



## Submission: National Cultural Policy

### POSITION STATEMENT

The City of Perth is the capital city council of Western Australia, and under the City of Perth Act, has the object of ensuring the continued vibrancy of its cultural precincts and of maintaining and strengthening the local, national and international reputation of the Perth metropolitan area as an innovative, sustainable and vibrant global city that attracts and welcomes everyone. Under its Strategic Community Plan, activation through cultural, artistic and heritage industries, activities and events is critical to realising the City's vision of a *liveable, sustainable and prosperous* Perth.

As well as delivering its own program of cultural events, the City of Perth partners with many of the State's flagship cultural institutions and supports small to medium creative organisations through our sponsorships and grants program to deliver artistic projects which bolster the vitality, economic sustainability and cultural life of the city. While cultural events have played a key role revitalising city spaces in the aftermath of COVID 19, the City recognises the need to ensure long term cultural activation by facilitating spaces for artists and small to medium creative organisations to produce and present their work. Cultural infrastructure plays a critical role in sustaining and promoting the creative sector, which is vital to the liveability, wellbeing and economic sustainability of all Australian communities.

A key priority of the City is to unlock thousands of square metres of vacant space in existing and forgotten buildings in the Perth CBD through regulatory reforms, as achieved in South Australia and New South Wales through amendments at state level to the National Construction Code (NCC). To ensure artists in all capital cities can access workspace, which is vital to the sustainability of their creative practice, the City of Perth calls for a nationally consistent approach from the NCC where best practice state variations have been introduced and recognised. These changes will make it easier and more cost effective for small scale cultural activities to take place in existing office, industrial, retail and community facility buildings.

### CONTEXT

In 2016, the [World Cities Culture Forum](#) declared urban affordability as the most profound challenge facing arts and culture sectors in global cities, leading to two major areas of risk:

- The flight of creative people from cities to more affordable areas
- The loss of performance, exhibition, creation, production and administrative spaces where creative people work.

In 2019, City of Perth, in partnership with City of Sydney and City of Melbourne, hosted a national tour with Tim Jones, CEO of Artscape, Toronto, Canada. Artscape is a recognised leader in the domain of cultural space development and author of a policy toolkit that enables global cities to improve the creation and retention of urban cultural spaces. Tim addressed place-makers, the creative sector, developers and property owners at a fully booked out public forum in Perth and presented a series of workshops with city and state planners and key members of the creative sector at Council House.

One of the key recommendations that emerged from the Making Space for Culture workshops held by Tim Jones was for the City of Perth to support the retention of artists living and working locally. In June 2021, the City undertook 'Making Space for Culture' - an artist live/work and needs assessment study of inner city Perth. The study evaluated the current situation and determined future demand

(needs) for the provision of creative spaces. It identifies opportunities and policy mechanisms that the City could pursue to facilitate an uptake of sustainable, affordable, and long-term artist live/work spaces across its neighbourhoods - contributing to Perth's identity as a liveable, prosperous and sustainable city.

### **Findings**

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, a survey was distributed to the creative sector to gather data for the needs analysis. The City received 1,080 survey responses from local, national and international artists. Below is a snapshot of the survey data:

- 84% of respondents are interested in having creative space in Inner Perth
- Of those interested – 42% identified City of Perth as their preferred LGA area
- 53% of the demand for space is from creatives in the visual arts sector
- 28% of the demand for space is from creatives in music and performance
- 78% were interested in work space only
- 19% were interested in live/work space
- 3% were interested in live only spaces
- Over 75% of respondents identified 'affordability' as the top reason preventing them from taking up space in inner Perth.

### **MAKING SPACE FOR CULTURE – A CALL TO ACTION**

While the City of Perth applauds the five pillars that will underpin the proposed National Cultural Plan, we would like to bring to the Federal Government's attention a significant gap in relation to cultural infrastructure that must be urgently addressed – the dire lack of creative spaces needed by independent artists and small to medium creative organisations for the cultural production and presentation of their work.

Over the last three years, the City of Perth has collaborated with other Australian capital cities through the Council of Capital Cities Lord Mayors (CCCLM) to advocate for creative space development in capital cities. While each Australian capital city has slightly different scenarios and issues, there are many commonalities which can more effectively be addressed jointly at national level. Some of these have been addressed through a joint submission made by CCCLM. This submission addresses a cultural infrastructure issue pertaining to the Perth context which relates to unlocking existing spaces through adaptive reuse and regulatory reform.

#### **Variation to building classifications under the National Construction Code (NCC)**

Currently, creative spaces are defined within the planning system as 'Entertainment Venues' and, within the building system, as 'Assembly Buildings'. These categories have been designed for nightclubs, major halls and public buildings such as airports and schools. Whilst they can be adapted to apply to smaller creative spaces, this can only be done at a cost well beyond the limited resources of smaller creative enterprises, and with timeframes which make short term and temporary projects untenable. Under the current National Construction Code, building types are separated into 16 classes, two of which apply to live music and small arts venues: Class 6 and Class 9b.<sup>i</sup>

In May 2016, the South Australian Government initiated variations at a State level to the National Construction Code that effectively enable certain live music and small art venues to be designated as Class 6 buildings (with fewer assessment hurdles) instead of as Class 9b buildings (involving significantly more compliance obligations). This was achieved by various amendments to the relevant definitions, and by adding a new reference to a small arts venue in the definition of Class 6 buildings. The impact of these changes are reflected in the 2019 Music SA Live Music Census<sup>ii</sup> which

recorded an increase of 27% live music licensed venues operating within the City of Adelaide boundary<sup>iii</sup>. Similar variations to the NCC have subsequently been adopted in the state of New South Wales.

The City of Perth calls for a nationally consistent approach from the NCC where best practice state variations have been introduced and recognised. The City requests that New South Wales variations to the NCC definition of Assembly Building, associated NCC definitions of Class 6, as well as the SA Small Arts Venue variations be a matter for consideration to be adopted nationally by all states and territories.<sup>iv</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Strong and supported creative industries are vital for Australia's future wellbeing, sustainability, national identity and global competitive advantage. City of Perth recognises the importance of collaboration with all levels of government to more effectively support the growth and sustainability of the creative sector. Whilst having established a good relationship at State Government level, the City recognises it has had limited engagement at the Federal level in relation to the arts and culture portfolio. The City of Perth welcomes the opportunity for improved dialogue at all levels of government and looks forward to being an active co-contributor to a sector which has and will continue to inspire Australians to share and celebrate our unique cultural identity through the arts.

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<sup>i</sup> 2015 Sydney Fringe Festival Findings Of The Pop-Up Theatre Pilot Project

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.musicsa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Live-Music-Census-2019-web.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> [presentation-arts-culture-dashboard-18-19.pdf \(d31atr86jngq2.cloudfront.net\)](https://www.musicsa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/presentation-arts-culture-dashboard-18-19.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://livemusicoffice.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Arts-Venues-and-Assembly-Buildings-Proposal-for-Change-2019-National-Construction-Code.pdf>