

Submission
No 71

INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY
CBD

Organisation: Bankstown City Council
Name: Mr Wayne Carter
Position: General Manager
Telephone: 02 9707 9400
Date Received: 10/09/2008



10 September 2008

Catherine Watson
Committee Manager
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

RECEIVED
10/09/08

Dear Ms. Watson,

SUBMISSION TO THE NSW PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Thank you the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into the development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.

Please find enclosed Bankstown City Council's submission which responds to the issues raised in the Background Information Paper, and the major questions being explored through your Inquiry.

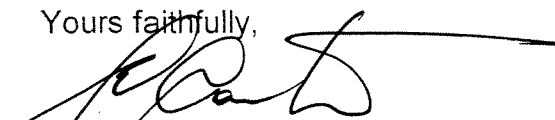
A number of issues have been raised through our submission, which highlight the critical need of ongoing support for arts and cultural development within our LGA, from all three tiers of government.

These include support for both "hard" cultural infrastructures such as the development of cultural facilities and funding for key local arts organisations, as well as the "soft" infrastructure, which enables the production of community, based cultural activity.

Council endorses the principles of access and participation to directly provide opportunities, programs and activities that involve communities in their own cultural development. This includes support for projects such as our Town Centre Improvement Programs that bring cultural animation and engagement within all parts of our city.

The partnership between Council and ArtsNSW has been critical in generating arts and cultural infrastructure development in our LGA. Council would like to call upon the State Government to consider the issues and recommendations raised in our submission in order to further strengthen the cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.

Yours faithfully,



Wayne Carter,
General Manager

INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY CBD

Overview

Bankstown is a large and vibrant City covering 78 square kilometres, approximately 22 kilometres south-west of the Sydney CBD. The City is known for the diversity of its people, its strong sense of local identity, its strategic location between some of Sydney's primary transport corridors, and its easy accessibility by road and rail.

While significant achievements have been made in Bankstown in the last 5 years through cultural planning initiatives, there are considerable challenges ahead to deal with the future.

BACKGROUND

The City of Bankstown is one of the largest councils in New South Wales, with around 180,000 people living within its boundaries the City of Bankstown has the 4th largest LGA population in Sydney. Only Blacktown, Sutherland and Fairfield LGAs have a greater population than Bankstown.

Bankstown forms part of the West Central Sub region under the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, a sub region covering the five Local Government Areas of Bankstown, Parramatta, Holroyd, Fairfield and Auburn.

Bankstown is a huge regional economy. In 2005 it contributed approximately \$9.5 billion towards the national GDP. This represented about 14% of the total Western Sydney economy. Bankstown had an estimated residential population of 176,817 at the time of the 2006 census. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated residential population update for Bankstown, on 30 June 2007 states Bankstown has an estimated residential population of 179,657.

Bankstown is a culturally diverse society. In 2006, 35.9% of the population was born overseas and 32.3% were from a non-English speaking background. The top ten overseas birthplaces are Lebanon, Vietnam, China, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, India, and Egypt. The 2006 Census found 127 languages other than English were spoken at home in Bankstown.

Bankstown community has proportionately more older people than Sydney as a whole, 16.7% in 2006 aged 60 or over. It also has comparatively more young people aged 0 - 24 years than Sydney as a whole, 33.5% in 2006.

Bankstown is a relatively low-income area, with 34% of households falling into the lowest household income quartile in 2006.

Over the next 25 years, the population of Bankstown is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 0.7% although the average household size is projected to decline from 2.92 in 2006 to 2.77 in 2031. This is still higher than the NSW Government's projected metropolitan Sydney average of 2.36.

Council's Residential Strategy Issues Paper 2008 suggests the urban form of Bankstown should not change significantly, and should remain suburban in nature. Council research indicates a sustainable dwelling target for Bankstown of up to 16,000 new dwellings over the next 25 years. The Council's preferred target would lead to an annual target of 650 new dwellings per annum, and Council has made a submission to the State Government on this basis.

However, the State Government has asked Bankstown to accommodate an additional 22,000 dwellings over the next 25 years. This is the 7th highest dwelling target in Sydney.

To date, the NSW Department of Planning has not linked the dwelling and employment targets proposed by the Metropolitan Strategy and sub regional planning process with infrastructure improvements. This means that Bankstown Council and other Sydney councils may need to find ways to fund facilities and services to support the growing population and their infrastructure and service needs. Actions by the State Government to restrict the abilities of councils to raise funding have made it even harder for Councils to provide for their local communities.

Bankstown Council is concerned that provision of jobs, services and infrastructure cannot keep pace with the estimated population growth (up to 66,000 people) over the next 25 years.

Relevant Arts and Cultural Planning

In 2002 Bankstown City Council adopted its Cultural Plan 2002-2005. This came about to make a formal commitment to arts and cultural development. The plan also enabled Council to take advantage of the funding support offered by the State Government for a dedicated Cultural position within Council.

The Plan included strategies to "facilitate effective cultural development, and to protect and enhance those aspects of the physical environment, urban design and amenity of the Bankstown local government area critical to the experience of its cultural life."

The Cultural Plan also included a Cultural Development Policy, which outlined Council's position on cultural development and its objectives for community cultural development in Bankstown. It was designed to encourage and support a "whole of Council" approach to cultural development, and provide a framework for Council to take the lead in the longer-term cultural development for Bankstown.

In 2007 this Plan was reviewed utilising a number of processes including community consultations, meetings with key internal and external stakeholders and research and analysis of relevant Council's policies and plans, and other external documents such as the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, WSROC's Regional Cultural Planning Strategy, NSW Cultural Planning Guidelines, and cultural planning documents from other Councils in Western Sydney, as well as interstate and international models from culturally diverse cities.

The result of the review is the Draft ***Creative Bankstown, which*** outlines cultural activities and projects to be put in place over the next five years (2008-2012). This document describes the next phase of Bankstown City Council's Cultural Plan. ***Creative Bankstown*** is an Implementation Plan, endorsing the framework developed in the earlier Cultural Plan and maintaining its strategic directions, which remain relevant in the current context.

The 2008-2012 Implementation Plan has been developed with consideration of Bankstown's unique social and cultural fabric; Council's broader strategic framework and resource capacity and feedback received from internal and external consultations.

The Plan primarily focuses on Council's role in promoting a vibrant and flourishing cultural life for its residents as well as addressing citywide priorities. It can also be utilised as a guide for planning cultural projects and partnerships by local community organisations, artists, cultural organisations and all levels of government. The Plan complements other Council and State planning processes.

A Cultural Strategies Group has been established within Council to facilitate and co-ordinate cultural planning across all sections of Council and support the review process. This "whole of Council" approach will also ensure that the profile of arts and culture is raised in Council's strategic documents, promotional material, civic events and provide an integrated approach to cultural planning.

Creative Bankstown will be presented to Council for endorsement after the upcoming Council elections.

Dedicated Staffing

The position of Cultural Development Co-ordinator was supported through a grant from the NSW Ministry for the Arts (now Arts NSW) and filled in 2003, providing a focus for arts and cultural development in the LGA.

Through this position, Council has initiated a range of cultural and public art projects utilising community cultural development processes.

In July 2007, the position of Cultural Development Co-ordinator was endorsed as a permanent position within Council that will continue to focus on creating

opportunities for arts and cultural development in partnership with local communities and organisations. These include co-ordinating integrated placemaking programs through the Town Centre Improvement projects and a major public art project on the Georges River Foreshore.

Amount of funding spent on arts and cultural activities

Bankstown City Council spends around \$800,000 annually on arts and cultural activities. This funding supports staff, buildings, programs and community grants targeting arts and culture.

A highlight of Council's focus on arts and culture is the funding for Arts and Cultural Projects that has been provided through Council's Community Grants Program since 1998. In this time over \$500,000 in direct funding has been provided by Council for community cultural projects for arts skills development, placemaking, story telling, performances etc and around \$1 million dollars on broader cultural projects such as community harmony and intercultural projects.

The development of civic events and festivals such as Bankstown Bites Food Festival, Art Cars, the Children's Festival and NAIDOC week celebrations have increasingly involved local communities in active participation beyond spectatorship, and provided a showcase for local artists and performers, as well as popular culture. The Talent Advancement Program (TAP) is a partnership between Council and Department of Education & Training and continues to nurture excellence in youth performers from the LGA.

A number of innovative arts and cultural projects continue to be generated through community-based organisations – many of these through direct grants support from Bankstown City Council. Examples include:-

- Bankstown Area Multicultural Network: African Children's Storytelling Project and Afghan Women's Writing projects – all leading to high quality publications.
- YMCA: Bankstown NOW photographic project with young photographers exploring their sense of place in the community: Bankstown.
- Bankstown Police Community Youth Club (PCYC): supporting contemporary Hip Hop and break dancing over a number of years leading to Superroundbox 2 (Australia's most prestigious Breakdance competition organised by Hybrid Formz – Bankstown's own champion breakdancing crew).

Sourcing funding to support arts and cultural activities for the Bankstown community in competition with other essential Council services has been difficult. Access to a reliable ongoing source of funding for the longer term is essential for Councils.

Council's experience with the State grants process

Funding available through Arts NSW Western Sydney Arts Strategy has been an essential factor in generating arts and cultural support through the Council into the LGA and fundamental to cultural development in the region. The partnership between Council and State government and other local arts organisations has manifested through the strategic funding program and targeted policy for arts development in the region.

In Bankstown, the Strategy as well as the Cultural Accords between State and Council have been catalysts to push for cultural infrastructure, provision of funding for cultural staff (jointly funded for 3 years) and the tying of funding to the development of the Cultural Plan. The resulting Cultural Planning framework is assisting Council in positioning the support of culture as a central aspect of its core business.

The Western Sydney Local Government Arts Incentive Scheme has also provided leverage to support local cultural projects. A number of projects have had significantly increased support due to the increased capacity of Council to support cultural development through this Incentive program. These include completed public art projects for the Chester Hill Community Centre, the Sefton Art Fence project and the Faces of Bankstown Mural in the City Plaza.

This Scheme also supported the first major placemaking project through Council with the Greenacre Town Centre Improvement Project, involving community members in the design and making of public artworks, as an integrated process within this upgrade of the shopping precinct.

In 2002, Arts NSW announced a major infrastructure package for the arts in Western Sydney including a grant of \$1.5 million (matched by Council) to provide new accommodation for Bankstown based contemporary arts organisations. Council is shortly to realise its planning carried out through extensive community consultation and to commence work on the "Artist's Village" concept to meet the terms of this grant.

Funding available is insufficient to provide the amenities that Council believes to be appropriate.

Issues related to the implementation of arts/cultural grants program or cultural plan

Through the planned redevelopment of the Bankstown CBD, Bankstown is in a unique position to engage local communities in the creation of a vibrant and activated city centre that will potentially provide a range of cultural precincts and opportunities for creative expression. Community engagement is critical to this process and cultural planning is starting to be understood as providing the major tools for this to be effective and representative of community needs.

The development of an Arts focus as part of this development is also creating a great opportunity to establish a sub regional cultural centre, celebrating

cultural diversity as its greatest asset and enabling its expression and interpretation through active community participation.

A number of key issues that are being considered in the *Creative Bankstown – Cultural Implementation Plan* include:-

- The continued need for exhibition spaces, workshop and studio spaces, the potential for artists in residence, as well as the development of multipurpose facilities for cultural activities.
- Increasing mechanisms for cultural exchange through cross cultural and intergenerational projects, including cultural tours that actively involve local communities.
- Increasing opportunities for participation and cultural expression for specific communities - local indigenous people, cultural needs for newly emerging communities and people with a disability.
- Highlighting the strengths of Bankstown's cultural activity and leadership in developing innovative youth arts projects.
- Enhancing the local distinctiveness of neighbourhoods as cultural precincts.
- Improving the management and resources for place making and public art.
- Acknowledging and celebrating the unique local heritage both in the natural environment (our green spaces and the Georges River) as well as the built environment.
- Developing training, employment opportunities in and development of creative industries.

To respond to these identified needs and issues requires staffing in addition to the current position of Cultural Development Co-ordinator within Council, to assist a whole of Council approach and which can be achieved through the employment of a senior Cultural Planner. It is intended that funding support for this position will be sought through Arts NSW.

Accessibility of cultural and arts education

Western Sydney no longer has any university based visual or performing arts training – both TAFE NSW and University of Western Sydney have within the past decade reduced training in the fine arts and creative industries to a limited number of campuses in the region as well as reducing the courses available. The sole contemporary arts degree suspended intake in 2008.

Existing courses within TAFE in the region require higher delivery options in photography, visual arts, events management etc. In an area of great geographical distances exacerbated by issues of transport and socio-economic disadvantage, students have to travel out of the region to study courses such as design, theatre, multimedia, screen and digital media.

Bankstown Council is represented on a WSROC Taskforce that was established in September 2007 to explore alternatives for the provision of tertiary arts education in the region. This Mayoral Education and Creative Industries Taskforce is currently examining broader arts and creative industries training.

Critical to the development of cultural infrastructure is the delivery of a range of arts courses from certificate level to university degrees across the art forms and discipline areas throughout the region.

Location of cultural facilities in close proximity

WSROC launched *Authoring Contemporary Australia* in 2005, a Regional Cultural Plan for Greater Western Sydney, which argued the need for Western Sydney to have a complementary network of cultural organisations and facilities, rather than duplication.

The development of an Arts focus for Bankstown as a sub-regional centre offers the opportunity to acknowledge and support the existing cultural strengths that are in the area – in particular the Performing Arts - and to position the LGA as a leader in Youth Arts development. As a specialised cultural facility it can offer a “niche” market as a way to develop audiences and symbolise the cultural strength of the region.

The orientation of the key contemporary arts organisations - namely Urban Theatre Projects (UTP), Bankstown Youth Development Service (BYDS) and CityMoon is highly participatory actively engaging large numbers of young people and culturally specific community groups in the making of new art. This is in opposition to many key arts organisations in the region that are generating more individualistic arts practice such as digital arts.

Urban Theatre Projects is now acknowledged as the major contemporary theatre company in Western Sydney developing cutting edge productions that are receiving both national and international acclaim. CityMoon is an innovative Australian Vietnamese theatre company and BYDS has been consistently producing high quality arts and cultural projects for the last 15 years, with a focus on Youth Arts and has a solid track record as a major arts training organisation for Western Sydney. Young artists who have been mentored through BYDS now work all over Sydney as actors, filmmakers, multimedia artists etc.

It is critical to support cultural hubs that encourage cross fertilisation, opportunities for artists to engage with specific communities in their artistic research, creation, and production. It is also important to look at

public outcomes that occur in alternative spaces - UTP for example, creates site specific performance works in non-traditional spaces.

Currently these organisations also offer local communities opportunities for capacity building eg. through aspiring grants, use of space, and mentoring local artists.

Our surrounding local government areas house a range of major cultural facilities eg Casula Arts Centre, Fairfield Museum, Blacktown Arts Centre, Hazlehurst Regional Gallery. While these centres provide significant cultural spaces, they are also a significant distance for local audiences to travel to or to provide access points for local artists.

These regional arts facilities owe their success to a great extent to the State Government support that has been provided to ensure that adequate staffing levels have been maintained. This enables them to provide a diverse range of cultural programs and attract audiences. Bankstown Council will be seeking assistance in order to provide similar staffing for the Arts facility that is currently being developed in the Bankstown LGA.

Significance of partnerships with private sector funding

New opportunities are emerging for funding innovative cultural projects in the LGA including initiatives such as the Reel Deal Short Film Festival starting in 2006, which includes the Bryan Brown Film Scholarship to nurture local filmmakers.

Local organisations have also successfully gained funding support for cultural projects through a variety of Trusts and funding bodies such as the Film and Television Office, Foundation for Young Australians, as well as Arts NSW and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Increasing the opportunities and resources for public art and placemaking that are now emerging in Bankstown also involves negotiating partnerships and increased support from the private sector (such as through arts planning and creative design in new developments and soliciting developer contributions).

Suitability of Public infrastructure for arts and cultural life

Whilst cultural infrastructure is most often understood as the physical structures for social and cultural purposes such as schools, libraries, galleries etc, Bankstown Council won the 2008 LGSA Cultural Award for Cultural Infrastructure Award for its Greenacre Town Centre Improvement Project Placemaking project.

Bankstown's Town Centre Improvement Program (TCIP) aims to upgrade and reinforce the role of suburban shopping centres as cultural and physical hubs for residents. Vibrant and active centres are important contributors to creating

a sustainable and liveable City. As outlined in the Regional Planning Framework, Council aimed to develop a stronger 'sense of place' in Greenacre, recognising that feelings of attachment or belonging to a physical environment assists the sense of collective identity. This integrated public art and urban design project aimed to develop a place imbued with meaning, symbolising people's personal histories that would translate a "sense of place' into a 'sense of community'.

Bankstown's TCIP focuses on public domain improvements to promote the viability and utility of the town centres across Bankstown Local Government Area. These local centres are major contributors to the image and identity of communities as well as being the location of community facilities and local businesses. The improvement of these local centres also aims to provide a range of community health benefits. They are within walking distance of home, and by increasing the attractiveness and amenity of the centre, locals are more likely to consider the local centre as a destination they can walk to. With improved recreational and social opportunities to complement the shopping, with artwork that reflects local identity, people are more likely to visit and spend time there meeting up with other locals, improving understanding between different cultural groups and reducing isolation within the community.

The Greenacre TCIP was the first placemaking project for Council - utilising a more creative, consultative approach in planning the town centres, street upgrades and public spaces, as well as encouraging greater project management between Council divisions.

This integrated arts and urban design project, positions public space as cultural infrastructure assisting in the development of community relationships. Greenacre typically illustrates the cultural diversity of South Western Sydney. The local community is made up of diverse groups including Arabic, Vietnamese, Indigenous and Anglo Celtic backgrounds, who may have only little understanding of each other's stories and values. Council has established quality public space and public art that has met with great approval from locals.

The success of the Greenacre TCIP Project is that it provides an opportunity for dialogue and cultural representation which is helping build strong understanding and community harmony in Greenacre today. The process for community consultation at Greenacre focused on physical improvements and prioritising works as opposed to negotiating land use and development change. This has ensured an efficient project and series of improvements to the public domain and provides the basis for a viable town centre. This is essential for the future growth in use and activity – the basis for residential housing strategy close to town centres and transport hubs. Greenacre now has an improved purpose-designed gathering space in McGuigan Place, which can be utilised for staging of events, children's play community gathering and meeting, and adds to the amenity of the streetscape.

Having said this Bankstown has a limited range of social and cultural facilities – including the Arts and Crafts Centre in the CBD, neighbourhood and community organisations, clubs and sporting facilities and an active network of libraries that are our cultural hubs. They provide outlets for cultural expression, access to information and support, community connectivity and local collaborations.

In order to better understand the range and breadth of this infrastructure, a major research project is currently being planned for 2009 together with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Shopfront, to culturally map and audit the social and cultural facilities in the LGA. This will also assist in defining inadequacies and planning for new infrastructure in both established and new residential areas.

Economic impact on communities

The City of Bankstown represents one of the largest local government area economies in Sydney, a 9.5 billion economy. Bankstown's economy is diverse and dynamic. Significantly, it is the manufacturing heart of Sydney with around 7,000 small, medium and large manufacturing businesses. The City has significant potential for future growth in the local economy, investment and employment. The State Government's *Metropolitan Strategy* has recognised the economic growth potential of Bankstown and has categorised Bankstown as a major centre. It has also identified Bankstown Airport/Milperra as a specialised centre and the M5 as an economic corridor. There will be significant growth implications predicted for Bankstown's population, the number of dwellings and jobs.

Bankstown City Council adopted its first economic development plan - the *Bankstown Business Investment Strategy* in 1997. Council is currently finalising its Economic and Investment Strategy for 2008-2017. The Strategy has identified three themes for action:-

- Marketing and Promoting Bankstown (including positioning the CBD as a full service hub; developing Bankstown as a learning centre; and encourage and support an increase in local attractions to travelers, international tourists, inter-state, intra-regional visitors and day trippers).
- Supporting the established Business Community.
- Reconfiguring and modernising Bankstown's industrial centres.

Although not a tourist destination in the traditional sense of the term, because of its multicultural demographics, natural and built environment and history, Bankstown has the potential to develop and promote cultural tourism, including indigenous heritage tourism, and intra-state and intra-regional visits and day trips. Bankstown is home to Bankstown Airport, one of the busiest airports in Australia.

According to data from the Commonwealth Department of Industries, Tourism and Resources (2003), the economic impact of not having a tourism industry is significant for Bankstown. The City has the potential to further attract per annum 741,000 international, 670,000 domestic overnight, and 690,000 day trippers. It currently has about 350 international standard hotel rooms and sizeable motel accommodation infrastructure, which experience high capacity utilisation and even indicates unmet demand. With the increasing growth of the university campus and other learning centres in the City, and increasing number of visitors, considerable investment in the upgrade City's physical, cultural, tourism infrastructure will be an obvious necessity.

Adequacy of the State Plan to maximise diversity of access

Access and participation in the arts are the cornerstone principles in ***Creative Bankstown*** - Cultural Implementation Plan, focusing on providing opportunities, programs and activities to directly involve communities in their cultural development.

Whilst increased access to physical facilities and resources are undeniably important, active community engagement is more likely to build public support for the arts by increasing perception of the value, benefits and relevance of the arts.

The solution is not necessarily in building bigger and better facilities which often brings with it hierarchical corporate structures, large operating budgets and consequently looking for ways to make relevant programs. Economic impact and commercial success are increasingly asserted as the primary indicator of valuing the arts.

Embedded within Council's Cultural Plan is the capacity to increase opportunities for social connectedness, relevant and participatory programs, and acknowledgement of diverse traditions and values.

It should be noted that due to cost shifting from federal and state level there is an increasing requirement by local government to support local arts and cultural activity.

Given that the Australia Council dismantled its Community Cultural Development Board, a major impact has been felt by the NSW sector with a reduction of \$1.8 million in available funding nationally.

It is therefore recommended that increased support be given by state funding towards developmental aspects of local community based arts and cultural activities.