

**Submission  
No 29**

**INQUIRY INTO GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF THE  
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM AND OTHER MUSEUMS AND  
CULTURAL PROJECTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Goulburn Mulwaree Council

**Date Received:** 1 May 2020

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## OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

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24 April 2020

The Director – Select Committees  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Borsak,

**Subject: Inquiry into the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales**

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Goulburn Mulwaree Council is committed to the development of cultural infrastructure, and welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Inquiry into the Government's management of the Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in New South Wales*. Our submission is focussed on: (b) *the Government's management of all museums and cultural projects in New South Wales*.

As a strong support of arts and culture, in 2016 the Marketing, Events & Culture business unit was established at Goulburn Mulwaree Council, bringing together the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Goulburn Mulwaree Library, Museums (Rocky Hill War Memorial Museum; Historic Goulburn Waterworks; and St Clair Villa Museum & Archives) and the Marketing & Events Team into one consolidated portfolio.

This sector has seen greater local government support in recent years than ever before, evidenced by the increased profile and capital investment across all areas. This includes:

- \$19M re-development of the former Town Hall into a state of the art Performing Arts Centre (under construction)
- \$2.5M development of a state of the art new museum at Rocky Hill War Memorial to cater for demand and this growing collection
- Refurbishment and re-brand of the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery – a leading public Art Gallery
- Refurbishment and re-brand of the Goulburn Mulwaree Library
- Increased investment in marketing activities, and the delivery of cultural and sporting events

Whilst we take a very proactive approach locally, greater support, collaboration and funding is required at a State level to support the growth of this sector. It is well researched and recognised that the Arts contribute greatly to community and social well-being, and it is critical that a strategic approach is taken to support the sector.

The lack of an up-to-date Arts policy for the State is of concern. The establishment of a clear and concise framework for the Arts across NSW will strengthen our capacity to deliver quality experiences for our communities and the many people employed in the Arts.

There are opportunities being explored through Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&GNSW) in relation to regional digitisation hubs that could be driven at a government level. Goulburn

Mulwaree Council is always interested in discussing opportunities to capitalise on our strategic location between Sydney and Canberra, central to a significant population who access the adjacent Hume Highway. We appreciate the support we receive from M&GNSW through the expert advice of their team, travelling exhibitions and access to project funding. The support of organisations such as M&GNSW is critical to the success and cohesion of Museums and Galleries across NSW. They are only limited through the funding they receive relative to the number of Museums and Galleries they assist and represent across the State.

Arts funding decisions are an ongoing concern, particularly the lack of transparency around funding handed down by Create NSW. The lack of consistency with decision making, process and in our situation a funding agreement that went from 3-5 years without opportunity for review, or bid for further funds is problematic. It is unreasonable to expect small arts organisations to be held to the same set of standards and accountability as the major arts organisations, many of which receive hundreds of thousands of dollars each year from the NSW Government. The \$1M grant handed to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2018 without due process, resulting in 11 other applicants missing out is just one example of the lack of confidence in funding decisions and inequality in the sector.

As we strive to deliver Museum quality and the highest of standards across our arts and cultural sector locally, we will continue to be limited due to the lack of available State Government funding for rural and regional collections. A state wide approach would consolidate expertise and resources, and this is something we commend to you.

Our three Museums alone rely heavily on the support of our volunteers for us to continue to operate. In 2019, the collective hours of our Museum volunteers alone was equivalent to 4.5 Full Time Equivalent staff. Without their ongoing commitment to the Museums, collections and community, we would have to cease operating the Museums, closing the doors to a state heritage listed site, a nationally significant site, and collections of state and national significance.

We implore the State Government to ensure appropriate and targeted consultation occurs wherever the Arts are involved. The recent lack of consultation in relation to the heritage arms and armour collection has been a great cause of concern for our Museum staff and volunteers, who have over many years acquired a significant heritage firearm and armour collection, which was placed in jeopardy as a result of the amendments to the NSW Firearms Legislation. Decisions like this should not be made in isolation of the facts, and the legislative parameters that our staff and volunteers have acquired these items over many decades.

We thank you for the opportunity of making this submission and look forward to the State Government taking a leadership stance that promotes cohesiveness in the Arts across New South Wales for the benefit of our communities.

Yours faithfully

Warwick Bennett  
**General Manager**

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