

# PUBLIC ART

DARWIN

PILOT PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the evolving thinking resulting from the 2015 Public Art Consultancy project.

As listed in the Consultant's brief the aims of the consultancy are:

- *that at least three (3) preferred sites are identified for public art development utilizing the public art reserve monies;*
- *that a presentation to Council is provided on any agreed options for public art reserve monies;*
- *that further recommendations are made to Council, where required to ensure best practise in public art development into the future, and providing input into the development of a five year plan (to be developed by the Coordinator Arts and Cultural Development);*
- *that the consultant reference and work within the governance structure and framework of the public art program as identified in current key policy and planning documents.*

**Site Assessment:** In response to the brief the initial Darwin visit included a number across site visits across the city to assess their suitability as locations for public art commissions. The assessment concluded that there is no shortage of excellent sites, including urban, parkland and coastal, that would be suitable for public art.

This raises the key issue of how to achieve an impact with limited funds. Current public art budgets are relatively small and therefore need to be allocated to projects that can maximise the expenditure. For example, integrating public art into Council infrastructure projects present an opportunity to value add to existing capital works funding, therefore potentially achieving more impact than could be achieved in a stand-alone commission.

The other important consideration regarding sites is where the most impact can be achieved in terms of visibility and community access. There are many attractive sites that widely spaced across the municipality, but likely to make limited impact without significant funding. Ideally, sites should initially be focused on strategic sites and indeed clustered to achieve impact over the short term in order to generate community interest and support for increased funding.

**Best Practice:** In terms of "best practice" in public art commissioning it is important to acknowledge that in addition to the traditional commissioning models, there are evolving trends in public art that tend to add new options for consideration rather than cancelling out previous approaches. Therefore, the practice is getting richer in terms of potential opportunities and community interactivity.

Among the recent trends is the increasing focus on commissioning temporary and ephemeral art for public places. This is in large part as a result of many cities having created a large body of permanent public art and a focus on urban activation and pop-up initiatives. The advantages of temporary artwork is that it brings vitality to a public space and allows for more challenging and experimental work than is possible with an expensive permanent piece. They also allow for low cost projects that are ideal for young and emerging artists to gain experience of undertaking work in public.

A concept that brings together a permanent setting and temporary content is the notion of "Artwork Platforms". Platforms are permanent infrastructure where temporary artwork can be exhibited, for example a wall mounted light box, an art billboard or a data projector. Each of these can be the site for a curated program of changing work, which bring interest and vitality to a city site.

A further and important trend for future opportunities is the growing number of contemporary artists who are creating their work through the medium of digital technology. This is leading to

an increase in public art proposals incorporating new technology, this may be new interactive lighting systems, computer programs and digital screen based work. All of these approaches present Councils with new challenges in terms of management and maintenance practices.

**Policy & Planning Framework:** A review of Council's current planning and policy documents suggests that there is support for the notion of public art and its potential benefits from integration into city planning.

For example:

*The Darwin City Centre Master Plan identifies places where arts, culture and education can establish a presence in the Darwin City Centre. The Design Guidelines suggest the widespread use of artists in streetscape projects, building design and in the making of urban infrastructure. In this way art and culture will be viewed as legitimate components of the economic development of the City as the City is rendered attractive and a living cultural artefact. This will boost tourism.*

Importantly the City of Darwin Arts Plan 2015-2020 not only seeks to develop a strategic approach to the commissioning of contemporary public art, but recognises the need to build local capacity and skills relevant to public art. This includes, generating professional development opportunities for local artists and encouraging debate around the role of public art.

*Arts Plan 2015-202 Theme 1: Public Art*

- 1. To develop a strategic Public Art Program that builds on our cultural heritage through high quality contemporary public art commissions, both permanent and temporary, integrated with master planning and major infrastructure developments.*
- 2. To professionalise the approach to public art commissioning in the city.*

- 3. To promote the cultural histories, strengths and characteristics of the city.*
- 4. To promote a program that is accessible and provides a number of opportunities for local artists.*
- 5. To inform, educate and support interest in public art and facilitate professional development opportunities for local artists, through forums, residencies and workshops.*

In response to these issues it is recommended that in the short term a program of Pilot Projects be undertaken to lay the foundations upon which a long term and sustainable public art program can be built. A program that is about and for Darwin, which reflects the city's culture, its skill base and is appropriate for the challenging tropical and coastal climate.

Based on the outcomes of the proposed Pilot Projects a new Public Art Plan can be developed with the knowledge of lessons learnt from this process.

## PUBLIC ART PILOTS ---

### Public Art Pilots as a test bed for ideas and processes

It is proposed that three different “Pilot” programs be established, involving different approaches to the commission of public art outcomes in the public realm. The concept is based on undertaking a series as pilot projects to test, implement and evaluate public art commission processes to achieve a wide range of outcomes.

Potential projects include both temporary and permanent artworks, they would build the capacity of Darwin’s creative community and generate debate regarding the role and potential of public art to tell local stories and enhance the public realm of Darwin, both in the City and in it’s neighbourhoods.

The three proposed “Pilot” projects are:

1. Public Art Platforms - for changing artworks
2. Integrated art – the direct engagement model
3. Stand Alone Art – the limited competition model

### Anticipated Outcomes:

**Conceptual Diversity:** The proposed “Pilots” each present different conceptual opportunities and therefore, will lead to a wide range of outcomes that can be used for public art advocacy material and to promote discussion.

For example the Public Art Platforms concept allows for an ongoing curated program of temporary artworks that provide the opportunity for artists to address challenging concepts and explore relevant and current local issues.

Conceptually the permanent Stand Alone and Integrated artworks will need to be focused on concepts that are relevant to place and

long time frames. They need to be conceptually accessible to the public and generate sufficient engagement to last the test of time.

**Implementation Strategies:** As a result of delivering the “Pilot Projects” Council will be able to establish evidence based “Best Practice Models” that will inform future implementation processes and support the Public Art Policy.

The models will illustrate the diversity of procurement approaches and demonstrate the benefits gained from each of the commissioning models. The models need to align with the Council’s procurement policies and budgeting structures, especially in relation to the Integrated Art model, where funding will inevitably be structured across a number of financial years.

**Capacity Building:** With each of the “Pilots” there should be a program of professional development and capacity building. Each “Pilot” presents the opportunity to upskill local artists, through mentoring, training sessions and critiquing of proposals and presentations.

Where possible, Council should take advantage of having experienced artists on a project to involve them in running master classes, etc. The initial “Pilot” project briefs should include a requirement for the participating artists to demonstrate a willingness to contribute to the capacity building process. While it is not always realistic to expect a commissioned artist to act as a mentor it is realistic to structure in a time commitment, over and above the commission process, to engage with the local arts community. To achieve this Council needs to build in additional funds into the artist’s budget to pay for these activities.

It has been suggested that there is a lack of experienced local fabricators that artists can engage to fabricate and install their commissions. Therefore, it is important to explore the possibility of undertaking an audit of local fabrication skills, and to establish a register of skilled trades who can assist local artists to create quality outcomes.

This register, could be developed through a call for registrations of interest from fabricators, through researching potential fabricators and undertaking an assessment of those local fabricators who have successfully undertaken previous commissions for artists in Darwin. It is also important to acknowledge that while there are a number of traditional fabrication techniques, such as casting and steel fabrication, many contemporary artists are seeking to exploit new technologies and materials. Therefore, developing a register would also need to look beyond the predictable trade skills.

**Advocacy:** Undertaking, evaluating and recording a diverse range of temporary and permanent works of this nature will provide the Council with a wealth of good stories for advocacy purposes. This should include, stories associated with the experiences of local artists, the impacts on Darwin's creative environment and public interaction. Ideally, a regular program of artist talks, forums and professional development workshops will be structured around the delivery of the "Pilot Projects".

Each Pilot should be documented photographically and through recording the experiences of the artists, architects, engineers and tradespeople involved. This documentation could realistically form the basis for a publication at the completion of the program.

To support this process a set of evaluation criteria checklists should be developed and provided to the project teams.

A budget allowance will need to be made to each "Pilot" or a separate documentation and evaluation budget established for the overall "Pilot Project".

## **PILOT 1** ---

### **PUBLIC ART PLATFORMS**

#### **Concept:**

The concept is to trial the use of “Platform” infrastructure for a changing program of public artwork, such platforms might be wall mounted or free standing light boxes, display cases, Artwork Billboards, LED screens or digital projectors. The great value of installing platform infrastructure is that it provides the opportunity to trial a wide range of artform content for a short period of time and thus building up an expectation of new experiences and public debate about the nature of contemporary art. Due to the temporal nature of a short term changing program artists can be experimental and challenging in the concepts they explore, and the public gets to experience a range of contemporary art practices and conceptual approaches.

#### **6x6 Pilot process:**

It is proposed to structure the opportunity as a 12 month curated program with Guest Curators being appointed for 6 months each to commission 6 artists on display for four weeks. The program would include the following Steps.

- Step 1:** An EOI process would be undertaken calling for submissions from potential Curators, who would be required to submit a Curatorial Rationale proposal that would underpin their program.
- Step 2:** Two Curators would be selected through an evaluation of the submissions and interviews of shortlisted proposals.
- Step 3:** Each of the two selected Curators would be commissioned to develop a selection of six artists.
- Step 4:** Each of the selected artists would be engaged for a fee to develop their artwork proposals under the supervision of the Guest Curator.

**Step 5:** Approved artwork concepts would be produced and made available for the Curator to schedule at the installed “Platform”.

#### **Outcomes:**

The Pilot will deliver a curated program 12 temporary artworks over the first year. The process will provide local artists with an opportunity to create artworks for display in public places, within in a structured program. This will help the artists gain experience, build confidence and extend their conceptual thinking.

The Curators will gain further experience outside of a gallery environment and build their reputation.

The changing program will generate a high level of public exposure to contemporary art, encourage debate and build anticipation of what comes next.

#### **Evaluation:**

At the conclusion of each of the 6x6 projects the outcome should be evaluated by the curator, the artists and an independent art professional.

Each of the artist's work should be documented and over time a publication could be produced with artist statements, images and curators discussion.

#### **Professional Development:**

The process should involve professional development sessions for each of the curated groups in order to build skills, explore the appropriateness to public environments and professional presentation of works.

### Platform Infrastructure:

Ideally a group of wall mounted or free standing light boxes could be installed in a location such as the walkway connecting West Lane and Mitchell Street. The light box option requires an electricity supply, therefore if this is not possible, then the use of Art Billboards would be an alternative.

In the event that the Platform Pilot proves successful other Platforms could be installed around town each year to build up a collection of different Platforms.



### Platform Examples:



City of Yarra: Artwork billboard



City of Knox: Artwork Light Box

## **PILOT 2** ---

### **INTEGRATED ART: DIRECT ENGAGEMENT MODEL**

#### **Concept:**

This "Pilot" is aimed at trialling a collaborative approach of artists achieving Art Integration into Council infrastructure projects. To achieve this aim, it is proposed that an artist be engaged to work with the design team on the Parap swimming pool redevelopment project.

#### **Process:**

In order to achieve true integration of the artist's concepts it is important that the artist is able to collaborate with the design team throughout the process. Therefore, it requires a direct engagement model in order that one artist be selected and appointed as a member of the design team.

In order to be both transparent and to encourage artists to consider involvement in the Council's public art program, it is proposed that an EOI process be used to select a preferred artist.

The process would include, but not be limited to, the following steps:

- Step 1:** An EOI package would be prepared that outlines the skill base being sought, the planned collaborative process and a conceptual framework to inform the artist's thinking about conceptual opportunities. The conceptual framework would focus on the artistic interpretation of the community history, assuming that is the agreed approach. Each EOI respondent would be asked to demonstrate how their art practice could respond to that approach.
- Step 2:** From the EOIs a shortlist of 3 artists would be selected for consideration. These shortlisted artists would be provided with collected community history research and

asked, for a small fee, to present an initial conceptual response.

- Step 3:** The 3 shortlisted artists would be invited to attend an interview with the public art officer and relevant design team representatives.
- Step 4:** The outcome of the interviews would be the identification of a preferred artist for direct engagement.
- Step 5:** The first stage of the commission would include the artist working collaboratively with the design team to undertake an analysis of the site/project and explore the opportunities for integration.
- Step 6:** In collaboration with the design team the artist will develop initial integrated concepts and refine as required.
- Step 7:** Once an agreed concept has been approved the artist will either be responsible for making or overseeing the making of the actual integrated artwork.

A program would need to be established that identifies the scope of work required, including the number of potential team meetings and budget available for art outcomes over and above the overall building construction budget.

#### **Outcomes:**

Integrating artwork through a collaborative process may result in not only a specific piece of integrated art, but also artistic influences on the design of the facility.

Integrating artwork may also lead to a value adding opportunity where the art budget contributes to costs over and above identified construction costs. For example, an artwork integrated into glazing or façade materials will utilise the existing material budget and the art budget only has to cover the cost of the intervention and additional handling costs.



## **Evaluation:**

During the process evaluation could be undertaken to identify:

1. The effectiveness of the EOI process in terms of scope and capability of submitting artists
2. The cost effectiveness of the EOI process
3. The quality of preferred artist's submission and interviews
4. Lessons learned that can be applied to future selection processes for integrated projects

At the completion of the project the evaluation would consider the strengths and weakness of the collaborative process and artwork outcomes.

## **Professional Development:**

This Pilot will provide opportunities for skill development and understanding of integration processes by both the artists and project team members involved.

Artist: all artists involved in the EOI, interview and final collaboration will have a range of opportunities to enhance their professional skills.

Council team: the process will provide opportunities for Council's infrastructure and planning team to work with artists in a structured and collaborative environment.

## **PILOT 3**

### **STAND ALONE ART: LIMITED COMPETITION MODEL**

#### **Concept:**

The concept is to develop a capacity building program around two public art projects for the fairly traditional stand-alone artwork model. The difference will be around the professional development program that drives the process.

It is proposed that two different scale artworks be commissioned:

**Opportunity 1:** A significant scale artwork with a budget in the order of \$150k to be commissioned for a park location, such as along the Bicentennial Park cycle and walking path. Indeed, this could be the first in an ongoing sculpture walk program.

**Opportunity 2:** A smaller, lower budget commission in the order of \$60k to \$80k and be located in a location such as the park area on the corner of Daly and Smith Streets, adjacent to the developing art gallery precinct.

#### **Process:**

In order to make these projects important "Pilots" the focus should be on capacity building of local artists and fabricators.

The proposed program for the two opportunities, is as follows:

#### **Opportunity 1:**

- A nationally advertised registration of interest for professional artists who have the required conceptual and technical skills and are willing to also contribute to a mentoring process, including workshops on concept development, presentation skills and fabrication techniques.
- A shortlist of three artists would be paid a fee to prepare a concept in response to the brief, each of the shortlisted artists would be required to contribute to the workshop program.

- The preferred artist would be selected from the three shortlisted submissions and commission undertaken.

#### **Opportunity 2:**

- The small scale project is intended as a low risk opportunity for young and emerging local artists to gain skills and potentially gain a commission.
- The opportunity to be considered for the commission and to be part of the PD program would be advertised locally and submissions would be invited.
- Once again three artists would be shortlisted and paid a fee to develop concepts from which a preferred concept would be selected.

#### **Outcomes:**

Importantly the outcomes will be physical, practical and intellectual and as such will make a significant contribution to the local skill base. Thereby, providing an important foundation for future commissions involving local artists.

From a physical perspective, the Pilot will deliver two new permanent artworks to the Council's collection and demonstrate best practice commissioning processes.

From a practical perspective, a group of local artists will be exposed to a high level of public art experience and gain the opportunity to develop ideas and artwork in a safe and supportive environment.

From an intellectual perspective, the participating artists will be conceptually challenged and exposed to peer review.

#### **Evaluation:**

As with the other “Pilots” evaluation and recording of outcomes would be undertaken at key points throughout the process of each opportunity.

### **Professional Development:**

These Pilot projects will provide an invaluable opportunity to structure a professional development process for a number of selected local artists that should make a significant contribution to the public art careers.

#### **Opportunity 1:**

PD workshops could be scheduled as the process proceeds and include:

- A workshop focused on responding to expressions of interest and building submission and presentation skills
- Each of the three shortlisted artists could be required to make a presentation of their concept proposal for a PD session
- The commissioned artist would also be required to contribute to a workshop during the fabrication or following installation

#### **Opportunity 2:**

- The two opportunities would be staged in order that the participating artists in opportunity 2 would be able to apply the knowledge gained from the Opportunity 1 PD workshops