

Submission
No 25

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

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Date Received: 29/08/2008

Submission to the Legislative Assembly
Standing Committee on Public Works

*Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural
Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD*

camperdown dulwich hill enmore lewisham marrickville newtown petersham st peters stanmore sydenham tempe

Marrickville
a diverse, vibrant and innovative community



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OUR REF:
YOUR REF:

3378

27 August 2008

David Borger MP
Chairman, Legislative Assembly Public Works Committee
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000
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Dear Mr Borger

RE: Submission to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD. Marrickville Council welcomes the Committee's efforts to engage on the issue of arts and cultural planning and infrastructure and the impact on communities.

Over the past decade or so there has been increasing discussion of the role of creativity in contributing to community wellbeing, cohesive societies, vibrant cities and regions, and economic wealth.

Council considers itself a leader in innovation and connectivity with our community across many areas, including arts and cultural development, and understands that effective cultural development is best achieved at the local level.

The Marrickville local government area is a unique cultural asset of metropolitan Sydney; producing new work and innovation across the sector and providing a home to many of city's arts and cultural workers.

Council recognises the vital importance of the creative sector and that this sector is primarily concerned with space and place, networks, a sense of community and entrepreneurial support. Many of these factors exist organically in the Marrickville area and Council looks forward to working with the State Government in providing support through policy, funding, services and programs to ensure the sustainability of the Marrickville area and the vital cultural function it provides for metropolitan Sydney.

For further enquires, please contact Council's Manager Communication & Cultural Services, Josephine Bennett, on 9335 2075.

Yours sincerely



Kim Anson
General Manager

Response to the Inquiry

1. About Marrickville – the Edge of the City

The Marrickville area is less than 10 kilometres from the city centre, and comprises some of Sydney's oldest suburbs - Camperdown, Dulwich Hill, Enmore, Lewisham, Marrickville, Newtown, Petersham, St Peters, Stanmore, Sydenham, and Tempe. The area covers 16 square kilometres and is bounded by Parramatta Road to the north, King Street (Newtown) and the Princes Highway to the east, the Alexandra Canal and Cooks River to the south, and Old and New Canterbury Roads to the west. Marrickville has a strong inner city 'look' - narrow tree lined streets, Victorian and Federation cottages, thriving strip shopping centres along main streets, distinctive neighbourhoods and local 'villages'.

The area is also a very vibrant and diverse community of residents and is known as the birthplace of multiculturalism. The 2006 Census reported that Marrickville's population has declined slightly to 75,000 people. The community is culturally and linguistically diverse, with 34% of the population born overseas, and 33% speaking a language other than English at home. The main languages spoken are Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese), Arabic and Portuguese. Council has strongly supported community diversity and the benefits that diversity brings. It is proud that many second generation migrants have chosen to remain in the area, and that Marrickville is also home to a significant gay and lesbian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and arts and cultural population.

2. About Marrickville Council

Marrickville Council is an award winning organisation well recognised for its ongoing innovation on behalf of the people of Marrickville. Council undertakes a great number of innovative and effective projects which have a positive impact on the community and on Council's performance. Over the years, Council has received extensive industry recognition for its work including the: 2002 WorkCover Employer of the Year Award, 2003 A.R. Bluett Award, 2004 LGSA Cultural Award for Cultural Industries, 2005 Planning Institute of Australia NSW Awards for Community Planning for the Marrickville Public Art Strategy; 2005 LGSA Excellence in the Environment Award, 2006 Adcorp National Employer of the Year (Public Sector) Award, the 2006 LGMA Management Excellence Award and the 2007 Local Government Cultural Award for the Artist Residency Programs.

3. About Arts and Culture in Marrickville

Council has recently completed a year-long consultation process for the development of the Marrickville Cultural Policy and Strategy that is presented as the *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008*, prepared by Susan Conroy, cultural planner. The *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* provides an in-depth analysis of the cultural landscape of the Marrickville local government area and confirms Marrickville's reputation as a key arts and cultural centre of metropolitan Sydney.

Over 3000 people who live in the Marrickville local government area (LGA) are employed in a cultural occupation; there are at least 289 cultural enterprises; close to 200 individual artists; 23 clubs and pubs that provide music or a cultural program; and 36 annual festivals.

Council manages a wide range of initiatives to support artists locally, nationally and internationally. Council spends approximately \$6,000,000 on arts and cultural development offset by approximately \$770,000 in income. Some of the specific Council-managed arts and cultural development programs include:

- **Arts and Culture in Marrickville E-network (ACME)** – an online networking and information sharing service for the arts and cultural communities of Marrickville. ACME provides subscribers with the latest information on what is happening in the region in relation to arts and culture;
- **Arts & Cultural Grants Program** – an annual grants program to assist local arts and cultural workers;
- **Art in the Park** – an annual outdoor sculpture exhibition program held in Maundrell Park, Petersham;
- **Chrissie Cotter Gallery** – a free gallery space managed by Council for contemporary artists to exhibit their work and bring high quality exhibitions to the local community;
- **Community Events Program** - provides an ongoing source of employment for local performing artists and arts workers through a variety of festival, street fairs, concerts and other community events, including the Marrickville Cultural Festival and Cooks River Arts & Sustainability Festival;
- **Cultural Diversity Action Plan** - Council's activities promoting the participation of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging in local citizens, and improving access to services and programs services that meet the needs and produce better outcomes for local citizens of CALD backgrounds;
- **International Artists Exchange Program and Local and National Residency Program** – opportunities for professional development and exchange between international, national and local artists. This program won the 2007 Local Government Award for Managing Culture;
- **Library Services** – four libraries throughout the local government area providing a range of literary, social and cultural programs to the community;
- **Local History Program** – a highly regarded program managing the social, cultural and physical history of the local government area;
- **Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee** – a long-standing committee advising Council on matters relating to local Aboriginal culture and associated programs, including the promotion of Aboriginal culture across Marrickville and along the Cooks River; protection of Aboriginal heritage sites; and preservation of Aboriginal history and culture within schools and the community;
- **MGM Museum and Gallery Guide** - providing a free listing of local galleries and museums in the local government area;
- **Marrickville Public Art Strategy: People, Place + Art** - an implementation of this wide ranging program has provided opportunities for artists to work on highly visible public art projects, such as the Robyn Webster Sports and recreation Centre at Tempe, the poster bollards in Newtown/Enmore and St Peters, and the Portuguese mural at Petersham. The program won the 2005 Planning Institute of Australia (NSW) award for Community Planning;
- **MOST** – the biennial Marrickville Open Studio Trail promotes local artists' studios in the Marrickville area, assisting audience and economic development;

- **Newtown Entertainment Precinct Project** - comprised a range of activities and programs designed to support and enhance the creative industries in the Newtown area. This program won the 2004 Local Government Cultural Award for Cultural Industries;
- **Sister Cities Program** - a program maintaining links between Marrickville and a variety of international towns and cities in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.
- **Stone Villa Artist Studio** – Council owned and independently managed artist studio facility in Sydenham that comprises nine studios spaces; and
- **Town Halls and Community Facilities** – Marrickville offers town halls in Petersham and Marrickville plus a range of smaller community facilities for hire, providing spaces for many community and cultural groups to come together.

The *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* shows there is an expectation that Council will continue to contribute to the arts and cultural life of local communities in the LGA. Some of the key strengths and opportunities identified in consultations, surveys and seminars include:

- tolerance, respect, and diversity are highly valued;
- mixed communities;
- the significant level and mix of traditional and new/emerging arts practice;
- the valuing of history and heritage as part of the celebration of culture;
- a desire for an online (web) form of engagement on cultural issues across the communities;
- the value of Arts and Culture in Marrickville E-network (ACME);
- a widespread desire for increased contact and engagement with other artists across the creative arts community including mentoring, career forums and master classes between young/emerging/established artists, cross-art form, cross-cultural and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal artists;
- the importance of the strip shopping centres and the different ways they are utilised by different cultural groups; and
- a positive attitude to living in the LGA and the options for engagement and participation as promoted by Council.

The key directions to be considered shortly by Council in the Draft Marrickville Cultural Policy and Strategy are as follows:

- Address the gap in significant cultural infrastructure;
Eg: a cultural precinct combining an Aboriginal keeping place, migration museum, library, history centre, and gallery/performance space.
- Upgrades of the existing adapted cultural facilities, such as the Stone Villa artist studios, Chrissie Cotter Gallery, Artist Residence, town halls and meeting spaces;
- Develop local history centre for community programs and exhibitions that represent a more diverse community history and exhibition program which reflects both historical and contemporary social life;
- Consider planning policy – work/live arrangements; day/night economies; strip shopping centres;
- Council's brokerage role in consolidating Marrickville as a location for the creative industries;
- Startup creative business programs; cultural tourism and creative business support programs;
- Mentoring;
- Networking and professional development;
- Community building – cohesion and social and cultural rights and responsibilities;
- Develop capacity for hosting touring exhibitions;

- Develop strategic partnerships with local and regional partners: other Councils, arts organisations and education institutions;
- Develop cultural development programs – cross-cultural, inter-generational and cross-art form; and
- Develop cross-Council arts and cultural programming and collaboration.

4. Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources

Outside the Sydney CBD and the major arts and cultural institutions, Council perceives that there has been limited allocation of state and federal resources for the development of cultural infrastructure in metropolitan Sydney for local communities.

Situated on the border of the Sydney CBD, the Marrickville LGA provides an important resource for the development of new cultural products and creative industries as well as being home to a large number of arts and cultural workers.

There are opportunities for arts and cultural infrastructure in the Marrickville LGA to service sub-regional and regional needs, however this is not feasible without additional funding and support.

Community feedback received through the Cultural Research Project 2008 includes the following:

- the gap between having a great idea and getting it off-the-ground and the related sense that funding agencies expected an immediate return or success; and
- concern about the gentrification of the area and its impact on the arts spaces and housing.

Council acknowledges the recent support of Arts NSW towards the feasibility study costs of developing art studios in the local area and looks forward to the further development of this project to provide much needed affordable studio space in the LGA.

5. Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life

The *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* has revealed that there is a high need for hard and soft cultural infrastructure in the LGA to ensure the sustainability of the area into the future. The report noted that while Marrickville Council owned a range of smaller adapted community facilities, there was a gap in significant cultural infrastructure and further potential to develop soft infrastructure to support the connectivity between the creative schools, workers, businesses, audiences and consumers in the area.

Council owns and manages a community facilities portfolio comprising 32 properties for public hiring, Council functions and activities operated by community-based organisations under lease or licence. The historic town halls at Petersham and Marrickville are regularly used to host Council-run community events.

A comprehensive review of Council's community facilities portfolio was undertaken in 2004, to ensure that the facilities meet changing community expectations and statutory requirements. The review noted that the portfolio had been established over a number of years and in most cases was not purpose built for the current use and the number of available spaces does not meet the demand from community groups for leases or licences. A subsequent condition audit of the portfolio led Council to establish a community facilities reserve budget to fund the various programs for maintaining and upgrading the facilities identified in a long-term plan. There are a number of heritage properties in the community facilities portfolio and the development of conservation plans has been included as a priority in the plan.

Funding the on-going maintenance and, particularly, the upgrades of Council facilities is an issue for Council and an area in which the State Government could assist. Specific examples include facilities that currently or have the potential to service the metropolitan region, such as the Addison Road Centre precinct (requiring capital investment in hard and soft infrastructure, as identified in the *Metropolitan Strategy* and *Marrickville Urban Strategy*); the Coptic Church in Sydenham (requiring approximately \$2 million to upgrade, if it is to be utilized, for a combined community facility / artist studios centre); 19 Railway Road, Sydenham (existing Council-operated artist studio facilities servicing local and metropolitan artists that are being investigated for expansion to service demand); and the Petersham and Marrickville Town Halls (heritage halls that service metropolitan Sydney requiring building and technical upgrades).

In terms of soft infrastructure, there is a role for State Government to consider providing or partnering in providing support programs throughout metropolitan Sydney, recognising that the creative communities and enterprises of this area act regionally. For example, audiences living in the Marrickville LGA will consume cultural product offered in the City of Sydney area; and audiences in areas of the City of Sydney LGA consume the cultural products offered in the Marrickville area and surrounds. Similarly, artists living outside the Marrickville LGA seek studio space in the Marrickville LGA. Career path development, training and networking for arts and cultural workers across the sector also requires attention.

Key issues for the Marrickville LGA identified in the cultural research process include:

- the lack of a cultural hub or precinct and its importance in triggering contact and endeavour;
- the limited range of affordable and diverse spaces, venues and facilities to provide opportunity for further development of studios, and creative industry businesses;
- the critical role that re-zoning and planning controls can have in supporting cultural activities both in terms of public venues for arts and culture as well as home studios in residential developments;
- the lack of significant Council-supported cultural facilities in particular a gallery and museum, arts development projects, art kiosks, and the perceived absence of a significant market for 'serious art';
- concerns about the safety and accessibility of public transport options; and
- ageing cultural infrastructure which was not designed for cultural and arts uses requiring maintenance.

Council welcomes an opportunity to work with the State Government in the development of major cultural infrastructure in the area, as well as opportunities to provide and support the development of soft infrastructure.

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

The Newtown/Enmore area of the Marrickville LGA has the city's highest concentration of theatres and the suburb has long had the reputation for being a centre for new and emerging independent artists, creating an organic cultural hub or precinct. Within this area, performances across the diverse areas of music, dance, film and drama attract around half a million patrons to Newtown every year, based on research conducted by the Newtown Entertainment Precinct Association.

Consultants Hill PDA's analysis of the Newtown/Enmore/Erskineville precinct, as presented in the *Newtown Precinct Business Study 2008*, identified the highly developed entertainment industry as a key strength of the Newtown/Enmore/Erskineville area, along with its strong sense of community and multiple late night shopping venues; and established alternative market niche and nightlife reputation. Based on their analysis of retail and commercial trends, Hill PDA note that there will be an increasing demand for variety in entertainment and the arts within the Newtown/Enmore/Erskineville precinct.

While the Newtown/Enmore/Erskineville precinct enjoys strong trade, there are several notable weaknesses in infrastructure to service the increasing demand of future growth and long-term economic sustainability including the following:

- traffic and pedestrian congestion;
- insufficient pedestrian crossings;
- lack of a focal point, landmark feature or central point, to be developed in an area such as Newtown Square;
- lack of open public space / domain within the shopping precinct;
- the poor condition of Newtown Railway Station and its surrounding area;
- insufficient landscaping and greenery;
- short supply of street furniture such as garbage bins, seating etc;
- quality of shop fronts and facades; and
- restricted parking.

From 2002 to 2006, Council implemented the Newtown Entertainment Precinct Project (NEPP), a series of inter-related projects that aimed to foster economic and cultural development through coordinating Newtown as a unique cultural and entertainment precinct; maximise Newtown's tourism potential by working with the community, public and private sectors to strengthen Newtown's unique cultural identity and develop domestic and international visitor interest; and improve physical infrastructure in the precinct through the inclusion of legal postering bollards and public art.

The Newtown/Enmore area already attracts considerable visitor numbers each year, but the potential of this unique area requires further support. Through the NEPP, Council worked with Tourism NSW to promote Newtown to the Australian domestic tourism market as a major destination for its vibrant and eclectic culture; established a marketing website for the entertainment precinct; in partnership with the Alternative Media Group and the City of Sydney, Council instigated and supported a 'What's On' publication for the area. Council has further committed funding to the Newtown Entertainment Precinct Association for the establishment of a ticketing and information kiosk in the Newtown Square area. Council is currently pursuing a major public artwork for Newtown Square that will provide an iconic focal point for the precinct. Council welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with State Government to develop this unique and vital cultural precinct of metropolitan Sydney.

Further, Council is investigating the development of a creative industries 'zone' in the Marrickville/Sydenham/St Peters area through the development of a new Local Environment Plan and the pending Cultural Strategy. There is currently adaptive use of the old factory stock in those areas for creative businesses and collectives. Council is interested in implementing strategies to retain the availability and affordability of these areas for creative businesses, which could effectively provide a 'buffer' between the industrial lands near Sydney Airport and the surrounding residential areas.

7. Accessibility of cultural and arts education

The Marrickville area has a sound base of specialised arts education, including the Dulwich High School of the Visual Arts, Newtown High School of Performing Arts on its border and the Design Centre Enmore (TAFE) which specialises in design and fashion. In addition there are a number of other local schools offering a range of arts and cultural programs within their curricula.

Council considers the main challenge for the LGA is to work with a range of partners to develop a clear path from childhood and young adult education to vocational training, transitioning into employment opportunities across the creative sector, as well as providing support for early and mid career artists in areas such as awareness of existing training, support and residency programs and professional brokering and arts marketing skills. Council is also interested in exploring informal arts and cultural learning opportunities for the adults and older people to facilitate well-being within the broader community.

Council welcomes the opportunity to develop a partnership with the State Government in these essential development and education areas for the well-being of the community and in supporting sustainability in the creative industries over time.

8. Economic impacts on communities

Council recognises the significance of the economic impact of the creative industries in the local area and understands the increasingly important role these industries can play in the viability of cities and regions. This is reflected in Council's key planning documents such as the *Marrickville Community Plan and Strategic Plan 2006-2011* and the *Marrickville Urban Strategy*.

A key direction of the *Marrickville Urban Strategy* is support for the creative and innovation sectors in the LGA, given the potential to increase local employment opportunities and as an appropriate land use buffer between higher impact land uses and residential areas.

The *Metropolitan Strategy* recognises that the Marrickville LGA is part of the global economic corridor and jobs, such as general and specialist managers, specialist business unit managers, business, information technology, science, and arts and media professionals, are concentrating in and around the global economic corridor.

The *Marrickville Employment Lands Study 2008* identifies the creative industry sectors as a potential area of competitive strength for Marrickville in building global supply chains, clustering of industry and responding to the State Government's Innovation Statement, particularly in the areas of media, design and creative industries. This study also shows an increase in cultural and recreational services employment of 11% from 2001-2006, in contrast to broader metropolitan Sydney employment patterns.

Data gathered throughout the *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* about the arts sector and creative industries within the Marrickville area showed that over 3,000 people living in the LGA were employed in a cultural occupation. Other research indicates that there has been a 106.4% increase between 1986 and 2006 of people employed in a cultural occupation in the LGA. Marrickville is home to numerous commercial cultural venues (eg. the Enmore, Newtown and New Theatres) and galleries; festivals; active main streets day and night; as well as education facilities and services.

The cultural research project found that there are many innovative niche arts businesses and creative industries, studios and artists working in collectives or groups, a high level of internet use and a lot of artists working in contemporary art media. The Marrickville community takes an active interest in the arts and cultural life and there is a high level of household expenditure on arts and cultural goods and services, as demonstrated in the *2008 Marrickville Community Survey* results.

The Newtown/Enmore area of the Marrickville LGA has the city's highest concentration of theatres and the suburb has long had the reputation for being a centre for new and emerging independent artists. Within this area, performances across the diverse areas of music, dance, film and drama attract around half a million patrons to Newtown every year. An average \$20 ticket makes this \$10 million per annum-business for Newtown, based on research undertaken by the Newtown Entertainment Precinct Association.

The *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* noted a general feeling in the community "that governing bodies failed to recognise the important role creative endeavour can have in accelerating real economic growth". There was also a perception that there was a need for government recognition of the market impacts especially for small business, theatre, music venues and community facilities.

Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the State Government in the establishment of start-up creative business programs and support services for creative businesses.

9. 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

Council supports the *NSW State Plan* and the *Metropolitan Strategy* in their recognition of the essential role of the cultural development and artistic and entertainment precincts in creating 'liveable cities'. The *Metropolitan Strategy* notes that the maintenance of a lively cultural scene will assist in maintaining Sydney's position as a global city and its cultural richness and diversity are one of Sydney's special characteristics.

Council has long supported the cultural uniqueness of the Marrickville area and the *Marrickville Community Plan 2025* and *Marrickville Strategic Plan 2006/2011* include as a key objective the development of “a creative, learning and diverse Marrickville” that is “recognised as a leading learning and creative arts centre of Sydney...”

Council was pleased to note that in the *Draft South Subregional Strategy: Parks, Public Place and Culture* section that Marrickville’s significance as a centre for arts and culture is recognised. As recommended in F4.1, Council is currently in the process of preparing the Marrickville Cultural Policy and Strategy inline with the NSW Government’s *Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government*.

Council has provided feedback to the Department of Planning on the *Draft South Subregional Strategy* that included comments on the opportunity to investigate the potential of creative industries in the revitalisation of employment lands and contribution to managing the interface issues between industrial and residential land uses. Council is investigating options for the growth of local creative industries for inclusion in the Cultural Policy and new Local Environment Plan.

Council acknowledges that the partnership between State and local governments through the Cultural Accords has been of significant symbolic importance and supports all levels of government strategically working together to achieve outcomes for communities. Council looks forward to a new Cultural Accord in 2009 that is supported through tangible programs, adequately funded and focused on assisting local government to continue its work across a broad range of areas that contribute to local cultural development.

The *Marrickville Cultural Research Report 2008* noted that there was concern amongst the local community that due to development pressures some areas are more at risk from a combination of factors including gentrification, the impact of State Government policy and reduced access to public space and infrastructure.

Council would welcome further discussion on the development of a State cultural plan and an opportunity to participate in the process. Council acknowledges the United Cities & Local Government’s *Agenda 21 for Culture*. Adopted in 2004, *Agenda 21 for Culture* presents a worldwide mission advocating locally-led cultural development that contextualises the role of cultural development in local government, internationally. Approximately 225 cities, local governments and organisations throughout the world were linked to *Agenda 21 for Culture* as at June 2007. Thematically, *Agenda 21 for Culture* comprises culture and human rights; culture, sustainability and territory; culture and social inclusion; and culture and economy. Council is firmly committed to supporting cultural diversity in its broadest sense and believes that this is best achieved at the local level; therefore any regional and national policies should recognise and support cultural development at its most local level. Council would therefore recommend that a State cultural plan be developed in close consultation with local communities throughout NSW to ensure the plan’s integrity and relevance.

10. Conclusion

Over the past decade or so there has been increasing discussion of the role of creativity in contributing to community wellbeing, cohesive societies, vibrant cities and regions, and economic wealth. At this point in the discussion, Council recognises the vital importance of the creative sector and that this sector is primarily concerned with space and place, networks, a sense of community and entrepreneurial support. Many of these factors exist organically in the Marrickville area and Council looks forward to working with the State Government in providing support through policy, funding, services and programs to ensure the sustainability of the Marrickville area and the vital cultural function it provides for metropolitan Sydney.