LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

LGNSW Research into Arts, Culture and Heritage

Byron Bay Scout Hall

Image: David Hancock

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW
GPO BOX 7003, SYDNEY, NSW, 2001
L8, 28 MARGARET STREET, SYDNEY, NSW 2000
T: 02 9242 4000 F: 02 9242 4111
LGNSW@LGNSW.ORG.AU LGNSW.ORG.AU

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

Prepared by Local Government NSW

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general-purpose councils, associate members including special-purpose county councils and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

NSW GOVERNMENT Create NSW Arts, Screen & Culture

This project is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

CONTENTS

Executive Summary **4**

Key Recommendations **6**

Section I: Summary Of Research **8**

1 Background 8
2 What We Found 10

Section II: Technical Report **13**

3 Questions and Findings 13
4 Detailed analysis/extrapolation 19
5 Recommendations 41
6 Summary of Process 44
7 Summary of Data 46

Select References **52**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

Executive Summary

Communities and Culture is a unique, qualitative study undertaken by Local Government NSW (LGNSW) which identifies how councils deliver arts, culture and heritage services. In doing so it highlights that existing quantitative data vastly under-represents the actual commitment of councils in NSW.

The focus of the research was to develop baseline documentation identifying what activities councils deliver and how they deliver them, not how much councils own or spend.

Much existing research about local government focusses on quantitative data on the arts such as how many dedicated staff councils employ, dedicated expenditure and income, attendance numbers, identified cultural infrastructure and economic outputs.

The hypothesis of this research was that not all arts, culture and heritage services and activities that councils facilitate are identified as such, and so are not necessarily reflected in quantitative surveys.

In-depth interviews were conducted with general managers and senior directors and more than 70 telephone interviews were undertaken across the council demographic. These structured interviews took place from November 2015 to August 2016. LGNSW greatly appreciates the generosity and commitment of all councils involved in this project.

The data presented in this report supports the original hypothesis and paints a rich and diverse snapshot of arts, culture and heritage in the NSW local government sector.

Communities and Culture reveals an otherwise untold story of council activities, which are not designated as arts, culture and heritage, but fall under that definition and which add life and value to communities across NSW.

Key findings of the qualitative research are:

- **Councils place immense value on arts, culture and heritage**

  'Cultural activities give a place a soul. Everyone loves the beauty of the place but people are also looking for an attachment to the place and that is found in arts and culture.'

- **Arts, culture and heritage have serious economic value for communities**

  'All Council's tourism projects here are based around arts and culture.'

- **Councils deliver far more arts, culture and heritage services than documented**

  'It doesn't show up in our budgets but does in our community.'

- **Councils apply broader definitions to arts, culture and heritage than those traditionally used**

  'Shows are culture; skate parks too….we have youth art expression and races are culture too.'

- **Councils are the most important provider of public libraries**

  'Our library is a social space, the community lounge room - we don't have a youth centre or seniors' space, so it's really important.'

- **Councils are a major custodian of NSW heritage assets**

  All councils indicated paid staff involvement in administering heritage of local, state, national and international significance.

  > Most of the heritage items on statutory lists in NSW are managed by local councils. This includes over 27,000 individual heritage items listed in Local Environmental Plans and many thousand more within 183 conservation areas.[1]

[1] NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/, accessed 15 September 2016.

- **The place of arts and culture in councils is changing from a social activity to an economic one**

  These changes are driven by the need to innovate and be sustainable, and in some cases, for communities to survive.

  'From Council's perspective it is about expanding the economic and employment base within the community beyond mining.'

- **Community perceptions about resourcing arts, culture and heritage are tempered by what they see as 'core' council business**

  'We have no trouble at community consultations gathering support for $600,000 for our six swimming pools but if they notice $11,000 to our [arts] organisations they would probably question it.'

- **Policy, planning and evaluation of arts and culture is improving but needs development**

  'We miss the middle bit, so go from broad statements to operational budget, but no arts and cultural plan in the middle area.'

This research shows that councils deliver arts, culture and heritage services at a grass roots and community level across the state, whether formally documented or not. These services provide communities with unique identities, shared heritage and add value to everyday community life.

Communities and Culture provides an evidence base upon which councils can appraise and evaluate their arts, culture and heritage roles, and which LGNSW can use to inform policy and strategic approaches on behalf of members. Communities and Culture is also a tool for stakeholders who partner with local government, providing insights into the language of arts, culture and heritage at the grass roots community level.

As with all solid research, questions and opportunities were revealed which would benefit from further investigation. Recommendations are included in this report.

This report is structured in two parts: Section I is a detailed summary of the research and Section II is the technical report.

LGNSW is proud to present this research on the extent of arts, culture and heritage activities being delivered by the local government sector.

Key Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed in response to the research findings. They are designed to guide future arts, culture and heritage advocacy and sector requirements. The recommendations are also designed to be a tool for councils, funding bodies and stakeholders.

Recommendation 1

Build local government capacity to support the integration of cultural plans into the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) processes and documentation

Many councils indicated arts, culture and heritage appeared only in operational plans and annual budgets. Integrated Planning and Reporting documentation demonstrated a great variation across NSW ranging from fully embedded to barely mentioned. There is a strong identified need to rectify this disparity, because without effective planning there can be no effective evaluation, resourcing and recognition of services.

Recommendation 2

Build local government capacity in qualitative evaluation strategies

Skills in qualitative research methods (including measurable cultural outcomes), will assist local government to demonstrate the full benefits of art, culture and heritage services. There is an opportunity for councils to better demonstrate the role and value to the community of art, culture and heritage services with the development of benchmarks within community surveys.

Recommendation 3

Investigate options to apply the current NSW libraries model to council arts, culture and heritage arenas

Councils all noted the regularity and orderly manner in which libraries are evaluated and reported due to requirements linked to the NSW Library Act 1939. The evaluation and reportage model used provides comprehensive annual sector and year-by-year data, with the latter building the case for funding trends. There is scope to explore the feasibility of a formal mechanism by which local government investment in arts, culture and heritage services can be planned, tracked and reported - providing greater visibility and recognition for the extensive work undertaken.

Recommendation 4

Develop art, culture and heritage planning and policy resources for councils

There is a need to develop a suite of practical model plans and policies for local government organisations, which include: public art policy, museum/gallery collections policy, de-accession strategy, sample plans and sample organisation charts. These resources would assist councils across NSW to take a more uniform approach and establish good policies and plans.

Recommendation 5

Ongoing advocacy with other spheres of government and stakeholders

This research provides further evidence to assist the sector to advocate to state and federal governments for sustained and improved investment in arts, culture and heritage within local government. Strategic objectives include:

- Communicate issues related to the arts, culture and heritage sector with stakeholder agencies, e.g. the Office of Local Government, Create NSW, Department of Planning and Environment, Office of Environment and Heritage, Regional Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW
- Advocate for greater interdisciplinary funding opportunities for councils to aid the integration and coordination of arts, culture and heritage services and programs
- Heighten awareness and recognition of the value of funding for cross-council jurisdiction partnerships.

Recommendation 6

Raise awareness among councils and stakeholders about what is happening in arts, culture and heritage in local government and how it occurs

The amount of arts, culture and heritage activity delivered by local government is far greater than traditionally quantified. It is important to create an understanding of this among councils and their stakeholders - in advance of devising frameworks and strategies - to foster and improve a more strategic approach to services.

Recommendation 7

Raise awareness of the important place of heritage in councils

The legislative and regulatory framework for recognising and managing heritage has translated to the vast majority of councils placing it in a separate directorate and planning framework from cultural services. Heritage collections were frequently managed as part of recreation or asset management programs. There is a valuable opportunity to explore ways in which heritage and arts and culture functions can be better planned and coordinated with all council functions.

Recommendation 8

Explore ways for local councils to build capacity in destination management planning

There is an opportunity to increase councils' capacity to undertake destination management initiatives with councils interested in growing their economies by promoting local arts, culture and heritage. Research revealed a trend in councils' internal structures where arts, culture and heritage has moved out of the traditional community or social services directorates across to corporate services, economic development or tourism directorates. From small rural to metropolitan councils, these changes reflect a desire to drive a visitor economy and to make places more attractive and liveable for residents and newcomers.

Recommendation 9

Undertake further research

Like most rigorous research, this undertaking raised further questions and potential opportunities to quantify this work. It is recommended a sample of representative councils be investigated to quantify the ratio of designated to undesignated staff, funds and services, the difference between total identified expenditure and infrastructure and total undefined expenditure and infrastructure.

Section I: Summary Of Research

1 Background

1.1 Why we undertook the research

LGNSW strives to strengthen the voice of local government in NSW and assist our members to best serve the residents and ratepayers they represent.

Arts, culture and heritage provide opportunities for local government and communities - be they remote, regional or metropolitan for expression during both optimistic and challenging times. Arts, culture and heritage provide communities with unique identities and add value to everyday community life. In times of demographic change or uncertainty - arts, culture and heritage services provide a place for inclusion, participation and reconciliation. Arts, culture and heritage in NSW are also increasingly recognised and valued as economic drivers for cities, regions and towns.

The research hypothesis was that councils are supporting arts, culture and heritage activities across multiple directorates that extend beyond cultural assets and designated budgets. It was theorised that the activities were not explicitly recognised, coordinated or comprehensively evaluated.

A key goal of LGNSW is to support and enable the activities of its membership. To that end, the study's primary objective was to establish a strong evidence base to inform service delivery and policy development to address the needs of the growing arts, culture and heritage sector in local government.

Secondarily, the research aimed to raise awareness of the unique way in which arts, culture and heritage operate in the local government context, and to inform subsequent research.

The focus was to develop baseline documentation of what services councils deliver and *how* they do this, not *how much* or *how many* assets and resources are officially dedicated.

The overarching question that guided this research project was: *how is local government delivering arts, culture and heritage services?* Underpinning this question was the desire to establish what was being offered and how councils and communities value this service provision.

1.2 How we did the research

An objective of the research was to conduct in-depth interviews with NSW local government general managers. Their roles oversee all council operations and thus they are able to offer a whole of council viewpoint. Interviewing general managers was also necessary - in smaller councils there are no designated cultural staff, and in larger councils many arts, culture and heritage services are often beyond the brief of designated staff.

It was determined that at least 70 phone interviews were required to gain a representative field of data across the breadth of NSW council types and sizes - metropolitan, regional and remote councils, coastal and inland councils and varied community demographics (population and area).

Councils were initially contacted in order of population (smallest to largest) to test the theory that small councils may invest little in arts, culture and heritage. As hypothesised, they supported arts, culture and heritage in unquantified ways. In councils with larger population bases general managers were not as accessible. Hence, the research methodology was adjusted to seek a targeted representative sample of councils.

A notice of the research was issued in the LGNSW Weekly Bulletin (Issue 47, 27 November 2015). Subsequently phone interviews were conducted by Dr Sally Watterson, Senior Policy Officer – Arts & Culture and Dr Anna Lawrenson, the latter conducting interviews with the larger councils. As a result of the council amalgamation proclamations made by the NSW Government in May 2016, there were significant staff changes in many councils. Consequently, in July 2016, LGNSW CEO Donna Rygate corresponded with general managers and interim general managers who had not yet participated, re-confirming the research was underway. Not all NSW councils were surveyed. Those councils that did

not respond were offered the opportunity to contribute via an online survey. Data collection was largely completed by the end of August 2016.

1.3 Definitions

The study took a broad definition of what might be included within arts, culture and heritage.

Arts, culture and heritage was defined as including:

- visual arts including for example galleries, collections, public art, graffiti art
- heritage including for example museums, movable, built and intangible heritage, precincts
- events including festivals, commemorations and celebrations
- libraries and literature
- performance and film.

The broad definition was made explicit to participants at the outset of interviews. This was a deliberate strategy to encourage consideration of the full spectrum of activities that might be designated to have an arts, culture or heritage element. The strategy is well-established and has been used in other studies for similar purposes. Lisa Andersen describes the interview process undertaken for the report All Culture is Local: Good Practice in Regional Cultural Mapping & Planning from Local Government (2013).

> In my experience, it is difficult to get people who are not-artists from non-metropolitan areas to 'open up' about arts and creativity... Often they will demur ('I'm not arty, I wouldn't be able to say anything about that') … talking about 'Art with a capital A' is intimidating and outside their comfort zone. Many people in rural areas (and men in particular) equate the terms 'arts' and 'culture' with 'high' or 'heritage' [as opposed to] wood turning, craft, recipes and patterns, singing in a choir, rom-coms or country and western music.[2]

Andersen went on to note that in order to generate a level of comfort for participants in talking about the topic, their study chose to use 'deliberately vague' terminology which allowed participants to apply their own definitions. Andersen's study also used open-ended questions that were designed to accommodate this variety of definitions. These approaches were mirrored in this research methodology.

While identifying a local government definition of the term 'arts, culture and heritage' was not a goal of the research, due to this methodology, important evidence around this definition emerged.

[2] Lisa Andersen & Margaret Malone, (eds), *All Culture is Local: Good Practice in Regional Cultural Mapping & Planning,* Local Government Cultural Asset Mapping in Regional Australia project, 2013, p.8.

2 What We Found

Councils place immense value on arts, culture and heritage

Arts, culture and heritage are viewed by councils as vital to community identity, inclusion, liveability, reconciliation and survival.

> *'The benefits are endless...you could measure the economic benefits but it's all a social thing.'*
>
> *'It is a fundamental part of a healthy and vibrant community...it helps to build resilience and a sense of community...it is as much about the social value and about bringing people together...it enriches lives and engages people in a meaningful way...it has the ability to develop community pride and is a great way for the community for being proud.'*
>
> *'What will make our community stronger? Arts and culture will make us a richer city also a more resilient city.'*
>
> *'The councillors [are] strongly supportive of helping community...there is a strong political will to do this.'*
>
> *'I think it's critical.'*
>
> *'It cheers them up in hard times by having a bit of fun. It's something other than asphalt.'*
>
> *'It's not just about roads, rates and rubbish; it generates a positive image in the community and is about added value.'*
>
> *'Small numbers do not demonstrate the important cultural significance of these actions for the local people.'*

Arts, culture and heritage have serious economic value for communities

Councils across NSW reported that as their communities grew, evolved or changed, how councils manage delivery of arts and culture changed too. Predominantly, as councils come to realise that arts, culture and heritage have not only social but economic benefits, these functions are more and more frequently aligned with services which have economic outputs such as tourism and economic development. These changes are being driven by the need to innovate and be sustainable and in some cases, for communities to survive.

> *'From Council's perspective it is about expanding the economic and employment base within the community beyond mining.'*

Councils deliver far more arts, culture and heritage services than documented

As a result of the complex ways in which local government provides arts, culture and heritage among its directorates and service wings, the level of resourcing, support and delivery is rarely fully identified as arts, culture and heritage. In councils with a dedicated culture operation, reportage is often limited to that unit or facility at the expense of activities that may not be named as culture. In councils with no arts and culture staff, budgets or dedicated arts and culture assets, arts and culture activities are still being supported, but would rarely be captured in a survey or report as such.

> *'If we wrapped all of this up over the years, it would be quite significant.'*

Councils define arts, heritage and culture broadly

> *'Culture here? Is it horses and shows?'*

There is a great variety of definitions represented within the research results which indicates councils apply broader definitions of art, culture and heritage than traditionally used. Artistic and aesthetic excellence is heavily tempered with notions of recreation, inclusion and participation which are also influenced by geography and demographics. Activities offered as arts, culture and heritage included, but were not limited to:

- youth, seniors and disability access programs
- local seasonal festivals – regional produce, kites, highlanders, winter fests
- agricultural shows
- waste to art and environmental programs
- fashion parades
- sport including horse or motor racing
- skate parks, graffiti prevention
- nickname hall of fame
- ute musters
- childcare programs.

'Sounds a little outlandish, but we run all parks...does a Show count as culture?...we run that, and skate parks too - even the races, they are part of our culture - we have Fashions on the Field.'

'Swimming pools and speedway are considered culture here.'

Councils are the most important provider of free public libraries to the NSW community

All councils in NSW provide for public libraries and the vast variety of associated services that modern libraries accommodate.

'You only have to try to close a library branch to see what the value is.'

Councils are a major custodian of NSW heritage assets

All councils indicated paid staff involvement in administering heritage of local, state, national or international significance. Local government bears significant responsibility in the NSW heritage sector.

Most of the heritage items on statutory lists in NSW are managed by local councils. This includes over 27,000 individual heritage items listed in Local Environmental Plans and many thousand more within 183 conservation areas. Local councils and their communities are at the forefront of the vital task of conserving the heritage of NSW.[3]

Policy, planning and evaluation of arts and culture is improving but needs further development

Councils across NSW indicated that arts, culture and heritage are implied in Community Strategic Plans (CSP) in some way, the most common being in broad brush statements around: inclusion, liveability and participation. However, a very significant sample of councils reported that the cascade of formal arts, culture and heritage planning through the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documentation could be improved.

'We don't have any whiz-bang document as we don't need it, we know each other's phone numbers and that's the way we work.'

'We do, but could do more.'

Community perceptions around resourcing the arts are tempered by notions of what they see as 'core' council business

While the benefits of arts and culture investment are appreciated by communities and council there is often a reluctance to dedicate investment when resources and budgets are already stretched.

'We have no trouble at community consultations gathering support for $600,000 for our six swimming pools but if they notice $11,000 to our regional arts organisations they would probably question it.'

[3] NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Heritage/publications/localresources.htm, accessed 16 September 2016.

'It is a very easy line item to look at cutting.'

'It's very hard to take a strategic approach at our size…quite frankly, if it [arts] is budgeted and regularly making a loss, no GM worth his salt would keep it in there.'

'Arts are increasingly easy to sell to local community.'

'It's easy for politicians to cut but in an LGA that has 150 different ethnic groups where there is the threat of extremism - and polarisation around that - the social glue is a very important aspect… council's new arrivals services… we hope that they are made to feel part of the community and arts and culture is integral to that.'

Section II: Technical Report

3 Questions and Findings

3.1 The Questions

The survey consisted of nine questions.[4] The first eight questions covered four broad themes and the ninth allowed for respondents to offer any further information. The questions were grouped around key areas as indicated below:

Designated arts, culture and heritage expenditure and services

- Does council have identified employees working within arts, culture and heritage positions?
- What, if anything, does council fund via a designated arts, culture and heritage budget?
- Does council own and manage arts, culture and heritage assets?

Undesignated arts, culture and heritage expenditure and services

- How does council support arts, culture and heritage through non-designated budgets?
- Are council owned places used or managed by community groups for purposes related to arts, culture and heritage?

Arts, culture and heritage planning, policy and evaluation

- Has council devised any specific plans or policy related to arts, culture and heritage activities?
- Does council undertake any regular evaluation of the arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

Value of arts, culture and heritage expenditures and services

- What do you perceive as the value or benefit of arts, culture and heritage provisions in your LGA?

Other information

- Would you like to offer any further information about arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

3.2 Key Findings

3.2.1 Designated arts, culture and heritage expenditure and services

- Does council have identified employees working within arts, culture and heritage positions?
- What, if anything, does council fund via a designated arts, culture and heritage budget?
- Does council own and manage arts, culture and heritage assets?

All councils fund the arts in all parts of NSW

All councils reported some degree of funding for staff, facilities and programs involved with arts, culture and heritage.

[4] Note that as the survey was largely one to one verbal, some respondent information strayed between questions. In these cases, that information has been positioned in the most appropriate question to enable extrapolation of findings. Also because of the discursive nature of the interviews, the questions were not always posed verbatim.

Councils are the lead provider of libraries in NSW

All councils have library staff, ownership of libraries or membership of a library service and recurrent annual funding. This was reported as result of statutory framework around libraries.

NSW councils own and manage a vast cache of both built and natural heritage

All councils indicated ownership of heritage assets including physical buildings, monuments, historic sites, precincts and natural heritage.

Councils own and care for vast and significant cultural collections across NSW

Across all sizes and demographics, the vast majority of councils indicated ownership/management of a cultural collection including, but not limited to: libraries, local studies, movable heritage, art and public art.

Councils deliver arts, culture and heritage cross divisionally and therefore delivery is frequently under-acknowledged

All councils reported staff working either in part or in full in arts, culture and heritage. However they are frequently not identified as arts, culture and heritage appointments and situated in more than one directorate. As such funds for arts, culture and heritage are also dispersed.

The number of arts, culture and heritage staff employed by local government is increasing

In the past decade several councils reported development of professional museums, art galleries and performing arts centres that employ paid staff. Councils also support and facilitate volunteers, who play an important role in delivering arts and cultural services.

Cultural infrastructure provision results in dedicated staff employment

Where councils own cultural facilities, such as libraries, art galleries, museums or performing arts centres, these facilities are serviced by a dedicated workforce.

A range of nuances by population base were reported. These are included in Section IV.

3.2.2 Undesignated arts, culture and heritage expenditure and services

- How does council support arts, culture and heritage through non-designated budgets?
- Does council own places that are used or managed by community groups for the purposes of arts, culture and heritage activities?

All NSW councils provide and support arts, culture and heritage activities in ways not specifically designated as such

Methods for administering and providing this support vary sharply depending on council size and structure.

Undesignated funds are always spread across more than one directorate

This makes planning and then articulating the picture almost impossible. This in turn means councils generally under report the true value of their arts, culture and heritage spend.

Councils use a wide variety of their infrastructure (places and spaces) for arts, culture and heritage

Both in councils where there is no dedicated infrastructure and also where there is, councils traditionally deploy their infrastructure to conduct or facilitate arts, culture and heritage. This includes foyers, halls, historic buildings, parks, recreation fields, showgrounds, race tracks and streets. Councils are increasingly experimenting in this area.

'Absolutely - our halls have all sorts of performances and exhibitions for which we waive fees and provide promo.'

NSW councils accommodate a huge variety of community initiatives across the state, thus assisting the community to enrich its own life and wellbeing

Councils accommodate: community arts groups, historical societies, performance arts groups, craft groups, schools, bands, choirs, festivals, youth and aged groups, commemorations and seasonal events, allowing for their existence and sustainability.

3.2.3 Arts, culture and heritage planning, policy and evaluation

- Has council devised any specific plans or policy related to arts, culture and heritage activities?
- Does council undertake any regular evaluation of the arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

Councils do plan their arts, culture and heritage

The overwhelming majority of councils reported that arts, culture and heritage is reflected to some degree in their planning processes and documentation.

'Yes. [It's] front and centre in corporate documents. The decline in mining meant that tourism has been a priority to take its place.'

'Yes, but very generically - in the Community Plan under 'increased participation' for example.'

The planning landscape across NSW is not consistent

The strength of arts, culture and heritage in planning ranges from 'broad-brush statements' in the Community Strategic Plan, through to specific arts activities only appearing in annual budgets as line items or not being identified at all. Several respondents indicated a robust cascade of arts, culture and heritage from the broad brush statements through to a cultural plan, down to operational plans and annual budgets. Many did not.

'Arts actions [are included] around participation and providing diverse social and recreational opportunities.'

'We miss the middle bit, so go from broad statements to operational budget, but no arts and cultural plan in the middle area.'

'Yes. It works up into IP&R, but in the form of very broad-brush statements'…local government in rural areas has to deliver on broad-brush as they don't have the resources to get down to this place, these people.'

'An engaged and supportive community…we use these general comments only when we see a grant opportunity and can capture activities under this banner.'

It's difficult to plan arts, culture and heritage holistically because it is cross divisional

As arts, culture and heritage services are spread across council directorates activities may be explicit in a plan of council but not necessarily grouped under arts, culture and heritage. Conversely, respondents across NSW indicated arts, culture and heritage as a strong focus during community engagement processes.

Community engagement around Community Strategic Plans often garners opinions

Respondents noted that this up front information is not viewed as evaluation in many cases and could be deployed more usefully in the evaluation process. This was seen as a result of resourcing and the perception that culture was always broad-brush at the highest levels. Many opinions contradicted this also, pointing to councils recognising culture as permeating all community areas.

'The most amazing thing is in this consultation about council services, community highly values these things, libraries are always at the top.'

'The difference is that in the country word of mouth is everywhere and people are not shy of telling you what they think, we can really rely on people's feedback as accurate indicators.'

If council doesn't plan robustly, evaluation suffers

All councils indicated a correlation between Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documentation, service delivery and evaluation. If an item is planned, it is likely to be evaluated and less so, if not explicit in planning.

'If I haven't planned it, why would I evaluate it?'

'Give me $25,000 and we'll do a Cultural Plan.'

Evaluation across NSW is a mixed bag, though councils do try

Most councils indicated some form of regular collection of quantitative data. A significant portion of this was reported around libraries. Further, a significant area of evaluation that was reported as increasing was around economic and tourism outputs. Some smaller or remote councils reported that formal evaluation was less necessary due to a close connection to community opinion.

'We are absolutely committed to working to get benchmarks in place.'

'Silence is agreement, but you hear about it when people are unhappy.'

'As we have no person, there is no evaluation.'

'The community expects evaluation against core business - roads and parks - not culture.'

'Libraries, yes. Not really as it's so spread across the three directorates.'

'Frankly, the level of expenditure in these areas really means we don't say "let's have a closer look at that expenditure".'

'Evaluation is mainly quantitative.'

3.2.4 Value of the Expenditures and Services Discussed

- What do you perceive as the value or benefit of arts, culture and heritage provisions in your LGA?

Questions 1 – 7 discussed what arts, culture and heritage services councils offered and how they were planned and evaluated. Question 8 moved onto a discussion of the value of those services. While Questions 1 – 7 revealed a complex and under recognised service provision and inconsistent planning and evaluation, responses to Question 8 elicited an overwhelming response around social value.

Planning is inconsistent but value is overwhelming

A majority of councils reported some deficiency or dissatisfaction with levels of planning, evaluating and budgeting for arts, culture and heritage activities – as outlined above – with the takeaway from this being that these often ad hoc, underfunded or under-planned activities were overwhelmingly noted as being immensely valuable to councils and to their communities. All respondents noted critical social value to the community as a result of arts, culture and heritage provision and support. This value was most often as a contribution to enriching the identity, quality of life and health and wellbeing of the community. This benefit was noted across all types of councils.

'The benefits are endless...you could measure the economic benefits but it's all a social thing.'

'Frankly - council tends to be the last man standing - these things wouldn't continue if we didn't step in.'

'It's the glue, it's critical, it keeps us connected.'

'Not really, but even if we did, numbers would be small. As the actions are not identified in plans, they are not appraised. Besides, small numbers do not demonstrate the important cultural significance of these actions for the local people.'

Enriching ratepayers' lives is seen as councils' civic obligation

The core motivation expressed by respondents about delivering arts and culture was as an important civic obligation to community.

'It doesn't show up in our budgets but [it] does in our community.'

'It's hard to quantify...diminishing availability of places where the community meets in regional and remote areas...we lost two bank branches recently...people find it harder to connect with each other. That's why the Shows are so important and races and camp draft etc.'

Delivering arts, culture and heritage can be problematic

Historically, public perception of what councils should provide (core services) means many councils find it difficult to justify expenditure on the arts against other legislated regulatory services.

'Roads are always looked at...we increased library opening hours without changing the expenditure and there was criticism of that.'

NSW councils are increasingly seeing the economic benefits of arts, culture and heritage for their communities

A notable sample of respondents interpreted 'value' in economic as well as social terms. The economic value of investment in arts, culture and heritage was also noted emphatically by most councils from smallest to largest. The councils that noted this the most were pursuing a visitor economy or attempting to attract new residents or aid in retaining existing populations.[5]

'Council wants to strengthen arts as social enabler and tourism generator.'

'People want to move to the country because it's got culture, they don't come for cows and dry grass.'

3.2.5 Other information

- Would you like to offer any further information about arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

Funding is always an issue

Insufficient funding from the rate base and other spheres of government was one of the common issues raised in this section. There was also a notable trend for councils in some areas to feel that because of their location or demographics that they were excluded from grant opportunities.

'...rural areas miss out.'

The other issue was the difficulty for council staff to make a case to the community (ratepayers) and elected members (councillors) for funding arts, culture and heritage, as this was often perceived as a diversion of funds from 'essential' services.

Local government reform is disruptive and creates uncertainty

While the survey did not seek opinions around reforms, most participants reported the high level of impact of the local government reform process, amalgamations in particular. The impact included an extra administrative burden of consultation and reporting as well as impacts on staff morale due to

[5] This was particularly noted in rural and regional areas.

extra work and uncertain futures. Respondents noted also that community anxieties were heightened which was another issue for councils to manage.

'Mergers create massive disruption around core services.'

'The overall position of arts, culture and heritage is precarious because there is currently no mayor or councillors so plans are being made around where things will sit and what the priorities are that may not reflect the priorities of the new council when it is properly established.'

The research project

Given that this survey involved general managers giving their time during a busy period, a surprising number of participants offered thanks to LGNSW for undertaking this research. The overwhelming majority of respondents saw value in the research and were pleased to be given the opportunity to participate. Participating afforded a rare chance to identify the range of activities they support and to reflect upon and appraise this work, as much of their time is usually taken up managing 'core services'.

'We're really proud of our council and their achievements.'

4 Detailed analysis/extrapolation

This section is a nuanced discussion of the data collected that takes into consideration variations between councils. Often these variations were most extreme in relation to geographical locations (rural versus metropolitan – remote versus coastal), populations (large constituency versus small) and demographics (age, culture, occupations etc.).

4.1 Question 1

- Does council have identified employees working within arts, culture and heritage positions?

Councils that reported zero identified cultural staff (apart from librarians) ranged from population bases of 1,000 to 3,000.

All did however indicate that staff are partly involved with cultural programs in areas such as:

- heritage planning and regulatory functions
- asset maintenance that may link to arts, culture and heritage (such as accommodation for community groups, locations for festivals and events or historic monument maintenance)
- parks and recreation services
- liaison officers (such as youth, Aboriginal, multicultural, aged, disability) who may engage in arts, culture and heritage projects.

Libraries are the most significant employer in the sector of identified staff

Libraries constitute the most consistent and largest body of appointments in the arts, culture and heritage realm. However, many councils did not perceive of or administer libraries as an arts, culture and heritage service, rather they are administered on the basis of them being a core service and positioned in council as such. While the research parameters did not extend to documenting exact numbers of staff – rather their existence – the State Library of NSW provides extensive evidence to quantify this assertion (see Table 1).

Table 1. NSW Library Employment Statistics

	Full time Librarians	Full Time Library technicians	Full Time Library Assistants	Other Full Time Employees	Total no. of Part Time Employees	Total no. of Casual Employees	Total Staff
NSW Median	5.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	5.14	0.78	16.36
NSW Average	6.70	5.82	5.20	2.87	6.90	1.16	22.97
NSW Total	643.14	448.00	384.5	146.40	669.66	50.86	2,342.56

Staff who work in the arts are not always designated as such and are not always in a 'cultural' unit or division

Respondents overwhelmingly noted areas of council where arts, culture and heritage actions were embedded in staff roles including:

- urban planning
- tourism
- asset management
- heritage regulation
- place making
- parks and memorials
- general beautification schemes
- community groups' accommodation
- community service divisions including youth, multicultural, Aboriginal liaison, sister cities officers, grants, events, health and aged care and disability etc.

Cultural infrastructure provision results in dedicated staff in arts, culture and heritage

The status and seniority of these positions is incredibly variable and includes:

- Full and part time positions (permanent and temporary) as well as casual and contract appointments.
- Directors, coordinators, managers and officers.

By contrast, councils that have no permanent cultural facilities do not have the same level of dedicated workforce. Instead they frequently indicated that they may provide staff, full or part time, around areas described above.

Volunteering and grass roots community involvement is vital and fundamental to local government arts, culture and heritage

Regardless of the size or geographical location of the council, community involvement in the provision of arts, culture and heritage services was consistently reported.

Across all types of councils, volunteers were noted as being integral to the operations, and in many cases survival, of community-based museums, galleries, heritage items and, to a slightly lesser extent, theatres. Volunteers figure less prominently in the provision of arts, culture and heritage services via libraries and performing arts centres, as these are more likely to fund staff. It was identified that many cultural facilities are managed via community committees, including arts societies, local history societies, amateur performance groups and interest groups and also committees of council delegated under Section 355 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. [6]

The most common Section 355 committees reported were library, heritage advisory, halls, and Aboriginal advisory committees. Respondents noted committees around museums, public art, art galleries and youth committees (to a lesser extent) and significantly, fewer of these were Section 355 committees.

The reasons for this are that as these committees are not responsible for advising on core services, there is not a particular need for them to be constituted. Also some community committees historically existed and worked well, so there was no reason to constitute them. Several general managers noted that over time, council had reduced the number of advisory committees constituted under Section 355 as a way of reducing administrative burdens.

All councils have staff who administer heritage

Heritage identified roles were reported as predominantly designated planners within development and planning units, except those dealing with movable and intangible heritage. This is a result of the historical legacy of the structure of the state heritage system and legislation. Like libraries, there is a statutory framework that governs the way heritage is managed and as such there is an expectation that this is part of councils' core service. Heritage is considered a planning and regulatory matter. Councils administer heritage obligations in two main ways: firstly ensuring compliance and providing advice as necessary to constituents regarding privately owned heritage assets. In the second instance councils are also responsible for maintaining and interpreting the heritage assets that they own.

Other heritage related positions in councils fall into three broad categories:

- Council staff employed in the maintenance of heritage assets.
- Contractual or consultant-based roles within planning and regulatory divisions, usually a heritage advisor funded through external Office of Environment and Heritage funding.
- Heritage grants schemes administrator.

[6] Section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993 allows for councils to delegate some of its functions to committees of council.

4.2 Question 2

- What if anything does council fund via a designated arts, culture and heritage budget?

Councils have three main forms of direct funding for arts, culture and heritage:

- capital (creating new and improving existing)
- recurrent (for staffing, operations and programs)
- grants (community grants, heritage grants, in kind and ad hoc).

Capital Funding

Councils reported some sporadic expenditure on new or existing cultural infrastructure and regular expenditure on improvements to existing capital in which arts, culture and heritage take place. These types of facilities are listed in the next section of this report.

In the instances where councils had expended funds on new cultural infrastructure, there was a strong trend reported around the proportion of council's expenditure compared to that of other sources in capital projects:

- Philanthropy was reported as a significant funder in recent projects, for example, the Murray Art Museum Albury City and the Margaret Olley Art Centre in Tweed Shire.
- Funding from other spheres of government was reported as helpful and as a catalyst usually in the initial stages of a project.
- Councils' direct spend in creating infrastructure was reported several times as the highest proportion of overall funding for new cultural infrastructure. This was further magnified by the internal costs that council bore in managing these projects.

Recurrent Funding

Councils reported their greatest expenditures on arts, culture and heritage was around recurrent annual operations and program budgets. Statistics sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics support and quantify this finding:

NSW local government contributed the largest amount of recurrent arts expenditure in Australia at $372.7million compared to other states. In terms of total spend – including infrastructure, the ABS reports total expenditure by local government on cultural activities in NSW itself was $435.7million.

In 2012-13, 83% of the estimated total local government funded expenditure on cultural activities was for recurrent expenses.[7]

The most commonly reported recurrently funded facilities were:

- libraries
- museums
- galleries
- community and civic centres
- youth centres
- cultural precincts
- performing arts centres and cinemas.

Within the recurrent allocation, libraries featured most prominently. Councils' heavy investment in library services was described by respondents as indicative of their status as a 'core service':

- The provisions of library services were the most consistent commonality across council types regardless of size, geographical location or demographic profile. As such, the most commonly

[7] This figure is for all cultural activities.

recognised formal budgeting in the realm of arts, culture and heritage was considered as the funding of libraries.

- Statistics from the State Library of NSW substantiate this position and indicate a significant investment by all councils in NSW.

> NSW local government total expenditure of libraries for the 2013/14 period was $378,809,088.80.[8] Further, State Library of NSW statistics indicate that between 1985 and 2014 local government per capita expenditure on libraries increased five-fold. [9]

Grants Expenditure

All councils reported a community grants program, which was cited as a vital way for councils to support arts and cultural activities, particularly where councils were lacking in cultural infrastructure or expertise. It was also noted as a way of enabling the community to take the lead in proposing activities about which it was passionate. Medium to large councils commonly reported criteria and procedures around this, smaller councils less so.

Heritage specific grant programs were also administered by all councils. Unlike community grants the parameters of heritage grant funding were more formalised, aimed at assisting community members to meet their obligations around heritage planning and regulation.

Arts, culture and heritage across NSW is funded across a range of council areas

Support for arts, culture and heritage was reported across three main areas:

- economic development (as a tourism and employment driver)
- community (supporting wellbeing, identity and inclusion strategies)
- legislative, statutory and regulatory functions (specifically in the areas of library provision and heritage management).

A large and unwieldy number of identified divisions, which accounted for arts and cultural activities within designated budget lines, included:

- operational and programming costs associated with cultural facilities (libraries, museums, galleries, theatres etc.)
- economic development, tourism, events, commemorations and festivals
- community grants
- heritage, works and asset management
- contributions to Regional Arts Boards[10]
- Aboriginal programs
- community services
- human services such as disability, youth programs, health and aged care programs.

A large portion of what councils spend is not related to infrastructure

Not all councils had cultural facilities outside of libraries, yet all councils reported expenditures. Non-identified expenditures are discussed in detailed analysis of Question 4.

[8] State Library of NSW, Library Statistics 2013/14, http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013_14statistics.pdf, accessed 15 September 2016, p.51.
[9] ibid..
[10] Much information about council relations with regional arts organisations was offered in this section of the survey. General managers identified this expenditure readily as it is budgeted formally.

Cultural collections

Respondents frequently noted that funds were allocated for the acquisition and management of cultural collections including:

- local studies collections
- movable heritage
- art collections
- public art

Long-standing, annual, council-initiated acquisitive exhibitions, art prizes and increasingly, public art commissions, were reported across the range of councils from very small to very large and in all geographical locations.

Acquisition by donation was very common, though donations are accepted cautiously in most councils, as storage, display and management of the collections incurred an ongoing cost to council.

Tourism, events, commemorations and festivals

Investment in three main types of festivals, commemorations and events were reported by all councils including:

- council run and funded events
- council support or collaboration for community generated events
- council run events with significant private sponsorship or partnered with other spheres of government.

Council support for events was described as being delivered in four broad ways through:

- formal grant allocations from council (most frequently small grants programs)[11]
- ad hoc allocation of funds
- in kind support
- recurrent budget line for annual events.

Most smaller councils indicated employing the first three funding models. In the case of the fourth, dedicated funds in smaller councils were most commonly for Australia Day citizenship ceremonies and Anzac Day.

All councils reported a range of events and festivals, commonly:

- NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, Harmony Day
- Australia Day, Anzac Day, Remembrance Day
- Seniors Week, Youth Week
- New Year's Eve and Christmas events.

In addition, councils supported more localised events such as:

- agri and food tourism festivals
- festivals around geographical features, local historical events, seasons, cultures, sports or local industries
- major arts or cultural festivals
- agricultural shows.

[11] However, small grants programs were not entirely for arts, culture and heritage applicants.

Division of services and relationship to state and federal funding

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that total expenditure in 2012/13 on cultural activity by the three spheres of government comprised: 33% from the Australian Government, 47% from state and territory governments and 20% from local government.[12]

There is evidence that the arrangement of state government legislation and funding has a clear impact on the way that arts, culture and heritage activities are conceived and distributed within local government areas. To this end, the research found a clear division between library services, heritage activities, museums and galleries.

Libraries, for example, are considered a core service and, subject to the *Library Act 1939*, are subsidised. This means that there is a more formal approach to evaluating the services on offer in order to comply with the legislation and as such be eligible for funding.

Likewise, heritage management and preservation is a much more highly regulated area, administered through the Office of Environment and Heritage, whose mandate is to 'work with the NSW community to care for and protect our environment and heritage.'[13] In many local government areas heritage was related to planning and development functions and therefore was somewhat separate from other arts and cultural services.

Unlike libraries and heritage, there are no formal expectations for the provision (or standard) of service in relation to arts and culture. Nor is there a legislative framework that outlines essential services. This means that funding in the area is not guaranteed.

Some funding for art, culture and heritage activities, aside from built and natural heritage and libraries, is provided through state-based avenues, such as Create NSW, Museums and Galleries NSW and Regional Arts NSW. Create NSW is the primary body responsible for funding arts based activities within the state. Through the Arts and Cultural Development program it provides program funding, project funding and professional development. Its priorities are determined by the NSW Cultural Policy Framework '*Create in NSW*,' which identifies three strategic pillars - excellence, access and strength. These are positioned within the context of the State's vision to be 'known for its bold and exciting arts, culture and heritage that engage our community and reflect our rich diversity.'[14]

Not all councils however were aspiring to bold and exciting artistic excellence within their programs. As discussed above, where the value of the investment was one of community health and wellbeing, the focus was on participation and capacity building. It is important to note this because of the implications it has for funding such community-focused projects, which necessarily falls to council in lieu of state allocations. This is where we see arts, culture and heritage activities being quantified under 'wellbeing' programs or strategies within Community Strategic Plans.

Where the motivation behind arts, culture and heritage investment was about providing a range of activities for existing residents and to be attractive to new residents, the calibre of offerings was more important. Thus the alternative focus on artistic excellence meant that 'Create in NSW' funding was a more viable option. This naturally meant that communities with more established infrastructure have a competitive advantage for limited funding.

The division of legislation and funding arrangements for the broad gamut of services covered in our definition of arts, culture and heritage services is in contrast to some of the trends that have been identified within the course of this research. In particular there is a trend towards creating cultural precincts or hubs that are mixed use spaces incorporating retail, food, cultural facilities, civic services and open spaces. This reflects trends towards place making strategies. It is also evidence of the trend towards providing a mixed array of offerings in order to encourage the visitor economy, allowing for both extended interactions, naturally resulting in greater visitor spend. Festivals are also becoming increasingly prominent in the local government landscape as a method of propelling the visitor economy.

---

[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4183.0main+features32012-13, accessed 15 September 2016.
[13] NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/, accessed 15 September 2016.
[14] Create in NSW, *NSW Art and Cultural Policy Framework*, 2015, p.10.

Councils often fund major events and festivals through corporate services or economic development divisions, which also fund tourism. Following on from this trend there is clearly a move towards seeking funding that supports this approach, in the form of partnerships with tourism bodies, in order to promote multi-platform arts, culture and heritage activities that are underpinned by this visitor economy model.

Such emphasis on cultural precincts also benefits local communities providing spaces for socialising and gathering. General managers also highlighted benefits of co-locating tourism attractions in terms of sustainability. Co-location enables some relief for those who run services like the visitor centres, galleries and museums in smaller rural areas, often volunteer groups.

Many councils were challenged by the legacy of funding and regulatory frameworks at the state level, which led to an intrinsic division of services. Repeated reference was made among all councils to the NSW Government Arts and Cultural Development Program:

> *'the money we are seeking is comparatively small, and that money can make such a big difference to communities.'*

- Create NSW Triennial Program Funding is essential to ease the fiscal burden on many councils who have significant infrastructure and provides a level of consistency for forward planning.
- Create NSW Program Funding for cultural institutions was described as providing a benchmark upon which to justify matched council expenditure.
- Create NSW Project Funding was described, where it was identified by respondents as essential, as an enabler to generate projects over and above annual operations.
- Some councils suggested that their inherent demographics made it difficult for them to meet the Key Priority Areas of the Create in NSW Cultural Policy Framework. This was among councils close to Sydney, but not in Western Sydney and among areas where there was relatively little cultural diversity and areas that were not remote.

Comments made by interviewees about funding were in relation to the amount of state based funding, increased cost shifting and the increasing pressure on councils to fill gaps. Also many respondents offered opinions on ways in which the structure of Create NSW funding meant that councils were competing with peak bodies for Create NSW funding.

> *'It's not that council doesn't want to support arts, culture and heritage, they just can't afford it.'*

For example, many councils considered that the local regional arts organisation (that councils partially fund) is in competition for grant funds and also in competition for devolved grants programs including grants administered by Regional Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW. General managers had a wide range of opinions around the regional arts organisations' relationships with council which are explored in section IV of this report.

Councils are becoming increasingly creative about how to fund arts, culture and heritage activities

Councils also indicated that they were increasingly making non-traditional links between arts, culture and heritage with other services to enable access to a range of state and federal government programs as a way of delivering arts, culture and heritage. Some examples include:

- Waste to Art program in association with the Environment Protection Authority
- Office of Environment and Heritage grants for heritage related projects
- ageing and youth funding streams
- public art strategies incorporated in to anti-graffiti and crime prevention strategies
- Aboriginal arts based programs funding through non-arts programs
- Club Grants and Veterans Affairs programs
- developer contributions under Section 94A.

4.3 Question 3

- Does council own and manage arts, culture and heritage assets?

All but three councils reported ownership and management of some sort of asset, as well as their libraries, that was used occasionally, part time or fulltime for arts, culture and heritage activities.

Councils are the single largest provider of libraries in NSW

As already discussed in Reflections on questions 1 and 2, councils are the single largest provider of libraries in NSW. Library buildings and branches were by far the most common. According to the *Public Library Statistics 2103/14*, for example, there are 268 physical library branches across NSW.[15]

Councils own and manage a broad range of physical assets where culture can occur

This includes dedicated and non-designated places. Most commonly reported were:

- libraries
- museums
- art galleries
- civic/entertainment/youth/community centres
- town halls and local halls
- theatres, cinemas, performing arts centres
- open spaces such as: parks, streets and recreational spaces.

'Absolutely - our halls have all sorts of performances and exhibitions for which we waive fees and provide promo.'

Councils are a major custodian of NSW heritage assets

All councils indicated administering heritage. The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage notes the quantity and thus extensive responsibility local government bears in the NSW heritage sector.

Most often reported were:

- buildings: town halls, theatres, chambers, courthouses
- infrastructure: historic bridges, jetties, wharves, cattle yards, stock routes
- Aboriginal sites of significance: sacred places, graves, fish traps, middens, places of protest and persecution
- sites of national, state or local significance
- memorials and cemeteries
- interpretive signage or devices, art trails, statuary and sculpture.

The trend towards precincts

There is a definite trend towards co-locating cultural assets and the creation of cultural precincts. This was evidence of many councils' increasing understanding of the benefits of co-location. This is clearly influenced by broader trends in both place making and destination management and by recent NSW State Government policy around co-location.

Councils are increasingly exploring outsourcing of management of cultural assets

Some councils have commercial arrangements with third parties in order to deliver arts, culture and heritage services within council owned facilities. This ranged from purely commercial arrangements

[15] State Library of NSW, Public Library Statistics 2013/14, http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013_14statistics.pdf, accessed 15 September 2016, p.47.

where council provides a fee for service (like outsourcing the management of a visitor information centre) to more complex arrangements that replicate the arm's length approach of state and national governments to the support of cultural facilities. One example is Penrith Performing and Visual Arts Ltd (PPVA), which is a Council-initiated incorporated body that consolidates offerings in the visual arts, performing arts and arts education.

4.4 Question 4

- How does council support arts, culture and heritage through non-designated budgets?

This study has shown that unquantified and in kind or ad hoc support for arts, culture and heritage in NSW occurs in all councils regardless of their geographical size, location or population base. The extent of arrangements was vast and complex. Once this in kind support is acknowledged, the value of the investment is further augmented.

> *'We gave $30k worth of Port-a-loos for the recent Fly In.'*
>
> *'A lot of in kind support. In a regional community, that's expected.'*
>
> *'Council owns 90 public buildings that sit under Property Management/Technical Services. They are frequently used free by community with significant outlay.'*

Because it's undesignated, it is always underestimated

Because of the undesignated expenditures and their locations in councils divisions, existing reportage (including that of councils themselves), surveys and studies that quantify council expenditure on art and culture activities by tracking allocated budgets vastly underestimate the investment that councils are making.

Proactive, reactive and in kind support are the main council approaches to delivery of arts, culture and heritage with non-arts budgets

Smaller councils rarely reported a strategic approach to determining which arts, culture and heritage activities were supported by these mechanisms. Medium through to largest councils reported more strategy and procedures around allocations as a matter of equity and transparency.

Proactive Support

In councils that serve larger populations, where there were more numerous requests from community groups for assistance, general managers described the importance of a policy driven approach. This support was determined in a number of ways such as grants programs and regular annual budgeted line items. Larger councils took a more proactive approach reporting that they had implemented specific policies or procedures around financial and in kind support and more formal avenues for approval and reporting. In both scenarios councils expressed an aim of quantifying their investment and providing equity for the community and accountability for council.

Reactive support

> *'The community just asks and council does what it can.'*

Many councils who identified no formal budget lines for arts, culture and heritage, generally regional or smaller councils, still identified significant unplanned, often short turn around ad hoc and opportunistic expenditure in response to community needs. The majority of small regional councils reported a reactive approach to in kind and financial assistance based on council 'doing what it could' to assist.

In regards to equity, some interviewees expressed concern that community groups, particularly migrant groups, may not have the confidence to negotiate council grant application processes or that the process may ostracise those groups. As such more transparent and equitable funding may in fact be of detriment to some. Councils use many functional areas to provide in kind support. Common forms of in kind assistance across all councils regardless of size were:

- mentorship and advice

- reduced or waived rent for council owned facilities and free utilities such as electricity and water
- waivers on hire fees for halls, spaces and places
- rate reductions
- provision of information technology and internet connectivity
- publicity, promotion and printing
- assistance with the preparation of grant applications (for both council administered grants and external funding)
- assistance with development applications, traffic management, risk management plans, alcohol licensing and waste removal and grounds preparation and remediation for events
- participation of staff and elected members in groups and on boards in own time.

In kind support for marketing of community groups and events in medium to large councils was one area where councils expressed caution. The concern was around about promoting events that may conflict with the 'message' of councils. Smaller councils however, tended to indicate broad in kind support for promoting local groups and events, based on a more grassroots connection to the community.

4.5 Question 5

- Does council own places that are used or managed by community groups for the purposes of arts, culture and heritage activities?

Council-owned assets are key sites for supporting arts, culture and heritage

Almost all councils have spaces and places that are provided to community groups who use them for arts and cultural activities. These have been discussed in reflections on Questions 1 - 4. Asset use in this way was strongly reported as not solely about artistic excellence but about council doing what it can to foster community participation, wellbeing, creating support networks and opportunities for social inclusion.

Councils work hand in hand with communities

Councils indicated that their role was about providing resources for community groups when they can, to serve the interests and needs of their constituency. In a symbiotic relationship, these community groups, and their efforts as volunteers, enable a greater range of activities to be offered in areas where councils have limited capacity and resources.

In local government areas with smaller populations and thus smaller budgets, there were fewer opportunities for councils to provide ongoing accommodation. This did not mean that councils did not support community groups. Where physical space was lacking, councils also supported these groups via other means – in kind support.

Existing facilities were not always exclusively used for arts, culture and heritage purposes and as such were often not funded through designated arts, culture and heritage budgets. This included:

- community halls (e.g. theatre, bands)
- civic centres, youth centres, community centres, aged care facilities
- showgrounds
- parks and civic spaces (festivals and events) as well as public art
- heritage buildings (museums and galleries).

In areas of larger populations, or with more physical infrastructure, it was very common to see arrangements between councils and community groups that involved provision of accommodation. That is, councils provided spaces for community groups either free of charge or at heavily subsidised rates. The scope of activities supported ranged from housing community societies like art societies, historical societies, and genealogy societies and to a lesser extent theatrical societies, youth groups, choirs and bands. Councils' support of these groups often resulted in a tangible benefit for the whole community as such groups often managed galleries and museums or managed performance programs that could not otherwise occur.

4.6 Reflections: Questions 1 – 5

Councils use varied models for arts, culture and heritage provision and they are changing

As a result of the need to innovate, a number of councils have revised their organisational structures in order to maximise their capacity to deliver an attractive offering to meet the needs of existing and potential residents. The research identified the following models:

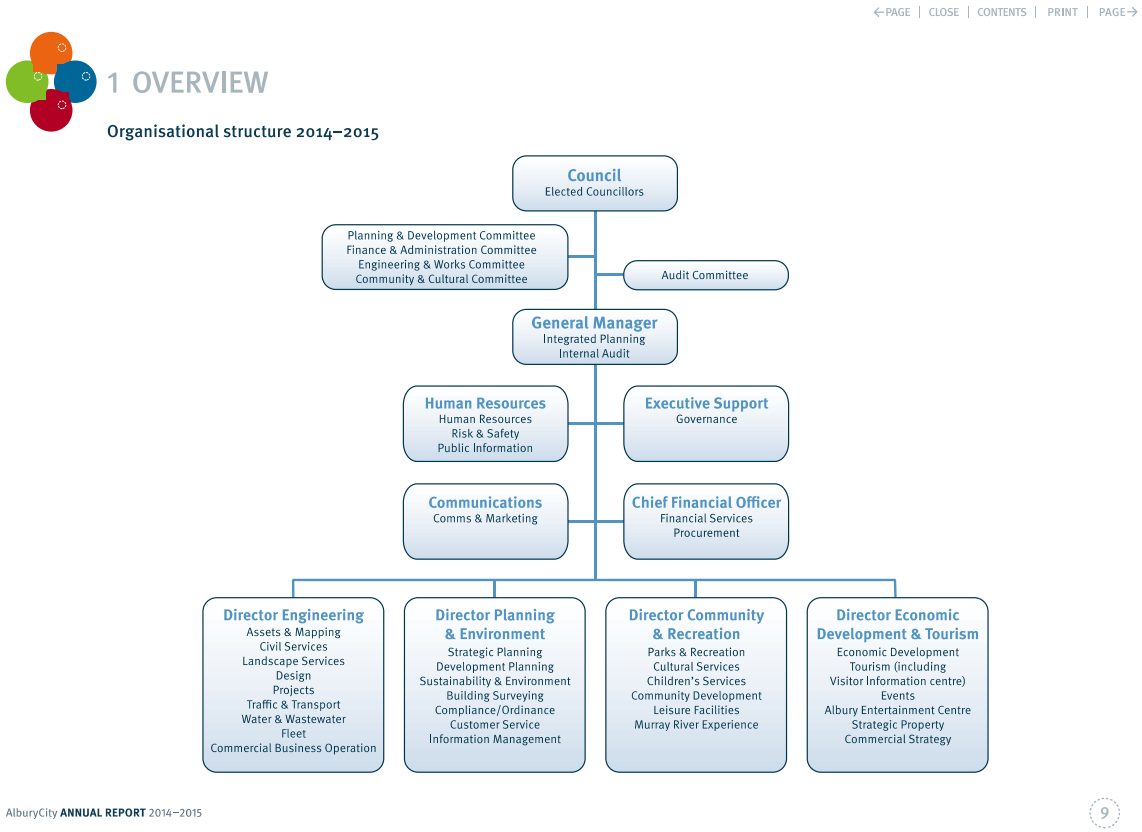
- traditional model
- economic development model
- integrated model
- community service model
- competitive/aspirational model.

Traditional model

Some councils acknowledge that the community is the driver and thus take a role as assister/facilitator. Byron Shire provides a good example of this approach in that council works in partnership with a very active, independent community in order to support that community vision. As such, the majority council involvement is around community grants.

Blue Mountains City Council operates in a similar manner by working in a responsive way to support the interests of a very active artistic community. This is however balanced by their investment in major facilities like the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre and work of the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise around creative industries and tourism.

Economic development model



Albury City Council Organisation Structure, Annual Report, 2014-2015

The economic potential of investment in arts, culture and heritage was identified by many local government areas from the smallest to largest. Many councils reported recent structural changes to capitalise on this potential. Most frequently this took the form of an amalgamation of tourism and arts, culture and heritage services within a corporate or economic development directorate.

Broken Hill City Council, for example, reported investment in arts, culture and heritage to lead a city-wide revitalisation program to counter the diminishing economic returns and employment prospects resulting from the winding back of mining in the area.

A common result in smaller regional councils was co-locating an arts activity, such as a small museum, gallery or craft enterprise in the visitor information centre with symbiotic results; the centre was enriched as an attraction, the community arts group were housed and the volunteers staffed the centre, thus enabling longer opening hours.

Integrated model

Some councils support the integration of services across council – Lane Cove Council for example took a fully integrated approach, as did Fairfield City Council. In both cases the respondents praised the sustainability of this approach because services that were fully integrated and embedded across council areas (and budgets) are more secure. This is because they are seen as having greater buy-in from council staff, which in turn makes them more crucial to the identity of the area. On a practical level, they also have more complex budget lines that are difficult to cut in times of fiscal restraint.

Community service model

Rural councils in particular stated that in times of economic downturn, the council had to lead in the realm of arts and take a community wellbeing approach to provision because it was the sole good news story for the region. Councils taking this approach tended to have a very traditional structure in which arts, culture and heritage fell within a community services directorate and was approached as a civic duty of council.

Competitive, aspirational model

Some of the larger, often metropolitan local government areas are clearly concerned with being leaders in their fields in terms of scale and quality of the planning, service and evaluation they undertake. This results in innovative models and occurs in medium to large councils.

For example, Penrith City Council established the previously discussed PPVA to support major projects at an arm's length to Council. This arrangement enabled council to concentrate on servicing the immediate community at a grass roots level in terms of participation while also offering a higher calibre of programs to interested locals and visitors.

Nuances by Population Base in relation to Questions 1 – 5

As responses to Questions 1 – 5 are intrinsically related, a brief summary of some nuances that the data indicates follows:

Councils with populations of 1,000 – 5,000

- All but two respondents reported some form of dedicated spend (as well as libraries) most frequently:
  - museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas
  - festivals and events
  - heritage and tourism
  - public art and art collections.
- Regarding staff resources, smaller council approaches to staff allocation is encapsulated in the following quote:

  'It is a mixed bag, things are diffused and there is often not a lot of logic apart from who is best placed at the time to take on the project.'

  'No budget. Never will be.'

Councils with populations of 5,000 to 10,000

- Cultural hubs or precincts began to be reported with annual budgets.
- All councils reported full or part time positions dedicated to arts, culture and heritage, as well as 'diffused' positions or cross divisional positions. The most common areas being:
  - events and tourism
  - economic development
  - community and youth development
  - Aboriginal liaison
  - multicultural officers
  - heritage
  - works departments
  - corporate services.
- The most common full or part time positions were reported in order as:
  - library staff
  - cultural or Aboriginal liaison officer
  - tourism and economic development (including visitor information centre managers and events staff)
  - heritage/planning officers
  - museum, gallery, cinema or theatre manager.
- Councils began to report their reliance on other spheres of government for income to support these spends.

  'State and national support is crucial.'

  'We are being overlooked at the expense of reporting surplus budgets at a state level…that money can make such a big difference to communities.'

Councils with populations of 10,000 - 50,000

Shared the above characteristics but also indicated:

- Dedicated staff and cultural services divisions with budgets.
- The importance of volunteers and casuals in delivering their arts, culture and heritage services within galleries, museums and performing arts centres.
- Shared services, particularly libraries and visitor information centres.
- From councils with populations 30, 000 and over, strong themes emerged around arts, culture and heritage for economic development, innovation, place making and enlivenment. This included the embedding of arts, culture and heritage spend within several areas of council like infrastructure, planning and corporate services.
- Began to report outsourcing the management of cultural facilities.

Councils with populations of 50,000 – 100,000

Reflect a similar pattern as the previous tier with a high number of part time appointments, reliance on casuals and service provision outsourcing. They did not report volunteers as frequently as the previous tier.

Councils with populations of 100,000 and over

This tier, which predominantly includes large Sydney metro councils, all indicated robust culture divisions, recurrent operational budgets, project budgets, and a more complex, sophisticated approach. This tier reported:

- Figures of up to and over 100 staff working in part and in full in arts, culture and heritage. By far the largest sector of this was reported as libraries, which often employed 60-70 staff across branches

- Some councils within this category reported fewer internal staff than others, but this was due to a trend toward outsourcing of services, which reduced their overall employment statistics. For example, Penrith City Council's arrangement with Penrith Preforming and Visual means that the 25 staff employed there do not figure in council's budget as employees.

4.7 Question 6

- Has council devised any specific plans or policy related to arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

Questions 1 to 5 discussed the breadth and depth of services councils provide in the arts, culture and heritage space. Question 6 moved to explore the level of strategic planning and policy around these services.

Arts, culture and heritage in formal planning is highly inconsistent across the state

The location, visibility and specificity of arts, culture and heritage in IP&R documentation was found to have little or no consistency across the state. The range covered councils with current, integrated and robust strategic planning, through to those which reported none.

Specific cultural plans or policies guided activities in 38 of the councils surveyed. This includes councils, which are operating under lapsed plans, were developing new cultural plans or had draft plans. Only four councils stated that arts, culture and heritage were not reflected in their overarching IP&R documentation.

Responses to this question clearly demonstrated that arts, culture and heritage are, at a planning and a policy level, addressed in numerous ways. This reflects the manifold ways that councils invest across their various directorates. It also reflects the varied definitions of arts, culture and heritage and the historical position of arts, culture and heritage in council operations.

> *'It works up into IP&R, but in the form of very broad brushed statements…councils in rural areas have to deliver on broad brush as they don't have the resources to get down to this place, these people.'*
>
> *'It's in the Community Strategic Plan in relation to Directive Four - An Engaged and Supportive Community…We use these general comments only when we see a grant opportunity and can capture activities under this banner.'*
>
> *'Arts is spread across community, Aboriginal, tourism and cohesive community actions.'*
>
> *'We miss the middle bit, so go from broad statements to operational budget, but no arts, culture and heritage plan in the middle area.'*

General managers in small to medium regional and remote areas mainly indicated that arts, culture and heritage are represented in general CSP strategies in broad brush statements around 'inclusion', 'wellbeing', 'liveability' and 'participation'. In many of these cases, in the absence of a cultural plan, arts, culture and heritage activities would only appear in explicit detail in the Operational Plan and Budget or be explicit at a facility level or tied to a particular directorate, stakeholder group or area investment.

Several respondents however noted a cultural plan of some sort existed, but was not considered firmly embedded, in the IP&R cascade. The indication in these cases was that culture happened outside of councils' core functions and that the cultural plan did not adequately connect upward in the goals of the CSP. Some reported that plans existed that had not been formally adopted by council.

The main effect of this was threefold:

- where expenditure and support were not identified in a budget, general managers expressed that there was no necessity to embed them in a plan
- sitting outside of formal planning documentation meant services were not recognised
- lack of evaluation around services.

Reasons given by the number of councils who reported operating under lapsed or out-dated cultural plans included:

- the plans were considered still relevant and as such there was no need to update, or they still listed action items that council was working towards
- council wanted to take a different approach in the next iteration of the plan but this was on hold due to resource constraints
- disillusionment with the efficacy of cultural plans. Due to a lack of adequate resourcing, no matter the status of a plan, it would be limited in its effectiveness
- lack of a staff member with the cultural planning skills to complete an existing plan and drive the drafting of a new plan.

Planning is complex, diffuse and nuanced by population

Councils reported all manner of aspects of specific and non-specific plans that involved arts, culture and heritage. Heritage Policies were specifically noted by 15 of councils. It is possible that this low amount was reported as respondents consider heritage the domain of planning and regulatory areas, not arts and culture. The same would stand for the list of policies reported below. Other policies that were noted, but not in the numbers expected due to the above reason were:

- health and aged care plans
- disability inclusion action plans (DIAPs)
- multicultural plans
- Aboriginal cultural plans
- reconciliation action plans (RAPs)
- youth strategies
- museum and gallery plans
- graffiti and crime prevention strategies
- tourism plans
- place making/city revitalisation plans.

As councils become larger, they reported being more likely to have a form of cultural plan, such as a cultural plan, community cultural plan or community development plan. These again were a mixed bag and still coexisted with actions in other diffuse plans.

The significant majority of councils however reported that arts, culture and heritage are reflected at some level of planning.

> *'We have a Tourism Destination Plan, Open Space Strategy, Integrated Land Use Strategy, Aboriginal Health and Heritage Policy… we are revisiting our Cultural Plan to give a higher level context to the area. We have a Youth Strategy, also individual facilities plans and policies.'*
>
> *'Council has a Destination Management Plan, Public Art Policy, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Plan (documents local sites of significance). Also plans for each cultural facility.'*
>
> *'Social Planning takes arts, culture and heritage into account. Our CBD Activation project is part of the IP&R process. It includes arts, culture and heritage activities working in public spaces and shopping centres.'*
>
> *'There are expectations for Public Art in the DCP. There are a range of other policies that support arts, culture and heritage: Disability Action Plan, ATSI Cultural Heritage Policy, Heritage Policy (built environment). Heritage Policy informs planning...heritage was an important part of the Renewal Plan. Place Management and Neighbourhood Renewal... also City Centre strategies.'*

Councils with a population between 10,000 and 100,000

Medium to large councils reported planning in detail with high levels of community engagement. However, this may only be within a definition of arts, culture and heritage that excludes some of another council directorate's managed services. Planning for arts, culture and heritage is increasing.

Councils with a population greater than 100,000

Conversations around planning became very complex including: cultural plans, place-making, economic development, tourism strategies, heritage strategies, youth, events and destination management. These councils reported strong public art policies. This was in relation to managing significant issues around developer contributions, public liability, and artistic excellence.

Public Art is the strongest arts policy area in councils but policy varies significantly in motivation, relevance, currency, efficacy and therefore in format and content

The most commonly cited policy reported as an arts, culture and heritage policy, was public art. Thirty one respondents had public art policies (in place, lapsed or in development).

Large councils specifically reported that this was because there was a requirement for public art to be funded within their Development Control Plans. Expectations around public art, and in turn investment in civic beautification, were also seen in policies around town revitalisation, civic master plans and place making strategies. Six councils specifically reported that arts and cultural activities were guided by such documents. Several smaller councils indicated that public art policy development arose out of pragmatic circumstances such as public liability concerns and the need to manage increasing pressure from community to install works.

Arts, culture and heritage is spread across council policy areas

Policy in councils related to arts, culture and heritage, like staff resources and funds, was diffuse across most council directorates, meaning that if a policy was reported as in place, it may not cover all areas that it should. For example, a heritage policy may be in the domain of the planning directorate, and thus at arm's length from librarians and curators who also administer local heritage collections. An Aboriginal liaison policy may include areas of arts, culture and heritage, but not necessarily connect to the local museum, art gallery or public art policy.

> *'Yes. Live Music and Performance Action Plan 2014, Public Art Strategy, Creative City Cultural Policy 2014-2024. Heritage Policy, Heritage is part of Cultural Plan. Also part of History and Collections Policy which sits under Library Policy. Aboriginal Policy has key arts, culture and heritage aspects. Arts, culture and heritage is one of the core pillars in IP&R – it operates on four pillar system - Sustainable Sydney 2030 is the plan here and arts, culture and heritage are central. There is also the four-year Community Plan which is almost up for revision.'*

4.8 Question 7

- Does council undertake any regular evaluation of arts, culture and heritage activities?

Councils do evaluate their services in many ways

Where arts, culture and heritage are not identified, or only included in broad brush terms in councils' IP&R documentation and in adopted policies of council, there is a direct relation to lack of evaluation. Almost all respondents offered the opinion that they could undertake better evaluation. Most often this was specifically in relation to doing more and to having the ability and capacity to track qualitative data.

Evaluation was reported across most councils with some similar characteristics:

- councils across the board indicated comprehensive evaluation of their libraries.
- the next most common form of evaluation was reported as tourism and visitor information centre statistics around events, visitations and accommodation .
- the next was around acquitting grants.
- medium to large councils indicated formal, regular collection of quantitative data.

- economic value was seen as more important than qualitative analysis as leverage for future investment.
- where quantitative evaluation did take place it tended to be carried out at the level of individual facilities or events.
- some smaller councils reported that data was difficult to capture, or it was pointless to evaluate, as participation and funds involved were minimal.
- smaller councils were less likely to undertake regular evaluation. In some cases this was a result of the activities not being 'planned' thus not requiring reportage, or due to lack of resources.

Qualitative evaluation

- Small to medium councils strongly emphasised that their connectedness with communities meant that anecdotal evidence and spontaneous direct feedback was their measure.
- In medium to larger councils, community satisfaction was often gauged through community consultation during Community Strategic Planning in lieu of specific recurrent evaluation.
- A notable number of councils were experimenting with electronic and online platforms to carry out evaluation and external research sometimes advanced evaluation practices.

'In the country word of mouth is everywhere and people are not shy of telling you what they think.'

'As we have no staff we have no evaluation.'

'Small numbers do not demonstrate the important cultural significance of these actions for local people.'

'Frankly the level of expenditure in these areas really means we don't say let's have a closer look at these expenditures.'

'Numbers do not demonstrate the important cultural significance of these actions for local people.'

Levels of evaluation are affected by population

The vast majority of councils under 41,000 population reported that the council undertook no formal evaluation of arts, culture and heritage except for libraries.

Larger councils reported arts, culture and heritage plans existed and therefore activities were evaluated. Activities noted in Delivery Programs and subsequently in Operational Plans would be assessed as part of the IP&R process. Some forms of evaluation included:

- targeted evaluation around projects, strategies and grant funded activities
- targeted information around visitation and ticket sales to cultural venues and events
- targeted tourism statistics
- more and more sophisticated planning with measurable outcomes assist councils in reportage.

'Reporting on libraries is huge given how little state funding they get.'

Larger councils also reported annual community satisfaction surveys or significant community engagement around consultation for the CSP as netting arts, culture and heritage evaluation. They also noted that where community consultation was formally undertaken around arts, culture and heritage, this did not net the full amount of undesignated activities discussed earlier in the interview.

Evaluation levels and methods relate to resource and capacity

Almost all councils expressed that they either didn't collect any qualitative data or, where they did, there was great room for improvement. Because most councils offer a range of services within this realm there is also a broad spectrum of approaches to evaluation. The investment in reporting and evaluation is usually proportionate to the financial investment or undertaken in the formative stages to warrant an initial investment.

By far the majority of evaluation that occurs in relation to arts and cultural services is of a quantitative nature. This is in direct contrast to the perceived benefits of the services provided. Most interviewees focused on the community benefits in terms of wellbeing, fostering positive representations and local identity and inclusion, yet the way services were evaluated was not aligned with these outcomes.

Anecdotal data collection

'Silence is agreement… but you hear about it when people are unhappy.'

Anecdotal evaluation was important for a number of councils. In many councils, which serve small populations, word of mouth was the only means used for evaluation. Importantly such mechanisms don't always highlight satisfaction; rather they may foreground dissatisfaction. This is problematic from a planning point of view because it means that councils don't have a clear picture of what is working until there is an attempt to institute change. Unless there is opposition, the status quo is maintained. This could hamper any opportunities to innovate in the sector.

Community Consultation

Broad consultation takes place in all local government areas most commonly around community engagement for the development of a CSP. Respondents noted netting significant, specific feedback on the importance of arts, culture and heritage in this process. Also, councils reported that some qualitative data is uncovered via consultation mechanisms such as Community Satisfaction Surveys. In both of these processes however, many councils did not specifically ask for feedback on arts, culture and heritage services so data across NSW is inconsistent.

Community consultation was noted as being central to the development of most cultural plans and policies in the councils that have them. Within this however there were variations around who was consulted and how that directed the outcome. Some respondents noted that community interest groups formed the basis of their consultations which meant that it was primarily existing users or advocates of the service who were informing policy development.

IT Infrastructure and data collection

Increasing uptake of information technology for capturing feedback was noted by participants. Some councils reported sophisticated online portals to solicit general feedback on all council services and some also on specific projects. Quantitative data was also mined by councils who could monitor mobile usage at events and in cultural facilities attendance. This augmented existing methods of data capture such as asking for postcodes at the point of ticket purchase.

Many councils reported using technology in a less formal way, and many small councils did not report any deployment of information technology for evaluation. Across councils, where evaluation utilising information technology is employed, there was a strong tendency to target evaluation at users. This mirrors the limitations discussed above in that councils were garnering feedback from users or advocates, not non-users.

External research

Some participants noted that they had been involved in external research projects initiated by industry groups, such as Museums and Galleries NSW and tertiary institutions such as the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. In these cases it was noted that the process was often involved but that the data gathered was invaluable for councils. These large scale evaluation exercises are simply outside of the capacity of most local governments to undertake without external support, so, though resource consumptive, are highly valued.

Of particular note councils reported that most of the studies they participated in were comparative and as such provided opportunities to benchmark their performance.

Evaluation related to infrastructure and programs

Where councils reported ownership of dedicated cultural facilities, they all reported tracking basic quantitative data as part of their standard IP&R key performance indicators. This is generally approached as a reporting requirement rather than an attempt to uncover the overall success of

facilities. Two areas of specific note where evaluation occurred were in relation to libraries and grants. Both require reporting to other government agencies. For the most part, this evaluation was reported as being of a quantitative nature.

The data collected around cultural facilities primarily includes: visitation (sometimes broken down into tourist groups, school groups etc.), number of programs (exhibitions, performances, events), and sometimes point of origin statistics. Marketing effectiveness was also noted as an area of interest.

Where the management of cultural facilities was outsourced by councils under a commercial arrangement, a more comprehensive approach to evaluation was reported. This is driven by accountability rather than a motivation to assess success.

One of the key flaws identified by respondents in relation to individual facility evaluation was that the methodology only targeted existing users. This meant that there was no way to capture data around why people were not attending or utilising services.

4.9 Question 8

- What do you perceive as the value or benefit of arts, culture and heritage provisions in your LGA?

Respondents were asked to indicate perceived value to council and perceived value to the community of the activities and services already discussed. Respondents strongly and overwhelmingly offered that investment in arts and cultural activities delivers critical mutual benefits.

Arts, culture and heritage is a sustainability driver

The way that councils articulated the value of their investment in arts and cultural services was as complex as the way that those services are resourced. While many councils are increasingly convinced of the economic contribution that arts, culture and heritage can make, they are also keen to highlight how this ultimately benefits the community in terms of health and wellbeing. As such the investment is self-sustaining: investment creates opportunities for community participation and the economic benefits enable ongoing investment which makes those communities more vibrant, confident and attractive to visitors and new residents.

> *'Cultural facilities provide a social space; they are the community lounge room.'*

Contributes to the health and wellbeing of the existing community

The vast majority of respondents had strong views about the qualitative benefits of investment in arts, culture and heritage. Councils of all sizes across all of NSW described arts, culture and heritage activities as critical to their communities. No councils responded that there was little or no value to the community.

In scenarios such as ongoing drought, industry decline, economic hardship or places with high levels of new migrant communities or significant social issues, councils all reported that investment in arts, culture and heritage provides a means for giving communities a point of engagement from which positive outcomes can be developed. Investment is also seen to have the capacity to build confidence and pride within communities as well as in individuals. This aspect of value was noted in both urban and regional areas.

> *'The idea of reinvention especially in the time of mergers or disasters is really important to small LGAs.'*

However, many respondents noted that some of these benefits – particularly in the realm of health, integration and wellbeing – were difficult to articulate in formal reportage. This correlates with a number of responses to the earlier research question about how councils evaluate services, where councils from smallest to large commonly noted that qualitative analysis was limited or non-existent.

There is also a clear focus on the potential for arts, culture and heritage to contribute to social cohesion, particularly in uniting diverse communities. Culturally and linguistically diverse residents were seen to use arts and cultural activities as a way of finding a common ground, or a point of entry, into new

communities. Likewise, intergenerational divides were reported as being bridged through engagement in arts and cultural activities.

Through such engagement there was also a focus on capacity building amongst communities which in turn generated pride amongst residents. This also extended to building the capacity of individual community segments including Aboriginal communities, youth, older people, disability groups and low SES constituents. Exploiting opportunities for engagement was increasingly important in regional communities where lifestyle had changed considerably in the face of technology. For example, one participant noted that as bank branches closed in regional towns, there were fewer opportunities for residents to meet and converse informally. As a result the social capacity of arts, culture and heritage activities to provide opportunities for informal exchange was of paramount importance.

Councils increasingly see the economic potential of arts, culture and heritage

> *'We'll never have the funds to build stuff, so it's recognising our local culture that is key to cultural tourism.'*

Where economic value was noted, respondents were quick to point out that dollar investment will never be matched by income to council. Economic value was mainly reported as coming from increased tourism which contributes to economic sustainability.

> *'Tourism and arts are the future when agriculture winds back.'*

The economic benefits were explicitly noted by over half of the respondents. It is important to add that, while this was identified in terms of benefits to local economies and businesses, the flow-on effects were often couched in terms of the benefit to the broader community. That is, communities that are more economically viable have employment prospects for residents and newcomers that aid in building pride and confidence.

Where economic benefits were clearly foregrounded, councils from medium sized to very large frequently reported attempts to encourage a 'stay and spend' economy through the creation of cultural precincts. This trend is also reinforced by the research findings about evaluation where it was very evident that visitor and tourist numbers are increasingly frequently overtly tracked by councils. In many cases where economic benefits were foregrounded the participants noted that quantifying return is about justifying financial investment or convincing sceptics. While return on investment might be an argument for initiating a project, it is often underpinned by the knowledge of the ensuing social value that is not as easily articulated. One responded expressed this by stating that they would exploit 'all arguments' to get an idea 'over the line' if it is in the community's interest. Even though the respondent saw broad social benefits to an investment in arts, culture and heritage often it was an economic argument that influenced decision makers.

Councils deploy the arts to retain and attract new populations

> *'Our investment in this area is near to our hearts, it shows that we don't necessarily live and die by sport and recreation.'*

> *'People don't move to the country for cows and dry grass, they want to move because it's got culture.'*

Part of the strategy of a number of rural and regional councils to attract new residents as well as retain existing residents, for example *Evocities*, was bound up in providing a range of services to appeal to a broad demographic.[16] For these councils, an investment in arts, culture and heritage was about creating 'attractive' and 'liveable' cities. Offering a range of artistic and cultural experiences – via permanent cultural facilities, recurrent festivals and one-off events – was reported as a way of ensuring that there was always 'something on' for the community and visitors alike. Diversification also increased the range of potential participants meaning that there was 'something for everyone'. These were common

[16] The Evocities are a partnership between Albury City Council, Armidale Dumaresq Council, Bathurst Regional Council, Dubbo City Council, Orange City Council, Tamworth Regional Council and Wagga Wagga City Council. The main objective of the campaign is to encourage capital city residents to move to an Evocity.

strategies cited in discussions around sustainable communities. Such strategies were used to develop a unique sense of identity within local government areas and make them more vibrant places in which young people could see a future for themselves. They were also explicitly aimed at building the identity and perception of the area beyond its borders. As was often noted, if councils wanted their areas to be attractive to new residents they needed to ensure that there was something for people to do once they arrived.

4.10 Question 9

- Would you like to offer any further information about arts, culture and heritage activities within your LGA?

At the conclusion of formal questions, participants were given the opportunity to add any further information. Comments have been grouped into three main areas:

Council reform

Proposed amalgamations of councils affected the arts, culture and heritage realm. On a practical level, councils who were subject to proposed amalgamation were reviewing how they support community activities. The context of the wholesale rethinking of council operations meant that arts and culture as 'non-core' services were not a high priority, except libraries. The precarious situation for many councils had an impact on staff sentiment also. For those earmarked for amalgamation there was uncertainty about what this meant for existing services, particularly when there was a different level of service being offered by previously distinct councils who were about to merge. There was also a lack of clarity around how demographically diverse councils would unite and what this would mean for the identity of communities. In smaller councils where arts and culture is primarily supported through undesignated budgets or in kind, councils reported on the very precarious future of that support.

'All in kind support is up in the air due to the merger.'

There were some (a very distinct minority) positive sentiments about the possibilities of amalgamation. This positivity was, however, tempered by caution and included having increased access to new staff expertise or capacity for some under resourced councils, and access to new facilities, budgets and assets.

Funding

Insufficient funding from rate base and other spheres of government was one of the common issues raised in this section. The other was the difficulty for council staff to make a case to convince the community (ratepayers) and elected members (councillors) to fund culture services as this was often perceived as a diversion of funds from 'essential' services. Some specific aspects of these discussions are grouped below.

State and federal funds

- respondents indicated the usefulness, yet paucity of such funds.
- council priorities do not necessarily mirror key priority areas in state and federal policy.
- cross border collaborations are highly logical but difficult for boundary based councils due to funder constraints.
- dissatisfaction around the perceived preference given by the state government to prioritise funding regional arts, larger regional centres and western Sydney/metropolitan areas.
- smaller councils reported frequently that lack of staff with expertise meant the application and acquittal process can be onerous.

Regional arts organisations

- the role/efficacy of regional arts organisations received many unsolicited comments due to the fact that for many councils it is their main identified culture spend. Also general managers often had to put significant effort into convincing councillors to recognise the benefits of this expenditure.

- some councils expressed the enormous benefit to the community, for a small outlay from council, that the regional arts organisation provided. In particular, councils that would never have the capacity to provide this service alone valued regional arts organisations. Secondly, councils appreciated that the regional arts organisation can work with sectors of the community in experimental and innovative ways that council would not have the expertise or capacity, or popular mandate to do.
- some issues were around consulting with/reporting to council. The connection between council outlay and the alignment of the work of the regional arts organisation to council's plans, policies and key performance indicators was very frequently reported as not robust. For general managers, this meant that making a case for value for money, and thus ongoing funding, was difficult.
- respondents from small towns described that parochialism around travelling events meant significant travel for satellite town residents to larger centres to access activities and the smaller towns thus not receiving the fiscal and social benefits of hosting events.
- several respondents indicated that while council was allocating funds to a regional arts organisation, the organisation had become a competitor for state government funds.

Cost shifting around infrastructure and operations

- respondents indicated arts, culture and heritage were common victims when councils are already resource poor and the ratepayer base is static or declining.
- the burden created by cost shifting around libraries was a common concern across all types of councils.[17]
- concerns were raised around the perceived inequity between smaller regional communities and larger regional centres, where income generation was extremely limited, and metropolitan local government areas.

The Research Project

Given that this survey involved general managers giving their time during a busy period, a surprising number of participants offered thanks to LGNSW for undertaking this research. The overwhelming majority of respondents saw value in the research and were pleased to be given the opportunity to articulate what they actually do.

This was seen as an opportunity for respondents to be completely frank about their opinions, management methods and communities. Participating afforded a rare chance to identify the range of activities that they support and reflect upon and appraise this work as much of their time is usually taken up thinking about perceived 'core services'.

Many participants reported that they have to 'fight' for every project, or allocation of funds, and that this research would highlight the depth of unquantified expenditure and provide support for and recognition of their efforts.

Some however noted it must also be approached with a cautionary flag in that scrutiny can very easily lead to cuts. Some councils spends were embedded into budgets in a way that avoids this.

[17] LGNSW makes annual pre budget submission to the NSW State Government highlighting this point and calling for a redress of the increasing burden on councils. LGNSW, Pre Budget Submission 2017/18, http://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/imce-uploads/206/lgnsw-submission-to-nsw-budget-2017-18.pdf, accessed May 2017.

5 Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed in response to the research findings. They are designed to guide future arts, culture and heritage advocacy and sector requirements. The recommendations are also designed to be a tool for councils, funding bodies and stakeholders.

Recommendation 1

Build local government capacity to support integration of cultural plans into Integrated Planning and Reporting processes and documentation

The way that Integrated Planning and Reporting documentation reflects councils' commitment to arts, culture and heritage activities varies greatly across NSW from fully embedded to barely mentioned, with many councils indicating arts, culture and heritage appears only in operational plans and annual budgets. There is a strong identified need for action to rectify this because less than robust planning leads to less effective evaluation, resourcing and recognition.

This recommendation also responds to those participants who noted that cultural plans had been written but not resourced. Integrating cultural planning into the cascade of planning from Community Engagement through the Community Strategic Plan and subsequent operational and delivery plans will ensure that the investment made in planning is fruitful.

Recommendation 2

Build local government capacity in qualitative evaluation strategies

Evaluation in any form was not a strong point for many medium to small councils. Most NSW councils also noted that qualitative evaluation was more difficult than quantitative. A majority of councils also noted that quantitative data was important for grant acquittals but that small numbers generated by their projects did not demonstrate the immense qualitative value thus being able to articulate quality was essential.

Councils indicated that their approaches to measuring arts, culture and heritage in community satisfaction surveys were either mixed or indeed absent. LGNSW should work with councils to develop benchmarks for including arts, culture and heritage activities within these broad community surveys. Providing training in qualitative research (including measurable cultural outcomes) methods will help to build the capacity of local government to demonstrate the full benefits of its services.

Recommendation 3

Investigate options to apply the current NSW libraries model to council arts, culture and heritage arenas

Councils all reported the regularity and orderly manner in which their libraries are evaluated and reported. This was due to regulations around the adoption of the *NSW Library Act 1939* by councils which makes them eligible for state government subsidies. The evaluation and reportage model that libraries in NSW use is excellent as it provides not only comprehensive annual sector data, but year-by-year builds a case for trends in funding. Moving beyond evaluation of individual services and programs, there is scope for LGNSW to take a lead role in exploring with its members the feasibility of establishing more formal reporting mechanisms by which local government investment in arts, culture and heritage services can be planned, tracked and reported. This will provide greater visibility, and thus recognition, for the extensive work in this area.

Recommendation 4

Develop art, culture and heritage planning and policy resources for councils

In the long term develop a suite of useful model plans and policies for use by members including: public art policy, museum/gallery collections policy, de-accession strategy, sample plans and sample organisation charts. This would assist councils across NSW to begin to take a more uniform approach to a) having policies and plans and b) having good policies and plans.

Recommendation 5

Ongoing advocacy with other spheres of government and stakeholders

This report should be used as further evidence to advocate to state and federal governments for sustained and improved investment in arts, heritage and culture within local government. Strategies include:

- Raise awareness of issues with agencies such as the Office of Local Government, Create NSW and Screen NSW, Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Planning and Environment and other peak bodies in the sector such as Regional Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW
- Advocate for more interdisciplinary funding opportunities for councils in order for them to facilitate the integration and coordination of arts, culture and heritage services and programs
- Advocate for improved recognition of the value of cross-border partnerships for councils.

Recommendation 6

Raise awareness among councils and stakeholders about what is happening in arts, culture and heritage in local government and how it occurs

One of the key outcomes of this research is an acknowledgement of the complex, significant investment, whether financial or in-kind, that all local councils make in the realm of arts, culture and heritage activities. Their investment makes communities happier, healthier and more robust via the creation of opportunities for social interaction, learning, engagement, tourism and economic development. This achievement should be celebrated.

Moreover, the research has clearly demonstrated that the amount of arts, culture and heritage delivered by local government is far greater than traditionally quantified and an understanding of this is crucial to councils and their stakeholders in devising frameworks and strategies to foster and improve a more strategic approach to their services.

Recommendation 7

Raise awareness of the important place of heritage in councils

Respondents all indicated management of heritage, but the vast majority indicated that this generally took place in a separate directorate and planning framework from other council cultural services. This was due to the legislative and regulatory framework around recognising and managing heritage.

Heritage collections also were noted as frequently managed as part of recreation or asset management programs. When being questioned about any relevant plans or policies, larger councils noted that they would frequently cite a significant number of council plans that were closely interrelated but were not necessarily developed in an integrated or cross divisional manner. LGNSW has the opportunity to work with its members to explore ways in which arts, culture and heritage functions can be better co-planned and coordinated.

Recommendation 8

Explore ways for local councils to build capacity in destination management planning

This research has revealed that there is a trend in some councils for arts, culture and heritage to move out of traditional community/social services directorates into corporate services or economic development and tourism directorates. This was evident across the state from small rural to metropolitan councils. These changes reflect a desire to drive a visitor economy as well as to make places more attractive and liveable for existing residents. Therefore there is an opportunity to assist in capacity building for those councils that are interested in moving in this direction but do not as yet have the skills to realise their goals.

Recommendation 9

Undertake further research

Select a group of representative councils and revisit this report with questions around quantity. Gather quantitative statistics and reflect on the ratio of designated to undesignated funds and services across the sample and also the difference between total identified expenditure and infrastructure and total undefined expenditure and infrastructure. This research would extend, in a quantitative manner, the evidence presented in this report about the disparity between total amount of arts, culture and heritage activities of councils versus the amount that would traditionally be calculated and articulated. While the research will require a significant level of scrutiny by sample councils, to do the work at this level of detail will provide as true a statistic as possible.

6 Summary of Process

6.1 Research Process

1. Interviewers undertook online research into each council including:

    - establishing the organisational structure of the council noting any directorates and how arts, culture and heritage activities were positioned within that structure
    - noting specific arts, culture and heritage related policy
    - noting specific arts, culture and heritage related infrastructure
    - noting specific arts, culture and heritage activities and services.

2. Analysis of the council tourism portal was also undertaken as a way of identifying in more detail the way in which councils promoted arts, culture and heritage.

3. Checks were undertaken as to the status of councils pending amalgamation and thus under administration. In these cases the acting general manager would be the contact person.

4. Contacting councils and arranging and conducting interviews. During the interview:

    - the research project and purpose was explained
    - a definition of 'arts, culture and heritage' was offered
    - nine set questions were asked
    - interviewees were given the opportunity to add any additional information.

5. Information from the interview was transposed into a spread sheet.

6. Councils which could not be contacted were given the opportunity to participate via an online survey.

7. Results were analysed by the two researchers and consolidated into this report.

In order to achieve a representative sample for the purposes of comparative analysis, the interviews were carried out in a discursive manner. This meant that where information on a particular area of service was not offered, interviewers would prompt participants by asking additional questions often based on knowledge recorded during pre-interview internet research. The combination of data gathering methods meant that the researcher was able to capture a comprehensive picture of the activities supported in each council area.

The study concluded with two open-ended questions. The first was designed to elicit a qualitative response on the value of investment in the identified activities. The second was an opportunity for participants to offer any other information that they thought was relevant, that they particularly wanted noted or that they thought was not covered by the interview.

6.2 Delegation beyond general manager

In some cases the general manager delegated research participation to a staff member:

- councils with larger populations were more likely to put forward a delegated staff member to participate in the interview.
- some general managers deemed that delegating would afford a higher level of detailed information from expert staff.
- participation often fell to directors who were not always able to articulate detail around activities within other directorates. This was mitigated, where possible, with further primarily web-based research beyond interviews.
- some newly appointed interim general managers did not have the corporate knowledge across council to complete the interview which also resulted in a delegation.

6.3 Logistical issues and their impact on the research

The most significant logistical issue to have an impact on this research was the changing landscape of councils in NSW as a result of local government reform processes. This presented a number of related challenges:

- general managers of councils involved in amalgamation expressed frequently that not only did they have additional consultation and reporting burdens during this period; they were faced with anxious, sometimes angry communities and associated politics.
- there were several weeks and months in which the research was suspended as it was not appropriate given the administrative burden this reform entailed.
- the corporate knowledge of councils involved in amalgamations was diminished as interim general managers were overseeing new council areas.

7 Summary of Data

7.1 Respondent profile

At the time of the commencement of the research there were 152 councils in NSW. As at the conclusion of data collection at 23 August 2016 the number of councils was reduced to 129.[18] This has impacted upon the final statistics by reducing the indicated quantity of councils contacted because some contact councils merged. In some cases, more than one constituent council of an amalgamated council was interviewed prior to the amalgamation. For purposes of currency, this report presents findings as they existed at the time of the data collection period and statistics have not been further adjusted to reflect subsequent reduction in the number of councils so as to be reflective of the actual research period.

In the process of the research, phone interviews were conducted with a total of 75 councils, as listed in Table 2.

In addition to the phone interviews conducted LGNSW also received 19 responses to the online survey that was released as a last chance opportunity for councils to input data.[19] The level of detail in these responses was varied - ranging from very minimal to highly detailed. The councils that responded via this portal are listed in Table 3.

In summary the total number of responses received was 94. This constitutes 72% of the current councils in NSW.[20] This figure is complicated by the fact that some councils have merged since the data was collected. At a minimum it represents 61% participation rate.

Table 2: Telephone Interviews Conducted with Council Staff

	Council Name	Area	Population	Metro/Urban Rural/Regional
1	Albury City Council	306	50243	R/R
2	Ballina Shire Council	485	41335	R/R
3	Bathurst Regional Council	3818	41051	R/R
4	Bega Valley Shire Council	6277	33313	R/R
5	Blacktown City Council	240	325185	M/U
6	Bland Shire Council	8560	6010	R/R
7	Blayney Shire Council	1526	7330	R/R
8	Blue Mountains City Council	1432	79225	R/R
9	Bogan Shire Council	14612	3037	R/R
10	Boorowa Council[21]			R/R
11	Bourke Shire Council	41652	2996	R/R
12	Brewarrina Shire Council	19188	1940	R/R
13	Broken Hill City Council	178	19048	R/R
14	Byron Shire Council	567	31612	R/R
15	Canterbury-Bankstown Council[22]	110	350983*	M/U
16	Carrathool Shire Council	18940	2792	R/R
17	Central Darling Shire Council	53534	2070	R/R

[18] Office of Local Government, 'Council Contact Details', https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/content/download-council-contact-details, accessed 15 September 2016. As at the time of final drafting of this report, the number of councils is 128.
[19] Canterbury-Bankstown Council was interviewed on the phone however it also completed an online survey. In this instance, to avoid repetition, it has been counted in the phone interviews rather than the online.
[20] Approximately, as some councils have been flagged for amalgamation, but have entered into court proceedings.
[21] Boorowa Council became Hilltops Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of amalgamation with Harden Shire Council and Young Shire Council. We interviewed Boorowa prior to the amalgamation.
[22] Canterbury-Bankstown Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of Bankstown Council and Canterbury Council. The interview was conducted with a former Bankstown Council representative.

	Council Name	Area	Population	Metro/Urban Rural/Regional
18	City of Parramatta Council[23]	82	215725*	M/U
19	Cobar Shire Council	45605	5024	R/R
20	Conargo Shire Council[24]			R/R
21	Coolamon Shire Council	2431	4276	R/R
22	Coonamble Shire Council	9925	4279	R/R
23	Council of the City of Sydney	27	191918	M/U
24	Cowra Shire Council	2810	12551	R/R
25	Fairfield City Council	102	201427	M/U
26	Forbes Shire Council	4720	9664	R/R
27	Georges River Council[25]	38	146916*	M/U
28	Gilgandra Shire Council	4836	4488	R/R
29	Glen Innes Severn Council	5487	8905	R/R
30	Gloucester Shire Council[26]			R/R
31	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	3220	29230	R/R
32	Griffith City Council	1640	25425	R/R
33	Gundagai Shire Council[27]			R/R
34	Guyra Shire Council[28]			R/R
35	Gwydir Shire Council	9274	5104	R/R
36	Hay Shire Council	11329	2962	R/R
37	Junee Shire Council	2030	6227	R/R
38	Kyogle Council	3589	9538	R/R
39	Lachlan Shire Council	14973	6748	R/R
40	Lake Macquarie City Council	648	200796	R/R
41	Lane Cove Municipal Council	11	33996	M/U
42	Leeton Shire Council	1167	11539	R/R
43	Lismore City Council	1290	44637	R/R
44	Liverpool City Council	306	195355	M/U
45	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	5086	7763	R/R
46	Lockhart Shire Council	2896	3021	R/R
47	Mid-Coast Council[29]	10,053	90504*	R/R
48	Murrumbidgee Shire Council[30]			R/R
49	Muswellbrook Shire Council	3407	16851	R/R
50	Narrabri Shire Council	13028	13685	R/R
51	Narrandera Shire Council	4117	6030	R/R

[23] City of Parramatta Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of parts of Parramatta City, The Hills Shire, Auburn City, Holroyd City and Hornsby Shire councils. The interview was conducted with a former Parramatta City Council representative.
[24] Conargo Shire Council became Edward River Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of amalgamation with Deniliquin council. The interview was conducted before the amalgamation.
[25] Georges River Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of Hurstville City Council and Kogarah City Council. The interview was conducted with a former Kogarah City Council representative.
[26] Gloucester Shire Council became Mid-Coast Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of amalgamation with Great Lakes and Greater Taree City councils.
[27] Gundagai Shire Council became Cootamundra-Gundagai Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of their amalgamation with Cootamundra Shire Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.
[28] Guyra Shire Council became Armidale Regional Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of amalgamation with Armidale Dumaresq Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.
[29] Mid-Coast Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of Gloucester Shire Council, Great Lakes Council and Greater Taree City Council. The interview was conducted with a Greater Taree City Council representative.
[30] Murrumbidgee Shire Council became Murrumbidgee Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of their amalgamation with Jerilderie Shire Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.

	Council Name	Area	Population	Metro/Urban Rural/Regional
52	Narromine Shire Council	5264	6872	R/R
53	Newcastle City Council	187	158553	R/R
54	Northern Beaches Council[31]	254	263413*	M/U
55	Oberon Council	3628	5270	R/R
56	Orange City Council	284	40869	R/R
57	Penrith City Council	405	190428	M/U
58	Sutherland Shire Council	334	223192	M/U
59	Tamworth Regional Council[32]	9894	59743	R/R
60	Temora Shire Council	2803	5995	R/R
61	Tenterfield Shire Council	7332	6973	R/R
62	The Council of the Shire of Wakool[33]			
63	Tumbarumba Shire Council[34]			R/R
64	Tweed Shire Council	1309	90114	R/R
65	Upper Hunter Shire Council	8102	14650	R/R
66	Upper Lachlan Shire Council	7129	7586	R/R
67	Uralla Shire Council	3230	6370	R/R
68	Urana Shire Council[35]			R/R
69	Walcha Council	6267	3087	R/R
70	Warren Shire Council	10763	2910	R/R
71	Warrumbungle Shire Council	12381	9778	R/R
72	Weddin Shire Council	3410	3711	R/R
73	Wentworth Shire Council	26267	6832	R/R
74	Western Plains Regional Council[36]	7536	50627*	R/R
75	Wollongong City Council	684	205231	R/R

[31] Northern Beaches Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of Manly, Pittwater and Warringah councils. The interview was conducted with a Pittwater Council representative.
[32] The response from Tamworth Regional Council was provided by email after a number of attempts to schedule an interview failed.
[33] The Council of the Shire of Wakool became Murray River Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of their amalgamation with Murray Shire Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.
[34] Tumbarumba Shire Council became Snowy Valleys Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of their amalgamation with Tumut Shire Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.
[35] Urana Shire Council became Federation Council on 12 May 2016 as a result of their amalgamation with Corowa Shire Council. The interview was conducted prior to the amalgamation.
[36] Western Plains Regional Council was formed on 12 May 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of Dubbo and Wellington councils. The interview was conducted with a Dubbo City Council representative.

Table 3: Online Respondents

	Council Name	Area	Population	
1	Armidale Regional Council	8,621	29946*	R/R
2	Berrigan Shire Council	2066	8365	R/R
3	Burwood Council	7	35298	M/U
4	City of Canada Bay Council	20	84906	M/U
5	Council of the City of Ryde	41	112545	M/U
6	Federation Council	5685	12,602*	R/R
7	Gunnedah Shire Council	4992	12688	R/R
8	Hawkesbury City Council	2776	65114	M/U
9	Kempsey Shire Council	3379	29361	R/R
10	Mid-Western Regional Council	8758	23843	R/R
11	Moree Plains Shire Council	17929	14250	R/R
12	Mosman Municipal Council	9	29983	M/U
13	Nambucca Shire Council	1493	19529	R/R
14	Port Stephens Council	859	68935	R/R
15	Rockdale City Council	28	106712	M/U
16	The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill	6	14491	M/U
17	The Council of the Municipality of Kiama	258	21047	R/R
18	The Council of the Shire of Hornsby	462	166855	M/U
19	The Hills Shire Council	401	180214	M/U

As noted in the tables above, the range of councils contacted represents a diversity of geographical regions, land areas and population. Where councils, which were indicative of a particular size and population base had not responded to the initial announcement of the research, LGNSW approached them directly to ensure a broad spread of examples.

Where councils, which subsequently merged, were interviewed prior to amalgamations the population and area of the council is discussed in this report as it was at the time of interview. Councils that have amalgamated did not all have statistical data available on population and area at the time of writing. Where the amalgamation was a straightforward coupling of existing whole councils we have estimated the population and area on the basis of existing information. Where the amalgamation was more complex, incorporating parts of numerous other local government areas, we have not provided an estimate of area or population.

Table 4: Number and Position of Respondents

Number of respondents	Position of Respondents
37	General Managers
2	Director Community and Culture
1	Director Community and Recreation
1	Director Community Development
3	Director Community Services
1	Director Community, Corporate and Regulatory Services
1	Director Corporate Services
1	Director Corporate and Business Services
1	Director Corporate, Community and Development
4	Directors of individual cultural facilities (galleries/theatres/arts centres etc.)

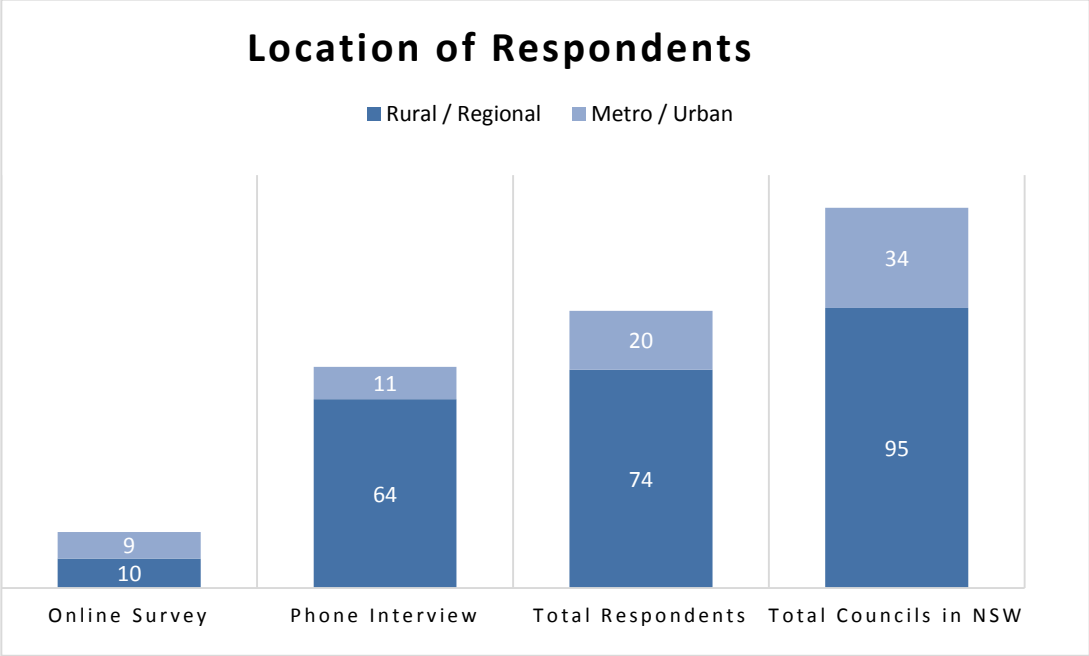
Of all of the 75 interviews conducted by telephone, 37 were with general managers.

There were several instances where phone interviews were conducted with more than one staff member at a given council. Some interviews were carried out in conference with the general manager and other selected staff. At other times a general manager was the first point of contact and then there

was a follow-up conversation with a delegate who was deemed by the general manager to have a greater level of detailed knowledge.[37]

The next most frequent level of authority the general managers would delegate was to that of director. This included a range of directorate parameters as they vary from council to council. It also included a number of directors of individual cultural facilities who would usually report to a director or a manager in the council organisational structure.

Graph 1: Location of Respondents



As shown in Graph 1 above, the total 94 councils that provided information for the study:

- 20 are metro/urban
- 74 are rural/regional areas.

Currently the Office of Local Government lists the split of councils in NSW as:

- 34 metro/urban
- 95 rural/regional.[38]

This means that, according to Office of Local Government criterion, 26.35% of councils are designated metro/urban. The study included 21.27% of councils designated as metro/urban.

This is slightly below the overall state ratio of rural/regional vs. metro/urban. In part this is explained by the size of metropolitan councils and in turn the availability of staff. It was seen to be essential to ensure that rural and regional views were fully considered because of a perceived lack of visibility of cultural services where little or no expenditures are readily identified. In order to address this it was deemed important to prioritise rural and regional areas in the first instance during data collection.

7.2 Research Context

This research sits within a substantial body of work in NSW and Australia. This study does not include an extensive literature review, as the research itself charts a methodology that is specific to the

[37] Where a general manager was involved in the conversation they have been listed as the primary contributor.
[38] NSW Office of Local Government, Council Contact Details, https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/content/download-council-contact-details, accessed 15 September 2016.

hypothesis. Much existing research has informed the development of this research project however, other research has had a slightly different focus. It is often formulated around infrastructure, financial inputs and outputs, economic outcomes and participation. One such example is the Delloite Touche Tohmatsu 2015 report *Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy — a key to Sydney's success,* which has detailed and comprehensive mapping and analysis of the arts infrastructure in Western Sydney and comparisons to greater Sydney.[39]

Moreover, much research addresses arts, culture and heritage service provision from a broader perspective, beyond local government. Common themes of existing literature include analyses of the economic contribution of cultural activities and a focus on the capacity of arts, culture and heritage to revitalise communities or provide a foundation for city and regional renewal. In the former case, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Statistical Overview of Arts, Culture and Heritage in Australia* provides data on the level of investment and participation in the sector.[40] In the latter, *Adding Value! A report on the economic impact of the cultural infrastructure of the Evocities of NSW* for example specifically considers this topic in relation to regional NSW.[41]

Another perspective that is represented in the body of literature is analysis that aims to identify levels of participation and in turn satisfaction. The University of Technology's 2015 report *Why Local Government Matters*, and Museums and Galleries NSW's *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery*[42] and *Guess Who's Going to the Museum*[43] are some key sources in this area. At a national level, the Australia Council's *More than Bums on Seats: Australian participation in the arts*, also considers broad questions around participation with some relevance to local government in NSW.[44]

There is excellent and highly relevant recent research around the value and trends in public libraries including the Civica Group and University of Technology Sydney's, *The intrinsic value of libraries as public spaces* 2016 and the State Library of NSW's *Collaborative Library Service Delivery: A Guide to Regional Library Management Models in NSW*, 2015.[45]

Finally, there is a body of literature on more specific aspects of cultural services that are most often distinguished upon disciplinary lines. Most recent here is the Museums Australia (Victoria) report on *Local Government & Cultural Collections in Victoria*.[46] Public library statistics gathered by the State Library of NSW also provide significant data in the realm of information services across NSW.[47]

It is important to note that literature around arts, culture and heritage is premised on varied definition of arts, culture and heritage. In many cases, the definition is somewhat narrow and closely related to culture provision in cultural infrastructure. Some reports include museums, but may not extend to heritage places for example. For these reasons, the current report draws on this body of literature generally.

---

[39] Delloite Touche Tohmatsu, *Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy,* https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-economics-western-sydney-cultural-infrastructure-report-250215.pdf, accessed 10 October 2016.
[40] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4172.0 - Arts, culture and heritage in Australia: A Statistical Overview,* 2014, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4172.0~2014~Main%20Features~Funding%20by%20Government%20and%20Business~8, accessed 15 September 2016.
[41] Michael Huxley, *Adding Value! A report on the economic impact of the cultural infrastructure of the Evocities of NSW,* Museums and Galleries NSW, 2014.
[42] Matthew Mackenzie & Michael Huxley, *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery? A strategic audience evaluation and development study,* Museums & Galleries NSW, Museums and Galleries NSW, 2010.
[43] Michael Huxley, *Guess Who's Going to the Museum? Museum Audience Evaluation Study,* Museums and Galleries NSW, 2015.
[44] Australia Council for the Arts, *More than Bums on Seats: Australian participation in the arts,* Australia Council for the Arts, Sydney, 2010.
[45] Civica Group, *The Intrinsic Value of Libraries as Public Spaces,* 2016, https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/Civica%2BIntrinsic%2Bvalue%2Bof%2Blibraries%2Breport.pdf, accessed 15 November 2016.
[46] Kitty Owens , *Local Government & Cultural Collections in Victoria,* Museums Australia (Victoria), 2016.
[47] State Library of NSW, *Public Library Statistics 2013/14,* http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013_14statistics.pdf, accessed 15 September 2016.

Select References

Andersen, Lisa & Malone, Margaret (eds), *All Culture is Local: Good Practice in Regional Cultural Mapping & Planning from Local Government*, Cultural Asset Mapping in Regional Australia, 2013

Create NSW, *Create in NSW: NSW Art and Cultural Policy Framework*, 2015

Create NSW, http://www.create.nsw.gov.au/

Australia Council for the Arts, *More than bums on seats: Australian participation in the arts*, Australia Council for the Arts, Sydney, 2010

Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4172.0 - Arts, culture and heritage in Australia: A Statistical Overview*, 2014, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4172.0~2014~Main%20Features~Funding%20by%20Government%20and%20Business~8

Bennett, J., Woods, R., Bower, N., Bruce, S. and O'Connor, G.,*Creative Councils for Creative Communities,* Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney, 2015

Civica Group, *The Intrinsic Value of Libraries as Public Spaces*, 2016, https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/Civica%2BIntrinsic%2Bvalue%2Bof%2Blibraries%2Breport.pdf

Delloite Touche Tohmatsu, *Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy — a key to Sydney's success,* 2015, https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-economics-western-sydney-cultural-infrastructure-report-250215.pdf

Hunting, S.A., Ryan, R. & Dowler, B., *Collaborative Library Service Delivery: A guide to regional library management models in NSW,* Centre for Local Government, University of Technology Sydney, 2015

Huxley, M., *NSW Museum & Gallery Sector Census and Survey*, Museums and Galleries NSW, 2013

Huxley, M., *Adding Value! A report on the economic impact of the cultural infrastructure of the Evocities of NSW*, Museums and Galleries NSW, 2014

Huxley, M., *Guess Who's Going to the Museum? Museum Audience Evaluation Study*, Museums and Galleries NSW, 2015

Larcombe, F. A., *A History of Local Government in NSW 1831 - 1906*, Sydney University Press, 1976

Local Government NSW, 2017/18 Pre Budget Submission, http://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/imce-uploads/206/lgnsw-submission-to-nsw-budget-2017-18.pdf

Mackenzie, Matthew & Huxley, Michael, *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery? A strategic audience evaluation and development study by Museums & Galleries NSW*, Museums and Galleries NSW, 2010

Mansfield, T., Winter, C., Griffith, C., Dockerty, A., Brown, T., *Innovation Study: Challenges and Opportunities for Australia's Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums*, Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation, CSIRO and Smart Services Co-operative Research Centre, August 2014

Museums and Galleries NSW, http://mgnsw.org.au/sector/about-us/

Neil, I., *Born 1883, Still Going Strong!, In Commemoration of the Centenary of the Local Government Association of NSW*, Local Government and Shires Association, Sydney, 1983

NSW Government, *Stronger Councils: Stronger Communities*, https://www.strongercouncils.nsw.gov.au/

Office of Environment and Heritage, http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/, accessed 15 September 2016

Office of Local Government, 'Council Contact Details', https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/content/download-council-contact-details, accessed 15 September 2016

Owens, Kitty, *Local Government & Cultural Collections in Victoria*, Museums Australia (Victoria), *2016*

Ryan, R., Hastings, C., Woods, R., Lawrie, A., Grant, B. 2015 *Why Local Government Matters: Summary Report*, 2015, Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, University of Technology, Sydney Australia

State Library of NSW, 'Public Library Statistics 2013/14', http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013_14statistics.pdf, accessed 15 September 2016