

## **MINUTES OF ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2025**

- Present: Councillor Indu Balachandran (Chairperson)  
James Austen, Community Member  
Wendy Blaxland, Community Member  
Andrea Doney, Community Member  
Mary Faith, Community Member  
Hong Huang, Community Member  
Dee Jackson, Community Member  
Anne Louise Cahill, Community Member  
Shipra Shah, Community Member
- Staff Present: Director Community, Janice Bevan  
Manager, Governance & Corporate Strategy, Chris Jones  
Marketing and Programs Lead, Library and Art Centre, Sam Groth  
Community Development Officer, Caine Wilkins
- Others Present:
- Apologies: Councillor Barbara Ward (Deputy Chairperson)  
Manager Visitor Experience and Events, Melanie Morson  
Manager Library Services, Michelle Swan-Beardmore  
Tony Bates, Community Member  
Michelle Cahill, Community Member  
Lee Johnston, Community Member (resigned from committee)  
Johnathan Karanikas, Community Member  
Tom Sweeney, Community Member

*The Meeting commenced at 5:08 PM*

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interest was declared.

### **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **NOTING OF MINUTES**

#### **Minutes of Arts and Culture Committee**

File: S14547  
Meeting held 4 November 2024  
Minutes numbered ACC01 to ACC02

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Minutes numbered ACC01 to ACC02 circulated to Councillors were taken as read and confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings of the Meeting.

## **Guest Speaker**

File: S14328

*Vide: GB.1*

### **Mary Faith, Director, Grace Cossington Smith Gallery and Community Member**

- Mary Faith, Director, Grace Cossington Smith Gallery and Community Member introduced the Gallery and provided an overview of Gallery history, Heritage Status and 2025 Exhibition Calendar.
- Mary described the positive relationships and associations with the art sector in the neighbouring LGA of Hornsby.
- Mary advised that students gain regular exposure to artists presenting their work at the gallery, which is located on Abbotsleigh School grounds, and mentioned the upstairs artist studio utilised by year 12 HSC students from the school.
- Mary described upcoming exhibitions showcasing local artists and notes the Gallery has agency to determine its own exhibition programs
- Mary explained the Gallery's position was unique, being privately funded by Abbotsleigh
- The gallery will look at hosting more small events in the future.
- The Committee discuss the utilisation of the space as a multifunctional, versatile venue that has previously hosted a wedding and a Sean Tan exhibition last year, attracting public schools across the LGA and described an upcoming multimedia exhibition with projectors and smart TVs.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For members to note.

## **Ku-ring-gai Art Centre**

File: S14328

*Vide: GB.2*

### **Sam Groth, Marketing and Programs Lead, Library and Art Centre, Ku-ring-gai Council**

- Sam Groth, Marketing and Programs Lead, Library and Art Centre, Ku-ring-gai Council, advised members of upcoming Programs and Exhibitions at the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre.
- Sam talked about the very successful Art Centre Opening Day earlier this year.
- Adults have the opportunity to engage in a tester class at the Art Centre to gauge interest prior to committing to a 9-week term of classes. This has resulted in a significant increase in new enrolments.
- Sam Groth congratulated two committee members who lead a class at the Art Centre, for reaching the maximum enrolment in their term classes.
- Sam talked about the current *"Seeing Red"* exhibition at the Art Centre, featuring art showcasing Australia's outback and the Lunar New Year.

## **Dee Jackson, President Ku-ring-gai Art Society/Committee Member presenting on the Celebrating 60 Years Exhibition at the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre.**

- Dee Jackson, President, Ku-ring-gai Art Society/Committee Member introduced the Celebrating 60 Years Exhibition at the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre, 11 April to 16 June 2025.
- There will be 22 art works from the talented artists from the Ku-ring-gai Art Society.
- Dee expressed gratitude towards the Art Centre and Ku-ring-gai Council, with specific thanks to the Committee Chair, Cr Balachandran and Director of Community, Janice Bevan, for their support to improve the heritage celebration.
- Dee noted the list of artist applications to be featured was heavily oversubscribed and advised that artists had either once lived in Ku-ring-gai area or were once affiliated despite their current location.
- Dee noted Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Mayors have attended exhibitions in the past and the society's extensive records and documentation have been taken to the archives held by the State Library.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For members to note.

### **Events Update**

File: S14328

*Vide: GB.3*

### **Janice Bevan, Director, Community Ku-ring-gai Council**

Janice Bevan, Director, Community, Ku-ring-gai Council, provided an Arts and Cultural Events update in place of the Manager of Visitor Experience and Events, Melanie Morson, Ku-ring-gai Council. Janice describes the following events:

#### **Gai-mariagal Festival**

- The Gai-mariagal Festival was founded in 2001 and aims to raise awareness of First Nations People living in the Northern Sydney region.
- The Festival starts on Sorry Day, 26 May and goes through to the end of NAIDOC Week the second week in July- 17 July 2025.
- The Festival committee includes local government, other agencies, businesses and numerous community groups with events to include workshops, art exhibitions, performances, films, talks, degustation and more.

#### **Arts & Cultural Festival**

- Celebrating the diverse and thriving arts and cultural community from 18 June - 24 July.
- The program will consist of a variety of events including local exhibitions, theatre performances, arts and creative workshops and film screenings. Ku-ring-gai's Arts and Cultural Festival aims to increase the awareness of arts and culture in our region, showcasing the rich culture of the area and fostering the capability of local talent.

#### **Multicultural Festival**

- A celebration of Ku-ring-gai's cultural diversity at St Ives Showground on Sunday 23 March. 10am – 3pm
- The festival will include a vibrant display of music and dance performances,

interactive workshops and a variety of stalls featuring cultural wares, community information and culinary delights. There will be activities for children including craft, camel rides and mini train rides.

### **Heritage Festival**

- The Ku-ring-gai Heritage Festival will return for its 4th year from 18 April to 19 May. Ku-ring-gai Council presents a program of events for the National Trust Australian Heritage Festival which explores the rich history of Ku-ring-gai and celebrates Indigenous, natural, built and cultural heritage. The Festival aims to provide the community with an understanding of the rich history of Ku-ring-gai, developing a deeper connection to the area. The event program will be hosted during the Australian Heritage Festival in partnership with the National Trust. The Festival will include digital photographic displays, open homes, historical talks, walking tours, readings, art workshop and fashion exhibitions from festival partners.

### **The Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize**

- The Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize is the highest valued Art Prize for women in Australia and in 2025 with \$58,000 in prize money available.
- Entries Close – 5 March 2025 (12pm AEDST)
- Finalists Announced – 8 May 2025
- Opening Night – 20 June 2025 at Ravenswood School for Girls
- Exhibition of Finalists – 21 June to 7 July 2025 – Free Entry on Thursdays to Sundays
- The Committee commented on the placement of the events in winter and over school holidays. Some members identify this may be intentional to provide families not travelling during the holidays with entertainment and to provide activities in a generally sleepy part of the year.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For members to note Arts and Culture Events.

### **Arts and Cultural Forum 2025**

File: S14328

*Vide: GB.4*

### **Cr Balachandran, Ku-ring-gai Council and Committee Members**

- The Committee Chairperson Cr Balachandran invited committee members to engage in discussion about objectives and interest for an Arts Cultural Forum in 2025, focusing on the most vital issues and needs of the arts community.
- Committee members advocated for the refurbishment and renovation of Marian Street Theatre or a functional equivalent, advising that it is increasingly hard to find a performance space and venues in the area that have suitable infrastructure and are financially accessible.
- Committee members expressed a strong need for a multipurpose Arts and Cultural Hub to accommodate the diverse range of arts and cultural groups in the community, encourage youth engagement, facilitate sector collaboration from varying forms of artists and integrate with festivals like Writers Festival or Sydney Festival.
- Committee members highlighted the success of Cultural Hubs in neighbouring LGAs in developing a relationship with audience through showcasing and fostering community talent and suggested they speak at the Forum.

- Committee members referenced a presentation from earlier meeting, considering the possibility of three options for a cultural multipurpose space and asked for an update on how this is progressing with council.
- The Committee agree the wider community needs to be brought into the conversation at The Forum to understand how a Cultural Hub would impact community.
- Cr Balachandran informed the Committee that council was working to retain the current DA for Marian Street Theatre and next steps will be evaluated at the council meeting in April.
- Committee members considered the Ku-ring-gai Art Centre was understated and it would be opportune to promote its services through the forum, with potential to host the forum at the Art Centre.
- Committee members recognised significant contributions from artists in the local community for Arts and Culture and proposed an award be integrated into the Forum. Multiple categories were suggested such as Arts Citizen of the Year, Art Contribution Award, Emerging Artists or Musician of the Year. The Committee concur awards support artists through profile building and increasing cultural capacity of the area.
- Committee Members discuss the relevance of a local Artist Directory. Director, Community, Janice Bevan, informed the Committee of previous discussions revealing the labour intensive and privacy risks associated with the Directory and advised a similar resource already in existence.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Committee agree the most significant issue faced by the Arts and Culture Community is the lack of suitable venues and a multipurpose Arts and Cultural Hub. The Committee recommend Ku-ring-gai Council consider how this could be resourced.
- The Committee agreed that a forum would provide an opportunity to hear the voices of the wider arts community and engage the wider community in the value and impact of such a Hub for the whole community.
- The Committee recommend that an award for Artist of the Year be included at the Arts and Culture Forum.

### **Ku-ring-gai Council Strategic Plan**

File: S14328

*Vide: GB.5*

### **Chris Jones, Manager, Governance and Corporate Strategy - Ku-ring-gai Council**

- Chris Jones, Manager, Governance and Corporate Strategy, Ku-ring-gai Council, introduced the Ku-ring-gai Council Strategic Plan and informed the Committee of the frameworks enforced by the NSW Government that Council must follow in its creation and referenced the main priority areas revealed through community consultation.
- Chris described the community and expert consultation process undertaken to inform the Council Strategic Plan and advised that over 100 community members attended workshops and 200 responses to surveys.
- Chris informed the Committee that the Draft Council Strategic Plan will be open for Public Exhibition following the next Council Meeting on 15 April, and that a feedback mechanism will allow committee members to make suggestions.
- Chris referred to the Cultural Facilities Strategy, and the Committee

recommended it be reviewed and recalculated.

- The Committee noted that in addition to the necessity for venues and a Cultural Hub, they would recommend the Council Strategic Plan includes opportunities to raise awareness of and celebrate the Arts.
- Chris Jones informed Committee Members that vibrant centres and creative spaces are one of the priorities for the Council Strategic Plan.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The Committee recommended the Council Strategic Plan address the lack of suitable venues and consider development of a multipurpose Arts and Cultural Hub.
- The Committee recommended that Council progress the development of the Cultural Facilities Strategy in the Council Strategic Plan.
- The Committee recommended that Council support raising awareness and celebrating the arts in the Council Strategic Plan.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Wendy Blaxland and Tony Bates - Committee Members**

- Wendy Blaxland individually reported the 'We ❤️ the Arts' event held by the Marian Street Theatre ACTION group as Tony Bates was an apology.
- The event was held at the Uniting Church given poor weather conditions.
- Performers included a 50 woman choir, 2 person dance group, two 4 and 5 year old violinists and 100 performers in total with 100 guests in the audience.
- Wendy considered that Marian Street Theatre appealed to a diverse range of audiences and artists, and many local residents and performers supported the plans for the Marian Street Theatre.

### **Dee Jackson - Committee Member**

- Dee Jackson requested increased education for people from outside the area who are unsure how to manage green spaces or interact with wildlife.
- Director, Community, Janice Bevan, informed the Committee of many services that exist that would meet this need in the community.

### **Caine Wilkins - Community Development Officer, Ku-ring-gai Council**

- Caine Wilkins provided an update on the Community Grants Program in Kim Harris' absence.
- Ku-ring-gai Council is inviting community groups and arts/cultural organisations to apply for the 2025 community grants opening in March.
- The grants provide the opportunity for community groups and arts/cultural organisations to develop exciting new, innovative programs that will further enhance the lives of Ku-ring-gai residents. Further details about on how to apply and the grant criteria will be available soon on council's website.
  - Arts and Cultural grants up to \$5000.
  - Community Development grants up to \$5000.
  - Small equipment grants up to \$2000.

**Cr Indu Balachandran – Ku-ring-gai Council, Chair Arts and Culture Committee**

- Cr Indu Balachandran advised the next meeting will be held at Ku-ring-gai Arts Centre, Roseville at a date to be decided in May.

Proposed dates:

1. Monday 05 May 2025, 5:00PM
2. Monday 12 May 2025, 5:00PM

Could members please advise their preference by Friday 7 March 2025.

*The Meeting closed at 6.50pm*