

Submission
No 50

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

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Date Received: 01/09/2008

Public Works Committee NSW
Legislative Assembly Inquiry
Into the Development of Arts
and Cultural Infrastructure
Outside the Sydney CBD -
Submission

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the Australia Street Company Pty Ltd

29 August 2008



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INTRODUCTION

The Australia Street Company is a leading Australian consultancy with over 10 years experience in socio-economic and cultural planning, policy analysis and management review. We have undertaken strategic work for clients across New South Wales. Projects have included the preparation of Cultural Plans, feasibility studies into the planning and development of cultural facilities, the development of State wide and regional strategies for specific aspects of the arts program delivery such as audience development, as well as management reviews of cultural infrastructure such as public libraries, regional galleries and public art projects. During 2007 we provided expert advice to the Council of the City of Sydney for the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Plan. We are familiar with the issues under consideration and welcome the opportunity to contribute to this present Inquiry.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

Cultural infrastructure has been broadly defined as “creative spaces” – space for creativity, to incubate, to innovate, to agitate, to cogitate, to anticipate, to congregate and to cultivate”.¹ This broad definition identifies that space is one of the key factors in planning for a community’s or a city’s cultural and creative development. It does not however acknowledge that infrastructure also includes intangible assets such as the creation of conditions that nurture and support creative services and programs and projects including organisational and financial capacity. This includes policy frameworks and human resource assets such as governance and management resources, as well as information and telecommunications technology including hardware and software systems.

In this submission, arts and cultural infrastructure includes, but as is outlined above, is not limited to the physical or built facilities that support a diverse range of arts and cultural activities, programs and services in a community. Arts and cultural infrastructure also includes intangible

¹ Imagine Toronto...strategies for a creative city, 2006. Final Report of the Strategies for a Creative Cities Project. www.imaginetoronto.ca

amenities and assets such as policies, programs, activities, services, systems, skills and knowledge that are dependent on physical infrastructure and work in tandem with it.

Tangible infrastructure for the arts and culture includes but is not limited to:

TANGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE	TANGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE	TANGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE
Art galleries	Community cultural centres	Concert Halls
Museums	Literary Institutes	Theatres
Libraries	School of Arts	Keeping Places
Artists studios	Amphitheatres	Film, radio and television studios
Public squares	Cultural businesses-	Cinemas
Botanic gardens	bookshops, ballet	Archives
Events live sites	schools, bars for live music.	Heritage buildings and landscapes
Education institutions – schools, TAFE, universities		

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SCOPE OF THE SUBMISSION

We note the wide ranging nature of the Inquiry and although we understand that the arts and cultural sector is made up of three organisational segments i.e. commercial, public/ not for profit and community sectors with artists working across each sector; we propose to confine our submission to comment on the public sector/ not-for-profit and community sectors only. We also propose to focus specifically on the following select matters as listed in the Terms of Reference:

1. Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources
2. Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life
3. The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs
- 5 Economic impacts on communities
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.

1. ISSUES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING AND ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

When it comes to considerations of funding and the allocation of resources for arts and cultural infrastructure in New South Wales and outside the Sydney CBD, the majority of professionally managed not-for-profit cultural venues are under the jurisdiction of government – usually local government or State government. Facilities, other than commercial, are otherwise mainly operated by the community sector, utilising volunteers as committees of management/ project advocates to deliver services and programs. Both not for profit and community sector infrastructure requires the availability of capital funds to realise physical infrastructure followed by access to sufficient operational resources to ensure ongoing sustainability.

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CAPITAL FUNDS

Our experience in working with both the not-for-profit, government and community arts and cultural sectors across New South Wales indicates that in general the majority of capital funding outside the Sydney CBD is sourced locally, either from local government or direct from the community via fundraising. By comparison, the Federal and State government provide a much smaller proportion of funding support to arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.

ADVOCATING FOR INCREASED FEDERAL SUPPORT

The Federal Government, through the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), in principle, does not provide funding assistance for arts and cultural capital infrastructure projects. The exception to this is the support provided to national projects initiated by the Federal Government and receiving ongoing annual operational support e.g. National Maritime Museum, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Although capital funding is not available via DEWHA, the Federal Government has in the past provided critical infrastructure funding to regional arts and cultural capital projects through the former Department of Transport and Regional Services via the Regional Partnerships Program. This has included funding for feasibility studies as well as for capital works. e.g. Laurieton Amphitheatre Study, 2003; Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, 2006; Western Plains Cultural Centre, 2004.

Although this program, now under the auspices of the new Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, has now ceased, this Department looks set to continue to fund a range of infrastructure projects relevant to this Inquiry. For example, under its Regional programs the Department has funded a number of Rural Transaction Centres in small regional communities that have incorporated branch libraries as well as technology access services. The Department has recently allocated \$176M for a Better Regions Program targeted at investing in *“important community infrastructure which will significantly enhance the liveability of regions”*.

<http://infrastructure.gov.au/regional/index.aspx>

The House of Representatives Standing Committee in Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government is currently

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conducting an Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program and local government has made the case for a funding program that focuses on infrastructure renewal including community infrastructure. It goes without saying that this includes arts and cultural infrastructure and the State Government should be a leading advocate for such a program at the Federal level.

The new Department, integrating as it does regional development as well as local government and including within its portfolio, the newly established Infrastructure Australia agency, presents a strategic advocacy opportunity for State and Local Government stakeholders. The role and scope of Infrastructure Australia is still evolving, and every effort needs to be made to advocate for an expansion of its role. The agency should move beyond an apparent *engineering* focus related to water, transport, communications and energy to the equally important *needs* focus which relates to land use planning, quality of life and liveability in cities and towns across the country. This includes consideration of arts and cultural infrastructure needs and not only in Australia's major cities.

Building on its current, relatively low key and reactive advocacy program, the NSW Government should take a lead role in making the case for a more strategic role for the Federal Government in the planning, development and support for the recurrent operations of the nation's arts and cultural infrastructure needs.

As a start, the NSW government should take a leadership role as an advocate for Federal support for public libraries – including for capital funding as well as project support. Increased support for public libraries is needed across the board, based on the expanded role of libraries in delivering diverse services that support lifelong learning and independent living across the community. The Federal Government is committed to creating an education revolution and that commitment recognises the central role that education plays in the economic and social strength of the nation.² In this context, advocating for Federal support for public libraries is long overdue, particularly based on the role that public libraries play as valued, accessible and core community cultural infrastructure.

² Quality education: The case for an Education Revolution in our Schools, August 2008. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

INTEGRATING AND INCREASING STATE SUPPORT FOR CAPITAL WORKS

Although the State Government provides access to an annual Arts NSW Capital Infrastructure Fund with a maximum limit of \$250,000, in reality most capital infrastructure projects cost much more than that. For example, the average purpose-built performing arts centre in a regional city costs in the vicinity of \$20M (Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre 2008/ The Glasshouse, Port Macquarie 2008) and a traditional regional gallery or museum could cost up to \$15M (Hawkesbury Regional Museum 2008/ Albury LibraryMuseum 2007). The Capital Infrastructure Fund is extremely competitive and most successful grants are for less than \$100,000.

A similar inadequate level of capital development funds are available to public libraries across the State through Library Development programs managed by the State Library of NSW. Recent reviews of Public Library Funding (Parry Report, 2008) and the NSW Cultural Grants Program (Review Panel, 2008) identified the need to link these funding programs with a view to responding to trends in co-location of facilities as well as economies of scale in the preparation of grant applications and in recurrent operational costs. (See also comments in relation to Federal funding for public libraries above).

It is also not unheard of for some projects to attract significant one-off capital grants from the State as well as the Federal Government. This is often as a result of intense lobbying direct to Members of Parliament and particularly where a political benefit as well as a community benefit can be demonstrated. Although in reality it is likely that this opportunity will continue to be available, as a basis for distributing funds, the State government should, regardless of the circumstances, require as a minimum, documentation that demonstrates a commitment to planning for sustainability. This would include the availability of planning tools such as a 5 year Business Plan for all arts and cultural facilities applying for capital support. At the moment ArtsNsw Capital Funding specifically does not support the cost of feasibility/scoping studies or the development of business plans.

RECURRENT OPERATIONAL COSTS

Capital building programs for the arts and culture when considered overall, represent less challenge for the host provider than the ongoing

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revenue raising required to support recurrent activities. This includes program support, staffing, building maintenance and general operations such as IT systems etc. The reality of finding, maintaining and even growing recurrent operational resources for professional as well as community based arts and cultural infrastructure can be daunting. Identifying true costs including for qualified and experienced staff, operations and programs is challenging and as community demand and expectation for quality program delivery grows, the need to be innovative as well as efficient and effective is heightened usually with a consequent rise in costs.

At the outset, host agencies and funding bodies must have access to robust and reliable information in relation to operational and programming costs as well as governance and management models as a basis for decision-making. This includes building maintenance life cycle planning as well as indicative business planning to give a true picture of the impact of the proposed development on recurrent budgets.

As a start, and in order to contribute to sustainable infrastructure planning, the State government could establish an Arts and Culture Infrastructure Planning Partnership Fund similar to the Western Sydney Local Government Arts incentive Fund. Such a fund would provide matching funds to organisations including local government to assist with the development of strategic documentation such as feasibility and scoping studies covering for example, costed capital works options, governance models, staffing structures and 5 year budgets relating to set up costs, recurrent operations, income targets etc.

Developing a robust, reliable and stable base for operational support is a critical component of arts and cultural infrastructure sustainability. This requires the identification of strategies that support organisational and system capacity and which avoid facilities and spaces that are under-utilised, over stretched and poorly maintained. There is a role for the State government as a partner with local government and the community in resourcing key strategic operational components critical to the management of arts and cultural infrastructure.

This would build on best practice models already in place, such as M&GNSW Regional Museum Adviser scheme, Volunteer Initiated Museum grants (M&GNSW) and the heritage adviser scheme supported by NSW Heritage Office. It could include support for management and technical skills development programs focusing on the specialist needs of arts and

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cultural facility staff; funding local and regional specialists in cultural planning, arts and cultural audience development and marketing who work across a number of venues; and establish and adequately fund a State-wide annual funding program that supports the appointment of Visiting Artistic Producers/ Creative Curators at regional galleries/ museums and performing arts centres across NSW (based on the success of recent pilot programs in the Illawarra, Griffith and Bathurst).

The NSW State government should also reconsider its long-standing practice of rate pegging and allow local councils to raise rates in accordance with planning and service priorities that reflect local community need. This would go some way to alleviating the financial pressures faced by local government as State and Federal government pursue cost-shifting strategies. It would assist local government to invest in upgrading and developing infrastructure that has important and diverse benefits including linking to the State Plan's Goal of increasing participation in arts and cultural activities.

2. SUITABILITY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL LIFE

"We need a vital arts sector. Artists are symbol creators who tell stories and create images that bring meaning to our lives. They show us beauty and evil. Through metaphor and narrative they expose and challenge the status quo. They have the courage to speak of unspeakable wrongs. They express what is complex, controversial, contested and timeless. And they also have the ability to help us envision a better world."³

A community that values its artists also needs to adequately support their creative output by providing infrastructure that nurtures artists, engages with audiences and encourages broad participation. Research indicates that such investment has an economic as well as a cultural dividend. This cultural dividend is demonstrated across New South Wales, where a number of regional cities have recently upgraded their investment in culture with a consequent positive impact on tourism, on the local cultural

³ *Caught in a money trap* by Kathleen Maloney, 10 July 2008. www.onthecommons.org

industries and on local quality of life. (E.g. Bathurst, Dubbo, the Shoalhaven, Lake Macquarie).

However in addressing the question of 'suitability', there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Infrastructure that is appropriate for inner ring, socially disadvantaged, metropolitan Auburn is different to the needs of Lane Cove on Sydney's North Shore, which is very different from the arts and cultural infrastructure needed in say, the Clarence Valley local government area on the State's north coast or tiny Coolamon Shire near Wagga Wagga.

Standards of provision and suitability are also influenced by urban development cycles and stages, demographic trends, political/ election cycles and corporate goals and priorities. They can also be impacted by 'home grown' enthusiasm and commitment to the development of local arts and cultural infrastructure where local, community passion carries the argument and results in the development of infrastructure that suits local need at that time. E.g. Byron Bay Community and Cultural Centre; Up to Date Store Heritage Centre and Library, Coolamon.

Planning for the provision of arts and cultural infrastructure therefore needs to be imaginative, flexible and should anticipate inevitable shifts in demand and changing community tastes. In order to ensure sustainability, specific floor space or independent entrepreneurial initiatives should always be factored into planning documentation as a policy principle in order to provide a dedicated income stream as an expenditure offset. (See local markets at Byron Bay Community and Cultural Centre, fitness centre at Glen Street Theatre, Warringah).

Planning should take account of the development phases that are an inevitable component of the provision of a needs based infrastructure. This includes taking into account the stages associated in building organisational, community and system capacity over time, whilst also focusing on being responsive to audience and community need. In many instances the staged design and development of open air space suitable for artist focused programs such as makers' markets, for live performance, for temporary sculpture walks etc would be a preferred and more effective approach to investing in 'suitable' infrastructure than committing early on to high-profile, high-cost capital work projects such as traditional regional galleries, public libraries, museums and performing arts centres.

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‘Suitable’ infrastructure for many communities may also be better focused on the provision of community cultural centres that are purpose designed or adapted to the diverse creative interests of that specific community. Such centres might incorporate small meeting rooms for arts/ heritage organisations, art-form workshops for hire by tutors, artist studios, community gallery, performance space, media lab/s and incubator offices for the emerging creative industries. The centre could be co-located with a branch library or local history museum. (See *Tullimbar Community Cultural Centre Issues Paper*, 2006 Unpublished. Australia Street Company).

3. THE DESIRABILITY OF LOCATING CULTURAL FACILITIES IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO CREATE HUBS

Cultural or creative hubs are increasingly touted in the planning literature as building blocks for ‘creating or fostering a vibrant, creative community’ or one that uses the creative city concept as an economic development tool.⁴ At the same time specific sectors within the creative industries, such as the collections sector and the performing arts venue sector, have been advocating and researching the value of cultural hubs as a means to achieving economies of scale in management and operations, in nurturing community cultural life and in fostering community capital through enhanced volunteer programs etc.

A cultural hub or district is defined as a “well recognised, labelled, mixed use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction”.⁵ This is supported by planners, from Jane Jacobs in the 1960s to the new urbanists in the 1990s, who argue in favour of fine grained planning that accommodates a mix of co-located uses such as residential, retail as well as commercial and cultural. A finer grain development encourages cultural vitality at the neighbourhood level with its own distinctive character and identity – fostering access to arts experiences, to live/ work, to local dining, to window shopping, to leisure and recreation that is at the same time accessible to visitors.

⁴ Markusen, Ann, 2006, Cultural planning and the Creative City. Paper presented at the American Collegiate Schools of Planning meetings, Ft Worth Texas, Nov 12, 2006.

⁵ Frost- Kumpf, Hilary Anne, 1998. Cultural Districts: the arts as a strategy for revitalizing our cities. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.

Rather than imposing cultural hubs from above, and often establishing a centralised cultural district into the bargain, for many places minimal clustering and a distributed network of cultural infrastructure can make a more sustainable contribution to community cultural life. This will be even more powerful if the focus of infrastructure investment is also on nurturing the needs of artists by providing an environment that is predominantly motivated by community cultural development objectives and not only by economic development aspirations.

The cultural hub agenda in New South Wales at any rate is mainly focused on the development of physical infrastructure, paying only secondary attention to nurturing local creativity at the grass roots, at encouraging community participation and audience development through creative projects and programming. The co-location (Hawkesbury Regional Gallery and Library, Bathurst Regional Gallery and Library, Tamworth Regional Gallery and Library) or more recently the fusion or convergence of cultural facilities such as libraries and museums (Albury, Puke Ariki, New Zealand) or galleries and museums (Dubbo), or gallery and performing arts centre (Port Macquarie) have initially at least been driven by promises of economies of scale, by project glamour and image, by the potential to successfully attract and negotiate developer contributions and by the availability of affordable land in a suitable location. Cultural impact issues, including the needs of cultural heritage collection management, cultural industry opportunities, audience needs etc, often play a secondary role in influencing decisions in relation to critical cultural infrastructure.

The cultural and arts needs of regional and rural New South Wales are often identified as being different to those of metropolitan Sydney. However in most cases the principles are generally the same; that is that the most successful in terms of usage and profile are those facilities and clusters that have evolved 'organically' as a result of serendipity and where "creators and participants, producers and consumers"..... make "decisions to locate near one another".⁶

Rather than invest in clustered, flagship infrastructure that has been based on inflated or overly ambitious visitor targets and which often results in the development of an expensive white elephant, resources should rather be directed towards decentralised, accessible, participatory

⁶ Markusen.

and local or regionally anchored arts and cultural infrastructure. The co-location of diverse arts and cultural programming within flexible arts and cultural infrastructure goes hand in hand with this approach to infrastructure development. Investments of this nature would develop skills and understanding as well as support the development of soft infrastructure such as systems, volunteer resources and organisational capacity and would provide the building blocks for an evolving and sustainable creative community.

5. ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES

In planning for sustainability, the integration of cultural factors into the mix of consideration along with social, environmental and economic factors provides for a more broadly-based, strategic and holistic approach to community planning including infrastructure planning. Some of the key cultural planning principles include complex issues relating to diversity, innovation, connectedness, equity and social justice and provide incentives to address and balance multiple strategies that benefit a diversity of community need and interest. This includes the need to accommodate the notion of supporting the arts for art's sake (including through support for cultural infrastructure) as a building block of community vitality whilst at the same time supporting arts and cultural infrastructure for its positive impact on the economy. The need to balance, value and accommodate multiple impacts that address a diversity of community needs will be a key factor in achieving long term cultural infrastructure sustainability and viability.

The development of arts and cultural infrastructure has a demonstrated and widely acknowledged impact on local, regional and city economies. Much has been made of the benefits of creative cities (e.g. Berlin, Glasgow, London) where a healthy and viable creative industry sector is valued and recognised for the contribution it makes to national and regional economic development. Currently despite high levels of talent, the infrastructure to support small arts start-ups, creative entrepreneurs and cultural workers is not well developed in Australia, including across New South Wales. Research into the potential economic capacity and future potential of the creative sector in New South Wales is generally adhoc.

Leadership is required at the State level to advocate for increased investment specifically in the arts and cultural infrastructure as a

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development tool – for increased employment, in tourism development, in skills capture, in influencing potential new residents to relocate and in fostering new arts and cultural related businesses. Government support for cultural economy focused programs should reach beyond Arts NSW to embrace opportunities at Tourism NSW, Department of State and Regional Development as well as the Department of Commerce etc.

Investment programs supported by the State Government in partnership with local councils could include an artist studio incentive fund (as at Parramatta); cultural industry audit research programs (e.g. Arts Northern Rivers); Creative Entrepreneurs Start up/ Incubator Fund.

6. THE ADEQUACY OF THE NSW STATE PLAN

The NSW State Plan is a positive first step towards integrating planning for liveability across the New South Wales Government. It sets a blueprint for development and a benchmark for measuring the impact of stated priorities for Government action. Since its launch in 2006, the Plan has influenced the roll out of a hierarchy of regional plans which have incorporated arts and cultural planning strategies including reference to arts and cultural infrastructure at the local government level.

However, when taking into account the scope and potential for the arts and cultural sector to have a significant impact on the future development directions of the State Government, the State Plan proves disappointing. It reinforces the perception that the arts and culture are not regarded by the NSW Government as a key aspect of planning for sustainability along with social, environmental and economic factors.

By generally limiting consideration of arts and culture to a sub section of the Environment for Living Activity Area, the State Plan misses many opportunities to influence the State's capacity to deliver better results for the community from NSW Government services. For example, across the other 4 activity areas including through community involvement and citizenship, through integrating the arts and cultural development into key services such as health, education and transport, through arts and cultural development programs addressing social justice and social exclusion and through projects that foster productivity and growth in newly emerging industries. Opportunities to integrate culture and the arts into whole-of-government planning have been missed and the outcome is diluted as a result.

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POTENTIAL FOR A STATE CULTURAL PLAN

Based on the comments above and on the relatively limited support provided until now at least by Arts NSW in nurturing the sustainable roll out of local government Cultural Plans across the State, it is unlikely at this time, that the development of a State Cultural Plan would be either relevant or effective. The development of a Cultural Plan for New South Wales would be a complex and challenging project requiring rigorous research, robust and engaging consultation along with a broad based understanding of the State's cultural sector including its challenges and opportunities as well as its future potential. It would require an active and demonstrated commitment to building partnerships as well as to whole of government initiatives.

Artsnsw is undergoing internal review and revitalisation at present; new policies and programs are in development, an organisational structure is underway and new management is in place. Based the current environment therefore as well as on previous track record, the development of a State Cultural Plan would be an ambitious scenario that is unlikely to be realised in the current environment.

POTENTIAL FOR A STATE ARTS AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

If the NSW Government however is serious in its commitment to achieving the State Plan targets for participation in the arts and culture, it needs to adopt a more strategic approach to investing in and maximising results across the arts and cultural sector. Detailed mapping as required by the cultural planning process remains the exception rather than the rule across local government in NSW. When data is collected it is generally related to a specific capital project and site, is often reactive and seldom broadly or strategically focused.

One way to overcome this information vacuum would be for the State government via Arts NSW to take the lead by systematically scoping arts and cultural infrastructure across the State as a first step. This builds on Recommendation 14 of the recent Review of the NSW Cultural Grants

Program which recommended an audit of infrastructure by region, an identification of gaps and the development of priorities for the future.⁷

By mapping and critiquing those assets, identifying strengths and weaknesses including access but also in relation to physical condition and life-cycle planning, a picture would emerge that would inform planning, funding and program partnerships. Arts NSW would also need to commit to maintaining and promoting the documentation and updating the database on a regular basis. An audit of existing assets - both tangible and intangible - would inform the prioritisation of needs so as to maximise opportunities including resources, to deliver responsive arts and cultural infrastructure in the future.

By mapping arts and cultural infrastructure across the State, a picture is likely to emerge of unequal distribution, and of infrastructure black holes as well as arts and infrastructure hot spots. However without a systematic approach to collecting and analysing data, this picture will remain as a perception only, since robust and systematic data on arts and cultural infrastructure is scant.

A similar approach has been taken recently in Canada by the Centre for Expertise on Culture and Communities based at Simon Hopkins University. The Centre has initiated a dialogue across Ontario to consider the role and value of cultural infrastructure in furthering culture and the creative economy in cities and communities. See:

www.cultureandcommunities.ca/events/regional-roundtables

SUMMARY

Taking a more informed and systematic approach to infrastructure planning and support has become a theme in Australia recently and it is one that is shared by other countries, including Canada and England. The focus on infrastructure traditionally has been on sewers and drains, on transport, on telecommunications but also more recently on health, sport and /recreation infrastructure. Many studies have identified inadequate and deteriorating assets, with accompanying recommendations for dramatically increased levels of investment to upgrade and rectify the situation.

⁷ Report of the Review Panel, 2008. A Review of the NSW Cultural Grants Program. Sydney: Sandra Yates and Michael Collins for the Minister for the Arts.

Planning for sustainability now also includes taking into account the arts and cultural needs of communities including at the local, regional, State and national level. It includes tangible and intangible infrastructure including the provision of resources for capital as well as recurrent operations. Resources should in principle be available from the Federal government as well as from the State and local government sectors and at an adequate level that reflects contemporary costs as well as the value that cultural infrastructure provides the community. The State government should have a lead role in advocating a more active role for the Federal government in supporting the development of arts and cultural infrastructure at the local level.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure. Decision making in relation to cultural infrastructure should be based on systematic and robust research. State government support should be available to systematically collect and analyse data that supports the development of sustainable arts and cultural infrastructure across the State. Plans should be flexible and should be responsive to audience and community need. They should make allowance for staged developments and for changes in community capacity over time. All new and upgraded arts and cultural infrastructure should allow floor space for independent income streams that offset operational expenditure.

Cultural vitality is not solely reliant on so-called 'cultural hubs'. Rather, vitality is more likely to be achieved via distributed, branded networks of activity in venues that are accessible, encourage participation, and creativity, are responsive to need, are under-pinned by a commitment to best practice and are anchored in the local community. The principle of co-location is a good one but should not only focus on so-called 'flagship' infrastructure such as city galleries, regional museums, central libraries and performing arts centres.

The cultural industries and the creative economy are critical aspects of economic development in the 21st century. Arts and cultural infrastructure has a key role to play in building that economy in New South Wales and the State government should, as a matter of urgency, take a more proactive role in fostering cultural industry initiatives in partnership with local government.

And finally, a critical building block for this state's arts and cultural infrastructure would be the development of an Arts and Cultural

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Infrastructure Plan. Without access to robust and systematic data, any analysis of arts and cultural infrastructure will be perceived as unreliable and put aside. A more strategic approach is needed to guide decisions and to establish a sustainable model for future development.

It's time that resources were mobilised to provide the community of New South Wales with the arts and cultural infrastructure it needs and deserves.

30 August 2008.

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