



# Growing our arts and culture

## A cultural plan for Nillumbik Shire

### 2011-2017

### Second edition

“...if culture describes how we make sense of the world and our lives, then art describes that aspect of culture in which creativity and imagination are crucial, where we discover meaning and community in ways that are intuitive, irrational and unpredictable.”

Jon Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*



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## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Nillumbik Shire Council recognises the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land now known as the Shire of Nillumbik. Council values the significance of the Wurundjeri people's history as essential to the unique character and local culture.

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## Introduction

The 2011-2017 Nillumbik Shire Council Cultural Plan ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** is a unique cultural plan befitting a unique Shire. Nillumbik celebrates its rich cultural heritage on an everyday basis, with the arts in all its forms, a distinct and natural expression of ourselves.

***Growing our Arts and Culture*** was borne of community aspiration and need. Much community consultation for the purposes of the original plan and this second edition has been undertaken, the results of which provide a robust research-based plan. Community is integral to informing the cultural plan. Community for these purposes includes not just Nillumbik's diverse arts sectors representing each corner of the Shire, but also other sectors of the community that are not ordinarily involved with the arts, together with cross-functional units within Council. Thank you to all those members of the community who participated in that consultation process.

The first three years of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** focused on mobilising people and celebrated the notion of participation in the arts for all. The next three years will focus more on place and activation of space through the arts. The ultimate goal of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** is for the active inclusion of culture in all of Council's and indeed the community's decision making.

It is the distinctive way in which Nillumbik celebrates its culture and expresses itself through the arts, that makes Nillumbik a choice cultural destination. But further and most importantly, it is why we chose to live where we live and be able to enjoy an iconic rich heritage.

*Cr Helen Coleman*  
*Chair Arts Advisory Committee (Acquisition and Strategy)*

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## Executive summary

Nillumbik enjoys a longstanding tradition with the arts which makes up much of the Shire's rich cultural heritage. That cultural heritage importantly lies within each of Nillumbik's townships with their own unique story and culture. ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, *A Cultural Plan for Nillumbik shire 2011-2017* has been based very much on the cultural nuances of Nillumbik, having taken into account extensive community consultation with diverse community members from across the Shire.

***Growing our Arts and Culture*** aligns directly to the *Council Plan 2013-17* and, importantly, identified community values. Further, it relates to numerous Council strategies which are fundamental to the realisation of the ultimate cultural plan goal of embedding culture in major decision-making and planning, akin to the fourth pillar ethos, and adopting a percent for art policy.

Each of the six years of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** is themed, and within those themes sit five overarching goals. In short, the goals relate to connected communities, creative spaces and places, creative communities, the creative economy and communication and leadership. The themes account for discipline areas of the arts that are integral to Nillumbik's cultural make-up. The themes also provide a basis for the development of signature events during each year of the cultural plan.

***Growing our Arts and Culture*** has a multiple purposes. The freedom of participation in the arts and the practice of one's culture is a fundamental human right. As such, Council's investment in the Arts and Culture program is an investment in community wellbeing and social capital. The strong and important relationship between arts and culture on health and wellbeing are widely reported. Further, cultural tourism and the business of professional artists are important aspects of Nillumbik's economic development, and Arts and Culture are fundamental to this. ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** provides a framework for Nillumbik Shire Council in servicing and programming to meet the cultural needs of the community, based on thorough research through community consultation.

The results of the community consultation for the purposes of the second edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** identifies four major themes. First, in terms of demographics, focus areas are for children aged between 8 and 12 years, their parents and parents of youth, Also prevalent are the needs of Nillumbik's positive ageing and ageing in place demographic. Second, we are experiencing a shift towards placemaking with many of Nillumbik's townships and their people seeking their own identity, association with place and cultural expression. This also correlates with a sector trend towards a holistic notion of the arts and an emphasis on participatory arts and placemaking. Third, diverse opportunities for practice development were called for. Finally, we heard once again a strong calling for Nillumbik's own cultural centre that, at its most visionary, would incorporate a gallery, theatre and studio spaces.

As with the first edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, the community offered some fabulous and inspiring ideas. However, it is simply not feasible to incorporate them all into one cultural plan, nor is it Council's place to do so. ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** should also be aspirational and is intended to inspire the community to express their own culture through the arts. There are avenues of support to the community from Council, and heralding Arts and Culture's often said mantra, that Council should be "the glue, not the do". Such mantra has heavily influenced the development of the Arts and Culture team's vision and mission, integral to this plan. So while Nillumbik does not have its own gallery, we can all utilise our creativity to present Nillumbik in a continual exhibition and celebration of contemporary participatory arts, local culture and heritage.

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## Background

Nillumbik has long been known as a region of artistic vitality, where the creative life of the community is highly valued and nurtured. Nillumbik Shire Council (Council) offers opportunities for artists and members of the local community to engage in arts and cultural activities.

However, it is important to recognise that Council does not create this cultural environment. Rather, it supports the conditions in which the community and the arts

“All of a sudden he understood that he didn’t have to invent it all from scratch, that it was a matter of making something new by synthesis of all that was good in what came before.”

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*

can flourish. Communities and individuals create their own cultures and it is Council’s role to stimulate, support and grow this activity, through advocacy, programs and projects. The renowned visual art and literary awards are important accomplishments and calendar events for professional artists and writers, and artist residencies provide opportunity for creative development. There is a range of other support

for festivals, readings, performances, artist talks, galleries and exhibitions, heritage and historical societies. Council’s Community Fund grants program provides important opportunities for cultural growth.

A wide range of partnerships are integral to the work of the Arts and Culture team at Council. Strong partnerships with the Living & Learning Nillumbik network, the Yarra Plenty Regional Library branches, Nillumbik Tourism Association for the shire-wide Artists Open Studios program, Montsalvat’s presentation of the Council-sponsored annual Nillumbik Prize and monthly Red Chair Artist’s Talks, and numerous service agreements with community festival committees help to extend creative programming. Council also acquires and manages an impressive collection of artworks of both contemporary and historic interest.

***Growing our Arts and Culture: A Cultural Plan for Nillumbik Shire 2011-2017*** stimulates new creative engagement, whilst building on our historic successes. The cultural plan will build local cultural capacity by linking ideas, individuals, organisations, leadership and resources

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## Principles in cultural planning

**Leadership and accountability** - Cultural planning guides Council’s facilitation of community engagement in the cultural life of the Shire, ensuring opportunities for participation across the community. As with other planning, cultural planning is evidence-based, and community needs have been sought and are forefront in this plan.

The Culture and Arts Advisory Committee (CAAC) made up of volunteers and a Council representative, acted as the steering group for the development of the first edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***. Since the adoption of the first edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, the Culture and Arts Advisory Committee has been superseded by the Arts Advisory Committee (Acquisitions and Strategy) who have monitored the implementation of this plan, and will continue to do so, to ensure ongoing feedback loops and public accountability.

**Joined-up approach - *Growing our Arts and Culture*** formally links with other parts of Council in the promotion of cultural wellbeing for the area. Many of the new programs will be implemented by a joined-up approach, recognising the role of culture across all of Council areas. Furthermore, this plan has been developed in consultation with local residents, community organisations, Council staff and artists. Neighbouring Councils and regional arts organisations are important partners to deliver coordinated programming. Through existing and new partners, the plan aims to complement already existing cultural activity, and address gaps in our cultural environment.

**Aspiration and values** - Cultural planning is a strategic process, "...in which local government integrates strategies for social equity, environmental sustainability, cultural vitality and economic viability. It also focuses on using the arts and cultural development processes to develop a sense of place and to uncover community values in order to inform local governments' thinking, policies and programs."<sup>1</sup>

The cultural plan is aspirational, allowing us to respond to new opportunities, such as funding and ideas from our community, and include them each year; rather than being a resource-driven, operational plan that depends on Council to provide everything. We could describe this as "Council being the glue - not the do".

### **Vision and Mission**

Taking into account our mantra and the second edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, the Arts and Culture team have considered the context for the work that it does. The vision and mission for Arts and Culture is as follows:

- **Vision** - That Nillumbik continues to be a place that nurtures creativity, values the arts as a natural expression of its cultural identity, and continues to be recognised not only for its rich cultural heritage but as a significant place of multi-disciplined contemporary arts.
- **Mission** - To enable opportunities for local communities to participate in creative activity and express their cultural identity through the arts, support the local creative economy, and preserve and make manifest our cultural heritage and local history.

### **Strategic alignment**

Culture plays a role in representing a country's national identity. There is a growing global movement recognising the role of culture in local sustainability and human development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recognises the right for individuals to participate in the culture of their own community, stating requirements for provision of arts and culture at the local level.<sup>2</sup>

Agenda 21 for Culture is UNESCO's international meeting point for cities, local governments and networks that places culture at the heart of their development processes. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Working Group on Culture, constituted by UNESCO in 2005, agreed to "enshrine their commitment to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity and human rights, the development

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<sup>1</sup> Mills, Deb, in Anne Dunn, "Community Partnerships Scoping Study," (Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development*, 2nd ed. (Paris: UNESCO Pub., 1996).

of a participatory democracy, the promotion of cross-sector applicability in public policies and creating conditions for peace”.<sup>3</sup>

**Growing our Arts and Culture** aims to translate these overarching principles into actions for Council to consistently consider cultural vitality alongside effects on the environment when new projects are being considered.

**The Turn to Community** - Drawing on international literature, Mulligan and Smith examine the role of art at the local government level.<sup>4</sup> They explain that the constant creation of strong and inclusive local communities has become a key responsibility of local government in the contemporary world. Environmental disasters like drought, flood and bushfire are very real for the people of Australia and these real effects of climate change, coupled with international conflict and economic instability, require local forums for citizens to consider. Nikolas Rose also states “community is not simply the territory of government but a means of government.”<sup>5</sup> The arts have significant potential for active citizen re-engagement.

**Think Global, Act Local** – Arts and culture play a key role in creating opportunities for social connectedness, developing a sense of belonging, and reconnection with community. This is recognised internationally and acknowledged Australia-wide at both federal and state government levels. Local government is able to provide extended and place-specific service delivery for state and federal governments through implementation of relevant arts and cultural policies. This offers local government new prospects to combat social isolation for ageing and single populations, overworked and commuting families, displaced people and a technologically-reliant society. Local government is best positioned to assist citizens in democratic re-engagement through participation in community wellbeing actions like arts and cultural activity. And to this end, there is increased coordination of cross-departmental government activity in this cultural plan to address these complex problems through extended partnerships and external funding opportunities.

Local government policy responds to Nillumbik’s current environment, but also considers the broader political environment, such as policy developments and funding opportunities at State and Federal levels.

### Council objectives

**Growing our Arts and Culture** linked directly with the previous *Council Plan 2009-2013*, and remains so for the current *Council Plan 2013-2017*, sharing five goal areas. It is also important to keep both the Council Plan and Cultural Plan goals within the context of Council’s values for the Shire, as expressed by the community during the visioning project, *Picture Nillumbik*.

Delivery of Council services is strengthened through the integration of cultural plans with Council’s broader priorities and objectives. Cultural amenity is not something remote or apart from everyday life but fundamental to residents’ needs and the business of local government.

The following table outlines the relationship of the Cultural plan to the Council plan and values.

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<sup>3</sup> Agenda 21 for culture website: <http://agenda21culture.net/index.php?lang=en>, accessed Apr 30, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Mulligan and Pia Smith, "Art, Government and the Turn to Community: Putting Art at the Heart of Local Government," (Melbourne: RMIT, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> N. Rose, "The Death of the Social? Re-Figuring the Territory of Government," *Economy and society* 25, no. 3 (1996).



Values	Council plan goals	Cultural plan goals
Deep connection and resilient community	<p><b>Our community</b></p> <p>To enable a better future for Nillumbik residents and encourage healthy, safe and resilient communities through the provision of quality services.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Provision of opportunities for education, life-long learning and creative pursuits to the community.</i></p>	<p><b>Connected communities</b></p> <p>Opportunities to participate locally and develop social relationship; encouraging an inclusive and diverse Shire</p> <p><i>Strategy: Making intergenerational connections; communities creating content; building local cultural identity and exchange; arts volunteer participation; and growing arts audiences.</i></p>
Balance with nature	<p><b>Our natural environment</b></p> <p>To preserve and nurture the natural environment of the Green Wedge for future and current generations through responsible leadership and stewardship.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Protection of the Green Wedge and the Shire's biodiversity, provide leadership and opportunities for our community to participate in the conservation of natural resources and lead the local government sector in energy-efficient practices.</i></p>	<p><b>Creative spaces and places</b></p> <p>Natural and built environments influence our local culture and how we engage with each other.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Honour and engage indigenous heritage; support unique local arts festivals; animate spaces; support artist residencies and studios; utilise venues for creation, presentation and dissemination.</i></p>
Local village life Creative expression, art and cultural exchange	<p><b>Built environment</b></p> <p>To provide infrastructure and plan for a built environment which respects and preserves the unique character of the Green Wedge.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Responsibly manage our existing assets to maximise the life of the Shire's important community and civic infrastructure and invest in new or improved community facilities that are planned to meet identified community needs.</i></p>	<p><b>Creative communities</b></p> <p><i>A creative community solves problems together. Artists can challenge the past, stimulate new ideas and echo broader societal concerns.</i></p> <p><i>Strategy: Arts education; fostering creativity; recognising artists; presenting the arts; increasing networking capacity across sectors.</i></p>
A sustaining and evolving economy	<p><b>Our economy</b></p> <p>To develop a prosperous local economy through partnerships with local business, governments and the community consistent with our Green Wedge values.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Partnering with local businesses and groups to promote Nillumbik as a unique destination for nature, recreation, culture, food and wine.</i></p>	<p><b>Creative economy</b></p> <p>Arts and culture are important assets in Nillumbik.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Develop cultural tourism; researching the arts; supporting the business of the arts; valuing and investing in the arts; economic development.</i></p>
Discovery and fulfilment	<p><b>Our council and good governance</b></p> <p>To provide good governance, leadership and responsible financial management and to make decisions in an inclusive and transparent manner.</p> <p><i>Strategy: Provide strong and innovative leadership, focus on the importance of customer service, ensure services are efficient and deliver good value for money, meet legal responsibilities, manage risks.</i></p>	<p><b>Communication and leadership</b></p> <p>An important role is communication, listening and leadership. Council's role is to support local culture and also stimulate new ideas "to be the glue, not the do."</p> <p><i>Strategy: Foster civic engagement, organisational capacity, creative exchange and forums; cross-council and annual signature projects; inter-relate civic policies and strategies; information sharing.</i></p>

**Growing our Arts and Culture** links directly to a variety of other strategic plans within Council.

The first edition considered the following documents:

- Nillumbik Shire Council Plan 2009-2013
- Health and Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013
- Recreation Strategy 2011-2019
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2009-2013
- Climate Change Action Plan 2010-2015
- Economic Development Strategy 2010
- Green Wedge Management Plan 2010
- Living & Learning Nillumbik Plan 2009-2013
- Nillumbik Heritage Strategy May 2011
- Bushfire Social & Health Recovery 2009-2012

The second edition of **Growing our Arts and Culture** considered the above documents together the following further documents:

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Annual Community Survey Overview 2013
- Destination Nillumbik
- Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016
- Pantom Hill Bushland Reserves System Management Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- St Andrews Township Plan 2013
- Living & Learning Nillumbik, *Back into it*
- Disability Action Plan 2013
- Picture Nillumbik
- Reconciliation Policy 1998
- Reconciliation Charter 2008
- Environment Charter 2012
- Eltham MAC Precincts 3 and 4 Redevelopment Project
- Positive Ageing Strategy 2013-2018
- Edendale Strategic Business Plan 2014-2017
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library Arts and Culture Strategic Framework 2010-2015

### Victorian government objective(s)

Local governments must meet obligations and objectives of a Council under Section 3C the Local Government Act 1989 which provide for the promotion of social, economic and environmental sustainability of the municipality, ensure best value services and efficient use of resources, and improve the overall quality of life of community members.

### Australian government objective(s)

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts”. With local council the tier of government closest to its constituents, cultural plans at the local government level assist Council in decision-making, resource management, and development of new programs. In doing so, local government makes available opportunities to participate in the community’s cultural life and enjoy the arts.

Similarly, as stated above, United Cities and Local Government 2010 policy statement recognizes that the fundamental purpose of governance is to work towards a healthy, safe, tolerant and creative society, and that governance should include a strong cultural dimension.

“Culture is not a Sunday hat to be displayed on great occasions, but an internalised set of strategies for managing life’s difficulties, always in intimate interaction with the changing circumstances of life. One’s culture, like one’s present circumstances is the product of one’s history.”

Inga Clendinnen, *True Stories: History, Politics, Aboriginality*

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## Context: What informs this cultural plan

### The story of Nillumbik: culture and resilience

Nillumbik is named from a Wurundjeri word meaning shallow earth. The Shire is located 25 km northeast of Melbourne, with the Yarra River as a southern boundary. At the time of the first edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** Nillumbik's estimated population in 2010 was 64,184 in 2010<sup>6</sup> but since that time has declined slightly to 62,724 in 2013<sup>7</sup>.

Open spaces, natural environment, and friendly townships each with unique characters from typical urban settings to remote and tranquil bush properties, are attractive to both residents and visitors.

The creative life of the community is highly valued and large numbers of artists live and work here in the quiet beauty of our landscape. Nillumbik's existing artist communities such as Butterfly Studio, Dunmoochin, Baldessin Studios, and Montsalvat, and the strength of artistic traditions commencing from the early Australian Impressionist painters through to current practice in contemporary arts showcased at local, regional and international forums, all contribute to Nillumbik's defining characteristics as an arts-rich environment.

In general terms, local community disadvantage stems from rural remoteness, transport limitations within the Shire, and financial barriers. A high percentage of Nillumbik's population works outside the Shire and some residents report life stress and the pressure of being time poor. This can limit ability to participate in local activities outside home and work. Our ageing population, stay at home parents, disengaged youth, culturally diverse residents, and the disabled all can experience social isolation. This cultural plan considers opportunities for the arts to extend engagement and promote cultural understanding to the widest possible demographic.

The February 2009 Black Saturday bushfires claimed many lives, properties, and over 23% of the bush in our Green Wedge municipality, known as 'the lungs of Melbourne'. The urgency and immediacy of the Bushfire Recovery Initiative has resulted in many new social connections and creative engagement between individuals and communities. These activities have been supported across all Council departments. Artists and creative activities have played an important role in the process of enabling reflection, empathy, support, recovery and the beginnings of a 'new normal' for Nillumbik.

*I saw all the grey ash after the fires and I thought... we need colour!*

***Growing our Arts and Culture*** is informed by Council goals, and contributes to the model of community resilience. While there are many definitions of the term community resilience, implicit in each is a link between community resources and the capacity of a community to adapt in times of stress. Put simply, community resilience is a process whereby communities mobilise specific resources in order to adapt after an adverse event – we have learned that creativity is a key element in this resilience. There is strong evidence that trauma recovery through arts is an

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. No. 3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009,

<http://profile.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=140&pg=210&gid=10&type=enum>

<sup>7</sup> Source: ID Profile, <http://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik>

effective step after initial welfare needs have been met.<sup>8</sup> As Dr. Rob Gordon, trauma psychologist advising the State Government and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority says “resilience is the ability to resume a creative life.”

## Community voices in Nillumbik: Community consultation

“Human flourishing is not a mechanical process - it is an organic process. You cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do is, like a farmer, create conditions under which they will begin to flourish.”

Sir Ken Robinson

In the development of both editions of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, the content was collected through consultation: interviews, discussion, conversations and meetings with local residents, artists and Council staff. That consultation and qualitative research, alongside industry/sector and quantitative data, form the platform for ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, grouping the information under the five goal areas – Connected Communities, Creative Spaces and Places, Creative Economy, Communications and Leadership, and Creative Communities.

From the community consultation for the second edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, we can see an emerging shift in focus and needs. Whereas the previous three years focussed on mobilising people, there is now a shift towards celebrating place and a need for activating space and participatory arts. Placemaking will feature in the next three years of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***.

As with the original community consultation, a calling came loud and clear for a dedicated gallery and performing arts centre. While we may not be able to deliver large-scale projects such as this within the next three years, Nillumbik can certainly be celebrated everyday as a leading place live and visit for the arts in a multitude of disciplines and forms of presentation.

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## Developing cultural plan goals

### 1. Connected Communities

#### Acknowledging and celebrating diversity

In Yarrambat, I met an Aboriginal family who used to tell stories and do ceremony. Through them, I became very aware of the bush, especially the orchids.

Whilst Nillumbik is seemingly a homogenous community, there are new and unique cultures and communities amongst us. The cultures of migrant and refugee populations, alongside indigenous peoples, can strengthen our diversity and creativity. At present 7% of Nillumbik residents were born overseas compared to 22% in Melbourne, but this will increase. Residents include single person or single parent households, older people, people with disabilities and carers, and other non-traditional family designs.

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<sup>8</sup> Laub, D., Podell, D. (1995). Art and Trauma. Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 76:995-1005.

Nillumbik welcomes diversity and must seek ways to invite new residents through the consideration of community programs, health services, and diversity of housing stock. Arts and culture offer one way to increase social connection and participation in community life. This plan offers opportunities for all residents to enjoy local culture through festivals, events and programs. The plan also looks beyond arts access provision to find new ways for community to express its culture. Through partnership activities, cultural tourism and cultural development grants, residents of Nillumbik are invited and supported to develop their own ideas.

*When Eltham Library was built, a man who used assistance from a walker had concerns about access up the ramp. A seat was designed by NSC with a local artist and built so that people could transfer to the seat and enjoy the view.*

## 2. Creative Spaces and Places

There are limited venues in Nillumbik for community cultural events, artist exhibitions, performances, and film screenings. There is a lot of enthusiasm for a purpose-built gallery space that showcases local work and exhibits the valuable and extensive NSC collection. There also is a particular need for small flexible spaces accompanied by technical support to present performing arts in all formats. Council is challenged to find ways to support both private and public initiatives so that fees to

*I first visited Montsalvat on a school trip. I was amazed by the atmosphere and by the working artists. I had no idea such people existed!*

the public are accessible. The development of arts networks could provide an umbrella for touring activities for these venues. An inventory of existing venues would be useful to match the needs of artists and presenters. What support can schools offer in relation to venues? Montsalvat and Edendale can also host ephemeral sculpture.

**Venues:** There are currently two Council controlled purpose-built spaces for community and arts events - the Eltham Community and Reception Centre, and the Eltham Performing Arts Centre at Research. Accessible spaces that can be used by the community for workshops or meetings, for innovative and mainstream music, film, theatre, dance or circus performances require flexible staging and seating capacity. Venues with seating for 50 to 300 are the most useful and most used spaces for current art making.<sup>9</sup> Larger specialized spaces are most likely out of the financial reach of community organisations and artists.<sup>10</sup> The Eltham Community and Reception Centre (ECRC) could be revitalised and adapted to cater for an expanded range of creative activities.

*I know I can always go to St. Andrew's Market and catch up with people I haven't seen for a while.*

The linking and networking of community resources and creation of arts hubs was also voiced. Festivals and markets in Nillumbik make use of our green spaces and provide access to community culture for residents and visitors to the Shire. They are places for residents to connect. They are also an important contributor to tourism and the local economy. There is a broad range of festivals from music to literature to local celebrations in particular townships. The township-based festivals are uniquely positioned to promote the local character and place-based diversity of Nillumbik. Council could provide creative assistance and professional support to enable community to brand the uniqueness of each festival, located in respective townships.

<sup>9</sup> Deloitte, "Small Arts Organisations Research and Evaluation Report," ed. Arts Victoria (Melbourne: 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Anatolitis, Esther, *The Art of Taking Risks*, *The Age*, 24 April, 2011.

### 3. Creative Economy

Artists contribute to innovation in ideas and economic vitality. Given Nillumbik’s strong reputation in this area, it is surprising that arts practice is relatively invisible. There are few opportunities to see artists at work or for artists to become more self-sufficient through access to venues to sell work on an ongoing basis. The Artists Open Studios is extremely popular. The case has also been made for an increase in art forms and their visibility to include digital arts practice and thereby encouraging participation by teenagers and youth. Festivals have enormous potential for creating economic opportunities for presenting artists and for internal and external cultural tourism. The cultural plan will support local festival committees to embrace and enhance a wide spectrum of arts, and will also advocate for arts small business such as galleries and bookshops.

I first went on Open Studio tours as a visitor. It inspired me so much I wanted to do it, be an artist!

Council has a vital role to play in increasing economic and creative sustainability with local artists, community arts and our heritage initiatives. Is it possible to activate more existing spaces for affordable studios and sale and exhibition of arts? There is welcome support for initial and emerging artists, but then the next stage of creating sustainable economic activities appears to be missing. Links between artists at different stages in their careers could be facilitated. This could be assisted through administrative support, creating avenues for interaction between potential partners including business and entrepreneurs via networks and improving the dissemination of ‘what’s on’ information across the Shire. Council could be an access point for information about local, state and national activities.

Culture can be embedded across a range of Council Departments. Council’s Economic Development Strategy includes an Arts Development Strategy. “Arts: celebrate our creative heritage - capitalise on the creative heritage of our Shire and position it as a continuing centre for the arts.” Continuing its judicious investment in Nillumbik’s cultural vitality through the cultural development grants program and the creation of a seeding grants program is a vital role for Council.

#### Partners

In addition to numerous local, regional, state and federal funding partners, there are a number of funding and service agreements in place:

Partner Organisation	Funding and Service Agreement
Nillumbik Tourism Association	Artists’ Open Studios
Montsalvat	Nillumbik Prize, Red Chair Artist’s Talks
Nillumbik Reconciliation Group	Past Matters Festival
St Margaret’s Church Eltham	New Voices Festival
OxFam	World Matters Festival
Combined Nillumbik Heritage Group	Support to ten historical societies

Other partnerships include that of Yarra Plenty Regional Library in relation to the Alan Marshall Short Story Award and Parks Victoria in relation to the Laughing Waters Artist Residency.

### 4. Communication and Leadership

One of the most important roles of culture and art is communication. Art can reflect a community back to itself, hold historical perspectives, and expand the range of possible ideas and experiences about how we can live well with each other. If artists manifest potential future change, how can Council begin to engage with ‘the risky,

the edgy' to sustain the widely-held perception of Nillumbik as a culturally-rich area of cutting-edge arts practice? Council can think about a range of ways of listening and responding to the community - using social media, engaging with marginalised communities and having forums or meetings in different places across the Shire.

### **Culture as integrated policy: cultural vitality**

Our consultations indicated a desire to see Arts and Culture valued across the entire Council. Suggested methods for achieving this include creating a framework and communication tool for valuing the arts across Council, an educational document or presentation of some kind that would inspire people, using workshops and interactions with artists. It was felt that it is important for Council to develop and communicate a philosophy or set of principles to inform its Arts and Culture and Community Cultural Development programs.

There is a strong interest in cultural change at Council, to adopt UNESCO's Agenda 21 for culture and develop a fourth pillar of sustainability: cultural vitality<sup>11</sup> as part of the cultural plan. There are a growing number of Victorian local Councils that have added culture to the more traditional triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental indicators. This trend can be seen globally, with leadership in both Australia and Canada. The creation of relevant cultural policy and procedures will take a few years and external advice, but this is where NSC can look to other Councils that already have these policies in place.

### **Art Acquisitions and other policies**

The extensive and valued Nillumbik Art Collection currently has no purpose-built venue with limited opportunities for only a very small portion to be viewed by the public at Eltham Community and Reception Centre, as with Council offices. Community consultation for both editions of ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** found expressed concern about this and that the range of art forms collected is limited to object-based art works. Currently, there is little or no representation of literature, contemporary music scores or recordings, theatrical play scripts or digital arts material.

***Growing our Arts and Culture*** considers how acquisition policies and practice may include these other forms of contemporary and historical art to be more representative and reflective of the cultural life of this community. It was suggested a wider range of ages, career stages, and art forms can be included in annual prizes and that competitions can be annually themed to accommodate a range of different participants. ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** considers how these works can be shared and enjoyed by residents across the Shire through exhibitions, public art installations, performances and active engaged programs. It was strongly endorsed by participants in our consultation sessions for Council to develop a social media policy and a digital art acquisitions and exhibitions policy.

## **5. Creative Communities**

There were strong themes we heard repeatedly in the development of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***. These community discussions noted the importance of the arts in healing, building connections and friendship, and the creative power of networks at all different levels. It was clear there is a necessity to consider new communications strategies: gathering and disseminating information from a central point and local hubs. The role of artists is recognised as precursors of change and inspiration.

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<sup>11</sup> Jon Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning* (Melbourne: Cultural Development Network (Vic.) in association with Common Ground Publishing, 2001).

Residents expressed concerns that some very important details and favourite activities may be overlooked, encouraging us to continue with valued projects and programs. Very basic requirements can encourage creative activity, including assistance with legal requirements and insurance about using public spaces for events. Access to a register of artists and available resources on Council's website would assist creative networking. Ideas were brainstormed like seasonal community-get-togethers, celebrations, or an Arts Blitz over a weekend in different parts of the Shire which would encourage participation and connection.

Support for new art mediums and digital arts were thought to be vital for engaging a wider range of ages and interests in activities. Flashmobs during Year One of **Growing our Arts and Culture** brought together the 'usual suspects' and the 'unusual suspects' in creative processes and in non-traditional arts spaces and venues. People also want to see more support for artists with disabilities. There is a sense that early stages of artists' careers are nurtured quite well, but ongoing skill and career development across the lifetime of an artist's career is lacking. Cultural hubs and resource centres such as libraries, Edendale and Living & Learning Nillumbik's venues will continue to act as crucibles for creative activities and expanding skills. And finally, the consultations stressed that entrepreneurship and arts small business venues are critical for the local survival of the arts.

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## Annual themes: growing arts and culture year by year

Annual themes in **Growing our Arts and Culture** are offered as an innovative way to focus attention upon a particular area of arts and culture, and to expand inventiveness, possibilities, and options in participation. These themes may trigger new responses in existing programs and open paths for exploring unexpected partnerships or unpredictable opportunities. These overarching themes do not suggest other activities will not continue, as Council has a strong commitment to its ongoing programs. Under these themes, Council will host a number of new signature events and programs that become the basis for future years' actions.

The annual themes were fully developed with the first edition of **Growing our Arts and Culture**, each of which built on the actions of the previous year. Signature events developed in each year will have a generative effect on arts activity and participation. They will lay the building blocks required for sustainable activity and ideas with Years One, Two and Three having created a base for Years Four, Five and Six. Actions for the latter three years were developed with the second edition of **Growing our Arts and Culture** in response to community consultation and changing times.

We believe the use of annual themes can achieve several things:

- Provide Council-wide and community-wide creative focus for entrepreneurial, educational, research, individual and group activities.
- Generate multiple and diverse responses and open up possibilities for individual and group creative partnerships that were previously invisible across arts, social agency or businesses.
- Link national and international actions to local events.
- Provide entry into arts participation for schools and under-represented groups like aged care, disability or other social agencies.



There are also strong themes connecting the first three years of the cultural plan to the latter three years. The first three years having focussed on mobilising people and communities. The final three years will take a great focus on place-making and community connectivity. The latter three years will also take a greater focus on cross-functional partnerships and collaborations, which feeds into the overarching cultural plan, that is, to embed culture in decision making and planning and percent for art policy.

### **Year One: Participation, Partnerships, People, Place**

The first year of Growing our Arts and Culture saw new responses in community arts, cultural development and festival programs. It opened exciting paths to explore new partnerships and widen opportunities for participation with more people in more places across the Shire. Active participation was encouraged in our existing programs, and widened with the launch of the Nillumbik Ekphrasis Poetry Award and with the signature project for Year One, *52 Flashmobs in 52 Weeks*, funded by VicHealth's MOTION grant program, which provided arts participation for schools and previously under-represented groups.

It is interesting to note that the VicHealth Indicators Survey of 2011 showed a significantly higher participation in the arts by Nillumbik residents, some 77.3% compared to that of the state average of 63.6%. The 2011 survey was significant in evidencing a rise in participation in the arts for Nillumbik from 43.6% in 2007 to 77.3% in 2011. The *52 Flashmobs in 52 Weeks* would have impacted on those participation rates and survey results.

### **Year Two: Earth Plus...**

*Earth Plus...* focussed on the meaning of Nillumbik, shallow earth, from the Wurundjeri, with place-based activities central to the theme. There were many and varied interpretations of *Earth Plus...*, all of which explored and celebrated Nillumbik's cultural roots and strong connection with the local environment. In particular, *Earth Plus...fire* showcased a ceramics exhibition of Potters Cottage artists represented within the Nillumbik Art Collection, exploring our cultural heritage. *Earth Plus...water* further celebrated our cultural heritage and closeness with mudbrick practice, with a Red Chair Artist Talk by architect of Eltham Library, Greg Burgess, together with *The big muddy*, finale flashmob. *Earth Plus...cooperation* saw a unique community arts project and mural by our local children exploring the life-cycle of the Eltham Copper Butterfly.

### **Year Three: Word on the street, ear to the ground**

*Word on the street, ear to the ground* grew the literary arts leaps and bounds with an investment into the craft of writing. Arts and Culture launched the highly successful and unique collaborative project with Positive Ageing, Nillumbik Tales. The Alan Marshall Short Story Award invested in a professional development prize for local writers by introducing a two-day masterclass with Award judge and highly acclaimed author, Toni Jordan. The Nillumbik Ekphrasis Poetry Award showed the strength of poetry, having increased its participation rate by 300%. *Word on the street, ear to the ground* was also an important conduit to go back to the community to check the progress of the **Growing our Arts and Culture** and what it means for the community. That community consultation very importantly informed the actions for the next three years of **Growing our Arts and Culture**.

### **Year Four: Practice**

Signature events will see the celebration of diverse disciplines of the performing arts, be it theatre, dance, music or comedy. Professional practice will also be supported and highlighted, particularly with an emphasis on the discipline required as a practising artist.

### **Year Five: Now, Look Here**

Signature events will be developed in visual arts, film and new media, and the same encouraged from the community as a ground-up projects. The Nillumbik Art Collection will consider non-traditional new media. Public art may include ephemeral and digital installations.

### **Year Six: Cultural Vitality**

Culture, the fourth pillar of sustainability, informs Council's Plans and Policies alongside the triple bottom line. As part of the fourth pillar ethos, we will advocate for a cultural change within the organisation with 1% for the arts in all major projects, and effects on cultural vitality of the community informing decision-making.

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## **Action plan**

Each year a number of strategies are identified to assist with achieving the goals. After undertaking comprehensive community consultation, the plan for the next three years takes a quite distinct flavour to that of past three years. Whereas the plan for the past three years was more prescriptive, the plan for the next three years takes a broader approach, taking into account resources, current trends and methods in cultural planning, and marrying those with identified community needs.

The gap areas that have emerged through the consultation process are children of primary school years, parents of children and youth, the positive ageing demographic and a wanting for celebration of community and place. We also heard a strong call for professional development opportunities to support the spectrum of Nillumbik's artists and the integrity of arts practice. This relates to opportunities for established artists, in extending their practice but also to give back to Nillumbik's arts community. At the other end of the scale, support is needed for emerging artists, particularly arts school graduates. With arts practice often a solitary profession, networking is one such method, by which artists of diverse and similar practice areas can meet, support and even mentor each other, and indeed find opportunities to collaborate. Other professional development opportunities can extend to prizes, together with public programs such as forums and community engagement projects to enhance exhibitions.

Further, celebrating place and place-making also became apparent through the consultation process. This need is reflective of the fact that many Nillumbik communities have gone through a rebuilding phase. It is also reflective of wider sector trends in place-making and participatory arts. There is an opportunity to balance the strong call for a community cultural centre that encompasses gallery space together with a performing arts venue and studio spaces and showcase Nillumbik's diversity of arts practices, outside the confines of a white cube or a black box.

## GOAL ONE: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Arts & Culture are ways for people to participate locally and develop social relationships, making for an inclusive and diverse Shire.

Meets:

- Council plan goal “*Our community*”, enabling a better future for Nillumbik residents and encourage healthy, safe and resilient communities through the provision of quality services
- Community value of a *deep connection and resilient community*

YEAR 4: Practice	YEAR 5: Now look here	YEAR 6: Cultural vitality	Collaborators
Develop opportunities for original music compositions and performances	Explore potential for community owned local history speakers corner or walks	Strengthen opportunities for children, youth, families and seniors to engage with the arts	Community Service and Social Development Edendale Economic Development Leisure Services Living & Learning Nillumbik People and Place Statutory Planning Yarra Plenty Regional Library Combined Nillumbik Heritage Group Traders Associations
Redevelop heritage trail booklet with Combined Nillumbik Heritage Groups	Investigate potential for <i>Friends of the Collection</i> , volunteer guide program	Explore development of community owned arts precincts in collaboration with traders and business	
Reinvigorate Alan Marshall Short Story Award for its 30 <sup>th</sup> anniversary year	Extend community access to Nillumbik’s prize-winning literary arts through public arts programming	Investigate potential for intergenerational mentoring between established and emerging artists	

### OBJECTIVES

Making intergenerational connections

Communities creating content

Building local cultural identity and exchange

Arts volunteer participation

Growing arts audiences

## GOAL TWO: CREATIVE SPACES AND PLACES

The natural and built environments influence our local culture and how we engage with each other.

Meets:

- Council plan goal “*Our natural environment*”, to preserve and nurture the natural environment of the Green Wedge for future and current generations
- Community value of a *balance with nature*

YEAR 4: Practice	YEAR 5: Now look here	YEAR 6: Cultural vitality	Collaborators
<p>Develop opportunities for Indigenous storytelling, celebrating places of significance and connection with land</p> <p>Curate exhibition of <i>Laughing Waters stories</i> celebrating ten years of the artist residency program</p> <p>Explore potential for Practically Green <i>Sustainability Award</i> for the arts</p>	<p>Explore potential for ephemeral public art program</p> <p>Launch <i>Laughing Waters stories</i> and develop opportunities for public understanding in recognising significance of Laughing Waters’ heritage</p> <p>Explore potential for after-school arts programs</p>	<p>Strengthen social context focus for Laughing Waters Artist Residency in line with contemporary residency practices</p> <p>Develop Eltham Library Community Gallery floor talks and public program</p> <p>Collaborate on feasibility study for Nillumbik’s own gallery</p>	<p>Community Development</p> <p>Economic Development</p> <p>Edendale</p> <p>Environmental Services</p> <p>Environmental Works</p> <p>Living &amp; Learning Nillumbik</p> <p>Strategic Planning</p> <p>Nillumbik Reconciliation Group</p> <p>Parks Victoria</p>

### OBJECTIVES

Honour and engage indigenous heritage

Unique local arts festivals

Animate spaces

Artist residencies and studios

Venues: creation, presentation, and dissemination

## GOAL THREE: CREATIVE ECONOMY

The Arts & Culture are important assets in Nillumbik.

Meets:

- Council plan goal “*Our economy*”, develop a prosperous local economy through partnerships with local business, governments and the community consistent with our Green Wedge values
- Community value of a *sustaining and evolving economy*

YEAR 4: Practice	YEAR 5: Now look here	YEAR 6: Cultural vitality	Collaborators
<p>Interpretation of local WW1 stories for Centenary of Anzac</p> <p>Reinvigorate Red Chair Artist Talks to include symposiums, debates with a focus on professional practice</p> <p>Explore potential for Arts &amp; Culture networking program</p> <p>Initiate cultural partnerships with local traders under Brand Nillumbik</p>	<p>Develop public education program component of the collection</p> <p>Explore potential for tertiary arts school internships</p> <p>Investigate potential for shop-front galleries</p> <p>Collection exhibition of iconic Nillumbik locations</p>	<p>Develop potential for percent for art policy</p> <p>Explore potential to increase integration of the arts into Open Cellars</p> <p>Explore potential to develop arts projects to add value to Children’s Week, International Women’s Day and Seniors Festival</p>	<p>Asset Management</p> <p>Community Services and Social Development</p> <p>Economic Development</p> <p>Living &amp; Learning Nillumbik</p> <p>Combined Nillumbik Heritage Group</p> <p>Nillumbik Tourism Association</p> <p>Traders Associations</p>

### OBJECTIVES

Cultural tourism

Researching arts

Support ‘business of the arts’

Valuing and investing in the arts

Economic development

## GOAL FOUR: CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

A creative community solves problems together. Artists can challenge the past, stimulate new ideas and echo broader societal concerns.

Meets:

- Council plan goal “*Our built environment*”, to provide infrastructure and plan for a built environment which respects and preserves the unique character of the Green Wedge
- Community values of a *local village life and creative expression, art and cultural exchange*

YEAR 4: Practice	YEAR 5: Now look here	YEAR 6: Cultural vitality	Collaborators
<p>Explore development of creative initiatives for new community centres</p> <p>Complete registration of on-line collection</p> <p>Acknowledge and celebrate practice, people and groups</p>	<p>Explore potential to develop arts projects to add value to early literacy programs</p> <p>Explore development of creative initiatives for township masterplans</p> <p>Acknowledge and celebrate places and activities</p>	<p>Support development of arts projects with social awareness focus</p> <p>Develop programs for longevity of award winners</p> <p>Curate exhibition of visual arts and memorabilia quintessential to Nillumbik’s own culture</p>	<p>Community Development Community Services and Social Development Strategic Planning</p>

### OBJECTIVES

Arts education

Fostering creativity

Recognising artists

Presenting the arts

Increasing networking capacity across sectors

## GOAL FIVE: COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

An important role is communication, listening, leadership, support local culture and stimulate new ideas – “be the glue, not the do”.

Meets:

- Council plan goal “*Our council*”, to provide good governance, leadership and responsible financial management and to make decisions in an inclusive and transparent manner
- Community value of an *experience, discovery and fulfilment*

YEAR 4: Practice	YEAR 5: Now look here	YEAR 6: Cultural vitality	Collaborators
<p>Complete audit of Nillumbik’s memorials</p> <p>Pursue integration of programs with Melbourne Writers Festival to embed Nillumbik as integral to Melbourne’s status as a UNESCO City of Literature</p> <p>Development of public programs to add value to exhibitions program</p>	<p>Commence asset registration of Nillumbik’s memorials</p> <p>Establish conservation fund for Nillumbik’s memorials</p> <p>Revalue Nillumbik Art Collection</p> <p>Review maintenance fund for Nillumbik Art Collection</p>	<p>Practice development opportunities with guest speakers to inspire and strengthen community-owned arts and cultural initiatives</p> <p>Investigate potential for dedicated Arts and Culture website</p>	<p>Asset Management</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Organisational Development and Risk</p>

### OBJECTIVES

Civic engagement

Organisational capacity - new ideas

Creative exchange and forums

Cross-council team – annual signature projects

Civic policies and strategies

Information sharing





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## Moving Forward

Staff and Advisory Committees are supported by Council to stimulate and support arts and cultural activity in Nillumbik Shire. They are eager to respond to your ideas and we invite you to contact us to discuss how you wish to grow your arts and culture.

## Resourcing the Cultural Plan

The identified actions will be achieved through a blend of existing budgets, external funding, and intended initiatives such as 1% for arts. External funding will be a mix of grants, sponsorship, gifts under Council's DGR tax deductibility status, and philanthropic funds. Integral to the implementation of the Cultural Plan is the Arts and Culture team and the Arts Advisory Committee (Acquisition and Strategy).

## Arts and Culture Team

The Arts and Culture Team at Nillumbik Council has a small, dedicated team of specialist workers committed to the cultural life of Shire. Sitting within the Community Participation, Learning and Culture Unit, Arts and Culture staff work with community members, artists, partner organisations, other Council departments and external funding bodies to support and deliver programs that enhance cultural wellbeing.

At the time of endorsement of Years Four to Six actions of the second edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, (September 2014) the Arts and Culture team amounts to 3.6 EFT and is comprised of the following roles:

<b>Permanent positions</b>	<b>Fraction of fulltime</b>
Arts and Culture Coordinator	0.8 EFT
Visual Arts Development Officer	1.0 EFT
Exhibitions Officer	0.1 EFT
Cultural Development Officer	0.8 EFT
Administration Officer	0.5 EFT
<b>Temporary positions</b>	<b>Fraction of fulltime</b>
Local History Officer	0.2 EFT
Literary Arts Project Officer	0.2 EFT

## Arts Advisory Committee (Acquisition and Strategy)

To provide a formal mechanism for Council to consult with key stakeholders, seek specialist advice, and enable community participation in arts and cultural planning and development.

## 2018 and Onward

As a result of the themes and strategies delivered from 2011 to 2017, we will better understand each other and how we represent ourselves through media, image and word. We will be more aware of our interactions with the environment, each other and the capacity of imagination to expand the realm of the humanly possible. Within ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** these communication tools will have provided the means for ensuring ongoing dialogue between Council and community and continuous planning of actions aimed to ensure a creative and innovative future for Nillumbik.

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## Valuing Community Involvement

This cultural plan has been developed for the particular time and context of Nillumbik Shire Council, in consultation with a variety of stakeholders: people who live, work, study and play in our communities.

During 2013 and 2014 Nillumbik Shire Council's Arts and Culture team worked with specialist cultural planning consultant, Irene Pagram for the purposes of the second edition ***Growing our Arts and Culture***.

We would like to thank the Arts Advisory Committee (Acquisition and Strategy) for their part in the actioning of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***:

Cr Helen Coleman (Chair)  
Jessie Imam  
Ute Leiner  
Jenni Mitchell  
Valerie Murray  
Elizabeth Nettleton  
Julie Tipene O'Toole  
Jessica Page  
Debbie Robinson  
Libby Schreiber

For the development of the first edition of ***Growing our Arts and Culture***, the Arts and Culture team worked through 2010 and 2011 with arts consultants, Marnie Badham, internationally renowned cultural researcher, and Robin Laurie, practitioner specialising in arts as an agency for change to develop ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** in response to what we have seen and heard through consultation and policy review. In the development of the original cultural plan, we visited many cultural events and venues in the Shire to better understand the local cultural landscape.

We would like to thank the initial steering committee members for their dedication and vision across several years towards the completion of the original cultural plan:

Cr Helen Coleman (Chair)  
Gwen Ford (of late)  
Simone de Haan (of late)  
Helen Lucas  
Barry McKimm  
Linda McLeod  
Isabel Nalato  
Margaret Summerton

This strategy builds on local heritage, history and the work of culture makers and artists, while recommending strategic actions that can position Nillumbik Shire Council with a creative and innovative future. We want to thank all those organisations and groups, artists and community members who have provided generous insights and ideas.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Conceptual Frameworks: ideas behind the cultural plan

#### Cultural Ecosystem: a model of inter-dependence

The model developed in ***Growing our Arts and Culture*** relies on connection and inter-dependence, suggesting that cultural diversity and all forms of artistic expression are necessary. The cultural ecosystem model has obvious links to cultural and environmental sustainability and the importance of diversity. The plan implements this ecological model both metaphorically and quite literally. Like our natural environment, the cultural environment in Nillumbik requires investment, assessment, and appreciation for it to be resilient and sustainable. If one element of the ecosystem is neglected, the other components of the whole can never reach their potential.

Arts education, community arts and arts access activities fuel ideas, emerging artists and the audiences required to nourish professional art practice. Professional arts stimulate engagement, inspiration and interest across the community. Arts specific venues, repurposed venues and public places, and collaboration between highly trained groups, passionate individuals and hobbyists, other business resources that support artists, are all key ingredients in this ecosystem. These things contribute to the development, creation, production, presentation, and dissemination of artwork. When planning for culture, we need to consider all of the components required to sustain this creative environment.

The ecological model recognises that new ideas often come - not from the centre - but from the hybrid vigour of the edges or other unexpected places. It is these spontaneous ideas, often the precursors of change that come from outside and invigorate and challenge mainstream culture. We need to make space to see and hear new creative ideas.

#### Creativity and Innovation

The cultural ecosystem recognises its past and its future. Cultural heritage and a reputation for cultural vitality are important to Nillumbik's character. We must understand our past to know who we are and where we hope to go in the future. However, creativity will challenge this past through the arts, science and philosophy to create new meaning.<sup>12</sup> This creative and innovative process means risk taking, imagination, even the difficulty of letting go of what we know, and actively embracing something new.

Nillumbik Shire Council values our significant programs like Red Chair, Laughing Waters Artist in Residence, Courthouse Readings, the Nillumbik Prize and the Alan Marshall Short Story Award. This plan recognises and supports these continuing signature programs, but challenges them to reinvent, develop new audiences and work on new innovations. The strategies and themes laid out in the action plan offer a new lens and opportunity for new ideas and recognition of new voices. Nillumbik's established artists and programs have an important role to play in fostering this continued environment of creativity and innovation.

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<sup>12</sup> Dick Stanley, "The Three Faces of Culture: Why Culture Is a Strategic Good Requiring Government Policy Attention," in *Accounting for Culture: Thinking through Cultural Citizenship*, ed. Caroline Andrew (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2005).

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