

# Draft Arts and Creativity Strategy

## Connected Community 2028



northern  
beaches  
council





Weaving Bridges, Stuart Somerville Bridge

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Fire Exhibition, Creative Space

## Message from the Mayor



When the much loved Oceandies - Sea Nymphs sculpture by Helen Leete at Fairy Bower Pool was destroyed by a violent storm in 2016, our community was devastated. Almost immediately locals mobilised behind the campaign to replace it, raising thousands of dollars to recreate the original sculpture from bronze to withstand the elements for generations to come.

With Council matching the community fundraising dollar for dollar, the Sea Nymphs were returned and once again stand proud over the pool at Fairy Bower, a symbol of a community connected, with a shared passion for art and creativity.

One of the things that makes Oceandies so special for me is not just the elegance of the work, or even the way the nymphs complement the environment they are in, but that they are so accessible to anyone and everyone enjoying the spectacular walk between Manly and Shelly Beach.

And that's what this Strategy is all about – bringing people together, inspiring creativity, fostering different perspectives and, above all, looking at how we can contribute to making the arts a greater part of the fabric of our community so they can be enjoyed by all.

At Council we can make sure we embed the arts in our strategic planning right from the beginning, actively seek out investments in cultural infrastructure and find ways to better foster and encourage local talent in our service delivery and events.

Here on the Northern Beaches we are lucky to have such an active arts and creative community and I thank the many people who contributed to the development of this Strategy. There are so many opportunities for Council and the community to work together and deliver an even greater sense of vibrancy and imagination across our region. I look forward to what we can deliver together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Regan', followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

**Michael Regan, Mayor**

## Summary

*The purpose of the Arts and Creativity Strategy is to create a shared reference and long-term direction for enabling the arts and in turn supporting the wellbeing of the Northern Beaches community.*

The Northern Beaches is home to a passionate and growing creative community who are keen to contribute to enriching our cultural life. The Strategy seeks to build on this creative momentum by encouraging broad scaled community participation in the arts and creating a more liveable and connected community. In the face of increased pressures associated with modern living, the arts are perhaps more important than ever in supporting our health and wellbeing.

There is a unique opportunity to embed the arts and creativity in the long-term planning for Northern Beaches. In response to the NSW Government's 20 year direction for the Sydney Metropolitan area

(North District Plan) we are renewing and rethinking our planning across all areas of Council – strategic land use, urban renewal and economic, social and environmental planning.

This Strategy presents a holistic approach to achieving good outcomes for the community in terms of better places and spaces; diverse programs and activations; and active participation and engagement.<sup>1</sup> An overview of these outcome areas, as well a vision and summary of the proposed 19 future directions, are provided in Figure 1.

### Definition

We understand 'art' broadly to be the expression or application of human creativity, skill and imagination in capturing and transposing the creator's imaginative, conceptual idea, or technical skill through various mediums, and intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power.

(Based on Oxford Dictionaries definition of art)

<sup>1</sup> This structure aligns with the concept of 'creative ecosystem' as defined as consisting of three basic elements: creative environment (places and spaces); creative project/activity (programs and activation); creative person (participation and engagement). Source: Harrington (1999) quoted in Gorny, E. (2007)

## Figure 1: Vision and outcomes

Vision: The Northern Beaches community is enriched by creative and cultural experiences that enhance wellbeing and build social cohesion.

1

### Outcome 1 - Better Places and Spaces



Place is not simply a destination. It is defined by the meaning we give it and in turn it influences how we feel and how we interact. We will support community wellbeing through the creation of welcoming places that enhance a sense of identity, belonging and curiosity.

2

### Outcome 2 - Diverse Programs and Activations



Arts and creativity is essential to our wellbeing as individuals and as a community. We will enable the community to initiate and drive programs and activations that will enrich our lives and build a stronger, more inclusive community.

3

### Outcome 3 - Active Participation and Engagement



Active participation in the arts brings together people, perspectives and ideas in new ways that foster greater insight, awareness and action. We want to use the arts as leverage for innovative and inspired engagement that can lead to better community outcomes.





## Importance of the arts

*There is a wealth of empirical evidence that shows the strong contributions the arts can make to society - positively contributing to community cohesion, health and wellbeing, education, economy and protecting our natural environment.*

Over the past five to ten years, community interest and participation in the arts has grown exponentially on the Northern Beaches. The engagement with more than 800 people for this Strategy suggests that the arts are becoming increasingly important in our everyday lives as a way to counterbalance stress and get back to our values.

We are challenged on all levels of society with the pressures of modern living. Globalisation, disruptive technologies, social media, climate change and urbanisation are some of the megatrends that have very real implications for how we live and how we are today. Young people feel these pressures acutely at a time in their lives when they seek self-discovery, identity, belonging and meaning. Stress, anxiety and poor mental health have become symptomatic of how we live. <sup>2</sup>

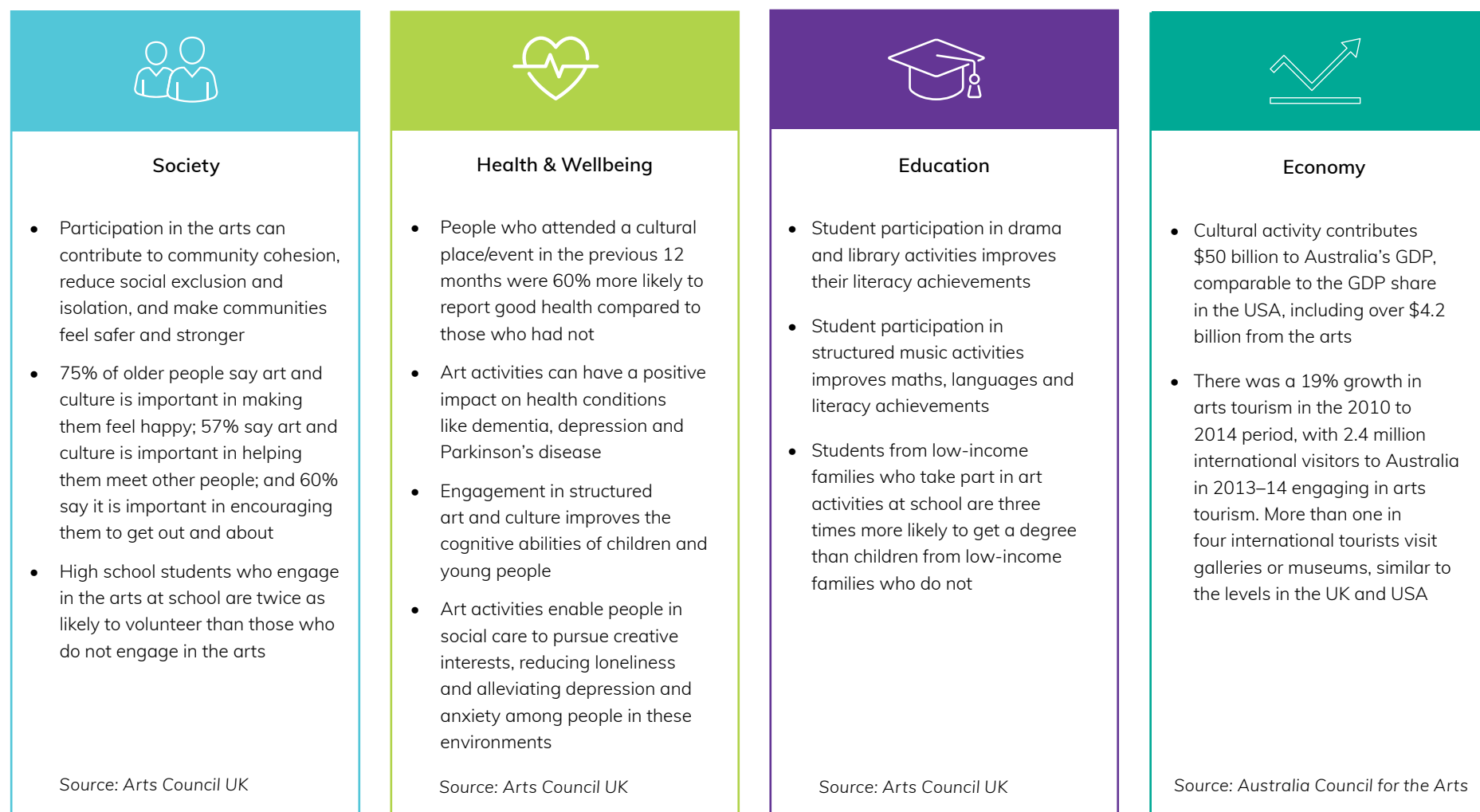
In this rapidly changing and uncertain world, finding balance and searching for connection – to each other and to nature – is becoming increasingly important to our wellbeing. There is a large body of evidence that shows how the arts can help build resilience, confidence and communication which in turn may have ripple effects across other aspects of community life.

Figure 2 on the next page provides a summary of recent research which demonstrates the benefits of the arts to society, health and wellbeing, education and economy.

<sup>2</sup> Nearly half of all Australians will experience some form of mental illness during their lifetime. Source: WayForward (2018). It is also estimated that one in five Australians experience a mental illness in any one year. Australian youth (18-24 years old) have the highest prevalence of mental illness than any other age group. Source: Black Dog Institute (2017)



Figure 2. Benefits of arts and creativity





## Snapshot of our creative community

*Northern Beaches offers a broad selection of creative and cultural facilities and experiences. Our community strongly supports the arts and the majority of community members actively participate in creative or cultural activities and events.*

Council provides a broad range of arts facilities, programs and events that are well attended by the community. These facilities and initiatives are complemented by private, community and not-for-profit organisations' arts offerings.

With a growing and changing population, as well as significant changes to our urban landscape, we need to ensure that we are able to meet current and future demands for cultural and social infrastructure.

Our population is ageing and young people are increasingly leaving the area; the proportion of seniors and retirees over 60 is larger than the

proportion of young people in the student/young workforce statistical service cohort (aged 18 to 34). Additional ABS Census data shows that this young demographic group comprises 18.7 per cent of the total population (compared to Greater Sydney's proportion of 25 per cent). There was also a significant decrease of nearly one percent between 2011 and 2016 in the student/young workforce service cohort.

An overview of current Council arts offerings and participation, as well as key demographic data is provided in Figure 3.



Figure 3 - Snapshot of arts, creativity and cultural offerings

Population & Economy	Places & Spaces		Programs & Activations
<b>252,885*</b> residents  <b>21.9%*</b> seniors over 60  <b>18.7%*</b> young people and young workforce aged 18 to 34  <b>8.1%**</b> of the workforce employed in cultural or creative occupations**	<b>254 km²</b> total land area  <b>27.5 km²</b> open space  <b>41</b> community centres  <b>1</b> planned 36 km Coast Walk featuring public art and interpretative works	<b>6</b> libraries  <b>4</b> community libraries  <b>1</b> theatre- Glen Street Theatre  <b>1</b> regional gallery - Manly Art Gallery and Museum  <b>2</b> Creative Spaces (1 in pipeline)	<b>226</b> theatre & dance productions  <b>65</b> arts and creativity groups in community centres  <b>44</b> visual art exhibitions  <b>2</b> Artist Trails  <b>2</b> Artist in Residency programs
Participation and Engagement		<b>118,000</b> participated in Manly Jazz Festival  <b>12,000</b> participated in Manly Arts Festival	<b>2,000</b> participated in Northern Beaches Art Prize  <b>300</b> participated in Gai-Mariagal Festival
<b>175,000</b> visits to galleries and theatres  <b>5,200</b> participated in Council's youth arts and creativity events	<b>1,280</b> participated in creative capacity building programs  <b>770</b> participated in literary programs		

\*Source: 2016 ABS Census information (total population usual residence)

\*\* Source: Australian Council for the Arts. Note that this is based on Mackellar and Warringah electoral data and hence includes data from Mosman

## Current attitudes and participation in the arts

A random telephone survey of Northern Beaches residents showed strong interest and high participation rates in the arts. Results from the survey are summarised in Figures 4 to 6 below, where the total number of respondents is 404. The survey also identified the top barriers to participation were work responsibilities, domestic responsibilities, lack of opportunities in a particular type of art, personal choice (e.g. no interest) and lack of information on what is available.

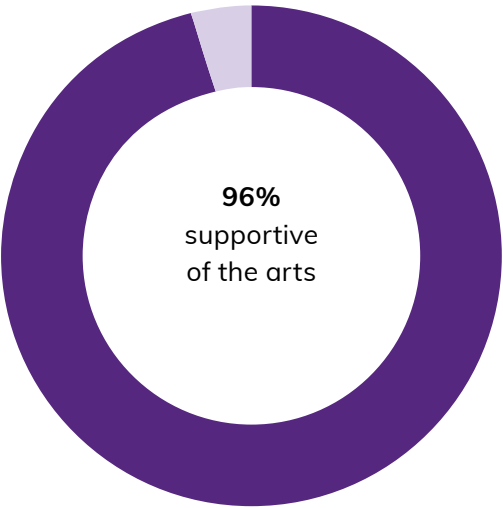


Figure 4 - Attitudes towards Council’s role

Figure 5 shows the percentage (in brackets) of total respondents who had participated in any of the art forms. The bar chart shows how frequently those respondents had participated in that art form in the past year.

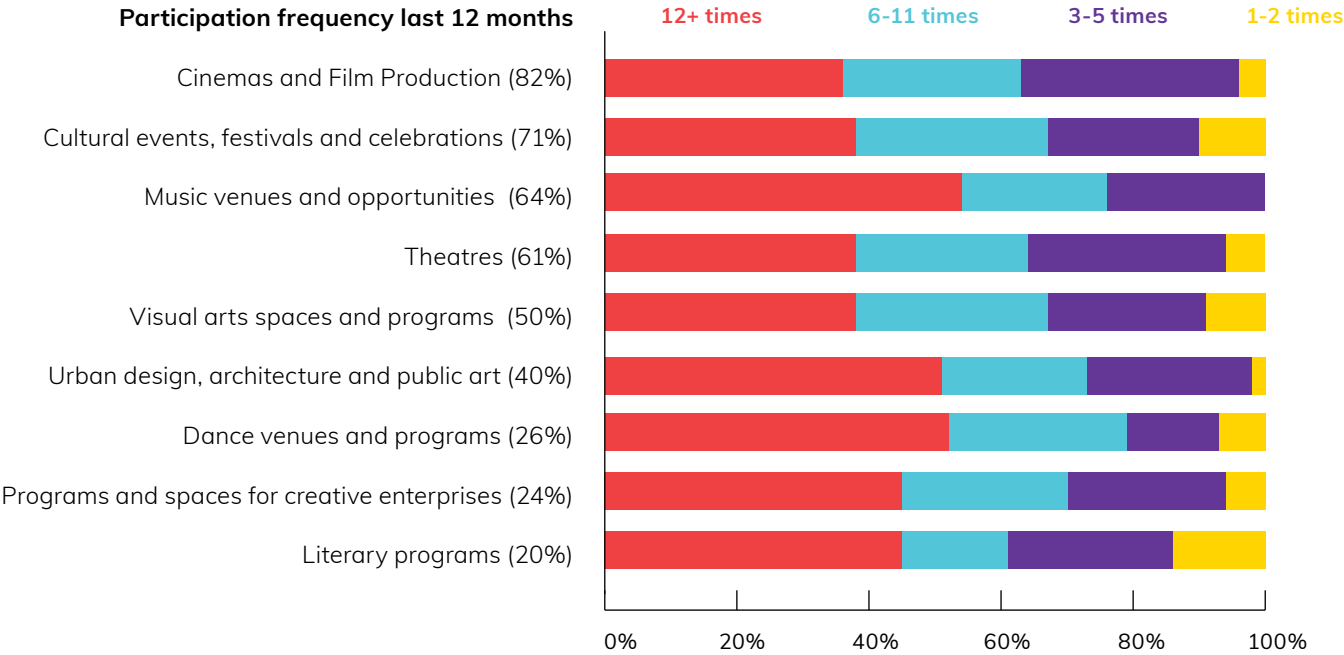
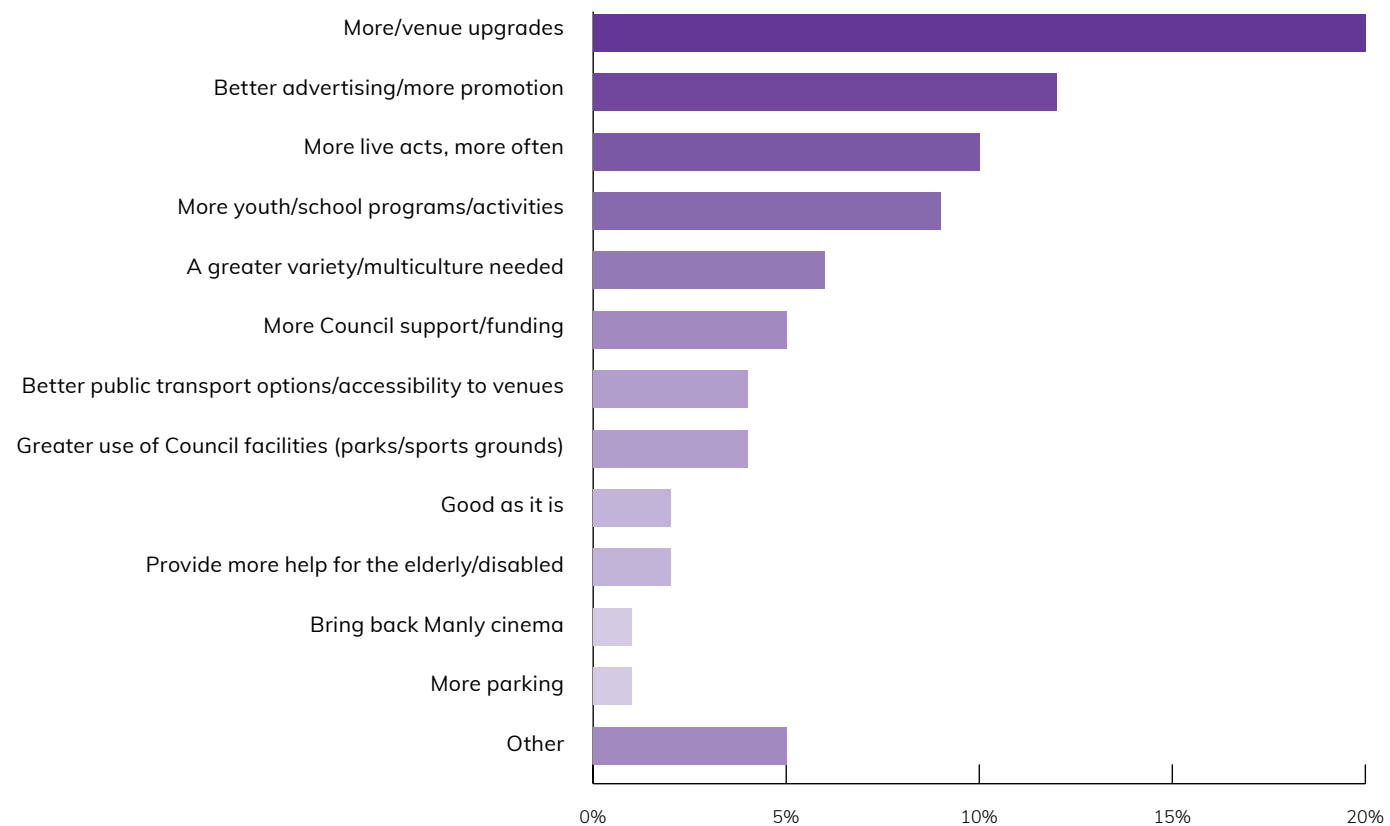


Figure 5 – Current participation in the arts



**Figure 6 - Opportunities for improvements**

The survey question was framed as an open-ended question so as to avoid bias and subsequently coded as per the graph. A third (33%) of respondents chose to answer with nil/nothing/unsure/no.



## Key opportunities

*Our extraordinary coast and bushland environments are important sources of inspiration and creativity for many community members. There is a clear link between the arts, nature and community wellbeing.*

Many residents have commented that it is in the tranquil bushland, by the stunning beaches or amongst other creative community members that they harness their creativity and find inspiration and a sense of balance to their lives in a busy world.

Current participation rates are high across all arts offerings on the Northern Beaches, with Glen Street Theatre and Manly Art Gallery & Museum continuing to be strong drawcards for locals and visitors alike. Creative Space at North Curl Curl is also a highly valued studio and exhibition space, particularly for emerging artists and creative community members.

With more than 175,000 visits per year to our cultural facilities, these spaces are by and large at full capacity and there is an opportunity to complement larger scaled productions, exhibitions and events with more neighbourhood based and community driven arts programs and cultural events.

As our projected population will be almost 300,000 by 2036, we need to ensure that creative and cultural offerings continue to be accessible to the whole community.<sup>5</sup> This entails undertaking diligent research as part of our overall land-use, strategic and economic planning to ensure that current and future needs and interests of all demographic groups are properly identified and addressed.

<sup>5</sup> Source: NSW Department of Planning (2016)



### Summary of findings from the engagement

The following key opportunities have been identified through extensive engagement with more than 800 community members, artists, creatives and stakeholders:

- Current participation in the arts is high across all demographics, but it could be even higher if existing opportunities and the importance of arts and creativity to community wellbeing were better promoted
- Community members want to initiate and drive arts and creativity programs and they call for clearer processes and guidance as well as improved access to funding
- Improving and expanding access to creative and cultural spaces would improve participation; there is a need for creative space and performance and music spaces in particular
- There is a strong interest in cinema and film-production amongst the community. The focus group with young people suggested that film clubs or film screenings could have wide appeal and could also be used as a drawcard for community engagement on important issues
- Community members want to have input into planning that affects land use, public art, ephemeral art, busking and other public arts initiatives that enhance our public domain
- Building a strong creative and evening economy are seen as important aspects of making Northern Beaches more liveable for residents and attractive for visitors. It may also help retain our young population, who increasingly are moving out of the Northern Beaches

## A holistic approach

One of the NSW Government's key planning priorities for the region is: "Fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities." (North District Plan, Planning Priority 4)

The NSW Government has set directions and targets that will shape population growth, housing, employment, transport, education, health and environmental management over the next 20 years for the Sydney Metropolitan Area, including the Northern Beaches.

In responding to the NSW Government's regional plan for the area – North District Plan - there is an excellent opportunity to forge new partnerships and build collaboration to embed creativity into our long-term strategic and economic planning.

Figure 7 illustrates how our plans and strategies work together to deliver our vision for a more creative and connected community. As indicated in the figure, there are three main avenues for progressing the vision for the arts: Strategic and Urban Planning; Integrated Planning and Reporting; and Tactical Plans and Strategies. These are described in more detail on the following page.

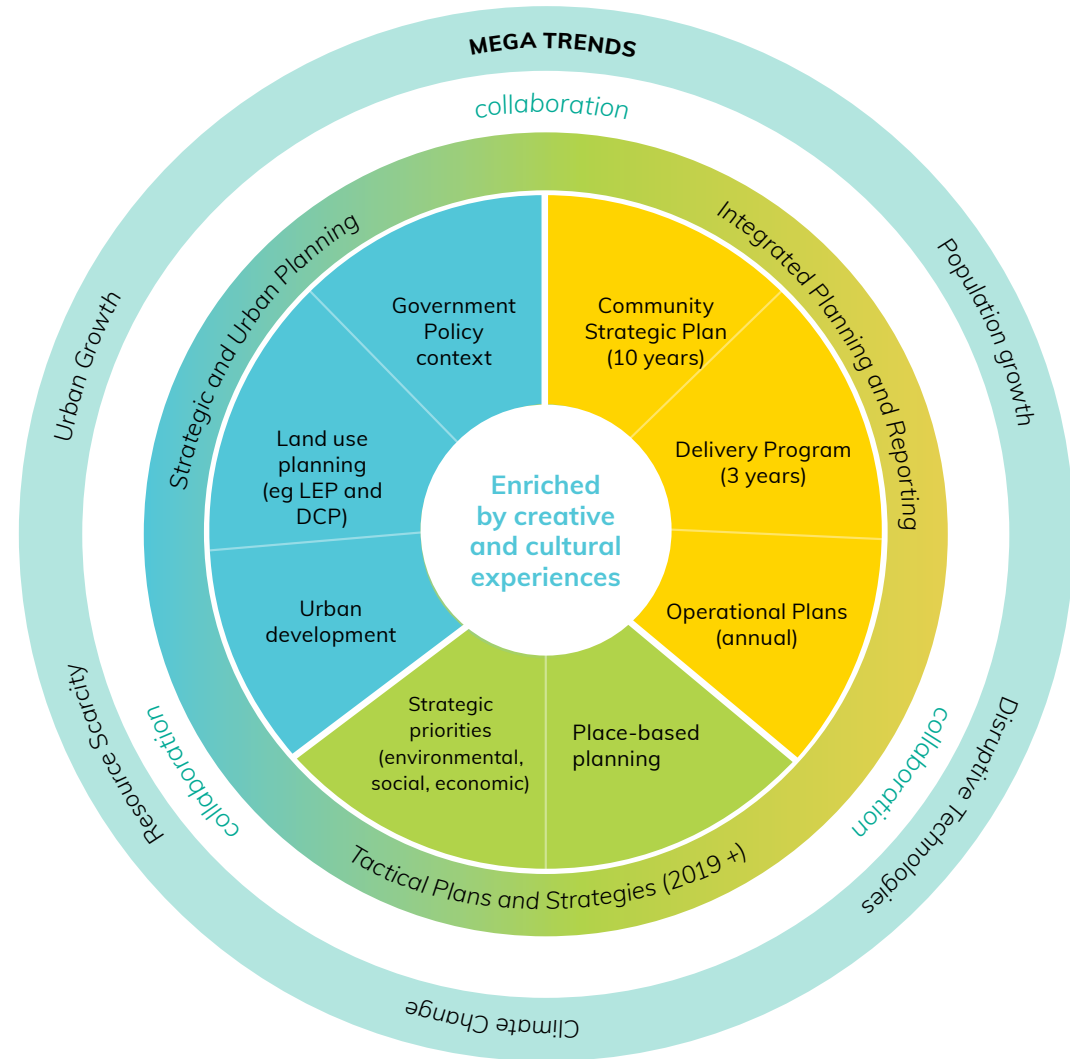


Figure 7 – Policy and planning context



### Strategic and Urban Planning

- Government policy such as Create NSW; Cultural Infrastructure, NSW Arts and Policy Framework (2015); NSW Government Cultural Infrastructure Action Plan (2018) and NSW Health and the Arts Framework all provide important reference points for collaboration and potential leverage for funding. There are also opportunities for Council to negotiate opportunities for shared use of Government owned property (e.g. schools and hospitals) for creative use and/or exhibition spaces as part of implementation of the North District Plan.
- Land use planning (namely Local Strategic Planning Statement, Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plans) will set the parameters for zoning (which will determine options for provision of creative spaces) as well as define regulations (e.g. noise and operating hours) which all have a profound effect on our cultural life.
- Urban development and precinct/master planning offer opportunities for creativity in urban design, integration of public art, and negotiation of voluntary planning agreements that deliver arts and culture outcomes to the community. The NSW Government's Better Placed design policy provides a good basis for achieving this.

### Integrated planning and reporting (IP&R)

- The IP&R Framework identifies specific actions and resources required to deliver on identified community priorities. Regular (monthly, annually, quarterly and end of term) monitoring of progress against the community's long term vision for the Northern Beaches ensures transparency and accountability.

### Tactical Plans and Strategies

- Strategic priorities will be identified in key corporate documents such as the Social Plan, Economic Development Plan, Destination Management Plan (tourism), Environmental Strategy and Open Space Strategy. These projects are scheduled to commence in 2019. There are also strong links to the implementation of the Events Strategy.
- Place-based planning will provide an opportunity to incorporate key directions from this Strategy in enhancing the local character of key villages such as Avalon, Mona Vale and Manly.



## Vision

*Our vision for arts and creativity:  
The Northern Beaches community is enriched by creative and cultural experiences that enhance wellbeing and build social cohesion*

The concept of a connected community is central to the overarching vision for the Northern Beaches as 'a safe, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment' (Community Strategic Plan).

It is clear from the engagement that arts and creativity is seen as beneficial to everyone. There is broad recognition that the arts can make significant cultural, social and economic contributions.

Community members have emphasised the importance of the arts to individual and collective wellbeing. Residents and young people in particular have told us that they want more opportunities for getting together in meaningful ways and in inspiring places.

The role the arts play in overall wellbeing is now recognised at a public policy level. Most notably, the integration of arts into the design and delivery of health services and public health messaging, both at federal and state levels, demonstrates this.<sup>6</sup>

## Vision, outcomes and future directions

<sup>6</sup> Following the implementation of the World Health Organisation's Health for All strategy, the 'Arts and Health' movement started to gain momentum in Australia as a means of improving public health, promoting social inclusion and reducing health inequalities. This has informed policy development which has made an explicit link between health and wellbeing and the arts; e.g. Australian National Arts and Health Framework (2016); and NSW Health and the Arts Framework, NSW Department of Health (2016)





## Outcome 1: Better Places and Spaces

*To enliven our urban landscapes and provide spaces for creative pursuits through innovative planning and bold design*

### Background

Changes are underway to better plan for a growing and ageing population on the Northern Beaches.

The NSW Government has set targets and priorities for population and employment in the region and we are responding to these requirements through careful review and planning across strategic land use, development controls, and other social, economic and environmental plans.

This is an opportunity to integrate arts and creativity at a strategic level to make sure that our urban centres, local neighbourhoods and suburbs support community wellbeing and quality of life. It is also a chance to negotiate provision of more creative and cultural spaces.

Frenchs Forest, Ingleside and Warriewood Valley are examples of new developments where innovative design and social and cultural infrastructure will be essential to the liveability of the area.

Similarly, proposed revitalisation and plans for urban upgrades in Dee Why, Brookvale, Mona Vale, Avalon and Manly offer opportunities to incorporate arts in good design and identify potential spaces for creative pursuits and activations.

We will collaborate with the NSW Government to enhance all aspects of our urban environments by putting creative and people-centred design at the core of our planning and development processes.

## Voice of the community

- There was a strong desire from the community to help co-create our spaces and enliven the urban landscape with street art, busking, music, colour and creative expressions – big and small – that could spark new thoughts, conversations or identity of place
- The main source of inspiration for creativity was other people; the social aspects of creativity were deemed inseparable for creative production for many people. The natural environment was also identified as being of high importance in sparking creativity
- One of the main barriers for active participation in the arts was creative spaces that cater for a multitude of functions including art studios, exhibitions, learning and socialising
- Spaces for music enjoyment and rehearsal, as well as theatre production, were identified as a major gap by many community members; music being particularly important to the younger generation
- Concern was raised about significant changes to the urban environment; for example, it was suggested that arts and creativity may be used to create 'a new identity for Frenchs Forest' in the wake of significant changes to its urban landscapes and sense of identity

## Future Directions

1. Enhance and promote local environmental, aesthetic, cultural and heritage values of the Northern Beaches through creative expressions and public art
2. Undertake an audit of hard and soft cultural assets to better support the needs of creative practitioners and audiences
3. Map existing clusters of creative industry and creative consumption with a view to facilitating creative precincts/hubs
4. Leverage and promote existing facilities (namely Glen Street Theatre and Manly Art Gallery & Museum) to increase professional and community participation in the arts
5. Identify opportunities for increasing the supply of new creative and cultural spaces (e.g. through property portfolio management and identification of funding streams)
6. Consider options for extended and shared use of existing community gathering places such as schools, libraries, galleries, theatres, and community centres for creative purposes
7. Ensure land-use planning processes, policies and development controls enable creative expressions, cultural enjoyment and social interaction
8. Celebrate creative participation as a key pillar of evening economies, and chart opportunities for cultural activation and participation

### What will this look like in 2028?

- There are plenty of accessible places for people and families to get together – during the day and in the evening - for a range of different creative and cultural experiences
- Our urban landscapes and public domain invites social interaction and diverse cultural experiences through bold design and prominent creative expressions
- Our public art vision is a good foundation for collaboration with the community, arts organisations and developers, who deliver outstanding cultural outcomes
- Northern Beaches is fertile ground for innovation and an increasing number of artists and creative entrepreneurs call the area home

### Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy will be implemented through the following policies, plans and strategies which will be developed over the 2018 – 2020 period:

- Local Strategic Planning Statement, Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plans
- Developer Contributions Plan
- Urban renewal plans and projects (e.g. implementation of Dee Why Town Centre Master Plan, Brookvale, Warriewood Valley, Ingleside, Frenchs Forest Structure Plans)
- Place Plans (Avalon, Manly, Mona Vale)
- Economic Development Plan
- Destination Management Plan (tourism)
- Open Space Strategy
- Community Centres Strategy
- Public Art Policy
- Urban Design Guidelines



### Case study: Transforming Wollongong

From a steel and coal manufacturing city to 'Australia's City of Innovation', Wollongong is a city transformed. At the heart of this transformation is the implementation of Wollongong Council's Cultural Plan 2014-18 and, most significantly, changes to their planning controls for noise in the CBD district. The CBD was identified as an entertainment precinct between 5pm and midnight, meaning any new residents should expect noise within those hours.

"It was like waving the flag and saying this is 'danger, danger, danger' or 'opportunity, opportunity, opportunity'," Wollongong Lord Mayor Gordon Bradbery says. "When I first came to the Council I used to get a lot of letters from people complaining about the noise at night. However we didn't want our CBD and the precincts around it to be considered a retirement village." <sup>8</sup>

Changes to planning controls now allow for music and cultural activities that generate more noise; however noise complaints have actually decreased. This is likely due to clearly communicating intent to re-invigorate the CBD and to potential investors or homeowners that owning an apartment in the city had implications and that noise and nightlife were to be expected.

<sup>8</sup> Source: *Newcastle Herald*, 8 September 2018

<sup>9</sup> Source: *Newcastle Herald*, 8 September 2018

<sup>10</sup> Source: *Wollongong City Council* (2017)

By setting clear standards and managing expectations, Council was able to not only decrease noise complaints, but create a vibrant city centre where music was welcomed and attracted people and visitors to the area. "I think it was one of our masterstrokes in terms of saying this is what comes with the package of living in a precinct around our CBD," Lord Mayor Gordon Bradbery said.<sup>9</sup>

The change in planning controls has enabled a flourishing music scene which in turn has had a tremendous impact on general liveability as well as local economy. For example, more than 65 small bars and cafes have opened in the last three years alone, boosting Wollongong as a destination and contributing to the \$1 billion tourism economy.<sup>10</sup>

The case of Wollongong has now inspired Newcastle to investigate options for taking a similar approach to working with musicians, promoters and government officials to invigorate their city, while effectively manage noise concerns.



## Outcome 2: Diverse Programs and Activation

### *To enable a diverse and inclusive range of arts and creativity programs and activations*

#### Background

Arts and creativity programs and initiatives have become more accessible to the community and participation in creative pursuits and cultural entertainment is growing steadily.

Our research shows that there are presently not enough creative and cultural opportunities on offer on the Northern Beaches. Similarly, the research points to a need for greater diversity in arts offerings across all creative disciplines. This includes considering ways to expand opportunities for both emerging and established artists as well as facilitating opportunities for both local and out of area creatives and artists.

Providing programs that build the skills of the community to lead arts initiatives and activations will support a diverse range of arts offerings across the Northern Beaches, independent from Council services. This entails ensuring that regulations and processes for running arts initiatives and activations are simplified and that community members are supported with adequate resources (financial, information, or in-kind) to run creative initiatives.

A diverse local arts and creativity program will cater for the varied interests and abilities in the community, hereby supporting wellbeing. It will also support our local economy by expanding opportunities for creative enterprise.

### Voice of the community

- Many community members expressed a desire to see a broader diversity in arts offerings across literary, musical, performance/theatre, film production, urban or industrial design initiatives, and visual arts
- There was a strong understanding in the community generally (and not only from artistically minded people) that the arts are important to individual wellbeing; it is a way to relieve stress, express ourselves and share our stories
- Arts and creativity were seen as having tremendous potential in terms of addressing worrying trends of poor mental health, and drug and alcohol abuse
- The community generally (irrespective of whether they were personally creative) expressed a strong appreciation of arts, creativity and cultural events as avenues for social bonding and cohesion

### Future Directions

9. Recognise and create awareness of Aboriginal culture and heritage
10. Build the capacity of the community to initiate, undertake and drive creative and cultural programs, activities and events
11. Collaborate with the community, businesses, agencies and arts organisations to deliver a distinct, diverse and inclusive arts and activation program
12. Showcase and support talent, innovation and creative enterprise
13. Enable live music and creative urban activation opportunities
14. Facilitate and support access to funding opportunities (including community grants programs) for cultural and creative projects, activities and events



### What will this look like in 2028?

- Ephemeral art, busking and 'pop-up' cultural performances and expressions are visible and valued aspects of community life
- Diverse events and programs on a local neighbourhood, village and urban centre scale bring people together and builds a sense of community and belonging
- 'Arts therapy' is accessible and recognised as an effective method for improving the wellbeing of people who are ill, vulnerable or at risk
- There are ample opportunities for heritage interpretations of our urban and natural landscapes

### Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy will be implemented through the following policies, plans and strategies which will be developed over the 2018 – 2020 period:

- Local Environment Plan
- Development Control Plan
- Social Plan
- Public Art Policy
- Place Plans (Avalon, Manly, Mona Vale)
- Economic Development Plan
- Destination Management Plan (tourism)
- Open Space Strategy
- Community Centres Strategy
- Place making framework and Place Activation Plans
- Events Strategy (existing)

### Case study: Magnetic Places

Magnetic Places is an annual community place-making grants program which aims to activate public spaces with and for the local community. It is an initiative of Penrith City Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Program.

Initiated in 2007-08, the Magnetic Places program has significantly contributed to building the capacity of residents, community groups, artists and organisations to activate local places.

The program complements Council's investment in identified priority neighbourhoods and builds upon the Penrith brand values of Transformation, Invention, Harmony and Lifestyle. Magnetic Places continues to grow and evolve as the City's communities collaborate with artists, organisations and each other to celebrate local identity and amplify the vibrancy of Penrith.

Each year the program has a total of \$50,000 available for grants. In 2018, Council funded five place-making projects totalling \$47,700. These projects delivered a number of positive impacts for the community in 2018 including 45 activation workshops with 287 participants in nine different types of locations. These five projects were supported by two resident-led community groups, five collaborating organisations and six paid artists who worked with residents to create 36 new artistic works. A total of 674 residents enjoyed the artworks and celebration events as well as the opportunity to participate in meaningful local community activities together.

The program has funded 80 successful projects over its almost decade-long life. Project evaluations demonstrate that the community partnerships around making places welcoming and sociable is contributing to the wellbeing of Penrith residents with participants reporting that they have made new friends, gained confidence and developed new skills amongst many other valuable outcomes.

*Source: Information provided by Penrith City Council*



Manly Jazz Festival









## Outcome 3: Active Participation and Engagement

**To create greater awareness of the importance of the arts and inspire active participation and engagement**

### Background

In the last decade, we have seen a growing interest in the arts and a general awareness amongst the Northern Beaches community of the importance of creativity to our wellbeing.

Young people are especially keen to actively engage and use creativity to shape the future of our community. They see it as a way to generate mutual understanding and tolerance as well as further their study and job prospects.<sup>11</sup>

There is a large potential in the community for building community-led creative programs in the arts. The engagement for this Strategy suggests that better promotion and awareness of what is currently on offer would help boost participation and contribute to strengthening creative community networks.

There is also an opportunity to use the arts as a springboard for engaging in other important issues that are of value and concern to the community, such as climate change and environmental protection.

Working with the community to identify ways in which they want to be engaged and contribute will be important in order to achieve the directions laid out in this Strategy and may have wider implications in terms of starting new conversations and reflections on important topics.

<sup>11</sup> These sentiments resonate with a recent study from Deloitte (2017) which found that young people rate the ability to think creatively and to generate new ideas as being more important to career development than e.g. information technology and social media skills.

### Voice of the community

- Community members predominantly find out about creative opportunities via social media and have called for arts and creativity related information to be more easily accessible via different online platforms
- Many residents are concerned with the state of our natural environment and believe that we can use the arts to create greater awareness of environmental issues
- Some younger people identified an opportunity to use cultural entertainment and events as a platform for other engagement (i.e. hosting a film-night, author talk or music performance which then could include an engagement segment on a particular issue such as climate change)

### Future Directions

15. Promote creative and cultural offerings in new and surprising ways that are suited to the target audience (e.g. youth, seniors, and people with disability)
16. Explore technology based options for encouraging creativity and participation in the arts
17. Facilitate creative and cultural networks and information sharing opportunities
18. Use arts and creative expressions to start new conversations in the community about important environmental, economic and social challenges and opportunities
19. Establish partnerships with arts, educational and health organisations to nurture creativity, wellbeing and community connection

#### What will this look like in 2028?

- Information about arts and creative opportunities and cultural events is easily accessible and targeted to the specific needs and interests of different demographic community groups
- Conversations and public debate are invigorated through creative expressions and innovative engagement methods

#### Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy will be implemented through the following policies, plans and strategies which will be developed over the 2018 – 2020 period:

- Social Plan
- Environment Strategy
- Community Engagement Framework

### Case study: Bimblebox: art-science-nature

In 2016, Manly Art Gallery & Museum proudly hosted the touring exhibition Bimblebox: art - science - nature about the Bimblebox Nature Refuge - an 8,000 hectare property in the Desert Uplands Bioregion of Central West Queensland. Curated by Beth Jackson from a project initiated by artist Jill Sampson, the exhibition was the result of an artist group's creative response to their experience of this unique and threatened environment.

The exhibition included artworks in installation, works on paper, painting, artist books, photography, digital media and sound in a dynamic experience that highlighted the environmental, social and scientific significance of the Bimblebox Nature Refuge.

Testament to the tremendous awareness the exhibition created, it became the subject of a study, 'Following Bimblebox' which explored the role of the arts in generating general public sustainability engagement. The research found that the arts can help solve complex 'wicked' problems facing us today which require innovative, interdisciplinary synergy between previously disparate fields such as ethics, philosophy, natural and social sciences.

In this way, the arts can help make the 'invisible visible' by conveying complex, challenging or threatening ideas to audiences in ways which make us feel, and care, as well as simply think. It is a powerful way to not only engage with the community, but also instigate positive behavioural changes.

Source: Nicholson, A. (2018)





Manly Jazz Festival

## Implementation and evaluation

*The success of the Strategy depends on a willingness to be curious and experiment, learn and take risks*

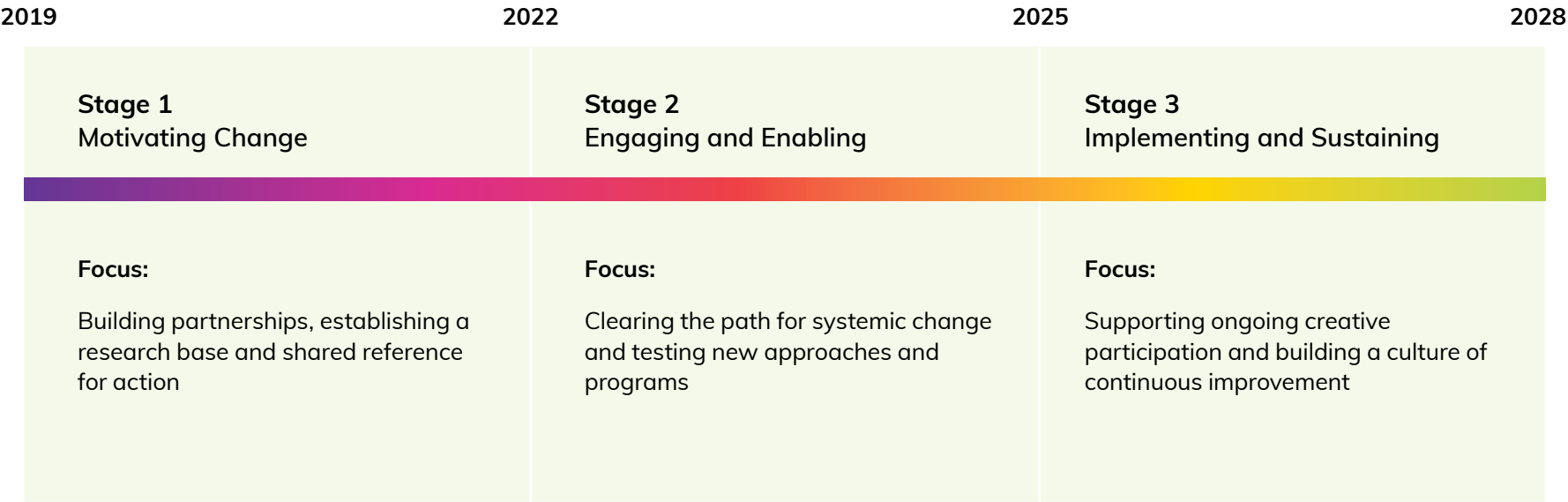
This Strategy is only the beginning; building a more connected and culturally rich community will take time, planning and collaboration.

The implementation of this Strategy follows well established change management theory. Figure 8 below shows the emphasis in focus in implementing the future directions across three key stages (where

the timing and phasing in Figure 8 is indicative only). Initially, the implementation will focus on motivating and building a strong knowledge base before making any major changes. Second stage focuses on building collaboration and piloting key initiatives before wider scale implementation. The third and last stage is focussed on adjusting and sustaining the change.

Implementation and evaluation

Figure 8 – Implementation roadmap



## Evaluation

This Strategy is focussed on achieving social benefits from the arts that can contribute to community wellbeing and social cohesion. It is inherently difficult to measure progress in this area because the factors that influence community wellbeing cannot be easily isolated and rarely are the impacts tangible and measurable, but instead subject to perception and interpretation.

It is nevertheless important to monitor performance and evaluate impacts in order to make adjustments and ensure currency of planning. The following measures will provide indication of how we are tracking against our future directions and the community's vision for the Northern Beaches. These measures will be supplemented by additional measures under other plans (namely Social Plan) which also work towards creating a more connected community.

## Measures of success

- Public art, ephemeral art, outdoor cinema and theatre, busking and other creative expressions are visible aspects of our landscapes
- We can record an increase in the degree to which we actively collaborate or hand over responsibility of arts initiatives to the community on a project by project basis
- We can demonstrate a reduction in regulatory burden
- We are able to track changes to policies and procedures that allow greater flexibility on arts and cultural initiatives and events
- Unused or tired spaces no longer have a prominent visual effect on our streetscapes
- We can continuously demonstrate good participation rates and community satisfaction with cultural events
- People are using our public domain in creative ways

## Monitoring progress

We will monitor our progress through the following main avenues:

1. Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (namely annual reporting and End of Term Reporting)
2. Project and event evaluations
3. Benchmarking of participation rates (against base-line survey data)





Manly Art Gallery and Museum



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