

Submission
No 28

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

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Gallery
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David Borger MP
Chairman
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Re: Response to NSW Public Works Committee Inquiry into the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside Sydney CBD

Dear Mr Borger

Please accept this submission to your committee's inquiry on behalf of Griffith City Council. The submission will give an overview of the current situation of Arts and Culture within Griffith and a clear perspective on the role that Council currently plays in delivering services in this area to the community.

The City of Griffith is a thriving and diverse community, and is the regional centre of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA). With the exception of 1986 and 1991, Griffith's population growth consistently outperforms the NSW State average, and has been estimated by Griffith City Council Economic Development Unit to grow 60% to 40,000 in the next 25 years.

Griffith is noted for its cultural diversity, with a higher than average number of people of European descent, primarily Italian. ABS statistics indicate there are some 25 non-English speaking nationalities represented in the population, yet anecdotal information suggests in excess of 70 first languages and 40 settled communities. Significant population groups include South Pacific Island communities (eg Fijian, Tongans and Samoans), Indians, Turks, Afghani and Iraqi.

Griffith has a vibrant Aboriginal community and Council fosters strong and positive links with the local community through the Aboriginal Advisory Board, Creative Riverina Youth Team (CRYT) and other projects.

With increasing evidence of the wellbeing and community building benefits that enhanced support for arts and culture can deliver, Griffith City Council (GCC) has continued its generational support for arts and culture via focused investments in a range of arts and cultural resources, infrastructure and activity.

GCC has positioned the visual and performing arts, entertainment, cultural and community services in a way that is planned to attract, generate and reinforce positive attitudes, behaviour and consideration. This support has been underpinned by the Community Action Plan (CAP) released in 2007 which positions GCC as an active partner in the delivery of programs, activity and messages. GCC believes this investment will both return considerable benefit to the Griffith community, and strengthen GCC's relationship with, and in, its community.

With the lease expiring on the current building that houses the Griffith Regional Art Gallery in 2013, an opportunity now exists to compliment the increased investments made by GCC in community and cultural resources and infrastructure over recent years, and establish a state of the art gallery facility that addresses current and future needs and provides inspiration for the Griffith community and communities around Australia and overseas.

GRIFFITH REGIONAL ART GALLERY

FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Griffith Regional Art Gallery (GRAG) currently serves a vast community, including those resident in Griffith and many beyond the Griffith City Council limits, from relatively modest premises. Residents and artists from Darlington Point, Leeton, Narrandera, Ardlethan, West Wyalong, Hillston, Coleambally, Jerilderie, Finley, Deniliquin, Carrathool and Hay are well serviced by GRAG and its exhibitions.

Griffith's remoteness is amplified when the closest NSW Regional Galleries to Griffith are considered

- Wagga Wagga – approx 200 km east
- Orange – approx 400 km north east
- Broken Hill – approx 600 km north west (750 km by sealed road!)

The Griffith Regional Art Gallery has been housed for 25 years in three rooms (2 exhibition, 1 office) within the Griffith War Memorial building, a facility built on crown land and managed by a Board of Trustees. The rent is peppercorn and the presence of the art gallery is outside the guidelines of the War Memorial's intended use. As the current lease expires in 2013, there is strong support from the GRAG Advisory Committee and in the local community to assist GRAG find a home of its own.

It would be fitting for the new gallery facility to be well established and operational so that it can be a key contributor to Griffith's Centenary in 2016, and place Griffith in the best possible position to meet the NSW State Plan (2006) target of increasing visitation and participation in arts and cultural activity by 10%.

A five year plan has been developed by GRAG staff that proposes community consultation, planning, building and opening of a new Gallery in 2013. Partnerships between Council, local business, and state and federal governments will be critical in this development proposal.

It is important that regardless whether the facility is:

- **an arts and civic hub** by integrating a new gallery facility with existing Griffith Regional Theatre infrastructure,
- **a community/cultural hub** by planning a new gallery facility within a proposed new community centre,
- **a new retail/community/cultural hub** by exploring new private projects with the possibility of public/private partnership
- building a new stand alone gallery facility

that the concept, function and social role of the facility shapes the model rather than the other way around.

CREATING A HUB

BACKGROUND

From 2006, Griffith City Council commenced a systematic development of arts and cultural programs, activities, resources and infrastructure.

- Griffith Regional Art Gallery strategic review and implementation of recommendations
- Continued operation of CRYT (Creative Riverina Youth Team)
- Development and resourcing of the Theatre Access Program
- Partnership leading to Big hART 3 year residency
- Recruitment of key personnel to drive programs and facilities
- Convergence of Griffith Regional Theatre and Art Gallery management
- Establishment of Marketing and Education resources to optimise engagement with local and nearby community and schools

CURRENT DIRECTIONS

Like many organisations, Griffith City Council understands that more could be done to ensure better joint planning between cultural facilities and resources to maximise benefits for the community and visitors, and for schools in the delivery of both the core and wider curriculum.

With convergence of administration (which has removed the duplication of management roles and enabled creation of new relevant roles), Griffith is moving to the model of a Cultural Hub where arts and cultural facilities and resources are providing a more integrated and accessible range of activities and events. In line with UK research, key benefits to working within the Hubs include:

- increased access and opportunities for participation
- improving ways of working among facilities
- developing partnerships with government and non-government sectors
- professional development for cultural practitioners and teachers
- learning outcomes for school students

Current activity (see below) has given the Griffith community the chance to expand engagement with arts and culture, and work with some of the country's leading artists and companies. It has provided increased access to the cultural assets of the local area, and engaged young people with the outstanding facilities in Griffith, including theatre, art gallery and library.

Griffith has long believed that all people have the right to be both consumers and creators of culture. Young people, people working within the arts, cultural and education sectors hold the key to this - by working closely together, the gallery, theatre, museum, library and other heritage and arts organisations can open up a wealth of new opportunities for young people to experience and create a new and rich diversity of cultural products.

ARTS/CULTURAL EDUCATION

The establishment of a Marketing and Education Coordinator for Griffith Regional Theatre and Art Gallery has been a key driver in ensuring the investment in arts and cultural resources is widely realised and pathways for engagement are opened for Griffith's diverse communities.

We are now able to provide schools with a direct line of access to our theatre and gallery. For some of the students involved, this has given them their first point of contact with the cultural resources that lie in our community.

CURRENT ACTIVITY

- **Big hART – GOLD (3 year Griffith residency)**

Big hART is a critically acclaimed arts and social change arts organisation, and is also one of Australia's highest producing and most critically acclaimed arts and social change organisations. GOLD continues Big hART's work, exploring the chemistry of bringing together young people growing up in Griffith, with farming families during the worst drought in recorded history.

Young people and photographers, filmmakers, designers and producers, have spent time on rural properties across the Murray Darling Basin in Eastern Australia. These project participants have been sharing and collecting stories of hardship, survival and resilience with farming families who may well become Australia's first refugees of climate change.

These narratives are being collated with an open global invitation for response, interaction and further contributions.

This work will inform a number of creative products in the coming years - a multi media performance event that will take place in dry dams and riverbeds on properties across the Murray Darling Basin in 2009, an acoustic musical that will be performed in major Australian cities and

regional theatres 2009 – 2010; and content which could be screened nationally on ABC TV.

- **Theatre Access Program (TAP)**

TAP is a three year partnership (concluding late 2009) between Griffith City Council, The Australia Council for the Arts and ARTS NSW for the development of professional theatre and performing artists, hosted by Griffith Regional Theatre.

Critically, TAP is an opportunity for regional artists to develop professional experience, develop ideas and receive critical feedback as they collaborate with other professional artists.

TAP also provides, via a series of workshops, performances, residencies and professional development assistance, an opportunity for professional regional performing artists to tap into the resources of the Griffith Regional Theatre.

It is enabling new local theatre work to develop to a professional standard, providing creative and innovative local work for audiences to savour

- **Sport Meets Art (SmArt) Circus Skills Development Project**

To attract local young people (primarily ages 9 – 18) not engaged in sport and regular community activities.

Promote healthy lifestyle choices and target reductions in obesity in young people.

To offer participants multiple points of access in community activities. Eg. Through sports, performance, multimedia involvement, as audience members, and creative workshops.

- **CRYT (Creative Riverina Youth Team)**

CRYT is a unique program that has harnessed the needs, energy and enthusiasm of young people in Griffith and provided a relevant program that is youth driven, inclusive and responsive.

It has genuinely improved opportunities for young people, giving voice and access to youth services, events, workshops and entertainment. CRYT celebrates diversity and has become a local player contributing to strengthening the community.

Its success is best seen in the young people who have been key to CRYT's success, notably Jasmine Blumer, now Griffith regional theatre's TAP

Creative Producer and Maydina Penrith, a local indigenous woman currently running for Council at age 21.

- **Body Culture**

Body Culture is an exciting, new initiative funded by Museums and Galleries NSW, that aims to build students' skills, understanding and appreciation of art styles and promotes acceptance of cultural diversity in the community.

The project focuses on the human body and culture and will comprise a number of linked exhibitions, workshops and other activities that explore and integrate these themes.

There will be particular focus on targeting disadvantaged schools in Griffith and its surrounding areas.

TOURISM

The Burley Griffin designed town of Griffith is a unique blend of cultures that provides a cosmopolitan atmosphere in a community that thrives on its agricultural base.

Cultural pursuits within the city have increased over recent years as a direct result of active pursuit and promotion of the finer things in life and this is reflected in the increased patronage at cultural facilities.

As a major regional centre in New South Wales, Griffith is well placed to draw visitation from a range of neighbouring communities as well as increasing its capacity to cater as an alternative holiday destination for those wanting to experience a blend of many cultures.

A number of annual festivals draw visitors from across the nation and allow for Griffith to not only showcase its diversity but its creativity and inclusiveness as a community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Griffith, with its growing business community, provides an opportunity for great lifestyle and abundant work opportunities.

Whether you are looking to relocate a business, searching for employment in the many different industries or after a change of lifestyle for you and your family, you will be able to find it in the City of Griffith.

The region is renowned for its food, wine, agricultural diversity, engineering and retail sectors and the strong growth in these regions.

With Griffith centrally located between Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide it makes an ideal site for easy distribution to these centres.

Alignment

Focussed support for arts and culture assists GCC build a strong social inclusion model that:

- Facilitates a robust forum for social cohesion and community capacity building
- presents shared cultural experiences in a relevant and accessible way to groups in the community who otherwise have no perceived need to engage with services provided by GCC
- offers diverse entry points to shared cultural experiences for the community as audience members and participants
- provides an alternative social engagement to entertainment presented by hotels and leagues clubs

Advantages for NSW artists and arts companies

- Commitment by local government and partners in managing , staffing and resourcing capital infrastructure is estimated at approx \$2m
- Building upon considerable base of cultural activity currently present in Griffith
- Audiences are demonstrating support for high quality presentations (evidenced in increase attendances)

Collaborations and Residencies

Negotiations with performing and visual artists and arts companies has revealed a high interest in establishing lasting collaborations and residencies with NSW artists and arts organisations.

- Flying Fruit Fly Circus
- OzOpera
- Monkey Baa

Audience Development

GCC will continue a strong focus on audience development through building relationships between artists and arts companies on one hand, and local residents, community and businesses on the other. This will increase the

number of opportunities for artists and audiences to be introduced and exposed to diverse arts practice.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Griffith Regional Theatre
- Griffith Regional Art Gallery
- Pioneer Park
- Griffith Library

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Director, Griffith Regional Theatre and Art Gallery
- Marketing and Education Coordinator, Griffith Regional Theatre and Art Gallery
- Events Co-ordinator, Griffith City Council

RESOURCES

- Couture Collection

What evidence exists of a need for future infrastructure development?

The Griffith Community Action Plan (CAP) was developed following extensive consultation with the Griffith community and as a means of improving service delivery. The 14 priorities and 40 strategies outlined in the CAP have all been linked directly to the priorities and goals of the NSW State Plan.

The Griffith CAP is an integral document in Griffith City Council's Strategic Plan and elements of the CAP will be incorporated into the long-term growth strategy currently being prepared for the city, *Growing Griffith 2030*.

Arts and cultural themes resonate throughout the CAP documentation and appear frequently as actions to address the strategies detailed in the plan. The following information outlines how infrastructure development would help meet some of the CAP objectives and NSW State Plan priorities.

LINKS TO GRIFFITH COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN:

Strategy 1

Encourage and promoted youth culture & citizenship

Strategy 3

Encourage and promote existing public spaces and services

Strategy 15

Ensure community development response to antisocial behaviour are planned, developed, implemented and monitored

Strategy 16

Reduce discrimination on the basis of cultural identity and ensure equitable access to all services.

Strategy 38

Support the delivery of the Community Action Plan through an Arts and Cultural Strategy

Strategy 39

Increase participation in the Arts – in production, audience development and infrastructure

Strategy 40

Participate in larger Regional Arts Strategy

LINKS TO NSW STATE PLAN:

Rights, Respect and Responsibility:

R3 – Reduced levels of antisocial behaviour

R4 – Increase participation and integration in community activities

Environment for Living

E8 – More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity.

Fairness and Opportunity

F2 – Increased employment and community participation for people with disabilities

Growing Prosperity Across NSW

P2 – Maintain and invest in infrastructure

P6 – Increase business investment in rural and regional NSW

P7 – Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies.

CONCLUSION

The City of Griffith is well placed geographically and strategically to be a central point for arts delivery programs for the western Riverina. However, its capacity is somewhat hampered by limited access to appropriate infrastructure to facilitate this.

Griffith City Council has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to improving the opportunity for cultural pursuits for not only its community but the wider population of the region and will continue to pursue this into the future. The needs and desires of the community have been well documented through the preparation of the Community Action Plan which is a vital plank in building the future of this community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment to the inquiry on this important issue for regional centres in New South Wales. We await your determination with interest.

Sincerely

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