

A Cultural Plan for Blacktown City **Our Creative City**



Blacktown
City Council

WELCOME AUNTY EDNA



WARIMI
NGALLAWAH
MITTIGAR

HELLO, COME IN, SIT DOWN, FRIEND

WARIMI NGALLAWAH MITTIGAR

TIATI MURRA DURGA PEMEL.
KOI MURRA YA PEMEL NGALARINGI BUBBUNA.
BAN NYE WURRA NANG.
NYE DICE GAI DYI YA NANGAMI DYARRALANG.
NGALARINGI TIATI NGALARINGI NAGAMI GAI.
GU-YA WILLY ANGARA GU-NU-GAL DA GU-NU-GAL.
DA LA LOEY MOOGOO COT-BALLIE NANGAMI
DICE LA LOEY GNIA TARIMI GU-NU-GAL.
JAM YA TIATI NGALARINGI EORAH JUMNA.
MITTIGAR GURRUNG BURRUCK GNEENE DA
DURAGA PEMEL.

Hello, come in, sit down, friend

This is Darug lands.
It is the land of our Ancestors.
Their spirits walk amongst us.
Spirits that have been here since the Dreaming.
Our language and our culture have been passed down from generation
to generation.
To continue an unbroken culture that has extended for thousands of years.
In the language of our people we welcome you to Darug lands.

Artwork by Aunty Edna Watson





STOLEN
OUR CHOICE FROM US

03/11/81

We acknowledge the Darug people who are the traditional owners of the Land on which we work.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and thank them for their Custodianship of this Land.

We will work together for a united City that respects this Land and values the contribution to our community and culture of all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR TONY BLEASDALE OAM



Culture is the lifeblood of our city and it should be a part of everyone's daily life.

The ways that we express and experience culture in Blacktown are incredibly diverse.

It is shaped by the practices and knowledge of the Darug people who have been custodians of this land for tens of thousands of years, and continues to be influenced by the many diverse communities who choose to make Blacktown their home.

Council invests in culture because it delivers so many benefits. It sparks our imagination, celebrates the diversity of our community, strengthens our economy, contributes to the education of young people, and makes our city spaces more vibrant and enjoyable.

Our contribution includes a range of events and festivals in all parts of the city, including at The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre and in our libraries and community centres.

We commission public art for parks and open spaces, support local artists and community groups to develop their practice.

A cultural plan enables us to look at the range of outcomes delivered by creativity, culture, map what we are already doing and identify any gaps or opportunities to do better.

As we emerge from what has been an incredibly difficult and isolating time for so many people, the role of culture and creativity to unite and inspire is more important than ever before.

We hope that you will join us in making Blacktown Our Creative City.

Councillor Tony Bleasdale OAM
Mayor of Blacktown City



Culture in our city gives everyone a voice.

Regardless of background or circumstances, everyone has a right to express themselves and practice their culture. It is a human right (United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* 2011).

Blacktown City Council values our community's right to celebrate culture, and we understand the critical role participation in cultural activity can play in providing life opportunities.

There is evidence that young people engaging in creative activities have better education and employment outcomes. Participating in arts activity can help with depression and anxiety and make people feel less isolated.

A smarter, healthier and happier city is a prosperous city.

Our Creative City is a cultural plan that will equip us with the strategies and partnerships to achieve these outcomes of cultural engagement.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO KERRY ROBINSON OAM

In addition to Council, there are many individuals, community groups, institutions and businesses who make an enormous contribution to the city's cultural life.

As our city continues to transform, we will need to work together to ensure new facilities and programs remain relevant to our dynamic and growing community, and that access is available to a wider range of people than ever before. (newapproach.org.au *Insight Reports – A New Approach (ANA), A view from middle Australia* 2020).

Kerry Robinson OAM
Chief Executive Officer of Blacktown City

**'...young people
engaging in
creative activities
have better
education and
employment
outcomes.'**



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‘Creativity and culture establishes a common platform that enables individuals from different cultural backgrounds to come together and celebrate.’

- Khadim Ali,
artist and resident
Blacktown City

'Creativity and culture are powerful tools that have the ability to inspire, educate, transform and bring joy to a community.'

- Daisy Montalvo, Creative Director, 'FUNPARK', Bidwill.



BLACKTOWN OUR CITY



54
SUBURBS



 **LARGEST COUNCIL**
in New South Wales by population

 **4TH LARGEST COUNCIL**
in Australia by population

35kms
FROM SYDNEY



262kms
OF WATERWAYS



406
playgrounds



6
community
hubs



785
parks



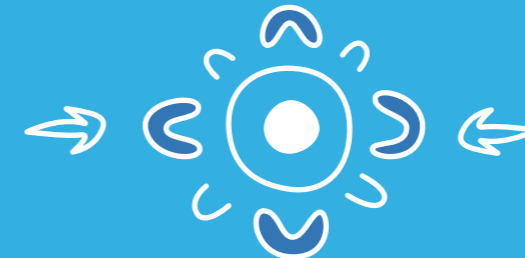
11
train
stations

BLACKTOWN OUR PEOPLE AND ECONOMY

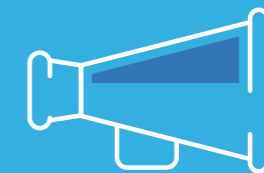


population of

403,000



**LARGEST URBAN ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
POPULATION IN NSW**



46%
speak a language
other than English



44%
of the population are
under 30 years old



40%
of our population
are born overseas



44%
of residents
WORK
in Blacktown City



26,141
local businesses

152,928
LOCAL JOBS



\$21.98 **BILLION**
Gross Regional
Product

Cultural Infrastructure Map

LEGEND

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Gallery |  Library |  Recording Studio |
|  Dance Studio |  Live Music |  Trains |
|  Arts Centre |  Aboriginal Site of Significance |  Community Facilities |
|  Theatre |  Archaeological |  Community Hall |
|  State Heritage |  Local Heritage | |

3
cinemas

36 multi-purpose
community
centres

2
galleries

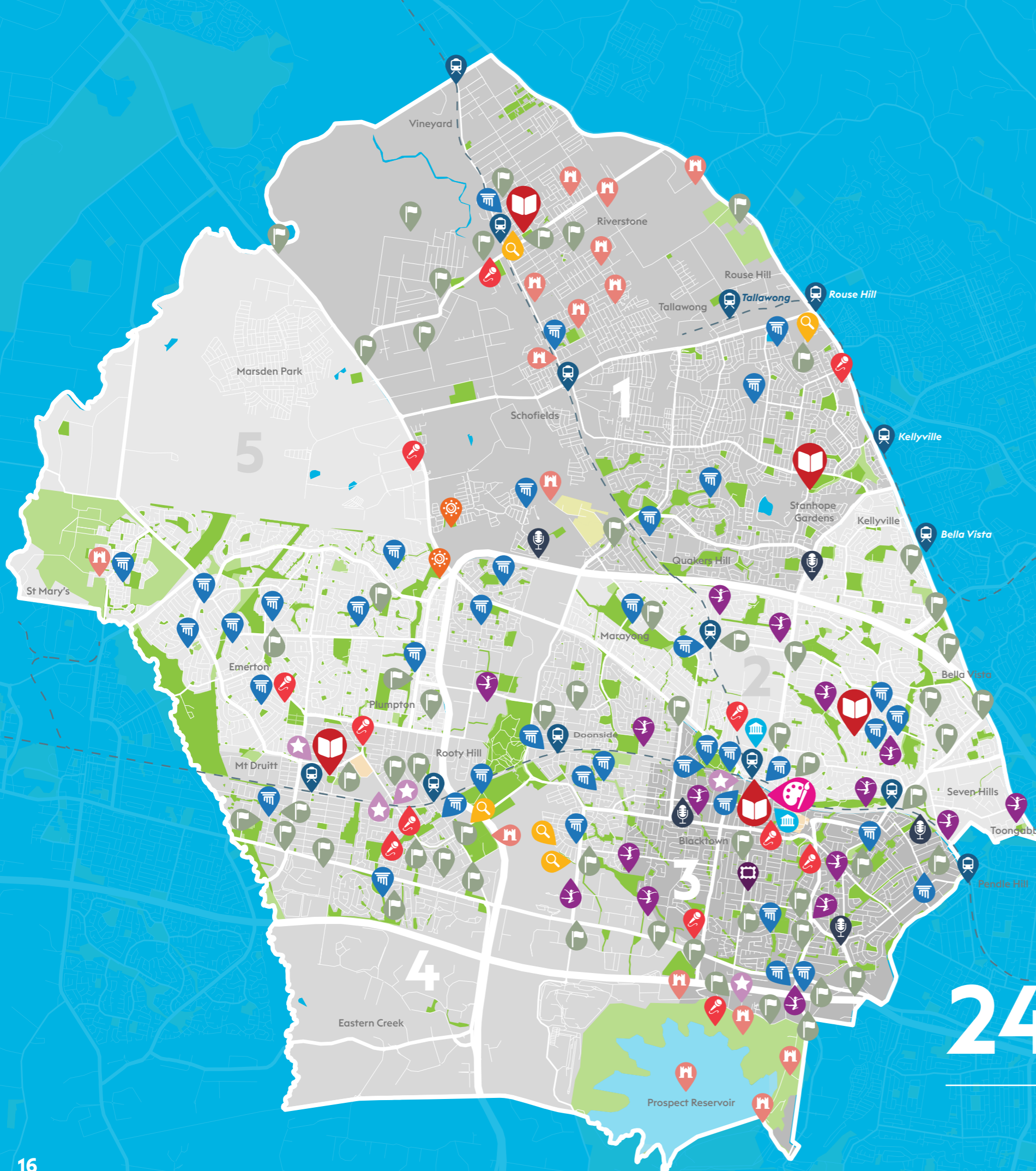
6 libraries (5 libraries
and 1 mobile library)

5 recording
studios

248 public
artworks

2 theatres

40+ Heritage
items



**'I'd like to see more
library story time and
teaching kids about
different cultures'**

- Community feedback





Tian Zhang, Leanne Mulgo Watson, Erin Wilkinson, Peter Rush, 'Songlines and Sightlines', The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre. Image: Hypereel Brand. Courtesy Blacktown Arts

CULTURE IN OUR CITY

Culture and creativity are part of everyone's daily life

Culture is the way we do things, how we express who we are. Whether reading a book or watching a film, sharing photos or attending a community festival, we participate in cultural and creative activities to understand our place in the world.

Culture in Blacktown is as diverse as our community. It is expressed through words, music, art, dance, performance, craft, fashion, food, festivals and celebrations.

Changing technology and our increasingly globalised world means that people are increasingly curating their own cultural experiences. The range of choice we have is constantly expanding, and we are able to determine the terms of how, where and when we would like to participate.

Culture and creativity are crucial to the health, prosperity and vitality of our communities. They bring us together, help us enjoy our environment and flourish personally. They foster creativity and innovation, provide jobs and celebrate our unique heritage.

We live and work on the land of the Darug people, home to Australia's second largest urban Aboriginal population, and one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse cities in the country. A deep sense of culture, people and place sit at the heart of everything we do.

'art is a visual extension of my ancestry'
- Jamie Eastwood



'I speak to people about the history of Blacktown as the largest urban Aboriginal population in NSW and the knowledge and wisdom embedded in Blacktown as a region.' - Danny Eastwood

OUR CREATIVE CITY

Relevant to the whole of Council

Our Creative City is a living document and planning tool providing Council with a clear set of priorities for the enhancement of culture, arts and heritage facilities and initiatives across the City. This plan was developed based on research and engagement with the Blacktown community and the creative and cultural sector.

The overall purpose of the strategy is to guide Council's provision of dynamic cultural services and programs in the City and the social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes that culture delivers.

It focuses on the big picture and the positive changes we can achieve in our community. It is designed to be relevant to the whole of Council. Our Blacktown 2036 is Council's Community Strategic Plan that articulates the vision of the community, and the kind of city that Blacktown wishes to be.

To ensure that Our Creative City plays a practical role in achieving Council's vision, the priorities for culture are divided among the six strategic directions outlined in Our Blacktown 2036:

- **a vibrant and inclusive community**
- **a clean, sustainable and healthy environment**
- **a smart and prosperous economy**
- **a growing city supported by accessible infrastructure**
- **a sporting and active city**
- **a leading city.**

Our Creative City will focus on measurable outcomes for each of these strategic directions.

It offers the creative community a way of telling the story of the role it plays in inspiring creativity, building community resilience and encouraging health and well-being.





'It is my obligation not only as a First Nations artist, but a member of the Blacktown community, to build on our collective strengths, which has been a big driver for me to work in the field that I am in and continue the community work my mother started.'

- Cassandra Jackson, Mount Druitt Learning Ground

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAID HIGHLIGHTS

1,876

respondents
engaged via a
survey or workshops

96%

of respondents who
connect with culture
rated it as important
in their lives

Several common themes
emerged from community
consultation:

Activity and Engagement

Strong interest in
live performance,
culturally-specific
events and
festivals, literature
and film.

Access and Inclusion

Timing, affordability and location
of events will help remove barriers
to engagement, particularly for
busy young families.

Creative infrastructure

Support for maintaining and developing existing
cultural facilities, and providing access to space for
creative projects and development activities.

Information and awareness

A desire to know more about the range of activities taking
place, promotion of Blacktown as a vibrant city with talented
local creatives and artists.

Spaces and places

Valuing the natural environment of Blacktown, enjoying
the cultural activities and public art that activates
nature reserves, parks and open public spaces.

WHAT CULTURE IS TO US

These are some of the ways our community have told us they experience or participate in culture.

dance art **movies** zines **studios** storytelling
language religious activities **podcasts**
filming **events** **festivals** art exhibitions
writing singing **music** history **publishing**
calligraphy **instrument making** food **parks**
concerts poetry **craft making** public art
cooking kite running **fashion** connecting
to land and the Elders **outdoor activities**
performance live theatre **maker spaces**



A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Arts and culture can encourage creativity, express diversity, and contribute to social cohesion, health and well-being, all of which are strong indicators of vibrancy and inclusivity.



A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Our community has told us they need:

- events that celebrate our city's cultural diversity
- a greater understanding of our First Nations stories
- higher quality rather than more events
- more programs for young people and families
- better communication and awareness of what's on
- affordable events and programs in accessible locations
- events and programs scheduled to suit working families.

We currently support a vibrant and inclusive community through:

- supporting the self-determination of First Nations Elders, community and artists
- a combination of major festivals and events, and local community festivals throughout the city
- The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre, with an arts and cultural program delivered throughout the city and online
- public art and events that activate and enhance our experience of streets and public spaces
- five libraries and a mobile library supporting access to literature, literacy and skills development
- The City Art Collection
- preserving historical records and heritage assets.

4 in 5 Australians agree that **First Nations arts** are an important part of Australia's culture (80%)

(Australia Council for the Arts *Connecting Australians Results of the National Arts Participation Survey 2017*)

Our lives are **busier than ever** so finding the time, or the right time, to participate is a challenge

Our priorities

To offer a range of accessible arts and cultural facilities and activities throughout the city that enable our community to participate in a vibrant and inclusive cultural life, we will:

- increase representation and support for Darug and First Nations-led cultural programs
- ensure events and cultural programs reflect the diversity of the city's changing population
- integrate programming across Council's Library, Events and Arts and Cultural Development services
- have a coordinated approach to marketing cultural activities and events in the city
- target cultural activities and improve scheduling to meet the changing needs of our community
- support and showcase local artists and creative businesses
- formalise Council's approach to delivering public art and place-based experiences
- increase community access to historical records, heritage assets and Blacktown City's cultural collections.

98% of Australians say arts have a place in their lives

(Australia Council for the Arts *Creating Our Future Results of the National Arts Participation Survey 2017*)



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1



A CLEAN , SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE RESILIENT CITY

Arts and culture can stimulate awareness and understanding of local, regional and global environmental challenges, lead sustainable practice, and encourage appreciation of our public spaces, natural and built environment.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2



CLEAN, SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE RESILIENT CITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Our community has told us they need:

- a greater understanding of First Nations connection to Country
- experiences that take place in and celebrate the natural environment
- to protect our built and natural heritage throughout Blacktown City
- public art that enhances our engagement with the built and natural environment
- to feel safe in all parts of the city.

We currently support a clean, sustainable and healthy environment through:

- public art and cultural activity in parks and open spaces that enhances the appreciation of our natural environment
- sustainable event management across all Blacktown cultural programs and events
- events and activities that have an environmental theme to encourage a deeper understanding of, and engagement with, environmental issues
- raising awareness of environmental issues through our cultural events and venues.

The number of **very hot days** (over 35 degrees Celsius) will increase by **50%** in the Blacktown area over the next two decades

(Blacktown City Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020, p.70)

Jamie Eastwood and Danny Eastwood, *GUWUWI YANA NGYLA DARUG NURA 'Come here and walk with me through Darug country'*, 2019, Nurragingy Aboriginal Art Trail, Aboriginal Heritage Garden, Nurragingy Reserve Image: Adam Hollingworth. Courtesy of Blacktown City Council

Our priorities

To prioritise activities that encourage critical reflection and deeper understanding of our natural and built environment, we will:

- champion projects that profile First Nations knowledge and leadership in connecting with Country
 - preserve and promote the history and heritage of the St Bartholomew's Cemetery, activating the site to promote its heritage, stories and cultural value
 - increase the delivery of public art that creates new ways to experience the environment, histories and cultural diversity of Blacktown City
 - foster collaboration between artists and landscape designers that will improve our experience of public spaces, ensuring they are places of celebration, recreation and creativity
- include projects that educate and engage the community about environmental values and generate civic pride
 - implement our sustainable procurement and sustainable event policies across all cultural events and activities.





A SMART AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

Cultural and creative activities are a major employer, support employment-enhancing skills and improve career opportunities, particularly for young people. Local events and activities attract visitors and support local businesses.



A SMART AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Our community has told us they need:

- creative workspace and business skill development opportunities
- greater representation in support programs for First Nations artists, culturally and linguistically diverse artists, and artists with disability
- access to means of production and cultural infrastructure
- support to overcome complex barriers in becoming professional artists
- opportunity to program and showcase work within the City's cultural programs and events.

We currently support a smart and prosperous economy through:

- major festivals and community events around Blacktown City, bringing people together and supporting local business
- supporting skills development and the sustainability of artists and creative businesses through a Creative Arts Fund and Arts Residency Program
- promoting local artists and organisations to support the local creative economy
- providing access to employment enhancing skills development
- acquiring the work of local artists and building Blacktown City's Cultural Collection
- supporting local sole traders, micro businesses and suppliers.

The cultural and creative industries contribute over **\$91 billion to the national economy**, around 5.2% of GDP, every year.

(newapproach.org.au Insight Reports - A New Approach (ANA) Transformative Impacts of Culture and Creativity 2019)



Arts and cultural activities enhance **education** and **employment** outcomes

Our priorities

To prioritise activities that support increased productivity, employment and economic well-being, we will:

- identify opportunities for local creative start-ups to deliver creative services and projects
 - prioritise local suppliers for events and cultural programs delivered by Blacktown City
 - increase opportunities for artists to generate income through the sale of their work
 - identify under-utilised spaces that can be used to support local creative business to develop and grow sustainability
- increase the accessibility and awareness of existing grant and residency programs to under-represented groups
 - apply to COVID-19 stimulus programs for creative and cultural projects that employ local creatives.

In 2020 the impact of COVID-19 saw a **loss of \$18 million to the local creative and recreation economy**, with many creative practitioners not qualifying for wage subsidies and support

(economy.id.com.au Covid 19 Economic Impacts Blacktown 2020)



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3



Artist Sima Alikhani teaching drawing techniques at the Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre. Image: Courtesy of The Western



A GROWING CITY SUPPORTED BY ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Libraries, arts centres, community facilities and public spaces ensure equitable access to culture, contributing to community cohesion and connectedness.

A GROWING CITY SUPPORTED BY ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

Our community has told us they need:

- upgraded facilities to accommodate a broader range and scale of activities in locations throughout Blacktown City
- more access to safe and affordable space to engage with and participate in cultural activities
- cultural and creative activities in locations close to public transport.

We currently support a growing city supported by accessible infrastructure through:

- five libraries and one mobile library in different locations across Blacktown City, accessed by over 1.2 million people, per year
- The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre
- Main Street Artist Studios
- community centres in 45 locations across the city
- Blacktown Showground Precinct housing a range of cultural and community groups
- temporary and permanent public art in public spaces throughout Blacktown City.

‘The relaxation I feel when I walk through the door and being received by everyone at Blacktown Arts is a feeling I can’t explain.’ - Uncle Wes Marne, Bigambul, Elder based in Mount Druitt



Our priorities

To provide equitable access to community, arts and cultural facilities and open space, we will:

- review use of community facilities and identify opportunities to create greater access and affordability for cultural users throughout Blacktown City
- conduct a feasibility study for long-term storage and conservation of heritage items and the City Art Collection
- design and build a new outdoor stage at the Blacktown Showground Precinct
- refurbish the Main Street Artist Studios
- refurbish the Kelso Lane Creative Hub and make it accessible for cultural and creative use
- facilitate the use of public space, such as plazas, carparks and footpaths, for temporary cultural programs, events and artwork
- ensure environmental regeneration and new infrastructure makes Blacktown City's public spaces better suited to a changing climate and the delivery of seasonal cultural events.

The right provision of community resources will **foster diversity of use, social inclusion and equitable access.**

(Blacktown City Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020, p.38)



A HEALTHY, SPORTING AND ACTIVE CITY

Participation in arts and cultural activities improve people's mental and physical health, increase self-esteem and build healthier, more resilient communities.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5





A HEALTHY, SPORTING AND ACTIVE CITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5

Our community has told us they need:

- opportunities to enjoy Blacktown City's parks, walking tracks and green spaces to improve health and well-being
- creative arts, craft, dance and socialising for their well-being
- an expanded range of opportunities for physical and recreational activity due to an increase in high-density housing and growing population
- equitable access to amenities, especially for young people in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

We currently support a sporting and active city through:

- cultural and creative programs that encourage participation
- festivals and events throughout the city, encouraging community leadership and participation
- enhancing public spaces, including parks and reserves, that create a welcoming environment for all forms of physical activity and recreation
- providing facilities for our community to meet and practice a broad range of cultural activity.

Australians are increasingly seeing the importance of art in their lives and how it **enriches our physical and emotional well-being.**



'I participate in group dance performances in cultural events.'

- Community feedback

Our priorities

To prioritise cultural activities that encourage participation and social connectedness to contribute to health and well-being, form bonds between people who share common interests, and assist people to cope with life's events and challenges, we will:

- develop public art and activations of Blacktown City's parks and green spaces to encourage engagement and active lifestyles
- create participatory programs that engage people in a broad range of physical activity
- create new partnerships with a range of community service providers to design and deliver programs that combine cultural activities with health and well-being outcomes
- increase the provision of cultural and creative activities in locations throughout Blacktown City to combat the growing issues of loneliness and isolation
- implement responsive cultural programs to assist the community to recover from disasters and trauma
- use local artists in design of playgrounds and parks and areas of cultural significance
- gather together to celebrate community milestones and successes through events and community development programs.

1/4

of Australians reported feeling frequent feelings of loneliness and isolation in 2018

(newapproach.org.au Insight Reports - A New Approach (ANA) Transformative Impacts of Culture and Creativity 2019)



'Eleni - Navigators of Polynesia', The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre. Image: Jade Cadelina. Courtesy of Blacktown Arts

A LEADING CITY

A commitment to arts and culture delivers economic, social, and environmental outcomes and promotes a dynamic and progressive city.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6

A LEADING CITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6

Our community has told us they need:

- networking and access to resources
- greater representation and visibility
- a cultural plan that reflects the changing interests and diversity of Blacktown City.

We currently support a leading city through:

- developing Blacktown City's Cultural Plan through community consultation
- integrating social, environmental, economic and governance leadership principles into our core business and decision making
- our organisational culture of teamwork, customer focus, innovation and safety
- building Blacktown's reputation and a sense of civic pride.

'I have lived in Blacktown for the last 14 years. I find the movement of cultures, people, the growth of the region and the artistic intervention in our new developments, very exciting.'

- Blacktown resident





Our priorities

To support activities that provide beneficial networks and resources within the local community, enable our community's expression, enhance civic pride and inspire a positive future, we will:

- deliver, implement and evaluate a cultural plan that reflects community aspirations
- adopt integrated planning and evaluation for all cultural programs and activities
- maximise the use of Blacktown City Council facilities to ensure they benefit the community and the cultural sector
- provide forums and networking opportunities for artists, organisations and creative communities
- expand the range of partnerships across the cultural, government, private and education sectors
- showcase local talent, foster civic pride and raise the profile of Blacktown through arts and culture.

Creativity and culture.....

'is an opportunity to share and exchange ideas' - Tina Barahanos

'engages my curiosity and sense of well-being' - Alex Byrne



City Shift, artists Alexandra Byrne and Tina Barahanos, Mackenzie Walkway, Blacktown CBD. Image: Gerrie Mifsud



'I enjoy interacting with people, sharing stories and images from our past'

- Rosemary Phillis, Secretary, Riverstone and District Historical Society

EVALUATION AND OPERATION

In addition to Council's indicators for measuring success in quantitative terms, we work with the schema of measurable cultural outcomes developed by the Cultural Development Network (CDN), endorsed internationally by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and published in the international peer-reviewed journal.

The Cultural Plan will be evaluated for its efficacy and contribution to the operations of Council.



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Blacktown Arts charcoal workshop, The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre.
Image: Courtesy of The Western



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