



National Cultural Policy Submission - Wagga Wagga City Council

The Wagga Wagga Local Government Area (LGA) has a current population of 69,108 people (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2025). With its strong and diversified economy, its strategic location linking Australia's major cities, and its expanding industrial, education, health and agricultural sectors, Wagga Wagga is well positioned to grow in coming years.

Wagga Wagga is home to a number of cultural institutions including the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre, and Wagga Wagga City Library as well as Charles Sturt University's Wagga Wagga campus, TAFE NSW's Wagga Wagga campus, the Riverina Conservatorium of Music, and Eastern Riverina Arts. The Wagga Wagga LGA also boasts a thriving sector of volunteer-run arts groups that continue to underpin a vibrant creative ecosystem.

The Wagga Wagga City Council (WWCC) Cultural Plan 2020-2030 was developed through extensive community and industry consultation and underpins the recommendations being made in this submission.

PILLAR 1 – First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture

The entire Wagga Wagga LGA is situated on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri nation. Council values its relationship with the Wiradjuri community and has a Reconciliation Action Plan in place which guides community-based outcomes.

As detailed in Council's Cultural Plan 2020 – 2030, WWCC is committed to:

- Incorporating Wiradjuri art, language and culture into significant new infrastructure and projects
- Supporting the establishment of a Keeping Place for Wiradjuri cultural heritage in Wagga Wagga
- Presenting and promoting Wiradjuri and First Nations art in cultural facilities
- Supporting education institutions to provide public access to Wiradjuri language, culture and heritage

WWCC's recommendations for the National Cultural Policy include:

- Investment in education and training programs through the university/TAFE sector for First Nations artists and arts workers.
- Collaboration with all levels of government to develop an employment strategy and support for First Nations positions in arts and cultural organisations across all levels of employment (entry level, mid-career, leadership).
- Increase investment in regional communities for First Nations-led infrastructure.
- Standard protocols for all publicly funded First Nations projects to consult and collaborate with Traditional Owners. All First Nations artists fees to meet industry standards.

PILLAR 2 - The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture

WWCC recognises the arts and cultural industry as a major contributor to the economy and understands the importance of recognising artists as workers, artistic practices as a valid career path and artists as being active contributors to society. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe impact shutdowns had on the creative industries. WWCC understands

artists of all disciplines require access to suitable studio/work spaces and has recently supported the development of a Creative Industries Hub by Eastern Riverina Arts in a central location in the city.

WWCC is committed to:

- Supporting creative residences and exchanges
- Supporting the development and presentation of original local creative work
- Supporting local creative activities and partnerships across the region
- Advocating for creative industry development opportunities

WWCC's recommendations for the National Cultural Policy include:

- A National strategy for improving career opportunities for regional creatives
- Establishment of an industrial Award rate for artists which legislates the payment of artists' fees.
- Increase education around artists' workplace rights, contracts, taxation, superannuation, and entitlements
- Investment in cultural infrastructure through urban and regional master planning that provides affordable and accessible spaces for artists
- Strategy and incentives for State and National cultural institutions to support opportunities for regional creatives through and within their exhibition programming
- Develop a national arts strategy addressing AI, copyright infringement, online harms and the misuse of artists' work in digital environments

PILLAR 3 – A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture

The Wagga Wagga LGA has a diverse community of ages, nationalities, identities, and abilities. Council believes everyone has a story and should have the ability to contribute to and express themselves as part of our National cultural identity as well as having equal access to education, resources, and cultural facilities. As a regional centre we are often disadvantaged by our distance to metropolitan centres which has financial, creative content and developmental impacts.

WWCC is committed to:

- Cultural experiences for everyone
- Implementing the recommendations of its All Abilities Inclusion Action Plan relating to arts and cultural activities
- Increasing early childhood creative learning programs

WWCC's recommendations for the National Cultural Policy include:

- Investment in opportunities for artists and creative industries workers of all abilities to gain reasonable employment and opportunities to earn income.
- Federal and state funding agencies providing appropriate levels of logistical support involving artist travel, accommodation, per diems.
- Development of a framework around access to education at all levels of school, university, and TAFE so that regardless of location, ethnic background, age, or access to internet, people can follow their chosen career.
- Increased support for regional touring programs across all artistic disciplines and cultural facilities

PILLAR 4 – Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture

The Wagga Wagga local arts and cultural industry has been impacted by the removal of Creative Industries based courses at the Wagga Wagga Charles Sturt University campus. These courses incentivised local young people to remain in the region and attracted people from across the state

and nation to relocate to the region. With the removal of these courses there is no longer a pipeline of trained arts practitioners in the city or wider region and young people leave town to study elsewhere, mostly in the capital cities.

WWCC also recognises the ageing workforce in regional cultural facilities, particularly in the Museum sector, due to limited creative sector employment opportunities and lower turnover rates than metropolitan centres. This can have negative impacts with a diminished capacity of workforce over time and loss of skills and knowledge.

WWCC is committed to:

- Strengthening formal partnerships between cultural facilities and education providers
- Supporting education providers to locate facilities and activities within the city centre
- Supporting education providers to develop creative industries
- Expanding opportunities for early career internships and volunteering
- Implementing programs that develop live music and production skills

WWCC's recommendations for the National Cultural Policy include:

- Embed arts education as a key commitment in the National Cultural Policy, including sustained investment in tertiary arts education, vocational pathways and professional development
- Consideration given to encourage ongoing training through accreditation in the sector, with a focus on technical roles, to meet and improve on safety standards across all cultural and artistic venues
- Subsidised professional development opportunities for cultural facilities staff to be more readily available in the regions and online
- All levels of government to co-contribute to key organisational staff positions ie Education and Collection Management. This would enable: standardised visual arts offer for schools that intersects with National curriculum; and, ensure the assets of the community and Nation (collections) to be cared for and benchmarked at national standards.

PILLAR 5 – Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad

WWCC is currently reviewing and renewing a number of its cultural facilities after recognising that some of the city's public cultural institutions were functioning out of buildings that were never purpose-built, or are no longer capable of hosting the best work in the genres they support. WWCC relies on all levels of government to do their part to ensure that residents and visitors to Wagga Wagga can meet, create and enjoy arts and cultural activities in spaces that are purpose-built and contemporary.

WWCC is committed to:

- Renewing our cultural infrastructure
- Publishing the cultural collections of Wagga Wagga City Council online to promote public access and research
- Increasing the capability of parks and open spaces to accommodate community use for cultural activities

WWCC's recommendations for the National Cultural Policy include:

- Investment in the renewal of regional cultural facilities to meet industry demand and be competitive with metropolitan centres
- Continued support for the roll out of digitising collections
- Re-establish the National Arts and Culture Accord to facilitate cooperation between the three levels of government
- Increase consistent investment in region-led festivals, triennials and cultural models that centre on local leadership and community connection.