



AUSTRALIAN  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
ASSOCIATION

# Arts and Culture

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POLICY POSITION

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# ALGA ARTS AND CULTURE POLICY POSITION

## ALGA'S POSITION

THE AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR SUPPORT OF THE PIVOTAL ROLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLAYS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE SECTOR, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO THE LIVEABILITY AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF ALL AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES.

### CONTEXT

Arts, culture and the creative industries are valued by local government as an essential economic driver for visitor, regional and night-time economies, as well as community mental health and social cohesion. In 2013, local government investment in culture and heritage was \$1.2 billion, or over 18% of the total national investment by all governments (ABS, 2011). By 2017 this investment had increased to \$1.5 billion, or over 27% of the total national investment in to the [\\$111.7 billion industry](#) by all governments (ABS, 2017).

This substantial contribution comprises capital (building and maintenance) and recurrent (staff and programs) investment. Local government supports and finances galleries, libraries, performing arts centres, museums, festivals, place activations and individual local artists and arts organisations. Together this expenditure forms the framework required for local and regional cultural and creative activity across every community in Australia. State and Federal art programs/strategies rely on the infrastructure and specialised staff provided by councils with the National Touring Performing Arts ecology provided as an example.

Local government investment in the creative sector delivers important economic, social, cultural and health outcomes across regional and metropolitan areas, bringing richness and meaning to individuals' lives and strengthening communities by:

- building community cohesion, wellbeing and resilience;
- creating attractive places to live, work and visit;
- helping to retain populations where drift to cities is a tendency; and
- highlighting creative talent, natural assets, and unique cultures.

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR

Australia's creative and cultural economy contributes almost \$112 billion or 6.4% of the nation's total gross domestic product (GDP), and employs close to 600,000 people or 5.5% of the workforce. Local government is part of this vital ecosystem that requires investment in order to continue to foster creative and visitor economies and deliver significant social, economic, cultural, health and wellbeing outcomes for Australia.

Australia's 537 local governments play a critically important role in amenity, shaping 'places' in which people live and work. Many councils also have community cultural development embedded into their corporate and strategic documents. These documents set out the pathways to achieve their communities' vision for the future, and frequently identify the role that councils will play in fostering community arts, cultural development and creative industries.

Local programs and opportunities to participate and engage arts and culture are greatly enhanced by arts and cultural programs provided by states and territories, the Commonwealth and the private sector. These include the provision of radio, television, film, digital services, orchestras, opera, dance, state and national institutions, community transport and support for major and smaller performing arts companies, touring, artists and specific art forms.

### CHALLENGES

Councils have a strong track record of working collaboratively at the local level and can provide targeted delivery of strategic cultural and creative programs by expert personnel. Council owned arts and culture venues are often the only ones in regional and rural towns and so are highly valued. Yet remote and regional councils need further resources to support the provision of cultural services. Here, adequately funded arts programs could play a far greater role in addressing local population drift to urban centres and in building community resilience.

Over the last decade, the Federal Government has decreased its per capita arts spending by 18.9 per cent. During the same period Local Government per capita expenditure increased by 11.0 per cent, while state and territory government expenditure increased by 3.9 per cent. Over the same period, the level of Financial Assistance Grants provided to Local Government has fallen from an amount equal to around 0.72% of Commonwealth Taxation revenue to just 0.55%.

### POLICY POSITIONS

1. **Support for the arts and culture:** ALGA seeks the preservation, development, and promotion of cultural services to provide personal, community, economic and civic development.
2. **Equal Partnership Approach:** Local government contributes around 30% of total government expenditure on arts and culture and as a result a 'whole of government' and partnership approach to planning and delivery is required to ensure a flourishing creative sector.
3. **Direct Funding to Local Government:** Councils have a strong track record of working collaboratively at the local level, efficiently and effectively integrating program delivery and strategic responses to natural disasters and social and economic challenges. Given financial

constraints, direct financial supports from other levels of government will sustain Councils arts and culture focus and best achieve efficient and long-term local impact.

4. **Eligibility of Local Governments for arts grant applications:** It is essential that Local Governments are eligible to apply for all government grants programs
5. **Integrated Destination Plan Development:** The visitor economy depends on a strong arts and culture scene and requires integrated destination- plan development and delivery. Local government has the capacity and capability to enhance “experiential travel” as a key component of economic recovery
6. **Local Government Engagement:** to drive arts, culture, and creative industries in their post-COVID recovery ALGA encourages the Australia Council for the Arts to work closely with local governments across the country.
7. **Local Government Representation:** Local Government needs to be represented on the arts and culture ministerial council if it continues.

## **PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARTS**

Local government involvement in the arts and cultural sector is based upon the following principles:

- **Culture and its role** Local government recognises that ‘culture’ encompasses our diverse heritage and avenues of expression through arts, architecture, history, language, education, the built and natural environment, leisure, work and daily life. People use culture to express their fundamental character and aspirations;
- **Breadth of ‘the arts’** Local government recognises that arts activities encompass:
  - the visual, performing and literary arts,
  - social events and activities,
  - educational activities leading to the development of professional skills and knowledge,
  - festivals, celebrations, commemorative events,
  - community and urban planning and design, public art and cultural planning;
- **Breadth of ‘cultural services’** Local government recognises cultural services include:
  - provision of libraries, museums, art galleries and performing arts centres,
  - employment and provision of assistance to professional cultural workers,
  - encouragement and promotion or development and implementation of cultural activities, and
  - preservation of unique cultural activities;
- **Art, culture and integrated planning frameworks** Local government acknowledges that quality of life in communities can be improved through integrated planning frameworks and arts and culture planning and development, a key function of Local governments that contribute to the wellbeing and connectedness of place.
- **Art, culture and liveability** Local government understands that improving connectedness inspires innovation, increases economic viability by making a place more liveable and therefore attractive to visitors and businesses alike, improves health and wellbeing, is an essential component of Placemaking, and is responsive to contemporary digital communications;

- **Strategic cultural planning** Local government recognises strategic cultural planning is a key initiative enabling local communities and councils to respond to changing social, recreational, leisure and economic needs, and to address the increasing demand for cultural resources;
- **Multiculturalism & cultural diversity** Local government recognises and respects cultural diversity by developing and promoting a range of multicultural activities to include CaLD community groups;
- **Cultural identity** Local government recognises the rights of individuals and communities to determine their own cultural identity by promoting consultation and encouraging participation;
- **Cultural conservation** Local government supports conservation of cultural heritage and promotes innovation and creativity, recognising that the maintenance of a dynamic balance between the preservation of the old and the evolution of the new is the hallmark of a rich and productive culture; and
- **Museum facilities** Local government aims to increase its involvement in the support of local, regional and community museums and to achieve better communication with its state and Commonwealth funding partners, in order to ensure communities receive the best museum facilities and services available.

## SUMMARY

Local Government plays a vital role in the burgeoning creative and visitor economies, investing and delivering capital investment and ongoing arts and culture programs in metropolitan and regional areas of Australia.

Given financial constraints, local governments need the continuing support of other levels of government to ensure the sustainability of its arts and culture focus.

## FURTHER REFERENCES

Chamber of Arts and Culture WA and Community Arts Network WA 2015 [Arts and Culture in WA Local Government](#)

Creative Community Network Creative Communities SA 2002 [Guidelines for developing and maintaining an arts and cultural policy](#)

Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities *National Awards for Local Government* [Arts Animates—Creating Vibrant and Cohesive Communities through the Arts](#) sponsored by the Department of Communications and the Arts

LGNSW 2016 [Arts and Culture Forum](#)

LGNSW 2017 [Communities and Culture: Research into Arts, Culture and Heritage](#)

MAV 2018a [Arts and Culture Forum: Collaborate to Innovate](#)

MAV 2018b [Live Music Toolkit for Local Governments](#)

MAV 2020 [Position Statement for the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries](#)