

Submission  
No 20

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

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ORANGE CITY COUNCIL

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28 August 2008

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

Dear Sir/Madam

**INQUIRY INTO ARTS & CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Please find attached a submission by Orange City Council to the Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD by the NSW Public Works Committee.

Should you have any queries, or wish to discuss Council's submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Jan Richards at Orange City Council on 6393-8126 or by email at [jrichards@orange.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jrichards@orange.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Michael Milston  
**DIRECTOR HUMAN SERVICES**

# Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD

Submission by Orange City Council

## ***Background***

The city of Orange is located within the Central Tablelands of New South Wales, about 260 kilometres west of Sydney and 270 kilometres north of Canberra. The City is bounded by the Cabonne Council area in the north, east and west and Blayney Shire in the south.

Orange is a cultural city, blending historic buildings and streetscapes with cosmopolitan cafes, restaurants, theatres and galleries. It offers all the benefits of a modern regional city and supports a population of 38,000 people and with surrounding towns and villages, a further population of 100,000 through its industrial, commercial and service resources.

Orange can boast a strong, diverse economy, excellent education and health facilities and broad range of community services. The city's industry base is significant and diverse, ranging from apples through to whitegoods manufacturing, mining, tourism, agricultural support and research facilities.

The region has consolidated its position as a nationally significant metallurgical mining centre with the development of Cadia and Ridgeway gold and copper mining projects. The cumulative economic impact of the operation of Cadia Hill and Ridgeway Gold Mines is estimated to be in the order of \$426 - \$453 million in annual regional output, \$271- \$286 million in annual value added and \$40 - \$47 million in annual household income. The mines currently employ some 500 people.

Electrolux and an extensive range of medical specialists and health services are also concentrated in Orange. The City and surrounds include agricultural industry, viticulture and orcharding.

## ***Orange City Council - Cultural Services***

The Strategic Objective for the delivery of Cultural Services by Orange City Council is to:

*Provide for the cultural development of the community by strengthening local identity, building a sense of place and enhancing the quality of life through developing and providing a diverse range of cultural programs to match the community's needs and interests.*

This is achieved through the activities and series of Council's cultural institutions:

- **Orange City Library** located in Civic Square, and member of Central West Libraries, is considered one of the best public libraries in NSW. Open 7 days a week the Library provides a diverse range of services for the whole community. The Library is also host to the **Central West Writers Centre** which is partially funded by Arts NSW.
- The adjacent **Orange Civic Theatre** is a multipurpose venue, which offers a diverse annual program including many local, national and international touring productions.
- **Orange Regional Gallery** next to the Library is one of the best galleries west of Sydney. Regular exhibitions provide challenging and dynamic representations of local, regional and international art.

Council has also supported the **Orange Regional Conservatorium** since its formation 20 years ago through the provision of premises and land for its operation.

Cultural development in the city is in accordance with *The Orange Cultural Plan 2007 – 2011*. This is the third *Orange Cultural Plan*, the first being developed in 1999. It conforms to the Department of Local Government *Cultural Planning Guidelines*.

The *Orange Cultural Plan 2007 -2011* links closely to other Council documents including *Orange Community Plan 2006 – 2011*, the *Heritage Strategic Plan 2004*, *Draft Museum Development Plan 2005* and the *Orange Local Environmental Plan 2000*.

## **Responses to questions**

### **1 Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources**

#### ***Council's experience with the State grants process***

Orange City Council has significant experience in the State grants process from application through to acquittal. All of the cultural partners within the organisation heavily utilise grant funds to provide opportunities to further strategic directions and implement innovative programs. This is not always possible from Council's own funding base. Without access to these funds the ability to be able to provide a high level service would be severely curtailed. For example on average half of the Gallery's exhibition program is funded by grants while implementation of the Library's Library Management System was made possible by a Library Development Grant.

Touring theatre productions rely on grants to ensure they can be experienced by regional audiences.

#### ***The amount of funding spent on arts and cultural activities***

In the period 2007/2008 Council spent \$3,577,394 in the area of cultural services.

Council's *Management Plan* provides for a budget that maintains existing levels of service with provision for capital project expenditure and an opportunity for increased level of capital projects over the next three years. The objective of the *Management Plan* is to maintain the high quality assets and services already provided in the City and to expand where appropriate to meet the level of growth in Orange.

Council and staff are committed to maintain and develop sustainable infrastructure assets that are relevant to an expanding community's needs, and to develop opportunities that provide a quality lifestyle and create an environment for a diverse and sustainable commercial, industrial, agricultural and tourism sectors.

The *Management Plan* is informed by the *Orange Cultural Plan 2007 – 2011* which will help inform and the allocation of resources during the period. Those strategies requiring additional resources will need to be prioritised by Council and implemented in a staged manner over the life of the *Plan*. They will compete for additional resources alongside other Council priorities in Council's annual *Management Plan* development process.

The *Cultural Plan* fits within the section titled Community Amenity within the *Management Plan*.

#### ***The significance of any partnerships with private sector funding or private sector sponsorships in the area of arts and culture***

All of Council's cultural institutions have participated in private sector sponsorship opportunities, with limited success. The occasion to seek sponsorship at a local level is impacted by the relatively small number of large organisations within the local

community and the many requests on their resources. Overwhelmingly it is agreed that the effort required to secure and service the sponsorship, far exceeds the value of sponsorship received.

All of these institutions, including the Orange Regional Conservatorium, have ability to access funds from the Orange Regional Arts Foundation (ORAF), a local philanthropic organisation established in 1984 to support and encourage activities in the Arts, in particular:

The Foundation augments the support provided by government with funds for the expansion and improvement of these institutions, in the facilities and services they offer to the community. Recent projects include acquisitions for the Orange Regional Gallery, Writer in Residence program for the Orange City Library, participation in the project to replace Orange Civic Theatre's seating and compactus shelving for the Orange Regional Conservatorium. Further information is available from the ORAF website: <http://www.oraf.org.au/oraf/default.htm>

## **2 Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life**

Council's research in this area has indicated that "the community and cultural facilities in Orange are sufficient to meet current and future populations however there is scope to continue to expand and diversify cultural community programs and events". (SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd, 2008, *Orange Economic and Community Futures Discussion Paper*. Unpublished, July, p. 34).

Without adequate funding the infrastructure necessary to provide cultural services including staffing, buildings, opening hours and collections will need to be reviewed. The young, old, culturally diverse and disadvantaged have the most to lose. Sustained cuts to funding have eroded funds available for infrastructure renewal and innovative project development. This is particularly evident in country NSW where local government's ability to fund these projects is limited.

Each of Council's cultural institutions has dedicated staffing:

- Orange City Library 11 (EFT)
- Orange Regional Gallery 4 (EFT)
- Orange Civic Theatre 7 (EFT)

Arts development is undertaken by the Managers of the 3 institutions in partnership with the regional arts organisation, Arts OutWest.

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

Orange City Council recognises the value of cultural hubs and is in the process of commissioning a concept design from selected architectural companies for integrated facilities within its Civic Square. The Civic Square includes a cultural and civic precinct.

Part of the concept design will include a design concept for a museum that may share facilities with the existing Regional Library/Art Gallery (ORLAG) and Orange Visitors Centre.

Orange City Council's Regional Library and Art Gallery (ORLAG) complex was opened in 1986. At the time the complex set a new benchmark for regional libraries and

galleries and was awarded the Sulman Prize for Architecture. In 1994 the original architect Colin Still designed a canopy for the North Court.

The ORLAG complex is located in Civic Square (bounded by Lords Place, Peisley, March and Byng Streets) and forms part of a cultural and civil precinct that includes the Council Chambers, Council administration, Orange Visitor Information Centre, Orange Civic Theatre, community services, open green space, public art and car parking.

The cultural precinct has become the focus of a diverse range of cultural, educational and community activities. The precinct includes significant public art works and memorials; it is also used for outdoor performances, exhibitions, festivals, expositions, Carols by Candlelight, and markets.

In 2000 Council adopted a Museum Plan that proposed the option of a museum development within the cultural precinct. In 2006 as part of its *Orange 2020* planning program Council further developed the proposal for an integrated regional museum in the cultural precinct, combining this purpose in the existing ORLAG.

The development of an Integrated Cultural Facility will form a complex that provides a wonderful opportunity to add value to the existing cultural infrastructure, to share facilities, reduce capital/recurrent costs, whilst enhancing the overall amenity and functionality of the cultural precinct.

This integration will include multi purpose exhibition space, appropriate storage for works, exhibition preparation areas, education areas, meeting rooms, combined front of house facilities and extend the overall capacity of the existing cultural precinct to incorporate a range of facilities.

The complex will only eventuate with strong support of State/Federal government funding, and with contributions from local business.

#### **4 Accessibility of cultural and arts education**

In common with many professional areas cultural services are increasingly being confronted with the difficulty of attracting suitably qualified and experienced staff to country areas. It is becoming commonplace to advertise several times before filling a position and even then the appointment is often a compromise situation. These factors can be identified as contributing to this challenge:

- The recognised issues associated with relocation from city to country – lifestyle, family connections, social networks, and distance from major centres
- Capacity of country councils to pay attractive salaries
- Comparative position of cultural services within country councils
- Lack of education and professional development opportunities
- No perceived or identified career path
- Inadequate opportunities for employment of the partner

Already the ageing of the cultural services workforce is beginning to have an impact with difficulties in recruiting for positions vacated by baby boomers being recorded across regional NSW. The impending retirement of larger numbers of older staff combined with the reluctance of new graduates to relocate to country areas will ensure that alternatives will need to be explored. Problems such as this are not restricted only to more remote locations but also occur in more “desirable” coastal communities.

As many cultural services professionals who accept a position in country NSW will be working in isolation, or with limited support, there is an expectation by employers that they be “workplace ready”. This is envisaged as working towards an agreed upon skill set that prepares graduates for the environment in which they will find themselves.

Ongoing professional development is also viewed as a key area for, including:

- summer schools be offered similar to those available for teachers
- advantage should be taken of flexible education methods to ensure that those living outside of metropolitan areas aren't disadvantaged in the area of ongoing professional development
- Continuing professional development should be supported and should embrace a wide range of skills in keeping with what is required in the workplace.

By virtue of their circumstances many professionals working in the cultural industries undertake tertiary study in librarianship by distance education. Most are already employed in the industry and are studying to address the identified need for qualified staff. For many of these students the requirements for practicums creates great hardship, both at a personal and institutional level – the need for replacement staff, travel and accommodation costs and family commitments. Members believe that in order to make education a more attractive option this area needs to be closely examined.

## **5 Economic impacts on communities**

In the *Consultants Findings Report* (SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd, 2008, Unpublished, August, p.4) it is described how “stakeholders unanimously agreed that the quantity and quality of community infrastructure is a key asset to the community. The overall amenity of the city and its contribution to liveability was also considered a key attractor for both new residents and business investment”. The city's cultural institutions are a key contributor to this assessment.

## **6 The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan for the state to maximise diversity of access with reference to the Tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies**

Despite representations from peak stakeholder bodies during the draft phase The *NSW State Plan* does not adequately reflect the demonstrated role in supporting our communities and government initiatives played by the cultural sector in this State. Detailed submissions on the role of libraries in supporting the State Plan were also made to the Rural and Regional Taskforce. In order for the sector to be able to apply for grant and other funding in an equitable environment there needs to be recognition and documentation, whether as an inclusion in the State Plan or in a separate Cultural plan linked to other key policies.