

# CULTURE AND CREATIVITY STRATEGY

DRAFT



Building a vibrant LGA  
where culture and  
creativity are enjoyed by all





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## Recognition of the Cammeraygal People

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of North Sydney local government area (LGA), the Cammeraygal people*

We recognise the Cammeraygal people as the Traditional Owners of the area known today as North Sydney.

We acknowledge that the alienation of Cammeraygal Country followed the first local land grant in 1794 which occurred without consultation, treaty or compensation.

Western archaeological evidence shows that Aboriginal people lived in the North Sydney area at least 5,800 years ago, and likely for thousands more. That evidence is precious. We seek to preserve it and through that to better understand Cammeraygal connection to Country.

After North Sydney Council was formed in 1890 through the merging of three boroughs, the word Cammeraygal was included on its coat of arms. Today it holds a central position in the Council's logo as a reminder of the long and ongoing Indigenous heritage of this place.

In recent years the spelling of Cammeraygal has varied to include Gammaraigal and Gai-maragal as our community has sought to reflect and honour the heritage of First Nations people in a more culturally appropriate manner.

## Mayor's message

I am truly delighted to present North Sydney Council's first ever Culture and Creativity Strategy.

Culture and creativity are vital to our community, enhancing social cohesion, driving economic development, and supporting civic identity. By celebrating our diverse heritage through the arts, festivals and community events, we foster connection and understanding amongst the residents, students and workers of our unique local government area (LGA).

This strategy marks a holistic approach to culture and creativity in North Sydney, aligning with State and Federal priorities for investment. We have a unique opportunity to amplify diverse voices and strengthen reconciliation efforts while leveraging our iconic location to promote cultural appreciation.

Furthermore, engaging with local schools and educational institutions will unlock creative pathways and foster a new generation of artists and thinkers. By reimagining our public spaces and collaborating with local creatives, we can cultivate an inclusive environment that invites participation and showcases the vibrant diversity of our community's artistic talent.

This strategy is underpinned by extensive community engagement, ensuring your voices shaped and guided the path forward. Thank you to everyone who provided feedback in the 'Have your say on North Sydney's next ten years' consultation in mid-2024. This engagement was testament to our strong tradition of public participation and the importance of empowering our community to influence decisions that impact your lives.

As we embark on this ten-year journey, I urge you to continue to actively participate in our community. By fostering culture and creativity, we can address local issues effectively and create a vibrant, inclusive and connected LGA where culture and creativity are enjoyed by all.



## Introduction

North Sydney is home to a unique and diverse cultural and creative ecosystem, offering a rich tapestry of experiences and opportunities that enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike. From Stanton Library and community centres to museums, theatres, galleries and vibrant public spaces, North Sydney hosts an array of events, programs and cultural organisations that foster creativity. Our local businesses also play a vital role, contributing to a thriving creative landscape and making culture and creativity an integral part of life in North Sydney.

A vital component of this cultural richness is the deep respect for First Nations culture and history, particularly that of the Cammeraygal people, the Traditional Owners of this land. Their connection to Country spans thousands of years and is characterised by a profound spiritual and cultural bond with the land. By embracing and incorporating First Nations perspectives and stories, we not only deepen our understanding of local history but also foster reconciliation and inclusivity. This strategy honours First Nations heritage to ensure their voices are central in shaping North Sydney's cultural future, while promoting a sense of belonging for everyone.

This strategy aims to build on existing strengths within our cultural and creative ecosystem and foster greater participation, ultimately leading to **a vibrant LGA where culture and creativity are enjoyed by all.**

To achieve this outcome, the strategy includes the following strategic directions:



The strategy is a long-term commitment to enhancing North Sydney's cultural landscape, ensuring it is a thriving hub for creativity and expression that celebrates our collective heritage and supports community wellbeing.

## Background

This strategy is part of a suite of informing strategies (see Figure 1) that articulate North Sydney's needs and priorities over the next ten years. These strategies will form the basis for Council's new Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2025-2035, Delivery Programs and Operational Plans.



Figure 1: Suite of Informing Strategies

### The role of Council

North Sydney Council plays an important role in shaping strategic directions that align with community aspirations and prioritising funding accordingly, however collaboration will be essential to driving meaningful outcomes.

Council's ten-year strategies must be viewed within the broader framework of local government's role in relation to State and Federal policies and jurisdictions.

While Council has significant responsibilities, its powers can be limited in certain areas. In these situations, advocacy and partnerships with other organisations may be necessary to influence specific actions in place of more direct initiatives.

## Community engagement

In 2024, Council launched its most extensive consultation to date: the 'Have your say on North Sydney's next ten years' campaign. This initiative was designed to gather broad and meaningful input from the community to shape the suite of informing strategies.

The six-week consultation focused on five key Discussion Papers\* that addressed critical areas of community interest, helping us understand evolving needs, aspirations and priorities.



We received over **1,000 responses to our online surveys**, and over **600 individuals attended our community forums**. Additionally, thousands more were engaged through both in-person and online events.

To ensure we heard from unique and diverse voices, Council also held dedicated workshops for specific groups including a **demographically selected group of 60+ residents**, a **First Nations workshop** in partnership with Indigenous consultancy Murawin, a **Voice of Youth workshop** with over 50 primary and secondary students, and sessions with **relevant key stakeholders**.



The valuable insights gathered through community engagement, along with extensive research, have shaped five comprehensive studies that outline the vision and priorities for our community. These studies are the foundation for bold, forward-looking strategies that will guide our next ten years.

For details on the research and engagement supporting this strategy, please refer to the North Sydney Culture and Creativity Study 2024.

*\*Specific discussion papers and research studies were not prepared for Environment, Housing and Governance as part of this campaign, for the reasons outlined below.*

*Environment: Significant research had already been undertaken to develop the North Sydney Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2030.*

*Housing: The existing North Sydney Local Housing Strategy is a legislated strategy under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. It will be reviewed and updated in 2025/26.*

*Governance: The Governance strategy focuses primarily on internal governance structures and processes, which are guided by established regulations and best practices.*

## About this strategy

The Culture and Creativity Strategy details how Council, the community, businesses and other stakeholders will work together over the next ten years to build:

### A vibrant LGA where culture and creativity are enjoyed by all

This strategy takes precedence over existing Council strategies and plans, except where required by legislation. Relevant information captured in superseded documents will be considered through service unit planning and, if necessary, adopted as supporting plans.

### Principles

The strategy is guided by five key principles:



#### INCLUSION

Ensuring that cultural and creative opportunities are open and accessible to all community members, regardless of background or ability.



#### FIRST NATIONS FIRST

Recognising and respecting First Nations culture and ensuring actions directly affecting First Nations community are informed by community.



#### COLLABORATION

Fostering partnerships with community, local organisations and businesses to plan and deliver cultural and creative initiatives.



#### PRESERVATION

Preserving and celebrating North Sydney's heritage and recognising the importance of historical sites and stories in shaping community identity.



#### INNOVATION

Encouraging innovation and adaptability in cultural programming to respond to evolving community interests and trends, fostering a vibrant creative environment.



## Structure

The strategy includes four strategic directions with clear measurable objectives, that outline how we will strive towards the outcome of **a vibrant LGA where culture and creativity are enjoyed by all**.

Under each direction are specific projects and initiatives that will help us achieve the objectives. There is also a list of Council's existing services that support each strategic direction.

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the informing strategy.



Figure 2: Structure of the Culture and Creativity Strategy

Timing and delivery of new projects and initiatives will be dependent on availability of funding from a variety of sources, including but not limited to grants, developer contributions and Council's internal reserves.



# DELIVERING THE OUTCOME



**OUTCOME**  
A vibrant LGA where culture and  
creativity are enjoyed by all

## OBJECTIVE

🎯 Deliver at least ten new projects that share First Nations culture and history by 2035

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Respect and acknowledge First Nations culture and history

1.1 Explore opportunities to work with First Nations community members to share and make First Nations cultural heritage visible in North Sydney through First Nations led tours, dual naming, interpretive signage, art and other projects.



1.2 Work with First Nations community members to develop a First Nations advisory committee.



1.3 Work with First Nations community to explore opportunities to develop cultural spaces for First Nations people.

1.4 Support the inclusion of First Nations programming (led by First Nations community) within our current creative program.

1.5 Commission First Nations artists to create First Nations public art.

### Shared projects, initiatives and services

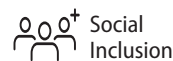
Some projects, initiatives and services contribute to the delivery of outcomes from multiple Informing Strategies. These are indicated using symbols (see below) representing the other strategies that include the same activity.



Culture and Creativity



Integrated Transport



Social Inclusion



Economic Development



Environment



Housing



Governance



Open Space and Recreation

## OBJECTIVE

🎯 Increase the number of participants engaging with heritage projects, via in-person visitation to the library and significant sites and online through our digital collection, by 10% by 2035 from a 2025/26 baseline

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Preserve and celebrate North Sydney's heritage

2.1 Develop innovative and interactive methods to engage the community with history at key local sites.



2.2 Work with local schools to educate children and young people on North Sydney's heritage and history collections.

2.3 Develop and deliver a digitisation and digital storytelling project that increases visibility and access to heritage collections.

2.4 Deliver infrastructure to remember significant events in North Sydney's history including:



- A new sign for the entry point to the Waverton Peninsula Parklands, and interpretive signage celebrating 100 years of community action on the peninsula
- Improvements to the War Memorial surrounds at St Leonards Park as detailed in the St Leonards Park Plan of Management
- Refurbishment of the Brothers Memorial in Cremorne

2.5 Undertake a comprehensive heritage review.

**Service** Preserve and promote North Sydney's cultural heritage; this includes managing key historical sites and museums.

## OBJECTIVE

🎯 Increase the percentage of residents who are at least somewhat satisfied with the range of arts and cultural experiences in North Sydney to at least 90% by 2029 from a 2023 baseline of 87%\*

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Provide and promote a diverse range of affordable and accessible cultural and creative events, experiences and opportunities across the LGA

3.1	Review and refresh Council's program of events and activations to ensure they are responsive to community needs and leverage key assets.	
3.2	Partner with cultural and creative organisations to host joint events, for example multicultural festivals, and cross-promote cultural and creative opportunities to expand their reach.	
3.3	Continue to support the Crows Nest Festival and include North Sydney Festival as a yearly fixture in the events calendar to attract wide audiences and support the local economy.	
3.4	Partner with major events and festivals, such as Sydney Biennale, to bring people to North Sydney.	
3.5	Deliver a variety of public art installations across the LGA.	
3.6	Develop and implement a street art program to create vibrant public places.	
3.7	Develop and implement a creative hoardings program.	
3.8	Activate laneways and other public spaces with busking, public art, lighting and projections, including after hours.	
3.9	Explore opportunities to encourage live music, comedy and drama in the LGA.	
3.10	Consider opportunities for Special Entertainment Precincts in North Sydney CBD and Crows Nest.	
3.11	Enhance Council's website to provide an accessible central list (by date and/or type) of events, programs, markets and activities run by Council and others across the LGA.	
3.12	Develop an interactive map of culture and creativity in North Sydney and promote this to locals and visitors.	
3.13	Create and advocate for partnerships between local creatives, Council, businesses, educational establishments and State Government to explore shared cultural and creative goals.	
<b>Service</b>	Provide and advocate for opportunities to develop, express and enjoy creativity through a range of exhibitions, programs, creative spaces and public art.	
<b>Service</b>	Organise and support a range of public space activations and events to bring communities together, engage, celebrate and activate our LGA.	
<b>Service</b>	Provide library collections, resources, services, events and programs to support lifelong learning, literary engagement and community wellbeing.	

\* Source: Customer Satisfaction Survey (Micromex Research)

## OBJECTIVE

🎯 Increase the number of spaces that are available for people to participate in cultural and creative activities in the LGA by 10% by 2035 from the 2026 cultural infrastructure baseline

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: Increase the number of places and spaces that are available for cultural and creative participation and production

4.1 Undertake a cultural infrastructure study, that includes an audit of Council and non-Council places and spaces (including open spaces), to identify needs and opportunities.

4.2 Develop a reserve to implement projects identified through the cultural infrastructure study.

4.3 Deliver a cultural and creative hub in St Leonards.

4.4 Prepare a strategic plan for The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability site to inform opportunities and priorities to increase community use and enjoyment, and develop a reserve for delivery.



4.5 Advocate to Transport for NSW for the adaptive re-use of the existing Coal Loader wharf for heritage interpretation, public access and water access.



4.6 Develop a ten-year plan for expanding library services across the LGA. This includes consideration of potential satellite sites.



4.7 Explore opportunities to partner with Australian Catholic University for additional library facilities.



4.8 Upgrade the existing library and expand the floorspace into the adjoining James Place development.



4.9 Work with NSW Government agencies to deliver the Miller Place project which includes a major public plaza, as well as recreation and entertainment space for the North Sydney CBD.



4.10 Deliver new public space through completion of the Balls Head Quarantine Depot site redevelopment project, including advocating for ownership of the lower section.



4.11 Develop a masterplan and feasibility study for consolidating a new community centre, underground carparking and a significant new area of open space for Crows Nest on the site which currently accommodates the Holtermann Street car park, Crows Nest Community Centre and Ernest Place.



**4.12** Prepare a public domain and placemaking strategy for Crows Nest and St Leonards that determines appropriate design and function of public space to support the growing population. The strategy will consider the pedestrianisation of Willoughby Road and incorporate the Holtermann Street car park precinct and Hume Street Park expansion projects.



**4.13** Develop a masterplan for the civic precinct in North Sydney (bounded by Ridge, Miller, Church and McLaren Streets) that investigates and incorporates a range of new community space, open space and active recreation spaces.



**4.14** Explore new opportunities to partner with local schools and Schools Infrastructure NSW to enable community use of school facilities after hours.



**4.15** Advocate for increased community use of Sub Base Platypus.

