

COWRA SHIRE CULTURAL PLAN

Developed for Cowra Shire Council

By the Cowra Cultural Council

Adopted as a Working Document April 2002 (amended June 2002)

1. Foreword

The Cowra Cultural Council has been formed to generate a strategic approach to Cowra's cultural development, through the development of the Cowra Shire Cultural Plan. This has not been done previously and is long overdue. Currently there are many groups struggling to survive without access to resources, time, money or skills needed to compile grants or utilise networks. The establishment and continuation of the Cultural Council would, for the first time, give this community a hub from which to network and a voice to advocate the community's cultural needs. As with the Sports Council, the Cultural Council will act as a link between the groups in the community and the Cowra Shire Council. The Cultural Council is made up of representatives of various cultural associations in our community. A copy of the Cowra Cultural Council's organisational structure is included in Attachment 1.

The basis of this plan is simple. It is about developing a cultural infrastructure for the Cowra community. It focuses on networking, building on the networks that have been created, raising awareness and policymaking. These are fundamental steps that need to be in place. This Cultural Plan is inclusive of all cultural organisations whether they are non-profit or private enterprise.

2. Background

The Cowra Cultural Council, established by the Cowra Shire in 1999, was initiated after the Cowra Shire Council in conjunction with the regional arts body, Arts Out West, conducted a cultural audit. A survey was sent to all organisations in Cowra and two workshops were run to identify resources and priorities of the cultural community. From the survey and workshops an audit was compiled, which led to the appointment of the Cowra Cultural Council.

Groups who have participated in the development of this Cultural Plan

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Cowra Eisteddfod | Cowra Art Group |
| Cowra Historical Society | Cowra Musical and Dramatic Society Ltd |
| Cowra Migrant Camp | Cowra Neighbourhood Centre |
| Senior Citizens Club | Cowra Civic Centre |
| University of the 3 rd Age | Cowra Library |
| Cowra Family History Group | Cowra Visitor Information Centre |
| Cowra Ballet School | Carpenter School of Dance |
| The Australia Chapter of the | Cowra Arts Council |
| World Peace Bell Association | Cowra and District Youth Access Radio |

This committee was asked to produce and submit a cultural plan for the Shire by April 2000. At the time of the cultural audit most groups did not network with each other, nor were they aware of the function and resources of other organisations in the community. In its first year The Cultural Council has facilitated communication between various

cultural organisations leading to the co-operative effort needed for the preparation of the Cultural Plan.

It is the aim of this Cultural Council that we continue to develop these networks and implement the Cultural Plan.

3. Vision of the Cowra Cultural Council

A community's culture **distinguishes** its identity in the world.

It is the Cultural Council's expectation that the **Cultural Plan** we have **presented** will be a **starting point** from which our community, together, can **define** and **express** what is **significant and meaningful** about our **identity and environment**.

4. Definition of Culture in the Cowra Community

“ Culture is a unique combination of people and their environment, a mixture of participation, celebration, identity, belonging and having a sense of place. “

- Cowra Cultural Council - 2000

Culture, and especially, culture in regional areas, allows the community to promote what is distinctive and special about its place. Through cultural events, projects and promotion, a community can define and express what is significant and meaningful about the environment through harvesting from the past, enjoying the present and evolving a path to a rich, vibrant future. It benefits locals by helping to build a sense of identity, a feeling of belonging and a continuing development of pride and purpose throughout the community. It benefits visitors who leave with a deeper understanding about where they have been and what they have experienced.

“ Self-knowledge readily translates into self-confidence and a region with a strong and distinctive sense of identity is a region likely to be going somewhere - socially, economically and environmental”.

*-The Great Yarn Event
Regional Arts Australia - 1998*

5. Why Cowra Shire needs a Cultural Plan

Culture plays so large a role in our lives that we take it for granted. At present Cowra has a large, but fragmented, cultural community. Each group, in its own way, contributes to the cultural life of Cowra. Collectively they benefit the community on a much larger scale. With further development, the impact they will have on Cowra could be very significant. Some of these benefits are listed below.

- People who are involved in a cultural organisation do so in their own time. The effort and power of volunteers in the community should be given recognition.
- Many people learn or refine skills in voluntary organisations. Belonging to a cultural organisation can enhance skills and offer a training ground for young and old alike.

- A community that is rich in culture has the potential of attracting people to move to the area, thus leading to a positive impact on business and employment. Our community will become more diverse with unique opportunities and experiences for all.
- An increase in interest in our shire, through our cultural expression, will increase tourism and transport services to the area.
- Culture and cultural experiences can provide opportunities to bring people together. Associated activities promote self worth and confidence. They also develop creative abilities, expand horizons, improve the quality of life and enhance the social and mental health of the community.
- Festivals and other cultural events are now recognised as viable economic resources. They generate a significant economic boost to a community.
- This plan encourages all groups to become more proactive. With the help of Council's administration, community organisations will have access to resources that may have been out of reach before. Increased resources and assistance ensures the cultural life of Cowra is sustained with continued growth and benefits felt throughout the community.

6. The Role of Local Government in Community Cultural Planning

Cowra Shire Council has a responsibility to play an active and positive role in cultural planning and to be a strategic partner with the cultural community. There are two documents that highlight the role of local government in cultural development and planning.

On the 20th of November 1999 Cr Peter Woods OAM President of the Local Government Association, Cr Chris Vardon President of the Shires Association of NSW and Ian Gzell QC Chairman of Regional Arts NSW signed a Cultural Accord. This accord “ recognised the economic and creative importance to communities of a culturally diverse society, whose aspirations often find expression in the arts. The Associations agreed to support, develop and promote local Government involvement in the arts and cultural development in NSW. This would be partly achieved through working with the arts organizations and community groups.”

The Local Government Act 1993 - Section 8 also discusses the role of Councils in cultural development.

Council's role is defined as follows:

- “To provide directly or on behalf of other levels of government, after due consultation, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively.”
- “To exercise community leadership”

- “To exercise it’s functions with due regard for the cultural and linguistic diversity of its community.”
- “To promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children.”
- “ To properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible.”

The Cowra Shire Council is bound by this accord to support its local cultural community.

Cowra Shire Council is to be congratulated on its commitment to the cultural community by conducting a cultural audit, establishing the Cultural Council, employing a Community Recreation Officer, renovating the Library and establishing an Art Gallery. This is an exciting time for all involved and the Cultural Council looks forward to continuing its work with the Council to support and foster our cultural community by providing resources and assistance to further its development.

7. Mission statement of the Cowra Cultural Council

“Through encouraging and promoting cultural activities enrich the quality of life for all members of the community.”

8. Aims of the Cowra Cultural Council

- Act as an Advisory Board to Cowra Shire Council on Cultural Matters
- Maintain an ongoing Cultural Plan

9. Objectives of the Cowra Cultural Council

- Network with the Community and beyond
- Facilitate in the seeking of financial assistance, partnerships and support
- Encourage Co-operation within the Cultural Community
- Promote and raise awareness of the cultural life of the Community
- Assist in determining the best use of cultural facilities and resources in the Community
- Encourage public participation in cultural activities
- Identify and prioritise cultural needs within the Community
- Make recommendations to Council, through the Recreation and Community Facilities Committee on the integration of Cultural aspects in all other areas of Council business.

10. Strategies and Outcomes

The Cultural Council has identified the following strategies and outcomes as issues worth investigating in the future. All strategies are subject to ongoing investigation and funding.

1. Network within the community and beyond.

- 1.1 Encourage continued liaison between the Community Recreation Officer, Cultural Council and Community.
- 1.3 Compile an accurate list of cultural organisations, with their description and resources and make this readily available to the community. Utilise existing organisation lists already supplied by other groups.
- 1.4 Establish and maintain links with, and utilise the resources of other regional cultural organisations, such as Arts Out West.

2. Facilitate in the seeking of financial assistance, partnerships and support.

- 2.1 Be informed on grants availability and distribute this information to cultural organisations.
- 2.2 In co-ordination with Cowra Shire Council develop the criteria/framework to establish a 'seed-funding program' to support cultural organisations or individuals with projects or submissions.
- 2.3 Secure 'devolved' funding to assist groups with administration costs and grant applications.

3. Encourage co-operation within the cultural community and beyond.

- 3.1 Identify and promote opportunities for cultural groups, and others to work together.

4. Promote and raise awareness of the cultural life of the community.

- 4.1 Include information on Cowra's cultural activities in Council's newsletter.
- 4.2 Publish and distribute a quarterly newsletter for the Cultural Community.
- 4.3 Support community information infrastructure such as Community Youth Radio and IT media.
- 4.4 Create a cultural page or link on Cowra Shire Council's web page.
- 4.5 Maintain a 'scrapbook' of cultural events, projects or news items.
- 4.6 Provide community notice boards with calendars of events in public places around town.
- 4.7 Utilise existing resources in promoting events.

5. Determine the best use of Cultural Facilities and Resources in the Community.

- 5.1 Conduct a Heritage Survey of the Shire.
- 5.2 Maintain a regular update of cultural facilities and resources by way of a biennial cultural audit.
- 5.3 Create a database of cultural icons, treasures and historical items in the Shire.

- 6. Encourage participation in cultural activities.**
 - 6.1 Promote the benefits of being involved in cultural activities to all members of the community.
 - 6.2 Ensure our community's cultural facilities and activities are accessible for the majority of our community members.

- 7. Recognise the history and significant cultural contribution of indigenous persons in the community and encourage the sharing of ideas and resources**
 - 7.1 Consult with local indigenous people and their organisations and work in partnership with them to put in place programs to address their cultural needs.

- 8. Identify the needs of Cowra's youth and encourage their support in establishing cultural programs to meet their needs**
 - 8.1 Consult with local youth and representative organisations and work in partnership with them on cultural matters.

- 9. Encourage people of non-English speaking backgrounds to share their cultural diversity and participate in local events to enrich our community.**
 - 9.1 Consult with people of non-English speaking background in Cowra and their representative organisations and work in partnership with these people to implement cultural programs.

- 10. Maintain an ongoing Cultural Plan**
 - 10.1 Develop an Action Plan to further investigate strategies, responsibilities, timeframes, budgets and outcome measures for the recommendations in this plan.
 - 10.2 Maintain the Cultural Council as an advisory body to Council on cultural matters.
 - 10.3 In consultation with Cowra Shire Council carry out an annual review of the Cultural Plan.

11. Action/Implementation – The Future Employment of a Cultural Development Officer

Throughout this plan there are several strategies that will require a strong commitment of time and resources by Council's Community Recreation Officer through her appointment as the Cultural Council's point of contact with Cowra Shire Council. The Cultural Council applauds Council's initiative of employing this person to coordinate the development of Recreation, Sporting, Cultural and Special events and opportunities in the Cowra Shire. The Cultural Council believes, however that in the future, it may be necessary to employ a person to singularly deal with Cultural issues and opportunities, due to a growth in demands and workload that is predicted to occur when the Community Recreation Officer position really 'finds its feet'.

For this reason the Cultural Council requests that Cowra Shire Council be open to exploring the future employment of a full time, qualified Cultural Development Officer (subject to ongoing investigation and funding).

This person will need the skills to perform the following duties:

- Manage Cultural Projects and Co-ordinate Cultural Events
- Network with Galleries, Museums and other cultural organisations
- Network within the wider community
- Play an educational role within the community
- Deal with heritage issues
- Access and facilitate grants
- Understand insurance issues and legal issues
- Encourage the use of Cowra's cultural assets by the community

A Cultural Development Officer would liaise with the cultural community and bring all the threads together. The employment of such a person may be deemed necessary to facilitate the future development of Cowra's Cultural Community.

13. Future Projects

The Cultural Council has reviewed the outcomes of the Cultural audit and has identified the following projects as worthy of investigation (subject to ongoing research, grants and funding).

- Upgrade the Cowra Civic Centre.
- Employment of a Cultural Development Officer.
- Provide safe storage for archives, historical items, costumes etc.
- Establish a History Museum
- Develop the Cowra Railway Station as a community facility.
Theatre Space for smaller audiences (100 - 150 capacity)
Movie Theatre
- Develop a Civic Square
- Provide a Conference Facility/Centre
- Investigate possible insurance structures to include, as umbrella cover, the activities of cultural organisations within the community.

14. Recommendations

- a) That the Cultural Plan is adopted as a strategy and incorporated into Cowra Shire Councils Management Plan.
- b) That the Cowra Shire Council continue its support of the Cowra Cultural Council.

Attachment 1.

THE COWRA CULTURAL COUNCIL Organisational Structure

The Cowra Cultural Council was established in 1999 to advise Cowra Shire Council on cultural matters, facilitate communication within the various cultural organisations and develop, implement and maintain a cultural plan.

The Cultural Council is a Section 355 Committee of Council with a structure that incorporates:

Cultural Council Executive (Voting Members)

- One Chairman elected from the community
- Six elected members representing local associations
- One Councillor

Non-voting associates

- Council's Community Projects Officer
- Interested persons from the community

Cultural Council meetings are held quarterly on the 1st Tuesday of February, May, August (AGM) and November commencing at 7.30pm. Agenda items must be brought to the attention of the Chairman, or Community Projects Officer at least 2 weeks prior to meeting date. The Committee reports to Council on all matters of policy through the Community Projects Officer's formal reporting mechanisms, and a copy of the Record of Proceedings from all meetings are provided to all Councillors after each meeting for information.

Extraordinary meetings may be called to discuss urgent business, at which an agenda will be prepared and circulated to all members with at least two (2) days notice.

All interested persons from cultural organisations are invited to attend each meeting to give input on decisions but when matters require a resolution, only the executive members may vote. A quorum will consist of half the total number of voting members plus one.

Elections of the Cultural Council Executive are held in August each year at the Annual General Meeting with all interested persons invited to stand for election.

Nominations for the Cultural Council Executive are to be taken on the night of the AGM. Persons may be elected in their absence provided that a written statement of acceptance is presented at the meeting. A maximum of one (1) individual representing the same organisation is permitted on the executive.