

## **INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

**Organisation:** Western Sydney Arts and Cultural Lobby  
**Date received:** 12 August 2016

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# WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS & CULTURAL LOBBY

9 August 2016

Dear General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4,

Re: Inquiry into museums and galleries

The arts are a grass roots matter, a community concern. And nowhere is that made clearer than in Western Sydney. The arts sector in our region is built on excellence with many artists and organisations producing works that have been recognized nationally and internationally, being presented and represented in major festivals around the world. Western Sydney is both crucible and catalyst for Australia's burgeoning arts sector and cultural economy.

Much of Western Sydney's artistic production is based in communities, and produced via deep and ongoing community engagement. This work tells meaningful Australian stories through traditional and new forms of artistic practice. In 2015 the region's peak cultural institutions and organisations attracted more than 1,000,000 people to our events and programs, contributing millions of dollars to the regional economy and employing hundreds of people. Equally important was the social, educative and promotional impacts of this work.

Western Sydney's art scene has evolved significantly over the past forty years, yet it has been woefully underfunded (a point made clear in an independent report from Deloitte, which found that despite its burgeoning population and booming economy, the region's arts scene has flourished and thrived into a rich and dynamic force).

Western Sydney has been identified as major growth areas over the next ten years. It would be effective use of resources of the Standing Committee if the region was given priority in its recommendations. The Deloitte Report outlines what significant program, operational and capital investments would have important outcomes in Western Sydney. <http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-economics-western-sydney-cultural-infrastructure-report-250215.pdf>

Note: The Western Sydney Arts & Cultural Lobby (WSA&CL) recommends the Inquiry expands its definition of Museums and Galleries to include artists, screen culture, independent arts organisations across all discipline, theatres, and multi-arts organisations as culture delivered in Western Sydney.

Below is a response to the individual issues raised by the Inquiry.

Local government areas represented: Bankstown, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Campbelltown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith

Western Sydney Arts & Cultural Lobby includes: Artists, Arts Workers, Bankstown Arts Centre, Bankstown Youth Development Service, Blacktown Arts Centre, Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Cultural Arts Collective, Curiousworks, FORM Dance Projects, Information and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta Artists Studios, Parramatta Riverside Theatres, Peacock Gallery and Auburn Arts Studio, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts, Powerhouse Youth Theatre, Westwords, Writing & Society – UWS, University of Western Sydney and Urban Theatre Projects.

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## **a) NSW government policy, funding and support for museums and galleries, museum and gallery buildings and heritage collections, including volunteer managed museums and museums managed by councils**

The WSA&CL recommends:

- The NSW Government and Opposition take a bipartisan approach to the arts in NSW when developing policy and reviewing funding processes.
- The NSW Government establish Arts NSW as an Act in Parliament similar to its federal counterpart, Australia Council for the Arts.
- If an Act was not possible then Arts NSW and the NSW Cultural Institutions could benefit from becoming a separate department of Government. Thus raising its profile and have a greater ability to negotiate with other Government departments.
- The NSW State Government to increase the level of funding from approximately \$4.9m to \$10m per year to support artists, artistic programs and cultural organisations based in Western Sydney (excluding MAAS) and establish a Western Sydney Cultural Fund through Arts NSW. This would address the lack of equity, access and parity for artists and cultural organisations based in Western Sydney in comparison to the major CBD-based arts and cultural institutions. The recent increase by the NSW State Government of \$7.5million over 4 years to fund Western Sydney Arts and Culture goes some way to address the disparity of funding over the past decade.
- The NSW State Government quarantine \$200 million for arts and cultural infrastructure in Western Sydney, a relatively modest portion of the \$600 million allocated to arts and cultural within Restart NSW.
- That a competitive process be established within Infrastructure NSW to ensure government strategic priorities are met for Western Sydney and ensure that it is not used for the relocation costs of the MAAS to Parramatta.

The fund would:

- I. Develop a new cultural precinct to house Arts and Cultural companies that require permanent accommodation.
- II. Work in partnership with Local Government (and the private sector where feasible and appropriate) to expand and renew existing Arts and Cultural infrastructure.
- III. Allow the Government to deliver on the commitments made in its State Infrastructure Plan to build facilities in Western Sydney.

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- The NSW State Government work in partnership with Federal Government to establish a comprehensive arts and cultural development strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities/artists in Western Sydney. As part of the strategy, Western Sydney arts organisations will be engaged to deliver professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and fund identified ATSI arts positions in Western Sydney organisation.

**b) potential funding impacts on museums and galleries affected by council amalgamation**

No effect on Western Sydney artists and cultural organisations.

**c) opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach, and impact of museums and galleries, and their research and collecting priorities**

The WSA&CL recommends:

- The NSW Cultural Institutions continue to expand programs to connect with new Western Sydney audiences. This would be best achieved by creating programs in partnership with WS cultural organisations.
- Funding should be expanded for Western Sydney artists and cultural organisations to provide programs for audiences across the region.
- The NSW Government to increase funding to tertiary institutions as it has a low investments in arts education (per capita) then in other states. This must be addressed through an increase of funds at a University and TAFE level.

**d) access to the collections of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the Australian Museum and any other state collections held in trust for the people of New South Wales, and programs that promote physical and online access**

The WSA&CL recommends:

- Decentralising the NSW State Cultural Institution collections such as moving the Powerhouse Museum moving to Parramatta will be of major benefit to Western Sydney and its audiences.
- The NSW Government should invest in programs that create better access to collections from audiences in Western Sydney. This could be achieved by investing in partnerships with Western Sydney cultural organisations, thus creating access points for NSW State collections.
- The NSW Government invest in programs promote the state Collections and create parallel narratives/histories that reflect the cultural traditions and diversity of Western Sydney.
- An effort should be made to continue to digitise the collection and embed it into the NSW education curriculum for students to access.

**e) the sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta, and whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development**

The WSA&CL support the move of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta.

The WSA&CL recommends:

- The NSW State Government ensures that the Powerhouse Museum is funded to a standard of its international peers.
- The new museum is of a higher standard than the facility at Ultimo.
- The above commitments must not be at the reduction of funding for the operations, artistic and capital programs of cultural organisations in Western Sydney.
- The Powerhouse Museum continues to consult in a positive way with Western Sydney cultural organisations and communities as it has done in the past 12 months.

**f) the development and transparency of advice to the government on priorities for NSW museums and galleries**

The WSA&CL urge Western Sydney cultural organisations have the opportunity to compete with CBD organisations for Negotiated Funding. Arts NSW is extremely transparent in the delivery of multi-year, annual and project funding but it is unclear how decisions are made for Negotiated Funding as there are no pathways for Western Sydney cultural organisations to be funded under this program.

Negotiated Funding includes:

- Major Performing Arts Organisations (<http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/index.php/category/arts-in-nsw/major-performing-arts-organisations/>)
- Major Festivals (<http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/index.php/category/arts-in-nsw/major-festivals/>)
- State Significant Cultural Institutions (Museum of Contemporary Arts and Carriageworks).

NB: None of the above is based in Western Sydney. Western Sydney cultural organisations would be competitive when applying for Negotiated Funding if this process was transparent and open.

**g) the impact of the efficiency dividend on the budgets of museums and galleries over the last 10 years, and funding levels compared to other states**

The WSA&CL recommends:

- An increase of arts funding in NSW. NB: The Victorian State Government investment is \$440 million (approx.) into the Arts, while the NSW State Government invests \$402 million (approx.). The NSW State Government should invest to the same level as Victoria with a focus on Western Sydney artists, cultural institutions and organisations

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## **h) the economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism, and their role in supporting the visitor economy in Sydney and regional New South Wales**

The WSA&CL recommends:

- Investment to be made to grow cultural tourism into Western Sydney as recommended in the Deloitte report, “Addressing the paradox of Western Sydney”, ([www.deloitte-au-ps-addressing-paradox-western-sydney-271115.pdf](http://www.deloitte-au-ps-addressing-paradox-western-sydney-271115.pdf)) i.e. the massive the potential for Western Sydney to grow at a greater rate as it is starting at a lower base. Western Sydney also offers a different experience for cultural tourism through the diversity of artists, organisations and venues.
- An expansive consideration on the calculation of the social return that the Western Sydney arts and culture can provide. It is important to create a holistic auditing process as audience attendance figures are a limited and inadequate way to measure the outcomes and impact of an organisation. New evaluation tools for the arts are needed that accurately and appropriately measure the significance of WS cultural organisations.

## **i) any other related matter.**

The NSW State Government should revise planning laws to accommodate the ability for artists and short-term arts organisation to establish easily across WS and NSW. Current Development Application requirements and classification to establish exhibition, studio/workshop, performance/rehearsal and/or other venues are extremely cost prohibitive and unnecessarily time consuming.

## **The benefits back to NSW State Government**

- Investment in Western Sydney will deliver on many priorities in NSW State Government strategies including A Plan for Growing Sydney, The State Infrastructure Strategy, NSW Creative Industries Action Plan and Create in NSW.
- Organisations in Western Sydney (both Local Government and Non-Government) will be able to increase capacity to deliver relevant arts and culture locally.
- Western Sydney is the point of difference for Sydney, and offers branding potential — the arts & culture being the perfect platform for ‘selling’ and celebrating Sydney as a whole.
- Solid investment in arts and culture in Western Sydney supports the current urban expansion, animating cities and suburbs, making them places people want to live and work. Without this, we risk a lack of social cohesion and connectedness, creating a plethora of other social issues.
- There is a higher yield benefit for every dollar invested in Western Sydney than in the CBD organisations including audience growth, artistic production and capital infrastructure.

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Please do not hesitate to contact the WSA&CL, if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Kind regards,  
WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS & CULTURAL LOBBY  
[westernsydneyarts@gmail.com](mailto:westernsydneyarts@gmail.com)

About Western Sydney Arts & Cultural Lobby In February 2014, a group of artists and arts workers across Western Sydney met at Fairfield Arts Centre (hosted by Powerhouse Youth Theatre). The purpose of the meeting was to instigate collective thinking across the arts in Western Sydney as to how we could activate ourselves/lobby as a sector on key issues. At that meeting a steering committee was established.

The Western Sydney Arts & Cultural Lobby (WSA&CL) aims to achieve the following:

- Equity - secure fair and equitable arts funding for Western Sydney
- Leadership - ensure 'we are at the table' and influence decision-makers regarding the future development of our region
- Positive Identity - communicate success, build our brand, shift perception, and secure recognition for arts activity in Western Sydney.

Various strategies and actions are being developed and managed by the Steering Committee. Actions to date include the development of three key messages for the sector, collection of financial and audience data across the sector, communication to funding bodies of the establishment of the group, and the appointment of a PR firm to promote the messages of the Lobby group. A list of priorities has been developed for the NSW State Government.

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