

Feasibility Study for the future of Lismore Regional Gallery & Lismore Museum

Lismore's arts, culture and heritage



LISMORE
REGIONAL
GALLERY



RICHMOND RIVER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

MUSEUM



Discussion Paper

September 2023

YOUR INVITATION

This Discussion Paper provides an overview and background material for anyone wanting to contribute to the future of **Lismore's Regional Gallery and the Museum**. We are particularly interested in receiving feedback on the future of both, not only post the 2022 flood but also for the medium to longer term. In particular, we seek your input and direction on the following:

- The guiding principles and objectives to help further define the parameters and outcomes of this study; ideas and directions that will further guide, frame and underpin decision making.
- What opportunities and challenges the study should prioritise, particularly over the short, medium to longer-term, for both the gallery and museum.
- Sector trends, including disaster resilience, cultural and heritage tourism opportunities, jobs and training, enhanced access and inclusion, activation and community wellbeing.
- How 'Country and First Nation's Culture' are included in the future planning of the Regional Gallery & Museum.

You will note that this paper does attempt to identify potential projects and infrastructure needs (from initial stakeholder consultation and analysis), however these ideas remain fluid to allow further dialogue and examination.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

To respond:

Please read this short discussion paper.

Option 1



Go to <https://forms.gle/GYkn888pikHYy75G6> to answer questions in response to the ideas set out here. Please make time to complete the questions and encourage others to do the same.

Option 2



Simply drop in for your say between **12pm to 4pm** at **Elevator ARI 3 Rural Street, Lismore** from **3 - 6 October 2023**/ or attend in-person consultation session:

- Artists/Creatives Session - 2pm Tuesday 3 October
- Museum/Heritage Session - 2pm Wednesday 4 October
- Business/Tourism Session - 2pm Thursday 5 October

Or join the free **LRG 'Collage Club'** at the **Lismore Quad** on **Thursday 5 October 4-6pm** to tell us what you think!

For more information contact: andrew@overttoncreative.com



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This project is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW



CONTEXT AND APPROACH

For this study to be a success it's critical to capture and include the rich knowledge, expertise and perspectives of local, regional and sector-wide stakeholders, and communities, to cover and consider all broader cultural/heritage infrastructure needs and settings.

With strategically focussed outcomes in mind, we aim to provide an understanding of the infrastructure needed for Lismore arts, culture and heritage to reach its full potential, with prioritisation and decision-making recommended over the short, medium and longer-term.

The ability to adequately meet infrastructure and service needs for both the gallery and museum is expected to become more interesting and challenging over time. Success demands consideration of:

- The complexity and dynamic nature of disaster recovery (including the loss of cultural material) and impact on the community and how that might be prolonged and/or extend beyond geographical boundaries.
- Resilience and mitigation controls for infrastructure and programs to reduce the impact of disasters before they occur, along with the financial impacts of insurance affordability and availability (national principles to disaster recovery).
- Socio-cultural changes and trends - finding new ways to meet emerging audience demand related to gallery and museum programs, including First Nations best practice.
- Fostering a strategic alignment: considering existing and new strategies, policies, priorities and plans of government; infrastructure and increased service delivery within a context of limited public funding capacity.
- Understanding future planning approaches in Lismore; the need for a healthy locally based creative industry and heritage sector to balance the city's retail, hospitality and commercial life (within the CBD and beyond).

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- There is a strong desire for flood recovery to be community led.
- Whilst both the existing regional gallery and museum buildings undergo remedial works and plan to reopen mid-2024, for both facilities capacities to operate will remain limited by the likelihood of further flood events.
- Gallery and museum collections (all local collections in fact) remain vulnerable post flood – no permanent home (gallery collection stored off site, museum collection not temperature or moisture controlled, currently housed in shipping containers).
- Strategic investment in both the gallery and museum is now an urgent priority. Without it, Lismore runs the risk of losing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rethink approaches (when the focus of recovery dissipates). The future of Lismore arts, culture and heritage requires purpose-built facilities where culture/heritage can be stored safely, created, produced, presented and consumed.
- Lismore's existing social and cultural diversity provides a compelling point of difference and strength. The city's grassroots arts/cultural and heritage ecology is distinct and is celebrated for its ability to generate stimulating, creative environments and cultural experiences about the past, present and future in which the community lives and works. The arts community has embraced a vision for 'Lismore to be Australia's preeminent regional centre for the arts and creativity.'
- The cultural sector contributes not only to Lismore's liveability, vitality and sustainability, but also its economic prosperity. Arts and cultural organisations, as well as heritage festivals and events, encourage local storytelling, grow tourism, retain discretionary spending and expand workforce skill sets – all of which are considered essential to attracting and retaining other skilled and professional workers.
- The creative industry sector in Lismore LGA consistently generates a higher rate of employment by comparison to NSW as a whole and Regional NSW. (Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2019).

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- Creativity and innovation can drive responses to disaster recovery, resilience and community wellbeing. New approaches and technology, in engineering and other disciplines, can help find solutions and define approaches (best reflected in the ‘creative recovery’ of other places like Christchurch NZ).
 - There is a growing desire to encourage new design that responds to Lismore’s subtropical climate that supports adaptation, opportunity and environmental sustainability.
 - Collaborative approaches with neighbouring councils and regional tourism bodies, to promote connections with Lismore through its villages and shared hinterland assets, be pursued as a unique and diverse tourism offering.

OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

What we have heard, read and considered

Lismore Creative Industries Recovery Forum Report (October 2002)

Arts Northern Rivers (ANR), Research agency Patternmakers

Where is recovery investment best directed? Arts community creative solutions included:

- There is an opportunity to invite ambitious ideas and ‘big picture’ thinking in the recovery process.
- Investigate the creation of a gallery/museum outside the Lismore basin flood zone.
- Store artworks, cultural material and equipment in portable disaster proof containers or ‘bubbles’ that can be moved in extreme weather events.
- Disaster proofing art/heritage collections locally and regionally.
- Encouraging Lismore Council to support the development of a new Arts & Cultural Strategy
- Rebuilding studios/artspaces ‘smarter’ using sustainable materials, creating disaster resilient structures.
- Involve First Nations knowledge and creativity.

Initial stakeholder comments and observations (June 2023)

- Frustration at the speed of flood recovery – need creative outcomes to stimulate the recovery process. Build back better with improved capacity and capability.
- Recovery communication is fragmented, better coordination and collective vision is required.
- No relevant data on the social/cultural impact of the floods - a very disruptive period, particularly for arts, culture and tourism.
- Opportunity for reinvention to occur – making strategic choices (high value outcomes) – decisive and necessary action.
- Take a place-based approach to adaption, incentivising mitigation and resilience.
- Priority needs - look at preparedness and prevention with cultural material. Look to best practice with storage, care and research. Prized community objects like the return of the Hannah Cabinet remain important to the flood recovery process.
- The Gallery is seen as an anchor of the local/regional sector in providing creative leadership and direction; to present dynamic programs, build audiences and serve artists. It reflects Lismore’s creative and social identity.
- Opportunity to link with other strategic priorities and/or infrastructure projects including stronger cultural tourism outcomes for Lismore and region - build authentic experiences around the region’s product strengths and support the facilitation and attraction of key infrastructure projects.
- Identifying skills and strengths and where some strategic partnerships can lead to more sustainable and resilient outcomes.

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- There has been unprecedented development in both the visual arts and heritage sectors across Australia with significant multimillion dollar investments delivering new gallery and museum infrastructure from local, state and federal governments - 'Lismore must keep pace and find its point of difference.'
 - Activation and vitality remain important for proper functioning of the Lismore CBD. However existing school infrastructure has committed to not returning to current sites with the CBD.
 - Greater access to local/regional cultural heritage can contribute to inclusive growth – when people or communities are given the opportunity to engage with, learn from and promote their own cultural heritage, it can contribute to stronger social and economic development.

INITIAL OPTIONS

With this analysis in mind, please consider the following early-stage proposals:

1. **ISSUE: An immediate prioritisation to provide safe and secure storage for both council and community cultural/heritage collections.**
CONCEPT: Plan, design, construct and operate a dedicated regional storage/collections facility out of the flood zone.
2. **ISSUE: Examine redevelopment options for Lismore Regional Gallery and Lismore Museum, including redevelopment (risk reduction) of existing buildings and/or co-location above flood zone.**
CONCEPT: Plan, design and construct resilient and forward-looking infrastructure for the gallery and museum, out of the flood zone.
3. **ISSUE: The re-development of the gallery's existing location - quad site (ground & 1st floor)**
CONCEPT: The mid-term re-development potential of the gallery's quad site (ground & 1st floor) into artist studios and community 'incubator' style workshop spaces. Grow current site activity for creative industries and uses. Co-locate with tourism.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- In the context of this study, where should we focus the greatest effort and resources in the recovery process, towards an inclusive, sustainable and ambitious approach for the gallery and museum?
- How can we create and improve access to cultural heritage and art across Lismore and region?
- What type of gallery & museum infrastructure & programs can help grow creative and cultural experiences for Lismore over the next 5-10 years?