

Submission  
No 19

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

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Ref No: A06/0915  
Date: 25 August 2008

Mr David Borger MP  
Chairperson  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



RECEIVED  
28/08/08

Dear Mr Borger

I am writing in response to your letter dated 24 July 2008 regarding the inquiry into the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside the Sydney CBD.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response on this important issue in local government. Such an inquiry is now timely given the recent Australia 2020 Summit and its focus on arts, culture and creativity in Australia's future, and recent critical reviews of arts and cultural initiatives such as the NSW Cultural Grants program.

Waverley Council acknowledges the vital role of arts and cultural infrastructure and programs in the well being, cohesiveness and dynamic social development of local communities across NSW. Outside of the major cultural institutions based in the Sydney CBD, local governments are usually the primary authority responsible for the construction, maintenance, management, coordination, programming and strategic development of these facilities.

While current financial and other support provided by the State and Federal governments for capital infrastructure and arts and cultural programs are appropriate and greatly appreciated, there is rarely sufficient capital available to meet the diverse cultural services demands and needs of local communities. Any additional support and assistance arising from this inquiry would be well received.

#### SUBMISSION SUMMARY

- This submission outlines Waverley Council's current arts and cultural infrastructure, programs and services, staffing and resources, and policies and strategies. It also refers to the key infrastructure issues and opportunities arising for Council in the near future, such as the upcoming renovation and upgrade of cultural facilities at the Bondi Pavilion and the Bondi Junction 'Town Square' proposal.
- The submission also addresses some of the issues specifically raised in the background paper to the Inquiry including Waverley Council's experience of the State cultural funding process, levels of arts and cultural funding in the LGA, and access to arts and cultural education and training in the area.
- Finally, the submission explores a number of strategic issues relating to arts and cultural infrastructure in NSW – the NSW State Plan and the desirability of a NSW Cultural Plan; cultural development networks; proposal for a Sustainability Fund for arts infrastructure; and the importance of cultural precincts and the creative use of branding and consistent marketing to create the notion of a cultural precinct for a dispersed network of arts and cultural facilities.

*All correspondence should be addressed to Waverley Council*

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## **Arts and cultural Infrastructure in Waverley**

Waverley Council has a strong and enduring commitment to supporting and developing the arts through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, staffing and resources, and the coordination or facilitation of festivals, events and programs. The recent appointment of a Cultural Planner to Council's staff and progress towards the implementation of Council's Arts Plus Plan will provide a more strategic focus for Council's diverse arts and cultural program.

Waverley is one of several local Councils bordering the Sydney CBD and in many ways shares with Sydney a high density, high population urban footprint. There are strong connections between Waverley and the Sydney basin in many respects such as a daily exchange of commuting populations and workforce; the attraction of the newly redeveloped commercial and shopping precinct of Bondi Junction so close to the CBD; the enduring popularity of Bondi and the surrounding beaches and reserves as a 'playground of Sydneysiders'; and arts and culture, with the enormous popularity of events like Sculpture by the Sea each year and a well recognised concentration of artists, filmmakers and other creative practitioners in the Bondi and Waverley area.

### *Definition of 'infrastructure'*

In this submission, we have assumed a broad definition of the phrase 'arts and cultural infrastructure'. Infrastructure in this context should encompass more than simply buildings and facilities used for arts activities, such as galleries, theatres, cultural centres and studios. It should be extended to include programs and activities, services, mechanisms of support (such as grants, funding and programs of assistance) as well as human skills, access to technology and systems.

It is difficult and (arguably) inappropriate to separate the arts and cultural infrastructure based in the Waverley LGA (outlined below) from the diverse and vibrant programs, events and festivals, activities and groups that operate in them, and the range of support and resourcing Waverley Council and other agencies provide.

### *Bondi Pavilion - [www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/info/pavilion/](http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/info/pavilion/)*

In terms of pure physical infrastructure, Waverley Council manages and coordinates several key cultural facilities. Perhaps the best known is the historic Bondi Pavilion at Bondi Beach. The heritage-listed Pavilion, constructed in 1928, has evolved considerably over time and amongst its many contemporary functions it has developed as a creative hub to a diverse group of emerging and professional local artists, arts workers, community groups and creative practitioners.

The Pavilion's current facilities include a fully equipped theatre and gallery space, contemporary music studios, a ceramics workshop, function and workshop rooms and an artist's studio/residence. These facilities are home to a wide range of dynamic music, arts and theatre programs targeting audiences and participants from the local area and far beyond, servicing community, emerging and professional artists, and attracting demographics from pre-schoolers, to disabled arts practitioners, seniors and everyone in between.

These programs and facilities are coordinated by a dedicated and experienced community cultural development and events team based at the Pavilion (5-6 full time staff and several contractors).

Some examples of current services include coordination of festivals and events (such as the upcoming Festival of the Winds and the annual South American Festival); the innovative and successful Bondi Wave Music program; community access to classes and programs; exhibitions and displays; talks and theatre performances; markets; and public art.

Also based at the Pavilion, Council's Bondi and Beaches Division (a team of three staff) contributes significantly to Council's arts and cultural programs. As well as ongoing liaison with a range of external event providers (such as Sculpture by the Sea, the City to Surf and for annual celebrations such as Youth Week), the Bondi and Beaches team assist with the coordination of the Bondi Beach broad walk mural walls and the decoration of the Bondi skate park, and deliver several major events each year including the annual *My Bondi Summer* Christmas/New Year events program and the Bondi Winter campaign.

Over the coming years, Council plans to expend a capital works budget of several million dollars on upgrading and renovating elements of the Bondi Pavilion including the theatre facilities and gallery, change rooms, function rooms and some external repainting and signage. While some external funding will be sought, the majority of the capital works budget will be provided by Council. Greater assistance from other levels of Government would greatly improve the ongoing strategic development of the Pavilion's cultural facilities and Council's ability to meet ambitious goals for the Pavilion's future arts and cultural programs (such as the Pavilion's theatre). Given the demands upon Council's overall capital works budget, there are inevitably compromises in the redevelopment or renovation of arts and cultural facilities, which in turn may place constraints or limitations on the strategic vision of the facility or future programs.

*Waverley Library – [www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/library/](http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/library/)*

Waverley Council's involvement in local cultural initiatives dates back to the 1960s when Waverley's first library was built in Ebley Street. Council traditionally sponsored many cultural activities such as music performances, art exhibitions and the Waverley Library Talks and Interviews program. By the early 1980s had broadened its involvement to include other activities at a number of venues throughout the LGA.

Today, the Library complex on Denison Street, Bondi Junction hosts a dynamic annual program of arts and cultural activities and events including author talks and poetry readings, photography competitions, visual art exhibitions, music recitals, theatre performances, film screenings, and range of activities and events for children and young adults. The Library boasts a multipurpose theatrette (with audio visual facilities) and a number of other workshop rooms, in addition to the traditional Library services. The Library also coordinates and presents the upcoming CAL Waverley Library Award for Literature ('The Nib'), a well respected annual NSW literary competition.

*Bondi Junction – [www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/bondijunction/](http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/bondijunction/)*

The redevelopment of Bondi Junction in 2003 with the addition of the Oxford St pedestrian mall provided a new heart for Bondi Junction and the opportunity to combine arts and cultural events and programs alongside business, retail and commercial activities. The evolving annual Bondi Junction program now consists of signature events such as the Global Table, smaller regular events and activities and weekly organic, farmers and rotary markets.

The pedestrian mall on Oxford Street provides a versatile public space for diverse arts and cultural activities within the commercial centre of the Junction. Council is also investigating the development of a 'town square' in the heart of the Junction which would complement the Oxford St Mall and offer further opportunities to consolidate Council's civic and cultural presence. One of the early options proposed for the town square project was the inclusion of facilities for a fine music centre providing a base and performance spaces for organisations such as the ACO and the Song Company.

Waverley Council would be very interested in exploring new funding or other partnership opportunities that may arise from this inquiry and its recommendations which would assist in the development of a versatile and dynamic multipurpose town square and provide additional cultural and community capital in the local government area.

*Waverley Woollahra Arts Centre – [www.wwac.org.au/](http://www.wwac.org.au/)*

The Arts Centre, established in 1968, is an independent non-profit community arts centre operating out of a Council-owned premises on Bondi Road. The centre provides a dynamic program of vocational and recreational courses and workshops in all facets of visual arts and crafts. The Arts Centre is largely self-funding and operates independently of Council but there are a number of aspects of collaboration between the Centre and Council. These include operational subsidy and financial assistance to coordinate the annual Waverley Woollahra Art Prize. Waverley Council also coordinates an artist-in-residence program based at the Arts Centre.

There is potential for greater collaboration between the Arts Centre and Council, especially in relation to these two latter programs. With more substantial investment, from Council, other levels of Government and perhaps major private sector sponsors, the Art Prize particularly could grow in terms of profile, scope and reputation. The lack of a large professional gallery or exhibition space within the LGA is one factor which limits the potential growth and profile of this and other visual arts programs.

#### *Public Art and sculpture*

Waverley Council has a long history of supporting public art and sculpture in the local area and strongly values the important contribution public art can make to local precincts and community well being. Waverley was one of the first Local Government areas in and around Sydney to have dedicated mural walls – the large scale murals inside and around the Bondi Pavilion are still fondly remembered. Council continues to support and coordinate local murals, and the art walls along the Bondi promenade evolve constantly with contributions from local, national and international artists.

A long term partnership with the internationally acclaimed Sculpture by the Sea exhibition (occurring annually along the Bondi-Tamarama coastal walk) has been complemented by Council's development of Hunter Park sculpture reserve at Bondi. Iconic and innovative mosaic seating is located both at Campbell Parade and Waverley Library. The recent redevelopment of Campbell Parade at Bondi also added a new element to the Waverley public art collection – a human sundial – and Council will soon be commissioning a new public art work for Bondi Junction.

#### **Council arts and cultural plans or strategies**

Waverley Council formally acknowledged its commitment to public art with the development in 1999 of its *Public Art Policy*. The Policy sets out the objectives for public art in Waverley, and Council's approach and criteria for the commissioning of new public artworks. It particularly encourages public art and functional design in new commercial or private developments in Waverley.

Council is also currently working to operationalise its *ArtsPlus Plan* – an overarching strategic arts plan for Waverley – through an integrated Implementation Strategy. The ArtsPlus Plan reiterates Council's commitment to arts programs and cultural development in Waverley area and to public art both in the public and private domains. The Arts Plus Plan (in many ways similar to a Cultural Plan) will provide a strategic overview for all of Council's arts and cultural programs and initiatives and the opportunity to maximise the benefits and opportunities from Council's long term investment in cultural infrastructure and development.

Some of the key elements identified in the Arts Plus Plan include creative industry development (working more closely with the large community of arts and creative practitioners in the Waverley and Bondi areas); using arts and cultural programs to support cohesive and dynamic local communities and celebrate the diversity of the area's local villages; and drawing together Council's diverse arts and cultural programs and activities under a bold and united brand, providing a clear, unified approach for future planning. Council is supportive of the State Government's initiatives to support and encourage integrated arts and cultural planning in local government.

### **Council's arts and cultural staffing**

Waverley Council makes a considerable staffing commitment to arts and cultural staff employed across several of their key cultural facilities described above.

There is a team of 5-6 full and part-time arts and cultural development officers (plus casual staff) based at the Bondi Pavilion, as part of what has traditionally been known as the Community Cultural Centre. This team, reporting to the Manager of Community and Cultural Services, coordinates facilities such as the theatre, gallery and music studios, programs such as the Bondi Wave and a number of annual events and festivals.

A recent addition to the Integrated Planning and Community Consultation Division, the Cultural Planner focuses more on strategic development and planning, coordinating key projects (such as public art commissions and resident artist and theatre initiatives) and the implementation of Council's Arts Plus Plan and other strategic processes. This position and the Pavilion team are the staff with a primary focus on arts and cultural programs and infrastructure.

However, there are a range of staff in other divisions and facilities with at least some involvement with arts programs or cultural events, or initiatives with some arts or cultural dimensions. These include the diverse staff of Waverley Library, the Bondi and Beaches and Bondi Junction Divisions, the Civic Pride Coordinator and Youth Development Officer.

### **Council's experience with the NSW arts and cultural grants process**

Over many years, Waverley Council's experience of the State cultural grants system has been a positive and fruitful one. Council has successfully accessed arts and cultural grant funding from variety of sources including Arts NSW (formally the Ministry of Arts) and the Australia Council for the Arts. Our funding has predominantly been annual project funding, and most often NSW funding has been provided in matched arrangements with equivalent Federal funding.

Although many of the grants have not been large, over time they have enabled Council to undertake a number of innovative and popular projects as part of their community cultural program emanating from the Bondi Pavilion and run throughout the community.

This in turn has provided employment for artists, both as practitioners and tutors, and provided accessible arts education and community development for participants. These experiences often provide that introduction and immersion in the arts that can lead to a future in the profession and or most importantly, an ongoing interest and support for the arts – encouragement and creation of an arts audience.

Additionally, Arts NSW project funding of around \$20,000 – 30,000 (such as that for the Bondi Wave) can in turn attract thousands of dollars of in-kind commercial sponsorship, such as the equipment and instrument loans provided for the Wave.

Most of the grants received by Council have been in the form of year to year grant funding aimed at employing or paying artists involved in specific projects (such as community murals or music programs) rather than any recurrent or triennial support designed to build capacity and sustainability. While vitally important and appreciated, the year by year funding arrangements for ongoing projects can make it more difficult to plan for and lock in programs (like the Bondi Wave) well in advance and even biennial funding provides some security and resource savings for all involved.

In recent years, Council has focused its access to Arts NSW funding on the two music programs based at the Pavilion – the innovative Bondi Wave music development program and the diverse musicians' projects (such as the Bondi Vista Music Club, the pre-school song project and the Junction House Band). The Bondi Wave has been the recipient of generous levels of Arts NSW funding for some time and Council has worked to develop strong partnership with the Arts NSW Music Program.

#### **Level of arts and cultural funding and resourcing**

In addition to the significant contribution Council makes in the form of operational, maintenance and staffing budgets for the facilities outlined above, it also provides financial support to local arts and cultural organisations and events primarily through its Small Grants Program. The program is split into two rounds each year and has a total budget of around \$75,000.

Individual grants of around \$3,000 (in some cases more) are given to organisations such as the Actors Forum, the Bondi Writers' Group and Eastern Suburbs Poetry Group, the Horizon Theatre, the Waverley Historical Society and the Jewish Film Festival to support their operations. The Festival of the Winds and Sculpture by the Sea are allocated larger targeted amounts and receive generous additional support in the form of in-kind assistance and services.

Other organisations receive alternative support through subsidised rent (on Council-owned buildings of office space) or subsidised access to facilities (such as workshop spaces, studios or the Library theatre) and financial assistance for specific programs such as the Arts Centre for the Waverley Woollahra Arts Prize.

#### **Access to cultural and arts education**

Local access to arts and cultural education and training is provided by a range of agencies and organisations. A program of arts and cultural courses and regular programs are offered at the Pavilion, coordinated by both Council staff and external providers. These include the Bondi Wave music development program, a number of community music initiatives (several choirs and the community orchestra), ceramics and pottery classes for adults and children and diverse dance, drumming and martial arts classes and art courses for children.

The Waverley Woollahra Arts Centre on Bondi Road delivers a wide range of affordable courses and skills development workshops for community and emerging artists across all forms of visual arts and crafts. Eastern Suburbs Community College (also based on Bondi Road) similarly includes a range of arts and cultural courses and vocational training in its program, in areas such as ceramics, theatre and dramatic arts, drawing and painting, fashion, photography, film and television, jewellery making and music. This complements the opportunities offered by private providers in specific visual arts and craft mediums.

★ **Ideas/proposals relating to arts and cultural infrastructure**

The following section offers observations and comments on some of the issues raised in the background paper provided by the Inquiry.

1. **Desirability of a NSW Cultural Plan:** Waverley Council would be generally supportive of the development of a NSW-wide Cultural Plan or strategy, although we are unaware of any other examples internationally of such a State or territory Plan. However, as the focus of the inquiry is specifically on arts and cultural infrastructure, perhaps the plan developed could be an Arts/Cultural Infrastructure Plan to hone the focus and provide a strategic approach to equitable provision of quality arts and cultural facilities, programs and support mechanisms.
2. **NSW State Plan:** as summarised in the background paper provided, the NSW State Plan makes generalised references to arts and culture as key factors in economic prosperity, quality of life and the liveability of NSW cities and towns. It refers to increases in visitation and participation in the arts, and the role of arts and cultural planning in increasing prosperity. It also encourages integrated planning to build stronger regional partnerships.

However, the State Plan is not truly specific or detailed enough to provide a basis for comprehensive planning and strategic development. The development of a NSW Cultural Plan, or a specific Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy (as suggested above) would provide the opportunity to research more deeply the current state of arts and cultural industries, infrastructure, programs and initiatives across NSW, and the appropriate strategies to support and build the NSW arts and cultural sector into the future.

3. **Supporting cultural development networks:** there appears to be a strong need in NSW for a facilitated network of arts and cultural workers, coordinators and planners throughout the greater Sydney and Western Sydney areas, in addition to those based in the regional and rural areas. At present there is very little inter-Council liaison and formal networking amongst local government arts and cultural workers. As these workers increase in local government across Sydney and NSW, there would appear to be a gap in networking services and support, especially given the growing emphasis on integrated planning and development.

As arts and culture is a growing but less traditional and well recognised element in the broad scheme of local government's activities and responsibilities, a coordinated network of arts and cultural workers with regular opportunities for liaison (including blogs and/or online conferencing), information exchanges and professional development would be welcome and greatly beneficial.

Waverley liaises with its neighbouring Councils on a broad range of programs and initiatives. More recently, the arts and cultural coordinators/planners from Randwick, Woollahra and Waverley have been meeting irregularly in relation to their separate cultural planning activities and to identify opportunities for greater collaboration and partnership.



The Arts Centre on Bondi Road has long been jointly supported and subsidised by both Waverley and Woollahra Councils. Support and facilitation for greater development of partnerships and collaboration between neighbouring Councils across Sydney could also be very beneficial, especially in terms of identifying and/or creating a distributed network of arts and cultural facilities and programs across a region. The Regional Arts Development Officer network across NSW often provides this regional connection and network in regional NSW – there may be elements to be drawn from this model for metropolitan and Western Sydney in the future.

4. **Sustainability Fund for arts And cultural infrastructure:** One additional aspect of State and Federal arts infrastructure funding that it would be timely to consider would be **environmental sustainability** – financial assistance in the form of one-off or recurrent grants to enable local Councils to alter or renovate cultural facilities to make them more environmentally sustainable or 'green'.

So often, cultural infrastructure was built many years ago long before environmental considerations were commonplace or as heavily emphasised in design and planning. Alternatively, arts and cultural programs operate out of facilities that were not custom built, in community centres or spaces originally designed for very different purposes.

The Bondi Pavilion is a perfect example of such a facility. Originally designed and built in the 1920s and primarily as a change facility and beach amenity, the Pavilion's current cultural facilities (theatre, gallery, music studios) were largely added later and the arts and cultural program has evolved considerably over many years.

Council recently developed the Bondi Pavilion Purpose Statement, looking into the diverse uses of and strategic future directions for the Pavilion (<http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/info/pavilion/purposstatement.asp>).

During this process, there was considerable debate within Council and the community about the environmental sustainability of the Pavilion's facilities and programs, and strategies to more effectively 'green' the facility and arts programs, events and festivals.

One of the primary issues in this debate was the relative cost (estimated to be substantial) of renovations and additions to an 80+ year old structure to bring it more closely in line environmental sustainability principles.

It would be interesting to explore the feasibility and issues around an annual budget allocation and funding program to assist local governments and other relevant agencies to conduct 'green' renovations and modifications to arts and cultural infrastructure.

5. **Cultural Precincts:** we note the references in the background paper to the work of John Montgomery and the role of 'cultural quarters' in urban regeneration; and the desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to form creative hubs. Undoubtedly, well developed cultural precincts with a range of arts and cultural facilities and programs operating in close proximity can exponentially increase the impact, energy and success of the individual activities involved and the benefits for the local and surrounding communities.

The Cultural Precinct of Christchurch, New Zealand offers a unique and powerful example of what can be achieved with the planning foresight and Government commitment to bringing together a city's arts and cultural organisations.

The Precinct, developed over 150 years, brings together the new Art Gallery, Centre for Contemporary Art, the Arts Centre (a complex of working studios, cinemas and theatres), and Canterbury Museum (amongst others) within several large city blocks adjacent to the Botanic Gardens (see <http://www.culturalprecinct.co.nz/>). The precinct surrounding the Te Papa National Museum on Wellington's foreshore presents a similar model.

The challenge of such a model, especially in developed urban areas such as Greater Sydney and Waverley, is the capacity to locate a range of such arts facilities in the limited space available to create such a precinct. It is rare that a redevelopment project for a larger area arises in such areas or that there is a commitment within such redevelopments to substantial arts and cultural infrastructure. In Waverley, the existing cultural infrastructure is somewhat scattered across the LGA and the opportunities for further facilities near any of these current buildings are limited.

There are several strategies which may provide some of the benefits of locating cultural facilities in close proximity. Cultural networks may be more feasible and as effective in providing support for arts and cultural development, and may even be more flexible, especially for disparate creative communities or rural and regional areas.

Such networks can involve regular meetings or liaison meetings in-person, seminars and professional development opportunities; but they may also be based around developing technologies such email, virtual networks and social media, blogs and Internet conferencing facilities, especially where members of the network are not physically proximate or such gatherings are not seen to be necessary.

The cultural network approach and engagement of virtual tools may provide solutions and are no doubt already used by some to address for the isolation experienced by many rural and regional cultural development officers, artists and arts workers. They may also offer the opportunity for creating distributed networks of community cultural centres and arts facilities across an LGA or regional area as opposed to big budget 'flagship' venues or facilities which must by necessity be based in one specific physical location.

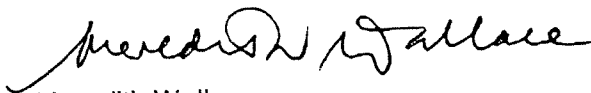
Another possibility is the branding and marketing of cultural infrastructure and facilities. Again, the Christchurch Cultural Precinct provides an excellent working model which could easily also be applied to a group of arts facilities less centrally located. The Christchurch precinct uses a consistent branding campaign across all elements of the precinct (galleries, theatres, museums, studios, cinemas) even though most of these are independent entities. It is the branding, as much as the proximity, that draws together and creates the precinct in participants' minds. The brochures, signage, banners and other marketing collateral are all consistent, reinforcing the impression of a collective, strategic approach to arts and cultural development and infrastructure (see <http://www.culturalprecinct.co.nz/>).

Such a model could be applied even in areas such as Waverley where the arts-related facilities are not in immediate proximity. As an example, the Bondi Pavilion, the Waverley Library, the Arts Centre and various activities and events elsewhere (such as in Bondi Junction) could all be branded in a consistent way through brochures, posters, signage and web-based collateral.

While these facilities are at different locations in the LGA and offer separate and independent programs, the collaborative branding and marketing could present the concept of a Waverley 'cultural precinct' and establish a clear link between the facilities, programs and opportunities in the local and public awareness. This would also be a possibility in regional and rural communities where arts and cultural infrastructure exists but may be disparately located across a town, an LGA or a region, creating the perception and sense of a precinct without a physical cluster.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry. If you have any enquiries in relation to any of the information provided above, please contact our Cultural Planner Brendan Smith on 02 9386 7918 or [brendans@waverley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brendans@waverley.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely



Meredith Wallace

**Director of Recreation, Customer and Community Services**