

National Cultural Policy Submission

The City of Greater Geelong

Submitting: On behalf of government or government body

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

The City of Greater Geelong supports the development of and investment in a National Cultural Policy. We welcome the opportunity to provide input through the development process.

The City of Greater Geelong is Victoria's largest provincial city with more than 50 suburbs and townships, Geelong's population with nearly 275,000 now, to a projected population of 393,216 in 2041. The City's recently endorsed Arts and Cultural Strategy 2021-2031 has strong alignments with the goals of Creative Australia, in particular the 5 key pillars identified for the National Cultural Policy response.

First Nations

1. Key focus areas:

- **First Nations Peoples self determination**
- **Building a strong relationship and partnership with all First Nations Peoples in Greater Geelong**
- **Strategically aligned to current First Nation Policy and relevant strategies**
- **Supporting First Nations artists and creative collectives in building capacity**
- **Engage collaboratively with internal City of Greater Geelong departments, and leaders to ensure that First Nations Peoples voices are represented**

Wadawurrung Country Plan 2020-2030

Our connection to Culture and Country continues to provide us with the strength to practice and pass on tens of thousands of years of knowledge, as Wadawurrung People.

Caring for our Country, land, sky, and waters, and continual cultural practices are core to our identity as the Traditional Owners of Wadawurrung Country. Our People have endured trauma, violence and dispossession since invasion and have demonstrated an innate ability to continue their cultural practices which has provided strength to ensure our survival. We are connected to our land, our skies, our waterways, and our coastal areas, keeping them healthy keeps our People and Culture healthy.
Patrick Fagan Chair Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Coordinated and sustained leadership shouldn't necessarily be the responsibility of a single entity, rather a coordinated strategy across three tiers of government.

We welcome the approach in the **Australia Council, National Cultural Plan Framing submission focus areas**, in particular:

- First Nations workforce and capacity building with a focus on Indigenous self-determination in governance and leadership
- Investment and capacity building of First Nations small to medium arts organisation
- Development and pathways for First Nations creative workers and leaders
- First Nations creative industries: music, fashion, writing, visual arts and games
- Global First Nations exchange

The City of Greater Geelong's recently endorsed Arts and Cultural Strategy 2021-31 recognises as a core value Wadawurrung Culture as our city and region's most valued and enduring asset. The City is committed to ensuring cultural safety, cultural training for all staff, developing protocols in working with First Nations Peoples and continuing to identify opportunities for participation in our arts and cultural programs. Reflected in our Strategy is a focus on the need to promote a deepened, shared sense of cultural identity. Looking to the future, it is important that this concern for intangible cultural heritage also be made explicit within other planning policies and strategies, including 'big-vision' strategies.

Challenges

- Retaining First Nations' staff, high expectations and increased support required
- Limited knowledge and appreciation of First Peoples cultural heritage and relevance to place (although much work is being addressed in this area)
- Cultural safety in the workplace
- Limited budgets and lack of coordinated approach across all levels of government

Opportunities:

- A supported, integrated, and long-term approach to build capacity, skills, and programs. First Nations career pathways, creative leadership, and funded placements in local government. Potential for nationally accredited training package to include workplace professional development. Mentorships or business support for First Nations' artists in alignment with *Action 4C of the National Indigenous Visual Arts Action Plan 2021-2025*
- Supporting participation of individual regional First Nations' artists in First Nations' art fairs across Australia
- First Nations artist in residence programs and/or Elder in residence
- Collaborative approaches to the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in Geelong could involve engagement and partnerships with the Federal

Government to 'position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and creative expression as a core, shared part of Australia in the 21st century.' *'Twenty-first century priorities for Australian arts and culture policy' Oct 2021 A New Approach (ANA) Priorities for Change p23*

A Place for Every Story

Ensuring our programs reflect the diversity of our population

Key Focus Areas:

- Nurture our local identity and heritage, and connect to our stories
- Focus on diversity, equality of access and inclusion

The values and beliefs which underpin these principles include:

- Culture and creativity are central to all our lives and to our community's sense of identity
- Culture reflects and reinforces our sense of pride and belonging
- Our citizens and visitors have the right to access and contribute to the city's cultural and creative life, its heritage and future

There exists a diversity of experiences in every community and there is not just one community but many. We know that stories remain hidden, unrecognised, or unacknowledged, groups of people that experience racism, gender violence, indifference, prejudice, notably refugees, First Nations Peoples, people of colour, LGBTQI+, women. Revealing the stories of Geelong, and celebrating its rich and diverse heritage, are important for building awareness and our common identity. These are also the bedrock for the many opportunities that exist to develop cultural tourism as a significant element in the Geelong economy, to celebrate what makes Geelong unique.

A National Cultural Policy needs to address the unique context of regional and remote Australia. There is strong evidence showing the movement of artists (and their families) away from cities and surrounding suburbs to regional Australia - looking to a different quality of life, and life as an artist and creative.

Regional life and culture shape a unique set of needs, and thinking about the opportunities for artist, conceptualising and making art. Recent data shows migration from capital cities to regional Australia increased by 16.6% in the March quarter of 2022. Geelong being the third most popular destination, the majority being millennials with an average age of 33 adding to a growth rate of around 2% annually. ⁱ

Challenges

- One-off schemes to engage diverse communities, people with a disability and people living in disadvantage unfairly raise expectations and do little to challenge systems, behaviours and attitudes that exclude many from engaging in the arts

- Acknowledging *white middle-class* artists remain the dominant career professionals, and audiences are also predominantly *affluent and white*
- Cultural Leadership and gender equity
- Unequal access to digital opportunities
- Skills, capacity, and resources in arts education supporting expression of cultural diversity and youth
- Current funding streams excluding regional cities ie. Modified Monash Model criteria

Opportunities

- Supported long-term community-led initiatives requires a coordinated approach and resourcing to sustain commitment. A partnership approach with targeted investments would be welcome to fully engage the whole community in our city's cultural life. Potential for dedicated, funded, and measurable actions that address under-representation in programs, services, and leadership of women, deaf and disabled, First Nations, CALD communities
- Investment in public infrastructure and funding programs that demonstrate a community benefit would go some way to capturing more diverse voices, stories, and cultural expression
- An Equity Framework that challenges the prevailing structures of power and privilege to address gender equity. This could include support in the capture of disaggregated data
- Acknowledgement and investment for regional and remote artists, creative professionals. The move away from cities creates opportunities to build resilience across the Nation, improve the sustainability and liveability in regional centres.

The Centrality of the Artist

Sustainability and healthy creative ecology/creative industries

Key Focus Areas:

- Investment in our artists, arts and cultural organisations and creative enterprises
- Career pathways and skills development, building capacity for a healthy and thriving creative ecology
- Mental health and wellbeing of our artists, creative workers, and community
- Building resilience in response to the COVID 19 pandemic
- Advocate the value of arts and culture

Job security, a tenuous system of contract-based work was put into sharp focus as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Models of secure funding are heavily weighted to Major Performing Arts groups, major organisations, and companies. Emerging and evolving artists/companies and groups are vulnerable to the short term and short-sighted approach to current funding models. Important sectors for example live arts and performing arts were particularly hard hit.

Average incomes for artists remain below the poverty line, an issue that has not shifted for some time. Further work is required to develop more sustainable models that supports our artists and their contribution to the creative life of the city. Many artists have missed out on support packages during COVID 19 are still recovering and have minimal superannuation to access after a lifetime's commitment to the arts.

Challenges:

- Artist and artworker career cycle, targeted support for mid-career artists
- Closure of art schools and reduction in funding for arts education
- Artist's rights and working conditions
- Insecure work leading to mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Consideration to address the monetisation models eg. platforms like Spotify that have disrupted how money is generated and how artists are paid

Opportunities:

- Targeted programs to address precarious employment and skills shortages in the creative industries for eg. Universal basic income for artists or recognition of artistic practise as work (Centrelink)
- Support for arts and cultural organisations and individuals to scale up digital models as a resilience strategy to future disruptions
- Live music and festival/event support to rebuild our live arts programs
- Creative spaces for artists, infrastructure development and operational funding support – long term and holistic approach. Support independent artists, musicians and public artists who seek inspiring places to live and work
- Artists professional development and business development support to enable experimentation and product development
- Arts Education at both secondary and tertiary levels that provide skill development pathways to support current and emerging requirements of the creative industries sector.

Strong Institutions

4. Cultural Venues - *Creative Places and Spaces*

Key Focus Areas:

- Investment in arts and cultural venues, infrastructure, and collections
- Live arts, performance, and music
- Cultural precincts, hubs, and art in the public realm – public art
- Interdependence of creative spaces, networks capability, and artistic practice

The City of Greater Geelong plays an important leadership role and contributes significant investment in cultural institutions in Greater Geelong, including the Geelong Regional Library Corporation (and

Library Network), the Geelong Gallery, and Council operated and owned cultural venues the National Wool Museum and the Bellarine Multi Arts Facility – The Potato Shed.

Over a period of 20 years, population growth and the public's appetite for live performance have exceeded forecasts and expectations. With this growth, and a strong level of support and research, Council is now seeking to build on the success of the Potato Shed to emerge as a new **Bellarine Arts Centre - a 21st century arts and cultural facility** to meet the long-term needs of visitors, community, schools, and the creative industries sector.

The 2020 Potato Shed Strategic Assessment Study has laid the groundwork and justification for development of a **full business case** for this project and Council is currently **seeking government support and partnership**.

Cultural infrastructure will continue to play an important role encouraging creative expression and enabling more social connection between community members in affordable fit for purpose facilities. To achieve this Council is also currently seeking to partner with government in the development of a **full business case and 30 Year Vision for the National Wool Museum**. In expanding its scope and purpose, protecting, and sharing Geelong's stories, and positioning First People's living cultures, histories, and knowledge at the core of its practise, the Museum will be a cultural leader in the care, preservation, and access to Geelong's rich and layered heritage.

The City's Art & Heritage Collection is of major national, state, and local significance. It is made up of more than 12,000 heritage objects, artefacts, and artworks, with an estimated value of nearly \$28 million. Spread across numerous locations throughout the municipality, the collection is incredibly diverse and reflects Geelong's history as a vibrant and progressive city. Strategies to reveal and celebrate our stories include **public programs, revitalisation projects and public art** in support of Geelong's designation as a UNESCO City of Design.

Per capita public expenditure on culture has dropped by 4.9% over the decade 2007/8 – 2017/18, with rate capping and a growing population in Geelong currently forecast, ([change 2022-41 is at 44.17%, forecast.id.com.au/geelong](#)) the challenges are real. Australia's cultural investment is not keeping pace with our international peers: Australia ranked 23 out of 34 member countries for combined expenditure on culture, recreation, and religion across the OECD. [Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative activity in Australia 2007-8 to 2019-20 A New Approach \(ANA\)](#).

Challenges

- Onsite collections storage with environmental controls urgently needed
- Staffing levels and resources are inadequate to sustain current programs
- Upgraded technology, disability access required
- Significant population growth impacting current investment. Needs of artists, performing art groups and other creative groups seeking spaces that are affordable and secure of tenure not being met.
- Limited operational budgets restrict ability to increase engagement and capacity
- Australia's per capita public expenditure on culture not keeping pace with growth
- Limited multi-year funding, to expand range of eligible groups/companies/organisations
- Whole of government approach - Local, State, Federal co-operation, long-term strategic goals

Opportunities

- Deliver fit for purpose cultural infrastructure and services across the municipality that is affordable and meets the needs of our diverse community. This remains evident even as the State Government and Council invests heavily in Geelong’s existing arts and cultural facilities
- *The 2020 Potato Shed Strategic Assessment Study* has laid the groundwork and justification for development of a **full business case** for this project and Council is currently seeking government support and partnership
- **Full business case and 30 Year Vision** for the National Wool Museum
- Improved program delivery, capacity building, access, and diversity through multi-year funding
- Supporting networks to build capacity, sustainability, and interdependencies to leverage opportunities and share resources.

Reaching the Audience

Key Issues:

- Digital capability and transformation
- Data resourcing and capture
- Showcasing our strengths. Live Music and Partnerships
- Building on our signature Festivals and Events

In the development of the Strategy our community told us that they wanted to better connect with the full spectrum of society, with each other and the broader creative industries. Improved communications, collaborative research, digital gathering formats, networking opportunities, opportunities for engagement and participation and the development of creative hubs are a few examples.

Digital transformation has enabled our reach to extend locally, nationally, and globally. It has improved access and allowed the sector to continue to perform and connect during COVID 19. Technology that continues to evolve and provide new opportunities to reach audiences will strengthen interest and support for arts and culture fulfilling a basic human need that continues to transform and nourish our community.

An opportunity for our City and the region is the strength of our festivals, events, and live music industry. Improved social capital is the most commonly identified impact that events and live music has on the wider community. Consumers expressed feeling more personally connected, happy and engaged as a result of attending an event and suggested that live music encouraged and enabled a sense of community.

Challenges

- Resourcing and monitoring data collection, relevant to place
- Whole of government approach that embeds arts and culture in policymaking and program delivery to service populations in both metro and regional areas
- Investment in evidence base across sectors – knowing your audiences, attracting diverse participation and new audiences

- COVID 19 – participation
- Delivering services across the whole Municipality, most cultural infrastructure is in the city centre
- Long term investment in young people’s engagement and participation. Policy approach could be more holistic to address social, health and educational needs of young people.

Opportunities

- Digital transformation requires upskilling and resourcing capabilities. Further support in this area would be welcome as the city experiences rapid growth
 - Continued and sustained live music program to build capacity, opportunity, and access. Building on our strengths. There are multiple components that require our focus including planning regulations, skills development, event production modelling and community engagement across the municipality. Indications from cost benefit analysis and research to date indicate a 3.1 return (a 300% return on every dollar spent)
 - Collaboration across agencies in expanding current social indicators and datasets required to capture both state and local government data in the arts and cultural sector. Including disaggregation of data, monitoring, and updating.
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