



Draft Submission to the Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD

Executive Summary

The Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW (the Associations or LGSA) are the peak bodies for NSW Local Government.

The Associations are delighted to have the opportunity to respond to the Public Works Committee of the Legislative Assembly of NSW Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD.

State Government investment in arts and culture through Local Government provides expanding returns. These investments catalyse council and community participation. To significantly enhance State Government investments, six recommendations are set out in this submission. The recommendations are:

1. That the State Government place local artists and local creative activities centrally in arts and cultural infrastructure planning and policy and that implementation be conducted in close collaboration with Local Government
2. That the State Government create funding to expand Aboriginal arts development through Local Government
3. That the State Government create a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund, with multi-year and recurrent agreements, which will enable councils to deliver State Plan priority E8 cultural outcomes to local communities
4. That the State Government create and maintain comprehensive information relevant to planning for new arts-specific capital infrastructure, to assist the building of relevant and appropriate facilities and coordination between sectors
5. That the State Government review the content and implementation of the Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions to strengthen fair and equitable access to cultural experiences across NSW
6. That a range of incentives and pathways for collaboration between multiple agencies be central to arts and cultural infrastructure development in NSW.

About the Associations

The Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW (the Associations or LGSA) are the peak bodies for NSW Local Government. Together, the Local Government Association and the Shires Association represent all the 152 NSW general-purpose councils, the special-purpose county councils and the regions of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. The mission of the Associations is to be credible, professional organisations representing Local Government and facilitating the development of an effective community-based system of Local Government in NSW. In pursuit of this mission, the Associations represent the views of councils to NSW and Australian Governments; provide industrial relations and specialist services to councils and promote Local Government to the community and the media.

Terms of Reference

The LGSA understands that the Public Works Committee of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales will inquire into and report on the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD and is examining:

1. Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources;
2. Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life;
3. The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs;
4. Accessibility of cultural and arts education;
5. Economic impacts on communities;
6. The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan for the state to maximise diversity of access, with reference to the Tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies;
7. Any other relevant matters.

Further, the LGSA acknowledges that the Inquiry has used the following thirteen Issues and Discussion Points, as prompts to assist the Inquiry:

- Past, present and future funding patterns for cultural infrastructure, venues, production and promotion in NSW, particularly in areas outside of the Sydney metropolitan region.
- Funding options for arts or cultural infrastructure.
- Arrangements that are in place to ensure an equitable spread of arts funding across regional and rural NSW.
- Fair and equitable access to cultural infrastructure for all people living in NSW.
- Plans or current structures/arrangements for funding large scale arts and cultural infrastructure development outside of the big seven institutions based in the Sydney CBD.
- Implications for the availability and priority of cultural infrastructure funding in relation to the Metropolitan Strategy and regional strategies.
- Outcomes from the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, and possibility of plans to replicate the Western Sydney Arts Strategy in other regions.
- Existence of any audit of the cultural venues or cultural infrastructure that exists in NSW outside of the Sydney CBD and Metropolitan area.
- Mechanisms and support that are in place to ensure the importance of art and culture in the lives of people and the development of local identity to be taken into account when planning new regional centres and undertaking urban consolidation.
- Support through Arts NSW for local councils to undertake integrated cultural planning/planning for cultural infrastructure.
- Effectiveness of Cultural Accords – partnerships with local government, which encourage local councils to invest in the Arts and to develop cultural life in local government areas.
- Federal funding availability to local councils either directly or through Arts NSW.
- Role of private sector funding, sponsorships or trusts for regional arts and cultural funding and infrastructure (or for arts and cultural funding and infrastructure outside of the Sydney CBD/Metropolitan area).

Whilst this submission addresses the majority of the topics and issues above, it has not been structured around them. Relevance to each of the seven terms of reference and the thirteen Issues / Discussion Point prompts is specified throughout the submission.

Introduction

LGSA have a long history of working closely and effectively with NSW Government to develop arts and culture, strengthened by the series of Cultural Accords.

Councils in NSW undertake a wide spectrum of cultural development activity, including:

- Cultural planning
- Community cultural development
- Cultural services such as planning, development, delivery and/or support of the performing and visual arts, art galleries, performing arts centres, museums, other cultural facilities, public art, community arts, festivals, celebrations, new media and digital arts

A 2005 survey of NSW councils by the LGSA showed that councils provide 34 galleries, 40 museums and 25 performing art centres and employ 67 full time, 29 part time and 10 casual cultural staff. (Relating to Issue / Discussion dot point eight). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found that in 2006-2007 NSW councils spent \$57.93 per person funding arts and culture, up from \$49.61 the previous year and more than the 2006-2007 Australian average Local Government funding per person of \$51.98. Nationally per person, Local Government was the only sphere of government to increase funding in 2006-2007 from 2005-2006.¹

Despite these important investments, the financial capacity for Local Government to effectively provide community infrastructure in general, including arts and cultural infrastructure, has been severely eroded. The case for increased support for Local Government infrastructure has been effectively and convincingly made on numerous occasions. Examples include the *National Financial Sustainability Study of Local Government*² and the *Independent Report into the Financial Sustainability of Local Government in NSW*³. More recently the 2006/2007 financial sustainability reports on NSW councils, undertaken by FiscalStar⁴, reiterate the dire financial circumstances of some councils.

Financial constraints on Local Government infrastructure overall impact on arts specific buildings such as libraries, galleries, museums and performing arts centres. The detrimental effect for local arts expressions is magnified when the extensive arts use of other council facilities is accounted for. This includes traditional activities such as dance in local halls and art in child care centres, as well as newer cultural endeavours like digital media production in youth and community centres.

The wide-ranging scope of material supplied by the Committee, including the new advice of the development of an arts and cultural plan for NSW, has led to a recommendation for a conceptual shift in how governments provide for arts and cultural development.

Writing on the nature of culture, and reinforcing the need for conceptual change, Westbury says: 'There is no easy way to buy or build a culture. Culture has properties that defy planning. The more you grab at it, freeze it and attempt to set it in its place, the weaker it becomes.'⁵

This conceptual shift requires a greater focus on arts practice and practitioners, on so called 'soft infrastructure'. This can be defined as 'the range of social, educational, recreational, and cultural

¹ ABS, Cultural Funding by Government 2006-2007

² PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006

³ Commissioned by LGSA, 2006 and conducted by Allan, Darlison and Gibbs

⁴ <http://www.fiscalstar.com.au/>, accessed 25 August 2008

⁵ Westbury, Marcus *Fluid Cities Create*, Griffith Review 20: Cities on the Edge, Griffith University, 2008, page 2

services available to a community.’⁶ In relation to cultural development, we can further define ‘soft infrastructure’ to mean artists, employees, participants, practitioners, networks, programs and projects that give life, meaning and purpose to buildings and the built environment.

Of course, the importance of the physical remains: ‘Facilities and infrastructure to accommodate artists and organizations’ have been identified as one of six critical success factors for a vibrant cultural economy.⁷

Arts, cultural activities, services and programs are often dependant on physical infrastructure, which should work in concert with the services and programs delivered. Adequate attention and investment in both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure is essential for success.⁸

Context

NSW State Plan

The Associations remain ready to facilitate sections of the State Plan that would benefit from partnership with Local Government. We anticipate partnering with the State Government to work on the following Plan directions and targets:

- Developing a more strategic approach with Local Government to increase and improve their arts, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 135, under ‘E8’)
- Encourage development of arts and culture and cultural precincts in local communities through partnerships with Local Government (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 135, under ‘E8’)
- Increase visits to and participation in the arts and cultural activity 10% by 2016 (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 7, under ‘E8’)

In relation to the adequacy of the State Plan, investigated at term six of the Inquiry, LGSA contends that increased focus is required upon pathways to achieve the above directions and targets. Recommendations offered herein provide such delivery mechanisms.

Strategic cultural investment made in partnership with Local Government ensures optimal arts and cultural results throughout NSW, not least because councils have close contact with their communities. Local Government is in a singular position to deliver on-the-ground and tangible outcomes that can flow from the State Plan directions and targets. LGSA supports State Government developing an arts and cultural plan for NSW, and anticipates close collaboration on content and implementation as well as capacity for such a plan to facilitate changes coming from Inquiry findings. The Associations have long called for a more planned approach to arts and cultural development across the State and consider these recent developments favourably.

Public Libraries

Although not mentioned specifically in the Inquiry documentation, public libraries are perhaps the most important local cultural infrastructure. The body of this paper does not repeat the case for a significant injection of State Government funding to public libraries. That case is made strongly and clearly in *Public Libraries – Too Valuable to Lose*. (Attachment One) Public libraries are not catered for in the State Plan, which LGSA believes is a significant oversight (responding to term six of the seven numbered by the Inquiry).

Public Libraries – Too Valuable to Lose demonstrates that the NSW Public Library Network is a cohesive, state-wide network based on cooperation between council public libraries and the State

⁶ Blakely & Bradshaw, *Planning Local Economic Development: Theory and Practice* (Third Edition), SAGE, 2002.

⁷ PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Inter-jurisdictional Study of Best Policies and Practices for Public Sector Arts and Culture*, Canada, 2007.

⁸ *A Case for Investing in Arts, Culture and Heritage Infrastructure*, Vis-à-vis Management Resources, British Columbia, 2007, Page 7.

Library of NSW. This network offers a remarkable array of services to communities. The paper also demonstrates that public libraries are under increasing pressure to re-vitalise facilities, collections, electronic infrastructure and programs. These pressures come in many guises including changing demographics (including population ageing, child and youth usage trends); community demand for more varied services and programming; increasingly varied collection formats and new technologies; and e-government. The paper argues that the NSW Government must significantly increase the State's share of the total funding to local public library services to ensure it matches international and national benchmarks and meets unmet community demand for services. The paper recommends enhancing grants and subsidies to library services operated by councils and other organisations, to over \$5m per year for five years to reach a new recurrent target of approximately \$52m per year.

Accessibility

Issues of accessibility run deeply through the Inquiry. Specifically, there is relevance for terms two, five and six and Issue / Discussions prompts three, four and nine.

LGSA recommends that all arts and cultural infrastructure be developed in line with Australian Standards (particularly AS 1428). Access for people of all abilities needs to be considered not only to front of house areas, but also for backstage and working spaces. The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) stipulates that people with a disability have equal rights to access goods, services and employment. Accessible Arts organisations and professional access auditors are able to provide advice and assistance to arts and cultural organisations across NSW regarding their audience, creative, infrastructure, education and employment processes. One in five people experience a disability. In addition, family and friends of people with a disability will often not attend an arts event or venue if one of their members will be excluded.

Artist Centred Approach

Establishing and maintaining focus on local arts practice and local cultural activities and production is vital for efficient and effective government intervention to support cultural development. This section provides examples and finds recommendations for conceptual change in the provision of arts and cultural infrastructure. The underlying assumption is that when providing 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure, we are seeking to increase the amount of cultural activity, as expressed by NSW State Plan Priority 'E8' says "More People Participating in the Arts and Cultural Activity".

Local Artists and the NSW Arts and Cultural Plan

A perpetual challenge for governments is to provide appropriate and useful public infrastructure which can stand the test of time. Changing patterns of cultural production and consumption make this challenge particularly significant.

LGSA is attracted to emerging policy principles for cultural development which recognise the centrality of artists' practice⁹ and the importance of building individual creativity.¹⁰ These important policy principles say that all creative activities radiate out from people's capacity to make art, and we can add: to be creative agents in their communities. The principles accord with successful council cultural development practice. LGSA contends that increased application of policies placing local artists and local creative activities at the centre of State Government cultural development planning, will provide policy solutions to the issues raised by the Public Works Committee. These include funding and resource allocation, the first of the Inquiry points, as well as the second: suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life. More broadly, adoption of these policy principles would act upon the other Inquiry terms as well as the thirteen Inquiry Issues/Discussion prompts identified by the Inquiry.

⁹ Speeches by Professor David Throsby, Sydney 21 May 2008 and Canberra 28 February 2008

¹⁰ Creative Britain, *New Talents for the New Economy*, Department for Culture Media & Sport, UK, 2008

Perhaps the biggest challenge to all governments arts and cultural infrastructure efforts lies in changes to how art is being made:

“Much contemporary cultural vitality and energy is occurring outside the traditional arts and culture political framework and increasingly challenges the philosophy underpinning it. Examples include circus (physical theatre), new media arts, youth arts, performance culture consumed outside official parameters (CDs, DVDs), sub-cultures, community groups, amateur artists and performers, and electronically networked/produced/consumed arts and culture. These diverse examples of arts and culture are informing the development of active citizenship and cultural competence on various levels — local, regional, national, sub-cultural and global”.¹¹

Governments can successfully support new and emerging ways of making art and facilitate creative industries development by focussing on current local arts practice. The nature and extent of local arts practice varies extensively across NSW and it would be easy to mis-judge arts and cultural infrastructure investments and interventions. By resourcing and working closely with each council, State Government will be able to determine appropriate arts and cultural infrastructure provisions by jointly developing and maintaining a focus on local artists and local creative activities.

An example of infrastructure development initiated from the local level comes from Cootamundra. Cootamundra Shire Council supported local community vision for a new arts centre, by buying a derelict building for \$140,000. A further \$60,000 was made available by the Shire for renovations. In 2006 Arts NSW contributed \$75,000, matched in cash and kind by the Shire. Because the arts centre originated from the community, there is enormous community support and contributions, including over \$80,000 dollars in goods and trade discounts and more than 7,000 hours in volunteer labour, to date.

The new Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre opened in 2007, demonstrating the return to the community of combined Local and State Government arts investments. Investment in the arts through Local Government, in touch with community vision, has a significant catalysing and multiplying effects. These provide for longer term results, especially when initial capital funds are followed with ongoing support for programming.

Focussing on local arts practice and providing for cultural development on that initiating basis is recommended for the new NSW arts and cultural plan.

A Cultural Approach to all Infrastructure Development

This section moves beyond infrastructure provided especially for arts and cultural practice, and recommends taking a cultural and artist centred approach to infrastructure in general. This particularly addresses the second Inquiry issue: ‘suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life’. It also has bearing on how Western Sydney success can be replicated, local identity and integrated cultural planning – as per dot point seven, nine and ten of the Inquiry Issues/Discussion prompts on page 2 of the documentation provided and reprinted at the start of this paper.

Some of the most successful spaces and places are created when an arts and cultural approach is taken to development. For example, Parramatta City Council has significantly enhanced the local built environment by requiring developers to submit ‘arts plans’ as part of the development application process. Bankstown City Council has worked closely with local artists on the redevelopment of Greenacre shopping centre, resulting in a unique environment that is truly representative of Greenacre. Working with local artists can ensure that cultural developments are relevant to local communities. John McCarthy expresses the issue well:

“Cities are increasingly seeking to encourage culture-related uses in particular areas, often designated as ‘cultural quarters’, to achieve regeneration outcomes, and public art is often

¹¹ Craik, Jennifer ‘Re-visioning Arts and Cultural Policy, Current Impasses and Future Directions’, ANU, 2007, page 55

applied in such quarters in order to promote place image and to enhance local identity. However, it may be argued that these aims are potentially contradictory, since the image that is projected may not necessarily reflect local identity. This is a critical issue in view of the need to achieve regeneration outcomes that are inclusive, broadly based and context sensitive.”¹²

McCarthy’s ‘crucial issue’ can be solved by working with local artists. In the Greenacre case, a more experienced artist from outside Greenacre acted together with local artists and others living in Greenacre, providing an authentic and valid reflection of local identity in the built environment.¹³

To recap, current cultural policy principles place artists and cultural practice centrally, and this in accordance with successful Local Government practice and LGSA policy. Craik tells of contemporary changes to how art is being made. Parramatta, Cootamundra and Greenacre have worked successfully in the contemporary environment. This leads to a recommendation for wider application of the artist-centred approach by NSW Government, in partnership with Local Government.

Recommendation One:

That the State Government place local artists and local creative activities centrally in arts and cultural and other infrastructure planning and policy and that implementation be conducted in close collaboration with Local Government.

Aboriginal Arts Development

Expanded Aboriginal arts development has been a joint aim for State and Local Government in Cultural Accords for ten years. However we are yet to implement a substantial package of assistance appropriate to the potential of Aboriginal arts in NSW. This section relates to Inquiry terms one, two, four, five, six and Issue / Discussion dot point prompts one, two, three, four, six, seven, nine and eleven.

Regional Arts Australia identified the key issues in their 2006 *National Directions* paper:

“Supporting Indigenous artists and communities needs, including clarification of funding programs post-ATSIC; effective means of mentoring emerging artists and enterprise development; better engagement between Indigenous and non- Indigenous artists; and a recognition by local government that Indigenous heritage is a vital part of local identity”¹⁴

Councils leading in Aboriginal Arts cultural development, such as Campbelltown, successfully multiply State arts investments for their communities. When Arts NSW has funded identified Aboriginal arts development positions, as in Western Sydney, councils are able to broker longer term and multi-partner projects with other agencies, such as the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Again, the successful Western Sydney experience shows how the rest of NSW could benefit from strategic multi-year and multi-partner cultural investment in Local Government.

Recent feedback from the Aboriginal arts sector has demonstrated a need to support local level contemporary Aboriginal craft production and marketing, and that creative incubators for contemporary local Aboriginal craft production and sales be formed. Fitting out facilities to suit local Aboriginal contemporary creative production is also recommended.

Major non-arts infrastructure development provides opportunities for partnerships with Aboriginal communities together with Local Government. An excellent example is the Cowarra “Off-Creek Storage” Dam, located on the mid-north coastal ranges. As guardians of the land and waterways in the

¹² McCarthy, John, *Regeneration of Cultural Quarters: Public Art for Place Image or Place Identity?* Journal of Urban Design, Volume 11, Number 2, June 2006, Routledge pages 243-262

¹³ <http://culturalawards2008.lgsa.org.au/projects/29-greenacre-town-centre-improvement-program-tcip/videos/14>, accessed 11 September 2008

¹⁴ Dunne, A, *National Directions* Regional Arts Australia, 2006, page 15

area, Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council worked closely with Port Macquarie Hastings Council during the development and construction of the Cowarra Dam.

Bunyah Land Council assisted in the process of extinguishing Native Title on the site to allow the Cowarra Dam to proceed and to make employment and training opportunities available for local Aboriginal people. "We have a positive relationship with Hastings Council water supply people. The thing that won us over was the way they approached us," a Bunyah spokesman said.¹⁵ As well as significant employment in construction and on-going operations, a major public art project was integral to the process. Finished in 2004, the Cowarra dam is a model infrastructure, arts and reconciliation project.

Both in catering for local contemporary Aboriginal creative production requirements and when considering major infrastructure of a more general nature, capacity is required to promote and replicate successful models.

Recommendation Two:

That the State Government create funding to expand Aboriginal arts development through Local Government

Funding Arts & Culture with Local Government

State Government investments in art and culture find the best return when done in partnership with Local Government. This part of the submission also looks at public funding, the first of the Inquiry terms. Rather than examining the policy approach as seen leading to Recommendation One, here past present and future funding patterns are explored, as per the first of the thirteen Issues / Discussion Point prompts. This section also looks at the Cultural Accords, the eleventh of the Issues / Discussion Point prompts .

Loss of *City of the Arts*

Arts NSW *City of the Arts* program was unexpectedly discontinued in 2007. The City of the Arts funding program was specifically for Local Government, and provided monies for councils outside of the Sydney metropolitan area.

Funding was up to \$150,000 over two years, and was received by the following councils:

The Blue Mountains - Inaugural City of the Arts (1995-97)

Broken Hill - Second City of the Arts (1997-99)

Armidale Dumaresq - Third City of the Arts (1999-2001)

Port Macquarie - Fourth City of the Arts (2001-03)

Tweed Shire - Fifth City of the Arts (2003-05)

Maitland - Sixth City of the Arts (2005-07)

The *City of the Arts* program was instrumental in advancing cultural development. Discontinuation of this program is a significant blow to arts and culture outside the Sydney CBD, and has not been replaced. Whilst the *City of the Arts* program is no longer in NSW, there remains significant deficits in cultural infrastructure regionally, which require urgent attention.

Cultural Accord

NSW State and Local Governments have found extensive agreement to develop arts and culture through a series of Cultural Accords. Signed in 1997, the first Accord focused on regional NSW with a three year timeframe. The second Accord, signed in 2002, provided a stronger partnership and included a Western Sydney and Aboriginal cultural focus.

¹⁵ http://www.waterwisensw.com.au/images/media/pdf/CDPAP_Booklet.pdf, accessed 2 September 2008

Expiry of the second Accord in 2005 was followed by signing of the third in February 2006, which concludes on 31 December 2008. LGSA has had positive communications with Arts NSW on an independent review of current and previous Accords, and development of a fourth Accord. The Associations look forward to forging a new and practical agreement with State Government to jointly engender expansion of cultural development in NSW.

The current Accord sets out three focus areas for State and Local Government to collaborate on, which provide immediate opportunities for the Public Works Committee. The three focus areas with appropriate discussion are set out below.

The first Cultural Accord focus area and the one of primary interest to the Inquiry is:

To work collaboratively to establish a new Ministry funding program for Local Government that recognises Local Governments who are making a sustained commitment to the arts and culture through a cultural planning framework.

National studies reinforce the key role that councils play in cultural development. For example, the Myer report found “that local government plays a very important role in grass-roots support of community-based arts and craft activities, much of which is contemporary in focus.”¹⁶

NSW Government arts investments in Local Government produce cultural development results far in excess of the State Government contributions. Within councils, competing priorities for expenditure necessitate ongoing State incentives for cultural development.

Arts NSW total annual funding figures to Local Government are particularly low, especially when compared to total NSW councils expenditure on culture.

Arts NSW Grants to NSW Local Government		NSW Local Government Cultural Expenditure	
	Calender year millions		Financial year millions
2002	\$18.5	2001 – 02	\$242.1
2003	\$9.0	2002 – 03	\$350.3
2004	\$2.9	2003 – 04	\$315.2
2005	\$2.2	2004 – 05	\$311.9
2006	\$2.8	2005 – 06	\$374.9
2006	\$2.8	2006 – 07	\$397.0
2007	\$4.1	2007 – 08	n/a

Despite this positive effort, Local Government’s finances must not be taken for granted. With many NSW Local Governments facing financial challenges, as found by the *Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government*, it is vital that initial capital cultural investments are followed up with regular State Government funding support for programming.

Arts NSW and the LGSA are currently working together to assist councils in cultural development. Currently over one third of NSW councils have a cultural plan and one third are developing one. Increasing uptake of a planned approach to cultural development requires a greater State commitment to arts funding for councils.

The Progress Report on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy found that it “provides a valuable model for other regions with a need for integrated cultural development”.¹⁷ The Cultural Planning Guidelines

¹⁶ Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry, Commonwealth of Australia 2002, Page 307

¹⁷ Progress Report on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, 2006, Page 8.

for Local Government and the current Integrated Planning and Reporting approach being developed with the Department of Local Government advocate for an integrated approach to strategic planning.

The new funding program for Local Government proposed in the Cultural Accord, together with the very successful Western Sydney model, show how communities across the State could benefit from substantially increasing the level of State Government arts investment in councils. This approach has been proven in other jurisdictions, such as Victoria with the Arts Victoria Local Partnerships Program.

An integrated cultural funding approach is further supported by the second Cultural Accord focus area:

In recognition of the important cultural collections held by Local Governments, to jointly encourage greater integration of the operation of Local Government cultural facilities including libraries, museums and art galleries.

Current funding structures necessitate numerous applications to different State Government departments from councils, to augment their activity in the wide spectrum of Local Government cultural development activities. Providing packaged State investments for all of a council's cultural endeavours would also deliver on State Plan commitments to reduce red tape ('P3' in State Plan).

It is recommended that the current joint Arts NSW and LGSA initiatives to assist those councils yet to benefit from a planned approach to cultural development, be expanded and better resourced and that future cultural accords are provided with appropriate resources for implementation.

The third Cultural Accord priority is addressed later at Recommendation Six.

The Associations recommend creation of a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund with two interdependent strands – Infrastructure and Fit Out (fit out is expanded on below). The Partnership fund would be available for councils and regional groups of councils. Funding ratio agreements should be tailored to suit individual council circumstances.

Three to five year funding agreements are recommended, supporting the integrated and strategic approach which has been shown to work so well in Western Sydney. Multi year funding programs respond to the increasing importance of longer term strategic planning, as well as reducing red tape. An international study by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that a minimum of three years for cultural funding was critical to success.¹⁸

A negotiated and strategic approach providing a single funding agreement for the whole of a council's cultural undertakings is recommended for those councils advanced in cultural development. For those councils not yet in such a position, access to smaller individual project grants will need to be retained.

Fit Out, Access and Accommodation

Considering the difficult environment for Local Government community infrastructure in general and the current unsettling economic conditions overall, careful arts and cultural infrastructure investment is recommended. This can be achieved by program funding Local Government for fitting out, making good and ensuring access to existing buildings.

A program of infrastructure fit out, access and accommodation compliments the policy principle established in Recommendation One, where arts infrastructure investment follows local arts practice. For example, Canterbury City Council has recognised local need for visual arts gallery space, however is not considering funding a purpose built gallery. In future council office accommodation, foyer and reception space is being considered for visual arts display. A targeted and promoted funding

¹⁸ PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Inter-jurisdictional Study of Best Policies and Practices for Public Sector Arts and Culture*, Canada, 2007

program especially for Local Government fit out would facilitate the development of arts practice across NSW. It would ensure that facilitating infrastructure such as hanging, tracking and lighting for visual art is appropriate and professional. Further, assistance in curating and programming will be essential to best develop visual arts practice, such as in Canterbury.

As well as facilitating cultural development by fitting out public buildings, including those not specifically for the arts, a broader approach is needed. As Marcus Westbury says:

“In virtually every suburb in Australia, there is a building that has been boarded up for years, while its permanent use is debated or deferred or a consultant is brought in to determine just how much it would cost to fix. Each passing day is a lost opportunity for a temporary art gallery, for a business to incubate, for a community to form, for a performance space, for a meeting point for social or cultural experimentation.”¹⁹

Cultural development in NSW could be substantially furthered by funding councils to provide access for artists to existing buildings. This would include identifying and supporting sites of current practice by local artists, as well as providing safe access to buildings that are currently not in use. Investments of this type can mitigate what some see as the negative effects of gentrification. The problem, as expressed by Terry Flew²⁰ and others, is that the artists who breath life into previously undesirable suburbs are subsequently priced out of the market. This removes the vitality and interest that provides for urban regeneration.

A program formulated especially to provide access to living and working accommodation for artists in NSW would go a long way towards achieving viable cultural precincts, envisaged under ‘E8’ in the State Plan. A successful model can be found in the United States, where a non-profit organisation called Artspace²¹ works with local authorities to purchase and develop buildings for artists. This solution has direct bearing on term two of the Inquiry, as well as Issue / Discussion dot point nine.

Recent NSW legislative changes to the way councils levy developer contributions have substantially curtailed Local Government capacity to provide arts and cultural infrastructure for local communities. The case setting out the difficulties and disadvantages from current changes to council developer levies has already been clearly made by the LGSA and is not repeated in the body of this submission. *The Impact on Local Government of the Proposed Framework For Development Contributions* forms Attachment Two. That paper explains the threats that the changes, now being implemented, present to Local Government community infrastructure, including arts and cultural infrastructure.

To sum up, despite considerable investment in cultural development by Local Government and agreement under Cultural Accords, there is no specific funding program to leverage cultural development in councils. Changes to developer levies present a dangerous threat to on-going investment in arts by councils. As well as providing for new buildings where clearly needed, a successful funding program would focus upon: fitting out existing buildings, access to under-used and empty facilities, and living and working accommodation for local artists.

Recommendation Three:

That the State Government create a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund, with multi-year and recurrent agreements, which will enable councils to deliver State Plan priority E8 cultural outcomes to local communities.

¹⁹ Westbury, Marcus *Fluid Cities Create*, op. cit., page 9

²⁰ Flew, Terry *Music, Cities and Cultural Policy: A Brisbane Experience*, Paper presented to Sonic Synergies, Creative Cultures, University of South Australia, July 17 – 20, 2003, page 25

²¹ <http://www.artspaceusa.org>, accessed 29 August 2008.

Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Coordination

Here this submission considers all of the seven Inquiry areas, and thirteen Issues / Discussion Points and recommends creation of a practical resource to provide for the Inquiry concerns. In much the same way as a successful council provides resources for local stakeholders, it is recommended that State Government play a greater information provision and coordination role for arts and cultural infrastructure development across New South Wales. This section has particular application to the Issues / Discussion Point prompts about planning, seen at dot points five, six, eight, nine, ten and thirteen.

Galleries, museums, theatres, performing arts centres and studios are expensive to build, maintain, program and run. Whilst some councils have a good understanding of local cultural needs regarding 'hard' arts-specific infrastructure, others lack the resources to properly investigate local and regional demand for arts and cultural built infrastructure, especially beyond their boundaries. There is a need for greater coordination between State, Local Government and non-government sectors in the development of new facilities. For example, currently the McDonald College in Strathfield are planning new built arts facilities which will have impact and opportunities across the region. Regional coordination with the councils would be helpful.

Public use of arts facilities does not notice Local Government or other political boundaries and does not factor public funding or private development considerations. Patterns of arts facility use are determined by interest, taste, availability, access and affordability. Greater assistance and coordination is needed for all sectors when planning new arts infrastructure.

NSW would greatly benefit from the provision of a central source information for the planning and development of new arts-specific infrastructure. Such a resource would include data on existing public and private facilities, as well as reveal usage and trends in consumption and participation. Up-to-date intelligence of this nature, and information on unmet demand, would help Local and State Governments make much better informed decisions that are more likely to stand the test of time. The resource would also guide private investment in arts and cultural infrastructure, and work to prevent duplication and increase audiences.

One reading of State Government support for arts-specific infrastructure is that funding allocations are sometimes political. For example, recently two million dollars was found for worthy Wollongong Town Hall renovations, through an unorthodox process.²² Availability and interpretation of appropriate data and understanding of current needs and gaps state wide could provide a framework mitigating that type of decision making.

The resource would draw data from reports such as , *Energised, engaged, everywhere: Older Australians and Museums*²³, which provides comprehensive statistical and qualitative information about older people, specifically focussing on leisure habits and museum visiting. Accessible information on aging populations and other relevant demographic data is needed to effectively plan for arts and cultural infrastructure.

Research and data is also needed to effectively measure the impact of arts and cultural infrastructure investments.

Much of the information needed for a comprehensive mapping and interpretative exercise of this type has been published in various forms, for example in Local Government cultural plans, however it has not been collated and interpreted into a comprehensive data base which would allow allocation of resources according to appropriate audience catchment areas.

²² <http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/news/local/news/general/sartor-gives-2m-to-fix-the-town-hall/1260848.aspx>, accessed 12 September 2008

²³ <http://austmus.gov.au/amarc/pdf/research/introduction.pdf>, accessed 4 September 2008

Increased co-ordination of all sectors providing arts and cultural infrastructure for NSW communities would allow for greater use of facilities.

Recommendation Four:

That the State Government create and maintain comprehensive information relevant to planning for new arts-specific capital infrastructure to assist the building of relevant and appropriate facilities and provide for coordination between sectors and agencies.

Addressing Inequity

There are many commendable Inquiry themes of equity and access as well as the potential to move towards to redressing the historical favouring of Sydney CBD for arts and cultural support, in the Inquiry documentation. This part of the LGSA submission proposes a cost-neutral way to achieve the Inquiry equity themes and to get a fairer deal for those who find it hard to get to the CBD. Specific relevance is found here for terms one, two, four and six and for Issue / Discussion dot points one, two, three, four, six and nine.

Principles for Regional Programs

NSW Government support for arts and culture has traditionally, and remains, focussed on the Sydney CBD where the seven state cultural institutions reside. The extent of the focus upon these institutions is illustrated by the Arts NSW 2007-2008 budget, where of a total of \$258 million, \$212 is allocated to the state cultural institutions.²⁴ Although these organisations provide some services across NSW, the LGSA contends that access and participation in the arts could be greatly expanded by increasing incentives and requirements for state cultural institutions to more effectively and comprehensively engage with suburban and regional communities. This is not limited to touring cultural products, but is about working with people across NSW to provide skills acquisition and increase local cultural production.

In 1997 the NSW Government produced *Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions*. (Attachment Three) Regional tax payers are subject to ‘double taxing’ as they are supporting local cultural infrastructure and programs as well as that in the Sydney CBD. Such inequality prompts a recommendation for a comprehensive review and renewal of these Principles, including an examination of incentives and compliance measures in the funding agreements with the state cultural institutions.

Comprehensive implementation of updated Principles would provide for some correction of the longstanding imbalance of State Government cultural investments, which has strongly favoured those able to access the Sydney CBD.

Recommendation Five:

That the State Government review the content and implementation of the Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions to strengthen fair and equitable access to cultural experiences across NSW.

Cross-agency Collaboration

Working with often limited means at the local level, councils are adept at brokering cultural projects with several agencies, with arts agencies being one of a number of partners. Such projects bring agencies together around social and community development issues, which can be addressed by innovative arts projects. This Recommendation has direct application to Inquiry terms one, two, three, four, five and six and Issue / Discussion dot points one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, nine and twelve.

²⁴ <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/AboutUs/tabid/55/Default.aspx>, accessed 25 August 2008

The Western Sydney Arts Strategy Progress Report found that the

“Strategy has demonstrated the contribution the arts can make in traditionally non-arts related social policy areas through cross-agency projects and across the State. Major cultural projects have been delivered across the region in partnership with the health, education, environment and urban planning sectors.”²⁵

Regional Arts NSW have cited national research finding “concrete links between the implementation of arts projects and lasting social, educational, economic and artistic impacts”²⁶.

One of the better examples is the Newcastle Live Sites ‘place activation’ project. Developed by an Arts NSW funded ‘cultural broker’, Lives Sites is the joint effort of state government authority Honeysuckle Development Corporation, Newcastle City Council, Arts NSW and the not-for-profit Newcastle Alliance. Each year, Live Sites produces over 100 days of events and provides over 700 days of arts employment.²⁷

The Myer Report also supports council ability regarding multi-partner projects: “It is evident that the local government agencies are used to building on other programs such as tourism, environment and education and are highly flexible and adaptable in this respect.”²⁸

Mechanisms for cross-agency, collaborative and partnership programs, when built into State Government infrastructure planning and implementation, will maximise arts and cultural returns to NSW communities. This partnership approach would need to be well supported by increasing capacity for Arts NSW advocacy across other State Government agencies.

Three Spheres of Government Approach

As well as promoting collaborations across State government agencies and with private and non-government (NGO) sectors, a three spheres of government approach is recommended for cultural development in NSW.

NSW councils receive Australian Government grants and support for cultural development. Existing Local and State Government commitment can be an important precursor to Australian Government involvement. For example in Parramatta, their local Artists Studios project gained AusIndustry participation following State support.

Often councils must apply to numerous different NSW and Australian Government cultural grant programs and categories, resulting in onerous bureaucratic duplication.

A very interesting example of how governments can join together in addressing local needs and issues using the arts can be seen in the Generations project, initiated and run by the Cultural Development Network in Victoria. The Generations project is a collaboration between five councils across three States and supported by the three levels of government funding. Although the Generations project is not infrastructure specific, it is unique in size and processes, which are of interest to the current Inquiry.

The five localised projects respond to Local Government identified issues which are significant for their communities. These range across Indigenous land use and relationships with graziers; pressurised Aboriginal and Arabic youth in the state education system; aging populations in rural cities; climate change and coal mining in rural Australia; and identity on the urban edge. The

²⁵ *Western Sydney Arts Strategy Progress Report*, page 7

²⁶ http://www.regionalartsnsw.com.au/docs/quotes_stats_and_facts.pdf, accessed 1 September 2008, pages 3&4.

²⁷ <http://www.livesites.org.au/index.php?id=7>, accessed 4 September 2008

²⁸ *Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry* (Myer Report) Commonwealth of Australia 2002, page 30.

Generations project examines links between communities and civic engagement and how a cultural perspective on policies can strengthen that link and provide solutions 'generated' from the community.

The councils, funding bodies, communities and artists participate in regular forums, exchange news on progress and share ideas. The role of arts activity and its connection to improved health and well-being has been well documented, however the wider cultural impact of public policy on local communities requires more study. 'Generations' is the first major study of its kind.

Participating partners are: The Australia Council for the Arts, Regional Arts Fund Commonwealth Department for Communications Information Technology and Arts, Arts Victoria, Arts NSW, Arts Queensland, Dalrymple Shire (Queensland); City of Liverpool (New South Wales); Rural City of Wangaratta (Victoria); City of Greater Geelong (Victoria); and Latrobe City (Victoria). The project runs for three years between September 2006 and December 2009.

Longer term multi-partner strategic projects such as Generations, which bring agencies together to address particular local issues, demonstrate how a 'joined-up' and 'whole-of-government' approach can really work.

There is also room for greater joint NSW Local and State Government advocacy to Australian government on providing structural incentives for tripartite agreements. Such advocacy can proceed to forums such as the Cultural Ministers Council, as agreed in the third Cultural Accord focus area:

To jointly develop a proposal for a national strategy for Community Cultural Development through the Cultural Ministers Council.

LGSA has promoted a coordinated and three spheres of government approach to Arts NSW and the Australia Council for the Arts, in the development of fourth cultural accord.

In review, collaborative and partnership approaches can be conducted with great success, especially when working to address needs identified locally. State and Federal funding programs would more effectively serve NSW communities if collaborative approaches were better provided for. As well as about how the funding programs are structured, better relationships between programs are needed. This requires greater communication between State agencies as well as federally.

Recommendation Six:

That a range of incentives and pathways for collaboration between multiple agencies be central to arts and cultural infrastructure development in NSW

Conclusion

Arts and cultural infrastructure and local cultural development overall is currently under considerable threat in NSW. Reductions in developer levies, longstanding State underfunding of public libraries and the absence of arts funding specific to Local Government are combining disadvantageously.. Without substantial and strategic intervention by the Public Works Committee, damage from this combination will be far reaching, and have significant detrimental effects that extend way beyond the arts and cultural sector.

A conceptual change in how governments fund arts and cultural infrastructure is required to meet the current challenges. The change requires a focus back to local artists and local communities working creatively. When governments work to augment existing local cultural expressions, their investments will grow.

NSW Government investment in arts and culture can achieve substantial and on-going returns to communities across the State, when done in partnership with Local Government. In touch with communities, councils work locally to maximise the success of cultural development. Rapidly changing cultural landscapes mean the ability of agencies to identify common causes and work together for positive change will determine long term sustainability.

Attachments

ONE

Public Libraries – Too Valuable to Lose

TWO

The Impact on Local Government of the Proposed Framework For Development Contributions

THREE

Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions