with the issue of local provision, by providing a good range of accessible cultural development programs locally and by using cultural development to assist neighbourhoods develop pride and confidence in their own community.

As a first step, Council will undertake a comprehensive review of Council's community centres and halls to establish utilisation rates, planning issues, management structures, short and long term maintenance needs and future potential. (Links to Council's Priority: Communication and Consultation; Community Services and facilities).

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Undertake a comprehensive review of Council's community centres and halls. Develop and implement a model of district and neighbourhood level community cultural development programs using existing community centres and offering a wide range of creative and skills development programs that are affordable and accessible by public transport, cycle and pedestrians. Key factors for success will include active program management on a district basis and sound management of each centre in accordance with a Community Centre Policy and Operation Manual including a Pricing Policy and marketing and promotional guidelines and strategies.	Short	Centres are fully utilised. Each centre has a planned and professionally managed program of activities. Manual is completed and effective
2. Undertake a review of S94 developer contributions (including comparative research from other Councils). The Review to identify opportunities for developer investment in community cultural infrastructure such as public art, library collections and art and cultural facilities including levying for services city-wide and in established areas as well as in new release areas.	Short	S94 opportunities identified in the cultural field and new Contribution Plans adopted for citywide services in established areas as

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
		well as for new release areas in Riverstone, the ADI site and Parklea.
3. Develop a Multicultural Arts Strategy which focuses on programs and events as well as buildings to celebrate cultural diversity and creativity across the LGA.	Short	Strategy developed and implemented.
4. Develop a Strategic Plan for Library Services which aims to improve resource levels – staff/ financial- increases opening hours and develops a capital works time frame for new/ upgraded facilities including the new Central Blacktown Library and the proposed Stanhope Gardens Branch.	Short	Strategic Plan
5. Undertake a City-wide study into user and non-user needs of library services in order to ensure that branch libraries are strategically located and are accessible by public transport as well as by private vehicle, cycle and pedestrians.	Short	Library User & Non-User Needs Analysis.
6. Program an outdoor multicultural concert series in Blacktown's suburban parks.	Short	Calendar of events and attendance measured
7. Undertake a Feasibility Study into establishing a community-based music centre and program in Blacktown utilising existing facilities and including opportunities which encourage diverse musical expression and traditions.	Short	Consideration and decision on the establishment of a community music program.
8. Council to consider an overall review of its advisory committee structure and to give consideration to the establishment of a committee with a specific role in the integrated development of policies and programs which address the cultural needs of Blacktown's community. The Committee to appoint Working Parties and Task Forces as required.	Short	Advisory Committee review undertaken and cultural needs of the community incorporated into the roles and responsibilities of a revised committee structure.
9. Launch an active oral history program linked to the proposed Blacktown Community Writing Centre and taking into account Indigenous oral history traditions.	Medium	Local memories program underway and promoted.
10. Integrate Blacktown stories into Council's information line, into press releases, local radio programs and into audio based public art opportunities.	Medium	Blacktown Stories program developed and broadcast.
11. Develop an active program of multicultural arts programs based on community feedback for integration into Blacktown's community centres.	Medium	Programs developed. Participation monitored.
12. Review the Blacktown Garden competition to include categories which encourage creativity and innovation and to ensure that active resident involvement in planning the competition is encouraged.	Medium	Review of Competition and launch of new model.

BLACKTOWN CULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK &  
PLAN

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
competition is encouraged.		
13. Appoint a Multicultural Arts Officer to coordinate Council programs in liaison with Blacktown's diverse community and in partnership with the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre Inc.	Medium	Officer appointed.
14. Seek funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts for the preparation of a Museum Development Plan for Blacktown which reflects the City's cultural diversity, identifies new museum models including virtual museums and living museums and which takes into account the storage and archival needs of the City's historical societies.	Medium	Review commissioned
15. Undertake a review of the Community Information Directory including structure, content, frequency, resource needs, format and electronic access enhancements.	Medium	Consideration of the Review and launch of new Directory.
16. Review Council's public relations activities and where appropriate, link cultural activities and products to promotional material e.g. calendar of events.	Medium	Improved integration of activities and access to cultural information including an up to date calendar of events.
17. Develop a Community Broadcasting Strategy in order to promote Council activity and to strengthen local community cultural opportunities	Long	Adoption of Strategy.

## GOAL 3: RECOGNISING AND RESPECTING INDIGENOUS CULTURES

Blacktown has significant numbers of Indigenous people living and working in its local government area who have the potential to make a unique and rich contribution to the social and cultural fabric of the City. Through integrated cultural programming and through the establishment of links and connections between Council and the community, opportunities will be provided to foster the development of Aboriginal products and skills, to present and interpret Aboriginal heritage for wider appreciation and to stimulate a greater understanding and respect for contemporary Indigenous culture.

### OUR STRATEGY IS TO

ensure the survival and vitality of Blacktown's Indigenous cultures and the well-being of its most disadvantaged, but most long standing inhabitants, by taking active steps to assist Aboriginal residents keep their culture alive, develop their art works and celebrate and share their heritage.

As a first step, Council will appoint two Aboriginal Arts Officers to develop cultural program support in liaison with the local community and will establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee. (Links to Council's Priority: City Image; Community Services and facilities).

ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee in order to better communicate and consult with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.	Short	Appointment of the Committee and attendance at meetings.
2. Appoint an Indigenous Arts team (x 2 officers) to coordinate Council programs in liaison with Blacktown's Indigenous community.	Short	2 Staff members appointed.
3. Introduce an ongoing program of Aboriginal cultural awareness training across Council for all Council staff.	Short	Program developed for all new staff and provided regularly for all Council staff.
4. As part of the review of community centres, identify the options for establishing two district level Aboriginal community cultural/arts centres to build community cohesion and to encourage local skill development. (For example, one could specialise in creative and contemporary Aboriginal arts including performance, providing resources and skill development opportunities in both traditional and new media; and one could function as a meeting place and a keeping place, eg with some museum archival/conservation capacity.)	Short	An Aboriginal arts workshop and an Aboriginal meeting and keeping place are established.
5. Work with Indigenous youth to develop and implement community cultural development projects which promote self-esteem and develop new skills.	Short	Indigenous Youth Cultural Program developed.

6. Work with Aboriginal artists to assist them to market their work, including reviewing options for a shopfront arts outlet close to Blacktown station.	Short	An Aboriginal arts outlet is established
7. Develop a conservation plan for the range of Indigenous heritage sites including the Native Institute site in Blacktown to inform development and to ensure their protection.	Medium	Conservation Plan with strategies developed.
8. Support the Indigenous oral history program established at Luxford Road and encourage the establishment of an Indigenous oral history program coordinated by the proposed Blacktown Community Writer's Centre.	Medium	Program initiated and stories published.

## GOAL 4: STRATEGICALLY LOCATED CULTURAL VENUES

Buildings and facilities as well as public spaces including parks, reserves, malls, streets, town squares are essential to community cultural development. They provide meeting places as well as sites for congregation and celebration. Facilities provide opportunities to share information, to learn new skills and to establish new networks of association. Through high quality design, facilities also provide aesthetic experiences and an appreciation of a sense of place and identity.

City leadership and management now recognises that planning for infrastructure development and maintenance is best undertaken in an integrated way, encouraging consultation with users and program providers as well as with planners. In particular, Council should ensure that the needs of minority groups – young people, women with both parenting and workforce responsibilities, unemployed men, Indigenous and ethnic minority groups - for creative pursuits, congregation and celebration are met. At the same time, Council is mindful of the fact that construction projects can completely consume a cultural development budget. Therefore venue development needs to be strategic and limited to what is really feasible, viable and will serve the overarching aim of community cultural development.

### OUR STRATEGY IS TO

develop a strategic range of facilities and open space which provide functional and well designed venues for the community to come together to participate and appreciate the City's cultural life.

Council's first step will be to assess existing facilities for their use in a community cultural development program (see also Goal 2). Council will also assess the impact of the Western Sydney Orbital on the development of The Rooty Hill as a site for open-air cultural celebrations. (Links to Council's Priority: Infrastructure – Provision and Maintenance; Community Services and facilities; Economic Development; City Image)

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Pursue Goal 2, Action 1. Neighbourhood cultural development and active marketing and promotion of a Citywide Cultural Spaces Program encouraging the development of skills and the showcasing of new talent.	Short	Full utilisation of community centres as spaces for cultural development.
2. Develop the former Blacktown Anglican Church as a vibrant cultural centre by appointing staff as a matter of urgency and by developing a 5 Year Business Plan which addresses the Centre's ongoing viability based on an assessment of user needs and which provides for an active program of marketing and promotion.	Short	Staff appointed, and Business Plan developed and adopted by Council, and Council's ongoing operational subsidy approved.
3. Commission a Scoping Study into the need for a community based rehearsal and performance venue in Blacktown for amateur	Short	Brief developed, Study received and considered

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
theatre, community music recitals.		by Council.
4. Integrate identified indoor/outdoor cultural needs into the redevelopment of the Blacktown Showground as part of the Showground Review Study. Take into account the needs of existing arts users and consider the development of a flexible, co-located cultural facility suitable for large-scale performance and temporary art exhibitions, multicultural arts activities, as well as for small-scale community theatre productions. Space for open-air festivals and art/craft markets should also be provided. Acoustic soundproofing to be considered which caters for music/theatre rehearsal and performance needs of young people.	Short	Cultural Plan actions to be presented to Showground Review Study Committee to consider as specific strategies for integrating cultural facilities into the redevelopment.
5. Develop The Rooty Hill as a site for community gatherings for outdoor performance based on an assessment of the potential acoustic impact of the Western Sydney Orbital on the proposed amphitheatre as well as noise and car parking impacts for local residents.	Short	Traffic flow and noise impact assessments undertaken
6. Undertake a feasibility into developing the Prospect heritage precinct as a Gateway site using the former Post Office as a Heritage Interpretation Centre and Information Service.	Short	Feasibility commissioned.
7. Provide active movement and dance classes for teenagers in Council's community and Youth Centres including tap dancing classes which target Blacktown's teenage males.	Short	Movement and dance programs scheduled.
8. Review community cultural groups accommodation and support needs in order to integrate into community centre planning.	Short	Review undertaken and opportunities identified.
9. Undertake a Feasibility Study into the establishment of a botanic gardens in the Blacktown LGA which imaginatively integrates flora and sculpture to provide a distinctive visitor experience.	Medium	Consideration of the Feasibility and a decision by Council
10. Identify a suitable community centre, or upgraded branch library, for use as a Creative Community Writing Workshop with links to the local historical societies.	Medium	Establishment of Centre; local writing and publishing programs in place.
11. Provide training and awareness workshops for Community Centre Committees in relation to cultural programming and in particular innovative arts and cultural programmes for older adults.	Medium	Workshops held
12. Introduce disability arts programs into Blacktown's community centres that address the creative needs of people with disabilities.	Medium	Disability arts access programs conducted.

## GOAL 5: THRIVING CULTURAL AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES

As economies shift from mass production and dependence on natural resources to economies focused on services and a reliance on technologies and the global marketplace, cultural industries are increasingly important to the generation of new jobs and economic growth. The linking of creativity and productivity will be a critical factor in wealth creation. The cultural industries include creative content production on television and in multi-media products, design skills, cultural tourism, festivals, heritage as well as production in the performing, visual and literary arts.

Many cultural industry sector jobs are local, operating out of small office, home office environments. They are marked by their focus on people rather than capital and thrive on proximity – to services, to know-how, to local style and creativity. There is an increasing awareness in Blacktown but also in Western Sydney generally that there is an untapped potential for the region to consider and develop opportunities to grow programs and services in the area of cultural tourism and the cultural industries which will contribute to local economic development.

### OUR STRATEGY IS TO

provide an environment where Blacktown's cultural tourism and cultural industry potential is recognised and promoted. As a first step, Council will commission preliminary research into the size and scale of Blacktown's current cultural industries and in particular its media and design sector. (Links to Council's Priority: Economic Development).

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Seek funding from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development and GROW Employment Council Ltd. in consultation with WSROC to undertake a Cultural Industry Audit of the Blacktown Local Government Area.	Short	Grant funds received and presentation of the Audit Report to Council
2. Provide leadership on behalf of Blacktown's Indigenous community in liaising with the State government to establish an Aboriginal Heritage Interpretive Centre as a key tourism opportunity and separate from local Indigenous community arts centres.	Short	Funding and location of Centre agreed.
3. Commission a Feasibility Study into the establishment of a Blacktown City Gallery including an analysis of location options, space requirements, capital costs, recurrent costs, potential partnerships, programming options including exhibition focus – permanent/ travelling, workshops etc.	Short	Study received and considered by Council. Planning incorporated into Management Plan.
4. Undertake a market survey of the 2001 Blacktown City Festival to identify opportunities for its development as a key regional cultural event incorporating a marketplace, parade and creative content programming.	Short	Market survey completed and data integrated into the Festival Review.
5. Introduce an active Internet access program in Blacktown's youth centres.	Short	Feasibility Study undertaken and

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
youth centres.		undertaken and technology in place and accessible.
6. Identify regional partners including UWS and TAFE, Nirimba, the Blacktown BEC and the Nirimba Business Development Centre to establish a new business incubator in Blacktown (in line with Western Sydney Arts Strategy 1999) with a focus on media production and the support of new cultural industry entrepreneurs.	Medium	Funding sought and received from Western Sydney Arts Fund, and location for incubator identified.
7. Identify partnership opportunities, including Metro Arts, Art-Bytes Australia and Lux media/arts for the establishment of a New Media Lab in the Blacktown area to encourage innovation and skills development in emerging technology based arts product.	Medium	Partnerships identified and funding application presented to NSW Ministry for the Arts, NSW Office of Film and TV & Australian Film Commission.
8. Undertake a feasibility study into the use of Blacktown Council's heritage buildings, including the former Blacktown School, as unique cultural venues and the base for the development of cultural tourism initiatives with a heritage focus. Integrate Council's plans for heritage buildings with those of NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning.	Long	Study received and considered.

## GOAL 6: CULTURALLY ACTIVE MAIN STREETS

Community cultural development needs to be seen and experienced in order to belong to everyone. Vital as cultural programs in centres across the LGA are, there is a sense in which even the best of these will be somewhat out of the public gaze. In order to include everyone in a Citywide cultural development program, some aspects of that program need to take to the streets and to be considered as part of integrated urban design and landscape planning. Council wishes to provide for the taking of aspects of local culture, art works and performance to the streets and to create a wealth of opportunities for the positive sense of identity associated with local cultural and creative expression.

### OUR STRATEGY IS TO

use a wide range of policies and programs, such as formal mainstreet programs, public art programs, calendars of events and the facilitation of outdoor eating and performance venues, to facilitate the experience of community cultural development on the City's main streets. (Links to Council's Priority: Infrastructure Provision and Maintenance; Economic Development; City Image)

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
1. Develop a Public Art Policy and procedures which reflects a positive appreciation of Blacktown's cultural diversity and which encourages the development of interesting and imaginative public space. Link to Goal 1 Action 5.	Short	Adoption and implementation of the Policy
2. Develop a public art program including street furniture, lighting, roundabouts, safety barriers etc. which integrates into the design of all new and upgraded roads.	Short	Integration of public art into road design.
3. Program an outdoor multicultural Summer concert series in Blacktown's suburban parks.	Short	Calendar of cultural events developed and attendance levels measured.
4. Prepare and submit a grant application to NSW Department of Industry and Regional Development for a Main Street Coordinator.	Short	Grant received and Coordinator appointed.
5. Develop a monthly Friday night 'noodle market' and concert on the Village Green.	Short	Calendar of cultural events and attendance data.
6. Research and develop a Busking Policy for performance on the main streets of the Blacktown LGA.	Medium	Policy framework in place and buskers invited to perform.
7. Develop and implement a calendar of small-scale performance events using local artists (including music, poetry reading, story telling, mime and food as art etc) to take place on the main streets of Blacktown's town centres each month.	Medium	Calendar is implemented and snapshot surveys used to assess success

KEY ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	INDICATOR
8. Seek funding for the development of a LGA wide Main Street Plan to revitalise Blacktown's town/ suburb centres	Medium	Plan developed and Main Street funding received.
9. Develop a Strategic Plan for artist designed gateways at all town and suburb entrances across Blacktown.	Medium	Gateways developed
10. Hold a series of seminars for planners, landscape design staff and artists to consider the links between cultural diversity and urban design and to identify strategies which ensure those links are integrated into the planning process.	Medium	Seminars held and strategies adopted.
11. Commission a management and programming review of the 2001 Blacktown Festival to include a Strategic 5 Year Plan which positions the event as a building block in the City's cultural tourism development.	Medium	Review undertaken and future directions identified.
12. Undertake a feasibility study into the development of a Western Sydney Youth Arts Festival to encourage opportunities to showcase local and emerging talent.	Long	Feasibility Study commissioned and Festival endorsed.

# ATTACHMENT: THE CITY'S MANAGEMENT PLAN 2000/01-2002/3

The major Priority Areas of the City's Management Plan 2000/01 – 2002/03 have informed the development of the Cultural Plan. Potential links to the City's Planning Priorities have been noted in the Cultural Plan where appropriate. The City's Priorities are:

## PRIORITY 1 ACCESS AROUND THE CITY

'Council is committed to providing infrastructure and systems to ensure the safe and efficient movement of all traffic – vehicular, cycle and pedestrian, through and within the City.'

## PRIORITY 2 CITY IMAGE

'Council is committed to developing a pleasant, safe and attractive urban environment which proudly displays Blacktown's history and unique characteristics and encourages social interaction and community life.'

## PRIORITY 3 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

'Council is required to serve and provide leadership to the local community. Knowing the community and keeping residents informed of Council activities and services, as well as providing the community with the opportunity to comment on, and participate in these activities are fundamental elements of Council's communication and consultation goals.'

## PRIORITY 4 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

'Council is committed to improving the quality of our resident's lives. Council contributes substantially to this endeavour by providing a wide range of community services and facilities in the areas of health, safety, education and cultural enrichment and by assisting community groups.'

## PRIORITY 5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

'Council is committed to the promotion of economic development within the City so as to maximise business and employment opportunities and their positive flow on effects to the community.'

## PRIORITY 6 ENVIRONMENT

‘Blacktown’s rapid growth and large existing population and industry base have an impact on all facets of the environment. One of Council’s primary functions is to properly manage, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment within the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development.’

## PRIORITY 7 INFRASTRUCTURE – PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE

‘Council provides a diverse range of infrastructure including parks, sporting facilities, roads, waste collection, drainage, community centres, neighbourhood centres, child care centres, plant nursery, animal pound, libraries, depots and footpaths. Council needs to both maintain existing infrastructure and provide new or upgraded infrastructure in a timely manner and to an appropriate standard.’

## PRIORITY 8 MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF COUNCIL

‘Council is dedicated to efficiently pursuing the effective implementation of policy and the activities of Council. Council is committed to improving how it conducts its business of serving the community, by providing the best standard of service to satisfy the needs of the residents of Blacktown within budgetary allowances.’