Wollongong City Council has a long history of engagement with the arts and cultural life of the city spanning the traditional to contemporary forms of facilities, infrastructure and services along with arts and cultural practice through policy, program development and working with the community and industry partners.

One of the critical aspects of planning for arts and cultural services delivery in Wollongong is the complex nature of the environment. As well as being one of the most populous local government areas in NSW, Wollongong represents new growth, cultural diversity, and significant variations in socio-economic distribution. These variations differ across and within the local government area and influence planning since a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate.

The Cultural Plan has been developed as a key deliverable of the Wollongong 2022 Community Strategic Plan in order to achieve the Community Goal of achieving and maintaining a creative and vibrant city. Council is committed to ensuring the delivery of quality cultural and creative services across the Local Government Area and will facilitate connections to key external organisations and businesses for the development and support of the creative industry sector.

As Lord Mayor of Wollongong, I am pleased to present to you our Cultural Plan 2014 - 2018.

Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM
Lord Mayor
City of Wollongong

Vision - Wollongong is a Creative, Vibrant City

Creative industries are established and fostered.

The visibility of our cultural diversity is increased.

Community access to the arts and participation in events and festivals is increased.

Strong diverse local cultures thrive.

Source: Wollongong 2022 Community Strategic Plan

Acknowledgement of Country

Wollongong City Council would like to show their respect and acknowledge the traditional owners of the Land, of Elders past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
About Wollongong

Located 80 kilometres south of Sydney, Wollongong covers 714 square kilometres and occupies a narrow coastal strip bordered by the Royal National Park to the north, Lake Illawarra to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Illawarra escarpment to the west.

The City of Wollongong is characterised by coastal villages, suburbs and rural hamlets, with a CBD located in central Wollongong. The southern edge of the city skyline is dominated by the industrial landscape created by steel manufacturing.

Aboriginal people of Wollongong are known as the Dharawal (also spelt Tarawal or Thuruwal) people and are the Traditional Custodians of the land. The Dharawal people lived on the coastal areas of Sydney between Broken Bay/Pittwater, Berowra Waters, south west to Parramatta and Liverpool and extending from there into the Illawarra and Shoalhaven districts. Currently Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 2.2% of the total population of Wollongong (ABS 2011).

From 1816, European settlers developed the timber, agricultural and dairy industries followed by coal mining in the 1860s and steel industry in the 1920s. The steel and coal industries and associated manufacturing sector have been a main catalyst for urban and economic growth and has laid the foundations for the city’s economy, lifestyle and culture. Other industries have now developed which has helped Wollongong diversify its economic base. These industries include information technology, state government services, education, hospitality, health services and telecommunications, and continue to provide key economic opportunities for the city and region as a whole.

The University of Wollongong is also a major contributor to the city as an employer, economic driver and a leader of innovative practice contributing to a knowledge based city.

The total estimated resident population of Wollongong in 2013 was 263,038 with the majority (87.9%) being Australian citizens. Population projections indicate that Wollongong will grow at an annual rate of 0.78% over the next 20 years resulting in a city population of 237,447 people in 2033.

Post WWII and refugee arrivals over the last 20 years has meant Wollongong enjoys a rich sense of community and cultural diversity. 17% of residents speak a language other than English at home, representing people from over 20 religious backgrounds and more than 30 different language groups. Wollongong experienced an influx of migrants from Europe in the 1950s (including Britain) and then in the early 2000s, with Wollongong receiving refugees from Former Yugoslavia and African countries. This diversity continues to grow with the current influx of refugees coming predominately from Middle Eastern communities.

Wollongong’s community goals for the future include being a diversified economy, an educated, creative, connected and engaged community, a city that embraces the city’s cultural diversity and heritage, recognising the indigenous population and young people, and promoting the health and wellbeing of the community in order to develop a vibrant city.

Commitment to Art and Culture

The Wollongong City Council Cultural Plan 2006–2011 has guided Council’s delivery of arts and cultural development and infrastructure for the last 7 years. The Cultural Plan 2014–2018 has been developed to reflect Council’s Community Strategic Plan adopted in 2012.

Aims of Cultural Plan

The Cultural Plan assists Council to clearly understand the community’s aspiration and values. The aims of this Cultural Plan are to:

- Better focus Council’s future directions for cultural development within Wollongong.
- Identify gaps in skills and resources within the cultural sector.
- Identify opportunities for capacity building for cultural development and creative industries within Wollongong City Council.
- Identify opportunity through research and as expressed by the community through a comprehensive community engagement program for cultural development.
- Make connections to key business areas including economic development and cultural tourism.

Key themes that have emerged from consultations with Council and the community are:

- Recognition of Council’s potential to be a visionary, leader and a custodian in arts and cultural activity and resources.
- An opportunity for Council to increase community confidence through a demonstration of cultural change using arts and cultural capacity building initiatives.
- A desire for commitment at every level of leadership in Wollongong City Council to recognise and strengthen, through policy adoption and by support through agreed processes and collaboration, the creative and cultural dimensions that exist in all Council divisions, departments and operations.
- That the Community and Cultural Development Unit has the resources required to improve coordination and communication across Council and within the community to improve connectivity and visibility of arts and cultural activity.
- That the Community and Cultural Development Unit will provide opportunities for the broadest sector of the community including children, young people, Aboriginal, diverse and emerging communities to connect with one another and to engage in and experience the arts.
- To grow and nurture cultural and creative industries in recognition of the contribution that this sector can make to a diversified economy.
An extensive consultation process was undertaken to inform and consult participants and selected organisations relevant to the study. The views, issues and interests of all of the participants have contributed positively to the development of the Cultural Plan. The full Methodology is outlined in the Background Report and included:

- Briefing meetings with relevant Wollongong City Council staff.
- Extensive 1:1 interviews with key stakeholders from Council, the arts, culture and heritage sectors, representations of Aboriginal and migrant groups, University and TAFE as well as business.
- Hard copy survey forms were issued to young people through Youth Centres, Council’s Cadets, artists and arts organisations and Council staff with wider community participation via Council’s online engagement process including a survey, a discussion forum and a Your Stories section where participants were invited to share experiences around arts and culture.
- Regular engagement with Council’s Community and Cultural Development Unit.
- Workshops for artists, arts and community organisations.
- Aboriginal community elders gathering.
- Workshop attended by representatives of Council Reference Groups.
- Consultation with the Migration Heritage Project members.
- Councillor and Senior Staff Workshop.
- Creative Industries Symposium attended by representatives from Council, University of Wollongong, State Government, business and industry groups, creative industries and tourism.
- Two community workshops conducted at Wollongong and Port Kembla.
The Cultural Plan is supported by a range of related Action Plans and Strategies.

### Live Music Action Plan
Supporting both the overall goals of the Cultural Plan and the Evening Economy, Council has been working with the Live Music Taskforce to ensure that live music is an integral part of an active evening economy and the creation of a vibrant and energised city, ensuring cultural and economic outcomes are achieved. The key recommendations are around:

- Information and Resources
- Council Venues
- Events
- Transport and Parking
- Marketing
- Sector Engagement and Representation
- Liquor Licensing
- Planning
- Noise
- Research

### Evening Economy Action Plan and Strategy
The Evening Economy Action Plan and Strategy has been developed to guide the development of an evening economy within the Wollongong City Centre over the next four years that will deliver economic, social and cultural benefits. The six key priority areas for a successful evening economy identified by community consultation that also contribute to the Cultural Plan are:

- Activation
- Safety and Connectivity
- Accessibility and Transport
- Planning and Regulatory Environment
- Amenities
- Collaboration

### Creative Spaces Strategy
**Public Art Strategy**
These strategies are in development and will contribute to Cultural Plan outcomes.

The Cultural Plan outlines goals and strategies within five identified objectives. The Evening Economy Action Plan and Strategy and the Live Music Action Plan are also reflected within these objectives. They are:

1. An Inclusive and Connected City
2. Celebrating Our Places
3. Smart Economy
4. Vibrant Arts and Cultural Community
5. Civic Leadership and Governance.
An Inclusive and Connected Community

Wollongong City Council recognises that community wellbeing, resilience and prosperity is related to the degree by which people are connected with other people, participate in community activity and are engaged in decision-making processes that affect their lives and community.

Goals:
- Arts and cultural programs provide a platform and mechanism for engagement and participation for a cohesive cultural life across the City.
- The Wollongong community is able to participate in the social, economic and cultural opportunities on offer regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, geographical location and socio-economic status.
- The Wollongong community has access to dynamic and up to date information about arts and cultural assets and activities.

Celebrating our Places

Public places are more than the spaces between commercial, government and/or domestic realms. In an increasingly complex public realm, celebration of the uniqueness of individual places captures an overall sense of shared experience and identity, connects us to history and memories, to our neighbours and to the wider community. People-friendly spaces can encourage and stimulate business activity and improve social capital and safety.

Public spaces are places for public engagement, identification and social interaction. The way of moving in, and around and through our cities, commercial centres and neighbourhoods are best achieved by using intuitive, exploratory, interpretive and experiential senses. Public art, while an integral part of place-making, is only one aspect of the cultural experience that residents and visitors are looking for in public places.

Goals:
- Urban design and master planning processes provide experiential, intuitive, functional places, which nurture a sense of identity.
- Our public places, spaces and natural/outdoor environments provide a focus for permanent and ephemeral artistic and cultural expression, as well as providing safe and beautiful places for the pleasure and enjoyment of the community and visitors.
- Arts and cultural input are provided in the CBD, villages and neighbourhoods to enhance and celebrate local cultural identity, our history and heritage.

“Culture is not created by government, but enabled by it. Culture is created by the community”

Creative Australia, National Cultural Policy 2013 p9
Wollongong City Council recognises the inherent dynamism and growth potential of cultural and creative industries to contribute to the regeneration and diversification of Wollongong’s economy, with particular emphasis on design-led innovation.

Goals:
- Arts and culture is a contributor to the diversity and character of the economic and industrial landscape of Wollongong.
- Creative industries are central drivers for the creation of employment, wealth and economic development in Wollongong.
- Council’s regulatory environment attracts and fosters a vibrant and viable creative industry and evening economy.

Vibrant communities and places attract and retain talented people who in turn contribute skills, ideas, and resources to broadly benefit the entire community. Instrumental to a vibrant community are attributes such as being outward looking, having strong social capital as well as a progressive and resourceful knowledge economy.

Goals:
- Arts, cultural and social activity plays a key role in contributing to vibrancy in our City.
- Arts and cultural resources are strategically developed and managed to increase participation and engagement in the arts and cultural life of Wollongong.
- Contemporary arts and cultural practices contribute to social capital through interpretation and celebration of the multiple facets of our community.
- Creativity, innovation and new technologies are key tools and skills by which the community may adapt to change and prosper.

“Over the next decade, the partnerships between different levels of government, of public and private organisations, and the social sector, are likely to become richer and deeper as the cultural sector becomes more entwined in all aspects of life and the economy”.

Creative Australia, National Cultural Policy 2013 p33
Civic Leadership and Governance

Wollongong City Council understands its responsibility to maintain and strengthen a participatory, transparent and accountable system of leadership and governance that promotes, supports and sustains community through arts and cultural development and provides the processes through which communities can articulate their interests. Through the consultations there has been an identified need to improve communication and processes between Council leaders, Council Divisions and the wider community.

Goals:

- Council is a visionary, a leader in building partnerships, and a custodian of the City’s cultural life including its arts and cultural resources and assets.
- Public participation in the development and evaluation of arts and cultural policy and programming is essential to building trust and confidence within the wider community that governance is transparent and accountable.
- Council contributes to its commitment to fundamental human rights and social justice through its arts and cultural policies and programming.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and thank Susan Conroy, and her team, from Susan Conroy Cultural Planning Consultancy for her contribution to the development of the Cultural Plan and her capacity to listen and interpret the voice of the community.

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We especially acknowledge and thank the many members of the community, arts sector, community organisations, businesses and members of Council’s Reference Groups and Live Music Taskforce for their willingness to workshop ideas and their contribution to the developed cultural vision and goals for Wollongong.

Lastly we would like to thank the Councillors and Council staff across all divisions who have contributed time and energy to the development of ideas and strategies to help plan for Wollongong to be a creative, vibrant, energised, engaged and liveable city.

“Cultural policy safeguards the cultural rights of the people and places these rights on a par with political and social rights i.e. the right to engage with the intellectual and cultural heritage of people, to create a sense of wonder of our fellow citizens, to undertake a variety of approaches to develop our own forms of art and culture and to imaginatively engage in what is presented by others”.
