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Statement to the Legislative Council of NSW Parliament

Inquiry into museums and galleries

Sitting at Blue Mountains Cultural Centre 23 September 2016

Lee Morgan

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Blue Mountains City Council

This Statement is made in support of the submission lodged by The Cultural Centre of the Blue Mountains City Council.



The Vision

The Cultural Centre represents an untapped opportunity for the State Government to improve the reach and impact of galleries, and pursue economic growth by building on the region's strength and beauty.

- By any measure the Cultural Centre has been very successful; with a track record of consistent achievement.
- The Cultural Centre is the result of a vision shared by State and Local Government - A City art gallery and World Heritage Interpretive Centre.
- Eligibility for program funding would leverage the investment that has already been made by the Blue Mountains Council, and the State Government, ensuring that the vision is fully realised.
- We have the capacity and capability to play an even greater role working as a partner with State Government to deliver desired outcomes, helping to create strong sustainable, and thriving local communities.

Blue Mountains - Strengths and Opportunities

- The strength of our Region's attractions make it one of the State's major tourist destinations, drawing of the order of 3 million visitors pa. This is set to rise to more than 4 million in less than 10 years.
- The Blue Mountains are a very distinctive and separate part of the Western Sydney Region, a place of dramatic landscapes and distinctive culture.
- We have a strong and vibrant artistic community and offer a range of cultural tourism experiences.
- The gallery is a significant part of the cultural tourism offer and is capable of tapping into potential growth in tourism to a greater extent; thereby extending the length of stay and the benefits that flow to the local community and the sub region.
- The World Heritage Interpretative centre complements the art gallery and adds value to the cultural tourism offer – a museum celebrating the World Heritage landscapes, the history and the built heritage of the Mountains.
- Aboriginal culture is increasingly profiled by the gallery, the World Heritage Centre, other exhibits including the aboriginal collection housed in the co-located library, as well as projects aimed at promoting indigenous artists



The Role of Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture are an important expression of the individuality of this place.

Our artists play a major part in contributing to that identity and to the social well-being of our community.

The arts and creative community also make a major contribution to the economy and are significant drivers of growth potential.

Blue Mountains Council's Investment in the Arts

This Council has made a very significant investment in arts and culture. Aside from the development and operation of the Cultural Centre these include:

- Blue Mountains Theatre and Hub at Springwood, which offers a high quality performance space
 - Cultural partnerships and grant funding to support development of the arts and community participation
 - Protection of cultural heritage
 - Festivals, events, promotion and networking platforms.
- The Council delivers these programs for a net operational budget approaching \$3M (not inclusive of depreciation for facilities). The Cultural Centre represents about half of that expenditure.
 - At the time that the Council made the commitment to this expansion of cultural programs and the new facilities, the State government also contributed significantly to the build and indicated that operational support would be forthcoming separately.

As this Council continues to strive to maintain its Fit for Future status and to achieve those goals, it looks to the State Government to appropriately share the responsibility for delivering important cultural programs.

Realising the Vision

A failure by the State Government to make some contribution to the Cultural Centre programs would mean that:

- The potential return on that investment to date is not being fully realised
- The State Government, the Council and the community are not capitalising on the opportunities created by that investment.
- Progress towards the vision of economic and cultural development is more limited
- We are failing to make the most of building on the strengths of the region and our arts community.

That would also be a missed opportunity for the State Government to share in the success of achieving those achievable outcomes.



