

Arts and Culture Plan

2009-2013



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I Overview

There are various definitions and descriptions of arts and culture so for the purpose of this plan the following will be used:-

Art describes that aspect of cultural action in which creativity and imagination are the key drivers, where we discover meaning and community in ways that are intuitive, non-lateral and unpredictable, with the arts we can imagine the future, unpack the past and confront the present. We can predict change, focus our visions and face our fears. ¹

Arts and culture include the following activities:

- performing arts (e.g. music, theatre, dance, circus)
- visual arts (e.g. paintings, sculpture, art objects)
- film and media (e.g. movies, television, electronic games)
- literature (e.g. books and magazines, libraries)
- cultural heritage (e.g. museums, historical sites and associated collections). ²

Culture describes:

- our values and aspirations
- the ways we develop, receive and transmit these values, and
- the ways of life these processes produce. ³

Cultural Tourism is travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage and special character of unique places. It includes arts (e.g. galleries), cultural activities (e.g. festivals, celebrations), and physical heritage (buildings and environments).

Participatory arts describes empowered and hands-on community involvement in these processes. Its principle is that we are all creative and that we all have a right, a responsibility and a desire to be actively involved in making our own culture.

¹ Jon Hawkes- Regional Arts Australia National Conference

² Arts Victoria 2008

³ 1996 UNESCO Declaration of Cultural Rights (J Hawkes 2002)

1.1 Why focus on Arts and Culture?

The arts are important to the people of Bass Coast Shire because:

- They make the Bass Coast Shire a place where people want to live.
- They stimulate creative thinking in people of all ages.
- They attract business activity, promote tourism and attract people to the Shire.
- People with arts related skills are critical to the industries of the new economy which Bass Coast is pursuing.
- The people of Bass Coast regularly participate in a range of arts and culture activities.
- Involvement in arts and culture creates a healthier community.

*Communities all over the world, in particular regional and rural areas are changing and in some instances, unless a community is able to reinvent itself in a contemporary world, it will stagnate as is evidenced in many parts of Australia.*⁴ Research carried out in Queensland revealed that towns where leaders of the community were conservative stalwarts were actually the least innovative. It is suggested that these leaders had such a strong grip on power that they chase away the very creative talent that the towns need to attract and retain. It concluded that leadership responsibility needs to be experienced and shared to enable innovation. (ibid)

The recommendations arising from the research provide some suggestions to encourage diversity within a community:

- In-migration is to be welcomed as it is an indication that communities are more likely to be receptive to the inflow of talent. Newcomers need to establish a sense of place, purpose and social acceptance. If, on arrival, they are made to feel welcome, it is more likely that they will invest in the social and economic fabric of the community.
- Communities need to support and accommodate the education and career interests of the young people as there is a vast array of options available to them that were not available to previous generations and they are increasingly 'citizens of a global village'.
- Communities need to be tolerant of diversity.
- Communities that are thriving have a constantly evolving dynamic of creative coalitions of people who invest in the community willingly and thus build community capacity.
- Communities that celebrate are offering their citizens a sense of unity and identity.

There is a plethora of research evidence to show that areas where residents experience high levels of health and wellbeing have a vibrant arts and cultural

⁴ Plowman I

community. Cultural vitality is therefore very important in ensuring social equity, environmental responsibility and the economic viability of a community.⁵ There is also a direct correlation between high levels of social connectedness in a community and high participation rates of residents in arts and cultural activities.

It is now recognised in many parts of the world that arts and culture are essential elements of a socially connected community and that participatory art is indeed a very useful tool in community building. Countries such as Canada and New Zealand refer to cultural vitality as the 'fourth bottom line' or fourth pillar, after social, economic and environment. In Australia there is some evidence that this model is now developing interest and one local government area, The City of Port Phillip, now includes culture as its fourth bottom line in its Corporate Plan.⁶

Arts Victoria argues that arts and culture also make a direct contribution to liveability through vibrant and diverse activities such as cultural events and celebrations as well as community involvement in public art. Public art can contribute to well-designed public space, creating attractive, accessible places where people want to meet and create new social connections. Involvement of the local community in design of public art works within the local environment also leads to a sense of ownership and pride in the community.

Both Richard Florida (2008) and Peter Brain⁷ propose that an area can improve its economic status by attracting a *creative class* or global knowledge workers, of highly educated, well-paid professionals. This group are attracted to an area by opportunities for creative work and good quality of life amenities, including arts and cultural activities. These areas can then become centres of innovation in part because of the 'talent' that is attracted and through being able to creatively meet the challenges of global change. The value of creativity and cultural livelihoods to building identity and social cohesion has been well documented internationally but it is slow to be demonstrated in Australia.⁸

Currently the majority of funding for arts and cultural activities is for short term or one off projects and in times of economic downturn it is one of the first areas to experience a cut to funding. Arts Victoria believes there are strong arguments to support an increase in financial investment in arts and cultural activities in regional areas. The Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) State of the Regions Report 2006-2007 reported that regional areas that had strong, vibrant arts and cultural communities experienced population growth and positive economic performance.⁹

Arts and culture can play a critical role in strategically positioning an area as a destination for cultural and literary tourism (e.g. journeys that follow the histories of famous authors). This is evidenced internationally in cities such as Hong Kong,

⁵ Hawkes J 2002

⁶ Hawkes J 2002

⁷ *Development Options Bass Coast Shire 2005 – 2030* (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research)

⁸ VicHealth 2008

⁹ Arts Victoria 2008

Singapore and Abu Dhabi where substantial investment is being made in arts and cultural activities and infrastructure to attract tourists. Locally, Melbourne is becoming renowned for its role as a significant cultural tourism destination¹⁰ and Bass Coast has the opportunity to be part of this growing tourism market.

1.2 Our Perspective

Council has a responsibility to create an environment where arts and culture are nurtured, valued and supported across the entire community.

Over the past few years Bass Coast has become a very diverse community. This has occurred, in part, as a result of:

- increased in-migration made up of young families as well as new retirees
- settlement of Sudanese and Karen refugees
- an increased recognition of the traditional owners of the land and the recognition and support of contemporary indigenous arts and culture
- an increase in the visitor numbers particularly during peak periods
- increased expectations of the baby boomers, X and Y Generations

Such cultural diversity can enrich a community and provide a myriad of cultural experiences that may not have been previously available. It can contribute to the enhancement of Bass Coast's image as a popular area in which to live permanently or to visit.

Bass Coast is well positioned to become a vibrant community where there is an increased appreciation of the benefits to community health and wellbeing that arts and culture have. It has a very active and enthusiastic arts sector within the community and collaborates with this sector to celebrate and support its activities.

The residents of Bass Coast are also passionate about the history of the area and this was evidenced during the development of the document 'Guiding Bass Coast Towards 2030'. The community requested that Bass Coast be recognised as a window on the history of Victoria.

Council aims to create an environment where arts and culture are nurtured, valued and supported across the entire community. This commitment is supported by the following strategic document:-

- *Bass Coast Shire Council Plan 2009-2013*
- *Development Options Bass Coast Shire 2005 – 2030 (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research)*
- *Guiding Bass Coast towards 2030*

¹⁰ Arts Victoria 2008

- *Bass Coast Shire Council Municipal Public Health Plan: Health and Wellbeing in Bass Coast*
- *Bass Coast Shire Education Plan 2008-2012*
- *Strategy for Art in Public Places*
- *Municipal Recreation Plan (Draft June 2009)*

These documents espouse the value that arts and culture play in achieving the Council Vision and maintaining the Shire's sustainability. The Arts and Culture Plan will align with the key strategic actions within the *Bass Coast Shire Council Municipal Public Health Plan 2009-2013: Health and Wellbeing in Bass Coast*.

Whilst this is to be commended, strategies have to be put in place to continue to demonstrate more widely that a vibrant arts and culture sector actually benefits the whole community.

2 Council's Role

Bass Coast Shire Council encourages and supports involvement in, and appreciation of, a wide range of arts and cultural activities at all levels. This is achieved by:

- Planning and development
 - Development of relevant policies and plans e.g. Bass Coast Shire Education Plan 2008-2012, Strategy for Art in Public Places
 - Submitting grant applications
 - Input into plans for new infrastructure or renovation of existing infrastructure
 - Facilitate arts programs, workshops and forums
- Advocating and partnerships
 - Collaboration with relevant partners in all areas of arts and culture. Bass Coast Shire Council is represented on
 - The Creative Gippsland Network which has been very effective in promoting arts and cultural events throughout Gippsland.
 - The Bass Coast Heritage Group providing a forum for all historical societies and history related community groups
 - Networking
 - Political lobbying
- Provision of infrastructure
 - Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre
 - Cowes Cultural Centre
 - Phillip Island Heritage Centre
 - Inverloch Community Hub
 - Community halls and facilities
 - Libraries
 - Recreation facilities
 - Historic interpretive trails
- In-kind support
 - Advice and information
 - Assistance in writing submissions

- Financial support
 - Art acquisitions. Council funds the acquisition of arts through prizes in community art shows
 - Via the Community Grants Program which is available for worthy community projects in the arts and cultural areas
 - Grant applications in kind support for community organisations

To support its role in arts and cultural initiatives Council is obliged to:

- **Promote the importance of arts and cultural activities in improving the health and wellbeing of communities by:**
 - bringing communities together to celebrate events and /or work together on projects.
- **Demonstrate leadership and strengthen its commitment to the value of arts and culture to the community by:**
 - incorporating arts and culture into its core business taking a ‘whole of Council’ approach.
- **Recognise the value of providing appropriate art and cultural infrastructure as a demonstration of the value of lifelong learning and to enhance the attractiveness of the area by:**
 - advocating for funding to renew and /or upgrade community infrastructure.
 - providing additional facilities to enhance arts and cultural activities and opportunities.
- **Demonstrate the importance of cultural and heritage identity to community connectedness by:**
 - promoting the cultural and heritage identity of Bass Coast.
 - harnessing the enrichment that indigenous culture gives to the area.
- **Recognise the contribution of art and culture to the creation of economic prosperity by:**
 - increasing the financial value of Cultural Tourism.
 - increasing the opportunities for creative work and quality life amenities.
- **Use art to complement our natural environment as well as highlight historical events and as a tool for environmental awareness by:**
 - implementing and reviewing the *Strategy for Art in Public Places* including the provision of a Guide for Prospective Developers.

3 Strategies

This section details the strategies Council will undertake in order to develop arts and culture in the future.

3.1 Key Objective 1: Promote the importance of arts and cultural activities in improving the health and wellbeing of communities

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Bring communities together to celebrate events and/or work together on participatory arts projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased social capital - Greater participation and contribution by volunteers - A change in residents' perceptions of the place where they live 	Arts Officer	Operational Budget	Annually
Enhance partnerships with the with relevant groups	Stronger public / private voluntary sector partnerships	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational Budget	Annually

3.2 Key Objective 2: Strengthen Council’s leadership and commitment to the value of arts and culture to building community capacity

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Incorporate arts and culture into Council’s core business taking a ‘whole of Council’ approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a change in the image or reputation of Bass Coast - new approaches to evaluation, consultation and representation 	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational budget	Annually
Advocate to the relevant Government bodies for increased funding for the sector	increased funding opportunities	Director Community & Economic Development	External funding	Annually
Promote Bass Coast as a municipality committed to supporting excellence in, and community engagement with, arts and cultural initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive response to articles in media, Coastell, newsletters - arts and cultural activities funded via community grants in the community - arts and culture marketing brochure 	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational Budget	Annually
			Operational budget	Annually
			Operational budget	Annually

3.3 Key Objective 3: Recognise the value of providing appropriate art and cultural infrastructure as a demonstration of the value of lifelong learning and to enhance the attractiveness of the area

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Provide and maintain community facilities to meet the needs of the changing community	- Refurbishment of existing library	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	\$350,000 total \$40,000 Capital works \$10,000 WGLC \$300,000 External	February 2010
	- Concept Plans and agreed location for Principal Library in Wonthaggi	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	\$150,000	December 2011
	- Design work for the development of the Cowes Cultural Centre Precinct	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	\$104,000 Capital Works budget	2010/2011
	- Upgrade of Wonthaggi Union Community Arts Centre to meet users' needs		Operational + external funding works not covered within the operational budget	Annually
	- Increased volunteers to manage Council's community halls		Operational budget	
Integrate public art into the planning and development of public spaces	Creation of exciting, appealing and harmonious public spaces	Arts Officer	Operational budget	Annually
Enhance the value of Council's art acquisitions	- Quality of new acquisitions	Arts Officer	Operational budget	Annually
	- Control of selection of works	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator		
	- Development and adoption of Acquisition Policy	Arts Officer		

3.4 Key Objective 4: Demonstrate the importance of cultural and heritage identity to community connectedness

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Promote the cultural and heritage identity of Bass Coast	- Celebration of significant historical events in the Shire	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational	Annually
	- One additional significant heritage location signed each year	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Capital Works funding	Annually
	- Heritage tour brochure developed for each town – one per annum	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational budget	Annually
Harness the enrichment that indigenous culture gives to the area.	- Continued involvement in NAIDOC week	Community Development Team Leader	Operational budget	Annually
	- Increased indigenous artists registration on arts and culture data base	Arts Officer	Operational budget	Annually
	- Annual indigenous awareness workshop for staff and community organisations	Community Development Team Leader	Operational budget	Annually

3.5 Key Objective 5: Recognise the contribution of art and culture to the creation of economic prosperity.

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Increase the financial value of Cultural Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and/or enhance relationships with tourism bodies - Increased cultural tourism opportunities - Statistical data of cultural tourism providers and economic benefit 	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational budget	Annually
Increase opportunities for creative work and quality life amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract an increase in global knowledge workers - Bass Coast recognised as a centre of innovation. 	Arts & Leisure Co-ordinator	Operational budget	Annually

3.6 Key Objective 6: Recognise the importance of the relationship between art and our natural environment

Action	Measure	Responsible Officer	Resources	Completion Date
Encourage the use of art as a tool for environmental awareness	Greater awareness of environmental issues	Arts and Leisure Co-ordinator	External grants	Annually