ARTS AND CULTURAL STRATEGY | RESEARCH SUMMARY

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

1 September 2020

creative thinking
positive solutions

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations apply:

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
ACS	Arts and Cultural Strategy
COGG	City of Greater Geelong
GAC	Geelong Arts Centre
SWGO	Strengths, Weaknesses, Gaps, Opportunities

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises findings from three primary research processes that have been undertaken to inform development of the Geelong Arts and Cultural Strategy, including:

> Initial interviews with 20 individuals working in or closely connected with the arts and cultural sector in Geelong

> A range of ten focus groups with a range of arts sector and community representatives

> A survey issued to arts sector participants, and circulated widely via social media and Council's online platform. The survey secured 174 responses.

> A total of 1,040 individuals were engaged through this process.

Both the focus groups and survey were preceded by preparation of an Issues Paper which highlighted preliminary findings and highlighted items for discussion.

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

During the start-up period for the consulting process, interviews were held with 20 individuals, to provide early orientation and to inform the following research and consultation processes. Some of the perspectives provided through those interviews is summarised below.

GEELONG'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC

Geelong is Victoria's second largest city outside of Melbourne, and interviewees were deeply proud of their region and its contributions. Geelong has a suite of existing museums, galleries and performing arts offerings sitting alongside events such as White Night Geelong and The Archibald Prize. These initiatives are considered to be significant to the profile of the region and encouraging participation locally along with attendance from participants outside of the area.

Geelong is seeing a shift in its demographic. Over the last ten years Geelong has welcomed many young families to the region who are seeking aspirational lifestyle and affordable housing. Deakin University is also a drawcard to the region for national and international students. Many young people are commuting to Melbourne for work and residing in Geelong. The growth rate for the region is placed at 3% - almost double that of Victoria.

Young families are bringing with them their values and ideals including an interest in arts and culture alongside lifestyle needs such as access to the beach, heritage and smaller more inclusive communities. The local library and art gallery are key features in the city and regularly accessed by the community.

Whilst artists were identified as moving to Melbourne to access resources, work and funding opportunities, overall it was considered that Geelong has a great many new people – including travelling audiences for events and activities – and this is a key consideration in further building arts and culture for Geelong.

LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture currently being developed in the region is considered to be meaningful and important work. Community was considered important to local focus – however a disconnect between community participation and co-creation of events, programs and projects was identified. Interviewees communicated the need for articulation and engagement of different community sub-sectors such as young people, First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse – with response to specific needs designed appropriately.

There is opportunity to connect across sectors for greater impact – with tourism and destination management, food, sport and attractions, to develop further the regional brand and communicate this across a number of platforms. To achieve tourism growth this there will need to be improvements in local accommodation.

To increase local narrative and participation, there is an opportunity to embed community and local artists in the development of events such as Geelong After Dark - raising participation, ownership and attendance through community pride and civic engagement.

Geelong's First Nations people should be a valued and distinctive part of the cultural life and tourism offer.

DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

The region offers a multitude of opportunities for further developing the creative economy including wineries, golf courses, breweries, The Dome, GAC and the waterfront development. It was acknowledged that arts and culture will need to play a part in connecting these business and investment opportunities.

Place and precinct planning was identified as important to open up space for artists to make and devise work. The sector also needs to be better connected. Large institutions, small to medium organisations and the independent sector could come together to work on joint projects and share outcomes. Of note was the lack of space for quality experimental and contemporary art across all genres and forms in the region. Studio 112 was noted for providing opportunity and voice for non-institutional art and artists, while some artists have been using warehouse space in the CBD as studio accommodation.

The continuing investment into GAC will create programming opportunities for local and touring artists. Other opportunities for harnessing facilities and organisations for art and cultural activity include Osborne Park, Maritime Museum and Vietnam Vets. Additional research should be undertaken to identify what venues and organisations speak to local needs, and what will drive visitation.

Tourism facilities linking the waterfront and CBD area could be a focus point for the city and an opportunity for arts, culture and community activation. Old Customs House was identified as a site that could be re-purposed. Overall interviewees identified the need for more events to attract people to the area and included natural features such as the CBD and Waterfront for these activities. Greater advocacy for the inclusion of arts and culture in these and other tourism projects is considered important, to communicate to corporates and council the potential outcomes of the creative economy in the region.

Economic development initiatives which could support the creative economy include one-off grants, the pitch-based Runway funding program, development of coworking space and incubators. More challenging for government, innovative financing schemes - such as loans and venture capital – might also hold potential.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

COGG was identified as a key element in connecting the creative sector and providing a holistic approach across the region. Its role would include facilitating activities, new work, funding and opportunities between sectors. A cohesive and collaborative strategy is required to bring focus to the work of the region and to align the work of advocacy groups, corporate partners, tourism, venues and organisations. This is to avoid conflicting messaging or duplication, and secure streamlining of knowledge and services for the region.

A top priority is to continue the consultation and recognition of First Nations Peoples in the activities and forward planning of the area. The work to date has been in acknowledgment and cultural awareness training, and it is timely now to extend this work for greater alignment and embed cultural consultation. Greater collaboration with traditional owners, more visibility, and the provision of financial resources to appropriately undertake work were identified as requirements.

Interviewees identified the need for Council to provide some capacity building such as business and entrepreneurship skills development for artists. Support in the development of arts and culture was considered important to foster the supply side of the product chain and align with the resources for marketing and tourism of the region. The role of libraries was highlighted as an accessible, shared community resource, and as an industry portal to information. Specifically mentioned were pathways for professional practice, seed money for creative developments, revision of the scope for the grants program, generation of a curatorial arts advisory board and access to spaces.

FOCUS GROUPS

An important part of developing the Arts and Cultural Strategy is direct consultation with the communities that contribute to Geelong's vibrant cultural life. Sector representatives were encouraged to register for focus group workshops through our online engagement portal 'Have Your Say'. In addition we held two focus group sessions by way of invitation with First Nations Groups and the Youth Council.

In total we held 10 public workshops and two invite-only workshops engaging over 100 individual representatives.

Workshop Focus Groups included: *Visual Arts, Design and Fashion/ Music/Performing Arts and Literary Arts/Business and Tourism/Education (secondary and tertiary)/Museums Heritage and Libraries/Inclusive Communities/Screen Digital Media.*

Sessions were facilitated via Zoom videoconferencing due to the Covid-19 restrictions on travel and gatherings. Where individuals were unable to attend a focus group, further interviews were undertaken.

OBSERVATIONS ON ARTS AND CULTURE IN GEELONG

STRENGTHS

Common strengths of Arts and Culture in Geelong identified across the sector groups were the **high level of talent, dedication, and grassroots initiatives**. Arts and Culture is felt to be a **fast growing and dynamic sector** well **represented across multiple disciplines**. Residents are **proud of the UNESCO City of Design status** but feel more could be done to leverage this image into opportunities for the creative sector. The education workshop identified that the current **shift from manufacturing provides an opportunity for arts and culture to become a focus industry**, linking the sector with local educational institutions to provide specialised training and facilitation of career pathways.

WEAKNESSES

Some common weaknesses identified were the perceived **lack of opportunities within the area**, with many in the industry commuting to Melbourne for employment or to sustain their practices. However, it was also noted that Geelong's proximity to Melbourne brings many creative **relocators looking for more affordable spaces** and a better life balance, and they would like to see more done to assist that demographic with connecting to the sector and finding opportunities in the area.

> *"Artists seek a professional habitat – and affordable place to live where they are culturally understood and where they can network."*- Helen Bodycomb, Visual Artist

Across multiple sessions individuals expressed they find it a challenge to connect to their industry to establish **networks, partnerships and collaborative opportunities**. Creative outputs that are taking place are not openly showcased. The focus on settlement history and lack of First Nations representation was also raised as a weakness in both the First Nations and Heritage, Museums and Libraries groups.

TRENDS

The music focus group noted that **Geelong is perceived as conservative**, which can be detrimental to the development and retention of musicians and other creatives. There is an **enduring public perception that the CBD is unsafe**, limiting young people and families from participating in the live music scene. Participants wanted to see consideration and inclusion of rural and suburban community members in strategies for increasing Arts and Culture offerings and participation. The performing arts group noted the large amount of focus and funding channelled towards sport in the area leads to a perception that that is all Geelong does, and equal investment and support for performing arts and creative forms of entertainment would be necessary to change that perception.

THEME 1 – CONNECT, COLLABORATE, CREATE

A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

A common message across groups was the **crucial role the arts and culture play in connecting community**, to each other through events, and to place through storytelling. The cultural richness of Geelong's multidisciplinary creative sector was praised. Many groups voiced concerns at the difficulty of establishing connections and networks within their sector. The **need for a common space or central hub to facilitate connection and collaboration** across these disciplines was requested by multiple groups including music, performing arts, visual arts, education, screen and digital media. The screen and digital media group emphasised the usefulness of a shared working space particularly for fostering much needed collaboration during the development stage of projects.

> *"A space to play with other creatives and foster cross sector collaborations with musicians and visual artists as well as the education sector to develop digital literacy, skills and career pathways for young people."- from Screen and Digital Media*

CO-CREATION AND CO-CURATION

The First Nations group wanted to see the **continued collaboration with traditional owners** to allow for meaningful cultural engagement to take place from the onset of any project. This continued contact and connection would allow for a deeper understanding of indigenous culture to be embedded as a core component of any future Arts and Culture projects. Representatives highlighted that the current capacity of Council's Arts and Culture department would be spread thin in trying to facilitate this.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BROADER COMMUNITY

The Museums, Libraries and Heritage group raised the point that each sector must consider their approach to connection and collaboration holistically, in terms of how groups connect within their discipline, then to the wider creative sector, and the community of Geelong as a whole. The library is often the first point of contact for new arrivals to Geelong, and the group see themselves playing a key role in connecting new and existing community members to wider activity within the municipal through the provision of resources and information. The music group shared similar views, emphasising that artists need to help artists, venues need to help venues, **the sector needs to come together to promote Geelong as a whole**. The performing arts group highlighted the usefulness of festivals in filling that role of establishing direct connections between creatives, venues and community, and bolstering the image of Geelong as a whole.

> *"Bringing artists together builds confidence, maintains motivation and outputs, and elevates the whole industry" – from Education*

PARTNERSHIPS WITH EDUCATION

The Museums, Libraries and Heritage group also highlighted collaboration with the education sector as a key component in building connection and championing youth as stewards of heritage. The Inclusive Communities group echoed this, highlighting education partnerships as success stories in fostering connection and collaborations within their communities. Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Screen and Digital Media all voiced a desire to have greater connection to the education sector, to **build career pathways and champion young people**. The music group emphasised how important that connection is in providing opportunities for low socio-economic groups and the visual arts group voiced concerns that the lack of pathways from institutions to the sectors leaves many graduates unsure in their career advancement. This was in contrast with the views of the Education group who voiced frustration at previous efforts made to connect the community which were unable to be sustained. They believed many creatives are accustomed to working individually and in their own spaces and felt a radically different approach would need to be taken to break out of this tendency towards isolation.

NURTURING AND MENTORING NEW TALENT

In addition to connecting with education providers, the music group suggested a mentorship program, partnering young performers with those experienced in the sector. This would be particularly helpful for younger musicians looking to establish relationships with venues, festivals, and other commercial partners. The screen and digital media group also suggested a guild model for facilitating mentorship, and visual arts suggested a residency

program. The performing arts group reinforced **the value of mentorship in building a resilient sector** and suggested international mentors could play a role in broadening the scope of Geelong's creative outputs.

FACILITATING NETWORKS

The Inclusive Communities group raised that a lack of physical connection presents a real barrier. This has become a growing concern for many groups in the wake of COVID. The education group suggested establishing digital collectives in tandem with face to face collaborations and the visual arts group also said a **coordinated approach to networking is needed**.

THEME 2 – THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

A SKILLED AND CAPABLE CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Many groups expressed that skills and capacity are lacking, and **creatives are unaware of the business side of the arts**. Focus areas for development include:

> Entrepreneurial skills

> Business management

> Brand establishment

> Marketing

The education group were concerned artists continue to undertake courses when they are unable to establish a practice, and not enough resources are provided to bridge this gap, with no career paths or mentorship between leaving institutions and establishing yourself as a mid-career artist. Suggestions included a podcast series sharing success stories from creative businesses and a bridging course in business for art school graduates or electives within the course offerings. The visual arts group suggested a resource centre to provide guidance and advise to creatives trying to establish themselves. The Screen and Digital Media group emphasised that **skills and capacity building would benefit local growth of the sector**, bringing more people to the industry and increasing output.

SHARED PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS

The museums, library and heritage group saw their partnership with the tourism sector as crucial to economic outcomes. They emphasised the need to leverage the UNESCO city of design status and harness corporate and development investment from outside the region. They suggested Geelong could move towards being an events-based city, expanding cultural offerings beyond visiting tourists. If this could be done, an access point would be needed as a platform for visitors.

Visual arts echoed this sentiment, expressing a desire to establish partnerships and share platforms with food and beverage, hospitality and tourism sectors. Visual and performing arts wanted to see **facilitated opportunities to advertising in partnership with tourism**, such as the arts trail app maybe as a brochure or an official guide to Geelong's creative businesses. They emphasised this should extend to regional areas and current offerings such as the Arts Atlas are not delivering needed results.

FIRST NATIONS

First Nation artists in Geelong are working independently in businesses across art, design and manufacturing. These business owners have been involved in previous initiatives such as Mountain to Mouth, but were engaged as an addition to the program. The group want to see **Wadawurrung artists embedded in initiatives from their beginning**. Professional development for COGG staff in cultural awareness would be a starting point in developing an ongoing partnership. The group also wanted to see protocols put in place for engaging First Nation artists.

> *"There needs to be protection for Wadawurrung people. If an artist from another area receives funding for a commission this is culturally inappropriate."* – First Nations

ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR CULTURAL BUSINESSES

Screen and digital media described their industry as labour intensive with a high cost of production to compensate the skilled professionals needed to undertake the work. They are often reliant on grants to support

projects, particularly during their start up, even if the project has future commercial prospects. They find it is a **balance between creating commercial work without compromising creative output**.

The performing arts group also expressed concern about their **dependency on grant funding**. Supporting local artists, expanding audiences and subsidising funding with commercial investment were all raised as strategies to supporting economic outcomes of the Performing Arts.

DEMAND FOR CULTURAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

A struggle the music sector is facing is that audiences, particularly young people, are not willing to pay for music. The sector felt their industry was generally undervalued in a policy context, with STEM pushed hard and creative businesses left behind. A solution offered was to appeal to minority groups who would value events offering more diverse and inclusive line-ups.

The screen and digital media group said customers and project budgets are just not available in regional Victoria, and expansion into the Melbourne market is necessary to stay afloat.

In regards to developing inclusive communities, the group highlighted that while **products and economic outputs are important, the process is often what is being distributed, with skills development, trust, connections, and team building the outcome**. The group suggested a formal Needs Analysis would be required to fully understand desired services and outcomes.

THEME 3 –FACILITIES, PLACES, URBAN DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

ACCESSIBILITY OF SPACES

The performing arts group mentioned that when facilities such as the Courthouse (now housing Platform Youth Arts) and GAC were redeveloped, they **were no longer affordable or accessible to the creatives who previously used them, and spaces that are affordable are not fit-for-purpose**. GAC's programming was viewed as elitist without enough inclusion of smaller local community groups. A tiered pricing approach with concessions for community and local groups was suggested. The Education group reinforced this, saying funding and support are often needed just to access space. Visual arts expressed concerned over the number of established arts organisations that are no longer able to sustain a brick and mortar space.

Museums, libraries and heritage raised the point that interest groups are dispersed in the community and suburbs and often feel left out. Visual arts highlighted the **lack of creative spaces in rural and suburban areas**. They added that the provision of creative spaces outside the CBD could take the form of temporary spaces or pop ups such as a spiegeltent, but museums, libraries and heritage raised the point that they would need more permanent spaces to store shared equipment, display work and meet. Generally, the sector wanted to see flexible working spaces and a move away from permanent spaces and artworks being the standard and instead embrace **temporary activations and interventions in space**.

SUPPORT FOR A CREATIVE HUB

The education group raised the point that graduates loose access to specialist spaces and facilities such as darkrooms, recording studios, etc. which presents a real barrier for career progression. They stressed the need for a **dedicated, accessible, contemporary art space for emerging artists and artist run initiatives** to act as a central hub fostering partnerships and activities.

The visual arts group also requested a multidisciplinary space to come together to collaborate and experiment. Screen and digital media shared this view, expressing a shared lab/production/working space would be **instrumental in developing new work and sharing ideas with other creatives**. They also suggested the centralised hub could have an exhibition facility to showcase projects in development and gain feedback. This could also be a contact point for new clientele and audience development.

The performing arts group suggested alternative spaces such as warehouses could be developed into fit-for purpose venues. Screen and digital media shared enthusiasm for this idea, suggesting any new space would require a black space, full tech (audio, lighting etc.) which could be used for experimentation and emerging

performances/showcases without the commercial overhead of GAC. For the space to be successful as a new hub for experimentation, **creatives would need to feel ownership** for it, with free reign of the outputs.

USE EXISTING CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The museums, libraries and heritage group and inclusive communities group praised the recent developments in infrastructure such as the Geelong Arts Centre, and cultural precinct for its **cohesiveness and integrated approach across arts disciplines**. They wanted to see greater integration between their sector and the cultural precinct outside of festival periods and reiterated that libraries are often the first point of call for tourists to find information on places to visit. It was also suggested that if there is a need for youth co-working spaces, GAC has the engine room and the libraries offers spaces at affordable rates.

Current hubs for live music include the Torquay hotel and Barwon Club. Musicians felt there were limited options for live music venues, limited to two main hotels without the smaller bars and spaces to support emerging musicians. Venue operators disagreed stating they already struggle to maintain audience numbers with the available population, and **consideration needs to be given to revitalising the venues Geelong already has**. Alternative venues such as wineries could also be activated and connected to the industry. They wanted to see a focus on **collaboration rather than competition** by bringing in new spaces. Venue managers suggested if a successful model for a central hub is created, it could be rolled out across different areas.

The music and inclusive communities group wanted to see **more use made of outdoor areas** as they invite access from a wide range of the community across diverse groups. This could be in the form of regular once a month activities such as night markets with food/music and street performance. The **focus on long term and regular events would build audiences.**

Many groups highlighted that existing Council infrastructure such as the Post Office, Courthouse, Dimmies building, Botanic Gardens foreshore and Osborne House are underutilised and require continued investment for revitalisation, although The Potato Shed regularly runs at capacity and requires expansion. Educational institutions spaces could also have greater community use, such as the Gordon Gallery.

PLACEMAKING

The inclusive communities group suggested mapping safe zones and doing more to create safe spaces for marginalised groups. The music group raised **concerns that the CBD is not perceived as safe**, and public, safe night-time travel is a barrier to participating in events. They suggested the other side of Lt Malop St be developed to increase security and safety.

Visibility of the Wadawurrung People beyond the road signs is limited. This visibility is vital to visitors and the people of Geelong knowing where they are - Djilong. The group voiced a collective **concern at the lack of aboriginal storytelling and representation in public art, statues and landmarks**. The emphasis on Colonial history leaves many locals and visitors with no understanding of the cultural significance of Djilong and Wadawurrung history. Previous grant applications for larger pieces of aboriginal public art to increase visibility have not been realised.

Both inclusive communities and screen and digital media raised the idea that spaces for collaboration could be digital as well as physical.

THEME 4 – A CHANGING GEELONG AND COUNCIL'S ROLE

CHAMPIONING LOCAL CREATIVE WORK

Visual arts, music and performing arts wanted to see an **increased risk appetite in Council's approach to arts and cultural programming**, to support and present more adventurous work. While the Arts and Culture team are encouraging, **COGG overall approach is felt to be restrictive with prohibitive**. A template could be provided to help creatives facilitate public events.

The education group commented that funding available from Council is festival based, and community arts organisations need support outside of these outputs. They provide vital social practices and without support for resources and up to date equipment, artists will not be able to continue to practice in order to produce festival

outcomes. The music group highlighted that **Council's role in the facilitation of festivals and other large outdoor events and activating public space is crucial** and their support in that area is still very important. Performing arts commented that Council bring performers from Melbourne and are not connecting with local companies. They also felt there is ample funding for sporting groups, and the preference towards supporting these groups over arts and cultural activities contributed to a masculine outdoor culture in Geelong that can be exclusionary for other groups.

CONNECTING AND COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

The inclusive communities said Council's role should speak to the heart of Geelong and be reflective of what it values, championing education and collaboration with clear objectives and goals developed to reflect this. They also stressed the crucial role of Community Arts Officers as a direct link to Council. They also wanted to see **more diversity amongst GOCC employment**, particularly representation of the neurodiverse community to allow for accessible channels of communication, and in general strategies developed around employment for people with diversities.

The music group wanted to see Council play a role in encouraging collaboration between venues as they felt they are currently competing across different scenes and one another.

> *"[City of Greater Geelong Council] need to unify people and assist to work together." – Music*

The focus could be on access, with the provision of transport infrastructure such as a late-night bus service.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING STRATEGIES

Some groups commented that Council have already developed strategies, but struggle to implement them or progress towards action from initial conversations and consultation. The Music group felt the **Live Music Action Plan is hardly used and many of the actions identified have not been implemented**. They also felt members of the industry could do more to engage with it and assist with its implementation.

The First Nations group re-emphasised that engagement from Council needs to take place before a project starts and Council's role needs to be pro-active, not reactionary. The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation provides a single point of contact and the **Reconciliation Action Plan has provided clear strategies**, so the tools are there, and Council now need to play an active role in implementing them. Auditing tools may need to be developed to assist COGG officers in assessing their cultural engagement. The First Nations group also raised concerns that the Arts and Culture department in Council are stretched too thin to accomplish initiatives already underway, and the structure of the department may need to be reviewed before further strategies, initiatives and project outcomes can be realised.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW STRATEGIES

Museums, Libraries and Heritage wanted to see strategies for Arts and Culture extend beyond the Lt Malop St prescient and the visual arts group said inclusion of rural and costal areas is important to encourage groups from all parts of the City to engage. They felt Councill are focused on infrastructure and not activities for activations of space. They would like Council to work in collaboration with them to build on their role as a portal for the community and **develop a coordinated approach to Geelong's storytelling, cultural tourism and resource and information distribution**. Initial conversations need to develop into actions, and strategies developed need to align with the goals and objectives of local organisations, as well as regional and state strategies.

Other key actions raised by groups that they would like to see Council involved in included:

> Providing networking opportunities for local businesses

> Facilitating capacity building for the community

> Championing lifelong learners by providing educational cultural experiences.

> Leveraging the UNESCO City of Design status to support artists and market Geelong as a destination city and a dynamic place to be.

Each focus group participant provided responses for the three main actions they would like to see as part of the Arts and Cultural Strategy. A list has been appended for consideration and reference during strategy drafting.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

The Board of Creative Geelong, a creative advocacy NGO that provides a makers hub for creative businesses and start-ups, provided a joint written submission, in which they emphasised Geelong's unique cultural potential and stressed the importance of collaboration and the need for forums, platforms and space to do so, such as the Living Social Creative Studio concept. They also called for more focus on contemporary practices and temporary public art that challenges audiences, and investment and support for the development of works, not just outcomes.

> *"[We would like to see] a contemporary art space (part of the Contemporary Art Organisations of Australia CAOS) that is dedicated to nurturing emerging and mid-career practitioners which acts as a conduit for visiting audiences, curators, writers and other practitioners who come to Geelong and want to see work and meet contemporary practitioners in their studios or collective groups. This could be a one stop shop - a cultural tourism visitor information centre, and an arts advocacy agent and industry networking conduit, offering rigorous curated opportunities, mentorships, residencies and learning labs."*

Creative Geelong have a database of 6,000 local creatives and makers and could play an instrumental role as a link between Council and the community, particularly in developing a space they take pride in and feel autonomy and ownership over.

A written submission from a representative of Geelong and Region Branch National Trust (GRBNT) and Geelong HAC echoed many of the views expressed during focus groups – Geelong has a diversity of community groups; high standard of cultural institutions; significant cultural training institutions (Deakin University, The Gordon Tech); the library is an excellent cultural resource; and the UNESCO City of Design is an unrealised strength. The submission also expressed concerns over the emphasis placed on Geelong's sporting culture; the underutilisation of heritage sites as potential spaces for arts and culture; the lack of resourcing for the Arts and Culture department; and the inclusivity of the arts.

The submission also highlighted that Council's role in relation to Geelong's arts and cultural institutions is more removed than comparative municipals where Council is a direct stakeholder.

> *"It is notable that, while it contributes to them, Council is not fully responsible for the funding or direction of most of Geelong's cultural institutions – The Heritage Centre is run by the Library Corporation, GAC is an Arts Victoria (sic) institution, and the Gallery is run by a Board of Management. Many other Councils are more involved in the organisation and operation of their cultural institutions. "*

The organisational interests and objectives raised in the submission indicate **GRBNT could be a useful partner in the development of spaces for cultural activities and could play a role in establishing connections between the tourism sector, local businesses, and creatives**.

The submission from the Geelong Regional Library Corporation also commented on Council's role stating:

> *"[Council] has taken a curatorial rather than a facilitation role – there is a key opportunity going forward to change this direction to a model where Council's A&C offer meets communities where they are and not where they are perceived to be."*

Within their submission they also called for **an expanded definition and scope of arts and culture, not limited to the arts, but inclusive of all aspects of community development and engagement**, of which libraries play a key role.

SUBMISSION	KEY POINTS
Creative Geelong	• Region's peak creative advocacy NGO with an audience of 6,000 local creatives • Runs a prominent makers hub housing creative businesses and start-ups • Promotes critical thinking and discourse that is disruptive and drives opportunities, foster collaborations and cultivate community for artists, designers, creative enterprises, makers, researchers and social entrepreneurs.

SUBMISSION	KEY POINTS
	• Planning to imbed Creative Geelong in the Global Creative Hub concept to support Geelong's designation as a UNESCO City of Design • Committed to reactivating the Centre Point Arcade as a place for creativity, art, radicalism and design
Geelong Regional Library Corporation	• Library sector is thriving and has been a key driver in the transformation of the cultural offer in Geelong – it is often the first experience/open door to culture/cultural education for many people who find other cultural institutions less accessible or friendly. • The nature and reach of the modern public library and the public library system in general is pivotal in building the conditions by which arts and culture can flourish • Interested in a co-working 'network' of spaces, linking libraries, GAC's Creative Engine, and Creative Geelong's 'Makers Hub', Platform Youth Arts • Wants to provide a range of opportunities for emerging artists to exhibit and learn • Suggested the establishment of a cultural precinct-wide fellowship or artist-in-residency program
Geelong HAC	• The HAC's Heritage Advocacy and Interpretation Sub-Committee (HAIS) has sought to identify heritage groups in the municipality and to link them with tourism resources, so that they can better advocate for themselves. • Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine (TGGB) is planning to review membership fee structures allowing resources to be more accessible to community groups
Geelong and Region Branch National Trust (GRBNT)	• GRBNT Sub-Committee is involved in organising events for the annual UNESCO City of Design/Design Week • Worked for many years with the Osborne Park Association to ensure that Osborne House will be restored for future community and group use • Offers heritage house tours of the four Trust-owned properties and has offered to host a guided CBD walk • Offered to augment current tours to involve artist studios, museums, architecture and culinary experiences. • Interested in working with other heritage and arts groups to achieve space for community collections, group activities, and artist residencies. • Concerned the former Post Office is still for sale despite strong community support and advocacy for its retention as a space for community use

SURVEY

In addition to focus groups we promoted an online survey through the engagement portal. We promoted the online engagement portal through social media (FB and Instagram) with a reach of 4,710, Instagram feed on mobile devices 2,816 with the highest engagement on socials 18-25y/o (30%).

Total individual engagement – 1,040 (internal and external workshops/survey response/unique visitor engagement online/submissions/interviews)

Participants were recruited through an open registration process. Sector representatives were encouraged to register through the online engagement portal 'Have Your Say'. Participants for the First Nations Group and Youth Council were recruited by invitation.

We received 174 responses to the survey and three formal written submissions in response to the Key Issues Paper.

An analysis of the Survey has been provided separately. The following are some brief highlights, focusing on respondents views on desired future developments, and on proposals to be included in the Arts and Cultural Strategy.

Respondents were asked to identify **changes they would like to see in the creative sector**. Comments included:

> Affordable spaces for studios, workshops and exhibitions. Artist-run galleries and residency programs, funded with Council support

> Flexible, low cost arts workshop spaces in suburban locations as well as central Geelong

> Opportunities for emerging musicians and artists to perform and exhibit in smaller, accessible spaces

> Restructuring of grants systems to allow for greater accessibility and diversity of funding

> Showcasing of experimental practices

> Meaningful public art that showcases the history of the area

> Awareness of the strong skills, knowledge and teaching practice of First Nations people and artists practicing in Geelong

> Artist involvement in multiple aspects of society such as residencies in aged care, schools, hospitals

> Nurturing of cultural leadership - artists and creatives represented on boards and committees across multiple aspects of society and the region

> Greater outreach and exposure for the community to participate in arts experiences

> A database of support material and opportunities

Respondents views were requested on future **non-building-based infrastructure improvements** in Geelong. Comments included:

> Pop-up [pocket] parks with seating, water fountains and beautiful community-supported gardens

> Make the most of sloping spaces - a natural amphitheatre from the main street of Portarlington leading to the foreshore

> Improved disabled access and especially increased disability parking near cultural facilities - e.g. libraries, routes.

> More opportunities for ephemeral interventions in public. Commissions that have place around them that invite you to stop and consider the work and reflect. Integrated landscaping and public amenity like seating and lighting

> Outdoor performance spaces e.g. in Johnstone Park Bar or cafe in Johnstone Park to create more presence and safety

> More use of our public areas library fronts, parks, footpaths on shopping strips - focus on the main street in all areas

> More green spaces, pathways, community gardens, and linkages from existing areas to new areas. Walking trails, bike paths, ensuring that new developments allow common areas.

Respondents were also asked to identify **three things that they would like to see in the Strategy**. Amongst many other suggestions, the following are some of the proposals mentioned by multiple respondents:

> An openness to clever and creative use of public spaces

> An improved non-built environment. More green spaces, linkages, bike and walking paths.

> Build performance stages (with weather protection from rain, wind, sun) in CBD, waterfront, Eastern Beach

> Artist Run Initiatives

> Build makers spaces. Subsidised arts workshop spaces - even pop ups

> First Nations priority. Plan in partnership with Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation

> Opportunities for artists to engage in non-arts spaces and contexts (e.g. in schools, aged care, hospitals, industry)

> A fringe festival

> Council sponsored artist residencies that lead to finished work

> A Barwon River Festival that lines the banks with art fashion music, food, families

> Focus on the North

> More funding for individual projects not always linked to community

> Small business support

> Arts newsletter for Geelong including critical but accessible reviews and articles

> Forums, guest speakers, professional development for all artists

> Invest in professional artists who create work that speaks to our humanity and our time in history

> Artists on boards and committees / cultural leadership

> Take risks in creating a vibrant Geelong

> Hear new or silent voices

> Promotion of Geelong as a cultural capital in Australia - support for cultural events.

> Communities given space to grow their own diverse cultures

> Support communities to access commonwealth or private funding, provide more community grants.

> Invest in engaging Design Community for UNESCO related activity

The Survey also included questions in relation to Covid 19 and its impact, reported separately. The Arts and Culture Department will continue to monitor and engage with the sector to better understand, not only the immediate needs, but further long-term needs to ensure recovery and to inform our strategies into the future.

creative thinking
positive solutions