



# **Community Arts Policy**

Sutherland Shire Council

## Document review and approval

### This document has been approved by

	Name	Minute No	Date approved
1	Community Services Committee – CSV1-95	7	18 July, 1994
2			
3			

### Revision history

Version	Author	Date	Revision
1	Manager Cultural Planning	11 July, 1994	Original Version
2	Manager – Communities Unit	13 March, 2012	Policy reviewed as part of annual review process, no amendments necessary. However the policy needs to undergo a substantial review and re-write when resources allow

## COMMUNITY ARTS POLICY

The Community Arts Policy was prepared to assist with the formulation of strategies to improve arts and cultural facilities and services in the Sutherland Shire.

Comments on the draft copy of the Community Arts Policy were received from the Community Services Department, Property Division, Director - Library & Community Services, Planning Services Department, Parks & Landscape Manager, Community Arts Officer at Wollongong City Council, the Sutherland Shire Arts Council and the Community Arts Sub-Committee.

In preparing the Community Arts Policy, two issues became apparent:

1. To what extent will the Community Arts Policy assist with cultural development in the Shire?
2. Will additional resources be required to facilitate these changes?

On the first issue, section 4 of the Policy outlines a Cultural Planning process which will ensure consultation with relevant Council departments and community representatives. It will be the role of the Community Arts Sub-Committee to monitor progress made with the Cultural Plan through regular reports provided by the Community Arts Manager. The Community Arts Policy is the initial step in a process of planning a meaningful physical and social environment for local residents. The Cultural Plan is an adjunct to the Policy and outlines the steps to achieve this. It is the intention of the Community Arts Policy and Cultural Plan to satisfy "Our Purpose" as outlined in Sutherland Shire Council's Management Plan ie. "Provide facilities, services and controls which enhance the lifestyle and well-being of the community".

On the second issue, the Australia Council's publication "Better Places, Richer Communities - Local Government, Integrated Planning and Cultural Development" states: "It is not essential for Councils to employ specialist cultural workers in order to play a role in cultural development. Other staff, such as community workers, planners or designers may well possess the necessary skills..however, a sustained long term effort is likely to require some dedicated staff and funding resources from within Council". To assist the Community Arts Manager with the Cultural Plan it is recommended that the position of the Administrative Assistant - Community Arts be upgraded from 20 hours per week to 35 hours (full-time). Apart from the increased workload required to undertake the cultural plan, the upgrading of this position is also required due to the increase in community arts activities and level of service. It is envisaged that planning new community arts activities such as a film festival in Sutherland Shire will require time in addition to the normal working load by the part-time Administrative Assistant.



# *Community Arts Policy*

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The value of the new Administrative Assistant - Community Arts is evident in the quality of the new Community Arts publication 'ARTbeat', in the planning of activities and services, and in the office.

One of the main areas of concern in community arts is the provision of permanent exhibition and workshop facilities for the community. Sutherland is host to a large number and variety of community groups which require exhibition and exhibition space at different times throughout the year. Although Sutherland Shire Council is the second largest local government area in NSW (in terms of population), it does not possess a permanent exhibition venue as do smaller local government areas such as Waverley (Bondi Pavilion), Wollongong (Regional Gallery in old Council Chambers), Manly (Regional Gallery), Campbelltown (Regional Gallery), Penrith (Lewers Gallery) and Willoughby (Arts Centre). As noted in the Background to the Policy, the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts is centrally located and offers an ideal venue for small theatrical productions. Increasing the usage of the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts may be achieved by increasing community awareness of its facilities and close proximity to public transport.

It is envisaged that Sutherland Shire will become the centre of a concerted tourism drive. To complement the many natural attractions in the Shire, Council should consider the provision of cultural venues to satisfy visitors' needs. The Sutherland Memorial School of Arts, the Sutherland Entertainment Centre and a permanent exhibition space in the Sutherland Centre would allow local artists to perform and/or exhibit, and place Sutherland as the true cultural centre of the Shire.

It is proposed that the Community Arts Manager hold consultations with the Property Division to identify potential venues for permanent exhibition space within, preferably, Sutherland Centre and once identified, work towards the establishment of this much needed cultural facility.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the Community Arts Policy be adopted and consideration be given by the Community Arts Sub-Committee for its implementation.
2. That the preparation of a Cultural Plan for the Shire be supported.
3. That the Community Arts Manager in consultation with other relevant Council Departments prepare a cultural map of existing cultural services and facilities in the Shire.
4. That the Community Arts Manager in consultation with the Manager - Arts & Entertainment and Officers from other relevant Divisions of Council identify potential venues for permanent exhibition space within or in close proximity to the Sutherland Centre.
5. That the position of Administrative Assistant (Community Arts) be upgraded from 20 hours per week to 35 hours per week (full-time).

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

Since 1990, the Community Arts program in the Sutherland Shire has focussed on visual arts, craft, music, performing arts and other cultural activities. The Program continues to focus on children, youth, families, older people, residents who are disabled and residents from a non-English speaking background (NESB). Residents in Sutherland Shire strongly identify with the term 'Shire' and many of these initiatives are now regarded as annual 'Shire' events. The popularity of community arts events in Sutherland Shire is supported by high attendance figures, positive media coverage and continued support by community groups. Despite the popularity of the arts, the Shire lacks a cultural identity which is essential for the development of a local community (civic) identity and improving the residents' quality of life.

Apart from improving the residents' quality of life, other benefits from establishing a cultural identity include: pride in community ownership of services and facilities, an attraction to visitors, and as a means of empowering the community.

With a population expected to reach 200,000 before the end of this century (184,402 in the 1991 Census), residents in the Sutherland Shire enjoy a physical environment which comprises numerous beaches, waterways, parks, sporting facilities and centrally located retail shopping centres. There is however, little evidence of community or public art in this physical environment.

Strategies to improve the aesthetic quality of the Shire's physical environment will:

- \* strengthen support for the preservation of local heritage
- \* attract new public and private enterprise
- \* lead to further activities which are beneficial to both residents and visitors
- \* foster pride in local facilities
- \* attract visitors to the Shire

Venues designed for the exhibition and appreciation of local arts are necessary for providing an outlet for individuals and community groups to express themselves, provide entertainment for the local community and foster a local arts economy. In the Shire, the Sutherland Entertainment Centre and the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts are centrally located. Together, both facilities provide for the needs of large and small scale local music and theatrical productions. Both venues however, facilitate limited visual art/craft exhibitions with no workshop space, art storage area or retail opportunity for local art and craft works. A permanent exhibition venue within or in close proximity to the Sutherland Centre would provide the Shire with a significant cultural centre.

It is the role of the Community Arts Sub-Committee "to advise Council through the Community Services Committee on strategies and policies to meet the cultural needs of the Shire" (Community Arts Sub-Committee Charter). The Community Arts Sub-Committee will continue to monitor the community arts program and will also provide regular reports on the cultural planning process outlined in section 4.

## **2. RATIONALE**

It is the right of all residents in Sutherland Shire to have access to community arts activities and services which enhance their 'quality of life' as an individual or collectively as a community group.

Individual and collective concerns on issues relating to the Shire's natural and built environment illustrates the desire of residents for a better quality of life for future generations. Public art, landscape design and other processes which enhance the built environment should be encouraged.

Religious and other cultural beliefs are the right of all members of the community regardless of race, gender, age, income or disability and this should be reflected in the Community Arts Policy.

Although some strategies for Community Arts have been presented to Council in documents which include Council's Social Plan, Management Plan and Strategic Plan, an overall Policy Statement on Community Arts is necessary to ensure that future developments in the Shire address the art and cultural needs of the community as an essential planning process.

### **3.1 COMMUNITY ARTS**

Community Arts is a means by which a local community is encouraged to express themselves through the arts on matters relating to their local physical and/or social environment. The significance of each Community Arts initiative whether it be a festival, exhibition, workshop, public art project or other cultural activity is the "creative expression of this shared cultural experience" (Community Arts Manual 1990).

Community Arts in the Sutherland Shire incorporates visual arts, craft, music, performing arts and other cultural activities and services. The Community Arts Program will encourage local community participation, reflect community values, attitudes and beliefs, foster an appreciation of the local environment and will be accessible to all residents.

There is a need to provide and facilitate arts and cultural activities which encourage broad community participation (eg. festivals) and activities aimed at specific groups within the community (eg. workshops).

#### **3.1.1 CHILDREN**

Experiencing the arts is a necessary component of a child's educational and creative development. Community Arts projects specifically designed for children contribute to the future development of art and culture in the local environment. Whether it is painting a mural or participating in a 'Meet the Orchestra' session, our young local residents will develop an understanding and appreciation of their own local community through interaction with others. The local physical and social environment plays a major role in the development of the child's understanding of the world.

From visual representations of known objects and early association with sounds to visual, musical and theatrical expression, the arts are an integral part of the educational process for children. Community Arts activities for children which foster group participation and/or activities which focus on the individual will assist with the cultural and social needs of the child during the secondary socialisation process ie. experiences outside the immediate family unit.

### **Policy Statement:**

1. The Community Arts program will facilitate and encourage children to participate in arts activities and services.
2. Art and cultural achievements of local children will be regularly displayed to promote community awareness of their efforts.
3. Community groups and organisations which provide activities and services for children will be encouraged to include arts activities in their program.
4. The Children Services Sub-Committee to be informed of Community Arts activities for children and members of the Sub-Committee will be encouraged to participate.

### **3.1.2 YOUTH**

The term, 'Youth' generally refers to individuals in the community aged between 12 years and 25 years. Due to this age difference, defining youth culture is difficult without addressing the numerous youth sub-cultures.

Variables which help determine youth sub-cultures include:

- \* age groups with their own values, tastes preferences and experiences
- \* diversity of life conditions, experiences and prospects of each age group
- \* level of income, occupation, place of residence, gender and ethnicity
- \* social factors which determine their behaviour
- \* group name, manner of dress, interests, lifestyles, music preferences

Local youth culture is an integral part of the local community culture, and it is the role of Community Arts to foster public art, music and performing arts projects by youth in the Shire. Specialist art tutors are needed to facilitate projects to ensure that youth have access to resources and techniques necessary to promote their creativity and artistic innovation.

With a population of 37,060 youth aged between 12 - 24 years in the Shire (1991 Census), there are many private and community groups providing a range of arts related activities. A register of young musicians, artists and performers to assist with community and civic functions will raise community awareness of their talents and encourage their future commitment to the local community.

It is essential that the arts be an integral part of programs at Community Youth Centres and community groups dealing with Shire youth should be made aware of the value of the arts as a vehicle for expression not only for youth but also the wider community.

There should be more accessible and expanded sites, resources, materials and conditions for artistic activities already important in young people's lives. Youth representation on the Community Arts Sub-Committee is essential to provide a youth perspective on matters related to the planning of Community Arts activities in the Shire.

**Policy Statement:**

1. Encourage youth representatives to participate in the planning and implementation of Community Arts projects for youth.
2. Promote a positive relationship between youth and their local environment by initiating Community Arts projects which encourage local youth to contribute to the embellishment of local areas which are significant to them.
3. Ensure that youth in isolated communities receive equal access to community arts activities and services.

**3.1.3 FAMILY**

Council recognises the diversity of families in the Shire in terms of their composition, culture, and ethnicity. Council acknowledges the importance of Community Arts in promoting a neighbourhood environment which is harmonious and visually pleasing to all residents.

**Policy Statement:**

1. Activities and services provided in the Community Arts program will be accessible to all families regardless of their composition, culture and race.
2. Ensure that low income families have access to Community Arts activities in the Shire.
3. Community Arts activities which focus on a particular neighbourhood environment should be relevant to residents in that area.

**3.1.4 OLDER PEOPLE**

With an aging population in the Shire actively seeking leisure activities, there are already well established cultural activities which include the Shire's Festival of Arts and activities during Senior Citizens Week organised by the Community Worker (Aged Services) and the Senior Citizens Activities Committee. Entry by a ballot system to the larger events at the Sutherland Entertainment Centre illustrates the popularity of these activities.

In comparison to other local government area, the Sutherland Shire has the largest population of residents aged between 45 - 64 years in NSW. It has been estimated that the population of residents 60 years and over will rise from 30,720 to 40,469 between 1991 - 2001. More significant is the estimated increase of residents aged 75 - 79 years (62%), 80 - 84 years (65%) and 85+ years (85%). The increase in the population of older people is significant and highlights the need for increased community arts activities and services in the future.

It is acknowledged that many elderly in the Shire live in one person households and it is this group which will be more difficult to access. Council's Home Library Service is in regular contact with this group and it may be feasible to publicise community arts activities and services through this Library service.

The aging of the Shire's population is also reflected in the membership of arts and cultural groups in the Shire. Arts and cultural groups in the Shire should be encouraged to actively seek new members.

**Policy Statement:**

1. Ensure that Community Arts activities and services for older people are accessible to all, in particular, isolated older people in the community.
2. The Community Arts program to include activities and services where older people can participate.

**3.1.5 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Community Arts for people with disabilities provides an opportunity for participants to creatively express themselves through various arts activities including visual arts, craft, music and performing arts.

Community Arts activities for people with disabilities have focussed on adult groups with carers providing assistance during the workshops sessions.

Equal access to arts activities/venues in the Shire for people with disabilities needs further investigation and will be addressed in the cultural mapping process.

Foster art and cultural initiatives which encourage people with disabilities to participate.

**Policy Statement:**

1. Ensure that Council's Community Arts activities and services are accessible to people with a disability.
2. Support the formation of a local drama group for people with disabilities and encourage its members to participate in mainstream local drama groups.
3. Support opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in art and cultural activities in the Shire.

### **3.1.6 PEOPLE OF NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND**

Like other local government areas in Sydney, the Sutherland Shire is home to a large number of residents born overseas (1991 Census), the Sutherland Shire also attracts many more people of non-English speaking background on weekends and holidays to its recreational facilities.

Experiencing the traditions of other cultures by inviting local ethnic groups to participate in community arts activities reinforces Council support for cultural diversity in the Shire.

Understanding and appreciating other cultures both locally and abroad is the aim of multicultural arts festivals such as 'Fiesta'. Likewise, art and cultural exchanges between Sister Cities fosters community appreciation of other community attitudes and values.

#### **Policy Statement:**

1. Foster art and cultural exchanges between communities within and outside the Sutherland Shire.
2. Develop strong links with ethnic communities in the Sutherland Shire and promote community arts as a means for social and cultural expression.
3. Foster art and cultural exchanges such as between the Shire and its Sister Cities.

### **3.1.7 ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS**

Despite the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island residents in the Sutherland Shire (548 in the 1991 Census), aboriginal culture is significant to the heritage of the Shire.

The preservation of aboriginal art in the Shire will ensure that future generations will be aware of the importance of aboriginal culture in the Shire.

Raising community awareness and understanding of aboriginal culture through community arts activities has resulted in strong links with aboriginal organisations both within and outside the Shire.

In the past, Community Arts initiatives have included exhibitions of aboriginal art, performances by aboriginal dance groups, a mural designed by Kirinari Aboriginal Hostel students which was later painted by children from the Shire and assistance with the formation of an aboriginal cultural group in the Shire.

#### **Policy Statement:**

1. Aboriginal art and culture is an important part of the Shire's heritage. Community Arts initiatives will promote closer links between the aboriginal and Shire communities.

2. Ensure consultation with representatives from Kirinari Aboriginal Hostel and/or other relevant aboriginal organisations on matters relating to the implementation of aboriginal arts projects in the Shire.
3. Incorporate aboriginal arts in festivals, celebrations, exhibitions, and other appropriate community activities in the Shire.
4. Support the formation of aboriginal cultural groups in the Shire.

### **3.2 EXHIBITION & WORKSHOP SPACE**

Individuals and community groups associated with the Sutherland Shire Arts Council have over many years petitioned for art exhibition and workshop space in the Shire. Reference was made to early plans of Stage 2 of the Sutherland Entertainment Centre (which is no longer possible) which incorporated exhibition and workshop facilities.

There is a sufficient number of visual art and craft groups and individuals participating in art/craft activities to justify the provision of this specialised community space. The relocation of activities from 'Craft Cottage' (now referred to as the Sutherland Shire Art & Craft Centre) from Sutherland to Engadine did assist with the provision of exhibition and workshop space but space at this Centre is very limited and only viewed as temporary as the site is proposed as open space in the future.

Just as the provision of a local sports complex assists with the development of a variety of sports, the provision of a centrally located exhibition and workshop space for the arts will assist with the development of the visual arts and craft in the Shire.

A variety of visual art and craft groups in the Shire hold regular workshops and exhibitions in Council, school, scout, guides and church halls, private residences and outside the Shire where specialised facilities are available. This situation has for many years placed the Shire behind other Councils in the provision of adequate exhibition and workshop space. Apart from annual and biennial art exhibitions operated by Council (usually held at the Sutherland Entertainment Centre), there is no ongoing program for the exhibition of art throughout the year. In terms of population size, the Sutherland Shire is the second largest local government area in NSW with approximately 184,000 residents in the 1991 Census. The provision of permanent exhibition and workshop facilities in Sutherland Shire compared to other local government areas in NSW with similar population numbers such as Wollongong (174,000 in the 1991 Census) and Blacktown (210,000 in the 1991 Census) highlight Council's need to address this issue.

Through its Annual Grants Program, Council supports a variety of art and craft groups with workshops and exhibitions. Members of these art and craft groups as well as the visitors they attract to their activities would benefit from a permanent exhibition/workshop space.

A permanent exhibition and workshop space would enable Council to exhibit its collection of art, provide a meeting place for local artist and crafts people, encourage the local community to experience and participate in local art/craft activities, generate other arts related activities and services, and provide visitors with a venue to view and purchase local art/craft.

The protection and enhancement of the Shire's cultural heritage through the provision of museums and community facilities for heritage festivals and other related activities is essential to preserve the Shire's past. Community Arts activities which include heritage plays and photographic competitions which encourage the visual documentation of the Shire demonstrate the links between Community Arts and local history.

### **Policy Statement:**

1. Recognise the need for permanent exhibition and workshop space for local art and craft groups and individuals.
2. Support and exhibit a diversity of art forms from traditional to contemporary art styles.
3. Identify private and community venues for permanent and temporary exhibitions of local art and craft.
4. All proposals to establish exhibition and workshop space for the arts in the Shire to include consultation with local art and craft organisations and be presented to the Community Arts Sub-Committee.
5. Ensure that exhibition and workshop space in the Shire provide equal access for all individuals and groups.
6. Support the protection and enhancement of the Shire's cultural heritage and recognise the need for facilities to exhibit local artefacts.

### **3.3 ART IN PUBLIC PLACES**

Art in public places refers to public art and community art works, whether temporary or permanent. These can create an environment which is aesthetically pleasing, stimulating, challenging, accepted by the community, and complements the surrounding area.

Public art refers to the installation of a publicly or privately owned art work in a public place. The artist responds to a brief and may not necessarily consult the community, but increasingly this is so.

Works of community art in public places involves community participation in the design, creation and/or installation of the work of art. Public place refers to an area, natural or built, which is accessible or can be viewed by the public.

Public art and community art initiatives in public places may include murals, sculptures, tiled features, banners, street furniture, facade treatments (buildings), fountains, playgrounds, gates, fences, landforms, performances, video, cinema and music.

Taking into consideration the size of the Sutherland Shire, there are very few works of art in public places. In 1993/4 Public Art and Community Art works were installed in Peace Park, Sutherland. They include an aboriginal feature titled, 'Pemul Djalaringi', a large River Serpent Mural attached to the wall of the Sutherland Entertainment Centre and a temporary metal construction for the placement of 3 murals in the Park.

### **Policy Statement:**

1. Establish an Art in Public Places Program that reflects a collaborative working process between artists, residents, private developers and Council officers.
2. The assessment of existing public places in the Shire is necessary for the purpose of developing an appropriate strategy for planning future Public Art and Community Arts projects (cityscape analysis).
3. The integration of locally inspired sculptures, murals, street furniture, and other Public Art and Community Art works into the existing environment will strengthen community identification with a particular facility or location.
4. Early planning of Public and Community Art works in new estate areas will assist with the development of a local community identity.
5. Open space areas which are set aside for the community should be attractive and relevant to residents. This can be achieved through a well planned integration of art and landscape architecture.
6. The creation of Public Art and Community Art works provide a focus for a particular facility or locality and should be encouraged by Council.
7. Development and building applications to Council that may incorporate Public or Community Arts functions should be directed to the Community Arts Manager for input.
8. All development control plans for centres (eg. Cronulla, Caringbah, Miranda, Jannali etc.) include sites identified for art, sculpture and/or performance space.
9. Identify plans for parks (management plans, or DCP's) for the inclusion of sites for art work and consider the park as an art work in itself.
10. That any plan for development (public or private) include potential sites for art work, and particular attention to building design, colour, floorscapes, pathwayscapes etc.

11. Community consultation is required on all major Public Art proposals.

### **3.4 NEW ESTATE AREAS**

Woronora Heights, Menai and West Heathcote are all new estate areas in the Sutherland Shire.

With a population increase in the Menai Planning Area of around 40% between 1986 and 1991, there is an opportunity to establish Community Arts activities and to ensure that art in public places is integrated into the early planning processes such as Menai Park and the Menai Town Centre.

As detailed in the Menai District Target Plan, the emerging community in the Menai area are young families in the 0 - 10 and 30 - 40 years age group. Specialist arts facilities for the local community is limited and not adequate for this growing population.

#### **Policy Statement:**

1. During the initial planning stages of community facilities, public reserves, open spaces and retail centres in new estate areas, establish art workshop and exhibition facilities, create indoor and outdoor performance areas and designate sites for the construction of or placement of Public and Community Art works.
2. Council support the formation of art and cultural groups in new estate areas to assist with the cultural development of the area.

### **4. STRATEGY FOR CULTURAL PLANNING**

Community Arts in Sutherland Shire is multi-faceted in that it can involve activities ranging from the provision of small drama workshops for people with disabilities to the protection and enhancement of our cultural heritage and fostering cultural tourism.

A strategy for cultural planning must link with other Council programs and be flexible to meet the changing cultural needs of the community. Consultation with the community and departments within Council are necessary to present a Cultural Plan which has the overall support of all concerned.

Proposed Stages:

#### **1. Cultural Mapping:**

Liaise with other Council departments to produce a map of the Shire which highlights existing cultural services and facilities. These may include:

- \* Exhibition space for art and craft
- \* Workshop facilities for artists and crafts people
- \* Outdoor theatre and performance space
- \* Indoor theatre and performance space

- \* Art in public places
- \* Museums and Libraries
- \* Heritage sites
- \* Location of annual Community Arts activities and festivals

Other information on the above may include:

- \* facilities for people with a disability
- \* visiting times or hours of operation
- \* capacity of venue (where appropriate)

2. A list of possible or proposed sites for cultural services and facilities.
3. Consultation with relevant Council Departments and Community Arts organisations.
4. Consultation with the Community (representatives of the various community groups and individuals with an interest in the Shire's Cultural Plan).
5. **Cultural Planning Document:**

Extract from **Better PLACES Richer COMMUNITIES** Local Government, Integrated Planning and Cultural Development. Australia Council. 1994. Page 4.

*"Cultural planning is simply a purposeful, strategic approach to cultural development. Like all forms of local planning, it involves -*

- *Assessing the existing situation, trends, needs and opportunities*
- *Setting goals and objectives*
- *Identifying key issues and priorities*
- *Proposing courses of action to address those key issues and priorities*
- *Assembling resources required for implementation*
- *Initiating adopted courses of action"*

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