



Baw Baw Shire Council
Arts, Culture and Events Strategy 2017-2021



Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land that makes up Baw Baw Shire. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present.

In 2000, Baw Baw Shire Council committed through our statement of reconciliation to build mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and other Australians that allows us to work together to solve problems and generate success that is in everyone's best interests.

Council is committed to walking together in harmony, friendship, reconciliation and recognition

Overview

The **Arts, Culture and Events Strategy** guides Baw Baw Shire Council's delivery of services to the community and the region.

Baw Baw Shire Council's vision for Arts, Culture and Events:

"The social and cultural fabric of our life is rich. We are well served by sport, recreation, cultural and social facilities and services. Our vibrant arts are integral to our identity and reputation. These things bring us together, keep us healthy and build our sense of understanding and belonging.

Baw Baw Shire Council envisages the future in which we aspire to being a prosperous community where:

A thriving arts and cultural industry is present in our daily lives and underpins the social prosperity of our urban and rural areas. The community meets in the hearts of the towns to experience food, music and artistic pursuits. Vibrant, active streets, civic footpaths and open spaces are community meeting places. These areas support arts and cultural activities which are an integral part of the health and wellness of our community."

(Baw Baw 2050)

Community arts practice, grass roots activity, local festivals and celebrations, preservation of heritage (both physical and narrative), development of local stories and talents, recognition of indigenous culture and ongoing development of indigenous arts practice, are all part of the fabric of cultural activity.

Baw Baw Shire Council's Objective

- ***Vibrant Communities***

Our Outcomes

- ***Quality community focussed services, facilities and infrastructure to support a growing community.***
- ***A vibrant, healthy and inclusive community.***
- ***Thriving town centres, rural and remote communities.***



Baw Baw Shire – Creative at heart.

Baw Baw Shire is located in the West Gippsland region of Victoria, about 100 kilometres east of Melbourne. Baw Baw Shire is bounded by Yarra Ranges Shire and Mansfield Shire in the north, Wellington Shire and Latrobe City in the east, South Gippsland Shire in the south, and Cardinia Shire in the west.

Baw Baw Shire is a predominantly rural area, with rural-residential and urban areas in numerous townships. The Shire encompasses a total land area of about 4,000 square kilometres. The northern part of the Shire is heavily forested, while the southern part is used largely for dairy farming and agriculture. The middle part of the Shire is more densely populated, particularly along the Princes Highway and the Gippsland railway line. The main population centres are Warragul and Drouin, and to a lesser extent, Trafalgar. Smaller townships include Darnum, Longwarry, Neerim South, Noojee, Thorpdale and Yarragon. Land is used largely for dairying, farming (particularly beef, potatoes and fruit and vegetables) and forestry. Tourism is also an important industry.

The original inhabitants of the Baw Baw area were the Kulin and Kurnai Aboriginal people. European settlement dates from the 1860s, with land used mainly for farming and timber production, and mining in some areas. Population was minimal until the 1870s, with growth through to the 1890s, spurred by the opening of the Gippsland railway line. Expansion continued during the early 1900s, particularly in the townships nearest the railway line. Expansion took place in the larger townships (Drouin, Trafalgar and Warragul) during the post-war years. Several water storage facilities were constructed, particularly during the 1970s. The population of the Shire increased from the mid-1990s, rising from about 33,000 in 1996 to about 46,600 in 2016. Most of the recent growth has been in Drouin and

Warragul (current population about 16,000 combined). Strong population growth is expected to continue, with the population forecast to grow to 67,700 residents by 2031..

Baw Baw Shire core business includes the provision of Arts, Culture and Events services to the community. This is principally provided through a department which assists and supports community cultural development and which manages and operates West Gippsland Arts Centre, a purpose built, 492 seat proscenium arch theatre built in 1982 and active since as a major participant in presenting professional performing arts by National companies and artists. The venue is an important cultural hub for the community, hosting many performances by a wide range of community groups and schools, by visiting commercial touring artists and presenting an annual program of professional performing arts curated from the national touring network's menu in response to the needs of the immediate community as well as the broader audience coming (increasingly) from the wider Gippsland region as well as Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs.

In developing this strategy, Council has consulted widely, both with regular users of services, participants and stakeholders and with the wider community. Presentations and discussions with a wide range of community groups have been undertaken and Council's Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee, representing a wide range of community stakeholders, have also taken an important role in gaining input from stakeholders and the broad community.

Community feedback is here summarised in terms of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, which, along with Council Policy and the broader Council plan, provides a foundation for this four year strategic plan.

STRENGTHS

Council delivered services in Arts, Culture and Events help build strong, healthy connected communities and Council encourages and supports accessible arts projects and activities developed by the community for the community.

The West Gippsland Arts Centre is a major regional centre which attracts visitors to Baw Baw Shire, provides residents and visitors with access to major professional performances and offers exceptional resources and facilities for fostering local talent, providing training and inspiring the next generation to engage with the arts.

Arts, Culture and Events will play an important part in a strategy to attract visitors and new investment. They can be delivered as a driver for “liveability” (making Baw Baw a desirable place to live, work and play), and to drive cultural tourism.

West Gippsland Arts Centre

The 492 seat West Gippsland Arts Centre was established in Warragul in 1982 as a major venue to serve the Gippsland Region. It was the result of fund raising and lobbying by local residents and the Council of the day, in conjunction with the State Government (who also opened Geelong Performing Art Centre (1981) and Hamer Hall in Melbourne (1982) in the same period as part of a regional strategy for the arts.)

Apart from bringing internationally and nationally known performing artists to ‘the doorstep’ of local audiences, the West Gippsland Arts Centre provides professionally managed facilities for the use of many local artists and participants. In 2016, nearly 60% of venue use

was by local non-professional groups and schools and these presentations attracted over 50% of all attendances.

Annual attendances at the venue have been in the vicinity of 60,000 each year for the last three years.

A review of the postcode origin of ticket buyers to events shows an increasing number of those buying tickets are from outside Baw Baw Shire, including a growing number of visitors coming from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

In addition to arts uses (including increasing use of foyer spaces as visual arts exhibition galleries), the venue is used for meetings, seminars, conferences and many social events. It currently has a contract arrangement with a catering service to provide event catering, café service and licensed foyer bar facilities.



Community and Visual Arts

There are many individual artists and active artists' and arts groups in Baw Baw Shire. Baw Baw Shire Council currently provides support in a number of ways, including subsidies for community users of WGAC, Community Development Grants, providing advice regarding State or Federal government funding opportunities, promotion through Council's media and general support through provision of the Cultural Development Officer's position.



In 2001, Baw Baw Shire Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee (ACAC) was established by Council and is ongoing. ACAC is a committee of council and provides advice to council on matters pertaining to the arts and the implementation of its arts policy.

In October 2007, Council adopted a Public Art Policy. Part of this policy was adoption of a 'percent for art' plan which would earmark 1% of the total capital budget of Council and Government funded

projects costing \$1m or more, to enable Council to commission public art and to acquire cultural assets for the Shire.

Baw Baw Shire Council owns a diverse collection of artworks, some donated to Council and some acquired by Council, purchased from an annual budget allocation. Council's Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee has developed a clear policy for acquisition and collection.

Baw Baw Shire is a participant in the Creative Gippsland Network, with cultural officers from 6 Gippsland shires who, since 2009 have together planned and produced an annual 'all of Gippsland' festival in May each year. This event aims to attract visitors to the region as well as to encourage intra-regional tourism. It also aims to highlight arts practice and increase active participation in the arts.

Events

Baw Baw Shire has many community led events each year and Council provides direct assistance to the organisers through coordinated support services to help them manage such things as permits, risk, promotion and grant applications. Council's Events Coordinator responds to and provides assistance to 120 – 150 event applications or enquiries per year, ranging from sporting events, cultural events, family events and major promotional and visitor events such as 'Farmworld'.

Functions and Conferences

West Gippsland Arts Centre provides facilities for, and hosts a significant number of meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences each year and provides catering and technical services in support of these.

WEAKNESSES

There is an identified shortage of arts facilities/resources available at the community level. There are few spaces for community art exhibition, workshop arts spaces, and rehearsal/creative spaces, that are affordable and accessible.

A scoping study is required to identify what these needs are and to consider calls for sustainable 'Community Creative Spaces' (or Creative Hubs), useable for all sorts of arts and community activities including meetings, networking gatherings, visual arts activities, performances, dance and music rehearsal.

Council owns valuable heritage buildings and a collection of art work, and an important heritage collection is under the custodianship of a volunteer Historical Society. There is a need to explore how these assets can be sustainably conserved and made more accessible to visitors and to the community.

As noted, Council owns a significant collection of artwork, however works are currently displayed in Council buildings or held in secure storage, and at present, little of the Council collection is available to be viewed by the general public.

Council has a policy of recognition of Indigenous culture and acknowledges the Kurnai Nations as the traditional custodians of the land, however there is no strong connection to sustain inclusion of indigenous culture in Arts, Culture and Events programs and services.

Library services currently sit outside the Council's Arts and Culture Policy scope however there is a need to explore opportunities for better alignment in the context of a 'Cultural Precinct' plan.

There are a number of active community festivals and events which depend on volunteers for their sustainability. Many events are showing declining numbers of people prepared to volunteer. Council has no direct role to play in the delivery of these events, even though their social and economic value is recognised, and they are prone to 'falling over' if community volunteers are not available.

Events support services offered by Council tend to be 'reactive' and there is little done in this sphere in terms of attracting major in-bound events or producing major events ourselves.

The majority of Council's arts and cultural events and services are delivered in the major towns and there is a shortage of services delivered into smaller towns and rural areas. Local halls in smaller towns are available but under-utilised.

Although West Gippsland Arts Centre hosts many meetings and conferences each year, the venue has been unable to attract major conferences which potentially bring large numbers of visitors to the Shire.

There is no coordinated Visitor Information service in Warragul or Drouin to assist the many visitors who come here and opportunities to develop the visitor economy are lost.

OPPORTUNITIES

The community currently benefits from Council support for an active and vibrant arts program and the importance of the arts and culture is recognised in Council's annual budget commitment.

Developing a new Arts and Cultural Policy and Strategic Plan gives an opportunity to reassess Baw Baw Shire's commitment and to identify future directions and needs.

Management of existing assets to ensure they remain fit for purpose is important as is consideration of new facilities. The needs of smaller communities in the Shire need to be considered equally with those of the major population centres.

Recent developments

In 2010, coordination of community cultural development and management of West Gippsland Arts Centre were brought into the same department and Council's Cultural Development Officer moved to work alongside the WGAC team under the banner 'Arts and Culture'.

In 2012, Events Coordination was also integrated with Arts and Culture and the scope of the department's objectives was further widened to Arts, Culture and Events.

In 2012, ACAC led in drafting policies to guide Council's acquisition and collecting of artwork, and a specialist consultant has completed an audit, catalogue/inventory and condition report for the collection.

The Baw Baw Shire Tourism Strategy has an impact on the strategic context. Arts and Culture have been identified in the strategy consultation process as important contributing elements in the

package of offers we can present to visitors and the economic benefits of tourism can be enhanced by integration of arts and cultural opportunities. In 2015, the Arts, Culture and Events department was relocated to the Planning and Economic Development Directorate.

In 2016, Council adopted the new Arts and Culture Policy as a framework on which to build this strategic plan.

WGAC Upgrade Project

Following on from Civic Place Master Planning, community consultation, economic impact assessment and business plan development, full schematic designs were completed in 2015/2016 to improve the accessibility of the Arts Centre and expand its capacity to 750 seats.

Council received supporting funding for the project from State and Federal Government and moved to commence works in April 2017.

The building upgrade works are expected to be completed in mid 2018. During 2017/2018, WGAC will present a program of performances utilising outdoor spaces, community halls and neighbouring Shire's performing arts facilities.





THREATS

Baw Baw Shire's population is expected to grow significantly over the next ten years and with that growth will come significant change in the community's demographic and social 'mix', as well as a change in their expectations of Council's services in the Arts and Culture.

Significant Arts and Culture infrastructure projects currently underway or planned for neighbouring Shires will create greater competition, especially in terms of commercial and conference hire and audience attendances.

The State Government's rate-capping policy will put increased pressure on Council's capacity to deliver services that are too far beyond the traditional priority areas of 'roads and rubbish'.

Arts and Culture services are seen by some in the community as being of lower priority and thus, not as important to fund in a competitive budget environment.

The loss of employment in the energy sector in Gippsland (and in associated industries) may have flow on effects on the broader local economy and the ability to sustain arts and culture activities.

What is Council's Role?

The Policy context underpinning this strategy:

'Baw Baw 2050'

'Baw Baw 2050' is a community vision that identifies directions needed to achieve our preferred future. It informs Council policy and plans and positions us well to develop a new Arts, Culture and Events Strategy. The words highlighted in the following extracts from this document indicate the potential connections between the vision for the community and the place of Council in delivering Arts, Culture and Events services.

The vision sees **happy healthy people** where ***"everyday life is vibrant and exciting with opportunities to get involved, to produce, to create and to learn."***

We will **share prosperity and knowledge** and have **thriving villages** where ***"at the centre of each community (there) are places and spaces for people to come together. Town centres provide retail and service opportunities and experience....where artists and artisans build their reputation and that of their products."***

Baw Baw 2050

Baw Baw Shire Council Arts and Culture Policy (2016): Business Activities of Council.

- Council's Arts, Cultural and Events services to the community will be delivered in an integrated manner that maximises the opportunities for community engagement and participation in arts, cultural and community activities. Activities and programmes may occur in the community or in designated cultural facilities.
- Council will ensure management of its cultural assets and facilities in an efficient, programmed manner to ensure they are efficiently used, well maintained, presented and equipped, responsive to community needs, and professionally operated.
- Council will encourage and support access to these facilities and develop opportunities for the broad community to engage with arts and culture, and experience both professional and non-professional/community arts practice.
- Council facilities will be used to provide and sustain cultural 'hubs' in which the broad community, artists, customers, patrons and visitors can feel welcome, included, valued and inspired.
- Council will support and promote arts and cultural activity as a means to stimulate visitation and tourism and as a major contributor to growth in the visitor economy.
- Council will be responsible for ensuring management of diverse programmes delivered in these facilities to enable engagement with (and by) the community.

- Council will promote activities which support the development of local creative skills and talent, recognising the value of encouraging, attracting and retaining creative industry.
- Council will be responsible for the acquisition, management and conservation of cultural assets including the Council collection of art works and memorabilia. Council will ensure the collection is available to be viewed by the community in exhibitions and other events.
- Council will be responsible for the implementation of a Public Art Policy which enables public spaces to be enlivened by a range of art installations and activities. Council will manage and maintain these cultural assets for the benefit of the whole community.
- Council will be responsible for ensuring management and maintenance of Council cultural facilities and assets in a programmed and sustainable manner and provide for annual budgets to ensure ongoing asset management through both reactive and proactive/programmed maintenance to meet the standards of all relevant policies relating to Essential Services maintenance, compliance, environmental sustainability, OH&S and work safety and planning for future development of assets.
- Through these activities, Council will promote Baw Baw Shire's reputation as a vibrant centre for arts and cultural activity and will ensure the management and delivery of arts, cultural and events services and assets in a way that creates benefits for social and community well-being, and economic development.

Baw Baw Shire Council Plan 2017-2021

The Council Plan represents a four year road map for the Council, and describes the key priorities that Council will focus on over the four year term of the elected Council. It describes a number of goals, what we want to achieve and our key priorities for the next four years.

In developing the Council Plan, Council has considered its long-term infrastructure and financial plans, community aspirations and views for the future, emerging challenges and issues, and Council's role, capacity and capabilities. We also conducted two community workshops (including one focused on local youth), and a community survey.

Approximately 300 people, including the Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee, were involved in initial community consultation for the Council Plan, and among the key themes mentioned are:

- Maintaining our rural feel as our community grows.
- Community vibrancy, inclusiveness, arts culture and events.



Baw Baw Shire Arts, Culture and Events Strategy 2017 - 2021

Our Community's Vision:

Happy, healthy people sharing prosperity and knowledge from living sustainably and in harmony with our rural identity, thriving villages, productive and inspiring landscapes.

Our Objective:

Vibrant Communities.

About this objective: Council seeks to support the vibrancy and character of our local community as it grows and changes, through good planning, provision of its community focused services, facilities and infrastructure, and through support for local communities, health and wellbeing, recreation, youth, arts culture and events. We will also support smaller and remote communities in meeting their needs for vibrant community life.

“Vibrant community life is strongly valued. There are opportunities for social interaction in our neighbourhoods, on the streets where we live, in shopping areas, in **community places and spaces**, in recreation and **cultural groups** or on the sporting field.”

“Strong volunteer and mentoring programs **value and recognise volunteers and the contribution** they make.”

The **health and wellbeing** of the community is **improved through access to good food, arts and entertainment** and opportunities for an active lifestyle.”

Baw Baw 2050

Our Outcomes (what we want to achieve):

- Quality community focussed services, facilities and infrastructure to support a growing community.
- A vibrant, healthy and inclusive community.
- Thriving town centres, rural and remote communities.

What is a Community?

A Community is a **group of people who share something in common.**

What connects a community could be geographic, cultural, social, a demographic feature, a shared interest or issue, a common experience or need.

Communities are **defined by their members and exist where there is awareness, structure or affinity between them.**

People can belong to more than one community.

Australia Council for the Arts

Our Strategies:

- Build a vibrant community of arts, culture and events.
 - 2017/2018 Budget Initiatives:
 - Redevelop West Gippsland Arts Centre into a premier regional performing arts facility.
 - Implementation of the Arts, Culture and Events Strategy to guide Council's programs and activities.

Strategy:

Build a vibrant community of arts, culture and events.

Outcomes/Objectives:

Quality community focussed services, facilities and infrastructure to support a growing and ageing community.

Initiatives and Actions:

1. Redevelop the West Gippsland Art Centre into a premier regional performing arts facility.
2. Develop West Gippsland Arts Centre's capacity to attract major conferences and events.
3. Consult with the Community to identify and scope the needs and opportunities for new or improved community 'creative' space(s), cultural/arts services or facilities.
4. Further develop the Community Cultural Facilities/ Creative Hub Master Plan for the Warragul Civic Place Precinct.
5. Develop and implement a comprehensive Asset Management Plan for Council's Arts and Culture facilities.

Performance Indicators:

1. West Gippsland Arts Centre upgrade project completed on schedule (mid 2018) and on budget (\$13.4m).
2. Number of inbound conferences and events. (yearly measure, aim for increase year on year.)
3. Community Cultural Facilities/Creative Hub Master Plan for the Warragul Civic Centre Precinct completed by December 2018.
4. Asset Management Plan for Council's Arts and Culture facilities developed and implemented by June 2019.

Strategy:

Build a vibrant community of arts, culture and events.

Outcomes/Objectives:

A vibrant, healthy and inclusive community.

Initiatives and Actions:

1. Implement the Arts, Culture & Events Strategy to guide Council's programs activities
2. Manage and program West Gippsland Arts Centre to deliver a diverse range of professional arts, cultural and events services to the community.
3. Manage and program West Gippsland Arts Centre to enable the community to actively engage in creating and performing.
4. Manage Council's Visual Arts Collection, Public Art and acquisitions/commissions. Program exhibitions in West Gippsland Arts Centre and other suitable Council facilities.
5. Establish and maintain strong relationships with key community stakeholder groups to ensure actions reflect and respond to the diversity of our community, inclusive of both its recent and indigenous culture.
6. Support community based arts, culture, events and festivals, and support and facilitate arts/events creation/production by and for the community.

7. Maintain reciprocally beneficial strategic connections in terms of Arts, Culture and Events with our neighbouring shires and across Gippsland.
8. Develop training and skills development opportunities offered in conjunction with (and in the context of) the work of the Arts, Culture and Events team.
9. Build social capital by providing spaces and facilities that allow the social and health benefits of arts and cultural activity to be enjoyed by the community.

Performance Indicators:

1. Attendance at the West Gippsland Arts Centre as a percentage of seat capacity (yearly measure, aim for 60%.)
2. Percentage of annual program engaging the community in creating and/or performing at West Gippsland Arts Centre. (yearly measure, aim for 50% of available days.)
3. Number of visual art exhibitions presented in Council facilities. (aim for 10 per year)
4. Annual satisfaction survey delivers Net Approval Rating of 70+
5. Asset Management Plan for Council's Arts and Culture facilities developed and implemented by June 2019.

Strategy:

Build a vibrant community of arts, culture and events.

Outcomes/Objectives:

Thriving town centres, rural and remote communities.

Initiatives and Actions:

1. Develop and deliver a program of Arts, Culture and Events to venues and communities in the smaller towns.
2. Work in partnership with local committees and communities to facilitate bookings and sustainable community use of Council community halls and facilities.
3. Promote Baw Baw Shire's Arts, Culture and Events and build opportunities to develop the visitor economy.

Performance Indicators:

1. Number of Arts/Culture events and activities per year delivered to venues and communities in smaller towns in Baw Baw Shire. (yearly measure, aim for 5 activities per year.)
2. Proportion of West Gippsland Arts Centre ticket purchasers who come from outside Baw Baw Shire. (yearly measure, aim for 50% of ticket purchasers, by home postcode.)

