"... it is important that Melbourne’s cultural activities are built on local experience, that they celebrate our multicultural diversity, and that they enjoy the support and participation of the local community." City Plan
Creating a Culturally Vital City

The City of Melbourne's new Cultural Policy, launched in March 1999, is a blueprint for Council's commitment to arts and cultural development in Melbourne over the next five years. This document provides a summary of the Cultural Policy for your information. A full copy of the Policy can be obtained by contacting the City of Melbourne on its hotline 03 9658 9658 or fax 03 9658 8436.

The City of Melbourne believes in the importance of culture in ensuring the vitality and prosperity of city life. Not only does the strength of a city's cultural environment provide opportunities for its residents and visitors to reflect, explore, learn and play; culture plays an important role in the economic vitality of the city. There are many dimensions to culture and cultural development and the arts are at its core and fundamental to its full and free expression. The arts may be entertaining and commercially successful, but can also explore, reflect, critique and sometimes challenge society. A vibrant, and independent arts sector, stimulating imagination and critical thinking about who we are, where we've been and where we are headed is an essential ingredient in the Council's vision for the future. The Council must develop its cultural role and promote its achievements in order to secure its national and international reputation as a city of innovation, cultural diversity and artistic excellence - a City for the Arts.
"Melbourne will be recognised as a forward-thinking city, with a balance of tradition, innovation and enterprise and diverse cultural influences. Its reputation as a City for the Arts will flourish and the city will continue to be recognised as an excellent place to live, visit, work and prosper."

**Cultural Policy**

**New Vision**

The City of Melbourne will stimulate, support and promote contemporary arts and cultural activities that:

- Demonstrate artistic excellence and innovation
- Reflect Melbourne's diverse and distinctive culture
- Maximize community involvement

**Principles**

The following principles underpin the City's new Cultural Policy:

- Expression of the city's indigenous culture is fundamental to the full expression of Melbourne's cultural life
- Active and creative participation in the city's artistic and cultural life is fundamental to the development of our society
- Melbourne's multicultural community is one of its greatest assets
- The city's artists and arts organizations promote the distinctiveness of Melbourne's culture and identity

- An independent arts sector is essential to the integrity of the artistic process and to the quality and authenticity of its products
- A vigorous and viable artistic and cultural life is important to Melbourne's continuing economic and social development and our positioning as a significant partner in the Asia-Pacific region
- Discourse and debate on the cultural life of the City must be encouraged and promoted

**Strengthening our City for the Arts**

The City of Melbourne’s Cultural Development Branch, in collaboration with the Parks and Recreation, Street Activities and Urban Design Branches will work to promote the culture and vitality of the city. In this capacity the City will aim to:

**Leadership**

- Consolidate support for contemporary arts and community cultural development through major City events such as Moomba, and the inaugural Melbourne International Biennial
- Develop Federation Square as a centre for cutting-edge new media, Australian visual arts and other arts organizations and activities
- Work across the City to ensure effective integration of cultural objectives and priorities in programs with a cultural dimension
- Publish and advocate the outcomes of work in arts and cultural activities research, innovations in public art and urban design
- Monitor the effectiveness of the City's arts and cultural development activities in part against the objectives and benchmarks set down in City Plan
- Continue to monitor Melbourne's cultural development achievements against those of key cities with international reputations for quality arts and cultural activity
- Provide high level advice on the planning and management of activities and events to celebrate the new millennium and the centenary of Federation
- Raise the status of artists in the Australian community

**Arts Grants**

- Increase support for contemporary arts practice by encouraging young and emerging artists and collaboration between art forms
- Increase support for the development and presentation of works for young audiences
- Strengthen innovation through all funding programs by emphasising the City's commitment to legitimate risk-taking and developing new ideas and forward-looking arts activities
- Ensure transparency, accountability and probity in assessing funding proposals
- Clarify and specify funding assessment criteria in line with new direction towards innovation
- Restructure the cultural support program to establish discrete grant programs for indigenous arts; arts festivals; community festivals; partnerships; and use of City venues and street services
- Improve access to the Partnership Program by advertising grants available in line with other grant programs

**Public Art**

- Expand the public art program by improving opportunities for artists to create and exhibit new work through new city building developments
- Increase the range and quality of city venues for arts activities by seeking imaginative uses for both established and temporary sites in indoor and outdoor environments

**Community Development**

- Improve opportunities for all sections of the community to participate actively in arts and cultural activities
- Ensure community cultural development issues and strategies are integrated into local area planning processes according to the City Plan framework
- Build a broader and more productive dialogue between artists, producers, presenters and critics towards the development of new ideas and partnerships

**Heritage**

- Conserve, protect and promote the city's heritage assets in line with the City's Urban Art and Heritage policies
- Improve management of the city's valuable heritage assets (notably the Melbourne Town Hall art collection and the Melbourne Outdoor Sculpture Museum), and increase their accessibility to Melbourne's residents and visitors through innovative public display
Promoting Melbourne’s Cultural Strengths

The City of Melbourne will continue to vigorously promote the city’s cultural assets and the strengths of its cultural life, particularly on the world stage. Promotional activities will be supported by strategic market research building on the success of the international City for the Arts campaign established by the City in 1996. The Cultural Development Branch will participate in and support national and international arts industry and market development activities.

A promotion campaign will be established to increase awareness of the City of Melbourne’s cultural development programs among artists of non-English speaking background and allied organisations. Improved communication and interaction between these communities and the City will help develop appropriate ways to reflect and celebrate cultural diversity in the Melbourne’s cultural life.

Protecting our Heritage

Protecting, enhancing and promoting the city’s heritage continues to be a major goal. A key responsibility is conserving and maintaining the city’s heritage buildings, outdoor sculptures and the Town Hall historical art collection. These will continue to be vigorously promoted through Heritage Precinct Walks, exhibitions, interpretive information and strategic joint ventures developed with the Heritage Festival and the City’s Heritage Committee. A plan for exhibiting the historical art collection will be developed for the Councils consideration by 2000.

International Development

To ensure Melbourne continues to be recognised as a City for the Arts, especially in the Asia Pacific region, an international development strategy to increase the audience base and market share of Melbourne’s arts organisations and cultural products will be prepared. This will also highlight the city’s many cultural strengths, internationally. The strategy will support industry development through promotion, market research and expansion initiatives. The targets for this work will be the Asian cities identified as priorities in the City’s business development activities (those involved in Business Partnership Cities Network), sister cities as well as European and American locations which are recognised as global centres for artistic excellence and exchange. The Cultural Development Branch will also support artist and cultural exchange projects with key cities around the world.

Community Development

In addition to supporting community-based cultural activities through the Artists Grants and Community Festivals programs, the Cultural Development Branch will work with other divisions of Council towards locally owned programs for Cultural Development. City Plan is a core vehicle for effectively integrating cultural considerations in the planning process for local communities and their neighbourhoods. The North West 2010 project, for example, involved extensive community consultation and the skills of cultural planners and artists. Managing and developing the Moomba Festival is also a key strategy in this area. Unlike other Melbourne festivals, Moomba has unique community development and participation objectives. The Cultural Development Branch will develop strategies to increase young people’s participation in the cultural life of the city as presenters and audiences. The success of the Young Artist Award, established by the City of Melbourne in 1997, will be used as foundation for other youth arts activities and partnerships.

Advisory Bodies

Cultural Development Advisory Board

In planning and delivering cultural development programs to achieve the above, the City relies on the advice of artists and arts managers with a record of achievement across a range of art forms. The Cultural Development Advisory Board (CDAB) is the principal consultative body advising the City on Melbourne’s cultural vitality. The Board, which meets bi-monthly, provides information and advice to City of Melbourne staff about developments within the arts sector to ensure its activities keep pace with the evolving needs and capacities of the cultural industry and its audiences.

Cultural Development Assessment Panel

A sub-committee of the Cultural Development Advisory Board is convened annually to assess grants applications from arts and community organisations against published criteria. The Board occasionally co-opts other experienced arts sector representatives onto its Grants Assessment Panel to ensure that all art forms are suitably represented.

Indigenous Arts Panel

The City will establish an Indigenous Arts Advisory Panel, as a sub-committee of the Cultural Development Advisory Board. The role of this Panel is to guide the development of the City’s Indigenous Arts Program and to ensure effective review of arts grants applications by Indigenous artists and organisations. Self-determination is the core principle upon which the Indigenous Arts Program and Panel is established, consistent with the City’s commitment to aboriginal reconciliation.

Public Art and Acquisitions Committee

The Public Art and Acquisitions Committee advises on public art works to be commissioned and sited in the city. The Committee considers site-specific proposals in relation to broader construction initiatives. The Committee receives proposals both from within the City itself and from external bodies and artists.

Percent for Art

The City’s Per Cent for Art Policy enlivens the city by installing new site-specific contemporary artworks or exhibiting new works in innovative ways. The Policy dedicates one per cent of the City’s capital works commitments to the commissioning of new public artworks, integrated at the earliest stages in public construction projects. Managed by the Cultural Development Branch in collaboration with the City Projects Division, the Policy is implemented through the City’s Public Art and Acquisitions Committee.

A key project funded through the Percent for Art allocation leading up to the next century is the inaugural Melbourne International Biennial, initiated and managed by the City of Melbourne in conjunction with Arts Victoria. The Biennial, curated by Juliana Engberg, will be an international visual arts event featuring the works and ideas of some of the world’s most respected and innovative contemporary artists. This event will substantially boost Melbourne’s national and international reputation as a City for the Arts in the contemporary visual arts sector.

Promoting Melbourne’s Cultural Strengths

... it is important that Melbourne’s cultural activities are built on local experience, that they celebrate our multi-cultural diversity, and that they enjoy the support and participation of the local community.”

City Plan
City Venues for Public Art

A core goal of the Cultural Policy is to encourage quality contemporary arts activities to be sited or presented in the city. City owned venues such as the Melbourne Town Hall and the North Melbourne Town Hall Arts House are among those for which the City's arts grants programs provide hiring subsidies.

The Cultural Development Branch explores and brokers opportunities for artists to perform or exhibit in other city-based venues and in under-used or empty city buildings. Often these are temporary venues, but can make a significant mark on Melbourne's arts infrastructure map. These alternative spaces also attract young and emerging artists whose innovative approaches help to push out the frontier of arts practice and reach audiences not attracted by the large flagship companies.

Arts Grants Program

Indigenous Arts Grants

A grant program will be established in 1999 to support the development, presentation and promotion of arts and cultural activities from indigenous artists and arts organisations. An Indigenous Arts Working Group will be formed to assist the development of the program and to advise on applications to the program. The Committee will be comprised of indigenous artists and arts managers across all art forms. This program is one component of the Cultural Development Branch's contribution towards the City of Melbourne's commitment to the reconciliation process.

Artist Grants

This annual, advertised program targets support to outstanding, innovative arts projects of high artistic merit and sited in the city. These projects may be proposed by artists, or artists working within an existing organisation, and will be assessed by the Cultural Development Branch staff and CDAB Assessment Panel. Young and emerging Melbourne artists will be particularly encouraged to submit applications for innovative projects.

Arts Partnership Grants

This annual, advertised program targets support to Melbourne's significant arts organisations (with the exception of festivals) presenting innovative contemporary programs that demonstrate a commitment to increasing audiences and a capacity to enhance the city's reputation as a City for the Arts. These partnerships may be for a period of more than one year. The Partnership proposals will be assessed by the Cultural Development Branch staff and the CDAB's Assessment Panel. Arts Festivals Program

This annual, advertised program targets support to Melbourne's arts festivals that demonstrate a commitment to innovative means of presenting diverse contemporary arts and a commitment to increasing participation and audiences numbers and have a capacity to enhance the city's reputation as a City for the Arts. The funding may be for more than one year.

International Arts Development Grants

The City of Melbourne's City for the Arts Program promotes Melbourne's strong and innovative arts sector in the international context. The City of Melbourne is interested in developing and enhancing relationships between artists and arts organisations internationally. The grants available through this program are:

- international artist exchange projects
- young artist international development
- arts management residency (Asialink)

Access to Council Venues and Services

Many arts projects do not depend on the allocation of direct grants through the Financial Support programs but require subsidies for the hire of Council venues and/or Street Activity services. Provision of subsidies (sometimes 100% of Council related costs) provides sufficient incentive for large established arts organisations to choose the central city as the site for the presentation of their work, and also provides encouragement for smaller groups and emerging artists to work with the Council in the development of their work. The cultural activities at the Melbourne Town Hall, mostly supported by the Council through this program, have made a substantial contribution to the viability of the venue and to the vibrancy of city life with obvious benefits flowing on to city visitors and businesses. The newly established Arts House and performance venue at the North Melbourne Town Hall is the site for a broad range of cultural activities and has been successful in attracting bookings from small to medium sized arts companies and events, many of which demonstrate highly innovative approaches to the creation and presentation of their work.

The Cultural Development Branch explores and brokers opportunities for artists to perform or exhibit in other city-based venues and in under-used, or empty, city buildings. Often these are by definition temporary venues, but can make a significant mark on Melbourne's arts infrastructure map. These alternative spaces also attract young and emerging artists whose innovative approaches help to push out the frontier of arts practice and reach audiences not attracted by the large flagship companies.

How to apply for a Grant

Details about the application procedures and assessment criteria are published annually as funding priorities and resources change from year to year. For enquiries about the arts grants program please contact the City of Melbourne and request a grants information pack, which will include an application form, eligibility and assessment criteria and names of the Assessment Panel members. Additional assistance from Branch staff is also available on request and at an annual briefing session held prior to the application closing date.

Community Festivals Grants

This annual, advertised program targets support to festivals that derive from, are managed by, and celebrate local or specific communities. It is intended that support be directed towards those festivals that demonstrate quality programming and that have management structures and strategies to seek the widest and most active participation of members of the community involved.

Further Information

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"Culture is essentially about a way of life. It is a celebration of what a community is, where it has come from and where it is going - its identity and memory. It is also about how the City and its community do things and what they value. Melbourne life is greatly enriched by the contributions of people from diverse cultures and nationalities, starting with its indigenous people, and Council celebrates the city's multicultural society in Melbourne and throughout Australia. Fostering a diverse local culture based on these building blocks is important." — City Plan