

INVEST IN Penrith's creative identity

We need big picture thinking to achieve sustainable change, deliver equity in cultural and arts funding where people live and promote social benefits and our sense of identity.

WHAT WE NEED

- Strategic partnerships between Council and government to achieve real results for Western Sydney communities in arts and cultural planning and delivery.
- Increased programming support (\$1 million over three years) to grow new audiences and attract key arts and creative professionals to the region and stop the talent drain from Western Sydney through commissioning and residencies.
- \$4.5m to upgrade our existing Performing Arts Centre to offer 21st century cultural experiences which rely on digital technologies and versatile spaces.

THE STORY

In 2015 Council co-funded a Deloitte Access Economics report, "Building Western Sydney's Cultural Arts Economy," which highlighted glaring inequities in State and Federal funding for cultural programs and infrastructure. The report found that while close to one third of the population of NSW lives in Western Sydney, the region receives just 1% of Commonwealth arts program funding and 5.5% of the State government's arts and events budget meaning costs for arts and cultural programs in Western Sydney are predominantly borne by local councils.

Despite this, Penrith has a vibrant and passionate arts community and great facilities at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest.

Each year around 350,000 people attend The Joan and the Gallery. This includes over 300 students attending the Conservatorium each week from across the Western Sydney region, from Rooty Hill to Riverstone. Yet the operations of this Conservatorium are supported solely by Council – and parents.

World class cities are supported by arts and cultural facilities, creating a vibrant cultural life. As our population and the broader region we serve grows, we need ongoing investment by other levels of government to meet community aspirations, cultural appetite and maintain artistic potential. With an estimated 5000 more units expected to be built in our City Centre, demand and expectations for entertainment and cultural offerings within walking distance will grow and we need to see opportunities for social cohesion and building on our sense of place.

We need to establish a Creative Penrith identity and enable our flagship venue to adapt and change to meet community expectations for smaller more intimate gatherings with dining options as well as larger commercial arts offerings and make it a focal point for entertainment most days of the week, as opposed to a couple of nights each week.

