

**Submission  
No 239**

## **INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Wagga Wagga City Council

**Date received:** 28 February 2018

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Wednesday 28 February, 2018

The Director  
Portfolio Committee No. 6- Planning and Environment  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
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The Hon Paul Green MLC, Committee Chair  
The Hon Shayne Mallard MLC, Deputy Chair  
The Hon Jeremy Buckingham MLC  
The Hon John Graham MLC  
The Hon Taylor Martin MLC  
The Hon Matthew Mason-Cox MLC  
The Hon Penny Sharp MLC

## **Inquiry into the music and arts economy in New South Wales**

Dear Director,

Wagga Wagga City Council's community and cultural services unit has considered the request for submissions and appreciates the opportunity to make comment. In preparing this submission we noted the areas of focus provided.

### **Background: City of Wagga Wagga**

The City of Wagga Wagga Local Government Area (LGA) is located in the Riverina region of New South Wales, a midway point between Sydney and Melbourne. Wagga Wagga is the largest inland city in New South Wales, with an estimated population of 64,085 people. In addition, Wagga Wagga supports a regional catchment population of over 150,000 people in surrounding districts.

Wagga Wagga has been a key centre for thousands of years for the traditional land owners, the Wiradjuri people. Today, 5.6% of the population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, higher than the state average at 2.9%. Wagga Wagga also has a high percentage of persons in the 12-24 age group at 18.9, compared to the state average 16.1%. This is often attributed to the presence of Charles Sturt University and the Defence community. The City is a recognised Refugee Welcome Zone.

Wagga Wagga is a city of diverse functions and communities of interest and provides a regional focus for major commercial, retail and business industries. In addition, the City is a major centre for educational services including Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW Riverina Institute, and the Riverina Conservatorium

of Music; defence services (Forest Hill RAAF Base and Kapooka Army Recruitment Training Facility); and NSW Government Public Services.

Wagga Wagga is widely known for its sporting culture (commonly referred to as “The City of Good Sports”), but has also developed a strong and vibrant arts community, and a diverse range of cultural facilities and events. Established events across the year, drawing visitors and participants from across the Riverina and interstate, include the Fusion Multicultural Street Festival, the Wagga Wagga Food and Wine Festival, and the Wagga Comedy Fest. In 2018, new initiatives being launched in this sector include the Fitz Live local music festival, and the Fresh cross-generational cultural festival.

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to the development of the Wagga Wagga LGA as a thriving, innovative and connected regional centre, where culture and creativity engage and involve the whole community. The ‘Wagga View Community Strategic Plan’ (2017) states as the city’s vision for the future that,

*In 2040 Wagga Wagga will be a thriving, innovative, connected and inclusive community on the Murrumbidgee. Rich in opportunity, choice, learning and environment, Wagga is a place where paths cross and people meet.*

The City’s commitment to the arts, music and culture is further embedded in this Community Strategic Plan in three Strategic Directions with objectives of direct relevance to this inquiry:

1. *Growing Economy*
  - *We are a tourist destination*
  - *We are a hub for activity*
2. *Community Place and Identity*
  - *We are proud of where we live and our identity*
  - *We have opportunities to connect with others*
3. *The Environment*
  - *We create and maintain a functional, attractive and health promoting built environment*

Informed by the ‘Wagga View Community Strategic Plan’ and the City of Wagga Wagga’s population and facilities as outlined above, comment is submitted on the following items:

- *Policies that could support a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture across New South Wales*
- *Policies that could support the establishment and sustainability of permanent and temporary venue spaces for music and for the arts,*
- *Policy and legislation in other jurisdictions, and options for New South Wales including red tape reduction and funding options*



## **Policies that could support a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture across New South Wales**

Wagga Wagga City Council appreciates and commends the range of support currently provided by the NSW Government for music and arts culture in regional New South Wales. This support includes direct recurrent funding, through Create NSW and other agencies, for the City's significant cultural institutions including the Museum of the Riverina, the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Booranga Writers Centre and the Riverina Conservatorium of Music; as well as devolved funding through agencies including Regional Arts NSW and Museums & Galleries NSW.

Much of this support has been facilitated by the successful development of variants on 'hub and spoke' models of funding, such as the Regional Museum Officer program delivered through the Museum of the Riverina to support volunteer museum organisations throughout the region. These models provide a flexibility, and responsiveness to region-specific considerations, that has demonstrated value, longevity and sustainability.

It is noted however that the majority of funding and other support currently provided by the NSW Government in regional areas is directed at or only available for organisations and institutions. Given that a diverse and vibrant music and arts culture will inherently rely on a rich and sustainable creative ecology, it can therefore be recommended that the inquiry consider policies and support for individual artists, musicians and creative industry professionals in the private and commercial sectors. Such support would preferably encourage and facilitate collaboration with existing public institutions and not-for-profit organisations.

It is also noted that philanthropic support for the arts, music and culture in New South Wales is predominantly directed to metropolitan institutions and organisations. While regional areas retain a strong volunteering ethos, individuals and organisations in regional areas face disadvantages compared to metropolitan counterparts in generating philanthropic support both financial and in-kind. It is therefore recommended that the inquiry consider policies and initiatives that can foster stronger philanthropic support for regional music, arts and culture.

## **Policies that could support the establishment and sustainability of permanent and temporary venue spaces for music and for the arts,**

Wagga Wagga City Council appreciates and commends a number of recent initiatives of the NSW Government aimed at supporting the establishment and sustainability of music and arts venues. The Regional Cultural Fund, coordinated by the Cultural Infrastructure Project Management Office (CIPMO), is a valuable funding program that is likely to significantly address



the substantial backlogs in maintaining and developing cultural infrastructure faced by regional NSW.

The recently announced one-off investment of \$10million for the relocation of the Riverina Conservatorium of Music is a major statement of support by the NSW Government for music education and performance venues. Council has also been the recipient in 2018 of funding through the Live Music Office's Live and Local program, for the temporary venue micro festival Fitz Live. Council appreciates the opportunity to develop this pilot project, pairing Wagga Wagga based musicians with venues participating in Council's Tourism Partner Program.

Initiatives such as these demonstrate a renewed commitment by the NSW Government in supporting arts, music and cultural venues. This commitment by the State is integral for the continual evolution of spaces available for regional creative industries in New South Wales. However, it remains the case that regional New South Wales still receives significantly less opportunities to apply for funding compared to metropolitan and Western Sydney. It is therefore recommend that the inquiry consider additional support programs reserved for projects and programs in regional areas.

In addition, it is recommended that the inquiry consider support programs designed to foster collaboration across multiple artforms. Venues that support cross-disciplinary collaboration and communication, including studio and exhibition space, rehearsal and performance space, and retail options, particularly for emerging artists, are scarce in regional New South Wales as compared to metropolitan areas; and this scarcity is a contributing factor in ongoing cultural emigration from regional areas.

### **Policy and legislation in other jurisdictions, and options for New South Wales including red tape reduction and funding options**

Wagga Wagga City Council's commitment to supporting a diverse music and arts culture, as embedded in the 'Wagga View Community Strategic Plan', has been demonstrated through a regime of supportive regulation for music and arts venues. Projects such as the Live Music Office-funded Fitz Live initiative, and ongoing programs such as the Tourism Partner Program, have been enabled by this supportive regime to facilitate collaboration.

With regard to funding options, it is noted that many of the support programs currently in place emphasise one-off and singular projects; however the most sustainable and effective initiatives have been those funded over multiple years. Medium- to long-term funding arrangements have been the most successful in ensuring that initiatives can respond to evolving circumstances and community feedback.



A key example of this model is the Fusion Multicultural Festival, originally funded through Multicultural NSW for three years from 2012, with an additional two years unfunded as a condition of support. This commitment from the state, local and community partners for a five-year initiative ensured that the festival could be embedded in the City's annual program and continue to grow and flourish following the conclusion of the specific initial funding. It is therefore recommended that the inquiry consider support programs designed for long-term collaborative relationships, rather than one-off projects lacking strategies for enduring sustainability.

I look forward to your responses to the above issues and opportunity to provide further comments as the matter progresses. If the opportunity arises I would be happy to participate in any facilitated discussions or panel reviews that would further assist the committee in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Acting Manager Community Services  
Wagga Wagga City Council

