

Submission
No 26

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

Organisation: Bega Valley Shire Council
Name: Mr Peter Tegart
Position: General Manager
Telephone: 02 6499 2222
Date Received: 29/08/2008

Ref: DW

28 August 2008

Mr David Borger MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: Catherine.Watson@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Borger

Submission to the Inquiry into the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD

Please find attached Bega Valley Shire Council's submission to this inquiry.

The far south coast of New South Wales has few arts and cultural facilities despite a vibrant arts community with nationally and internationally recognised artists living in the region.

The NSW State Plan sets out five areas of activity – all would be better served by the provision of an integrated network of cultural facilities throughout New South Wales. As research shows, such support builds better communities. A copy of Council's Cultural Plan is also appended as part of the submission.

(http://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/Community/social_plan/culturalplan.htm)

Greater integration between the three levels of government to provide support for the development of a network of flexible spaces across the State would greatly enhance a community's economic, social and cultural capabilities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6499 2104 or Leanne Barnes, Group Manager, Customer Services and Community Development on (02) 6499 2105 if you would like further information.

ADDRESS ALL
CORRESPONDENCE TO:

PO Box 492
Bega NSW 2550
DX 4904
ABN 26 987 935 332

Council chambers
Zingel Place, Bega

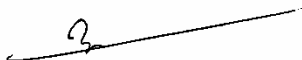
PHONE
(02) 6499 2222

FAX
(02) 6499 2200

INFORMATION
www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au

EMAIL
council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Peter Tegart
General Manager

Enc.

DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY CBD

Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Works

From Bega Valley Shire Council

All or any part of this submission may be made public

Assessment Bega Valley Shire Council's current involvement in arts and cultural planning and service delivery

Cultural Plan - Council has developed a comprehensive Cultural Plan which is linked to the Council's 20 Year Plan and four year management plans. The Cultural Plan was developed in partnership with the South East Arts Region (SEAR) and a local community reference group. This Plan is regularly referenced by Council and by community groups.

Facilities – Council has a main library, three branch libraries (all seen as broader cultural facilities), a mobile library service, a Regional Gallery, a Town Hall, 20 community halls, 5 museums and many other public areas. In the local area there are also significant NSW estate properties such as the Old Bega Hospital, the Bega Showgrounds which contribute to the cultural infrastructure of the area. There are also significant community assets such as the Keeping Place at Jigamy near Eden and private galleries and the Four Winds Festival space on a private property.

Grants – Council has been strategically applying for grants over a long period to assist with facility development and projects. In the area of infrastructure these grants have covered library and community space development in Eden, Bermagui and the mobile library service. In the project area there have been a range of areas covering collection development, performance, writing workshops, print workshops, community development projects with local Aboriginal communities. Council has also partnered with SEAR in funding submissions and with local community groups. Council also supports other local groups by way of in-kind support and by auspicing grants. Of particular interest has been the Keeping Place at Jigamy, the Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre, the Eden Whale Museum, the Bega and Merimbula Museums and Old Bega Hospital.

Council financial commitment – a total budget allocation in the order of \$950,000 covers commitment to the library, the regional art gallery and Council's contribution to South East Arts Region. This does not include allocations to public halls, other local community facilities and the public domain

Staffing – Council has a Cultural Services Coordinator full time responsible for the Regional Gallery, Library and cultural development, 9 library staff and a comprehensive volunteer program, there are 2 part time positions in the Gallery covering exhibitions and programs and program development. The SEAR Regional Arts Development Officer is also located with Council.

Local activity – there is significant local cultural activity and a strong and vibrant cultural community. This includes the Far South Coast Living Artists Project, Fling Physical Theatre, Karri Yalla Aboriginal Artists Co-op to name a few. There is also a strong festival culture within the Shire.

Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources

Partnership funding would provide opportunities for local organisations to seek private partners for large infrastructure projects.

Similarly, cultural infrastructure need not be, nor should be “stand alone”, single purpose buildings. A mix of private and other public funding partners would allow for the provision of integrated services – a mix of both commercial and public services – of most interest to the community.

Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life

There is little need for large iconic, often largely empty buildings. The real need (and challenge) is to develop smaller, flexible, multi functional spaces that allow for a multitude of events and activities. There is no doubt that public infrastructure is required to support arts and cultural life.

A review of currently held public buildings to ascertain the potential of refurbishment as multi-purpose cultural facilities would identify a potential infrastructure network.

The opportunities presented by libraries as “community hubs” needs to be further developed. Convergence as a theme is being further developed in NSW and needs to be taken to the next step.

In Bega we are currently building on an opportunity to establish a regional cultural precinct incorporating Regional Gallery, Regional Library and multi purpose space. This would be supported by the further development/refurbishment of the Department of Lands Old Bega Hospital (badly damaged by fire in 2005) as a multi purpose space and community arts centre.

The Bega Showgrounds is currently used as a facility for a range of cultural events, most prominent as a training and performance space for Fling Physical Theatre, the only funded youth dance troupe in NSW. The need to look for a permanent home for Fling should focus on current, underutilised public infrastructure facilities.

The public domain – parks, beaches, wharves- all provide opportunities for celebration, performance and this should be considered in terms of funding and design.

One of the most exciting opportunities in the planning stage locally is the Sapphire Coast Learning Community, a consortium of local state funded schools who are working with Council to look at accessing schools for broader community activity initially for broadband projects. The potential to take this further and to look at community/school library and community cultural centre spaces presents amazing possibilities.

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

Cultural facility hubs are less attractive than hubs that include a range of cultural, civic and other social services. These would create the best possible access to cultural facilities, creating opportunities for wide community use. Examples of this are the Albury Regional Gallery co-located with Council’s administration offices, Eurobodalla Shire’s Nowra Library co-located with community health services. This allows for cross over audiences.

In the Bega Council’s Regional Gallery and Library is co-located with Council’s central administration and plans involving a private city centre development may allow Council to further develop and extend this. In Eden, Council’s library is located in the NSW Gateway Centre which also houses a community technology centre, the Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre, Visitor Information Centre and Gateway to NSW . In Bermagui the

Bermagui Community Centre has a multi purpose hall, library, museum, community technology centre, Visitor Information Centre, and a range of community services. The opportunity to develop these places to provide more integrated cultural, community and civic spaces is exciting and should be investigated. Current funding models are restrictive to more integrated models.

Networks of facilities across NSW would also increase access and participation. For example, in 2001, the Victorian Regional Galleries sought funding through the Federal Government's Centenary of Federation program to develop a network of "standardized" exhibition spaces across Victoria. This allowed for, and continues to support, tours of top-class, museum quality exhibitions to small rural communities. A similar co-ordinated project in NSW would be of great benefit to communities outside of the Sydney CBD. It could also include multi media points to provide virtual training, first night performance screenings (such as the recent Australian Ballet screenings).

It is also more important for facilities to be located close to public transport. By "converging" civic, cultural, social services and opportunities there is an impetus for transport nodes to also follow.

There is a need for greater commitment and engagement at higher levels of government to drive implementation through relevant departments

Complexity and grant procedures need to be streamlined.

The debate about creative clusters does not appear to take into consideration the needs/ challenges of users such physical access to facilities (need to be close to public transport hubs, need to be collocated with other services.

Recent research by mgNSW indicates that galleries are visited by low income families.

Accessibility of cultural and arts education

Greater integration of services provision between Department of Education, TAFE and University programs would better serve the community.

The example outlined above provides an opportunity to pilot a new way of operating for local communities, local government and State government. A school hall, a school library can potentially be enhanced physically and with resources (most importantly human resources) to provide a broad range of cultural, community, social and education opportunities. Local government could value add to Education department facilities and courses across a range of disciplines could be offered.

Economic impacts on communities

Many home based businesses are arts and cultural activities, which contribute to the local economy. Cultural infrastructure assists these businesses by providing opportunities to showcase works to broader audiences.

The adequacy of the State Plan

While the intent of the State Plan to provide greater integration of service provision across two levels of government, in reality the Plan does not adequately address how arts and cultural services and infrastructure

Better integration of services with other agencies such Department of Education.

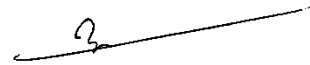
Any other relevant matters

Cultural plans

The development of cultural plans that integrate Council’s cultural activities with other local government services provide better support to the community. The new integrated planning framework being developed by the Department of Local Government may provide opportunity to raise the profile of this area.

Similarly, a State government cultural statement would provide guidance for the overall provision of services.

Submitted on behalf Bega Valley Shire Council



.....

Peter Tegart
General Manager

Bega Valley Shire Council