

New Creative Art Space

Summary of Community Engagement August – October 2017

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1. Executive Summary

In June 2017 the Administrator of Northern Beaches Council approved the allocation of funds to various projects from the Merger Savings Fund. This fund was set up to identify and capture ongoing savings made as a direct result of the merger of the three previous northern beaches councils. One of these projects was the establishment of a Creative Art Space at the northern end of the peninsula with an allocation of one million dollars in the 2017/18 Financial Year. (See below for full Recommendation)

As a result a Project Team was initiated and a Community Engagement Strategy implemented to assess the needs of the community and advise on the services and programs needed, desired location, service design and operational modelling of the new project.

The first phase of the public engagement ran from August to October 2017 and included;

- Submissions on Council's 'Your Say' website page
- Face to Face engagement at three pop up stalls at community events (Mona Vale, Warriewood, North Curl Curl)
- A Cultural Space Workshop
- Email and telephone submissions
- Northern Beaches Council Cultural Staff engagement
- EOI for Advisory Group

Response to the public engagement was very good with over 550 responses.

Phase one consultation targeted a high level of conceptual ideas and 'Blue Sky Thinking' around what such an art space might be or do. It explored what should be part of a new art space; the creative communities desires/recommendations; suburb/locality character; and the communities interest in an additional cultural venue.

The engagement revealed great enthusiasm about the Creative Art Space Project. The broad community demonstrated a keen appetite for increased cultural access and programming. The arts community articulated a strong desire to come together to network, create and present their creative produce. Artists at the northern end of the peninsula acknowledged the lack of dedicated arts space and opportunities but crediting the area with a high interest in the arts and creative sector.

Broad themes emerged - with equal desire for visual arts, low-key music, performance spaces and workshops/maker-spaces - community members were clear about their desire that the space be activated with programs, located centrally, and enhanced with complimentary uses (café, green space). There were strong sentiments about creating a space which fostered connection, inclusion and happiness, where people of different ages and abilities could "see and interact with the developing art scene on the Northern Beaches".

Council recognises that the new cultural space cannot satisfy all cultural wants. However, engagement findings will be embedded in Council's ongoing planning processes, including cultural planning, so that other areas, projects or ideas can be further explored in the future.

ITEM NO. 5.4 - 27 JUNE 2017

ADMINISTRATOR'S MINUTE NO 09/2017 - ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS FUNDED FROM MERGER SAVINGS FUND. RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

A. Allocate funds from the Merger Savings Fund to the following programs and projects:

a. **Arts and Cultural Program:**

- i. Creative Art Space at the northern end of the Northern Beaches local government area (e.g. Avalon or Newport) - \$1 million in 2017/18
- ii. Public Art in key locations (e.g. coastal walkway) with commissions from local artists where possible - \$500,000 per year for four years commencing in 2017/18

2. Engagement Overview

Phase 1 Engagement Activities

'Your Say' Community Engagement Web Page

www.yoursay.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/culturalspace featured:

- Online survey
- Registration for 19 September community workshop
- EOI for Advisory Group
- Key reports, news, Terms of Reference for Advisory Group, policy documents, FAQ

Pop Up Engagement:

- 24 August - Northern Beaches Art Prize, North Curl Curl pop up stall
- 27 August - Taste of the Beaches, Mona Vale pop up engagement
- 1 September - Beaches Markets, Warriewood pop up engagement

Community Workshop

- 19 September at Newport Community Cent with 44 participants

Northern Beaches Council Cultural Staff:

- Council Cultural Staff Consultation; Glen Street Theatre, Manly Art Gallery & Museum and Arts Development Staff.

Email, telephone submissions

Participation Statistics

- 1000 website hits
- 183 document downloads from website (Council reports, policy documents, Terms of Reference)
- 146 online surveys completed
- 325 conversations at pop-up events
- 44 workshop participants
- 38 Advisory Group applications
- Hundreds of free form submissions (post-it notes, pictures, emails etc.)

3. Engagement Results and Details

a. Your Say' Community Engagement Web Page

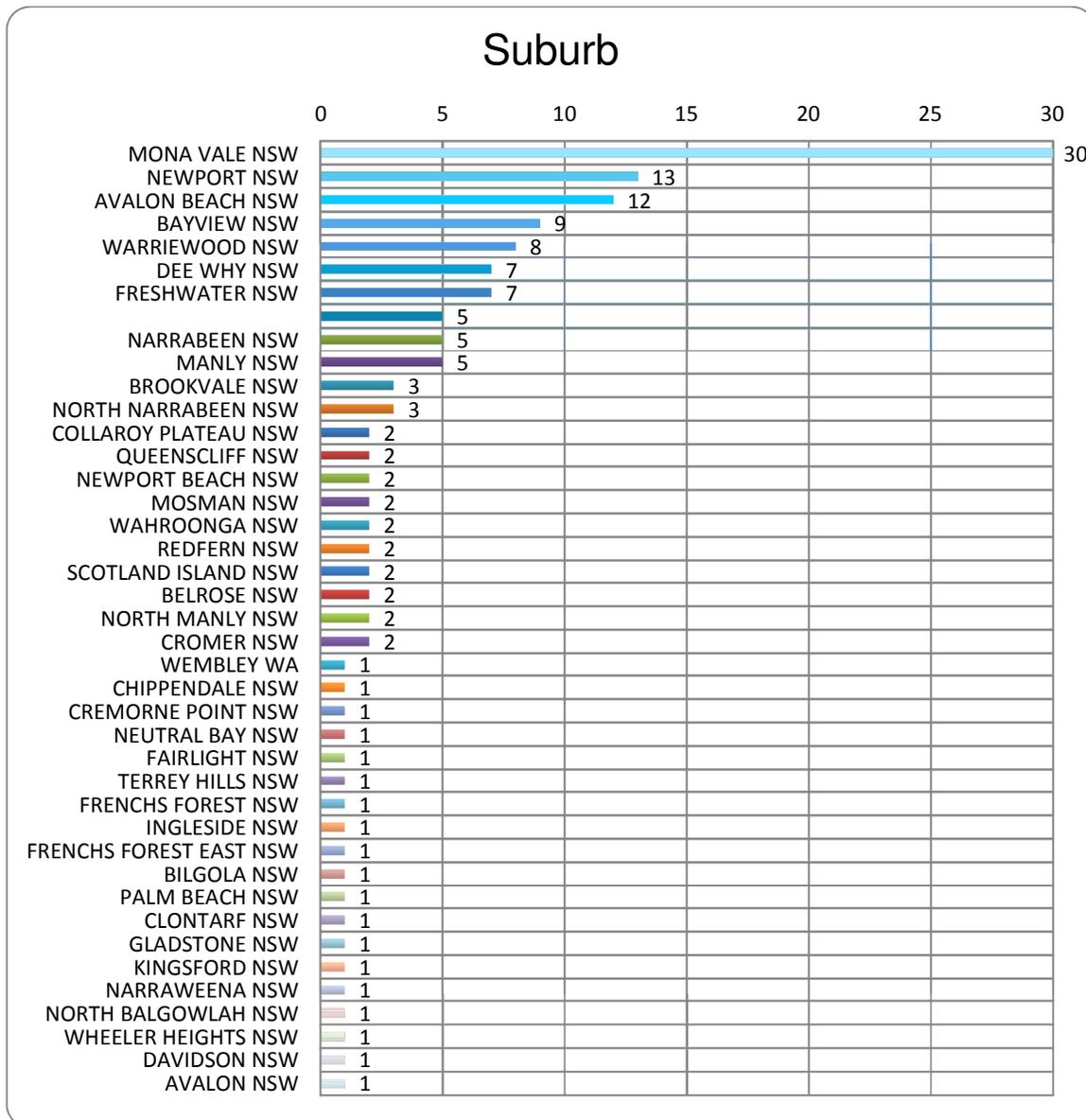
Online survey engagement sought to uncover:

- What should be part of the new cultural space?
- Audience needs/creative practitioners' needs

Survey Results

146 submissions were received through both online (Your Say) and paper submissions.

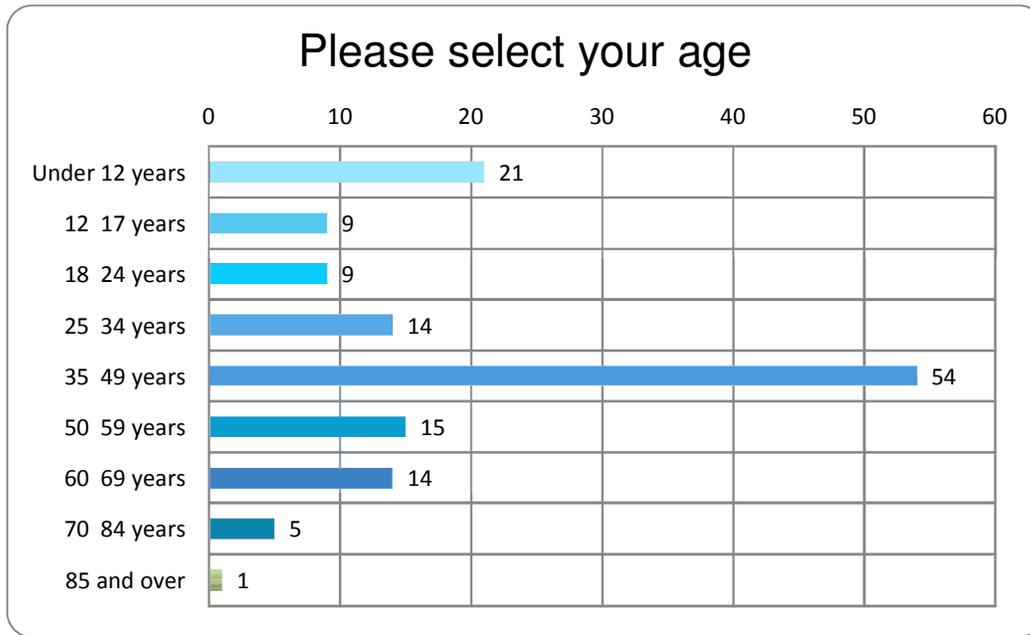
Participation by Suburb



The vast majority of participants (83) were from the northern part of the Northern Beaches Council LGA, with other participants spread throughout the peninsula, with only 11 not coming from the northern beaches region.

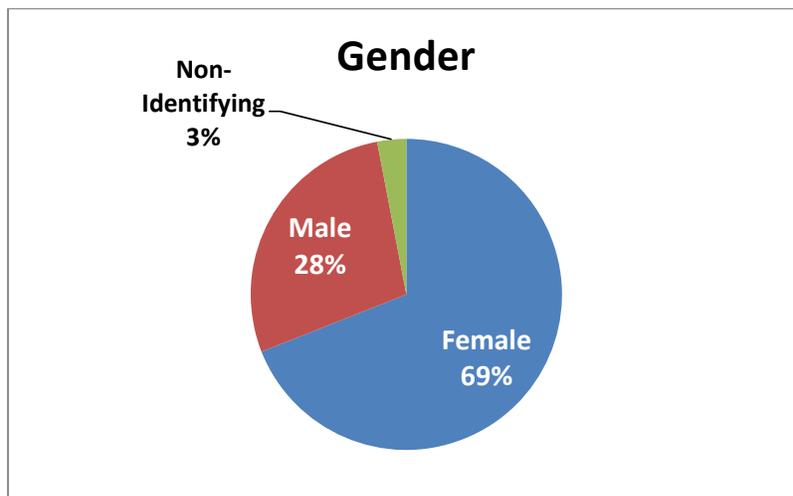
Participation by age

Note: A number of surveys were submitted at the Taste of the Beaches food and wine festival at Mona Vale. As an incentive, customers were given a free ice-cream for completing a survey. For this reason there was a high take-up rate of children and parents of young children.



Participation by gender

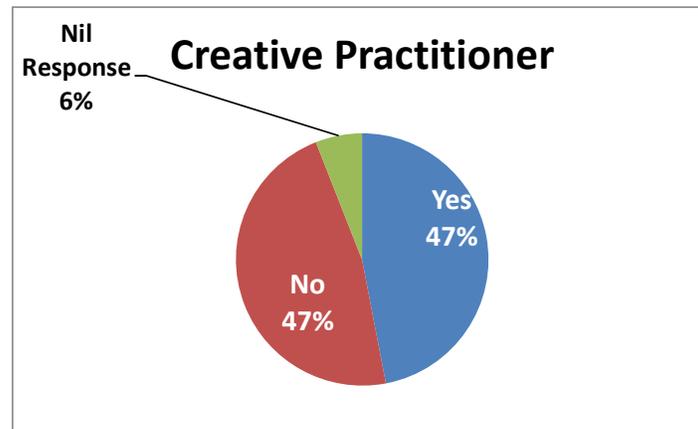
- Female - 101 (69%)
- Male - 41 (28%)
- Non-Identifying - 6 (3%)



Participation by creative practitioner

Are you a maker/designer/performer/creative type?

- No 69 (47%)
- Yes 69 (47%)
- Nil Response 8 (6%)



Those that identified as creative cited a broad range of practises, including dancing, sculpting, fashion design, content generation, arts journalism, visual arts, musicians, knitters etc.

Responses by question

As a practitioner do you have any feedback you would like to give about the new cultural space?

The results were evenly spread over a wide variety of themes. These included; visual arts, arts development/education, built form and place considerations, affordability, Aboriginal culture, Maori culture, inclusiveness, specific locations (Newport, Dunbar Park, Avalon).

What would you like to see included in the cultural space?

- 14% - performance/music space
- 12.5% - Target audience (children, youth, seniors)
- 12% - a multi-purpose (offering across more than one creative genre)% performance space
- 10% - Programming (wanted events, workshops and activities)
- 9% - Visual arts
- 8% - Aboriginal and multi-cultural (places for cultural exchange, learning and understanding)
- 5% - place management (complimentary uses, high amenity, good pedestrian access)
- 5% - Built form concerns (indoor/outdoor flow, adaptable space)
- 4% - Recreational (sport, adventure)
- 3% - Play/fun
- 2% - film/outdoor cinema

(15% of responses were one-off suggestions that did not fall into these classifications)

What do you think we can offer audiences/consumers with our New Cultural Space?

- 19% - Social connection (a place to connect, a place to volunteer)
- 19% - Arts access (performance, music, visual arts)
- 14% - Target audiences (children, young people, seniors, intergenerational)
- 11% - Entertainment (entertainment, markets)
- 9% - Cultural literacy (growth, learning, exchange and understanding that comes with access to arts and culture)
- 5% - Detailed visions for building opportunities for local artists, craftspeople, musicians
- 4% - Positive mood
- 4% - Cultural access (Aboriginal culture, multi-cultural learning/understanding/keeping places)
- 2% - affordable maker space
- 2% - Points of difference from other cultural offerings
- 2% - Programming

(6% of responses were one-off suggestions that did not fall into these classifications)

b. Pop Up Engagement Findings

Pop up Stalls – the surveys completed at these events are reported in the Survey Results section. In addition to the survey there was also the opportunity for conversations and free form input at these sessions.

Captured in conversation:

- A huge level of enthusiasm for a new cultural space
- Delight that Council had made a financial contribution
- An appetite to discuss what could be achieved with the funding
- A strong sympathy for cultural infrastructure in the northern part of the Northern Beaches

Free form suggestions (84):

Themes:

Function and feel of the space

- 35% Artform [performance, music, theatre, visual arts and outdoor cinema]
- 14% Tools [technological offerings and kilns were most popular]
- 10% Programming [workshops, programs]
- 10% Place considerations [high access, activation, precinct]

Out of scope

21% “It’s a jungle out there” [flying foxes, lollies, ice creams, tigers etc.]

Target audience

7% referred to a particular target audience – particularly children and young people

c. Community Workshop

The workshop held in Newport Community Centre was included in the first phase of engagement to accommodate the creative community’s strong desire to contribute to the vision for a space. The workshop booked out (44 attendees) and used a range of engagement strategies.

The aim was to uncover:

- ***What should be part of the new cultural space?***
- ***End-user relationship***
- ***Audience needs/creative practitioners’ needs***
- ***Place character – what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are present in localities at the northern end of the Northern Beaches?***
-

ACTIVITY: Inspiration Gallery

This ice-breaking activity was designed to get participants talking about their vision for the space.



Findings:

A very even spread of motivations, represented in large below:

| Mood | Building | Target audience | Function | Place requirements |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Community | Indoor/outdoor | Youth | Great artworks | Activates |
| Welcome | Respects and reflects nature | Families | Programming | High pedestrian access |
| Happy | Adaptable – not static | Artists | | True to the character of the north |
| | | Intergenerational | | Complimentary uses – coffee! |

ACTIVITY: “I love the new cultural space because...”

Participants provided 72 responses describing their relationship with the new cultural space, e.g.:

- It's mine, it's local.
- It's a place to meet people and make connections
- No one owns it, everyone feels like they do
- It's for learning and not just looking
- It is a place where I can see and interact with the developing art scene on the Northern Beaches

ACTIVITY: Your Pitch

Working in four groups, participants designed and presented their models for a new cultural space in the north.

String of Pearls

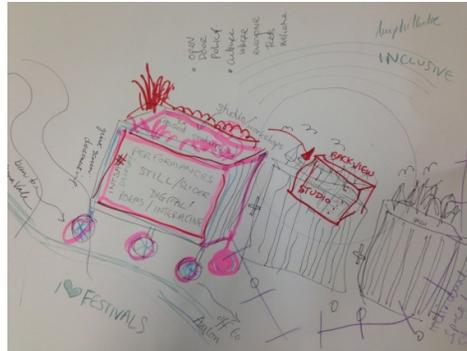
A series of small venues in the centre of each town/village (Avalon, Newport, Mona Vale), with an emphasis on shop fronts, high visibility and commercial outcomes



Repurposed Shipping Container

A series of shipping containers that are repurposed so their interior and exterior are activated. The internal space would be for studio/making spaces, the outside activated with digital offerings (films, artworks, images).

The vision was for it to move between villages – but particularly to activate village greens.



Big Ticket

The big ticket vision was for a regional/Sydney wide visual arts offering. Features: exhibition hall, studios, outdoor amphitheatre, multi-level, graffiti wall.



Strong themes/concerns:

- Inside outside – a desire for flow between indoor and outdoor spaces
- Programming – attracting audiences, users, attendees
- Art forms - Visual arts, performance (music, theatre, open mike, chilled) and digital (lights, art, sound, film, stills)
- Active and passive uses – there was a desire for to accommodate “sometimes” functions [festivals, performance, workshops] alongside “regular” functions [studios, workshops, retail]



ACTIVITY: SWOT Analysis

Participants analysed possible geographical areas and their suitability for a new cultural venue.

Avalon and Mona Vale were seen as the most logical options, but the group also presented alternatives. Summaries included below.

Avalon

| | |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>Established arts community</p> <p>Strong history of arts programming (exhibitions, public art, music)</p> <p>Strong relationships between business and arts communities</p> <p>A destination – particularly in summer, daytime</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Geographically remote</p> <p>Parking issues</p> <p>Limited population/audience pool</p> <p>Limited night-life</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>People who will attend – arts consumers</p> <p>Existing sites – cinema, bowling green, recreation centre</p> <p>Lots of artists</p> <p>Lots of tourists</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>Commercial viability (history of galleries coming and going)</p> <p>Already a variety of arts offerings – cannibalising?</p> <p>Expense</p> |

Mona Vale

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>Geographically strong – north-south access to Northern beaches, connects west to St Ives</p> <p>Commercial hub</p> <p>Good transport – cars, buses, B-Line</p> <p>Busy – passing traffic, schools, pedestrians</p> <p>Urban parks and space</p> <p>School communities</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Not known as an arts hub</p> <p>Disparate community (residents vs workers)</p> <p>Perception of lack of parking</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Growing population</p> <p>Existing council assets in town centre</p> <p>Arts-friendly industrial area (Darley Street and surrounds)</p> <p>Partnerships with Mona Vale Public School performance space</p> <p>Partnerships with young people and their families – skate community, school communities</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>Perception “not north enough”</p> <p>Reputation</p> <p>Busyness</p> <p>Congestion</p> |

Newport

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|--|--|
| <p>Newport Sculpture Trail (Trailblazers) annual program</p> <p>Existing café/dining culture</p> <p>On the main transport corridor</p> | <p>Physicality of Newport – linear development (drive through rather than a village)</p> <p>Lack of “cultural heart”</p> |
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| <p>Linking recreation centre to high street</p> <p>Laneways ripe for activation</p> | <p>Where does Newport sit on the cultural map?</p> <p>Some community reluctance to change</p> |

Alternatives

| Location/site | Notes |
|---|--|
| Pasadena, Church Point | <p>A beautiful, iconic Council owned site</p> <p>Problematic in terms of transport, parking and pedestrian access</p> |
| Narrabeen Scout Hall | <p>A scout hall with an attractive outlook over Narrabeen Lake.</p> <p>Problematic in terms of: not fulfilling the Administrator’s brief (not north), too close to Tramshed, and potentially a threat to existing models such as the Creative Space and Eramboo</p> |
| Warriewood – suburb | <p>Potential to build on the trendy, grungy character of the industrial area, and repurpose existing buildings for creative outcomes.</p> <p>While recognising the “community feel” might not be strong in Warriewood industrial area, there’s a spark for incubator models.</p> |
| Mobile creative barge | <p>Potential to capitalise upon the Northern Beaches’ unique natural assets and use waterways for a mobile performance stage.</p> <p>There are many logistical and permissibility challenges to navigate.</p> |
| Mona Vale Golf Club | <p>A parcel of land that sits alongside other recreational offerings (skate park, play fields, bowling).</p> |
| A series of locations across Northern Beaches – shopfronts, industrial spaces | <p>Rather than investing in one large venue, it was raised coordinating a number of small venues could be considered. Retail exposure for artists, economic development in town centres, and responding to local character were identified advantages.</p> |

ACTIVITY: Free Form Suggestions (37)

The feedback in free-form suggestions aligned with the findings of the “Inspiration Gallery Activity” (see above). Participants’ feedback was largely around:

- Built Form – Environmentally sustainable, indoor/outdoor flow
- Operational Concerns – Affordable, supported by volunteers
- The need for Cultural Planning, fostering a positive and welcoming mood, and including different target groups (particularly different ages).

The largest number of comments related to function. See below:

- FUNCTION – Model, Programming
- Digital age! Choice!
- Gallery, public interactive, diversity, all artists (visual, sculpture, public art, performance)
- Gallery - accessible, diversity of art forms, visual arts space, teaching space, size (bigger than the Creative Space), design and adaptation, creating and reusing
- Contemporary art creation
- Live music
- Bonsai
- Events too
- Visual/teaching space for visual art.
- Digital concepts, lighting (trees) art exhibition and workshops.
- Community involvement must involve (1) educators (2)mentors
- Cultural space as a point of connection: affordable, exhibition space
- Networking opportunities

d. Northern Beaches Council Cultural Staff Engagement

Staff from Transformation, Arts and Cultural Development, Manly Art Gallery & Museum and Glen Street Theatre participated in a meeting about the new Creative Arts Space. They were briefed on engagement process and findings, and encouraged to identify possibilities for the Space.

ACTIVITY: PITCH YOUR MODEL

The exercise that staff undertook was mapping potential models. The proposals were for:

Themes/models:

- Town centre/high street creative incubator and shopfront
- Mona Vale – retail space, accessible workshop for public to visit/view, artisan focus start-ups. This model would capitalise on Mona Vale’s strength as a high street
- An amazing projection/performance based space, with capacity to screen films, projection... In Avalon because the town centre is sympathetic, community is connected, there is a strong history of film festivals, open mike nights and intimate scale music events. Day-time usage would include design studio/showroom and meeting/learning room.
- A cultural precinct around Dunbar Park, Avalon. This precinct would include the following: Outdoor Cinema (on bowling green), Making space (on Avalon Annex site), shopfront (in Avalon Recreation Centre), and Dunbar Park activated by community/council programs
- Some kind of cultural space in Mona Vale that compliments (or even is co-located) with the proposed Mona Vale Performance Space or other council assets (Library, Community Hall)
- The end result may not just be one ‘centre’ but a conglomerate of facilities, programming, activities and services.

Operational and development concerns:

- Local community accept the fact that Council can't do everything.
- Trial it!! Test and build the case study/evidence based.
- Connected existing cultural programming across the beaches. 3 HSC exhibitions. Manly Arts Festival spreading up to Palm Beach. MAG&M utilising the 2 x Creative Spaces
- What are we doing now that can be extended to wider geographic areas?
- The need for broader Arts & Cultural Strategic Planning to drive and direct future projects

4. EOI for Advisory Group

In addition to gathering information and community input in the Phase 1 Engagement process, Expressions of Interest were sought for participation in an ongoing Advisory Group on a new northern Creative Art Space.

Initially it was planned to have a selection process, however on receiving a large number of high quality applications it was viewed that we did not want to lose any of the offered expertise and the format and consultative process was adapted to work with a larger group of 38 participants.