



the culture of our community.

Cultural Setting Report - Response Paper.

Executive Summary

Bega Valley Shire Council has a fundamental role in promoting the Shires' unique identity; preserving cultural heritage; supporting the arts and cultural sector and encouraging the growth of creative industries. Council also has a role in creating community environments that are distinctive and have a sense of place.

Bega Valley Shire Council is committed to supporting our cultural communities and environments, and the opportunities that cultural activity brings to the Shire. This commitment is expressed throughout Council's Community Strategic Plan, Bega Valley 2030 and is further defined through the formalisation of the Cultural Setting Report which explores cultural focus areas which are significant to the Bega Valley community, providing a summary of the current cultural activity within these areas.

This paper is written in response to the Cultural setting report. To assist Council and the community in working towards a vibrant cultural future, this response paper identifies five key opportunity areas for development within the Bega Valley community, highlighting Council's current commitment and current activity which supports each area. The five key opportunity areas are:

1. Planning for our cultural future
2. Supporting cultural economic growth
3. Researching and understanding our communities cultural needs
4. Communicating our cultural strengths
5. Identifying and supporting cultural partnerships

The Cultural Setting Report & Response Paper and its place in Council's corporate planning

Through the NSW established Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) legislation, Bega Valley Shire Council adopted its Community Strategic Plan, [Bega Valley 2030](#) in July 2009.

The [Bega Valley 2030](#) sets the direction for the Bega Valley for the next 20 years. It establishes the ambitions of the people who live, work and visit the Bega Valley and sets the direction for the Council and community to work towards over the next 20 years. Bega Valley 2030 identifies the long term responses needed to achieve the ambitions under Council's five theme areas :

Liveable

To support a place where everyone regardless of age and circumstance can enjoy a safe, involved and affordable community life

Enterprising

To support a creative and innovative business community, invigorating growth in employment and economic activity, in partnership with government.

Sustainable

To ensure the unique environment is protected to maintain biodiversity and water quality, and managed for our community to provide growth and economic opportunity

Accessible

To plan, and provide a comprehensive mix of public and private sector services and facilities in order that residents and visitors have access to quality health, recreation, education, employment, transport, utility and retail resources they want and need.

Leading Organisation

To shape an organisation that supports the agreed aspirations of the community within the capacity of the community and the capability of the organisation.

The Bega Valley 2030 links to other key documents which deliver over the medium and short term :

[Bega Valley 2011-2016 – Delivery Plan](#). The five year Delivery Program interprets the long term strategic plan into strategic action. The program guides the organisations activity through until 2016. The Delivery Program sets out clear priorities, ongoing activities and specific actions Council will undertake, within its areas of responsibilities and capacity, towards achieving the communities' outcomes.

[The Bega Valley – Operational Plan](#) (12 month financial year). The annual Operational Plan is the implementing part of Councils integrated and planning reporting framework. It narrows the actions and projects specific to the budget year and outlines activities to be undertaken for the year.

Through this transition to the state wide IP&R framework, the development of separate Social Plans and Cultural Plans are no longer mandated, rather, Councils are strongly encouraged to incorporate

social and cultural issues into the community strategic planning process creating a holistic approach to planning and delivery of Council activities.

While Council will no longer be developing separate planning documents, the need to highlight cultural issues and opportunities through setting reports is recognised. The Cultural Setting Report is an informing document for Council and for the community, and are expected to be dynamic. Where there is significant change or development in an area the papers can be updated or reviewed.

Through the consultation and development stage of Bega Valley 2030 Council's previous *Cultural Action Plan 2006 - 2011* played a key role in informing the development and direction of the adopted plan.

Council is now in the delivery phase and review phase of the IP&R cycle, and will be utilising the Cultural Setting Report to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources and the opportunity for Council to advocate on behalf of the community. The *Social Issues Papers* and Cultural Setting Report are provided to increase awareness and understanding throughout Council in the community and will assist in decision making on operational activities and providing background information on our community's needs, capacity and directions.

Details of strategic actions and current activities that Council is delivering on that support the issues and opportunities raised in the Cultural Setting Report are outlined through the [Bega Valley Operational Plan](#) which is updated on an annual basis. Council's capacity to address identified cultural issues is driven by availability of resources, including finances. The Shire has a relatively low general rate income and our services and facilities need to cover a large geographical area. Community expectations are also increasing. In addition to broad strategies such as improving service coordination, information provision and the development of partnerships, it will be necessary to investigate alternative sources of funding and resources such as grants, subsidies and section 94 developer contribution plans.

Through the consultation process for *Bega Valley 2030* a large number of issues and opportunities were identified and prioritised. This approach to identifying cultural needs helps Council to respond effectively to any funding opportunities that become available as well as enabling Council to assist community based organisations to access funding.

Specific long term Key Directions (*hyperlink*) of our Community Strategic Plan that support the development and growth of the cultural and creative industries sector include :

L4 'By 2030 in the Bega Valley, celebration, cultural and artistic expression are integrated into all aspects of the community'

L9 'By 2030 the Bega Valley creates opportunities for young people'

A4 'By 2030 in the Bega Valley, recreation, sporting, tourism, cultural and community assets meet the community need'

E2 ' By 2030 the Bega Valley has an increased business capacity generating ongoing economic development'

E4 'By 2030 the Bega Valley has expanded tourism opportunities taking full advantage of other marketing and promotion opportunities;

E6 'By 2030 the Bega Valley fosters innovation and has a reputation for its commitment to new and emerging industries'

To view details of strategic directions and annual activities that support these key directions, please view our annual [Operational Plan](#) (hyperlink)

To clarify the role and relationship Council has in providing infrastructure, facilities and services to the community, Council has identified its role across all areas of delivery throughout the Community Strategic Plan. These roles are also articulated to each opportunity area of the *Cultural Response Paper*.

Council roles:

As a **Leader** providing direction through planning policy

As a **Provider** of services and infrastructure

As a **Partner** with the community, government and private organisations

As a **Facilitator** to bring together local, state and national government, private and community objectives to achieve the best outcomes

As an **Advocator** on behalf of the local community

As a **Promoter** of the Bega Valley and of services, programs and activities within the Shire

As a **Broker** sourcing public or private funds to provide service or infrastructure

Council's role in cultural development

Council recognises its role in cultural development and planning as follows:

- Undertaking planning and research in order to respond to community needs and approaches to cultural development.
- Facilitation and brokerage of new initiatives and partnerships in the development of cultural opportunities and encouraging the growth of creative industries.
- The provision of high quality, accessible information and the promotion of cultural opportunities within the community.
- Supporting community education and community development processes.
- Acting as a catalyst for cultural activity and inspiring creativity by example.
- Promoting the Shires' unique identity and taking a custodial role in partnership with the community to preserve and enhance the community's cultural heritage
- Providing and managing cultural infrastructure through adopted Asset Management Plans.
- Directly providing gallery and library services and engaging staff who support cultural development.
- Supporting and facilitating the provision of accessible cultural services and opportunities for innovative expression and broad participation.
- Creating community environments that are distinctive and have a sense of place.
- Financially and in-kind support to South East Arts (SEA)

Opportunity areas - overview

The Cultural Setting Report explored current activity and community direction in the areas of *Our cultural places, Our cultural activity and community Our cultural celebrations, Our creative industries, Aboriginal arts and culture*. This report enabled Council to develop a greater understanding of the significance and potential of cultural life within our communities.

Council has worked closely with the Cultural Planning Committee to establish community priorities and aspirations for the cultural future of the Shire. The Cultural Planning Committee put forward the following ambitions to Council for consideration:

- By 2017 a cultural needs analysis of the region will have been undertaken, clearly outlining future asset priorities
- By 2017 the Bega Valley Region Gallery will have new / upgraded facilities with suitable exhibition and storage spaces
- By 2017 economic and social baseline data on the influence of creative industries is established and understood
- By 2017 the Bega Valley will be known for being 'brought to life through music' with the recognition and celebration of the unique and strong connection to music held throughout the shire
- By 2017 sustainable funding opportunities and foundation fund have been identified and established for cultural activities

In response to the areas explored through the Cultural Setting Report, and the ambitions put forward by the Cultural Planning Committee, Council, have identified five key opportunity areas for the support and growth of the shire's cultural future.

Opportunity Areas

1. Researching and understanding our communities cultural needs
2. Planning for our cultural future
3. Supporting cultural economic growth
4. Communicating our cultural strengths
5. Identifying and supporting cultural partnerships

1. Researching and understanding our communities' cultural needs

This opportunity area has been developed in response to the Cultural Planning Committees ambition 'By 2017 a cultural needs analysis of the region will have been undertaken, clearly outlining future asset priorities'.

A recent study undertaken by South East Arts, *Stocktake of performing arts venues in South East NSW, July 2012* recommended that a cultural needs analysis be undertaken to determine the need for a regional performing arts centre within the Shire. It has been identified that our strong community identity association with iconic community halls is an opportunity for the Shire which could be further developed through creating improved opportunities for cross promotions and support for community halls. To enable future planning, support and investment in the cultural industry sector, a greater understanding of our current community's needs and expectations is required, along with further research into emerging issues and trends for the future of the shire

Council response:

In October 2012 the study undertaken by South East Arts, *Stocktake of performing arts venues in South East NSW* was presented to Bega Valley Shire Council. Based on recommendations in this report, Council recognises the need for further research into our community's cultural needs and will advocate and support the seeking of external funds to deliver this. Any future work will compliment and expand on the feedback gathered by the Creative Industries forum held in October 2011, and the research undertaken by the Four Winds Festival and the Cobargo Folk Festival.

Key current and future planned activities:

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- undertake cultural needs assessment
- source relevant funding in partnership with South East Arts (SEA) and other agencies to develop clear strategies
- develop the framework for a creative industries forum / cluster

Council role : facilitator , advocator, broker

2. Planning for our cultural future

This opportunity area has been developed in response to the Cultural Planning Committees ambition 'By 2017 the Bega Valley Regional Gallery will have new / upgraded facilities with suitable exhibition and storage spaces'

This opportunity of has been divided into two areas, cultural infrastructure and cultural development support.

Planning for our cultural future involves planning for both the built environment through the maintenance and sustainable growth of cultural infrastructure, and supporting our communities through cultural development support.

Cultural Infrastructure

Cultural activity happens in many different ways and in varied places from purpose-built venues to adapted buildings and public spaces.

Planning and investment in our cultural infrastructure is essential for the health, social wellbeing and economic prosperity of communities.

Cultural and community infrastructure plays an important role in bringing people together, supporting the development of social networks, and helping communities to develop life skills. All of these attributes are essential elements in the creation and maintenance of strong communities.ⁱ

Existing cultural infrastructure within the Shire include;

- Community halls
- Galleries - Council, commercial and community run
- Libraries
- Museums
- Sporting grounds and recreational facilities
- Community centres
- Gathering places such as *Men's Sheds*, youth spaces, CWA halls.
- Purpose built facilities such as the Four Winds site, Magic Mountain sound shell and clubs.

To ensure existing cultural infrastructure remains relevant and of service to the community, planning for maintenance and understanding of the communities current and future needs is essential.

The development of new or the revitalisation of existing spaces to create new cultural infrastructure requires a comprehensive understanding of the current communities needs and expectations and the understanding of emerging needs. Reports such as the South East Arts *Stocktake of performing arts venues in South East NSW* (September 2012) act as guiding documents for decision making. Combined with understanding current expectations emerging needs, best practice business planning identifies community circumstances, ongoing ownership issues and operational and maintenance costs.

Council response :

Council provides a wide range of services, infrastructure and support to enable our Shire to actively contribute and share in the benefits of cultural activities. Council is committed to the ongoing maintenance and support of these facilities and services. Services and infrastructure provided by Council include:

Library services : Council provides, maintains and resources four library services and a mobile library service. This includes the ongoing costs and maintenance of building infrastructure. Council recognises the importance of innovative library services, which is primarily driven by dedicated staff.

Bega Valley Regional Gallery : The Bega Valley Regional Gallery is the only Council supported gallery in the South East region and opened in 1988 due to the growing interest in art in the community and the recognised need for space to support this. The Bega Valley Regional Gallery is one of approximately 40 regional galleries in NSW and it attracts over 10,000 visitors every year through a comprehensive schedule of exhibitions and public programs. Council recognises the ongoing challenges faced by the gallery with the need for additional storage and exhibition space and is committed to working towards a sustainable solution that meets the requirement of a growing community.

Community halls and public spaces: Community halls within the Bega Valley are managed or leased by local committees. Council staffing resources are provided to supporting hall committees and the training and resourcing of volunteers.

Museums –For the five museums within the Shire, and the Montreal Goldfields, the building is owned by Council, with a lease provided with funds allocated for the ongoing maintenance. This includes ensuring the building standards are kept and heritage conditions of the building are maintained to standard.

Public domain – Council is actively involved in the development and delivery of tourism signage for our ‘gateway’ towns which will support the Shire’s cultural tourism opportunities. Council is also committed to the ongoing support of public art and festivals which contribute to the exploration and interpretation of the community’s regional identity

Key current and future planned activities :

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- Review library services to enable continuation of services that best meets community needs
- Provide increased storage space at the Bega Depot for the Bega Valley Regional Gallery and will prepare options for increased exhibition space and public programs
- Will finalise Facility Management Plans for all of the community halls and public spaces in consultation with the volunteers and committees
- Consult with the lease bodies of museums to ensure adequate management of the asset.
- Work with South East Arts (SEA) to establish a museum working group

- Consider and adopt a Public Art Policy and Procedure in 2013, and the development of Section 94A plans which will provide support and to the development of public art and cultural activity.
- **Council Role : leader , provider , advocator, facilitator ; broker**

Cultural development support

The future of the Shire's cultural and creative growth is largely reliant on the support and development provided to artists and cultural groups.

"The task of an official body is not to teach or to censor, but to give courage, confidence and opportunity. Artists depend on the world they live in and spirit of the age....New work will spring up more abundantly in unexpected quarters and in unforeseen shapes when there is universal opportunity for contact with traditional and contemporary arts in their noblest forms" – Australian Council for the Arts (2009) Arts and creative industries – A historical overview and an Australian conversation.

Development support is required to assist individuals in having the creative space to develop their skills, to support cultural groups and individuals in the development of business skills and planning.

Promotional support to new artists through exhibition opportunities, performance opportunities and networking opportunities is an essential element of support to nurture a community of creativity

Council response : Council makes an annual contribution to the cultural development program of South East Arts to assist in the ongoing support of artists and creative industry groups. Donations and support is also provided to festivals held throughout the Shire.

Through the Bega Valley Regional Gallery, Council runs public programs to provide opportunities for the cultural and broader community.

Council has an ongoing commitment to supporting our Aboriginal cultural development and has a position allocated for the role of Aboriginal Liaison Officer which will be appointed in 2013. South East Arts, who are supported and hosted by Council have also secured funding for the employment of an Aboriginal Cultural Arts position which will also be appointed in 2013.

Key current and future planned activities:

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- Continue to support South East Arts
- Develop a festivals and events policy to support the growing sector

Council role—provider, partner, advocator , facilitator , broker

3. Supporting cultural economic growth

This opportunity area has been developed in response to the Cultural Planning Committees ambition 'By 2017 economic and social baseline data on the influence of creative industries is established and understood'

Arts, creative and cultural activities and the creative industries make a substantial, positive contribution to the economy. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Centre for International Economics gives us a broad, positive picture of the contribution arts, creative activity and the creative industries make to our economy in terms of employment, GDP, expenditure and tourism, but also highlights the potential for growthⁱⁱ.

Cultural tourism is perhaps one of the greatest economic opportunities for the cultural industry within the Bega Valley. Tourism has been a critical trend in Australia for many years, with all levels of government consistently demonstrating a commitment to recognising and extending tourism's value to support the local economy of regions.

Research undertaken through *Tourism Research Australia* indicate that cultural and heritage visitors contribute a significant amount to the Australian economy and spend nearly double the amount spend by other international visitors (\$6,280 compared to \$3,832)ⁱⁱⁱ Based on most recent available data (2007),

Bega Valley attracts 491,000 domestic and 21,000 international visitors per year, and 312,000 domestic day visitors. Based on visitor nights in 2007, the region attracts approximately 6,500 visitors per day.

In 2008/09 11% of all domestic visitors to the South Coast participated in a culture / heritage experience while 74% of international visitors participated in a culture / heritage experience and 27% participated in an Indigenous experience.

Over the next 10 years, it is expected that domestic tourism in Australia will have relatively flat growth of 0.1% per annum in domestic visitor nights and 1.3% in domestic overnight trips^{iv}. Research also shows a forecast growth of 1.7% per annum in cultural / heritage activities in the domestic market to 2020. This growth is the largest average annual growth of all tourism activities^v

In recognition of the potential that the cultural tourism sector holds within the Bega Valley, Sapphire Coast Tourism in partnership with the Australian Government have recently funded and published the *Sapphire Coast Heritage and Tourism Strategy 2011-2015*. The aim of the Sapphire Coast Heritage and Tourism Strategy is to identify key heritage tourism stories that will inspire the 'Experience Seeker' market to visit the region and extend their length of stay and increase spend in the local economy. It is recognised that the region has a wide range of cultural and natural heritage products, experiences and attractions, and this process works towards developing a way to clearly promote and interpret these in a way that is meaningful and accessible to the visitor.

The key deliverables of the Sapphire Coast Heritage Tourism Strategy are:

- A strategy that delivers heritage tourism and leverages the **Australian Coastal Wilderness** brand in order to encourage additional visitor markets to the destination;
- Identification of key heritage tourism experiences that align with the needs of the 'Experience Seekers' target market to extend visitor's length of stay and dispersal across the region
- A suite of strategies to effectively deliver, develop market and manage key experiences that are distinctive for the Sapphire Coast and create a competitive edge for the destination.

In addition to the key deliverable of the Sapphire Coast Heritage Tourism Strategy is the growing potential to harness the energy from the Shires festivals and celebrations.

Festivals within the Shire, and across regional NSW have demonstrated the possibilities in supporting local economies through accommodation, hospitality and add on industries. Many of the Bega Valley festivals are of a high profile, drawing a broad audience. In a recent study of the 2012 Cobargo Folk Festival, *Attitudes and Opinions of the 2012 Cobargo Folk Festival (Aptitude & Insight consulting)* it was identified that two thirds of the festival audience had travelled over 200km to attend the festival, with the total visitor spend at the festival and around the village of Cobargo to be estimated at \$540,000.

Council response

Council has identified the importance of the creative and cultural tourism sector to the economic growth of the Shire. The Business Growth Strategy which was adopted in 2011 identifies that there is scope to see more cultural activity by linking arts, economic development and tourism. The strategy highlights that tourism is the mainstay of the Shire's economy, based on its reputation as a family beach destination, and has performed well through recent market fluctuations. Still strongly seasonal, there is an opportunity to grow the shoulder season. While its foundations are strong, the sector needs more depth and diversity to capture more spending from higher value visitors for more of the year, and for capturing a share of the growth market of experiential tourism.

Key current and future planned activities:

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- Continue to support regional branding – through ongoing commitment to the Australia's Coastal Wilderness and the associated promotion;
- Continue to support Cultural heritage - Current activities include working with our Indigenous communities who are offering to share culture and stories. This has been supported by recent funding for the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council to work on surveying the Bundian Way
- Continue to support and develop cultural heritage tourism through the Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategy. This includes signposting and packaging around iconic stories of Whales, Mountains and Waters

- Continue to support Community events and festivals: The community commitment and effort towards the organisation and delivery of community events and festivals within the Bega Valley is vast. Council also provides a high level of support through the Council donation program, and resourcing of support before, during and after events. This includes traffic control, waste management, publicity support, risk management and insurance support.
- Support the growth and development of public art opportunities - Council is committed to the ongoing support of public art which contributes to the exploration and interpretation of the community's regional identity.
- Develop the framework for a creative industries forum / cluster

Council role –partner , advocator , facilitator , broker

4. Communicating our cultural strengths

This opportunity area has been developed in response to the Cultural Planning Committees ambition ' by 2017 the Bega Valley will be known for being 'brought to life through music' with recognition and celebration of the unique and strong connection to music held throughout the shire'

"Art may be the reflection of reality but music is the hammer that shapes it."

(Bertolt Brecht 1898 – 1956)

The potential of cultural tourism and the economic benefits of the cultural industry have been raised throughout this paper. A key factor in developing this notion is identifying and communicating the cultural strengths of the Shire. This will not only help develop a marketing angle for the Shire, but will enable communities with the Shire to identify and relate to characteristics of our cultural sector.

The Bega Valley Shire holds many musical festivals, performances, gatherings and opportunities. Through music, our community has the opportunity to celebrate and express themselves as individuals. As quoted by Kim Williams (News Ltd CEO)

"Music is fundamental to an expansive world view: it teaches us about beauty and the enduring value of human creativity. Music is good for the soul, it is good for human tolerance, it opens ones' perception, it frees ones' mind, it reinforces our capacity to feel and understand".

For many areas of our community, the Bega Valley is 'Brought to life through music'. This is through the development of skills with opportunities such music camps, choirs, orchestras and bands. Through music opportunities in schools and service clubs and through active involvement with music such as fLiNG. For others it is through having the opportunity to share in the enjoyment of music through festivals and small performances.

For some of the Shires' communities, such as Cobargo and Bermagui, music has provided the platform for economic stimulation through music festivals.

Identifying and communicating the Bega Valley as 'Brought to life through music' is a way to celebrate our communities' activities and recognise the achievements that have been made in this area. It is about taking the opportunity to bring together all aspects of our Shire that resonate with the local community, with visitors and reflecting this. *It's not about being a musician or loving all types of music. It's a chance for our region to say here's a way everyone can have fun, excel and belong. Transform your life, and live more fully and enthusiastically through learning and making music.*^{vi}

Council response

Through the adopted Business Growth Strategy, Council has identified the need for the promotion of an agreed and accepted 'brand' for the Shire as a whole, and the benefits of promoting the Shire as an investment opportunity. Work towards this area has included partnerships with the Australian

Coastal Wilderness brand and Sapphire Coast Tourism, and the development of an 'Investment prospectus' to attract investment into the region.

Key current and future planned activities:

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- Develop a business growth plan that identifies and assists sectors that are focused on reflecting this Shire values including the growth of creative and cultural industries
- Use the regions strong music profile as a pilot to foster community creative development focusing on 'brought to life through music'

Council role – leader , advocator , facilitator ,

5. Identifying and supporting cultural partnerships

This opportunity area has been developed in response to the Cultural Planning Committees ambition 'By 2017 sustainable funding opportunities and foundation fund have been identified and established for cultural activities'

The identifying and formation of cultural partnerships is often the underpinning factor to the success of supporting cultural development and the promotion of cultural activity. Organisations such as South East Arts play a fundamental role in bringing together opportunities and support for cultural industry. Through partnerships, individual artists can explore different elements of their creativity and gain support from others, and have greater access to broader markets. Programs such as the Living Artist Program with Bega Valley Shire Council also provide opportunities for artists to develop their networks and expand their skill base.

Council response: Council recognises the importance of fostering partnerships and the support towards sustainable funding avenues. Council will continue to facilitate opportunities to support the formation of cultural partnerships.

Key current and future planned activities:

By 2017 Council in partnership with agencies and community will:

- Continue to make an annual contribution to the cultural development program of South East Arts to assist in the ongoing support of artists and creative industry groups. This contribution is reviewed annually
- Continue to provide donations and service level support within a policy framework towards cultural festivals and cultural groups within the Shire to assist in their development and activities

Council role – partner, advocator , facilitator , broker

References

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- ⁱ Social Infrastructure Planning Implementation Guidelines N0.5, 2006, *Queensland Government Office of Urban Management & The Coordinator-General.*
- ⁱⁱ National Cultural Policy – Discussion Paper 2011 ; *Australian Government, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government and Sport*
- ⁱⁱⁱ Tourism Research Australia, Snapshots 2009, *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Australia.*
- ^{iv} Tourism Research Australia, Snapshots 2009, *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Australia.*
- ^v . Sapphire Coast Heritage Tourism Strategy, 2011- 2015
- ^{vi} Bega Valley Shire - Cultural Planning Committee , November 2012



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