

National Cultural Policy Submission

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY APPLICATION – CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

Introduction

City of Greater Bendigo (COGB) adopted [Greater CREATIVE Bendigo](#) 2019-2023 in November 2019 as the future strategic direction for the cultural and creative industries of Greater Bendigo. The strategy acknowledged State Government's new direction, *Creative State 2016-2020*, expanding the sector to include a whole ecosystem of creativity. The City recognised that creativity and culture as fundamental to Greater Bendigo's liveability and to its future. The strategy identified 33 action items that responded to five key themes:

- Inspire a culture of creativity.
- Create more activated spaces.
- Nurture and support talent.
- Champion inclusion and access.
- Show the world.

Recovering from the pandemic.

- Greater *CREATIVE* Bendigo has positioned the City as a Centre for Arts and Culture, recognised as an Australian leader in the development of Creative Industries¹.
- Gaps between the brand promise of Bendigo as a Centre for Arts and Culture and the experience of local creatives and those relocating to Bendigo, pose risks to the sustainability and integrity of the work.
- Fostering shared awareness of the Creative Industry Ecosystem in Bendigo would generate enormous value.
- Perceptions about the value of creative work and cultural development is the greatest systemic threat to the growth of the cultural and creative economy.
- Recognising the structural changes in the industry that have resulted from Covid and the support the sector needs to rebuild.

- Live music in Greater Bendigo requires a strategic approach to rebuilding.

1. First Nations

The strategy identified the importance of First Nations-led programming and community engagement, creating two new First Nations positions, identifying the desire for a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Gallery and continuing to work, connect, collaborate and listen to First Nations community. This strategy recognises and respects the crucial place that First Nations stories have at the centre of our arts and culture.

The First Nations Curator for the Art Gallery of Bendigo was the leading curator delivering Australia's first Indigenous Contemporary Fashion survey exhibition, *Piinpi. Indigenous Contemporary Fashion*. Launched in Bendigo in 2020, the exhibition has travelled to the National Museum in Canberra in 2021 and The Australian Embassy in Paris in 2022, sharing culture more broadly.

The Arts Officer First Nations is responsible for developing an annual cultural development program to support First Nations artists and leading the establishment of a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gallery and workspace, growing capacity in the region.

The City continues to work with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and recognise that the growing desire to include First Nations in policy advisory roles, places an increasing burden on the limited resources of those organisations.

Opportunities

- Provide funding, support, training and skill development to those Traditional Owner organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build capacity for the increasing demand on their time, cultural knowledge and local expertise in policy development.
- Provide funding to enable First Nations-led organisations and

¹ Queensland University of Technology Creative Hot Spots Report November 2019.

projects to take advantage of new prevalent market opportunities within Australia and abroad.

- Commit targeted financial support for independent self-determined First Nations artists and creative practitioners.
- Invest in First Nations-led education and training programs for artists and creative enterprises.
- Invest in First Nations-led infrastructure including local Art and Cultural Centres, studios, small-to-medium arts and creative organisations and galleries across all urban, regional and remote communities.
- Ensure public investment is tied to equity and industry standards for First Nations people.
- Support and invest in First Nations employment in the creative and cultural industries.

2. A place for every story

Greater CREATIVE Bendigo identified the need for more multi-cultural hubs where cultural and linguistically diverse communities could work, create and collaborate. Funding has been a barrier to delivering a sustainable model for such as space in Greater Bendigo and requires State and Federal support. Multicultural Arts Victoria did operate a space over Covid, however funding restraints have meant that programming and the offering has been stalled. This pilot program identified the need for space to encourage collaboration and visibility with the broader community.

3. Centrality of the artist.

Greater CREATIVE Bendigo recognises the importance of nurturing and supporting talent to develop sustainable, diverse and skilled creative and cultural sector. During the pandemic it became

acutely evident that the temporary and low paid structures imposed on creative and cultural workers meant many were unable to access Federal Government income support, benefits.

Both Bendigo campuses at La Trobe University and Bendigo TAFE have undergone severe cuts in resources and programming which is stifling skill development in the regions. Increased future funding for arts and creative industries education is urgently needed.

COGB delivered an extra \$140,000 in grant funding to help support creatives, artists and creative businesses to continue working on projects during 2021. This funding focused on:

- Valuing creative labour as work
- Upskilling artists and creatives
- Business development
- Reducing the digital divide
- Activating spaces
- Connecting creatives with business
- Cross sector collaboration and skill sharing

Opportunities

- Industrial reform that gives the Fair Work Commission powers to set minimum standards for artists and art workers and the scope and flexibility the Fair Work Commission needs to deal with “employee-like” forms of work
- Establish an industrial Award rate for the visual arts and craft which legislates the payment of artists’ fees.
- Extend the small claims jurisdiction in the Fair Work Division of the Court to assist artists to resolve disputes without recourse to costly legal proceedings
- Basic income scheme for artists and arts workers.
- Centrelink to recognise art as a profession and adopt income averaging in similar to ways this type of income is handled by the ATO under the Tax Ruling:

carrying on business as a professional artist.

- Superannuation reform so that visual artists receive super contributions.
- Art prizes, fellowships, scholarships, and government grants are tax exempt.
- Australia Council funds restored back to 2013 levels as a baseline and adjusted for inflation at a minimum.
- Tax incentives promote the purchase of work by living Australian artists. Give to the arts, buy art schemes and taxation incentives.
- Improve the benefit to artists donating direct to the Cultural Gifts Program.
- Introduce tax incentives for individuals to buy the work of Australian artists and craft practitioners.
- Invest in existing peak bodies, support agencies and service organisations to increase professional development programs for artists and arts workers.
- Support universities and TAFEs to expand delivery of professional practice units for all creative arts.
- Funding for affordable space for artists is included in urban and regional master planning.

4. Strong Institutions

A robust whole ecology approach that encourages collaboration between institutions, creatives and small businesses is crucial for a sustainable creative and cultural sector. Bendigo Art Gallery serves as the leading cultural institution in Bendigo. Building international recognition and prestige with blockbuster exhibitions and cultural exports attracts residents, visitors, business and creatives to the region. Our performing arts venues and community arts development venues play a crucial role and require updating, upkeep and development to cater for the changing technology and audiences. A whole creative ecology is needed to support the events, businesses, creatives and artists to

flourish. Spaces are equally important for creatives to collaborate.

Emporium Creative Hub, an initiative of Creative Victoria has become a crucial part of the ecology, professionalising, upskilling, connecting and developing artists and creatives.

Opportunities:

- Invest in university funding for creative courses, reduce tuition fees for arts subjects, and remove Ministerial discretion from approving or rejecting research grants recommended and administered by the Australian Research Council (ARC).
- Invest in the whole ecology including pathways. Multiple points of entry for people in the sector that are accessible, inclusive and equitable.

5. Reaching the audience

Opportunities:

- Extend Visions of Australia, the regional exhibition touring program to include an international touring program for reaching a global audience
- Invest in new funding to support the professional presentation of Australian artists, artworks and exhibitions in the digital space, ensuring artists' copyright is protected and are paid ongoing publishing fees for their content
- Boost funding to the Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program to properly digitise collections and license images of artwork for sharing on Trove
- Support UNESCO Creative City Networks
- Address NBN blackspots to include regional audiences