

*“It’s not where you are from, it’s where
you’re at” - Building diverse audiences
for the arts in Western Sydney*

Western Sydney audience development strategy

Prepared for Arts NSW

Part 1: Issues, Strategy and Key findings and
Recommendations

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AUSTRALIA STREET
c o m p a n y

REPORT TITLE NOTE

The title of this Study, "*It's not where you are from, it's where you're at*" was stated during an interview with a key Western Sydney stakeholder in October 2007. It seems to sum up the audience development context in Western Sydney and to provide a direction for the development of the Strategy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the critical aspects of planning for arts audience development in Western Sydney is the complex nature of the region's urban environment. As well as being one of the nation's regional powerhouses, Western Sydney represents diversity, population growth and significant variations in socio-economic distribution. These variations differ across and within the areas sub-regions influencing planning since a one-size fits all approach is clearly not appropriate for Sydney's west.

Recent investment in the arts and culture by the State and local government in the Western Sydney region has improved the opportunities for broad cultural participation. Nevertheless the region's capacity for audience development remains limited and this is in part due to low levels of understanding of the principles of audience development. This includes knowledge and expertise in the development and maintenance of systematic research and analysis including a detailed knowledge of population trends, community needs and interests, strategies for building relationships and investment levels that support product quality and program relevance.

The title of this Study, "*It's not where you are from, it's where you're at*" is based on a comment made during an interview with a key Western Sydney stakeholder in October 2007. The statement seems to sum up the audience development context in Western Sydney and provides a direction for the development of the Strategy. Clearly any audience development strategy for Western Sydney should be focused on the building blocks that will result in the establishment of relationships that foster loyalty and/ or support across a base of participants drawn from across the community and representing diverse backgrounds, cultures and traditions. Such a strategy would be committed to ensuring that programming is community responsive, drawing on local stories to create quality and accessible and sometimes challenging arts and cultural experiences. This regional audience will generally demonstrate a pattern of commitment to repeat visits. It will be reached by a marketing and communications system that understands its market profile, including information that relates to those sectors of the community who are currently non-users but have been identified as potential future participants.

The issues and opportunities presented above describe many of the significant challenges faced in Sydney's Greater West. However the greatest challenge and the one which underpins this strategy is the need to increase the resources available for audience development. This requires an investment in the infrastructure specifically for audience development including the skills, experience and qualifications needed to drive a strategic and sustainable of audience development program across the region. Such a program would take the lead in building the integrated and standardised research, data collection

and analysis programs and systems that are critical to informing the development of audience building strategies.

Increased resources to support audience development would ensure that audience development moves from the margins into the mainstream as a valuable and essential aspect of growing Western Sydney's arts activity, increasing participation levels and enhancing opportunities for artists and building the region's cultural economy.

KEY DRIVERS OF WESTERN SYDNEY AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The WS Audience Development Strategy Study has identified a number of issues and challenges that have informed the development of the Strategy. In summary these include:

- Forging relationships and strengthening partnerships
Acknowledging that going it alone and in isolation will not work and that an active commitment to formal and informal partners is essential for every Western Sydney arts organisation and venue.
- Harnessing the base of resources for audience development
Resources include human resources, systems skills and knowledge, commitment and leadership as well as financial resources and they need to grow from a current very low base to one which supports a sustainable program of audience building activity.
- Extending a culture of community engagement in the arts across the region
Participation in the arts and cultural activity must embrace the needs and interests of diverse audiences and in multiple cultural dimensions. It must extend beyond traditional arts audiences and take account of technology and new and emerging sub cultures.
- Developing locally responsive programming content
As well as presenting programs and productions developed external to the region, Western Sydney arts audiences will develop a strong base when creativity is recognised as a connector that unites local and regional audiences and artists through the development of programs that respond to the culture of place and which provide opportunities to share distinct local experiences.

THE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

This Study has resulted in the development of a long-term Strategy for building arts audiences in Western Sydney. The Strategy provides a planning framework including the development of a 10 year vision, establishes planning principles to inform decision making

and identifies Goals, anticipated outcomes and Actions as the stepping stones to achieving the vision. Critical elements of the Strategy are summarised below:

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT VISION 2007 TO 2017

In 2017, the Western Sydney region is widely recognised for the vitality of its culture of participation in the arts where cultural diversity is celebrated and where the arts and artists are valued, well resourced and accessible. Western Sydney is a leader in providing a model for best practice in sustainable cultural development including in audience development.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In building arts audiences for Western Sydney, key decisions will be considered in the context of the following core values which are expressed as planning principles. These principles are essential to the development of the Vision and are consistent with and complement the Key Principles identified in the Western Sydney Regional Cultural Strategy 2005¹.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE

Cultural sustainability: Meeting the cultural needs of the present through a combination of cultural resources without compromising the needs and creative potential of future generations.

CORE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Cultural diversity and respect for difference:** Embracing people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles.
- **Openness and trust:** Fostering and welcoming opportunities to contribute to and engage in the region's culture life.
- **Community wellbeing and inclusion:** Supporting an environment where social equality and cultural vitality are valued as the building blocks of social capital.
- **Connectedness and collaboration:** Encouraging cooperative links and partnerships based on shared objectives and commitments.
- **Distinctiveness and local identity:** The diversity of local as well as regional cultural identity is respected and celebrated.
- **Creativity and innovation:** The arts, new ideas and innovation are valued for their role in problem solving and in developing fresh modes of creative expression.

¹ Authoring Contemporary Australia: a regional cultural strategy for Greater Western Sydney, 2005. Blacktown: Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.

GOALS

- Goal 1 Partnerships for audience development are in place
- Goal 2 Resources for audience development are harnessed
- Goal 3 A culture of participation in the arts is embedded
- Goal 4 Investment in creative programming is demonstrated

THE NEXT STEPS

This Study has taken a big picture approach to researching audience development needs and to identifying the issues and opportunities to be considered in the development of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy. The Study through the Strategy has extended roles in audience development well beyond the scope of Arts NSW responsibilities to confirm links, partnerships and coordinated leadership roles for a range of agencies and organisations active in the Western Sydney arts and cultural development. Achieving the region's Arts Audience Development Vision will be dependent on embedding collaboration across the sector.

However at this critical first stage of the launch of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy, Arts NSW will need to continue to take a key role in advancing the Strategy and across many fronts including to Federal, State and local government, to peak arts organisations and institutions, to the business and non-government sector and to artists. The following Recommendations reflect that role and highlight those actions in the Strategy that will set the direction in the immediate short term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are divided into *Priority Roles and Responsibilities for State agencies* including for Arts NSW in recognition of its key role in commissioning the Strategy. Supplementary recommendations relate to *Supporting Leadership Roles and Responsibilities for Western Sydney partners*. The Strategy itself however spans a range of stakeholders who will be required to take an active role in dialogue, resource provision, cooperation, leadership and facilitation in implementing this Strategy.

PRIORITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STATE AGENCIES

1. Arts NSW to formally consider and adopt the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy as a sustainable framework and advocacy tool for working with sector partners to build arts audiences across the Western Sydney region.
2. Arts NSW to establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Incentive Fund as a new initiative within the Western Sydney Arts Strategy to provide leverage for building commitment and ownership from the range of partners needed to contribute towards the implementation of the actions included in the Audience Development Strategy. (see Strategy – Action 2.1)
3. Arts NSW to fully fund a new full-time Western Sydney Audience Development Broker as part of a longer term plan to establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Team with responsibilities to build capacity, foster linkages, develop awareness and skills, secure additional resources and coordinate the implementation of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy including at the sub-regional as well as across the Western Sydney region. (see Strategy – Action 2.2)
4. Arts NSW to initiate discussions with relevant arts/ cultural organisations and agencies to identify the most appropriate reporting structure and relationships for the Audience Development Broker. (see Strategy – Action 1.1; Action 2.3)
5. Arts NSW to liaise with M&GNSW and the Australia Council to commission a non-user market research study to identify the barriers, perceptions and attitudes to participation in the arts by residents of western Sydney particularly those from backgrounds that are culturally and linguistically diverse. (see Strategy – Action 2.4)
6. Arts NSW to commission a Youth Arts Audience Development Needs Study focused on fostering increased participation in the arts in Western Sydney by young people including an analysis of web-based technology such as Web 2.0 social networking software, My Space, You Tube, video streaming, pod casts and the role of technology based sub cultures of shared interest as a means of building young audiences for the arts. (See Strategy - Action 3.3; Action 3.4 and Action 4.7)

SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WESTERN SYDNEY PARTNERS

7. Western Sydney arts stakeholders (including arts and cultural venue/ facility managers, ABAF, Artswest and WSROC) to hold a planning workshop to explore the establishment of a Western Sydney Coalition for the Arts based on best practice governance and management with a focus on arts advocacy and project collaboration. (see Strategy – Action 1.1)
8. In recognition of the urgent need to establish systematic data gathering and analysis tools, the Western Sydney arts sector to work collaboratively to research and develop a standardised system for collecting and analysing audience data across artforms that informs strategies for building levels of participation in the arts across the region and within sub-regions. (see Strategy – Action 2.4).
9. Western Sydney arts sector to take a lead in liaison with State agencies and Western Sydney partners in establishing a Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Working Party with cross-agency and across-region membership to develop a Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Strategy. (see Strategy –Action 1.6)
10. Western Sydney arts sector to liaise with Arts NSW and the Australia Council to establish a Western Sydney Creative Producers Program including an artists residency (modelled on Albury’s Hot House Theatre - A Month in the Country) to encourage research and development of quality local programming relevant to Western Sydney. (see Strategy – Action 4.3)
11. Western Sydney arts sector to actively work with local councils, developers, universities and State government agencies to identify venues for the establishment of artists’ studios/ cultural industry incubators using Parramatta Artists Studios as a model. (see Strategy –Action 4.5)

INTRODUCTION

Arts NSW commissioned the Australia Street Company to undertake the Western Sydney Audience Development Study in June 2007 with a completion date of December 2007. The Study's aim is to provide the basis for a Western Sydney Audience Development Strategy that will provide a short and long term planning framework and sustainable direction for organisations, agencies and the arts sector with an identified interest in arts and cultural development in the region. A key basis for the Study is the idea that cultural sustainability is underpinned by broad-based audience participation.

It was agreed at the outset of this Study that it would focus on the arts specifically and would not address the audience development needs of the following:

- Festivals and events
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Public libraries
- Film and television

However the consultant team recognises that it is impossible to separate the arts from other related sectors and the Strategy will take account of these synergies.

The Study Report has been presented in two parts and as two documents – Part 1 being the presentation of key issues, the draft Strategy and Key Findings and Recommendations. Part 2 includes presentation and analysis of ABS Census data along with presentation and analysis of survey data related to attendance at cultural venues in central Sydney and also in Western Sydney. The Report documents key findings and makes strategic recommendations for consideration by Arts NSW as well as by those key agencies and organisations with a role and interest in the sustainable development of the arts in Western Sydney.

METHODOLOGY

The Study was based on interviews with relevant managers of Western Sydney arts/ cultural venues, and arts organisations including government managed galleries, museums, arts centres, artist's studios and theatres/ performing arts centres. The interviews focused on identifying issues, trends and opportunities that should be considered in the development of the Strategy. Not all managers were interviewed since at the time the Study was being carried out, a similar and complementary study was underway managed by M&Gnsw. That study also interviewed all managers of regional galleries and museums in the Western Sydney region and in order to avoid duplication of

time and effort and to make the best use of resources, M&GNSW kindly made the transcripts of interview available for the Arts NSW Study. The Study Report was finalised following a briefing workshop for key Western Sydney arts stakeholders which invited feedback and comment on Study analysis and proposed directions.

The Study was also based on an analysis of Census data related to Western Sydney from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. An analysis of attendance at selected cultural venues in Sydney and in Western Sydney was also analysed using data collected in 2005/06 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Study also sought information from major central Sydney based cultural venues related to levels of attendance from Western Sydney residents at each venue. This data provides preliminary information that informed the development of the Strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Study has been reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of many people working in and committed to the development of the arts in Sydney. This includes managers and directors of all the major cultural venues and organisations in Western Sydney as well as many in central Sydney. The Study team is also grateful for the advice and support of staff at Arts NSW particularly during a period of change and uncertainty. The contribution of WSROC in providing access to the analysis of 2006 census data for Western Sydney was critical to the Study. And, finally the attachment of University of Technology post graduate student, Zoë Backes on a professional internship to Arts NSW which specifically focused on this Study provided opportunities for additional research and critical analysis in the audience development area.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS

In order to be clear about the terms used in this Study the following definitions have provided a base for discussion:

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Audience development in Western Sydney relates to venues, facilities, projects, programs and services. It therefore requires a flexible approach to the establishment of relationships that foster loyalty and/ or support, understanding and appreciation across a broad base of participants reflecting the diversity of the Western Sydney community. It will generally promote a pattern of commitment to repeat visits or participation although this will depend on project and program objectives.

The Australia Council's definition of audience development is:

“Audience development is a strategic, dynamic and interactive process of making the arts accessible. It aims to engage individuals and communities in experiencing, enjoying, participating in and valuing the arts through various means including arts marketing.”² In the Australia Council definition, audience development embraces “The long term process of attracting and engaging target arts participants, audiences and markets and retaining them by establishing and maintaining strategic, dynamic and sustainable relationships”³.

The Carbins Report in 2004 went on to identify a number of key elements that underpin audience development goals and contribute to program success. These are:

- Ongoing quantitative and qualitative research
- Holistic support and involvement
- Long term investment
- Knowing your community
- Relationship integrity
- Product diversity
- Integrated marketing and communications
- Enhanced understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.

² Australia Council, 2005. Support for the Arts Handbook. Sydney: the Council.

³ Audience Development Strategy Western Sydney, 2004. Sydney: Jenny Carbins Marketing for the NSW Ministry for the Arts (unpublished).

AUDIENCES LONDON WORKING DEFINITION

This organisation was established in 2002 as a resource for around 40 arts organisations operating in the Greater London area. It receives funding from the Arts Council of England and the Association of London Government and is also supported by fees from subscribing organisations⁴.

AUDIENCE LONDON WORKING DEFINITION

“Audience development is a process involving many aspects of arts creation and management to break down the barriers preventing people from engaging with the arts. It’s a strategic process that can widen the diversity of audiences, increase the size or enhance the nature of their experiences. Effective audience development combines the work of arts marketers, educationalists, managers, planners, programmers and artists – working together to meet and balance artistic, social and financial objectives. It demands on going, long-term review and development of all organisational activities within an ‘artist-led, audience focused’ context. Understanding and respecting audiences – their characteristics, opinions and needs – is an essential part of the cycle. Collaboration between arts-providers is a key method by which such understanding can be achieved, and, often then addressed, enabling us to meet interests and build relationships”⁵.

MARKETING

Marketing has been defined in many ways but for this Study the definition developed by the Australia Council had been applied.

“Marketing is a set of activities undertaken to bring about desired exchanges that will help an organisation achieve its objectives. This view of marketing accepts the central role of the customer and of generating long term customer satisfaction, but it also recognises the market environment and the role that it plays in developing appropriate strategies”.⁶

PARTNERSHIP

A partnership is a joint working arrangement usually involving at least two parties who agree to co operate to achieve common interests or outcomes including information sharing, risks and benefits and sharing resources. The partnership process may be

⁴ www.audienceslondon.org/aboutal.asp

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Marketing the Arts, op cit.

secured based on a formal agreement to cooperate to benefit the mutual goals of the partners.

COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Community cultural development (CCD) is a community-based arts practice and can engage any artform. There are many variations of a community-based process, and as such, there is no one correct model. The process is primarily the collaboration of professional artists and communities to create interactions between and within cultures where creative ideas, skills and knowledge can be shared. During the CCD process artists and communities who are defined by a common interest work together. The community cultural development process can be empowering for communities by solving problems and addressing issues through arts practice⁷.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

“Activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property”⁸. Generally speaking the term creative industries is used in regard to the following interlocking and converging cultural industry sectors: advertising, architecture, arts and antique markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, television and radio, performing arts, publishing and software⁹.

CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism encompasses a diversity of views. For the purposes of this Strategy ‘cultural tourism’ is defined according to definitions adopted by the World Tourism Organisation, and by the Federal agencies of the Bureau of Tourism Research and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

“In the narrow sense, cultural tourism includes movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals, visits to sites and monuments. In a broad sense, all movements of persons might be included in the definition because they satisfy the human need for diversity,

⁷ Australia Council, <http://www.ozco.gov.au>

⁸ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UK, www.culture.gov.uk

⁹ Stuart Cunningham, ‘What price a creative economy?’, Sydney: Platform Papers, Currency Press, 2006

tending to raise the cultural level of the individual giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters.”¹⁰

It is defined according to visitors’ attendance at one or more of the following cultural attractions:

- festivals or fairs (music, dance, comedy, visual arts, multi-arts and heritage);
- performing arts or concerts (theatre, opera, ballet, and classical and contemporary music);
- museums or art galleries;
- historic or heritage buildings, sites, monuments;
- art or craft workshops or studios; and
- Aboriginal sites and cultural displays¹¹.

Note: cultural tourism can also include the screen industry and when combined with the natural environment and hospitality sectors, presents considerable potential for visitors and for those who live in a place.

¹⁰ World Tourism Organisation, 1985.

¹¹ Definition of ‘cultural tourism’ in Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy for WA, 2004-2008. Perth: Department of Culture and the Arts.

PLANNING CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

This section briefly documents some of the issues and challenges identified during research associated with this Study. It is these strategic factors that have informed the development of the Strategy and the key findings.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The arts sector in Western Sydney acknowledge the opportunities presented by the Western Sydney Arts Strategy¹². They see the need to foster and develop strong and active networks/ partnerships between Western Sydney cultural venues and they widely acknowledge the development of partnerships as a key next step.¹³ During interview many stakeholders commented that they regarded the development and fostering of partnerships as a critical building block in information exchange, resource sharing, strategic market and advocacy services and in creative program development. They regard sustainable partnerships as critical to audience development.

ARTS SECTOR PARTNERS

And at the end of 2007 the building blocks for the development of robust formal partnerships are in place although these partnerships have not only been driven by audience development priorities: e.g. ICE in Granville has developed formal Memoranda of Understanding with member local government councils and informal programming partnerships have been fostered between Campbelltown Arts Centre and Penrith Regional Gallery. Blacktown Arts Centre has an informal relationship with the Museum of Contemporary Art in The Rocks. The Parramatta Riverside Theatres and Urban Theatre Projects have pioneered and firmly embedded their relationships with the Sydney Festival. Urban Theatre Projects has a proven track record in actively encouraging the development of networks across the region including in Blacktown, Penrith and Campbelltown. Varuna Writers Centre in Katoomba has developed a successful formal relationship with the Sydney Writers Festival and with the Blue Mountains City Council which maintains a model Cultural Partnerships Program with its local cultural organisations.

¹² Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney, 1999. Sydney: now Arts NSW (formerly NSW Ministry for the Arts).

¹³ Interviews with key WS arts stakeholders October 2007.

To date the experience of committing to formal partnerships as demonstrated above has been generally to foster links to arts organisations external to the Western Sydney region. This acknowledges the traditional pattern where the region faces competition from central Sydney arts venues where ‘the lure of the bright lights’ provides a total entertainment package including transport, parking, dining and experience. The challenge for Western Sydney venues is to plan around this and to nevertheless develop integrated strategies that respond to inevitable competition for audiences. This will require cooperation in program development that connects to local audiences, is accessible and embraces high production standards.

ARTISTS NETWORKS

Audience development is also linked to opportunities for collaboration and networking between artists and arts practitioners. During interview, stakeholders highlighted the success stories achieved when cross-cultural arts projects provide opportunities for artists from many backgrounds and artforms to engage in sharing ideas. When artists are united and connected by their creativity, they foster opportunities for audience development including building new audiences. For example the Calligraphy project at Auburn Community Development Network and recent studio based initiatives at Parramatta Artists Studios. Artists’ collaboration can also contribute to creative industry development.

CULTURAL TOURISM LINKS

Cultural tourism provides opportunities to brand and market the region as unique cultural destination. It offers a rich experience that is attractive to locals, domestic/ national visitors plus to international audiences.

The presence of a network of arts and cultural facilities and programs located within global Sydney presents significant opportunity to engage with visitors, to contribute to the understanding of heritage and history and to celebrate local cultures and distinctive 21st century urban and in some places, rural lifestyles. Strategies that acknowledge and respect and promote understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and practice in Western Sydney should be a key component of cultural tourism.

Major cultural venues such as Casula Powerhouse, Campbelltown Arts Centre, the Riverside Theatres as well as other museums and galleries have an ambitious and outward looking focus and many think globally. Cultural tourism is a relatively untapped opportunity in Western Sydney with many stakeholders reporting that advocating for recognition and support for programs that foster visitor experiences falls on deaf ears.

EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

Collaboration and strategic advocacy is also required in relation to education and the arts in Western Sydney. The arts can have a significant impact on the lives of children. Opportunities to develop arts and education programs across Western Sydney that foster artists in schools, artist studio visits, visits to local performances, galleries and museums are important building blocks for audience development in the future.

Since educational attainment has been demonstrated as a key factor in influencing participation in the arts, the closure of arts courses at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) presents a key strategic issue. An ongoing coordinated and cooperative advocacy program that presents a robust defence for the review of the University of Western Sydney decision is required by the region from the arts sector in partnership with other peak interest groups. The closure of the arts campus also has the potential to impact on the development of a sustainable creative economy based on the local availability of skilled creative industry workers with relevant qualifications. The arts sector in Western Sydney has a continued role as a leading advocate in coordinating a review of the UWS decision.

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

Fostering diverse audience participation in the arts in Western Sydney will not happen in isolation. Partnerships and connections are needed across the whole-of-government as well as between diverse industries. This includes in the education sector including schools, TAFE as well as the tertiary sector. It includes cooperation with service providers who plan and deliver community education and lifelong learning including in arts skills and appreciation. Moving beyond the arts to the broad cultural sector to embrace the heritage and public libraries is critical to building partners and shared audiences.

In a region where relative social and income inequality is widespread, the arts provide a mechanism to contribute to the development of social policy via cross-agency and cross-government projects and partnerships. "Major cultural projects have been delivered across the region in partnership with the health, education, environment and urban planning sectors".¹⁴ Collaborations also need to be encouraged with State government agencies with responsibilities for State and regional development, for urban planning and infrastructure provision, as well as for health, tourism, the environment and environmental heritage. A more strategic approach to arts audience development provides opportunities to build new partners with shared goals to reach out to and to engage with new audiences.

¹⁴ The Arts In Western Sydney: progress report on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, 2006. Sydney: Ministry for the Arts.

BUILDING THE RESOURCE BASE

In this Study, resources are regarded as representing a broad base of tangible and intangible infrastructure. They could include financial resources, facilities, human resources, programs, services and projects. The intangible resources considered essential to audience development include qualifications, skills, experience as well as specialist systems in data collection and analysis.

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

In order to develop and maintain an environment where a diverse audience is provided with opportunities to understand, appreciate and participate in the arts, a greater level of understanding of audience development principles and practice is required across the Western Sydney region. This challenge includes the development of a commitment to and expertise in the systematic research, data collection and the analysis of strategic arts audience development information including ongoing collection of demographic statistics, actual visitation and audience data, qualitative research and systematic program evaluation and impact analysis.

INVESTING IN CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To date the NSW State government and local councils have shared the responsibility for developing and supporting the arts in the Western Sydney region. The State government has taken the lead by providing a strategic framework for capital and program investment. E.g. Bankstown Youth Development Service noted in interview that receipt of triennial funding from Arts NSW had an extremely positive impact on the planning and management of the Service.

In turn many local Western Sydney councils have become major partners with the State by providing a contribution to capital costs as well taking the lion's share in the funding of ongoing operational support for cultural infrastructure. This partnership has been effective and achievements are well documented.

The State Plan provides a framework for continuing Arts NSW support for Western Sydney specifically in focussing attention on the planning priority to "increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10% by 2016".¹⁵ To achieve this, increased financial resources specifically for arts audience development needs to be provided to the Western Sydney region.

¹⁵ A New Direction for NSW, November 2006. Sydney: Premier's Department.

It is unlikely that local government can increase its levels of operational support since the sector overall is under resourced for the scope of its local responsibilities. This is compounded in Western Sydney where high growth in urban development areas presents significant additional expectations on already stretched council resources. Few if any Western Sydney councils will have the capacity to contribute significant levels of additional funds required to establish audience development as an essential operational responsibility within arts organisations in the region. Leadership is required that fosters collaboration across the three tiers of government that leads to a shared commitment to invest in programs in Western Sydney that support cultural vitality through audience development.

SUB REGIONAL DIVERSITY AND RESOURCES

For general planning purposes and for this Study in particular it is also relevant to note that there is a marked difference between the three sub regions in Western Sydney. Those sub regions as defined by WSROC are:

North West Sydney – Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith Local Government Areas (LGA)

West Central Sydney – Auburn, Bankstown, Fairfield, Holroyd and Parramatta LGAs

South West Sydney – Camden, Campbelltown, Liverpool and Wollondilly LGAs

Although population has increased significantly across the region since 1991 to 1,788,967 residents, population size, density and growth rates vary within the region. Population densities and growth profiles reflect recency of development across the sub-regions and this is also reflected in the age profile of sub-regional residents and in differences between the sub-regions in terms of ethno-cultural origin of residents and levels of proficiency in English. The Census also provides data at collector district level related to high proportions of residents with poor English language skills that also tend to have high rates of low income reflecting the relationships between language skills, income and employment.

This data is relevant to this Study since it documents relative socio-economic disadvantage and informs the development of an index of relative socio-economic disadvantage (SEIFA). This in turn informs an understanding of the socio-demographic composition of Western Sydney and its current and potential audiences for the arts.

All the local government areas in Western Sydney contain pockets of wealth and poverty, but the extent and distribution varies across the region. This Strategy needs to respond to these differences with a range of strategic mechanisms rather than a one-size fits all generic based approach.

TABLE 1 INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE USING 2001 CENSUS DATA

North West Sydney	
Baulkham Hills	1,110
Blacktown	952
Blue Mountains	1,061
Hawkesbury	1,018
Penrith	992
West-Central Sydney	
Auburn	898
Bankstown	954
Fairfield	849
Holroyd	975
Parramatta	990
South-West Sydney	
Camden	1,043
Campbelltown	969
Liverpool	978
Wollondilly	1003
NSW	1000.46

Note: SEIFA rankings for 2006 are not yet available.

BUILDING BEST PRACTICE IN AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Western Sydney arts organisations and institutions currently demonstrate a great diversity in audience development practice. A variety of approaches and mechanisms are in place within and across artforms. Performing arts venues due to ticketing technology have access to accurate data in relation to their audiences whilst galleries and museums demonstrate more ad hoc approaches to visitor data collection. Other than the Riverside Theatres, Urban Theatre Projects, Blacktown Arts Centre and ICE, few organisations undertake regular market research. This seems to be due to limited financial resources and undeveloped specialist staff knowledge and expertise.

Recent investments in cultural venue capital development across the region have also impacted on opportunities to collect systematic audience data. For example over the past 2 years a number of key venues have been closed for refurbishment and development including Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre which has been closed for 18 months and anticipates a relaunch/ opening in early 2008. Until its closure in 2005 the Powerhouse had a demonstrated commitment to maintaining an active audience development program. Overall planned and forthcoming venue openings (Hawkesbury Regional Museum (2008), Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (2008) and Bankstown Cultural Facility present opportunities to get in on the ground floor in establishing systems to collect data in relation to current as well as potential audiences.

Overall the arts sector in Western Sydney demonstrates limited capacity for audience development research; it has little knowledge of current audiences and zero understanding of non-user audience needs and interests.

APPOINTMENTS AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

The generally limited representation of people from diverse cultures or specific demographics within the Boards/ Committees and staffing structures of Western Sydney arts organisations also presents a potential barrier to encouraging engagement with new audiences. This is a challenge across the State where the actual appointment of catalysts for change at the board and staff level has not had an active take-up. E.g. Indigenous Curators, Multicultural Arts Officers, Youth/ Children's' Coordinators. Further, experience demonstrates that the appointment of one only key individual to an organisation despite a clear role and program brief will seldom result in sustainable change for the better in engaging with and tapping into new and diverse audiences. Rather a critical mass of skilled and experienced staff/ advocates with relevant cultural knowledge are required with the power to be innovative, to make creative connections and to be resourced for the long-term.¹⁶

STRATEGIC CAPACITY AND ACTING ON PLANNING CONNECTIONS

Stakeholders during interview generally demonstrated a limited understanding and capacity to link cultural planning, audience development, advocacy and marketing strategies including at the local government but also at the regional level. And this works both ways – e.g. although Baulkham Hills Council developed a cultural plan in 2005, the plan makes only limited mention of or connection to cultural opportunities or strategies related to the Council owned (but not managed) Hills Performing Arts Centre.¹⁷ Few stakeholders interviewed made links to the strategic opportunities available to Western Sydney that respond to increased participation levels targeted in the 2006 State Plan. However most stakeholders were very clear that a heightened focus on sustainability in the longer term was required through investment in programs that foster cultural maintenance, continuity and stability rather than one-off projects.¹⁸

¹⁶ Walker-Kuhne, Donna, 2004 "10 Tools for audience development" at National Arts Marketing Conference, 2001. www.walkercommunicationsgroup.com/tools.cfm

¹⁷ Stakeholder interview October 2007

¹⁸ Stakeholder interviews October 2007.

The regional cultural strategy for Greater Western Sydney coordinated by WSROC in 2005 provides a framework for embedding cultural development across the region at all levels of government and in education, the environment, health, the community sector, in business and in the arts. The Strategy provides six strategic directions including “Cultivate a creative regional spirit” with a view to promoting “cultural participation across a range of sectors and strengthening creative regional community whilst building audiences for cultural activity”.¹⁹ Most councils across Western Sydney have followed up this regional strategy with the development of Cultural Plans at their local level. Many of the Plans recognise opportunities to improve community well-being and increase cultural participation via innovative community cultural development programs.

Audience development is complex and challenging. It requires the provision of resources including financial as well as more intangible resources such as leadership and skills to advocate for and integrate arts audience development programs, projects and processes across the Western Sydney region.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION

Measuring success in audience development is dependent on developing patterns of broad community participation across artforms and in multiple cultural dimensions. Participation embraces diverse stakeholders including but not limited to traditional arts audiences and it also takes account of technology and cultural participation opportunities presented by the world-wide web and social networking software. The challenge for the arts is to extend programming and audience reach beyond the loyal audience base and to engage with new audiences seeking understand and to take part in community cultural life.

SURVEYING ATTENDANCE

Since the launch of the 1999 Western Sydney Arts Strategy significant progress has been made in building the region’s capacity for cultural development. This may be measured by analysing the attendance at cultural venue and events data collected as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Surveys (GSS). Detailed analysis is provided in Part 2 of this Study at Appendix 2.

¹⁹ Authoring Contemporary Australia: a regional cultural strategy for greater Western Sydney, 2005. Blacktown: WSROC.

One reflection of this has been the reduction of the difference in overall attendance at least one of the selected cultural venues surveyed by the ABS in 2006 by Western Sydney residents compared to attendance levels by the rest of Sydney (Sydney SD). The data indicates that the difference in attendance levels since 2002 is small and the gap in levels of attendance between Sydney SD and Western Sydney declining. This data is important since it relates to a period when participation in the arts and cultural activities by residents across the Sydney metro region has fallen²⁰. The data shows that overall attendance in the Sydney SD fell from 87.3% in 2002 to 85% in 2006 (or a fall of 2.3%). But there was a much smaller rate of decline experienced in Western Sydney (GWS) between 2002 and 2006 where the decline was -0.8%.

The ABS data also indicates that with the exception of visits to museums, attendance rates by GWS residents to all venues and events increased although the increased attendance at libraries was not significant. In particular attendance at various live performances rose particularly in the following:

- popular concerts (up by 5.7% on Sydney SD and 4.8% in GWS).
- Dance performances (up by 5% in Sydney SD and 6.2% in GWS)
- Musicals and operas (up by 5.2% in Sydney SD and 5% in GWS)

The data shows that the main difference by categories of venues between Sydney SD and WS is in attendance at galleries.

The top 6 categories by attendance for Western Sydney were:

Rank	2002	2005-06
1	Cinema	Cinema
2	Libraries	Libraries
3	Popular music concerts	Popular music concerts
4	Museums	Other performing arts
5	Other performing arts	Musicals and operas
6	Musicals and operas	Museums

The top 6 categories by attendance for the rest of Sydney were:

Rank	2002	2005-06
1	Cinema	Cinema
2	Libraries	Libraries
3	Art galleries	Popular music concerts
4	Popular music concerts	Art galleries

²⁰ 'Attendance at selected cultural venues and events' :questions included in General Social Survey 2006, ABS.

5	Museums	Museums
6	Musicals and operas	Musicals and operas

Overall the GSS data shows attendance by Greater Western Sydney adults at cultural events and venues is slightly lower than the rates for Sydney SD, and that factors influencing attendance at different kinds of events/venues are having more impact on *changes* in these rates than place of residence. Identifying and responding to these factors will be one of the key challenges for this Study.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

The Western Sydney region supports significant diversity and this is likely to have an impact on attendance and participation at cultural venues and events across the region. When considering cultural diversity it is also relevant to note that 1.4% of Western Sydney residents (25,703 people) identified themselves in the Census as Indigenous Australians. More than half of these (13,642) live in North-West Sydney, mainly in the Blacktown LGA.

Sub regional differences in relation to the ethno-cultural origin of residents can be identified in the ABS data. In 2006, 43.3% of residents of the central-West subregion were born overseas compared to 26% and 28% for the other two regions. Further in 2006 35.4% of Western Sydney residents said they did not speak English well or at all with lack of fluency in English higher for residents of West-Central Sydney (39.8%) compared to the other two regions. See Part 2 Western Sydney Statistical Snapshot.

Although the ABS data on attendance rates by country of birth is available the error rates for these results are high and the results should be treated with caution. However taking this into account, the 2002 data shows that attendance rates for all groups including those born in non-English speaking backgrounds was highest for cinema. This is followed by:

- Performing arts
- Libraries
- Art galleries or museums

The 2006 ABS data is available in a less aggregated form and again cinema enjoys the highest attendance rate across all groups with libraries a consistent second. However the data also seems to indicate that people born in a non-main English speaking country appear to attend art galleries, museums and classical music concerts less frequently than other groups by birthplace.

Data related to attendance patterns by Western Sydney residents specifically born in non-main English speaking countries is not well documented. One of the key tools for building audiences is the ability to collect relevant information that helps build relationships with

communities that in turn informs programme planning and development. This presents a particular challenge requiring specific strategies including a sustainable investment in skills and resources focused across the key language groupings represented in the region.

TECHNOLOGY AND NEW CULTURAL AUDIENCES

Traditionally cultural venues, public spaces and organisations provided the hub for arts and cultural activity and the place to appreciate and participate in creative experiences. But whilst communities still use and expect the traditional form of cultural hub that is largely infrastructure based, new forms of cultural networks are emerging.

In particular technology including information and communications systems have influenced the 'reach' of arts and cultural programs whilst software developments supporting user generated content have encouraged new opportunities for audiences as well as for artists. Creative sub cultures are forming and evolving that blur the boundaries between artforms, between amateur and professional, between audiences and markets.

Web 2.0 social networking software, virtual cultural communities connected by shared interests, content generated sites such as My Space, Facebook, Second Life and YouTube all present new mechanisms to engage in culture and the arts. These provide fluid and flexible milieu for experimentation and innovation. They need not be place- based rather are amorphous initiatives that do not neatly fit into traditional categories. They are often driven by young entrepreneurs who relish the transient and temporary nature of technology driven/ supported initiatives.

Creative subcultures thrive in such an environment, presenting challenges as well as opportunities for audience development. Strategies that address audience development in Western Sydney will need to take account of and consider the emerging opportunities presented by technology based creative arts practice.

ACCESS AND GEOGRAPHY

Audience participation in Western Sydney is particularly disadvantaged due to poor public transport and vast distances that often need to be travelled to attend an arts/ cultural venue. Many venues are not near transport hubs. E.g. Campbelltown Arts Centre, the Hills Performing Arts Centre, Hawkesbury Regional Art Gallery, Newington Studios, The Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Gallery. The provision of affordable and accessible cross-regional transport systems is inadequate for the population and this places most cultural venues, programs and events at a distinct disadvantage. The need to travel long

distances across the region to visit cultural facilities also impacts on the capacity of local schools to find the time in a busy school calendar and the extra travel cost required to bus students to venues.

An emerging aspect of arts audience development reported by many stakeholders to this Study, is the 'time-poor' nature of Western Sydney lifestyles. The demands of urban living including work demands with long hours/ shift work, commuting long distances to the City as well as to urban edge growth centres, high-mortgage stress and family responsibilities influences the choices people make in relation to leisure options. Cost is certainly a factor that influences decisions in relation to arts participation but it seems that time and the capacity to give 'attention' to cultural experiences is an emerging consideration in arts audience development.²¹

RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY

Arts audience development in Western Sydney will not work if a 'one size fits all' solution is attempted. The region is distinctive due to its cultural diversity where clusters of cultural backgrounds and a mix of socio-economic capacity prevails, and where length of time residents have lived in Australia and attitudes to arts and cultural participation varies. Education levels across the region also vary with each sub-region supporting a rich mix of educational attainment from tertiary educated to unskilled, junior secondary school leavers. Although growth in Western Sydney is slowing the region still supports a relatively young community. Demographics in Western Sydney also reflect global trends towards an ageing society.

Western Sydney is recognised for the diversity of its audiences and most stakeholders commented that this characteristic requires multiple and multilayered strategies rather than one size fits all/ generic approach. There is no typical audience at most Western Sydney cultural venues presenting significant challenges for planning and programming. Demographic data indicates layers of socio-economic difference as well as cultural backgrounds including new arrivals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and diverse faith groupings. These differences in audience characteristic can be illustrated by the reported diversity of audience at performances at the Riverside Theatres and the homogeneity of audience (including at multicultural celebrations) at The Hills Performing Arts Centre.

Local neighbourhoods, suburbs, Local Government Areas and sub-regions across the Greater Western Sydney Region demonstrate that there is no one demographic providing a 'typical' arts audience membership. However many stakeholders commented that

²¹ Ferres, Kay and Adair, David, *Who profits from the arts? Taking the measure of culture*, 2007. Sydney: Platform paper, Currency Press.

diverse audiences do come together for community events and that the innovative use of these events for broadening opportunities to participate in the arts should be explored. E.g. Bankstown Bites in which the Bankstown Youth Development Service has successfully negotiated a valued presence in recent years. The Auburn Community Development Network has also recently been successful in utilising the Auburn Botanic Gardens as a cultural site. Community events and celebrations as well as public open space/ civic places present opportunities to engage with sections of the community not usually connected to the arts and culture. The hook or link can often be a food/ cuisine focus and opportunities to mix arts experiences with popular entertainment.

One of the challenges for increasing the levels of participation in the arts in Western Sydney will be the development of strategies that embrace multiple cultural dimensions reflecting and responding to the diversity of Western Sydney communities. Each of the three Sub regions present significant variety and difference requiring new and innovative ways of connecting with specific communities and sub cultures utilising lessons learnt from the past and the application of models of contemporary best practice in building new audiences for the arts in diverse urban environments.

PROGRAMMING AND LOCAL CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Recent investment in cultural infrastructure across Western Sydney has resulted in increased participation at arts and cultural venues. Many of the region's venues pride themselves on their commitment to developing programs that come directly out of local stories although this type of approach to arts programming is not yet widespread across the region. The challenge is to encourage a broad commitment to and investment in developing cultural programs (exhibitions, performance, writing, software etc) that express the culture of place and relate to local audiences.²²

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC VS CROSS CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Western Sydney arts venues have developed a reputation as community responsive. Research associated with the 2004 Audience Development Strategy noted that the region's community responsive approach whereby a greater proportion of arts product comes from artists within the local community is "a unique aspect of and an important

²² Terracini, Lyndon, A regional state of mind: making art outside metropolitan Australia. Platform Papers January 2007. Sydney: Currency Press.

asset for the Western Sydney arts sector.”²³ Urban Theatre Projects and the Auburn Community Development Network identified opportunities for cross-cultural creativity as a key strategic opportunity for artists particularly and recent projects demonstrate creativity as a connector that unites artists across projects and across the region.

In 2004 Casula Powerhouse, Penrith Regional Gallery, Blacktown Arts Centre and Fairfield City Gallery were cited as venues which had enjoyed greatest success in attracting audiences when “content is not culturally specific, but when product is based on a common theme to which members of diverse communities can contribute and relate”.²⁴ Since 2004, a number of new or expanded venues have opened (including Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Blacktown Arts Centre (performance space), Parramatta Artists Studios, Newington Artists Studios (SOPA), Campbelltown Arts Centre) and have provided opportunities to work with local artists to develop creative content that relates to the region. However most venue managers remain challenged in identifying sufficient funding to support the identification and development of local content which reflects a commitment to programming quality including high production values.

They also report difficulties in building loyal audiences for programs that are not culturally specific. Campbelltown Arts Centre and Penrith Regional Gallery report that an exhibition that provides a focus on and celebrates the stories and traditions of one cultural group will attract new audiences to their venue from that group. However there is no evidence that repeat visits to the venue are made by that one group once the relevant exhibition/creative program has concluded. More information is needed in relation to building loyalty from diverse communities through culturally specific and/or cross-cultural programming.

THE LURE OF THE BRIGHT LIGHTS

The preliminary data provided by a small group of central City cultural venues including in the performing arts, galleries and museums sector indicates that residents of some Western Sydney Local Government Areas are active patrons of arts events in central Sydney. (See Part 2 for detail). The data indicates that 8.3% of audiences are from Western Sydney and in particular from the Baulkham Hills LGA along with residents of Liverpool and Campbelltown. The data throws up more questions than it answers such as the potential for strong relationships between the central City based venues and venues in the West, the nature of the programs attracting Western Sydney audiences, means of travel, sources of information in relation to local, regional and central Sydney programming and marketing, opportunities for incentive programs between Western Sydney venues and central Sydney and vice versa.

²³ Audience Development Strategy Western Sydney, 2004. Sydney: Jenni Carbins Marketing (unpublished).

²⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

Clearly more rigorous surveying is needed. However even the indicative data indicates an interest in and commitment to the arts and a willingness by at least some Western Sydney residents to travel long distances to participate as an arts audience.

REFLECTING SUB REGIONAL DIFFERENCE

The data gathered as part of this Study indicates a diversity of experience and capacity across the region. Patterns of advantage as well as disadvantage are present within local government areas and this in turn influences the socio-demographic map at the sub-regional level reflecting variations in education, language proficiency, income level and ethno-cultural difference. In developing audiences for the arts, these factors demonstrating different local needs and experiences must be taken into account.

Each region also has varying access to cultural venues and facilities. Although new or refurbished infrastructure has been recently developed in Blacktown, Hawkesbury, Parramatta, Campbelltown and Penrith, some areas have very limited or no access to contemporary cultural venues managed at the local government level e.g. Auburn, Blue Mountains, Bankstown, Fairfield, Holroyd, Camden and Wollondilly. Although many of these LGAs have plans in development or on the drawing board, there will be a time lag before significant new audiences for the arts are established. Nevertheless each LGA should be provided with the opportunities to factor audience development research and analysis into all planning/ feasibility studies associated with the development of new/ refurbished arts and cultural venues.

LINKING PROGRAMMING, AUDIENCES AND WELL BEING

Community well-being recognises the inter-relatedness of social, cultural, economic and environmental factors.²⁵ In focusing on opportunities to build and develop Western Sydney arts audiences, opportunities to consider community well being and the links to community development and arts participation are presented.

As was noted earlier in this Report, the ABS constructs from each Census an index of relative socio-economic disadvantage (SEIFA). All West-Central Sydney sub region rankings on the index of relative socio-economic disadvantage fell below the median (1000.46) in 2001. Auburn and Fairfield ranked significantly below the other LGAs. SEIFA rankings for Liverpool and Campbelltown were lower than the median but for Camden and Wollondilly higher. All SEIFA rankings for North-West Sydney LGAs were higher than the median with the exception of Blacktown.

²⁵ Mills, Deborah and Brown, Paul, 2004. Art and wellbeing. Sydney: Australia Council.

The West-Central sub-region also had proportionately more households in both rental and mortgage stress than did the other two subregions, more lone person households, and higher unemployment rates. As well, the employment participation rate in West-Central Sydney was 49.7% in 2006 much less than the 58.3% in South-West Sydney and the 61.7% in North West Sydney.

Many researchers²⁶ have observed that income is a primary indicator of many sources of social disadvantage (in education, employment, health and life chances). Low income data again shows the patterns of relative advantage and disadvantage within local government authorities and the marked differences between them. Low income household maps for Penrith, Auburn, Fairfield and Campbelltown illustrate this point (see Part 2).

One of the delivery mechanisms for improving wellbeing and at the same time building social and cultural capital is to foster opportunities for communities and individuals to participate in creative cultural practices (described as community cultural development or CCD). By working with artists and engaging in participatory creative programs, community wellbeing can be enhanced.

Recent community cultural development projects undertaken by the Auburn Community Development Network, Bankstown Youth Development Service and Urban Theatre Projects represent best practice in the CCD area. These agencies have an excellent track record in working across their communities and with government including local government to respond to community need through creative cultural development practice. CCD practice represents significant opportunity to strengthen community wellbeing as well as increase community participation in the arts across Western Sydney.

Western Sydney does not present a uniform picture, but is characterised by its diversity and uneven spread in backgrounds, income levels, education, transport and housing.²⁷ It is this diversity that is a challenge since it requires multiple strategies in relation to arts audience development particularly in an environment where, until recently, arts infrastructure provision was underdeveloped or non-existent.

²⁶ For example Wilkinson R G 2005 *The Impact of Inequality: how to make sick societies healthier*. New Press, N.Y, and Routledge London.

²⁷ Sydney: polarisation amid prosperity by Bill Randolph, Simon Pinnegar et al. in Sydney Morning herald, 22-23 September 2007, p. 26

STUDY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the critical aspects of planning for arts audience development in Western Sydney is the complex nature of the region's urban environment. As well as being one of the nation's regional powerhouses, Western Sydney represents diversity, population growth and significant variations in socio-economic distribution. These variations differ across and within the areas sub-regions influencing planning since a one-size fits all approach is clearly not appropriate for Sydney's west.

Recent investment in the arts and culture by the State and local government in the Western Sydney region has improved the opportunities for broad cultural participation. Nevertheless the region's capacity for audience development remains limited and this is in part due to low levels of understanding of the principles of audience development. This includes knowledge and expertise in the development and maintenance of systematic research and analysis including a detailed knowledge of population trends, community needs and interests, strategies for building relationships and investment levels that support product quality and program relevance.

The title of this Study, *"it's not where you are from, it's where you're at"* was stated during an interview with a key Western Sydney stakeholder in October 2007. It seems to sum up the audience development context in Western Sydney and provides a direction for the development of the Strategy. Clearly any audience development strategy for Western Sydney should be focused on the building blocks that will result in a loyal base of participants drawn from across the community and representing diverse backgrounds, cultures and traditions. Such a strategy would be committed to ensuring that programming is community responsive, drawing on local stories to create quality and accessible and sometimes challenging arts and cultural experiences. The loyal base of participants will be reached by a marketing and communications system that understands its target market including sectors of the community who are potential participants and utilises a variety of effective campaigns to reach out and communicate.

The issues and opportunities presented above describe many of the significant features of the challenges faced in Sydney's Greater West. However the greatest challenge and the one which underpins this strategy is the need to increase the resources available for audience development. This requires an investment in the infrastructure specifically for audience development including the skills, experience and qualifications needed to drive a strategic and sustainable of audience development program across the region. Such a program would take the lead in building integrated and standardised research, data collection and analysis systems that are critical to informing the development of audience building strategies. Increased resources to support audience development would ensure

that audience development moves from the margins into the mainstream as a valuable and essential aspect of growing Western Sydney's arts activity, increasing participation levels and enhancing opportunities for artists and the region's cultural economy.

KEY DRIVERS OF WESTERN SYDNEY AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The WS Audience Development Strategy Study has identified a number of issues and challenges that have informed the development of the Strategy. In summary these include:

- **Forging relationships and strengthening partnerships**
Acknowledging that going it alone and in isolation will not work and that an active commitment to formal and informal partners is essential for every Western Sydney arts organisation and venue.
- **Harnessing the base of resources for audience development**
Resources include human resources, systems skills and knowledge, commitment and leadership as well as financial resources and they need to grow from a current very low base to one which supports a sustainable program of audience building activity.
- **Extending a culture of community engagement in the arts across the region**
Participation in the arts and cultural activity must embrace the needs and interests of diverse audiences and in multiple cultural dimensions. It must extend beyond traditional arts audiences and take account of technology and new and emerging sub cultures.
- **Developing locally responsive programming content**
As well as presenting programs and productions developed external to the region, Western Sydney arts audiences will develop a strong base when creativity is recognised as a connector that unites local and regional audiences and artists through the development of programs that respond to the culture of place and which provide opportunities to share distinct local experiences.

THE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

This Study has resulted in the development of a long-term Strategy for building arts audiences in Western Sydney. The Strategy provides a planning framework including the development of a 10 year vision, establishes planning principles to inform decision making and identifies Goals, anticipated outcomes and Actions as the stepping stones to achieving the vision. Critical elements of the Strategy are summarised below:

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT VISION 2007 TO 2017

In 2017, the Western Sydney region is widely recognised for the vitality of its culture of participation in the arts where cultural diversity is celebrated and where the arts and artists are valued, well resourced and accessible. Western Sydney is a leader in providing a model for best practice in sustainable cultural development including in audience development.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In building arts audiences for Western Sydney, key decisions will be considered in the context of the following core values which are expressed as planning principles. These principles are essential to the development of the Vision and are consistent with and complement the Key Principles identified in the Western Sydney Regional Cultural Strategy 2005²⁸.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE

Cultural sustainability: Meeting the cultural needs of the present through a combination of cultural resources without compromising the needs and creative potential of future generations.

CORE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Cultural diversity and respect for difference:** Embracing people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles.
- **Openness and trust:** Fostering and welcoming opportunities to contribute to and engage in the region's culture life.
- **Community wellbeing and inclusion:** Supporting an environment where social equality and cultural vitality are valued as the building blocks of social capital.
- **Connectedness and collaboration:** Encouraging cooperative links and partnerships based on shared objectives and commitments.
- **Distinctiveness and local identity:** The diversity of local as well as regional cultural identity is respected and celebrated.
- **Creativity and innovation:** The arts, new ideas and innovation are valued for their role in problem solving and in developing fresh modes of creative expression.

²⁸ Authoring Contemporary Australia: a regional cultural strategy for Greater Western Sydney, 2005. Blacktown: WSROC.

GOALS

- Goal 1 Partnerships for audience development are in place
- Goal 2 Resources for audience development are harnessed
- Goal 3 A culture of participation in the arts is embedded
- Goal 4 Investment in creative programming is demonstrated

THE NEXT STEPS

This Study has taken a big picture approach to researching audience development needs and to identifying the issues and opportunities to be considered in the development of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy. The Study through the Strategy has extended roles in audience development well beyond the scope of Arts NSW responsibilities to confirm links, partnerships and coordinated leadership roles that will ensure that the Audience Development Vision will be achieved.

However at this critical first stage of the launch of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy, Arts NSW will need to accept and continue to take a key role in advancing the Strategy and across many fronts including to Federal, State and local government, to peak arts organisations and institutions, to the business and non-government sector and to artists. The following Recommendations reflect that role and highlight those actions in the Strategy that will set the direction in the immediate short term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are divided into *Priority Roles and Responsibilities for State agencies* including Arts NSW in recognition of its role in commissioning the Strategy. Supplementary recommendations relate to Supporting Leadership Roles and Responsibilities for Western Sydney partners. The Strategy itself however spans a range of stakeholders who will be required to take an active role in dialogue, resource provision, cooperation, leadership and facilitation in implementing this Strategy.

PRIORITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STATE AGENCIES

1. Arts NSW to formally consider and adopt the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy as a sustainable framework and advocacy tool for working with sector partners to build arts audiences across the Western Sydney region.
2. Arts NSW to establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Incentive Fund as a new initiative within the Western Sydney Arts Strategy to provide leverage for building commitment and ownership from the range of partners needed to contribute towards the implementation of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy. (See Strategy – Action 2.1)
3. Arts NSW to fully fund a new full-time Western Sydney Audience Development Broker as part of a longer term plan to establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Team with responsibilities to build capacity, foster linkages, develop awareness and skills, secure additional resources and coordinate the implementation of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy including at the sub-regional as well as across the Western Sydney region. (See Strategy – Action 2.2)
4. Arts NSW to initiate discussions with relevant arts/ cultural organisations and agencies to identify the most appropriate reporting structure and relationships for the Audience Development Broker. (See Strategy –Action 1.1; Action 2.3)
5. Arts NSW to liaise with M&GNSW and the Australia Council to commission a non-user market research study to identify the barriers, perceptions and attitudes to participation in the arts by residents of western Sydney particularly those from backgrounds that are culturally and linguistically diverse. (See Strategy –Action 2.4)
6. Arts NSW to commission a Youth Arts Audience Development Needs Study focused on fostering increased participation in the arts in Western Sydney by young people including an analysis of web-based technology such as Web 2.0 social networking software, My Space, You Tube, video streaming, pod casts and the role of technology based sub cultures of shared interest as a means of building young audiences for the arts. (See Strategy - Action 3.3; Action 3.4 and Action 4.7)

SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WESTERN SYDNEY PARTNERS

7. Western Sydney arts stakeholders (including arts and cultural venue/ facility managers, ABAF, Artswest and WSROC) to hold a planning workshop to explore the establishment of a Western Sydney Coalition for the Arts based on best-practice governance and management with a focus on arts advocacy and project collaboration. (see Strategy 1.1).
8. In recognition of the urgent need to establish systematic data gathering and analysis tools, the Western Sydney arts sector to work collaboratively to research and develop a standardised system for collecting and analysing audience data across artforms that informs strategies for building levels of participation in the arts across the region and within sub-regions. (see Strategy – Action 2.4).
9. Western Sydney arts sector to take a lead role in liaison with State agencies and Western Sydney partners in establishing a Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Working Party with cross-agency and across-region membership to develop a Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Strategy. (See Strategy – Action 1.6)
10. Western Sydney arts sector to liaise with Arts NSW and with the Australia Council to establish a Western Sydney Creative Producers Program including an artists residency (modelled on Albury's Hot House Theatre - A Month in the Country) to encourage research and development of quality local programming relevant to Western Sydney. (See Strategy – Action 4.3)
11. Western Sydney arts sector to actively work with local councils, developers, universities and State government agencies to identify venues for the establishment of artists' studios/ cultural industry incubators using Parramatta Artists Studios as a model. (See Strategy – Action 4.5)

WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

VISION 2007 TO 2107

In 2017, the Western Sydney region is widely recognised for the vitality of its culture of participation in the arts where cultural diversity is celebrated and where the arts and artists are valued, well resourced and accessible. Western Sydney is a leader in providing a model for best practice in sustainable cultural development including in audience development.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In building arts audiences for Western Sydney, key decisions will be considered in the context of the following values which are expressed as planning principles. These principles are essential to the development of the Vision and are consistent with and complement the Key Principles identified in the Western Sydney Regional Cultural Strategy 2005²⁹.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE

Cultural sustainability: Meeting the cultural needs of the present through a combination of cultural resources without compromising the needs and creative potential of future generations.

CORE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Cultural diversity and respect for difference:** Embracing people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles.
- **Openness and trust:** Fostering and welcoming opportunities to contribute to and engage in the region's culture life.

²⁹ Authoring Contemporary Australia: a regional cultural strategy for Greater Western Sydney, 2005. Blacktown: WSROC.

- **Community wellbeing and inclusion:** Supporting an environment where social equality and cultural vitality are valued as the building blocks of social capital.
- **Connectedness and collaboration:** Encouraging cooperative links and partnerships based on shared objectives and commitments.
- **Distinctiveness and local identity:** The diversity of local as well as regional cultural identity is respected and celebrated.
- **Creativity and innovation:** The arts, new ideas and innovation are valued for their role in problem solving and in developing fresh modes of creative expression.

This Audience Development Strategy – including the Vision and the Principles - is underpinned by 4 strategic Goals that together form the structure from which Actions and Outcomes are achieved.

GOALS

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Goal 1 | Partnerships for audience development are in place |
| Goal 2 | Resources for audience development are harnessed |
| Goal 3 | A culture of participation in the arts is embedded |
| Goal 4 | Investment in creative programming is demonstrated |

GOAL1: PARTNERSHIPS FOR AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT ARE IN PLACE

Fostering collaborative partnerships in the arts sector and in other industries that provide opportunities for innovation and new ideas, networking, mentoring and skills development.

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge is to break down the barriers to cooperation across the Western Sydney region including rivalry and competition between arts venues and to encourage the region's creative people and institutions to work collaboratively to reach arts audiences. Partnerships require a commitment to working together in both formal and informal ways based on shared objectives and outcomes.

THE OUTCOMES

- 1 The establishment of formal, ongoing and sustainable partnerships and networks between arts organisations, venues and practitioners in Western Sydney.
- 2 Building robust connections to the education sector particularly schools and the Department of Education that result in improved access to arts and education opportunities across the WS region.
- 3 Through partnerships, increased use of the region's public and open space for arts experiences, events, arts markets and festivals.

THE ACTIONS

- 1.1 Hold a planning workshop for Western Sydney arts stakeholders including Australian Business Arts Foundation (ABAF), Artswest and WSROC as well as key venues and organisations that explores the establishment of a Western Sydney Coalition for the Arts based on best practice in governance and management with a focus on advocacy and collaboration.
- 1.2 Explore formal collaboration between Western Sydney cultural venues and organisations and committed central City venues in programming and in audience development survey and analysis.
- 1.3 Establish a pilot arts project supported by the three tiers of government and based on a formal commitment to collaboration and partnership between at least 3 Western Sydney arts organisations aimed at developing and growing a long term, sustainable relationship with a potential target arts audience in the region. E.g. Focus on Gen Y audiences and technology including youth focused web sites and social networking technology and the arts.

- 1.4 Establish a collaborative Arts Open Day Project across the region which results in an annual, family-friendly, whole-of-region cultural event to encourage access, break down traditional perceptions and build new audiences for the arts.
- 1.5 Establish a Western Sydney Arts Marketing Task Force to coordinate the development of a marketing plan including shared advertising for an integrated Western Sydney galleries and performing arts centres block advertisement in relevant media including the Saturday Sydney Morning Herald. (See also Action 4.4 WS 'Creative Hothouse' program)
- 1.6 WSROC to take the lead in liaison with State agencies and Western Sydney partners in establishing a Cultural Tourism Working Party with cross-agency and across-region membership to develop a Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Strategy.
- 1.7 Build on the strengths of the Arts NSW Connect Ed program and liaise with the Department of Education and Training to obtain sponsorship for a 1 Year trial project for a dedicated, subsidised arts bus to carry Western Sydney school children to the region's arts/ cultural venues at nil cost to the pupils or their schools.
- 1.8 Develop in partnership with local ATSI representatives, a Western Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts and Cultural Development Strategy that nurtures the heritage and contemporary practice of Aboriginal cultures in the region.
- 1.9 Work with relevant State and local agencies and councils to ensure that the region's housing and accommodation mix includes low cost, affordable options suitable for new arrivals, artists and other creative industry workers.

GOAL 2: RESOURCES FOR AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT ARE HARNESSSED

Mobilising resources including finance and infrastructure resources (programs, venues, human resources, projects and services) to support sustainable audience development strategies and increase participation in the arts.

THE CHALLENGE

Audience development is complex and challenging. In order to develop and maintain an environment where a diverse audience is provided with opportunities to understand, appreciate and participate in the arts, a greater level of understanding of audience development principles and practice is required across the Western Sydney region. This challenge includes the development of a commitment to and expertise in the systematic research, data collection and the analysis of strategic arts audience development information including ongoing collection of demographic statistics, actual visitation and audience data, qualitative research and systematic program evaluation and impact analysis. It requires the provision of resources including financial as well as more intangible resources such as leadership and skills to advocate for and integrate arts audience development programs, projects and processes across the Western Sydney region whilst respecting and responding to the regions' sub regional differences.

THE OUTCOMES

- 1 Increased numbers of residents, workers and visitors participating in the region's arts and cultural programs and facilities.
- 2 Increased participation in the arts by Western Sydney residents born in non-English speaking countries.
- 3 Growth in programs and projects that encourage the development of cross-cultural artist collaboration that are maintained over time.
- 4 Development of a systematic and standardised audience data collection program that provides robust information to inform the ongoing development of audience development strategies for Western Sydney.
- 5 Western Sydney region is recognised as leader in arts audience building through its commitment to supporting an integrated regional approach to participation in the arts.

THE ACTIONS

- 2.1 Arts NSW establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Incentive Fund as a new initiative within the Western Sydney Arts Strategy to provide leverage for building commitment and ownership from the range of partners needed to contribute towards the implementation of this Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy.
- 2.2 Arts NSW to fully fund a new full-time Western Sydney Audience Development Broker as part of a longer-term plan to establish a Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Team with responsibilities to build capacity, foster linkages, develop awareness and skills, secure additional resources and coordinate the implementation of the Western Sydney Arts Audience Development Strategy including at the sub-regional as well as across the Western Sydney region.
- 2.3 Arts NSW to initiate discussions with relevant arts/ cultural organisations to identify the most appropriate reporting structure and relationships for the Audience Development Broker.
- 2.4 The WS Audience Broker to work with key peak organisations including M&GNSW and the region's arts venues and organisations to develop a standardised system for collecting and analysing audience data that informs strategies for building levels of participation in the arts across the region and within sub regions.
- 2.5 Arts NSW to liaise with M&GNSW and the Australia Council to commission a non-user market research study to identify the barriers, perceptions and attitudes to participation in the arts by residents of western Sydney particularly those from backgrounds that are culturally and linguistically diverse.
- 2.6 Seek funds and partners in consultation with ABAF to establish a sustainable and ongoing Audience Development hands-on workshop program for Western Sydney arts/ cultural administration staff to foster understanding of audience development principles and to develop skills and expertise for implementation at the work place.
- 2.7 Establish the Western Sydney Audience development mentorship program providing at least 2 attachments annually for Western Sydney arts workers to be attached to City-based cultural institutions with a demonstrated track record in audience development.
- 2.8 Build on the Connect Ed Program to seek sponsorship for artists in schools programs and school visits to artists' studios to encourage children's and young people's engagement in the arts and creative practice.

GOAL 3: A CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION IS EMBEDDED IN THE REGIONS' CULTURAL LIFE

Developing cultural vitality in Western Sydney based on a dynamic and rich cultural life practices across all communities, cultures and traditions.

THE CHALLENGE

Since the launch of the 1999 Western Sydney Arts Strategy significant progress has been made in building the region's capacity for cultural development. One reflection of this has been the decrease of the gap in the level of attendance at selected cultural venues attendance since 2002 and 2006 by residents of the Sydney Statistical District and residents of Western Sydney. The data also shows that although overall attendance by Western Sydney residents declined between 2002 and 2006, the decline was at a significantly smaller rate than the rate of decline in overall attendance levels across the Sydney metro area. The challenge is to design and implement a broad range of initiatives that contribute to increased community participation in the arts including by responding to and engaging with new and emerging sub cultures and groups. Another challenge for increasing the levels of participation in the arts in Western Sydney will be to support the development and presentation of arts product that engages with local audiences and contributes to building sustainable and loyal audiences over time.

THE OUTCOMES

- 1 Improved engagement in arts and cultural activity among the region's diverse community.
- 2 Improved engagement in arts and cultural activity by audiences living outside the Western Sydney region.
- 3 Increased programs and projects that celebrate local Western Sydney stories and histories providing a base for the development of new, relevant local arts/ cultural product.
- 4 Provision of new transport models between cultural venues that encourage participation in the arts.

THE ACTIONS

- 3.1 Develop and build pilot programs that integrate arts programming developed by Western Sydney cultural venues and key arts organisations into the regions high-traffic but non-arts public spaces and places such as shopping centres, town squares, parks and transport hubs.

- 3.2 Build on the Auburn Poets and Writers Network as a model for nurturing cross-cultural arts practice; and encourage cross-cultural programming to be included in the regions festivals and events such as Harmony Day, New Years celebrations, citizenship functions, significant public holidays, street festivals and markets etc.
- 3.3 As an outcome of the Youth Arts Audience Needs Study (See also Action 4.7) develop a Youth Arts Ambassador's Program that connects arts venues and programs across the region utilising social networking technology.
- 3.4 Seek funding to design, develop and maintain a Western Sydney arts/ cultural website linking the sites of all arts and cultural venues with up to date, content-rich, quality arts information and providing links to a specific WS Youth Arts Audience Development web site.
- 3.5 Develop an annual Community Leaders Arts and Cultural Forum to market the region's arts and cultural assets, to build relationships and to target new arts audiences.

GOAL 4: INVESTMENT IN CREATIVE PROGRAMMING IS DEMONSTRATED

The arts and cultural sector energises the region through support for artists, creativity, new ideas and contemporary cultural practice providing the foundation for the region's creative industry.

THE CHALLENGE

Western Sydney arts venues have developed a reputation as community responsive. Many of the region's venues pride themselves on their commitment to developing programs that come directly out of local stories. At the same time most venue managers report significant challenges in identifying sufficient funding to support the development of local content which reflects a commitment to programming quality including high production values. The challenge is to encourage a broad commitment to and investment in developing cultural programs (exhibitions, performance, writing, software etc) that express the culture of place and relate to local audiences.³⁰

THE OUTCOMES

- 1 Contributing to a positive image of Western Sydney based on the celebration of local identity, heritage and a sense of place.
- 2 Nurturing and exploring community creativity through local storytelling and cultural expression.
- 3 Fostering Western Sydney cultural industries by encouraging the development of cross-cultural projects and programs that employ local artists and entrepreneurs.

THE ACTIONS

- 4.1 Research and identify key strategic community events, celebrations, markets and street fairs that provide opportunities to program arts specific productions/ exhibitions/ workshops that contribute to building audiences and breaking down stereotypical perceptions.

³⁰ Terracini, Lyndon, A regional state of mind: making art outside metropolitan Australia. Platform Papers January 2007. Sydney: Currency Press.

- 4.2 Establish a collaborative Western Sydney Digital Storytelling Program in partnership with the State Library of NSW, Department of Education and the Department of Commerce to gather, promote and maintain local community stories and histories including from diverse communities as a foundation for regional specific program creation. The Program to build on model projects undertaken by ICE, Auburn Community Development Network, Bankstown Youth Development Network, Urban Theatre Projects and a number of Western Sydney public libraries.
- 4.3 Arts NSW to liaise with the Australia Council to establish a Western Sydney Creative Producers Program including an artists residency (modelled on Albury's Hot House Theatre - A Month in the Country) to encourage research and development of quality local programming relevant to Western Sydney.
- 4.4 As a component of the proposed Western Sydney Arts Marketing Strategy (See Action 1.5) develop and promote the region as Sydney's Creative Hothouse where arts programs (local as well as other) are developed, workshopped and previewed for the national as well as international markets.
- 4.5 Arts NSW to actively work with local councils, developers, universities and government to identify venues for the establishment of artists' studios/ cultural industry incubators using Parramatta Artists Studios as a model.
- 4.6 As first step in the Western Sydney Cultural Tourism Strategy seek funding to research and develop an integrated Arts Trail connecting the region's arts and cultural venues including theatres, galleries, museums, artists' studios, bookshops, public art sites and ethnic cafes and markets. The Project to include interpretive signage, web site, brochure/ map.
- 4.7 Arts NSW to commission a Youth Arts Needs Study focused on fostering increased participation in the arts in Western Sydney by young people including an analysis of web-based technology such as Web 2.0 social networking software, My Space, You Tube, video streaming, pod casts and the role and impact of technology based sub cultures of shared interest as a driver for building young arts audiences.

APPENDIX 1 CONSULTATIONS

The following stakeholders were interviewed on a one on one basis in order to provide a solid base of data reflecting on-the-ground experience in relation to the development of regional arts audiences - challenges and opportunities.

NAME AND POSITION	ORGANISATION
Jenny Bissett, Manager, Cultural Services	Blacktown City Council
Tim Carroll, Arts Officer	Bankstown Youth Development Service
John Cheeseman, Director	Blacktown Arts Centre
Michael Dagostino, Studio Coordinator	Parramatta Artists Studio
Madeleine Dignam, Executive Director	Varuna Writers Centre
Sharon Fingland, Assistant Director	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd.
Jack Frost, Manager	The Hills Centre for the Performing Arts
Kon Gouriatis, Director	Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and Liverpool Museum
Lisa Havillah, Director	Campbelltown Arts Centre
Susan Hutchinson, Coordinator	Fairfield City Gallery and Museum
Martha Jabour, Arts Officer	Auburn Community Development Network
Robert Love, Director	Parramatta Riverside Theatres
Anne Loxley, Managing Curator	Penrith Regional gallery and The Lewers Bequest
Lena Nahlous, Director	ICE Information and Cultural Exchange
Christopher Snelling, Manager	Powerhouse Discovery Centre
Caitlin Vaughan, Assistant Director	ICE Information and Cultural Exchange
Kath von Witt, Director	Hawkesbury Regional Gallery and Museum
Simon Wellington, General Manager	Urban Theatre Projects

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