

Submission
No 43

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

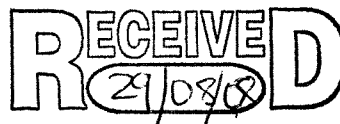
Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council
Name: Mr Les McMahon
Position: General Manager
Telephone: 02 4677 1100
Date Received: 29/08/2008



Our Reference: TRIM

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

26 August 2008



Dear Ms Watson

Re: Wollondilly Shire Council Submission - Inquiry into the development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD

Please find enclosed Wollondilly Shire Council's submission for the Inquiry into the development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD. I look forward to the contents of this submission being considered in the development of an art and cultural plan for NSW and the alignment of this plan to broad government planning strategies for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD, including regional areas.

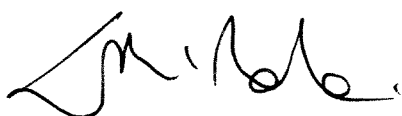
The issues raised in this submission impact upon the Wollondilly Shire. The submission addresses the key issues the Committee will inquire into and the following issues are of particular concern to the Wollondilly Shire:

- Interface Councils such as Wollondilly have experienced ongoing difficulties in navigating through Government and non-Government definitions of 'metropolitan', 'country', 'regional' and 'rural'. A specific Interface Council Program will help overcome this by providing a pool of funding for councils that cover both metropolitan and rural areas
- Council's recent strategic planning has documented a community-based sector under stress linked to factors such as government downloading of services and changes in the way the sector is funded.
- Difficulties in attracting parties to become involved in Council developments, especially since the tightening of processes following the problems experienced with Liverpool Council's Oasis project.
- Public resistance to borrowing and education of public understanding of inter-generational equity.
- Rising expectations by the public of what should be provided by Local Government which has been reinforced by cost shifting pressures and initiatives by other levels of governments and have not however been supported by responsive funding and resourcing frameworks.

- Wollondilly Shire Council applauds the State Governments commitment to arts and cultural infrastructure in Western Sydney through the Western Sydney Arts Strategy. However Wollondilly Shire has seen very little if nothing delivered within the Shire in regards to the implementation of this strategy.
- The short term nature of funding which undermines the promotion of strategic, responsive and well-designed interventions with sustainable impacts.
- Funding bodies increased monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements but do not fund agencies to do this work.
- Currently there are limited facilities in the Wollondilly Shire which we believe highlights major gaps in the arts and cultural facility asset portfolio of the Greater Western Sydney Region.
- The need for the creation of a strategic priorities plan for cultural facility development at a local as well as a regional level.
- Limited resources and limited capacity of Council to raise revenue to develop arts and cultural infrastructure, a cultural plan or employ an arts and cultural officer to drive and champion community development initiatives for our community.
- Outreach servicing to our Shire is limited and funding is often granted on a Macarthur wide basis with many resources located in Campbelltown, out of reach of our local community.
- Public transport infrastructure is limited and non-existent in many areas across Wollondilly which limits access to other regional services and activities.
- The need for a Wollondilly Regional Cultural Centre and Council desire to have a definite start date for the Centre within the next 5-10 years.
- Limited access to cultural and arts education to the residents of Wollondilly.
- The importance of services to be realistic about the actual coverage of service provision. It is unhelpful to say that "we are providing services across the Macarthur region" when in reality this is not happening.
- The need for a varied way to disseminate information to all members of our community.
- The need for an Aboriginal Keeping Place and Cultural Heritage Centre to assist in the reconnection to country and cultural heritage and to assist in the education of young Aboriginal people and re-connectedness of the stolen generation and elders with their culture and communities.
- If Wollondilly Shire Council is seriously expected to build culture plans and infrastructure, then we need new finance, we need resources to do so.
- The need to break down perception that an arts and cultural experience primarily happens in an urban/city context and the need for an "Agri-Cultural Tourism" approach
- A statewide conference to introduce the "Agri-Cultural Tourism" concept to the arts community, specialty producers, and other government and non-government organisations.
- Arts and cultural infrastructure investments must be made relevant to interface communities such as Wollondilly Shire

Council wishes to thank the Committee for any consideration that they may be able to give to this submission.

Yours faithfully



Les McMahon
General Manager
WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL



Our Reference: TRIM

The Committee Manager
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

27 August 2008

Dear Committee Members

Re: Wollondilly Shire Council Submission - Inquiry into the development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD

I am writing on behalf of Wollondilly Shire Council and thank you for the opportunity to make submission into the examination into the development of an art and cultural plan for NSW and the alignment of this plan to broad government planning strategies for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD, including regional areas.

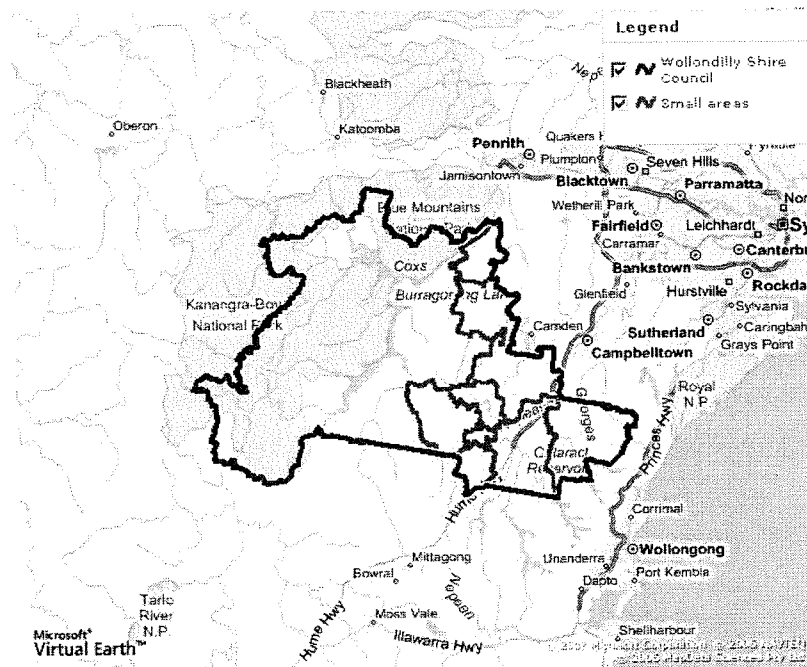
The issues raised in this submission impact upon the Wollondilly Shire. While not addressing all of the questions raised in the information paper, this submission addresses the key issues of concern to the Wollondilly Shire.

About Wollondilly Shire

The Wollondilly Shire is one of the largest local government areas in metropolitan Sydney. While considered as an 'urban' council for funding purposes the Shire has 16 towns/villages surrounded by rural areas. Wollondilly Shire does not contain any area of mass development with our biggest community being Tahmoor with a population of 5,000 people.

Whilst often defined as a metropolitan Council, Wollondilly is different and has unique and complex issues to that of other metropolitan Councils. Wollondilly is:

- significantly larger than other local government areas covering an area of 2561square kilometers



- Many Villages throughout the shire have limited to non existent public transport, cultural infrastructure and services creating significant geographic, physical and social cultural barriers between villages. In 2006, there were 802 people who caught public transport to work (train, bus, tram or ferry) in Wollondilly Shire, compared with 14,272 who drove in private vehicles (car –as driver, car – as passenger, motorbike, or truck). Analysis of the method of travel to work of the residents in Wollondilly Shire in 2006 compared to the Sydney Statistical Division shows that 4.2% used public transport, while 74.6% used a private vehicle, compared with 18.0% and 60.8% respectively in the Sydney Statistical Division.
- Analysis of the type of internet connection of households in Wollondilly Shire compared to the Sydney Statistical Division shows that there was a larger proportion of households with either no internet connection or a dial up connection, but a smaller proportion of households with broadband connectivity. Overall 55.6% of households had no internet connection or a dial up connection, and 38.3% had broadband connectivity, compared with 45.5% and 45.0% respectively in the Sydney Statistical Division

These factors have the effect of segmenting the Shire into several disparate areas. This mix of distinct and dispersed communities impacts upon both our residents' ability to access arts and cultural services and community facilities and on Council's capacity to provide high-quality infrastructure and services to meet the needs of our communities.

The rural/urban mix and high population dispersion is common for Council's located in the urban fringe areas of the Sydney metropolitan area. Urban fringe areas are the interface between the rural and metropolitan areas and our needs and issues are different.

Often the Wollondilly Shire does not fit in to the definition of a rural area or a metropolitan area. Common amongst interface areas are issues associated with access to public transport, ageing and inadequate infrastructure in established areas and difficulties meeting the service needs of dispersed and varied communities. We believe that as an interface Council, on the boarder of one of the fastest growing areas in the state, we do face unique situations, falling between the urban metropolitan areas and the rural, with a huge and growing demand for arts and cultural services and infrastructure.

Understanding of arts and cultural infrastructure

Wollondilly Shire believes arts and cultural infrastructure not only refers to the hard "bricks and mortar" of physical buildings and spaces but it can also refer to social and economic structures of cultural activity such as networks, industries, and services. We call these kinds of cultural resources, cultural infrastructure. Cultural infrastructure includes cultural enterprises and small businesses; networks of voluntary, socio-cultural associations; the organisations which program and/or present cultural events; directories and databases; social and cultural services such as Council's Aboriginal Development Officer and our Community Services Development Officer.

Stable and resilient arts organisations are a critical component of this infrastructure. It is the quality, strength and connectedness of this infrastructure, rather than its size or quantity that determines how well it serves the arts and the public.

Cultural infrastructure is also the cultural economy. This includes film and television production and distribution, festivals, libraries, design and architecture, literature and publishing, museums and galleries, music performance, recording and publishing, heritage, performing arts, radio and television as well as the individual creators such as artists and writers. This broad grouping includes both large, commercially driven cultural industries and small-scale cultural enterprises representing the business/trading arm of individual artists or artist collectives.

The issues and factors for the inquiry – An in-depth look

Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources

Non-profit and community based organisations play an important role in the delivery of arts and cultural infrastructure and over many years, a sophisticated and well-established art, cultural and human service delivery system has evolved

in response to changing social needs. A mix of government, institutional, private sector and community providers deliver these services. However, it is the non-government community-based sector that provides the foundation of this service system.

The community sector is a key partner in both the delivery of arts and cultural infrastructure and services and in the promotion of government's broader social development goals. Non-government community-based agencies help strengthen neighbourhoods, for example, by bringing people together for community cultural events, exhibitions and activities. Agencies work with each other to plan and co-ordinate to better meet the needs of people in their communities. Non-government community-based agencies also offer many ways for people to get involved in issues that affect their lives including volunteer, community leadership and professional development opportunities.

Wollondilly Shire Council has a vested interest in the capacity and stability of the community-based sector as this sector contributes greatly to the development of our shires cultural identity. What matters to our community is culture as it defines their lives. Through cultural activity, individuals and communities make sense of life experiences and explore their relationships and connectivity to other people and places.

Our Community Strategic Plan 2030 strongly encourages the development of the sector in delivering responsive services and programs to meet our community's needs, advocating on behalf of the residents of Wollondilly and helping to build social cohesiveness within and between our villages. Through the efforts of community based organisations our communities will grow stronger helping to form the historic legacy of the Wollondilly Shire as a liveable, vibrant and sustainable community.

Wollondilly Shire Council has long been concerned with the stability of the community-based sector and views the impact of government funding reductions in the community-based art, cultural and human service sector as a threat to their effectiveness and sustainability. Profound impacts due to changes in priorities, values and funding mechanisms at senior levels of government impact directly on the ability of non-government community-based agencies to address the needs of the people they serve. Council believes that there is a direct relationship between the existence and strength of an arts infrastructure in a community and the capacity of that community to support artistic practice and to access funding.

Council's recent strategic planning for the Wollondilly Shire has documented a community-based sector under stress linked to factors such as government downloading of services and changes in the way the sector is funded. Since the early 1990s, State and Federal government have reduced and/or devolved many responsibilities to both Local Councils and to the community sector. In addition, Local Councils are relying more heavily on the community-based sector to deliver

services. However, similar to the local government experience of downloading, it is not clear whether the community sector has the capacity, stability or the appropriate funding to assume this responsibility.

Prior to the recent funding policy changes, some government funding for core organisational costs for non-government community-based agencies had some flexibility in how program dollars were used relative to the needs of the agency. Short-term, project funding is now the current practice. This type of funding is more limited in the costs it will cover and is targeted to specific programs and/or population groups that reflect current government priorities. In addition, governments have adopted stronger requirements to measure and report on service performance and demand similar requirements of the groups they fund.

The trends in the allocation of funding in recent years has hindered and in some cases prevented both private (non-government agencies) and public bodies (Local Government) from successfully implementing sustainable delivery of art and cultural soft and hard infrastructure. It is safe to assume that while funding levels of individual agencies may have changed, for most services overall funding has not noticeably increased in the past decade. This is particularly pertinent for the Wollondilly Shire.

Infrastructure funding is a common problem. There are often difficulties in attracting parties to become involved in Council developments, especially since the Government tightened the process following the problems experienced with Liverpool Council's Oasis project. Whilst there is a desperate need for additional funding, the prime concern for a Council is to ensure the public interest is protected and this impacts upon public private partnerships.

Interestingly, Councils can generally borrow on similar (or even better) terms than private companies, therefore the point of a public private partnership is often not finance but accessing skills, including skills in risk allocation and management. This also raises the question of what type of professional advice Councils should seek on public private partnerships.

Another factor is public resistance to borrowing. There is a need to improve public understanding especially of inter-generational equity.

Trends in both state and federal policies have significantly impacted upon the local level and the ability to implement arts and cultural infrastructure and these include:

- funding levels maintained at current rates i.e. no additional funds to meet unmet or increased demands
- emphasis on "user pays"
- cost shifting i.e.

- increasing expectations from state and federal governments that local government will facilitate local responses to resolve issues and needs at the local level and be involved in a broader range of planning processes
- move away from direct service delivery by state and federal departments to providing grants and contractual arrangements with community and local government sectors
- increased reliance on the non-government community based sector to provide services
- no transfer of funds to Local Councils or services to meet increased demand
- collaboration between public and private sectors being promoted to resolve community issues
- preference given to regional projects/funding

In recent times additional pressures on the delivery of art and cultural services and infrastructure have included:

- rising expectations by the public of what should be provided by local government
- rising expectations by the public (and in legislation) of the level and standards of provision of infrastructure, facilities and services
- grant applications often seek matching funds from local government
- higher expenses as a result of user pays, higher insurance requirements, increased demand for and cost of delivering services
- increased demand on infrastructure and need for facilities to accommodate outreach services and programs as a result of the move towards centralising services
- difficulty in finding experienced and skilled volunteers for management committees
- lower growth of income compared to expenditure
- growing non-recurrent nature of funding
- funding often short-term which impacts upon skill development and retention, impacting on planning and service delivery
- outcome based nature of funding increasing
- pressure to provide "in kind support in successful grants
- increased administration, legal costs and insurance requirements
- accountability judged on documentation rather than on what services need to be delivered on the ground
- more competitive tendering
- pressure to collaborate with other services and organisations

The short term nature of funding undermines the promotion of strategic, responsive and well-designed interventions with sustainable impacts. The race to get art and cultural programs up and running, under the pressure of achieving targets and milestones, lends little time to the collection of baseline information and the design of appropriate monitoring tools.

The threat of the ever decreasing pool of resources discourages cooperation between groups, pushes short term goals over long term strategic development and thereby reduces the effectiveness of the investment of public funding. Long term goals can only be achieved if agencies can plan strategically for the future: this does not necessarily require more resources but it does require security and continuity of funding.

Wollondilly Shire Council has observed:

- current funding issues for the community-based service sector are less about cuts and more about the restrictive nature of the funding that is available.
- the majority of agencies are experiencing growth, both in budget and programs. However, the restrictive and time-limited nature of funding is having an impact on the overall capacity and stability of agencies.
- most available funding does not cover core organisational costs that are necessary to effectively operate an agency such as rent, utilities, staff, transport and volunteer training and supervision, volunteer co-ordination and financial management and reporting.
- the current and predominant practice of short-term, project funding is creating budget and program fluctuations.
- funding bodies have increased monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements but do not fund agencies to do this work. There is also little consistency among application and reporting information that funding bodies require.
- most agencies are hiring more program staff but they are struggling with high rates of staff turnover and burnout due to an inability to offer permanent positions and/or competitive wages and benefits.
- government is the main funder of the community-based service sector and relies on that sector to deliver responsive services to the public.
- non-government community-based agencies benefit the larger community as well as the people who use their services. In this way they help the community meet its social development goals such as strengthening neighbourhoods, planning and co-ordinating services and increasing civic engagement and participation.

Wollondilly Shire Council believes the majority of agencies are in a position of growth but serious concerns have emerged about the long-term stability and capacity of the art and cultural sector due to current funding practices. Issues such as the lack of funding for core organisational costs, annual rather than

multi-year funding cycles, and inconsistent and cumbersome reporting requirements must be addressed by funding bodies to ensure the sustainability of this critical part of the human service sector.

Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life

To match the richness of cultural activity and the agencies that support this activity, there is a need for a plethora of cultural facilities—large and small—to serve the needs of artist creators, arts and culture organisations and audiences. Public infrastructure is needed for creation, production, presentation, administration and artist housing and these should be the key aspects in the delivery of any facility portfolio. Appropriate cultural facilities are essential to our community and key to the economic health of our community. These facilities serve residents, attract tourists, maintain businesses, and enhance our quality of life. However, ensuring access to appropriate and affordable facilities is challenging in our current climate.

Local government has traditionally provided accommodation for the range of Non-government community-based agencies and services provided through State and Federal government funding. As the Wollondilly population grows and service delivery increases through either the development and funding or the outreaching of services into the Shire, there is further pressure on Wollondilly Shire Council to provide appropriate, affordable accommodation for these services.

Currently there are limited facilities in the Wollondilly Shire which we believe highlights major gaps in the arts and cultural facility asset portfolio of the Greater Western Sydney Region. While the Greater Western Sydney Region has a multitude of arts and culture facilities, Wollondilly Shire has none. Many of our Shires community facilities are aging, inappropriately suited to their functions and too small to sustain growing operations in the arts and cultural sector.

Our Shires arts and cultural communities are evolving at lightening speed, providing enormous challenges for keeping pace with effective and appropriate infrastructure and facilities. Wollondilly Shire notes challenging factors such as use, ownership, age, purpose or non-purpose built, maintenance and design contribute to the character and variety of spaces, as well as the complexity of their suitability and long-term maintenance and operation.

Wollondilly Shire Council acknowledges that artistic and cultural facilities play a vital role in the community and such investments require significant cash and land investment that partnerships are critical to the realisation of cultural facilities, and that local government involvement is both desired and necessary. There is a need for the creation of a strategic priorities plan for cultural facility development at a local as well as a regional level. A Cultural Facility Study should be undertaken and should build on the work of earlier studies and plans and take

measure of today's needs and priorities to capture a vision and strategy for cultural infrastructure and facility development for the next fifteen years.

Wollondilly Shire Council supports arts and cultural infrastructure and our Councils contribution to this includes:

- a central and mobile library,
- festivals (i.e. Thirlmere Steam Festival; White Waratah Festival; Dam Fest; Careflight Day etc),
- celebration and awareness events (NAIDOC Week, Seniors Week; Youth Week; Children's Week; Book Week; Village celebrations etc) and
- community art exhibitions (Aboriginal Together Arts Exhibition; Sculpture by the Road; Youth Week arts exhibition etc).

Cultural development and social justice principles are implemented within all our projects to build community capacity, improve community opportunities and outcomes. "Liveability", "Wellbeing" and "Social Cohesion", are outcomes identified within our Wollondilly Community Strategic Plan 2030.

Council currently has limited resources and limited capacity to raise revenue to develop arts and cultural infrastructure, a cultural plan or employ an arts and cultural officer to drive and champion community development initiatives for our community. Outreach servicing to our Shire is limited and funding is often granted on a Macarthur wide basis, and many resources are located in Campbelltown out of reach of our local community. Public transport infrastructure is limited and non-existent in many areas across Wollondilly which limits access to other regional services and activities. Council's recent strategic planning process reaffirmed our residents found poor transport reduced the accessibility of education in isolated areas, both via poor infrastructure, services and costs of transport. Many regional art and cultural services and activities do not have adequate resourcing to outreach to the Wollondilly Shire and many of our residents are expected to travel to where the resources and services are.

Councils' involvement in cultural activity has for the most part been in response to expressed community needs or available opportunities. We recognise arts and cultural activities contribute positively in creating a sense of community, it improves quality of life for our residents, and ongoing cultural engagement helps our Council to make better informed decisions that reflect more closely the community's cultural needs.

The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs

There is a trend across the local government sector of co-locating services and facilities. The Wollondilly Shire Council has included in its strategic planning

processes to develop a number of "community cultural hubs". These are hubs that share resources and target groups through the consolidation of a range of services within a shared facility. The creation of these hubs provides improved accessibility for our community maximizes the functionality of facilities and reduces costs associated with infrastructure maintenance and improvement.

For these "community cultural hubs" to work successfully and be sustainable services providers need written documents for Memorandums Of Understandings, partnership agreements, clear outlines of expectations of each other and the communities they service etc. It would be useful if there were drafts of these kinds of documents available, policies and guideline templates available to assist and build service capacity in the sector.

Wollondilly Shire Council currently works out of an old office building in the Picton Town Centre which was the headquarters for a former electricity authority. As this building has been assessed at only having 10-15 years of its functional life left, Council has now formulated its replacement. This replacement will form part of a Civic Precinct Re-development and Council has a strategic plan in place for our Civic Precinct in the Picton Town Centre. The essence of the re-development will comprise of four (4) major elements:

- new Administration Building.
- new Civic Building (Council Chambers; Mayoral and Council Rooms; Committee Meeting Rooms).
- a new Library Building with integrated community and child care services.
- a Cultural Centre.

The re-development physically connects the major elements of the Administration Building to the Civic Offices using the proposed Cultural Centre. This design ensures activities in the Cultural Centre can be facilitated either by Council staff from the Administration Building and have access at the same time by elected representatives and visiting dignitaries from the civic offices. Those activities can, if required, flow into the Cultural Centre. Connection is by way of a glass atrium which will be used as a display space for art and sculpture exhibitions. This concept has been used most successfully in other modern local government civic centres. The main building of the Cultural Centre will accommodate additional exhibition space, storage, lecture and art class rooms, offices, catering areas and staff and public amenities.

Any element of the re-development can be programmed at any time but with the community desire for a tangible commitment by Council for a Wollondilly Regional Cultural Centre, Council is most desirous to have a definite start date for the Centre within the next 5-10 years. The current estimated cost of the Cultural Centre element is \$6.5 million

Accessibility of cultural and arts education

Access to cultural and arts education is not equally accessible to the residents of Wollondilly. Arts and Cultural services and infrastructure are often funded on a regional basis i.e Macarthur wide and services are concentrated in Campbelltown. Groups missing out on services include:

- smaller and/or more distant communities
- socially isolated communities

People in these communities that are missing out are often unaware of the services that are available as well as being unable to easily access them. It is important for services to be realistic about the actual coverage of service provision and describe it realistically. It is unhelpful to say that "we are providing services across the Macarthur region" when in reality this is not happening.

Some of the comments from the 18 September 2006 Macarthur Outreach Forum¹ included:

- there are lots of services out there doing great things but some are stretched to the limit; but if we are more realistic and pull in our explicit boundaries we would be better able to identify what is not being done.
- only call ourselves what we actually do - name what we do. If we are not Macarthur wide lets not call ourselves Macarthur wide.

Other issues identified at this forum in relation to access to service provision in Macarthur included:

- in working to improve client's access to services we must be able to hear from the people who are missing out. We need to understand clients' viewpoints.
- there is a need for better planning at a higher level (Regional, State, etc) to address some of the issues of access and equity across the Macarthur Region. Specifically what better planning is necessary needs more work and discussion.
- improving collaboration, partnerships and networking is an essential ingredient of building a services network that will enable services to be accessible to clients.
- lack of public transport in some parts of the region is one of the key ingredients in limiting some people's access to services.
- there needs to be effective promotion and marketing. This is likely to involve new and innovative approaches. One useful way forward would be to build on the asset mapping done in Wollondilly.

¹Macarthur Outreach Forum - Exploring Macarthur outreach issues & action arising, Macarthur Community Forum, January 2007

- staff need both orientation to their clients, service provisions and agency. They also need orientation to the region, local communities, etc. The former is the primary responsibility of the service provider. The latter might best be done in a coordinated way across the region.
- there has been lots of service mapping done across the Macarthur region. But not all services or community are aware of what services are available across the region. This issue needs more consideration to identify what the real issues are.
- projects and funding need to be sustainable
- funding agreements need to be realistic about what is required to provide services across the Macarthur region. Providing services across the Region has funding implications. We need to be clear about what they are. For example:
 - the funding bodies need to be more flexible in allowing the work to continue until the ground work has built momentum - not pulling out too early. It can take a couple of years to build trust and get established.
 - funding bodies to recognise the cost of what it takes to outreach to communities - need to be realistic about how many clients can be seen when outreaching, given the travel time etc that is involved.
 - funders being aware of the costs of services - as service providers we need to support each other in putting the true costs out there and we need to include evaluation in those costs.
 - need to be realistic about what can be done.
 - accountability of the funding body to ensure the service was appropriately funded and implemented and the accountability of the funded services to ensure they were doing what they were funded to do.
 - the services also need to be accountable to the local community as well.
 - the funding processes needed to have transparency.
 - we needed to have a demonstration of service provision to targeted areas e.g. if the service was funded for Macarthur the service provider would be able to demonstrate they were providing services across the whole of Macarthur.
 - funding agreements in plain English and how the service is divided across the region need to be specified.
 - if it is not Macarthur wide, don't call it that.
 - need for a dialogue between a local advocate the funding body prior to the expression of interest of funding rounds so that when a funding body is proposing they will fund something in a region, the local advocate would be able to

give them information about specific issues such as what is required to outreach to specific areas.

Currently Wollondilly has no tertiary services located within or outreaching to the residents of Wollondilly.

Council's recent strategic planning process reaffirmed our residents found poor transport reduced the accessibility of cultural and arts education in isolated areas, both via poor infrastructure, services and costs of transport.

For interagencies and services to be doing the best work they can they need to be more than just sharing information. There is a need for opportunities for service providers to come together to work for change. This however needs resources and time allocation for this to happen which is difficult in the current funding climate.

Lack of information and the need for timeliness of notification of events, activities and opportunities is a major inhibitor to accessing cultural and arts educational opportunities for people residing in Wollondilly. Wollondilly Shire Council has developed asset maps of each of its villages to assist services and agencies to connect appropriately at the local level and enable the dissemination of information about arts and cultural opportunities.

A majority of art and cultural information is disseminated via the web however 55.6% of households in the Wollondilly Shire had no internet connection or a dial up connection, and 38.3% had broadband connectivity and technological infrastructure is limited across the Wollondilly Shire. Consideration to the use of a variety of methods in disseminating information to residents in the Wollondilly Shire needs to be reviewed by agencies trying to connect with communities about their services, events and facilities. Many agencies believe they connect with residents through the local newspapers however a large number of our residents do not receive a local paper or have access to the web.

Often people are limited by family obligations and they can find it hard to get out of the house, or found driving distances a problem in accessing educational opportunities. This highlights the need for more family friendly policy and practices in the delivery of educational opportunities to the residents of Wollondilly.

The potential contribution of the creative industries to arts and cultural education is not fully realised in the Greater Western Sydney Region. There is a need to build partnerships between arts organisations, local Councils, cultural and arts infrastructure and schools. Often cultural partnerships with schools are limited as there is not enough money and not enough time in class schedules. Other barriers include cultural outreach not being a priority for schools or not knowing what cultural organisations and agencies offer.

Wollondilly Shire Council is increasingly acknowledging the contribution of Aboriginal people, the first artists of Australia, and are committed to Aboriginal reconciliation and supporting the preservation and interpretation of culture for Aboriginal people residing in our shire. Council is working towards breaking down barriers between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by employing an Aboriginal Development Officer, the establishment of an Aboriginal Advisory Group for Council and implementing activities and cultural training opportunities that promote a sense of identity through, symbolism and signage, development of a Scar Tree plan of Management, NAIDOC week celebrations and family fun days, the development of educational resources and information, the implementation of caring for land projects such as the caring for Stonequarry country project, the development of an indigenous garden and the annual "Together" Arts exhibition held during Reconciliation Week.

Cultural awareness and educational opportunities are however hindered by the lack of appropriate and culturally sensitive infrastructure. Our Aboriginal community has highlighted the need for an Aboriginal Keeping Place and cultural heritage centre to assist in the reconnection to country and cultural heritage and to assist in the education of their young people and reconnectedness of the stolen generation and elders with their culture and communities. This keeping place needs to be totally Aboriginal owned and operated, with all of its profits returned to the artists and the Aboriginal community.

Currently Council is working towards the development of a 'one-stop shop' to improve the delivery of Aboriginal services in order to meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. The lack of appropriate infrastructure opportunities is limiting the full potential of this initiative.

Economic impacts on communities

Local government is well placed to read the often diverse and complex cultural currents and needs of their communities, and to judge how resources can be best used to maximise artistic opportunity and expression. But we can't do it alone. If Wollondilly Shire Council is seriously expected to build culture plans and infrastructure, then we need new finance, we need resources to do so.

It has been acknowledged that the role of Wollondilly Shire Council has changed significantly with a shift from being the custodians of roads, rates and rubbish to the builders of communities through the provision of extra services in the area of welfare, community development, safety, arts and cultural activities, cultural facilities and community amenities, including a stronger regulatory role. The expectation on Council to fulfill this expanded role for its community has been clearly articulated and mandated through the development of the Wollondilly Community Strategic Plan 2030.

This expanded role, has been reinforced by cost shifting pressures and initiatives by other levels of governments and have not however been supported by responsive funding and resourcing frameworks. While the objective of local government is to promote the social, economic and environmental sustainability of local communities, we have been expected to do so with limited additional resources.

Our communities are still rural for all intents and purposes and this is defined by the size of our shires land mass and our communities desire to retain a sense and identity of rural living² however this lack of rural recognition has significant financial implications and access limitations to funding opportunities for the shire. Being designated urban or metropolitan deems us not eligible to access rural funding programs and continually we are usurped by other urban councils with higher density populations in the bid for metropolitan arts and cultural infrastructure grants and subsidies. Funding levels either don't take into account, or adequately reflect the costs of providing outreach services and travel required by many agencies to access people living in Interface areas such as Wollondilly.

The Shires ability to raise revenue from developer contributions for arts and cultural infrastructure is limited because the NSW Government has established urban growth boundaries through the Metro North West and Metro South West growth strategies. There is no planned significant growth for Wollondilly within these plans. Development in the Shire has for the most part reached its urban growth boundaries and population is likely to increase only incrementally over the long term.

As an interface Council, the Shire is also confronted with higher costs to deliver services and infrastructure to its varied and dispersed communities. This comes on top of the ever increasing costs of service delivery and infrastructure maintenance and renewal currently being experienced across most local government areas.

The rate of increase in the cost of service delivery and infrastructure renewal and maintenance is also considerably greater than CPI. As well as high costs of delivery, the capacity of the Shire's community to pay for goods, services and infrastructure is inhibited by the additional costs residents have to face to travel to reach services and pockets of considerable economic hardship and higher needs have resulted in isolation and disadvantage. In addition cost shifting has made a significant impact upon revenue and program delivery for the Wollondilly Shire.

All these factors limit the revenue streams available to Council and make the Shire particularly dependent on Councils rates and grants and subsidies from other tiers of government. The uncertainty of the availability of grants and subsidies and the cost incurred to apply for them limits Council's ability to plan

² The Wollondilly Community Strategic Plan 2030

and limits our ability to deliver arts and cultural services and infrastructure programs to our communities.

Grants and subsidies from other tiers of governments are an essential revenue source and local government is often better positioned to effectively and efficiently deliver these projects to our communities than the state or federal governments. It is also important that the manner in which grants and subsidies are provided for the development and delivery of arts and cultural infrastructure are appropriate, allowing Council to determine its own spending and are not administratively cumbersome. An example of a streamlined and uninhibited funding process this is the highly successful Roads to Recovery program funding.

It is essential to invest to sustain and further develop the Wollondilly Shires cultural, environmental and creative asset base, in order to preserve its distinctive and unique identity and preserve its quality of life for future generations. Our Community Strategic Plan 2030 actions and strategies include supporting active yet sensitive management of the landscape and built environment, investing in cultural infrastructure and developing a sustainable economy. The plan states culture lies at the heart of successful places, successful economies and successful communities. Cultural infrastructure gives people opportunities to learn skills, to express their identities, to share experiences; it gives them a sense of community and a stake in the places where they live.

Human creativity, based on ideas and knowledge, rather than natural resources or manufactured goods, has become an essential economic driver, and Council is increasingly conscious of the need to advance the creative agenda. Some of our artists are exploring new ways of engaging audiences, working collaboratively with communities, and integrating environmental and social issues in their art.

This was demonstrated recently in our successful Sculptures by the Road Exhibition. This road safety themed sculpture exhibition was designed for young drivers to consider how attitude affects driving and was opened by Tom Bass, renowned Sydney sculptor. 21 entries were received from young people aged 12-25 across the Shire. Over 500 people visited the exhibition over the three days and most visitors remarked on how impressive the display was and how talented the artists were. This is a great result for a public art exhibition held in Picton's village green and demonstrates that there is interest in cultural activities in Picton.

This experience of the use of the village green emphasises the need to break down perception that an arts and cultural experience primarily happens in an urban/city context.

Council believes creative ways for the exposure to arts and culture in a rural context is through the use of agritourism.

Agritourism is an enterprise which combines elements of agriculture and tourism. Linking artists and specialty producers in a unique "Agri-Cultural Tourism" approach encourages the use of public and private spaces where arts and cultural experiences are located as an extension of the land and assists in creating a physical site for dialogue and public engagement.

Agriculture and the arts are tied by heritage and resources are readily available to artists in rural areas. In sparsely populated areas, agritourism enterprises have a difficult time attracting potential tourists. By partnering specialty agricultural enterprises with nearby or regional artists and other cultural entities and events, a critical mass of attractions can be created. This approach currently works well especially in areas such as The Hunter Valley, Tuscany, South Dakota, Canada and Bali.

A major challenge for developing agritourism in Wollondilly is the low population density and lack of traditional attractions sufficient to draw customers into our geographic region. However, this same low population density is precisely what appeals to tourists from urban areas wanting to experience rural culture.

Many people interested in agritourism experiences are interested in experiencing the arts and utilising the synergies between agritourism and the arts can benefit both. Rural culture is broader than agricultural production and includes local artists, artisans, writers, poets, galleries, museums, and even performance arts. Agritourism operations can and should link with the whole range of arts and cultural experiences available in the landscape to entice visitors.

Specialty producers in Wollondilly also face marketing challenges due to the area's low population density and the distance to population centers. In 2006, fruit and vegetable growers and other local producers in partnership with Wollondilly Shire Council, formed the Wollondilly Harvest (a farm gate programme) which now represents a wide range of non-commodity agricultural products. One of their primary goals is to support producers and value-added entrepreneurs with marketing, particularly direct marketing, of their products. Wollondilly Shire Council recognises that tourists present a potential market and has actively encouraged agritourism development.

Specialty producers and artists share common challenges in identifying and cultivating a customer base for their products/creations, particularly in rural areas. By working together, we can create a critical mass of unique activities, events, sites, attractions, and products to draw potential customers to an area. We believe that Wollondilly can offer a unique experience by including the broad spectrum of rural community culture — artists and artisans, family-owned farms, specialty shops, and cultural events.

A statewide conference is needed to introduce the Agri-Cultural Tourism concept to the arts community, the specialty producers, and other government and non-government organisations which would assist in connections, partnerships and the exploration of how this concept could be further progressed and developed.

Arts and cultural infrastructure investments must be made relevant to interface communities such as Wollondilly Shire by recognising their limited fiscal capacity to raise matching dollars and cultural Infrastructure investments should be based on need and capacity to ensure that communities that are dispersed and less densely populated have full access to funding. The formulae must be re-examined to ensure the arts and cultural infrastructure needs of our communities are met. The quality of life and competitiveness of interface communities depend on their having the infrastructure they need. The cost of new infrastructure, limits participation by interface communities because they are unable to raise sufficient revenue through the rate base.

The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan for the state to maximize diversity of access, with reference to the tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies

Greater Western Sydney comprises 14 Local Government Areas. These range from the established urban areas of Auburn, Parramatta, Holroyd, Bankstown and Baulkham Hills to developing areas of Blacktown, Penrith, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Camden and semi-rural/conservation areas of Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Wollondilly.

Wollondilly Shire Council applauds the State Governments commitment to arts and cultural infrastructure in Western Sydney and this has been demonstrated by the establishment of the Western Sydney Arts Strategy. However Wollondilly Shire has seen very little if nothing delivered within the Shire in regards to the implementation of this strategy.

In 2005 an Arts and Cultural centre in Campbelltown was established as a regional facility. However limited outreach servicing and limited to non-existent public transport initiatives have been implemented to develop connectivity with out lying areas such as the Wollondilly Shire.

The expectation of Local Government to be key partners and participants in the development of local strategies and actions rely upon resources, (i.e staff, facilities and buildings, program and project funding) however the revenue source for this is not articulated within these plans. Relevant planning strategies including the NSW State Plan and the Tourism masterplan tend to be big on beautiful ideas but not so big in terms of budget and silent in regards to the source of revenue to implement these beautiful big ideas. The ability to acquire resources and apply for funding varies greatly from one local area to another.

For most grants, submission writing involves a lot of time in addition to the day-to-day work of Council, and often applications are not necessarily successful. Before applying for funding, our Council now assesses our available resources to do this including our ability to spend sufficient time on writing submissions and if we have the resources to meet the reporting and other requirements of the funding body if it is successful. Often other competing priorities and statutory obligations prevent Council resources from being diverted to the task of grant applications and submission writing.

Any other relevant matters.

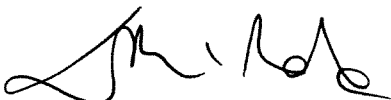
In general policy processes fail to consider issues of distance and low population density, with negative impacts on service delivery and public administration. Greater attention is needed in policy planning and administration, to the specific needs and requirements of interface areas such as Wollondilly.

It is recommended improved funding for Interface Councils, such as the Living Regions: Interface Council Program that was implemented in Victoria is investigated and implemented so fair and equitable outcomes stated in the Western Sydney Arts Strategy can be achieved.

When seeking government assistance interface Councils such as Wollondilly have experienced ongoing difficulties in navigating through Government and non-Government definitions of 'metropolitan', 'country', 'regional' and 'rural'. A specific Interface Council Program will help overcome this by providing a pool of funding for councils that cover both metropolitan and rural areas. It will put interface councils on an equal footing with their rural and urban neighbours when lodging applications for grants.

Council wishes to thank the Committee for any consideration that they may be able to give to this submission.

Yours faithfully



Les McMahon
General Manager
WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL