

Featured Sites – Cultural Industries & City Revitalisation

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1. Wollongong

Wollongong is a city actively reinventing itself -anticipating a future as a progressive centre of business, education, new technologies, tourism and culture. It consists of distinctive precincts clustered between the ocean and the escarpment, from coal mining hamlets and tourist hotspots of the northern suburbs to the CBD and the industrial heartland of the steelworks to the port, lake side and the green fields of the south. This unique geography has created many distinct and proud communities, with great differences in wealth and lifestyle. With a transient student population and high unemployment rate, there is an increasing need for a vibrant cultural life and creative industry development.

2. Infrastructure

Our particular history has developed a strong working and sporting culture, political and environmental activism, integrated multiculturalism and active indigenous communities. The Cultural infrastructure includes: a successful university (Australian University of the Year 1999 and 2000); an extensive TAFE institute, a distinguished regional art gallery; a major performing arts centre; several vibrant performing arts companies; many local museums, a contemporary art exhibiting space; and an dynamic annual festival. The City's cultural assets include a large and growing population of well-educated and creative people - visual artists, writers, film makers, designers, performing artists and musicians, an ethnically diverse population with the diverse cuisines, places of worship and social groups. The first arts officer was employed in 1990, by 2000 the cultural services team has grown to three permanent workers. In mid 2001 we welcomed the cultural broker to the team. External to Council we have a Multicultural Arts officer at the Ethnic Communities Council and an Cultural Development Officer with the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation.

In Wollongong, Cultural Development/Community Art/Public Art have a proud history and innovative practices to involve diverse communities to generate social change and stimulate new ways of engaging. Cultural projects build community capacity and stimulate social enterprise thus contributing to increased social capital.

The Cultural Services team coordinate community cultural development, public art projects, festivals and events, small grants program and cultural industries projects. The work that I will speak about today, relates specifically to the Creative Industries development project and are in no way all that we do!

Wollongong City Council acknowledges Cultural Industry as a major contributor to achieving the triple bottom line through enhancing environment, facilitating social identity and interaction and stimulating economic growth.

Currently Wollongong leading the way nationally in developing strategic partnerships to nurture the growth of the regional cultural industry.

Cultural Services Section has facilitated partnerships between federal, state and local funding committed to the growth of cultural infrastructure, skills development and employment generation.

3. Planning for Creative Industries

1998 - extensive community consultation.

Cultural Plan to set goals and directions 1998-2003.

Identified 5 strategic directions and a framework for action focused on:

City image and identity, in from the margins, audience development, cultural infrastructure, building businesses of the future

In 1999 Council launched the Image Campaign , a 5 year strategy to re image the "Steel City" as the "City of Innovation". Focus of addressing stereotypes of industrial centre to external community (new business, tourists, investors).

If Wollongong is to succeed – must integrate sense of optimism and change into local culture. All very well to attract people but must be a reason to stay! Concepts of Place making and Community Cultures must be recognised as intrinsic to future development. Amenity and identity of a city is shaped by active participation of its residents.

1999 launch of the Cultural Industries Development program established task force of senior executives from Wollongong City Council, Illawarra Regional Development Board, Department of State and Regional Development, Illawarra Area Consultative Committee, Illawarra Business Chamber and University of Wollongong.

Commissioned **Cultural Industries Audit** to benchmark current activity and identify future strategic development.

This quantified numbers employed, regional cultural spending, audience participation

Local statistics now exist to provide a benchmark for measuring future progress and development.

Inter sectorial Consultations commenced in planning of specific cultural industry projects. Major partners are the Department of State and Regional Development, the Illawarra Regional Development Board, the federal government through the Regional Assistance Program of the Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business.

4. “Cultural Industries”

A collective term for this sphere of activity – includes all those creative enterprises that express and explore the essence of who we are and our channels of communication. The cultural industry includes multiple skills in film, design, media, advertising, recreation, public artists, fashion, furniture, entertainment. The business of creativity is big business.

The research conducted by Saatchi and Saatchi for the Australia Council quantified its economic impact for the nation. The arts industry in Australia is an \$8.8 billion industry. Nationally the sector:

- Grew by an average of 3.3% per year in real terms over the eight year period from 1997-98
- Experienced almost 50% increase in employment

Cultural industries are also important as an indirect contributor to related industry multipliers such as tourism, sports and retail.

The Wollongong audit also developed an action plan for implementation by the Cultural Broker in the areas of:

- business development
- market development
- city image & cultural tourism
- research – new audiences

5. The Cultural industries Audit confirmed that:

- Cultural Industries make an important and growing contribution to the Wollongong economy
- Gross output in cultural and recreational industries in Wollongong amounted to \$129.4 million in 1998
- Cultural industries represented around 2.7% of total output from all industries in Wollongong in 1998.
- In 2000 an estimated 1225 were employed in cultural industries
- In 1996, Illawarra residents spent \$204 million culture, of which \$129 million was spent outside the area.

Some related cultural industry strategies include:

6. Film Illawarra

An initiative of the University of Wollongong in partnership with Wollongong City Council and funded by the Regional Assistance Program.

It has developed a website, strategies and services to promote the Illawarra as a film location. The no fees policy aims to attract industry and benefit from spin off multiplier effects in travel, catering, accommodation sectors. All five Councils in the Illawarra Region of Councils collaborated on a joint film policy, this initiative is a state first. A recent result was the regional shooting of Mullet. Industry seminars have also been organised and employment opportunities secured.

7. Network projects

Network projects arose from extensive community consultation exploring the needs of local artists. funded by the Regional Assistance Program in partnership with Wollongong City Council. They aim to increase

employment opportunities by coordinating local artists into incorporated groups, running skills development seminars and promoting "buy local -employ local" to regional businesses.

8. Cultural Enterprise Broker

Funded by Wollongong City Council and the Illawarra Regional Development Board of the Department of State and Regional Development for a two year term. This position aims to implement the cultural industries audit action plan by developing strategic partnerships with regional industries.

The Cultural Broker's role is largely a persuading and connecting one - making links and connections across divisions of Council, with state and federal government, and with business. These connections work towards aggregating support for established, new and emerging cultural industries. The Broker is working toward the creation of a 'cultural incubator'/'cultural cluster' arrangement whereby a number of creative industries are clustered in the same locality and aggregate energy and economic resources towards higher profile, greater profitability and sustainability.

Practice

The following are examples of some current projects that contribute to city revitalisation in different ways.

9. Illawarra Art and craft network

Rationale:

- The region has a higher than state average of resident artists
- Artists are highly skilled, very productive but still low- income earners. This is affected by their relative isolation (working alone in studios) and limited access to markets

Results:

- The networks, funded by the Regional Assistance Program of the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, provide coordination of
- Joint insurance cover
- Skills and business development opportunities
- Collective marketing and lobbying
- Artists exchange of resources and services
- Incubators for future development

10. Create Illawarra

Centralised register of practitioners

On line database – for direct client access

Regional marketing of "buy local, employ local" – export local

Includes performers, musicians, technicians, visual artists, designers, craftspeople, managers, suppliers- an enormous list with multiple subcategories

11. A citywide cultural Festival

"Viva La Gong" – title itself honours the working roots and struggle of the people, a call to solidarity – to celebrate creative innovation and cultural diversity

Rationale:

- City image still poor - 'a cultural wasteland', 'Chip of steel/smog on the shoulder'
- No sense of local pride and identity
- Limited employment opportunities for creative community
- Low attendance numbers at regional cultural facilities
- Need for a focal event to generate activity and awareness
- Need to promote unique environment – tourism potential

Results:

- Showcase for regional skills and talent
- Stimulate new audiences
- Raise awareness about the range of cultural facilities
- Celebrate our cultural and social diversity
- Focus for cultural expression -creation of work about Wollongong
- Generated new cultural product from region available for export, including Indigenous bush food small business, Industrial music composition, New creative groups, Short film festival
- Promote environmental technology ie solar powered pyramid , waste management practices and recycled costumes and floats paraded.
- 10 days of programmed activities : 39,000 attendances, estimated _ million income to region,
- Increased awareness in community
- Ongoing inquiries and requests for local artists

12. Place making

Rationale:

- Working in creative ways with marginalised communities to stimulate new skills and local facilities, creating enduring and physical reminders of community cooperation
- Link to Cultural Plan - “Creative Communities”, “In from the Margins”
- Each year we focus on two areas - derelict areas, new release, housing estates – in Dapto, Berkeley, then Bellambi.
- Cultural projects are a direct way to engage with communities of low literacy and skills. Participants have diverse options for engagement and can learn new skills in non- threatening, non- work/education related environments. Their contributions are then made visible as permanent evidence in their communities. culture brings soul and spirit
- Port Kembla revitalisation already involves a collaboration between chamber of commerce, community SCAT, police, agencies, Council, artists, DSARD.
- Value adding to existing community initiatives

Results:

Cultural projects in a linked three phase strategy

1. Heritage photos of old Port collected from community members and local businesses. Then mounted in the windows of empty shops along the main street. As images of prosperity and active cultural life they serve as reminders of the actual past and potential future.
2. Community Chessboard project - active involvement of artists in interpreting designs, sharing creative skills with communities. Major user groups are older men of Mediterranean background -Focus on mosaic and welding in recognition of existing skills in the population base.
3. Creative street furniture in collaboration with planned main street refurbishments and/or the creation of a designated sex worker zone.

Also investigating the possibility of cheaper studio rentals, artists cluster zone and home of boutique businesses

13. Circus comes to town

Rationale

- Cultural Plan suggests: attract a national performing arts company to relocate
- Direct appeal to young people who are the audiences of the future
- Circus Monoxide are the only regional touring non animal circus in Australia

Results:

- Establishment of an activity incubator for cross art form skills development
- Development of local groups - Youth Circus, Wild Older Women's Circus
- Focus for International exchanges -visit from Angelo de Castro international clown and educator, stimulus for regional creative development activities
- Building of a Big Top – employing locals in construction, rigging, technical design
- Use of local materials and companies as suppliers -national promotion opportunities
- Wollongong as a city of creativity indirectly travels to communities throughout Australia.

14. Cultural Tourism

The audit revealed a history of poor communications and promotions with the local Tourism industry. Cultural Services in partnership with the image Campaign, developed a strategic approach to developing this relationship

Public art guide. Wollongong has a substantial collection. Catalogued sixty works and hundred in the university grounds. Currently Cultural services manage an average of 3 projects per year up to eighty thousand dollars. Developed the brochure to raise awareness, now engaged in public art policy.

Production of cultural tourism brochure in partnership with Tourism Wollongong

(listing regional galleries, theatres, museums, festivals, attractions)

On a micro level the work includes promoting a 'Buy Local - Buy Creative' campaign for corporate and government gift- giving programs,

In summary the Cultural Industry initiatives aggregate to attract new investment in genuinely innovative, sustainable, 'intellectual-capital' industries and the educated and creative workforce to participate in these sustainable 'new economy' industries.

This is just **some** of the projects we are co-ordinating, if anyone would like copies of policy and planning documents, or project brochures, feel free to contact me.