

# WYONG SHIRE COUNCIL

## A CULTURAL PLAN FOR WYONG SHIRE 2005



WYONG  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL

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Cover Illustration – “Norah Head Bush”, Postcard Competition Entry by Susan Bod-Kiss

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## *Imagine ...*

*It's a Friday afternoon in March 2008. Council staff anxiously check the sky for signs of cloud and rain. They need not worry – it's going to be a fine autumn evening, clear and crisp but not cold.*

*From a bird's eye view of the Shire, vehicles are on the move, perhaps more than normally. The usual solid traffic is heading north from Sydney on the F3 but apart from that it all seems to be converging on the beaches and parks around the Tuggerah Lakes system. Families and groups of friends are setting up picnic tables and impromptu games of cricket.*

*As the light fades, all eyes are on the water and the opposite bays and headlands. At a signal, a necklace of pink Chinese lanterns lights up from Canton Beach and is joined progressively around the Lake by thousands more. Late comers make their last minute purchase from the lantern sellers and hurry to light up. Children gasp at the shimmering glow from the shore, mirrored in the still waters as far as the eye can see.*

*The Festival of the Waters has opened.*

*This weekend the mayor and councilors have a busy schedule. They join Elders of the Aboriginal community at the new Warnervale Library for the unveiling of a display on the fishing technology of the Darkinjung and Kuringai people. Then it's on to join bushwalking groups for "Walk the Wyong River" along the recently completed track at Tacoma. Walkers pause to read the brightly coloured signs along the track telling the stories of the Aboriginal people and the early European settlers.*

*Meanwhile, in the cafés along Alison Road the Saturday lunchtime crowd sits outside enjoying the pleasant autumn sunshine. Café proprietors are not surprised that the crowd is bigger than usual – many of the patrons have tickets for the first performance ever at the Wyong Performing Arts Centre. The official opening is at 2.00pm followed by a matinee performance by the Wyong Youth Performing Arts Project. The production is a new work, a collaborative effort with the Ourimbah Campus and the Central Coast Writers' Centre based at The Cottage in Church Street.*

*The excitement is high. Staff of Council's Communications Unit, charged with organizing the event, check their watches nervously and hope that the Premier, due to arrive any moment, is running on time. But all is well - the opening goes without a hitch and two hours later the performance closes to enthusiastic applause.*

*The celebration goes on for another two weeks with many more events that celebrate the creative talents of the Shire's community and the environment that inspires its artists - the 33<sup>rd</sup> Festival of the Arts exhibition, this time in the large foyer of the Performing Arts Centre; the Council-sponsored photographic exhibition now in its seventh year and running in the Civic Gallery with the involvement of the new Central Coast Photographers' Alliance; a Central Coast Shakespeare Company production of "The Tempest" in the event park at North Entrance ...*

## Mayor's Message

Wyong Council is committed to creating a cultural focus for our Shire. It has adopted this new Cultural Plan and has appointed a new Cultural Planner to ensure the plan is implemented and the community is involved.

This is important for Wyong Shire because culture does not just relate to “the arts”. It involves all forms of creative expression including visual, literary and performing arts, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, heritage, fashion, community stories, celebrations, festivals and media.

The key goals of the Shire's new cultural plan include:

- Ensuring cultural facilities and programs for the local community.
- Encouraging and supporting cultural diversity and expression.
- Celebrating our past.
- Encouraging personal and professional artistic development.
- Promoting cultural development across the Central Coast region.
- Working with government, arts and other organisations.

To help achieve these goals, Council is working to develop Wyong township as a focus of cultural activity. This will build on the township's existing cultural activities and its environmental and cultural heritage. A feasibility study is already underway into the possibility of establishing a new performing arts centre in Wyong.

The Cultural Plan also aims to establish a network of arts centres across the Shire and to investigate providing a new Youth Art Cart which can take arts activities to young people in remote areas of the Shire.

Bricks and mortar are only one part of cultural development, however. Our new Cultural Planner will work with the community and across all Council departments to ensure facilities are properly resourced and used and the community is involved.

Our Cultural Planner will also work to implement key actions in the new Plan, including development of a cultural grant program, an Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement, a youth performing arts project and a public art program. The Cultural Planner will also work with our community and government partners, including Gosford Council, to develop a regional cultural strategy.

This new cultural focus is a very exciting opportunity for Wyong Shire and I am proud to commend this document to you, Council's first Cultural Plan.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Pavier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenton Pavier,  
**Mayor of Wyong Shire**

# Executive Summary & Timeframe for Key Actions

## Background

The development of a Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire has been conducted over a 10-month period in 2004 and 2005. It has been a collaborative project between Council, other government agencies, community groups and individual arts practitioners.

The Plan provides an immediate and long-term direction for culture and the arts for Wyong Shire. It is designed to guide the activities of Council and the community over the term of the plan and provide a foundation for cultural development into the future. It seeks to achieve this aim with due regard to the rapid changes that the region is experiencing in the present and is expected to experience over the term of the plan and beyond.

## Definition

In the broadest sense, culture is everything in human behaviour that is not instinctive. Thus culture refers to our shaping of the environment by the making of implements, shelter and settlements, communication with other community members and the enhancement of our surroundings. The culture of a community and its diverse smaller communities is its way of life.

For the purposes of cultural planning, a related but more focused definition is required: all the modes of creative expression of a community including visual, literary and performing arts, architecture, landscape architecture, design, community stories, celebrations and festivals, cultural heritage and media which in turn reflect the community's cultural identity.

## How this Plan was Developed

1. Research – a review of relevant plans and policies at local, regional, state and federal levels; review of Australian Bureau of Statistics and other data relating to demographics and to cultural participation; an assessment of cultural facilities, programs and organizations in Wyong Shire and in the region.
2. Community consultation consisting of a Reference Group, public forums, discussions with interagencies and community groups, one-on-one interviews, a postcard competition and a community survey. Altogether over 1,000 people were involved in the consultation program.
3. Identification of key themes and issues.
4. Development of a draft cultural plan.
5. 28-day exhibition period.
6. Assessment of submissions and further report to Council.

## Rationale

Whilst the major focus of Councils' activities has always been seen to be "rates, roads and rubbish" Councils have in fact long been involved in cultural development by providing libraries and community centres that can accommodate a range of arts and cultural pursuits. However, until recently this cultural engagement has not been conducted within a systematic cultural planning framework.

In the past twenty years councils have increasingly become involved in cultural facilitation through the provision of infrastructure such as theatres, galleries and cultural professionals. Council facilitation of cultural development yields tangible benefits both in the community and economic domains.

Culture and cultural experiences reflect and celebrate the uniqueness of a community and contribute to its sense of identity. Examples of this in Wyong Shire and the Central Coast include the Central Coast Country Music Festival, the thriving visual arts scene and the strong following for dance. Participatory, interactive engagement in cultural activities brings people together and is recognized as providing a rich foundation for community development and the building of social capital:

*Active community participation in arts practice is an essential component of a healthy and sustainable society ... [and] profoundly contribute[s] to the development of community.<sup>1</sup>*

There are real economic benefits attached to cultural engagement. The Australian production of cultural goods and services totals about \$22 billion per year, approximately the same size as the road transport industry. Households in New South Wales spend an average of \$28 per week on culture.<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics research in 2002 indicated that 88% of the adult Australian population had attended at least one cultural venue in the preceding year<sup>3</sup> and research into the Wyong population indicates that residents generally attend cultural venues at an even higher rate than the national population. This indicates a high level of participation in cultural activities and a significant economic potential for cultural products if appropriately marketed.

Recent research has drawn a connection between economic success and a community that is culturally diverse and vibrant. Richard Florida argues that,

*Cities need a people climate before they need a business climate. This means supporting creativity across the board ... and building a community that is attractive to people, not just to high-tech companies.<sup>4</sup>*

Councils can help to create just such a people climate by building and nurturing attractive shared public places and cultural facilities, promoting participation through artistic expression and supporting the creative talent of young and emerging artists.

### **The Planning Context**

All levels of government recognize the importance of culture and the arts in developing and promoting dynamic and vibrant community life. The *Cultural Planning Guidelines* released by the NSW Ministry for the Arts in 2004 acknowledge “local councils’ key role in contributing to the well-being of local communities [and] that they are well-placed to support cultural institutions and ... inclusive participation in cultural expression at the local level.”<sup>5</sup>

Both federal and state governments provide funding programs to support small and large cultural projects consistent with government policies and priorities. Key themes of current federal and state cultural policy and planning include:

- Respect for the traditional owners of the land
- Respect for the diversity of the New South Wales and Australian population
- Encouragement of education, learning, excellence, innovation and experimentation
- Recognition of the arts practice of children and young people
- Encouragement of participation in a rich cultural life for everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Hawkes for the Cultural Development Network (Vic.), *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, Common Ground Publishing 2001, p.38

<sup>2</sup> *NSW Cultural Statistics Snapshot*, NSW Ministry for the Arts website February 2005

<sup>3</sup> *Attendance at selected cultural venues and events*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p.3

<sup>4</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Pluto Press Australia, 2003, p.283

<sup>5</sup> *Cultural Planning Guideline for Local Government*, NSW Ministry for the Arts, 2004, p.3

Wyong Shire Council supports culture and the arts through the provision of library services, support for events and the provision of small grants for cultural organizations through the Community Improvements Grants program. A number of Council plans and strategies are relevant to the development of this cultural plan in particular the *Community Plan 2002*, the 2004-2005 *Management Plan*, the Wyong-Tuggerah Planning Strategy and strategic planning for Warnervale. Care has been taken to ensure that this plan is consistent with these and other relevant documents.

### The Culture of Wyong Shire

People are the heart of the cultural life of the community and without them there is, literally, no culture. Responses to a 2004 survey of cultural organizations based in Wyong Shire or having a Central Coast focus indicate that there were a total of 2,480 members of organizations, 420 voluntary workers and 268 paid workers in the responding organizations. This is an underestimate of the people actively involved in cultural and arts activities in the Shire as returns were received from 58% of surveys distributed. Based on this research there is an estimated annual audience for cultural activities such as exhibitions, events and performances of over 100,000 people.

The research for this project revealed a rich diversity of cultural groups, businesses and individual artists and performers in the Shire. Not counting individuals, these groups may be summarized as follows:

Adult education centres	5
Craft	40
Cultural Diversity	27
Dance	27
Events	21
Film & Media	11
Heritage	4
Music	23
Photography	22
Studios and galleries	12
Theatre	10
Visual Arts	10
Writing, Speaking & Literature	8

Highlights of the cultural life of the Shire include:

- The traditional owners' 40,000 year history of living on the Central Coast. There are a number of organizations of Aboriginal people in the Shire including the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council based in Wyong township.
- The post 1788-history of the Shire including the story of the timber industry, agriculture and transport and items of built heritage.
- Norah Head Lighthouse and Hargraves House at Noraville.
- The relatively small (compared with New South Wales as a whole) but richly diverse multicultural community.
- Central Coast Festival of the Arts (approx 4,000 visitors per annum).
- Wyong-based theatre groups (up to 6 productions per year at the Memorial Hall, Wyong).
- Central Coast Country Music Festival (approx 25,000 visitors per annum).
- Annual Gathering of the Clans (approx 15,000 visitors per annum).
- Music program at Gorokan High School.
- Contemporary art and world music at the Grand Hotel, Wyong.
- A large number of dance schools.

Infrastructure that supports culture and the arts consists of a network of five libraries, 51 council halls the largest being the Memorial Hall in Wyong, eight community and neighbourhood centres, a small art gallery at Wallarah Point Park Gorokan, a potters' studio, arts facilities at Gravity Youth Centre, a movement studio at Wadalba Community School and parks and reserves including The Entrance Memorial Park. There are two privately operated cinemas in the Shire. The University of Newcastle Ourimbah Campus is also a significant cultural asset that supports tertiary education in visual, performing and literary arts. At a regional level Wyong residents have access to Gosford Region Art Gallery at East Gosford, Laycock Street Theatre at Wyoming, Mt Penang Parklands festival venue and Lake Macquarie Art Gallery at Booragul.

Cultural professionals at local and regional level include:

- Youth Arts Officer at Gravity Youth Centre (funding terminating in 2005).
- Librarians and library technicians WSC (12).
- Cultural Planner WSC (temporary, until June 2005).
- Events and marketing personnel at The Entrance, Toukley Greater Vision, Wyong Town Centre, Mt Penang Parklands.
- Cultural Officer, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Gosford Regional Gallery and Laycock Street Theatre staff.
- Manager Arts and Culture, GCC.
- Cultural Development Officer, GCC.
- Events Officer, GCC.
- Youth Arts Officer, Parkside Youth Centre.

### **Community Consultation**

More than 1,000 community members were involved in the development of this cultural plan. These included:

- A Cultural Plan Reference Group consisting of community members representing a range of cultural perspectives including Aboriginal and non-English-speaking backgrounds, youth, visual arts, performing arts, literature, tertiary education and arts advocacy. Council officers in the group represented the disciplines of cultural, social and environmental planning, landscape architecture, community development and recreation.
- Cultural forum attendees – 110 people.
- Community surveys – over 750 responses.
- Postcard competition – 101 entries.
- Meetings with interagencies and community groups.
- One-on-one interviews with fifty-five people.

Key objectives of the consultation included:

- Establishing a sense of the cultural identity of the Shire.
- Determining what community members see as the cultural assets of the Shire and how these can be built on.
- Determining levels of satisfaction with Council's existing cultural programs.
- Developing a long term vision of the cultural landscape of Wyong Shire.
- Understanding the issues for cultural development in Wyong Shire from the point of view of the arts community and its audiences.

The consultation revealed a diverse range of opinions and ideas from a broad representation of community backgrounds. There were some clear themes that emerged:

- People commented overwhelmingly on the importance of the natural environment to the cultural identity of the Shire and the region. As one interviewee put it, “people ... believe that they live in a defined region that is characterized by natural beauty of extraordinary variety.” Other themes included the state of rapid change that the Shire is undergoing - of being “reborn” - and the sense that the community is insufficiently connected with the heritage of the region including the Aboriginal and post-1788 stories.
- Council’s library network is well-regarded by the community as is The Entrance Memorial Park as a venue for outdoor entertainment.
- There is a rich diversity of activity at the community level but it takes place in spite of some significant gaps in infrastructure including:
  - Cultural professionals in Wyong Shire Council
  - A “hub” that can form the focus of cultural activity
  - A suitable facility for the performing arts and
  - Places for artists to exhibit their work.
- The community looks to Council to encourage:
  - Recognition and respect for the diverse cultures of the Shire.
  - The pursuit of innovation and excellence in the arts.
  - Cultural opportunities for young people.
  - Equity in access to opportunities for participation in culture and the arts.
- There is a need for action at a regional level including development of a regional cultural strategy.

### **A Plan for Action**

A four-year action plan has been developed in response to the research and community consultation. The themes of the action plan and highlights of the actions include:

#### *Creative Places*

- Establishment of a performing arts facility in accordance with the findings of the feasibility study currently being undertaken
- Creating opportunities for exhibition space and informal performance space in Council’s libraries and other community buildings
- Development of Wyong township as a focus of cultural activity by building on its natural features, heritage, its cultural organizations and events.

#### *Many Communities in One*

- Encouragement of festivals and events that celebrate the cultural diversity of the community.
- Development of a framework for consultation with the Aboriginal community.

#### *Supporting our Young People*

- Development of a Youth Strategic Plan.
- Establishment of a youth performing arts project in conjunction with the proposed performing arts centre.
- Investigating the feasibility of establishing a “Youth Art Cart” to take cultural activities to young people in isolated areas.

### *Resources in Place*

- Establishment of a Cultural Planner position to drive the implementation of the Cultural Plan.
- Establishment of a Cultural Grants program to resource community projects consistent with this Cultural Plan.
- Development of a long-term plan for the annual photographic competition and exhibition.
- Working with the business community to establish an Arts Foundation for Wyong Shire.

### *Celebrating our History and Heritage*

- Encouragement and support for programs that research and document the Aboriginal and post-1788 history of the Shire.
- Further development of a heritage walking trail of Wyong township and development of a heritage driving trail of the Shire.
- Working in partnership with community organizations, schools and seniors groups to develop an oral history program that documents the experiences of older residents.

### *Places You Want To Be*

- Development of a public art policy and strategy for Wyong Shire.
- Investigating the establishment of an outdoor amphitheatre for live theatre and concerts.
- Establishing a walking and cycle track along the northern bank of the Wyong River at Tacoma and including public art to reference the heritage of the area.
- Working with sporting and cultural groups to develop a “Festival of the Waters” in 2008 as a celebration of natural and cultural heritage.

### *Why Not in Wyong?*

- An artist-in-residence program in the visual arts and a Master Class program in the performing arts.
- An Open Studio Day program to showcase the work and artistic practice of local artists.
- An annual cultural awards program.

### *Well-Connected*

- A communications package including a cultural directory and a calendar of events, possibly in conjunction with Gosford City Council.
- Annual forums to promote networking amongst artists and arts organizations.

### *Working as a Region*

- Approach Gosford City Council and other government agencies to establish regular liaison between cultural professionals and work towards the development of a regional cultural strategy.

# Timeframe for Key Actions

## Year 1

### *Infrastructure*

- Complete feasibility study on the performing arts centre.
- Establish Cultural Planner position.
- Work with community groups towards establishing a cultural precinct in Wyong township.
- Develop strategic plan for display of material in Civic Centre foyer.
- Resource extension to Toukley Arts Centre.

### *Policy and Strategy*

- Develop guidelines for Cultural Grant program.
- Develop long-term plan for photographic competition.
- Document Council's collection of historical artefacts.
- Develop Public Art Policy and Strategy.
- Develop Master Plan for public art for Warnervale.
- Develop a framework for engaging cultural professionals.

### *Youth*

- Develop a Youth Strategic Plan.
- Adopt Youth Protocol for public space.

### *Diversity*

- Work with Indigenous community to develop protocols for acknowledgment and involvement in council ceremonies and meetings.
- Develop Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement.

### *Other*

- Negotiate with the business community to establish an arts foundation.
- Establish working party to identify regional projects.

## Year 2

### *Infrastructure*

- Ongoing development of performing arts centre.
- Application for "City of Arts" funding.
- Identify outdoor venues for cinema and concerts.
- Conduct feasibility study on outdoor amphitheatre.
- Develop "Gateway" projects in Sparks Road and Wyong Roads.
- Civic Centre Foyer in use as display space for heritage and visual arts.

### *Programs*

- Initiate artist-in-residence and master class program.
- Initiate cultural grants program.
- Initiate communication program – directory, event calendar and website.

- Initiate training program in arts management skills for community groups.
- Develop communications package to attract creative businesses and organisations to locate in Wyong township.

#### *Policy and Strategy*

- Develop collection and gifts policy for shire art collection and gifts to the organisation.
- Develop filming policy.

#### *Heritage*

- Develop Wyong township heritage walking trail.
- Develop street naming strategy for Indigenous and European heritage.
- Establish exhibition on Indigenous heritage in a library branch.

#### *Diversity*

- Work with the indigenous community to identify ways to establish a community worker position.
- Initiate cross-cultural training.
- Work with Gosford City Council to establish a multicultural worker position for the region.
- Initiate a community arts program to involve youth and people from diverse backgrounds.

#### *Youth*

- Establish youth performing arts project.

### **Year 3, programs begun in Year 2 plus ...**

#### *Youth*

- Conduct feasibility study on establishing an “art cart”.
- Establish Gravity Community Park cultural program.

#### *Infrastructure*

- Ongoing development of performing arts centre.
- Establish Cultural Projects Worker position.

#### *Heritage*

- Establish oral history project with schools/seniors/family history groups.
- Conduct a heritage forum to develop a coordinated approach to collecting heritage material.

#### *Programs*

- “Festival of the Waters”, a community celebration.
- Initiate an Open Studio program.

### **Year 4, programs from Years 2 and 3, plus ...**

#### *Heritage*

- Develop a heritage driving trail of the Shire.
- Establish a walking track at Tacoma incorporating public art on the heritage of the area.

# Introduction

## The Project

The development of a Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire has been conducted over a 10-month period in 2004 and 2005. It has been a collaborative project between Council, other government agencies, community groups and individual arts practitioners.

The Plan provides an immediate and long-term direction for culture and the arts for Wyong Shire. It is designed to guide the activities of Council and the community over the term of the plan and provide a foundation for cultural development into the future. It seeks to achieve this aim with due regard to the rapid changes that the region is experiencing in the present and is expected to experience over the term of the plan and beyond.

## Definition

In the broadest sense, culture is everything in human behaviour that is not instinctive. Thus culture refers to our shaping of the environment by the making of implements, shelter and settlements, communication with our fellow community members and the enhancement of our surroundings by creating comfort and the means of enjoyment. The culture of a community and all the diverse smaller communities that it encompasses is its way of life.

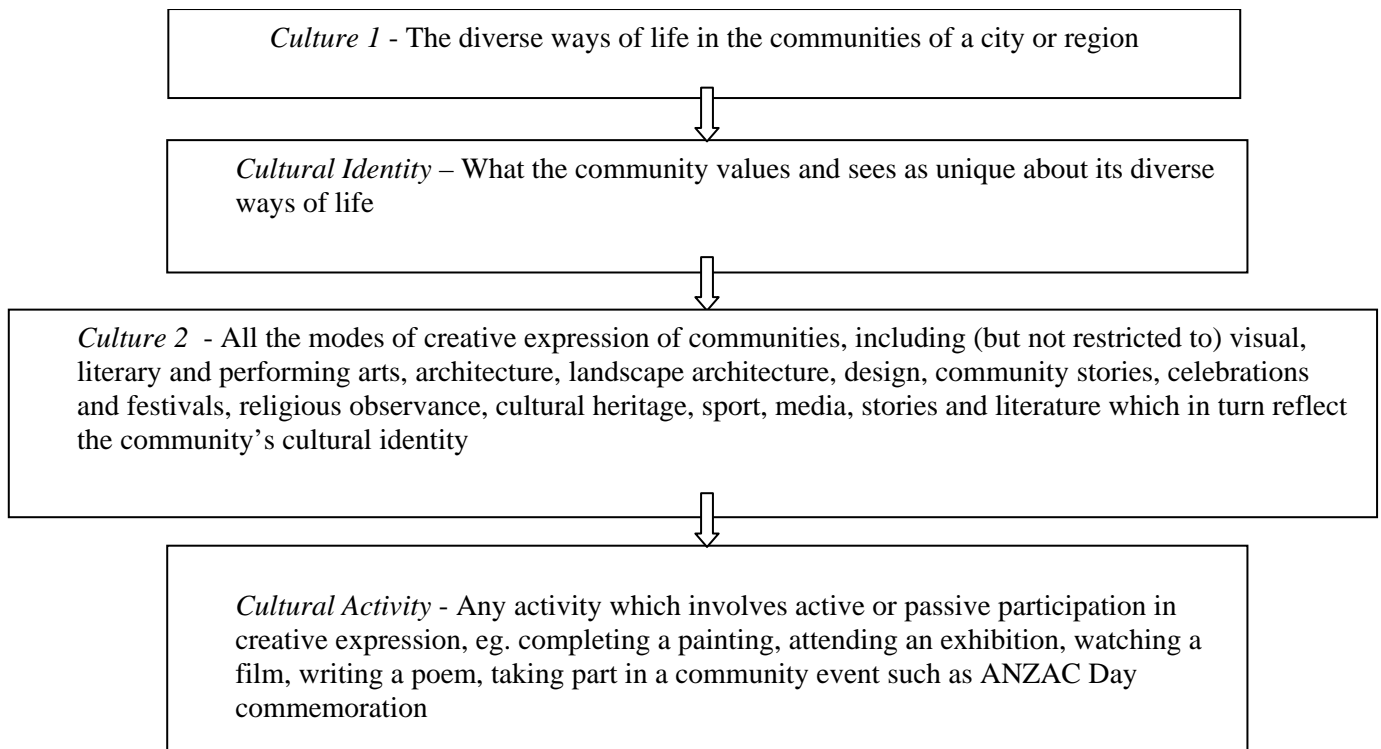
The practice of cultural planning, however, requires a related but more focused definition: all the modes of creative expression of a community, including (but not restricted to) visual, literary and performing arts, architecture, landscape architecture, design, community stories, celebrations and festivals, religious observance, cultural heritage, sport and media which in turn reflect the community's cultural identity.

## Cultural Planning Principles

The following principles were developed in consultation with the Cultural Plan Reference Group and have guided the development of this cultural plan:

- Council has a key role in providing leadership and support in developing culture and the arts.
- A diverse and vibrant cultural life is integral to a healthy community.
- Council is committed to working with the communities that make up the population of the area, to identify and build on their cultural assets.
- All members of the community have the right to participate in a rich and diverse cultural life.
- Council values and encourages participation, innovation, excellence and good governance in the practice of individual arts and cultural mediums.

*What is Culture? Two Distinct but Related Meanings.*



**Cultural Plan Reference Group**

Damien Aidon	Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.
Pari Batha	Central Coast Multicultural Project.
Jodi Cameron	Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.
Margrite Erling	Wyong Youth Arts Project.
Graham Hankin	FUSION Arts and Wyong resident.
Stephen Hopley	FUSION Arts and Wyong resident.
Jill Mather	Writer and Wyong resident.
Jocelyn McKinnon	Ourimbah Campus University of Newcastle.
Joanne Boccalatte	WSC Community Services.
Christine Bramble	WSC Cultural Planner.
Dawn Brown	WSC Community Services.
Kylie Frazer	WSC Senior Social Planner.
Boyd McMillan	WSC Landscape Architect.
Steve Prince	WSC Recreation Planner.
Dan Smith	WSC Director Strategic Planning.
Greg White	WSC Manager Environmental Planning.

Wyong Shire Council would like to express sincere appreciation to the community members of the Cultural Plan Reference Group, who generously gave their time, energy and creativity in helping with this project.

## How This Plan Was Developed

The project to develop a cultural plan for Wyong Shire builds on the recommendations of the Community Plan 2002 and adopted an Assets Based Cultural Development approach, a planning strategy that focuses on existing strengths and assets rather than needs. The process followed in developing the Cultural Plan is shown in the diagram below.

*Figure 1: Steps to develop the Cultural Plan*

### *Step 1*

#### Fill in the Background

- Review relevant Wyong Shire Council plans.
- Review relevant regional, state and federal plans and policies.
- Review Australian Bureau of Statistics and other data.
- Assess cultural facilities, programs and organisations.

### *Step 2*

#### Talk to the Community

- Cultural Plan Reference Group.
- Public forums.
- Interagencies and relevant community groups.
- Surveys.
- One-on-one interviews.
- Postcard competition.

### *Step 3*

#### Identify Issues & Strategies

- Identify themes and key issues.
- Develop a draft plan.

### *Step 4*

#### Place on exhibition

- Ask the community to comment.
- Revise exhibition draft.

### *Step 5*

#### Adopt cultural plan

- Identify resources.

### *Step 6*

#### Implement cultural plan

- Ongoing review

## Background Research

The principle background research undertaken was as follows.

- A review of Wyong Shire Council's Community Plan 2002.
- A review of Wyong Shire Council's Management Plan 2004-2005.
- A review of other relevant council reports and plans and relevant consultants' reports.
- A review of relevant regional and state government plans and policies.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics data was reviewed including 2001 Census data and data relating to arts and culture, participation and the role of the cultural industries in Australia.
- A review of Council's current resourcing of cultural activities.
- Development of a database of community groups, businesses, government agencies, individuals and venues involved in cultural activities in Wyong Shire and the Central Coast.
- Mapping of existing cultural assets and activities.
- A survey of community groups, government agencies, businesses and individuals involved in cultural activities.
- Investigation of cultural plans and activities of other local government areas in Australia.
- Review of international trends in cultural development.

## Consultation

This plan has been developed with the views of the Wyong Shire community as its focus. Over a 10-month period a variety of methods has been used to seek people's views. Altogether we consulted more than 1,000 people, many of them representatives of organisations with hundreds of members.

The purpose of the consultation program was to:

- Inform and raise awareness of the role of culture and cultural planning.
- Establish a sense of how community members perceive the cultural identity of Wyong Shire.
- Determine what community members consider to be the cultural assets and gaps for Wyong Shire.
- Determine levels of satisfaction with Council's existing cultural programs.
- Develop a snapshot of patterns of attendance at cultural venues and events.
- Develop a snapshot of patterns of participation in cultural activities.
- Explore options for expanding Wyong Shire's cultural assets and infrastructure.
- Develop a long term vision of the cultural landscape of Wyong Shire.
- Gain an understanding of the issues for cultural development in Wyong Shire, from the point of view of the arts and cultural community and the audiences.

The principle consultation and communication components of the project are outlined in the following section.

### 1. Cultural Plan Reference Group

This group was convened at the start of the cultural planning project to advise the Cultural Planner at key stages. Community members were selected for their ability to reflect a range of cultural perspectives and included representatives of the Aboriginal community and people from non-English speaking backgrounds, tertiary education, arts advocacy and visual, performing and literary arts. Council officers in the group represented the disciplines of cultural, social and environmental planning, landscape architecture, community development and recreation.

The Group was formally convened for three meetings and assisted the Cultural Planner to:

- Finalise the project brief.
- Develop a consultation program.
- Comment on the Consultation Report.
- Identify key themes and issues and priorities.

The completed draft plan was circulated to members for comment.

## 2. Cultural Forums

The Cultural Forums were held at the Civic Centre on 9 & 11 November 2004. The forums were widely advertised and were attended by approximately 110 people. Each forum consisted of two workshop sessions during which forum members selected discussion groups based on

- a. Special interest issues, eg, Aboriginal culture, visual arts, events, etc.
- b. "Hot topics" – each forum member nominated a topic on arrival. These were then grouped thematically to form discussion groups, eg cultural awareness, promoting excellence, regional issues.

Each group created a record of the discussion which was then incorporated into a Consultation Report.

## 3. Attendance at Interagencies and Relevant Community Group Meetings

These groups included FUSION Arts Central Coast Inc., the Central Coast Aboriginal Interagency, the Central Coast Multicultural Interagency, the Central Coast Multicultural Project Committee and the Central Coast Youth Interagency. One or more meetings were attended either by invitation or as an *ex officio* member, for the purpose of introducing the cultural planning project and canvassing views.

## 4. Community Survey

Information was collected from community members through a telephone survey of 300 residents selected at random and conducted during the evenings and Saturday mornings as well as during the day time.

## 5. One-On-One Interviews

Approximately fifty-five interviews were conducted, generally with single individuals but occasionally with two or three representatives of an organisation. People were selected to provide a range of views from community, business and government organisations with an interest in cultural development. They included representatives of key community groups involved in cultural activities in Wyong Shire. These interviews were in addition to attendance at meetings such as interagencies and community group meetings which are considered separately. A list of persons interviewed is included in the Consultation Report (Appendix 1). The interviews asked people to respond on the following:

- Perceptions of the cultural identity of Wyong Shire and the Central Coast
- The cultural assets of Wyong Shire – organisations, individuals, infrastructure
- Issues for cultural development in Wyong Shire.
- What cultural and arts activities people would like to see in Wyong Shire in the future

6. Postcard Competition – “My Favourite Place in Wyong Shire”.

Members of the community including children and young people in Wyong Shire Council vacation care centres and Gravity Youth Centre were invited to design a postcard showing their favourite place in Wyong Shire.

The purpose of this consultation method was to:

- Promote the cultural plan project to a broad audience
- Engage community members that would not otherwise become involved in a formal consultation, eg children and young people
- Encourage creative expression
- Recognise the value of creative expression
- Gain an impression of the cultural identity of the Shire in relation to a sense of place
- Gain an impression of the favourite activities of children and young people

*Figure 2: Under-18 Winner, Laurin Grime, Lake Haven*



Target groups were involved in the consultation program as indicated in Figure 3:

Figure 3: *Involvement of Target Groups in Consultation*

	<b>Phone Survey</b>	<b>Forums (of 110)</b>	<b>Interviews (of 55)</b>	<b>Postcard Competition (of 101)</b>
Aboriginal & Torres St Islanders	3.7%	8	4	n.d.
People from cultural & linguistically diverse backgrounds	7%	20	7	n.d.
Children & Youth	7%	4 (18-25 yrs)	12	50
People with disabilities	11%	8	n.d.	n.d.
Commuters	13%	16	n.d.	n.d.
New residents (< 1 year)	3%	4	n.d.	n.d.
Hinterland residents	5%	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.

Figure 3 demonstrates that the consultation program succeeded in canvassing the views of a good cross section of the Shire's community.

This section has reviewed the research and consultation methods employed in the development of this plan. The next section outlines the rationale for the project.

## Why a Cultural Plan?

Whilst local government has traditionally been seen to focus on “rates, roads and rubbish”, councils have in fact long been involved in cultural development activities by providing community centres, library services – an essential but often “invisible” cultural resource – and organising or resourcing civic and community events such as Australia Day ceremonies. However, this cultural engagement has not been conducted within a systematic cultural planning framework until relatively recently.

In the past twenty years many councils in New South Wales have progressively developed cultural plans, appointed cultural professionals, implemented cultural programs and established new cultural infrastructure such as theatres, galleries and designated cultural precincts.<sup>6</sup> Council facilitation of cultural development yields tangible benefits both in the community and economic domains.

### Culture and Community

Culture and cultural experiences reflect and celebrate the uniqueness of a community and contribute to its sense of identity. Such experiences can grow out of community initiatives specific to a sense of place, such as Nelson Bay’s “Festival of Whales”, which celebrates the annual migration of whales through the coastal waters of Port Stephens. Or they might emerge from the opportunities afforded by features in both the built and natural environment, like the Sculpture Garden overlooking the waters from Lake Macquarie’s Art Gallery Precinct or historical events such as Maitland’s Steamfest.

Cultural experiences might also be generated from the talent and creative expression of resident artists and performers, and engage an audience beyond the immediate community, such as the Central Coast Country Music Festival or Newcastle’s This is Not Art Festival. Cultural experiences can also grow out of the anxieties and tensions that accompany changing urban environments, such as the Green Square oral history project that documents the “unique industrial and working class history ... [that] lives in the minds, imaginations and experiences of the people who belong to and know an area”.<sup>7</sup>

In all their character and flavour, these cultural activities draw upon diverse social, economic, environmental and people-based resources in a region and celebrate and enhance the experience of being part of that particular community.

A report commissioned by the Australia Council for the Arts in 2000 found that:

*Nine out of ten Australians place a high or fairly high value on: learning about new things (93%); being intellectually stimulated (89%); and having some creative skill (88%) Only two-thirds of the population place the same value on having some sporting skill (68%) ... and 67% believe that ‘the arts should be as much about [expressing yourself creatively] as being part of an audience.’<sup>8</sup>*

The community survey conducted for this project found that Wyong Shire residents get involved in a wide range of cultural activities in their free time. Some of these could be termed passive, others are more active. Electronic media are pre-eminent but reading is also important. Reading books was the next most popular daily activity after watching television and listening to the radio.

Active cultural pursuits result in a cultural “product” – writing, art and craft, performing music or taking part in a play. The surveys demonstrate that a high percentage of respondents engage in at least one of these activities *at some time*. Writing for pleasure is the most common activity – almost 60% of respondents.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Conroy, “One Size Does Not Fit All”, *artwork*, issue 55, May 2003, p.31-35

<sup>7</sup> *Everyone Knew Everyone - Histories and memories of Green Square*, South Sydney Development Corporation, 2001, p.2

<sup>8</sup> *Australians and the Arts*, Saatchi and Saatchi, for the Australia Council, 2000, p.22

This participative, interactive engagement in cultural activities brings people together and is recognised as providing a rich foundation for community cultural development and the building of social capital:

*Active community participation in arts practice is an essential component of a healthy and sustainable society. The methodologies of arts practice not only open up fantastic vistas of community expressivity but also, in their application, profoundly contribute to the development of community.*<sup>9</sup>

## Culture and the Economy

There are real economic benefits attached to cultural engagement. In New South Wales at the 2001 Census 2.5% of employed persons were employed in cultural and recreation services. In Wyong Shire, the proportion was 2.1% or 977 people, an increase of 82% since 1991.<sup>10</sup> The Australian production of cultural goods and services totals about \$22 billion a year. This makes the cultural industries approximately the same size as the road transport industry, the banking industry and the communications services industry. Households in NSW spend an average of over \$28.00 per week on culture. This includes more than \$7 per week on literature and more than \$9 a week on television, video and photographic equipment.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 4: Attendance at Cultural Venues – Wyong Residents compared with Australians



Australian Bureau of Statistics research in 2002 indicated that 88% of the adult population (or 12.8 million people) had attended at least one cultural venue in the preceding year. Cinemas, libraries, botanical gardens, zoos and aquariums attracted the highest participation rates.<sup>12</sup> As illustrated in Figure 4, Wyong residents demonstrate a higher level of attendance at most types of venue (botanical gardens and classical music concerts are the exception) than for Australia as a whole. This reflects the proximity to the cultural opportunities of the Sydney metropolitan area and Newcastle but also shows a high level of participation in cultural activities and a significant economic potential for cultural products if appropriately marketed.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Hawkes for the Cultural Development Network (Vic), *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, Common Ground Publishing 2001, p.38

<sup>10</sup> *Central Coast Regional Profile & Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, Tables 10.11 and 10.12, pp.232-233

<sup>11</sup> *NSW Cultural Statistics Snapshot*, NSW Ministry for the Arts website February 2005

<sup>12</sup> *Attendance at selected cultural venues and events*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p.3

More than one and a half million people visited the Central Coast as tourists in 2003.<sup>13</sup> Many of these people visit because of the natural attractions of the lakes, beaches and bush. A study commissioned by Central Coast Tourism in 2004 has identified ways of utilising these attractions as a catalyst for economic investment in nature tourism.<sup>14</sup> Some of the larger cultural events in Wyong Shire and on the Central Coast are already a draw card for people outside the region. These include the Annual Gathering of the Clans at Toukley, the Country Music Festival at The Entrance and the Australian Springtime Flora Festival at Mt Penang.

Cultural tourism can also develop around cultural venues and historical buildings and precincts. Morpeth, for example, is marketed as the “Historic Capital of the Hunter”. In the 19th century, Morpeth was the gateway to the inland and one of the busiest trade centres in New South Wales. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it attracts thousands of visitors each year to its unique combination of art and craft shops, antique shops, heritage buildings and cafes. At present there is no recognised “historic hub” on the Central Coast although there are clusters of historically significant buildings and sites – such as in Wyong township or Ourimbah – that could be developed as tourist attractions around the history of the traditional owners, agriculture, timber getting and rail transport.

Recent research has drawn a connection between economic success and a community that is culturally diverse and vibrant. Richard Florida argues that:

*Cities need a people climate even more than they need a business climate. This means supporting creativity across the board – in all of its various facets and dimensions – and building a community that is attractive to creative people, not just to high-tech companies.*<sup>15</sup>

Councils can help to create just such a people climate. They can do this by engaging in cultural planning to:

- Build and nurture attractive shared public places and “buzzing” cultural facilities;
- Promote participation and community connectedness through artistic expression; and
- Support the creative talent of young and emerging artists.

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Wyong Shire Council takes a planned approach to all its primary roles. It is therefore crucial for Council to have a strategic plan for the support and development of arts and culture. In addition the NSW Ministry for the Arts requires councils to demonstrate that a strategic cultural plan is in place in order to access grant funding.

Community groups, individual artists and cultural businesses seeking to advance or develop the culture of the area can use this plan to guide their activities, confident in the knowledge that it is the result of extensive community consultation. Any group applying for funding will also be able to use this plan to support their applications where requests for funding are consistent with the priorities arising from it.

This section has reviewed the reasons for developing a cultural plan. The next section reviews relevant plans and policies at a national, regional and local level.

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<sup>13</sup> Information provided by Central Coast Tourism

<sup>14</sup> *Central Coast Nature Tourism Industry Development Plan*, Calais Consultants for Central Coast Tourism, 2004, p.3

<sup>15</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Pluto Press Australia, 2003, p.283

# The Planning Context

*Just as biodiversity is an essential component of ecological sustainability, so is cultural diversity essential to social sustainability. Diverse values should not be respected because we are tolerant folk, but because we must have a pool of diverse perspectives in order to survive, to adapt to changing conditions, to embrace the future.<sup>16</sup>*

## State and National

All levels of government recognise the importance of culture and the arts in developing and promoting dynamic and vibrant community life. At the Federal level, the Commonwealth Government provides leadership through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and programs such as *Festivals Australia* and *Visions of Australia*.

In New South Wales, the Ministry for the Arts takes this leadership role. As a result of consultation with the New South Wales Department of Local Government and the New South Wales Local Government and Shires Association the Ministry released the *Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government* in 2004. These guidelines acknowledge:

*Local councils' key role in contributing to the well-being of local communities [and] that they are well-placed to support cultural institutions and to encourage inclusive participation in cultural expression at the local level.*

The guidelines are designed to encourage a consistent and strategic long-term approach to cultural planning and development at the local level.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Federal and State governments provide funding programs to support small and large cultural projects. Depending on the program, funding may be available to councils, cultural institutions, community organisations, events organisers and individuals that can demonstrate that a given project is consistent with government policies and priorities.

Key themes of current federal and state cultural policy and planning include:

- Respect for the Aboriginal population of Australia as the traditional owners of the land and a growing commitment to engage with Aboriginal communities.
- Respect for the diversity of the New South Wales and Australian population (within a legal and constitutional framework where English is the common language).
- Encouragement of excellence in artistic endeavour.
- Encouragement of innovation and experimentation.
- Encouragement of education and learning.
- Ensuring that everyone in the community can participate in a rich cultural life.
- Recognition of the arts' practice of children and young people.
- Encouragement of partnerships at all levels of community activity.
- Encouraging communities to take ownership of their own cultural development.

<sup>16</sup> Jon Hawkes for the Cultural Development Network (Vic), *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, 2001, p.14

<sup>17</sup> *Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government*, NSW Ministry for the Arts, 2004, p.3

## Regional

At regional and local planning levels there is significant emphasis on developing facilities and programs to enhance quality of life and ensure long-term sustainability of communities, especially in the context of substantial population growth. *Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan* (PlanningNSW 2003) envisages a prosperous and vibrant region where people want to live, work, visit and invest.<sup>18</sup>

Actions to support this vision include strengthening regional identity, increasing opportunities for participation in recreation and cultural activities, balancing recreational use and preservation of natural environmental features and improving the management of recreational and cultural facilities.<sup>19</sup> Specific recommendations include:

- Development of a Regional Cultural Plan.
- Advocating for the development of a regional conference facility that can also serve as a regional entertainment centre.
- Investigation of the development of purpose built cultural facilities to serve the needs of specific creative disciplines.<sup>20</sup>

Since the publication of *Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan*, Gosford City Council has released *A Celebration of Community – a cultural plan for Gosford*. Highlights of this strategic plan include support for the “concept of a civic centre / concert hall” in Gosford CBD, programs to raise awareness of the City’s heritage, communications initiatives and liaising with Wyong Shire Council “to ensure that major cultural projects and programs ... are complementary”.<sup>21</sup>

*A Celebration of Community* was adopted by Gosford City Council in June 2004 and has already yielded significant cultural development outcomes. Council has taken leadership in acting on recommendations such as the appointment of an Aboriginal community worker, the Erina Centre exhibition program and the staging of “Umina Family Flicks”. Council officers have commented on the high quality of proposals for cultural grants as community organisations pitch their applications either to specific issues or projects identified in the plan. Through the grants program, the community is taking real ownership of the plan and its recommendations.

## Local

At the local level Wyong Shire Council has recognised that, given the projected rate of population growth that will result in a community of 220,140 by 2031, “the people of Wyong Shire today are involved in a city-building project”.<sup>22</sup> This is an undertaking that requires cultural infrastructure and cultural programs to support a vision of a civic community where:

*Any day in any year, there may be a fresh encounter with a new talent, a keen mind or a gifted specialist ... a place where groups of women and men are seeking and developing the highest things they know.*<sup>23</sup>

Council currently supports culture and the arts through the provision of library services, support for a number of events and small grants for cultural organisations through the Community Improvement Grants program.

<sup>18</sup> *Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan (Revised)*, PlanningNSW, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, 2003, p.6

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.110

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.115

<sup>21</sup> *A Celebration of Community – a cultural plan for Gosford*, 2004, pp.43 & 45

<sup>22</sup> *State of the Environment, Wyong Shire Council, 2001-2002*, p.4

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Mead, quoted in *Redbook*, New York, August 1978

The overall direction for Wyong Shire Council is set by its objective of “building a better tomorrow”.<sup>24</sup> The organisation is currently developing a Shire Wide Strategic Plan that will set the direction for the Shire to the year 2025. It will contain the vision for present and future communities across the Shire. Council acknowledges that it cannot achieve its vision alone. It needs the input and the support of the community and all levels of government.

In the domain of culture, Council acknowledges that “cultural development and community arts activities and facilities ... respond [ ] to the need for creative community expression and contribute [ ] to a sense of community cultural identity.”<sup>25</sup>

The *Community Plan* recommends actions to “support cultural diversity and encourage participation in cultural activities”, including appointment of a Cultural Development Project Officer and preparation and implementation of a Cultural Plan, development of a network of arts centres and programs to encourage participation in cultural activities.<sup>26</sup> The development of this Cultural Plan is a direct outcome of the *Community Plan* and occurs within the framework of the 2004-2005 *Management Plan*.<sup>27</sup>

Cultural planning is relevant to and consistent with a range of council plans and projects currently underway. Council’s Plan of Management for sportsgrounds, parks and playgrounds encourages “recreational, cultural, social and educational pastimes and activities”.<sup>28</sup> Its Landscape Policy and Guidelines requires consideration of the impact of any proposal “on cultural values, including sensitivity of any Aboriginal or other heritage.”<sup>29</sup> Development Control Plans (DCP’s) in general aim at achieving harmonious public places that are visually appealing and that retain the valued characteristics of an area. For instance, Wyong Town Centre DCP No.7 calls for “complementary built forms, quality urban design solutions and the enhancement of the character of the area”.<sup>30</sup>

DCP No. 60 for The Entrance Town Centre aims to “provide for a range of entertainment, dining and other tourist related activities; to ensure a harmonious and attractive living environment for residents and visitors; to provide a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors.”<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, The Entrance Town Centre has become a centre that attracts families and tourists from throughout the Central Coast and beyond with its offering of a broad range of cultural experiences. This role will be augmented in the future with the establishment of a planned event park at North Entrance that will accommodate carnivals.

The township and main shopping streets of Wyong face a similar challenge to many other regional cities. As the civic centre it is less of a business and retailing hub than in earlier times although it remains the centre of Council business. A number of other government functions are located in Wyong including the courthouse, Centrelink and a Motor Registry. Westfield Tuggerah shopping centre draws visitors from throughout the Central Coast and the Lower Hunter regions and in addition to retailing, provides a range of services including banking, professional services, cinema and a library that have been historically associated with a town centre.

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<sup>24</sup> *Management Plan 2004 – 2005*, Wyong Shire Council, p.11

<sup>25</sup> *Guidelines for the Planning and Provision of Community Facilities in Wyong Shire*, Section 94 Background Paper, Final Report, Wyong Shire Council Strategic Planning Department, June 2000, p.26

<sup>26</sup> *Community Plan 2002*, Wyong Shire Council, pp.110-111

<sup>27</sup> *Management Plan 2004 – 2005*, Wyong Shire Council, p.39

<sup>28</sup> Plan of Management, Sportsgrounds, parks, playgrounds and general community use, Wyong Shire Council, 2000, p.3

<sup>29</sup> Landscape Policy and Guidelines, Wyong Shire Council, 2001, p.23

<sup>30</sup> *Wyong Town Centre Development Control Plan No 7*, 1.5

<sup>31</sup> The Entrance Town Centre Development Control Plan No 60, 1.4

This cultural plan recommends building on the existing cultural and heritage assets of the Wyong town centre to allow it to develop as the “hub” of cultural activity within the Shire. It is therefore particularly relevant to the Wyong Town Centre Planning Strategy which aims to “ensure Wyong’s role as a civic/administrative centre for the Shire”<sup>32</sup> and the Wyong Tuggerah Planning Strategy which identifies the study area as “uniquely placed ... [with] extraordinary access to both the rural and coastal communities, which make up the Central Coast and to the surrounding Sydney, Newcastle and Hunter regions.”<sup>33</sup> Cultural facilities and events can be powerful statements of community identity and a close relationship between civic and cultural life is common in communities throughout the world. An example in our own vicinity is the clustering of Newcastle City Hall, Civic Theatre and Art Gallery.

The development of a town centre for the Warnervale/Wadalba area provides the opportunity to engage in community building through the establishment of “natural and built venues to facilitate passive and active recreational and cultural activities” including the recommendation for an arts centre located in the town centre.<sup>34</sup>

A recurrent theme from the community consultation undertaken as a basis for this plan was the importance of the environment, both natural and built, to the region’s quality of life and its cultural identity. Council acknowledges this in its most recent *State of the Environment* Report:

*Unlike some other coastal councils Wyong Shire can still boast of many environmental assets which are in relatively good condition ... Council has introduced a range of projects and programs aimed at managing and slowing environmental decline.*<sup>35</sup>

This section has reviewed relevant plans, policies and funding programs that provide the context for and support cultural planning and development initiatives in Wyong Shire. The next section reviews the geographical and demographic features of Wyong Shire.

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<sup>32</sup> *Wyong Town Centre Planning Strategy*, Wyong Shire Council, 2000, p.21

<sup>33</sup> *Wyong Tuggerah Planning Strategy Draft Background and Issues Report*, Strategic Planning Department, September 2003, p.3

<sup>34</sup> *Community Support and Human Services Strategy for Warnervale / Wadalba*, Wyong Shire Council, revised edition September 2002, pp.21, 57,

<sup>35</sup> *State of the Environment*, Wyong Shire Council, 2003/2004, pp.5-6

# Wyong Shire Geography and Population

## Geographic Profile



The Wyong Shire together with Gosford City Council comprises the Central Coast region of New South Wales, located midway between Sydney and Newcastle. Residents of both Wyong and Gosford local government areas identify strongly as belonging to the Central Coast. In the words of one Wyong resident interviewed for this project, “people [living on the Central Coast] believe that they live in a defined region that is characterised by natural beauty of extraordinary variety.”

**Julie Robinson - Competition Entry**

The Aboriginal population had lived in the Central Coast area for up to forty thousand years before the arrival of Europeans in Australia in 1788. The Darkinjung territory extended north from the Hawkesbury River to the southern end of the Hunter catchment and northwest to the Wollombi Valley. The Kuringai people lived along the coastal strip. Further information and references on the culture of the Aboriginal people of the region prior to 1788 can be found in the Department of Education publication, *These are my people, this is my land*.<sup>36</sup> European settlers arrived in the area that is Wyong Shire in the nineteenth century, attracted by the opportunities for agriculture and rural industries including timber getting and dairying. Wyong township developed as the hub of this activity, a role strengthened by the establishment of the Sydney-Newcastle railway.

Wyong Shire is contained within boundaries strongly influenced by the natural environment. The boundary to the east is determined by the Tasman Sea (South Pacific Ocean). The northern boundary is defined by the southernmost bays of Lake Macquarie. The western boundary is fringed by the Hunter range and the forests of the Watagan Mountains. The southern boundary, running approximately northwest from Yambool Point, separates Wyong Shire from the City of Gosford. The Tuggerah Lakes system, consisting of Tuggerah Lake, Budgewoi Lake and Lake Munmorah, is wholly contained within the Shire boundaries.

Wyong Shire is rich in areas of natural beauty: open coast, beaches, headlands, rural valleys, national park, lakes, estuaries and wetlands. It contains diverse landforms, plants and animal species.

Settlement is most heavily concentrated in the east of the Shire, along the coastal strip and in suburbs and villages around the shores of the Lakes, close to the F3 Freeway and along the Pacific Highway. With the Shire situated midway between Sydney and Newcastle almost 33% of the workforce commutes outside the Central Coast each day, mainly to Sydney but also to the Hunter and the Illawarra.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Department of School Education Metropolitan North Region, *These are my people, this is my land*, n.d. (after 1990), pp.13-30

<sup>37</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.254

## Demographic Profile

The Central Coast is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. Population change has been substantially higher than in Sydney and New South Wales. From 1991 to 2001 the population of the Central Coast increased by 56,446 or 23.5% compared with 12% growth for New South Wales.

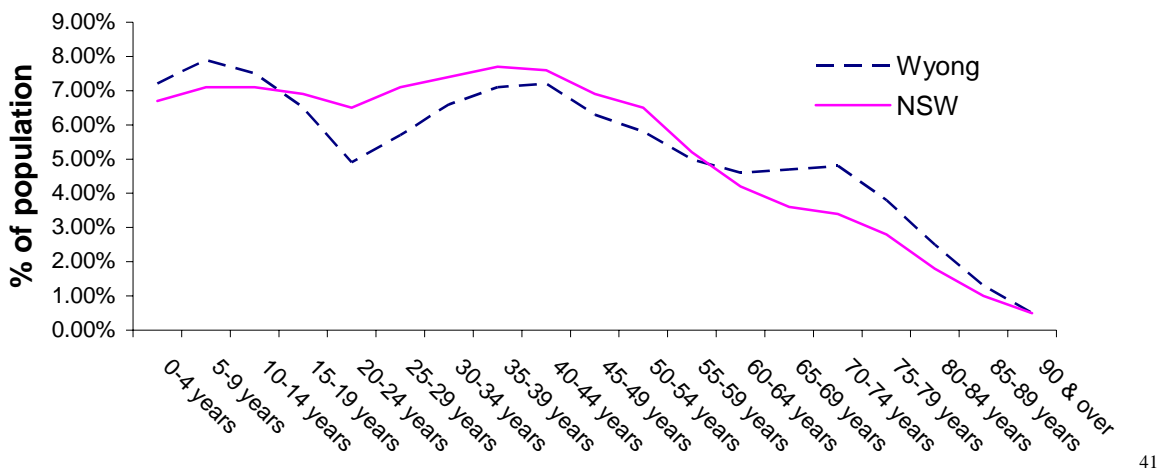
The rate of increase has been more marked in Wyong Shire than in Gosford. This is on account of the limited suitable land available for residential development in Gosford compared with Wyong. The estimated population of Wyong Shire in 2003 was 140,288 compared with 120,185 in 1996. The estimated population of Gosford in 2003 was 162,533. At the end of 2003 the two local government areas formed a region with a population of approximately 302,000. This represents an increase of almost 17% in seven years.

For the year 2001-2002 Wyong Shire grew by 2.0% or an estimated 2587 persons and for 2002-2003 by 1.6% or an estimated 2203 persons.<sup>38</sup> Wyong Shire Council has recognized the need to support these new residents in establishing themselves as members of the community by initiating a New Residents strategy. This includes regular free bus tours of the Shire for recently-arrived residents and a New Residents kit that provides information on local facilities and services.

Under the latest projections, the Shire's population is expected to reach 220,140 persons in 2031, an increase of almost 85,000 or 62% over the projected population in 2001.<sup>39</sup> This growth is driven by pressures related to the growth of Sydney<sup>40</sup> and specifically by the availability of land for residential development, rail and road links to Sydney and Newcastle, the natural environment and the lifestyle available to residents of the Shire.

Figure 5: Comparison of Age Distribution in 2001 – Wyong and New South Wales

### Age distribution 2001 - Wyong and NSW



<sup>38</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, pp.38-40

<sup>39</sup> DIPNR Population Projections for Statistical Local Areas, 2001 to 2031 (2004)

<sup>40</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.40

<sup>41</sup> Graph based on Tables 4.1 and 4.2 in *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, pp. 58 & 60

The major areas of age difference between Wyong and New South Wales at the 2001 Census are illustrated in Figure 5 and may be summarized as follows:

- There was a higher proportion of children aged 0 - 11 years in Wyong Shire than in NSW. In all the age groups 15 – 19 years to 55 - 59 years there were a smaller percentage of people in Wyong than in NSW with the difference most marked in the 20–24 years age group – 4.9% in Wyong compared with 6.5% in New South Wales.
- In the older age groups (60 years and above) there was a higher proportion of people in Wyong Shire compared with New South Wales.

Children form a numerically very significant portion of the Wyong and Central Coast population. However, the 0 – 4 years age group has trended downwards since 1991 and there are indications that this will continue over the next two decades. On the other hand the proportion of the population aged 55 and over has remained at around 27% in Wyong Shire over the same period.<sup>42</sup>

The “hour glass” age demographic of Wyong Shire impacts on the cultural life of the community in a number of ways. There are a large number of cultural organizations in the Shire that involve older people who have the time to extend themselves through arts activities and administration of community groups. This involvement is very positive for the community on the one hand but *can* lead to a cultural scene that is conservative and risk-averse as younger people may be unwilling to join these groups. The “brain drain” of young adults from the Central Coast to job opportunities and a more contemporary vibe in Sydney and Newcastle exacerbates this effect.

In 2001, there were 2,565 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Wyong Shire, representing 2% of the population and an increase of 43.5% since the previous Census in 1996. Across NSW this group makes up 1.9% of the overall population.<sup>43</sup>

Figure 6: Selected population groups as a proportion of the Wyong and New South Wales populations in 2001

Selected population groups (ABS Census 2001)	Wyong	NSW
Women	52%	51%
Men	48%	49%
Youth (12 - 25 years )	16.7%	18.9%
Children (0 - 11 years )	18.3%	16.6%
Seniors (55 + )	27%	22.5%
Percentage of Employed Persons in Wyong Shire that Travel Outside the Central Coast to go to Work	32.7%	-
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	2%	1.9%
Born Overseas	13.2%	23%
Born in Non-English Speaking Country	4.1%	16%
One Parent Families	13.3%	11.3%
Annual Household Income \$52 - \$10,348	4.4%	4%
Annual Household Income \$10,400 - \$20,748	22.9%	16%
Annual Household Income Over \$104,000	4%	10.2%

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, pp.57 - 60

<sup>43</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.108

In 2001 the majority of Wyong residents - 95.9% - originated from English-speaking countries including Australia. Amongst those who speak a language other than English at home the Census identified more than 31 language groups with the three largest being Italian (530 speakers), Chinese languages (316) and Spanish (269). This includes a large group categorised as "other".<sup>44</sup> Research by the Central Coast Multicultural Project in 2002 indicated that the actual number of languages spoken throughout the Central Coast is at least one hundred and two.<sup>45</sup> Between 1996 and 2001 the rate of increase in the number of people from culturally diverse background living on the Central Coast was 15.5%, more than twice the rate of increase for New South Wales as a whole.<sup>46</sup>

There were more households in the lower range of annual income in Wyong Shire than in New South Wales as a whole in 2001 (See Figure 6). This is skewed by the higher percentage of people in Wyong Shire who are over 55 and retired from the workforce and by the number of single parent families.<sup>47</sup>

In Wyong, 27.8% of people said that they used the Internet at the 2001 Census, compared with 36.4% across NSW. 36.7% of Wyong residents used a computer at home compared with 41.2% in New South Wales.<sup>48</sup> In an increasingly electronically connected society, this has implications for people's ability to participate fully in accessing information and education and to enjoy cultural experiences through New Media.

The Central Coast has significantly lower rates of participation in tertiary education compared with New South Wales. In 2001, 1.9% of Wyong residents were engaged in university or other higher education compared with 4.6% in New South Wales. The region also has a lower proportion of residents that completed Year 12 than the State – 27% compared with 38% respectively.<sup>49</sup> Many people's first foray into active participation in cultural pursuits is through a school or university course. Wyong residents' shorter period of exposure to formal education therefore can have implications for expectations and attitudes to culture later in life.

The Shire attracts people from all walks of life and amongst its residents are many talented professionals and retired professionals in cultural fields – such as country music, acting, directing, writing and the visual arts.

This section has given an overview of the geography of Wyong Shire and the demographic characteristics of its community. The next section provides an overview of the cultural life of the Shire at present and highlights the cultural assets on which the community can build.

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, pp.115-117

<sup>45</sup> *Profile of the Migrant Population on the Central Coast*, Central Coast Multicultural Project, May 2002, p.1

<sup>46</sup> Information provided by Central Coast Multicultural Project

<sup>47</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, pp.70

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, pp.211-212

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, pp.185 & 192.

# Wyong Shire, its Culture and Cultural Assets

## Part 1 – The Culture of Wyong Shire

### Introduction

The culture of a community – be it town, city, region or nation – is a little bit like a lava lamp. The movement of a lava lamp is driven by a convection current that moves the liquid in the lamp upwards and then down again in a continuous cycle. A lava lamp illuminates, entrances and surprises. It is constantly in motion and never repeats itself. See Figure 7.

The community is the convection current that drives cultural development. Every day, individuals and groups express themselves and the cultural identity of their communities through visual arts, design, craft, fashion, dance, drama, music, architecture, radio, research, reading, writing and celebrations to name but a few of the elements that constitute our culture. This creative and expressive energy is in evidence everywhere that there are people – at home, in schools and colleges and offices, the Council Chambers, on the bus, at dance class, in the local history museum, in shopping centres and the park. Culture is not restricted to the walls of art galleries or theatres although dedicated cultural facilities such as these are an important part of the cycle of community cultural development.

Figure7: Cultural Development as a Continuous Cycle of Interactions



To return to the analogy of the lava lamp, as the liquid in the lamp gets hotter it begins to move and rise – a successful neighbourhood festival is repeated bigger and better each year and its reputation spreads; a community college runs a great creative writing class and next term it engages extra tutors; a budding 12-year-old Oscar winner of the future gains a place at a Performing Arts High School; his mother moves on from a hobby painting course to enrol in Fine Arts at University; a one-person website designer takes on more staff as his happy customers spread the word; the local organisers of Youth Week win a state award; the council builds stage one of a public gallery in response to the growing demand for exhibition space... .

At the highest point of this cycle are the acclaimed artists of all genres, the state and national arts ministries, the regional and national theatre companies and academies, the symphony orchestras, the opera houses, the great public libraries, galleries and museums, the iconic landmarks, the international festivals and the awards that celebrate the cycle of the year and the finest flowering of the community's culture. These gifted people, flagship events and institutions and public places are rightly a focus of national and regional identity and pride. They do not - and should not - sit in splendid isolation as benchmarks alone, but actively feed back into the community in the form of inspiration, education, role-modelling and mentoring... As expressed by Jon Hawkes, 'culture is not a pile of artefacts – it is us; the living, breathing sum of us'.<sup>50</sup>

People are the heart of the cultural life of a community and without them there is, literally, no culture. Responses to a 2004 survey of cultural organisations based in Wyong Shire or having a Central Coast focus revealed that there were a total of 2,480 members of organisations, 420 voluntary workers and 268 paid workers in the responding organisations. This is an *underestimate* of people involved in cultural and arts activities in the Shire as returns were received from 58% of surveys distributed.

Many of these people are mature members of the community with years of experience in their chosen field of cultural endeavour, be it the visual arts, family history, musical drama or band music. In a community of commuters and with a high proportion of people aged over 55, the task of running organisations through committee and voluntary work is often undertaken by people who have retired from the paid work force. This strong involvement of mature aged adults in cultural activities allows the community to benefit from the wisdom and experience of the elders. At the same time there is the risk that cultural groups may be conservative and unwilling to experiment and the community loses the benefit of a diversity of age groups driving cultural activity.

### **The Regional Context**

Artists, performers, writers and their audiences are part of the Central Coast community as well as the community of Wyong Shire. As such, they have access to facilities and organisations in Gosford as well as in Wyong. Gosford's cultural infrastructure is more developed than in Wyong and there are more cultural organisations based there. This is a result of Gosford's greater population historically and its role as the regional centre.

In 2003-2004, 150,000 people visited Gosford Regional Gallery with up to 40% of these visitors coming from Wyong Shire. A similar percentage of Wyong artists enter the Gosford Art Prize each year.<sup>51</sup> Laycock Street Theatre collects audience statistics on a postcode basis. In 2003-2004, 4,997 people with a Wyong Shire postcode booked tickets for performances at the Theatre. Ticket purchases average two to three persons per booking so an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people from Wyong attended a performance at Laycock Street Theatre in that year.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, Jon Hawkes for the Cultural Development Network (Vic), Common Ground Publishing 2001, p.23

<sup>51</sup> Visitor statistics and estimates provided by Gosford Regional Gallery.

<sup>52</sup> Audience statistics and estimates provided by Laycock Street Theatre.

In the survey of cultural organisations and businesses the respondents were asked to indicate the size of their audience in the previous twelve months and the percentage of the audience from Wyong Shire. See Figure 8.

Figure 8: Audience Size in Previous Twelve Months

	Total Audience	Audience from WS
All Groups including groups based wholly in Wyong Shire, groups based in Wyong Shire and with a regional focus and Central Coast focussed groups based wholly or in part in Gosford. <sup>53</sup>	486,602	225,007
Groups based in whole or part in Wyong Shire	157,622	84,830

The numbers in the table are in many cases based on respondents' estimates and are indicative only but they do underline the interconnectedness of the cultural scene on the Central Coast and that the flow of audiences is a two-way process. There are more cultural groups in Gosford local government area than in Wyong Shire, reflecting a higher population than in Wyong historically.<sup>54</sup> Responses to the survey were returned from 58% of the groups that received the survey. Hence these figures are an *underestimate* of the audience in Wyong Shire.

Cultural facilities in Lake Macquarie Shire and Newcastle that were investigated for this study do not collect visitor statistics on a postcode basis. However, it is reasonable to assume that Wyong residents form part of the audience that visit Lake Macquarie Art Gallery, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Civic Theatre and Newcastle Regional Museum. School groups from Wyong Shire are known to be regular visitors to the Newcastle Regional Museum.<sup>55</sup>

### The Traditional Custodians

The community of Wyong Shire is many communities in one. The Aboriginal community, 2,565 individuals at the Census in 2001,<sup>56</sup> are the traditional custodians of the country that is Wyong Shire. Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC), which includes Gosford as well as Wyong local government areas, is based in Wyong township. The Land Council has recently appointed a Cultural Officer, who is a point of contact for Council on cultural issues.

The Aboriginal population had lived in the Central Coast area for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans in Australia in 1788. The Darkinjung territory extended north from the Hawkesbury River to the southern end of the Hunter catchment and northwest to the Wollombi Valley. The Kuringai people lived along the coastal strip. The land provided the people with materials – such as wood, stone and shell – to make tools and weapons and with food supplies such as fish and shellfish, vegetables and meat from mammals and birds. Physical evidence of the first people in the Wyong area is seen in rock engravings, cave drawings and middens. There are 270 Aboriginal sites in Wyong Shire that are listed on the National Parks and Wildlife register.<sup>57</sup> Further information and references on the culture of the Aboriginal people of the region prior to 1788 can be found in the Department of Education publication, *These are My People, This is My Land*.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Does not include Gosford based groups with a local rather than regional focus

<sup>54</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.37-38

<sup>55</sup> Information provided by the respective institutions.

<sup>56</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.108

<sup>57</sup> *State of the Environment 2003 / 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, p.193

<sup>58</sup> Department of School Education Metropolitan North Region, *These are my people, this is my land*, n.d. (after 1990), pp.13-30

Contemporary Aboriginal arts practice is supported through regional projects such as the annual Aboriginal art exhibition at Gosford Region Art Gallery and the NAIDOC Week Awards. The work of Aboriginal visual artists can be seen in public art in the Shire including the mural at Gravity Youth Centre and in collaborative community arts projects such as the anti-graffiti project at Oasis Youth Centre. There are a number of active Aboriginal cultural programs at schools in the Shire, in particular at Wyong Primary and High Schools.

### **Cultural Diversity**

Compared with other communities in New South Wales and Australia the degree of cultural diversity in the population of the Central Coast is low. In 2001, Wyong had 4.1% born in non-English speaking countries compared to NSW where 16.1% of the population is in this population group.<sup>59</sup> However, there are ten languages other than English that are spoken at home by more than one hundred people each in Wyong Shire, with the “top three” being Italian, Chinese languages and Spanish<sup>60</sup> and approximately ninety smaller language groupings spoken throughout the Central Coast.<sup>61</sup>

There are also at least twenty-three ethnic cultural community groups on the Central Coast that provide services and activities for members. Multicultural events and activities include International Lunch meetings at Warnervale Family and Community Centre, an International Family Picnic at San Remo and individual group meetings at licensed clubs, community centres and other venues. Recently the multicultural community on the Central Coast has lost the broadcasting licence for PCR FM radio. This is seen as a significant loss by the multicultural community.

### **Children and Young People**

Children and young people in school education in Wyong Shire have access to cultural activities through class and extracurricular programs in the creative arts. They are able to take part in school-based concerts, exhibitions and competitions. Local high schools run lunchtime activities such as “Wyong Idol” and practice sessions in all creative media.

Regional cultural events for schools include *A Central Vision* (schools’ art exhibition at Gosford Region Art Gallery) and *Central Coast Showcase* for the performing arts as well as *Starstruck* in Newcastle. Outstanding students have also achieved recognition in *ArtExpress*, an annual touring exhibition of HSC works, and through selection for high-profile events and organisations including the Olympic Games opening ceremony and the Australian Ballet.

Young people can also take advantage of out-of-school opportunities including dance, drama and music classes through private tuition. There is a particularly strong presence of dance schools in the Shire. Music lessons are available through the Central Coast Conservatorium outreach program based at Gorokan High School. The music education program at Gorokan High School is acknowledged for its energy and quality. The school’s musicians have many years experience of playing at festivals and events both nationally and internationally, their most recent tour being to Central Australia in 2004. Young people also participate in the Shire’s amateur theatrical groups as actors, orchestra or technical support. Several organisations have recently shown an interest in establishing a youth performing arts group in the Shire. Youth in Performing Arts is an annual event for young people in the region, held in the winter school holiday each year at Laycock Street Theatre.

Service providers organise weekend, evening and holiday activities at youth and children’s centres throughout the Shire. A dedicated Youth Arts Program based at Gravity Youth Centre boasts the only dedicated youth arts worker in the Shire and provides opportunities for creative expression including programs for young people at risk. However, it is understood that the NSW Ministry for the Arts funding for this program is to cease at the end of 2005.

<sup>59</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, p.116

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.117

<sup>61</sup> *Profile of the Migrant Population on the Central Coast*, Central Coast Multicultural Project, May 2002, p.13

Youth Week provides a focus for youth cultural activities each year. In 2003 a highly successful Fire and Art Festival was developed culminating in a final performance at Maple Circle, Watanobbi.

Professional facilitators in fire dancing choreographed a performance developed during six workshops with local young people and youth workers. Other events included break dancing workshops, drama performances, the Stormfront Youth Festival and the annual 'GOATS' Festival. In 2004 the Week included a Movie Premiere and Youth Recreational Expo, Surfing, break dancing and graffiti workshops, acrobatic workshops and skate board and BMX Competitions. This year young people in the Shire will be able to participate in dance parties, circus skills and graffiti workshops, BMX clinics and competition and Wat-A-Fest Youth Festival at Watanobbi.

Young people enrolled in tertiary education at Central Coast Campus have access to cultural programs organised by Campus Central<sup>62</sup> including cultural grants, lunchtime concerts, an annual art competition and events to mark milestones in the academic year.

### **Seniors' Cultural Opportunities**

In addition to all the events, exhibitions, workshops and performances that are available to them as members of the general public seniors are able to access a range of cultural activities at Seniors' Centres in the Shire. Long Jetty Seniors' Centre program includes an entertainment group, line dancing, New Vogue dancing, handcrafts, painting, yoga, Tai Chi and computer skills. Toukley Seniors' Centre provides Tai Chi, yoga, a drama group, floral art, handcrafts, woodwork, art, line dancing, New Vogue dancing, a choir, Old Time dancing and calligraphy. Lake Munmorah Seniors' Centre program includes Tai Chi and social dances. Talented visual artists on the Central Coast that are aged fifty and over can enter the annual Grandma Moses art competition and exhibition that is held in October each year at Gosford Senior Citizens' Centre.

### **Heritage**

Wyong Shire Heritage inventory includes a range of domestic, commercial, industrial, agricultural and community structures such as houses, shops, holiday accommodation, hotels, silos, churches, schools, halls, bridges and a lighthouse that reflect aspects of the Shire's agricultural, industrial, social and maritime heritage. These items date from the early 1800s to the twentieth century and are mainly clustered around Wyong Creek, Yarramalong, Noraville, Wyong town centre, Ourimbah and The Entrance/Long Jetty. The Norah Head Lighthouse is a widely-recognised regional landmark and has state significance in the history of navigation in New South Wales. The 'Hargraves house', also in Noraville, is a rare example of a Georgian era home built from local materials and has state significance because of its association with a key figure in Australia's nineteenth century economic and social development.

Heritage groups in the region include Wyong Historical Society based at Alison Homestead, Wyong, and Brisbane Water Historical Society based at Henry Kendall Cottage, West Gosford. Wyong Historical Society is recognised as the principal repository of the movable heritage of the Shire. Wyong Shire Council has a collection of artefacts specific to the history of the organisation but this collection has grown on an ad hoc basis and is as yet undocumented. The Military Museum and Library located at The Entrance / Long Jetty RSL Club collects, researches and displays the story of the region's involvement in overseas conflicts. Family history is also catered for. The Central Coast Family History Society is based in East Gosford and Wyong Family History Society has a research centre co-located with Wyong Chamber of Commerce and conducts regular workshops at Tuggerah Library. The research activities of these groups are supported by Wyong Council's Information Services Librarian who maintains and develops Local Studies and Family History Collections. Family history is very active in the Shire, perhaps because of the high proportion of retired people who have the time and the interest to pursue personal research. This area of cultural activity has the potential for intergenerational projects in the context of schools, TAFE and university history programs.

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<sup>62</sup> Campus Central is the membership organisation for all students and staff of Ourimbah Campus.

## The Performing Arts

In the Dramatic Arts, well-established events and groups include Wyong Drama Group and Wyong Musical Theatre Company, which between them present up to six productions per year at Wyong Memorial Hall. In 2004 Wyong Drama Group hosted 'Theatrefest', a 3-day festival of one-act plays that attracted entries and subscribers from throughout the Central Coast as well as from Newcastle, Gulgong and Canberra.

In January 2004 and 2005 the youthful Central Coast Shakespeare Company, in partnership with The Entrance Town Centre Management, brought an open air production of *Twelfth Night* to The Entrance Memorial Park. Though based in Budgewoi, the company is truly regional in scope and at the time of writing is preparing for a production of *Macbeth* on Terrigal Beach at Easter 2005.

The Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle offers courses at all levels in various aspects of the dramatic arts, from Introduction to Drama and Theatre Studies to Community Research and Drama at the Postgraduate level. 'ImaginedArts' is a theatre company based at the University that provides opportunities for students and community members to work together on projects for public performance at The Hangar, Ourimbah.

Dance is a popular pursuit in Wyong Shire. There is a number of private dance studios, dance companies and community organisations that provide tuition and performance opportunities both for fun and artistic development in classical and modern ballet, tap dancing, square dancing, folk dancing, belly dancing and new genres such as Ceroc. Contemporary dance such as break dancing and hip-hop have been successfully offered as activities at Gravity Youth Centre and Tuggerah Lakes Community College. End-of-year concerts are an annual focus for the groups providing private tuition and draw large crowds.

Whilst not as widely known as the Tamworth Country Music Festival, the Central Coast Country Music Festival held at various locations at The Entrance in March attracts an audience of up to 25,000 each year. The Central Coast is something of a 'hot spot' of country music talent, with nationally recognised stars such as Kasey Chambers based here. The popularity of country music in the region is supported by a community radio station, 'Hits & Country 94.1' based at The Entrance. Federation Park at Warnervale has in the past been used as an outdoor venue for country and other music genres. This venue is currently somewhat run down and not widely known. With the increasing population of the area it is an asset that could be redeveloped.

Over twenty community programs, groups and businesses in the Shire categorised as 'musical' include brass and country music bands, classical ensembles, seniors' and children's choirs and guitar tuition. One of the more innovative and unusual of these is Central Coast Creative Choirs which runs classes at The Entrance. It is a 'signing choir' of relatively recent origin that is gaining a reputation throughout the Central Coast and which contributes both to cultural expression and to a spirit of inclusiveness and acceptance of difference. The licensed clubs and pubs in the Shire provide daily access to a range of popular music genres. The Grand Hotel, Wyong, is working on audience development by trying innovative programs such as 'The Acoustic Lounge', which operates successfully at hotels in Sydney and the Illawarra.

Residents wishing to learn to sing or play a musical instrument are catered for by private music schools and individual tutors and courses at the two Community Colleges in the Shire. Courses range from the traditional skills such as guitar to more unusual media such as shamanic drumming. Primary and High Schools in the Shire provide a range of programs as part of the syllabus as well as for extracurricular activities. Their students participate in school and community concerts as well as annual events such as *Central Coast Showcase*, *The Schools Spectacular* (Sydney) and *Starstruck* (Newcastle). Lack of a venue of a suitable size and standard prevents the establishment of this sort of interschool program in Wyong Shire.

The music education program at Gorokan High School is acknowledged for its energy and quality and the school has recently become the base for the Central Coast Conservatorium of Music Outreach Program in Wyong Shire. This program sees the school facilities in after-hours use on all week days. The school's musicians have a 12-year record of playing at festivals and events both nationally and internationally, their most recent tour being to Central Australia in 2004.

### **The Visual Arts**

The Central Coast is a region of great natural beauty and this is reflected in the work of many of its visual artists. Landscapes, particularly Wyong Shire landscapes, and wildlife were the predominant subject of the Toukley and Districts Arts Society exhibition in November 2004. These are also strong themes of the annual Gosford Art Prize which receives approximately 35% of its entries from Wyong-based artists.

There are a number of private art galleries in the Shire, restaurants that host exhibitions (eg the Shore Thyme Restaurant at Norah Head) and a small public gallery co-located with the Tourist Information Centre at Gorokan and managed by the Toukley and Districts Art Society. The society has plans for a small extension of the gallery to provide improved workshop and exhibition facilities.

Tuggerah Lakes Art Society is another active community group that provides a focus for visual artists in the Shire. The Society is based at Tuggerah Lakes Memorial Services Club and holds exhibitions both there and at Bay Village. Its 'Fab Fakes' exhibition is into its seventh year and is now a well-established event on the cultural calendar of the Central Coast. Toukley Rotary Club organises the Central Coast Festival of the Arts, held annually for the past thirty years and based in the Memorial Hall in Wyong. It showcases the work of artists from around Australia as well as the Central Coast. It attracts an audience of approximately 4,000 people with the majority (approximately 90%) from Wyong Shire.

Wyong Shire Council has in recent years conducted an amateur photographic competition and exhibition, located in the Civic Centre, in conjunction with the Central Coast Festival of the Arts. The competition attracts hundreds of entries from people of all ages throughout the Shire.

The Council's own collection of art and craft works consists of over 150 items including paintings, prints and photography. This house collection is displayed in offices and public areas of the Civic Centre or in storage. It has been acquired by purchases from the Central Coast Festival of the Arts and from gifts. Council maintains a register of item locations updated on a 6-monthly basis but as yet the collection lacks a collection management policy or a resource allocation for maintenance and display costs.

More contemporary art practice can be experienced at the innovative Grand Gallery in Wyong, which is co-located with The Grand Hotel. The curator also runs several galleries in Sydney for the purpose of showcasing Central Coast artists.

The art of photography is well represented in the region, with thirty-five Wyong-based 'general photographers' alone listed in the Yellow Pages. Historically, this may be linked to the opportunities for professional photographers afforded by the natural environment of the region and the tourist industry. The Community College at Ourimbah is the home of the Central Coast School of Photography and reports strong and increasing demand for its courses. A submission from a locally based professional photographer states that "the Central Coast has the strongest interest groups ... in photography than any other area in Australia" with, in addition to the many professionals, approximately 200 amateur photographers in organised camera clubs. The submission proposes that the community form a Photographers' Alliance with a view to establishing a permanent venue including a specialist Gallery of Photography.

Entry level in the visual arts is catered for by community groups that provide workshops in painting and drawing. There are also private tutors and classes at community centres and the community colleges. The latter also have the resources to offer technology-based visual arts courses in webpage design and digital imaging using industry standard software. Visual artists wishing to pursue their art at tertiary level are able to study Fine Arts at the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle, including to honours level.

An initiative that has the potential to provide stimulus to the visual arts across the region is the recently established Mt Penang Institute of Contemporary Arts. This is a non-profit community organisation located in a heritage building (former boys' home) in The Avenue, Mt Penang. With a background in tertiary education in the Fine Arts, the principal individuals behind this project are based at Ourimbah Campus and have the objective of encouraging innovation and excellence in contemporary arts practice.

## **Film**

Attending cinema is a popular leisure activity for Wyong residents. Commercial cinemas within the Shire consist of The Entrance Cinema and Greater Union at Tuggerah. Other cinemas on the Central Coast include Hoyts Erina, Kincumber Ritz and Avoca Beach Theatre. Gosford City Council has recently introduced an open air cinema program at Umina.

Several years ago a group of film and television professionals on the Central Coast established the Central Coast Screen Alliance with the assistance of the NSW Department of State & Regional Development and Business Central Coast. This membership organisation has the objective of establishing a sustainable film industry on the Central Coast to cater to the corporate market and the feature film industry.

There are already a number of recording studios on the Central Coast including at The Entrance, Wyong, Tuggerawong and Berkeley Vale. The Alliance estimates that there are up to 1,200 professionals in this field living on the Central Coast although the majority of these commute to Sydney. The Alliance is in the process of developing a web directory to promote the skills available in the region and the rich diversity of filming locations.

Quick Flicks Short Film Festival is an annual event that encourages the work of young film makers on the Central Coast. In 2003 this popular event attracted 48 films and in 2004 this increased to 65 entries with screenings at Erina Fair and Mingara Recreation Club.<sup>63</sup>

## **Craft**

Craft activities at both professional and amateur level are a point of intersection between the visual arts "for arts sake" and the purely practical. Commercial craftspeople in Wyong Shire include glass artists, practitioners of traditional metal crafts such as blacksmithing, mosaic artists and businesses specialising in custom-made furniture and ceramics. A number of community groups provide opportunities to learn, develop skills, exhibit and sell work in the fields of woodturning, pottery, folk art, embroidery and ceramics. Tuggerah Lakes Potters' Society is equipped for all stages of ceramic production at its base in Gorokan. The community colleges offer a diverse range of craft courses including floral arrangement, lead lighting, mosaics, antique restoration, sewing, felt making, tapestry and jewellery making.

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<sup>63</sup> Information supplied by Central Coast Screen Alliance

## Writing, literature and ideas

Literacy is one of the keystones of our culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Wyong Shire Council recognises this through its resourcing of the library network and its support of the 'Birth to Kindergarten' literacy program. The community surveys for this cultural planning project indicated that reading and writing are important leisure time activities for Wyong residents of all ages and the Shire's network of libraries is well regarded by its users.

While not the most visible of cultural pursuits, writing and public speaking are well established within the Wyong community with several writers' and poets' groups and four toastmasters' groups in the Shire. The database of arts and cultural groups developed for this project lists thirteen groups in this category across the region, yet there is no Central Coast Writers' Centre. A proposal for such a centre on behalf of writers' groups nominates Wyong township as one of the preferred locations.

## Events

Wyong Shire is the home of events both large and small. In the long term the most successful events are those that develop from small community celebrations and grow organically. Events in Wyong Shire range from the Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras which attracts 15,000 people to The Entrance on the first weekend in December to many small community festivals and monthly markets.

Events provide the opportunity to celebrate the cultural diversity within the community. An example of this is the Annual Gathering of the Clans held in Toukley to showcase Scottish heritage. The ethnic diversity of the Shire is currently quite low in comparison with other parts of New South Wales – 4.1% of Wyong residents were born in a non-English speaking country compared with 16.1% in New South Wales as a whole. However, this is likely to change with the influx of new residents. At the 2001 Census 4,220 residents spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>64</sup> An International Family Picnic held at John Pete Howard Reserve, San Remo, in October 2004 was attended by 160 people. Harmony Day, 21 March, is a national celebration of a multicultural community. A Harmony Day Picnic held in San Remo in March 2005 attracted 200 community members.<sup>65</sup>

Civic and community events occur each year to mark major festivals such as Christmas and national commemorative days and weeks. Australia Day celebrations occur throughout the Shire including at The Entrance, Wyong and Toukley. This year celebrations in Wyong township were conducted at the race course and incorporated a citizenship ceremony. ANZAC Day, focusing on local war memorials and Returned Services Clubs, is celebrated with dawn services and mid-morning marches as a unique and special annual event for the smaller as well as larger communities of the Shire. This year the commemoration will include ceremonies at Doyalson, Ourimbah, Toukley, Wyong and Long Jetty.

Wyong Shire Council participates in Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks through official flag-raising ceremonies and in partnership with Gosford Council sponsors NAIDOC Week Awards to Aboriginal achievers. The GOATS<sup>66</sup> Family Festival in the north of the Shire signals the start of Youth Week on the Central Coast. Into its sixth year, this event was attended by 3,500 people of all ages in 2004.

Christmas and New Year celebrations in the Shire include the Lighting of the Christmas Tree at Toukley and New Year's Eve Fireworks at The Entrance.

We live in a community heavily dependent on the motor vehicle for transport but for some the motor vehicle is an all-absorbing hobby as well as a means of getting around. Annual events and organisations for car enthusiasts in Wyong Shire include the Great Aussie Mailbox Run for "Hot Rods and Kustoms" at Lake Munmorah in April, Easy Street Rod and Kustom Club at Toukley, Street Rats at Doyalson, All Ford Club at the SupaCentre and Central Coast Hot Rodding Inc at Norah Head.

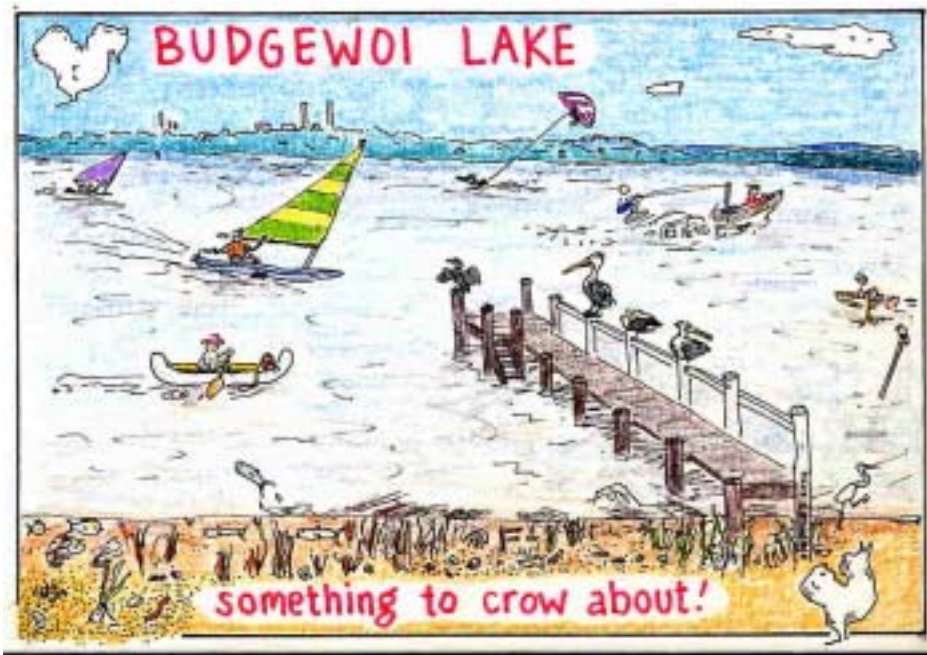
<sup>64</sup> Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas 2004, pp.115-117

<sup>65</sup> Information provided by Central Coast Multicultural Project

<sup>66</sup> GOATS is an acronym for "Going Off At The Swamp".

## Tourism

Tourism is a significant aspect of the culture of Wyong Shire. More than one and a half million people visited the Central Coast as tourists in 2003 including around thirty thousand international tourists.<sup>67</sup> Predominantly, these visitors are attracted to the coastal and lakeside villages and suburbs such as The Entrance and Toowoan Bay but also visit the rural hinterland where attractions include The Macadamia Nut Farm at Yarramalong and the Dooralong Valley resort.



Sally Butler -  
Winner, Postcard  
Competition.

<sup>67</sup> Statistics supplied by Central Coast Tourism

## **Part 2 – The Cultural Assets of Wyong Shire**

### **Cultural Infrastructure in Wyong Shire**

Wyong Shire library network – Wyong, Tuggerah, The Entrance, Lake Haven, Bateau Bay, Toukley.

Wyong Memorial Hall.

Dolphin Theatre, The Entrance Campus of Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College.

School Hall with Tiered Seating, Tumbi Umbi Campus of Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College.

Dance and Movement Studio at Wadalba Community School.

Country Music Park, Warnervale.

Toukley & Districts Art Society Gallery, Gorokan.

Pottery Studio, Beryl Street, Gorokan.

Privately Operated Galleries.

Neighbourhood, Family and Community Centres at - Banksia Centre (Bateau Bay), Cynthia Street Centre (Tumbi Umbi), Northern Lakes (Lake Munmorah), San Remo, Southern Lakes (Berkeley Vale), The Entrance, Toukley, Wyong.

Public and Community Art Projects - John Pete Howard Reserve Mural, Lake Haven Skateboard Park Aboriginal Mural, Legal graffiti walls at Gravity Youth Centre and EDSACC, Bateau Bay, Oasis Youth Centre Mural.

Schools as Community Centres - Wyong Public School, Kanwal Public School.

Youth Facilities - Gravity Youth Centre Lake Haven, Oasis Youth Centre, LINKS Youth Service at six locations in the north of the Shire, The Cottage (Bateau Bay), Campus Central, University of Newcastle at Ourimbah.

Wyong Shire Council Community Halls and Other Public Buildings for Hire - 51 locations throughout the Shire including hall at Tumbi Umbi equipped for dance rehearsal.

Cinemas - Great Union Tuggerah, The Entrance Cinema.

### **Cultural Professionals (Council, Business and Community)**

Youth Arts Officer - Lake Haven Gravity Youth Centre.

Librarians and Library Technicians (12).

Cultural Planner (Temporary Position).

Events and Marketing Personnel – The Entrance, Toukley Greater Vision, Wyong Town Centre.

## **Regional Scale Cultural Infrastructure**

The Entrance Foreshore Park (WSC).

Gosford Regional Gallery & Arts Centre, East Gosford (GCC).

Laycock Street Theatre, North Gosford (GCC).

Mt Penang Parklands, Kariong (State Government).

Erina Centre foyer exhibition space, Erina (GCC).

Central Coast Conservatorium of Music, Gosford CBD (Community).

Youth Arts Officer, Parkside Youth Centre (Community).

Cultural Officer Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.

## **Organisations and Events**

This inventory has been developed as part of a cultural mapping exercise using available resources including community directories, news media, websites of Wyong and Gosford Councils, personal contacts and the Yellow Pages and is as comprehensive as resources permit at the time of compilation. Some Gosford-based organisations are listed if they also operate from a site within Wyong Shire, eg Mad Cow Theatre Company. It includes organisations and businesses from the government, community and private sectors and demonstrates the range and volume of cultural activity in Wyong Shire.

### ***Heritage***

Alison Homestead, Wyong Museum and Heritage Centre.

Norah Head Lighthouse Trust.

Tuggerah Lakes RSL Memorial Library and Museum.

Wyong Family History Group Incorporated.

### ***Cultural Diversity***

Aboriginal Student Support Parent Awareness Group.

Alliance Francaise.

Annual Gathering of the Clans.

Australian-Filipino Association of the Central Coast.

Australian-German Friendship and Welfare Society.

Banksia Centre Multicultural Group.

Bungree Aboriginal Association Inc.

Central Coast Bosnian Group.

Central Coast Chinese Association.

Central Coast Instuif (Dutch Group).

Central Coast Islamic Society.

Central Coast Italian-Australian Organisation.

Central Coast Pelicans Aboriginal Corporation.

Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Fijian Women's Association.

Greek-Australian Association.

Hellenic Community of the Central Coast.

Japanese Group.

Kabaro Filipino Women's Support Group.  
Korean Group.  
Maori Women's Group.  
Mirring Aboriginal Women's Group.  
Persian Group.  
Russian Group.  
Somalian Community Group.  
South Pacific Group.  
Tongan Group.  
Ugnay-Kabayan (Filipino).  
Warnervale Neighbourhood Centre Multicultural Group.  
Wyong Shire Combined Interagency.  
Wyong Sister City Committee.

### *Music*

Aslan Music Studio.  
Berkeley Music Centre.  
Budgewoi Ladies Choir.  
Central Coast Conservatorium outreach program, Gorokan High School.  
Creative Choirs.  
David Hill Music School.  
Doyalson/Wyee RSL Brass Band.  
Earth Central.  
Elizabeth Dilley Singing Lessons.  
Gorokan High School Music Council.  
James McEntryre Music School.  
Peasants Country Rockin' Bush Band.  
Ron Coafield Music School.  
The Country Music Reckoners.  
The Rockin' Chevys.  
The Woodwind and Brass Warehouse.  
Toukley RSL Musicians and Performers Club.  
Toukley Senior Citizens' Choir.  
Tower Music.  
Tuggerah Lakes Choral Society.  
Tuggerah Lakes District Band.  
Warnervale Family and Community Centre Choir.  
Warren Targett Guitar Tuition.  
Wyong Musical Theatre Company.

### *Theatre*

Alan Colemans TV and Drama School.  
Central Coast Shakespeare Company.  
Helen O'Grady's Children's Drama Academy.  
ImaginedARTS.  
Marni's Studio of Performing Arts.  
Rollo the Clown.  
The Edge Theatre Company.  
The Mad Cow Theatre Company.  
Wyong Drama Group.  
Youth in Performing Arts.

### *Dance*

B-BAR-H Square Dance Club.  
C Makin.  
Carpenter and Co Square Dance Club.  
Central Ballet School.  
Central Coast Baton Twirlers.  
Central Coast College of Dance.  
Central Coast Young Entertainers.  
Central Dance Company Australia.  
Cheryl Warwick's Dance Academy.  
Crane Academy.  
Dance Attack Challenge Competition.  
Dance Power.  
En'Style Dance Studio.  
Fame School of Performing Arts.  
Jump Street.  
Kamotion Promotions.  
Kickin T Dancers.  
Kristen's Dance Dynamics.  
Lee Academy Dance and Performing Arts.  
Marni's Studio of Performing Arts.  
Paige's Dance Academy.  
Rhythm Dance Centre.  
Star Twirlers Square Dance Club.  
The Ritz Dance Company.  
Vogue Academy of Dance.  
Studio 007-Pictures.  
Susan's Photography.

### *Studios and Galleries*

Bumble Hill Studio.  
Creative Moods Stained Glass Studio.  
Earl Hingston Gallery.  
Jelyssa At Riverdale Studio.  
Paper Doors Studio.  
Somers Studio.  
Studio 007-Pictures.  
The Grand Gallery.  
Toowoona Bay Gallery.  
Toukley Arts Centre and Tourist Information.  
Tumbi Hill Gallery.  
Warnervale Studio.

### *Visual Arts*

Adam's Abode.  
Artist World.  
ArtPlus Graphics.  
Central Coast Festival of the Arts (Toukley Rotary Club).  
Gravity Youth Centre Youth Arts Project.  
Northlake Art Group.  
Toukley and Districts Art Society.  
Tuggerah Lakes Art Society Inc.  
Tuggerah Lakes Picture Framing & Artists' Supplies.  
Veg Art Airbrushing.

### *Craft*

Anyes Glass Creations.  
Bead and Crystal Heaven.  
Blue Haven Arts and Crafts.  
Budgewoi Ceramic and Crafts.  
Butlin Val-Ray.  
Card Craft.  
Carol's Porcelain Painting Supplies.  
Central Coast Folk and Decorative Artists' Association.  
Central Coast House of Ceramics.  
Central Coast Lapidary Club.  
Central Coast Woodturners Cooperative.  
Clare's Leadlight Cottage.  
Clever Furniture.  
Coastwide Steel and Metalwork Pty Ltd.  
Cracked Up Mosaics.  
Creative Moods Stained Glass Studio.  
Custom Built Furniture.  
Early Times Wrought Iron.  
Embroiderers' Guild of NSW Wyong Branch.  
Excel Quality Paints.  
Fabrique.  
Fandec Glass.  
Gumleaf Glass.  
Holistic Seating.  
Holloway's Creations.  
Jan's Ceramic Creations.  
Luke Berger Artistic Blacksmith.  
Parchment Networks Australia.  
San Remo Handicraft Group.  
Scrapbooking Nook.  
Seakay Designs.  
Sew Necessary.  
Supreme Wrought Iron Pty Ltd.  
Sweet Dreamz.  
TAD Mosaics.  
The Decorative Palette.  
The Rustic Edge - Custom Made Furniture.  
The Toukley Trading Post.  
Tuggerah Lakes Potters' Association Inc.  
Woodstruck.

### ***Photography***

About N.C.Pics Photography.  
Amanda Clair Designer Photography.  
Animal Business Photography.  
Artographics Photography.  
Australian Professional Dance Images.  
Bloom Photography.  
Candid Kids.  
Central Coast School of Photography.  
Clique Photography.  
David Spratt Photographics.  
Freeform Photography.  
Hi-Tide Photography.  
Jellybean Images.  
Jelyssa At Riverdale Studio.  
Jennifer Allgood Photographer.  
Mark Steel Photography.  
Meg Pemberton Photography.  
Phillip Green.  
Rachael Greig Photography.  
Rising Star Photographer.  
Rochelle Fletcher Photography.  
Wyong Photography Show.

### ***Writing, Speaking and Literature***

Creative Children's Productions.  
Blue Gum Flat Toastmasters Club.  
Featherbrains Writing Group.  
The Fellowship of Australian Writers NSW Inc - Tuggerah Regional.  
Toukley and District Toastmasters Club.  
Tuggerah Lakes Daytime Toastmasters.  
Tuggerah Lakes Memorial Toastmasters Club.  
Tuggerah Lakes Poets Society.

### ***Film and Media***

Ace High Recording Studios.  
Alien Recording Studios.  
Central Coast Screen Alliance.  
Cloud Recording Studios.  
Grey Wolfe Films.  
Halling's Recording Studio.  
Hits and Country 94.1.  
Quick Flicks Short Film Festival.  
Scope Studios.  
Springboard Productions.  
Warrego Productions.

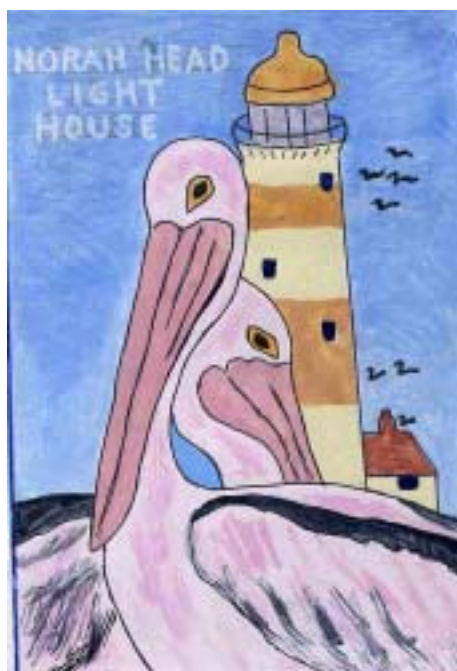
### *Events*

Annual Gathering of the Clans.  
Budgewoi Community Festival.  
Central Coast Country Music Festival.  
Central Coast Water Festival.  
Food and Fun by the Lake at Canton Beach.  
GOATS Family Festival.  
Gwandalan Arts Festival.  
Lighting of the Christmas Tree at Toukley.  
Northlakes Arts Festival.  
Pioneers Association Annual Dinner.  
Rockin' Back to Wyong Festival.  
The Bush Bash.  
The Entrance Art and Craft Market.  
The Entrance Lions Markets.  
The Entrance New Year's Eve celebrations.  
The Entrance Town Centre Management Entertainment Program.  
Toukley Open Air Market.  
Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras Festival.  
Warnervale Districts Spring Fair.  
Wyong Farmers & Craft Markets.  
Wyong Theatrefest.

### *Adult Education Centres*

Tuggerah Lakes Community College.  
Central Coast Community College.  
Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle.  
Ourimbah TAFE.  
Wyong TAFE.

This section has reviewed the culture and cultural assets of Wyong Shire. The next section outlines the results of the community consultation undertaken for this project.



**Barbara Runciman – Competition Entry**

## Results from Community Consultation

I have found that the Wyong Shire area is hungry for culture people love to be part of the art. - Visual Artist and Curator

THERE IS MUCH COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE IN THE (ABORIGINAL) COMMUNITY BUT IT'S NOT DOCUMENTED AND COLATED  
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBER

... the region is in the process of being "born". The Coast has held on to what it was for so long a place for a "sea change". But the influence of the retirees is fading.  
Event Organizer

The Northern precincts ... are seriously deprived of community cultural opportunities ... [there is the view that] the Central Coast Northern area is for low-cost housing development and is lacking in cultural activities.  
Writer and Community Broadcaster

*The lakes and beaches contribute to the uniqueness of the area, as does the sheer size of the Shire.* Youth Worker

The geography of Wyong is significant in providing its cultural identity. There is the contrast between the coast, the lakes, the natural bush and the sandstone geomorphology of the hinterland ... People [living on the Central Coast] believe that they live in a defined region that is characterised by natural beauty of extraordinary variety.

Planner and practising artist

It [Morah Head Beach] is the place I spend most of my time and I love it so that's why I drew it.  
Competition entrant, Vacation Care

It (the lake) is peaceful and quiet. I want to. A Competition entrant, 8 years old

I can go there when I

**There are 95 different nationalities living on the Central Coast. Cultural diversity is more in evidence than it was 10 years ago.** - Community Worker

Wyong Shire is a place that is young, vibrant, new and changing ... There is a strong relationship [on the Central Coast] between the community and the natural environment - However, built heritage is seen as rather foreign, not part of the mainstream environmental movement. The Central Coast has a fragile built heritage.

Arts Professional



The environment is an important aspect of cultural identity here. The view that there is a strong community spirit is overstated though it may be true of some of the 'villages', but not true of the region as a whole. - Aboriginal and European cultural heritage goes largely unrecognised and un-celebrated.

Representative of State Government Agency

The Central Coast is seen as the backyard between Sydney and Newcastle. - Youth Worker

I have travelled the world and seen many lovely sights but The Entrance has beauty and charm not as yet equalled by any other country. It just says 'stay a while' and we did - in 1969.  
Competition entrant

THERE IS ... A LACK OF URGENCY ABOUT LEARNING THAT CAN BE A BARRIER TO ACHIEVEMENT. HOWEVER, THIS LAID BACK LIFESTYLE IS CHANGING AS PEOPLE MOVE IN TO THE AREA. - EDUCATOR



There is a lack of diversity and the area is quite monocultural, very "white Australian". Planner

## Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is what the community values and sees as unique in its diverse ways of life. Overwhelmingly, people commented on the importance of the natural environment to the cultural identity of the Shire and the region.

The clear favourite in the postcard competition, “My Favourite Place in Wyong Shire” was Norah Head and its beaches and lighthouse. Aspects of the natural environment predominate in the responses as a whole. This supports the findings of the 2004 Central Coast Omnibus Survey, that “Almost one-third of respondents (32.2%) nominated features of the *physical environment* as the most positive aspect [of living on the Central Coast].” (Most frequent response.)<sup>68</sup>

Strong recurring themes from interviews, surveys and written submissions were as follows:

- The beaches, waterways and natural environment make a very significant contribution to cultural identity.
- Wyong is in a state of rapid change, not all of it for the best. But new residents and tourists provide a benefit in bringing new ideas, skills and perspectives to the community.
- Wyong is many communities in one, with something of a “split-personality”.
- There are areas of great social disadvantage in the Shire.
- Whilst the Shire is still predominantly Anglo-Celtic the degree of cultural diversity is growing.
- We don’t know and see enough about the heritage of the Shire – both Aboriginal and post-1788.
- There is sometimes the perception that Wyong is the poor relation to Gosford.
- The Central Coast is the “holiday coast”. It has a laid back feel – not necessarily a good thing.
- Commuting is a significant aspect of the cultural identity of the Central Coast. It impacts on people’s involvement in cultural activities and on the lives of children and young people.

## Cultural Forums

The Cultural Forums were held at the Civic Centre on November 9 and 11 2004. The forums were widely advertised and were attended by approximately 110 people. They included professional and amateur artists, performers, writers and historians, Aboriginal community members, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, young people and representatives of youth organisations and council staff from both Wyong and Gosford.

The forum workshops provided a wealth of ideas and opinions based upon first-hand experience of involvement in the arts and cultural scene in Wyong and the Central Coast. A full account of the forums is included in the Cultural Plan Consultation Report, pp.16-23 (Appendix 1). This information will be a valuable reference for council officers given the responsibility of implementing this cultural plan. It is not practical to include all the suggestions in the present cultural plan, although some of the actions may be relevant to future plans. However, there was broad agreement in certain areas:

- There is a wealth of cultural activity and interest at a grass roots level that forms a solid basis on which to build.
- There is a need to encourage recognition and respect for the diverse cultures and lifestyles within the Shire, including Aboriginal residents, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, young people, the aged, artists and other cultural practitioners. Council can show leadership by ensuring that there are key personnel within the organisation to support this diversity.

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<sup>68</sup> *Central Coast Omnibus Survey*, Central Coast Research Foundation for Wyong Shire Council, September 2004, p.1

- There is a lack of appropriate, affordable venues as a focus for cultural activity.
- Effective communication and networking are essential for cultural development.
- There is a need to maximise opportunities for access to the cultural life of the Shire.
- It is important for councils, the arts community and the broader community to define how we work as a region, both internally and externally.

### **Interagencies and Relevant Community Group Meetings**

These groups included FUSION Arts Central Coast, the Central Coast Aboriginal Interagency, the Central Coast Multicultural Interagency, the Central Coast Multicultural Advisory Committee and the Central Coast Youth Interagency. The themes that emerged from discussions with these groups are as follows:

- Strategic planning for culture is a first step – Council plans need to be resourced including with appropriate personnel - a cultural planner, an identified Aboriginal community development worker and an identified culturally and linguistically diverse community worker (the latter possibly shared with Gosford City Council) to lead and facilitate the implementation of the Plan.
- The Aboriginal community, its culture and its heritage are not adequately recognized.
- There is a need to encourage recognition of cultural diversity including non-English-speaking residents and youth.
- Performing arts and visual arts groups throughout the Central Coast struggle to find suitable venues for performances and exhibitions.
- Central Coast councils need to work as a region in advocacy for the arts and culture.
- Wyong Shire, Gosford City and the Central Coast need to develop educational and employment opportunities for young and emerging artists and performers, to address the “brain drain” to Sydney and Newcastle.
- Inadequate transport is a barrier to involvement in community and cultural life, particularly for young people and people on low incomes.

### **Interviews**

Approximately fifty-five interviews were conducted. Interviewees were selected across a range of arts genres, community groups, business and state and local government. As with the forums the responses were as diverse as the people interviewed but there were nevertheless some strong recurring themes.

Many people interviewed pointed to the great variety of cultural activity in Wyong Shire at the community level and commented on the popularity of dance. There are a number of annual events that are well regarded – most frequently mentioned included the Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras, Australia Day festivities in Wyong Town Park and the Toukley Rotary Club Festival of the Arts.

Youth activities, especially the Going Off at the Swamp (GOATS) Festival and Gorokan High School Music Program, were mentioned often. A number of people commented on the need to provide more support to the community in the north of the Shire where several community-generated small festivals and celebrations are developing. Wyong Musical Drama Group and the Wyong Musical Theatre Company are well-regarded.

A small number of people commented that there was little or nothing of value culturally.

A significant number of responses indicated the lack of suitable venues, especially for performance and exhibition (as opposed to meetings and workshops) and storage is an issue for some groups, particularly the storage of stage sets and costumes. A number of people considered that Gravity Youth Centre is working well as a focus for cultural activity for young people and the natural environment is considered to provide good opportunities for more informal outdoor cultural activities.

When asked to comment on issues that impact on the cultural development of the Shire, the two most frequently mentioned issues were:

- Lack of suitable facilities with the appropriate equipment.
- Attitudinal and educational factors – low expectations, literacy levels, entrenched and conservative attitudes, lack of cultural sensitivity, hostility to young people in public places.

Other recurrent themes were:

- Significant barriers to participation in cultural activity include bureaucratic processes and requirements, the cost of insurance, geographical isolation and poor public transport, particularly affecting the northern part of the Shire.
- The need for groups and agencies to cooperate and coordinate, for effective operation and for a united voice in advocacy.
- The “brain drain” to Sydney and Newcastle.
- The importance of boosting community connectedness and civic pride.
- Lack of knowledge and celebration of heritage especially Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Interviewees were asked to nominate what changes they would like to see occur during the next five years as outcomes of the cultural planning process. The most frequently mentioned changes are summarised as follows:

- Establishment of appropriate venues for the performing arts and visual arts.
- A higher profile for heritage – Aboriginal and post-1788.
- An outdoor venue such as an amphitheatre.
- Programs to encourage excellence and innovation in the arts.
- More effective promotion of culture and the arts.
- An environmental interpretive centre such as a botanical gardens.
- Programs to highlight the cultural diversity of the Shire.
- Encouragement of café culture, especially in Wyong township.

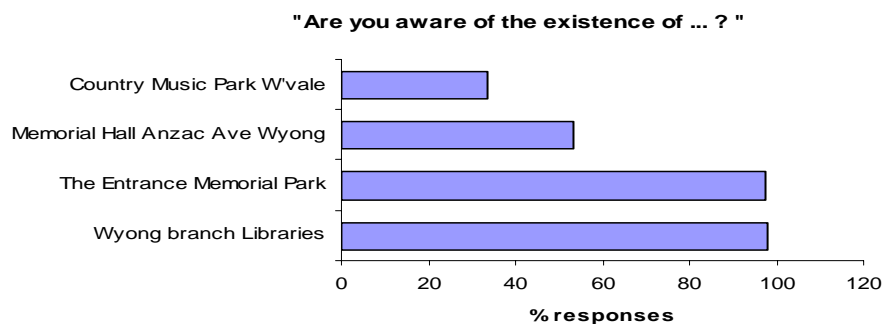
## Community Surveys

Information was collected from community members through a telephone survey of 300 residents selected at random and conducted during the evenings and Saturday mornings as well as during the day time. Results reported here have been weighted to reflect Shire demographics.

### *Level of awareness of selected cultural venues*

Survey respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness of Wyong Shire Libraries. The lowest level of awareness was of Federation Country Music Park at Warnervale. See Figure 9.

*Figure 9: Awareness of Selected Cultural Venues in Wyong Shire*



### *Level of Satisfaction with Cultural Venues*

Survey respondents were asked to comment on:

- Wyong Shire libraries as a service providing books and information
- The Entrance Memorial Park as a place for outdoor entertainment
- The Memorial Hall Wyong as a place to attend a live performance.

The results were positive, with many more people selecting “satisfactory” or “very satisfactory” than “unsatisfactory” or “very unsatisfactory”. The extent of “don’t know” responses with regard to the libraries and the Memorial Hall has implications for promotion of services and venues. See Figures 10 – 12.

Figure 10: Level of Satisfaction with Wyong Shire Libraries as a Service Providing Books and Information.

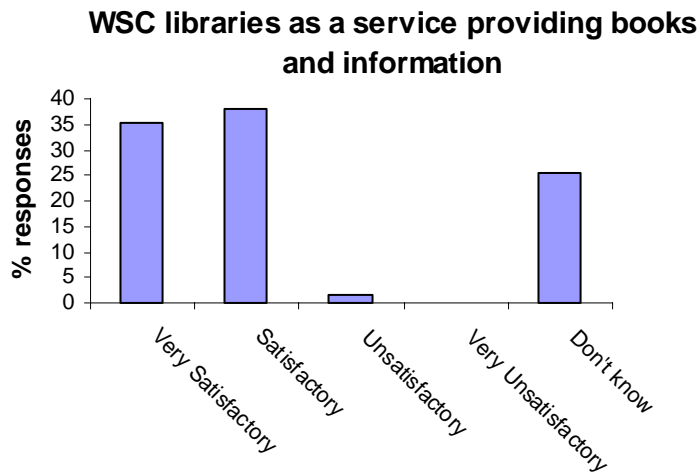


Figure 11: Level of Satisfaction with The Entrance Memorial Park as a Place for Outdoor Entertainment

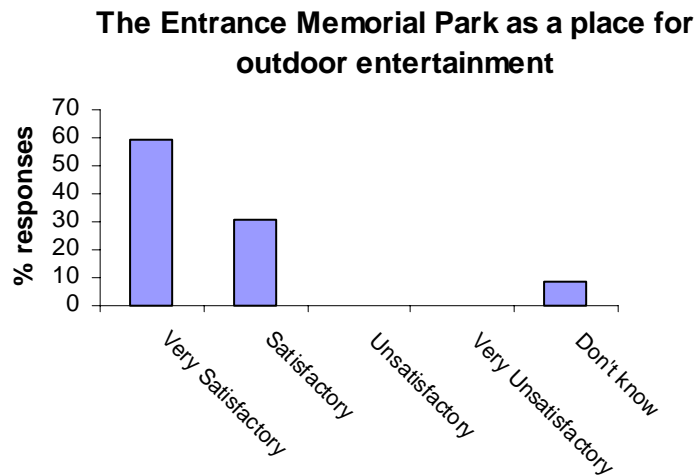
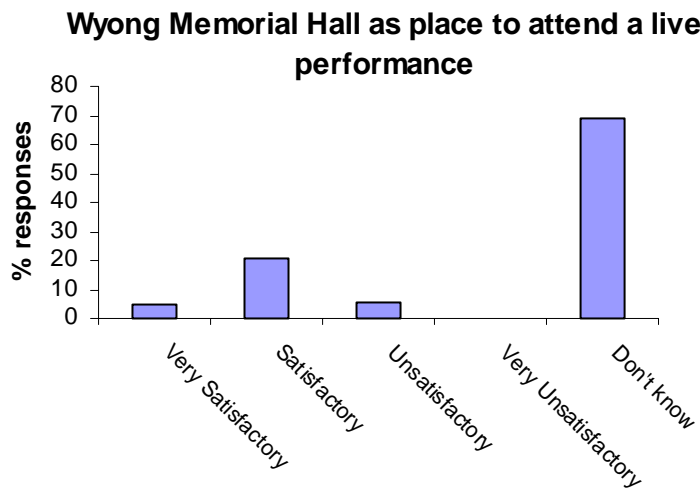


Figure 12: Level of Satisfaction with Wyong Memorial Hall as a Place to Attend a Live Performance



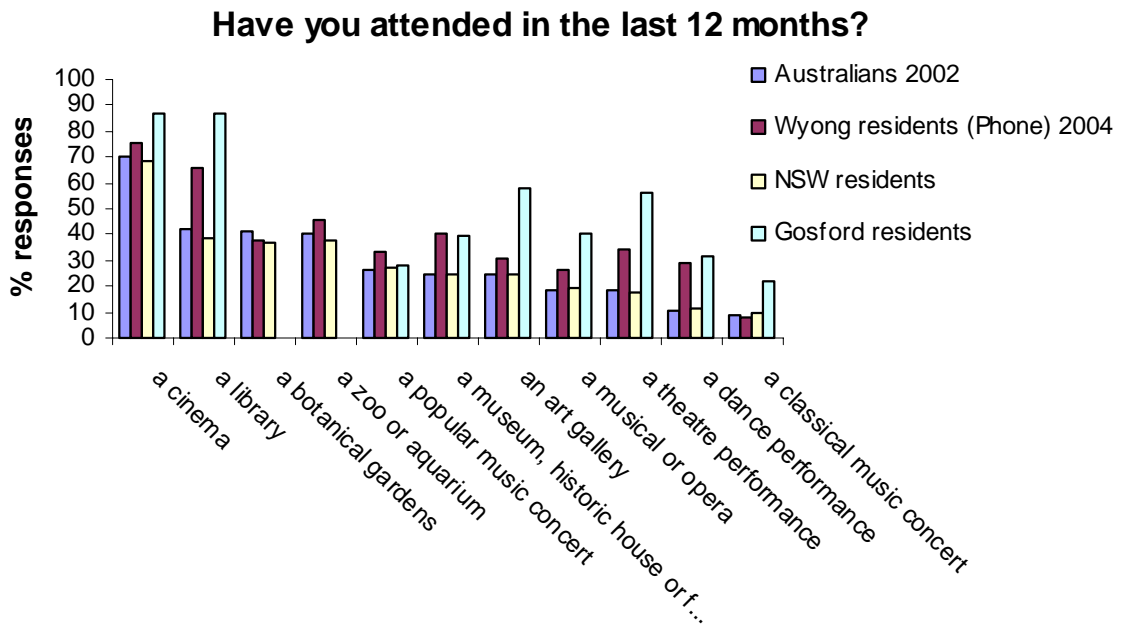
*Attendance at Cultural Venues in the Previous 12 months, Whether in Wyong Shire or Elsewhere*

Respondents were asked to say whether they had attended a range of cultural venues in the previous twelve months. The categories were selected to match similar national surveys carried out periodically by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. See Figure 13.

The most-attended cultural venue is a cinema, followed by a library. This ranking also applies to available data for the Gosford Local Government Area<sup>69</sup> and New South Wales data.<sup>70</sup> Other cultural venues that were well supported by Wyong residents include art galleries, museums, zoos and botanical gardens and various forms of live entertainment.

The local, state and national data indicate the importance of cultural venues generally but especially cinemas and libraries in the cultural life of the community.

*Figure 13: Cultural Venues Attended in the Previous 12 months – Comparison of Wyong Residents with all Australians, NSW Residents and Gosford Residents*



*Wyong Residents’ Free Time Activities*

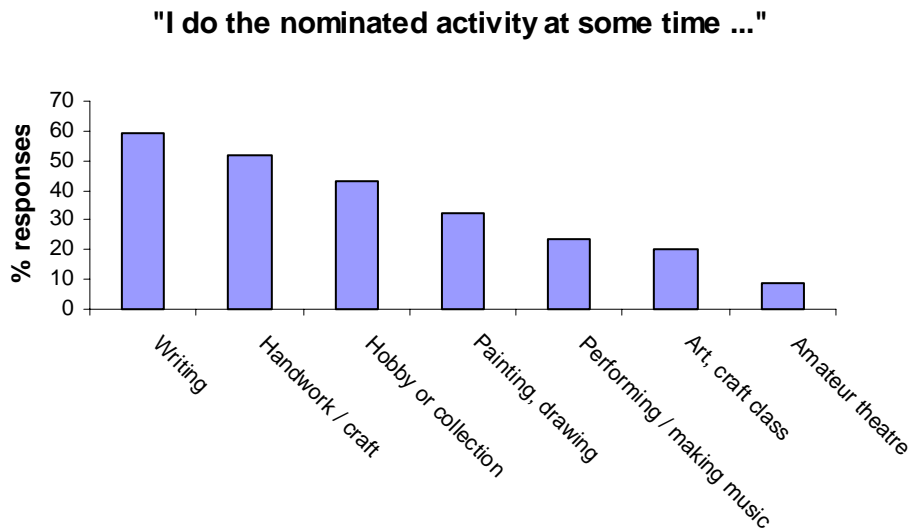
Audio-visual media, especially television and radio, are an important element in the free time activities of respondents. Over 90% of respondents watch television daily. However, reading is also important, reading books being the next most popular daily activity after television and radio.

An analysis of active participation that results in a “cultural product”, eg a painting or piece of writing, demonstrates that a high percentage of respondents engage in one of the activities *at some time*, writing for pleasure being the most common activity. Almost 60% of respondents write for pleasure and over 50% do handwork or craft. See Figure 14.

<sup>69</sup> *A Celebration of Community – A Cultural Plan for Gosford*, 2004, p.9

<sup>70</sup> Source: *ABS Attendance at selected cultural venues and events. 2002.*, p.18

Figure 14: Free Time Activities that Result in a Cultural “Product”



*What Cultural or Arts Activities would you like to see in Wyong Shire that are Not Available at Present?*

There was a great variety of responses to this question but there were some recurrent themes. 210 survey respondents or 70% of total respondents answered this question. The most frequent response was for a performing arts centre – 9% of responses to the question -followed by an entertainment centre. An art gallery and arts centre also rank high. Details of all responses are contained in the Cultural Plan Consultation Report.

Figure 15: Phone survey “Top Six”. “What Cultural or Arts Activities would you like to see in Wyong Shire that are Not Available at Present?”

1	Performing Arts Venue
2	Entertainment Centre
3	Art Gallery/Arts Centre
4	Live Entertainment
5	Children's Activities/Facilities
6	Activities from Diverse Cultures

## Survey of Cultural Groups

One hundred and seventy three surveys were mailed to cultural organisations and businesses based in Wyong or having a regional focus but based in Gosford. Fifty-eight percent of the surveys were returned completed. The results are based on self-reporting in the survey and should be regarded as indicative estimates only.

The groups represented a variety of cultural and artistic media and organisational types, including Aboriginal and multicultural groups, performing and visual arts, events and heritage. Responses indicate that the general public is the predominant target audience for these groups (78%), but a significant number of groups also cater for children (41%) and young people (51%).

The majority of people involved in these groups are members of associations or volunteers (2,428) but a significant number of people – 268 employees and 20 sole traders – report that they earn income from work in a cultural business or organisation. This demonstrates the employment potential of cultural and arts activities as well as the importance of community and voluntary involvement.

Sixty-seven percent of the groups surveyed provide tuition or workshops to members or clients, thus fulfilling a significant educational role and highlighting the role of cultural and arts activities in providing personal and professional development opportunities. The most frequently provided services for the general public other than tuition or workshops are performances (46%), events (42%) and exhibitions (26%).

Respondents were asked to provide an estimate of their total audience during the previous twelve months and the percentage of this audience from Wyong Shire. See Figure 16.

*Figure 16: Audience Size in Previous Twelve Months – Total of All Groups Surveyed*

Scope	Total Audience	Audience from WS
All groups including groups based wholly in Wyong Shire, groups based in Wyong Shire and with a regional focus and Central Coast focussed groups based wholly or in part in Gosford. <sup>71</sup>	486,602	225,007
Group based in whole or part in Wyong Shire	157,622	84,830

The responses to this item indicate the willingness of people to become consumers of cultural product. Cultural and arts activities available in Gosford are significant for residents of Wyong Shire. This reflects the existence of a major public art gallery and theatre facilities as well as a majority of Central Coast focused organisations based in the Gosford local government area. However, the flow of audience is not all one-sided.

## Written Submissions

See table on next page.

## Conclusion

The consultation indicates that there is a broad range of cultural activities available in Wyong Shire particularly at the community level and catering to different age groups and interests and a strong interest in participation in these activities. This is widely considered to be a sound basis for further cultural development. The community has indicated that it looks to Council to support this process with appropriate provision of cultural infrastructure and programs in order to develop a vibrant cultural life for the Shire into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The next section sets out a plan of action to achieve this vision.

<sup>71</sup> Does not include Gosford based groups with a local rather than regional focus.

*Summary of Written Submissions Received Since June 2004*

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Origin</b>
Music Education Centre/Concert Hall	To facilitate music (acoustic) education and performance in the absence of a suitable venue.	GOROKAN	District	High School
Gallery Extension	To provide urgently needed space for workshops and visual arts display.	Tourist Centre, GOROKAN	District	Community group (Visual Arts)
Budgewoi Arts Festival	Community building in an isolated community.	BUDGEWOI	District	Community group
Expansion of Facilities for Ceramics	Facility that can accommodate all stages of ceramic production – throwing, firing, demonstration, display and sales. Current facilities are cramped and do not provide exhibition/sales space.	TOUKLEY or environs	District	Community group (Visual Arts)
Writers' Centre	Provide hub for workshops, talks, networking, book launches, festivals. There is no Writers' Centre on the Central Coast in spite of the existence of a number of very active groups.	WYONG	Regional	Writers' groups, various
Network of 'Art Galleries' located in existing Civic and Community Buildings	Beautify existing buildings, provide hanging space for CC artists in the absence of suitable venues in Wyong Shire, make art and culture available to more people, create community awareness of issues by using the spaces to conduct competitions, eg. on environmental issues.	Various - WSC foyer, libraries etc	Regional	Community member (Visual Arts practitioner)
Photographers' Alliance	Networking, education, display, promotion. Photography is a very popular amateur and professional pursuit on the Central Coast but has no natural "hub".	Unstated	Regional	Community member (Photographer)
Recording Studio; Programs Employing Professional Artists to conduct workshops, master classes etc; rehearsal space; performing arts venue; exhibition venue	Support Creative Arts Education in schools and in the wider community.	Unstated	Shire	Creative Arts coordinators: Three Wyong Shire High Schools

## *A Plan for Action*

### **GOAL AREA 1: CREATIVE PLACES – Facilities that Support the Cultural Aspirations of the Community.**

A strong message from the community consultation – from the surveys, cultural forums, interviews and written submissions alike – was that cultural facilities in the Shire are not commensurate with the level of community activity or the aspirations of the community. Whilst the Shire is well supplied with halls and community centres that accommodate meetings and workshops, cultural groups and individual artists struggle to find suitable venues to perform, to store tools and materials, to conduct demonstrations and to exhibit. It is not uncommon for schools in Wyong Shire to hire venues in Newcastle or Gosford for concerts and other performances. This view is also supported by studies, reports and discussions in recent years including the proposal to establish a regional cultural facility at Ourimbah Campus.<sup>72</sup> Population growth of 62% between 2001 and 2031 will be accompanied by an increase in cultural participation through community groups and educational institutions and an increase in demand for the entertainment and enrichment provided by exhibitions, concerts, theatrical performances and events.

Council has recently resolved to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a performing arts centre, possibly on the site of the Memorial Hall, Wyong. The feasibility study will consider the relative needs of various types of performing arts practice in Wyong Shire as well as the options to accommodate professional touring groups.

Participants in the consultation program recognised the importance of utilising existing infrastructure to the best advantage. Visual arts practitioners identified opportunities for exhibition space in Council buildings including the establishment of a small civic gallery as part of the Civic Centre foyer. Such a gallery could be created within a relatively short time frame and for low cost as many of the requirements of a public gallery – climate control, security, visitor amenities, proximity to public transport – are already in place.

Municipalities around Australia are turning to the development of cultural precincts in the regeneration of town centres affected by the flight of retailing and services to shopping malls. An example of this trend is the City of Albury which has a long-term plan to redevelop its City Square to incorporate a Performing Arts Centre, Museum, Art Gallery and civic open space. In and adjacent to Wyong town centre there are a number of cultural and heritage assets that have the potential to contribute to a cultural precinct.

As the map indicates (see endpaper), the cultural assets of the Shire are distributed throughout the local government area rather than concentrated at a hub. This is a result of the geography of the Shire. Whilst Council can develop the cultural assets of Wyong Town Centre as a primary focus of cultural and arts activity, there will always be a demand for district-based facilities. In the longer term, Council can act on the recommendations of the Community Plan to develop a Community Arts Centre at Warnervale and a network of arts centres around the Shire.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. *Art Gallery and Performance Proposal*, SJPH for Central Coast Campus Ourimbah, 1997; *Feasibility Study for a Community Arts Facility for Warnervale Town Centre*, Positive Solutions for Wyong Shire Council, June 2004

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
1. Establish and resource a Performing Arts Facility in accordance with the findings of the feasibility study on a Performing Arts Centre, to provide a focus for community cultural activity and community pride and to nurture youth performing arts activity.	Highest priority	As determined by feasibility study	Performing arts groups; schools; youth organisations	Unknown at this time	WSC (S94); Min of Arts; sponsorship
2. Develop Wyong township as a focus for cultural activity for the Shire, by building on its natural features, its heritage, its cultural organisations and events, as reflected in the Strategic Plan for the township.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Wyong Town Centre Mgt; Chamber of Commerce; cultural groups	A component of Wyong-Tuggerah Strategy	
3. Develop and implement a communications strategy to encourage creative businesses and organisations to locate in Wyong township.	Very important	Year 2	Cultural businesses and organisations	\$10K	WSC
4. Maximise the use of the Council Chambers as a focus of community pride, by developing and resourcing a strategic plan for the display of material in the Foyer including heritage and visual arts material.	Very important	Year 1 – plan Year 2 - implement	Visual artists and visual arts organisations; heritage groups	\$30K	WSC; Min of Arts; sponsorship
5. Implement the recommendations of the <i>Feasibility Study for a Community Arts Facility for Warnervale Town Centre</i> to establish a facility for the visual arts.	Very important	To be determined	Visual artists and visual arts organisations;	\$1.25M	WSC (S94); Min of Arts; sponsorship
6. Establish a network of three Arts Centres around the Shire, in addition to the Warnervale Arts Centre, to cater to the needs of the visual arts and crafts - Wyong, The Entrance and Lake Munmorah.	Important	To be determined	Visual artists and craftspeople and visual arts and craft organisations;	Unknown at this time	WSC (S94); Min of Arts; sponsorship
7. In consultation with community groups, equip each arts centre to cater for a specialist area of the visual arts and crafts – photography, ceramics and one other.	Important	As centres are developed	Visual artists and visual arts organisations;	Unknown at this time	WSC (S94); Min of Arts; sponsorship
8. Resource the proposed extension to the Toukley Arts Centre (Wallarah Point Park) to provide a workshop space.	Very important	Year 1	Visual arts organisations	\$60K	WSC (S94)
9. Ensure that Council’s community facilities are accessible and affordable for cultural and arts groups and activities in order to encourage a diverse and energetic cultural scene.	Very important	Ongoing	Artists & performers; community cultural organisations	-	-
10. In Community Facility Reviews, identify opportunities to provide bulky storage in Wyong township for performing arts groups.	Important	Ongoing	Performing Arts groups	-	-
11. Plan and implement a program to create opportunities for exhibition space and informal performance space in Council’s libraries and other community buildings.	Very important	Year 2	Artists & performers; community cultural organisations	\$20K	WSC; Min of Arts; sponsorship
12. Encourage private enterprise to establish cinema services in Warnervale.	Important	Ongoing	Businesses/developers	-	-

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
13. Consult with writers' groups on the feasibility of establishing a Writers' Centre in Wyong town ship.*	Very important	Year 1	Writers' groups	\$5K	-
14. In the planning and establishment of new community facilities, consult with diverse members of the community to ensure that facilities are welcoming to all cultures and relevant age groups.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Target groups	-	-
15. Ensure that universal access principles are applied in the design of new community facilities.	Highest priority		People with disabilities	-	-
16. Implement the public art program in new community centres ensuring community participation.	Highest priority		Community centre users and groups.	1% of construction budget	WSC (S94)

**GOAL AREA 2: MANY COMMUNITIES IN ONE - A Community that Recognises and Respects Cultural Diversity**



**German Band**

**Photo: Central Coast Australian-German Assoc**

“Acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness are important in contributing to community harmony and social cohesion. A society that does not accept or include diversity may lead to the creation of marginalised groups which become isolated from others in the community, and are unable to access opportunities to fully participate in social, economic and political spheres of society.” *Measuring Social Capital, An Australian Framework and Indicators*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p.38

The community of which Wyong Shire residents are a part is many communities and many cultures in one – of new comers and long-standing residents, of retirees and families with children, of commuters, of single-parent families. Community consultation indicated that there are three groups in particular that are cause for attention in promoting inclusiveness. Whilst the majority of residents are Australian-born and of Anglo-Celtic origin there is a significant population of over 2500 people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in the Shire and a growing diversity of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds. With the arrival of new residents to the growth areas of the Shire, many from Sydney, this diversity will grow. As someone interviewed for this project commented, “the region is in the process of being ‘born’”. As an example, during the last 18 months three multicultural support groups have commenced operation, at Warnervale, San Remo and at Bateau Bay. This is partly a result of outreach activities by the Central Coast Multicultural Project but also on account of the needs of new residents in the Shire. There was also concern about the place of young people in the wider community as they are a large population group with very specific needs in a community that also has a large constituency of older people. This group is dealt with in the section “Supporting our Young People”.

Comment from the community regarding the Aboriginal and the culturally and linguistically diverse communities can be distilled down to two themes:

- The community expects Council to take a strong leadership role in showing respect and recognition for cultural diversity.
- People are keen to experience the cultural diversity of the community.

Action <sup>73</sup>	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
17. Continue to fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at the front of the Civic Centre.	Highest priority	Current and ongoing	DLALC, Elders, Aboriginal organisations	-	-
18. Work with the Aboriginal community to develop a framework for consultation including consideration of an Aboriginal Consultative Committee.	Highest priority	Year 1	DLALC, Elders, Aboriginal organisations	-	-
19. In consultation with the Aboriginal community develop a protocol for acknowledgement of and involvement of the traditional custodians at meetings and functions organised by Council.*	Highest priority	Year 1	DLALC, Elders, Aboriginal organisations	-	-
20. Negotiate with the Aboriginal community to identify ways of establishing an Aboriginal community worker position.	Very important	Year 2	DLALC, Elders, Aboriginal organisations	-	-
21. Develop and implement an Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement for Wyong Shire as required by the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. <sup>74</sup>	Highest priority	Year 1	CC Multicultural Project; CC Multicultural Interagency	-	-
22. Develop cross cultural training for Council staff and interested community groups to raise awareness of the diversity of cultures within the Shire, including Aboriginal, non-English speaking and youth cultures.	Very important	Years 2 -3	Aboriginal & CALD organisations and youth.	\$5K p.a.	WSC
23. Encourage festivals, events and other community projects that include celebration of cultural diversity.	Very important	Year 2	Community & cultural organisations; CC Tourism	Through cultural grants program	-
24. Negotiate with Gosford City Council and with the multicultural community with a view to establishing a regional multicultural worker position. *	Very important	Year 2	CC Multicultural Project; CC Multicultural Interagency; CALD groups	\$40K p.a.	WSC; GCC; NSW Ministry for the Arts
25. Involve Aboriginal residents, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and young people in community arts projects in parks and other public places. Conduct one project annually.	Very important	Years 2 - 4	Aboriginal & CALD organisations and youth.	\$10K p.a.	S94; WSC; Ministry for the Arts;
26. Review the Library Services family history collection to ensure that diverse groups are well resourced to research their family history.	Important	Ongoing	Family history groups	\$2K p.a.	WSC

<sup>73</sup> Actions marked \* have the potential to be implemented as regional projects.

<sup>74</sup> Green Paper *Cultural Harmony – the next decade 2002-2012*, Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW, p.88

Action <sup>75</sup>	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
27. Support the multicultural community in the reestablishment of community radio.*	Very important	Ongoing	CALD groups; GCC	-	-
28. Review civic celebrations such as Australia Day to ensure cultural sensitivity and to encourage participation by diverse groups.	Highest priority	Year 1	Community groups	-	-
29. Resource the community to establish an annual Harmony Day (21 March) event that celebrates a culturally diverse society. *	Very important	Years 2 - 4	CC Multicultural project; CC Multicultural interagency; CALD groups	\$5K p.a.	WSC
30. Review Council's Sister City program to ensure that it reflects current best practice in sister city programs.	Important	Year 3	Sister cities; community organisations	-	-
31. Review and report on Council's resources for residents that require interpreting services whilst conducting business with Council.	Very important	Year 2	CALD community members	-	-

<sup>75</sup> Actions marked \* have the potential to be implemented as regional projects.

**GOAL AREA 3: SUPPORTING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE – A Community that Values and Supports the Cultural Expression and Participation of its Young People**

“[We] need to protect the young people from marginalization and neglect by ensuring their social inclusion and involvement in civic and cultural programmes... How is this to be accomplished? How can we help the young realize their dreams and aspirations? What can we do to help impart a sense of meaning and value to their lives?” *Our Creative Diversity*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1995, Ch.6 (on-line edition).



**Danielle Mitric, Age 10. Horse riding at Yarramalong Valley**

Children and young people are numerically a large group - there were 44,447 people under the age of 25 years in Wyong Shire in 2001, or 34% of the population. This is greater than the 27% of people over the age of 55.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Central Coast: Regional Profile and Social Atlas*, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, University of Newcastle, Central Coast Health, pp.57 & 60.

These children and young people are “adults-in-waiting” – the next generation that will carry the responsibilities of family and community in the decades to come. Whilst creativity, imagination and experimentation are not the sole preserve of youth, if these qualities are not nurtured and valued in an individual’s early years they have little chance of flowering later in life. These qualities are just what society needs to meet the social, technological and environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Children and young people love to sing and dance, to beat drums, to whistle and skip, to act out and dress up. However, community consultation including amongst young people and youth service providers has sent a strong message that opportunities for cultural participation for youth in Wyong Shire need to be further developed. This is not just a matter of establishing programs and facilities that children and young people can access, although these are both a key element – “things for kids to do” was a common refrain of the consultation. It is also about working with older people in the community – elected representatives, council officers, service providers and members of community organisations – to increase awareness, appreciation and tolerance of children and young people and their cultures.

**Did you know?**

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus was established in the NSW country town of Albury in 1979, during the International Year of the Child. It has established itself as one of the world's premier youth performing arts companies.

Council can provide recreational facilities such as skate parks and swimming pools to harness the energy of young people and can encourage the private sector to fill gaps in the provision of cinema entertainment in the Shire. Council has a unique opportunity, in establishing a

performing arts centre, to nurture and showcase the talents of youth – not only in performance but also in design, production, technical skills and arts marketing – by resourcing a youth performing arts program.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
32. As a framework for acknowledging the importance of our youth to the cultural development of the community, develop a Youth Strategic Plan in consultation with a broad range of young people.	Highest priority	Year 1	Youth and community groups	\$40K	WSC
33. Continue existing resourcing for youth cultural programs including Youth Week events.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Youth and community groups	Existing budget	-
34. Encourage cultural events that promote participation by young people and families.	Very important	Years 2 - 4	Youth and community groups	Through cultural grant program	WSC
35. Support the proposal for a Police Citizens' Youth Club in Wyong Shire.	Very important	Ongoing	PCYC; NSW Police; youth	-	-
36. Encourage and support community projects that provide opportunities for young people to develop their interests, skills and knowledge in culture and the arts.	Very important	Years 2 - 4	Cultural organisations; schools; youth	Through cultural grant program	WSC
37. Provide support and advocacy to Wyong Neighbourhood Centre in seeking sustainable funding for the Wyong Youth Arts Project.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Wyong Neighbourhood Centre	-	-
38. Provide seed funding for the establishment of a youth performing arts project in association with the proposed performing arts centre.	Very important	Years 2 - 3	Community groups; schools; young performers	\$10K – Year 2 \$5K – Year 3	WSC; grants
39. When completed the Gravity Youth Centre Community Park will provide a venue for cultural events in association with Gravity Youth Centre. Establish an annual program to provide young people with opportunities for performance and for event organisation.	Important	Years 3 - 4	Gravity Youth Centre; Wyong Neighbourhood Centre; youth	\$2K p.a.	WSC
40. Investigate the feasibility of establishing an "Art Cart" mobile program to take cultural activities to young people in isolated areas of the Shire.*	Important	Year 3	Youth service providers; young people; cultural organisations	\$15K	WSC; Ministry for the Arts; sponsorship

**GOAL AREA 4: RESOURCES IN PLACE – Programs that Support the Cultural Aspirations of the Community.**

The survey of cultural organisations and businesses in Wyong Shire and the community consultation have demonstrated that there is a wealth of cultural activity and interest at a grass roots level that forms a solid basis on which to build. However, this activity tends to be fragmented, to happen in isolation and to be dependent on ad hoc resourcing and the skills and the work of volunteers. The community recognises the contribution of Council in providing the Library network as a key educational and cultural resource for the community and in resourcing the development of a cultural plan but looks to Council to establish programs that will

- Underline Council’s commitment to the development of a vibrant cultural life for Wyong Shire in a growing and increasingly sophisticated community.
- Provide on-going coordination and professional support for community cultural activities.

- Work with the community to provide and to source sustainable funding for culture.
- Demonstrate leadership and best practice in the management of cultural projects.

The early appointment of a Cultural Planner will build on the momentum gained during the cultural planning process. This position is essential to put in place the policies and strategies recommended in this report. Amongst the most important of these is a Policy and procedures for the proposed cultural grant program that will raise the profile of cultural activity in the Shire and set a standard of cultural governance and management. Down the track, as programs are put in place there will be the need to establish a further position of Cultural Projects Worker to provide on the ground support for community groups and artists and assist them in sourcing promotion, funding and sponsorship opportunities.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
41. Establish a Cultural Planner position to drive the implementation of this Cultural Plan and to raise the profile of culture and the arts within Council and the community.	Highest priority	Ongoing from Year 1	Cultural groups, artists, performers	\$80K	WSC
42. Establish a cultural grants program to resource community projects that are consistent with this Cultural Plan.	Highest priority	Introduce in Year 2	Cultural groups	\$30K	WSC
43. Council recognises its Library Services as a key educational and cultural resource for the community. Continue to resource this service as the foundation of future cultural development.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Library services; library users	Existing budget	-
44. Note the recommendations of the Review of Library Services to be conducted in 2005 and take action as appropriate.	Very important	-	Library services; library users;	Unknown at this time	Unknown at this time

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
45. Review Council's collection of art works and artefacts and develop a policy for the collection to include: acquisition, acceptance of gifts, deaccessioning, exhibition and collection management.	Very important	Year 2	Visual artists and visual arts organisations; heritage organisations; community groups	-	-
46. Develop a long-term plan for the annual photographic competition that reflects the principles and priorities of the Cultural Plan and that establishes sustainable management and resourcing of the event.	Important	Year 1	Photographers and visual arts groups; schools	\$6K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship
47. Develop and promote a policy for groups and individuals wishing to film in public places in Wyong Shire.	Important	Year 2	Film and photography industry; Cultural groups	-	-
48. Work with community and business groups to develop an application for "City of the Arts" funding to submit in 2006.	Important	Year 2	Community and business groups; Ministry for the Arts	-	-
49. Work with the business community to establish an Arts Foundation for Wyong Shire.	Very important	Year 1	Business organisations	\$2K p.a.	WSC
50. Provide training for community groups in arts administration skills including marketing, submission writing and event coordination. Conduct training in one field each year.*	Very important	Years 2 – 4	Community Cultural Development NSW	\$2K p.a.	WSC
51. Establish a Cultural Projects Worker position to work with community groups and recipients of cultural grants, with the objective of: 1 Providing professional support. 2 Identifying opportunities for partnerships. 3 Identifying promotional, funding and sponsorship opportunities for cultural projects.	Very important	Ongoing from Year 3	Cultural organisations; regional media; business organisations; Ministry for the arts	\$70K p.a.	WSC
52. Develop a framework for Council to engage creative professionals, such as for community and public art projects, residencies and master classes and performance at civic events, including strategies to ensure the ability to comply with Council's requirements for contractors.	Very important	Year 1	Artists and performers	-	-

## Wyong Township – A Cultural Hub

Municipalities around Australia are turning to the development of cultural precincts to regenerate town centres affected by the growth of suburban shopping malls. Reasons for this approach include:

- Highlighting the uniqueness of an area.
- Encouraging cultural development.
- Developing a sense of ownership of town centres.
- Improving community safety by increasing levels of activity day and night.
- Attracting small businesses.

A starting point for developing such a precinct in Wyong is to work with the community on the development of a public art strategy to:

- Create the cultural theme.
- Make entry point statements to create that unique sense of place.

Establishing the town as a cultural hub can act as a catalyst for economic activity such as cafes, bookshops, boutiques, costume suppliers and craft studios. This in turn creates an attractive ambience that can encourage larger businesses to locate in the area.

Council property at 12-14 Church Street consists of a cottage built c.1920 with a large block of land overlooking Wyong River. This and an adjoining property in Margaret Street can be integrated into the cluster of community facilities including the Neighbourhood Centre and Seniors' Centre surrounding Wyong Town Park to further activate the area and to provide a stimulus for cultural activity in the area.



The immediate environs of the two properties provide scenic views of the hills and valleys beyond the township. The location is an inspiring setting for creative activities.

The community has made a number of suggestions for development of cultural facilities and activities in Wyong township including a Writers' Centre, a youth theatre project, a Family History Centre, an Aboriginal Story Circle:

### Central Coast Writers' Centre

There are at least eight writers' groups on the Central Coast including three in Wyong Shire. There are eight regional writers' centres in New South Wales but none on the Central Coast.

A writers' centre typically provides writers' workshops, readings, seminars, talks, book launches and meetings of special interest groups – eg. poets' circle, young writers. Stakeholders include writers and writers' organisations, publishers, libraries, news media, schools, TAFE colleges and university. There are many opportunities for partnerships - for example with theatre groups (scriptwriting projects), historical societies (local history, biography or historical fiction), visual arts groups (art appreciation and criticism, mixed media).

Both the Church Street and the Margaret Street cottages could be adapted to use as a writers' centre and would have the potential to work with groups using the proposed performing arts centre.

### Youth Theatre Project

In resolving to conduct a feasibility study on a performing arts centre Council has acknowledged the significance of the performing arts to the people of the Shire. In Wyong township there are two active theatre groups that between them mount up to six productions a year in the Memorial Hall. There are also a number of private dance and drama schools in the vicinity. Several groups and individuals have in the past year expressed an interest in establishing a youth theatre project in the area but have been constrained by the availability of a venue. The immediate requirement is for workshop space for tuition and rehearsals.

The activities of a youth performing arts group have the potential to link with writers' groups and could work from the same centre. There would also be opportunities to form partnerships with schools and TAFE in Wyong. The group could work with Council towards the opening of the performing arts centre and would give the young people of the Shire a stake in the future of the centre and a sense of ownership.

### Aboriginal Story Circle

The Aboriginal community has a strong presence in Wyong township with organisations such as Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre. Members of the Aboriginal community have identified the need for a venue for quiet reflection, where Elders can meet with children and young people to pass on their traditional knowledge. Amongst the objectives of such a "story circle" are to strengthen a sense of identity in younger members of their community, boost self-esteem and support them in completing school education. Partnership opportunities could include:

- Writers – Creating written accounts of experiences.
- Family history groups – Assisting individuals to establish their personal family stories.
- Theatre groups – Developing scripts and performances.

### A Family History Centre

Wyong Family History Group operates a family history centre in Wyong Plaza. A long term aim of this group is to find a permanent home in a location with a heritage ambience. Such a centre would allow for members' research activities, a library of resources, "drop in" facilities and regular workshops. The group reports that there is strong and growing interest in family history especially amongst older residents who make up such a significant part of the population of the Shire.

The Town Park locality is suitable for such a purpose with its heritage associations. The Church Street cottage in particular has pleasing heritage features and is associated with an early Wyong family.

Partnership opportunities could include:

- Oral history projects with seniors' groups
- Family History Workshops as part of the Neighbourhood Centre program
- Publications with writers' groups.

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These proposals all have intrinsic merit and could be complementary to existing and proposed cultural assets in Wyong township and the Shire and benefit from access to rail and bus transport and shops. The location itself is inspirational and begs a use that is out of the ordinary.

It is proposed to invite written submissions from interested groups to establish two or more complementary activities in the properties. These would be upgraded to ensure universal access and to link them with the existing community facilities around the Town Park.

## GOAL AREA 5: *CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY AND HERITAGE – A Community that Values and Celebrates its Past*

“History is important in helping people to locate themselves in time and space, especially when people move into an area.” Community member interviewed for this project.

History is the collective memory of the community that connects us with our past and that counsels and inspires us for the future. Wyong Shire residents show a strong interest in history, especially in local and family history. This is demonstrated by the popularity of family history workshops run by Wyong Family History Group. The consultation has indicated the importance to the community of learning more about the past of Wyong Shire, both its Aboriginal and its post-1788 heritage, the desire for education for present and future generations and for preservation of what is valuable in our built and moveable heritage. This desire is motivated both by the intrinsic fascination with the past and by anxiety about the pace and scope of development in the Shire. Council recognises the importance of heritage and has identified possible directions for the maintenance of heritage in *State of the Environment 2003/2004*.<sup>77</sup>

History is stories and everyone loves a story well-told. History programs provide unique opportunities for interaction between groups and individuals with stories to tell – seniors and young people, Aboriginal and European Australians, migrants and Australian-born. Built heritage can contribute greatly to the flavour of the environment – this is illustrated by Wyong residents’ affection for the environs of the iconic Norah Head Lighthouse. There are clusters of built heritage throughout the Shire – for example, in Ourimbah, The Entrance and Wyong township. These can be highlighted through plaques and heritage trails to strengthen the identity of individual areas. In the case of Wyong these assets have the potential to contribute to the appeal of a revitalised town centre.



### Did you know?

Wyong Family History Group has a research centre in Wyong Plaza and runs regular workshops at Shire libraries.

### Did you know?

“According to the Dreaming story of this region, it was created by Daramulen, the great god above the sky who is the source of all power. Many lakes and rivers were shaped by the Rainbow Serpent, who rests in the swamp at Freeman’s Waterhole.”  
Central Coast Area Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy Implementation Plan 2003/2005, p.9.

<sup>77</sup> *State of the Environment 2003 / 2004*, Wyong Shire Council, p.202

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
53. Encourage and support programs that research and document the Aboriginal and post-1788 history of the Shire.	Very important	Ongoing	Aboriginal community; Heritage groups; libraries	Through cultural grants program	WSC
54. Establish a library branch as a centre of local history and heritage including Aboriginal heritage, with provision for an exhibition area.	Important	Year 2	Aboriginal community; Heritage groups	Incorporate in construction cost	-
55. In consultation with the Aboriginal community, develop a permanent display on the culture of the first inhabitants, in the designated library branch.	Important	Pursuant to (54)	Aboriginal community; Heritage groups; Library Services	\$30K	WSC; NSW Ministry for the Arts; Dept of Environment & Heritage
56. Encourage uses of the Pioneer Dairy site to provide opportunities for the interpretation of environmental and cultural heritage.	Very Important	Ongoing	Aboriginal community; heritage groups; environmental groups	-	-
57. Document the collection of artefacts relating to the history of the Council and develop a strategic plan for its management.	Very important	Year 1	Council staff; heritage groups	-	-
58. Work in partnership with community organisations, schools and seniors' groups to develop an oral history program that documents the experiences of older residents.*	Important	Year 3	Heritage groups; schools; seniors' centres; Library Services	\$5K	WSC; NSW Dept of Environment & Heritage
59. Develop a heritage walking trail of Wyong township, including interpretive signage and a brochure.	Very important	Year 2	Heritage groups; schools; seniors' centres; Library Services; CC Tourism	\$100K	WSC; NSW Dept of Environment & Heritage
60. Facilitate the identification of a suitable "shopfront" in Wyong town ship for Wyong Family History Group.	Very important	Year 2	Wyong Family History Society	-	-
61. Develop a heritage driving trail to link clusters of heritage sites throughout the Shire, including interpretive signage and a brochure.	Important	Year 4	Heritage groups; schools; seniors' centres; Library Services; CC Tourism	\$100K	WSC; NSW Ministry for the Arts; Sponsorship
62. In conjunction with Aboriginal and historical organisations, develop a program to reference Aboriginal and other heritage in named features such as streets.	Very Important	Year 2	Aboriginal groups; heritage groups; developers	-	-
63. Facilitate a working party representing heritage and history groups to develop a coordinated approach to collecting material.*	Important	Year 3	Heritage groups; Library Services	-	-
64. Encourage and support intergenerational projects, including the possibility of holding an historical festival, that provide opportunities for the transmission of the community's stories.*	Important	Ongoing	Heritage and other community groups; schools; university	Through cultural grants program	-

**GOAL AREA 6: *PLACES YOU WANT TO BE - A Community that Celebrates the Interaction between People and the Natural and Built Environment***



**An Innovative Public Art Project in Chicago**

“Before the Village Green was created in Toukley, people used to meet and chat in the car park or not at all. The Village Green has given people a place to come together and created a feeling of community”. Resident

The people of Wyong Shire enjoy a varied and visually pleasing natural environment of beaches, lakes and bushland and a climate that invites people to spend their time outdoors. The community consultation roundly endorsed residents’ appreciation of these features. Wyong Shire has its share of the inharmonious aspects of modern built environments but there are many created outdoor places in the Shire that are attractive and inviting. Council has invested significant resources in projects such as the landscaping of Wyong Road, the redevelopment of The Entrance main street and foreshore, Toukley Village Green, Swadling Park and the Chittaway to The Entrance cycleway.

Council can build on these cultural assets to further enhance the built environment in new and redeveloped areas, to create inviting and inclusive outdoor space and to encourage a sense of community ownership wherever people congregate to shop, walk, swim, picnic, listen to the band or just enjoy the view. This will be achieved by ensuring that the perspective of all age groups including youth and seniors is included in future master plans to encourage public areas where everyone feels safe and welcome.

Cultural activities take place outdoors throughout the year in Wyong Shire, such as major events at The Entrance and “Food and Fun by the Lake” at Canton Beach. Council can further encourage community festivals, concerts, street theatre and outdoor movies by ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place.

Finally, Council can provide a meeting point for a wide range of community, cultural and sporting organisations by coordinating a “Festival of the Waters” to celebrate the natural environment that gives the Shire its unique and enviable lifestyle.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
65. Develop a public art policy and strategy for Wyong Shire.	Highest priority	Year 1	Visual artists and community organisations; business organisations; developers	\$10K	WSC; NSW Ministry for the Arts
66. Develop a public art Master Plan for Warnervale to provide a coordinated and consistent approach to public art in the new town centre.	Highest priority	Year 1	Visual artists and community organisations; business organisations; developers; Landcom	\$50K	WSC; NSW Ministry for the Arts
67. Review Council's parks and reserves to identify suitable venues for outdoor cinema and concerts.	Very important	Year 2	Community organisations and sporting groups; cinema operators	-	-
68. Conduct a feasibility study on establishing an outdoor amphitheatre for live theatre and concerts.	Very important	Year 2	Performing arts groups	\$50K	WSC
69. Work with young people, community organisations and business to develop and implement a Youth Protocol for public and commercial space.	Highest priority	Year 1	Youth workers; young people; community organisations shopping centres	-	-
70. Establish a walking and cycle track along the northern bank of Wyong River at Tacoma and incorporate public art to reference the heritage of the area.	Important	Year 4	Sporting and community organisations	\$40K (track) \$100K (public art)	WSC; NSW Dept of Sport and Recreation; NSW Ministry for the Arts; sponsorship
71. Mark Shire gateways in Sparks Road and Wyong Road with signage such as banners and hoardings that reflect cultural identity.	Very important	Year 2	RTA	\$100K	WSC; NSW Ministry for the Arts
72. Work with cultural and sporting groups with a view to developing a Festival of the Waters in 2008 - 2009 as a celebration of natural and cultural heritage.	Very important	Year 3	Cultural and sporting organisations; businesses	\$50K	WSC; Min of Arts;
73. Encourage outdoor dining and diversity in restaurant and café culture.	Important	Ongoing	Businesses	-	-

**GOAL AREA 7: *WHY NOT IN WYONG? – A Community that Encourages the Pursuit of Innovation and Excellence in Personal and Professional Artistic Development.***



**“Sculpture by the Bay” (2004) Gave School Students the Opportunity to Work with an Artist-in-Residence at Gosford Regional Gallery.  
Photo – Gosford Region Art Gallery**

“Innovation drives the cultural industries ... [we need to] focus on the ways artists, our creative core, can be supported to experiment and renew”.  
*Priorities for the Arts – NSW Ministry for the Arts Strategic Plan 2004-2007, p.7.*

Much of the enjoyment of participating in activities at the community level – whether cultural, sporting or whatever – lies in getting involved, having a go and interacting with other people. But out of the rich mixture of the community’s cultural life will emerge those that excel and those that dare to take risks with their arts practice. There are many people living in the Shire, both young and old, taking their first steps with creative expression as there are those who have established themselves in the visual, performing and literary arts at the regional and national level. Wyong Shire’s Australia Day Citizen of the Year for 2004 was the renowned author Bryce Courtney. The award for best director in the Short and Sweet 2005 “Biggest Little Play Festival in the World”, run by Newtown Theatre and attracting over 1,000 entries for Australia and overseas, was won by young Budgewoi director Steven Hopley.

Development and recognition programs are a well established aspect of the sporting scene in Australia both in the amateur and professional spheres. It is not enough to say that we value innovation and achievement in the arts. As a community we need to encourage the talents of our emerging achievers in all aspects of the arts and to celebrate their successes. In a limited way Wyong Shire Council is doing this already through the annual photographic competition. Community groups on the Central Coast have been advocating for some time for the expansion of awards programs in the arts as well as “in-residence” and master class programs.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
74. Establish and promote an artist-in-residence program to provide opportunities to have visual artists in residence whose work can be experienced and appreciated by other artists, students and community members.	Very important	Year 2 - 4	Visual artists and visual arts organisations	\$4K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship; NSW Ministry for the Arts
75. Establish and promote a Master Class program in the performing arts.	Very important	Year 2 - 4	Performing arts organisations; schools	\$4K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship; NSW Ministry for the Arts
76. Negotiate with visual artists to develop and promote an Open Studio Day program to showcase the work and artistic practice of local artists and to provide inspiration to others.*	Important	Years 3 - 4	Visual artists; visual arts organisations; schools	\$2K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship; NSW Ministry for the Arts
77. Support community projects that encourage innovation and excellence in the arts.	Very important	Ongoing	Cultural organisations; artists and performers	Through cultural grants program	-
78. In partnership with cultural organisations and the business community establish an annual cultural awards program that recognises the achievements of groups and individuals.*	Very important	Years 2 - 4	Cultural organisations; businesses; media	\$10K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship

**GOAL AREA 8: WELL-CONNECTED – Effective Communication and Networking amongst Government Organisations, the Arts Community and with its Audiences**

The need to establish effective communication and networking has been a common theme of the consultation for the cultural plans of both Gosford City and Wyong Shire. In the course of this project, Council hosted two forums to canvass community views on the direction for cultural and the arts in the Shire and held three meetings of the Cultural Plan Reference Group. The coming together of members of the arts community and Council officers has established a valuable dialogue that greatly enhances the work of this Cultural Plan. But this is not the only outcome of such meetings. They are an opportunity for individuals and organisations to network with each other, to share information, to discover common interests and often to embark on collaborative projects.



**“The Art of Celebration” – A Forum for the Arts Community on the Central Coast, April 2004.  
Photo – FUSION Arts Central Coast**

Such connections can greatly enrich the cultural life of a community.

Artists and arts organisations have asked for more opportunities to come together in this way with the assistance of Council, as well as the development of communications tools such as an arts directory, a website and a calendar of events. These will not only support connectedness amongst arts practitioners but also develop the audience on the Central Coast and beyond. By their nature communications tools such as meetings and publications are not fixed in space and are therefore projects that could be implemented on a regional basis.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
79. Develop and promote a directory of cultural organisations and businesses and Council facilities that are suitable for cultural uses.*	Very important	Year 2	Cultural organisations and businesses	\$4K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship
80. Develop a calendar of cultural events.*	Very important	Year 2	Cultural organisations and businesses	\$2K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship
81. Distribute an email bulletin of “what’s on” in culture and the arts.*	Very important	Ongoing	Cultural organisations and businesses	-	-
82. Conduct regular forums as a means of promoting networking amongst arts and cultural groups on the Central Coast.*	Highest Priority	Annually	Cultural organisations and businesses	\$5K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship
83. Provide support for a community managed arts and culture website.*	Very important	Years 2 - 4	Cultural organisations and businesses	\$10K p.a.	WSC; sponsorship
84. Ensure that new WSC community and cultural facilities include provision of prominently placed updatable signage to advertise events.	Highest priority	Ongoing	Cultural organisations and businesses	Include in construction costs	-

**GOAL AREA 9: WORKING AS A REGION – Finding Strength in Numbers**

“There is the feeling that the region does not have control of its own destiny. As an example, the region cannot sustain itself with employment and has unmet needs for infrastructure in response to population growth ... The local government authorities have a role to play in addressing this issue, by working to avoid intraregional conflict and power play.” Findings of Regional Issues discussion group, Wyong Shire Council Cultural Forum November 2004<sup>78</sup>

The strong sense of a regional identity that is apparent to people who live and work on the Central Coast seems at times to prevail in spite of, rather than with the support of, other levels of government. For example, regional entities such as Central Coast Health and the Department of Education Central Coast directorate have in recent years been dismantled and the responsibilities devolved to agencies in northern Sydney or the Hunter. This approach is at odds with the reality for businesses and community organisations on the Central Coast.

Council’s database of regional-scale arts and cultural organisations and businesses has over a hundred entries, most of them with “Central Coast” as part of the name. In 2004 a group of Central Coast arts practitioners, responding to a perceived need to lobby on behalf of the arts community, formed an incorporated association to provide peer support to arts workers and to advocate for cultural development in the region.

There are tangible benefits for councils and other government agencies that work together in cultural development, such as the opportunity to share resources and information and adopt a single voice on issues of mutual interest. The New South Wales Ministry for the Arts encourages councils to consider the regional dimension in developing cultural plans<sup>79</sup> and for some projects – such as major cultural infrastructure - will only consider providing funding on a regional basis.

Action	How Important Is It?	Time Frame	Who are the Community Partners?	What is the Financial Impact?	What are the Potential Funding Sources?
85. Approach Gosford City Council and other government agencies including Mt Penang Parklands and the University to establish regular liaison between cultural professionals working on the Central Coast.	Highest priority	Ongoing	CC Cultural professionals	-	-
86. Approach Gosford City Council and other government agencies with a view to developing a regional cultural strategy that builds on the cultural plans of both councils and includes a complementary approach to facility provision.	Highest priority	Ongoing	CC Cultural professionals	-	-
87. Work with Gosford City Council and other government agencies including Mt Penang Parklands and the University to conduct an annual regional cultural forum.	Very important	Annually	CC artists, performers and cultural professionals.	-	-
88. In partnership with Gosford City Council and other government agencies monitor emerging cultural industries on the Central Coast, including the film industry, to identify projects with the potential for employment generation. Provide support as appropriate.	Very important	Ongoing	Cultural professionals	-	-

<sup>78</sup> Wyong Shire Council Cultural Plan – Consultation Report January 2005, p.23

<sup>79</sup> Cultural Planning Guidelines for local government, NSW Ministry for the Arts, 2004, p.17

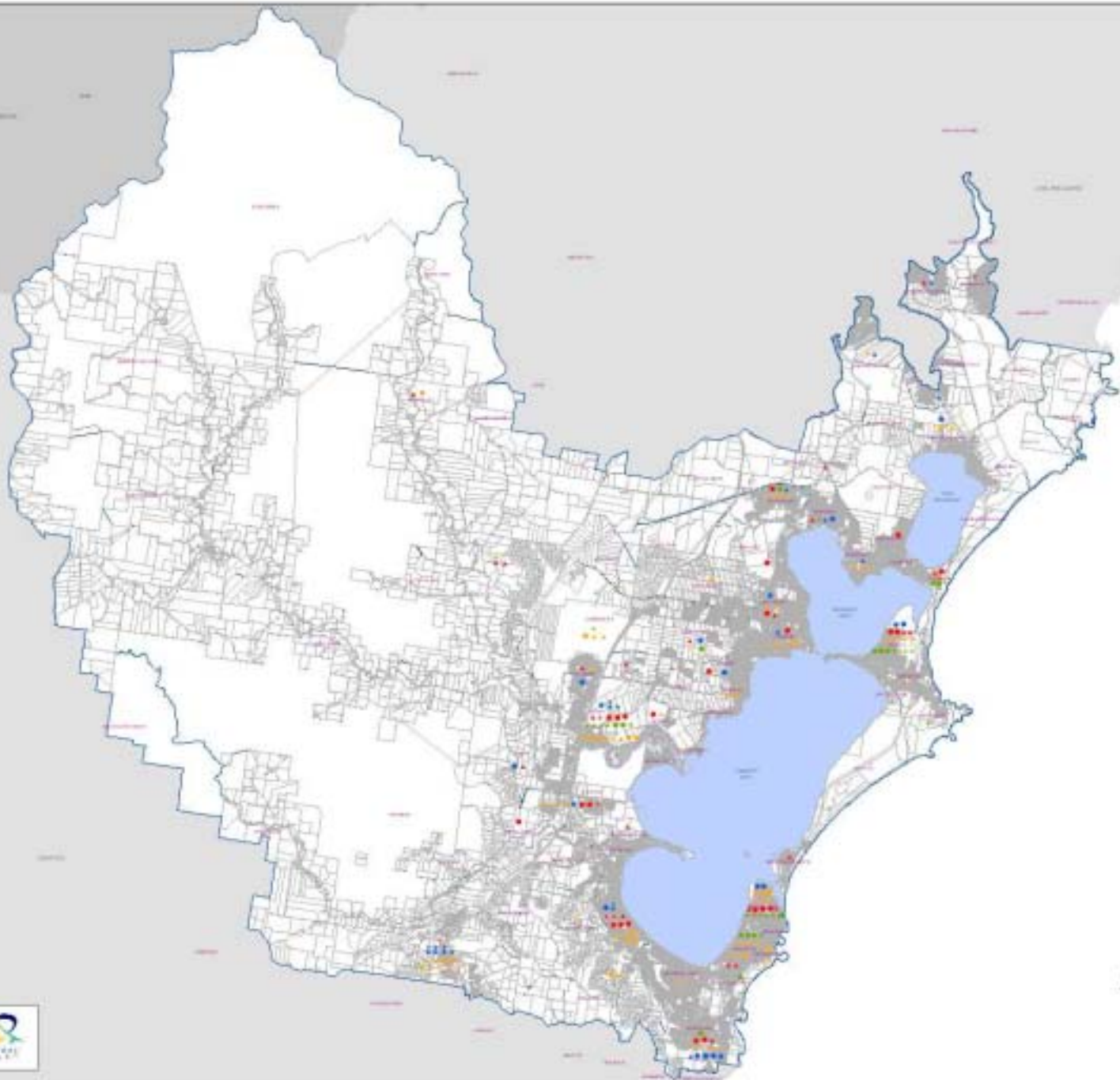


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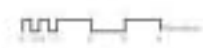
Document	Organisation/ Publisher	Author	Date
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A Report on the Central Coast Muslim Community	Wyoming Community Centre	CC Multicultural Project	2003
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<i>Central Coast Omnibus Survey</i>	Wyong Shire Council	Central Coast Research Foundation	Sept 2004
<i>Central Coast: Regional Profile &amp; Social Atlas</i>	Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council, University of Newcastle, CC Health		2004
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Document	Organisation/ Publisher	Author	Date
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<i>NSW Cultural Statistics Snapshot</i>	NSW Ministry for the Arts website	NSW Ministry for the Arts	February 2005
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Population Projections for Statistical Local Areas, 2001-2031	DIPNR		2004
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<b>Document</b>	<b>Organisation/ Publisher</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
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Second Cultural Accord 2002-2005	NSW Ministry for the Arts & Local Government Assoc & Shires Assoc		2002
<i>Shaping the Central Coast Action Plan (Revised)</i>	PlanningNSW	PlanningNSW, Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council	2003
<i>Social and Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines</i>	NSW Dept of Local Government		2002
<i>Social and Community Planning and Reporting Manual</i>	NSW Dept of Local Government		2002
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<i>The Rise of the Creative Class</i>	Pluto Press Australia	Richard Florida	2003
<i>The Valleys</i>	Wyong Shire Council		August 2002 edition
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Wyong Shire Council Art Collection Inventory	Wyong Shire Council	Engineering Services Dept.	2004
Wyong Town Centre Planning Strategy	Wyong Shire Council	Strategic Planning	2000
Wyong Town Centre Report - Town Character and Cultural Significance	Wyong Shire Council	Colin Brady Architecture + Planning	1997
Wyong Tuggerah Planning Strategy Draft Background and Issues report	Wyong Shire Council	Strategic Planning	2003
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- Legend**
- PERFORMING ARTS**
- dance
  - music
  - theatre
- VISUAL ARTS**
- craft
  - film/video
  - cinema
  - galleries & studios
  - photography
  - visual arts
- INFRASTRUCTURE**
- community centres
  - library
  - education centres
  - youth
- OTHERS**
- cultural diversity
  - events
  - heritage
  - veldg/literature/speaking



## A CULTURAL MAP OF WYONG SHIRE

