
**A Strategy for the Arts
in Western Sydney**

New South Wales Ministry for the Arts

and

The New South Wales Government's Office of Western Sydney

November 1999

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The Office of Western Sydney forms part of the
NSW Department of Information Technology
and Management

ISBN 0 7240 8875 X

Cover designed by *Hoy*
Cover photograph – *Effi Alexakis*

FOREWORD

Western Sydney is one of the great cosmopolitan regions in Australia. Around 30 per cent of its people speak a language other than English at home; 60 per cent of Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reside there. It has a proud migrant and indigenous heritage.

The wealth of arts and cultural activity in Western Sydney should not be underestimated. The region is home to numerous galleries, museums, festivals, professional and amateur performance companies, highly-regarded community based arts organisations and a diversity of traditional multicultural arts. The community-based arts networks are energetic and productive. More than a quarter of Sydney's cultural and recreational workforce lives in Western Sydney - an important foundation for jobs, entertainment and tourism.

In its first term, the Government substantially increased arts funding in Western Sydney, establishing the *Western Sydney Regional Arts Program* and the *Western Sydney Performing Arts Fund*. Many Western Sydney organisations, such as Urban Theatre Projects, the Powerhouse Youth Theatre, Railway St Theatre, the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and Parramatta Heritage Centre, received increased support.

The Western Sydney Arts Strategy builds on the Government's support to the region. The Strategy was developed with input from the region's artists, arts communities, private sector, University of Western Sydney, local councils and state and federal government agencies. A recurring theme of the consultations was the need for better communication and stronger partnerships across the region between all stakeholders to ensure the further development of arts and cultural activities.

The Strategy outlines the Government's strategic framework for arts development in the region, identifies key stakeholders and articulates specific initiatives and funding programs.

Key Government commitments are addressed in the Strategy. A number of these - a new Local Government Arts Incentive Fund to provide support to local councils for arts projects, a new corporate support-for-the-arts scheme and the refocussing of the Ministry for the Arts' capital assistance program to give priority to Western Sydney projects - are important elements of the Strategy.

On behalf of the New South Wales Government, we thank the people of Western Sydney for assisting in the development of this Strategy. By continuing to work together, we can encourage a greater level of creativity, participation, innovation and excellence in the arts, culture and heritage of Western Sydney.

The Hon Bob Carr MP
Premier
Minister for the Arts
Minister for Citizenship

The Hon Kim Yeadon MP
Minister for Western Sydney
Minister for Information Technology
Minister for Energy and Minister for Forestry

WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS STRATEGY

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Introduction

On 19 August 1998 the New South Wales Government announced that it would develop a strategy for the arts and cultural activity in Western Sydney.

The aims of the strategy, announced by the Minister for Western Sydney, the Hon. Kim Yeadon, MP, were to encourage greater participation in the arts by the people of Western Sydney, increase business support, assist job creation, highlight existing infrastructure and resources, and make recommendations for specific initiatives.

The social, economic and cultural importance of Western Sydney is now fully recognised by the New South Wales Government. In the past year it has been given sharper focus through the appointment of the State's first Minister for Western Sydney and the establishment, in 1998, of the Office of Western Sydney.

This strategy has been devised to encourage Western Sydney's cultural development through new targeted forms of structural support and increase opportunities for community participation in the arts. Partnerships between local and state government, the private sector and arts communities are critical to the strategy, and several innovative approaches are proposed for strengthening these arrangements.

Consultations have been held with relevant groups including local councils, the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, artists and arts workers in Western Sydney, a broad range of cultural organisations, the Australia Council, the staff of the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts and members of the NSW Arts Advisory Council and its committees.

The strategy has drawn on an earlier study *Arts Development in Western Sydney* by Colleen Chesterman and Jane Schwager (Australia Council 1990).

A number of key policies have provided guidance for the strategy. They include *Principles for regional programs by State Government cultural institutions* (December 1997), *The arts and cultural diversity: principles for multicultural arts support in NSW* (August 1997), the NSW Government and Local Government and Shires Associations' *Cultural Accord: Memorandum of Understanding* (May 1997), and *Focus on Young People: NSW Youth Policy* (October 1998).

Other relevant policies and programs have included the cultural agenda of the TeamWest Regional Priorities Group and the programs of the New South Wales Government's Office of Western Sydney. Related Government initiatives include the relocation of the NSW Heritage Office at Parramatta in 1997 and the Migration Heritage Centre established in 1998 as an agency of the Premier's Department.

This Strategy is a joint initiative of the Office of Western Sydney and the Ministry for the Arts. It will be implemented and refined over the next three to five years as our measures are adopted and developed through further consultation with relevant groups.

The Ministry for the Arts and the Office of Western Sydney wish to express their appreciation for the co-operation received from many individuals and organisations consulted in the preparation of this strategy.

In particular we acknowledge the work of Christine Sammers, who undertook most of the consultation, research and drafting. Her contribution to the project has been invaluable, and has been driven by a well-informed and strongly held commitment to its aims.

Ministry for the Arts

Office of Western Sydney

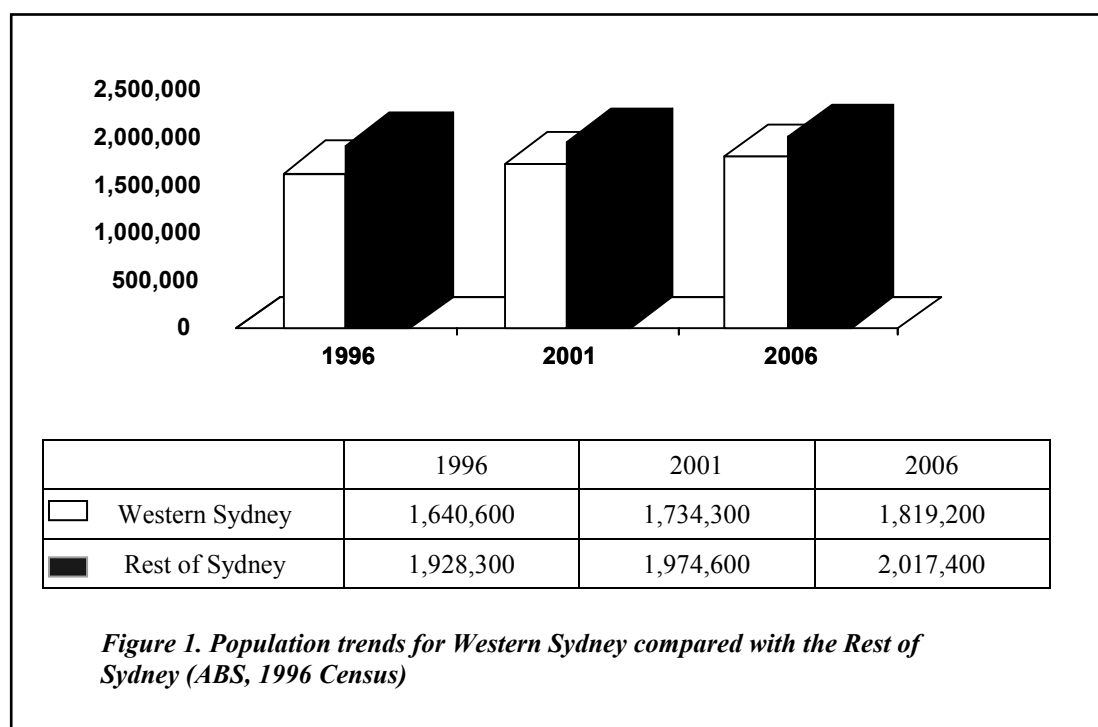
1 The Region

Western Sydney has an area almost twice that of Perth, four times that of the ACT and nearly five times that of Adelaide. More than 1.6 million people - almost one in ten Australians, or 26 percent of the people of New South Wales - live in its 14 local government areas.¹

The constituent local government areas are Auburn, Bankstown, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith and Wollondilly (see map on page 5).

Western Sydney's population is growing faster than the rest of Sydney's.² From 1991 to 1996, the population grew by 7.5 percent, compared with 6.0 percent in the rest of Sydney and 5.4 percent in New South Wales as a whole. Population growth of 5 percent or more is projected over the next eight years. More than 1.8 million people are expected to live in Western Sydney by 2006.

At present Western Sydney is home to 45 percent of Sydney's population. By 2021 it is likely to have more than half Sydney's population.



The population density across the whole of Sydney is 320 persons per square kilometre. In Western Sydney it is 177. With this lower density comes a range of infrastructure issues, notably a more restricted access to public transport and a higher reliance on cars.³

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics: 1996 census. This data and other statistics that follow, including projections, are based on 1996 Census data unless otherwise stated.

²The Rest of Sydney (to use the ABS term) is defined as Sydney without Western Sydney and Gosford / Wyong.

³Regional Population Growth. Australia 1997.

Demographically there is considerable difference between and within local government areas. Sparsely populated rural areas exist beside new development areas in Wollondilly and Hawkesbury. Some municipalities are dominated by new-release residential estates (Baulkham Hills, Blacktown and Liverpool), contrasting with more established LGAs such as Parramatta, Auburn and Bankstown.

Western Sydney is characterised by a young, growing and ethnically diverse population. The median age is 31 (36 for the Rest of Sydney and 34 for NSW). Around one-third of Western Sydney residents are under 19. Average income levels, employment and tertiary education participation rates tend to be lower than for the rest of Sydney. Families tend to live in stand-alone dwellings and most employed residents of the region work in the region.

Western Sydney has a strong migrant and non-English speaking character, with one-third of people born overseas, and 78 percent of this group born in countries other than the UK, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Ireland and New Zealand. The 1996 Census shows 18,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Western Sydney - 60 percent of Sydney's total ATSI population.

Western Sydney is the third largest marketplace in Australia. The 1996/7 Gross Domestic Product was \$35 billion (24 percent of the State's total economic output). Agriculture remains one of the most important industries, with 90 percent of Sydney's fresh produce coming from the region.⁴

⁴ Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board 1997 and Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Trust 1997. Further information about Western Sydney can be obtained from a range of sources. Important among these are local councils, the two Regional Organisations of Councils (Western Sydney and Macarthur), the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Greater Western Sydney, and the Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service which has produced and assembled an extensive range of publications available through its website - www.infoexchange.net.au:8081/westir/

WESTERN SYDNEY



SYDNEY METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES

Western Sydney

1	<i>City of Hawkesbury</i>	8	<i>City of Holroyd</i>
2	<i>City of the Blue Mountains</i>	9	<i>City of Fairfield</i>
3	<i>City of Penrith</i>	10	<i>City of Bankstown</i>
4	<i>City of Blacktown</i>	11	<i>City of Liverpool</i>
5	<i>Baulkham Hills Shire</i>	12	<i>City of Campbelltown</i>
6	<i>City of Parramatta</i>	13	<i>Camden Council</i>
7	<i>Auburn Council</i>	14	<i>Wollondilly Shire</i>

2 The Arts in Western Sydney

We see the need to establish as fully as possible the context in which this Strategy has been framed and document the great diversity of Western Sydney's cultural life. This section contains an outline, by no means exhaustive, of existing arts and cultural activity in Western Sydney. Much of it will be familiar to Western Sydney people.

A sense of place

Underlying much of Western Sydney's arts activity is a strong sense of place and local history. The numerous Aboriginal rock art sites in the Blue Mountains such as Red Hands Cave in Glenbrook, which contains some of the finest examples of hand stencils and prints in the Sydney Region, represent the earliest illustrations of a sense of place in the area. Aboriginal relationships with the land are a recurring theme in the work of local artists.

It was in Western Sydney that the first substantial contact occurred between Europeans and Aborigines - the earliest attempts at resistance as well as the earliest attempts at reconciliation. In 1805 Parramatta, named after the local Burramattagal clan, was the site of the first recorded act of reconciliation between colonial and indigenous people. This historical event is celebrated in the annual *Foundation Week Festival*. Other local festivals are based on key historical events and promote the importance of the 'urban bush', a concept said to characterise the region as a whole.

Western Sydney also contains some of the most important post-contact agricultural heritage sites in Australia. Elizabeth Farm, begun in 1793 and now managed by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, is the oldest surviving building in Australia and the site of the founding of the Australian wool industry. Between 1810 and 1821, Governor Lachlan Macquarie founded the urban base of Western Sydney by establishing the towns of Wilberforce, Pitt Town, Windsor, Richmond and Castlereagh.

During this period, in 1813, work on Rouse Hill House commenced. Rouse Hill House is set in Australia's oldest surviving European garden and contains a unique and fragile record of six generations of an Australian family. It is widely regarded as one of the richest collections anywhere in the country. In 1999, the Historic Houses Trust opened Rouse Hill estate to the public as a fully operational house museum.

Casula Powerhouse is a contemporary symbol of Western Sydney. What began as an electricity power station in the 1950s was converted in 1994 from a derelict site to an innovative community-driven arts centre, one of the most successful in New South Wales.

Cultural diversity at the grass roots

Community arts are widespread in Western Sydney. Working through neighbourhood centres, housing estates, mainstream venues, shopping centres, schools and other community organisations, artists and facilitators have produced a wide range of participatory creative art.

It is through these activities that Western Sydney's enormous cultural diversity has been most strongly expressed. Recent examples include:

- *Holy Threads*, an exhibition at Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery in late 1998, by Lao-born Australian artist Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, which included Laotian traditional textiles as a reference point for the artist's contemporary expression.
- The second *Auburn International Film and Video Festival for Children and Young Adults*, part of *Carnivale 99*, providing an outlet for films by Australians of non-English speaking background.
- *Journey's West*, a site specific work at Liverpool TAFE performed by Powerhouse Youth Theatre and City Moon Youth Theatre. Young performers presented "a cross cultural travelogue through Australia's past: ghosts...homeland...the past...and mum's cooking"

There have been innovative partnerships between the private and public sectors and between local and State-based organisations. In *Equal Spaces*, a year-long project launched in December 1998, the project partners (Stocklands Group, Fairfield Council, Wetherill Park Library and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) have combined with the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW to explore the use of public space by young people from culturally diverse backgrounds in and around Stocklands shopping centre and the new cinema complex in Wetherill Park.

Museums and heritage issues

Museums and heritage properties are central to the region's sense of place and cultural esteem. They are important not just to the people of Western Sydney but to the nation.

Much of Western Sydney's significant movable heritage, like that of other regions and towns throughout New South Wales, is in the care of volunteer-run community museums and historical societies. These hold in trust the history of their communities for present and future generations.

A belief that local communities should retain their heritage collections in the places where they have most significance is widely held. The development of museums in forms that reflect the community's wishes, and the character, diversity and distinctive qualities of their towns or suburbs, should be encouraged.

Museums in Western Sydney play an important role in preserving and celebrating the local sense of community and history. They include regional museums such as the Liverpool Regional Museum, heritage centres, such as those at Parramatta and Fairfield, theme-specific venues such as Belgenny Farm, the Brislington Medical and Nursing Museum in Parramatta and the Museum of Fire at Penrith, and historic house museums.

Camden Historical Society Museum is typical of many museums in the region, relying on volunteers to develop its collections and displays and open the museum to the public. The museum has been expanded and developed as a model of best practice for a volunteer-run community museum. The expansion will allow it to display small travelling exhibitions from the State's cultural institutions and better display, interpret and store its collections.

The recently opened Parramatta Heritage Centre integrates the local archaeological archives and local studies collections with a brief to introduce and orient the visitors to the many museums and heritage sites in the Parramatta area. The centre includes community history archives and an exhibition space which hosts a range of small travelling exhibitions. Staff, as part of their duties, work with the volunteer-run museums in the surrounding region.

Museums are an integral part of the Western Sydney cultural scene. The Government has substantially increased its funding for museums and is encouraging the State's cultural institutions to develop partnerships with museums and other communities in Western Sydney.

Other heritage sites are being successfully adapted and re-used, for example, the former King's School and headmaster's residence on the Marsden Hospital site in North Parramatta as the future headquarters for the NSW Heritage Office and Heritage Council.

Festivals

Nearly all local government areas in Western Sydney host one or more annual festivals. Most of these are multicultural arts festivals, typically involving a range of community groups offering amateur and professional activities, presentations of traditional arts and innovative works, and programs with key cultural development objectives.

Some festivals are built around particular themes - for example, the *Food, Wine and Music Affair* at Hawkesbury, the *Pacific Wave Festival* or the *Battle of the Bands* in Liverpool. Australia Day celebrations take place across the region. In some municipalities the tradition of the local agricultural show continues to thrive.

The *Blacktown City Festival*, a week-long event held annually in May, has grown in popularity since 1975. The festival is a celebration of dance, music, theatre and visual arts. There is a strong emphasis on youth arts.

Carnivale, NSW's annual multicultural arts festival, has been successful in developing a Western Sydney presence, with 36 events (about 35 percent of its program) taking place across the region in 1998. *Carnivale* makes extensive use of ethnic media outlets. The participation of Western Sydney people in the festival has been increased by targeted marketing and programming strategies.

Exhibition venues

Western Sydney has many venues for the visual arts and crafts, providing outlets for the sale of local work and exhibition spaces for other Australian and overseas art.

Penrith Regional Gallery (incorporating the Lewers Bequest) is the oldest established gallery in Western Sydney, and draws 70 to 80 percent of its visitors from Western Sydney, in particular from the Parramatta to Blue Mountains axis. The Gallery has joined in successful partnerships with Penrith Panthers Club, Australia's Wonderland and the University of Western Sydney.

Until 1988, Penrith was the only regional gallery in Western Sydney. New regional galleries have since been established at Campbelltown, Fairfield and Casula.

The Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery has given emphasis to collections of Aboriginal art and to encouraging locally based work, with exhibitions such as *Beyond China* in 1998 and *Local Matters* in 1997.

The Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre provides Western Sydney with a continuing program of high-quality exhibitions and cultural and educational activities. The Centre has five galleries, print and ceramic studios, a performance rehearsal space, as well as low-cost office space for local cultural enterprises. An outstanding project was *Vietnam Voices*, an exhibition held in 1997 involving North and South Vietnamese, as well as Vietnam veterans and their families and anti-war protesters. Works included painting, photography, political posters, sculpture and prints, as well as dance events.

Bok Bok Gallery at Mount Druitt features the work of local Aboriginal artists and among other activities, regularly provides visual arts and dance workshops as part of a visiting speakers' program for schools.

Writers

Examples of long standing local writers' groups include Liverpool Young Writers and a well-established Granville group. Other groups have developed alongside theatre projects, notably through the work of Urban Theatre Projects, and there have been small groups associated with community organisations.

Since 1996 the Centre for Liberty and Creativity, an Arab-Australian cultural organisation at Katoomba, has published *Joussour*, a quarterly journal focusing on Arabic and Australian literature. The University of Western Sydney has published local authors through the magazine *W/Edge*, providing a forum for new writing across several genres.

The Varuna Writers Centre at Katoomba, opened in 1990, has offered 177 residential fellowships to Australian writers and hosted up to 45 literary events a year, many of them free. The centre serves the community by providing professionally tutored writing courses and arranging events for local authors and readers to meet writers, editors and publishers from around Australia and overseas.

The Sydney Writers' Festival has made use of the Varuna Writers Centre, and has been involved in collaborative work with the UWS School of Communications and Media.

Meanwhile, the New South Wales Writers' Centre at Rozelle provides a range of literary activities within the region, including readings at Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, participation in the Campbelltown Literary Festival, and workshops by Aboriginal elders from Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council area.

Theatres

The Parramatta Riverside Theatres, established in 1988, have two performing spaces which attract the best of national and international dance and theatre and provide venues for local theatre and dance organisations. Successful recent shows include *Steaming*, *Looking through a Glass Onion*, Theatre of Images children's shows (for example *Jake and Pete*) and *Between the Lines*, a series of four short plays by young Western Sydney playwrights.

The Riverside Theatres have also presented a sold-out season of performances for schools by the Bell Shakespeare Company. Innovative marketing strategies include sponsorship by Integral Energy, which sees advertising delivered to 750,000 households across the region. The theatre is host to many touring productions supported through the Federal Government's touring program Playing Australia. The Riverside is gaining a reputation as Sydney's leading dance venue, attracting audiences from all parts of Sydney. It is also concentrating on the youth market and recently hosted *Write Out*, a weekend of workshops and forums on writing for performance run by Playworks and attended by 64 new and emerging Western Sydney writers.

Railway Street Theatre is the most recent (1998) arrival in Western Sydney, building on the long and distinguished history of Penrith's Q Theatre. Based at the Q, where it performs a full professional season, Railway Street is the state's leading touring theatre company, with 56 percent of its performances given in regional NSW. Under its charter it also tours in Western Sydney. The 1999 program of five plays includes a new Australian play *Sun Kisses* by Daynan Brazil and an adaptation of Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, developed with young people of the Blue Mountains for a professional cast.

Western Sydney's community theatre companies draw on the rich cultural traditions and stories of the region while forging new performance modes. The best known of these is Urban Theatre Projects (formerly Death Defying Theatre), a professional community theatre company making contemporary theatre works with and about the

people of Western Sydney. Founded in 1980, it relocated from Paddington to Auburn in 1991, and three years later to Casula Powerhouse, and is now in Bankstown.

Recent UTP projects include *Trackwork*, a performance event on trains and platforms exploring the cultural variety of the Western Sydney region; *Speed Street*, a multimedia production exploring the site and local myths of a Liverpool street and its residents; *Subtopia*, an exploration of youth sub cultures performed in different sites in Bankstown, and *The Query*, a new play by Merlinda Bobis about global culture.

Indigenous performing arts have had a lower profile in Western Sydney than indigenous visual arts. However, when Urban Theatre Projects employed Leah Purcell and Arthur Ridgeway on the project *The Other Side* there was great interest from Aboriginal youth: a youth theatre group, Burringilling Theatre, is now at an early stage of development.

Another example of community theatre is the City Moon Youth Theatre and its umbrella group City Moon Vietnamese Contemporary Theatre, a company dedicated to establishing a cultural bridge between the Vietnamese and the broader communities through contemporary drama.

Multi-arts venues

The Hills Centre, established at Castle Hill in 1988, is one of the cultural focal points of Sydney's greater west. The main 500-seat hall serves all aspects of performance for audiences in the west. About half of the centre's use is for community activities. Programs range from local productions to concerts by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre at Penrith opened in 1990 and caters for all musical tastes through its programs. The centre is used by a wide range of community groups, including music, theatre and dance. The programs include locally produced musicals and the centre is also an important venue for music teaching.

As Chesterman and Schwager noted in 1990, each local government area has multi-purpose halls with varying capacities, ranging from small arts and crafts centres to the E.G. Whitlam Centre at Liverpool, which functions as a sports complex and entertainment space. Other key venues include the Fairfield School of Arts, which has housed a wide range of performance and visual arts activities; Bankstown Town Hall, with a 1000-plus seat auditorium and a 300-plus theatre restaurant; and the Glenquarie Community Centre, seating 750, which is located in a high school at Macquarie Fields.

There are, in addition, a number of private venues, including theatre restaurants and licensed clubs with significant performing spaces, notably the well-appointed Evan Theatre at Penrith Panthers. In recent years, Panthers has sought links with organisations involved in cultural activities, and presented Railway Street Theatre's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Two Weeks with the Queen*. The networks of RSL Clubs and the Blacktown Workers Club are other examples of lively venues for commercial rock concerts and other club circuit entertainment.

Australia's Wonderland, the leisure and amusement park at Prospect, has performance venues for commercial shows. Wonderland and the adjacent Australian Wildlife Park have more than a million visitors a year and employ 1,200 people (the largest employer of youth in the region). Annual events include a rock festival, a children's festival and Carols by Candlelight.

Involving state organisations

The Heritage Council of NSW is now based in Western Sydney, however none of the State Government's cultural institutions are based in the region. The Historic Houses Trust and State Records NSW have properties in Western Sydney.

Some major non-government arts organisations with State or national charters conduct some of their annual activities in Western Sydney and all are eager to attract new audiences.

Metro Screen, which provides training, facilities hire and production support through accessible film and TV activities, has more than a third of its members in Western Sydney and targets the region with its national multicultural film and video festival *Changing Images*, held during Carnivale.

Artspace, the visual arts centre and galleries in Woolloomooloo, has been involved in partnerships with UWS Nepean (for example, a joint artist-in-residence exchange project enabling a Western Sydney artist to visit Los Angeles) and developed the *Critical Spaces* project with Street Level, the artists' organisation formerly based in Blacktown. Currently 20 percent of Artspace's membership is from Western Sydney.

Other major organisations have provided seasons and one-off performances in Western Sydney venues. The Bell Shakespeare Company tours Western Sydney schools and has performed at the Riverside Theatres, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra gives occasional concerts at the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. As noted above, Carnivale has a strong presence in Western Sydney.

Schools

Schools throughout the region are key providers and producers of the arts. Individual and combined school events include dance, music, theatre and visual arts, and often have a specific focus, such as the celebration of cultural diversity.

For many people, participation in or attendance at school-based performances or exhibitions is their most significant engagement with the live arts. Around 200 presenters are approved by the Department of Education and Training to perform in schools. In this respect, schools provide employment opportunities for itinerant artists and are a major provider of audiences.

In July 1998, the Minister for Education and Training opened the Arts and Education Centre at Westmead, increasing opportunities for public performance and exhibitions with facilities including two theatres, rehearsal and recording studio space.

The Department employs district arts curriculum consultants, five of whom work in Western Sydney. These consultants are supported by state arts curriculum consultants and inter-district and state arts events consultants. In addition to working closely with schools, the district and inter-district arts consultants liaise with arts agencies, the arts community and universities in the delivery of programs that link schools with other arts organisations.

Examples of the types of arts-related programs the Department is currently implementing in schools include:

- the visual arts project *Beyond the Frame*, funded by the Dobell Foundation, which links regional galleries with schools and focuses on employing local artists as artists-in-residence;
- the Dobell Spring School through which 40 Year 11 students from Western Sydney have the opportunity to study in specialist workshops at the National Art School for four days in their holidays;
- the *Dance 2001* project, developed by Ausdance, which employs professional dancers to work in schools with teachers and students; and
- *Operation Art*, a collaborative venture between the Department, the New Children's Hospital Westmead and the Art Gallery of NSW. Selected works become part of the permanent collection at the Hospital.

Tertiary education and the arts

The region's tertiary education sector offers a number of highly regarded arts courses. The University of Western Sydney (UWS) plays an active role in fostering arts and cultural development, training, study and research as well as practice at a local, regional, state, national and international level. UWS offers a wide range of highly regarded arts and cultural undergraduate and postgraduate programs of study at its Nepean, Macarthur and Hawkesbury campuses.

The *School of Contemporary Arts* at UWS Nepean offers courses in fine arts, music, theatre and dance, with state-of-the-art facilities including a new performance centre constructed in 1997. The *Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences* at UWS Macarthur offers visual arts programs in painting, printmaking and ceramics, digital imaging, creative writing and film and video, and UWS Hawkesbury provides visual arts subjects within courses on tourism and ecological studies.

Involvement with the local community is an objective of UWS. Several projects of the School of Contemporary Arts have established links between the university and local arts organisations. Examples include the regular Performance Playbill at Railway Street Theatre; *Sonic Circus*, an annual music event, and a 1997 production of *Mothering Heights*, involving women from the Older Women's Network. In an innovative *Outdoor Performance Project*, 50 student groups devised street theatre performances for Australia's Wonderland, which gave financial support. A number of the performance groups were subsequently employed by Wonderland. The Hawkesbury district does not have a performing arts venue or regional gallery facility. Accordingly, UWS Hawkesbury has developed plans for a performing and

exhibition venue that will serve the area. This project will be implemented over the next decade.

UWS has strong cultural, artistic and heritage links with the indigenous Dharug people within Western Sydney. These links have been developed and sustained through an active program of representation and involvement. This program includes special performances of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultural products and materials as well as the observance of indigenous traditions and practices at all functions, events and activities held at all campuses.

For all these reasons, UWS is likely to remain a key player in the development of the arts in Western Sydney. In addition to its support for arts education, activities and events, it contributes directly to the development of an educated and informed arts public. The students (currently 30,000), graduates and staff contribute to a pool of arts enthusiasts and audiences. The university's seven campuses are spread throughout the Western Sydney region.

Colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) have made significant contributions to the training of artists within the region by providing visual arts courses for the past 20 years and access to resources through community outreach programs. This is particularly the case with indigenous artists. The Western Sydney Institute of TAFE (Nepean) has a new vocational visual arts course which includes graphic design, drawing and photography. Blacktown TAFE college offers a diploma in music business. A new TAFE certificate I-IV course in Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Practices is to be introduced.

Networks

The Artswest Foundation has provided networking opportunities, advocacy, and information on Western Sydney arts activities for 20 years. Its membership is around 220 and its newsletter circulates to an estimated 10,000 readers. Artswest Foundation is the cultural representative on the Team*West* Regional Priorities Group.

Emerging networks include the Penrith-based *Foundation for Creative Enterprise*, which, among other activities, organises an annual *Creative Enterprise Week*. *Penrith Arts and Business Network* links key arts and business organisations in the Penrith region, allowing pooling of resources and information. *Workers for Arts for a Multicultural Australia* (WAMA) is an advocacy and lobbying network for multicultural arts with a high percentage of Western Sydney members. Local radio stations with migrant language programs and publishers of community newsletters also serve the region.

Local councils provide important rallying points for cultural workers within individual LGAs. Networking has become highly developed where councils employ dedicated cultural staff. The co-ordinating offices for the two regions of councils, WSROC and MACROC, provide contact, information exchange and advocacy networking. The work of local libraries and schools and many similar organisations and individuals is also important in promoting a vigorous cultural climate in Western Sydney.

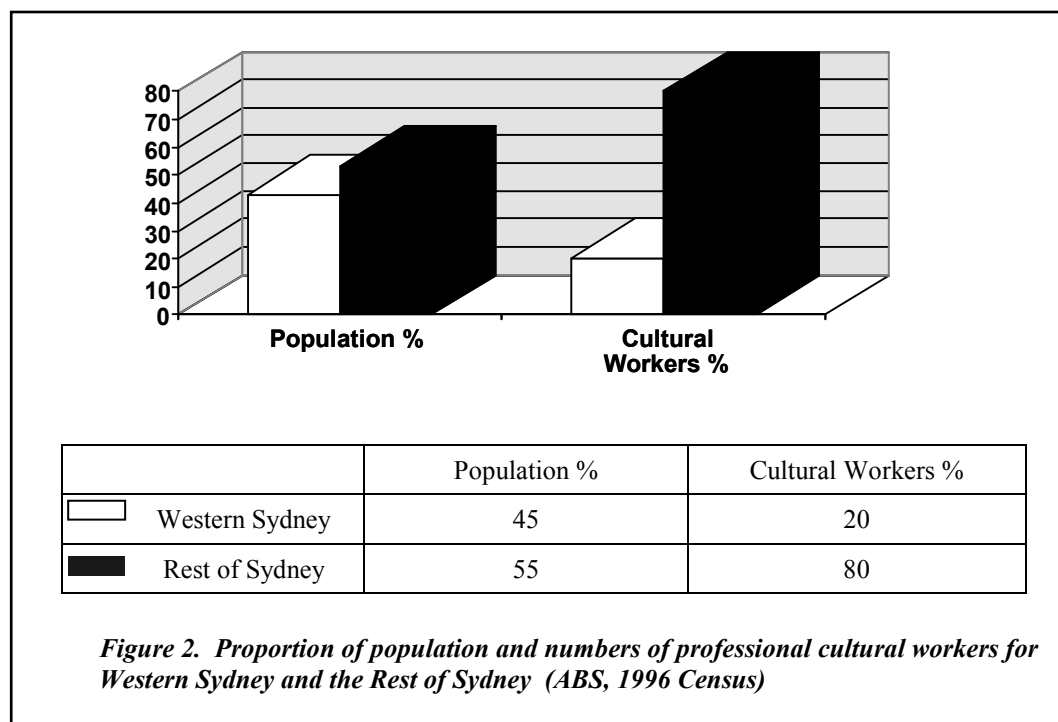
3 A Matter of Equity: the need for a strategy

Equity is a long entrenched principle in the government's arts and cultural policies. It aims to improve opportunities for artists and widen community access to the arts throughout regional New South Wales. It has also increased support in areas where levels of funding were seen to be inadequate - museums, local libraries, film, youth, multicultural and indigenous arts activity. Inequities and shortcomings in all these areas have been vigorously addressed since 1995.

It is in this spirit that the government is making a strong commitment to the arts in Western Sydney. Despite the wealth of activity described above, more can be done to use resources more effectively and establish structures for future growth. An analysis of per capita participation in arts activities easily demonstrates the disadvantage of Western Sydney people relative to other Sydney residents and those living in other parts of the State.

Employment in the arts

Although Western Sydney contains about 45 percent of Sydney's population, it is home to only 20 percent of Sydney's professional cultural workers.



This proportion is better in certain professions within the arts. For example, 27 percent of visual arts and crafts workers, 29 percent of dance teachers and 28 percent of all library and museum workers live in Western Sydney. However, only 7 percent of Sydney's directors (across all performing arts areas) live in the region, and in all areas associated with film and television production the proportion is well below 20 percent.

There are also disproportionately low numbers of Sydney's authors (13 percent) and actors (8 percent) living in Western Sydney.

A separate 1997 ABS survey of paid and unpaid work in culture and leisure activity also found significantly lower participation rates for Western Sydney (10.5 percent) relative to Sydney overall (13 percent), regardless of age or birthplace (see Appendix 1).

Importantly, comparison of concentrations of cultural workers yields a somewhat different impression when the analysis is confined to organisations and individuals of non-English speaking background. For example, in the Carnivale database of 500 NESB writers, performers, musicians and cultural organisations, approximately 50 percent come from the Western Sydney area.

Participation as consumers

Western Sydney people are not keeping pace as consumers of the arts. Figure 3 compares participation rates across a range of arts activities for Western Sydney with Sydney overall.

Typically, participation rates for Western Sydney are two-thirds to three-quarters those for the whole of Sydney. For example, 12.4 percent of people in Western Sydney attend theatre performances, compared with 18.8 percent for Sydney overall. The rate is better for attendance at museums (23.5 percent against 28.9 percent), but significantly worse for attendance at art galleries (13.5 percent against 24.9 percent).

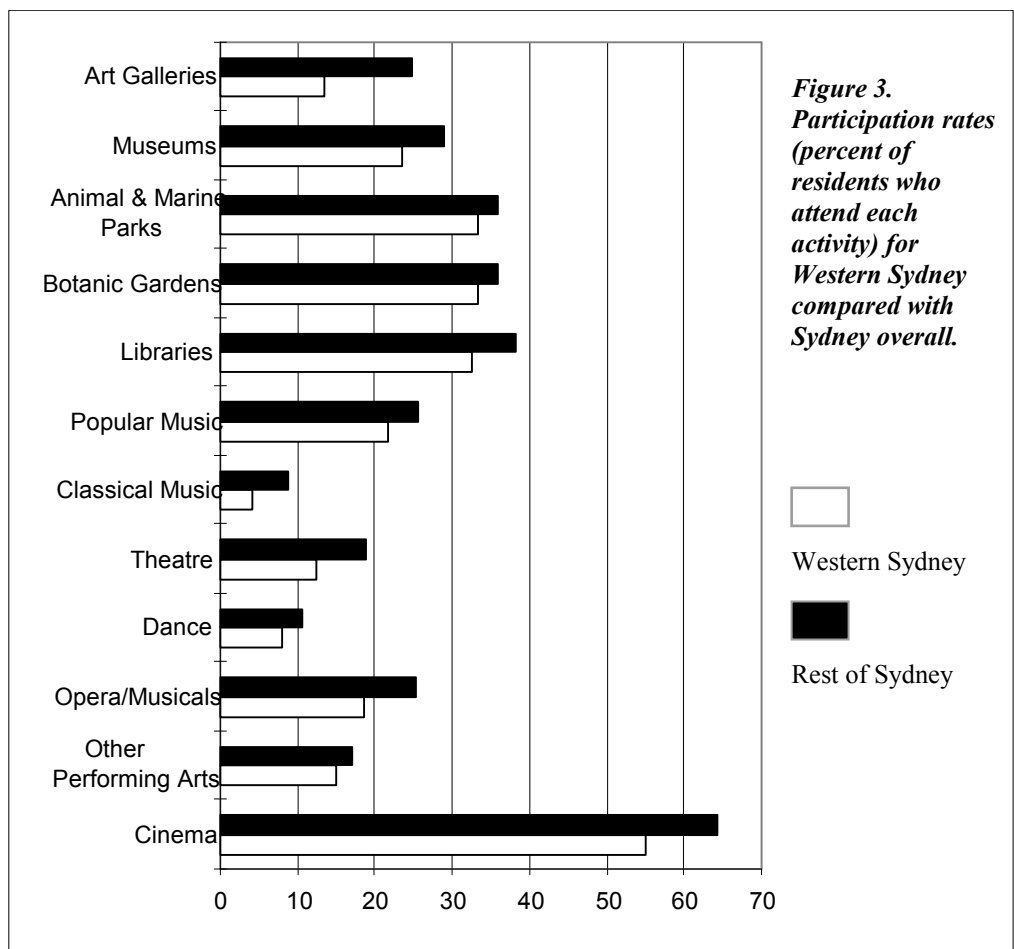


Figure 3.
Participation rates (percent of residents who attend each activity) for Western Sydney compared with Sydney overall.

□ Western Sydney
■ Rest of Sydney

A further breakdown of participation rates according to age groupings and place of birth confirms the lower participation rates by Western Sydney residents (*see Appendix 2*). Out of a total of more than 150 points of comparison, Western Sydney participation rates equalled those for Sydney overall in only two categories - dance activities by people born in non-English speaking countries and participation in "other performing arts" for people aged 15 to 24.

Because of the distances involved, Western Sydney people are less frequent visitors to the major New South Wales cultural institutions. The *Australian Museum's* attendance records show that people from Western Sydney local government areas are much less likely to visit the museum than residents of the Rest of Sydney (*see Appendix 3*). Promotional campaigns targeting Western Sydney have, however, had some success. Western Sydney attendances at the *Powerhouse Museum* increased from a norm of 21-23 percent to 26-27 percent during targeted school holiday promotions in 1997-98 - an indication of what targeted marketing can achieve, though it falls well short of equitable participation.

The pattern of attendance at locations managed by the Historic Houses Trust is also instructive. The venue with the highest Western Sydney participation rate is Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta, which attracted 38 percent of its visitors from Western Sydney in 1997 (52 percent were from the Rest of Sydney and a further 10 percent from elsewhere in NSW). At Trust properties outside Western Sydney (Hyde Park Barracks Museum, the Museum of Sydney, etc) only 25 percent of visitors were from Western Sydney. This would suggest a clear preference among Western Sydney residents for cultural activities located in their region.

Sydney's major CBD-based cultural events have attracted relatively few Western Sydney residents. A preliminary study indicates that only about 7 percent of attendances at the 1998 *Sydney Writers' Festival* were by people from Western Sydney despite the majority of events being free. More successful is the *Sydney Symphony Orchestra's* record in attracting an estimated 24 percent of its annual Sydney Festival Symphony in the Domain audience from Western Sydney.

Public funding of the arts: the Commonwealth

In their 1990 report, Chesterman and Schwager concluded that on a per capita basis Western Sydney was receiving no more than a third of the total Australia Council funds being received by the Rest of Sydney. This figure excluded groups with a national or State focus. If these were included, Western Sydney received only a quarter of what the Rest of Sydney received.

It is instructive to analyse recent Australia Council expenditure on Western Sydney. Although a direct comparison with Chesterman and Schwager's 1990 figures has not been possible, a comparison between funding to Western Sydney and total funding to NSW since 1994 demonstrates that, despite what appears to be a marked improvement in relative funding levels, significant inequity remains.

Year	NSW	Western Sydney	Percentage to Western Sydney*
	\$	\$	
94-95	9,456,086	1,260,312	13.3
95-96	9,953,860	1,965,832	19.7
96-97	10,119,933	1,840,866	18.2
97-98	9,052,544	2,052,063	22.7

*Table 1. Australia Council funding to Western Sydney compared with total funding for NSW. Figures for total exclude major national organisations based in NSW. * Western Sydney's population was 26 percent of that of New South Wales in 1996.*

In interpreting these figures, it should be noted that since 1994, the Australia Council has recorded expenditure to selected major organisations in a "national" category. These organisations include many Sydney-based companies such as the Sydney Theatre Company, the Bell Shakespeare Company, the Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Sydney Dance Company and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, none of which has substantial activity in Western Sydney. When funding to these organisations is taken into account, the Australia Council's support for Western Sydney may be seen as not greatly different from the proportions recorded by Chesterman and Schwager in 1990. The role of the major organisations is given further consideration in Section 4.

When Australia Council funding for each artform is considered, the following pattern emerges. Leaving aside national organisations, theatre and literature might be regarded as "on track", with some 24 percent of theatre funding reaching Western Sydney in 1997-98 and 40 percent for literature. (Literature funding goes largely to Varuna Writers' Centre and fellowships for writers living in the Blue Mountains.) Community Cultural Development funding, however, is the reverse of the norm, with around 72 percent of NSW money going to Western Sydney in 1997-98. Music (1.4 percent), visual arts (5.6 percent) and new media (2.6 percent) are all well below equitable levels, and there has been no Australia Council funding for dance in Western Sydney for the last two years.

State arts funding programs: NSW Ministry for the Arts

Over the last seven years, by keeping funding levels for the rest of Sydney fairly constant while the overall arts budget has increased, the Ministry has built up its base of support for Western Sydney relative to the rest of Sydney. (Likewise the proportion of funding to other regions of NSW has been increased.)

In dollar terms, over the period 1993-99, the proportion of State arts funding to Western Sydney has increased almost threefold from \$689,731 in 1993 to \$1,777,629 in 1999. (In addition, certain one-off allocations were made in 1997, which brought funding in that year to a peak of \$2,115,487.)

In percentage terms, this is a rise from about 6 percent of total spending in 1993 to around 9 percent in 1999. These spending figures should be compared with the population of Western Sydney, which is 26 percent of the whole of NSW.

Year	Western Sydney	Rest of Sydney	Other NSW	Total
1993	\$689,731 6.2%	\$8,309,986 75.0%	\$2,079,234 18.8%	\$11,078,951
1994	\$910,035 6.7%	\$10,423,382 76.5%	\$2,299,587 16.9%	\$13,633,004
1995	\$1,048,255 7.8%	\$10,358,482 76.7%	\$2,101,441 15.6%	\$13,508,178
1996	\$1,561,123 10.3%	\$10,809,230 71.1%	\$2,831,349 18.6%	\$15,201,702
1997	\$2,116,487 13.2%	\$10,568,162 66.0%	\$3,328,245 20.8%	\$16,012,894
1998	\$1,691,111 10.0%	\$10,778,656 63.8%	\$4,417,455 26.2%	\$16,887,222
1999	\$1,777,629 8.6%	\$13,002,325 63.2%	\$5,795,332 28.2%	\$20,575,286

Table 4. NSW Ministry for the Arts funding to Western Sydney, the Rest of Sydney and other regions 1993-99

Recognising the need for greater equity, the Ministry has allocated special funding for Western Sydney through two special grants programs. The *Western Sydney Regional Arts Fund*, has provided \$100,000 a year (from 1997) to support a range of arts and cultural activities in the area. A second fund, the *Western Sydney Performing Arts Fund* has provided \$300,000 over three years (from 1998) for the four largest Western Sydney performing arts venues - The Hills Centre, the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, the Parramatta Riverside Theatres and the Casula Powerhouse - to allow them to present and tour new and innovative work and to develop awareness.

Advancements have been made through these and other initiatives however as most programs are application driven there is a need to stimulate greater arts activity.

The distribution of Ministry funding has by no means been even across all Local Government Areas:

Local Government Area	Population	Population as proportion of Western Sydney's (%)	Total Ministry funding (\$)	Funding as proportion of Western Sydney's (%)
Auburn	53,140	3.2	313,185	3.5
Bankstown	164,256	10.1	783,231	8.7
Baulkham Hills	125,553	7.6	32,337	0.4
Blacktown	239,765	14.6	436,440	4.9
Blue Mountains	74,870	4.6	1,050,805	11.7
Camden	33,129	2.0	191,645	2.1
Campbelltown	148,249	9.0	269,130	3.0
Fairfield	188,849	11.5	583,728	6.5
Hawkesbury	59,137	3.6	53,100	0.6
Holroyd	83,681	5.1	16,760	0.2
Liverpool	124,424	7.6	1,961,753	21.9
Parramatta	142,993	8.7	1,414,315	15.8
Penrith	167,927	10.2	1,849,275	20.6
Wollondilly	34,639	2.1	11,600	0.1
		100		100

Table 5. NSW Ministry for the Arts funding across Local Government Areas 1994-99

There is a correlation between the level of State (and Federal) Government subsidy and the resourcing of cultural development infrastructure by councils. For example, the lack of specialist staff goes much of the way to explaining why even populous municipalities are often unsuccessful in applications for State arts funding. This is further considered in Section 4 (Summary of Key Issues, page 22).

Conclusion

A clear pattern emerges from the statistical analysis of participation in the arts by Western Sydney residents. In comparison with the Rest of Sydney, its people are underemployed in cultural activity and participate less as consumers across all art forms and (with few exceptions) across all age groups and backgrounds.

Part of the explanation for this inequity lies in the history of government funding, which, despite policy changes and targeted programs with their resulting improvements, remains balanced in favour of the Rest of Sydney.

There are clear historical reasons for this. It might be argued, for example, that it would be unrealistic to compare state and federal funding allocations to central Sydney, where the flagship arts companies and state institutions are located, with allocations to other areas of the State. Equally, it may be unrealistic to expect parity

of funding between regions with well developed infrastructure supported by local government or other agencies and regions without these advantages.

The Western Sydney Arts Strategy is a response to these structural inequities. It addresses what may be the fundamental problem facing the arts in Western Sydney - a lack of critical mass. By this we mean the levels of infrastructure and activity, including artist and audience numbers, needed to make the cultural life of the region self-sustaining and self-renewing.

The role of the Ministry for the Arts must be to identify areas of need and adopt a strategic approach in areas where increased funding would benefit the region.

This section summarises the key arguments and assumptions underpinning the Western Sydney Arts Strategy. These have been distilled from consultations with a broad range of stakeholders.

Cultural planning and development: the role of local government

The effectiveness of any regional arts strategy is likely to turn on the strength of cultural planning at the local level and the extent to which individual local plans are integrated within a regional approach.

The social benefits of energetic local cultural activity include the establishment of valuable networks, the improved consultation between community and government, development of community pride, a reduction in social isolation and improved understanding of different cultures or lifestyles. The economic advantages include better design and planning of public facilities, and the attracting of further resources to the community. For the arts sector itself, the benefits include an increase in support for and involvement in arts activities by the community.⁵

Consistent with the *Local Government Act 1993*, local authorities are increasingly embracing their key role in planning, managing and funding community cultural development. Through community-based cultural planning, support for events, provision of performance spaces, and providing a focus for what makes areas unique, local councils can set the cultural agenda. In Western Sydney there have been spectacular successes; but there are wide differences between councils in philosophy and commitment. Development is uneven, and the baseline is markedly different from one local government area to another.

This Strategy, therefore, encourages community ownership of arts development and fosters local government's integrated engagement with the arts in partnerships with state and federal governments, the business sector, the education sector and the wider community.

In their 1990 review, Chesterman and Schwager placed considerable emphasis on the need for cultural planning which would clearly identify aims, policy and strategies and establish workable timelines and performance indicators for implementation.

At that time, Fairfield Council provided a good example of the integration of cultural objectives within Council's strategic plan, and, with this model in mind, Chesterman and Schwager recommended that councils move forward quickly to develop and implement plans.

Five local councils have devised cultural plans and a further six have signalled their intention to do so. In a cultural audit carried out by the Local Government and Shires Association in 1998, most councils declared their strong interest in improving planning and delivery of cultural services, which they saw as an important priority relative to other council business. (One council declared its lack of interest in cultural

⁵ Deirdre Williams, *Creating Social Capital: a study of long term benefits from community-based arts funding* (Community Arts Network SA 1995)

development and some others expressed uncertainty about the priority it should be afforded.)

A preliminary interpretation of the Local Government and Shires Associations' audit indicates that per capita expenditure on the arts (excluding funding for "bricks and mortar") ranges from a low of about 50 cents per person in some local government areas to a high of more than six dollars.

Libraries, museums, heritage sites, performance venues, community centres, local halls and tourist information offices exist in most municipalities and are funded and managed by local councils. Schools, churches, shopping centres, amusement parks, botanic gardens and parks are also important venues for cultural activities.

Some councils provide substantial budgets for their venues. For example, Penrith provides \$100,000 per year for the *Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre* and Blacktown City Council supports its civic centre with allocations of over \$3 million. Baulkham Hills spends \$300,000 a year on *The Hills Centre* and Camden provides a comparable amount for its civic centre. Every LGA is home to professional, semi-professional and amateur groups, and examples of their activities have been given in Section 2.

Consultations with Western Sydney representatives have identified some basic impediments to effective council involvement in cultural planning. These include -

- The absence of any benchmark or obligation relating to the minimum level of cultural services which councils must provide. Most councils have been satisfied with this low-key approach and see planned culture as someone else's responsibility; there is a sense that culture will just happen.
- An indirect effect of the uneven pattern of cultural development and resourcing is the reluctance in some local government areas to allocate funds for fear that an adjoining municipality will benefit. There is also an unwillingness to share facilities with adjacent municipalities. (In at least one area this has meant loss of potential State government funding.)
- Some councils do not see cultural planning as a continuing process, and have a conceptual difficulty in turning community cultural development principles into defined programs of action.

The Department of Local Government has advised that it is developing processes to assist councils in addressing cultural services planning, such as the introduction of Management Planning Guidelines and benchmarking of cultural and arts expenditure, in conjunction with key stakeholders.

Cultural worker positions

At the other end of the scale, some councils have put in place substantial teams of five or more cultural workers (as many as 11 full time equivalent positions at Campbelltown). These teams are typically headed by a high-level cultural or

community services manager, and include cultural planners and development officers, events supervisors, heritage planners, specialist arts officers, gallery directors, and /or museum and gallery staff. Blacktown Council has recently appointed a full-time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts officer.

There are great differences between councils in their employment of specialist staff. Some councils lack any such staff; one has licensed the operation of its arts centre to a commercial contractor responsible for staffing. Some gallery and museum officers are co-funded with the Ministry for the Arts, on a sunset arrangement. One of the largest LGAs in Western Sydney employs only two casual heritage officers with some responsibilities for cultural development and no other specialist staff.

In Western Sydney the long-term maintenance of cultural workers' positions is now in doubt. Some LGAs are in retreat, and at least one Council has chosen not to replace a cultural officer position when it became vacant. In an important parallel development, the Australia Council has decided to cease funding a number of multicultural arts officers based at migrant resource centres in Western Sydney.

The rationale for this is that the Australia Council policy gives emphasis to the development rather than the maintenance of arts organiser positions, and believes that several years of Federal funding should by now have triggered a financial commitment from local government.

Another crucial factor in the effectiveness of cultural workers is the authority given to them. An arts officer low in the management structure can be isolated and lack support. Under-resourcing of cultural teams can constrict even basic liaison within and between municipalities and State and Federal governments. Appropriate structural support is crucial.

Heritage and museums

Heritage issues are an integral part of identity-building for communities in Western Sydney. In the past, heritage programs and funding mechanisms have placed considerable emphasis on British colonial heritage, in particular colonial buildings. This emphasis is now broadening to embrace Aboriginal heritage, movable heritage, archaeological relics, natural heritage and the more recent history of migration and cultural diversification.

The Government's newly established *Migration Heritage Centre* aims to identify and preserve the fixed and movable material heritage of migration and provide a voice for migrant communities in public discussion of the role of cultural diversity in the community.

Three of the new centre's projects are relevant to Western Sydney. *The Lebanese in the world: the worlds of Lebanese Australians* assists the Lebanese community to celebrate its heritage and contribution to Australian society. This project is an example of how the skills of a major institution - Sydney's Powerhouse Museum - can assist a community to identify, record and preserve its culture from its own cultural

perspectives. Two other programs, *Mapping Italian Heritage* and *Mapping Chinese Heritage*, have similar objectives, but with a stronger emphasis on fixed heritage.

These and other initiatives are all valuable developments, strengthening cultural facilities and resources in Western Sydney. There is, however, a need for a comprehensive review of Western Sydney's heritage properties and their links with arts and cultural development generally. This review would develop an inventory of heritage sites and resources in Western Sydney, analyse the issues affecting their conservation and management and develop a coordinated strategy to enhance public access and appreciation. This review will be assisted by the existing 11 heritage advisors in Western Sydney which are co-funded by the Heritage Office and local government. The State Heritage Inventory which provides information on the significant heritage items and places will also aid in the process.

Tourism

Much has been made of the potential increase in tourism from cultural development. A report on the likely "knock-on" effects of cultural development has confirmed that cultural industries are as likely to stimulate the economy as any other industry, and more likely than many others to increase employment.⁶

Tourism NSW does not treat Western Sydney as one region, distinct from the Rest of Sydney. It has an interest, however, in developing defined precincts which build on local strengths as attractions for longer-stay visitors. Parramatta, with its heritage sites, is well placed in this regard; Cabramatta is already popular with those interested in Asian produce and cuisine and has the potential to develop this profile further.

Indigenous community cultural development

Western Sydney is home to 60 percent of Sydney's Aboriginal population. While there is no specialist infrastructure for indigenous arts in Western Sydney, there are three Aboriginal land councils across the region – Tharawal, Deerubin (Daruk), and Gandangarra. Since 1994 the Ministry for the Arts has funded an indigenous arts officer at the NSW Community Arts Association (CAA).

Participants in the consultations for this Strategy strongly argued the need for an Aboriginal arts forum where people can take project ideas and obtain advice drawing on existing knowledge of Aboriginal artists. Such a forum would also be an advocacy and lobbying platform for Aboriginal arts and increase the visibility of local Aboriginal artists.

It may be that Aboriginal people will not achieve satisfactory levels of community cultural development until an integrated reconciliation approach is taken, linking sustainable cultural heritage activities to land. There is a need, however, for agencies in education and training, cultural and natural heritage, tourism, local government and

⁶ Cultural Ministers Council report on multipliers for culture-related industries, 1995

the arts, as well as agencies involved in social justice, land acquisition, restoration and management, to coordinate their services.

Multicultural arts development

Exciting and innovative art is being created in Western Sydney by artists of non-English speaking background (NESB), see Section 3. Their efforts have been supported by active NESB communities, community-based organisations and a strong network of multicultural arts officers (MAOs).

With increased competition for Federal government funding, some of Western Sydney's MAO positions have been wound back. This will require organisations with a multicultural arts focus to co-ordinate even more effectively their support for artists and NESB communities in Western Sydney. There is a need for better regional co-ordination and more clearly defined roles and priorities for organisations such as the Multicultural Arts Alliance and the NSW Community Arts Association.

Supporting artists in the region

The achievements of Western Sydney artists are too rarely acknowledged and promoted. According to the Ministry for the Arts' research, many artists and arts workers feel that the work being created in the West goes unrecognised by their peers and those in mainstream cultural sectors.

A lack of well-developed support structures, a sense of isolation, restricted opportunities for critical debate and sporadic employment have reinforced these perceptions. Although such issues are common to artists in many parts of Australia, they are made more acute in Western Sydney by the relatively low numbers of artists and their wide geographic spread.

Historically, the pattern of government funding for the arts in Western Sydney shows predominant use of the grant categories of infrastructure, heritage and community cultural development. Because of this, many artists feel that, in the eyes of funding agencies, their individual developmental needs take second place to the developmental needs of communities.

Western Sydney needs strategies which provide artists with more opportunities for risk-taking, experimentation and individual development. The needs of Aboriginal artists, especially in the area of training, have been identified as a priority.

Encouraging new audiences

New audiences need to be developed in Western Sydney. The high numbers of young people suggest that such audiences are waiting to be discovered and won over.

The rich cultural diversity of Western Sydney provides opportunities to focus activities on particular communities. Niche marketing, which has worked successfully

for many Western Sydney organisations in the arts and the commercial sector, should be further developed.

Ultimately the need to develop new work is fundamental to audience development in Western Sydney. The exploration of new, relevant content, and artforms such as youth rock music, multi-media and new technologies, has great importance for Western Sydney in particular, given its demographic profile.

Arts education

The quality of arts education in schools has a profound bearing on children's appreciation of the arts and their later participation as adults.

In consultations with the Ministry for the Arts, artists and the Arts Advisory Council's specialist committees have urged closer collaboration between the Ministry and the Department of Education and Training to develop the artistic skills and understanding of young people. Since 1995 the Ministry has contributed to the salary of an education arts advisor, based in the Department, to assist in this process.

Music and visual arts education are mandatory, with dance and drama provided in other key learning areas. There is a widely held view, however, that the quality of music and visual arts education programs is uneven across schools and that most children are completing primary school with limited experience of the arts.

An arts strategy for Western Sydney should aim for better co-ordination of resources between the arts and education sectors of government and a commitment to increased recurrent funding for the arts in schools. Eventually, more teachers and artists will be needed to stimulate long-term improvement in arts education, together with better support and resources for teachers through the Internet and other technologies.

Meeting the needs of the emerging arts industry

As noted earlier, the arts in Western Sydney have yet to achieve the degree of activity and interaction required to sustain a viable industry. There is a need to nurture and support individuals and organisations prepared to *drive* new initiatives and see them through. In this way new champions will be found for the arts - both from the grass roots and from a business sector attracted to business-and-arts strategies. Already in Ministry for the Arts initiatives, a number of organisations have secured funding for marketing and audience development strategies.

Private sector support

The private sector has played, and continues to play, an important role in the development, training, employment and resourcing of artistic endeavours in the region, for example, by

- providing venues for training, performances and exhibitions

- providing equipment and materials used by artists and art organisations
- sponsoring festivals, concerts and other arts-related events, and
- directly employing graphic designers, animators, musicians, singers, dancers, photographers, and many other artists.

The private sector also has crucial expertise in arts-support services, often lacking in non-commercial arts groups. The private sector has significant financial, auditing, management, marketing and legal skills and expertise. Many non-commercial artists and cultural organisations would benefit from private sector assistance in these areas. The provision of private sector expertise to Western Sydney artists and art organisations is difficult to quantify, but would appear to be under-developed.

The private sector also plays a major role in funding artistic initiatives, often directly through financial sponsorship or the provision of services in kind. The Office of Western Sydney is developing solid links with the business sector across the region which will bring increased opportunities to encourage business support of the arts.

Role of State cultural institutions and major organisations

None of the State's main cultural institutions or major independent arts organisations is located in Western Sydney.

Some employ rigorous marketing strategies to increase their Western Sydney participation rates; others do not (see Section 3). A number of organisations see marketing to Western Sydney as 'risk taking' or 'experimental'. The majority seem to have given little serious consideration to the benefits of targeting the region.

To meet this situation, the Government's 1999 Cultural Development Policy has pledged to encourage the State's cultural institutions to develop further partnerships and collaborative projects with museums and communities in Western Sydney.

While it can be accepted that some major institutions and organisations have difficulties in engaging with Western Sydney, there is an expectation that, at the very least, they will acknowledge Western Sydney as a potential market and provide information to residents through cohesive and on-going marketing strategies.

Bringing it all together: regional co-ordination

In the consultations for this Strategy, there was debate about the need for regional co-ordination and the appropriate structures for achieving it. Broad support emerged for regional structures matched by targeted and unique local strategies.

The outcome of the Creative Cultures initiative has been instructive. Creative Cultures focused attention on Western Sydney's cultural needs through its broad agenda. This included advocacy for arts and cultural development in the region, marketing, brokerage, strategic planning and networking, liaison among arts organisations and between them and all levels of government, advice to government regarding arts and cultural development in major urban growth areas, integration of arts and cultural

planning into urban and social planning processes, and management of regional projects.

Such an agenda remains relevant for new regional mechanisms. However, Creative Cultures did not substantially increase local government's responsiveness to cultural development issues or its willingness to include cultural planning as part of core activities. The reasons for this have been canvassed above, but fundamentally it would appear that the centralist strategy which Creative Cultures represented was never fully accepted by local government. At the time, councils faced with a broad agenda of development issues seemed unwilling or unable to turn outwards, and Creative Cultures had insufficient influence to become an important player in policy development by local councils.

Among councils there remains an ambivalence towards a regional strategy, although the timing may now be more suitable and the potential co-ordination infrastructure more conducive to co-operation.

The NSW Cultural Accord between State and Local government was designed as a strategy for non-metropolitan NSW; the new accord in the year 2000 will give greater focus to Western Sydney.

As with all the issues identified above, principles and strategies which attempt to resolve the problems of regional co-ordination are presented in the following section.

5

A Strategic Framework for arts and cultural development in Western Sydney

This Strategy sets out priorities for the next three to five years to capitalise on the existing extensive cultural activity in Western Sydney, to build on increases already made in government support, and achieve a more equitable distribution of resources and energy across the region while giving expression to local differences.

In implementing this strategy, the goals of the New South Wales Government (Ministry for the Arts and Office of Western Sydney) will be -

1. *To encourage arts and cultural activity that is locally determined and helps communities to grow.*
2. *To assist artists in Western Sydney achieve their full potential.*
3. *To increase participation in the arts by the people of Western Sydney.*
4. *To support and nurture the arts industry in Western Sydney.*
5. *To encourage regional cultural development.*

Goal 1 To encourage arts and cultural activity that is locally determined and helps communities to grow

1.1 Broadening the partnership with Local Government: the Western Sydney Local Government Arts Incentive Fund

The Ministry for the Arts will establish a Western Sydney Local Government Arts Incentive Fund.

The new fund will provide financial support by matching local government funding dollar for dollar (or on a sliding scale depending on the rate base); it will be administered by the Ministry for the Arts. The aim is to support individual local governments to develop and promote the arts in their area.

Councils will be invited to form local advisory committees to develop and endorse a cultural plan for their local government area and submit a program of cultural activities consistent with the plan to the Ministry for funding. The committees would include council representatives, artists and representatives of the indigenous and ethnic communities within the local government area.

In the first year, practical support will be given to councils to develop cultural plans and the operation of the fund will be refined in consultation with relevant groups. The intention will be to encourage cultural planning processes from the grassroots and encourage ownership, leadership and commitment from the local community.

Funding will be for short-term projects. It will cover professional fees associated with residencies or commissions, as well as promotion, or travel costs associated with professional development for local artists and practitioners. (Support for buildings is available under the Ministry for the Arts' capital assistance program.)

The Ministry for the Arts will work with other agencies to ensure that the cultural plans developed entail the best outcomes for artists.

1.2 Strengthening a sense of place: preserving Western Sydney's cultural heritage

The Heritage Office, in consultation with other government agencies and local government, will conduct a Western Sydney Heritage Review.

The review will look at the region's diverse range of heritage properties and sites and heritage collections and develop a strategy for assisting them. It will embrace the views and expertise of the Office of Western Sydney, Tourism NSW, the Heritage Office, the Ministry for the Arts, specialist organisations such as the Historic Houses Trust and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Opportunities for cultural tourism in Western Sydney, through improved programs for visitor access to its important heritage sites, will be explored as part of the review. Better co-ordinated approaches to the conservation, interpretation and management of heritage sites and properties and heritage collections will be developed.

Goal 2 To assist artists in Western Sydney achieve their full potential

2.1 **Artist-driven initiatives**

The Ministry for the Arts will provide funding over two years for artists or groups of artists with a demonstrated commitment to Western Sydney and with visionary or ambitious ideas.

Activities selected for funding will have a particular significance for the long-term cultural development of Western Sydney.

The funding will be equivalent to a fellowship. Up to two grants will be offered annually and funding will include project components as well as a stipend.

2.2 **Flexible venues**

The Ministry for the Arts will provide resources and support to assist the establishment of flexible multi-purpose spaces across Western Sydney.

Low-cost spaces will improve the working conditions of artists and provide much-needed facilities for local communities.

The Ministry will address the need for studio and rehearsal space and space for small-scale exhibitions, performances and workshops.

Existing unused spaces which can be transformed with minimum fit-out costs will be sought wherever possible. It is envisaged that up to three spaces will be established in the region.

2.3 **Indigenous artists forum**

To create a supportive structure to provide guidance and advice to Indigenous artists, the Ministry will sponsor, with the University of Western Sydney Nepean, an Indigenous artists' forum.

Through consultation with Indigenous artists, UWS has agreed to host the forum with support from the NSW Community Arts Association. One of its aims will be to build inter-agency support for Indigenous arts development.

UWS Nepean is currently setting up a diploma of Indigenous studies and offers a degree in Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies. This allows Indigenous people to major in performing or visual arts, encouraging arts development across the region.

2.4 **Indigenous artists training**

The Ministry for the Arts will explore with Arts Training New South Wales improved mechanisms for Indigenous artists training.

2.5 **Corporate partners for change: an employment strategy**

The Office of Western Sydney and the Department of Education and Training (DET), in collaboration with the Ministry for the Arts, will encourage employment of Western Sydney artists.

To achieve this, the Office of Western Sydney will work closely with industry associations and employers to identify and make use of appropriate sustainable jobs/traineeships/apprenticeships in growth areas of the economy. The Department of Education and Training will be encouraged to fund training (as it has in comparable circumstances in other industries) to meet identified needs through its existing programs. Registered training organisations will be selected from the Department of Education and Training's list of approved providers.

2.6 **Access to the Internet**

The Ministry for the Arts will enhance artists' access to, and their creative use of, the Internet.

Although artists have access to core information in the form of newsletters and periodicals, they do not have easy access to the level of critical debate, ideas and benchmark projects, both nationally and internationally, needed to stimulate creative development.

Readily available Internet facilities will allow artists and arts workers to access instantaneously the sort of information they need and to communicate with one other. This will not replace live critical debate, and the Ministry and other cultural organisations will together foster conferences, forums and other such activities in the Western Sydney region.

The proposal is for inexpensive, readily available Internet access. The equipment could be housed at a stand-alone venue - a cyber café - perhaps in partnership with an entrepreneur, or at the arts incubator (see 4.1 below). The Ministry will liaise with the tertiary education sector to identify opportunities for similar facilities on campuses.

To complement this strategy, mechanisms for providing subsidy of an Internet server will be considered.

2.7 **Assistance to attend ANAT Summer School**

The Ministry for the Arts will offer assistance for a Western Sydney artist to attend the annual Australian Network of Art and Technology (ANAT) summer school to expand their experience and knowledge of multimedia.

Goal 3 To increase participation in the arts by the people of Western Sydney

3.1 Arts and education

The Ministry for the Arts will work with the NSW Department of Education and Training to develop policies and programs which -

- *Improve the arts learning outcomes of young people, both as artists and as audiences*
- *Support local artists and groups wishing to work in schools*
- *Encourage long-term developmental projects with schools*
- *Develop partnerships between the Department of Education and Training and the tertiary sector with arts courses and artists*
- *Increase indigenous cultural activity in schools.*

The Ministry for the Arts will consult the relevant authorities to explore the opportunities offered through collaboration with the *Western Sydney Dance Centre* at Westmead (in co-operation with the Dance Department, University of Western Sydney and Ausdance); to consider *fee relief for young artists* from disadvantaged schools; to create a *young people's choir* (an extension of Sing 2001), for which Penrith has been suggested as a base; to assist the careers for *young rock musicians* by focusing on vocal and instrument performance, aural skills, music technologies, occupational health and safety issues, vocational pathways, links with record companies and performance opportunities in co-operation with the Music Department, University of Western Sydney, Music NSW and Pacific Circle Music Convention; and to seek further opportunities for theatre arts graduates to develop and present theatre-in-education productions.

The tertiary education sector, particularly the University of Western Sydney and TAFE, will be encouraged to extend its links with communities, artists, schools and groups in Western Sydney and create activities tied to the needs of the region.

3.2 Audience development: cultural institutions, major organisations and festivals

The Ministry for the Arts will promote and encourage all State cultural institutions, festivals and major organisations to put in place marketing strategies for Western Sydney.

The further development of cultural activity in Western Sydney should take place alongside increased participation by Western Sydney residents in the activities of Sydney-based organisations.

The success of such strategies at some of the cultural institutions suggests that they should be widened and adopted by others. The Ministry will work with the institutions, festivals and major funded organisations to establish the relevance and benefits of improved Western Sydney marketing strategies.

**Goal 4 To support and nurture the arts industry in
Western Sydney**

4.1 Promoting industry development: arts incubators

The State Government will seek to establish one or two arts incubators to support arts groups.

The incubators will provide small business facilities, including office and meeting space, access to telephone services, printing and photocopying, with regular on-site assistance with legal advice and information on industrial issues.

It is likely that the incubators could be housed in one or both of the new business incubator facilities being established at Blacktown and Liverpool. A working group will be created with membership from the Office of Western Sydney, the Ministry for the Arts, TAFE, artists, local business leaders, the tourism sector, representative arts enterprises and other funding partners to devise a program of development for the incubators. This could include strategic management advice, marketing advice, and business planning and audience development strategies. Funding partners will be sought from State and Federal regional development departments.

4.2 Corporate support for the arts

The Office of Western Sydney, in partnerships with local chambers of commerce and business, and in consultation with the Ministry for the Arts, will initiate a corporate support for the arts scheme.

The scheme will include -

- Development forums for business executives and arts groups
- Awards for creative partnerships between business and the arts
- Pairing schemes by which businesses are matched with and offer strategic management advice to arts organisations
- Business-and-the-arts clubs allowing subscription-based involvement of business with membership benefits
- Community foundations (charitable trusts) aiming to establish permanent, independent and flexible sources of local funding.

The Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, based in Melbourne, is establishing such a scheme on a national basis. The Foundation has indicated that it wishes to develop links with, and provide support for, similar schemes across Australia.

A *Business and the Arts* scheme in Western Sydney will build on the links already existing between business and community organisations with expectations of above-average levels of economic growth in the future.

4.3 The arts: a relocation strategy

The Ministry for the Arts will provide financial and other assistance to arts groups outside the greater West to enable them to re-locate to Western Sydney.

For historical and other reasons, many large arts and cultural organisations have been located in or near the Sydney central business district. As a result, these organisations are isolated from their largest and fastest growing market: the half of Sydney's population who live west of Parramatta. Companies will be assisted to relocate to Western Sydney.

Funding will be provided for up to two groups annually - those who can best demonstrate a commitment to working in Western Sydney and whose work is considered most likely to benefit the cultural development of Western Sydney.

4.4 Physical Infrastructure for the Arts

The Ministry for the Arts will refocus the Capital Assistance Program to give priority to projects in Western Sydney.

Goal 5 To encourage regional cultural development

5.1 **Overseeing the Western Sydney Arts Strategy**

The Office of Western Sydney will convene meetings twice a year between the CEOs of key NSW government agencies responsible for implementing the Western Sydney Arts Strategy to share ideas and monitor outcomes. The Office will provide an annual report on progress to the Premier through the Minister for Western Sydney.

5.2 **Co-ordination of the Western Sydney Local Government Arts Incentive Fund and the development of regional and sub-regional co-operation**

The Ministry for the Arts will convene meetings twice a year between local government cultural planners or other relevant local government staff with the Local Government and Shires Associations' cultural officer and Ministry staff to assist the implementation of the new Incentive Fund and other areas of regional and sub-regional co-operation.

5.3 **Multicultural arts co-ordination**

The Ministry for the Arts will host a meeting to clarify the roles and responsibilities of arts organisations involved in multicultural arts across the region and the needs of non-English speaking background artists and communities.

5.4 **Cultural Accord**

The Ministry for the Arts will facilitate development of the second Cultural Accord (2001-2003) between the Local Government and Shires Associations and the Ministry.

5.5 **Representation on boards and committees**

The Ministry for the Arts will include more people from Western Sydney on its policy and funding advisory committees and on the boards and trusts of the arts portfolio

6**Appendices**

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics: work in selected culture, leisure activities
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics: participation rates - persons attending cultural venues
- 3 Attendance index of visitors at a major cultural institution (The Australian Museum)

Appendices available on request from Ministry for the Arts