

THE
CAMRA
TOOLKIT

ALL CULTURE IS LOCAL

GOOD PRACTICE IN REGIONAL
CULTURAL MAPPING & PLANNING
FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The CAMRA cultural asset mapping in regional Australia Project is an Australian Research Council Linkage research project LP0882238.

CAMRA is a partnership between



Arts North West
West Darling Arts
Armidale Dumaresq Council
Central Darling Shire
Uralla Shire
City of Wollongong

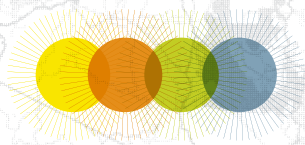
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Lisa Andersen



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Edited by
Lisa Andersen and Margaret Malone

Foreword



President
Keith Rhoades AFSM
Local Government NSW

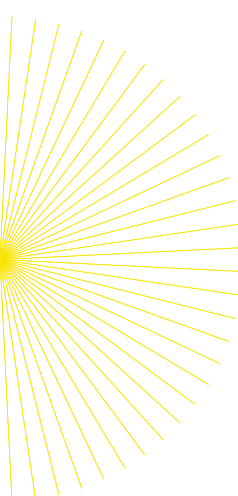
Local Government NSW is pleased to partner with the University of Sydney and the University of Technology, Sydney, on The CAMRA Project Toolkit.

This collection of case studies details NSW councils' cultural activities and highlights the significant inroads councils are making in the areas of cultural policy planning and implementation, and data collection.

NSW councils are involved in myriad community cultural activities – from 'what's on' newsletters to developing and running community-based arts precincts – and this toolkit demonstrates their contribution to local development and community wellbeing.

Central to many of these cultural case studies is a keen sense of 'place'. These examples reveal the ways in which policy and strategies, developed in consultation with the community, can produce initiatives that are locally meaningful and meld arts and culture into communities.

Written in accessible language and full of practical advice, the CAMRA Toolkit will be extremely useful for councils and their communities across Australia.





Janice Summerhayes

Chair, Regional Arts NSW

*Director of Environmental
and Community Services,
Wagga Wagga City Council*

The 'All Culture is Local' Toolkit, and the wider CAMRA project generally, is a welcome demonstration of the sort of communal narrative that needs to be occurring more often across rural and regional communities in Australia and their representative bodies. This collaborative and inclusive exchange of facts and ideas ensures that much-needed skills and knowledge held by local councils and regional arts bodies can be shared and built upon. This sort of capacity building is both innovative and pragmatic.

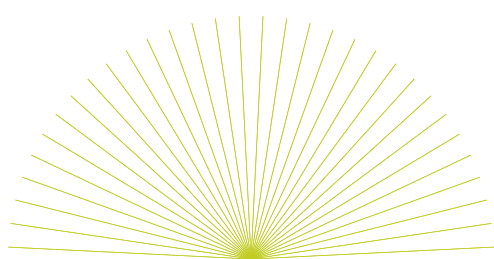
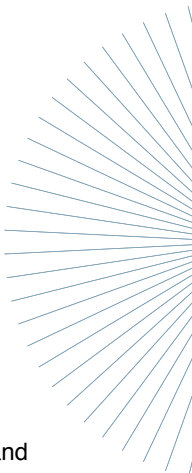
As many regional areas of Australia adapt and change traditional agricultural production to a variety of functions and resources, there is an increased need for the arts and cultural industries to be part of mainstream consideration within the fields of regional development and planning.

Of key interest to Regional Arts NSW in reading and reflecting upon these case studies is the way in which they contribute to a greater understanding of the interrelationship between cultural industries and regional development. As the peak body for 14 regional arts boards across the state, and a leading member of Regional Arts Australia, we are deeply interested in the ways in which networks and partnerships

can help to maximise capacities and resources, and how the Regional Arts Development Officers can be conduits for knowledge transfer as well as the means by which bridges can be built between local stakeholders, regional tourism, economic development agencies and community well-being initiatives.

It is heartening to read of the ways in which locally-based activities are increasing their impact through 'levelling up': Victorian Opera fruitfully collaborating with Urana Shire, for example, or Arts North West developing, in consultation with their constituency, an arts policy template for use by local governments and their communities.

Underpinning our work are the values of cooperation, collaboration and partnerships – values which marry wonderfully with the stories and efforts contained in this Toolkit.





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UTS: Library

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Introduction

The CAMRA Toolkit is an outcome from a five year Australian Research Council funded research project. Over this time four universities, four local governments, and peak regional, state and federal agencies sought to develop knowledge that would enable better informed planning for arts and cultural development in rural and regional communities.

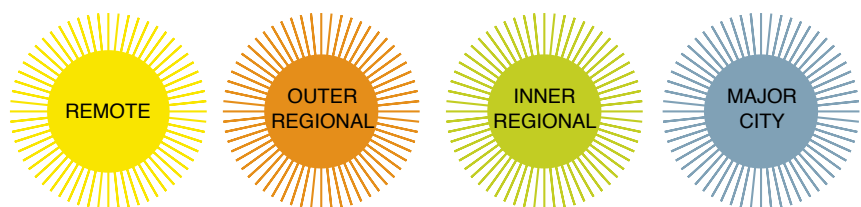
Twenty per cent of public investment in cultural activity in Australia comes from local government. However, over the course of the CAMRA Project, it became strongly evident that what is missing for many local governments is place-specific knowledge to inform planning. At the same time, many local government staff and cultural decision makers are keen to learn from others. This Toolkit is CAMRA's response to that need.


The CAMRA research was located in regional New South Wales. So locating the case studies – with one exception – in this state was a deliberate editorial choice based on our networks and knowledge of good practice with our two key industry partners, Local Government NSW and Regional Arts NSW. The case studies have

been written with the aim of making ideas and processes transferrable for any regional local authority with the resource implications made clear. We make no claim to be comprehensive in our selection of 'good practice'; although our choices were considered and you will find no 'romantic case studies' here. This collection forms a start for further information sharing and development of good practice.

Good data makes good planning, so this Toolkit has two sections: (1) Cultural Mapping and Data Collection, and (2) Cultural Planning. Case studies are ordered (with a corresponding colour label) using Australian Standard Geographical Classification-Remoteness Areas for local government area, by:

While each case study is place-focused, the 'recipes' are written to be transferrable





The case studies in Section One repeatedly demonstrate a number of elements to good practice. They are:

- Re-use existing data to save money
- Use creative engagement processes and you'll get better results
- Include everyone – not just the 'usual suspects' (you probably already know what they're going to say as they said it last time) or the loudest voices
- Use internal Council research expertise for data management and analysis, and work with the cultural sector to share and use findings
- Broaden your understanding of what is local, vernacular creativity in defining creative industries for your area
- Level up – work collaboratively on win-win data solutions at regional, state and federal levels to share expertise and save money

The lessons here are to start with the data that already exists – whether that is an Australian Bureau of Statistics data set or eight years of data from your local arts newsletter. If you are going to collect new data look to partnering, take risks, change the conversation and listen broadly. People enjoying creative engagement methods will naturally talk about their creativity and local cultural strengths. So don't be restricted by 'top-down' 'tick box' categories of arts and cultural practice. Finally, have a plan for how the data you collect will be embedded and used in whole-of-council planning.

Case studies on cultural planning in Section Two also emphasise the importance of levelling up – working with consultants in mentoring capacities, forming long term relationships with experts from 'away' and using external ideas, processes and templates to develop your plan. But the context of place is critical. Each place has its own strengths for a plan to respond to. But three things are certain in regional Australia: nothing happens quickly, community cultural activity is volunteer-led and driven and creative industry operates on the periphery – with a disproportionately small share of markets, knowledge and technology. So the aim of local government cultural planning should include:

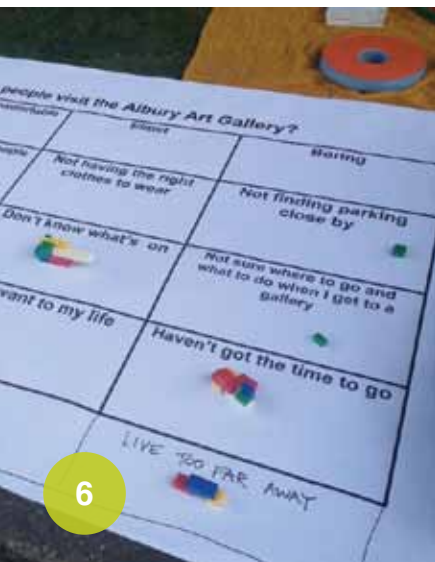
- engaging the community to set the next long-term goals and (in Meg Larkin's words) 'giving patience a structure'

- enabling volunteer-led actions and structures and
- facilitating 'access' both for the community and local, professional creative industries

Some issues seem too hard to tackle head-on in planning – where do you start? But a cultural plan is an aspirational document that tells outsiders a great deal about your community and each successive plan measures the journey travelled. When scoping content for this Toolkit, we hoped to showcase an example of good planning practice for disability access and inclusion. This was hard to find until Accessible Arts introduced us to Darebin City Council's earnest, whole-of-council approach. It seems appropriate that the Toolkit ends with this case study (which is also the only one not located in NSW).

Universal outcomes for each local government included skilled up, engaged and connected staff, and enhanced relationships with the community. Finally, the common feature of all is practice that is democratic and underpinned by respect for the expertise of the local community.

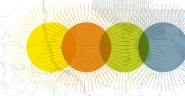
Enjoy the Toolkit; we enjoyed working with the authors to tell their story and thank them for their generosity. While each case study is place-focused, the 'recipes' are written to be transferrable - do try this at home!





01

CULTURAL MAPPING & DATA COLLECTION



CASE STUDIES

01 Central Darling Shire & Uralla Shire

02 Eurobodalla Shire

03 Central West NSW

04 Wingecarribee Shire

05 City of Wagga Wagga

06 AlburyCity Council

07 Wollongong City Council

08 Wollongong City Council

09 Penrith City Council

CASE STUDY 01
Central Darling Shire
& Uralla Shire



Who better to tell you about what's local and special than local people? This case study looks at how the University of Technology, Sydney, worked with Central Darling Shire and Uralla Shire on research to engage local residents in both articulating what cultural assets are most important to them, and mapping local cultural industries. What's a cultural asset, you ask? Read on...



AUTHOR

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Asking A Local mapping cultural assets with residents

WHY

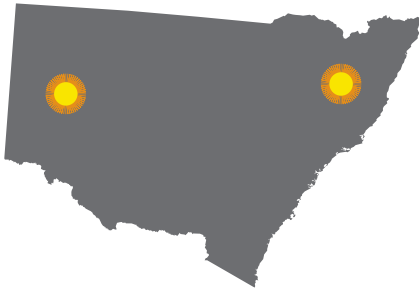
In every community there are cultural assets that have shared value and contribute to the imagination, happiness, pride, social connections and dreaming of that unique place.

Cultural assets may be concrete things like McCrossins Mill in Uralla – with its unique collection of local heritage and arts – or incorporeal, like the ghost story set around one particular River Red Gum on the banks of the Darling River in Wilcannia, or a joke enjoyed in Ivanhoe with its one sealed approach road (Visitor: 'What's the best way to get to Broken Hill?' Local: 'Are

you driving?' Visitor: 'Yes'. Local: 'That's the best way'.)

They may be native – like the leopardwood that grows in the stony hills and sand plains of far western NSW and is used in traditional Barkindji carved work of artists like Waddy Harris, or the red berries of the Sea-Berry Saltbush from the same area used as dye or in artworks – or they may be introduced from 'away,' like the fine wool farmed from sheep in Uralla Shire only to reappear in Paris *haute couture*, or cinematographer and brewer Stephen Dobson, who moved to the village of Kentucky to run Eastview Estate Winery, stage music events and film local places that fascinate him.

WHERE



CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE

Size

53,000 km² (largest local government area in NSW)

Remoteness

Very remote/ remote

Location

Far Western NSW

Population

1,991
1 person per 26.6km²

Centres

Towns of Ivanhoe, Menindee, Wilcannia and White Cliffs and localities of Darnick, Mossgiel, Sunset Strip and Tilpa

Industry

Pastoral (grazing properties account for 96 per cent of the area) and mining

Demographics

Home of Barkindji and Ngijaampaa people; Indigenous people make up 38 per cent of residents; the average Indigenous age is a young 23.6 years. Unemployment rate is 10 per cent

URALLA SHIRE

Size

3,230 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional / Inner regional

Location

New England Northern Tablelands of NSW

Population

5,440

Centres

Town of Uralla, localities include Bundarra, Yarrowyck, and Kingstown, Kentucky and Wollun

Industry

wool, vineyards, fruit orchards

Key assets

twenty national parks within a two hour drive; McCrossins Mill volunteer-run museum, arts and community centre; Uralla Library

Demographics

Indigenous population is 5.8 per cent, more than double national average

Cultural assets may be a skill or knowledge, like Ngijaampaa Elder Beryl Carmichael's understanding of techniques with thrown wooden hunting weapons, or her reading of impending weather patterns in the growth behaviour of local flora. Or climatic: locals and visitors make special trips to see Autumn at Gostwyck Chapel (also a popular film location), while a still atmosphere and clear, dark skies make Ivanhoe a top location for amateur astronomers. They may be natural sites – like Uralla's Mount Mitchell with its totem, the echidna, that inspires local artists and bushwalkers – or human-made, like the traditional Christmas plum pudding recipe made annually by women from the Menindee Country Women's Association to raise money for charity.

During the CAMRA Project we worked on developing research methods and tools to map local cultural assets and cultural industries. The great challenge of this research was to ask the right questions in the right way; and this case study focuses on what we learned about the asking.

In my experience, it is difficult to get people who are not-artists from non-metropolitan areas to 'open up' about arts and creativity – particularly to a stranger-researcher who's asking them to fill something in, speak into a recorder or sign a consent form.

Often they will demur ('I'm not arty, I wouldn't be able to say anything about that') or not connect with the topic ('I'm just not into that stuff'). This may be because they feel insecure talking about their own experiences of creativity, and also because talking about 'Art with a capital A' is intimidating and outside their comfort zone. Many people in rural areas (and men in particular) equate the terms 'arts' and 'culture' with 'high' or 'heritage'.

*we used
'cultural
assets' as a
deliberately
vague term
– allowing
the local
community to
define what
they were*

Lisa Andersen



arts categories – commonly painting, but also opera, ballet, professional theatre and symphony orchestras, and not wood turning, craft, recipes and patterns, singing in a choir, rom-coms or country and western music. In short, it is 'The Other'. To capture that conversation, you have to question differently. We took an approach that did not use standard 'arts practice' or 'creative industry' categories. Instead we used 'cultural assets' as a deliberately vague term – allowing the local community to define what they were. We also used open-ended questions designed to elicit the variety of place-based asset types described earlier: concrete-tangible, intangible, skill, knowledge, design, natural scenery, heritage, climate, uniquely local, introduced... animal, vegetable or mineral.

We trialled different ways of collecting data – including telephone and face-to-face interviews, colouring-on-map-interviews and GIS tracking and photographic interviews – but this case study describes two linked activities: (1) where the questions asked in a postal and online questionnaire in Uralla Shire developed into (2) The Outhouse video interviews in Central Darling Shire.

HOW

1. Uralla Shire Residents' Survey: our cultural assets

From July to October 2010 residents of Uralla Shire were invited to fill in a questionnaire about local cultural assets they valued. Working with Paul Ashton (University of Technology, Sydney), Ross Gibson (University of Sydney) and Jim Walmsley (University of New England), I designed a survey that was piloted by Armidale Dumaresq Council at the Armidale Wool Expo, and further developed based on feedback from the trial run.

The final, two-page, self-completion questionnaire was posted to Uralla Shire residents in their monthly newsletter. The questionnaire could be returned to a free post address or to Council Chambers (just off the main street). Surveys were also available at Council Chambers and there was an [online survey option](#) for people to fill in.

Survey questions:

1. Are you a resident of Uralla Shire?
2. How long have you lived in the Shire?
3. A friend comes to visit you and it is the first time they have been to Uralla Shire. What do you do with them? Why do you choose to do that?
4. Money is no object and you want to buy your visiting friend something 'local' and 'special'. What do you buy them? Why do you choose to buy that? Where would you buy it?
5. Can you give details about something creative that you



Uralla artist Cheryl Nolan being interviewed at McCrossins Mill by CAMRA researcher Rosie Catalano

do – either with others or a personal thing – that makes you feel proud or is enjoyable? (This is about you – so don't feel any thought is too small or insignificant.)

6. If you could be at the one place in Uralla Shire that most inspires you, where would you be? Why that place?
7. What is the coolest thing about Uralla Shire?
8. What local cultural asset is most important to you? I choose this because...
9. What is your current occupation?
10. Are you? Female/Male
11. What is your age?

Survey results

One hundred and five completed responses were received, which represented two per cent of the Shire population (and a number of

the surveys were jointly filled in by families). We were pleased with the response rate (having set a goal of 75 responses), but would achieved a higher rate if:

- The research had been more extensively promoted locally, and
- We had been able to include telephone or face-to-face interviews in the mix to ensure residents with varying levels of literacy were given the chance to participate.

Literacy levels will always be an issue for doing inclusive research in rural areas, and I addressed this in the design for the research the Central Darling Shire (below).

The questions worked extremely well and responses were able to be plotted onto maps, such as a Google map, [Uralla Shire: our cultural assets](#), which plots responses to the question 'What local cultural asset is most

important to you?'. One good question that 'got away' and was not used was: 'If you had to design a logo or coat of arms for Uralla Shire, what three things would you include on it?' One question I may consider rephrasing before using again in a locality with four distinct seasons was 'What is the coolest thing about Uralla Shire?' – as a number of people gave tongue-in-cheek responses about the cold local winter. One person wrote, 'I could say every morning from March to September! But will say coffee and cafes'.

The fact that the survey was distributed in winter had an impact on responses. If we had sent out the same survey in mid-summer I am certain community value of local assets would have had different emphasis (for one, the local pool and swimming holes would have featured more prominently). In the Central Darling Shire, the fact that the research took place just after the breaking of a ten-year drought

*If you could
put something
– anything
– from your
community in
a protective,
time capsule
bubble, what
would you
save?*



had an impact: not just on responses but also the willingness of residents to participate and tell their stories. Context is important.

Uralla Shire – as described by people who live there

The most valuable assets of Uralla Shire are its ‘small scale’ and ‘village atmosphere’. People are ‘friendly,’ ‘creative’ and ‘helpful’ and the ‘community works well together’.

On the main street of Uralla ‘people from all walks of life’ come together and heritage buildings tell ‘our local story’ – this makes long-term residents feel ‘proud’ and recent residents ‘interested’.

Local places or events the community value most are (in order):

- McCrossins Mill, a ‘real community meeting place’
- Alma Park
- Uralla Library
- and the local calendar of cultural events

These places create bonds, bringing people ‘of all ages’, ‘rural workers and arty types’ together, by ‘going beyond competitive entertainment’ and by ‘offering many opportunities to feel a part of this community’.

Key characteristics of people who live in the Shire are their ‘volunteering’, ‘loyalty’, ‘commitment’ and ‘hard work’.

The townships of Uralla have a unique ‘old world’ ‘country’ character. People who’ve recently moved into the area see it as more ‘creative’ and ‘cohesive’ than other places and were attracted both by the ‘quiet’ and ‘history’, and the ‘buzzing atmosphere’ of ‘dynamic culture’. Their move was inspired by the ‘creativity and talent’ and ‘dedication of all the people who made this great place’.

2. Central Darling Shire and The Outhouse Storycatcher

To kick start CAMRA research in the Central Darling, in 2009, and to get a sense of who we were dealing with and how to design research to ‘fit’ locally, I surveyed and interviewed 23 community and cultural leaders using a similar set of questions to the research in Uralla. Their responses were located in a series of [community cultural maps](#) published on the CAMRA website.

Research in the Central Darling then proceeded with the understanding that most information lived in people’s heads, very little of it had been written down and there were no libraries of information. There was statistical and social services data and some tourism information, but – apart from a community radio station and newspaper in Wilcannia and a locality historian in Tilpa – the community stories and the fascinating individual stories that make up the small towns and settlements of this region of NSW were largely untouched, and little-known to many people from ‘away’. As it turned out, concern about loss of information and loss of traditional knowledge proved to be a serious issue for the local communities we visited in the Central Darling.

The ‘Outhouse’ video booth was originally conceived and built in Ivanhoe in 2009 by Melbourne-based arts company, TRAX Arts, and software designer Samuel Van Ransbeeck as an interactive art installation to gather local stories that Outback Theatre for Young People could turn into a local performance as part of their ‘Ivanhoe Chronicles’ project.

In May 2009, I approached Brian Cohen and Tara Prowse from



*The Outhouse Storycatcher premieres at Kilfera Field Day, outside Ivanhoe, September 2010
LtoR: Andrew Warren, Samuel Van Ransbeeck, Brian Cohen and Lisa Andersen*

TRAX Arts with a proposal to adapt The Outhouse concept and develop a social research tool for CAMRA that would help to map culture in a region where literacy levels are low, documentation is scarce, and local people are ‘fed up’ with social service surveys and research that, as they see it, produce no outcomes.

In 2010, we redesigned and rebuilt The Outhouse, with ‘game playing’ screen graphic design from Alan Lippert and questions written (and asked, in a voice recording) by me. In September and October, this new version of The Outhouse was part of research fieldwork in the Central Darling Shire.

The questions were a further development on what was asked in Uralla Shire, phrased differently for this new audience and with new questions added including:

- If you could put something, anything, from the Central Darling in a protective time capsule bubble so it would still exist 1000 years from now, what would you save?

- Of all the people you’ve known in the Central Darling – people you admire or people who make good things happen – if you could nominate one of those people to be made into a figurine, statue or action figure – who would you nominate and why?
- Think back over the last couple of years and community or arts events, festivals or live performances you’ve attended in the local area. Tell us about your best time out and why it was such a good time.

Writing the questions, I walked around my office saying them out loud to test how they sounded; it felt more like writing a theatre script than a series of research questions.

Ivanhoe, located 900 kilometres west of Sydney, became the first stop on a research ‘run’ which included the towns of White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Menindee and Sunset Strip, and the local agriculture event, Kilfera Field Day. Covered in red velvet and with four opening

doors, The Outhouse looked odd and interesting standing in the middle of the main streets. It became a talking point; people driving or walking past had to stop and ask ‘what’s that?’. It generated a ‘buzz’ (and a variety of local nicknames, including ‘Tardis’, ‘phone box’, and the less-than-complimentary ‘sh**house’) where it parked and we asked people to step into The Outhouse to tell their stories about what is ‘cool’, ‘inspirational’, ‘memorable’ and ‘creative’ about their community.

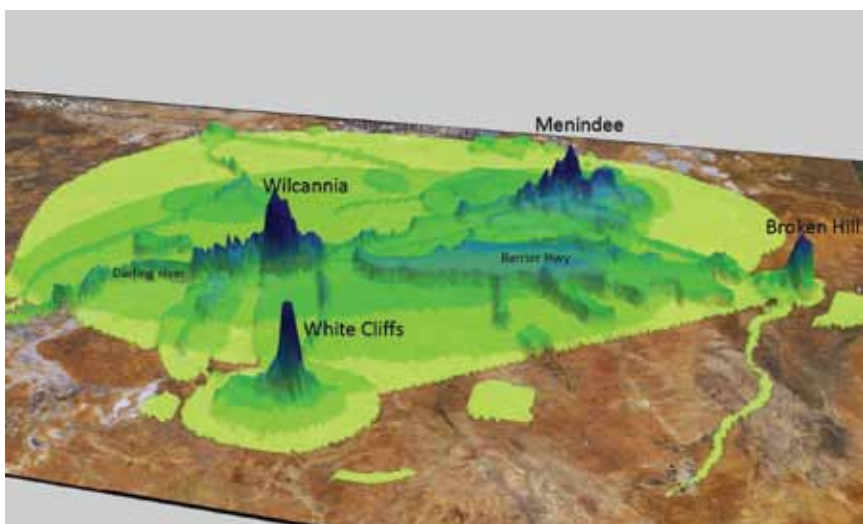
Inside was a chair and a video touch screen that allowed the interviewee to listen to the pre-recorded questions and control their participation. Their responses were recorded by a digital camera built into the wall of the booth and participants could choose to broadcast their responses via an external screen and speaker or keep their answers private and ‘confessional’.

For those reluctant to step into the booth, Andrew Warren and I were on hand to conduct face-to-face interviews. Samuel Van Ransbeeck travelled from his home country of Belgium to act as technical manager of the videobooth.

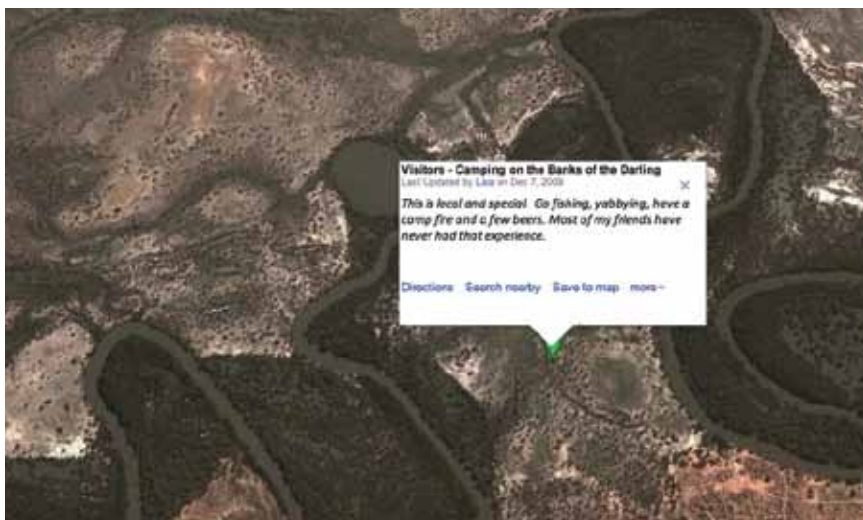
More than 100 ‘Outhouse’ recordings or interviews were undertaken or five per cent of the Shire’s population.

Alongside creating a directory of creative practice from the region, CAMRA was able to support building a profile for these people outside the region by using the interview data to build an online [Central Darling Artist Gallery](#). In addition, while in the Central Darling, we created a series of GPS tracks that mapped, through ‘walking, talking and storytelling’, less visible tourism assets or local creative practices.

In 2011 Museums & Galleries NSW (MGNSW) re-used The Outhouse Storycatcher for research with Indigenous cultural leaders at the *Keeping Places and Beyond* summit to discuss culture and heritage planning. MGNSW’s Michael Huxley approached CAMRA and TRAX as he felt the use of a videobooth was an exciting way of collecting opinions and ideas from this audience ‘beyond the organised sessions’. I worked with Michael to write new video questions using the existing touch screen design and 28 ‘confessional-style’ interviews were recorded during the Summit.



Map of places in the Central Darling that most inspire residents
Map: Dr Chris Brennan-Horley



Google Map showing where one resident would take visitors to the Central Darling: camping on the banks of the River Darling



The Outhouse at work on the main street of Ivanhoe, 30 September 2010

OUT COMES

The key take-away from this first case study in The CAMRA Toolkit is that the questions we asked residents in rural-remote Australia worked, as did the methods. If you reuse the questions, you could expect:

- Data on local cultural assets that will be useful for cultural, social, tourism and other planning and
- Maps of local cultural industries – including production spaces, venues and markets – to inform tourism and economic development planning, as well as cultural planning.

Finally, the local responses we collected form such a distinctive and compelling narrative, that every UTS staff member involved with the data was so inspired by what they read that they – and family, in some cases – subsequently visited Uralla or far western NSW. While this image of a micro-niche tourism market of UTS staff that suddenly sprang up is amusing, it does demonstrate how powerful this data could be for re-use in place branding.

MORE

CAMRA Project website
<http://camra.culturemap.org.au>

Central Darling Artist Gallery
<http://camra.culturemap.org.au/central-darling/artist-gallery>

Community cultural mapping the Central Darling
<http://camra.culturemap.org.au/central-darling/community-mapping>

The Outhouse Storycatcher @ Junction 2010, short film by TRAX Arts
<http://vimeo.com/18855401>

Uralla Residents' Survey: Our Cultural Assets, online version
<http://surveys.uts.edu.au/surveys/urallaculturalassets/index.cfm>



This case study explores how local government can act as a broker – of ideas, collaborations and data – to support cultural planning and development. Each year, Eurobodalla Shire Council partners with volunteer organisers to present the Eurobodalla River of Art Festival, acting as the central collection point for information and evaluation. The resulting data is used and re-used by the Festival organisers, local creative practitioners, tourism, business and, of course, Council itself.

Council As Information Broker sharing networks and expertise to build community capacity



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WHY

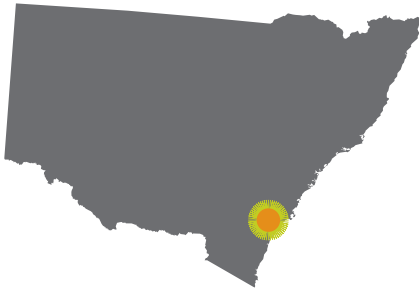
act as broker?

Eurobodalla Shire Council services an area that is rich in creative practitioners, presenters and product. Recent research commissioned by Council revealed that approximately 21 per cent of the Shire's adult population identified themselves as producers of creative products. As with many regional and rural areas, however, this capability is held in check through capacity constraints: there is an absence of 'hard' infrastructure such as galleries and museums; practitioners can lack business and marketing skills; and Council, too, has limited resources.

Against this backdrop, each year community volunteers, Council, tourism and business collaborate to present the Eurobodalla River of Art Festival, our only Shire-wide festival. It showcases the strengths of our creative practitioners to over 10,000 locals and visitors each year, and contributes over \$200,000 to the local economy.

The Festival collaboration is significant for Council for a number of reasons: it is an ideal way to enhance the region's networks, it enables the creation of other initiatives, it supports practitioners, and it provides a focus on the arts as a social, cultural and economic enabler. It has also proven effective as a means to position Council as a community partner.

WHERE



EUROBODALLA SHIRE

Size

3,422 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional/ Inner regional

Location

south coast NSW

Population

37,048

10.8 people per km²

Centres

Batemans Bay, Moruya, Narooma, Mogo, Central Tilba and Tuross

Industry

Retail, tourism, dairy and cattle grazing

Demographics

ageing population

Council cultural capacity

1 x full time Coordinator, Arts and Cultural Services, located in Community, Art and Recreation

The collaboration works because each partner brings to it their own expertise. As a local authority working across the whole-of-community, Council is able to act as a centralised point of information collection and collation; and we are able to use our research expertise to gather and analyse data on the Festival experience. These activities build a strong evidence base to support and inform Council planning; and the sharing of data builds our partners' planning capacity alongside our own. Arts organisations and local creative practitioners benefit from these transactions, as do business, tourism, and the community generally.

After six-and-a-half years as Coordinator of Arts and Cultural Services at Eurobodalla Shire Council, I have developed an understanding of Council's role in cultural development as that of 'broker': a conduit for ideas, a builder of collaborations between different people and organisations, and a coordination point for information and data collection and analysis. It is this last role, in particular, that will be discussed here.

HOW

to broker

Eurobodalla River of Art is a ten-day, annual festival held in May that celebrates the wealth and vibrancy of creative practice in our region. It is presented by a core team of six volunteers – about half of whom have a long-term relationship with the Festival – with support from local business and Council. While Council invests around \$1500 every year into the planning and promotion of the festival, our primary roles consist of (1) acting as a centralised coordination point for planning and event management (2) research management and (3) using the data to inform and improve cultural planning.

As the only full time staff member with responsibility for arts and culture, the partnership absorbs a significant amount of my time, particularly as we near Festival time. However, it's worth stating that this collaboration is not one project but a multitude of small ones involving many people, and the 'ripple' effect of the work done under the Festival banner is felt throughout the year and across my other projects – be it managing *The Arts Exchange*, an online information sharing network, or assisting with the business skill development of creative practitioners.

How does Council work as an information broker to maximise opportunities for all?



1. Council as centralised coordination point

Planning: Each year, we start thinking about the Festival about six months out. At this early stage, the focus of my efforts as information broker relates to the Festival program: who wants to participate, what are they offering, what resources do they need, what opportunities for promotion and sponsorship are there? Who needs this information?

The 2013 Festival showcased 35 events and experiences including open studio trails, exhibitions, music, live theatre, literature and family and market events. Each presenter (be they an individual or a team) is responsible for their own event or activity, giving them ownership of their involvement in the festival.

One of our first tasks is to bring the program together to try and ensure every event maximises its audience and profile. This is no easy task. Over recent years, Council has worked with the core Festival team to establish a clear process:

- **Collect registration forms.** I collect and collate all registration forms, and prepare the draft of the program for the Festival team to review. I meet with the team and we examine where there are gaps in the program, which the team follows up.
- **Secure sponsors.** We are fortunate that good relationships have been established with many sponsors and we are able to renegotiate terms of agreements annually. The lion's share of this work is undertaken by the Festival President and I predominantly explore new opportunities for sponsors and partnerships.

- **Gather promotional materials.** Each presenter provides promotional material for the media, such as images and information. Previously I had managed this, but now a specific position has been created for this task.
- **Evaluate previous year's data.** For the last three festivals, survey data has allowed us to evaluate the Festival from the perspectives of 'presenter', 'resident' and 'visitor'. The survey provides comparative data on who is attending, what they purchase, where/how long they are staying and where they are from. This helps us understand if the festival is mainly for locals or visitors, assists with future programming and enables better targeted marketing. Council also uses the data in broader planning for and promotion of local arts and cultural activities.

Our active participation at this fundamental level helps nurture a positive and productive relationship between Council and community.

Event management: Work with the Festival organisers gets more intense as we get closer to May, and increases to around 45 per cent of my time over the final two months. Of central importance is the establishment of a timeline and tasks – again, much of my work as broker is concerned with information: are the processes clear and up to date? Do the relevant people have access to it? Having a shared understanding and involvement in all of these 'behind the scenes' tasks and responsibilities is essential to develop a skilled community organising team. Our timeline of actions in the lead up to the Festival includes:

Three months out:

- Review administration processes
- Prepare funding submissions
- Identify potential partnerships for sponsorship and content
- Prepare and hand over all program information to the designer
- Prepare survey information to ensure all relevant data will be collected to support objectives
- Update manuals to ensure relevance – event management manuals, risk assessment procedures, marketing plans
- In conjunction with the Council’s Tourism Department, develop a communications strategy and implement procedures for online ticket sales

Festival time:

- Distribute programs: the Festival team take responsibility for hard copy distribution, while together we handle website updates (30 minutes, three times per week) and Facebook posts (five minutes per day)
- Have weekly event management meetings with Festival team (30 minutes)

Post-Festival:

- Collate and analyse survey data.
- Debrief with the Festival team. I report on the survey findings and any anecdotal feedback and we discuss implications and ideas for planning next year’s event. Festival presenters are also welcome to provide input at this meeting.

2. Data gathering and analysis

Council manages the Festival evaluation survey that reviews visitation and participation. I prepare the survey in consultation with Council tourism staff and use their [Survey Monkey](#) account. The electronic survey is linked to the Festival web page and is also distributed via our recently established e-news service *The Arts Exchange* (which has resulted in a significantly increased response rate), while a paper-based survey is distributed by volunteers at major Festival events.

Evaluation and analysis is undertaken by me, with Tourism and administration support. This takes approximately two days. The final report is given to the Festival organising team, Tourism and Council.

3. Cultural planning

Research data from the Festival helps Council better understand the local arts and culture sector, audiences, the impact of individual programs within the Festival and marketing effectiveness. Examples of new programs developed as a result of our research include:

- A trial Open Studios Eurobodalla program, which was initiated for the 2013 Festival. It was so successful it has resulted in a three-fold increase in expressions of interest from artists to join in a new program of Open Studio weekends (one of which will be presented as part of the 2014 Eurobodalla River of Art Festival)

Active participation at this level helps nurture a positive relationship between Council & community

Monika McInerney



Eurobodalla River of Art audience survey questions

- ① **What State do you live in?**
- ② **What is your postcode?**
- ③ **How did you hear about the Eurobodalla River of Art? (Newspaper, magazine advertisement, radio, web, TV, word of mouth, other)**
- ④ **Where are you staying? (Resident, own holiday house, with friends/family, commercial accommodation, day visitor)**
- ⑤ **How long are you staying? (Overnight, weekend, 2-4 nights, 1-2 weeks)**
- ⑥ **Have you purchased any locally made work?**
- ⑦ **Did you experience any restaurants or cafes?**
- ⑧ **Will you return next year to attend the festival?**
- ⑨ **What is it about Eurobodalla River of Art that will bring you back?**
- ⑩ **Would you recommend the Eurobodalla River of Art to others as a festival to experience? (If no, please let us know why)**
- ⑪ **Any other comments you would like to inform the festival coordinators about?**

– The development of a Festival arts market program. During the ten days of the Festival, *Art Street*, a series of local arts and crafts stalls and live performances, participate in the regular Saturday Moruya Country Markets. This partnership between the market stallholders and the Festival took some time to develop



– Council and the Festival team have invested much effort into developing clear processes and a set event management timetable, which is now adhered to by organisers and presenters. This has reduced the turnover of the volunteer Festival team (with subsequent loss of knowledge and skills). Having clear tasks, which we all understand and agree to, has noticeably diminished anxiety levels and the burn-out rate of the festival team and the Eurobodalla River of Art Festival has now got a very strong core group of festival organisers and presenters. Between 2012 and 2013:

- Individual events such as the major Art Prize experienced a 26 per cent increase in participation/submissions.
- The number of creatives participating in *Art Street* at the Saturday Moruya Country Markets increased by 45 per cent
- *Art on Parade*, where art is displayed in shop windows, and inside shops, galleries or studios throughout Batemans Bay, Moruya, Narooma and surrounding areas, saw an increase of 13 per cent in submissions.

but data has shown increased and new audiences for both, and increased sales. *Art Street* is able to use the existing market infrastructure and their insurance. We have now established a registration process for *Art Street* stall holders and live performers, which will give us annual information on who and how many are participating.

- Overall visitor attendance at the Festival increased by 8 per cent
- The visible role Council has played as broker and collaborator directly contributes to the community's confidence in our collective abilities to deliver the Festival, with the result that volunteers willingly come forward to offer their assistance. The core organising team of six is now ably supported by 50 or so volunteers in the lead up to and during the festival.
- The involvement of volunteers and the partnerships fostered by Council have collectively saved both Council and community groups \$1000s of dollars over the years.
- Finally, strong relationships have resulted from our role with the Festival, including internally and externally: with Council's Tourism and Communications teams, media, businesses, presenters and artists, and with the volunteers themselves.

Photo: Helen Okey



Singers performing at the Moruya Country Markets as part of Art Street 2013



CASE STUDY 03
Central West NSW



AUTHORS

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This case study explores a collaboration between Arts OutWest and Regional Arts NSW to build a state-wide database that would also meet sub-regional needs as an online directory of local artists, arts organisations, venues and events in the Central West of NSW. The data can be reused for promoting and planning local arts and culture. A key outcome for Arts OutWest – and their 12 local government partners – was the expansion of their successful arts media program through the application of up-to-date technology.

Gathering To Grow how to get the most out of a regional cultural directory

WHY

a cultural directory?

Arts OutWest is the regional arts board servicing 12 local government areas in Central West NSW. Our mission is to promote, educate, facilitate and advocate for arts and cultural development for the communities of our region. Since the mid 1980s Arts OutWest has been running a successful Arts Media program – designed to develop audiences and increase cultural participation – as a free service as part of our core activities. For many years, a cornerstone of the program was a weekly spot on Prime television. This regular showing gave our arts media

program a fantastic profile. When this weekly spot ended, in 2005, Arts OutWest needed to develop alternative means of promoting our region's arts and culture. By then, online options were increasingly commonplace and, while we did have a cultural directory, it was hard to use and visually unappealing. An updated directory was required, not just to make the user experience simpler and more satisfying but to give us greater options on using the data we were collecting. We wanted flexibility in application – such as ebulletins, linked social media accounts, and localised data that drew on regional information – time and cost efficiencies, and longevity.

WHERE



CENTRAL WEST NSW

Size

55,000 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional/ Inner regional

Population

180,000

3.3 people per km²

Centres

Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Weddin and Wellington

Industry

Agriculture, mining, food processing, manufacturing and tourism

Arts OutWest capacity

4.6 full time staff, including
1 x Regional Arts Development Officer, 1 x Communications Officer.
Funding from State and local governments, and specific project funding

HOW

we built an online directory

In NSW there are 14 Regional Arts Boards who are both networked and independent. Arts OutWest collaborated with Regional Arts NSW, our peak state body, with both partners bringing expertise and contextual knowledge to a complex technical task. The design and build took one year and we achieved an outcome that met both our organisations' needs and the needs of our local government partners.

Project management

In 2009, when we were planning to upgrade our website and directory, Regional Arts NSW were also critically examining their various in-house databases and their capabilities. A conversation began about whether this was something we could collaborate on.

Arts OutWest wanted a new website that would let the public search certain information – local cultural organisations, artists, venues and events – as well as meet our in-house database needs. We could have pursued our own solutions but the close relationship we have with Regional Arts NSW made collaboration the right choice for us. We decided to combine resources to develop a content management system that made use of something already being invested in.

When Regional Arts NSW began building their new database, their Funding Manager, Ben Sibson, and our Communications Officer, Maryanne Jaques, explored at length how the new state-wide database could solve our needs. When their database was completed, our web developer was able to work with

Regional Arts NSW's database developers to fit the required coding into a new, interactive Arts OutWest website. The cost of commissioning an external web developer to build our website was around \$6000. As well, our Communications Officer put in considerable hours on this part of the project.

Today, Regional Arts NSW hosts a state-wide arts and culture database available to all regional arts boards for an annual maintenance fee of \$500. Information is available at a regional and state level organised under the following categories:

- organisations/entities
- venues
- artists
- grants
- events (which was included at our request)

Anyone working for Regional Arts NSW or any of the 14 NSW Regional Arts Boards with access to the database can add to or modify the shared records – an essential feature for keeping information on practitioners and organisations up-to-date.

Privacy levels can be selected which dictate what information can be seen by whom and also which information is shown on the Arts OutWest website. For example, artists can select that their biographies and web links are publicly available, but not their phone number. The raw data is only accessible to Regional Arts NSW or the regional arts boards and can be further restricted so that it cannot be seen or changed by any users outside of the regional arts board that services the organisation or individual to whom the data refers.

Event listings cover all commercial or community-based arts and heritage events in NSW's central west region

Maryanne Jaques
& Tracey Callinan



Fine tuning

The state-wide database 'sits' on the Regional Arts NSW website in Sydney, which gives our website the benefit of their security back-up system. All Arts OutWest staff have access to the shared database. Staff can log in remotely, including from their phones via the internet.

We receive regular content for the Arts OutWest cultural directory by email from local tourism offices, venues and organisations, and we also collect information by searching local papers and social media. The details are then cut and pasted into the database. On average, Maryanne spends about four hours per week updating the database; although some weeks are busier than others.

Records are grouped on our website and can be searched under two themes: ['cultural directory'](#) (practitioners; organisations; venues) and ['what's on'](#) (the events). The cultural directory receives about one new record a week, while about 40 new events are listed every week.

The 'what's on' events listings cover all commercial and community-based arts and heritage events in NSW's Central West region. A visitor to our website can search an event by name, by artform, by event type (such as festival, lecture, workshop), keyword, date and location.

The directory does not include images. Though they would add value to a cultural directory, they would have slowed the site down and increased the cost of development.



to deliver an Arts Media program

Our Arts Media program promotes over 2000 events and hundreds of opportunities every year, we provide media support to over 500 practitioners, groups and businesses and we have the capacity to team up with tourism and business groups to showcase the wealth of activity in our region, drawing on detailed local information.

Arts OutWest have put great effort into strengthening the profile of our Arts Media program over the last few years, primarily through the use of radio and online options. A central aim in the development of the new Cultural Directory was to take advantage of new technologies such as social media to reach new audiences. Our program includes:

Local radio:

- We have regular, short ‘what’s on’ chat spots on seven local radio stations, including:
 - ABC Central West (Monday-Saturday, Friday artist profile)
 - 2MCE FM Bathurst (twice daily, Monday-Friday)
 - 2BS Bathurst (weekly)
 - 2EL Orange (weekly)
 - 2GZ Orange (weekly)
 - 2LT Lithgow (weekly, until November)
 - 2PK Parkes (weekly)
 - Binjang Community Radio, Wellington (weekly recording provided)
- In addition to the ‘what’s on’ chats, we present a live interview once a week for local ABC radio looking at one of the events or artist in detail: our ‘Friday Artist Profile’.
- We search the database for the coming week and tailor each radio presentation to the local government areas covered by that radio station. Because Maryanne has entered much of the information in the Directory, she has a good feel for the content. Radio stations are sent the notes in advance to help ensure an informed discussion.
- Preparing the material for the radio chats takes about two to three hours per week. The recorded segment for Binjang Radio is made using our off-the-shelf digital voice recorder and edited in Adobe Soundbooth. The segments for 2MCE and for the ABC are recorded in their studio and they edit them ready for radio.



Print and online:

- We produce a free monthly *Artspeak* newsletter (printed and online), with seven pages of events, arts news, reviews and funding information. The printed version is available at libraries, councils, Visitor Information Centres and galleries. The electronic version is received by free email subscription. It takes Maryanne two days per month to produce the newsletter, including five hours laying out the ‘What’s On’ directory listings.
- We send media information and editorials to local, regional and national print and online publications.
- In a joint initiative with Fairfax, Arts OutWest provides the content to produce [Arts Sunday](#): a once-a-month front page feature of art stories, events and happenings for the online edition of their local papers.
- In 2012 we transitioned to a [Mailchimp](#) subscriber list management system. This service is much easier to use and track than our old system and makes for far nicer looking emails.

Social media:

- Information is communicated via Twitter and Facebook. We have three Facebook accounts: a general Arts OutWest one (our main and largest one) and one each for youth and for Aboriginal arts. We tailor content for each one, promoting at the most six highlight events per week to avoid overload

Training:

We hold media skills workshops and provide media advice and support for local promoters and organisers.



Cultural directory

Through our collaboration with Regional Arts NSW, we now have a cultural directory that is simple to maintain and run, is cost effective, and is easy for visitors to navigate. It is a hugely valuable tool that allows us to take advantage of new technologies to grow and expand our work.

- Since relaunching in 2010 we have seen an increase in activity across all our sites. In 2012: we listed 1950 local arts events in the cultural directory (an annual increase of 14 per cent); hits to the website grew by 16 per cent; use of the ‘What’s On’ listing increased by 87 per cent; e-bulletin subscriptions increased by 26 per cent; social media contacts increased by 29 per cent; and radio mentions increased by 11 per cent.
- There has been a 30 per cent increase in the number of local records (people, organisations and venues) listed on the state-wide Regional Arts NSW database.

- Working with Regional Arts NSW, we have discovered there is value in being part of a system that is shared – we share the same information and the same language. In developing a system that is responsive to our local needs while getting the benefits of state-level infrastructure we had to make choices but they were right for us.
- We can now also provide targeted statistics that can be used for planning, funding applications and marketing.

Arts Media program

- The estimated value of the Arts Media program to our region in 2012 was \$292,000 (at an average of \$150 per event). In that year we provided media support to more than 500 creative practitioners, groups and businesses.



Central West Cultural Directory
<http://www.artsoutwest.org.au/directory/>

Arts Media Program, Arts OutWest:
http://www.artsoutwest.org.au/news/arts_media_program.php

Photo: Otis Williams



Arts OutWest Cultural Directory lists artists from across NSW's central west and their work is promoted by the Arts Media program. Condobolin artist Bev Coe's woven work, pictured here, featured in the 2012 Marramarra Bulla Aboriginal arts showcase in Parkes





ArtsInfo is a weekly e-newsletter compiled by Wingecarribee Shire listing cultural activity in NSW's Southern Highlands. Costing only two hours of Council staff time each week, it is now the area's leading 'what's on' guide. Also, with an archive of six years of information on local cultural industries, *ArtsInfo* is now a valuable trove of data to be mined in cultural, social and economic planning.



AUTHOR

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ArtsInfo News building relationships while mapping the big picture

WHY

an arts newsletter?

A 2006 arts round table hosted by Council identified better communications of arts and culture as a priority, as there was no centralised information on what was on and who were the artists and arts organisations.

As newly-appointed Cultural Development Officer with the Shire, I developed the [*ArtsInfo*](#) e-newsletter to achieve a number of things, including:

- As a 'quick and easy' way to gather and communicate information about our arts

and culture scene – I needed something visible, practical and accessible.

- To build networks within the cultural community, especially as some were wary of the newly restructured cultural development role.
- To build the 'bigger picture' of local cultural activity and identify gaps. Without a centralised store of information, no-one (including Council) knew what events were on, who the artists were, what venues were being used and what events people were attending and what events they wanted.

WHERE



WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE

Size

2700 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional

Location

NSW Southern Highlands

Population

44,000

17.2 people per km²

Centres

Bowral, Mittagong, Moss Vale, Bundanoon

Industry

Sheep and cattle grazing, tourism, timber, fruit and vegetables, mining, viticulture

Demographics

43 per cent of residents aged over 50

26 per cent volunteer

Council cultural capacity

1 x Cultural Development Officer under the responsibility of the Strategic and Assets branch

HOW

to provide *ArtsInfo*

My background includes work in community development and 25 years as a librarian so I'm good at managing information. But I'm the first to admit my design skills are very limited and so is my knowledge of digital communication tools. *ArtsInfo* was designed to be sustainable using my skills and existing Shire resources and to be compatible with my workload. The process of compiling, designing and sending the newsletter, and managing the subscription list, is as simple and low cost as I can make it.

Here's my 'easy recipe'

I spend two hours every week on the newsletter. Information is simply cut and pasted into a Microsoft Word document template when I receive it. Information is now regularly sent to me by artists and event organisers, but when I was setting up the newsletter I had to spend more time searching for information and building the network until people could see the value.

Content is listed under the following category headings in chronological order (ie, from the closest date):

- special announcements - exhibitions and art shows
- film
- music
- theatre and auditions
- festivals
- grants and opportunities
- books and writing
- talks and lectures
- community events
- workshops and courses (includes school holiday events)

The content deadline is Wednesday, then *ArtsInfo* as word document is sent to subscribers as an email attachment using Microsoft Outlook every Wednesday. The mid-week distribution allows subscribers to plan their weekend.

No special software or add-ons are needed to read the newsletter, it downloads quickly and is easily for our audience to read, many of whom are older people with less experience of online technology.

The email addresses of my 600+ subscribers are grouped into contact groups. The email is sent to myself, with the groups copied in as BCC (not CC!).

The word document is converted to a pdf and uploaded onto the council website.

Consideration needs to be given to storing previous newsletters and managing of data. For the first two years I failed to properly file newsletters; they are not lost but have been archived and I will need help to retrieve them.

I spend 2hrs every week on the newsletter

Rules for content (slightly flexible)

- ① I won't make personal recommendations for any individual event (although will include a quote from someone else).
- ② Non-arts/culture related events are generally not included (despite occasional pressure from organisers to do so).
- ③ Events outside the Shire are listed only if they include someone from the Shire or are an opportunity not available locally (I'm a bit flexible here, because it is good to support the region, including Goulburn, Wollongong and Kangaroo Valley).



ArtsInfo was designed to be sustainable using my skills and existing Shire resources, and to be compatible with my workload.

Jenny Kena



Limitations

- Production of the newsletter is dependent on my presence: if I am sick or on leave, it doesn't go out that week. Furthermore, people can only subscribe or unsubscribe through me rather than do it automatically.
- Being low-tech means that the newsletter is not aesthetically appealing and can be hard to read, with a lot of information to digest. Sending a Word document in Outlook limits the use of hyperlinks and subscriber feedback suggests the newsletter needs an index, greater use of images and a webpage format.
- The newsletter does not attract a broad audience. Eighty per cent of subscribers are older than 50 while only 1 per cent are under 30. This partly reflects the makeup of our community (43 per cent of residents are 50 years or older) and the fact that only a small number of youth events are listed in *ArtsInfo*. Also, young people tend to get their information on what's on from social media sources.

Next steps

- *ArtsInfo* now needs to use a more sophisticated technical system to continue to grow and be sustainable. Six years down the track there are now a number of online systems available. My ideal system would be one where contributors could add their own events (with overseeing and editing based on the rules) and subscribers could indicate how often they wanted to receive the newsletter (weekly or monthly?).
- We are now moving *ArtsInfo* operations to the online marketing system, [MailChimp](#), using council's existing, paid-for subscription.



The value of ArtsInfo

- *ArtsInfo* works well for its ‘save the date’ role. It lists over 50 events each week, building awareness and reducing the incidence of events clashing – a common problem in regional communities.
- It is a simple, free (except for my time) way to communicate local and up-to-date information across the community, building enthusiasm and audiences for what’s on.
- It has established strong links between Wingecarribee Shire and the arts and cultural community, building the Council’s profile with an engaged audience.
- Information from it is regularly ‘cut and pasted’ into local newsletters, and used on flyers, posters and other promotional material.
- New residents can easily engage with local culture and events through their subscription.
- The *ArtsInfo* subscriber list is used for targeted promotion of the annual [Arts Festival and Southern Highlands Art Studio Trail](#) in November.
- It has significantly increased council’s internal knowledge and awareness of the level of arts and culture to the community.
- Tourism Southern Highlands provides *ArtsInfo* information to visitors in their events calendar.

Using ArtsInfo data for planning

More than six years of information on local arts and cultural activity has now been collected through the pages of *ArtsInfo*. This data cache can now be mined and analysed to provide a detailed cultural map of annual activity, who and where are the established and emerging artists, infrastructure and gaps, audiences, visitor events and what our local creative industries are.

Data from the newsletter is currently being used in planning for a regional gallery and a performing arts venue. Also, as Wingecarribee Shire is about to embark on a cultural planning process, we would like to earmark funds to commission an analysis of the newsletter content to build a ‘big picture’ map of local arts and culture. If this happens, *ArtsInfo* will have proved a rich source of information on which to base the Plan.

Evaluation

In 2012 I conducted an online survey of subscribers to assess the newsletter’s impact and collect suggestions for improvement. Council has an account with [SurveyMonkey](#), so it was an easy and cost efficient option. It took about one day to design and send the survey, do an analysis of feedback and write the report.

The results showed that more than 65 per cent of subscribers (or 390 people) attend at least one event per month as a direct result of reading about it in *ArtsInfo* and that they recommend subscription to newcomers to the area.



ArtsInfo Newsletter

<http://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/services/community/arts-culture/whats-on-arts-culture>

Other local government

What’s On electronic newsletters:

Blue Mountains *City Council*

City of the Arts News,

<http://www.cityofthearts.org.au/category/arts-news>

Sunshine Coast Council,

Sunshine Coast Arts News

<http://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/sitePage.cfm?code=electronic-newsletters>

City of Sydney *What’s On*

<http://whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au>



Wagga Wagga's 'Faces of Ashmont' Exhibition by Eastern Riverina Arts featured an empty shop, portraits by a professional photographer, an exhibition, and local residents' hopes and dreams. This simply executed arts project produced – almost as a by-product – authentic insights from a disadvantaged, not-engaged community. The case study considers how this creative engagement method could be expanded and replicated for use in planning.

Faces Of Ashmont place-making, photography and community engagement



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WHY

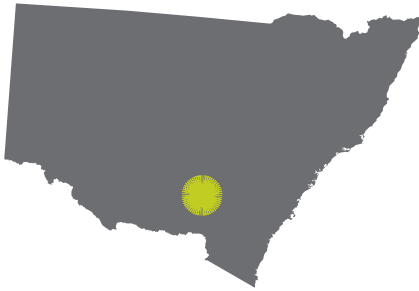
photography in the mall?

Ashmont is a suburb in Wagga Wagga with a high ratio of social housing, and its residents are over-researched in terms of social services but under-consulted in terms of local planning decisions. In 2012, Wagga Wagga City Council invited [Eastern Riverina Arts](#) to participate in an ongoing place-making initiative involving the Council, police, Ashmont community leaders, retailers and the community more broadly. The immediate focus was to create a sense of identity around Ashmont Shopping Mall and increase the profile of Ashmont to represent it in a more positive light.

As the Regional Arts Board for 11 local governments in our area, our remit is to assist in the building of a vibrant and creative region through supporting local arts and artists. When an empty shop in the mall was offered to us free of charge, it became the perfect venue for staging our first arts-based community engagement project as part of this larger place-making strategy.

We took up residency in the shop in late November 2012. An empty shop over the summer holidays invites trouble, so the landlord benefited from our presence. On

WHERE



CITY OF WAGGA WAGGA

Size

4,824 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional

Location

Riverina, south west NSW

Population

61,746, with 12 people per km²

Centres

City of Wagga Wagga and towns of Tarcutta, Ladysmith, Mangoplah, Uranquinty and Collingullie

Employment

Education, retail, health, defence

Eastern Riverina Arts capacity

1 x Regional Arts Development Officer, plus 3 x part-time staff

our side, the central location meant we were able to tap into the buzz that accompanies the end of the year. In Ashmont, in particular, this means the staging of elaborate Christmas lighting displays, which attract nightly crowds from across Wagga Wagga. By asking Ashmont residents the simple question, 'What are your hopes and dreams for 2013?', we hoped the portraits and responses would authentically reflect the community at a time of year that is traditionally one of celebration but also reflection.

HOW

to develop a community portrait

'Faces of Ashmont' exhibition

'Faces of Ashmont' was our first exhibition in our new Art Space, and we deliberately kept it fairly low-key. Our team consisted of just three: professional photographer David Maloy; photographer's assistant Jay Taminiau; and myself, Scott Howie. We set up a makeshift photographer's studio outside the shop and over the course of one Saturday took pictures of people holding a chalkboard featuring their answer to the question: 'What are your hopes and dreams for 2013?'

We took it in turns to approach people visiting the shopping mall, explaining the project and asking if they would like to participate. If they agreed, we put the question to them, providing further prompting if necessary. They either wrote their answer themselves on the chalkboard or the photographer's assistant did it for them. The use of chalk and chalkboard is not new, but it remains a valuable technique for its simplicity.

The photographer then spent 5–10 minutes with the participant to get a nice shot. All photos were taken outside in natural light (rather than use studio lights, which can be a bit threatening). About 30 portraits were taken over the course of the day, from a wide cross section of the community – mums, dads, families, kids, professionals and teenagers.

The consent process

Once a person's photograph was taken, I guided them through a rigorous consent process regarding the use of their images. In the course of our work, Eastern Riverina Arts has developed our own ethically-informed consent form for the artists we work with. Many generic consent forms available on the internet give too many rights to the organisation, and too few to the individual. Our philosophy is to engage artists with a strong connection and commitment to our communities. Our work is professional and high quality and we pay market rates. The basis of our approach is connectedness and inclusion. We applied this same ethical approach to our community participants when asking them to consent to the use of their portraits.

- Each participant was required to sign a release form (or have a parent/guardian sign it on their behalf, if under 18).
- A checklist allowed them to indicate how their image could be used:
 - for the exhibition
 - on Eastern Riverina Arts' website and social media
 - in annual reports and newsletters and
 - as publicity for the exhibition and Art Space

The activity proved a particularly effective way to get input from young people, who are often not consulted

Scott Howie



Photo: David Maloy

'Faces of Ashmont' Exhibition: Community Respect (Jay)

- Participants could choose to be identified by their first name, first and last name, or some other identifier.
- A number of participants chose to only briefly engage in the consent process and quite happily signed the document with a friendly 'whatever' or 'do what you want with it'. The project team chose to treat these responses as *not* equating to fully informed consent, and instead registered it as consent for the public exhibition of their image only. We were very aware that we were working with people's images and stories, and so took the approach that the only consent we really needed was that which would allow us to make the exhibition work.
- We made it clear to participants that not everyone would get a copy of their portrait – only those images that were chosen to be included in the exhibition were printed.

The exhibition

A week before Christmas – the entire project took just over three weeks to go from idea to opening – 18 portraits were hung in the shopfront window, which essentially served as a window display gallery. The photographer did all the editing, printing and hanging, with some help from a part-time staff member of Eastern Riverina Arts. Photographs were printed on A3 photographic paper and hung, unframed.

It's fair to say 'Faces of Ashmont' generated quite a buzz. It was our first exhibition, the community could see themselves (or friends or family) in the window and it felt special and positive. 40 people attended the opening, plus media, and it was launched by the Mayor, Councillor Rod Kendall.

The exhibition stayed up over the summer holidays, giving the community the opportunity to wander by, look at the photos and consider the project. After the exhibition finished, the participants were given their portrait.

In terms of costs, this project did not require much time, resources or capital. The photographer supplied his necessary equipment plus lighting, we supplied the chalkboard, chalk and consent form. The photographer's fee was approximately \$800, plus \$500 to cover editing, printing and installation.

Developing a creative engagement method

'Faces of Ashmont' was designed as an arts project, not a consultation process. The responses received from participants to our question: 'What are your hopes and dreams for 2013?' were broadly of three types:

- Wishes for more infrastructure, particularly for young people, such as sporting facilities and parks;
- Messages of hope, respect and peace; and
- Personal ambitions.

People sincerely engaged with the question and, due to the overwhelmingly positive public response, I have since thought about how I could redesign this project to maximise its potential to engage with marginalised people and thus include their voices in local cultural planning. The activity proved to be a particularly effective way to get input from young people, who are often not consulted or don't participate in consultation.



Improving on the process

- The use of a professional photographer was vital – the photographs are wonderful and they formed a tangible outcome for participants. Next time I would commission the photographer for at least a week (including over two Saturdays or during ‘peak foot traffic’ times).
- We took photographs outside, and used only the shop window for displaying purposes. Next time, we would set the photographer up inside and edit as we worked. Being able to edit and print on the spot would allow us to have a rotating display of the photographs as we took them, rather than wait for the official opening to showcase results. As well, having the photographer for a week would allow us to slow the whole process down and build more of a dialogue with participants. Also, photography is an interesting process and seeing a professional at work would draw people in.
- A number of people said ‘no’ to participating because they felt they didn’t look good at that moment. A longer project would give people the chance to come back another time groomed and ready – and for them to tell friends and family. By sheer luck, two leading members of the community were at the mall on that Saturday in November, and they agreed to have their portraits taken. Again, commissioning a photographer for a few days would limit the reliance on luck. It was interesting, too, to see how, over the course of the day, visitors to the mall changed – from busy

shoppers in the morning to pub patrons in the late afternoon. It would be worth plotting out how the full breadth of a community could be engaged over all the times of a week-long project.

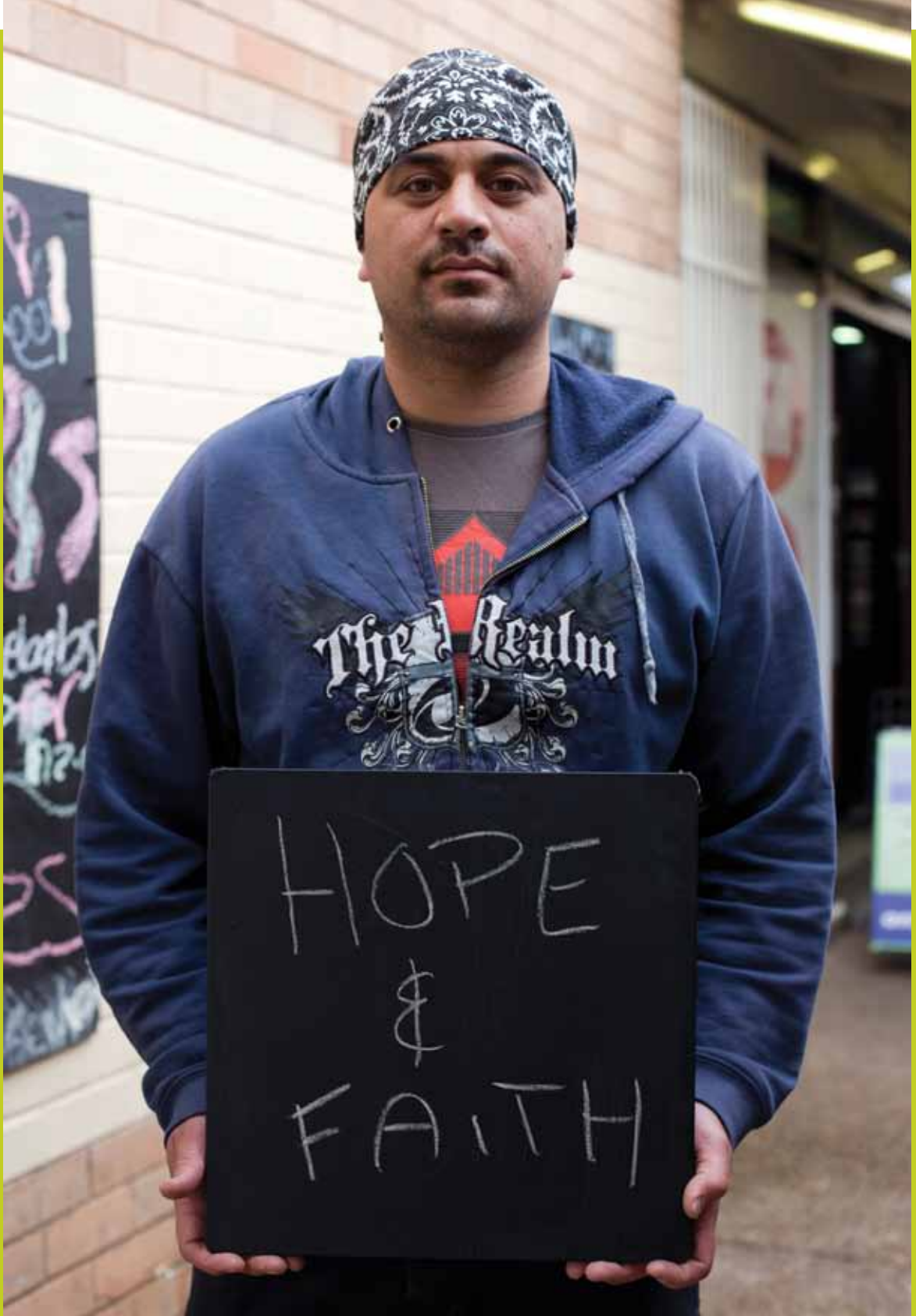
- Our informed consent process worked well, as did the exhibition opening and viewing, and releasing the portraits to their owners at the end of the exhibition.
- In terms of capturing data, a second outing of the project could engage, from the outset, the appropriate staff from council to assist with framing questions and then analysing the data generated.
- In order to gain a more targeted response to feed into our own arts planning, next time I would change the question to: ‘What activities/types of exhibitions would you like to see in the Artspace?’ Participants could be asked to prioritise from lists of possibilities and they also could be encouraged to draw their responses.
- Communicating the results back to the community would also be part of the project.



Our first art project has been a great success for us all: Eastern Riverina Arts, the community and Council. It has demonstrated that simple, professionally done art projects can achieve quick, visible, positive results. It was an excellent way for us to get to know the community, and we continue to talk with Wagga Wagga City Council about future work we can do together as part of their place-making strategy for Ashmont.

Since the ‘Faces of Ashmont’ exhibition ended, we have made further use of the shopfront as a means to support local artists and engage with the community. It is a great space, and we are able to use it productively. Our next exhibition is a video art piece created by dLux MediaArts working with local at-risk kids. The video will be part of the Fusion13 Festival, but it is at the shop, where the video will be later shown, that friends and family will gather to see their kids’ achievement.

Photo: David Maloy



*'Faces of Ashmont' Exhibition:
Hope + Faith (Clint)*





SpeakOut community planning events are particularly valuable for engaging with a broad cross-section of residents. In 2012 AlburyCity Council conducted their first SpeakOut session at the popular monthly Twilight Markets. Over the course of an evening, Council staff talked to young and old and were rewarded with insights and data that informed their Cultural Plan and Social Plan.

SpeakOut a conversation with the community



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SpeakOut?

During 2012 AlburyCity was developing Cultural and Social plans and we were searching for a new community engagement strategy. The impetus for this came from the Council appointment of a Strategic Planner, Kate Kohne, a seasoned community development worker who wanted more effective engagement and was able to influence decision makers within Council to trial a new approach.

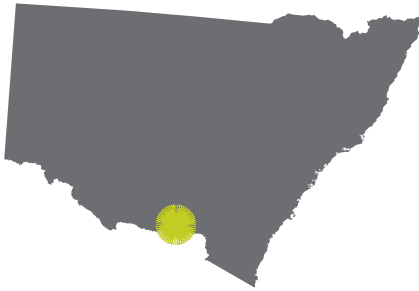
Many standard consultative techniques reach the same people every time. We wanted an approach to get from a broad range of residents and really learn what they

liked (or didn't) about art and culture in our community, how they engaged with it and why. Our aims were to:

- Develop an alternative venue for community engagement, separate from formal forums and information presentations
- Allow for creative – and therefore less predictable – engagement between Council and the general public
- Reach a broad range of the community, from children and youth to seniors
- Increase awareness in the community *and* in Council of what constitutes AlburyCity's role for its community.

Our solution was to trial a SpeakOut session.

WHERE



ALBURYCITY COUNCIL

Size

306 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional

Location

Murray region, just north of the Victorian border

Population

49,655
162 people per km²

Localities

Albury, Lavington, Glenroy, Springdale Heights, Thurgoona and Splitters Creek

Industry

Health care and social assistance; tourism

Demographics

7.7 per cent of residents have a German background

Council cultural capacity

last year's operational expenditure for cultural institutions, cultural staff and cultural development was \$6.035 million

HOW

While the methodology itself is not new, this was AlburyCity's first go at conducting a SpeakOut event and the following outlines our approach.

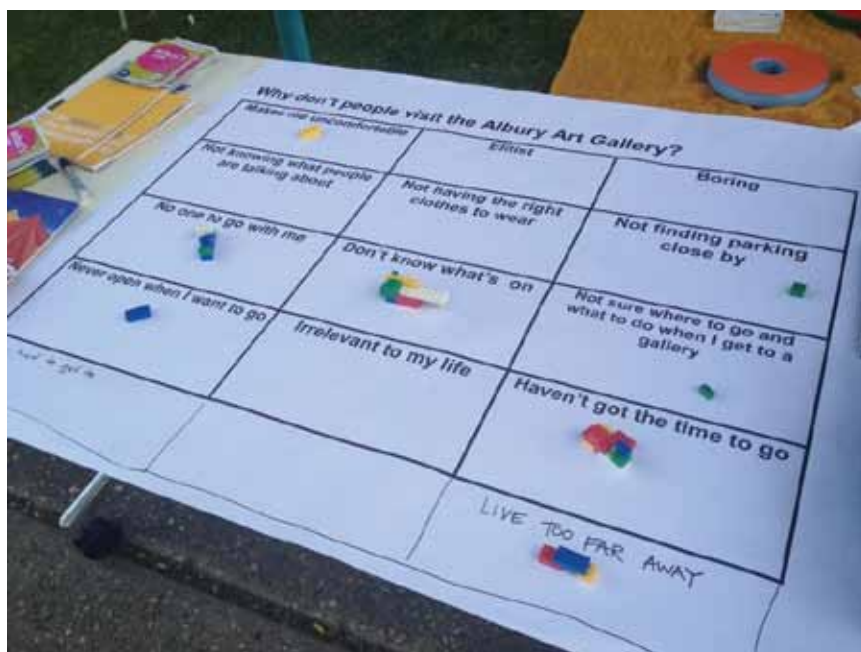
Preparation:

- AlburyCity contracted planner and SpeakOut designer Wendy Sarkissian to advise us on how to conduct the session.
- We held a one day training course for 25 Council staff in February 2012 at the Albury Entertainment Centre. The training included a general introduction to SpeakOut sessions and how to run one, case studies of successful past sessions and a discussion of the benefits. The cost for this training day was around \$5000.
- Effort was taken when selecting staff to ensure a broad representation from various Council departments, rather than just have staff from the cultural services team.
- Staff were trained in guided conversations, how to achieve productive facilitated feedback and documentation and evaluation techniques. They were given tips for soliciting information and activities to try, such how to use an 'infinity diagram' to organise ideas and how to be a 'scribe' or 'listener'.

SpeakOut community events

The SpeakOut process was co-designed by community planners Dr Wendy Sarkissian and Andrea Cook in 1990 as part of the consultation for the redevelopment of the Salisbury Town Centre in South Australia. It is a way of engaging the community in a planning process, particularly those who are not reached in more mainstream processes. The basic principles are:

- Take the event to the people, rather than expect them to come to the event. Finding the right location is a critical component of this
- The structured 'drop-in' format maximizes attendance, as people are free to participate at a convenient time
- The session includes entertainment and special activities - particularly for children and young people
- Various SpeakOut 'issue stalls' feature information displays and/or interactive exercises
- Participants find the issues about which they wish to 'speak out' and get to have their say
- One 'Listener' and one 'Scribe' staff are posted at each issue stall, as well as other people to assist
- Running a SpeakOut requires considerable staff time and resources to design and mount the event, and to analyse the outcomes



'Build a Brick Barrier' activity at AlburyCity SpeakOut session

250
people
participated

On the night:

- A marquee was hired at a cost of \$800 and was set up as part of the Twilight Market, which is held every second Thursday of the month during daylight savings months. These markets attract about 1400 people and include live music and food stalls. The venue was an important element of the SpeakOut event, as it allowed our session to be part of an established, centrally-located, well-attended event. Participants in our session were given a free meal voucher to be spent at the food stalls.
- Inside the marquee we set up a number of different stations with different activities – some 'hit and run', others allowing for more thoughtful, longer interaction. Activities aimed at children were designed to capture data in a fun way. About 10 to 15 staff were needed: they were assigned in pairs to a specific task or activity, rotating to a new one at intervals of 1.5 hours. Two staff were at the entrance of the marquee, to welcome people in.
- We had simple stalls with some butcher's paper and pens and two staff to act as scribe and interviewer; another consisted of sticky post-it notes for people to write their comments on and stick them up; a third stall featured a large piece of paper set in a grid with lego pieces. We called this activity *Build a Brick Barrier*. Written on the paper were a selection of reasons for *not* participating in arts and culture. People were invited to place lego pieces on those reasons that most applied to them. As people added their lego pieces, we built up a 3D representation of key areas of dissatisfaction and barriers.
- Another activity involved placing a coloured plastic ball into a basket that best described how a person valued the arts in Albury. Participants chose one of five coloured balls to represent their age range and put it into one

of three baskets, corresponding to: 'value a lot', 'do not value' and 'don't care'. Children, in particular, enjoyed this activity.

- A final activity featured a large poster with a list of 14 arts and cultural activities on it, such as art galleries, library, reading and theatre. Participants were asked to put a coloured dot, representing their age range, next to the activity they *did not* participate in. People were able to place as many dots as they liked, with most using two or three dots.
- It was challenging for staff
 - getting people to engage, assisting colleagues when in need, managing the crowd 'flow' to keep things moving smoothly. The hardest part on the night was getting people to come into the marquee. Council staff were a bit nervous to start off with, and some residents were suspicious, thinking they were being approached for a donation. By the end of the night staff were hungry and tired!
- The SpeakOut session was well attended, with about 250 people participating. No one was antagonistic to the process or to what we were trying to achieve. Only a few were focussed on non-cultural complaints against Council (such as rate rises and road standards). These people were able to 'park' their issue on a piece of paper with a commitment from a facilitator to follow up. Responses were made to the complainant within the week, and this reinforced the SpeakOut as a legitimate community engagement program.

Reflection and fine tuning

- A team debrief was held a week after the event. The non cultural staff facilitators reported that they had been surprised by all the positive comments and noted that information flowed freely once you got the person engaged. The cultural volunteers had been surprised to find themselves a little uncomfortable in the beginning. All agreed that the wide demographic of the participants was very apparent, and that this was not something normally achieved at a public forum. In particular, staff said it was pleasing to see how many youth actively participated – once you got them sitting down.
- The event was quite resource-intensive. A lot of time and effort was needed in the lead-up. We wanted to get the details right – even down to having the correct coloured pens and sticky dots – and we had to anticipate the random. For example, we had to consider bad weather – what was the tipping point for cancellation? And, most importantly, were we completely off the mark in understanding our community views? (Thankfully it neither rained nor hailed, nor were we left there wondering what we were doing!)



Second SpeakOut event on redevelopment of Albury Regional Art Gallery

It is a very valuable tool and has increased the data-gathering capacity of staff from across Council

Jacqui Helmsley
& Narelle Vogel



Second SpeakOut

Due to the success of the first, a second session was conducted as part of our community consultation over the redevelopment of the Albury Regional Art Gallery.

This was a ‘hot topic’, as Council needed the community to reconsider an increase in capital expenditure, due to a shortfall in State funding. The SpeakOut was the perfect means for soliciting broad-based input, and there were definitely some polarised opinions on the dollar value of an art gallery. Once again we linked the SpeakOut event with the Twilight Market, an environment accessible to all the community, not just to those that value arts and culture.

The lessons learnt from our first session greatly assisted how we approached this second one. For example, we removed the marquee and other infrastructure that wasn’t needed and located ourselves under a tree, put up clear signage, placed the fun activities like the balls and kids activities at the front and included youth and children’s activities zones to give parents the chance to talk freely. This time, Council staff were more comfortable in their roles and were more proactive and friendly. We explained who we were, what we were doing and that participation was voluntary. We also adjusted the timetable to give staff a ten minute break every hour, which assisted greatly.



The value of SpeakOut:

- Our inaugural SpeakOut allowed Council to connect with 250 people from a broad demographic range, including youth, children, families and couples.
- Despite the demands on Council in terms of staff time, particularly in the pre-planning stages, the very rich data outcomes more than compensated for this investment.
- It was also a great team-building exercise, as staff from across Council engaged with the Cultural Team, each learning from the other. This experience has filtered through the organisation, improving the cultural services profile.
- Council is now more broadly aware of this approach as an effective means of gathering data (and should need less persuading next time round). We could not have collected this data with other techniques, such as a survey, and the event provided a point of difference in our policy development work. It was an effective reminder that there are different people in different places with whom we can engage.
- Externally, the session has positively enhanced Council’s standing within the community.

What we learned:

- Results revealed that the main barrier to cultural participation is that people are unaware of what is going on (40 per cent gave this as their reason). Participants spoke of the need for Council to improve promotion and communication, as there was a perceived low level of awareness of the various events, exhibitions and cultural and social programs available within the community. Other reasons included: not finding parking close by (12 per cent); not sure where to go and what to do once there (12 per cent); no one to go with (10 per cent); and irrelevant to my life (10 per cent).
- The top five places/activities *not* being engaged with were:
 1. Albury Regional Art Gallery
 2. Purchasing an original artwork
 3. Craft/art making workshops
 4. Lavington Library
 5. Visiting museums in Albury Wodonga

One quarter of respondents did not engage with any of the cultural activities listed.

- The data reinforced the need for Council to provide more free community events and festivals for families to create a more vibrant and liveable community, with stronger social and cultural connections being developed as a result.

- Other data revealed gaps in community services and ability to access these services, which validated information Council already had. This data was included in the Draft Social Plan.
- By matching the data with other sectors within Council we have been able to reinforce some messages and in other areas produce new insights: community development, events, economic development and tourism have all benefited from the data.

Finally, it is worth stating this methodology is definitely not 'soft'. The feedback and comments were constructive and insightful. It is a very valuable tool and has increased the data-gathering capacity of staff from across Council portfolios.



AlburyCity past community engagement plans
<http://www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/inside-alburycity/have-a-say/past-community-engagement-plans>

Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia. (2013) Community Engagement Toolkit
<http://www.sparc.bc.ca/component/rubberdoc/doc/534/community-engagement-toolkit.pdf>

Wendy Sarkissian, SpeakOut designer
<http://www.sarkissian.com.au>



This case study reveals how a researcher mapped a creative industry sector – custom car designing in Wollongong – and made it ‘visible’. It outlines a process of responsive engagement with youth that revealed a skilled and economic scene that challenges standard conceptions of artistic expression. ‘Cruising’ with youth and plotting their sites of activity using Google Maps identified an extensive, largely overlooked market and encouraged a renewed discussion about what constituted the city’s creative strengths and assets.

Pimp My Ride mapping vernacular creativity in an industrial city



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WHY

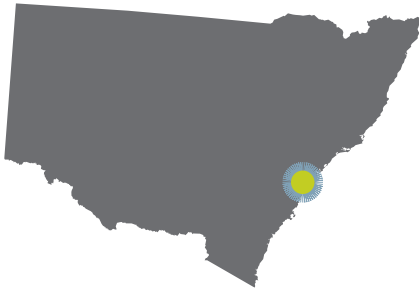
map vernacular creativity?

Wollongong is a vibrant regional city comprising a diverse mix of people, places and landscapes. Over the last five decades Wollongong has become one of Australia’s key centres for heavy industry. The city is noted for coal and steel production, as well as sea transport, freight and logistics. At the same time, however, this ‘steel city’ is grappling with anxiety over deindustrialisation. Regional economic plans have variously looked to tourism, higher education and creative industries for their capacity to diversify the city’s

economy and to insulate jobs from global economic fluctuations.

The development of local and regional cultural narratives plays an important role in imagining an expanded regional economic future. There is a presence in Wollongong of what are typically described as ‘creative industries’, including a theatre scene, visual artists, filmmakers and designers. The city also has pockets of gentrified ‘creative class’ activity, partly in the inner city and also on its scenic northern beaches (a function of lifestyle and amenity). Yet, conceptions of what constitutes artistic expression have tended to exclude any industrial potential for creativity. One consequence is that thriving, largely working class and

WHERE



WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL

Size

714 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional/ Major city

Location

Illawarra region of NSW,
80 km south of Sydney CBD

Population

202,000
283 people per km²
Australia's ninth largest city

Centres

Wollongong City, with smaller neighbourhoods of Helensburgh, Coledale, Thirroul, Corrimal, Port Kembla, Unanderra, Berkeley, Dapto

Industry

Manufacturing, education, research and development, coal mining, tourism, port activities, health and community services

Demographics

14 per cent are from non-English speaking backgrounds; 6 per cent attend university (4 per cent nationally). Youth unemployment is 13.2 per cent

youth-led sites of activity have gone unacknowledged.

Wollongong City Council cultural planners – industry partners on the CAMRA project – sought to include well-established arts communities in the project. But also, mindful of the critiques of creativity as pigeon-holed to a select group of ‘arts’ and innovative activities, city centre focused and classist, they were supportive of exploring a more expansive understanding of what local creative industry might be, and where it could be found in the city.

This was important in Wollongong because, with its industrial base, strong working class culture and demographic mix – high levels of cultural diversity, newly arrived migrant and refugee communities, socioeconomic inequality, problems of youth unemployment – any project focusing only on the established arts and creative industries would quickly run the risk of reinforcing existing divides and being accused of elitism.

Why the custom car scene?

I was born in Wollongong and have lived in the area most of my life. I came into the CAMRA Project as both a city ‘insider’ and researcher. As a local of ‘the Gong’ I was well aware of the city’s existing car culture. I often attended local ‘[Shown N Shine](#)’ meets around the region. Strikingly decorated cars were a regular accompaniment of local beach-side car parks. I spent many weekends on ‘cruises’ with friends who owned customised cars. Aware and appreciative of Wollongong’s custom cars meant that when I became involved with CAMRA through my PhD research with the project, I gravitated towards researching the scene.

In the mainstream media young drivers are commonly demonised

because of illegal street racing and noisy ‘hoon’ behaviour. However, in a city where youth unemployment rates are more than double the national average, I was interested in exploring Wollongong’s custom car scene from another point of view: that of a unique form of ‘enabling’ local creative production, with qualities, skills and networks that ought to be better understood when considering our ‘imperilled’ industrial city. In particular, my interest in the local custom car scene was a direct response to:

- A dominant narrative of economic revitalisation that shuns ‘brown’ industrial images and embraces development policies that encourage ‘creativity’, economic diversity, job creation, tourist flows and internal migration of the creative classes to reverse regional decline and rebadge place.
- Wollongong embraced a ‘creative city’ strategy in the 1990s and in 2001 was positioned as a ‘City of Innovation’, following a place-marketing consultancy. But the process privileged traditional notions of ‘the arts’, high-tech industries and middle-class aesthetics. Vernacular cultural identities and activities existing locally were marginalised.
- At the same time, however, Wollongong’s industrial base has not disappeared: around 15 per cent of the workforce remains ‘blue collar’. The city’s port has expanded and steel-making continues.
- Local cultural activities in Wollongong, particularly related to the city’s industrial heritage and working classes, were being overlooked. I sought to provide a different story to the normative creative city script and to offer Local Government policy-making evidence of already existing creative activities.



*to locate and
value vernacular
creativity*

There is growing recognition by academics and regional development practitioners that conventional assumptions around what constitutes ‘legitimate’ creative industries excludes alternative forms of everyday creativity – be it community gardening, Elvis impersonation, Christmas lighting displays or gnome collecting. Paradoxically, despite their visibility, audits of creative industries often miss many of these forms because they fall outside of standard ‘cultural’ and ‘creative’ categories. In Wollongong, it is impossible not to be aware of the custom car scene, in which cars are restored, modified and elaborately painted. Regular

car shows and festivals such as *Revfest* attract hundreds of enthusiasts, young and old alike. But despite the visibility of the scene, it has not previously been examined or even considered as a creative industry.

Photographic documentation of design and production in the custom car sector in Wollongong was an important component of this research. Photos: Andrew Warren



Cars at the popular American Muscle Car Club show, Towradgi



Young custom car fans at a ‘Show N Shine’ in Unanderra

The process I followed in conducting research on Wollongong's custom car scene included:

- As a first step, I contacted young people through car clubs, social media, personal networks and online platforms such as car forums.
- Discussion about the research and its goals was then held with different car groups and individuals.
- I made regular, informal 'catch-ups' with custom car enthusiasts at local hangouts, front yards, garages and workplaces.
- At this early 'scoping' stage, I was interested primarily in making contacts and building trust with individuals, not on gathering 'data'.
- Over a period of several weeks and as trust developed, research proceeded to an observational and 'groundwork approach': participants gave guided tours of their garages, driveways, workplaces and cars; I was taken on 'rides' through the design and production of a custom car; and participants 'showed off' their work, outlining sources of creative inspiration, methods for completion, time involved, money invested and social networks utilised.
- Tours and other interactions with custom car designers were captured with a digital recorder. Digital cameras captured images of cars, shows and work being carried out. Each tour lasted between one and five hours, and I maintained a fieldwork diary to help document observations and important details.
- Tour and diary notes were transcribed, analysed and

used to develop follow up questions and activities. I carried out the analysis myself. Transcription of audio material is time consuming, but helped me become more familiar with the data.

- Overall, the research took one year and involved 14 custom car enthusiasts. Most research participants were from blue-collar backgrounds, working as carpenters, electricians, mechanics and spray painters. Participants were from Italian, Greek, Lebanese, Cambodian and British migrant backgrounds. The intensive nature of the fieldwork produced an exceptionally rich source of data.
- To complement the primary research with car designers I then mapped the location of automotive businesses across Wollongong. In talking with custom car designers they provided the names of local businesses that helped to customise, maintain and repair vehicles. The location of these businesses was then mapped in Google Maps. This produced a region-wide picture, depicting activity in areas not 'known' for their creativity.
- A custom data run was also purchased (at a cost of \$450) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, showing employment in the automotive industries by postcode in Wollongong. This gave supplementary evidence for the geographic spread of this vernacular activity.

The skills of custom car designers are adaptive, creative, resourceful and social

Andrew Warren



Map showing the custom car cruise scene across Wollongong suburbs

Reflections

The stories collected in the research provide a corrective to the misunderstood narrative of the local car enthusiast as ‘hoon’ and ‘dangerous’ citizen as well as the nature of the creative economy. In reflecting on the research it has become clear that there remains a critical need to consider what is being included or excluded in any region’s particular narratives around regeneration and future economic directions. This consideration not only stems from the importance of properly recognising and supporting vernacular creative activities, but also to help appropriately value the qualities and skills that exist locally, and which can be built upon further.

1200
automotive
jobs rely on
the ‘scene’

OUTCOMES

The important outcomes of the research included highlighting the economic contribution of custom car design to Wollongong. But I also revealed the important social dimensions of custom car scenes, which predominantly involve young people from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, the research showed that:

- While the custom or modified car industry has not traditionally been thought about as a ‘cultural asset’ for Wollongong it makes important contributions to the city’s economy, and forms part of Wollongong’s regional identity.
- The local automotive industry supports over 1200 local jobs, with many workshops relying on the custom car scene for sustaining their business. Custom car designers possess practical skills in fabrication, mechanics, spray painting, sound design and use of automotive parts and materials. The skills of custom car designers are adaptive, creative, resourceful and social. This vernacular creative industry was complete with expert networks and organised professional circuits.
- Economically, the average participant spent more than \$21,000 on customising their car, in addition to the amount originally paid for their vehicle. Many planned additional work.
- Mapping the locations of this activity revealed how official investment in cultural infrastructure doesn’t necessarily align with patterns of vernacular – particularly working class – creative activity and cultural economies.

- There is a critical need for local/regional, grounded research to inform policy and decision making in terms of creative industry and arts-based regional development.

In concluding the research, all participants were provided copies of an article for publication in *Environment and Planning A* (reference below) and had the opportunity to voice any concerns with the presentation of results. Regular updates on progression of the research and results were also communicated via the [CAMRA](#) website and through a popular online custom car forum, of which participants were members. The research is now also being used by custom car clubs to help in efforts to receive approval for hosting local car shows and events.

MORE

Warren, Andrew, and Gibson, Chris. 2011. ‘Blue-collar creativity: reframing custom-car culture in the imperilled industrial city.’ *Environment and Planning A* 43(11) 2705 – 2722.



Photo: Andrew Warren

A custom car receiving a new paint job in a Dapto automotive workshop





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This case study outlines a methodology that combines *vox pop* style interviews, hand-drawn maps and specialised computer mapping techniques to produce a three-dimensional representation of a city's cultural vitality – as judged by its residents. In 2009, CAMRA researchers conducted a 'mapping lounge' at Wollongong's largest annual festival, gathering stories and maps that identified over 2300 cool and creative places, spread across the city. The data revealed the localised nature of 'creativity', and the value of small-scale, decentralised cultural infrastructure.

The Cool, Creative Mapping Lounge locating community perceptions of cultural vitality

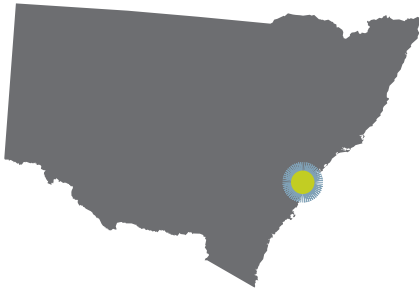
WHY

In the decade since creativity has been 'discovered' by urban planners, much of the focus has been on the private sector, on transforming traditional arts into businesses and on the so-called 'creative class'. Fringe groups, amateurs, community non-profit collectives and unusual forms of creativity are often missing from analysis and from creative city visions. One of the objectives of the CAMRA project was to document what local voices felt was important for cultural planning, and to do this by experimenting with different methodologies within research partnerships. Our team of

researchers from the University of Wollongong wanted to explore how ordinary people across a medium-sized, regional city – Wollongong, NSW – felt about the place in which they lived, and what this meant for cultural planning.

Stretched thinly along 60 km of coastline, Wollongong challenges standard models of inner city bohemia/outer suburban domesticity. It has 75 suburbs – from ex-coal mining villages in the north, the CBD with university in the centre, and the steelworks and low-density post-war suburbs in the south. There is a roughly north-south socio-economic divide. How might the cultural vitality of the city be perceived by its residents? How might we plot the *geography* of creativity in the city?

WHERE



WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL

Size

714 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional/ Major city

Location

Illawarra region of NSW,
80 km south of Sydney CBD

Population

202,000
283 people per km²
Australia's ninth largest city

Centres

Wollongong City, with smaller neighbourhoods of Helensburgh, Coledale, Thirroul, Corrimal, Port Kembla, Unanderra, Berkeley, Dapto

Industry

Manufacturing, education, research and development, coal mining, tourism, port activities, health and community services

Demographics

predominantly working class, lower socio-economic status (with pockets of wealth) and high levels of multicultural diversity

To explore this we conducted a 'mapping lounge', which combined qualitatively rich data from interviews with quantifiable data derived from hard-copy paper maps.

HOW

to do community cultural mapping

Over the course of a year, research plans were negotiated between university researchers and cultural planners at Wollongong City Council. It was agreed that the research method needed to be, first and foremost, a public one – with profile, simplicity and accessibility. Collaborating cultural planners wanted a method sensitive to community needs but that delivered 'hard data'.

The mapping process involved two stages: a community-based data gathering exercise (at the annual Viva la Gong community festival), which used conventional and easy to deploy mapping techniques (based on paper maps); and a second stage, which required specialist expertise and more technical computer mapping methods to draw together and analyse the resulting data.

In the lead up to the festival, glossy postcards were distributed to libraries and cafes, and were printed in newspapers etc, promoting the upcoming 'mapping lounge'. The postcards were designed to advertise the key research question in a fun and engaging way and to alert people to the possibility of having their say via a variety of means: either by coming along to the festival stall; attending a focus group day; or contributing online.

Stage 1: The Mapping Lounge

- At the festival, our team consisted of five CAMRA researchers. Our stall was very basic, consisting of a tent and tables, which helped create a feeling that this was a community (rather than a university or local government) run exercise. We had initially hoped to have lounge chairs and draped curtains but the reality of the logistics made this impossible.
- We had already sourced a basic map of the Wollongong City Council region from Council, which showed suburb boundaries, a few of the major roads and the names of prominent physical and cultural sites. This map had been photocopied in black and white and now sat as a stack of A3 maps of Wollongong, at the ready.
- Two different coloured Staedtler highlighters were used to draw on the maps in response to the two interview questions asked – blue for answering 'Where is cool Wollongong?' and pink for 'Where is creative Wollongong?' (Those colours subsequently worked well in terms of readability when the maps were scanned in.)
- Festival attendees were asked to spend a few minutes of their day to record their views about where 'cool' and 'creative' Wollongong was in their city. They did this by drawing on the maps and describing in words these locations and associated activities, which we recorded on MP3 Dictaphones.
- The conversations were conducted as *vox pop* style interviews. Participants were

encouraged to think laterally, and they were free to answer as briefly or as comprehensively as they wished. Many conversations lasted 10, 20 even 30 minutes. At the end of each recorded interview, participants were asked to record their age, gender and place of residence on the map. Very few people said no, and most were very positive about the exercise. Over 200 people participated, individually and in groups, producing 160 map interviews.

- Attendance at Viva la Gong represents a broad demographic of the Wollongong community and, in approaching prospective interview participants, CAMRA researchers ensured that that diversity was reflected in the respondents.
- After the event, a blog and Facebook page were established, which allowed people to continue sharing their views on cool and creative places in Wollongong.

Stage 2: Analysis

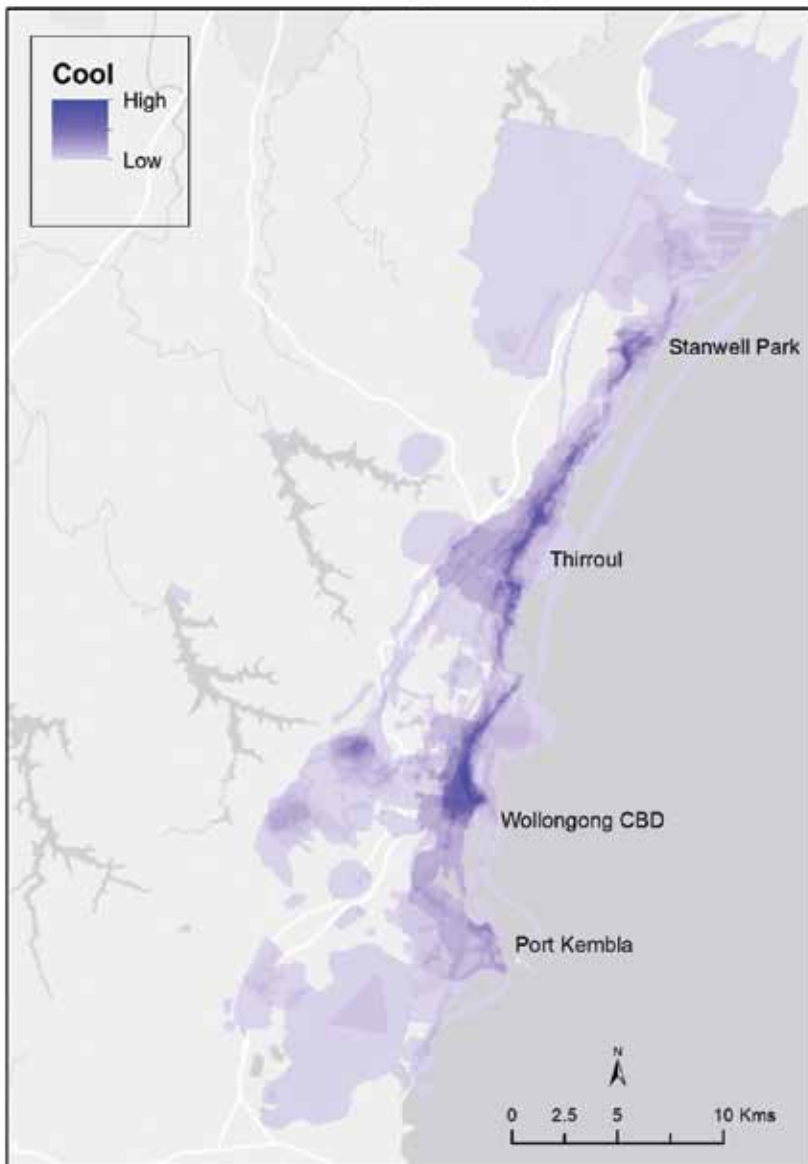
- By the end of the day we had a kilo of A3 maps and nearly half a gig of MP3 recordings – a very large dataset!
- While the technology was kept very simple on the day – paper maps, recorders – we chose to use a sophisticated digital mapping methodology to convert all the data into a digital form for collation and analysis. This meant a high degree of back-office processing afterwards, scanning and digitising all the hand-drawn maps.
- The digitised maps were then combined for analysis in a Geographic Information System (GIS). All the scribbles and markings made on each individual map were traced into the GIS and coded as either ‘cool’ or ‘creative’.
- To find the places that were the most often responded to,

all the markings made by the participants were overlaid in the GIS onto a single mapping frame and concentrations were revealed. A 3D visualisation of the data was produced, with peaks forming around the most frequently mentioned places. Converting the hand-drawn maps into this digital form allowed the GIS analysts to zoom around the map, highlighting the most popular hangouts and hear accompanying audio.

- This second stage of the research represented a considerable investment in time, expertise and equipment. ArcGIS software was used (\$20,000 licencing fee), although less expensive options such as MapInfo and free GIS systems (QuantumGIS) could be used. As well, the equivalent of a month’s full-time work was required to process and analyse all 160 maps.



Participants highlighted ‘cool’ and ‘creative’ Wollongong on the maps



Respondents' views on where is 'cool' Wollongong

OUT COMES

From that one day, we collected 2355 drawings of 'cool' and 'creative' places on the maps – an average of 14 per map. There were over 50 hours of recorded stories. The maps provided a detailed geographical representation of grassroots cultural activity in Wollongong, and while there is an obvious concentration of activity in the city centre, there is another, substantial, and decidedly *suburban* geography of creativity, with its own peaks, troughs and plateaus.

Creative places were often identified as those locations with high-profile cultural institutions such as the art gallery, performing arts centre, and entertainment centre in the CBD, as well as the 'arty' northern beachside villages. However, there were also numerous examples of everyday creativity (more often the 'cool' places): buskers, choir groups, community gardens, markets, fire-twirling, the local hardware megastore (specifically, its paint aisle!), scrapbooking, the Nan Tien Buddhist temple, bike tracks and even a Doll Club. Also ever present was the landscape: beaches, headlands, scenic lookouts – spaces of everyday engagement with nature.

The above results have implications for cultural infrastructure provision: there is evidence here that a distributed model that spreads funding across a range of grassroots community institutions, groups and infrastructure such as community halls and youth music centres would be an effective way to encourage vitality and creativity.

Equally, the results show how standard conceptions of 'creativity' barely capture what is possible – and are even confusing for many. Local pride in otherwise plain suburbs was a consistent counterpoint to the idea of creative cities as 'exceptional' places. By relaxing tight definitions of 'creativity' and 'creative industries', we opened the way to a jumble of responses – but from this stem opportunities to rethink the way cultural planning is practiced.

Finally, the festival proved to be an excellent location. Participants included whole families, retirees, students, farmers, motorcycle bikie gang members, Buddhist monks – Wollongong is the site of Australia's largest Buddhist temple – steelworkers and well-known members of the Aboriginal community. The youngest participant was 8; the oldest 80. About two-thirds of participants were women.

Reflections

The maps literally ‘stopped people in their tracks’ and many initially struggled to think of what places were cool or creative. But as they got going, people were soon talking freely, constantly using the map as a visual prompt. The hard copy maps – as a tangible, solid instrument – greatly assisted the expression of detailed and insightful comments about place.

Staff needed to be trained in ways to help coax people along who were having trouble answering the questions. Using the right language was crucial: for instance, ‘cool’ was especially problematic for older people. Instead, we substituted it with ‘fun’, ‘happy’, ‘exciting’ and ‘where do you spend your

spare time?’. A degree of flexibility was needed on the day – we found some people were more comfortable working in groups or couples rather than on their own.

The greatest challenge to rolling out such a project elsewhere are the technical GIS skills needed to conduct a similar analysis to that used in the Viva la Gong mapping lounge. Although the backend processing in this case went down a technical and expensive GIS route, other more ‘low-tech’ means for collation and analysis do exist. For example, listening to the *vox pop* interviews whilst looking at the relevant maps would allow for simple tallies and graphs to be produced about prominent places

that featured in the data. Webmapping sites such as Google Maps or Google Earth can be used as an interface to visualise and feature the most prominent sites. Webmaps can be easily marked up with pushpins and pop-up boxes that detail text, audio and video content, and are easily shared through embedding in websites or across social media. Furthermore, coding *vox pop* transcripts and looking for common themes amongst respondents does not require much in the way of software beyond a word processor. Skills in qualitative data analysis remain beneficial to this method.



A film of the Wollongong mapping methodology
<https://vimeo.com/77756380>

CAMRA Project introduction to Mapping Culture
<http://camra.culturemap.org.au/page/mapping-culture>

Gibson, Chris, Brennan-Horley, Chris, Laurenson, Beth, Riggs, Naomi, Warren, Andrew, Gallan, Ben and Brown, Heidi. 2012. [Cool places, creative places? Community perceptions of cultural vitality in the](#)

[suburbs](#)’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 15, no 3, pp. 287–302.

Look to sites such as <http://walking-papers.org/> for easily printable maps of your local area.

Create a Google account to access the ‘my maps’ feature in <http://maps.google.com/>

Download QGIS, a free GIS package for Mac or PC

From this stem opportunities to rethink the way cultural planning is practiced

Chris Gibson
& Chris Brennan-Horley





A map interview at the 2009 Viva la Gong Festival Mapping Lounge





This case study presents an innovative consultation process that utilised creative activities to give residents direct input into a planning and design process. Here, an unloved park in a disadvantaged suburb was redeveloped as part of Penrith City Council's neighbourhood renewal program. Over the course of an afternoon, residents of Kingswood Park drew, moulded, glued and scribbled their way to imagining their new local park – and, in the process, opened up an ongoing conversation with Council around their wishes for their community. The resulting park – now a well-loved and cared for place – reflects and makes real the residents' aspirations.

Dreaming Up A Park engaging residents in local planning



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WHY

During the 2007 consultation for the Neighbourhood Action Plan for Kingswood Park in north Penrith, residents repeatedly expressed the desire for a centrally-located park where children could play safely after school on good quality equipment, young parents could meet, and residents could feel proud of their community. Such a space connected with the four key themes identified in the Plan as community priorities:

- Community harmony and safety
- Public spaces and parks
- Traffic and transport
- Access to services

As well, residents were clear about what they were proud of in their community: a sense of connection, friendliness, and open space. The local public school and community centre were seen as unique assets. The proposed site for the park was important and identified by the community – it was adjacent to Kingswood Park Public School – which made it ideal for holding events such as family fun days and other creative programs. At the time, the site was a well proportioned but empty block of land that contained one lonely swing set. It was desolate to the point where there wasn't even any vandalism – no one cared. By collaborating with residents in the planning and designing stages, Council aimed to deliver a park for all, and not just a playground.

WHERE



PENRITH CITY COUNCIL

Size

404 km²

Remoteness

Major city

Population

186,493

Kingswood Park suburb - key assets

Kingswood Park Public School, North Penrith Community Centre, interested residents

Kingswood Park demographics

Kingswood Park is 'relatively disadvantaged' on the SEIFA index; compared to the Penrith average, the area has a larger percentage of single income households and residents living in Housing NSW properties.

Neighbourhood Renewal Program

1 x Place Manager; 1 x Community Engagement Officer; 1 x Cultural Development Officer

HOW

to 'dream up' a park

Planning for the new park was a creative process that involved the community and which culminated in the 'Dreaming up a Park' day. A forum held at the Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) introduced us to a model developed by the UK-based artistic team [Proboscis](#), which utilises everyday objects in collaborative planning and design. This inspired us to commission western Sydney-based artist David Capra – who had previously worked with Proboscis and ICE – to work with local residents, and particularly children, to plan the new playground. David brought great enthusiasm and interest to the process, encouraging the children and supporting them in their imaginative efforts.

Preparation

- The consultation was planned according to Council's [Community Participation Policy and Manual](#) (updated in 2011).
- The project proposal – including a purpose statement, consideration of stakeholders, an invitation and promotion plan, an outline of methods, a budget, staffing considerations and an evaluation process plan – was presented to Council, and approval granted.
- Funds for the renovation and installation of playground equipment was allocated, securing \$87,077 from the Penrith City Local Open Space Development Contribution Plan and other sources.
- Three Council staff from the Neighbourhood Renewal Program were involved in

8 months later the new park opened

- preparation and planning. Plans were kept deliberately simple – the main expenditure was the cost of engaging David Capra, which was the market rate.
- Key stakeholders: Staff from Housing NSW were actively involved in promoting the event to their residents and spent time on the day helping and chatting with participants. The local public school were also actively involved in promotion. One of their teachers made a video of the children talking about what they would like to see in the park and this was played to Council as part of the project proposal.

To a passer-by the park looks like many others, but to the residents the park is now a special place they helped create

Jeni Pollard,
Heather Chaffey &
Cali Vandyk-Dunlevy



On the day

- The event was held in the chosen park, on a weekday from 3pm-5pm, and featured a range of activities designed to appeal to a wide range of participants.
- A free BBQ was provided, both to entice passers-by and as a gesture of appreciation to the residents and families for their time and effort. We provided the BBQ food and residents assisted with cooking and serving.
- Council staff attending included three people from the Neighbourhood Renewal Program and one from the Parks department. Staff from Housing NSW and a local community development worker from the Neighbourhood Centre also attended. At one point in the afternoon, as we heard the thunder of the local kids running down towards us, we looked at each feeling that perhaps we were about to be overwhelmed – but it was quickly apparent the families were there to enjoy themselves.
- Attendance on the day was very good. Children from the local primary school filled the park within ten minutes of the final bell sounding, with teenagers and other children arriving soon after. In all, about 120 people attended, including 70 children, 30 parents and grandparents, ten other adults, five teachers and school staff and five community workers.
- The activities focused on a creative visioning process led by professional artist David Capra, as well as a survey and informal written activities (all described below). David's exercises were designed to give the community the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the park upgrade – design, location of park features, selection of play equipment, seating and shade structures and future place-making activities – and the cost of the craft supplies used was minimal, as most were purchased from the \$2 shop.
- Video and photography were used to document the consultation.



Heather Chaffey talking to a resident about what the community wants for the new park



Artist David Capra working with local children

‘Creative visioning’ process

The ‘dreaming up a park’ exercises included:

- **Story book and cubes:**

Participants were presented with a book of photographs of the existing park. Children were given blank paper and invited to draw pictures of the features they would like to see filling the empty spaces of the park. Their pictures were cut and pasted onto the photographs which slowly developed into a story book of possibilities for future park development. A second element involved the use of white paper cubes. Participants were asked to draw on one side of the cube the park as it currently existed, and on the other side of the cube the park they would like to have in the future. At first participants were noticeably hesitant, limiting themselves to standard park features, such as swings. However, they soon began to imagine a whole host of things, such as giant jumping sponges and a shade cloth designed to look like a gum

leaf. Even though participants realised that some of the ideas were dreams rather than practical solutions, they were still valuable input for future design concepts and place-making projects.

- **Model sculpture of a proposed park:** On a large sheet on the ground, plasticine, paddle pops, pipe cleaners, coloured paper and foil were laid out, with the invitation to participants to create three-dimensional models of things they would like to see in the park. Participants placed their models directly onto two large laminated maps of the park, creating a new, imaginative place. Children and even a few adults joined in, with the children’s wonderful sense of creativity responding well to the exercise. The completed model park featured a telescope, microscope, spider webs, ponds, fountains, flower beds, bridges, climbing frames and Parkour equipment. The evolving model sculpture park was photographed and filmed over the course of its creation.

- **Stick it!:** This exercise was originally designed for infants and primary school aged children, but for our park consultation adults were also invited to join in. Each participant is given three identical stickers, which indicates their age and gender, and they use these stickers to vote on suggested activities that were written up on graffiti paper. Each graffiti paper included pictures of the activities so that everyone could participate regardless of literacy levels. In all, 71 people joined in this exercise, mostly children but also some adults and adolescents. We were pleased with the level of seriousness shown by the children, who took a great deal of time to consider their priorities.
- **Graffiti sheets:** This is a tool commonly used in informal consultation settings. A question or statement is clearly written at the top of a sheet of paper and participants are invited to write down their thoughts, suggestions and concerns. This can lead to a flow of comments which relate to one another or a series of individually expressed ideas. In our consultation, adults and children were invited to complete open-ended statements on the graffiti sheets about what they would like in a neighbourhood park. The activity has a level of anonymity to it which allows residents to report antisocial behaviours without fear of retribution, and also helps residents who may feel skeptical of government agencies to freely participate. There was no record taken of numbers or demographics of participants.

Examples of statements include:

- When I come to the park, I like to...
 - I come to the park with...
 - My dream park would include...
 - The thing I like most about this park is...
 - The thing I like least about this park is...
- **Survey interviews:** Twenty one adults from a mix of local cultural groups were asked survey questions designed to solicit ideas, concerns and dreams, both for the park and more broadly for the community. The interviews were conducted by senior Council staff and were supposed to take five minutes, but many people talked for longer, allowing for some great conversations. The respondents, most of who were aged 20 to 30, were primarily concerned with safety issues for local children and being able to interact and play with their children at the park. They also wanted to play and exercise in the park themselves, and sit and rest there. The questions were similar to those used on the graffiti sheets, with the addition of some basic demographic questions. This method was used to catch adults who may not have wanted to participate in the graffiti sheet exercise or who may have had low literacy.





OUT
COMES

- About eight months after the community consultation, the redeveloped park was officially opened by Penrith Mayor, Councillor Jim Aiken. The Parks team at Penrith Council undertook the work and ideas from the day were built into the design for the new park, such as a spider web for climbing and the snake design in the soft fall. Several of the seats installed in the park have a surprise element in them: such as preserved leaves and bugs that the children collected and which were embedded in acrylic and placed into the wood of the seats. Many of these elements were constructed by designer Ric McConaghy. Ric also worked with children at the primary school on individual designs that were fired onto park pavers.
- The ‘Dreaming up a Park’ event began an ongoing discussion with the community about the use of this space. Since that day, we have run into children and adults that attended and they always speak about the event as a ‘good day’ for their community, that it was a chance to come together and plan something productive and tangible. The numbers that attended were significant for that community, particularly given the high number of residents living in public housing. We were very pleased with the level of interest from the community and the good will generated.
- No negative feedback was received from the event (initially

a concern within Council).

Indeed, many residents specifically came over to express their support for the development of the park.

- Council gained very specific information on what was wanted by the community, from space to ride bikes and skateboards to where the play equipment should be located. Attention was drawn to the need for safety, surveillance, maintenance and traffic issues.
- Strong partnerships with residents, community organisations and other government agencies developed over this planning (and over the course of the larger neighbourhood renewal project). Communication and familiarity is much improved between Council and Kingswood Park Public School, which has practical and community benefits. The value of this type of ongoing relationship between school, community and council should not be underestimated.
- The park continues to be well used and Parks’ staff report less vandalism. The park is used by the local community organisation to run Family Fun Days and other activities each school holiday, and other times it is a clean, safe and well-loved meeting place for children and families.
- ‘Dreaming up a Park’ was a successful pilot for Penrith City Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Program in terms of using a creative consultation process and we continue to work this way whenever possible. Working with creative practitioners like David Capra

and Ric McConaghy brings creativity and excitement to planning projects and the community really responds. Our team continues engaging with the most disadvantaged areas in Penrith on Neighbourhood Action Plans and we continue to challenge ourselves in the way we approach tasks, seeking value for Council and the best possible outcomes for the community.

- Most importantly, the day helped change the conversation between Council and community. Where previously Council’s approach might have focused on vandalism prevention in parks, our new approach opens with ‘this is your place, how would you like it to be?’

To an ordinary passer-by, the park looks like many others in the surrounding areas, but to the residents that we continue to have contact with, it is a special place that they helped create.



MORE

See the [‘Making Squeaky Wheels’](#) case study, (pp 98-105)



10



11



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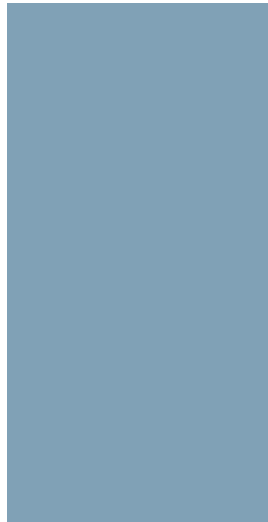
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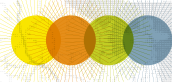
17





02

CULTURAL PLANNING



CASE STUDIES

10 New England North West NSW

11 Urana Shire

12 Coolamon Shire

13 Cootamundra Shire

14 Tamworth Regional Council

15 Clarence Valley Shire, Auburn Council & Ku-ring-gai Council

16 Penrith City Council

17 Darebin City Council

CASE STUDY 10
North West NSW



This case study describes how a request for assistance at the local level resulted in a region-wide planning resource. In 2011, the Armidale Public Art Committee approached their Regional Arts Board, Arts North West, to help develop a public art policy for Armidale Dumaresq Council. Utilising their expertise and data, Arts North West developed a policy template for use by the 13 local councils across north west NSW (and beyond?).



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Making It Your Own a regional planning template for local use

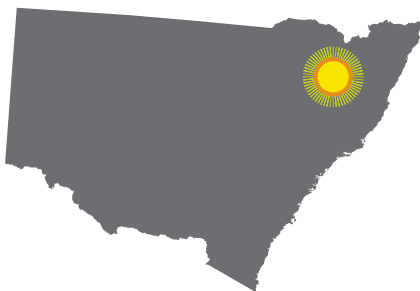
WHY

a public art policy template?

Arts North West is the Regional Arts Board for the New England North West of NSW, with over 17 years of collaborative work on public art projects in the region. This is an area with excellent grass-roots arts networks, regular events, established artists and strong cultural identity and a sense of heritage that is place-related. However, physical isolation, distance and limited cultural resources impact on cultural development, and local government faces significant challenges in planning for, creating and maintaining cultural assets

and infrastructure. A large portion of cultural activity is carried out by volunteers and access to professional development and knowledge networks is fragmented.

Many local councils here cannot afford to hire cultural development officers so oftentimes it is their partnership with Arts North West that gives them access to cultural services and expertise. While Arts North West has just 2.2 equivalent full-time staff for a large and diverse region, we are able work for many local areas at once. Furthermore, with a range of regionally operating services and projects, we serve as a central repository for arts and culture related data, which we can track, analyse and respond to in a flexible



NORTH WEST NSW

Size

98,409 km²

Remoteness

includes Remote/ Outer regional/
Inner regional

Population

181,667

Arts North West

Local Government Partners

Quirindi, Tamworth, Uralla,
Armidale, Guyra, Walcha, Glen
Innes, Tenterfield, Wyallda, Moree,
Narrabri, and Gunnedah

Industry

Agriculture, education,
manufacturing, mining

Arts North West capacity:

1 x Regional Arts Development
Officer; 1 x Communications Officer;
part-time Arts Administration Officer

fashion. The public art policy template is an example of that flexibility.

Recently, Arts North West has seen a growth in opportunities across NSW's north-west region to develop new public spaces, facilities, memorials and venues, or to redevelop existing ones. Our local government partners are aware of these opportunities but can lack the capacity to act on them. Local councils and volunteer groups don't get much time to dedicate themselves to arts matters and even less to the in-depth consideration that integrated arts policy requires if it is to be of most benefit to a community. When they do get the time, they often require outside expertise.

Arts North West have long been championing the value of incorporating public art policy into local government planning and consider it part of our role to provide assistance in the uptake of such policies. The opportunity to develop a region-wide public art policy template came in 2011, when the Armidale Public Art Committee asked me to help with the development of their policy for Armidale Dumaresq Council. The Committee's focus at that stage was on managing graffiti and donations of public art. Initially, Arts North West provided examples of public art policies and other resources to support their work. But the Committee were finding it hard to extrapolate what was relevant and what was not. There were a number of factors at play: lack of time, lack of experience in arts policy development, differences of opinion on the value of public art and a focus on specifics rather than the big picture. A lack of finances ruled out seeking help from an external consultant.

With 13 local governments in our region, Arts North West does

not have the capacity to provide individually-tailored advice on public art matters, or to sit on all the relevant committees. At the same time, the Armidale Public Art Committee were attempting to solve a problem they weren't properly equipped for: what had initially appeared to be a straightforward planning exercise only became more complex the more they examined it. I started to consider whether our experience in public art planning and our in-depth understanding of the broader region's context could be utilised to draft a public art policy that would serve specific project-based needs – such as where to put a donated piece – as well as inform public art planning into the future. Given that 12 local LGA's, including Armidale Dumaresq Council, are financially contributing members of our board, I felt that such a policy template would be a tangible outcome of this partnership.

The 'win-win' in this Armidale work for us was the transferrable planning template [Making It Your Own](#), with [Accompanying Notes](#), designed to be adapted by our local government partners to meet their local needs.

HOW to develop a
*regional planning
template*

*Public art
can excite,
motivate,
amuse and
sometimes
challenge*

Jane Kreis



**Phase 1: Intensive
research**

The complexity of the document I was attempting to draft quickly became apparent. During an intensive six month research phase I uncovered some wonderful online resources about public art and public art policy (see *Making It Your Own* Accompanying Notes and the resources listed at the end of this case study). However, I could find nothing specific for regional NSW. Very little of what I found could be successfully adapted to my stakeholders' needs, and even fewer offered these stakeholders the opportunity to consider what elements of a policy are relevant to their community, their budgets and their plans.

Part of the challenge was that, according to my research, many of our councils (although not all) considered public art policies in reactive rather than proactive ways: that is, they were more likely to consider a public art policy as a response to one particular opportunity or issue than as a holistic planning and developmental tool. For example, public art policy might be considered in relation to:

- successful infrastructure grants for community spaces or road ways that require branding, decoration and/or public art
- the donation of artworks
- a funded community cultural development project that has artwork as part of the process or an outcome and
- the commemoration of significant events through memorials.

Where this occurred, the resulting policy was often short-lived, as it was limited to one opportunity and/or not able to be integrated with other relevant policies or plans. This impacted on liveability and limited cultural expression in local communities and meant that funding and partnership opportunities were overlooked. The policy template we were developing needed to integrate more effectively with LGA planning and be coordinated with planning documents including:

- CBD master plans
- parks maintenance
- public and private developments
- festivals and community events
- cultural plans

My research helped articulate the key challenges (and purpose) of the template, which were to:

- clearly articulate the questions that can guide planning from a one-off response to a more holistic approach
- include within it a framework for public art projects to meet existing council development planning, safety regulations, maintenance schedules and signage policy requirements
- demonstrate that cultural planning is strategic and pragmatic (and not 'airy fairy')
- demonstrate that the cultural sector is aware of and works within the confines of budgets, maintenance costs, ownership, and insurances and liabilities
- demonstrate the benefits of resource sharing across our region.

My solution was to develop two documents: a policy template and accompanying explanatory guide notes.

Phase 2: Consultation and drafting

The next stage consisted of three months of consultation to draft the template. Local councils were contacted to find out who had operational public art policies. Which policies functioned well and why? Which were out-of-date or inappropriate to local needs and why? Other Regional Arts Boards and Regional Arts NSW provided copies of policies or case studies from their regions. The Arts Law Centre of Australia advised us on the legality of our undertaking, checking that there wouldn't be any copyright issues if we gave this template out freely and we also received information from Arts NSW and Australia Council for the Arts.

In addition, we drew on our existing data: an archive of 15 years of public art, arts projects, artists' and community groups' feedback, planning for new cultural centres, refurbishments and workshops, advice on contracts and arts law and more. Put together with the wealth of experience in our own staff and networks, it added up to a big resource pool.

In the end, there were eight drafts of the template before it was finalised. I sought specific feedback on style, policy, legality and useability of the document, among other issues, approaching stakeholders that included LGAs, publishers, regional arts workers and policy experts.

Phase 3: Finalising and publishing

It was hard but we did it. In October 2012, Arts North West launched *Making It Your Own Public Art Policy and Planning Template* and *Making It Your Own Accompanying Notes*.

The template and guide notes are available on our website via a [Creative Commons](#) 'Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported' for anyone to access. As a Regional Arts Board we understand and value creative intellectual property. The choice of 'Attribution' in the license sits well with both our ongoing responsibility to educate artists and organisations about Creative Commons licensing and issues of copyright, and as a means to recognise the important role Regional Arts Boards play wherever they may be located. However, Arts North West is a not-for-profit organisation and we developed this template and guide so that it could be used! The 'ShareAlike' and 'Non-Commercial' use aspects of this license were chosen for that reason.

Phase 4: Applying the template

Armidale Dumaresq Council have adapted and adopted the policy, as has Tenterfield Shire Council. Putting their new policy into practice, Tenterfield recently approved their first piece of public art with the help of a Public Art Advisory Committee, formed for this purpose. In addition, three other Councils have been in touch with Arts North West about implementation of the policy.



Phase 5: Evaluation and next steps

This project was limited by the fact that I am the only full-time staff member to service the cultural needs of the region. While this was a big undertaking for us, we achieved significant results in a relatively short amount of time: the initial meeting with the Armidale Public Art Committee was on 1 February 2012; the document was released the following October.

Many of the stakeholders who assisted with the development of the template have provided feedback in relation to it and of course the take up of the policy is a good indication in itself. Feedback has been positive and Arts North West has now been asked to consider broader cultural planning and policy template development and envisages working with our stakeholders on this in 2014.



The importance of public art

Arts North West understands the potential of public art to:

- Excite, motivate, amuse and sometimes challenge residents and visitors
- Enrich the community by celebrating and exploring the diversity and history of people and place
- Respond to the built and natural environment
- Create a distinctive sense of place
- Create a sense of ownership and pride within the community and
- Make the community a better experience for visitors and thus increase tourism.

OUT COMES

- To date, two local governments (Armidale Dumaresq and Tenterfield) have adapted the policy and three more are considering doing so.
- While the regional template is offered free of charge to our constituency, the pro bono value of this work, based on quotes for public art policy consultancies, is a \$10,000 saving for each local government area that uses the template.
- Further savings for participating councils come from being able to draw on Arts North West's cultural data to inform their local planning.
- The template is also a resource for regional cultural development in Australia and elsewhere, as it is freely available

MORE

Albury City. (2010) AlburyCity 2010–2020 Urban & Public Art Strategy

https://eservice.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/portal/Temp/TrimDocumentViewer_673711_KLYbiSWvoJ.PDF

Arts SA. Public Art: Making it happen. Commissioning guidelines for local councils, A report prepared for the Government of South Australia
<http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=279>

City of Melbourne. Public Art Program
<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutMelbourne/ArtsandEvents/PublicArt/Pages/PublicArt.aspx>

under Creative Commons. This license was chosen so that the template could be respectfully shared by others. We hope that by assisting councils to implement and integrate effective public art policy we will see more public art created, viewed and embraced in our communities. Other regional arts boards have also requested to use this template and we share it freely so that public art can grow.

- Apart from the financial savings, the outcomes for community development and wellbeing are less measurable but just as real. As is the contribution to the artistic development of our region as a whole. A viable Public Art Policy is priceless!

Glen Innes Severn Council. (2012) Public Art Policy

http://www.gisc.nsw.gov.au/index.php?option=com_jentlacontent&view=article&id=1131308:policy-register-alphabetic-list-of-all-council-policies&catid=3259:public-documents-and-policies-gisc&Itemid=3723

Public Art Online – an excellent online public art resource
<http://www.publicartonline.org.uk>



*'The Family' by Tom Deko,
Walcha Open Air Gallery, 1998*



*'The Stack' by Tony Sevil,
University of New England, 2009*



CASE STUDY 11
Urana Shire



This story on Morundah Bush Entertainment Committee's award-winning community-led renewal program tells how a small rural community turned a vision for cultural renewal into an ongoing program; succeeding through community buy-in, working with their local council, and building external partnerships to add capacity. In the mid-2000s the village of Morundah in Urana Shire needed a new idea for community development. Eighteen months later a shire-wide cultural plan was adopted *and* Opera Australia performed to more than 1000 visitors in a new community-built shed – The Paradise Palladium Theatre – that, as is typical for this resourceful community, also doubles as an agricultural pig shelter.

Making The Most Of Every Opportunity turning a cultural renewal plan into reality



AUTHOR

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Chair, Morundah Bush
Entertainment Committee;
Deputy Mayor, Urana Shire
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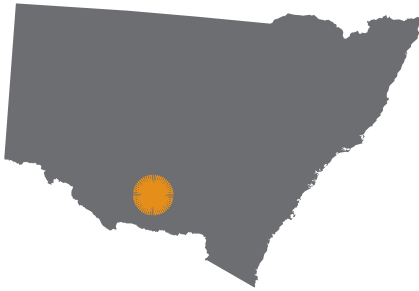
WHY

cultural renewal?

For over 30 years, the Morundah Bush Picnic Racing Committee had been running an annual bush picnic horse race meeting. By the mid-2000s, however, high insurance costs and falling attendance numbers forced the committee to rethink this event: was it any longer the best way to bring money into our village? With this change of direction a new committee was formed: the Morundah Bush Entertainment Committee (MBEC), tasked with the role of identifying a low-impact event for our community. Discussions over the bar in the

pub convinced the MBEC that culture and the arts was the way to go. If successful, not only would the right, low-impact event bring money into the village but other things, too: enjoyment, cohesion, and a broadening of the community's own understanding of what constitutes culture.

WHERE



URANA SHIRE

Size

3356 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional

Location

South West Riverina

Population

1159

1 person for every 2.9 km

Centres

Boree Creek, Morundah, Oaklands, Rand, Urana

Industry

Sheep, beef cattle, grain production

Demographics

36 per cent of residents are aged over 55. 38 per cent are directly employed in agriculture and 34 per cent do unpaid voluntary work

Council cultural capacity

Cultural development is councillor-led, with non-cultural council staff assisting when needed

HOW

Gaining community buy-in

Our motto has always been: keep it simple and keep it relevant. Staging an opera in a tiny village with no spare money, little infrastructure and no professional cultural development staff might seem neither of those things. But a canvas of residents in 2006 revealed people were willing to give it a go and to contribute what they could. In a small community, everyone wears multiple hats: mine are publican, Captain in the Rural Fire Service, Urana Shire Councillor since 2004 (and Deputy Mayor since September 2013) and Opera Coordinator/public officer of the MBEC.

MBEC was first formed in 2006, consisting of many members from the old Morundah Bush Picnic Racing Committee. Today, the committee consists of 12 core members, drawn from Morundah district (area population 76). Other casual members and volunteers from further afield may not necessarily come to meetings, but instead volunteer their time freely when needed. We also have the Morundah Town Improvement Committee (MTIC), formed in 2000. It is largely responsible for the upkeep, maintenance and construction of projects within the village. A number of people belong to both committees, and meetings are held monthly on different days of the month.

At every meeting I present an opera report and ask for input and comments. Minutes of the meetings are published in *The Morundah Gazette*, our free

*1000 hours
of volunteer
labour on the
opera*

community newsletter, as well as tabled with Urana Shire Council. The *Gazette* is published and distributed by the secretary of the MBEC and me. Informally, residents keep informed and contribute through chatting at the pub.

There are important differences between the two committees. As an [incorporated association](#), the MBEC can apply in its own right for funds, independently of Council. It is also a [Deductible Gift Recipient](#) (DGR), which means donors can claim income tax deductions for their gifts. Qualifying as a DGR involves endorsement by the Australian Taxation Office – a time-consuming process. In contrast, the MTIC is a Council S355 committee. It raises its own funds through raffles and the like, as well as receives a yearly fund from Council of \$2,000.

The MBEC set about identifying tasks. The first priority was to build a theatre and prepare the adjoining park. The land for the theatre and agricultural pig shed was donated for use by the Morundah pub. Other things, such as designing and building the stage, bitumen on the main street, wider culverts on back village roads to allow for trucks, new town signage and guttering in the main street came once we gained Council assistance.

*people were
willing to give
it a go and
to contribute
what they
could*

Dave Fahey



A skills audit of local communities was conducted. Volunteers included carpenters, bricklayers and concreters, welders, machinery operators, painters and many other trades. Bobcats, trucks and cement mixers, plus more, were donated for use.

Once preparations started in earnest for our opera event, working bees were organised as needed by word of mouth and advertising in the *Gazette*. In the lead up to our first opera performance in 2006, I estimate over 1000 hours in volunteer labour was racked up.

Over the years, MBEC has had to 'upskill' to fulfil its role. The internet has been a great source of information, as have our partners at Oz Opera and Louise Walsh at Artsupport. Peter Trengrove, our MBEC President since the 1970s, has proved himself a great supporter of new ideas and projects.

Finding the money

I applied for funds. Since that first year, as member of the MBEC, I have spent hours and hours writing applications for grant, sponsorship and foundation money at the local, state and national level. Positive responses have included: \$5,000 from Bendigo Bank; \$15,000 from the Department of State and Regional Development; \$20,000 raised from local businesses; \$18,500 from the St George Foundation; \$2,000 each from Urana Shire Council and Narrandera Shire Council; and \$15,000 from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, among others.

An invaluable resource that I rely on has been the [Easy Grants Newsletter](#), produced by the Australian Business Financing Centre. This monthly newsletter is posted out to Council and provides excellent advance notice of upcoming grants and funding programs. Council pays an annual subscription fee of approximately \$300 for this service.

Most applications can be completed online and I have learnt it is essential to read the criteria twice before commencing. Some applications can take two to three hours; others 40 to 50. The number of applications I write every year varies – in 2012, for example, I didn't apply for any. I was tired and needed to refresh my enthusiasm for the process. Right now, however, I have four applications underway. One has been successful and I am waiting to hear on the other three. I also try not to 'repeat tap'. Having said that, seeing our work first hand has prompted the St George Foundation to repeat their funding of our youth music workshop.



Tuning up at The Paradise Palladium Theatre, Morundah

Working with Council on cultural planning

A good working relationship between the community and council is essential to ensure that our efforts comply with local regulations and Council policies. Urana Shire Council provides a yearly allocation of funds to the MTIC. But their most valuable and long-term commitment has been in developing an open and listening attitude to community and grasping the importance of a formal cultural plan for the Shire.

A cultural plan for Morundah

It quickly became apparent that we needed a strategic cultural plan for Morundah. In 2006 the MBEC held discussions at a series of town improvement meetings and conducted a mail out to everyone to identify the projects that people wanted included in the plan. This included infrastructure, events and cultural assets.

The Morundah Gazette advertised the draft plan and called for comments. After this, it was placed on public display for 28 days, before being formally adopted by Urana Shire Council. The total time from start to finish was about three months.

A cultural plan for the Shire

A shire-wide strategic cultural plan was the next logical step. Council involvement was often required for funding applications and also for entry into awards, such as [Local Government NSW Art and Culture Awards](#). Perhaps more importantly it signalled a professional, open and collaborative relationship between Council and its constituents around questions of art and culture. The process of developing a cultural plan for the shire made possible a broad conversation around what we considered to be our cultural assets, what we wanted to support and what we wanted to grow, going into the future.

As Councillor, I began canvassing residents shire-wide via word of mouth and questionnaires to see what was important to them. Many thought they were not part of the ‘cultural scene’ but after some discussion, soon realised that they were.

Our local cultural assets included not just the obvious opera and art shows, but sporting activities, too, such as football, netball, cricket and other events such as the Morundah carp-a-thon, the vintage machinery rally and tractor pull. We also included natural features such as the Urana Aquatic Centre, Colombo Creek and Yanko Creek.

I wrote the plan using the local Morundah plan as a template. I also searched the internet and looked at what other councils were doing, picking out what seemed relevant to Urana Shire. Drafting the plan took about 60 hours.

The draft shire plan was put on display and comments were received. The final plan was

As our activities have grown and expanded, so too has the engagement between community and Council

Dave Fahey



adopted by resolution of the Council in 2007. Integrating the cultural plan into Council's operational and financial plans was a real achievement for Urana Shire Council. Furthermore, the process opened up the scope of projects under consideration with all villages in the shire. Other communities have seen what we have achieved and it has got them thinking, too.

As of late 2013, as part of the Shire's Integrated Planning and Reporting process, we now have a schedule to properly and thoroughly examine the strategic cultural plan. I hope that it will be brought up to date and kept relevant to the changes within our community and identify new partners, for both funding and advice. Many councillors, who once may not have been aware of the number of potential partners, now see the benefit of a strategic plan and are supportive of the process.

A working relationship


As our activities have grown and expanded, so too has the engagement between community and Council. There are roles and responsibilities for both sides. Council have the sometimes difficult task of finding ways to make our plans comply with changing rules and regulations. I can see how it is easy for councils to become risk averse, to put up barriers, rather than adopt an attitude of 'how do we work around this problem to get where the community wants to be?' It's important to remain open and flexible. Over the years, Urana Shire Council has done just this.

On the community side, we have had to demonstrate results and capacity. Winning awards and gaining outside grants help enormously in this regard. We have had to keep Council informed at every stage in a professional, competent manner. We have provided Council with numerous reports, including business plans, feasibility studies, evaluation reports, and risk assessments.

We have appointed one person to be the chief point of contact with Council, which has been myself. But, if I were not a Councillor, the same role could have been filled by a community member of the MBEC. We do not approach Council for more money than the MBEC can match (or better), or for things not identified in the strategic plan.

Apart from the cultural plans, a mutual result from working productively with Council has been the huge morale boost experienced by both community and Council. Successfully resolving legislative requirements and other issues has positively raised Council's profile in ways that simple dollar injections can't do.

Another major outcome has been the development of a plan to build a permanent large-scale, multi-purpose community space, in place of the existing theatre building. These plans are being developed with full Council support and will house not only the opera but also an indoor sports centre, a museum space and be a community centre for things such as market days and annual balls. We are in the process of raising \$200,000 to achieve this end goal.



75 kids from
a 200km
radius at the
workshop

Building external networks and partnerships

Relationships that were first established in 2006 have continued to grow and strengthen over the years. After the first sell-out opera event, I became Opera Coordinator for the MBEC as the one key liaison person to deal with all outside organisations, and I have established good working relationships with various production companies and individuals.

These are win-win relationships and, so, many have lasted years. Here are just some examples:

- I first contacted Anne Frankenberg, then the Manager for Opera Australia’s touring arm, Oz Opera, in 2006. Since then, Anne has been employed by the MBEC to act as a consultant to assist with an Arts NSW grant application and the development of a marketing strategy. In 2010, she assisted us with producing ‘A Gala Night at the Opera’, our own production.
- We have established a very strong relationship with Victorian Opera. One significant outcome of this partnership has been the establishment of a bi-annual children’s music workshop. Our first three-day educational music workshop

was held in 2009, involving 75 kids from a 200 kilometre local radius. Led by Victorian Opera’s Music Director, Richard Gill, and Jane Millet, their Operations Manager, the workshop culminated in the staging of *Brundibah*. It was free for all the children and cost the MBEC about \$30,000. This was a major event to offer. Our next is planned for 2014 and will be run concurrently with our annual opera. About 34 children will be involved: 24 performing in the opera and 10 will have an opportunity to audition for a scholarship with Opera Australia.

- Many of the technical staff have returned two or three times to Morundah, either with opera companies or to help out with our own productions. These enduring relationships have been invaluable, allowing us to seek out advice and assistance from trusted sources. It is important to note that these are professional relationships and have been respected as such. Upon occasion we have engaged individuals in a paid capacity to assist with grant applications and to provide technical expertise.
- In 2008, supported by Urana Shire, I attended a NSW Community Development Network Conference in Sydney.

This led to a partnership with Louise Walsh at Artsupport Australia (now called [Creative Partnerships Australia](#)) which aims to grow cultural philanthropy. This relationship has helped us find over \$25,000 in support so far, as well as introductions to supportive institutions who may wish to donate to our cause. As a result of this, we applied for DGR status.

- Attending the Local Government and Shires Association Cultural Awards in 2008 provided me with valuable information about the worth of a cultural plan for our Shire. This also opened up networks with like-minded staff from other councils.

The pride, morale and sense of stewardship that exists in our community is undeniable

Dave Fahey



The value of formalising our plans

- The Urana Shire Council Cultural Plan 2009–2014 was our first formal attempt to articulate a cultural vision with goals and objectives in a document focussed specifically on Urana Shire’s cultural life. It is embedded within Council’s other planning processes, and is in line with Council’s management plan and community wants and needs. It is a significant achievement.
- Urana Shire Council is now represented on the local regional arts board, Eastern Riverina Arts.
- The Shire has won awards at local and State level, including winning the People’s Award at the Local Government and Shires Association Cultural Awards in 2008 and 2009. In 2007 Morundah won the Country Energy Bush Spirit Award in NSW Tidy Towns.
- Adopting the plan has allowed for more formalised and coordinated activities, resulting in many notable outcomes: new public art in Morundah’s sculpture park; an annual youth photography competition; a bi-annual children’s educational music workshop; youth music scholarships; the enhancement of youth and seniors week activities; and the identification of Aboriginal art sites, among other things. We also have a war memorial and annual Anzac Day service, attended by around 100 people.

- The Morundah sculpture park, with commissioned works by Andrew Whitehead and local artist Alan Hocking, attracts at least 30 visitors most days simply through word of mouth. It also serves as a pre-entertainment area and foyer when the opera is on.
- The pride, morale and sense of stewardship that exists in our community is undeniable, and the whole community is increasingly engaged.
- Last, but certainly not least, is that the profit from the opera and other events stays in the shire, and is spent in the shire.



Morundah Opera
<http://www.morundahopera.com.au/>



Photo: Jeff Busby

Victorian Opera performs Mozart's Così fan tutte in 2007, in its inaugural regional tour



CASE STUDY 12
Coolamon Shire



In 1996 Coolamon Shire Council bought an iconic, but languishing, general store in the centre of town to ensure the site's preservation. 17 years on, restored and reinvented, the Up-to-Date Store Cultural Precinct was launched. But this case study isn't about infrastructure development *per se*, it's a tale of council leading community involvement in cultural planning and asset management.



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Keeping Up-to-Date renewing a heritage site as a new community asset

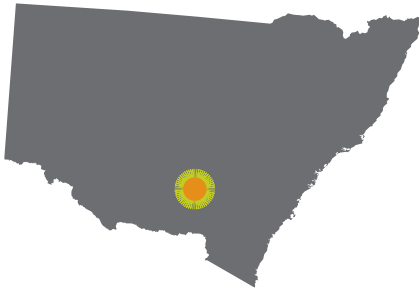
WHY

Built in 1909 – and, in its heyday, selling anything from a plough to a piano – the Up-to-Date Store closed in 1932 and the site was subsequently used for storage and various retail activities. When Coolamon Council bought the Up-to-Date Store in 1996, it was to ensure the preservation of this heritage building and focal point of the street. But what to do with it? As a small council, the task of planning how to reuse the space became the responsibility of senior management; in particular, myself, as the Executive Manager, Planning and Environmental Services. Crucially,

this placed the building squarely into Council affairs, and ensured considered thinking about how to develop the space as a valuable community asset. Some key points have led to the great outcomes we have today:

- Council decided early on that the space needed to be functional, multi-purpose and, ultimately, pay its own way.
- Council recognised that we needed to take a leadership role and develop a vision for the long-term viability of the building, in consultation with experts and community.

WHERE



COOLAMON SHIRE

Size

2,500 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional/ Inner regional

Location

Riverina, south west slopes

Population

4,099

1.6 people per km²

Centres

Ardlethan, Coolamon, Ganmain, and villages Beckom, Matong and Marrar

Industry

Grain farming, and sheep and beef cattle grazing

Demographics

Median age 43 years (six years more than the national average)

Council cultural capacity

cultural duties are included in the responsibilities of the Executive Manager, Planning and Environmental Services

- Council was prepared to spend money to start the process of adaptive reuse and to build community buy-in.
- Council was flexible in considering what the most appropriate use would be to optimise the building and its heritage value to the community.

HOW

The store, though unused for nearly 70 years, was completely intact inside, and still featured original fittings and one-of-a-kind historical artefacts such as the Lamson Cash Railway system – in its day, a cutting edge point-of-sale system. The complexity of the building, its potential and the keen interest shown in it by the community, led Council to consult with various stakeholders, including government departments, community and interest groups. Here’s an outline of the staged planning and development steps we took.

Council commitment:

- With the full support of Council, I was tasked with managing the building and finding the most appropriate use for it.
- Council employed a cultural heritage and development officer on a part time basis to work out of the store and give it a shopfront. This position was tasked with finding funding opportunities and significantly overlapped with other operations within Council. At the completion of their employment, the position was discontinued and more responsibility taken

10 years of planning and development

on by the community-based management committee.

- Other than the original purchase, only limited Council money was allocated to the building. Funds were sourced mainly through grant applications, which included:
 - Museums Projects Application: Interpretation and Exhibition, 2005
 - Ministry for the Arts Capital Infrastructure Application, 2005
 - Library Development Grant Application, 2006–2007
 - Application to NSW Heritage Grant Program, 2007
- The real financial – and thus council commitment – came with the decision to build the new library on the site, thereby ensuring that the precinct was now an item line in the budget.
- Insurance, electricity and operational costs were generally borne by Council.

*Council
needed to take
a leadership
role and
develop a
vision for
long-term
viability*

Tony Donoghue



***Working with the
community:***

From the outset, we involved the community. A community-based Management Committee was set up with the responsibility and a budget for the management of the building's immediate needs.

The Committee:

- Has ten members from Council and the community, and meets monthly
- As a [Section 355](#) committee, members hold a legal position and are under the direct control of Council
- Meeting minutes are sent to Council and endorsed in the regular Council Meeting by way of resolution
- All of their financial requirements are administered and recorded by Council in a legal sense
- At the same time, the Committee has some freedom to manage their own affairs and budgets, which gave them ownership of the project
- Their budget does not cover expenses such as water and rates; these are paid for by Council as the owner of the building

Initial activities concentrated on fundraising through raffles, catering for functions and organising working bees to repair the building and whitewash the walls. Soon, however, the Committee expanded their efforts to build up an income stream. For example, they took out a loan to construct a kitchen, which was then leased out to the coffee shop owners, producing an income.

As the Council's Executive Planning Officer, I remained in close contact with the Committee and ensured that what was proposed met with the overall

strategic plan. I also administered all funding and building work.

Over time, the Committee's responsibilities have grown, and now include management of the entire precinct. A core group deals with bookings and daily operations of the cultural precinct and a volunteer body, known as the Friends of the Up-to-Date Store, staff the building and act as tour guides and helping hands.

About 16 residents comprise the volunteer group, mostly retirees but also some members of the Rotary Club. They contribute approximately four to five hours per week, on a roster system, and most have been involved for a number of years. They play a crucial role in the success of the precinct, often being the first point of contact for locals and visitors alike.

The Committee is to be congratulated on their commitment to the project. The original core management group spent many years deeply involved in the Store and its outcomes. A recent shift in the Committee's role, from focusing on restoration to one of management, has seen a changeover in personnel. We have seen some great community champions take the reins at the Up-To-Date Store including:

- Marcia Harding, who was the previous Chair, put in place numerous projects that are now coming to fruition
- Councillor David McCann has now taken on the role of organising and directing the volunteer group and has continued the good work of those before him

Bringing in expertise:

Over the course of the ten-plus years, we commissioned experts to advise how to best manage the building in light of its heritage and cultural potential. This series of plans and reports gave Council the time and means to seek achievable outcomes and gave substance to funding applications. They included:

- Photographical documentation
- Conservation Management Plan, Michael Pearson, Duncan Marshall, Linda Young, 1999
- Cultural and Economic Development Plan, Australia Street Company, 2001
- Assessment of the Use of Space and Installation of Facilities, Stedinger Associates, 2002
- Interpretation Plan, Kylie Winkworth, 2002
- Design Concepts, Dinah Fisher, 2003
- Advice regarding the Library, Stedinger Associates, 2005
- Statement of Heritage Impact, Margaret Desgrand, 2005
- Heritage Report, David Scobie, 2005
- Statement of Environmental Effects, Ian Brewster (Brewster Hjorth), 2005
- Scope of Works Mavis Furner Collection, Dinah Fisher, 2004
- Coolamon Up-To-Date Store Cultural Precinct: Strategic Plan 2012–2015
- Report of Heritage Impact for Refurbishment Works
- Coolamon Library 2007–2008
- Up-To-Date Store Heritage Works (NSW Heritage), 2008–2009
- Library Media/Conference Development, 2010–2011
- Garth Jones/Community Building Partnerships, 2010–2011
- Godde Collection, 2011–2012
- Garth Jones ‘Bring It To Life’, 2012

Reflecting on what worked

Looking back over this process, a key factor contributing to our success was the ability to be flexible: demonstrated both by Council and the community-based Management Committee. Rather than jump in, Council early on took the decision to keep an open mind about the reuse – specifically, we decided not to merely fill the heritage store with goods and objects of a bygone era. This would have fixed the Store as a ‘static’ space, worth visiting once only, maybe twice.

Instead, we allowed ourselves time. Deliberately keeping the space empty, gave us the opportunity to offer a whole range of cultural activities and events – from a string quartet to amateur theatre productions to trial how the space would be used.

Early on the Management Committee made a crucial decision when they decided to forego fundraising and take on a more strategic role in the precinct’s development. By leasing the Store’s kitchen to a coffee shop, they gave up access to the kitchen – which had brought them approximately \$3000 per year through fundraising dinners – but in return gained a regular revenue stream – of approximately \$5000 per year – and, more importantly, freed them up to pursue, with Council, an asset management role.

The coffee shop proved to be the tipping point for the next stage in the development of the Up-to-Date Store Cultural Precinct, because it – along with the library – brought in a whole new section of our community and with them came ideas, enthusiasm and buy-in.

We were off.

OUT
COMES

- Together with our community, Coolamon Council has developed a cultural precinct that incorporates a library, coffee shop, three museums and facilities for stage and convention-style use.
- Retaining open space within the facility has given us great flexibility and versatility. The space is now used by the community for a variety of projects, including: Coolamon Up-to-Date Art Exhibition; photo competition; quilt exhibitions; auctions; wedding receptions; tai-chi; doll shows; workshops; Storytime; Rotary markets; Antique Bottle Fair; fundraisers; and heritage tours.
- Some of the above community uses do not raise an income but others are starting to, which adds to the income from the coffee shop lease. It is Council's aim to have the precinct revenue-neutral into the future.
- Money that was spent early on by Council has been repaid by obtaining grants that met with the overall goal in our strategic plan.
- High levels of attendance at events and programs show the very broad support the community has for the precinct. Just two examples are:
 - Women's International Day was celebrated in March 2012 at the Store, with over 100 women attending. This was a first for the Council and is now an annual event;
 - The School Holiday Program is loved by children and growing. 'Crocodile Encounters' in the library last September attracted 45 children, while 35 children had great fun participating in 'Science Twist'.
- Other councils have approached us for advice.

*Rather than
jump in
we allowed
ourselves
time to trial
how the space
would be used*

Tony Donoghue



MORE

Up-to-Date Store Cultural Precinct

<http://www.coolamonshire.com.au/up-to-date-store-cultural-precinct.aspx>



The Up-to-Date Store: as it was originally, and refurbished and renewed, at its centenary in 2009





The previous case study on Coolamon was about council leadership and community buy-in, here the story is reversed and focuses on successful cultural planning run by the community for the community with the support of Council. Here's how the volunteer-led Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre Committee, with the full support of Cootamundra Shire Council, transformed a once-derelict factory into a cultural hub – giving a once sports-obsessed town a vibrant multi-arts scene.

A Playing Field For Arts

community-led cultural planning and council support as a winning combination



AUTHOR

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WHY

There used to be very little investment in the arts in Cootamundra, while a lot had gone into sport and sports infrastructure. Even with cultural infrastructure, the emphasis was on sport! There's the Bradman Birthplace Museum – as cricketing great Don Bradman was born in Cootamundra – and the Captains Walk public art in Jubilee Park with 42 bronze sculptures of Australian Test Cricket Captains.

The idea for an Arts Centre came from when I was directing plays and productions for the local, 65

year old Cootamundra Amateur Dramatic Arts Society (CADAS). CADAS wanted a purpose built theatre – instead of the cumbersome and barn-like town hall stage they were then using. We believed that Cootamundra was full of talented people in all mediums of art and wanted to encourage the local community to explore their talents.

With the demise of a business using an old factory site on the Olympic Way, a main entry to town, the historic building was in danger of being demolished. The vision in early 2003 was to kill two birds with one stone. Pool all the arts in one place and allow them to bounce off each other while at the same time save this beautiful

WHERE



COOTAMUNDRA SHIRE

Size

1524 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional / Inner regional

Location

Riverina, South West Slopes NSW

Population

7,334

5.05 people per km²

Centres

Cootamundra and villages of Stockinbingal and Wallendbeen

Demographics

ageing population

Council cultural capacity

Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre Committee is a volunteer Section 355 Committee of Cootamundra Shire Council

historic building complex.

At the time, Cootamundra was stagnating in terms of economic development. There were few tourism assets and the population was ageing. People choose to live in rural communities not just because of jobs, but also for the lifestyle and a new art centre would also contribute to Cootamundra becoming a more attractive location for new residents.

In 2005 the first stage of the project, visual arts studios, was completed, and in 2011 The Tin Shed Theatre opened - and there's more to come. My husband, Leigh Scott, and I were key drivers of the project with the Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre Committee. But our vision would not have come to fruition if it were not for the joint efforts of the community: from Cootamundra Shire Council, to local tradespeople, to hundreds of volunteers, to the artists and performers from the region.

HOW

Starting up with the right team

In 2003 Leigh and I gathered a group of local people together with a plan to turn a disused factory in a neglected end of town into a multi-arts centre and cultural precinct. None of us had a professional background in arts management but the makeup of the group ranged from professional business people with financial and legal skills, to multi-skilled farmers, tradespeople and health professionals. My own professional background was in sport but I also had a

sound grounding in the arts having attended a school that promoted the importance of both art and sport.

But the critical skills within the group were business and human resources management. For example, Leigh Scott had over 40 years experience as the financial controller of multi-million dollar business while at the same time he had been manager of a workforce on our rural property and core business. When he retired he was able to transfer those skills as a volunteer on this project and together we developed the business plan for the project with assistance from the Council's then-Development Officer.

The group also had two passionate Shire Councillors on side who were looking for a new innovative project to set Cootamundra on a new path of economic development, Councillors Lyn Magee and Bruce Ward.

In addition, the design of the now finished sections of the Arts Centre were achieved through consultation with willing experts who gave time and knowledge to us. Architects, acoustical experts and builders, amongst others, generously gave their time – as each person could see this was being accomplished by a group of people who also were giving freely to their community. This is one of the great rewards of volunteering on a project such as this. Generosity of expertise, ability and hard labour causes further generosity of knowledge and expertise.

Also, as a group, we had the ability to get around any roadblock with subtle changes of direction. **The team was all important.**

The building itself began life as the first farm machinery agency outside metropolitan Sydney and through the years also was used as a blacksmith's shop, and a Shepherd

*Now this is
the 'buzzing'
end of town
and a number
of new
businesses
have set up*

Isabel Scott



Woolskin's factory, where the first ugg boot was manufactured in Australia. But, by the time we were looking at the building for rescue and restoration, the site was derelict and only providing housing for rats and mice.

After developing a business plan our loosely knit group of community arts enthusiasts approached Cootamundra Shire Council requesting that they purchase the building for the purpose of an Arts Centre at a cost of \$140,000; which they did in 2004. They also provided an additional \$60,000 for a clean up of the site, which used hundreds of volunteer hours and the removal of five semi-trailer loads of rubbish.

Volunteer management committee

A Section 355 Committee of Council was formed at this point and became known as The Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre Committee (CCACC). The committee was charged by Council with the planning, design, construction, programming and administration of the complex. This included how the project was to be funded.

This was a huge leap of faith by the Council in community volunteers and we were given a great deal of autonomy on the strategic direction and operations for the Centre.

In 2003 the Committee's Vision was to:

- Provide the infrastructure for the development of art and culture to strengthen, broaden, diversify and challenge artistic creativity
- Work with ARTS NSW, Regional Arts NSW, Eastern Riverina Arts, Federal Arts Bodies and private arts promoters to build arts and cultural initiatives in a rural setting

- Create a healthy balanced society with true choice for recreational activity

Our current 2013 Mission Statement is to: 'Promote the arts as an alternative recreational activity for the Cootamundra Community and Region by:

- Promoting and fostering artistic performance and production
- Promoting and delivering educational programs for developing skills and theatre production support
- Seeking unique, motivational, educational productions and events which promote excellent diverse, artistic performance

The CCACC Committee organises regular fundraising activities throughout the year and meets on the second Thursday of each month.

The committee is the decision making body and it is all volunteer-run. Anyone can be a member of the Committee. (We could have 300 members if they wanted to join, but we don't! *Thankfully!*) The pride of most members is that they have been there right from the very beginning. There have been about 10 or 12 that were here month in month out, and a smaller number who worked daily on the building site. There's 8000 hours of recorded volunteer labour on developing the site. That doesn't include maintenance, operations and administration – that sort of thing isn't recorded. We've calculated the Centre could sustain work for three paid staff members.



Further Council buy-in

In 2005 the Shire Council granted that the premises be used as a centre 'for the furtherance of the arts in Cootamundra'. Even at this stage, it was still a relatively low risk venture for Council as, if the arts centre failed, they could sell the now extensively improved site. But there was an ENORMOUS amount of trust given to the Committee by Council.

I think that one of the reasons why Council was so supportive is the approach we took. If we'd been asking Council for a new sporting field, or anything to do with sport, it would likely have been approved – the trick here was pitching this as the 'artists' playing field'. 'Not everyone wants to be physical about their recreation,' we said. 'So what else is there that people really need to do?'

Cootamundra has an ageing population and most community

activity available was competitive sport. There needed to be different activity on offer and some in Council saw this. We got enough support in the first instance but there was activity against the idea and certainly there were some rescinded motions. Over the past ten years there's been a lot of playing politics but throughout we've been passionate and honest – asking for support and being very clear about what we are going to do, we haven't been trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes.

And Council has received broader recognition for their support. In 2006 Council won a NSW Local Government and Shires Association Cultural Award for Capital Infrastructure for the visual arts infrastructure development. Then in 2008 they won this same award again for the Exhibition Stage of the development. The Arts Centre has also won two Volunteers NSW awards.

Grants and funding

Alongside the ongoing support from Cootamundra Shire Council during the eight years of development (so far!), the Arts Centre and has received substantial state and federal financial support, including:

- Arts NSW
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Community Building Partnerships
- Rural Lands Halls for Renewal,
- Regional Development Australia
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal/ Riverina First

The total value of funding from these sources has amounted to over three quarters of a million dollars – drip feed into the project over nine years. The flow on effect of that investment for our community is multiplied by the hundreds and the actual investment was stretched through clever management of funds – much like the 'loaves and fishes'. All of these grants were made on a dollar for dollar fundraising basis. The CCACC Project Manager (me), Treasurer and Works Manager wrote all the applications which were auspiced by Council who managed the funds and submitted the funding reports compiled by CCACC. The CCACC Committee determined the use of the funds.

Local Private funding has also played a part through the Cootamundra Shire Community Arts Trust that was established. Also, patrons large and small have helped the Arts Centre on its way, from local tradespeople discounting their work, to local businesses selling tickets for events, to the volunteer labour workforce.

Our achievements challenge a restricted view of what a small town can achieve

Isabel Scott



Opening the new Centre

The first section of the Centre opened in 2005 and further sections have subsequently been completed, including a purpose built drama theatre, The Tin Shed Theatre: a new home for the Cootamundra Amateur Dramatic Arts Society. This stage of the development was opened by Arts NSW's Mary Darwell in 2011. Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre now offers courses, workshops, performances, seminars and activities across many art forms: from music, dance and theatre to sculpture, painting, pottery and stained glass. The centre aims to cater for all age groups and be a positive and creative environment for all – an artist's playing field, indeed!

Corporate Team days can also use the Centre's Theatre and Exhibition spaces. The Committee caters for these events from our semi-commercial catering facility. We can also provide professional meeting space with catering attached to the program.

A partnered staff solution

As volunteers we all worked incredibly hard to get the facility renovated and running to the point it is at. It got to the stage where there was so much happening that the volunteers were stretched to keep up and there was still potential for more to happen.

The Committee had been trying to secure funding for an arts coordinator to take the facility to that next step and Council had also been putting money aside in case funding applications were successful.

Sick of waiting, this year we came up with our own solution. In June 2013, the Council relocated the

Visitor Information Centre to the Arts Centre. The move provided Council with an independent Visitor Information Centre with local information and unbiased advice, and a 'stop, revive, survive' service that gets visitors out of their vehicles, experiencing local arts and exploring the town. The Centre gets two Customer Service Officers allowing our doors to be open daily. They operate the box office and provide central information for all cultural and community events in the Shire. In return, our volunteers 'staff' the Visitor Information Centre on Sunday.

We now aspire to having a Cultural Development Officer on Shire who is charged with tourism and event development for the whole Shire. This will assist with working the Arts Centre Cootamundra to its full potential while at the same time bring economic advantages and further self-funded development to this area.

A new structure

In 2013 the Arts Centre Project moved from a construction project to an arts and events program and a new governance structure was put in place to support this new phase. All policy and procedures were documented for running the Centre and an Incorporated Association, Cootamundra Creative Arts Inc, was set to run operations. The CCACC S355 Committee of Council still owns and looks after the maintenance of the building and provides insurance coverage. And the partnership will continue into the future as a true statement of Community-driven, Council-supported economic development.



Town renewal

There used to be a derelict site and eyesore on one of the major corners through Cootamundra: on the Olympic Way, where everyone travels through. Now there's a colourful and vibrant arts centre.

Economic development

- Our policy for the centre is that all materials are bought locally where we can: this included the design and build of the overhead gantry for the theatre lights by a local contractor. We also creatively reused local assets: the heating/cooling system, for example, came out of the post office, when it was replaced.
- The construction phase of the arts centre generated seven new jobs, and we are currently looking to fund an ongoing full-time arts coordinator role.
- A number of businesses are doing better in this sector of town due to the Arts Centre Development. The Coffee Shop and Bed and Breakfast opposite struggled until we moved in. Now this is the 'buzzing' end of town and a number of new businesses have set up.
- A high quality cultural venue and the activity it generates will attract families and boost population growth, which in turn will expand local service industries and business outlets and boost the economy.

Professional arts development

The Centre:

- Provides a venue and full facilities for local and visiting performing artists
- Offers artists-in-residence programs
- Assists local artists with professional development opportunities. For example, our contract with Critical Stages brings the best of theatre and theatre groups to stage performances and run workshops. And our visual arts program brings top arts teachers to the area for arts technique development workshops
- Has introduced new voices to Australian culture—including new visual artists, musicians and playwrights, through, for example, the Short+Sweet Festival

Community development

The Centre:

- Is a venue for combined schools productions
- Has developed needed creative programs for young people and people with a disability
- Its lively performance, exhibition, screening and workshop program has entertained, surprised and enriched the lives of all local residents

The complex was bought by Council in 2003 for \$140,000. In 2011 it was valued at \$2.2million. Cootamundra Shire Council's trust in its volunteer community based project was indeed worthwhile.

Four tips for trying this at home

- ① **Not everyone can see where you're going. They don't recognise what you're doing is actually possible. Proving ourselves to Council itself was also difficult – but they did give us a blank page to work with. They said, 'Do what you can with it, let's see if it works.' And it has worked.**
- ② **When asking 'What is our next step?' – we frame it as 'What else can we do that is positive and generating economic development for Cootamundra Shire?'**
- ③ **We've taken a sustainable approach that has income coming in from commercial areas associated with the complex.**
- ④ **Our achievements challenge a restricted view of what a small town can achieve in supporting a broad range of local creative practice. Just have the passion to carry on. Don't be afraid to ask for help.**



Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre
<http://www.theartscentrecootamundra.org.au>

Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre: A Brief History film
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyZp0IHLLZQ>

From Tin Shed to Theatre film
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVmSUy7A46A>

CASE STUDY 14
Tamworth Regional
Council



AUTHORS

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Cultural planning is about continuity in change management for the long term. In this case study, each plan becomes a staged iteration for long term cultural development – where the new plan responds to the previous plan, external changes and internal review, and defines the next goal. Given time the plans will benchmark cultural development by allowing measurement of the distance travelled. Tamworth Regional Council's decade-long commitment to the value of cultural planning has produced two cultural plans as blueprints for change and they are now making a start on a third.

Giving Patience A Structure the cultural planning document working for the long view

WHY

is a cultural plan valuable?

(After all, there are no requirements to produce a cultural plan in NSW.)

- Cultural planning is about continuity in change management. It takes a long time for people to buy in, resources to be found and action to happen. In the meantime, the cultural plan is the blueprint for change: it defines the goals and gives patience a structure.
- The planning process develops a shared understanding of the plan with the community.
- A planning process collects evidence that can be reused in or influence other areas of Council planning.
- The plan is not rigid, but it helps guide resourcing in order to work towards its implementation. And the document itself can sometimes be used as a 'shield' against fleeting enthusiasm for a 'great new idea' that is non-strategic or not sustainable.
- A key focus of Tamworth Regional Council's cultural planning, particularly with the current Regional Cultural Plan, has been on genuine community engagement. Consultation undertaken for the drafting of the

WHERE



TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL

Size

9,893 km²

Remoteness

Outer regional/ Inner regional

Location

New England Region of NSW

Population

58,922

Localities

City of Tamworth and towns of Barraba, Kootingal, Manilla and Nundle

Industry

Sheep and cattle grazing, lucerne and wheat growing, and poultry farming. Tamworth is well known for its annual Country Music Festival

Council cultural capacity

last year's operational expenditure for cultural institutions and cultural development was around \$3.5million

plan and adoption of strategies is used to guide Cultural Development Priorities within the Integrated Planning and Reporting process, which itself is based on consultation.

- The planning document is the benchmark for the next planning phase, which will include internal reflection – what worked in our previous planning framework? where to next? – and respond to external and internal changes: for example, the framework for our next cultural plan will respond to the 2010 introduction of the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPR) and restructuring in Tamworth Regional Council.
- A key success of the second, Regional Plan was the inclusion of a Cultural Audit. In the context of long term planning, such a tool is invaluable to track change and development.

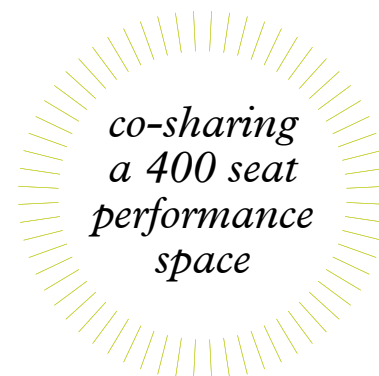
HOW

10 years of cultural planning, Tamworth style

First iteration: Tamworth City Council Cultural Plan 2003-2005

In 2002 the (then) City of Tamworth began a process to develop their first cultural plan. The focus was on infrastructure in the city, with planning for a new library, art gallery, a performance space and a public art program.

This coincided with various other social planning and community engagement initiatives – outside of the cultural forum – that evidenced the need for regional growth and competitiveness of Tamworth as a regional centre and development in the areas of education, cultural



and sporting services, therefore the value of high quality 'cultural spaces and services' became a priority.

Actions taken to inform the plan included consultations with arts and cultural organisations and a comprehensive survey of wider community members.

The Plan recommended the development of support structures for arts and cultural groups in the areas of training and marketing, as well as some key infrastructure projects. On adoption there was immediate implementation of some recommendations, including the formation of a Cultural Advisory Committee to Council which was disbanded through the course of the subsequent amalgamation but has recently restarted.

Outcomes

- 2005: the new library and art gallery were completed
- 2008: a 400 seat performing arts space, Capitol Theatre – innovatively, as a co-shared space with a cinema chain
- 2008: a public art policy and implementation plan was adopted
- 2008: money put aside for the next cultural plan
- Completion of a number of identified master plans, feasibility studies and policy reviews which related to arts and cultural projects

*In the context
of long-term
planning, a
Cultural Audit
is invaluable
to track
change and
development*

Meg Larkin, Bruce Mercer
& Petria Jukes



***Second iteration:
Tamworth Regional
Council Cultural Plan
2010-2015***

Background

In March 2004, after Tamworth City Council adopted their first cultural plan, the Council and nearby local governments areas of Barraba, Manilla, Nundle and Parry Shire were amalgamated into Tamworth Regional Council.

Meg Larkin was employed in 2009 as consultant for a regional cultural plan. The focus of this post-amalgamation plan would not be on city infrastructure but on cultural development throughout the Tamworth region, including the smaller communities. This second cultural planning process aimed to both build ‘buy-in’ and make visible local identity and activity outside Tamworth City, and to introduce strategic thinking and collaborative thinking – and reduce ‘isolated thinking’ – in those smaller communities; allowing a regional approach to some development priorities.

Whilst the plan acknowledged individual communities’ cultural assets and aspirations, it took a region-wide approach to ‘cultural development support’ by Council – in the provision of training, information sharing, marketing and volunteer support. The recognition and encouragement of our ‘volunteer-led cultural life’ was paramount.

Planning process

The first step was a desktop literature review for best practice in NSW, nationally and internationally. (Some of these resources are listed below and, while they are older publications – as there a very few recent resources for local government on cultural planning – they are still useful.) Alongside this was an evaluation of the previous cultural planning processes and a review of achievements of 2003 Cultural Plan, as well as the identification of recommendations not implemented or achieved.

The extensive consultation and engagement across the region took place, both with key cultural organisations – including Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music, Tamworth Regional Gallery, the Musical Society and local historical societies – and with the newly-formed Community Development Committees in each town. This revealed the wealth and diversity of cultural activity driven by volunteers in each community in the region.

The consultation did not focus on individual business or strategic planning of arts and cultural organisations, where such planning existed. The main aim of consultation was to ascertain how council could support a wider vision beyond that of operational matters.

Cultural Audit

A full Cultural Audit was undertaken as a key tool for plan drafting and to use as a baseline for future planning. The Audit mapped:

- arts and cultural venues
- education and training opportunities
- festivals and events
- volunteer-run cultural groups and organisations

The Audit also listed all of the services to the arts and cultural sector currently provided by the Council. These included a significant number of operations such as the Regional Gallery and libraries, youth program, venues, the Public Art policy and support for volunteer-led organisations.

It also included a comprehensive report on each of the consultations held in the various towns and with the major cultural organisations.

Cultural Industries, in relation to economic development and tourism, were considered as well, as was the social value of lifelong learning and education for arts and culture.

To provide a benchmark for future planning and to measure development, a description of the services currently provided by arts and cultural institutions was included.

Drafting and adoption

Prior to adoption of the Cultural Plan a workshop was held with Councillors, who were able to view the recommendations in the plan and discuss them individually, if they felt necessary. They also discussed the recommendations in the Cultural Plan in the context of Council's broader directions and other planning documents. A number of Councillors had also attended local consultations in the smaller towns and the consultation with arts and cultural groups in Tamworth and were familiar with the issues being considered.

In drafting the plan, the document structure worked within the parameters/ framework of existing Management Plan and fitted the Council's organisational structure.

Tamworth Regional Council Cultural Plan 2010-2015 was adopted by Council in October 2010. The final plan

- Focused on region-wide needs for cultural development through activity – not infrastructure. It included recommendations for integrated actions included shared training and development opportunities – for example, significance assessment and collection management for museums and scopes for a regional solution to collection storage.
- Was written as an aspirational document, with a full awareness that there was no funding committed to the plan at the time of its adoption. For example, the role for a Cultural Development Officer based in council was articulated in the plan, but there was, at that time, no funding available for this new role.

- Included an Action Plan with a series of actions that Council could usefully undertake to advocate for and/or support in developing the cultural life of the Tamworth region.

Outcomes

- The Cultural Audit made visible the (surprising!) extent and diversity of volunteer-led cultural organisations across the region – almost 110 groups generating arts and cultural activity – highlighting the value of volunteers and the need to support their work.
- 2012: money from Council savings was used to employ a Cultural Development Officer. Because that staff role had been articulated in the plan, and was championed internally by Bruce Mercer, Manager Community and Cultural Services, it became possible.
- 2013: a new Cultural Advisory Committee is being formed from arts leadership in the region to provide strategic advice and advance cultural networking in the region.
- The Cultural Development actions continue to gain momentum, for example, with current movement around increased support and capacity building for volunteer-led museums of our region.

Third iteration: what's next?

Since 2009, major changes include the introduction of Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework and a 2008 internal restructure of Tamworth Regional Council.

While the IPR does not specifically require separate cultural planning, Council has agreed that cultural planning is a valuable process for them and a cultural plan is a useful document, so there will be a third cultural plan from 2015 with consultations to commence late in 2014.

The next cultural plan will:

- be delivered within a framework that responds to IPR and internal changes in Council
- be based on reflection of what worked and did not work in the previous plan
- amalgamate the separate foci of the two previous plans to include both cultural infrastructure and community cultural development
- take advice from the new Arts and Cultural Advisory committee on strategic matters
- any action planning and implementation strategies will aim to identify both internal and external partners for delivery
- be, similar to the previous plans, aspirational in defining our region's next cultural development goals.



Tamworth Regional Council Cultural Plan 2010-2015

<https://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/Community/Cultural-Development>

Regional cultural planning resources:

Australian Government. Department of Communications and the Arts. (1994) *Mapping Culture: a guide for cultural and economic development in communities*.

Grogan, D and Mercer C. (1995) *The Cultural Planning Handbook: an essential Australian guide*. Arts Queensland.

NSW Ministry for the Arts and Department of Local Government. (2004) *Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government*.

<http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/information/CPG-final.pdf>

NSW Ministry for the Arts and Local Government and Shires Association of NSW. (2000) *Community, culture and place: a local government handbook for museums*. Edited by Shar Jones.

Regional Arts Australia. (2009) *Creating a better life for Regional Australians*.

<http://www.regionalarts.com.au/raa1/creating-a-better-life-for-regional-australians.asp>



Photo: Lou Farina

*The Feminine Optic: perspectives
on the Landscape 2013 Exhibition
at Tamworth Regional Gallery*



CASE STUDY 15
Ku-ring-gai, Auburn City
& Clarence Valley Councils



One effective approach to embedding cultural planning into the business of local government has been the design of projects that mentor council staff in the development of cultural plans. Here leading cultural planner, Sue Boaden, explains how, using her work with Ku-ring-gai Council, Auburn City Council and Clarence Valley Council as case studies.

Embedding Planning Skills working with an external consultant as mentor



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Principal, Sue Boaden
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a mentor-consultant?

During the past few years I have worked with a number of local governments around Australia as a consultant cultural strategist/mentor to assist management and staff in their cultural policy and plan development.

Like every cultural plan that I've worked on, the mentoring model needs to be designed to reflect and respond to individual Local Government Area needs and capacities. When it comes to the development of cultural plans, councils with specialist cultural

staff have slightly different needs to those with a keen generalist community services team but no specialist staff. Generally, though, councils need the mentor to work alongside council staff and to take on the role of guide and sounding board, to collaborate on the consultation methodology, to support and advise on the data gathering and mapping program, and to provide input into the identification of issues, challenges, opportunities and realistic priorities.

In every case the mentor is accessible to provide practical and up to date advice to management and staff that results in a

WHERE



CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

AUBURN CITY COUNCIL

Remoteness

Inner regional and Major city

Strong leadership

Each of these councils had different needs, varying understanding of and commitment to cultural planning and development, and a variety of staffing models which could address and facilitate cultural planning and development. However, they all had the benefit of strong leadership at either the executive level or in key management positions and these leaders recognised and advocated that the cultural planning process needed to be embedded into council's business for the long haul. Independently, each council came up with a mentoring model that established the building blocks for the future, where cultural planning would be sustainable and a key aspect of local government community planning.

HOW

1. Ku-ring-gai Council

In 2004 Ku-ring-gai Council had gathered all relevant cultural data, had conducted a survey and had carried out a suite of consultations. Now they wanted me to draft their Cultural Plan, based on the information gathered and in close consultation with their cultural development team.

The Council had established a fine track record in supporting and encouraging the area's cultural life but recognised that, whilst the skills of its cultural team were strong in cultural project and event management as well as in cultural development, the skill base needed strengthening in strategic planning and policy development.

sustainable outcome which has been based on rigorous and systematic research and consultation. The mentor is responsible for ensuring that best practice in cultural planning is applied, including nurturing cultural planning skills and expertise in management and staff.

The nature of the assistance varies, depending on the level of skills and resources available. Here I write specifically about my experiences with Sydney's Ku-ring-gai and Auburn City councils and with Clarence Valley Council in NSW's Northern Rivers region.

In Ku-ring-gai, the mentoring model was a partnership based on shared roles in community consultation strategies, and in drafting plans and policies. My role as mentor focused on encouraging the critical analysis of wider cultural sector trends and the identification of issues and priorities. I also provided first drafting expertise in policy frameworks and strategic action plans.

2. Auburn City Council

In the mid 2000s, Auburn City Council was a fledgling in the area of cultural planning although they were committed and enthusiastic. The Council had supported the evolution of a strong community development role but wanted to foster and encourage specific cultural planning and development expertise in their staff team. By 2006, Council staff could see the need and the opportunities that cultural planning might present in their diverse community and they wanted access to support and advice that would set them off in the most effective direction for the future.

The need for a local cultural plan emerged during the preparation of the Social Plan in 2003 and reflected the area's rich multiculturalism and also its significant social and economic disadvantage. The need to build a sense of belonging and shared identity across the Auburn community provided a driver for the development of a Cultural Plan, and Council staff were keen to undertake the task based on best practice and with an eye to integrating cultural issues and opportunities into broader council strategic planning.

The design of a cultural mapping program was agreed jointly and the staff took responsibility for data collection. As mentor, I:

- Worked with staff to design the consultation program and managed the workshops and conversations, which the staff documented
- Led the internal discussion with staff, including senior management, which resulted in the Auburn specific cultural policy and planning framework, including cultural planning principles and key objectives and goals and
- Developed a first draft Plan, which was then finalised for Council by management and staff.

a mentoring model that established the building blocks for the future

Sue Boaden



3. Clarence Valley Council

Finally, taking another mentoring approach with a rural-regional local government, in 2007 Clarence Valley Council engaged me to assist with the development of their Cultural Plan 2007-2012, with a specific brief to act as mentor to Council's inaugural Cultural Development Officer.

Here the mentoring model was more complex since, as well as requiring the development of a ten year cultural vision, the plan also needed to bring together the newly amalgamated communities of the now defunct Councils of Copmanhurst, Grafton, Maclean and Pristine Waters. Like many regional and rural councils, the capacity of Clarence Valley Council was limited – in human resources, financial terms and expertise. Putting together a complex document such as this is no easy task, but again, the focus was on ensuring that skills and experience were established via mentoring that could be applied locally into the future.

The Clarence Valley model required close collaboration with Council staff on designing the consultations to reflect key community groups and areas of interest. A Cultural Futures Forum open to all interested members of the community was proposed, with guest speakers and active community participation. The Forum was conceived by the mentor but were designed and managed by the staff, based on mentor advice. The Forum provided ideas on cultural planning opportunities realized in other councils and relevant for consideration in the Clarence Valley Plan.

Five principles for working with a mentor-consultant

- ① Cultural plan related mentoring projects take from six to nine months.
- ② Based on my experiences, the mentor-consultant can provide a mix of activities including:
 - Advice into the scope and design of mapping program for staff implementation
 - Design of consultation program for management by mentor with staff assistance
 - Mentor designs short cultural survey in consultation with staff and for staff to distribute, analyse and manage
 - Mentor works with staff and management to design a Cultural Forum aimed at stimulating ideas and broadening understanding of benefits of cultural plans and Council-supported arts and cultural development. Council staff manage the event providing PR, venue, operational support and hosts the Forum of leading experts speakers
 - Establishment of cultural planning reference group (with internal and external representation)
 - Development by mentor of staff skills in research and analysis of relevant trends, issues, opportunities
 - Collaboration with mentor on identification of planning principles and cultural planning framework – goals, objectives, KPIs etc
 - Mentor compiles first draft Plan for ongoing carriage by management and staff
- ③ During the development of any local government Cultural Plan, including when councils engage the expertise of an independent cultural planner/ mentor, the

council is always the key point of contact. As a foundation principle, it is the council's Cultural Plan that is being developed and therefore council will identify a contact point to manage the project, including the administrative aspects of the mentorship as well as the operational aspects of the development of the Plan.

- ④ When councils' engage a mentor-based consultant to assist and advise on the development a cultural plan, financial project costs are generally reduced. Based on a collaborative partnership, operational aspects are undertaken by Council and more time is spent on discussion and information sharing between the staff and the mentor.
- ⑤ Plan drafting time is generally allocated initially to the consultant but, after first draft stage, revisions are managed by council staff who take the draft Plan for presentation to Council.



- Every plan was different but common outcomes from the mentoring process included:
 - A heightened awareness and increased understanding across council of the scale of the community's cultural assets and resources
 - Increased community interest in participating in council's cultural planning initiatives
 - Increased management and staff capacity to advocate for arts and cultural development based on improved knowledge of trends and issues
 - The collaborative/capacity building model resulted in a best practice plan (two out of three have won awards)
- The Consultant-as-Mentor Model is estimated to represent more than a 35 per cent cost saving in consultant fees
- In addition to the dollar savings are the:
 - learning experiences of staff (probably equivalent to one full unit of tertiary education)
 - the community's perception of Council's commitment to the Plan
 - full integration with other areas and strategies of Council and
 - streamlining of processes. These can't be easily valued.

Reflections

The mentor model is professionally satisfying for consultants as well as for councils. It's a win/win since it provides a real opportunity to pass on skills and expertise, to establish firm partnerships and to build on successes and reflect on lessons learnt. Mapping cultural communities, fostering cooperation, encouraging innovation and celebrating distinctiveness are all key cultural planning principles. Cultural planning mentorships provide opportunities to test drive these principles whilst demonstrating their relevance and value.



Auburn Council
Cultural Plan 2007–2017
<http://www.auburn.nsw.gov.au/Community/CommunityDocuments/Cultural%20Plan%202007%20%202017.pdf>

Clarence Valley Council
Cultural Plan 2007–2012
http://www.clarence.nsw.gov.au/content/uploads/FINAL_DRAFT_CULTURAL_PLAN_-_July_07small.pdf

Ku-ring-Gai Council
Cultural Plan 2004–2009
http://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kmc.nsw.gov.au%2Ffiles%2F91ec6d2f-14e3-4bfb-a5a9-a1500e1bd85%2FCultural_Plan_2004_-_2009.pdf&ei=U9pcUtrzM4PJiAeJy4C4AQ&usq=AFQjCNGI40u69Wu3FgrWMefCbjPQBwuNQ&bvm=bv.53899372.d.dGI



This case study details a planning approach that is useful for regions where community cultural renewal and development – and not creative industry – is the focus for cultural planning, and where adequate resourcing is available. Penrith City Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Program aims to connect with residents in disadvantaged areas and build capacity in the community to respond to their own needs. Using innovative community engagement methods, each small town-scaled planning project takes a strengths-based approach in developing Neighbourhood Action Plans.

Making Squeaky Wheels an assets and strengths based model for local planning



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WHY

The Neighbourhood Renewal Program, located in the Place Management division of Penrith City Council, was set up with dedicated funding in 2006 to develop Neighbourhood Action Plans that would address physical infrastructure and service needs in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and to operate across all Council divisions.

What began as a process to ‘fix up facilities’ over time began to increasingly emphasise community engagement and incorporate local input into the planning. So

now, while much of the Program activity still takes a conventional planning approach, the team is using innovative, place-responsive approaches in working with residents to develop each Plan.

In this work, especially, we’re guided by two of United Nations Environment Program’s *Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities* – adopted by Penrith City Council in 2003 – which are:

Principle 7. Empower people and foster participation

Principle 8. Expand and enable cooperative networks towards a common and sustainable future

WHERE



PENRITH CITY COUNCIL

Size

404 km²

Remoteness

Major city

Population

186,493

Employment

manufacturing, retail, health and social services, and construction.
51 per cent of workers travel outside of the area to work.

Demographics

21 per cent born overseas, 4.4 per cent need assistance with core activities. The median age 34 is lower than Australian average of 37. Penrith is 996.3 on the SEIFA index of disadvantage

Neighbourhood Renewal Program

1 x place manager; 1 x community engagement officer; 1 x cultural development officer

We follow the definition of community engagement – by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) – as, ‘any process that involves the public in problem solving, decision making and uses public input to make decision.’

As outlined in the Penrith Regional City [Community Engagement Strategy](#) 2011, our work:

- Is place and assets-based – focusing on local strengths (not deficit-based)
- Uses a range of novel and artistic techniques to overcome place-based disadvantage and develop Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Builds a partnership between the community and Council – encouraging the participation of residents, businesses, schools and community groups in local decision making

HOW

Step 1: Resourcing

The Neighbourhood Renewal Program was a small component of a Special Rate Variation, termed the Asset Renewal and Established Area Strategy, which saw a 5.2 per cent increase in residential rates and was accepted by the community and approved by the Department of Local Government in 2006.

As well as salaries for program staff, there are funds for community engagement activities such as artist workshops, family fun days, luncheons, senior’s afternoon teas and the hiring or purchasing of equipment if required, such as hiring a Jumping Castle at a local school fete as a consultation event. All our events

12
communities,
12 action
plans

are provided free of charge to the community. The ability to offer food and fun activities greatly assists in engaging with residents, who may otherwise be unable (or unwilling) to participate. Event budgets range from a few dollars to purchase morning tea to take along to a playgroup, through to the community digital media and storytelling project, [Neighbourhood Stories](#), that cost \$16,000.

The Program has a philosophy of using local suppliers for goods and services and local artists, or those from Greater Western Sydney, for creative community engagement activities.

Each year two communities are the focus of the program. Aside from staff costs, approximately \$20,000-\$25,000 is allocated to each of the two areas to assist in the development of programs and activities to engage the community.

In addition, once the Neighbourhood Action Plans are in place, the program now has access to \$300,000 per annum to assist in implementation of recommendations identified by the plans, primarily as ‘seed funding’ for the delivery of physical infrastructure items. This dedicated budget is a recent addition to the program, but is critical to ‘open doors’ in Council and with external agencies.

We use a range of novel and artistic techniques to overcome place-based disadvantage

Jeni Pollard,
Heather Chaffey &
Cali Vandyk-Dunlevy



Step 2: Building the team and developing the Program

In 2006 Elton Consulting designed the renewal program as a systematic planned approach with the Neighbourhood Action Plan. Jeni Pollard, who was then Social Planner with Council, developed the program while working with Erich Weller, Manager of the Community and Cultural Development Department. In determining the skills needed for working with disadvantaged communities, Jeni and Erich researched a number of approaches and decided that key to breaking through on issues were engagement, support for employment and cultural development. Cultural development was included as we had recently completed our Cultural Planning process and felt strongly that it was an important tool to both engage with residents and build local identity.

Of the two Program staff employed, Heather Chaffey had a background in youth work and public health, while Cali Vandyk-Dunlevy's background was in community cultural development.

Like most people in local government, we continue to be inspired and informed from many and diverse sources. Early on, some of the many influences and inspirations for the Neighbourhood Action Plans and our engagement processes, included:

- City of Sydney's '[City of Villages](#)' local action planning model
- The Victorian Government's [community housing renewal projects](#)
- The social engagement techniques of [Proboscis](#)

- [Appreciative Inquiry](#) with its collective design approach that aims to build around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't
- Jordi Pascual and [Agenda 21 for Culture](#)
- Ploy Yamtree, who is Senior Architect with Openspace in Thailand who work on community-designed parks

We were looking for a depth of relationship with the community, as that gives you an understanding about where the strengths and interests are in that community, and how we can best support that community to make positive change for themselves. As that only comes with time, we determined to do only two areas every year.

From the beginning of the Neighbourhood Renewal Program there has been consistent and ongoing support from Senior Managers and politicians in Council. All of the elected representatives are positive about the program and this supports the team to take risks and try new approaches. There have been no internal battles to fight, which has been key to the Program's success. (While writing this, we have just presented our latest Neighbourhood Action Plans to Council and they could not have been more supportive – bouquets to them for being such good advocates!)

Step 3: Selection of Neighbourhoods

Through Australian Bureau of Statistics' data, 12 neighbourhoods were identified with the goal to complete two Neighbourhood Action Plans every year.

Selection criteria for inclusion of a neighbourhood were:

- Poor access to key services and resources
- Socio-Economic Indexes for the Area (SEIFA) Data – relatively low scores on Index of Relative Disadvantage
- Crime and personal safety issues
- Limited local training opportunities to support further employment opportunities
- Poorer health Indicators
- Limited local employment and enterprise opportunities
- Poor physical environment and public domain
- Lower than average levels of car ownership and poor access to public transport
- Negative perceptions of the area from both internal and external sources

The first plan was begun in the suburb of Kingswood Park in 2007 and the final two, Cranebrook and Cambridge Park were started in 2013. The process of completing two areas each year is intensive and inevitably there are projects and partnerships that go beyond the time frame, but add great value to planning process.



Residents at the RePresenting Colyton project event – facilitated by Anjali Roberts

Step 4: Creative engagement and consultation

We start every Neighbourhood Action Plan by recognising residents as experts and build a positive relationship by really listening to them and getting to understand what they see as the strengths of their community.

The first step involves the Community Engagement Officer being present on the ground in the community, talking to as many people as possible, and starting to figure out what is unique about that place. As a start, it is as simple as, 'Hi, my name's Heather, I'm from Penrith Council, have you got two minutes to talk to me please?'

At corner shops, in churches, neighbourhood centres, schools and skate parks, we start to gauge who's in the community, and how

we can use their interests, and local networks, groups and leadership to design the 'structured, documented conversation' we need to have for planning. This mapping process can take up to six months and information and opportunities are fed back to the team through both formal team meetings and informal exchanges.

From this we develop 'Creative Engagement' consultation actions for that structured conversation: either by taking part in existing community events or putting on our own. For past Neighbourhood Action Plans, that has included: dance workshops, Parkour, community lunches, business networking events, artist mentoring programs, community gardening, storytelling, senior's luncheons and morning teas, family fun days, attending playgroups and having a stall at a school fete.

we start by recognising residents as experts

Jeni Pollard,
Heather Chaffey &
Cali Vandyk-Dunlevy



Resident completing a survey

Lead by our understanding of local demographics, activities are planned with the aim to include ‘hard to reach’ people, or community members who may not have previously had the chance to voice their thoughts and views on their local area. When we run our own event – often ‘family fun day’-style events – we promote them by letterbox drop; that has proved the most effective way to ensure participation.

There are generally around ten activities in each neighbourhood, which include:

- the family fun days, afternoon teas and school fete events
- focus groups with organised groups such as the P&C, the Neighbourhood Centre Management Committee, and church seniors and
- more in-depth creative engagement projects, like getting young people to make films about their neighbourhood (which are then watched and transcribed as data)

We have four standard questions that we ask over and over again within various activities:

- What do you most like about living in this neighbourhood?
- What do you least like about it?
- What is your favourite place?
- What would improve this neighbourhood for *[insert target group here: seniors, children, Aboriginal people etc]*?

Asking people what they like and what would improve their community are both fairly fundamental questions. At the end of the day, there are some physical infrastructure needs that come out, but people talk most about wanting connections and about wanting to have opportunities to meet with others and feel safe.

In terms of cultural planning, if you ask people in our neighbourhoods about arts and creative programs they’ll respond: ‘Huh, like, what are you talking about? I just want to pay my electricity bill.’ But, by posing the above key

questions during our creative engagement events – when people are experiencing and enjoying (as they inevitably do) a creative process – it leads people to answer these broader questions differently. The data collected at these events is more likely to focus on their creative needs.

Finally, through the process, we can also map and make visible some public assets of a community – small examples include mats from the YMCA that are available for community use, computer equipment at the public school, a church group that has a food share program – and log simple actions with Council that can be acted on without being included in the Plan; for example, a pothole in the road or a prickly pear that needs to be cut down.

Step 5: Developing the Neighbourhood Action Plans

All data collected from the consultation is collated and analysed, then taken back to the community at a Community Planning Session. Here 20 or 30 members from the community who've taken a key role in the consultation are invited to come together and hear everything that everyone told us about the neighbourhood – good, bad and in-between. We ask them to confirm the information and confirm that we haven't missed anything major.

We then negotiate with them and support a process where they negotiate with each other, as well as other partners/collaborators, about what actions are important and possible – that is, can they be implemented by Council? – and that forms the Neighbourhood Action Plan.

The Plan is then adopted by Council, by which time the listed actions have been negotiated across Council and everyone has agreed that the work is prioritised and can occur within the next four years.

The community partners and other, relevant local agency partners – such as policing and social service agencies or NGOs operating in the neighbourhood – receive a copy of the final Neighbourhood Action Plan. The community also receives a report on all the data collected during the consultation, which includes any issues and concerns not included in Council's Neighbourhood Action Plan.

Step 6: Implementation and follow up actions

Once the Plan is endorsed by Council, the Manager and the Community Engagement Officer keep in contact with people across Council and in the community sector to monitor and track the actions within the plan. By mid-2014 we'll have 12 Neighbourhood Actions Plans completed, so the work of monitoring and re-negotiating actions has snowballed every year, with each addition two new plans.

In 2011 the Neighbourhood Renewal Program received an additional \$300,000 per annum to enable us to make a financial contribution to work that has been prioritised by local communities.

Also, a number of project ideas that came from the planning process have been supported by Council, including:

- The Parkour and Krump Summer Series creative projects
- A skills development initiative with the Sudanese community to progress towards employment
- Artist and Community Toolkit Series professional development in grant writing, copyright and legal issues, marketing and projects development
- 'Sustaining the Meadow' community building project
- Local stories projects: Koori Story Exchange, The Story Exchange and Neighbourhood Stories

In addition, in response to a need articulated by our planning process, Council has developed a new funding stream specifically for cultural renewal, Magnetic Places.



Residents of Colyton who participated in the Capture Colyton Magnetic Places Program. Credit: Media on the Margins

when people are enjoying a creative process...the data collected will focus on their creative needs

Jeni Pollard,
Heather Chaffey &
Cali Vandyk-Dunlevy



Our ‘plasticine’ planning model

What is solid in the process is that we start out knowing we are going to engage and that we will develop a Neighbourhood Action Plan. For the rest, we work with what we’ve called the ‘Plasticine Model’, which means the Program is continually a work-in-development around three key areas:

- 1. How the Program staff work together.** Early on each role had distinct areas of responsibility, the Community Engagement Officer was responsible for talking to people and developing the Neighbourhood Action Plan and the Cultural Development Officer developed arts activities for the communities. Over time those roles have closely integrated and cultural development activity is used as a critical tool for the planning itself.
- 2. Place-responsive planning activity.** We enter a community and start the

conversation and then the planning process is built around what people are interested in sport, for example, or photography, or history. We don’t go in with a set agenda but the planning activities, and the focus of the Plan itself, evolves as our relationship with residents develops.

- 3. Trying new approaches.** Anyone involved with the program can suggest a new idea or approach. We trial new things – some of which flop – but we take risks, which keeps ideas and enthusiasm flowing. It’s part of the ‘plasticine model’ – growing and changing over time.

After 12 Neighbourhood Actions Plans, we’ve really learned to trust this process. Sometimes, things happen and one of us will be worried, thinking: ‘Where’s this going?’ And then people in the communities have these amazing stories and do lovely things and it all just comes together – always.



Six years ago we started the first Neighbourhood Action Plan, and the final two of 12 will be completed by mid-2014.

Outcomes for communities have included:

- New social and other infrastructure based on their ideas and concerns
- Enriched decision-making
- Community ownership of decision-making and outcomes from decisions
- Personal and professional development of local participants – including leadership and confidence, and technical and ICT skills
- Cultural assets have been made visible
- Social justice issues have been highlighted
- Enhanced ability to discuss sensitive issues
- A more respectful relationship with Council

Within Council, we've seen:

- Enhanced understanding of residents
- Elected representatives and senior management demonstrate commitment to equity in resource allocation
- Trust built across departments through working together on the Neighbourhood Action Plans and their implementation
- Enhanced capacity and expertise of Renewal team to do this work
- Reputational outcomes including awards and recognition

Finally, **'squeaky wheels'**...

The saying 'a squeaky wheel gets the grease' well conveys concerns about traditional planning consultation in that a privileged, articulate group of people are often a focus and, as the leading voices, their concerns get the most attention. With our consultation process, people who are usually not engaged ARE engaged and empowered. Beyond the Neighbourhood Action Plan, they're now making noise for their community's interests.



IKEN (2012) Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Project: Partnering with Community and Building on Their Stories <http://iken.net.au/penrith-neighbourhood-renewal-project-partnering-community-and-building-their-stories>

Magnetic Places Blog <http://magneticplaces.blogspot.com/>

Magnetic Places video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT8wwqmUcvI>

Neighbourhood Stories website <http://neighbourhoodstories.net.au/>

Neighbourhood Stories: St Marys Behind the Scenes video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mlo7QD66H6Y>

Place is Where the Heart is: Heather Chaffey at TEDxParramatta, August 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdkuJlo14qY>



This case study examines the ways in which Darebin City Council in Victoria has set about making disability access and inclusion an integral part of its cultural planning. Through an innovative ‘whole-of-council’ planning model, strategies to ensure access and inclusion are considered from the outset – not relegated to the status of ‘add on’. The result is cultural planning that is helping to drive transformational change within Council and the community.

Accessible From The Outset cultural planning for access



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WHY

a ‘whole-of-Council’ approach to access?

In our community of Darebin, 20 per cent of people have a disability, and half of those are over the age of 55. As well, over 50 per cent of those with a disability speak a language other than English at home.

For some years now, but particularly over the last decade, Darebin City Council has been working to articulate – through our policies, plans and actions – a ‘whole-of-council’ approach that will support and encourage a ‘whole-of-community’ approach to access and inclusion. Under

this understanding, access and inclusion is not considered an extra, an ‘add on’ to core procedures and cultural planning, but is part of planning from the outset. Similarly, local government’s role in arts and culture – often historically conceived as the provision of community celebrations, festivals and events and so forth – should take a ‘whole-of-council’ scope, taking into consideration things like urban design, jobs growth, place-making, retail success, and social and health indicators.

What does it mean in planning and practice to bring a holistic approach to disability access and inclusion in arts and culture? This case study does not claim

WHERE



CITY OF DAREBIN

Size

53 km²

Remoteness

Inner regional

Location

Northern suburbs of the City of Melbourne

Population

145,000
2736 people per km²

Key assets

Two performing art venues (Northcote Town Hall and Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre) and an art Gallery (Bundoora Homestead). Darebin has a large number of professional artists, especially in music and, increasingly, film production. The cultural and demographic mix within Darebin is rich and multifaceted

Employment

health care, education and training, retail, scientific and technical services

Demographics

a highly diverse population, with over 33 per cent born overseas. 23 per cent of residents are aged over 55, and 5.9 per cent of the population need help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability

Council cultural capacity

Darebin City Council has a Creative Culture Division with 30 staff and a Cultural Development Branch with four staff.

to have all the answers, but I'll take you through our journey so far, particularly in our work with community festivals and events.

Darebin City Council has long recognised that providing accessible and inclusive arts and cultural events benefits a great many: individuals with a disability, their family and carers, parents with prams, the elderly, staff and performers. Good accessibility helps an event to run safely and smoothly. It is also our legal obligation.

As Council has worked over the last few years to develop an integrated approach to access and inclusion issues, we have undergone something of a mindshift. Certainly, a learning curve. We've recognised:

- Council's previous understanding of what it meant for an event to be 'accessible' was inadequate – it involves more than just wheelchair ramps for the toilets, and it applies to more than just the audience, but also staff, performers, and stall holders
- Council needs to provide opportunities for professional training and on-the-job experience to staff and performers with a disability
- Effective action is not outside of our reach

HOW

to embed access and inclusion in planning

Darebin City Council is currently developing its latest cultural plan, [Creative Darebin – Darebin Arts Strategy 2014–2020](#), which will respond to Council's ambitious agenda for internal change about how we listen to and respond to community aspirations.

Darebin City Council is aware that it is in a unique position to enhance cultural access and inclusion for people with a disability across a number of levels: at an organisation level, at a community level, and at a state and national level (here we are, in this toolkit!). In developing the cultural plan, we are attempting to combine two key understandings:

- A whole-of-Council model which will bring into cultural planning many departments that have not historically been associated with a cultural agenda, such as economic development, planning and community safety; and
- A whole-of-community approach where the aspirations of all of our community are being listened to and acted upon

If we look specifically at disability access and inclusion, this holistic model is understood as the demonstration of leadership across all departments in the development of policies, projects and initiatives to improve access and by striving for best practice in the integration of disability access planning into the delivery of all of Council's programs, services and communication processes.



Roving 'lollypop crossing guards' at Darebin Community and Kite Festival, and members of Rollercoaster Theatre, a performance based theatre company for people with a disability

A number of actions have been taken to help drive this approach:

- Development of the [City of Darebin Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2009–2013](#). This Plan highlights the importance of minimising physical, socio-cultural and communication barriers to access and social inclusion, and also foregrounds the age and ethnicity demographic features amongst the population of people with a disability in Darebin.
- Establishment of the Darebin Disability Advisory Committee over ten years ago. This Committee meets bi-monthly and is comprised of residents with a disability, service providers and internal Council staff officers. It is chaired by a nominated Councillor. The group advises on issues relating to access and inclusion for people with a disability living, working, studying or visiting Darebin and monitors the implementation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. It is also concerned with promoting and advocating for improved access and inclusion within Council and the broader community.
- Undertaking extensive internal consultation for the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. This included four separate phases, featured nine workshops, and, all up, involved over 90 staff from across Council, most of whom were senior management.
- Community consultation in the development of our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. Council hosted community consultation which included residents with a disability, service providers and representatives from key disability and diversity focused community organisations.
- Establishment of work placement initiatives within Council to support the inclusion and participation of people with a disability in the workforce.
- Development of policies and guidelines around hosting accessible events for use by Council and the broader community.
- Policies and plans are reviewed on an annual basis and are integrated into Council's business planning system.
- Creation of a full-time position dedicated to disability planning across Council.
- Creation of a full-time position funded by the Department of Human Services to support the MetroAccess Initiative.
- Development of an All Abilities Playground at Bundoora Park.
- Purchasing of accessible communication tools for use by Council staff such as podcasting and portable hearing loops for hire at events; the use of Auslan interpreters; and producing documents in alternative formats.
- Development of Accessible Signage Guidelines for use by Council staff.
- Implementation of Access Awareness Training, Deaf Awareness Training and Mental Health Awareness Training to over 350 Darebin staff.

HOW

to put access into practice

1 The Access Mentoring Project

In 2005 Lesley Hall, a passionate Council staff member with a disability, successfully applied for a two-year grant from VicHealth to pursue efforts that would improve the accessibility of our festivals and events. The Access Mentoring Project was started as part of that grant, and has been running successfully ever since. It provides mentoring by Council staff and festival contract staff, as well as on-the-job experience in events management to trainees with a disability. It works in conjunction with the annual Darebin Community and Kite Festival, a large, daytime event that attracts up to 40,000 people, and as such offers a range of work and performance opportunities.

- About two months out from the Darebin Community and Kite Festival, trainee positions are advertised. Most trainees are referred to us from related agencies. Each trainee is assessed individually. Trainees have a range of disabilities, but a range of abilities, too, and the key is to find a job that matches the individual – not the other way round.
- Council staff and festival contractors acting as mentors undergo mandatory accessibility training and safety training, which covers all aspects of the Festival access plan and the mentoring project. This training was initially provided by external contractors, but as we have become more experienced, we have conducted this training in-house.

- I oversee the careful matching of mentor and trainee, and attend initial meetings to ensure the partnership will be a successful one.
- The mentors provide three to four hours of training prior to the festival. Some trainees may already have some experience. On the day of the festival, each trainee works an eight-hour shift with their mentor. Jobs can vary enormously: we have had casual staff working as runners, as the MC, doing the bump in and bump out, among other roles. Trainees can participate in the program for more than one year, and may be hired at a number of events and activities.
- Initially, we mentored four trainees per year, and relied on external funding: in 2006, as mentioned, we received a grant from VicHealth, as part of a larger Accessible Festivals Project; in 2007, the project was continued with the support of [Access for All Abilities](#), a Sport and Recreation Victoria funded project. Since 2008, however, we scaled back the number of trainees to just two per year. This was done so that the Access Mentoring Project could be entirely self-funded by Darebin City Council through the Darebin Community and Kite Festival. Reducing trainee numbers also ensured that we could offer repeat work to our pool of trainees.
- A percentage of the Darebin Community and Kite Festival performer's budget is set aside for performers with a disability. Since 2006, this has varied from between 10 per cent to 25 per cent of the total performance budget, depending on availability of performers with disabilities.



- We estimate the cost of mentoring staff with a disability at approximately \$60–\$70 per hour per trainee. This allows for the trainee to be employed at Council as a casual employee (band 3) at the standard wage. It also covers all on-costs associated with the trainee and includes a \$30 per hour wage increase for Council staff while they take on the extra duties and responsibilities associated with being a mentor.

Recently, Darebin City Council has modified the way we offer our Access Mentoring Project. With only a limited number of events, we were reaching the point of having insufficient jobs to offer our by-now large pool of casual trained staff, while the administrative side of hiring staff was becoming time-consuming. Consequently, we have now entered a partnership with the North Melbourne Institute of Technology (NMIT) on a student work placement scheme. This arrangement allows us to continue to offer our mentoring program, but within a larger NMIT-run network of participating organisations.

People now attend the Darebin Community and Kite Festival because they know it will be inclusive, safe and enjoyable

Craig Rogers



2 Accessible event management

With each event that we put on, we learn and improve upon what we have done before. Having staff and performers with a disability is a great way to learn about gaps, and find solutions. Initially, we asked carers and industry people to formally audit an event; now we rely more on informal feedback from trainee staff and performers, from carers, and from general visitors.

As a result of our learning, in 2009 I was able to produce a 'how to' guide to making events accessible: [Access Enabled](#) (version 3.0 now available). Council had amassed a substantial amount of practical and detailed knowledge around how to stage a truly accessible event, and I personally had nearly three years of hands-on experience in this area. Internally and externally this guide is of real use, and has received interest from all over Australia.

The following are some of the details that have evolved over time and are now put in place at the Darebin Community and Kite Festival:

- Wheelchairs are provided by Council, and can be borrowed for free.
- We provide carers (trained Council staff), who can be booked in advance or on the day. We also have 'roving' carers, who can be called at short notice on mobile phone numbers, which are displayed on posters at the Festival. In particular, carers are ready to assist in food areas.
- Similarly, our interpreters do not confine themselves to the main stage, but can escort individuals around the event, helping to orientate them.

- There are allocated drop-off zones in car parks, where people can be met by a carer.
- We provide a rest and recharge centre, where electric wheelchairs can be recharged, and provide chairs in which people can sit quietly. Carers, too, can rest there.
- For those who do not wish to use the Rest and Recharge Centre, the Information Booth provides many of the same facilities: the chance to rest, get information, have a glass of water.
- We use an audio loop system on the stage. People with hearing aids can tune into the system through a T-switch on their hearing aid, which lets them connect directly to the audio desk, and thus bypass a lot of background noise. For others, who are hard of hearing but who do not use hearing aides, we have headphones they can borrow.
- We no longer offer this service but we spent four years perfecting the use of a mobility buggy. One or two small motorised cars would be available for those not confined to a wheelchair but who nevertheless have mobility issues. Some years the cars were hardly used; the next, half our staff's time was taken up with driving people around. (It seemed word just needed to get out about it car's availability. I am not sure we ever got it 100 per cent right.)

All of these services are factored into the Festival budget. Because we now own much of this equipment, costs have reduced.



Brian Hender, employed by Darebin City Council as sound engineer at Darebin Community and Kite Festival, after participating in Access Mentoring Project

OUT COMES

- We have seen a change in mindset across Council in terms of our understanding of accessible and inclusive cultural planning.
- The Access Mentoring Project has produced a very capable pool of casual employees, each with a disability. Trainees from the Project have gone on to full-time work in the arts and other industries.
- Many Council staff have now been trained in accessibility and safety awareness, and will regularly step forward to act as mentors.
- The community are aware of and value our efforts. Feedback at events has indicated that people are now attending events such as the Darebin Community and Kite Festival precisely because they know it will be inclusive, safe and enjoyable. One family travelled over three hours to attend the festival, knowing it would be accessible.

MORE

Darebin City Council, *Access Enabled: Festivals and Events Disability Access Guide*

<http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/plananevent>

Darebin City Council, *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2009–2013*

http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Files/Disability_Access_and_Inclusion_Plan_2009-2013_Full_Document.pdf

Front cover:

Phoenix Foundry, Uralla.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

Back cover (from top left to bottom right):

Painting landscape near Ivanhoe.
Photo: Painters of the Plains

Wilcannia Art Centre.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

A custom car receiving a new paint job in a Dapto automotive workshop.
Photo: Andrew Warren

White Cliffs jeweller Barbara Gasch in her underground art gallery.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

Surfboard making at Skipp Surfboards Workshop in North Wollongong.
Photo: Sean McGuire

White Cliffs road from the window of Graham Welling's plane.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

Andrew Warren on the banks of the Darling River, Wilcannia.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

The Outhouse Storycatcher at Kilfera Field Day 2010.

Section One: Cultural Mapping & Data Collection

1 The Outhouse Storycatcher in Ivanhoe 2010.
Photo: Lisa Andersen

2 *Art Street* at Moruya Country Markets 2013.
Photo: Helen Okey

3 Bev Coe woven artwork at 2012 Marramorra Bulla Exhibition.
Photo: Otis Williams.

4 Sturt Australian Contemporary Art and Design Gallery, Mittagong.

5 Faces of Ashmont Exhibition. *Community Respect (Jay)*
Photo: David Malfoy

6 'Building a Brick Barrier' activity. AlburyCity SpeakOut session, Twilight Markets, 2012.

7 A custom car receiving a new paint job in a Dapto automotive workshop.
Photo: Andrew Warren

8 A map interview at the 2009 Viva la Gong Festival Mapping Lounge.
Photo: Andrew Warren

9 Story cubes at Penrith City Council's 'Dreaming up a Park' event 2007.

Section Two: Cultural Planning

10 Weather Signs by Stephen King. Walcha Open Air Gallery.

11 Victorian Opera performs Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in 2007.
Photo: Jeff Busby

12 The Up-to-Date Store, Coolamon.

13 Sand sculpture activity day at Cootamundra Arts Centre, 2013.
Photo: Mark Taber Photography.

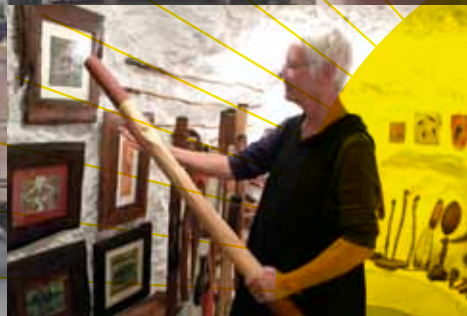
14 Performance from the 2009 Tamworth Country Music Festival.

15 Grafton in November. Jacarandas in flower. Photo: yaruman5

16 Picture taken by participant in the *Park Kings Magnetic Places* photographic event. Penrith City Council.

17 'Lollypop Crossing Guards' performance by Rollercoaster Theatre 2013. Darebin Community and Kite Festival.





Front and back cover images from research fieldwork for the CAMRA cultural mapping in regional Australia Project.