

Cultural Strategy – Setting the Scene

Context

The Inner West has a strong cultural identity and is the heart of Greater Sydney's independent arts and cultural production. The Inner West has the highest concentration of cultural producers in any location nationally and cultural and creative industries contribute \$1.4 billion per annum to the local economy and directly employ 6,500 people.

Inner West Council is committed to supporting local culture. This is recognised in *Our Inner West 2036* which provides a clear mandate for local creativity and culture: *Creative communities and a strong economy* and culture's powerful role in *liveable communities and wellbeing*.

The Executive of Inner West Council has commissioned a scope for an integrated Cultural Strategy.

Scope

The Cultural Strategy will propose a four-year plan to support and nurture creativity and culture. The plan will include strategic goals and accompanying actions that deliver meaningful outcomes. It is anticipated attention to the following will be included in the strategy:

1. Cultural heritage and inclusion: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage, cultural diversity and inclusion
2. Creativity, innovation and the global city: artistic development and excellence, audience development
3. Culture's role in placemaking and good growth: integrating culture in urban planning and design, including production and presentation spaces and art in public places
4. Creative participation: including links to well-being, grassroots culture, belonging and cultural activities
5. Arts and cultural sector support: grants and other Council resourcing, capacity building and collaborative Council governance of culture

What do we mean by culture?

Culture for this strategy is understood broadly as the way we live and express ourselves in the world, including making, sharing and participating in creativity and drawing on our customs, heritage and beliefs. Artists, cultural groups, residents, visitors and businesses all help to create our distinctive cultural life. Culture can also inspire new ways of thinking and living in a changing world.

Background to the Strategy

Since 2017, Council has built on successful initiatives such as Creative Trails, Perfect Match, culturally diverse arts, public art and performing arts projects. In addition, through its *Creative Communities Notice of Motion* in February 2017, Council increased support for live music, creative spaces and artist residencies, creative industries regulatory reforms and a public program for cultural activation, which evolved into EDGE Inner West.

Council has commissioned research into distinctive cultural production spaces which have been received and noted by the Executive and launched in November 2019:

- *Planning Cultural Creation and Production in the Inner West LGA: A case study needs analysis (WSU, 2018)*
- *Creative Spaces and Venues Discussion Paper (Leftbank and JOC, 2019)*

Engagement

There is already existing engagement on local arts and culture from Council's 2036 Community Strategic Plan, Creative Spaces Research, Economic Development Strategy and Retail and Employment Lands Study.

The Strategy will seek to engage with groups and communities that it has not heard from already. Engagement methods will include creative online engagement tools, Your Say Inner West, interviews with local and NSW government peers, and selected cultural and creative sector group focus groups and interviews.

Existing engagement has so far reflected the following priorities and issues:

- Arts and culture's essential role in local identity
- Locals want to preserve existing culture and are concerned about gentrification
- The importance of nighttime activities/ economy to residents and cultural tourism
- Street art and public space activations are well loved
- Affordable creative spaces, especially cultural production spaces, are seen as critical to local culture and economy and there are significant concerns about the threat of development, rezoning and affordability
- Cultural diversity is valued
- Music and performance venues have raised a range of regulatory issues which hinder their activities and financial viability in addition to residential encroachment
- Artists want a greater role in placemaking, including urban design and development
- A lack of affordable housing for artists is identified as a threat to local culture
- Arts and culture can be a resource for developing new, local, sustainable responses to a changing world and can help reframe outdated or inequitable social narratives
- Arts and culture can assist local liveability, community connectedness and wellbeing

Internal Alignment

The Strategy will develop an understanding of how culture contributes to the vision and identity of the future city to support development of the next Community Strategic Plan in 2020/21 and will align with relevant plans including the Library Strategy, Healthy Ageing Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan.

Funding

The Cultural Strategy will be produced within existing resources.

Timeline

Late Jan- Feb 2020	Internal engagement
February 2020	External engagement
March	Data analysis, drafting of strategy
April	Internal review and refinement of strategy
May 2020	Public exhibition. EDGE Labs
June 2020	Councillor Briefing, finalising of Strategy, Final design
July 2020	Strategy to Council for adoption