

City of Casey

National Cultural Policy Submission

Please note this is an officer's submission from the City of Casey and the submission has not been endorsed by Council.

1. **Are you submitting this submission:** On behalf of government or government body.

About City of Casey and our flagship cultural precinct, Bunjil Place

City of Casey is one of Victoria's largest and fastest growing municipalities. Located in Melbourne's outer South-East, Casey has a current population of 365,000 and is expected to reach 550,000 people by 2041. Our growing community is young, with our largest single cohort being children under four, and it is diverse, with just over two-fifths of Casey residents speaking a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021).

Bunjil Place is a unique outer metropolitan cultural and civic precinct located in Narre Warren, 35km from Melbourne's CBD. Opened in 2017, the landmark \$125 million infrastructure investment gives our community the opportunity to participate and experience the best local, Australian and international art.

Designed by leading architectural studio Francis-Jones Morehen and Thorp (fjmt) our precinct holds a public art gallery, multipurpose 'black-box' performance and exhibition space, a three-level library, 800-seat theatre, outdoor plaza and urban screen, function centre and civic area that has become a familiar and recognisable community and cultural space.

Casey is home to one of the largest communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in metropolitan Melbourne. Our Aboriginal Gathering Place is a community owned and operated place that provides Aboriginal-led programming by and for the First Nations community. The Gathering Place delivers responsive, community-driven opportunities and resources to connect and support First Nations people in the area.

City of Casey is committed to design excellence launching a Design Excellence Framework to guide future infrastructure growth and development, appointing an esteemed Design Excellence Panel and establishing Design Excellence Awards in 2022. We are the first council in Victoria to have such a comprehensive program, recognising the importance of good design to liveability in our growing our region.

2. **What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?**
Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

Challenges

- Building capacity within Local Government to facilitate culturally safe and affirming environments for First Nations artists, storytellers, and audiences in our venues and our programming.
- Enabling local First Nations communities to engage at every age and stage through art and cultural activities will require increased cross-government collaboration and investment, particularly at the nexus of art, health and wellbeing.

Opportunities

- Invest in the career development of First Nations artists and arts workers through training, skills development, networking and mentorship to accelerate career trajectories and promote retention and cultural safety.

- Using local Gathering Places, in collaboration with local government Arts and Culture Units, to provide an environment of experimentation and creative programming.
- Gathering Places can facilitate arts and wellbeing programs that address and confirm the centrality of culture to the social determinants of health for First Nations people.

A Place for Every Story

Challenges

- Our residents tell and hold the stories of a resilient, changing and 21st century Australia. Casey residents have seen themselves represented on screen in the inimitable *Kath & Kim*, however opportunities for local talent in Melbourne's South East to develop representative, nuanced stories are few. *A place for every story* means providing local opportunities to develop, present, champion and engage local creators, across art forms, through new media technologies and in emerging cultural and entertainment experiences. It means shifting from the belief the suburbs are cultural wastelands, harbingers of Australian kitsch, and peripheral to a complex, contemporary conception of Australian identity.
- Casey has a high youth population, with 23% under the age of 14, compared with the metropolitan average of 18%. Our youth population has limited knowledge of and access to traditional career pathways but is hungry for access to opportunities to develop and succeed.

Opportunities:

- Addressing the investment gap requires sustained, multi-pronged, region-based approaches to stimulating career aspirations, engagement and providing alternative training pathways for emerging artists and creators. Growth of local artist ecologies in outer metropolitan areas requires investment in:
 - o Partnerships with existing arts institutions that prioritise co-design and working within the community (not from a metro centre) across multi-year commitments.
 - o Encouraging relevant tertiary training institutions to play their part in regional development; Western Sydney Creative decadal strategy is one such model. Fund expansion of scalable, practical training programs such as Arts Centre Melbourne's RTO.
 - o Fund new or existing place-based and peer-led initiatives like Casey's Arts Agitators or GRID Series' emerging music-makers programs. Emerging outcomes from these initiatives already demonstrate their capacity to support new talent, stimulate new emerging artist collectives and creative businesses.
 - o Prioritise multi-year funding for organisations that take place-based development approaches like PTY Fairfield (NSW), Sweatshop (NSW), Western Edge Youth Arts (VIC), Outer Urban Projects (VIC) and Co-Curious (NSW) that address the opportunities gap by developing targeted programs that focused on transition pain points and provide alternative training and industry pathways into creative expression and careers for young people.
 - o Improving arts and culture infrastructure in the outer metropolitan growth areas by developing or re-purposing spaces as studios and cultural hubs, from which emerging artists can work and professionalise.
 - o Creative place-making initiatives that stimulate cultural and creative R&D.

The Centrality of the Artist

Challenges

- Standard procurement policies, together with an expectations that artists have strong comprehension of business and legal requirements in Local Government, creates barriers to effective working relationships with artists at all stages of development.
- Superannuation legislation limits artists' ability to receive contributions for work completed for local government.
- Artists who are migrants and refugees in Australia - some who have achieved success and recognition in their field and globally - experience barriers to entering the Australian sector and performance circuits. The capacity of our cultural gatekeepers to recognise excellence and celebrate non-Western artists and their practice must evolve.

Opportunities

- Chance to partner with Australian Local Government Associations and state counterparts to streamline guidance and standards on engaging artists and creators, taking a user-centric approach to contract and procurement design.¹
- We recommend superannuation reform to ensure artists receive super contributions.
- Exploration of right-fit presentation spaces, cultural and artistic leadership models and development institutions that are inclusive of people from diverse cultural, linguistic, or ethnic backgrounds.

Strong Institutions

Challenges:

- Sustained and significant population growth is driving demand in the outer-metropolitan and growth area suburbs.² This is not reflected in any recurrent national cultural investment initiatives or policy settings. Simply put, in the City of Casey, local government is the principal investor with recurrent investment of approximately \$7 million annually, and limited other public cultural funding (recurrent or capital) directly reaches our vibrant communities. Equitable investment driven by current and future population growth in the suburbs is central to a National Cultural Policy that aims to achieve and is broadly perceived to be delivering on public value. (as referenced in *Australia Council for the Arts Framing Submission*).
- Outer-metropolitan growth areas must make trade-offs in balancing investment priorities between greenfield community infrastructure development to meet population growth demands, and 'market shaping' investment in arts and creative ecologies to service a strong interest in local content, health and wellbeing, and economic development outcomes.
- Arts and Culture units have mixed success providing input into local planning initiatives. Difficulty in modelling demand for community cultural infrastructure in growth area councils, together with a lack of a) national benchmarks in cultural infrastructure provision and b) nationally-adopted definition of 'social infrastructure' and/or 'community infrastructure' mean opportunities are actively missed.
- There is absent a clear and long-term region-based vision for cultural infrastructure planning, investment risks being duplicative, 'lumpy' and not meeting emerging needs beyond our LGA boundaries.
- Public accountability for our large, nationally significant institutions to deliver value for outer-metropolitan populations is not apparent, despite their national or state-wide remits and potential role in growing new and diverse audiences.

Opportunities:

- A cross-portfolio, national approach to cultural infrastructure planning that builds on the work of Infrastructure Australia, a recommendation detailed in A New Approach's *Twenty-first century priorities for Australian arts and cultural policy* paper.
- Future generations of the National Partnership Organisations scheme, like Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations model, incentivise re-location of organisations to under-serviced metropolitan areas with high and growing population demands for cultural engagement.
- Developing national benchmarks for cultural infrastructure provision would ensure greenfield developments in growth area Councils are required to integrate cultural community infrastructure into planning and development.
- Any future Federal and State Government 'City Deal' in South East Melbourne to consider and fund cultural infrastructure. Relevantly, a key component of a deal could be re-locating or situating a new, additional site of an existing large institution within our region.
- Incorporating arts and community development infrastructure into existing local government infrastructure funds or developing new infrastructure funds that will provide access to funding

¹ For example, user-centric design approach detailed in Serpentine Legal Lab Report 1 (2021): https://serpentine-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021/07/Serpentine-Legal-Lab-Report-Final_V3.pdf

² For further information on arts and culture in Growth Area Councils we reference the submission from Victorian Outer Metropolitan Growth Area Councils in the 2020 Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions.

based on population density and other access and equality metrics. Funds should incentivise regions to collaborate.

- Ensure representation of outer metropolitan areas on Boards of major cultural institutions, and require an annual report card on engagement, activities and reach within these substantial and growing populations.

Reaching the Audience

Challenges

- Transport costs, time cost and poor public transport networks make it difficult for those living in the outer metropolitan to access our nationally significant, mostly inner-metropolitan arts and cultural institutions, activities and events. This also makes it difficult and costly for organisations to deliver sustained education programming and engagement in our region. Cumulatively, this has a significant impact on our young people's developing social capital.
- Our residents have previously lacked opportunities to participate in localised arts and cultural events and a sustained, annual programming calendar. Our community tells us they want local arts and culture experiences, and that this is important to participation in community life.
- While public investment in touring indirectly reaches our community, local government as a major investor and venue operator, is given limited influence on decision making or consulted on the relevance of cultural content for our communities.

Opportunities

- Festivals and cultural initiatives to take a city-wide approach to developing and delivering entertainment and experiences; fund local producers that understand cultural appetites of our audience.
- Re-focus audience engagement data collection and reporting from outputs to measuring outcomes. This will ensure the participation and equity gap of public investment is clear, identifiable and can direct policy development.
- Local government programmers should have stronger input into funding decisions in national touring schemes.
- Develop a Young People and Culture Framework as canvassed in the Theatre Network Australia (TNA) submission. We recommend the foundations of any framework be shaped by emerging practices and in how young people view, create, and consume culture; focus on pain points in employment pathways and training; and prioritise investment that increases cultural equity in our sector.

3. Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

- A commitment to streamlining public investment through more directed legislative arrangements that clarify roles of each level of government.
- Regular arrangements within levels of government, both ministerial and the public service, to ensure consistent policy implementation and engagement with local government as an investment partner; Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) are a key national agency.
- Stronger engagement and representation of local government through national forums, on taskforces and consultations via ALGA and National Growth Areas Alliance.
- Outer metropolitan regions and growth area councils need a long-term arts and culture vision, a decadal plan is a key mechanism to achieve sustainable development for Australia's growing and under-served populations.

4. How would you like us to attribute your words?

Organisation (if applicable): Bunjil Place, City of Casey

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