

National Cultural Policy Submission

Penrith City Council

Submitted: On behalf of government or government body

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

Penrith City Council supports this pillar that focuses on First Nations.

Penrith City, located in Western Sydney, is home to a comparatively large population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is increasing. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people calling Penrith City home is greater than the national and NSW average. Culture is central to First Nations health, identity, kinship and self-determination.

Opportunities

Our community have told us they want more opportunities to learn about First Nations cultures and stories, and for these to be shared more and increasingly visible in the public domain.

A Place for Every Story

Penrith City Council supports this pillar that seeks to ensure government support reflects the diversity of Australia.

Western Sydney is home to over half of Greater Sydney's population, and this will increase in coming years. It is the most ethnically diverse region in Australia, has the largest First Nations population, is the 4th largest economy and is going through a period of significant change.

Challenges

Western Sydney still does not secure proportionate amounts of grant funding or facilities for arts. Penrith City Council contributed to the 2015 report 'Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy – A Key to Sydney's Success' by Deloitte, which identified that Western Sydney represents 1 in 10 Australians yet attracts only 1% of Commonwealth arts program funding. The report also noted "On a per capita basis Western Sydney's arts and cultural sector has been grossly underfunded and supported".

Our community has told us they want more stories that reflect a growing diversity of cultures and experiences. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) artists experience barriers to accessing funding, mentorships and support for developing new work. CALD Australians are under-represented in leadership roles across the cultural sector, where decisions are made, and strategies are set.

Penrith City has an increasing percentage of people living with disability according to the 2021 Census. Improving arts engagement for people living with disability was highlighted in recent community engagement.

Opportunities

At this time of significant population growth, cultural transformation and infrastructure development, a sustained funding and policy focus on Western Sydney is required to ensure that amidst these dramatic changes, people's values and the quality of their day-to-day life remains central.

Recommendations set out in the report, Shifting the Balance: Cultural Diversity Leadership within the Australian Arts, Screen and Creative Sectors (Diversity Arts Australia, 2019)

<https://diversityarts.org.au/app/uploads/Shifting-the-Balance-DARTS-small.pdf> talk to actions to reflect the diversity of the community in arts, entertainment and cultural pursuits. The

recommendations include setting diversity standards and targets in the creative sector, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the impact of actions to increase diversity, promoting inclusion of CALD communities in arts leadership, and creating more pathways to leadership through mentorships. The Penrith City Council 2022-26 Disability Inclusion Action Plan includes several actions to improve arts engagement for people living with disability, reflecting the desire for increased creative opportunities to tell the unique stories of Penrith. An action to renew the National Arts and Disability Strategy will further assist to incorporate, through the arts, the diverse perspectives of people living with disability into the national identity.

The Centrality of the Artist

Challenges

The COVID shutdowns brought to light the irony of the arts sector, in that while people at home relied on the arts more than ever to survive lockdown, artists themselves have lost work through this time. Penrith artists and support crew (like lighting technicians) lost work through cancellation of local events and touring shows.

Opportunities

Council supports initiatives that enable artists to develop skills in early career development, and to earn a living income from their work.

Strong Institutions

Penrith City Council supports this pillar to strengthen the capacity of our cultural institutions to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.

Challenges

Without insurance to cover the cost of event cancellations caused by Covid-19 restrictions or other outbreaks, event organisers, artists, sole traders, venues and small to medium organisations take significant risks when programming major events and commissioning new art works. Penrith has had numerous cancelled events with financial implications for producers and artists alike. Since early 2020, private insurers have removed the option to buy back 'communicable disease cover.'

Opportunities

Organisations such as The Committee for Sydney and NAVA (National Association for the Visual Arts) have identified the opportunity for government support to establish a National Exhibitions and Events Business Insurance fund including covering communicable disease for all events.

Reaching the Audience

Penrith City Council supports this pillar to ensure Australian creativity thrives here and abroad.

Challenges

Our community tells us they want more creative arts opportunities for children and young people. This was also identified in Council's Youth Action Plan endorsed by Council in 2021.

Opportunities

Education in the arts opens minds and creates active citizens who have empathy and a lifelong appreciation for arts experiences. Schools and other educational institutions can play an important role locally in the cultural lives of young people, and the community. The inclusion of arts in education cultivates individual creativity and self-expression, entrepreneurship, social intelligence, problem solving and critical thinking skills (all vital 21st century work skills) and creates active citizens who have a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

The deeper involvement of local first Nations musicians, dancers and artists, and cultural educators at Penrith City Council's 2022 NAIDOC Week celebrations was very well received by our First Nations and broader communities. This warm and positive response has reinforced the interest and desire from our communities to learn more about First Nations cultures, identities and storytelling. Furthermore, it demonstrated the importance and benefits of respecting First Nations protocols for inclusion of artists and cultural activities to strengthen community and stakeholder relationships.

A Place for Every Story

Our communities tell us that they want to see greater diversity and inclusion in the arts. Penrith City Council supports a National Cultural Policy and in it, sees Western Sydney as a priority area for focus and investment.

Support for Western Sydney artists and arts organisations, particularly those that work with communities to grow their capabilities to creatively express their stories and experiences, is vital to our residents feeling heard, seeing themselves reflected in their places, and enhancing their sense of belonging in a changing environment.

The Centrality of the Artist

Penrith City Council is currently developing a Cultural Strategy and Action Plan. Feedback received during community engagement to inform the development of the Strategy highlighted our community's increasing desire to support local artists, as much to provide local employment, as to enable a deeper connection to place-based stories and references and to generate a sense of pride. Council adopted the Penrith City Economic Development Strategy in 2016, which highlights Arts and Culture as one of six target sectors identified for growing jobs.

Strong Institutions

As a result of COVID-19, like most arts bodies, Penrith's main cultural institutions, the Penrith Regional Gallery and Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre have been adapting and evolving to "the new normal". Having appropriate resources to maintain arts and culture access locally, including to programs that embed local communities and have local relevance, is critically important. The strength of Penrith's cultural organisations and facilities is fundamental to increasing the reach of arts and cultural representation with new and emerging communities and generations across a growing Western Sydney. Resourcing of this work and anchor facilities should reflect, respect and recognise that our cultural organisations and institutions are vital homes for local voices and cultural expression.

Reaching the Audience

Our communities tell us that they greatly appreciate being able to attend free and accessible arts events and activities. Without free arts events, many members of the Penrith community would be excluded from in-person cultural engagement. Council is also working to increase accessibility of our

events so that people who identify with specific needs (e.g., as neurodiverse or with sensory needs) are more comfortably able to attend.

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

The National Cultural Policy has the opportunity to drive collaboration across Federal government departments to achieve diverse policy goals through arts-based approaches. Artists are problem solvers and communicators that think outside the box. These skills can be utilised to tackle complex issues across a range of disciplines, for example health and ageing, social services and environment. Art responses work effectively to communicate important and complex information and encourage people to “spend time” with an issue. Integrating cross policy funding and collaborations can enable such approaches that embed the skills of artists to support complex problem solving.

Examples:

Arts and Ageing <https://artsmidnorthcoast.com/projects/creative-ageing/> Arts and Climate change <https://research.reading.ac.uk/research-blog/science-art-helps-climate-change-message-hit-home/>

Arts and Health <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/our-work/arts-and-social-connection#:~:text=VicHealth%20supports%20arts%20and%20cultural,harm%20from%20alcohol%20and%20tobacco>