

# ARTS AND CULTURAL STRATEGY ISSUES PAPER

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

29 June 2020



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Purpose of the Issues Paper .....	3
Guiding Principles.....	3
Context.....	4
Themes .....	4
Theme 1 - Connect, Collaborate, Create .....	5
Theme 2 - The Cultural Economy .....	6
Theme 3 - Cultural Facilities, Places, Urban Design and Environment .....	8
Theme 4 - A Changing Geelong and Council's Role .....	9
Your response .....	10

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations apply:

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
ACS	Arts and Cultural Strategy
city	The geographical location and community
City	Greater Geelong City Council
COGG	City of Greater Geelong municipality
G-CAR	Geelong Covid-19 Arts Recovery Advisory Panel

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Greater Geelong acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of this land and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of the Greater Geelong community today.



# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE ISSUES PAPER

Recent years have seen significant changes in the economy and demography of Geelong, and much further change and growth is expected. Alongside this, the cultural life of the city is evolving and, as with all great cities, will play an important role in the attractiveness, liveability, social cohesion, wellbeing and economy of Geelong. The City of Greater Geelong (COGG) has initiated the development of an Arts and Cultural Strategy (ACS) for Geelong and engaged consulting firm Positive Solutions to assist.

A range of strategic agencies and institutions is active in arts and cultural development in the region – including State Government/ Creative Victoria, G21 and neighbouring Councils, and Deakin University. It is important for the City to play an effective role in both leadership and support for the arts and cultural sector, helping to make the arts an integral part of community life. To do so an articulation of the role of the City in arts and cultural development, and a clear vision and set of priorities is needed. The ACS will provide this.

During preliminary work for the ACS interviews with selected individuals from the creative sector and key stakeholders have highlighted some of the themes and ideas that matter to Geelong. This engagement together with recent engagement with the Geelong COVID-19 Arts Recovery Panel (G-CAR) and earlier engagement specific to arts, culture and heritage has highlighted initial themes as a structure.

The purpose of this Issues Paper is to hear further from the creative sector and community. Your response will help inform the priorities, strategies and goals for the City. These will be tested through wider community consultation before the ACS is refined and presented to Council for adoption.

Questions in response to each theme have been provided, and a link to a feedback survey is provided towards the end of the paper.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The ACS will reflect the following high-level principles which frame all our work in the arts and cultural sector:

- > Build a strong relationship and partnership with our First Nations People
- > Advance the role of Artists
- > Nurture our local identity and heritage, connect to our stories
- > Connect to our natural environment, our urban city and neighbourhoods
- > Activate our places and spaces
- > Focus on diversity, equality of access and inclusion
- > Collaborate across the sector and develop creative networks



# CONTEXT

*The arts are an essential public good that create a ripple effect of benefits felt throughout our community. They provide a unique expression of what it means to be human, that is fundamental to our nature and affects us all, through all the possibilities of participation in roles as artists, arts workers, practitioners, teachers, students, critics, supporters, and consumers.<sup>1</sup>*

In 2017 over 16,000 Geelong citizens contributed to the development of a 30-year vision for our city and region. At the heart of our community's vision is for Greater Geelong to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally as **a clever and creative City**. This engagement supports a growing understanding that creative and cultural expression and participation is not only an essential ingredient for community wellbeing but a strategic factor in our City's sustainable development.

Geelong's accreditation as a **UNESCO City of Design** and the connection this gives us into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network also provides a unique opportunity to set the direction for arts and culture in Geelong, our investment, and our long-term vision.

The arts can have a positive impact on our community through a deepening and **shared sense of our cultural identity**. By encouraging community cultural participation, opportunities for learning, pleasure, joy and reflection we can provide the basis for a **healthier and ultimately sustainable City**.

To achieve this, the City needs to work across a range of disciplines and departments and align the ACS not only with the City's Clever and Creative vision and the UNESCO City of Design development, but with other key strategies and plans, including COGG's Heritage Strategy and Public Art Strategy, the recently endorsed **Reconciliation Action Plan** - providing a clear pathway to strengthen our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community - and the **Vital Communities Project<sup>2</sup>**.

COGG's population continues to grow, with an estimated 2019 resident population of 258,934. Through more than 50 suburbs and townships, the population is predicted to reach 393,216 by 2041.

By empowering our artists and fully utilising our assets we can encourage the involvement of all citizens and inspire the personal and political will to create a revitalised and sustainable city. COGG continues to work with our creative sector through the recently established advisory panel G-CAR set up in response to the pandemic and the devastating loss the sector has experienced. A key theme from its early discussions includes a need to collaborate and connect, to think how we can redefine the contribution of the arts, how we can come together and work differently to recover and rebuild. Artists, community groups, arts organisations and cultural facilities all play an important role. They are the life blood that enables our community and audiences to enjoy their city and connect with each other through arts and culture.

# THEMES

Through research and engagement themes have emerged that reinforce the importance of celebrating our diversity, and the strength and rich fabric of our culture.

Some in our community have expressed a lack of opportunity related to participation, skills development or the ability to strengthen their practice. They express, for example, a need for greater collaboration, more career development opportunities, improved planning, stronger representation of First Nations people and affordable workplaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, M., Kabwasa-Green, F. & Herranz, J. (2006). Cultural Vitality in Communities: Interpretation and Indicators. The Urban Institute, Washington DC. Available at <http://www.urban.org/publications/311392.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Vital Communities Project seeks to improve the City's coordination and planning to address disadvantage through greater social inclusion and increased workforce participation in three identified communities



## THEME 1 - CONNECT, COLLABORATE, CREATE

*Our future will rely on an economy that embraces ingenuity and inclusiveness – a place where science interacts with art, and technology is stitched into design thinking. Work of the future acknowledges that conversations and collaboration between people are critical to our success.<sup>3</sup>*

Strengthening our networks and exploring sustainable models of creative practise will assist us in building individual and sector capacity.

At this critical and uncertain time, it is important to find **new ways of working, new routes to financial sustainability** and to develop **a culture of collaboration**. With promotion and growth of local talent we can continue to build a rich cultural life for Geelong. COGG will need to develop partnerships with the events and tourism industries for example, and better understand the needs of local business, government departments, our stakeholders, and creative sector representatives.

Significant changes in creative practice are in progress – a **rise in interdisciplinary work**, an **expansion in the use of digital** in the creative process as well as in audience engagement and interaction, and the **evolution of co-creation and co-curation**. Each of these has implications for the level of **connection and collaboration needed**.

Increasingly arts centres have accepted that their responsibilities lie in several directions – to audiences, to funders, and to the wider industry. The latter includes **nurturing and mentoring new talent, facilitating networks** between creative practitioners, providing low-cost access to making/rehearsal space and resources, and inviting in product development by local artists and companies.

Much arts practice and cultural experience occurs outside of physical facilities. Site-specific arts practice, community arts and transferred community cultural practices are also of significance to the cultural life of a city. The ways in which we facilitate passing on of story, the selection of public artworks, and the role played by the arts in connecting people to natural environments are all issues of concern for the Arts and Cultural Strategy.

A key success factor is our **relationship with the broader community**. As audiences, consumers and participants the wider Geelong community – and the region’s visitors – are the partners in everything we do. There have been significant recent social trends – accelerated by the recent pandemic – which will shape the way in which we engage with each other. These include the boost to online cultural consumption and the heightened value placed on virtual experiences, a questioning of sustainable production practices (and globalisation more generally), and a corresponding emphasis on local networking and support.

The personal and social stresses generated by the pandemic and social isolation have thrown into relief the importance and fragility of individual and community wellbeing. The roles of the arts and of Council in supporting wellbeing are playing out currently but will have implications for the long-term. Arts in health practice as well as the health and wellbeing of creative practitioners themselves are both aspects of this – and connectedness is an important ingredient for success.

Our community is asking us to be brave enough to experiment, to take risks, to maintain a commitment and take a long-term view knowing that our strength is in our ability to work together and create something unique to Geelong.

### QUESTIONS

1. Which connections and collaborations would most benefit a vibrant arts and cultural sector in Geelong, and which would most benefit you as a practitioner or organisation?
2. What are the key changes or developments which have been occurring in the creative sector which need to be reflected in the Arts and Cultural Strategy?
3. What are the key changes which are needed to generate deeper engagement with the arts by the Geelong community?
4. What developments would you like to see within your local creative community/sector?

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<sup>3</sup> Jen Cromarty, Clever and Creative





## THEME 2 - THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

*It's the unique people you meet and experiences in life that you will remember forever. Artists provide this. They can provide Geelong a unique point of difference from every other town or city around the world.<sup>4</sup>*

### SCOPE

While definitions vary, the cultural economy typically includes activity related to the full range of creative industries, including architecture; the art market; crafts; visual arts and design; designer fashion; film and video; interactive leisure software; music; the performing arts; publishing; software and computer games; and television and radio. It also embraces libraries, museums and heritage, and Aboriginal cultural activity.

The G21 Region Creative Industries contributed \$2.1billion with over 12,000 additional jobs between 2015 – 2017 comprising over 5,000 creative industry businesses. (REMPLAN).

The Geelong Cultural Precinct, located in the CBD, is a key hub of cultural activity in the G21 region. It is home to the Geelong Library and Heritage Centre, Geelong Arts Centre, the Geelong Gallery, Platform Youth Arts and Back to Back Theatre. Other important cultural activities take place at the National Wool Museum, and Potato Shed Multi-arts Centre on the Bellarine, the Pivot City Innovation Precinct, a hub for design and tech start-ups in the north, Boom Gallery/Big Boom + and Fyansford Paper mills - sites which provide opportunities for artists and creative professionals to establish their practice. These hubs are supported by a network of broader arts and cultural activity across the region.

Recent arts and cultural mapping of the region identified over 670 public arts and cultural sites across Greater Geelong, 130 of which are located within the CBD. Mapping also identified 257 individual artists and groups registered with private addresses within the region.

The economic value of the tourism industry for the Greater Geelong and the Bellarine region in 2018 was \$2.2billion, generated by 5.8 million visitors. The tourism industry employs 11,264 people. Cultural events in the region such as Geelong After Dark and Mountain to Mouth contribute to this industry, and in 2018 The Archibald Prize exhibition at the Geelong Gallery was the second most attended major event offering for the region<sup>5</sup>.

### DYNAMICS OF THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

An economy comprises customers and suppliers, physical and intellectual assets, networks and transactional relationships. A useful way of visualising the cultural economy is through the 'value chain', which divides activity up into the stages through which value is created and realised – from training, through creation, production and consumption:

Figure 1 | The Stages of the Creative Value Chain



A healthy local and regional cultural economy demonstrates:

- > Sufficient resources in each step in the 'value chain', from research and development (e.g. education and training) to conception (creative 'ideation'), production, distribution (presentation and sales) and consumption (visitors/audiences and purchasers). Where any of these are weak or absent it results in higher 'imports' and lower sales
- > Effective hard and soft infrastructure assets – affordable facilities for making, collaborating and presenting, skilled people, good market knowledge/data
- > Creative/cultural producers, and others in the value chain, with access to finance
- > Strong networks and information sharing
- > Supportive policy frameworks

<sup>4</sup> Quote Clever and Creative engagement

<sup>5</sup> M. Ruzzen, D. Cousens, A. Patsouris, 2019, *Greater Geelong and The Bellarine Tourism Development Plan: Final Report 2019-22*, Urban Enterprise: Brunswick.



The arts and cultural sector are experiencing significant disruption through the COVID 19 pandemic. It is critical that we strengthen our resilience, mobilise and deeply engage communities and stakeholders to unlock our local creative capital. This will take time and require effort in re-building capacity, developing new skills and career pathways, to drive innovation and opportunities.

Events, festivals, music and live performance are economic drivers as well as a celebration of our culture. As it is unlikely, we will be able to hold events with large gatherings for some time there are other avenues we need to explore to create a strong, resilient and connected creative community to rebuild and deliver quality arts and cultural programs.

## FIVE SUCCESS FACTORS

To build a strong cultural economy for Geelong in the longer-term five success factors for the cultural economy need to be addressed:

- > A skilled and capable creative community
- > Shared platforms and networks that encourage creative collaboration and interaction
- > Infrastructure which supports creative and cultural activity
- > Access to finance for cultural businesses
- > Demand for cultural products and services

Even prior to the onset of the pandemic there was evidence of a desire to rethink current funding models with individuals seeking support to broker funding from other sectors. The cycle of one-off grants has left many feeling depleted and frustrated with the short-term nature of the current system and the opportunities it provides. In addition, funding opportunities have become more competitive and the pool of available monies has been in decline especially at a federal level.

Some developments which could build the cultural economy and its resilience include:

- > Skills training and mentoring – including capabilities in online fundraising and resourcing, business partnerships, grant-writing, marketing and digital skills
- > Artist-led initiatives to drive innovation and develop partnerships
- > Access to materials and equipment
- > Percent for art schemes

Imaginative approaches are called for to stimulate demand – through participation, attendance and purchasing of cultural products and services, both by the local community and from visitors. Linked to this, cultural tourism holds significant potential for Geelong, including the opportunity to increase the visibility and economic value of Aboriginal tourism.

## QUESTIONS

5. Which aspects of the Geelong cultural economy do you regard as strengths, and why?
6. Which aspects of the Geelong cultural economy do you regard as weaknesses, and why?
7. How could the Arts and Cultural Strategy support a stronger cultural economy? What would you like to see in the Strategy?
8. What are the key opportunities for growth of the Geelong cultural economy (or specific aspects of it)?



## THEME 3 - CULTURAL FACILITIES, PLACES, URBAN DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

*For more than 60,000 years Aboriginal people have built strong and resilient communities through arts and creativity. Their culture continues to teach us that communities are defined through the connections between people and place. Cultural infrastructure provides us with the spaces that allow these connections to be forged and celebrated. It creates spaces and builds communities where people can meet and connect, celebrate identity and shared values, understand differences and diversity, contribute to the meaning and significance of the places where they live and participate. In doing so, cultural infrastructure helps to build and strengthen the social capital that makes communities inclusive, cohesive and resilient.<sup>6</sup>*

### INTEGRATED CULTURAL FACILITIES

Geelong's cultural precinct is home to world class cultural facilities, as noted above. These cultural anchors are spaces and organisations that play a significant and high-profile role within the art ecosystem. They coordinate large scale arts events and programming and are the backbone to Geelong and the wider G21 region, complemented by several smaller creative organisations.

There is a **growing trend to develop new facilities in clusters**. In Victoria, State Government has encouraged this alongside the promotion of co-working and collaborative facilities. Co-locations provide opportunities for productive inter-disciplinary working, and stronger centres of attraction activation. The meeting rooms, making spaces and other shared resources in co-located facilities support collaborative working amongst creative practitioners and businesses. Opportunities for **informal networking, sharing of ideas and mutual learning** are enhanced in multi-faceted facilities and clusters.

Public Art has been used successfully to enliven spaces with cultural assets and ephemeral experiences. The success of Public Art is often grounded in artists creating site specific and site responsive works. The need for appropriate support to build and maintain a public art collection is important in fulfilling the Clever and Creative vision for Geelong and maintaining our status as a UNESCO City of Design.

From recent cultural mapping clusters of cultural assets have been identified and evidence shows that most facilities are situated in the city centre. However, creative practitioners, community groups and users live in our neighbourhoods. Large infrastructure developments are sometimes not fit for purpose for creative endeavour and our challenge is to balance the need for fit for purpose creative spaces that build capacity and support cultural development, and infrastructure that also provides a cultural service and attracts visitors to Geelong.

### THE CHANGING NATURE OF CULTURAL SPACES

Education, learning and engagement are being placed increasingly at the heart of a facility's offer. This includes **space for events and performance activity, contemplation and learning** as well as social interaction and increasing collaborations with physical and virtual visitors. In Melbourne the Friday Night Live series at the NGV – with music and club atmosphere at its heart – has stretched the concept of the role of a gallery and proved successful at reaching a younger and wider demographic. Events, popular commercial components, and a broadening of public and educational programming combine to give the modern gallery the spirit of an accessible precinct rather than an austere, high-end art institution.

New galleries are planning for hybrid spaces, variously termed 'Black Box', 'Grey Box' or 'Art Bays', for performance and expanded practices with all the technology necessary to allow theatre, dance or fashion shows as well as performance art and large-scale installations. The potential for enhanced programming and additional exhibition spaces through the proposed **Geelong Gallery redevelopment** will contribute to our region's renewal and strengthen our ability to develop a cultural tourism economy.

Well-presented and **high-quality retail and catering have become an expected part of the visitor experience**. This not only becomes part of the 'offer' but can also contribute to the sense of welcome and breaks down the cultural barriers that infrequent gallery attenders experience in this otherwise unfamiliar environment.

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<sup>6</sup> Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025, Create NSW





## GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Geelong's accreditation as a *UNESCO City of Design* also provides us with a unique opportunity as a member of the *UNESCO Creative Cities Network* to apply our creativity through sustainable urban development. A strategic approach to cultural planning would allow us to realise a vision for a rich and fully engaged cultural life. Consolidation of the ownership and management of our cultural spaces is required to realise this and allow for the further development of these assets.

Opportunities might include:

- > Growth of the creative sector through support for creative hubs, artist run initiatives, and fit for purpose creative spaces
- > Development of accessible mid-sized performance/music space
- > Recognition of the role arts places in city design and development
- > Connection of people to place through public art and initiatives like the COGG cultural apps
- > Strong relationship building and partnerships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- > Increased access and awareness of our cultural, community and heritage collections and programs
- > Strategic and considered approach to public art development, urban design, the aesthetic environment, architecture, streetscapes, placemaking, urban renewal and revitalisation

## QUESTIONS

9. How can existing cultural infrastructure be leveraged to maximise its impact for the arts sector and the broader community?
10. Is there infrastructure (public or private sector) which is under-utilised?
11. What cultural infrastructure is most needed in non-CBD areas?
12. What are the most important non-building infrastructure improvements that would enhance the cultural life of Geelong e.g. outdoor places and spaces, improved accessibility?

## THEME 4 - A CHANGING GEELONG AND COUNCIL'S ROLE

### A NEW DEMOGRAPHIC

Over the last ten years Geelong has welcomed many young families to the region who are seeking aspirational lifestyle and affordable housing. This has led to a boost in a younger demographic for the region. 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 the growth rate for the state.

With relocation to Geelong 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 ROLE OF COUNCIL

Initial interviewees for the Arts and Cultural Strategy identified the need for Council to provide capacity building such as business and entrepreneurship skills development for artists, and to align with the resources for marketing and tourism of the region. Specifically mentioned were pathways for professional practice, seed money for creative developments, revision of the scope for the grants program, establishment of a curatorial arts advisory board and access to spaces.



A priority will be to continue the consultation and recognition of First Nations Peoples in activities and forward planning. Council's work to date has prioritised 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 may be needed.

Geelong has a number of key partners that are integral to the success of the region including State Government, Creative Victoria, G21 and neighbouring Councils, Deakin University, and tourism providers within the Great Ocean Road and Greater Geelong and Bellarine. These are identified as critical to the forward planning and growth for the area.

COGG is a key agent in connecting the creative sector and providing a holistic approach across the region. There is a range of roles which Council can play. For example:

- > **Host** – providing and supporting the provision of space for the production and presentation of creative products and services
- > **Facilitator** – encouraging networking, clusters, knowledge-sharing and partnership development
- > **Capacity Builder** – partnering with peak bodies, tertiary institutions and the private sector to provide professional development and skills development programs which strengthen the cultural sector
- > **Investor and Commissioner** - providing selective financial support to grow elements of the arts and cultural sector, commission public art, and stimulate community engagement
- > **Advocate** – promoting the area's creative and cultural businesses and organisations, and leveraging investment from other levels of government

For the arts and cultural sector to thrive Council's commitment and championship of the sector will be essential, not only through direct support but also through encouraging others to engage with and develop the sector via business and education partners, other tiers of government, inward investors and, above all, the local community.

*I believe the creative future for Greater Geelong is very bright. To keep moving forward, we need to accept each other's differences, skills and knowledge and truly embrace the world's oldest living culture, our Aboriginal culture. Let's walk into the unknown together!*

Norm Jurrawaa Stanley

## QUESTIONS

13. What are the key changes you observe occurring in Geelong – and what implications do they have for the arts and cultural sector?
14. How are you or your organisation plan adapting to a changing Geelong?
15. What three actions would you like to see in the Arts and Cultural Strategy?

## YOUR RESPONSE

Thank you for taking time in contributing to this discussion.

We invite your ongoing participation in developing the Arts and Cultural Strategy and welcome your feedback to any or all of the questions posed. The feedback will inform the development of the Draft Arts and Cultural Strategy. An online feedback form will be available for you to provide your views, and to comment on any issues or opportunities that may have been missed.

Following receipt of feedback from our engagement, we will prepare a Draft Arts and Cultural Strategy. This will be issued for public comment before the final Strategy is prepared.

If you have any further queries, please feel free to email [info@positive-solutions.com.au](mailto:info@positive-solutions.com.au)





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