

urbanrenewal - Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

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Subject: Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback on the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.

I wish to comment on the cultural plans which have been identified as a focus in the draft strategy, particularly for the east-end of Newcastle City.

Without travelling too far, it can be recognised that in order to promote a thriving arts culture, it is imperative that live performance and exhibition venues attribute a significant visual impact on the city. Such examples exist in the Sydney Opera House, Wharf Theatre and the numerous galleries and institutions that operate from Sydney's most prominent locations. This serves not only as an attraction for tourism but promotes a liveable city in which people want to live and invest. It is pleasing to see that there has been some provision, albeit minimal, to consider housing of the arts in venues such as The Victoria Theatre and a re-developed Wheeler Place in the Draft Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.

My comment on your renewal strategy is this: it is important that a cultural masterplan is established for our city. This plan must be made with an accurate understanding of the current arts industry landscape and ensure that future plans precisely meet needs identified to support thriving arts businesses. Practising creative artists must be heavily represented in this process.

The NSW Creative Industries Fundamentals publication outlines that government support is critical to sustaining much of the performing arts;

“Local and state governments play a key role in provision of venues for the performing arts... Much of the sector has struggled in recent years with subdued revenue growth, falls in attendances, and falls in the overall number of productions. A more positive future will require securing new funding sources and developing new audiences (especially outside of the baby boomer demographic). A lack of funding prevents smaller performing arts companies progressing to the next stage of development and more generally impedes experimentation, encouraging the repeated presentation of proven international hits (such as Phantom of the Opera), rather than more home-grown creative productions.”

NSW Creative Industries Fundamentals
 Department of State and Regional Development. Pg 51

I encourage your government departments and all key stakeholders of your Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy to consult with entities such as the Newcastle Performing Arts Taskforce when planning and implementing the new vision for our city.

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