

Submission  
No 32

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

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

Lismore City Council Submission  
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**Introduction**

As part of the Inquiry into the *Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside Sydney CBD*, Lismore City Council would like to strongly state the need and value of cultural precincts, cultural hubs and the development of the creative industries in regional NSW.

Lismore City Council requests the assistance of the state government to reinvigorate the city of Lismore and develop a culture-led revitalisation through the articulation of the *Art in the Heart* project and the Lismore's Cultural Precinct project. Lismore City Council requests from the state government \$500,000 towards The Margaret Olley Art Centre, partner funds towards The Green at *Art in the Heart* and partner funds towards the establishment of The Lismore Cultural Precinct.

*Art in the Heart* is a public community space where cultural infrastructure, green space and retail are located. The space will be a zone of engagement with art, culture, creativity, local stories, live music, the indigenous environment, learning, enjoyment and commerce.

*Art in the Heart* locates a gallery, library, conservatorium, creative enterprise and The Green, adjacent to Lismore's CBD – long since known as The Block.

To build the *Art in the Heart* project Lismore City Council is looking to partner with the state government. Lismore City Council is committed to this project and the long term benefits of culture-led revitalisation of the city.

Many regional centres and towns around Australia have undergone fundamental economic and cultural transformations over the last few decades as traditional businesses have been forced to adjust to the shifting economic pressures and circumstances of the global economy. Partly as a result of the contracting agricultural sector, the 'commercial strip' has changed in many ways. Newly available commercial properties have been taken up and profitably engaged by arts and cultural enterprises. These 'shopfront' activities however are often just the surface of the deeper changes that have taken place in Australian society as we have become more affluent and well educated. Cultural product (in the broadest sense) is more highly valued and sought after by mainstream audiences than ever before. This undoubtedly reflects a maturing of Australian cultural experience and it is widely expected that this will continue to develop over the coming years.

Lismore is typical of this trend. As the traditional agricultural economies have contracted, businesses in the central business district have radically changed over the last twenty years. Creative industries have moved forward through that restructuring process. Much of this activity has occurred organically and as such the creative fabric of the community is disparate and spread very broadly across a number of venues around the city centre. Increased attendances at cultural events have demonstrated that the people of Lismore strongly support the arts and are committed consumers of all types of cultural products.

Notwithstanding this, Lismore CBD is in a dire state. In recent times more and more businesses have closed and shopfronts are being left vacant. Lismore urgently needs to have a culture led revival to invigorate the CBD and bring commercial confidence back to the centre.

### **Lismore Cultural Precinct**

The Lismore Cultural Precinct is considered to be similar to the Christchurch model. It is a link with arts and cultural infrastructure across the CBD and includes:

- The Starcourt Theatre
- The City Hall (home to performing arts company Norpa)
- The Lismore Museum
- Lismore Regional Gallery
- The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre
- Lismore Library
- The Riverbank
- The Lismore Café and Culture Trail (includes a café exhibition program)
- Public Art walks
- Next Gallery (Southern Cross University)

The Lismore Cultural Precinct will be enacted as part of the construction of the *Art in the Heart* project. Once completed, the *Art in the Heart* project will form the hub of the Lismore Cultural Precinct.

### **Art in the Heart**

In recognition of the trend towards a culture-led revival, Lismore City Council purchased a site in the Lismore CBD in 2001 for a space to concentrate cultural infrastructure. Council has since developed an *Art in the Heart* Master Plan which was formally adopted in 2006. Through Council's Economic Development Unit it has also developed a companion Cultural Centre Business Plan. Stage 1 of this plan has been completed with the redevelopment of the Lismore City Library and the Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre on site.

**Stage 2 of the Art in the Heart development** will include:

- Stage 1 of The Margaret Olley Art Centre
  - housing the Lismore Regional Gallery
  - SCU Gallery
  - The Margaret Olley Permanent Collection Gallery
  - Centre shop selling local work
- The Creative Industries Building (under development and determination)
  - Creative industries office suite
  - Artist studios
  - SCU studio
  - The Margaret Olley Art Centre artist residency program
  - Bundjalung Art Centre
  - Community Connections
  - The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre Dance Studio
  - The Margaret Olley Art Centre collection storage and workshop areas
  -

**Stage 3 of the Art in the Heart development** will include:

- The Green
  - a central public space that links the buildings and CBD
  - an indigenous plantings landscaped courtyard and meeting area
  - The Conservatorium open air performance arena
  - café/restaurant
  - public art and sculpture walk
  - Bocce court
  - Kids art/play area

**Stage 4 of the Art in the Heart development** will include:

- Stage 2 of The Margaret Olley Art Centre

*Art in the Heart* will also act as a link between the CBD, the cultural precinct, sporting fields and Oakes Oval, and the Lismore Shopping Square.

## **The Margaret Olley Art Centre**

The next phase of the development is the construction of the Margaret Olley Art Centre. This new building will form the vital cog in arts infrastructure for Lismore and will complete the spread of cultural amenities within the precinct. It is estimated that this phase will cost \$5.5 million.

Lismore City Council has committed to contributing \$3 million to the project. Current plans are to raise the remaining money from Southern Cross University (\$500,000 - confirmed) LRG private fundraising initiatives (\$1,000,000) NSW State Govt (\$500,000) and the Federal Government (\$500,000).

When completed, this complex will be a world class regional facility. The gallery will have 1200m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, roughly 10 times the exhibition area of the current gallery. In planning the next phase of the development – the gallery, public outdoor spaces and the creative industries building, great care is being taken to create the kind of spaces that will be large enough and flexible enough to be able to serve the community well into the future. They will be designed to service both the current uses for which galleries are designed and also the new roles that will develop throughout the life of the building as technologies and community expectations change.

The Margaret Olley Arts Centre is a centre for learning, history, arts, stories, creativity, social interaction and community.

**The Margaret Olley Art Centre and the Art in the Heart project will deliver** to the city of Lismore and surrounds:

- City revitalisation
- Cultural tourism
- New industry jobs
- City identity
- Economic benefits
- The Art in the Heart project is designed to grow sustainable arts practice in the Northern Rivers region. It will drive new jobs growth and industry development in regional Australia by becoming a hub of the arts and economic development.
- The aim of the project is to make art, creativity, our stories and Australian history accessible to the whole of community.

**The benefits for construction of The Margaret Olley Art Centre** as part of the Art in the Heart project:

- Stimulate and promote development of ancillary and commercial activities within the precinct and beyond
- Be a magnet to attract cultural tourism to the region
- Become a National and Internationally recognised site
- The focus of many civic and community celebrations and events of a City and regional nature, with a strong ceremonial role
- Increased employment opportunities
- Stimulate and re-vitalise the city centre
- Harness the artistic resource our rich and diverse region has to offer
- Re-establish Lismore as the cultural hub for the Northern Rivers Region
- Assist with moving artists from welfare to employment by providing more opportunities to display their work and sell in the Centre Shop
- Grow and encourage the creative industries
- Create a link between Lismore City centre, arts, sport, retail and the environment
- Provide a “centre of town”
- The new facility will have nationally significant programs
- The new building will be a flagship for regional revitalisation through the arts as the Lismore region embraces the arts and the creative industries as new jobs growth
- The new building will redefine Lismore’s CBD and profile as a creative, innovative, sophisticated and industry-ready city
- The new building will embrace community cohesion and economic development
- The new building will attract more visitors to Lismore; more retail/ hospitality purchases, more accommodation booked and more cross-event participation
- Will offer greater opportunities for the general public and whole of community to engage with the arts, Australian history, creativity and Lismore stories

## **Partners**

The *Art in the Heart* project and The Margaret Olley Art Centre are a partnership between Lismore City Council and Southern Cross University.

The Margaret Olley Art Centre, supported by collaborations and programs with Southern Cross University, will offer significant learning opportunities to pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and life-long learning sectors. The arts, Australian culture, contemporary issues and Australian history will be made more accessible through interactive programs utilising Gallery staff and University staff expertise. Southern Cross University have a strong record in developing community engagement programs that deliver connectivity and learning in our community. The Margaret Olley Art Centre and SCU will develop programs to enhance community identity and harmony.

## **Southern Cross University and *Art in the Heart* in Lismore**

Ros Derrett OAM, Head, Office of Regional Engagement, Southern Cross University wrote in a report 17 December 2007, "Lismore City Council (LCC) has embarked on a transformation of the old Lismore High School site to a vibrant cultural precinct that will revitalise the central business district of Lismore. Council's mission is to create a distinctive urban area that will integrate major residential and commercial developments with community and public areas, and provide a link between planned redevelopment of the riverbank, Magellan Street and the proposed Laneways redevelopment project.

Creativity is the key to economic growth. Precinct supporters' vision for the development is based on the value of cultural and creative activities to enhance the quality of life, provide a strong social identity, and to create educational / training and economic benefits for the region. Community groups may use the facilities for exhibition, research, training, development and performance activities. The facilities will also form a major tourism attraction for Lismore and the region. In 2006, LCC prepared the business case for the development of the whole site. Plans have been drawn of the projected Margaret Olley Art Centre

SCU has had representation on the Project Team overseeing developments since 1999. Staff from SCU and LCC has met to discuss partnership opportunities".

## **Arts and Community Profile**

The Far North Coast region of NSW has become the fastest growing and most densely populated rural region in Australia, with nearly 10 per cent of the State's population. The region has a distinct demographic profile for rural areas in Australia. Like other coastal parts of NSW, it has been a popular destination for contemporary counter-urban flows, as professionals, academics, retirees, artists and musicians gravitate towards the region's natural and cultural environment.

**Key Study Findings** by Arts Northern Rivers in 2005 have identified:

- The Northern Rivers region of NSW is renowned as a regional centre for the arts. Spanning the Clarence, Richmond and Tweed valleys the region is home to the highest concentration of artists outside the capital cities. Many are successful professionals. Southern Cross University and North Coast Institute of TAFE also offer education in visual arts and fine arts, producing many emerging artists.
- 7,280 people are directly engaged in creative industries in the region in December 2005, which is 6.1% of the region's labour force
- An additional 2594 work either as volunteers or support roles for major events
- There are 6220 students involved in the sector
- The total number of all people involved in the creative industries in the region is therefore approx. 16,000 people
- The estimated economic value of the creative industry sector is \$190.8 million
- Regional Galleries offer artists a significant market pathway for their work to be seen, sold and promoted. Regional Galleries also offer a potential income stream for local artists, giving artists opportunities and potential for gainful employment.

## **Cultural Tourism**

Lismore City Council Tourism Marketing Strategy 2004-2007 has identified cultural tourism as a key performance area and would like to position Lismore as the Cultural Capital of the region.

The experiences generated by Australian performances, visual arts and heritage are unique. Cultural tourism embraces the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes a destination distinctive – its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts, its people – and the business of providing and interpreting that culture to visitors.

Cultural experiences have been identified by the department of tourism as a major component for both domestic and international visitors as a major component of their holiday.

According to the report Cultural Tourism in Australia – Characteristics and Motivations, inbound tourists made more than two million visits to Australia's cultural attractions during the six month survey period July 1 to December 31, 1996. Sixty percent of all tourists to Australia visit our cultural attractions. Other findings included:

- the majority of inbound visitors are 'general' cultural visitors – that is, they see cultural experiences as part of the travel itinerary, rather than as their main reason for travel
- compared with the average international visitor, inbound visitors to cultural attractions tend to be younger, are more likely to be on holiday, stay longer and spend more
- during the survey period cultural visitors spent more time in Australia than the average visitor, and on average, they spent \$2,300 – approximately \$300 more than average for inbound visitors

Extracts from Cultural Tourism in ACT (Braithwaite)

### **Lismore City Council Tourism Marketing and Development Strategy 2004 - 2007**

Tourists visiting Byron Bay and Nimbin are drawn there primarily as cultural tourists and participate in cultural activities. There are opportunities for Lismore to "pull in" many of the people who are already in our region.

The Rainbow Region is located within the Northern Rivers which attracts approximately 7.2 million domestic visitor nights and 199,000 International visitors. Visitors to the region are from Queensland (30%), Sydney (30%), other Regional NSW (26%), International (9%) Victoria (10%) and other (4%).

Visitors to the region could be divided evenly with respect to three lifestyle groups: The older, parents with children, and single/couple with no children. These lifestyle segments represent the profile of the 'customer' that would be attracted to the Cultural Precinct.

Tourism is widely recognised as a major contributor to the region's economy. The Department of State and Regional Development (DSARD), estimated that in 2005 the Northern Rivers Region would be firmly established as a premier destination. Tourism currently contributes \$762 million to the Northern Rivers economy and generates 5863 jobs.

Tourists spend \$132.9 million in the Lismore local government area, 10.2% of the Lismore regional population is supported by tourism. Lismore City Council's total income from having a population supported by tourism is \$4,730,000.

Department of Industry Tourism resources – Tourism Impact Model, DSARD August 2000

### **Community Feedback**

Workshops have been held with a wide range of people from the cultural/arts industry to discuss the potential of the site as a cultural precinct and to gauge support. The view of participants at the workshop suggested the concept offered the opportunity to showcase Lismore's unique cultural activities and at the same time revitalise and repopulate the central business district. In addition, there was interest expressed from the business community who clearly saw the economic benefits in the development of the site as a cultural precinct.

### **Healthy Communities**

Galleries can play a key role in informing debate so communities are better placed to contribute to decisions that will shape social values and government policies. Gallery's can bring people together across differences and, in so doing, can help to promote individual and collective engagement with the ideas and issues of sustainability.

Quality of life is determined by many factors including health, income, level of education, cultural diversity and environmental quality.

Responsible financial decisions must include the long-term sustainability of the community and environment. The current reliance on economic growth statistics alone as the basic measure of prosperity and progress, implicitly devalues the importance of our natural and social capital, including natural resource wealth and environmental quality.

### **Capital Infrastructure in Regional NSW**

Capital infrastructure has been identified by Regional Arts NSW as a priority area of concern for arts and cultural development in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. A cultural building is a place for activity, a meeting place, a place with great potential for things to happen and for engaging our community.

Buildings are important because communities and their artists need space – to create, to gather, to perform, to watch, to engage, to debate, to take risks, to make mess and celebrate. The result is a building with strong presence, of which residents can be proud of.

Investing in high quality public building, which has economic and social value, as well as exemplifying excellent design and construction is important to position the new Gallery as a destination for cultural tourism

above the traditional role as educational institution. The New Gallery must comply with both National and International exhibition standards.

In the past, galleries and museums were carved out of grand old houses, neglected, derelict or abandoned public buildings or donated as a gift by the people of the community. Today the benchmark has been lifted, an increasing number of galleries are being built by Councils' across Australia, as speculative investments designed to attract two potential currencies: collections and crowds.

### **Community Framework for Cultural Infrastructure**

Jon Hawkes, author of *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*, describes culture as the framework for the distinctive way of life of communities. He says it is both "the inherent values and the means and the results of social expression". and it is dynamic and constantly changing. Our culture:

- Embodies the sense we make of our lives; it is built on the values we share and the ways we come to terms with our differences; it deals with what matters to people and communities: relationships, memories, experiences, identities, backgrounds, hopes and dreams in all their diversity. And most of all, our culture expresses our visions of the future: what it is we want to pass on to future generations;
- Connects our present with our pasts and with the future we imagine. It is with culture that we make the connections, the networks of meanings and values, and of friendship and interest, that hold us together in time, in place and in society;
- Describes the ways we tell each other our stories, how we create our sense of ourselves, how we remember who we are, how we imagine who we want to become, how we relax, how we celebrate, how we argue, how we bring up our children, the spaces we make for ourselves;
- Is the expression of our desires to be happy, our desires to belong, our desires to survive and, above all, our desires to be creative.

As such, cultural thinking and cultural policy are central to planning for sustainable communities. Cultural values and expression can be found in many aspects of communities and community life. They manifest physically in the design and development of the built environment, in activities and pastimes such as sport, shopping or gardening, in language, cuisine, routines and ceremonies. The arts are just one manifestation, albeit an overt one, of the culture of communities.

Creative practice includes the arts and other activities that are carried out intentionally as an expression of cultural values and creativity.

In the building of sustainable communities, culture needs to be defined and embraced as a primary community resource. Culture is reflected in and is integral to social, economic and environmental matters. Cultural affairs generally present complex issues and interconnections that can be difficult to perceive and articulate, which is perhaps the main reason why cultural matters are often reduced to "a marginal add-on to be considered once the important planning questions like housing, transport and land-use have been dealt with".

Community cultural development practitioners work with groups to explore and strengthen their sense of identity, sense of place and capacity to shape and enact their own future.

For maximum community benefit, cultural thinking needs to be central to planning. It is not to be seen as "the icing on the cake rather than the yeast without which the cake fails to rise to its full potential".

It needs to be placed firmly on the planning agenda for local areas where it can direct management and resource allocation to more effective outcomes. Cultural thinking helps communities to take advantage of their cultural identity and inherent creativity to enhance their own quality of life and socio-economic well-being.

### **Regional Galleries Activating Communities**

Sometimes, galleries are seen as an end in themselves, being described as the stewards of community collections, venues for creative programming and support infrastructure for local artists. They also play an important role in informing, educating and entertaining communities and their visitors. Galleries and Museums are also community symbols. Along with a courthouse, the possession of a gallery or museum enhances the status of a municipality or shire.

However, while they are regarded as cultural assets by local government the activities of museums and galleries are frequently viewed as external to the core business of a council and not necessarily providing broader cultural programs for the community at large.

In 2004, to assist local government in cultural planning, Arts NSW produced Cultural Planning Guidelines. These reinforce the role of local government as the lead organisation for cultural planning and outline the benefits of the process. Key features in the Guidelines include:

- Encouraging local government to view cultural planning as integrated into council's other planning mechanisms
- Community engagement is central to the planning process
- Culture is broadly defined – beyond 'arts' to include a sense of place, values and identity
- Identifying products, cultural assets, resources and cultural infrastructure in both public and private ownership and understanding their potential and current use
- Identifying mechanisms for "removing barriers and enhancing opportunities for shared cultural expression and participation"
- Providing a framework for realisation of the plan including resources
- In summary, our research has indicated that museums have a valuable role to play in engaging fully in the cultural planning process and that these organisations can strengthen the cultural capacity of their communities. Indeed they are essential to the community's development of a vibrant creative environment to both sustain and nurture the future of that community and ensure a viable future for museums in these communities.
- Because workers in museums and galleries are often the longest-established and amongst the most credible in a community, they have a prime role and, I would advocate, a responsibility to take leadership in shaping the creative life of their communities – as well of course, in ensuring their own organisations perform well to fulfill their cultural plans.

Extracts from Creative Museums 2005 (MGNSW conference paper – M Stapleton, S-J Rennie, J Probert)

### **Statewide Planning Objectives**

The State Plan addresses a small number of commitments the State Government has made to support the arts in regional centres:

- Maintaining partnerships with local government through Cultural Accords...
- Taking into account the importance of the arts and culture in the lives of people and in developing local identity when planning new regional centres and urban consolidation

It also promises to consider new directions:

- Actively promoting and improving access to sporting, cultural and community events by building stronger partnerships between state and local governments and the private sector by:
- Focussing support on arts programs targeting children and young people, in particular ConnectEd Arts – a joint initiative of the Arts and Education portfolios.
- Developing a more strategic approach with local government to increase and improve their arts, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities
- Encourage development of arts and culture and cultural precincts in local communities through partnerships with local government

The *Art in the Heart* project feeds directly into these aims, by creating a more efficient structure into which to channel funding for projects and infrastructure, and by establishing a clear platform for present and future funding partnerships with Lismore City Council.

### **The Far North Coast Regional Strategy**

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy makes no explicit mention of culture. It would appear to be embedded in Cultural Heritage (historical artifacts and buildings) and Economic Development.

Acknowledging that the Regional Strategy may not have had the scope to address cultural issues, it does identify as an economic challenge to "support and strengthen the region's economic base by implementing the specific strategies and actions identified in the Regional Industry and Economic Plan for the Northern Rivers (NRRDB 2005). In this report specific recommendations are made in the 'Strategies/Actions for the Creative Industries Sector' section, such that:

- Particular on-going support should be given to the region's established strengths (eg. documentary film making, visual arts, music performing arts and writing)
- Facilitate the continued development of regional creative clusters, networks and representative bodies in creative industries which have been identified as significant clusters
- Develop central hubs for business centres to support creative industry sectors
- Support the development of high quality work and promote achievement of excellence and quality in arts and creative industry works through mentorships, professional development opportunities and awards. These are all core programming priorities of the LRG.

The FNC Regional Strategy also predicts that there will be a 26% increase in population for the period 2006-31, and that the key drivers for growth in the region will be an influx of people from Sydney and other areas of NSW, as well as South East Queensland due to improvements in accessibility provided by the upgrade of



the Pacific Highway. In each of these cases it is clear that a strengthened cultural sector will play an important role firstly in attracting these populations to the region and in keeping them in the area.

The FNCRS also encourages the trend towards taller, more condensed development in regional centres because this increases the level of services and consolidates the centre's regional leadership status. It also brings higher levels of vibrancy to the CBD and increases the economies of scale in the provision of services. Art in the Heart feeds directly into these planning objectives.

Furthermore, participants at the Northern Rivers (NSW) Area Consultative Committee Regional Forum, 'Growing Our Region Together 2007-2010', found that creative industries were one of the key emerging industries that would drive economic growth in the region in the future, and that the 'establishment of creative clusters or creative tourism experiences could enhance economic activity.' To this end the strategic priorities for Arts Northern Rivers in 2005-2007 were to:

- Foster and promote the culture of the region
- Foster and encourage Indigenous arts and cultural programs and practices
- Promote the arts, and achievement in the arts, to enhance social and economic community development
- Encourage an increase in the level of cultural tourism

### **Economic benefits and impacts**

In community consultation workshops, Lismore residents have demonstrated very clearly that the revitalisation of the CBD is a priority for the area. Beautification and rejuvenation of the inner city to ensure it remains modern, clean and aesthetically pleasing is strategically very important to residents and businesses alike in order to attract people back into the area. Lismore City Council has completed a major street beautification project in the CBD in recent years and the addition of the cultural hub to the city's cultural assets will add greater meaning to these works. It is anticipated that the creation of the new cultural hub will profoundly stimulate and revitalise arts and culture related activities in the city centre, providing a 'centre of town' for tourists and locals. It will create linkages between Lismore CBD and the arts, retail and environment sectors that operate throughout the CBD and will form a key point along the 'cultural trail' which would also take in the Lismore Museum, Riverbank, Star Court Theatre and City Hall.

While businesses in the surrounding area will benefit from a revitalised CBD and likely increases in economic activity that will flow on, the Art in the Heart project itself will place the host organisations on a much stronger footing. Increased visitation to the Margaret Olley Art Centre will lead to spill over increases to the other exhibition centres in the precinct, and proceeds from leasing out the facilities will allow for greater financial sustainability.

The Centre Shop will profile local artists, craft practitioners and designers. Indigenous, culturally diverse and non-indigenous local artists will gain significant business opportunity with an outlet promoting their work. The Shop will be at the front of The Margaret Olley Art Centre, which is located on the main shopping precinct of Lismore. The Centre will attract local people and tourists, as such, will afford increased opportunity for sales and career development for local artists.

Expenditure by tourists during their trip to cultural facilities generates direct, indirect and induced impacts as their money flows through the local community.

The induced economic impact are the impacts generated when surrounding businesses and organisations purchase additional products and services and hire additional employees as a result of the direct and indirect impacts. There will also be an induced impact where the Art in the Heart serves to strengthen the attractiveness of the area as an investment and operational location, thereby attracting activity and business that otherwise wouldn't have occurred.

Cultural precinct stimulate and promote development of ancillary and commercial activities within the precinct and beyond

### **Cultural benefits and cultural modelling/ planning**

Principally, the *Art in the Heart* project will act as a focal point for arts activities in the Northern Rivers and will be the spearhead of culture led regeneration in the Northern Rivers region. It will further consolidate Lismore's position as a centre for arts activity and will stimulate community and cultural cohesion through economic development. Lismore is extremely well placed to capitalise on this position, given the proximity of Southern Cross University and the Northern Rivers TAFE and their respective activities in growing the creative industries in this region. These two educational facilities attract students from all over Australia and the world, and the contribution these students make to the cultural life of the city and its economy is considerable.

*Art in the Heart* will provide a range of opportunities for cultural experiences in one central location, which will lead to increased utilisation and patronage of the city's cultural infrastructure. It will be the focus of many civic and cultural celebrations and events.

Another important flow-on effect of this 'culture led' regeneration process is that Lismore will become a far more attractive proposition for people looking to move to the area from elsewhere. By injecting cultural capital in to the area, more capital will be drawn to the area from outside, strengthening the local economy and improving employment and investment possibilities.

Perhaps most importantly of all, the artists of the region stand to receive the sort of professional support that is long overdue. Artists are the heart and soul of the creative industry and the opportunities *Art in the Heart* will provide to local artists will be substantial.

### **Education**

In Lismore Southern Cross University, The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre, ACE, TAFE, and local schools offer artists numerous opportunities to learn new skills and bring greater technical aspects to their practice. Arts Northern Rivers and the Department of State and Regional Development offer professional practice programs for artists. Lismore Regional Gallery runs a program called DIY: Artist, designed to assist artists in career development.

There are numerous state primary and high schools in the region, private schools, ACE, The Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre, TAFE colleges and Southern Cross University. SCU has an arts faculty with Schools of Art and Music, and the TAFE also has a popular art department. Each of these faculties feeds directly into the cultural community and generates an enormous amount of patronage for the local arts economy.

With the construction of the new Margaret Olley Art Centre the opportunities to forge creative partnerships with the educational sector are significant, and will allow the delivery of these services to occur at a level not feasible within current space constraints.

These educational initiatives will allow The Centre to contribute in a very significant way to the NSW State Plan which states that it will "support vocational education and training by building better links between schools, TAFE and industry to focus on better skilling North Coast young people to address the skills shortage in the region".

### **Community celebration**

Through the gallery's exhibition program and with an increasing role in public art management, cultural heritage will become an even more important part of *Art in the Heart's* role in public life. The benefits to local heritage will be to build strong, socially cohesive and resilient communities, who are aware of what makes them different and special, whilst encouraging local and regional pride, against what many perceive to be the steady erosion of local communities through globalisation and its effects.

This can be articulated through a celebration of local achievements via researched curatorial projects, public art projects and other public program initiated by the Gallery.

## APPENDIX

### **The Lismore City Council Cultural policy articulates:**

Lismore City Council has a responsibility to encourage and facilitate arts and cultural activity, to provide leadership and direction in cultural development, and to provide support for artists and arts/ cultural organisations to facilitate their continued contribution to Lismore's development.

Council will (abridged):

- 1 Recognise the value that cultural life contributes to community well-being.
- 3.1 Support and encourage emerging and existing cultural organisations.
- 4 Create the most appropriate cultural infrastructure to support the needs of a diverse and creative community.
- 5 Create opportunities for all residents to participate in a wide range of cultural activity.
- 5.1 Encourage and support organisations that promote cultural activity for young people.
- 5.3 Provide support for the development of partnerships within the community that promote Aboriginal cultural endeavours.
- 6.1 Identify existing and future opportunities for cultural tourism and develop strategies to capitalise on these opportunities for sustainable development.
- 7 Work towards the integration of cultural development planning with all relevant strategic planning processes and documents within Council.

### **Lismore City Council's Strategic Plan, 2004 – 2012**

(page 5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### AIMS

Build Lismore's reputation as a regional city for residents, businesses, education providers, health services and government. Increase regional economic development, tourism and job-creating investments.

#### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Champion Education
- Promote health facilities
- Support regional agriculture
- Promote cultural life
- Promote Lismore as a legal centre
- Support for sport
- Promote regional development
- Develop tourism
- Support businesses
- Pursue CBD revitalisation
- Assist in job creation
- Assist in creating new income opportunities

For more than 100 years, Lismore has been the hub of the Northern Rivers. It has a proud legacy and enjoys a vibrant and diverse culture within a clean, healthy environment and a thriving business community. The traditional mainstays of dairying, forestry and government institutions are all going through change. In the future, Lismore will find itself as a large urban population area in the Northern Rivers which will continue serving a regional agricultural community.

Council wants to build Lismore's reputation as a city of choice for residents, businesses, education providers, health services and government. Strategic initiatives include cultural promotion, support for sport and ensuring that our city remains a strong legal centre for the region.

#### TRENDS

Community consultation has demonstrated clearly that Lismore's residents are proud of their city and want it to continue to develop. Ensuring the physical construction and design of the city is modern and continually improving has emerged as a priority, given that it is only natural for cityscapes to become run-down and tired after years of continual use. Repeated comments by residents in workshops and surveys indicate that CBD revitalisation and architecturally sensitive beautification are of strategic importance to the city. Residents want Lismore to be a pleasant place to live, visit and do business, and want Council to act to ensure that the city does not become tired or run-down.

(page 6) The region is heading towards three million tourists annually in the medium-term, and this will also present a challenge to the city as these visitors look to the hinterland for tourism activities.

Lismore's economy developed away from its traditional mainstay of agriculture. In the future, knowledge-based industries, and those based on the creative industries, education and environmental repair and tourism will create jobs. The climate is also changing for local councils:

Lismore must be more efficient with ratepayers' funds, and look for new revenue opportunities for both Council and the broader business.

#### COMMUNITY VIEWS

Responses from the community directions survey support a regional city focus. 'Promoting Lismore as a regional capital' and 'pursuing CBD revitalisation' both ranked in the top eight issues. These rankings are well supported by many of the comments made as part of the community consultation workshops:

#### COMMUNITY FEEDBACK – RANKING THE ISSUES

- Promoting Lismore as a regional capital 5
- Pursuing CBD revitalisation 7
- Promoting city image 16
- Making Lismore attractive to new residents 19
- Encouraging job creation and business investment 3
- Supporting and promoting tourism 15

#### (page 8) LEADERSHIP BY INNOVATION

##### AIMS

Lead the region by demonstrating innovative practices in governance, customer service, communication, consultation virtual amalgamation and financial management.

Lismore will continue offering leadership to the region by striving for innovation and through continuous improvement in our management practices, and the programmes we put in place.