

# NORTH SYDNEY ARTS & CULTURAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2022



DRAFT JUNE 2019



arts & culture  
in north sydney

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# Introduction

Culture is the foundation upon which vibrant, resilient and creative communities are built. It creates cohesion in the community and helps build an inclusive society, providing avenues for a range of creative expressions and innovation, while contributing to a diverse and robust economy. <sup>1</sup>

North Sydney Council is committed to supporting the growth and diversity of arts and cultural activities and expression in ways that benefit the community, businesses and visitors to the area. In a recent study which ranked 555 Sydney suburbs based on liveability, 8 out of the top 10 suburbs were in the North Sydney local government area. With 'culture' as the 5<sup>th</sup> of 16 indicators of liveability, the significance of a dynamic and healthy cultural landscape is evident. Council continues to respond to existing needs and current and emerging trends in the arts and cultural sector. <sup>2</sup>

The Greater Sydney Commission's North District Plan supports the need for "fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities" (Planning Priority N4) with a commitment to deliver on three strategies to ensure "communities are healthy, resilient and socially connected; communities are culturally rich with diverse neighbourhoods; celebrates the arts and supports creative industries and innovation". <sup>3</sup>

This Plan outlines Council's Arts and Cultural Service Levels and three Directions identified through community consultation and is in line with recent planning studies across the sector. The Directions align with strategies set out in Council's Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028 and embrace the vision to enhance, support and develop arts, culture and diversity in the North Sydney local government area, whilst harnessing new opportunities from both within Council and across the broader community and business sector.



1. Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey, June 2017, Australia Council for the Arts, p. 12.
2. Creative Places /Places for Creatives Forum, Discussion Paper, North Sydney Council, 2016, p. 1.
3. Our Greater Sydney 2056: North District Plan – connecting communities, Greater Sydney Commission, 2018, p. 31.

# Vision

North Sydney Council is recognised as a local government leader in the provision of vibrant, inclusive, accessible, innovative and collaborative arts and cultural programs and services, recognising the role arts and culture plays in developing individual wellbeing, building community connectedness and contributing to a vibrant and dynamic community.

Council is committed to providing programs and infrastructure which accommodate a range of art forms and cultural experiences, ensuring that cultural life is available to all. Our programs and services are accessible and sustainable, tailored to meet the changing needs and demographics of our North Sydney community.

Planning for the continuing growth of North Sydney's arts and cultural programs and infrastructure takes place against a background of a projected significant increase in housing targets and employment. Northern Sydney Community Cultural & Arts Infrastructure Strategy Project says "both housing and jobs targets indicate that the infrastructure in the Northern Sydney region will come under unprecedented pressure unless investment is made in new infrastructure and strategies are deployed to improve productivity or utilisation of available infrastructure".<sup>4</sup>

## Housing targets for North Sydney

Local Government Area	Housing supply target 2016-2021	Housing supply target 2021 - 2036
Northern Sydney Region	25,950	92,000
North Sydney LGA	3,000	-

Figure 1. Our Greater Sydney 2056: North District Plan – connecting communities, Greater Sydney Commission, 2018, p.43

## Jobs targets by principal employment precincts in North Sydney

Employment centre	Jobs 2016 (estimate)	2036 – target	Increase
North Sydney	60,400	76,000 – 81,500	15,600 – 21,100

Figure 2. Our Greater Sydney 2056: North District Plan – connecting communities, Greater Sydney Commission, 2018, p. 57

Council actively supports the growth and development of cultural infrastructure and is alert to new opportunities in view of growing community and sector needs and expectations. Council recognises the need to embrace innovative technologies and digital platforms to ensure participation in arts and culture is available for all sections of the community. Council recognises the need for artists and the broader creative sector to receive support through funding, facilities, programs and initiatives if the community and cultural life in North Sydney is to flourish.<sup>5</sup>

4. Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities – connecting people, March 2018.

5. Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey, June 2017, Australia Council for the Arts, p. 15.

# Methodology

This Plan outlines Council’s Arts and Cultural service levels whilst addressing needs that have been identified through a process of community engagement and consultation. High priority needs were identified during the delivery of the annual program of arts and cultural activities as well as Directions and Outcomes highlighted in the North Sydney Creative Places / Places for Creatives Forum and Discussion Paper 2016 (Appendix page 33).

Feedback and data have also been considered from the engagement process for Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028, survey results in the formulation of the Arts and Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022 and the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy: Community and Stakeholder Engagement, 2018.

In a review of the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028 Council gathered ideas from residents through the community engagement process (Phase 2, December 2017-March 2018), which yielded a substantial amount of community input from a wide range of target groups.<sup>6</sup> Results of the Online Discussion Forum and strategies outlined in Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028 and Delivery Program 2018 – 2021 have informed this Plan, noting that two of the three topics/questions attracted a ‘high level’ response to the need for more arts, events and cultural activities/ spaces, as detailed below:

**Question: What issues need to be addressed as a priority?**

**Question: What do you want North Sydney Local government area to be like in 10 years?**

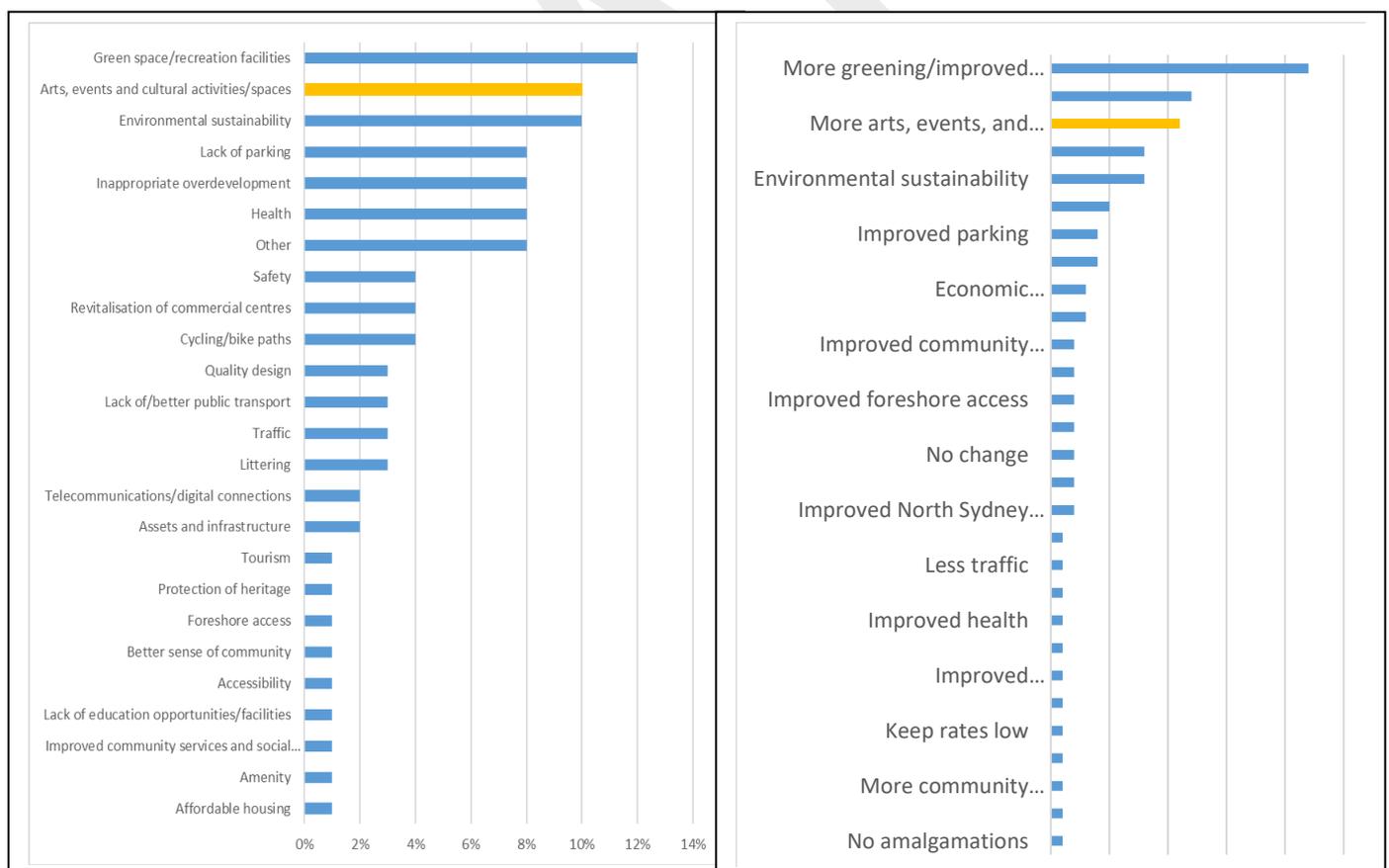


Figure 3 & 4. North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028: Community Engagement - Online Discussion Forum results.

6.. North Sydney Council Community Strategic Planning Review 2018: Community Engagement Findings Summary, pages 11-13 (North Sydney Council Report 9 April 2018)

Results of the Online Discussion Forum comments were analysed with the following five key arts and cultural needs identified by the community as priorities.

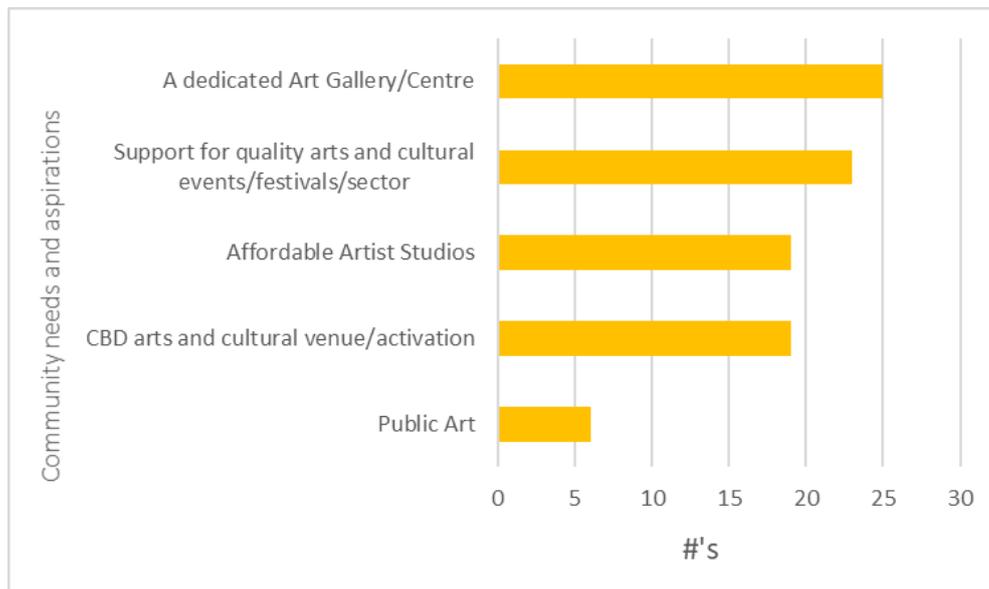


Figure 5. North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028: Community Engagement – On-line Discussion Forum results.

The Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022 Community Engagement Survey reinforced the above with over 80% requesting the need for a dedicated gallery/exhibition space specific. 85% of those surveyed wanted to see more arts and cultural activities specifically in the North Sydney CBD.



# Service Level

Table 1. Service Function

Related to Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028
<p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p>4.1 NORTH SYDNEY IS CONNECTED, HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE AND SAFE</p> <p>4.2 NORTH SYDNEY IS CREATIVE AND HOME TO POPULAR EVENTS</p>
Related to Delivery Program 2018 – 2021
<p><b>STRATEGY</b></p> <p>4.1.6 Celebrate diversity in the community</p> <p>4.1.6.3 Coordinate and promote activities in Indigenous festivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the Gai-mariagal Festival program</li> </ul> <p>4.1.10 Plan for future social infrastructure and health services to support healthy communities</p> <p>4.1.10.1 Promote Health and wellbeing through arts programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate Creating Wellbeing Program</li> </ul> <p>4.2.1 Promote, support and celebrate creative arts in North Sydney through facilities, spaces and programs</p> <p>4.2.1.1 Review the Arts and Cultural Development Plan</p> <p>4.2.1.2 Implement the Arts and Cultural Development Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct the North Sydney Art Prize</li> <li>• Implement Primrose Park Artist Studio &amp; Coal Loader Artist in Residence Program</li> <li>• Initiate and implement Creative Spaces program, i.e. inTransit Art Space, Ridge Street Artists Program, Inside Outside Sculpture Plinth</li> <li>• Initiate and implement Public Art opportunities and program</li> <li>• Conduct Youth Visual Storytelling Project</li> <li>• Coordinate diverse and innovative community arts programs, i.e. biennial community arts project, annual Children’s Festival</li> </ul> <p>4.2.1.3 Review the Primrose Park Arts and Craft Centre Joint Strategic Plan</p> <p>4.2.1.4 Prepare a Public Art Masterplan</p> <p>4.2.1.5 Identify art projects that are eligible for funding through the Subsidies and Grants program</p> <p>4.2.1.6 Increase public awareness of the arts programming offered throughout North Sydney</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and distribute Arts &amp; Culture Guide</li> <li>• Support and promote the local creative arts sector</li> <li>• Participate in professional/regional programs and networks</li> </ul>
<b>Date first Reviewed:</b> 30/7/2017
<b>Date last Reviewed:</b> 20/6/2019

# Service Level

Table 2. Components of Service

Components of Service	Performance Guarantee/ Agreement	Reliant Upon	Responsible Officer (Title)
<b>Creative Spaces and Opportunities</b>			
<b>Studio Spaces</b>			
<i>Direct</i>			
Primrose Park Artist Studios	6 artists' pa	Condition and maintenance of studio spaces, promotion, number of applications, resources	Team Leader Arts & Culture Team Leader Arts & Culture
The Coal Loader Artist Studio	1 artist pa		
<i>Indirect</i>			
Primrose Park Art & Craft Centre	Joint Strategic Plan	Renewal of current Lease under current terms from Council and approval from Crown Lands	Director, Community and Library Services
Studio A (Artists with a disability)	Lease arising from a targeted EOI	Renewal of lease at affordable levels	N/A
<b>Exhibition/Creative spaces</b>			
<i>Direct</i>			
Inside Outside Sculpture Plinth	6-8 works pa	Provision of the space	Team Leader Arts & Culture
inTransit Art Space	10 exhibitions pa	Provision of the space	Arts & Culture Officer
Hutley Hall	1 exhibitions pa	Demand for use has decreased as space and location are challenging	Team Leader Arts & Culture
Ridge Street Creative Space	6 exhibitions pa	Provision of the space	Team Leader Arts & Culture
Creative Space initiatives – the proposed St Leonards Arts Centre	Ongoing	Cross Council collaboration, support, funding and resources	Team Leader Arts & Culture
Proposed Cultural Hub initiative	<b>Ongoing</b>	Planning Proposal, funding and resources	Director, Community and Library Services

Table 2. Components of Service cont.

Components of Service	Performance Guarantee/ Agreement	Reliant Upon	Responsible Officer (Title)
<b>Enable Creative Expression and Experiences</b>			
Public Art Program	Deliver a public art project biennially	Continued support, resources & funding	Team Leader Arts & Culture
Public Art Masterplan	Develop a North Sydney Public Art Masterplan	Funding	Team Leader Arts & Culture
The North Sydney Art Prize	Biennially - 100 artists selected	Sponsorship, venue, resources, funding, artist volunteers	Team Leader Arts & Culture
Community Art Projects	Biennially	Resources & funding	Arts & Culture Team
Local Studies Art Collection	Annually	Resources & funding	Council Historian
Shoreshocked Rock Festival	Annually	Funding & Volunteers	Youth Services & Partnerships Co-ordinator
Policy review to remove unnecessary obstacles to cultural experiences	Policy adopted by Council	Acceptable impact on community	Director, Community and Library Services
<b>Support Diversity and Inclusiveness</b>			
Creating Wellbeing Program	12 workshops annually	Availability of venue, continued funding	Arts & Cultural Programs Officer
Children's Festival	Annually	Review funding in line with Council expectations and WH&S requirements	Arts & Cultural Programs Officer
Youth Visual Storytelling Program	Youth – secondary schools invited	Provision of free and/or subsidised venues, continued funding	Arts & Culture Officer
Seniors Week art project	Over 55	Continued funding	Arts & Cultural Programs Officer
Gai-mariagal Festival community art project	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander artists	Continued funding	Arts & Cultural Programs Officer
Arts & Culture Guide	Annually	Continued funding	Arts & Cultural Programs Officer

## Directions

In a review of the current arts and cultural Service Levels a series of needs were identified which aim to increase the value of Council's programs, activities and facilities for all the community in line with both existing services and shifting trends. The needs have been grouped under the following three directions:

- Provide Creative Spaces & Opportunities
- Enable Creative Expression & Cultural Experiences
- Support Diversity & Inclusiveness

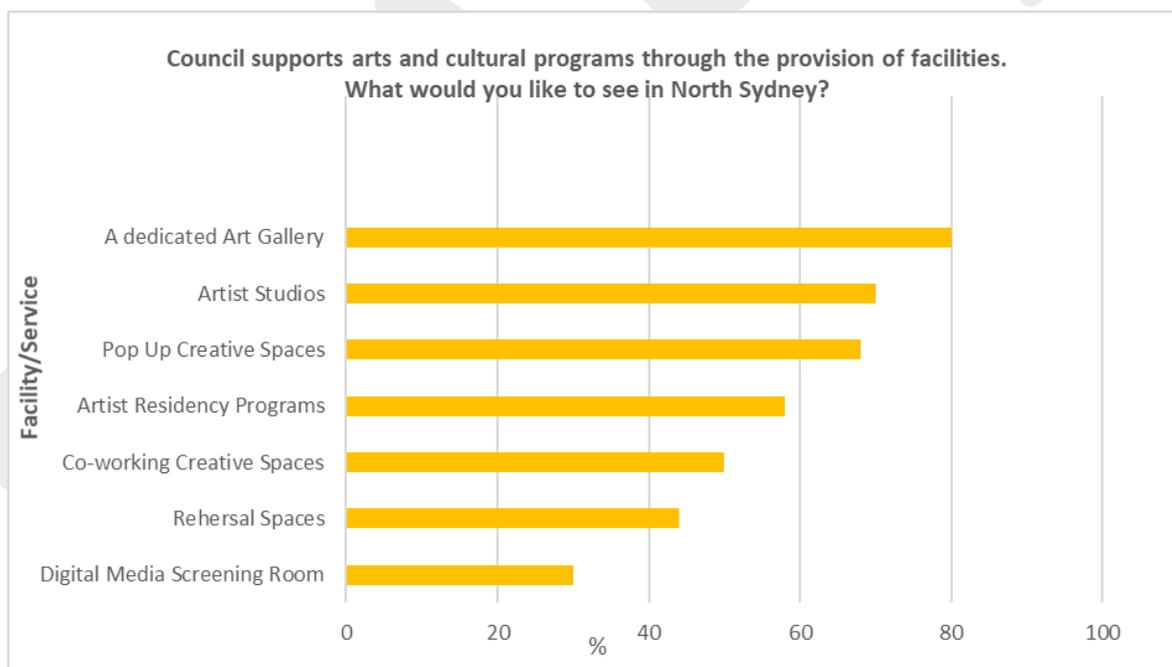


## Provide Creative Spaces & Opportunities

North Sydney has several cultural facilities that are varying in function, capacity, and usage which provide significant outcomes to a cross section of the community. However, with a changing demographic and an identified increase in community needs and expectations, it is essential that Council remains committed to supporting the development of facilities and programs which are inclusive and embrace contemporary and innovative concepts in line with current trends and opportunities.

The spaces in which artists meet to create and exchange ideas has always been highly valued not only by artists and Council but also by the wider community that have engaged in these shared cultural experiences. Council expanded their dedicated spaces with the extension to Primrose Park Artist Studios and the Ridge Street Pop Up Space in 2015, however with the closure of several galleries over the last six years the need for prominent, affordable short to long term exhibition and artist studio space continues to present as a fundamental issue for the creative sector in North Sydney.

In the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan Survey 2019-2022 over 80% of participants identified the need for a dedicated art gallery, closely followed by 70% who identified the need for Artist Studios and 66% commenting on the need for more Creative Pop Up Spaces, as below:



**Figure 6.** North Sydney Arts & Cultural & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022: Community Engagement – Survey results.

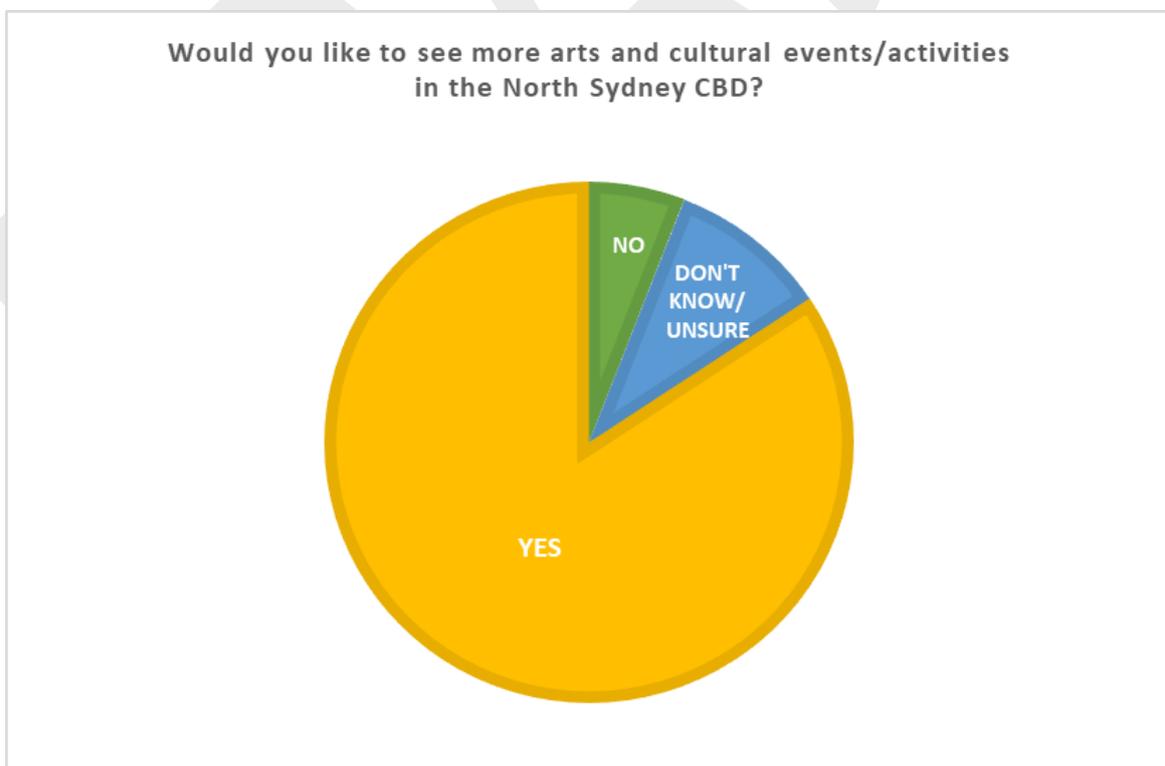
Over the past four years a Creative Precinct has emerged in St Leonards offering a range of multipurpose studio/creative spaces to the broader arts sector and while it represents a growing trend in the evolution of short term affordable creative spaces across Sydney, it is privately funded and exists only on a temporary basis. This example highlights the need to ensure that the community will continue to have access to a range of low-cost creative outlets.

The St Leonards/Crows Nest Precincts 2 and 3 study, adopted by Council in May 2015, recognised the potential of St Leonards as an arts hub and identified the establishment of a Multidisciplinary Arts Centre, which is subject to a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), approved by Council on 26 March 2018. This responds to the already emerging arts scene in this precinct, as described above. This VPA is now supported by an amendment to NSLEP 2013 (Amendment No. 24) which is now in force following its publication on the NSW Legislation website on 28 June 2019

This multidisciplinary model has the capacity to be integrated into Planning Studies for the North Sydney CBD and to contribute to a diverse and robust economy with significant social, community and place activation outcomes.

The need for a cultural hub/activation in the CBD was identified in the review of the North Sydney Community Strategic Plan in 2018. 11-12% of the community highlighted the lack of creative opportunities, spaces and experiences, particularly in the CBD, with comments such as “There should be a sustained focus on art, culture and green public spaces. North Sydney CBD should have a permanent, professionally run exhibition/performance/ events venue that would become a cultural landmark and revitalise local community”.<sup>7</sup>

This feedback was echoed in the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2024 survey conducted in 2019 with over 72% of those surveyed identifying the need for more arts and cultural activities in the North Sydney LGA, while 85% wanted to see more arts and cultural activities specifically in the North Sydney CBD as per the results below:

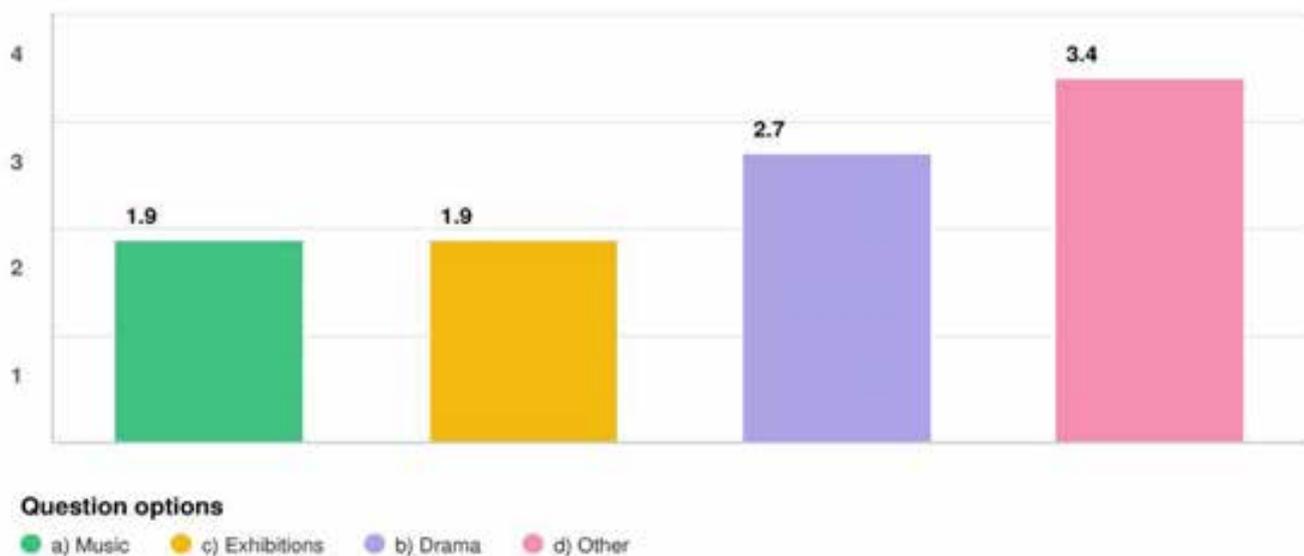


**Figure 7.** North Sydney Arts & Cultural & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022: Community Engagement - Survey results

7. North Sydney Council Community Strategic Planning Review 2018: On-line Discussion Forum Topics – Have Your Say, page 3, 27 March 2018.

A potential site for cultural activation in the form of a centralised arts and cultural precinct in the CBD is the Ward Street development, as per the adopted Ward Street Masterplan. It is currently proposed the site provide community use in the form an Arts/Cultural Centre and Knowledge Hub (modern Library) with a focus on creative activation

It is worthwhile noting that in the recent North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultation Outcomes Report, respondents noted they were likely to visit a cultural hub in the CBD ranking the preferred cultural genres as music, exhibitions and drama. Significantly, the feedback also suggests support for a multidisciplinary approach in line with current trends.



**Figure 8.** North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultations Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting), North Sydney Council, 2018, p. 23.

The Ward Street proposal has the potential to connect with the North Sydney Public Art Trail which is already starting to culturally activate the CBD by bringing together significant old and newly commissioned public art works and sites of significance. While this is emerging as a potentially culturally rich experience there is more to be done through avenues such as the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy and the Ward Street Masterplan.

The North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Community and stakeholder engagement on line survey responses identified Public Art as the most effective way of achieving a more community friendly and active CBD. <sup>8</sup> In relation to ‘Connectivity’ and ‘activating’ existing spaces “other responses mentioned improving the North Sydney CBD by increasing the amount of public art and creative spaces”. <sup>9</sup> In the same online survey the “majority of respondents said they would be more likely to visit a cultural hub in the CBD”. <sup>10</sup>

8. North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultations Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting), North Sydney Council, 2018, p. 13.

9. North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultations Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting), North Sydney Council, 2018, p. 17.

10. North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultations Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting), North Sydney Council, 2018, p. 24.

## Primrose Park Artist Studios

In 2014 Council refurbished Primrose Park Gallery to transform the otherwise under-used art space into additional artist studios to accommodate four artists. The new studio space on the upper level of Primrose Park Arts Centre is in addition to the existing shared studio on the lower level which accommodates two artists. The opportunity to offer studio spaces to six artists in one locale responded to areas identified in the, Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015, which highlighted a lack of low-cost studio spaces available in the area.

The artist studios are now fully equipped with high quality lighting, storage facilities, plaster traps and a professional hanging system catering for individual and group exhibitions. The program has been extended to accommodate artists from across the Northern Sydney Region who work alongside local artists and are required to deliver a Public Program of monthly Open days with artist talks, free community art workshops and exhibitions. Overall, the revised program has increased cultural activity in the area and community connectedness, participation and inclusion.



## Coal Loader Artist Studio

In 2012 a free artist studio was established at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in Waverton with the aim of attracting artists working with sustainable materials and/or concepts. Since then the studio program has undergone some changes to accommodate the unique nature of the studio space which is very basic and visible to the public. The program has been extended from a six-month period to one year during which time the artist is required to offer a public program of monthly open days, artist talks and free community art workshops.

While Council currently offers seven artist studios there is an ongoing demand for low cost studio spaces. This was supported as a key Action area in the Creatives Places / Places for Creatives Forum and Discussion Paper, 2016 which focussed on the capacity of Council to broker artist space in development and extending the scope of pop-up or short-term space options. The identification of potential artist studio, exhibition and multi-disciplinary creative spaces remains a priority. 11

## Primrose Park Arts and Craft Centre

Primrose Park Arts and Craft Centre Incorporated (PPACCI) consists of five user groups. The PPACCI Committee manages the Centre's membership, Work Health and Safety regulations, Management Plans and all promotional material. There has been a concerted effort by three of the member groups (Primrose Park Photography, Primrose Park Paper Arts & Basketry NSW) to increase membership through the delivery of regular exhibitions, workshops and forums. Through the Joint Strategic Plan Council has with the Centre Council encourages the Centre to engage more broadly with the community and collaborate on a range projects with Council's arts team.

In 2018 Council refurbished the Centre to meet accessibility requirements ensuring it remains viable and continues to meet community needs. Renovation works were completed in January 2019 which guarantee a fully accessible community-based art and craft centre and opportunities for expanding membership and providing significant community benefit.

## Studio A

In 2018 Studio A took up tenancy at level 4, Crows Nest Centre following a call for expressions of interest to meet identified social and cultural needs in the community. Studio A, the standout applicant, supports artists living with intellectual disability and assists them in accessing conventional education, professional development pathways and opportunities needed to be visual artists. Studio A provides its artists with a working studio space equipped with specialist materials and support-staff. It also manages an annual exhibition program and facilitates weekly workshops provided by invited contemporary artists. In addition to Council's support Studio A receives support from the State Government's Create NSW.

The Studio A program is structured to operate as a social enterprise where revenue derived from the program's activities is invested back into the program to increase its artistic and social outcomes. Income derived from the sale and exhibition of artwork directly benefits the artist.

There is an opportunity to work with not for profit groups, such as Studio A, on a range of community-based arts programs which reflect Council's objective to partner with key external stakeholders on community development projects and provide support to diverse groups across the sector.

An Artist in Residence or mentorship Program could be established to enable local artists to work with and/or provide mentorship to the artists from Studio A. Artist residencies are important as they support artistic and cultural exchange, nurture innovation and contribute to a sense of connectedness and wellbeing.

11. Creative Places /Places for Creatives Forum, Discussion Paper, North Sydney Council, 2016, p. 11.

## Spaces to exhibit Temporary Works - Inside Outside Sculpture Plinth

Spaces to exhibit temporary artworks and installations are limited in the North Sydney area and were addressed in the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015 as a priority. In 2014 Council's first Inside Outside Sculpture Plinth was developed in response and installed in Civic Park, providing a new space where such works can be shared with the wider community. The Sculpture Plinth was launched in March 2015 with the capacity to exhibit up to eight artworks annually. The aim is to display artworks and installations by local and regional artists as well collaborative works by community groups.

## Spaces to exhibit Temporary Works – inTransit Art Space

In 2013 the inTransit Art Space at Council Chambers was to address the ongoing lack of exhibition space for local artists and groups, while presenting opportunities for staff and the community to experience the diversity of creative expression in the LGA. The arts and culture team focus on diversity and inclusion providing opportunities for local multicultural, arts groups and programs.

These have included a range of exhibitions by the Creating Wellbeing participants as part of Mental Health Month, the Iranian Women's Visual Artists Collective, Studio A, Primrose Paper Arts group, Primrose Park Photography, Bradfield College students and exhibitions celebrating the Gai-mariagal Festival, Seniors Week and Children's Week.



The inTransit Art Space is free and accessible and available for up to six weeks with ten exhibitions held annually. The only limitation regarding use of the space is the opening hours which run concurrently with Council business hours from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

### Spaces to exhibit Temporary Works – Empty Spaces/Pop-Up Shops

Taking inspiration from Pop Up Parramatta and Renew Newcastle, Council supported a program to utilise empty Council shopfronts as short-term studios and exhibition spaces. In 2012 two Pop Up shops were established in a Council owned site proposed for redevelopment in Crows Nest. The program ran for 18 months with a range of participants offering regular, free community art workshops. Overall the program was well received, however the administration required for selection of participants for short term periods proved unsustainable.

In 2013 a Council shop front became available at 53 Ridge Street, North Sydney. The program was reviewed offering the participants longer leases and has been successfully operating on a year to year basis with significant community outcomes in the form of regular art exhibitions providing opportunities to local artists, free community art workshops and a public program of artist talks and, more recently innovative sustainable repair café workshops.



Whilst Council has provided some exhibition opportunities through the provision of the inTransit Art Space, Inside Outside Sculpture Plinth and the Pop-Up Program in 53 Ridge Street, there are no opportunities for emerging to mid-career artists to affordably exhibit works locally in a supported and professional exhibition space. As outlined in Figure 7, the identification of potential short to long term exhibition spaces should remain a priority.

Feedback from the On-line Discussion Forum as part of the *North Sydney Council Community Strategic Plan Review: Community Engagement Findings Summary* also expresses the “need for more support for artists through the provision of affordable spaces, particularly in the CBD. It is also important that Council makes a commitment to developing a quality cultural or exhibition space for all the community to enjoy. There is nothing like this in our area and the community could benefit greatly from place where arts and cultural expression are actively supported. A vibrant and supported arts and cultural sector is what makes a community healthy and connected. It creates a strong sense of identity and wellbeing”.<sup>12</sup>



12. 5. North Sydney Council Community Strategic Planning Review 2018: On-line Discussion Forum Topics – Have Your Say, page 1, 27 March 2018.

## Enable Creative Expression & Cultural Experiences

Council respects that the North Sydney Community needs outlets to celebrate, explore and transform themselves through participation in the Arts. Council aims to provide avenues and support for such expression and exchange to take place, in a range of forms.

The Figure below illustrates the community's views on a range of creative activities, with the need for more 3D activities including sculpture and installation-based art, Contemporary Arts Festivals and Public Art ranking as the top three cultural experiences that the community would like to see more of in the North Sydney LGA.

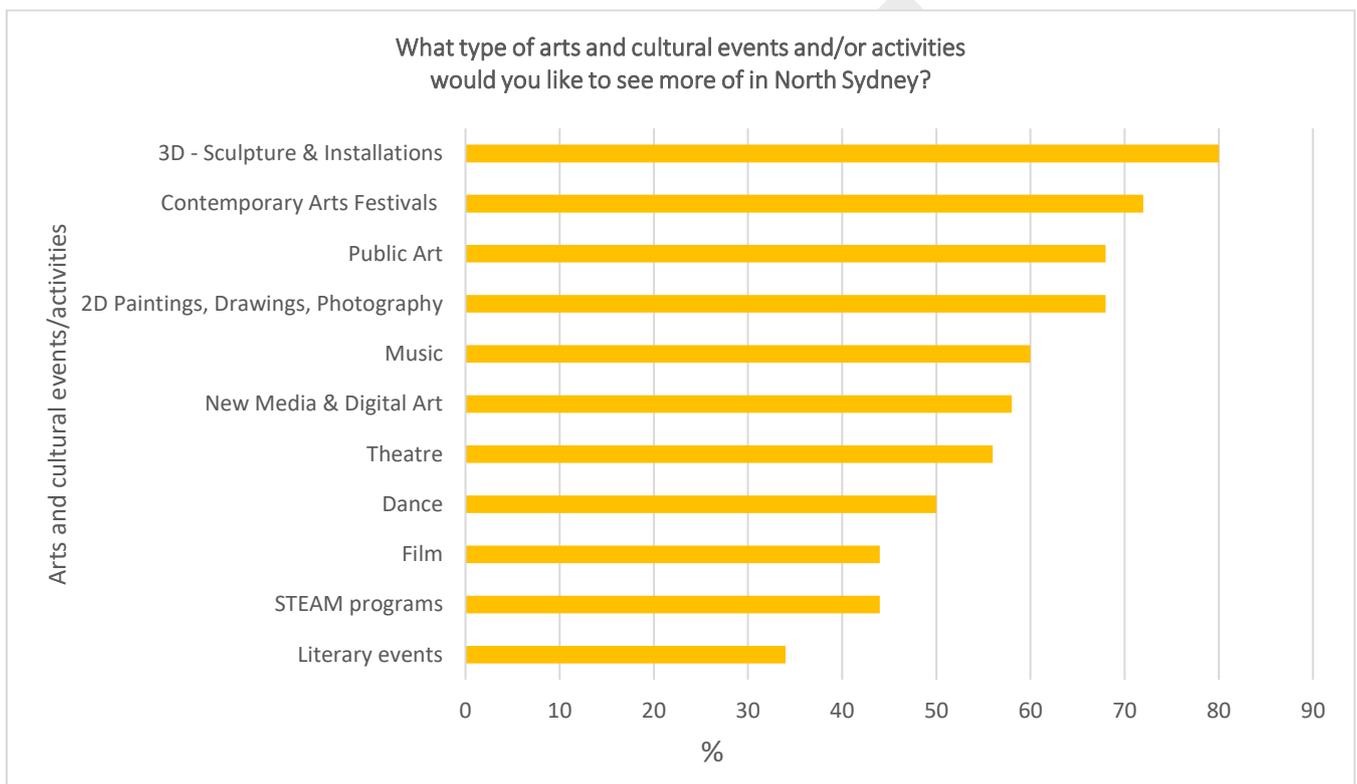


Figure 9. North Sydney Arts & Cultural & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022: Community Engagement – Survey results

### Public Art

Public art by nature is highly visible. It sits in the public realm, accessible to a broad audience, impacting on the landscape and the way people experience it. Public art takes many forms, including murals, fountains, sculpture, installations, details in streetscapes, sound works, text, multi-media; it may be permanent, temporary or ephemeral.

The need for high quality and accessible public art in North Sydney remains central to the Public Art Policy with the benefits wide ranging. It can generate a sense of ownership, a sense of place and cultivate community identity. It can enrich everyday experiences and enable recognition of and respect for the connection between individuals, the community and the environment, and importantly helps create a diverse and engaging urban and city environment.

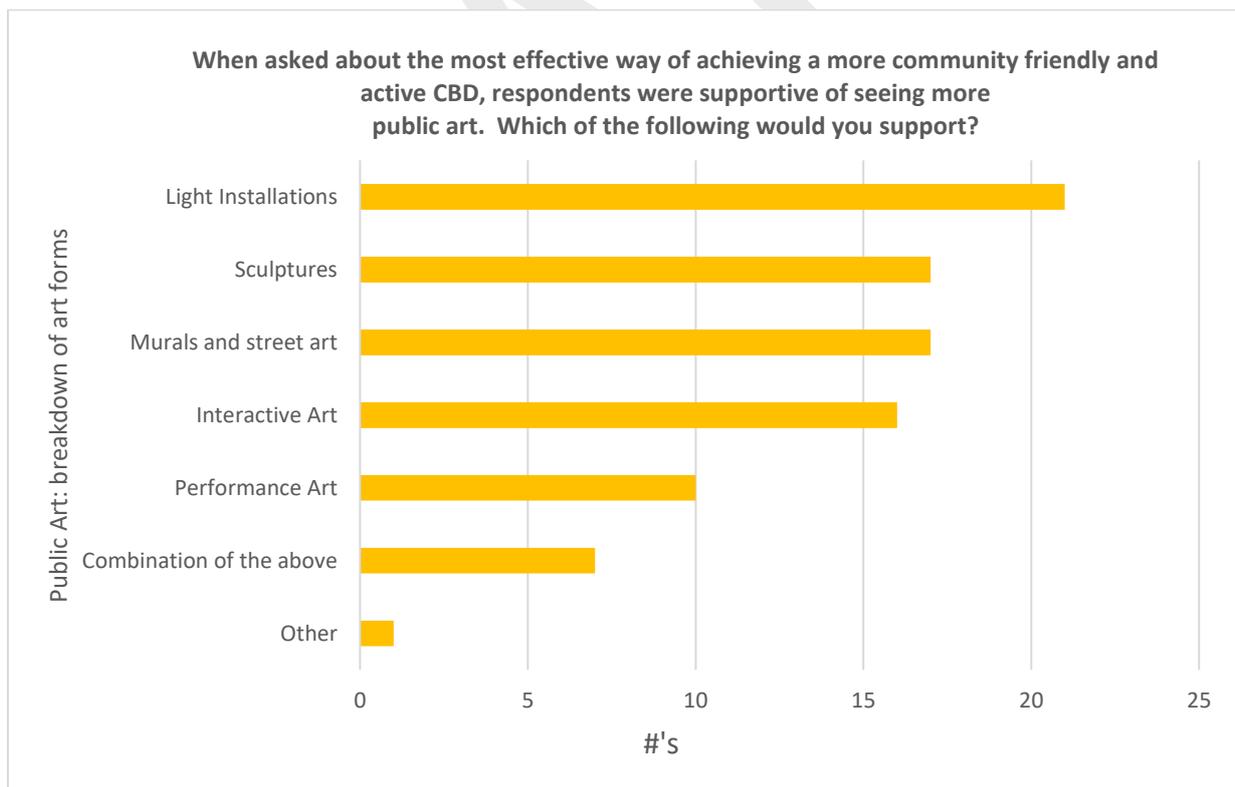
The Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan Survey 2019-2022 shows 68% of those surveyed identified the value of Public Art as a significant 'cultural experience' and are asking for more of it.

Council has commissioned its own public art projects in recent years and they have provided a sound basis for a continuing approach to developing public art across the LGA. It has done this particularly through the North Sydney Public Art Trail Development Application 2015 and Public Art Trail Masterplan 2017 which focused on connecting the North Sydney centre with the foreshore through a world class walking experience with high quality public art. Council has also worked with new developments in the CBD achieve best practice in Public Art on private property.

Building on the Trail there is a need to develop a comprehensive Public Art Masterplan for the whole local government area which would enable a considered response to new development and encourage permanent, temporary and place activation public art initiatives. Funding has been allocated for the financial year 2019-2020 to undertake a North Sydney Public Art Masterplan.

With the current and proposed redevelopment of the CBD Council will incorporate the needs of the CBD into the Masterplan which will ensure that public art and other creative opportunities are integrated into new development. 13

In the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy: Community and stakeholder engagement process participants were asked about the most effective way of achieving a more community friendly and active CBD.



**Figure 10.** North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Consultations Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting), North Sydney Council, 2018, p. 23.

13. Creative Places /Places for Creatives Forum, Discussion Paper, North Sydney Council, 2016, p. 10.

## Public Art Policy and Collection

The North Sydney Public Art Policy fosters the creation of high-quality public art in North Sydney, ensuring a commitment to excellence, innovation and diversity, enhancing and enriching the visual appearance, sense of civic identity and liveability of North Sydney and its environs. It promotes, emphasises and complements the desirable aspects, intrinsically unique qualities and ambient sense of place of North Sydney's public spaces. The policy encourages the inclusion of art and artists as a valuable and implicit part of North Sydney's civic planning, design and development processes, and those of its commercial and business sector.

North Sydney has a strong collection of public artworks, the most recent of which have been developed in line with Council's Public Art Policy. Under the Public Art Policy, Council has commissioned artists to design works that enhance, enliven and celebrate the environment where it is situated. The projects have ranged from small to large scale sculptures, mosaics, murals, glass and water features and both artists and participants have come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

## The North Sydney Public Art Trail

The North Sydney Public Art Trail was initiated by North Sydney Council in 2014 as part of Council's vision to shape a progressive, vibrant and diverse North Sydney community. In line with the Public Art Policy, the Public Art Trail has been designed to enhance identity and a sense of place through the provision of a high-quality public art trail for North Sydney, one which is distinct from other places and celebrates the diversity and uniqueness of the locality.



In recognising the different integrated layers and requirements of the project; heritage interpretation, placemaking, wayfinding, cultural development, cultural tourism and economic development, three key objectives were identified:

- a. The creation of a nationally recognised cultural attraction;
- b. A multi-layered trail experience - incorporating art, architecture, gardens and views;
- c. Activation of Milsons Point Foreshore, Brett Whiteley Place and the Education Precinct.

The Public Art Trail, as a subset of the existing public art experience throughout the LGA focused on activating the North Sydney Centre and immediate surrounds, identifying 18 locations from Kirribilli to North Sydney. Three sites were identified for the commissioning of site related medium to large scale public artworks, two of which were completed in 2016 and the third to be completed in 2019.

The trail includes signage at each site with the incorporation of braille. The 'North Arts' digital walking tour app was also produced providing a map, text, images and an audio component. It is anticipated that additional public artworks commissioned by private development will be added to the trail where they fulfil criteria in Council's Public Art Policy.



## Public Art Projects – ephemeral, temporary and permanent

Council is committed to developing meaningful community based public art projects with the delivery of programs such as the Public Art on Utility Box Project. In 2012 Council funded a pilot project to paint murals on three traffic signal boxes as part of the revitalisation of the North Sydney CBD. A community-based model was developed connecting local artists with groups and schools to collaborate in developing designs which would connect people to place whilst creating a sense of wellbeing in the community. Over 18 months and with additional funding from Council, the project culminated in the painting of thirty traffic signal boxes across the local government area.

A key outcome of the project was the development of a QR code and map which enables visitors to learn more about each box on a journey from Kirribilli through North Sydney and into Neutral Bay and Cremorne, however some of the boxes have subsequently been removed by the Roads and Maritime Services.

There is a growing interest in ephemeral and temporary public art across the local government area such as street art, installations, laneway activation and new media artforms which encourage creative options in unique places for artists, whilst building an inclusive and sophisticated society and generate a culture of innovation.

The need for a broad approach to Public Art was reinforced in the North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy: Community and stakeholder engagement feedback as outlined in Figure 10, page 20.



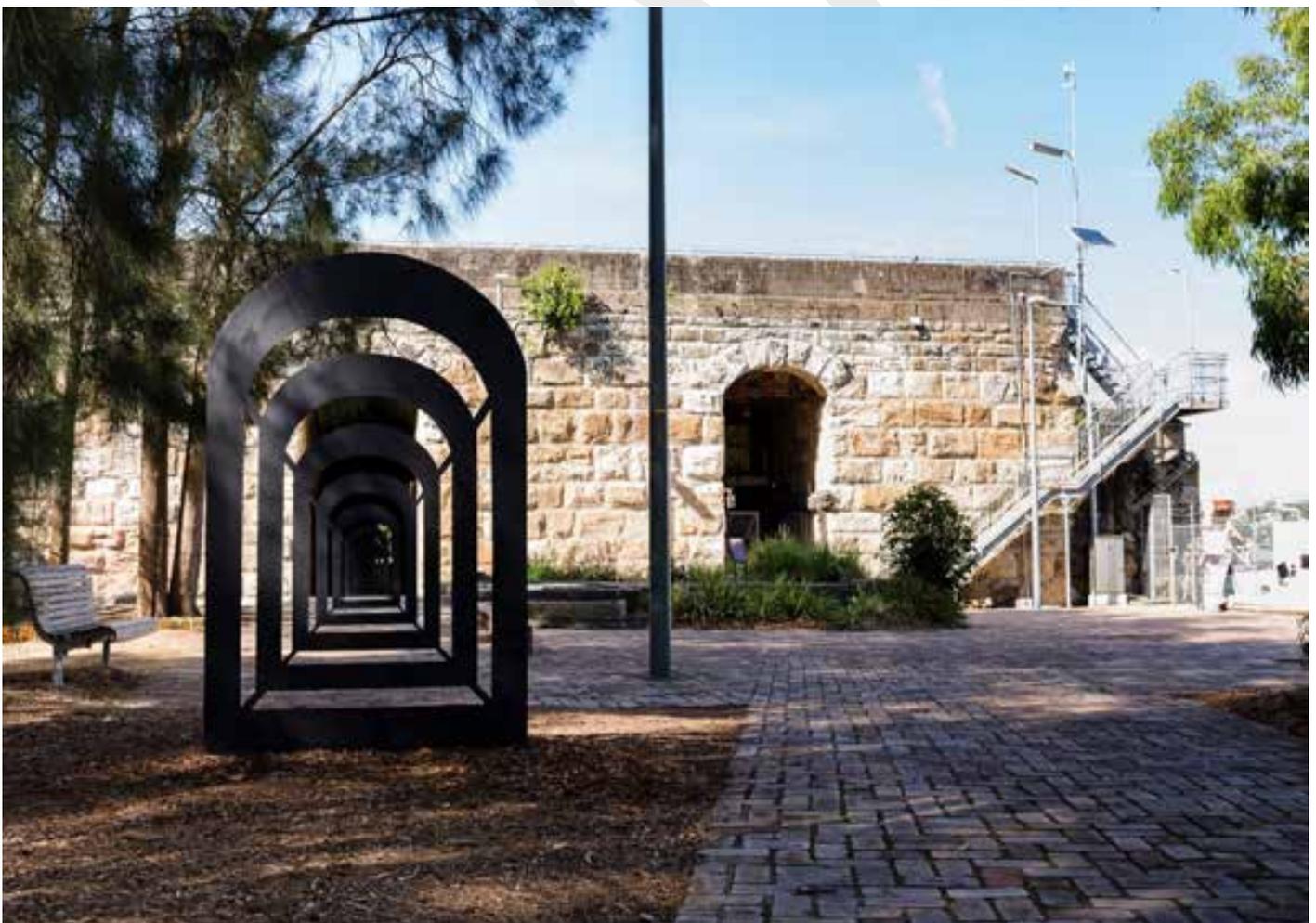
## The North Sydney Art Prize

In 2013 the North Sydney Art Prize was reviewed as it had been running for twenty-one years and operating within a similar format. The review provided an opportunity to revitalise the art prize and bring it into line with contemporary and innovative art practices and engagement principles, providing an overall richer community experience.

The revised biennial North Sydney Art Prize was held at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability increasing both visibility and visitation through the inclusion of additional categories and works, for both inside and outside display. In line with the revision of the Art Prize the exhibition encourages site specific sculpture and installation-based practices alongside two-dimensional artworks.

Artists are required to respond to a Curatorial Brief which embraces innovation in contemporary art while encouraging artists to consider the over-arching principles of the exhibition venue at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. A Public Program comprising of artist talks, exhibition tours, artist forums and children's art workshops was introduced and has become a popular part of the event for both artists and visitors.

In 2015 The North Sydney Art Prize was extended from an 8 to 16-day exhibition period with visitation at 7,000 over 16 days compared to 4,900 over 8 days in 2013. In 2017 the Art Prize attracted 8,000 visitors and in 2019 attracted an overwhelming 18,777 visitors and has become a leading contemporary biennial arts event on the North side.



The need for more quality arts events which engage with sculpture and installation-based practices, however, was echoed in the results of the Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan Survey 2019-2024, with over 80% of those surveyed identified the need for more 3D based events/activities followed by 68% calling for more 2D based activities see Figure 9, page 19.

### Support to Creatives – Cultural & Community Projects

Whilst Council has delivered a wide range of community art projects over the years there has been a recent emphasis on the need for community/creative capacity building and development. In line with this new focus Council initiated a significant community art event in 2017 which concentrated on celebrating creative women from the North Sydney area as part of International Women's Day.

Titled 'The Red Project' 74 women artists from across the area were invited to participate in six exhibitions at 6 Council venues throughout March. The exhibitions showcased work by emerging to established artists and arts groups who participated in Council's Artist Studios or had an affiliation with Council's broad range of creative programs and contributed to the cultural life of the area. This included category winners of the North Sydney Art Prize, artists from Basketry NSW, Primrose Paper Arts, the Iranian's Women Visual Artists Collective – Australia and Bridget Kennedy Project Space/Artist in Residency.

Artists were invited to develop works associated with the colour "red", as a colour affiliated with the earth, energy, strength, action, determination, passion, desire and love. The response to the curatorial theme was



remarkably diverse with artists exploiting a range of media including installation, sculpture, new media, mixed media, printmaking, textiles, basketry and contemporary jewellery.

Twenty-five installations were exhibited in the newly opened chambers at the Coal Loader and tunnels, providing an opportunity for the public to experience first-hand these remarkable sites of industrial restoration. This significant cultural event provided a broad view of contemporary visual practice whilst celebrating women's resilience, creativity and ingenuity.

### Support to Creatives - Funding and other Opportunities

Council offers support to community groups through the Grants and Subsidies Program. The Royal Art Society, Ensemble Theatre, North Sydney Symphony Orchestra (and its associated youth orchestra), The Highland Dancers and Council's own Story to Screen film program receive community grants. The Hutley Hall is offered at no cost to arts groups once a year for exhibitions, but this has had limited success.

The notion of a vibrant, engaged community implies support across the cultural sector and while Council offers support to some organisations, there are currently no opportunities available to individual creatives: Council's Grants and Subsidies Policy currently precludes this. 14

Obstacles in the planning system to cultural initiatives have also been identified; and while there are often good reasons for these controls, it is recommended that Council adopt the City of Sydney's approach and review the small scale cultural uses and compliance framework, with the aim of identifying and removing unnecessary obstacles.



## Support Diversity & Inclusiveness

Council recognises that all community members benefit from participating in Arts experiences. Creative expression promotes a better understanding of self, relaxation, and a greater sense of wellbeing.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

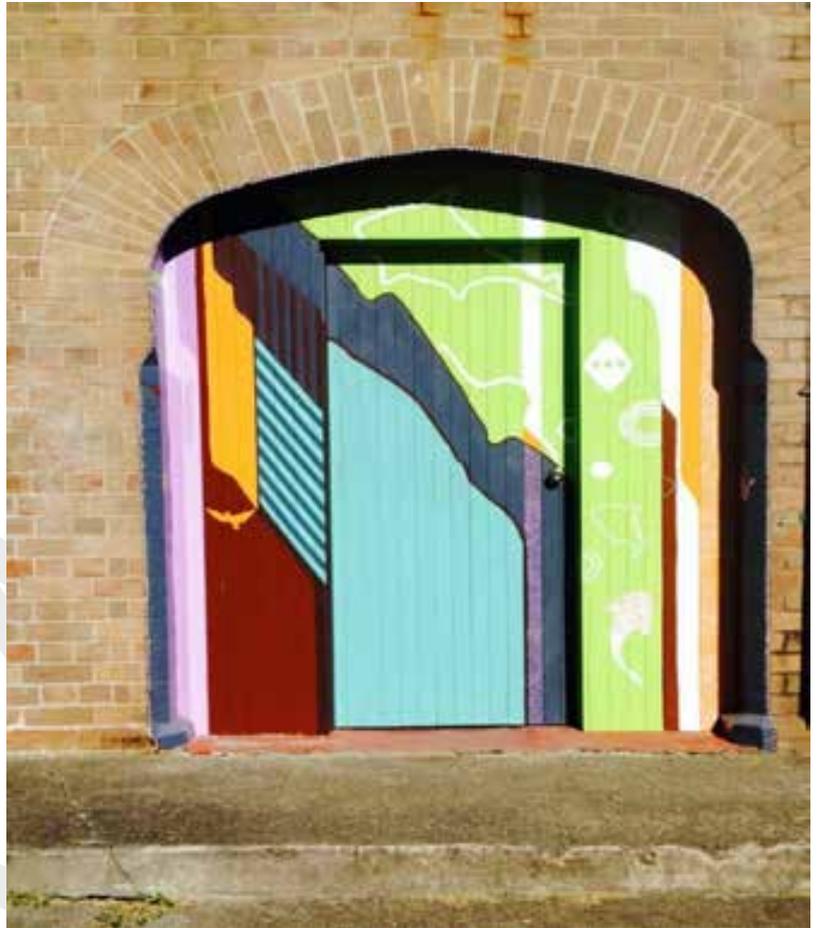
Council provides the annual Gai-mariagal Festival (formerly Guringai) which raises awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Sydney region. The festival commences on Sorry Day (26 May) and continues through to the end of NAIDOC Week (second week in July). The festival involves nine Councils, reconciliation and community groups. Events include workshops, art exhibitions, performances, films and talks.

Council supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and commissioned several works including "Message Sticks" by local artist Tim Moriarty and located in Cammeraygal Place. Jessica Birk contributed to the Public Art on Utility Box Project in 2014 which resulted in the painting of four boxes across the LGA in partnership with local primary schools. Jessica was also an artist in residence at Primrose Park Artist Studios in 2014 during which time she was commissioned to paint the 'Matora Lane Mural'.

The following year Jessica participated in the Guringai Festival painting the 'Ridge Street Mural' and in 2018 Jessica was selected to exhibit in 'The Red Project', a major cultural event celebrating the contribution of women in North Sydney. Subsequently her artwork 'Bloodlines and Coastlines' was acquired by Council for the Local Studies Collection.



Council currently has six artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in its Local Studies Art Collection including “Flowers” by Carmen Nicholson, “Guringai Dreaming” by Bibi Barba, “Families” by Fiona Omeeny, “Reconciliation” by Shane Haurama, a “Silk Textile” creation by Coral Vincent and “Bloodlines & Coastlines” by Jessica Birk.



## Creating Wellbeing

The creative process is particularly beneficial to community members experiencing social isolation or who may be living with or recovering from mental illness. Artmaking provides a point of self-reference and opportunities to socialise without the need for verbal communication. It can be a starting point that leads to highly beneficial dialogue and engagement for participants.

The Creating Wellbeing program was designed to reach isolated members of the community and is promoted through Lower North Shore Mental Health Services, Northern Sydney Local Health District Services, hospitals, private psychologist and psychiatrist practices in the LGA, and invites community members to participate in Arts activities which take place at the North Sydney Community Centre.

Council recognises that everyone benefits from being creative, expressive and engaging with their community, not just those identified as experiencing mental illness. Council also recognises the need to actively promote the program at the grass roots, getting out into the community to reach people not linked with support services. In the past 12 months, participation in the program has increased and is indicative of the inclusion of a range of artmaking practices which cater for a cross section of the community.

## Inclusiveness and creativity – working with Youth and Seniors

The Youth Visual Storytelling Project was developed in 2017 from a revision of previous youth-based programs, Page to Stage and Story to Screen. The project aims to empower young people and develop partnerships between students aged 12 – 18 and professional artists/creative industry mentors working with photography and screen-based technologies in a collaborative process from concept development to final production. In 2017 Council initiated a partnership with local creative enterprise Contact Sheet Photography, St Leonards to develop and facilitate the program. Parents and teachers have stated that the young people involved have developed approaches to story-telling through contemporary creative mediums such as digital platforms, whilst growing in self-confidence and self-expression skills. An added benefit is the social interaction enjoyed by meeting young people from other schools.

Seniors Week remains a focus for Council with the Arts & Cultural team delivering a community arts project annually, such as the “Autumn Leaves Yarn Bombing Project” in Civic Park, “Selfies with Seniors” (an inter-generational digital project) and “Portrait Stories” recognising the value of volunteers in the community.

## Community Engagement Programs for multicultural groups

Engagement in arts experiences by community members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) continues to be a priority in project design and delivery by the Arts & Cultural Team.

Council has delivered many successful projects including, New Beginnings, Bound Together, Recipes for Friendship, Chinese New Year and the Japanese Festival, to name a few. More recently a range of new projects have been developed with a range of groups including the Public Art on Utility Box Project, Christmas Community Art Project in Civic Park and in 2018 a collaboration with the Iranian Women’s Visual Arts Collective - Australia as part of The Red Project.

The need to engage with the multicultural sector remains a priority as identified in the Arts and Cultural Strategic Plan survey with 50% of participants recognising the importance of programs designed for the multicultural sector whilst 44% identified the need for programs for the disability sector.

## Community Information

Council promotes its activities through the production of the annual Arts & Culture Guide, as well as the production of translated versions for the Japanese and Chinese community. The Arts and Culture team have developed a range of related webpages which are updated on a regular basis. More recently there have been opportunities to engage with social media through the development of an artsandculture Facebook page and Instagram. Increasingly the visibility of Public Art in the area has been addressed, with the completion of the Public Art Trail App and the commencement of updating and developing a new user-friendly Public Art Database.

Supporting the current communication platforms offered in the digital age is central to both cultural dialogue and creative production. A key priority area identified in the Creative Places / Places for Creatives Forum and Discussion Paper noted the importance of engaging with new-media platforms and digital technology, such as establishing an accessible database of artists, creative spaces, opportunities and other resources and information. Promotion of and support for business opportunities for both artists and creatives could be included as well as foregrounding social media as a well-resourced, primary platform to link community and creatives. 15

# Objectives

In a revision of the previous Plan and information gathered from the community through a variety of processes including engagement through the Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028, previous arts and cultural consultations and the sample of surveys received in the current process, there is a level of consistency in the outcomes.

The results of the engagement process have confirmed the focus that Council is already operating well within the arts and cultural sphere, however whilst the community and the creative sector are telling us that our direction is well targeted and meeting needs, they have also placed arts and culture as high in importance to them and would like to see its reach extended.

The key priority areas outlined below were identified consistently throughout all levels of engagement, ongoing reviews and survey results to include the need for a dedicated art gallery/centre, more quality arts and cultural events/contemporary arts festivals, provision of artist studios, the need for a quality arts/cultural venue in the CBD along with arts/cultural activation over the weekends and weekend evenings, as well as the need to continue expanding Council's Public Art Program.

## Strategies: North Sydney Council Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022

Service/ Direction	Issue area	Action (Strategies)	Aligns with CSP Strategy	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23
<b>Provide Creative Spaces &amp; Opportunities</b>	<i>Lack of contemporary exhibition space / art gallery - LGA</i>	Explore opportunities for the development of permanent and temporary cultural infrastructure within Council resources and externally (partnerships and VPAs).	2.1.1 4.2.1	•	•	•	•
	<i>Lack of contemporary arts/cultural facility and activity - CBD</i>	Work with Council's Planners to develop strategies to generate cultural activity through the new and existing Council developments in the CBD	2.1.1 3.1.5 4.2.1	•	•	•	•
	<i>Accessible artist studios, artist in residence programs and short-medium term creative</i>	Explore opportunities for permanent and temporary cultural infrastructure within Council resources and externally	2.1.1 4.2.1	•	•	•	•

<b>Provide Creative Spaces &amp; Opportunities</b> <i>Cont.</i>	<i>spaces programs - LGA</i>	(partnerships and VPA's).					
	<i>Accessible artist studios, artist in residence programs and short-medium term creative spaces programs - LGA</i>	Work with Council's Planners to explore opportunities in current and new developments, with a focus on developing multidisciplinary 'creative spaces' (models) programs, activation and innovation	2.1.1 3.1.5 3.3.5 4.2.1	•	•	•	•
<b>Enable Creative Expression &amp; Cultural Experiences</b>	<i>Develop Public Art Plan and Policy</i>	Develop an LGA wide Public Art Masterplan and revised Public Art Policy to ensure partnerships with internal and external stakeholders are maximised with Public Art incorporated into developments, infrastructure, capital works programs, amenity, streetscapes, and parks	2.2.1 3.4.4 4.2.1 4.4.1	•			
	<i>Develop Public Art Collection/ Program</i>	Ensure Council's Public Art Collection is funded on an annual basis, well supported and maintained	2.2.1 3.4.4 4.2.1 4.4.1		•		•
	<i>Develop Public Art Collection/ Program</i>	Explore opportunities for temporary Public Art projects and programs to increase activation and support Council's Placemaking Strategy and CBD Public Domain Strategy	2.2.1 3.4.4 4.1.2 4.2.1 4.4.1		•	•	•

<b>Enable Creative Expression &amp; Cultural Experiences</b> <i>Cont.</i>	Need for quality contemporary arts and cultural experiences/festivals	Explore opportunities for contemporary arts/cultural festival and events	4.1.6 4.2.1 4.2.2		•	•	•
	Lack of quality contemporary arts and cultural experiences/Festivals	Seek partnerships and funding opportunities for a biennial Council wide cultural festival	4.1.6 4.2.1 4.2.2			•	
	Provide resources for community capacity building to local artists and creative sector	Explore opportunities for Increasing the provision of opportunities for local artists and creative sector through access to innovative facilities, with a multidisciplinary focus	2.1.1 3.3.5 4.2.1		•	•	•
	Provide resources for community capacity building through support for community arts projects/Programs	Seek and support opportunities to resource and fund community arts/cultural programs and projects on an annual basis	4.2.1		•	•	•
<b>Support Diversity &amp; Inclusiveness</b>	Provide access to community information and access to arts/cultural programs	Engage with innovative technologies and digital platforms to ensure participation in arts and culture is available for all sections of the community	3.3.3 4.2.1	•	•	•	•

# APPENDIX

## North Sydney Creative Places / Places for Creatives Forum and Discussion Paper 2016

### *Directions for Culture in North Sydney*

#### *Introduction & Scope*

In 2015 North Sydney Council began a dialogue about the culture of North Sydney, its creative places and spaces and, importantly, what people in the arts thought about the culture of North Sydney. This provided a timely opportunity to review Council's existing programs and, at the same time, provide a framework for Council's ongoing commitment to arts and culture, considering the various elements related to North Sydney's "liveability". 1

This paper discusses the commentary expressed at the Creative Places, Places for Creatives Forum held at the Coal Loader Sustainability Centre in April 2016. Both speakers and audience were lively and informed. The following illustrates trending issues and topics and places them in the context of Council's areas of focus. It is intended to engage stakeholders and inspire debate. This process does not replace the structured art form-based consultation and engagement process of a larger cultural plan. Council requested action areas to direct the outcomes of the Forum and these are included for discussion and review.

#### 1. *The Culture of City Identity*

##### *The Culture of North Sydney*

There is no question that North Sydney has played an active role in the culture of broader Sydney. From Luna Park to May Gibbs, from the Ensemble Theatre to Brett Whiteley the area has had an appeal and energy that is linked to its harbour edge location and quite possibly its bohemian past. Defining Australian artists including Conrad Martens, Roland Wakelin and Lloyd Rees worked here. The Royal Art Society moved to North Sydney in 1956. The Independent Theatre was established in 1911. In 1935 the new Art Deco Cremorne Orpheum was Sydney's most progressive movie theatre. North Sydney was an area that appealed to artists and writers who wanted the pleasure of the harbour and bush with the connections to the city centre.

*For me NS culture is defined by the physical space. The stands of red gums, the sandstone, the foreshores, the possibility of finding quiet spaces where all you can hear is the wash of the waves, the call of magpies, kookaburras and lorikeets and the contrast with the (now) relics of industry and still functioning industry at the Gore Hill terminal. Watching the tugs steer in the big ships is endlessly fascinating.*

*Pam Newton, Author & Lifelong Resident*

1. In July 2016 a new study was launched by Domain Tract Consultants and Deloitte Access Economics, ranked 555 Sydney suburbs based on liveability. Of these 8 out of the top 10 suburbs were in North Sydney local government area with Lavender Bay topping the list. With 'culture' as the 5<sup>th</sup> of 16 indicators of liveability the significance of a dynamic, healthy cultural landscape is clear.

North Sydney has maintained a solid commitment to the arts. Its Community Grants and Subsidies program supports May Gibbs' Nutcote Museum, the North Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the locally based NSW Youth Orchestra, The Ensemble Theatre, the Royal Art Society; Story to Screen and community arts development programs such as Creative Wellbeing. Its Cultural facilities and key programs include Primrose Park Arts & Craft Centre, Primrose Park Artist Studios, Coal Loader Artist Studio Program, Don Bank Writer in Residence Program, North Sydney Art Prize, North Sydney Public Art Trail, Pop Up Shop Creative Space Program, Sculpture at Sawmillers, as well as a cultural focus in the planning of localities such as St Leonards. Stanton Library is one of the most successful local government libraries, hosting cultural events such as the Nan Manfield Young Writer's Award and Author Talks, and is home to the North Sydney Heritage Centre.

*In more man-made physical spaces - NS culture thrives in the library network. I can't afford to buy a lot of books, but I read a lot. I suggest books and they are purchased by the library. The writer's program at Stanton in partnership with Constant Reader adds to the culture of NS*  
Forum Participant

The issue for North Sydney is one of strategic cultural planning. The arts already play a strong role in the life of the city yet there are incisive questions, which need to be addressed if North Sydney can move confidently into the 2020s. The first and most overreaching is about the culture of North Sydney itself; what is the culture of North Sydney and how can that culture be strengthened to successfully transition to the future?

In her presentation at Creative Places Forum Linda Corkery, landscape architect and 34-year resident of North Sydney described the many elements which contribute to a culture of place in North Sydney, its harbour edge, the visual and functional connections to Sydney, the topography of ridges and valleys, the villages and the city centre. But Linda also described the interactions and interventions that were the result of creative thinkers playing a part in the way the city was planned.

*The culture of place consists of static and dynamic elements.*  
Linda Corkery, UNSW School of the Built Environment, Forum Speaker

The capacity of local government to create the context for cultural identity to develop or strengthen is evident in the planning work North Sydney Council is doing in St Leonards. Interestingly the momentum has come not only from the community who have supported the move towards a creative precinct, but also from developers.

*Less predictable perhaps were the developers who were coming to me with (ideas for) Danks St style studios in mixed-use development projects.*  
Emma Booth, North Sydney Council, Forum Speaker

The synergy between local government momentum, community appeal and market driven outcomes indicates good research and management of a locality ready for change.

The experience of St Leonards forms a background for a trending discussion about the future of North Sydney Business District. While North Sydney is one of Australia's top business areas and part of Sydney's global economic ribbon extending from the airport to Macquarie Park there is a strong sense that the city centre is limited by a poor cultural identity. Architect Steve Zappia from Marchese in Walker Street described 'diversity, activity and quality' as design elements increasingly absent from the city centre.

*There is a monoculture of use in North Sydney (city centre), a lot of vanilla office buildings, a lot past their use by date. I think the culture of North Sydney can be improved by breaking the monocultures that exist. We need to encourage diversity and quality.*  
*Steve Zappia, Marchese Partners, Forum Speaker*

The idea that it is time for North Sydney to have a more active and activated CBD is relevant and timely. The notion that this might happen on several different levels is also relevant. The planning initiative NTHSYD is an example of work underway to promote and reimagine the business precinct while the intensive planning of the St Leonards locality typifies a quality master planning approach. The potential to reframe architectural design, encouraging quality and diversity is possible given the size and power of the economic momentum. However, creating a balance between the built form and street life will be an important agenda if a satisfying city culture is to be achieved.

*As we are privileged to have a CBD in our local area, it seems logical to find ways to connect the workers & businesses in that precinct with various artists and art forms in an engaging way to embed the mentality that north Sydney is a vibrant creative locale, great for artists and consumers of art in all forms.*  
*Forum Participant*

*We experience the city at a human scale.*  
*Jan Gehl, Urbanist*

### *The Arts & City Identity*

The belief that city centres can be satisfying at street level contributing to a creative work culture and functioning as destinations for broader populations underpins the role of the arts in city animation. The role of iconic projects and events in creating powerful destinations is important. Warren Langley cites Gormley's Angel of the North and Kapoor's Cloud Gate as artwork, which have achieved this. The sense of animation which art can achieve in business districts is also apparent with James Angus's Day in Day Out located at 1 Bligh St, an explosion of pattern & colour in the grey heart of the financial district and Lawrence Argent's I See What You Mean, an enormous blue bear peering into an office complex in Denver, USA. The idea that art might not only enliven but also actually comment on or even critique the nature of business is apparent in both these works. Enabling public art in these contexts requires developed and well-managed integration of public art into new development. As North Sydney CBD redevelops, as it will undoubtedly do, Council needs to have in place a City Centre Art Plan and the capacity to require public art as part of all substantive developments.

Other less formal managed plans include Marrickville Council's Perfect Match where street artists are partnered with property owners who want a wall or hoarding transformed.

In a similar way the role of theatre and performance in city centre culture deserves consideration. At an easily managed level the development of achievable policies designed to animate city spaces would allow music, street performance and pavement art to be part of the way the city is experienced. Council currently has a Busking Policy managed by Council's Events team. Extending the scope of this to active city programming could be considered. City of Sydney's work in this area provides a valuable precedent for other Councils. A more ambitious ongoing program is the New York Metro's MUNY Music Under New York where a yearly program of performances happens throughout the subway system.

*If North Sydney Council (could) explore ways to keep culture alive on the streets it would hugely benefit the overall perception of the area.*  
*Forum Participant*

City squares in North Sydney business district could provide an opportunity for both ongoing lunchtime performances and special event performance over a defined period. Linking performance to thinking about creativity and business performance could be an interesting platform. This is happening in part with the NTHSYD branding, managed by Events/Corporate team. Extending this work through corporate sponsorship could be considered.

### *Branding City Creativity*

Encouraging a creative texture to city life is seen as an important objective for North Sydney. While there is a sense that the villages and neighbourhoods are creative the city centre is not seen that way. Overall there is a lack of a cohesive, dynamic identity, which reflects the strengths and culture of the locality. For some this includes Council:

*One of the things which sticks in my mind is the need for some modern creative branding for North Sydney Council - it must pull people in. (It's) hard to have a creative program if the branding isn't creative. I think this is already on its way, and a good step away from the generic conservative / traditional council branding.*

*Forum Participant*

At a time when creativity is seen as a fundamental attribute of economic growth and when creative neighbourhoods are an attractor for millennial workers North Sydney CBD is seen as lacking the vibrant work/life energy that is desirable in new work environments.

*No one recognises North Sydney as cultural or artsy. It is recognised for its business and office culture. This doesn't have to change but without the colours of art it all becomes so boring. We, residents, artists, Council, must convince the suits they need us.*

*Forum Participant*

An important parallel to the emerging discussion about the city as a cultural hub is the very important place of creative industries in the global economy. The capacity to attract creative industries not only to North Sydney CBD but to other business centres such as St Leonards has great potential especially given the attractions of North Sydney, its proximity to the Harbour and Sydney CBD, and its connections to the knowledge industry ribbons through to UTS, Macquarie Park and Macquarie University. There is a strong sense that this is underplayed and unrecognised in North Sydney, that the city has no effective branding generally and especially in relation to 'creative city' values'

*To change the perception of North Shore as a conservative, bland part of Sydney. If North Sydney Council explores creative ways to keep culture alive on the streets it will hugely benefit this overall perception of the area.*

*Forum Participant*

*Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. With the avalanche of new products, new technologies and new ways of working, workers are going to have to become more creative to benefit from these changes.*

*Alex Grey, Senior Writer for the World Economic Forum*

### *Balancing/integrating community & business agendas*

The new connectivity between business and community goals in terms of broader liveable city goals; everyday amenity, access to cultural programming as part of working life, public art, city activation after hours, healthy interfaces with residential areas, all contribute to an integrated culture. Understanding in more detail how the city services the community and conversely how the business community benefits from the cultural amenity of North Sydney would allow strategic cultural planning to occur to support both.

## 2. Creatives in the City

### *Artist studio spaces, rehearsal spaces and performing art studios*

Accommodation for creatives in North Sydney is central to how many creatives in the local government area perceive Council support for the arts. This includes extending the range of artist studios now available, including space for performing artists to rehearse, record and practice, and exhibition and performance venues themselves.

*Council should support accessible creative short term to long-term spaces for artists in the area. By accessible I mean affordable flexible spaces, able to be used by different art forms i.e. musicians, dancers, visual artists etc.*

*Forum Participant*

There is also a strong interest in urban policy, which enables artist space either as part of new public or corporate buildings.

*Making studio space/creative spaces mandatory to any site redevelopment proposal.*

*Forum Participant.*

This thread was explored in detail by James Winter from Brand X both in relation to their work at St Leonards and at the Carlton Brewery site in Broadway. The need to consider site cultural activation as part of the development process resonates. The example of St Leonards provides an excellent case study for well researched planning and implementation of cultural outcomes with ME Artspace an example of an artist run space, which is part of the urban renewal of the locality.

The potential for artist spaces to be part of the repurposing of existing buildings is equally significant. There is significant interest both in broader culturally driven urban renewal projects such as Renew Newcastle and cultural facilities in repurposed buildings such as Parramatta Artist Studios, which now has longevity and functions within a changing city centre. David Greenhalgh in relation to ARI Archive Space also discussed the possibility of artists putting together initiatives in different ways.

The need to address the needs of performing art groups and musicians in the area is also important, as is the necessity for a breadth of creative spaces including short term space to longer term more permanent dwellings

*Having worked in the music industry there has also been a lack of rehearsal spaces for music ensembles, particularly accessible space when moving large equipment in and out of venues (I'm thinking percussion instruments). At NSCC in the past we have had several enquiries from actors, producers, directors looking for low / no cost rehearsal space for competitions such as Short and Sweet.*

*Forum Participant*

While the lack of a North Sydney Gallery was raised in the Forum there is also an interest in creative options for exhibition space from empty shopfronts to outdoor exhibition space. Rethinking use of existing Council spaces in ways that support creative use is also an agenda item with the potential for subsidised use of community centre space for rehearsals.

### *Cultural Programming*

The potential to combine events and exhibitions in a festival scenario is expressed in art events like Art Month and Art & About. Similar possibilities were raised for North Sydney:

*One option for a creative agenda would be to have a week-long Biennale – in North Sydney. This could be held in conjunction with existing events, Sculpture at Sawmillers, an exhibition at the Royal Art Society in Walker Street, Lavender Bay. To these could be added street theatre, music, jazz, pop up galleries, e.g. a marquee for an art gallery set up in the park under the bridge, a short stroll to art on the boardwalk, book readings outside Council Library.*

*Forum Participant*

City canvasses – street art, temporary art, galleries, installations, public art, city art prize.

There is an enormous interest in art as part of the culture of everyday life, in enabling artists to occupy spaces and places throughout the city from the railway station to under the Bridge, from office buildings to footpath art and flash mobs...

*Make art part of people's everyday*

*Forum Participant*

*Creative diversity as 'the new normal' - supporting emerging artists & community cultures, managing dominant cultures*

Creatives see value in a diverse cultural landscape. The perception that North Sydney lacks cultural diversity was an issue for discussion at the Forum. There is a sense that the reality of the culturally diverse population of North Sydney is not accurately represented. However, this was not discussed as a priority area nor did the forum identify target groups, ethnicities or cultures. Rather 'diversity' was a general value.

The opportunity exists for further work with the community to extend existing culturally diverse projects and focus the existing cultural outcomes, which would support a diverse culture in North Sydney. Aboriginal artist Jessica Birk presented a range of Council supported public art in the area and spoke of the potential to extend recognition of Aboriginal culture and creative work by Aboriginal people. Given the Harbourside location of North Sydney and its rich Aboriginal heritage the potential for significant city level public art and events celebrating the Aboriginal stories of North Sydney and contemporary Aboriginal culture. Resourcing and appropriate budget allocations are a more pressing issue here than any lack of planning intent.

### 3. *Creative Dialogues*

Creative dialogues enable vitality about direction and intent. The value of an ongoing dialogue about the culture of North Sydney was a key topic among Forum participants. This had three areas of focus: Council amalgamations, dialogues about the city shaping with creatives, Council, developers and communities, and the energy & importance of dialogues among creatives themselves.

#### *Local Government Reform*

There was a strong sense that a dialogue about the culture of North Sydney was timely given the proposed Council amalgamations. The need to ensure the culture of North Sydney was well defined with clear agreed goals was discussed, as was the capacity to collaborate.

*(There should be a) great emphasis on the need for communities/LGAs to work together in the lead up to inevitable change (of) amalgamation – to plan, protect cultural arts.*

*Forum Participant*

LGNSW's Sally Watterson discussed the challenges of Council amalgamations and their potential impacts on cultural service provision. The discussion was open with an appreciation of some benefits in relation to cultural service provision. The need to ensure the much-loved aspects of North Sydney culture were not lost or subsumed was important to forum participants. A creative approach was supported in what Sally Watterson describes as largely unknown territory for cultural planning and service provision.

*The overriding thing we are getting from our members in terms of local government reform is 'activate your opportunistic arts personalities'*

*Sally Watterson, LGNSW, Forum speaker*

#### *New corporate & community partnerships*

The potential to engage with developers on several levels including adaptive use of existing space, artist space in new development, public art and developer funded cultural activation is an area which has support. The role of Council in planning and brokering these outcomes has been given focus by the St Leonards experience. There is an interest in both extending and embedding this potential. There was a strong sense that the city is full of creative possibilities if planning, resourcing and political will are in place.

#### *Developing creative dialogues with communities – social media, online creative forums*

The work North Sydney Council has done to connect creatives is seen as a positive tool for cultural activation. There is a strong interest in extending this. Initiatives raised include:

- More targeted use of social media to link creatives
- Expanded databases to include not only artists but also available spaces, competitions, street art opportunities etc.
- Promotion of and support for business opportunities for creatives
- Regular forums to debate cultural issues and share experiences
- Collaboration & connection with other galleries and arts organisations around Sydney

#### *Creative future proofing*

The current scale and dimension of planning in broader Sydney is a trending topic for creatives. Kim Spinks' presentation on changing funding scenarios describes a sector that is now required to be more entrepreneurial and clearer about priorities. To balance this Nick Vickers presentation on the Bays Precinct illustrated integrated opportunities for creative infrastructure in State significant development. Ensuring North Sydney is well positioned to plan its own cultural futures is seen as important. So too is the area's capacity for innovative and targeted collaborations which link it more closely with Sydney and its neighbouring communities on the North Shore.

*Council is committed to the arts and culture in this area, but we want to do more and add more. If amalgamation happens we want to be in the position to say, 'we've sorted this'.*

*Councillor Barbour, North Sydney Council, Forum Speaker*

## *Action Areas*

### *1. A North Sydney Cultural Policy*

A relevant, engaging and inspiring cultural policy for North Sydney should be developed as a priority. The remit of such a policy should be expansive outlining Council's commitment to supporting a

dynamic city and neighbourhood while providing planned and comprehensive support for the arts. As with all good policy statements concise, directive language should enable its use by a broad range of creative initiators including the government, corporate and community sectors and creative industries.

## 2. *City Centre, City Spaces Art Plan*

The critical role of North Sydney City Centre in the Australian economic landscape should be partnered by a dynamic cultural plan, which addresses the creative potential of the CBD as an innovative work environment. The Art Plan could consider:

- Active streetscapes and ground floor usage as part of improved city culture
- Architectural design as part of city rejuvenation
- Public art and design as a condition of new development
- City events and animation of city spaces
- Creative spaces as part of city centre property management
- Corporate partnerships in delivering cultural projects

## 3. *City Identity*

The culture of North Sydney performs well on a range of indicators however this appears not to be reflected in city identity. The expansion of current work undertaken by Council on city branding could be extended to include:

- Promoting North Sydney as one of Sydney's most liveable areas
- Promoting North Sydney as a place where work/life balance can be achieved
- Promoting the easy access to arts and cultural events in and from North Sydney
- Using creative interventions as part of strengthened branding
- Supporting the arts sector as a driver of city identity

## 4. *Performance, Rehearsal, Studio & Workshop Spaces*

North Sydney has actively responded to the need for artist space. It should be recognised that there will be an ongoing demand for space. It is also important to disaggregate the kinds of space needed by different artforms, for different creative projects and in response to different timeframe requirements. Planning for ongoing creative space provision could consider:

- An audit of existing and available options and provision
- A review of Council owned cultural & community facilities
- Strengthening the capacity of Council to broker artist space in development
- Extending the scope of pop-up or short-term space options

## 5. *Public Art*

While the North Sydney Art Trail is an excellent initiative there is a need to develop a comprehensive Public Art Plan for the whole local government area. This would enable a considered response to new development, the public domain and the city centre, while enabling distinctive responses to neighbourhood environments. A Public Art Policy should accompany this. As a priority Council should consider:

- A North Sydney City Centre Art Plan
- A Public Art in New Developments Strategy
- Expanded inclusion of art as part of new or rejuvenated facilities
- A considered and innovative approach to Aboriginal public art as a key element in celebrating the Aboriginal heritage of the Sydney Harbour

## 6. *Festivals & Events*

The role of art in city and community animation is a relevant area for many creative thinkers in North Sydney as is the capacity to expand the scope of city events. As with other areas of cultural planning detailed consultation with event organisers and creative industries is needed however the following could form part of strategic planning:

- A review of Council supported events to identify resourcing issues and direct future funding allocations
- Expanded dialogue with City of Sydney, Mosman & Willoughby Councils to progress collaboration in event programming
- Development of new partnerships to expand community cultural development outcomes in city events

## 7. *Community Cultural Development*

The potential for art to be part of an inclusive, humane, engaged community is important to creatives in North Sydney. Work Council has done in this area is valued. Expanding the scope and relevance of community cultural development is a central objective of cultural planning. While the remit of Council and community aspirations are very broad the following areas should be considered in future planning:

- Development of partnerships with key service providers in health, education and youth & community services to expand the scope of community cultural development projects
- Integration of community cultural development programs into all new residential developments as part of the developer requirements
- Structured consultation and engagement with Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities to identify and plan cultural delivery
- A focus on emerging technologies in the context of community cultures including aged uptake of social media, emergent youth digital media platform, intercultural digital platforms promoting harmony and other innovations.

## 8. *Funding & Resourcing Culture in North Sydney*

The notion of a vibrant, engaged city always includes a commitment to resourcing culture. The arts need adequate and sustained funding to perform well. While short-term funding creates momentum Councils who prioritise long term funding for local culture inevitably see results, which extend beyond actual artworks and projects. At least 5 yearly reviews of funding allocations and priorities should be made, and planning processes should always include funding to enable outcomes to be achieved. A review of cultural funding should consider:

- A review of current levels of cultural funding against agreed performance indicators
- Expanded funding for city cultural planning priorities as part of a long-term cultural plan
- The inclusion of funding program that enables an annual response to cultural trends and initiatives in the form of an Arts Grant Program
- A quick response program to release small amounts of arts funding for innovative, one-off initiatives, which will benefit a group or creative enterprise

## 9. *Dialogues, Networking and the Future of Creative Connections*

Connectivity is central to both cultural dialogue and, for many artists, creative production. Council cannot market, promote and support culture without supporting the communication platforms offered in the digital age. In many ways this capacity will determine the success of other initiatives.

Forum participants were very clear about this imperative. Hence their ideas are repeated as a legible direction:

- Foregrounding social media as a well-resourced, primary platform to link creatives
- Establishing regional networks to link arts and arts organisations across the lower North Shore and beyond
- Expanding Council databases to include artists but also available spaces, competitions, street art opportunities and other resources and information
- Promotion of and support for business opportunities for creatives including links with other business forums
- The initiation of an annual forum to debate cultural issues and share experiences
- Collaboration and connection through social media platforms with other galleries and arts organisations around Sydney

#### *10. Future Proofing Culture*

As this dialogue takes place the process of Council amalgamations is just one of the challenges facing North Sydney. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion paper to set directions for a new regional council, Forum commentary and the experience of cultural planning during amalgamation in Victoria suggests some areas of focus:

- Up to date legible cultural planning priorities for city centres and neighbourhoods enable informed, organised input into regional planning processes
- In a similar way creative industry priorities and directions allow cultural groups and organisations to position themselves in larger cultural landscapes
- If managed well, a regional approach can have marked results for some organisations in terms of improved and more efficient resourcing, marketing and audience development.

In conclusion, liveability is in many ways a response to local culture; how we feel in our living and working neighbourhoods, how we interact with others, how well we believe our cities and suburbs support our identity and values. North Sydney is a local government area that is enjoyed and valued by residents, workers and visitors. Culture plays a central role in how it is experienced. Managing and supporting the culture of North Sydney to ensure the area retains this highly desirable edge is the task ahead.

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