

Submission
No 62

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

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NSW Legislative Assembly Public Works Committee
**Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure
Outside the Sydney CBD**

Wyong Shire Council Submission

Social Planning, Future Planning. Wyong Shire Council.

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Overview: Key Points

In response to the call for submissions to this inquiry, Wyong Shire Council, provides the following information.

The key points covered in this submission are:

- Cultural and arts development is a high priority of Wyong Shire Council and is considered fundamental to positive growth in the Shire.
- Cultural development priorities are integrated into Council's Management Plans well as urban and community planning, heritage and economic development strategies across Council.
- Wyong Shire Council has committed plans, strategies, resources and funds to cultural development including the Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005, Wyong Shire Council Public Art Policy, the Wyong Shire Cultural Grants program and the development of a range of cultural facilities including the planned Wyong Cultural Centre for Performing Arts.
- The cultural development strategies of Wyong Shire Council contribute to the achievement of State Plan priorities R4 and E8
- All of these strategies and resources rely on resources from Council's general revenue and Section 94 developer contributions as well as additional State and Federal Government funding, to enable capital works, program development and the establishment of key sector and regional partnerships.
- The development of a Central Coast Regional Arts Strategy has been identified as the highest priority of regional stakeholders, including Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council. State government support for such a strategy is sought to match the type of regional strategies and resource commitments allocated to other regions such as Western Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra.

Overview: Key Recommendations

In response to this inquiry, Wyong Shire Council, provides the following recommendations:

- Continuation of Section 94 funding for local, district and shire wide cultural facilities;
- Funds in addition to Council's general revenue and Section 94 being available for cultural local and regional capital works as described in this document;
- Funds in addition to Council's general revenue and Section 94 being available for recurrent costs of program development and implementation;
- Funds in addition to Council's general revenue and Section 94 being available for cultural project officers in Council and community based organisations; and
- Support and funds in addition to Council's general revenue and Section 94 for the development and resourcing of a Central Coast Regional Arts Strategy.

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

Key issues of private and public funding and resourcing that will impact substantially on the viability, sustainability and growth of the cultural and arts in Wyong Shire are:

Future of Section 94

Several key areas of cultural programs and infrastructure rely on Section 94 Contributions.

Consultation, feasibility studies and planning carried out by Wyong Shire Council gives priority to the development of cultural infrastructure as a fundamental part of the Shire's growth and viability.

Currently there exists a high level of uncertainty, and a need for greater clarity, regarding application of Section 94 through the revised EP&A Act Bill 2008, pending the release of funding guidelines by the Department of Planning.

Development and implementation plans for the Shire's public art, cultural and community facilities and the Wyong Cultural Centre (see below) all rely on funding through Section 94. The need for clarity in defining how "recreational and cultural facilities" can be funded through developer contributions, the classing of facilities as "local" and "district" and the definition of "reasonable time" in infrastructure construction, means that there is uncertainty as to the viability of Wyong Shire Council's cultural infrastructure plans

Cultural Facilities

Wyong Shire Council is committed to the provision of cultural facilities through *A Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005* (Goal Area 1: Creative Places – Facilities that Support the Cultural Aspirations of the Community). A series of feasibility studies and research has been undertaken to develop plans for the staged network of linked facility hubs across the shire which will support the broad range of current and expected cultural activities. This network utilises existing infrastructure, and, identifies priorities for new infrastructure to accommodate cultural, arts, knowledge and community based activities. The key facility for this network is the planned Wyong Cultural Centre (focusing on Performance). This centre is a crucial part of the revitalisation of the Wyong Township as a cultural and heritage precinct¹ as well as functioning as a regional facility to drive local stakeholder capacity building, audience development, innovation and participation in local practices, increase in touring cultural programs and support the wider Wyong facility network (see below).

Section 94 funds are a key source of financing capital works in the planned network of cultural facilities including the Wyong Cultural Centre.

Public Art

For over a decade Wyong Council has commissioned public art as a core part of its facility and public domain development. Public art has been implemented as a means of enhancing the built environment, reflecting and developing local identity, contributing to community development, interpreting heritage, culture and environment, driving professional development opportunities for creative practitioners and supporting the appropriate design and community ownership of places and amenities.

All of these projects have been financed by Section 94 funds.

As part of *A Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005* Council adopted a Public Art Policy in 2008. This policy formalises Council's public art processes based on best practice, establishes key future goals, ensures ongoing integration of public art into urban design and public works and enables developer implementation of public art through DCP requirements. The Public Art

¹ Wyong/Tuggerah Planning Strategy, Wyong Shire Council, October 2007, p.6

Policy has been developed in accordance with the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW Public Art Kit guidelines.

Regional Partnerships Program

The Federal Government's Regional Partnerships Program was identified as a key source of funding support by the business plan for the Wyong Cultural Centre. The closing off of this Federal program has contributed to uncertainty as to the funding of the planned centre.

State Arts Funding

Arts funding from ArtsNSW is a key source of financial support for Council cultural programs and capital works as well as for community based initiatives. This funding provides the required balance of funds which enable the commissioning of artists and the management of programs for community based cultural initiatives identified in the Cultural Plan.

Council Funds

Council funds are allocated through the Management Plan to Council managed cultural projects (identified by the Cultural Plan) including a Cultural Grants program which is open to all Wyong Shire not-for-profit groups. These programs are a crucial source of support for the wide range of cultural activities and groups initiated by residents in response to local needs.

Council funds also finance the planning and contribute to the capital works stages of cultural facilities and public art projects. Council funds will also provide the core funds for management and programming of current and planned facilities.

This funding will continue to need to be supplemented by hirer fees, sponsorship, developer contributions and State and Federal Government funding in order to achieve the specified cultural development goals and strategies.

2. Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life

The geographic nature of Wyong Shire, with areas of settlement spread out over large areas of rural areas, natural reserves and waterfront areas and the location of urban development clustered around the lakes systems means that the quality and accessibility of public infrastructure is not consistent.

Past, current and future growth areas and an increase in population is placing a continuous strain on existing infrastructure.

The Wyong Shire Council *Community Plan* identifies transport as a key infrastructure area that impacts substantially on quality of life. The enhancement of linkages and increased diversity of travel options for all residents is identified as crucial to the Shire's positive growth, and for the arts and cultural life.

The frequency, cost, indirect routes, physical design, stops and shelters are all factors contributing to a system that does not deliver the required level of service to ensure the required linkages and options. The private ownership of parts of the public transport system has been identified by the community as an issue for consistent direct services which serve all residents.

Cultural facilities, especially the Wyong Cultural Centre, rely on being integrated into urban planning and economic development strategies to be viable and achieve community sustainability. Effective transport systems are required for all such facilities, with transport infrastructure being crucial.

The planned Wyong Cultural Centre is central to the realising the aspirations of Wyong as a heritage and cultural precinct. Therefore the development of infrastructure to ensure the centre is accessible and linked to other areas is crucial for its growth in areas of community participation, audience development, private sector investment and the rationale for existing land owners to implement their own plans.

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

Cultural facilities: Context

Wyong Shire Council has identified physical infrastructure that supports culture and the arts in Wyong Shire as follows²:

- Libraries
- Council halls, the largest being the Memorial Hall in Wyong
- Community and neighbourhood centres
- Small art gallery at Wallarah Point Park Gorokan
- Potters' studio at Gorokan
- Art room at Gravity Youth Centre
- Movement studio at Wadalba Community School
- The Entrance Memorial Park outdoor stages
- Wyong Community Cultural Centre accommodating Wyong Family History Group and the Tuggerah-Wyong Regional of the Fellowship of Australian Writers.

At a regional level Wyong residents have access to Gosford Region Art Gallery at East Gosford, Laycock Street Theatre at Wyoming, Mt Penang Parklands festival venue, Lake Macquarie Art Gallery at Booragul and Lake Macquarie Performing Arts Centre at Warners Bay.

Wyong Shire Council has given priority to the integration of cultural activities into knowledge, arts, library and community centre designs.

A Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005 outlines the rich diversity of arts activity at the community level in Wyong Shire but notes that, even with the facilities detailed above, this activity takes place in spite of some significant gaps in infrastructure including:

- A "hub" that can form the focus of cultural activity
- A suitable facility for the performing arts and
- Places for artists to exhibit their work.³

Notwithstanding the existing and proposed infrastructure of adjacent Councils, it remains the case that Wyong Shire is entirely devoid of a substantial indoor arts venue for a population of over 140,000. A standard for the provision of cultural facilities (other than libraries) is at a rate of 600m² per population of 22,000⁴. For the current population of the Shire this arrives at a floor area of 4091 m². This floor area is the approximate size of the current proposal for an arts centre in Wyong township without taking account of future growth. In establishing such a centre, it can be argued that this is *the least* that Council should be providing.

² *A Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005*, Wyong Shire Council, p.10

³ *A Cultural Plan for Wyong Shire 2005*, Wyong Shire Council, p.11

⁴ *Guidelines for the Planning & Provision of Community Facilities in Wyong Shire*, June 2000, p.30

As a general guide people are resistant to driving for more than 30 minutes to attend a venue.⁵ Studies indicate the driving distances to a range of existing or proposed facilities from selected locations in Wyong Shire. The studies illustrate that:

- Gosford Regional Gallery and Laycock Street Theatre are (just) within the acceptable range for the *southern* half of Wyong Shire in average driving conditions;
- significant areas of the Shire are particularly isolated from cultural facilities; and
- a cultural facility located in Wyong township would be much more accessible to all parts of the Shire than those facilities currently available in other local government areas.

Wyong Cultural Centre

In response to an assessment of current and future cultural development needs and aspirations Wyong Shire Council has committed to developing a Cultural Centre focusing on performing arts based in Wyong town centre. The benefits of such a centre are seen as:

- community development: a well-programmed arts centre designed to meet the needs of its community can be a powerful tool of community building, especially where that community is in a state of rapid change due to population increase and development;
- to nurture young and emerging artists and performers and to retain their talents within the Shire for the enrichment of all;
- to add to Shire attractions that can encourage people to visit and businesses and professionals to relocate;
- address leakage of cultural dollars out of the Shire. The proposed arts centre can be expected to generate direct and indirect economic activity within Wyong Shire such as employment of arts professionals and providers of related services, ticket sales, venue hire, materials purchases, food and beverage sales, travel, tourist accommodation and incidental expenditure whilst visiting the arts centre;
- to alter the perception of Wyong Shire and
- Avoid likely higher costs in the future for development of such a facility as population continues to grow and demands for quality performing arts facilities expands.

To date a Feasibility Study and Business Plan have been developed for the centre through consultation and direction from the Wyong Performing Arts Centre Advisory Committee.

5. Economic impacts on communities

Wyong Shire Council's strategies and plans assume a strong link between cultural development, quality of life and environment and economic prosperity. The development of cultural infrastructure is based on an expectation that cultural development plays a role in local and regional economic diversification through growth in areas as knowledge-based industries.

This is achieved via:

- incentives and support for innovative solutions within the community;
- attracting and supporting businesses and individuals focused on innovation and technology;
- supporting all opportunities for skills development and exchange;
- supporting partnerships and links between education, business and community organisations; and
- access to world class information and technology

⁵ Tonkin Zuleika Greer "Wyong Performing Arts Centre Feasibility Study February 2006" by, p.32

Council's role in the achievement of these activities includes:

- identifying and maximising opportunities for economic growth and development at a strategic level;
- investing in infrastructure that directly and indirectly sustains business and community activity;
- developing instruments and implementing programs that directly support and provide incentives and requirements for community and business innovation; and
- lobbying for state and federal government funding and private sector investment in local industry and community initiatives.

Wyong Shire Council community and urban planning (including retail strategies) have been developed in response to identified quality of life, environmental and economic issues. Economic issues which impact on local quality of life include a need for greater employment opportunities, skills development, education and local business growth and investment. The number of residents who are employed outside of the region creates additional pressure on transport infrastructure as well as on local social capital such as volunteer capacity, and, family and social life through less time being spent in the area.

The Cultural Plan consists of cultural development strategies which contribute to the revitalisation of townships, skills development and exchange, stronger networking in the community and cultural service fields and increased opportunities for remuneration and professional development for cultural practitioners.

A risk has been identified for a negative economic impact on the community and the cultural services sector if key cultural development actions are not undertaken. These include:

- **Wyong Cultural Centre**
A feasibility study and business plan⁶ has identified a negative impact on the revitalisation of Wyong and Tuggerah towns and the shires cultural development in general if plans for a Wyong Cultural Centre are not followed through.
- **Economic and Community Development Through Cultural Facilities**
Wyong Shire Council is including the development of Multi-Purpose Community Centres in planned new release and existing areas. Such centres combine library, knowledge centres, culture and arts and are designed in proximity to business, recreational and residential development. These are seen as crucial in creating quality places and cohesive neighbourhoods attractive to residents and businesses.

6. The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a state cultural plan to maximise diversity of access, with reference to the Tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies

NSW State Plan

Whilst many of the NSW State Plan priorities are relevant to cultural development the two priorities and three targets that relate specifically to arts and cultural development at a local government level are as follows:

Priority R4

“Increase the proportion of the total community involved in volunteering... or group cultural and artistic activity by 10% by 2016”.

“Halve existing gaps in the participation rates of low income, non-English speaking and Aboriginal communities in volunteering.... and group cultural and artistic activities compared to the total NSW population by 2016”.

⁶ *Wyong Performing Arts Centre Business Plan* Positive Solutions 2007

Priority E8

“Increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 2016”

The achievement of these targets will rely heavily on support for local government to undertake:

- integration of cultural planning and programs with strategies for governance;
- building of the cultural development capacity of community, business and government;
- development of cultural facilities, networks and infrastructure; and
- an increase in the incentives and requirements for private sector contribution to cultural infrastructure.

State Cultural Plan

Currently the key NSW state agreement and document supporting the role of local government in Wyong’s Cultural Development is the Cultural Accord between the NSW State Government (ArtsNSW) and the Local Government and Shire’s Association, and, the Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government. These provide:

- structured guidelines based on experience and best practice which enable timely and cost effective localised plan development; and
- a consistent approach and level of standards across all NSW local government which provides groundwork for better regional networking and coordination

In order for a NSW State Cultural Plan to meet the Cultural Development needs of Wyong Shire and contribute to the State Plan targets it would need to:

- be based on, and further develop, the best practice guidelines and cross-government partnerships as established by the NSW Cultural Accord;
- support the development and maintenance of a Central Coast Regional Arts Strategy
- recognise the need for increased access to resources (through direct funding and mechanisms for ongoing private sector contributions) to implement local and regional cultural development strategies; and
- substantially increase support for investment in cultural facilities.

The Need for a Central Coast Regional Cultural Development Strategy

Since adoption of cultural plans for both Wyong and Gosford local government areas on the Central Coast in 2004 and 2005, representatives from a range of local arts, education and government bodies, (including Gosford and Wyong Councils) have met quarterly to exchange information and discuss issues of common interest.

A key issue identified by all groups is the lack of an overall regional arts and cultural strategy that would guide a coordinated approach by agencies at local, regional, state and federal level to the programming and funding of culture and the arts on the Central Coast.

The network has become aware of the need for such a coordinated approach to the planning and provision of arts and culture on the Central Coast in order to address the needs of a growing and changing population. The network has sought to enlist the support of Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (CCRoc) to make representations to the State government for support in developing and resourcing a regional cultural strategy.

The reasons for proposing this are as follows:

1. The regional status of the Central Coast is formally acknowledged in a number of ways:
 - a. The State ministerial portfolio for the Central Coast; and

- b. state and federal agencies that have a regional office on the Central Coast, eg the Department of State & Regional development, Tourism Central Coast, Department of Planning, Dept of Environment & Conservation, the (Federal) Area Consultative Committee etc
- 2. Arts and culture contribute to community well being and economic prosperity, are of equal importance to the region as tourism development, business development etc and indeed strengthen these other areas of community life.
- 3. The Central Coast, along with other Greater Sydney regions, is classified as metropolitan for funding purposes through ArtsNSW and cannot access regional funding programs such as Country Arts Support Program or Regional Arts funding.
- 4. As a region in the outer metropolitan area the Central Coast is disadvantaged compared with Sydney proper because access to corporate sponsorship such as for major events is much more limited – this is because of lack of awareness outside the region by the larger corporations.
- 5. Notwithstanding the thriving professional institutions Gosford Region Art Gallery, Laycock Street Theatre, Mt Penang Parklands and the University of Newcastle Central Coast Campus, and the range and diversity of community cultural organizations and events in the region, the population of the region experiences specific areas of disadvantage in accessing arts and culture, including:
 - a. High commuter population (30% of workforce) resulting in time poor adults.
 - b. A higher than average aging population.
 - c. A higher than average population of low socio-economic status.
 - d. Higher than average one parent families.
 - e. Lower levels of education than the State average.
 - f. The four preceding factors in particular result in limited horizons and resources for many people in the region, leading to inequity of access to the cultural life of the region in comparison to metropolitan areas.
- 6. ArtsNSW has recognized the special needs of other outer ring areas of Greater Sydney by developing strategies such as the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, the Lower Hunter Cultural Brokerage and the Illawara Arts Strategy.

Whilst the southern region of the Central Coast is relatively well provided with cultural infrastructure (see point 5 above), the northern part of the region is currently completely devoid of any professionally run cultural institutions in spite of a population of over 140,000.