

Item 3.4

City of Sydney Submission on a New Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy for NSW

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

This Minute places on record the City of Sydney's comprehensive submission to the consultation on a new Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy for NSW.

The submission responds to the discussion paper, A New Look at Culture, released by the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. John Graham MLC, in July 2023 and addresses questions developed from the Minister's priorities. These are:

- **A new look at people:** How can we create better more inclusive pathways and support for practitioners in the arts, culture and creative industries?
- **A new look at infrastructure:** How can we create and improve sustainable access to spaces, programs, and other support for all aspects of artistic and cultural activity?
- **A new look at audiences:** How can we grow local, national, and international audiences for cultural experiences, for the benefit of our community and the broader economy?

Establishing a whole-of-government framework will be crucial to implementing the new policy and addressing the Minister's priorities. Many of the submission's 32 recommendations point to the need for such a framework and the active involvement of NSW Government agencies other than Create NSW.

For example, the submission recommends that cultural infrastructure should be embedded in all NSW Government renewal and development projects. All NSW Government property-holding agencies need a coordinated, streamlined process for the use of their land for cultural purposes.

Changes to planning are also proposed. This includes increasing affordable work and live/work spaces as well as creating a pathway to better enable temporary and small-scale cultural events and make it easier for buildings to be used for creative and cultural activities.

Negotiating the complex planning system can be costly and challenging for many of our creatives. The submission suggests establishing a Planning Aid service, similar to Legal Aid, to provide free or low-cost planning advice. As a consent authority, local governments are not able to provide such advice and maintain probity.

Recommendations to support our creative practitioners include other actions to address the housing stress many of them face, along with actions relating to the impact of the gig economy and workplace issues.

Audiences would be better served by improving public transport connections to and between nightlife precincts and investing in accessibility upgrades for cultural venues. Destination NSW should have a focus on stronger support for local arts and cultural operators and promoting Sydney's year-round fine-grain cultural offer. NSW Government events should unlock employment opportunities for our local artists and support the activation of local precincts and fine-grain hospitality and creative businesses.

The new NSW policy will align with Revive, the new National Cultural Policy, launched earlier this year. Pillar 1 of that Policy is First Nations First. The City's submission suggests this provides an opportunity to align cultural policies at Federal, State and Local Government levels which acknowledge the world's oldest continuous cultures, those of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The City is already doing this through our Eora Journey project and Yananurula, referred to in the City's submission. In keeping with the emphasis on a whole-of-government approach, the submission states:

“... the NSW Government is best placed to coordinate the local authorities, land holders, trusts and major cultural institutions of the greater Sydney Harbour foreshore to undertake a comprehensive plan for embedding Aboriginal culture, history and truth telling in the public domain and community infrastructure.”

The new cultural policy should not adopt a single approach for all of NSW. It should recognise that Sydney's cultural life and workforce faces pressures unlike the rest of the state, and, as the driver of the nation's cultural product, Sydney must be given specific and urgent attention.

This is underpinned by the compelling research of City staff which shows, inter alia:

- The number of people working in Sydney's cultural and creative industries is growing at a slower rate than the national average, with Sydney being the only capital city to have lost artists, musicians, writers, and performers.
- In one decade, Sydney's cultural infrastructure reduced by the equivalent of three Opera Houses or six Carriageworks, with the loss of productive land and building stock breaking creative industry supply-chains.

The City has long sought to staunch this loss of cultural infrastructure and cultural activity. In 2010, we converted the Riley Street works depot into artist studios, now managed by First Draft. Our Oxford Street Creative Spaces program, launched in early 2012, was soon expanded to other areas. In 2013, we opened the state of art Eternity Playhouse in the former Baptist Tabernacle with the Darlinghurst Theatre Company as the resident company. The Darlinghurst Theatre Company's former home in the former Reg Murphy Hall is now the Hayes Theatre, recognised Australia wide as a leading exponent of music theatre.

The City also provides many other cultural and creative spaces through our Accommodation Grants Program, including 107 Projects in Redfern, the City East Community and Arts Centre, the Joynton Avenue Creative Centre and the PACT Centre for Emerging Artists.

We look forward to the opening of the Museum of Chinese in Australia in the former Haymarket Library and the expansion of Gallery 4A also in the Haymarket.

We have used voluntary planning agreements to leverage new creative space, most notably the City of Sydney Creative Studios. Our Late Night Trading Development Control Plan includes incentives for live entertainment and aims to encourage a new 24-hour cultural precinct in North Alexandria.

These initiatives are the result of different units of the City organisation working together and demonstrate what a whole-of-government approach can achieve. They also provide practical examples for the various NSW Government agencies and the importance of a broad approach to cultural and creative industries policy.

The City of Sydney has long championed the transformation of Sydney as a place for people, human-scale experiences, nature, amenity, public space, public art and cultural connection in the public domain. To quote our submission, “When the City is an artwork, everyone is the audience and every day is a cultural event”.

I acknowledge that many of our most significant urban rejuvenation projects have been made possible through collaboration with the NSW Government and look forward to further collaboration in advancing Sydney’s creative and cultural life.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the City of Sydney's comprehensive submission to the consultation on a new Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy as shown at Attachment A to the subject Minute;
- (B) Council commend City staff for their excellent work in preparing the City's submission; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Premier requesting he establish a whole-of-government framework to implement the new Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy when it is finalised.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor

Attachments

Attachment A. City of Sydney Submission – NSW Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy