

Submission  
No 33

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

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Date Received: 29/08/2008

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In reply please quote: G11-08-006

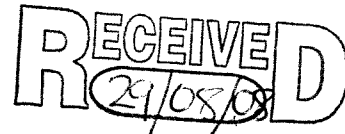
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Contact: Tiffany Lee-Shoy on 9725 0326

27 August 2008

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

Attention: Ms Catherine Watson



Dear Ms Watson

**SUBMISSION - TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND  
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY CBD**

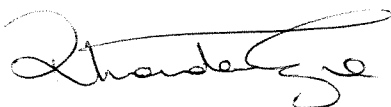
Fairfield City Council welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Inquiry. The Inquiry is timely, given the work by the State Government on the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and NSW State Plan, and recent review of the NSW cultural grants program, to ensure the best infrastructure to support a vibrant arts and cultural life.

Fairfield City is in a unique position. It is situated between three regional centres, each with multi-artform regionally-focussed arts centres which received significant upgrades under the Western Sydney Arts Strategy. Arts and cultural venues in Fairfield are found all across the City – a complementary network of cultural facilities – which encourages our residents to experience their whole City through creative activity.

Arts and cultural activities are important markers of our communities living heritage and the identity of Fairfield City. Council looks forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry.

Should you have any questions, please contact Council's Senior Policy Advisor Cultural Planning, Tiffany Lee-Shoy on ph: 9725 0326.

Yours sincerely



**RHONDA TYNE**  
**EXECUTIVE MANAGER CITY OUTCOMES**

Attach.

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

## Submission from Fairfield City Council

Fairfield City Council's submission is structured according to the seven issues that the NSW Public Works Committee is inquiring into and reporting on:

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

Fairfield City Council, like many local government authorities, invests in both hard and soft infrastructure to support arts and cultural development in our local community. Council believes that community art brings life enhancement to our residents and the communities they create and sustain. The provision of community arts facilities and programs recognises the right of every individual and community to their own forms of expression of their cultural identity.

#### 1.1 Hard infrastructure

**Art venues** - The three key arts facilities in Fairfield City are owned and maintained by Council. The properties are heritage listed under the Fairfield LEP:

- **Fairfield City Museum and Gallery**, Smithfield – social history museum, visual arts, public programs, workshops
- **Fairfield School of Arts**, Fairfield – performing arts and new media (theatre, music, film, movement)
- **Westacott Cottage**, Canley Vale – visual arts and craft

**Libraries** - Council operates the Whitlam Library (central library) in Cabramatta, with branch libraries in Smithfield, Fairfield, Bonnyrigg and Wetherill Park. Refurbishment of the Whitlam Library is planned in the short term, with longer term opportunities to expand Fairfield and Bonnyrigg branches being explored.

**Community halls** - Arts and cultural activity also occurs in Councils community halls and neighbourhood centres; and the **Fairfield Showground** is host to a range of cultural festivals and weekend markets.

**Parks** – Council's Parks Improvement Program (PIP) is a 13 year, \$13 million program to upgrade over 100 parks across Fairfield City. The program aims to provide unique, exciting and accessible environments for play, recreation and social interaction, promote community ownership and pride and achieve a sustainable balance between recreational use and the natural environment.

An upgrade generally involves the review of existing playground facilities, circulation and links to surrounding infrastructure, street trees, shade tree

planting, circuit paths and seating. Many of the parks have also incorporated public artworks from local artists, which add to their vibrancy and interest.

In addition to public art, the design of the parks often include infrastructure to support arts and cultural activity, as well as physical activity. For example,

- **Fairfield District Park** – Council consulted with a local senior’s health group and a youth performance group in the upgrade of this park, encouraging them to work together to develop concepts that suited the activity needs of both groups. As a result, a large **softfall activity area** was created which is used for youth capoiara, parkour and dance training as well as tai chi for elders. Embedded in the softfall is a parkour philosophy “The obstacle is the path”.
- **Thorley Park and Smithfield Library** – The upgrade of the park included a Storytelling Terrace to connect the park and library. It functions as a mini performance spot for activities such as storytelling, as well as other incidental activities – eating, meeting and reading in the sun.

**Cabravale Leisure Centre** - Opened in September 2007, the Centre has a health, wellness and fitness focus and aims to develop bodies, minds and spirits, while creating a meeting point for the local community. There is also capacity for art exhibitions at the Centre.

The Centre was designed to respond to the demographics of the area and changing community needs. Patrons have access to a combination of traditional health and fitness facilities including a gymnasium, group exercise programs, and heated pool; as well as a computer training lab and community function room.

## 1.2 Soft Infrastructure

### **(a) The People - Council staff**

Council’s dedicated arts and cultural staff are positioned across the organisation in different departments and branches. The benefit of this model is that arts and cultural approaches become part of the problem solving process across a range of disciplines.

- **Council Officers – dedicated arts and cultural staff**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Status</b>
Senior Policy Advisor – Cultural Planning	City Outcomes	Administration Centre	F/T
Community Projects Officer – Cultural Development	City Services	Administration Centre	F/T
Co-ordinator	City Services	Fairfield City Museum & Gallery	F/T
Social History Curator	City Services	Fairfield City Museum & Gallery	F/T

- **Council Officers - Library Staff with arts and cultural development aspects to their position**

Position	Department	Location	Arts focus
Manager, Libraries and Museum	City Services	Whitlam Library	Manager
Outreach Librarian, Local Studies	City Services	Whitlam Library	Local history & culture
Outreach Librarian, Multicultural	City Services	Whitlam Library (but rotates to main branches)	These positions use arts based processes in community engagement & audience development
Outreach Librarian, Children & Youth	City Services	Whitlam Library (but rotates to main branches)	
Outreach & Marketing Librarian	City Services	Whitlam Library	

- **Council Officers – staff with arts and cultural development aspects to their position**

Position	Department	Location	Arts focus
Senior Landscape Design Officer	City Services	Administration Centre	These design officers focus on public art in parks, open space and urban areas.
Landscape Design Officer	City Services	Administration Centre	
Landscape Design Officer	City Services	Administration Centre	
Senior Urban Design Officer	City Services	Administration Centre	
Community Projects Officer – Youth Festival	City Services	Administration Centre	Youth festivals
Community Projects Officer – Youth	City Services	Administration Centre	These CPO positions often use arts based processes for community building.
Community Projects Officer – Indigenous	City Services	Administration Centre	
Community Projects Officer – Multicultural	City Services	Administration Centre	
Community Projects Officer – Youth & Family	City Services	Administration Centre	
Community Projects Officer – Aged & Disability	City Services	Administration Centre	
Community Projects Officer – Health Development	City Services	Administration Centre	
Cabramatta Place Manager	City Outcomes	Cabramatta Office	Cabramatta Moon festival
Cabramatta Place Coordinator	City Outcomes	Cabramatta Office	Cabramatta Moon festival

**(b) The People – Arts Advisory Committee**

Council's Arts Advisory Committee meets bimonthly, to provide input and direction for the cultural development program. Membership is open to local residents, and three Councillors also sit on the Committee.

Council's Community Project Officer–Cultural Development provides secretarial support to the Arts Advisory Committee. The Committee's role is to:

- Provide advice on the development of the Cultural Plan
- Inform and advise Council on arts and cultural issues
- Promote arts and cultural development within the Fairfield LGA
- Advise Council on suitable projects for funding to the Western Sydney Local Government Arts Incentive Fund.
- Support the diverse cultures within Fairfield City
- Advocate for opportunities to develop arts and cultural infrastructure.

**(c) The Plan - Fairfield City Cultural Plan 2005-09**

In 2005, Council adopted the Fairfield City Cultural Plan (2005-09) "Making the Most of Our Culture". The Cultural Plan assists Council to maximise its cultural, artistic and creative assets in achieving the Vision of the City. It is therefore connected with major plans and policies of Council, particularly the City Strategic Plan and Social Plan.

The Cultural Plan is not about art-for-arts-sake. Rather, it articulates five goals which demonstrate the powerful role of arts, culture and creativity in civic participation, community building, learning and pride, place revitalisation, strengthening and diversifying the local economy, and making the most of Fairfield's unique cultural assets.

1. Including everyone in cultural activity
2. Creating a learning city
3. Valuing diversity and identities
4. Growing a creative economy
5. Sustaining a vital culture

These themes have been devised to harness Council's strengths in developing and driving its cultural projects, and build on the City's existing cultural resources, networks and talents.

Resource challenges - projects

One of the challenges in implementing the Cultural Plan has been limited project funding. Many projects are run in partnership with other branches of Council or external organisations to maximise resources.

Project grants from Arts NSW also enable Fairfield City Museum and Gallery to offer a greater range of community-based arts exhibitions and events, for example the *Rituals and Traditions* exhibition series and *Lets Make Music and Dance* workshops and performances by local groups.

The recent review of the NSW Cultural Grants program recommends restructuring the grants funding into four new categories. It is unclear to which category the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery should apply for projects such as those above.

**(d) Cultural programs – festivals and events**

Fairfield City buzzes each year with a myriad of cultural festivals and events. The City's **annual calendar of festivals reflects the multicultural diversity of our community** - from the Laos New Year celebrations held at the Lao Temple Wat Phrayortkeo Dhammayanaram, to the Muslim Eid Festival at the Fairfield Showground, to the Cabramatta Moon Festival organised each year by Council around Freedom Plaza.

Each culture brings their community together to honour significant days - they **also welcome the broader community to share in the celebrations** and learn about their culture, art, customs and traditions, thereby forging stronger community and cross cultural connections. These festivals bring the City alive and are **important markers of our living heritage** and our **shared identity**.

In fact Fairfield is so much the city of festivals that **the Fairfield Showground hosts cultural festivals almost every fortnight**. Not only is it a time for celebration and sharing, the communities often fundraise at the events. For example, the Uruguayan Festival in August raises funds for institutions such as hospitals and rural schools in Australia and Uruguay. This is a traditional part of the Independence Day event and confirms the strong generous tradition within the community.

The festivals organised by Council encourage community building through celebration, skills development and place rejuvenation. Council's flagship festivals include the Cabramatta Moon Festival (~September) and Bring It On Youth Festival (April), both of which attract sponsorship from local businesses.

Through annual festivals and events, the whole of Fairfield City comes alive with cultural celebration, not just our arts centres.

**(e) Cultural programs – Community Cultural Development Grants**

This annual program was initiated by Council in 2003. The program focuses on arts and cultural activity with community development outcomes. Applicants can request up to \$4,000 from a total annual fund of \$30,000.

The grants program functions as an "entry point" for artists and groups to imagine, develop and implement a cultural project, and is supported by free workshops and one-on-one tutorials in grant writing, project design and small project management.

Projects which have been funded through the grants program are diverse and range from:

- Health and Wellbeing – In 2003, the Arts for Health and Research Centre used visual arts to address depression amongst older Spanish speaking men.
- Cultural Heritage/Youth – The Assyrian Australian Association developed theatre and writing workshops for young Australian-Assyrian's living in Fairfield. This initiative took place in 2006.

- Cultural Heritage/Children – In 2007, the New Australians conducted traditional kite making and decorating workshops for children with special needs.

**(f) Cultural organisations**

Council significantly subsidises the rent of Powerhouse Youth Theatre (Fairfield School of Arts tenants) and Fairfield Arts Society (Westacott Cottage tenants) because these organisations are considered assets which contribute to the cultural development of the local community.

**1.3 Funding for arts and cultural infrastructure**

Since 2005, Council has allocated funds accordingly:

Funding source	YEAR				Total expenditure
	2005	2006	2007	2008	
<b>Fairfield City Museum and Gallery</b>					
Council	354,818	353,700	364,600	333,373	1,406,491
Grant-ArtsNSW	24,870	89,175	29,600	34,150	177,795
					<b>1,584,286</b>
<b>Libraries</b>					
Council	5,011,129	4,137,455	4,411,495	4,767,191	18,327,270
Grant-State Library	65,113	119,601	123,872	119,852	428,438
Grant-CDSE	18,960				18,960
					<b>18,774,668</b>
<b>Fairfield School of Arts refurbishment</b>					
Council			1,108,144		1,108,144
Grant-ArtsNSW			80,000		80,000
					<b>1,188,144</b>
<b>Parks Improvement program – public art component</b>					
Council	80,000	105,000	80,000	80,000	345,000
Grant-Smith Family	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	120,000
Grant-ArtsNSW		25,000			25,000
					<b>490,000</b>
<b>Community Cultural Development Program</b>					
Council	107,894	112,023	129,436	127,361	476,714
					<b>476,714</b>
<b>Cultural Planning Portfolio</b>					
Council	4,000	101,481	100,175	154,167	359,823
Grant-ArtsNSW		20,000			20,000
					<b>379,823</b>
<b>Cultural Development Grants Scheme</b>					
Council	28,728	29,500	23,970	37,227	119,425



					<b>119,425</b>
<b>Festivals</b>					
Council	90,821	146,211	176,458	121,032	534,522
					<b>534,522</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	5,816,333	5,269,146	6,657,750	5,804,353	<b>23,547,582</b>

### Private sector funding

Council participated in a roundtable organised by the Australian Business Arts Foundation (AbaF) to explore opportunities to increase corporate support for the arts in Western Sydney. One of the key issues for Fairfield is that our arts venues are small and locally-focussed, and corporate support for the arts in Australia is focussed on the top-end of town (for example, the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Theatre Company). It has been suggested that we approach small to medium sized local businesses to support local activity, and this level of support has been secured in an *ad hoc* manner for individual projects.

However, within Fairfield LGA is the Wetherill Park Industrial Estate, one of the largest in the southern hemisphere. These multinational companies – which employ local residents - are an untapped source of support for arts and cultural activities in Fairfield City. Council's Place Manager and Marketing Officer for Wetherill Park are starting to build relationships with businesses on the estate. The challenge for the local arts sector will be to build a sound business case and approach the companies that want to strengthen their community role and have employee committees which make funding recommendations.

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

The establishment of Council-owned arts and cultural venues in Fairfield City happened over many years, and they are spread out across the City in heritage-listed buildings (located in Fairfield, Smithfield and Canley Vale), each bounded by private properties. These two factors limit the potential for expansion of each venue or the consolidation of arts and cultural activity into a “cultural quarter”<sup>1</sup>.

Council recognises that the arts and cultural life of the City benefits from **access to specialised venues**. The Community Facilities in Fairfield City review in 2000 identified the need for more space to produce artwork. In response, Council has completed refurbishments to the Fairfield School of

<sup>1</sup> A “cultural quarter”, as defined by John McCarthy on p5 of the background paper, is “a distinct area with a high concentration of cultural facilities. However, the value of cultural quarter designation is disputed. It seems that for such quarters to be effective, they need to take into account the physical and design-related factors as well as broader issues such as relationship to local identity.”

Arts. The refurbishments include a new workshop/exhibition space, offices and storage, an accessible entry ramp and lift and public art, to improve access and amenity of the building and meet the needs of local arts groups. In partnership with the resident company, Powerhouse Youth Theatre, Council is encouraging more community groups to use this quality theatre space.

Similarly, the recent upgrade of the machinery shed at the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery has created a community space suitable for gatherings, performances and workshops. The Museum and Gallery hold regular art classes in the machinery shed, and it is a meeting space for community groups such as the Fairfield Garden Club.

Libraries in Fairfield City are the most frequented of our cultural facilities. In fact, all **our branch libraries are used to capacity everyday** (for example, the population catchment for Fairfield Branch is 32,000. The recommended standard for a library serving a population of 32,000 is 1500 sq mtrs. This is nearly 3 times larger than the existing building). The Fairfield City Museum and Gallery takes advantage of this fact, by “touring” selected exhibitions to the Whitlam Library to expose the shows to new audiences. The library exhibition space is also used by community groups and students.

However, the arts and cultural life of Fairfield City explodes beyond the activities in Council-owned cultural venues. Fairfield City is home to many religious and cultural groups which have invested in the urban landscape of the City by building places of worship and social clubs. These venues are vital to the cultural life of the City, a pulse of community gatherings, celebrations and festivities. This network of venues arguably defines what is **unique about Fairfield City’s cultural life and identity** – it is **diverse** in artform, cultural practice and in the community’s relationship to a particular place – rather than being centralised in “cultural quarters” or a cultural hub.

<p><i>3. The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs</i></p>
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**Fairfield City’s unique people and places**

As discussed above, Council’s arts venues are located in heritage-listed buildings which limits the potential for consolidating the City’s arts and cultural activity into a cultural quarter or hub.

So rather than planning for cultural quarters, Council is making the most of our existing infrastructure to **support creative development in ways that best fit the unique culture** of the Fairfield City community, which is characterised by:

- Fairfield is a uniquely vibrant and compassionate community. The City is home to many refugees and asylum seekers and continues to welcome new migrants.

- Fairfield could be considered the multicultural capital of Australia<sup>2</sup>. There are 230 nationalities represented in Australia today, 133 of which are in Fairfield LGA.
- Fairfield City is ranked the most disadvantaged LGA in the Sydney Statistical Division<sup>3</sup>. This indicates that the City has a significant number of residents who experience multiple social disadvantage.
- And yet, Fairfield City is also characterised by high levels of social capital. Residents solidly support and identify with their neighbourhood, and there is a strong sense of belonging, safety and trust among neighbours<sup>4</sup>.

### **Creatively experience the whole City – a network of cultural facilities**

With these characteristics in mind, Council is exploring opportunities for joint programs across our cultural venues (also including libraries and parks) to encourage residents to **experience their whole City through creative activity**. In this way, Council seeks to promote “**a complementary network of cultural facilities**” which supports the cultural life of the City, rather than a centralised arts hub.

Indeed, a centralised cultural quarter for Fairfield City may detract from **our local identity which is grounded in diversity** and the different rhythms of life found in each neighbourhood. Rather than privileging one location as the centre of arts and cultural activity, Fairfield’s “a complementary network of cultural facilities” acknowledges equally the value of each place and each community’s cultural activities to the **shared identity of Fairfield City**. The key to arts and cultural life in Fairfield City is that it is **grassroots and accessible** to all our residents.

### **Co-location rather than centralisation of cultural facilities**

While cultural quarters in Fairfield is unlikely, there is potential for **co-location** of cultural facilities if it coincides with the upgrade of a branch library. This is because libraries are the most accessible and most frequented cultural facilities in Fairfield City. For example, the Fairfield City Social Plan comments that Smithfield Library could relocate next to the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery if Council were to acquire an adjoining site (privately owned). Even if this were to happen to form a cultural hub – museum, library and gallery – Council would still promote a “complementary network of cultural facilities” as the School of Arts would remain the City’s primary performing arts venue.

Similarly Council has been investigating the expansion of the Fairfield branch library as a multifunction centre including a media hub with increased opportunities for media-based cultural activities.

<sup>2</sup> Arts NSW and Australia Council for the Arts, *Beyond Region: Public Galleries in New South Wales*, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)*, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Heather Nesbitt Planning for Fairfield City Council, *Fairfield City Social Plan 2007-09*, 2007.

## Fairfield City's unique position between three Regional Centres

In the hierarchy of centres outlined in the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, Fairfield City is located between the regional centres (and regionally-focussed arts centres) of Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith. It is anticipated that our residents will travel to these regional centres to see a major national exhibition or touring show. In this context, it becomes even more important for the three cultural venues owned by Council to **demonstrate their point of distinction from the regional art centres**.

The Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, for example, has built up a **reputation for national contemporary craft exhibitions** with a particular focus on cutting-edge textiles. Audiences for these exhibitions have developed from across Sydney and the surrounding area. Travelling an hour to Fairfield, they will stay for the day, stopping for lunch and then shopping for fabrics in Cabramatta.

Overall, our local venues have developed a **strategic focus on showcasing local culture**, including programs which have been developed in partnership with residents and community groups. Our arts venues focus on unpacking and **paying homage to the honest everyday lived culture of Fairfield** communities, rather than the spectacular or extraordinary.

Our venues showcase different, often **experimental** or creatively risky work, because they are not under pressure to be "on trend" with the current flavour of the inter/national arts industry. In this way, our arts venues support and **nurture local talent and neighbourhood creativity**, and provide artists with a legible and realistic pathway to an arts career.

For our arts venues, **audience development** is not a marketing strategy, it is a consequence of reaching out to our diverse communities to work collaboratively on projects which uncover our local culture. The Fairfield City Museum and Gallery for example, forged relationships with the Muslim, Russian orthodox and Vietnamese communities for the *Rituals and Traditions* program this year. Community members shared stories, ran workshops and loaned personal and family objects for the exhibition. Many of these residents had never before visited the Museum and Gallery, or even considered it part of their neighbourhood, but this program gave them a "point of entry" and a sense of ownership and pride in their culture.

Not surprisingly, 1 in 3 visitors to the Fairfield City Museum and Gallery speak a language other than English at home<sup>5</sup>. There is great potential for Council to tour our local arts and culture to other regions, including our sister cities in Australia and abroad.

In this light, Fairfield City's "complementary network of cultural facilities" plays a vital role in the strategic cultural development of the Sydney region. In

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<sup>5</sup> Museums and Galleries NSW, visitor information survey of 12 galleries and museums in Western Sydney and the Hunter, 2006.

particular our local venues contribute to the sustainability of arts and culture in NSW<sup>6</sup> through:

- **Innovation** – our venues encourage experimentation and creatively risky work, as well as supporting new art forms (eg: parkour, graphic novels)
- **Improved communications** – our venues are expert at communicating with multicultural communities
- **Audience development** – through projects that reach out and engage our communities as creative partners, and build skills and social networks, our venues develop new audiences for cultural and arts activity in Fairfield City. Audiences from outside the LGA are attracted to the authentic representation of local culture at our venues.
- **Artistic excellence** – as a local space for local artists, our venues identify, nurture and support local artists to realise their potential. Our venues maintain strong links with Arts Centres throughout the Sydney metropolitan region so that talented local artists can take the next step in their careers.
- **Appropriate infrastructure** – Fairfield City is unlikely to see cultural quarters, due to the heritage status of our venues and because much of our cultural activity is neighbourhood-based and cannot be centralised. So Council is working with these characteristics to make the most of our venues and “soft” cultural assets.

Fairfield City’s network of complementary cultural facilities encourage residents to experience their whole City through creative activity, rather than privileging one location as the centre of arts and cultural activity. Our arts venues are accessible to the community and connect with them in a grass roots way whilst building their skills and social and cultural networks. Visitors from outside the LGA are attracted to our exhibitions and events because they are an authentic and honest presentation of local community culture.

**Recommendation:**

**As the Sydney Metropolitan region develops and the recommendations of the NSW Cultural Grants program review are rolled out, Council urges the State Government to:**

1. **Acknowledge the strategic role of local cultural facilities, including their:**
  - **Contribution to the sustainability of arts and culture in NSW<sup>7</sup>**
  - **Accessibility which encourages increased participation and integration of people in community activities<sup>8</sup>**
  - **Contribution to the character of our suburbs and communities<sup>9</sup>.**

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<sup>6</sup> *Report of the Review Panel into the NSW Cultural Grants Program* (March 2008)

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Review Panel into the NSW Cultural Grants Program* (March 2008)

<sup>8</sup> *NSW State Plan* p36

<sup>9</sup> NSW Government, *City of Cities, A Plan for Sydney’s Future: NSW Government’s Metropolitan Strategy Supporting Information*, 2005, p3.

- **Role in presenting our authentic community culture, and empowering communities to control their own representation.**
2. **Ensure arts venues in town centres are not overlooked in the push to fund programs in the regional centres.**

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

##### 4.1 Formal Education

###### Primary and secondary schools:

Council has initiated arts and cultural projects with a number of local primary and high schools, which sees professional artists working in the classroom. For example, Fairfield IGNITE Music in Schools saw musicians working in nine primary schools to teach music basics and compose a class song; while at Fairfield High School the year 11 visual design class developed design concepts for two local sites with a public artist. At present, these initiatives rely on personal contact with the school's teachers or principal.

Council is keen to work with the Regional Coordinator from the Department of Education and Training's Arts Unit (based nearby in Westmead), to enable a more strategic, citywide approach to our arts-in-schools projects. It is expected that the Regional Coordinator can provide an overview of the opportunities and limitations faced by each school so that programs can be rolled out where they are needed most.

###### Tertiary education:

At a tertiary level, Wetherill Park TAFE offers some design classes, but more likely, students from Fairfield LGA will have to travel to the Art School in Campbelltown or Design School in Bankstown. Fairfield students were affected by the closure of the Fine Arts degree at UWS, although Fairfield residents also travel to the Sydney CBD to study art and design at UTS, College of Fine Arts and Sydney College of the Arts.

Council regularly takes student placements from University of Western Sydney and University of Technology Sydney. Recent projects that students have undertaken include developing a public art register for Fairfield City, research into the City's cultural assets, and various tourism projects.

Council is a member of the WSROC Taskforce on Arts Education, with the aim of securing fair access to arts education for Western Sydney residents.

##### 4.2 Informal Education

Council is committed to creating a culture of lifelong learning throughout Fairfield City. Council values lifelong learning as the key to assisting people

and the City to grow and meet new challenges. In a learning city imagination, creativity and cleverness are valued, developed and stimulated<sup>10</sup>.

Informal education is essential to building the skills and confidence of our community because there is a larger percentage of people in Fairfield City than the rest of Sydney who did not go to school (6.7% compared to 1.4%) or who left school at Year 8 or below (11.9% compared to 5.7%)<sup>11</sup>.

The Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, Fairfield School of Arts, youth centres, parks and libraries are the Council-owned cultural venues where residents can develop a range of arts-based skills. Running arts education programs in these venues is also an effective means of audience development:

The Fairfield City Museum and Gallery offers:

- The *Living the Past* program to primary schools. During 2007, it gave 44 different school groups an insight into life in Fairfield in the 1900's. Many of these schools travelled from outside the LGA (58%) for this experience.
- Regular art classes and school holiday programs
- A learning space for local folk art groups and tai chi
- It also supports local artists by curating an annual HSC art exhibition and involving TAFE arts and design students in public programs.
- Mentoring for emerging local artists and curators on selected exhibitions

The Parks Improvement Program offers:

- Mentoring for local artists in developing public art (this ranges from community consultation, to safety-by-design principles, to preparing technical documentation and liaising with engineers, development planners and manufacturers)
- Arts and design workshops to local schools or neighbourhood groups, to inform the development of the public artworks.

The Libraries offer:

- Literacy, photography, knitting and storytelling classes
- Online tutorial support
- Art/craft workshops for children and teenagers
- Exhibition space for local artists, including local school students
- Oral history interviews
- Information sessions about local community for community tourist and school groups

Youth Centres offer:

- Music lessons (eg: Uruguayan drumming)
- Training in music recording and setting up a home studio.

The Fairfield School of Arts (through Powerhouse Youth Theatre) offers:

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<sup>10</sup> *Fairfield City Cultural Plan 2005-09*, p16

<sup>11</sup> ABS 2006 census data, From profile.id for Fairfield City

- Skills development workshops in performance, film and theatre production
- Basic events management training, in conjunction with Council's Bring It On youth festival

Council's Community Cultural Development program offers:

- Grant writing and small project management workshops to assist applicants wanting to apply for a Cultural Grant.

## 5. *Economic impacts on communities*

### 5.1 Tourism

Fairfield attracts day trippers, because there are limited options for hotel accommodation in the LGA. Council offers food and shopping tours of Cabramatta and temple tours in Bonnyrigg. Schools also visit Fairfield City as part of geography, society and culture and religious studies subjects.

The Fairfield Showground holds markets every Saturday, and hosts community cultural festivals at least once a month - Hindu New Year and the Muslim Eid Festival are regular features on the Fairfield City cultural calendar, and draw people from across the Sydney metropolitan region.

The Cabramatta Moon Festival regularly attracts 60,000 visitors in September/October, with people travelling from across the state to attend the annual celebrations.

### 5.2 Creative Industry Development

During 2004, guided by the Management Plan, Council was preparing strategies in three different portfolio areas – industry development, cultural planning and revitalisation of Fairfield Town Centre. When scoping these strategies, a number of critical issues emerged which were common to each project. These included –

- Projected job losses in the manufacturing industry while the “knowledge intensive” industries are growing rapidly
- Multimedia talent and interest in Fairfield but no career pathways
- High youth unemployment
- Lack of opportunity for skilled artists from emerging migrant communities to pursue their profession
- People who want to work but do not speak English?
- National attention on “productive diversity” in the workplace
- Global evidence that creative industries can contribute to place regeneration



As a result of this research, Council's policy environment supports "nurturing creative industries" as a key strategy towards cultural and economic development and place revitalisation<sup>12</sup>. Council's goal in creative industry development is to capture Fairfield's creative and cultural talent and build local capacity for creative input in the development of products and services ("intellectual property"). The aim is to harness Fairfield's creative intellect, and not limit our involvement to the manufacture or sales of someone else's idea.

Growing the creative industries in a particular urban area requires an understanding of both external and internal factors, that is, why firms locate where they do (so that the appeal of the locality can be suitably enhanced), and an appreciation of the niche creative capacities of the local area (so that sector development evolves realistically from authentic local strengths). The following creative activities are identified as Fairfield's strengths and what can differentiate it from other places:

- Performing arts
- Cuisine – restaurants and food as an attractor and identifier
- Visual arts and design
- Traditional cultural practices and living heritage
- Screen culture

Council has invested in a Fairfield Filmmakers Capacity Building project for 2008-09. It aims to enhance the technical skills and secure opportunities for our 45+ local filmmakers, to shoot films in and about the local area.

Council is awaiting the release of the *Creative Industries in NSW Report* to inform future strategies for creative industry development in Fairfield City.

**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.***

Council supports the development of a NSW Cultural Plan to complement the NSW State Plan and Metropolitan Strategy and furthermore, to "embed cultural development processes into the objectives and operations of state government agencies so that a whole-of-government approach to cultural development can be achieved<sup>13</sup>."

An overarching NSW Cultural Plan will articulate a long term vision for arts and cultural life in NSW, and assure local councils of the state government's commitment to cultural development. It would connect with the Australia Council for the arts and local government arts initiatives. A NSW Cultural Plan

<sup>12</sup> *City Plan, Fairfield City Cultural Plan 2005-09, Fairfield Town Centre Strategic Plan.*

<sup>13</sup> This proposal was included in the third draft of the *Cultural Planning Handbook* released by the then NSW Ministry for the Arts and Department of Local Government in 2003.

would also enable Arts NSW to work more strategically with (and leverage funds from) other state government departments.

A number of state government departments are logical “partners”, including Planning, Heritage, Aboriginal Affairs, Education and Training, Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Citizenship. The focus of these partnerships would be to implement arts-based approaches to address broader social, environmental, urban and economic development issues.

## **7. Any other relevant matters**

Fairfield City’s network of complementary cultural facilities encourage residents to experience their whole City through creative activity, rather than privileging one location as the centre of arts and cultural activity. Our arts venues are accessible to the community and connect with them in a grass roots way whilst building their skills and social and cultural networks. Visitors from outside the LGA are attracted to our exhibitions and events because they are an authentic and honest presentation of local community culture.

### **Recommendation:**

**As the Sydney Metropolitan region develops and the recommendations of the NSW Cultural Grants program review are rolled out, Council urges the State Government to:**

- 1. Acknowledge the strategic role of local cultural facilities, including their:**
  - Contribution to the sustainability of arts and culture in NSW**
  - Accessibility which encourages increased participation and integration of people in community activities**
  - Contribution to the character of our suburbs and communities**
  - Role in presenting our authentic community culture, and empowering communities to control their own representation.**
- 2. Ensure arts venues in town centres are not overlooked in the push to fund programs in the regional centres.**