



# Literature Review: The Contribution of Social and Cultural Infrastructure to Liveability

Prepared for the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils  
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# Literature Review: The Contribution of Social and Cultural Infrastructure to Liveability

## Executive Summary

This literature review was commissioned to support the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) in obtaining a better understanding of the role of social and cultural infrastructure in enhancing regional liveability. It takes the form of a literature review of research and policy initiatives in Australia and comparable international jurisdictions (e.g., New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States). Its objectives were to:

1. Define social and cultural infrastructure across several international jurisdictions (such as Australia, UK, Canada, NZ, US, and selected European Union countries), and comment on their alignment with NSROC's hierarchy of social infrastructure.
2. Identify, review and annotate key Australian and international research reports published since 2000.
3. Identify and critically assess emerging themes arising from focus 2 above.
4. Identify areas and trends most relevant to NSROC's Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020.

From the literature surveyed, 15 Australian and 6 international reports were selected as discussing the value of social and cultural infrastructure, and its relationship with liveability. From this review, it was clear that not only is there no single, definitive understanding of social and cultural infrastructure, but social infrastructure often embraces cultural infrastructure in conceptual terms. For this reason, it is proposed that the synthetic notions of *culturally-focused social infrastructure* and/or *socially-focused cultural infrastructure* are used in the interests of flexibility and feasibility. Key emerging issues and themes include the following:

- *Increasing and diversifying populations*: rapid population growth is making increased demands on social and cultural infrastructure, and councils need to ensure that infrastructure provision is responsive to changing community needs whilst being robust and fit for purpose. Increasingly diverse populations also mean that infrastructure must cater to a wide range of requirements, and councils' responses

must be in accordingly scaled. Noteworthy in this context is the ‘social infrastructure hierarchy’ articulated by NSROC in its Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020.

- *Creating a sense of place*: social and cultural infrastructure plays a significant role in creating a sense of place, with both built structures and associated services contributing to the attractiveness and significance of sites for both residents and visitors. A sense of place has positive implications for the development of social capital and material wellbeing, which in turn increase liveability value by degrees.
- *Accessibility*: in order to contribute to liveability, social and cultural infrastructure needs to be accessible. The idea of the ‘20-minute’ neighbourhood or ‘30-minute’ city is an oft-discussed notion underpinning this intention, with elements such as sustainable transport and walkability being key components. Local and state governments play central roles in ensuring that the available infrastructure is accessible.
- *Desirability of multipurpose infrastructure*: social and cultural infrastructure is increasingly multipurpose and flexible, as well as encompassing a range of facilities and resources. The flexible use of infrastructure, including the forms that move between or combine the social and the cultural, entails developing ‘culturally-focused social infrastructure’ and/or ‘socially-focused cultural infrastructure’. This fluidity and flexibility appeal to councils seeking to secure and allocate resources.
- *Economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure*: social and cultural infrastructure and services, and the growth of cultural production and participation, expand employment opportunities both directly in the cultural sector and in ancillary occupations and services. A vibrant cultural life, for instance, can ‘badge’ a city or region as an attractive place to visit or live, whilst cultural tourism generates and retains local income.
- *Non-economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure*: enabling people to participate in the arts and in other cultural activities promotes social connection and cohesion whilst reducing isolation. Such involvement also facilitates expanding knowledge across social difference and diversity, building trust within and across communities. These capabilities contribute to good mental health, and a sense of wellbeing and belonging, and thereby to liveability.

The value of robust social and cultural infrastructure to liveability, whether in a city or regional context, and offered at a variety of scales, is clearly evident. Whilst NSROC councils do not consider the provision of such infrastructure to be discretionary, councils cannot be sole providers of such infrastructure and associated services. As several national and international examples demonstrate, it is collaboration between various sectors and levels of government (including councils, state governments, national governments, corporations, private businesses, philanthropic organisations, not-for-profits, social enterprises, and educational institutions) that makes effective social and cultural infrastructure possible.

# Section 1: Purpose of the Literature Review

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) requested a literature review of research and policy initiatives carried out in Australia and in like-minded international jurisdictions (e.g., New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada, and the US) to obtain a better understanding of the role of social and cultural infrastructure in the liveability of a region.

This review is an appraisal of the current literature and policies that aim to articulate the value of social and cultural infrastructure that will be relevant to the future implementation of NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020*, which includes action to develop a better understanding of the value contribution of social and cultural infrastructure to liveability. As the guiding principle for provision of social infrastructure, No. 5, states: 'New trends in social infrastructure should be monitored to ensure that new facilities reflect emerging technologies and demand' (NSROC 2020: 6, 45).

A review of the literature on research into Australian and appropriate international jurisdictions will keep NSROC abreast of current approaches, while increasing its understanding of both the non-economic benefits of liveability across regions and the economic value of social and cultural infrastructure.

This literature review will assist NSROC members to develop a framework that assesses the benefits of 'hard' (or built) cultural facilities and the inclusion of 'soft' (or relationship-oriented) social and cultural infrastructure within business planning processes. The NSROC framework will prepare the members to respond to policy changes by the NSW government regarding the development of infrastructure.

As elaborated under Research Question 1 below, NSROC's particular definition of 'social infrastructure' focuses on 'community and cultural facilities'. These facilities may be deemed to have a 'social' purpose because they are used by NSROC communities. The use of such facilities enables opportunities for socialising, developing new or reinforcing existing networks, reducing isolation, enabling integration, and contributing to overall community wellbeing – all of which are desirable components of liveability. The community and cultural facilities exemplified in NSROC's 'social infrastructure hierarchy' constitute what is generally regarded as 'cultural infrastructure'. This literature review, therefore, focuses more on cultural infrastructure and its essential contribution to liveability.

This research will also assist NSROC to assess the economic and non-economic benefits of investment in community and cultural facilities (community halls, performance spaces,

creative arts centres, etc.). It is designed to help NSROC with the task of developing a framework to understand these benefits, and on that basis determine how best to incorporate them in business plans for new social and cultural infrastructure.

As detailed in the response of Western Sydney University's Institute for Culture and Society (ICS) to the Request for Quote, the literature review is organised specifically to address the following focused research questions:

1. Define social and cultural infrastructure across several international jurisdictions (such as Australia, UK, Canada, NZ, US, and selected European Union countries), and comment on their alignment with NSROC's hierarchy of social infrastructure (2020: 6).
2. Identify, review and annotate key Australian and international research reports published since 2000.
3. Identify and critically assess emerging themes arising from focus 2 above.
4. Identify areas and trends most relevant to NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020*.

Given that this literature review is concerned with the contribution of social and cultural infrastructure in enhancing liveability in the NSROC region, it is useful first to consider what is understood by the concept of 'liveability'.

## Liveability

'Liveability' as a concept and central concern has become a core element in urban, suburban, and regional planning. It has been deployed in contexts as wide-ranging as housing, education, health, transport, amenities, employment, culture, and natural and built environments. Its meanings, however, are usage and context dependent, and likely to vary among planners and communities (Herman and Lewis 2015: 1). For example, in 2009, Partnership for Sustainable Communities (a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) developed six Liveability Principles for evaluating grant applications to a sustainable communities program. These principles are:

- 'provide more transportation choices' (safe, economical transport options that reduce household expenditure, benefit the environment and public health, and reduce dependence on foreign energy sources);

- ‘promote equitable, affordable housing’ (energy-efficient housing in varied locations for people of diverse social and economic backgrounds to lower combined costs of housing and transport);
- ‘enhance economic competitiveness’ (reliable access to employment hubs, education, services needed by workers, and business access to markets);
- ‘support existing communities’ (federal funding to revitalise existing communities through transport-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling, efficient infrastructure investment, and protection for rural environments);
- ‘coordinate and leverage federal policies and investments’ (ensuring federal policies and funding are aligned to advance collaboration, and increase government accountability and efficacy including smart energy choices);
- ‘value communities and neighbourhoods’ (highlight uniqueness of communities through investment in healthy, secure, walkable neighbourhoods whether urban, suburban or rural). (Herman and Lewis 2015: 3-4)

As a precursor to its discussion of the Liveability Index, the [Australian Urban Observatory](#) (2020a) offers the following definition:

Liveable communities are safe, socially cohesive, inclusive and environmentally sustainable. They have affordable housing linked via public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, to employment, education, shops and services, public open space and social, cultural and recreational facilities.

Its [Liveability Index](#) (2020b) employs a grid of nine ‘indicators of liveability’ that are connected with outcomes for health and wellbeing:

- liveability;
- walkability;
- social infrastructure;
- public transport;
- food environment;
- alcohol environment;
- public open space;
- local employment; and
- housing affordability.

Importantly, cultural infrastructure here is regarded as a subdomain of [social infrastructure](#) (2020c), and includes museums, art galleries, cinemas, theatres, and libraries.

Given that the geographical areas in which NSROC Councils are based position them within the orbit of the Greater Cities Commission and the Six Cities Region, it is useful, as a guide, to consider ideas about liveability generated from that location.



In the Greater Sydney Commission 2018 planning report, [\*A Metropolis of Three Cities\*](#), the 'directions for liveability' cover three broad areas:

- A City for People, with the potential indicator of 'increased walkable access to local centres', that will enable better access to services and greater connectivity among individuals and communities, leading to better health. Requisite social infrastructure will be determined by variations in demographic compositions.
- Housing the City, with the potential indicators of 'increased housing completions' and 'the number of councils that implement Affordable Rental Housing Target Schemes', to offer affordable housing for a growing population and range of income groups. Provision of housing will work in tandem with access to employment and public transport, to enable diverse and inclusive communities.
- A City of Great Spaces, with the potential indicator of 'increased access to open space' that is secure and walkable, to promote wellbeing whilst respecting heritage, and connecting design excellence with social infrastructure. (Greater Sydney Commission 2018: 46)

The section on liveability elaborates as follows:

The quality of life that residents enjoy in their neighbourhoods, workplaces and cities is central to liveability. Maintaining and improving liveability requires housing, infrastructure and services in the right locations to meet people's needs and enable them to stay in their neighbourhoods and with their communities as they transition through different stages of life. Planning for people recognises that liveability not only contributes to productivity and sustainability, but is also an important influence on individual wellbeing and community cohesion.

*A Metropolis of Three Cities* will give people better access to housing, transport and employment as well as social, recreational, cultural and creative opportunities. Easier connections with family, friends and the broader community will assist people to fulfil their potential. (Greater Sydney Commission 2018: 47)

In summary, liveability is usually understood as relating to the conditions necessary for all the inhabitants of a city, region, and community to have a decent quality of life. It includes their physical, social, cultural, and mental wellbeing and is based on the guiding principle of sustainability.

These interlinked ideas of liveability and directions for ensuring liveability provide an important background to understanding the value of social and cultural infrastructure, which is often valued for its real or perceived contribution to liveability. An important aspect of this contribution is related to the direct and indirect economic benefits that social and cultural infrastructure is deemed to elicit, including the expansion of job opportunities associated with the creative and cultural industries, enhanced city branding and imaging opportunities, and the economic benefits flowing from the cultural vibrancy afforded by social and cultural

infrastructure. Such benefits, in turn, enhance the liveability of a city or a region. This is not a linear process involving a direct return on investment or application of a planning formula. It requires, as outlined in this Review, a complex interweaving of formal and informal initiatives of variable scale, feasibility and outcome that enhance the possibilities for improved liveability, which is its own reward.

## Section 2: Definitions of Social and Cultural Infrastructure Across Jurisdictions

This section addresses the question of what constitutes ‘social infrastructure’ and ‘cultural infrastructure’, which varies across jurisdictions.

### NSROC’s definition of social infrastructure

Drawing, first, on understandings offered by NSROC’s *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy* (2020):

This study addresses both community and cultural facilities. All reference to social infrastructure includes reference to both community and cultural facilities...Open space, swimming pools, outdoor sports facilities and the like are not included in this study as these have their own drivers and strategic imperatives which differ from those of social and cultural infrastructure. (NSROC 2020: 5)

The *Strategy* develops the notion of a ‘social infrastructure hierarchy’ to delineate the levels at which particular types of social infrastructure are commonly provided (NSROC 2020: 9). For NSROC, the most closely applicable levels were determined as the following (with examples of facility type provided) (NSROC 2020: 10):

- Regional level facilities (e.g., performing arts centre)
- Sub-regional level facilities (e.g., regional gallery)
- LGA level facilities (e.g., creative arts centre)
- District level facilities (e.g., multi-purpose community centre)
- Local level facilities (e.g., community hall)
- Neighbourhood level facilities (e.g., meeting room).

## NSROC Social Infrastructure Hierarchy (NSROC 2020: 10)



The *Strategy* further notes, in its key findings, that:

- The analysis of existing need confirms that on the basis of the current provision of facilities, there appears to be existing unmet need in the NSROC region for community and cultural facilities. • The analysis of future need confirms that population growth will generate a need in the NSROC region for a significant number of community and cultural facilities. • The analysis confirms that population growth in addition to existing under-provision will generate a need in the NSROC region for an even greater number of community and cultural facilities over the next 15-20 years. (NSROC 2020: 5)

As indicated by the examples such as community halls and centres, libraries, creative arts and performing arts centres, multipurpose community hubs and regional galleries (NSROC 2020: 10) offered in relation to NSROC's social infrastructure hierarchy, *it is evident that what is termed 'social infrastructure' in the Strategy focuses on facilities that are generally considered as constituting 'cultural infrastructure'*. There is, however, a strong leaning towards the *'social' significance of this cultural infrastructure* – i.e., facilities for use by NSROC communities. The formation and sustenance of communities through the availability and use of these facilities and related services is a key characteristic of liveability.

## Other definitions of social infrastructure

Further examples of what is deemed to be social infrastructure include the following:

1. Infrastructure Australia, Australia's independent infrastructure advisory body, in its 2019 audit, defines social infrastructure as follows:

Social infrastructure is comprised of the facilities, spaces, services and networks that support the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities. It helps us to be happy, safe and healthy, to learn, and to enjoy life. The network of social infrastructure

contributes to social identity, inclusion and cohesion... (Infrastructure Australia 2019: 388).

In the audit, there are six social sectors in which infrastructure is discussed:

- Health and aged care
- Education
- Green space, blue space and recreation
- Arts and culture
- Social housing
- Justice and emergency services

There is considerable focus on the physical dimension of social infrastructure in the audit. Whilst the quality of Australia's social services is rated highly, there is some concern that 'infrastructure assets and networks are often ageing and not fit for purpose' (Infrastructure Australia 2019: 391).

As is evident in the above list, cultural infrastructure is included under the rubric of social infrastructure, but the audit also offers a more specific definition:

Arts and cultural infrastructure promote social cohesion in our communities by facilitating shared experiences, promoting a sense of place and providing insight into our local and national identities. It is the buildings and spaces that accommodate or support cultural activities, production and events. (Infrastructure Australia 2019: 441)

Examples provided include museums, art galleries, and major performance spaces, such as the Sydney Opera House; culturally significant natural entities, such as Uluru; other venues of varying scale such as art studios, live music venues, local libraries, and temporary production spaces; and digital cultural infrastructure, such as platforms to view online exhibitions. Ownership and operation of such infrastructure range across the three levels of government and the private and not-for-profit sectors. This definition is limited, apart from natural sites and digital platforms, largely to the built, physical dimensions of infrastructure ('hard') rather than the relational aspects ('soft'). This is a familiar delimitation that inhibits conceiving of social and cultural infrastructure as mutually and equally involved in fostering liveability.

Whilst the positive value contribution of arts and culture is acknowledged, the audit also notes that 'arts and cultural infrastructure is often not considered as essential social structure – unlike hospitals, schools or fire stations' (Infrastructure Australia 2019: 442).

2. The [New Zealand Social Infrastructure Fund](#) (NZSIF) has the following definition of social infrastructure:

Social Infrastructure is a subset of the infrastructure sector and typically includes assets that accommodate social services...[E]xamples of Social Infrastructure Assets

include schools, universities, hospitals, prisons and community housing [also transport hubs, civic facilities and utilities facilities]. Social Infrastructure does not typically extend to the provision of social services, such as the provision of teachers at a school or custodial services at a prison.

NZSIF notes that, in New Zealand, social infrastructure is provided by central or local government, or associated bodies such as universities and district-level health boards. Again, it sees infrastructure in terms of ‘accommodation’ of a service rather than being one infrastructural element among others.

3. The United Nations unit, [Habitat III](#), refers to social infrastructure services as including the following:

[F]ormal and informal public spaces, liveable streets, transportation and food systems infrastructure and networks. (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, 2017: 32)

Such social infrastructure services operate ‘to promote social connections and community networks, enhance public safety, and retain cultural heritage values, practices and assets’ (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2017: 32). This approach to social infrastructure is wider and more fluid.

Furthermore, social infrastructure is to be designed to ‘mitigate segregation and exclusion and enhance diversity in social, cultural, and economic activities’ (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2017: 26). Culture, therefore, is intrinsic to social infrastructure.

4. Among the programs funded by the Canadian Government’s [Canada Plan](#), the social infrastructure program provides for affordable housing and childcare, as well as community, cultural and recreational facilities. Increased accessibility to these forms of infrastructure makes Canadian communities attractive places to consider as ‘home’. This program (along with other programs of the Canada Plan) is aligned with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). Social infrastructure is notably concerned with the SDGs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, improving health care, propelling economic growth, and ensuring sustainable cities and communities. The program covers a range of areas of importance to Indigenous people (in housing, heritage, health, and childcare) as well as Indigenous Services Canada. Canadian heritage, more broadly, is also supported under this program. The indication is that the term ‘social infrastructure’ encompasses cultural facilities and heritage spaces as well.

5. [Latham and Layton](#) (2019) argue that the concept of ‘social infrastructure’ is useful for looking at the public value of built infrastructure (e.g., community halls, libraries, markets, parks, plazas, pavements, schools, swimming pools) because these sites offer people from various demographic groups the opportunity to congregate, socialise and develop networks, thereby contributing to the inclusivity of a city and reducing isolation. Public life, which is multidimensional, is related to public space, which can also become multidimensional. How cities are planned needs to take sociality into account; it needs to consider how infrastructure facilitates activity. ‘[Public] spaces matter because of their consequences for society, politics, health, and well-being’ (Latham and Layton 2019: 9).

This approach to social infrastructure is also founded on what is built or, as in the case of open public space, what is *not* built. However, they acknowledge that the “success and proliferation” of the public places on which they focus “is by no means guaranteed” (15). This acknowledgement opens up space for a broader, deeper conception of social infrastructure that incorporates, for example, people and skills.

To summarise, social infrastructure is the complex, interwoven eco-system consisting of various combinations of built infrastructure, open spaces, service provision and network/networking capabilities that enable quality living, and facilitate social connection and social cohesion. Such infrastructure is for public use, whilst also enabling diversity in cultural, social and economic life. Effective social infrastructure can also attract people to a location. Whilst social infrastructure is typically seen to encompass essential services such as education, health care, housing, aged care, and security/emergency services and the built facilities in which they are delivered, it often also includes, directly or indirectly, cultural infrastructure and related activities.

## Cultural infrastructure

1. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries ([DLGSC](#)) in Western Australia offers the following definition of cultural infrastructure:

Cultural infrastructure includes the buildings, places, spaces and technology necessary for arts and cultural education, creation, production, engagement, collaboration, ceremony, preservation, conservation, interpretation, sharing and distribution. Cultural infrastructure includes physical infrastructure like our performing arts centres, music venues, film and television studios, galleries, collections and digital technology. Integral to these spaces are the staff, volunteers and digital networks required to operate them (DLGSC 2020b: 1).

Notably, this approach encompasses both built structures as well as the digital infrastructure and human personnel involved in service provision and management.

2. Drawn from a particular Canadian context, cultural infrastructure that is tangible or 'hard' refers to 'built structures, cultural venues, monuments, public art or cultural spaces, and arts and cultural production or training centres that are essential to economy and society'. Intangible or 'soft' infrastructure refers to the 'activities that facilitate the functioning and management of tangible cultural infrastructure' ([Jeannotte](#) 2008: E2).
3. [Habitat III](#) refers to cultural infrastructures (in plural form) as 'including museums and monuments, but also art schools, libraries, theatres and occasional sociocultural activities, such as festivals at the city and neighbourhood levels' (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2017: 37). This definition incorporates particular activities as part of cultural infrastructure, especially as conducted at city and neighbourhood scale. Here, whilst cultural infrastructure refers primarily to tangible components of infrastructure, a few intangible components are included.
4. The Greater London Authority, in its 2019 [Cultural Infrastructure Plan: A call to action](#), defines cultural infrastructure as structures and locations where culture is 'consumed' or 'produced'. The former involves venues where culture is 'experienced', 'showcased' or 'sold', such as museums, galleries, cinemas, libraries, music venues and historic cultural sites. The latter are 'places of creative production', utilised, among others, by artists, performers, manufacturers or digital processes. Examples include creatives' studios; performing arts rehearsal spaces; studios for music recording, television and film; and industrial units used by creatives and cultural businesses (Greater London Authority 2019: 10). Some examples provided, however, do not appear to fall neatly into either a space of cultural consumption or production: 'the community centre where children are learning street dance' (Greater London Authority 2019: 11).

Other bodies refer to social and cultural infrastructure in combination, including groups as well as buildings. For example, the City of Ryde (which is a member of NSROC) states that social and cultural infrastructure 'incorporates meeting and activity space for general community hire; office and meeting space for community services, Not for Profit organisations and arts and cultural groups; Early Childhood Education and Care facilities; heritage buildings; libraries; youth services hub; arts and cultural infrastructure including performance space, gallery space and other creative spaces' ([City of Ryde 2020](#): 4).

[The City of Westminster](#) (UK) uses the term 'community infrastructure', defined as 'the framework of physical facilities needed to support and sustain a community of people to live and [work](#)'. Examples of community infrastructure include the following: safer roads, public



transport and facilities to support walking and cycling; flood defences; schools and educational facilities; medical facilities; sports and recreation facilities; open spaces such as parks and public squares; digital networks such as broadband infrastructure. This definition indicates that community infrastructure is very similar to the elements that constitute social infrastructure in other jurisdictions, whilst also including some community-focused 'cultural' infrastructure.

In summary, cultural infrastructure is a newer concept than social infrastructure. Its emergence reflects the increasing interchangeability of the concepts of the social and the cultural in policy domains (Stevenson et al. 2010). Given that there is no strict consensus concerning what constitutes either type of infrastructure, and the sometimes-fluid nature of the objects and relations encompassed by each term, to optimise liveability it would be beneficial to combine them, and so to think flexibly of and work with '**culturally-focused social infrastructure**' and/or '**socially-focused cultural infrastructure**'.

In our literature review we have found that NSROC's conceptual model of a 'social infrastructure hierarchy' is distinctive. The one possible parallel is offered by the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, which proposes liveability benchmarks that target four areas of scale, namely: precinct, LGA, district and metropolitan (SSROC, report No. 2, to be discussed in Section 3). However, NSROC's model is more extensive, with six areas of scale, and highlights infrastructure that is often categorised as constituting cultural infrastructure. NSROC's innovative model is helpful in determining at the level of jurisdiction at which social and cultural infrastructure should be planned and delivered. NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020* argues that 'a range of social and cultural infrastructure at different levels of the hierarchy is essential for the proper functioning and liveability of a community' (25).

While local government is considered the appropriate tier to plan and deliver local and neighbourhood social and cultural infrastructure in response to local demand patterns and community requirements (10), higher levels of provision are (or should be) the responsibility of state government. The *Strategy* points to the lack of coordinating mechanisms between local and state governments which, if available, would allow local government to provide input into state development plans (25). As the *Strategy* observes, 'NSROC member councils do not [currently] have a seat at the table with the State Government for identifying infrastructure deficiencies and the impacts of growth' (24). It also identified the need for local government to work more closely with the state government to achieve the goals of both tiers in terms of maintaining liveability through ensuring that population growth is accompanied by adequate provision of social and cultural infrastructure (50). This point reinforces the principle that infrastructure should be viewed and treated as an area of shared responsibility among governments and agencies.

# Section 3: Key Australian and International Reports: An Annotated Review

The reports discussed below focus on different aspects of social and cultural infrastructure development and provision and their contribution to fostering liveability. They were chosen on the basis of relevance and their potential for innovative adoption and adaptation by NSROC. These reports are organised into national and international examples.

## National exemplars

1. Museums and Galleries NSW (2010) [\*Value Added! The Economic and Social Contribution of Cultural Facilities and Activities in Central NSW.\*](#)

*Value Added!* looks at the economic and social contribution of council-funded cultural activities in the regional council areas of Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange in New South Wales. The cultural facilities included performing arts centres and venues, museums, public art galleries and heritage sites, and varied in type and age.

A detailed study of 12 of the over 75 cultural facilities that are funded by local government across the three areas yielded the following conclusions: among the economic contributions an additional 8.5 jobs were created outside the cultural sector for every 10 jobs within it; over \$14 million was added to the local economy in 2007-2008; *per annum*, \$9 million was generated in household income; volunteers generated \$1.3 million in economic activity; and across the region, households were willing to pay over \$1.1 million annually to maintain current levels of service.

A significant contribution was also made to 'social capital'. Engaging with their cultural facilities stimulated people to think differently about their world, understand different cultures, develop connections, build trust with one another, and cultivate a sense of place (Museums and Galleries NSW 2020: 2, 15).

Over 75% of all respondents had visited the performing arts facility in their LGA, and over 60% had been to their local art gallery and reported satisfaction with their visits. The contribution of and to social capital is also evidenced by the frequency of visits to cultural venues, with that frequency reflecting a sense of place. The report notes that 'a strong sense of place can lead to increased retention of a skilled and educated population' (Museums and Galleries NSW 2020: 15). In addition, the volume of visitors attending the cultural facilities from both within and outside the LGA would contribute to the image/brand value of the three areas (besides contributing over \$8 million annually to its income).

2. Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (2015) [Liveability Benchmarks for Central and Southern Sydney.](#)

The report of the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) focuses on liveability benchmarks that can inform planning, investment and infrastructure delivery in its existing urban areas. Underpinning the report is the initiative of SSROC ‘to ensure that state agencies and local governments are accountable for the delivery of additional services and infrastructure’ (SSROC 2015: 1) in a context of rapid change, including urban intensification, and population growth and changing demographics.

Liveability is defined here as ‘a range of issues that relate to the wellbeing of a community (e.g., accessibility, amenity, quality of life, sustainability, etc.) that could be subject to change as a result of urban intensification’ (SSROC 2015: 1). Ideas of ‘good’ liveability vary by population (e.g., established vs newer residents). Benchmarks and indicators are offered for each of ten themes/dimensions covered as conducive to liveability. They are related to four scales of area (as noted in Section 2 above) – precinct, LGA, district/subregion, and metropolitan – with the utility value of indicators varying according to scale and time.

The ten themes are as follows: district open space and recreation; housing affordability; access to centres (key community infrastructure) and employment; parking; schools and other educational facilities; hospitals and other health facilities; community and cultural facilities, including childcare; and precinct sustainability. The provision of community and cultural facilities is scaled at precinct or LGA level, whilst accessibility to key community facilities is scaled at precinct, LGA and district levels. The report suggests that ‘social and cultural dimensions, physical health, walkability and place quality (i.e., urban design)’ (SSROC 2015: 6) among other indicators of liveability.

The SSROC report focuses more extensively on what is usually regarded as ‘social infrastructure’, with cultural facilities being a smaller part of community facilities. Population growth and changing demographics are noted as key issues for the provision of community and cultural facilities. The report argues – as does NSROC - that local councils need to work with the state government to ensure infrastructure and facilities which will need to adapt to changing demand, such as new communities preferring locally accessible multi-use facilities for cultural purposes, recreation and other activities. The outcomes sought include a response to a needs-based assessment that would determine requirements by new and existing communities, and ensuring that the 20-minute city model and transit connectivity will improve access to cultural and community facilities (SSROC 2015: 31).

3. City of Parramatta (2017a) [Culture and Our City: A Cultural Plan for Parramatta’s CBD \(2017-2022\).](#)

*Culture and Our City* is a five-year plan to revitalise Parramatta as a 24-hour city that is ‘liveable and has a strong sense of place, invites creativity, stimulates prosperity, and celebrates our diversity as a strong and growing community – from First Peoples to the most

recently arrived' (City of Parramatta 2017a: 17). The plan also informs cultural planning for neighbourhoods across the LGA, functioning as a response to canvassed residents who want the creative industries to be part of the city's economic and cultural landscape.

Its *Strategy* includes support and resources for: creativity and creatives, including designers, digital innovators, curators, scientists and architects; their access to a mix of new and repurposed creative spaces; major performance spaces, visual and literary arts venues, and other arts and cultural venues in the city. Safe spaces for youth, public programs that reflect the city's diversity, and a supported local screen industry are also envisaged (18-19).

The plan also states:

Culture is key to delivering on our community promise. Culture has unique intrinsic value. Culture also makes strong business sense. If we invest wisely, culture has a strong return on investment. Culture creates a destination, which drives sales, sales drive liveability, liveability drives investment and new community members. A self-reinforcing cycle. (139)

The economic underpinning of culture and liveability is made explicit here. Whilst it notes that culture is important to liveability, the plan argues that it is the commerce of culture that propels liveability. The 'self-reinforcing cycle' involves financial investment in liveability contributing to an increase in the size of the community, thereby enlarging the pool of people in a particular place wanting to consume culture. Such economic instrumentalism raises questions of access to culture, and the quality of liveability, in an environment of sharp disparities of wealth and income. This point is addressed in the Parramatta context by Rowe, Stevenson, Tomsen, Bavinton and Brass (2008) (see example 10 below), who observed the need for an inclusive approach to after dark culture that does not prevent, for example, families and people of modest financial means from participating in cultural activities. This concern with access and equity needs to be maintained alongside increasing culture-associated 'sales'.

#### 4. City of Parramatta (2017b) [Public Art Policy](#).

The City of Parramatta *Public Art Policy* supports public art projects 'which add to the City's liveability and productivity and enhance the City's cultural assets' (City of Parramatta 2017b: 2). The works are to be commissioned from professional artists, and should be unique as local attractions, and inspirational and pleasurable to residents, to those coming into the area as workers, and to visitors. The artwork is to be celebratory of Parramatta's history, culture and people, and 'bring together diverse social threads and create a sense of pride in place' (City of Parramatta 2017b: 2).

This policy relates liveability and (public) art, where the art inspires and pleases people, whilst also generating community and civic pride. The artworks, which the policy indicates can be in physical or virtual form, also signal the relationship between their attractiveness/attraction, productivity (workers who are drawn to the city by employment opportunities complemented

by such art), and income generation (visitors who are attracted by the art, and who may become repeat visitors availing themselves of a range of local offerings because of it). Liveability, consequently, is informed here by cultural infrastructure (and related processes/services such as commissioning, allocating public space for display, and maintenance) that also enables both direct and indirect income generation. By its nature, public art is available to all positioned in an actual physical space or who can access it via digital technology. Its benefits may be economic, but its liveability value is not determined directly by commercial return on investment.

5. Greater Sydney Commission (2018) [Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities – Connecting People](#).

*A Metropolis of Three Cities* envisions three cities developed over 40 years to 2056 and a 20-year plan to manage growth, such that their residents can reside within thirty minutes of places of education, employment, health care, services and open spaces. The Greater Sydney Region is (re)imagined as three urban hubs:

- the Western Parkland City
- the Central River City
- the Eastern Harbour City

(The councils of NSROC – Hornsby, Hunter’s Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Ryde, Willoughby – fit mainly within the Eastern Harbour City, with some overlap with the Central River City).

The Greater Sydney Commission (2018: 6) declares that, ‘The vision brings new thinking to land use and transport patterns to boost Greater Sydney’s liveability, productivity and sustainability by spreading the benefits of growth’. City-scale infrastructure, services, and cultural facilities are made available, and green infrastructure (bushland, waterways, parks) is mobilised to enable sustainability and the wellbeing of residents (such as through networked cycleways and walkways). Collaboration between the three tiers of government – national, state and local – and between government and a variety of stakeholders (such as business, community, industry, non-profits), and considered investment, is presented as necessary to achieve its aims.

Challenges that triggered this plan include imbalances in job availability across the region, with greater concentration of jobs in Eastern Sydney; geographical constraints and climate variation; heavy reliance on cars, especially in Western Sydney; fast population growth, and changing demographics (including ageing populations) in the context of a culturally diverse polity.

Each City's plan has particular aims organised under four themes: Infrastructure and Collaboration (e.g., transport hub infrastructure to support business development and growth, land-use and infrastructure investment, health and education precincts, stakeholder cultivation); Liveability (e.g., new neighbourhoods informed by placemaking, heritage preservation, cultural events and facilities, urban renewal with increased infrastructure and services); Productivity (e.g., freight networks, expansion of industrial services, industrial corridors, innovation and global competitiveness); and Sustainability (e.g., green neighbourhoods, precinct-based approach to urban renewal, access to foreshores and coast for tourism and cultural events).

As discussed above, liveability is linked with the quality-of-life that residents enjoy in the context of their immediate neighbourhoods, employment locations, and cities. Accessible and appropriate housing, infrastructure and services are integral to this wellbeing, as are employment and social, recreational, cultural and creative opportunities. According to the plan, the concept of the 30-minute city should inform decisions regarding social infrastructure investments, with a focus on transport, health facilities and schools. However, the interlinked nature of the four themes discussed above: infrastructure and collaboration, liveability, productivity, and sustainability, are also indicated. For instance:

Infrastructure and services for socially connected communities include:

- playgrounds, libraries, education facilities and active street life
- farmers' markets, eat streets, street verges and community gardens
- creative arts centres, theatres, live music and co-working spaces
- bushcare groups, outdoor gyms, sportsgrounds, aquatic centres, and community spaces. (Greater Sydney Commission 2018: 55)

Objective 9 of the plan explicitly supports the arts and creative innovation, noting that supporting the arts will draw greater participation from residents and visitors and thereby attract investment (Greater Sydney Commission 2018: 57). The value of a safe and vibrant night-time economy is also recognised as 'enhanc[ing] Greater Sydney's standing as a global city', with the social needs of different cohorts (shift workers, youth, and tourists) to be taken into account.

Under liveability, diversity of income is discussed almost exclusively in terms of access to affordable housing rather than in relation to cultural creation and opportunities or cultural infrastructure. While such housing is, of course, essential, it cannot on its own deliver a multi-dimensional liveability, which must also involve cultural infrastructure, as Ang, Rowe, Stevenson, Magee, Wong, Swist, and Pollio (2018) found in their research in the City of Sydney.

6. Infrastructure Australia (2018) [\*Planning Liveable Cities: A Place-Based Approach to Sequencing Infrastructure and Growth\*](#).

*Planning Liveable Cities* highlights the fast growth of Australian cities, connected with rapid growth in population, and the accompanying need for sequential delivery of housing and related infrastructure to make a place ‘work’ – access to transport, schools, hospitals, cultural institutions and community facilities.

While Australia’s cities are the economic powerhouses of our nation, we need to remember that cities are also fundamentally about people. People are choosing to live in cities because of the access to jobs and amenity they provide. Liveability and sustainability are essential to attracting and retaining people and ensuring the efficient and productive operation of our cities. People want to live in places with easy access to parks, schools, community facilities, and reasonable travel times to work and services. Creating liveable places is not optional for governments; it is essential. Liveability is intrinsically linked to economic growth and will play a key role in maximising the opportunities of population growth in our cities in the future. (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 3)

The report adopts the following definition of liveability: ‘A liveable community is one in which it is easy and comfortable to carry out day-to-day life, for a range of different people’. This place should be ‘safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, and environmentally sustainable; with affordable and diverse housing linked by convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to employment, education, public open space, local shops, health and community services, and leisure and cultural opportunities’ (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 12). As noted earlier, Infrastructure Australia has a rather narrow conception of the object of its remit, with the cultural sphere addressed mostly in terms of built structures.

The report’s findings include observations that Australia’s three-tiered system of governance can negatively affect coordinated delivery of liveable places; infrastructure funding processes are out of step with growth; and government and industry do not have a shared understanding of infrastructure capacities. The report also notes that lags in infrastructure provision will reduce liveability and, in turn, affect the trust that communities have in governments if they fail to deliver on much-needed facilities and services.

The overall recommendation is that government and industry need to work in partnership (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 4-5). Specific recommendations include that both should engage with communities at strategic levels so that those same communities can collaboratively ‘tell the story’ of an area in ways that transcend individual projects. The diversity of communities also, it argues, needs to be taken into consideration (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 8). The rapid growth of urban populations is not seen simply as an infrastructure challenge to be met in a context of ‘densification’; it also offers opportunities

for economic flourishing, reinvigorating the labour force, expanding domestic markets, and promoting diversity (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 11)

There is, though, little recognition that government and industry often have different priorities, interests, and timeframes, and that acknowledging and adjusting expectations and methods in diverse social, cultural and spatial contexts requires a sophisticated grasp of communities and their histories and expectations.

7. Create NSW (2019) [Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+](#).

The *Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+* is the strategic plan for the NSW Government's investment in, and support for, cultural infrastructure. The plan encompasses Greater Sydney, other metropolitan centres of the state and regional NSW, and was developed to align with the Greater Sydney Commission's *Metropolis of Three Cities*. It builds on Infrastructure NSW's *Cultural Infrastructure Strategy: Advice to the NSW Government* (2016). Infrastructure NSW pointed out that cultural infrastructure contributed to the economy through job growth, exports and innovation; attracted visitors to New South Wales; marked Sydney as 'an appealing global city where people want to live, work and invest'; played a role in urban regeneration and regional development; and animated communities and neighbourhoods whilst contributing to positive health outcomes and developments in learning (Create NSW 2019: 5). This last aspect of the *Strategy* signals an instance where the boundary between cultural infrastructure and social infrastructure is fluid.

Culture's role in liveability is explicitly articulated: 'Culture is recognised as an integral part of communities and a key element of creating great places for people to live, work, visit, play and do business' (Create NSW 2019: 4). Cultural infrastructure, therefore, becomes here an important means to enabling liveability.

Cultural infrastructure in this plan includes libraries, museums, art galleries, performing arts and live music venues, outdoor amphitheatres and public art, among other items – in essence, 'buildings and spaces that accommodate or support culture'. Relevant digital infrastructure is also included (Create NSW 2019: 11) and universal access to cultural infrastructure is deemed an important operating principle (Create NSW 2019: 4).

The report advocates that the planning of cultural infrastructure be integrated with state and local planning processes, and its delivery and funding enabled through partnerships between state government, local councils, cultural organisations, philanthropic bodies and the private sector (Create NSW 2019: 4). Commonwealth and federal cultural institutions, too, can be engaged and cooperated with for the purpose of developing cultural infrastructure. There is also recognition that local councils head much of the planning for metropolitan and regional cultural infrastructure, and of the need to enable local communities to be part of planning for their specific needs (Create NSW 2019: 8).



The consultation process that informed the plan's development generated findings that include:

- Besides new infrastructure, communities and cultural industries wanted existing facilities to be adaptable and made fit for purpose.
- Creatives need more affordable, fit for purpose and flexible spaces for work.
- Aboriginal communities find cultural infrastructure important for cultural practice and economic empowerment.

Cultural infrastructure planning should happen at a local level in order to empower the state's culturally diverse communities, but capacity building and better coordination are also needed at a regional and local level (Create NSW 2019: 6). Therefore, Create NSW's plan takes a 'broad brush' approach to infrastructural development in the cultural domain.

8. Stevenson, D., Barns, S., Clements, J., Cmielewski, C. & Mar, P. (2019) [\*The Social Impact of NSW Arts, Screen and Culture Programs.\*](#)

*The Social Impact of NSW Arts, Screen and Culture Programs* offers an analysis of the social benefits of arts and culture to the communities of New South Wales, highlighting the role of arts and cultural policy in enabling community health and wellbeing, and fostering positive social outcomes, including for Indigenous people and through the impact of the arts in healthcare settings. The study also looks at how the arts have been used to support community revival, bolster sustainability and cultivate resilience in a context of complex social challenges created by environmental disasters such as bushfires and floods. It offers an understanding of social inclusion as a key underpinning concept and goal of socially focused art programs. How selected arts organisations engage with social concerns and track outcomes (including social impact evaluation), as well as the processes through which Create NSW sought to effect social impact, were the key bases of study.

The report notes that 'Measures of liveability, routinely focused on qualities of place, are increasingly used to capture the combined and various social, cultural, economic and environmental attributes, and today perform as important indicators of societal and economic wellbeing' (Stevenson et al. 2019: 22). City design and planning have implications for health, social inclusion and wellbeing outcomes of various urban communities. It is noted that Creative Victoria, a state-level body, emphasises that the arts are essential to a liveable city.

The concept of social inclusion necessitates looking at factors such as access, social connections and social capacities in relation to areas such as education, health, employment, housing and citizenship. This focus becomes vital where groups are likely to be socially excluded, thereby compromising their quality of life. As social inclusion has become a central concept and performance indicator in arts and cultural policy (Stevenson et al. 2019: 23), it is an important measure of liveability, where the capacity and capability to access education, healthcare, housing, jobs, and culture are as important as these resources being generally on

offer but mostly used by those who are already relatively advantaged in social, economic and cultural terms. This concern with inclusivity stresses the need to guard against cultural infrastructure inadvertently exacerbating social hierarchy.

9. Ang, I., Arora, V., Chambers, S., Cmielewski, C., Cornell, C., Hilder, C., James, P., Magee, L., Nectoux, S., Rowe, D., Stevenson, D., and Van Den Nouwelant, R. (2020) [Planning Cultural Infrastructure for the City of Parramatta: A Research Report](#).

*Planning Cultural Infrastructure for the City of Parramatta* assesses the cultural infrastructure capacity of the City of Parramatta (LGA). The report notes that Parramatta lacks adequate local, affordable, and accessible cultural infrastructure, which negatively affects both community needs and those of the area's cultural workers. The latter, consequently, are pushed to seek employment in inner Sydney or its eastern suburbs, with a loss of culturally generated income for the Parramatta LGA and, in particular, its CBD. Inadequate cultural infrastructure, it argues, has an impact on practising creatives (who need studios, practice spaces, and a variety of performance venues) and the area's multiethnic/multicultural communities (who need heritage sites and a culturally relevant museum).

The report argues that investment in cultural infrastructure will attract practising artists and cultural practitioners to Parramatta, thereby 'creating a healthy cultural ecosystem' (Ang et al. 2020: 10) which is beneficial to both local creatives and audiences. The provision of such cultural infrastructure can be undertaken by the public as well as private sectors.

The report notes that the programs of an entity such as the Parramatta Artists' Studios serve 'community wellbeing' (Ang et al. 2020: 133), as does utilising local parks (which already exist as green spaces and amenities for wellbeing) for hosting cultural events such as festivals, live performances, outdoor screenings, and a public sculpture venue.

The report offers evidence of the critical relationship between cultural infrastructure and liveability in both LGA and CBD locations. Inadequate cultural infrastructure has a negative impact on creative productivity and cultural ecosystems, and consequently on local wellbeing. Compromised cultural ecosystems affect the image/imaging/imagining of the city and region as an attractive cultural hub. The deprivation faced by creatives in turn affects audiences as cultural participants and consumers, and consequently their wellbeing. The outmigration of creatives also results in a loss of cultural production and related income for the city and region. Therefore, sufficient cultural infrastructure is essential to the liveability value of an area. It includes built structures (at varying scale) that are accessible to people from a range of backgrounds (including class, culture, and ability), whether as creatives or audiences. It also incorporates the interpersonal interactions among cultural practitioners, service providers, and audiences. The report proposes that the environs already dedicated to wellbeing, such as parks, can be multipurposed as cultural venues, and so incorporated within cultural infrastructure. This approach helps to overcome the artificial separation of closed and enclosed cultural spaces in infrastructural planning and provision.

10. Rowe, D., Stevenson, D., Tomsen, S., Bavinton, N., and Brass, K. (2008) [\*The City after Dark: Cultural Planning and Governance of the Night-Time Economy in Parramatta.\*](#)

*The City after Dark* presented the potential and challenges of the night-time economy in a culturally regenerating Parramatta, which had hitherto functioned largely as a daytime city. Realising a '24-hour' city in an arts and cultural framework means creating opportunities that balanced alcohol-based leisure and attendant policing/security concerns and demands on the health system, with other commercial and non-commercial leisure and socialisation options. These approaches needed to consider the city's diverse populations in terms of gender, culture, age, disposable income and other demographics, as well as the integration of working, domestic and leisure lives (Rowe et al. 2008: 5).

The night-time economy could play a vital role in urban liveability and identity, as well as the projection of a city's image. But, reflecting diversity in night-time civic culture required questioning disruptions based in alcohol consumption (mostly by youth), as well as middle-class patterns of exclusivity, paid leisure and cultural consumption that accompanied city gentrification (Rowe et al. 2008: 13).

The report also noted that 'the character of the night-time economy and its attraction to different types of people will differ across metropolitan and regional towns and cities depending on such variables as catchment area, environment, safety, and infrastructure' (Rowe et al. 2008: 24).

Whilst noting that a night-time economy is essential to liveability, the report highlights that LGAs will need to plan on how such liveability can be delivered, including by attending to how day- and night-time economies differ in their locations, and being mindful of the value of cultural infrastructure in enhancing night-time life in the city. Patterns of socialising, accessibility and safety requirements need to be developed in ways that are complementary rather than oppositional. Again, social inclusivity is highlighted with regard to cultural infrastructure, taking into account space, time and demography.

11. Creative Victoria (2021) [\*Creative State 2025: Placing Creativity at the Heart of Victoria's Recovery and Prosperity.\*](#)

Creative Victoria's *Creative State 2025* is a strategy designed to enable the state's creative industries to address the challenges they face, and to support the growth of the sector and its contribution to Victoria's social, economic and cultural life. It follows on from the Victorian Government's *Creative State Strategy (2016-2020)*, acknowledging the value of the state's creatives, who, coupled with sustained investment, have not only enabled a vibrant cultural life, but have also contributed to the economy through job creation, tourism and the attraction of further investment (Creative Victoria 2021: 5).

According to the *Strategy*, a creative state enables all community members to participate in creative experiences, with government investment in the creative industries producing economic benefits. Participation in creativity can serve to overcome barriers, especially among culturally and linguistically diverse groups and regional communities, increasing ‘a sense of connection and community’ (Creative Victoria 2021: 19).

The *Strategy* notes that, following the impact of COVID-19, renewed investment in cultural infrastructure in regional Victoria has resulted in both new built spaces as well as job creation, support for art initiatives and organisations, and accessible workspaces.

Indigenous people’s knowledge and protocols are positioned as central to creative initiatives, with Creative Victoria also committed to employing Indigenous peoples in the arts sector across the state. In addition, there is a promise to ensure equity of access to cultural experiences regardless of factors such as cultural background, income level, and location (regional, outer metropolitan, metropolitan). This is another example of the principle of social inclusion being incorporated into strategies and plans focused on culture and creativity.

12. (a) Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) (2020a) [Western Australian Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+](#).

(b) Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) (2020b) [Western Australian Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+ Summary](#).

The *Western Australian Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+* positions cultural infrastructure as integral to attaining a number of Western Australia’s priorities in the areas of economy, health, education and environment, amongst others, in order to deliver on the state’s economic development objectives (DLGSC 2020b: 1). Noting that ‘effective cultural infrastructure connects physical assets, spaces and technology with people, enabling economic, creative, cultural and social opportunities to flourish’ (DLGSC 2020b: vi), the framework lists five focus areas:

- Maintain and celebrate WA’s Aboriginal art, culture and heritage (provide targeted investment to facilitate the effective maintenance and celebration of Aboriginal art, culture and heritage)
- Optimise existing cultural assets (planning and design for world-class cultural infrastructure, precincts and experiences)
- Holistic cultural infrastructure planning (work across state government and partner with local governments to incorporate cultural infrastructure planning frameworks)
- Incentivise private investment (leverage and attract greater private investment to improve Western Australia’s cultural infrastructure)
- Understand and measure the public value of cultural infrastructure (optimise the [Public Value Measurement Framework](#) to measure a broader range of impacts of cultural infrastructure, including economic, social and cultural benefits)

According to this framework, collaborations between actors from a number of sectors, such as federal, state, and local government; designers, planners, developers and investors; local communities; and the creative sector and cultural infrastructure operators, are essential to implementing the framework. A periodically updated Cultural Infrastructure Toolkit is part of the framework, and includes [cultural infrastructure investment guidelines](#) and an interactive [cultural infrastructure map](#).

Effective cultural infrastructure is seen as enabling local cultures and creative workers to thrive, which in turn ‘produces economic benefits and improves the liveability of communities in Western Australia’ (DLGSC 2020b: 3). It is made evident throughout this framework that the need for economic growth is its key catalyst, although it is intended that other benefits will also result. For instance, creating jobs and developing businesses head the list of results that can come from investing strategically in cultural infrastructure. Maintaining Aboriginal culture is also held to enable, firstly, the growth of cultural industry and cultural tourism, followed by possibilities such as cultural healing and wellbeing for Aboriginal communities. Remote communities benefit through commercial opportunities that could contribute to sustainable self-reliance (DLGSC 2020b: 4).

Among the ten envisaged outcomes are: strengthening and maintenance of Aboriginal heritage and culture; a stronger economy for the state through job growth, economic diversification, greater investment in the state and increased tourism; equitable and inclusive access; ‘vibrant liveable environments for locals and visitors’; a creative workforce; and an efficient approach to cultural infrastructure investment (DLGSC 2020b: 6). The economic dimension is emphasised here, with Indigenous culture, in particular, positioned as an asset for the whole state.

13. (a) City of Melville (2022a) [Cultural Infrastructure Strategy \(Draft 5\)](#)

(b) City of Melville (2022b) [Cultural Infrastructure Strategy: Executive Summary \(Draft\)](#)

The *Cultural Infrastructure Strategy* (MCIS) of the City of Melville, WA, currently in draft mode with feedback recently sought from stakeholders towards its finalisation, is intended to inform the city’s investments in developing cultural infrastructure for two decades (2021-2041). With its declaration, ‘Culture for Everyone, Everywhere’, MCIS is the next phase of *Creative Melville 2018-2022*, which articulated Melville’s cultural potential and the value of education, culture and innovation to realising it.

In a context where arts and culture are seen to ‘provide a platform for people to unite, heal, share, generate income, and expand experience’ (City of Melville 2022b: 2), MCIS is animated by three interrelated themes pertaining to cultural infrastructure:

- City and Neighbourhood Exchange – ensures both a vibrant city centre and engaged neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood hubs operate as ‘cultural convergers’ to enable flexible and dynamic use of space (e.g., standalone libraries can be transformed to flexibly provide community-centred type space, depending on the facility and

community needs (City of Melville 2022a: 5). Exchanges between neighbourhoods and city also engender and promote connection with cultural activities at a broader scale (national and international).

- A Cultural Continuum – enables people to engage with culture in an ongoing manner regardless of the level of participation, whether as a novice or experienced audience member/practitioner. Cultural infrastructure is to flexibly accommodate this range of cultural development in experience, learning and practice.
- A City of Many Cultures – recognises and celebrates Melville’s cultural diversity, including Indigenous cultures, and promotes harmony.

The *Strategy* notes that most of the city’s cultural infrastructure is owned by the Council and, therefore, MCIS can be more easily utilised by communities to transform spaces conducive to cultural activity. MCIS aligns with other Melville city strategies (e.g., Infrastructure Strategy 2016-2036), and seeks to align itself with the WA Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+ (City of Melville 2022b: 4). This examples illustrates the use of cultural infrastructure by city councils like - Melville is in southern Perth - to differentiate themselves from others, in this case the City of Fremantle.

14. Uppal, S. & Dunphy, K. (2019) Outcome-focussed planning in Australian local government: How council plans and cultural development plans measure up, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 78(3), 414-431. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-8500.12367>

From an assessment of the council plan, or other key strategic document, and the cultural development plans of 67 councils across Australia, this article examines the changes that take place in people’s lives as a result of government policy and activity. Key principles or requirements for effective planning include: (i) a consideration of the values of the community encompassed by the plan; (ii) the goals and the direction required to achieve them; (iii) being focused on outcomes; (iv) the use of an evidence base; (v) being grounded in a theory of change; and (vi) engaging with robust processes of evaluation.

Prior research among Victorian councils had revealed that, in general, broader council plans and cultural development plans were more likely to focus on, and value, inputs (such as investments) and outputs (such as activities), rather than the outcomes (impacts) of such investments and activities. Consequently, the authors developed a Framework for Cultural Development Planning for a consistent approach (Uppal and Dunphy 2019: 2). The framework, consisting of the six principles noted above, was also employed as the tool of analysis for the plans considered for the current project.

Of the 67 councils examined, 65 had council plans, of which 22 (34%) had a current cultural development plan (CDP). Eleven others (17%) had a CDP that had expired or was under development, whilst 32 (49%) had no CDP at all. Urban LGAs were more likely to have a CDP compared with regional LGAs. A higher proportion of councils in Queensland and Victoria had CDPs compared with New South Wales (Uppal and Dunphy 2019: 5).

Overall, the research found that both council plans and CDPs from across the LGAs, failed to articulate strongly that they were underpinned by local community values and aspirations for the future. As a result, councils may be at risk of meeting with low approval from their constituencies. For CDPs, 53% had definite goals, demonstrating that a small majority of councils were aware of this value. Just 27% had measurable outcomes, indicating that goals were not soundly linked to objectives that form measurable steps. Although 59% of CDPs demonstrated evidence of use, important modes such as community consultation were not well integrated into the process of evidence gathering and usage. Approximately 50% of the CDPs were informed by a theory of change, but no plans indicated how stated activities were linked with the change that was being sought. None of the CDPs included outcome measures or evaluations that sought feedback from the public, which deprived councils of the opportunity to grasp the relationships between certain activities and the types of change that might have resulted. This lack of evidence impacts on the validity and effectiveness of future planning (Uppal and Dunphy 2019: 6-7).

This academic article's value lies in its reviewing of scores of key council documents and cultural development plans, with a focus on outcomes and their measurement. It points to the importance of integrating community consultation and developing frameworks that are underpinned by community values – engagements that contribute to the social connection and cohesion essential to liveability. In relation to cultural infrastructure it stresses the need to close the gap between planning documents and evidence-based benefits and problems.

#### 15. [Cultural Development Network](#) (2019)

The Cultural Development Network (CDN, based at RMIT University, VIC), whose goal is a 'vibrant and rich Australian culture', intends to expand the capabilities of governments to stimulate and support the creative aspirations of communities 'leading towards the cultural outcomes where there is *creativity stimulated, aesthetic enrichment experienced, insight gained, diversity of cultural expression appreciated and a sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage strengthened*'.

CDN's [measurable outcomes schema](#) applies to cultural engagement/participation. Engaging in cultural activities may result in the following types of outcome in a range of policy domains:

- Cultural (stimulation of creativity; aesthetic enrichment; knowledge gain; appreciation of cultural diversity; deepened sense of belonging)
- Social (improved wellbeing; sense of security; social connectedness; bridging differences; feeling valued)
- Economic (increased capabilities of professional practice; increased employability; economic wellbeing; support for local economy)
- Environmental (enhanced sense of place; understanding ecological issues; valuing natural environment; environmental stewardship)

- Governance (access to networks and resources; sense of agency; civic pride; civic trust)

In the social domain, participation in arts/cultural activities are proposed to [improve physical and/or mental health and wellbeing](#). Such activity could be solitary or in company with others, thereby promoting social connectedness and the capacity to appreciate cultural diversity and expression.

That participation in cultural activities is beneficial health-wise to people across age groups and socio-economic locations would support the contention that LGA expenditure in the area of creative and cultural industries could reduce some expenditure in conventional healthcare or social support.

In the economic domain, support for the local economy encompasses locally produced goods and services drawn upon by the cultural industries. These goods and services contribute to local economic resilience, which is also secured through '[economic diversity, complexity and participation](#)' as well as innovation and entrepreneurship. The definition of complexity encompasses the availability of skilled personnel locally who can utilise the available goods and services to create artistic outputs for local consumption (e.g., theatre productions).

It is evident that such outputs contribute to outcomes such as the raising of the locale's visibility and, if the arts productions are successful, its profile. Such success would feed the attractiveness of the locale for both resident and visiting audiences. CDN notes the evidence drawn from two regional arts festivals in Victoria which contributed to the local economy by attracting external visitors. It is of particular interest that CDN does not use the idea of liveability *per se* in its approach, but its measurable outcomes encompass the elements that contribute to liveability 'by proxy'. So, just as social infrastructure and cultural infrastructure are not always clearly distinguished in practice in the Australian context, liveability may not be named as a concept but is demonstrably connected to an array of local cultural practices.

## International exemplars

### 16. Greater London Authority (2019) [Cultural Infrastructure Plan: A Call to Action](#).

The Greater London Authority's *Cultural Infrastructure Plan* was catalysed by a concern about the considerable decline of cultural spaces in the city over the last decade. It is intended to safeguard and increase cultural facilities. The plan combines policy, funding and research towards achieving its aims. Its seven actions include an audit of London's existing cultural infrastructure; creating new cultural infrastructure; the provision of major infrastructure; support for 'culture at risk'; increasing investment sources and opportunities; creating policy



to encourage the creative industries; and offering training and networking opportunities (Greater London Authority 2019: 14). The plan is accompanied by the Mayor of London's (2022) [cultural infrastructure map](#), and an online toolbox to create or support cultural infrastructure.

The plan argues that culture infrastructures 'help strengthen local identities and bring communities together, provide for cultural and creative business and employment, visitor destinations for tourism, and places where Londoners can take part in cultural activity' (Greater London Authority 2019: 16). Offering easily accessible facilities in which to experience culture generates the social benefits of increasing people's wellbeing and reducing isolation. Enabling new connections and shared experiences through the provision of appropriate spaces also contributes to overcoming class, and other social, divisions. This facilitates the creation and sustenance of flourishing communities.

The contribution of cultural infrastructure to liveability is complemented by creating a wide variety of jobs and the accompanying revenue. In 2017, London's creative industries generated a gross added value of £52 billion and employed 1 in 6 persons. For every fulltime equivalent job in the creative industries, another 0.75 fulltime equivalent was created in the supporting supply chains (Greater London Authority 2019: 18). The attractiveness of London as a global tourist destination is enabled by, and requires, robust cultural infrastructure. For its 31.9 million visitors in 2017, the city's main draws included heritage buildings, museums, theatres, art galleries, ad music venues. Its pubs, which were visited by 54% of international visitors, are also regarded as cultural infrastructure by the city (Greater London Authority 2019: 13, 21).

In contrast to these positive potentials and developments, London's cultural infrastructure is also facing major risks, either through loss or inability to expand, because of a number of key overlapping factors: land value increases; national planning system; business rate increases; licensing restrictions; and funding reductions (Greater London Authority 2019: 26). For example, planning regulations enable offices to be converted into housing without a full planning process, resulting in a loss of creatives' workspaces because they are within the same 'use class' as offices (Greater London Authority 2019: 26). This might be regarded as an instance where social infrastructure – housing – is regarded as more important than cultural infrastructure. Or that the immediate monetary reward of often high-end housing justifies the appropriation of spaces that flexibly serve as workspaces for creatives.

Conflicts that arise between occupants of residential housing and cultural venues, on issues such as noise, affect the licence hours of such venues in a context of rising rents (Greater London Authority 2019: 30). Councils being forced to charge market rents on cultural infrastructure because of falling support from the national government, or reduced funding to the arts, have negative impacts on community-level initiatives and creatives' workspaces. The plan suggests that councils can still be major actors in supporting cultural infrastructure

by, for instance, providing rental solutions such as long leases and nominal rents (Greater London Authority 2019: 31). The loss of cultural infrastructure also leads to the fragmenting or wholesale displacement of creative communities, and thereby a loss to the community at large, such as where arts/cultural education programs have been developed through close work, over an extended period of time, between the local community and creatives/arts educators who live in that same community (Greater London Authority 2019: 34).

Among proposed solutions, in the planning and supply of new cultural infrastructure, there is recognition that ‘local needs cannot be dictated at a pan-London level: good placemaking requires local stakeholders and communities to be actively engaged’ (Greater London Authority 2019: 40). Councils are planning new cultural infrastructure or reviving and repurposing existing structure (Greater London Authority 2019: 41). At the mayoral level, large-scale cultural infrastructure is also being developed to ‘badge’ London as world class, with these major developments being led by council authorities, cultural organisations, and developers (Greater London Authority 2019: 42). The mayoral office is also committed to supporting venues at risk of being lost, offering funding from the centre alongside encouraging major investors and others to support cultural infrastructure. Council-level initiatives include working innovatively to invest in culture-supporting bodies whose work will benefit the community and its creatives. Such initiatives also receive mayoral financial co-support (Greater London Authority 2019: 47). Policy measures are being developed to enable creatives to deepen their connection with London, including affordable workspaces, strategic industrial locations, and supporting the night-time economy (Greater London Authority 2019: 48). The mayoral office also provides opportunities for training, networking and guidance, whether setting up a new venture or exploring the means to invigorate an existing infrastructure (Greater London Authority 2019: 51).

This plan offers a number of examples of initiatives undertaken by various councils to preserve, revitalise and/or build new cultural infrastructure, often through collaborative relationships and innovative means of funding, including with support through the Mayor’s office. It demonstrates that, like Greater Metropolitan Sydney, it is necessary for councils to intervene to preserve and develop cultural infrastructure in circumstances where other uses of land, such as residential building, are more immediately profitable and easily justified.

17. Glasgow City Council (n.d.) [Liveable Neighbourhoods](#).

*Liveable Neighbourhoods* combines the ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ concept with the place principle to enable communities to revitalise their local neighbourhoods and town centres in a context affected by climate change and COVID-19. The [20-minute neighbourhood](#) concept envisions that residents can access key services in their local area within 20 minutes, whether by ‘active’ travel (walking, cycling) or public transport, not only to promote access regardless of income levels, but also to benefit the environment. The [place principle](#) adopted by the Scottish Government (2019) promotes a shared understanding of place and a collaborative

approach, across all sectors, both resident and investor, to providing resources, services and assets for improved social outcomes.

The plan, initiated in 2021 and which extends over ten years, covers all areas of Glasgow and aligns with four themes: Local Town Centres; Everyday Journeys; Active Travel; and Streets for People. Through the plan, existing streets are to be ‘balanced’ by being redesigned for easier socialising and economic activity. This redesigning will also improve safer active travel and public transport use, whilst enabling other transport needs of the city to continue in a sustainable manner. Together with Glasgow’s Active Travel Strategy, the plan will ‘transform the city into a more inclusive, liveable and attractive place for residents, businesses and [visitors](#).’

A [Liveable Neighbourhoods Toolkit](#) (2021) has been developed to assist communities to understand how the plan will be implemented. The Liveable Neighbourhoods plan prioritises transport (modes, built infrastructure) as a means to ensure liveability. Not only are main roads considered, but also neighbourhood streets and associated infrastructure (such as seating) to enable comfortable mobility, capacities for community building, etc.

There is also recognition of the unequal impact and consequences for people and communities that lack either private means of transport or access to good public transport systems. Continued marginalisation also impedes people’s access to jobs further away or other services. Inclusivity and access, therefore, underpin Glasgow’s *Liveable Neighbourhoods*, which is a city that has historically committed to maximising cultural infrastructure (Glasgow Life 2022) that is at no or modest cost to local citizens on equity grounds.

18. Auckland Council (2012, 2018, 2022) [Auckland Plan 2050](#).

*Auckland Plan 2050* is a 30-year initiative aimed at addressing three significant challenges: high population growth, sharing prosperity with all residents, and environmental degradation. Whilst the majority of the population is urban, there are also extensive rural areas.

The Plan was first produced in 2012 and revised in 2018 after review. It is organised to deliver six outcomes, with each outcome having two or more directions and several focus areas:

- Belonging and participation
- Māori identity and wellbeing
- Homes and places
- Transport and access
- Environment and cultural heritage
- Opportunity and prosperity

Each outcome is embedded in a complex of integrated elements. For example, physical and social wellbeing are premised on the creation of community and reduction of isolation. Community is connected with place and accessing and making place is interlinked with the use of streets, city spaces, and open spaces. The need to make such opportunities accessible is also made explicit. It is evident that physical, social and cultural infrastructure are tied into making such ‘belonging and participation’ possible. For example, Focus Area 2 under Outcome 1 states: ‘Provide accessible services and social and cultural infrastructure that are responsive in meeting people's evolving [needs](#)’.

Māori knowledge contribution and participation are central to the plan, and one of Auckland’s declared features is the celebration of its Māori heritage and identity. Indigenous needs are also addressed in a dedicated manner.

The plan explicitly centres on people’s wellbeing, with social and cultural infrastructure to be developed in tandem with physical infrastructure in order to create communities and neighbourhoods that are liveable and successful for diverse groups that constitute the jurisdiction. Creativity and cultural infrastructure are deemed necessary to attract and retain talent from elsewhere (including from overseas). It is notable that, as with several Australian cultural plans and strategies reviewed here, the culture and heritage of the First Peoples of Aotearoa-New Zealand are given pride of place. In this way, cultural infrastructure development can play a prominent role in reconciliation and de-colonisation in settler-colonial societies and their constituent local places.

19. (a) City of Calgary (2016a) [The Cultural Plan for Calgary](#).

(b) City of Calgary (2016b) [Culture Shift: A Summary of the Cultural Plan for Calgary](#).

Calgary, ranked the third most liveable city in the world by the [Global Liveability Index 2022](#) (scoring 100 for health care, education and infrastructure, 95 for stability, and 90 for culture and environment), developed its first cultural plan in 2016. The ten-year Cultural Plan is a guide for the use of, and planning for, the city’s cultural resources to benefit the economy and ensure a more liveable city. The plan was also developed in response to a rapidly increasing, diverse population. Its key outcomes include increasing employment opportunities through developing the cultural sector, increasing tourism, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, and promoting cultural activity in the city’s neighbourhoods (City of Calgary 2016b: 3). The plan is operationalised through a number of short-term and medium-term actions, working with a range of partners. It aligns with other City strategies and policies (City of Calgary 2016b: 11, 21) and has five strategic priorities:

- *Maximize Calgary’s diversity advantage* by appreciating, engaging and connecting Calgary’s diverse population

- *Grow Calgary's cultural sector and creative industries* by recognizing the economic and creative potential of Calgary's not-for-profit cultural sector and for-profit creative industries
- *Activate culturally vibrant neighbourhoods and districts* by increasing opportunities for neighbourhoods to develop a culturally rich public realm
- *Reinforce Centre City as the cultural heart of the city* by realizing the area's potential to support thriving cultural, tourism and creative industry sectors
- *Conserve and celebrate Calgary's built, natural and Indigenous heritage* by embracing a vision of heritage that includes natural, cultural, tangible and intangible resources (City of Calgary 2016b: 4)

Short- and medium-term actions are aligned with each of the priorities. For example, under 'Diversity of People', actions for the short term (2016-2018) include:

- 'Increase awareness of and support low-cost access to exhibitions, performances and *events*, particularly targeting families, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities. (Key actors will be City of Calgary (CoC), Cultural Sector, Calgary Arts Development Authority (CADA))
- Begin to build bridges between cultural and social policy at The City to support the integration of new immigrants and ethno-cultural communities. For example, Welcoming Communities Policy, Calgary Local Immigration Partnership. (Key actors will be City of Calgary and Calgary Board of Education (CBE))
- Continue to commit resources to cultural competency training for City staff to support and enable effective communication with Calgary's diverse communities. (Key actor will be City of Calgary)'

Medium term (2019-2022) actions include:

- Deepen engagement with youth, seniors and LGBTQ communities when developing cultural programs and facilities. (City of Calgary and Partners)
- Explore the establishment of an Ethno-Cultural Advisory Committee to Council to inform and provide transparency and accountability related to plans, policies and programs directed at addressing the needs of ethno-cultural communities. (City of Calgary and Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC))
- Support established, cultural institutions in the city to act as incubators for emerging groups servicing ethno-cultural communities and Indigenous communities. (Calgary Arts Development Authority and Cultural Sector (CS)) (City of Calgary 2016b: 14)

The ethno-cultural diversity of Calgary is perceived as a source of cultural wealth, but there is also recognition that ethno-cultural communities must be involved in processes of decision making more widely with the council, which should be accountable to the communities it represents, including by undertaking requisite training in cultural competency. Issues of

accessibility by, and affordability for, different groups at cultural events also need active consideration, it states.

Whilst elsewhere in the Cultural Plan preserving or enhancing the built or natural environment (e.g., under 'Heritage Preservation') and investing in built/hard cultural facilities (infrastructure - e.g., under 'Cultural Sector/Creative Industries') and related services are given prominence, there continues to be a substantial focus on the City of Calgary's engagement with developing relationships with people from various sectors – among Indigenous and ethno-cultural communities, with the cultural sector and other partners – in order to benefit the cultural ecosystem. This combination of hard and soft cultural infrastructure, and ensuring people's engagement in the production, celebration and consumption of culture, are seen as vital to the liveability of the city. It also enables economic advancement through job growth, entrepreneurship, investment, training and tourism in a more open, flexible way than plans that focus on the cultural and creative industries in the first instance.

20. Holzner, M. & Römisch, R. (2021) [Public Services and Liveability in European Cities in Comparison.](#)

Using data for major European cities (e.g., Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, London, and Vienna), Holzner and Römisch found that 'a high level of public services in housing, transport, education and health care is essential for liveability in urban centres' (Holzner & Römisch 2019: 5). Welfare-oriented states in the Nordic countries, corporatist countries on the continent, and hybrid systems (Belgium, the Netherlands) tend to have higher public expenditure than in the United Kingdom or Mediterranean welfare states. Higher levels of state-supported housing (social housing), and a less commercial housing market, enable citizens to have resources to spend on cultural activities, thereby improving the quality of liveability. Austria, the Netherlands, France and Sweden are examples of countries ranking high on the Liveability Index which also have a higher *per capita* income. Where housing is highly commercialised and privatised – for example, Italy and Spain – residents have less discretionary income for recreation, cultural expenses, and other consumer items. Therefore, a lack of affordable housing negatively affects spending in the areas of recreation and culture.

This report does not directly address the role of cultural infrastructure in enhancing liveability, but it is relevant here in demonstrating the impact of both public service provision and the cost of housing (and even 'supergentrification' – Pollio et al, 2021) on the capacity for cultural participation and, therefore, on liveability.

21. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank (2021) [Cities Culture Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth.](#)

According to this report from UNESCO and the World Bank, culture and the creative industries fuel a cultural economy that can stimulate employment, economic growth and innovation, thereby contributing to sustainable development and the competitive capabilities of a city. A culturally dynamic urban centre has the capacity to draw in new residents while also retaining existing dwellers and enhancing economic prosperity. In a context where the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the sustainability of urban life and economic recovery, including artistic endeavours and cultural engagement, the creative industries nevertheless have the capacity to contribute to urban regeneration and economic revival. This *Cities, Culture, Creativity* report offers valuable guiding principles and a framework for a range of actors at varying levels of government, creatives and creative industries, and civil society, among others, ‘to harness culture and creativity with a view to boosting their local creative economies and building resilient, inclusive, and dynamic cities’ (UNESCO 2021: 4).

The report notes that, in 2013, the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) contributed nearly US\$2.25 trillion in revenues (3% of global GDP). Noted also is the capacity of CCIs to generate jobs for women, youth, and other marginalised groups, and positively to affect social inclusion and social network formation. To be effective, however, the CCIs need favourable, local-level policies and enablers, and multilateral partnerships (government, the private sector, civil society, local communities) (UNESCO 2021: 13).

The report identifies six ‘enablers’ that facilitate the flourishing of cultural assets and resources (which are comprised of artists, creative capital, and intangible cultural heritage):

- Urban infrastructure and liveability: creatives need affordable housing and access to a creative ecosystem, and they, in turn, catalyse neighbourhood regeneration
- Skills and innovation: Creatives need opportunities to enhance their skills through formal and informal education, and to teach/transmit their knowledge
- Social networks, catalysers, support and finance: Networking is essential to professional development and to the expansion of work opportunities that contribute to the CCIs and beyond; also necessary are business knowledge and targeted financial support
- Inclusive institutions, regulations and partnerships: Creatives need regulatory systems that safeguard their work and intellectual property, inclusive systems that value diversity, and support from cross-sector partnerships
- Uniqueness: A city’s particular badging attracts creatives, enables a dynamic cultural ecosystem, and draws audiences – all of which contribute to economic prosperity and growth of intangible cultural capital
- Digital environment: Digitalisation contributes to the development of tools that can enhance the value-chain of CCIs. (UNESCO 2021: 15-17)

The report offers several case studies from around the world (e.g., Angoulême, Brazzaville, Kobe, Lima, Madaba, Santos) to demonstrate how these enablers work. Three major outcomes can result from ‘creative’ cities that host numerous creatives and CCIs:

- Spatial benefits: CCIs contribute to amenities, attracting people to settle there, as well as drawing businesses and industries. High-amenity cities are likely to grow faster than low-amenity ones. The availability of such amenities is especially attractive to young people, and therefore plays a contributory role in urban regeneration.
- Economic benefits: CCIs support job growth and draw in marginalised groups, especially women and young people. UNESCO data suggest that for every job created in the CCIs, 1.7 other jobs (of varying value and status) are created outside them.
- Social benefits: CCIs contribute to network development that promote innovation, regeneration and growth. They can also foster social cohesion and enhance tolerance across various social and cultural groupings. (UNESCO 2021: 18-19)

Guiding principles and recommendations from the City-Culture-Creativity framework include: mapping cultural resources and CCIs; identifying constraints to their growth; prioritising interventions, in consultation with stakeholders, to take on challenges that limit growth of CCIs; and developing coalitions among stakeholders from a range of sectors invested in cultural growth and flourishing (UNESCO 2021:19). It is not surprising that the involvement of the World Bank would encourage an emphasis on the CCIs, and is symptomatic of a tension within UNESCO over the directions and functions of its Creative Cities Network (DeVereaux, 2020).

## Summary

The reviewed literature offers the following broad insights:

- There is widespread affirmation (both nationally and internationally) of the position that investment in social and cultural infrastructure is important for enhancing liveability. Positive assessment of this infrastructure occurs across all levels (local, pan-metropolitan, state, national and global). Social and cultural infrastructure is integral to the suite of infrastructure requirements for cities (c.f., the Infrastructure Australia report), and essential for the delivery of primary services and capacities for social inclusion, connection and cohesion.
- A strategic focus on culture to enhance liveability has paid dividends for some cities of very different sizes across the world, including Auckland, Calgary, London, and Melbourne. Heightening cultural attractiveness is also a means of raising a city's prominence nationally and internationally, and to draw in highly-skilled professionals from cultural and other industries as residents, non-resident workers and visitors.
- The economic benefits of cultural infrastructure investment are often stressed as *a* – if not *the* - key rationale for this investment, which in turn enhances the liveability of places. For example, Western Australia's *Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+*



positions cultural infrastructure as very important to attaining a number of Western Australia's economic and social sector goals in order to deliver on the state's economic development objectives.

- As a cautionary note, one piece of research (Uppal & Dunphy 2019) points to the lack of focus on measuring 'outcomes' of investment or seeking feedback from the public. This evidentiary gap deprives councils of the opportunity to understand the relationships between certain activities and the types of change that result for communities. Consequently, this shortcoming has an impact on the solidity of the foundation for current and future planning.

## Section 4: Emerging Themes

This section elaborates on the themes emerging from the review of the national and international exemplars presented in the previous section. These diverse cases elicit recurring issues but are not reducible to universal blueprints. They do, however, provide useful insights for the development of a social and cultural infrastructure framework that is focused on enhancing liveability.

### Increasing and diversifying populations

Growing populations urgently require effective and relevant social and cultural infrastructure and services. Councils around the world (including the member councils of NSROC) have articulated the need to replace ageing infrastructure, and to offer facilities that are fit for purpose, and which can be used in a flexible way. Increasing demographic diversity (regarding age, cultural background, linguistic capabilities, education attainment, income level, ability, and so on) also requires a variety of forms of infrastructure and a plethora of purposes for which they can be used. Locations ranging from Greater London, Calgary, and Auckland to the state of Victoria, Greater Sydney, and Parramatta have been proactive in putting in place strategies that will see this diversity propel the development of infrastructure so that people from a multitude of places can feel that they ‘belong’. Connectedness and opportunity for connectivity are important components of liveability which, in turn, can fuel income growth and wealth generation for a location in a self-reinforcing manner. The assumption – with variable evidence in support – is that places that capitalise on their diversity are socially, culturally and economically enriched.

### Creating a sense of place

Social and cultural infrastructure, broadly conceived, is generally considered critical to creating a sense of place. Attractive infrastructure draws people multiple times to participate in the experience on offer. Visitors (from both within and outside a region) to facilities contribute to the development and maintenance of a dynamic community that becomes connected to a particular place through a shared understanding of that site. Both social infrastructure (e.g., libraries, streets, plazas, and markets) and cultural infrastructure (e.g., performance spaces, art galleries, museums, and skate parks) enable this process. The example of Glasgow (Section 3, report 17) indicates how the place principle also promotes a cross-sector collaborative approach involving residents and investors to provide resources, services and assets for enhanced social and cultural outcomes to benefit demographically diverse places. The attractiveness of the place in which people choose to live (rather than only to visit from outside the area) is recognised as having positive implications for the development of social capital and material wellbeing, which in turn increases its liveability value. However, infrastructure that is relevant to arts and culture is often not considered

essential (Infrastructure Australia 2019: 442), and so it is necessary to make a concerted, persuasive public case for expenditure on enhancing liveability beyond material necessities.

## Accessibility

Accessibility is usually articulated in terms of physically getting to a necessary social or cultural infrastructure or associated service provider – school, health service, place of employment, library, theatre. The idea of the 20-minute neighbourhood or 30-minute city indicates the amount of time taken (at a maximum) to reach the built infrastructure or service, primarily and ideally using sustainable means – public transport or by walking or cycling – and secondarily by private transport. Transport infrastructure such as good roads, heavy and light rail corridors, cycleways or pavements are, therefore, as important as large infrastructure that supports commercial traffic. Glasgow City Council’s ‘Living Neighbourhoods’ plan (discussed in Section 3, report 17) shows how modifications to neighbourhood streets can be carried out to enable safe and comfortable walkability. Flattening pavements and walkways and ensuring that they are maintained supports mobility, including for people with disabilities. Sustainable transport enables people from a range of backgrounds, including children and the aged, to connect with one another and to build and maintain local community, thereby enhancing liveability.

When people from various demographic groups have the infrastructure and opportunity to congregate, socialise and develop networks, they take advantage of and contribute to the inclusivity of a city which in turn reduces isolation. Public life is multidimensional and deeply connected to public space, which can be concomitantly multidimensional. How cities are planned and the quality of the public space provided need to take sociality into account as a key element of liveability; it also needs to consider how social and cultural infrastructure facilitates activity. ‘[Public] spaces matter because of their consequences for society, politics, health, and well-being’ (Latham and Layton 2019: 9). As both the Create NSW and UNESCO examples demonstrate (Section 3, reports 7 and 21), this accessibility is not only physical. In the digital era, connectivity, software and so on are also crucial elements of cultural infrastructure.

## Desirability of multipurpose infrastructure

Social and cultural infrastructures are increasingly multipurpose and flexible in their use as well as encompassing a range of facilities and resources. For example, the social infrastructure program of the Government of Canada’s (2022) *Canada Plan* is underpinned by the UN Sustainable Development Goals aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, improving health care, propelling economic growth, and ensuring sustainable cities and communities. The program covers a range of areas of importance to Indigenous people (in housing, heritage, health, and childcare). The indication in the *Canada Plan* is that the term ‘social infrastructure’

encompasses cultural facilities and heritage spaces. Infrastructure used by artists, performers, manufacturers or digital processors could include creatives' studios; performing arts rehearsal spaces; studios for music recording, television and film; and industrial units used by creatives and cultural businesses (Greater London Authority 2019: 10). The possibility of flexible use of infrastructure, moving between or combining the social and the cultural, contributes to conceptualising and developing 'culturally-focused social infrastructure' and/or 'socially-focused cultural infrastructure'. Such multipurpose infrastructure may appeal to councils or other governance structures that have limited resources (including utilisable land) but are committed to providing essential infrastructure for their growing and diverse communities.

### Economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure

The development of social infrastructure, including cultural infrastructure and services, and the growth of cultural production and participation, expands employment opportunities both directly in the cultural sector but also in a range of other occupations and services, including those that provide ancillary support for cultural production and consumption. This developmental process is demonstrated by examples as diverse as the regional NSW LGAs of Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange, and the metropolis of London (Section 3, reports 1 and 16). An area's social and cultural infrastructure plays a crucial role in image-building and marketing for tourism, which in turn generates increased income for the town, city, and/or region. The growth and maintenance of cultural infrastructure, for instance, results in the increased employment of women and young people, people from diverse cultures, and of lower socio-economic status. Globally, nearly 20% of young people between 15 and 29 years of age are employed in the cultural and creative industries (UNESCO 2021: 18), and there is also growth in income for regional and urban communities through cultural tourism. As noted above (Section 3, report 21) in 2013 the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) contributed 3% of global GDP. It is safe to say that a decade later that proportion has grown as the 'culturalisation of the economy' (Venäläinen 2018) has intensified, placing cultural infrastructure even more squarely at the heart of both the society and economy.

### Non-economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure

The provision of social and cultural infrastructure enables participation in arts/cultural activities. This in turn results in improved physical and/or mental health and wellbeing (Section 3, report 15), especially by enabling social connectedness, appreciation of social and cultural diversity, a sense of belonging and value, and connection with place. All these are important elements of liveability. Participation in cultural production and the arts is essential to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities, and its value in healthcare settings has also been well established (Stevenson et al. 2019). The importance of arts and culture to collective and individual wellbeing is also evidenced in instances where the opportunities to participate have enabled communities affected by climate change and environmental catastrophes to recover

(Stevenson et al. 2019), and have also played a significant role in community recovery from the pandemic.

## Summary

While the key considerations of accessibility, a sense of place, the flexibility of infrastructure, and economic and non-economic benefit should be at the centre of any social and cultural infrastructure planning and delivery, it is important to remember that there is no blueprint that can be followed unthinkingly by some means of universal, mechanical application. These themes need to be taken into account and applied to the specific circumstances of a locality. Hence, for example, a sense of place is the distinctive experience of being in a particular place and enjoying a particular quality of life in the broadest sense there. This experience – both physical and mental – is framed and enhanced by the quality of the space and the nature of the social and cultural infrastructure provided in enhancing liveability. The next section will elaborate on these observations by highlighting areas and trends that are of most relevance to NSROC as it considers what liveability means and how it can be improved in the variable places within its own boundaries.

## Section 5: Themes and Trends most Relevant to NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020*

In its 2020 *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy*, NSROC explained its underlying impulse thus: '[T]o provide a long term framework to project demand for social infrastructure that it considers is required to deliver a satisfactory level of service to resident communities in the North Sydney region and to advocate for funding mechanisms to deliver the plan'. The consequent expectation is that such local planning implementation and infrastructural provision will be financially supported by the NSW Government (NSROC 2020: 4).

This strategy is underpinned by the need to accommodate the projected growth in NSROC's population, both in terms of residents and employees, and to ensure that there is an adequate response in terms of infrastructure needs for a growing community that is also increasingly diverse in terms of age, cultural background, income, education and employment. Whilst the Census-based resident regional population is expected to increase by 1.2% per year from 2016 to 2036, the requirements of non-residents who come into the region for work also need to be considered with regard to the provision of social infrastructure (NSROC 2020: 21). It is seen as important that 'the value of social infrastructure to the liveability of communities is recognised and not eroded by growth' (NSROC 2020: 4).

Social infrastructure, as noted, is defined broadly to include community and cultural facilities, but not, according to the approach adopted in this instance, not open spaces and recreation facilities (NSROC 2020: 9). The overall indication is that social infrastructure facilities are built structures, such as community halls or centres, meeting rooms, libraries, art galleries, etc., where residents and non-residents alike can convene and interact for a variety of purposes (NSROC 2020: 10, 21).

As noted earlier, the NSROC Strategy has developed a template of types of social infrastructure according to 'the level of hierarchy at which it is commonly provided'. Six indicative levels are listed:

- Regional Level Facilities (high level facilities that generally cater for the entire NSROC Region or other region as defined by individual service providers)
- Sub-Regional Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for groupings of LGAs within the NSROC Region)
- LGA Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for a whole LGA or equivalent area, or generally would only have one provided per LGA)
- District Level Facilities (facilities that generally cater for a group of suburbs)

- Local Level Facilities (facilities that generally serve a suburb)
- Neighbourhood Level Facilities (facilities that generally serve a small urban neighbourhood i.e., could be several per suburb) (NSROC 2020: 6)

Differentiating types of facility according to level of provision will assist NSROC in coordinated planning of social and cultural infrastructure across the different areas of the region.

For NSROC, there are three sub-regional groupings of LGAs:

- Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai ('Upper North Shore')
- Willoughby/North Sydney/Mosman ('Lower North Shore')
- Ryde/Hunters Hill/Lane Cove

Whilst the study out of which the strategy developed was limited to regional, sub-regional, and LGA levels, it is envisaged that member councils will plan local and neighbourhood level social infrastructure in response to local demand patterns and community requirements. These may be in the form of dedicated infrastructure for individual target groups or may be delivered as a component of a multi-purpose community facility at sub-regional, LGA or district level (NSROC 2020: 10). However, the *Strategy* also notes that councils by themselves cannot be responsible for planning and delivery of social (and cultural) infrastructure. This responsibility has to be shared between local, state and federal Governments. Community organisations and the private and not-for-profit sectors also play a role in providing facilities, but these are *additional* to council facilities, which are accessible to the whole community (NSROC 2020: 10).

NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy* notes that arts and culture are perceived as vital to community life in the majority of its Community Strategic Plans (NSROC 2020: 22). It further declares that the provision of social and cultural infrastructure is 'essential for the proper functioning and liveability of a community' (NSROC 2020: 25). The absence of such infrastructure, therefore, reduces the quality of liveability. At the same time, the *Strategy* notes that, in several NSROC councils, social infrastructure is ageing, dilapidated or unsuitable for its intended purposes (NSROC 2020: 20, 21). This reality counters any expectation that facilities and services will automatically follow the declared requirements of liveability or are already present and supported for new uses. Importantly, NSROC councils do not regard essential social and cultural infrastructure to be discretionary (NSROC 2020: 25), meaning that they will not 'disappear' among the many other calls on council resources.

The *Strategy* notes that NSROC's *10-Point Plan 2018-2019* has 'A Liveable Region' as a key focal point:

Objective: To enhance the liveability of the NSROC region by fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities, through the provision of appropriate social and cultural infrastructure.

Outcomes and Benefits: Liveability is enhanced with the timely delivery of appropriate social, arts, cultural and sports and recreational infrastructure that maximised participation opportunities, community well-being and amenity benefits. Social and cultural infrastructure is well-funded to meet the anticipated growth and needs of the NSROC region in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life for the residents in the region. (NSROC 2020: 44)

It follows from this statement that sustained funding for social and cultural infrastructure is critical to ensuring that the NSROC region can foster and actively maintain the conditions for liveability, especially given the pressures of current and anticipated growth in population. It requires that local government and state government work together to attain the goal of ensuring liveability (NSROC 2020: 50).

The following observations are drawn directly from earlier sections to highlight topic areas that will assist NSROC in developing a framework to assess the quantity and quality of their social and cultural investment.

#### Increasing and diversifying populations

NSROC is committed to the provision of social and cultural infrastructure for a population that is projected to see unprecedented growth in the next twenty years (NSROC 2020: 8), although COVID-19 has had an undeniable impact on such projections. The region is diverse in terms of age, education, cultural background, profession, home ownership and occupation, among other variables, and will become more so (see Appendix). Not only does this mean offering infrastructure that is robust and at scale, but also that is sustainable, accessible and flexible in utility. The particular demographics of each partner council would play a role when determining the level and type of infrastructural provision. Overall, for NSROC, given that 34% of the population is ageing and 22% are children, Glasgow City Council's *Liveable Neighbourhoods* approach offers important insights, especially regarding safe and accessible-friendly streets for walking, cycling and the use of public transport. In addition, NSROC notes that non-residents coming into the area for work also need access to infrastructure. Whilst this may primarily be a need for social infrastructure, cultural infrastructure plays an important role in projecting NSROC as an attractive place in which to work (and, potentially, to live), as Parramatta LGA's *Public Art Policy* has exemplified. More importantly, cultural infrastructure is vital to the quality of life for visitors and residents of all types and with highly variable tastes and needs.

When combined, the member councils of NSROC can be considered a microcosm of NSW (NSROC 2020: 15-18). The range of incomes, educational levels and multilingual capacities



suggests that the social and cultural infrastructure (hard and soft) will do best to cater to the diverse demographics to encourage participation and production. Whilst the proximity to Sydney CBD may provide access to social and cultural infrastructure for some of the NSROC populations, the opportunity to produce and consume arts and culture that responds to its local diversity cannot be underestimated. For example, in the planning and supply of new cultural infrastructure, the Greater London Authority, as noted, recognised that ‘local needs cannot be dictated at a pan-London level: good placemaking requires local stakeholders and communities to be actively engaged’ (Greater London Authority 2019: 40).

Enhancing the liveability value of the NSROC region may also include attracting creatives and innovators to the area, to live there in a more permanent way rather than simply commute to it for work. As *Planning Cultural Infrastructure for the City of Parramatta* demonstrates, this approach will necessitate providing infrastructure such as work studios and practice spaces for this resident-workforce. The availability of affordable housing (social infrastructure) will be a companion necessity. As cultural infrastructure reports discussed previously demonstrate, creatives and innovators, their cultural outputs, and audience consumption and participation, create a cultural ecosystem that plays a significant role in enhancing liveability. Creatives and a cultural sector embedded in the area will also generate income for the local area, besides enhancing its reputation as a lively zone of cultural activity.

#### Creating a sense of place

NSROC Councils are diverse in communities, locales and natural environments. The specificities of each locale can be highlighted, in continuous consultation with resident communities and other stakeholders, to develop and maintain infrastructure in a sustainable manner to enhance a sense of place for residents. The special nature of each locale will also attract visitors. For example, as mentioned the regional NSW LGAs of Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange enhanced place value for their communities, as well as attracted visitors to the area: ‘a strong sense of place can lead to increased retention of a skilled and educated population’ (Museums and Galleries NSW 2020: 15), which is especially of value to regional communities and suburban-regional neighbourhoods.

#### Accessibility

Whilst some of the areas administered by NSROC councils have easy access to central Sydney and the CBD, others are further away, making the ideal of the 30-minute city something of a challenge if they must or choose to go there. However, an example such as the City of Melville in Western Australia, where neighbourhood hubs are galvanised to operate as ‘cultural convergers’ that offer flexible infrastructure (City of Melville 2022a: 5), as well as avenues for

cultural flow and exchange between smaller locales and larger urban centres, suggests a means to overcome (at least partially) such a potential limitation. The talent enrichment potential for local communities, development of links across council areas and between neighbourhoods, and generation of income, all through providing robust, adaptable, accessible and localised social/cultural/community infrastructure, are evident outcomes.

#### Multipurpose infrastructure

Multipurpose infrastructure is identified in NSROC's *Strategy* as one of the types of facility on offer at district and sub-regional levels in the social infrastructure hierarchy (NSROC 2020: 10). Other facilities in the hierarchy can also be flexibly used in this manner. Providing multipurpose infrastructure is a trend in other jurisdictions (e.g., City of Melville WA, Greater London Authority). The advantage of multipurpose facilities is that, because they can be flexibly used, they can also cater to multiple diverse groups. The provision of multipurpose facilities also provides an opportunity for various groups and institutions to collaborate in setting them up, as in Greater London, through the office of the Mayor of London and other public services; involvement by the private sector, investors and developers; and educational institutions and not-for-profits working together to establish or revive cultural infrastructure.

#### Economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure

The numerous methodological challenges associated with assessing the economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure have yet to be fully addressed and frameworks continue to be devised that seek to capture them. Jeannotte cites Madden's (2001) suggestion to reframe economic impact studies towards development rather than growth to provide a "more elegant conception of economy" in supporting societies' "well-being, betterment and even enlightenment" (Jeannotte 2008: E24). Nevertheless, many of the social and cultural infrastructure strategies examined for this review were centrally concerned with direct and indirect economic benefits of investment. Several themes emerged as relevant:

##### Direct economic benefits

The review highlighted instances of clear economic benefits to be secured through investment in either new cultural infrastructure or the revival and refurbishment of existing infrastructure. The following examples illustrate the range of opportunities, potentials and results:

- The development of cultural infrastructure and services, and the expansion of cultural production and participation, expands employment opportunities directly in the

cultural sector, as well as in the occupations and services that support cultural production and consumption. The Creative Victoria (2021: 5) report indicates that post-pandemic state investment in infrastructure in regional Victoria contributed to job creation and support for art initiatives and organisations, as well as to accessible workspaces. This finding means that creatives from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are contributing to both cultural life and the local and regional economies. Creative Victoria acknowledges the value of the state's creatives who, coupled with sustained investment, have not only contributed to a vibrant cultural life, but have also to the economy through the creation of additional jobs, and by attracting tourism as well as further investment by their success.

- Social and cultural infrastructure is important in fostering a sense of place and can assist in image-building and marketing for tourism, thereby generating increased income for the town, city, and/or region. In the aforementioned Museums and Galleries NSW study of cultural facilities funded by local government in three regional LGAs, an additional 8.5 jobs were created outside the cultural sector for every 10 jobs within it; over \$14 million was added to the local economy in 2007-2008; *per annum*, \$9 million was generated in household income; volunteers generated \$1.3 million in economic activity; and, across the region, households were willing to pay over \$1.1 million annually to maintain current levels of service (2020: 2). In London in 2017, the creative industries generated a gross added value of £52 billion and employed 1 in 6 persons. For every fulltime equivalent job in the creative industries, another 0.75 fulltime equivalent was created in the supporting supply chains (Greater London Authority 2019: 18). UNESCO data suggest that, for every job created in the creative and cultural industries (CCIs), 1.7 other jobs are created outside them. CCIs also catalyse job growth, drawing in marginalised groups, especially women and young people (UNESCO 2021: 18-19).
- The reports on Parramatta City indicate how elements such as public art and developed infrastructure for a thriving night-time economy that caters to a range of social groups with varying spending capacities (not just liquor consumption), can attract audiences, whether resident or visiting, to participate in/consume culture, thereby bringing activity and income to the city (Rowe et al. 2008). Supporting local creatives, attracting outside creatives to Parramatta and retaining them as residents, and at the same time also enabling a creative ecosystem and talent circulation with visiting creatives, ensures that cultural infrastructure such as creative venues – whether these be a large performance arts spaces, or smaller, live-music venues such as pubs/bars that already host another enterprise – enables multisource income that benefits the local economy (Ang et al. 2020).
- In the economic domain, support for the local economy encompasses locally produced goods and services drawn upon by the creative and cultural industries, thereby contributing to local economic resilience. This is also secured through 'economic diversity, complexity and participation' (Cultural Development Network: 2019) as well

as via innovation and entrepreneurship. The definition of complexity encompasses the availability of skilled personnel locally who can utilise the available goods and services to create artistic outputs for consumption (e.g., theatre productions). These outputs may have the capacity to go beyond the initial local consumption, thereby also helping to mark out the locality in a wider landscape.

### Challenges affecting direct economic benefits

Compromising the cultural ecosystem affects the image of the city and region as attractive cultural hubs. Deprivations faced by creatives (such as loss of cultural infrastructure; prohibitive rents for accommodation or practice spaces) in turn affects audiences as cultural participants and consumers, and consequently their wellbeing. The outmigration of creatives results in a decline in cultural production and a consequent loss of related income for the city and region. Therefore, sufficient cultural infrastructure, which includes built structures (at varying scale); accessibility of these structures to people from a range of backgrounds (such as gender, class, culture, ability), whether as creatives or audiences; and the interpersonal interactions among creatives, service providers, and audiences, is essential to the liveability value of an area (Ang et al. 2020).

The Greater London Authority's report describes how various local councils are working with other organisations to safeguard their local cultural infrastructure and make changes to ensure effective use/reuse. In Hackney Wick, for example, the London Legacy Development Corporation has a policy that sets rents for creatives' workspaces at less than half the market value, whilst also safeguarding existing space in new developments (rather than having them demolished). Working with Hackney Council, this is an element that has resulted in Hackney Wick becoming a 'Creative Enterprise Zone' (Greater London Authority 2019: 49). Flexibility in the use/reuse of social and cultural infrastructure reduces challenges likely to affect direct economic benefits.

### Indirect economic benefits

Perhaps the most significant indirect economic benefits generated by the presence of social and cultural infrastructure comes from tourism and the visitor economy (including day-trippers and people visiting to attend special events and attractions). For instance, Museums and Galleries NSW found that the volume of visitors attending cultural facilities from both within and outside the LGA contributes to the image/brand value of the three research areas, Orange, Bathurst and Dubbo (2020: 15). London's fame as a global tourist destination is enabled by, and requires, a robust cultural infrastructure. Its heritage buildings, museums, theatres, art galleries, music venues, and its pubs (considered to be cultural infrastructure by the city) were the main attractions for its 31.9 million visitors in 2017 (Greater London Authority 2019: 13, 21).

## Non-economic benefits of social and cultural infrastructure

In the social domain, the provision of social and cultural infrastructure and associated participation in arts/cultural activities improved physical and/or mental health and wellbeing. Such activity could be solitary or in company with others, thereby promoting social connectedness and the capacity to appreciate expressions of cultural diversity. These are core elements of liveability which have economic implications but are conventionally treated as non-economic despite the large body research on the social determinants of health. This is more a matter of compartmentalisation and emphasis rather than indicating a strict separation of costs and benefits.

That participation in cultural activities is beneficial health-wise to people across age groups and socio-economic location would support the point that LGA expenditure in the area of creative and cultural industries could reduce some expenditure in conventional healthcare or social support (The Cultural Development Network 2019). The study on the social impact of the arts in New South Wales (Stevenson et al. 2019) delineates how arts and cultural policy enables community health and wellbeing, and positive social outcomes, including for Indigenous people, and for people in healthcare settings. Offering an understanding of social inclusion as a key underpinning concept and goal of socially focused art programs, the report indicates that it is an important measure of liveability, where the capacity and capability to access education, health care, housing, jobs, etc. are as important as these resources being generally on offer but mostly used by those who are already relatively advantaged in social, economic and cultural terms.

A significant contribution is also made by culture to the stock of 'social capital'. Engaging with their local cultural facilities stimulated people to think differently about their world, understand different cultures, develop connections, build trust with one another, and cultivate a sense of place (Museums and Galleries NSW 2020: 2, 15). Over 75% of all respondents had visited the performing arts facility in their LGA, and over 60% their local art gallery, and reported satisfaction with their visits. The contribution to social capital is also evidenced by the frequency of visits to cultural venues, with that frequency reflecting a sense of place. Furthermore, the report notes that 'a strong sense of place can lead to increased retention of a skilled and educated population' (Museums and Galleries NSW 2020: 15) that can also contribute to social as well as economic capital.

Creative Victoria (2021: 19) found that participation in create activity can serve to surpass barriers, especially among culturally and linguistically diverse groups and regional communities, increasing 'a sense of connection and community'. These benefits can be extrapolated to improved health outcomes and so reduce the burden on the health services given the role played in supporting wellness by social connectivity. In particular, health findings show that isolation affects mental, emotional and physical health and those who are connected with others tend to have a better quality of life (Department of Health, State

Government of Victoria 2022). Because social and cultural infrastructure sites and services offer people from various demographic groups the opportunity to congregate, socialise and develop networks, they thereby contribute to the inclusivity of a city and reduce isolation. Public life, which is multidimensional, is related to public space, which can also become multidimensional in form and function (Latham and Layton 2019).

Alongside social and cultural infrastructures, the art practices that activate these facilities have been used to support community revival, bolster sustenance and cultivate resilience in the context of complex social challenges created by environmental disasters such as bushfires and floods. Social and cultural infrastructure, therefore, has interconnected, multi-layered benefits that apply to any setting, which means that no government, city or region can afford to discount their importance or neglect to develop policies, plans and strategies in the interests of liveability and collective wellbeing.

# Conclusion

The aims of this literature review were fourfold. They are to:

- establish a workable definition of social and cultural infrastructure by examining examples from Australia and in international contexts
- comment on the alignment of this definition, the selected cases of reports, strategies and plans, and NSROC's published hierarchy of social infrastructure
- summarise, consider and reflect on the selected key Australian and international applied research reports, strategies and plans published since 2000.
- identify and assess emerging themes and identify areas and trends that are most relevant to NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020*.

The literature review provided here has shown that there is widespread agreement, nationally and internationally, that the provision of high quality social and cultural infrastructure plays an important role in enhancing the liveability of places, especially in the context of rapid population growth and demographic diversification. The benefits from such investment are not only social and cultural (including enhancing health and wellbeing, fostering social cohesion and community belonging) but also economic in that they contribute to local prosperity and vibrancy and are components of effective cultural tourism strategies. These multidimensional benefits are also central to the enhancement of liveability.

What is clear, though, is that social and cultural infrastructure can no longer be considered less essential than other, more commonly recognised forms of infrastructure, such as transport, schools and hospitals. Rather, it is an integral part of the entire infrastructural mix that cities and regions must provide to their residents, commercial operators, and visitors.

In the past decade the urban policy landscape has been characterised by a marked increase in dedicated cultural infrastructure strategies and plans developed by local governments, metropolitan entities, state agencies and international organisations. However, there are many challenges in determining how to move from strategy, policy, or plan to action and implementation. A key sticking point here is that there may be a disconnect between capacity and responsibility, particularly at a local level (Infrastructure Australia 2018: 33). Local governments play a key role in identifying and providing community and cultural infrastructure that enhances liveable communities, but many of them do not have the necessary resources (in terms of funding, logistics and ideas) effectively to deliver on their responsibilities.

This literature review will provide NSROC with information, ideas and inspiration that can help it develop a strategic social and cultural infrastructure framework for the region and its member councils. In this regard, NSROC's *Social and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy 2020* is evidence of the momentum within the organisation. Its framing of a 'social infrastructure

hierarchy' is an original and promising starting point for the development of a coordinated planning and delivery framework for the region and its associated councils.

At the same time, it needs to be reiterated that there is no universal blueprint for the development of a strategic framework, a lesson that learnt from the contextual deficiencies of previous models such as that of Richard Florida's (2003) influential but much criticised advice regarding the creative class to governments and councils around the world in radically different situations (Stevenson and Magee 2017). A flexible and consultative approach to identifying local needs and requirements is essential to meeting community/cultural infrastructure needs, rather than an 'imported' vision that is necessarily oblivious to local circumstances, noting that 'placemaking requires local stakeholders and communities to be actively engaged' (Greater London Authority 2019: 40).

Finally, given the fluid nature of the types of infrastructure encompassed by the terms social infrastructure and cultural infrastructure, we believe that it is more useful and productive to combine the concepts and to think in a less constraining way in terms of *culturally-focused social infrastructure* and/or *socially-focused cultural infrastructure* to signify emphasis rather than division. Approached in this manner, the conceptual divisions that often hamper progressive and imaginative thinking about the nature and provision of social and cultural infrastructure, as well as 'turf wars' over spheres of responsibility, will be overcome. Innovative and collectively beneficial frameworks for liveability, several of which have been cited in the literature in both Australian and international locations, will be much more likely to flourish if liberated from artificial conceptual and operational boundary marking.



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# Appendix

## ***NSROC Mapping and Demography***

On its [website](#), NSROC notes that its purpose is to develop social, environmental, and economic solutions that benefit both the region and individual communities. To this end, it endeavours to cultivate and establish innovative partnerships with a range of entities at the federal and state level, as well as with community organisations, charities, and developers. NSROC supports member councils in the optimal use of their social and cultural facilities (including community centres, art galleries and outdoor performance venues). It also works with the NSW Government to secure new avenues for resourcing the provision of fresh infrastructure as required. NSROC is committed to creating a flexible and sustainable funding system for councils and communities, and to establishing a 30-minute transport system connecting the region to the city.

NSROC is comprised of eight Councils:

- Hornsby
- Hunter’s Hill
- Ku-ring-gai
- Lane Cove
- Mosman
- North Sydney
- Ryde
- Willoughby

NSROC covers an area of 639 square kilometres, stretching from the Hawkesbury River to Sydney Harbour and the Parramatta River, and including an area west of the Harbour Bridge. It consists of urban hubs and villages and covers a diverse natural environment.

In 2021, its population was estimated to be [633,804](#), which is projected to increase at a rate of 1.2% annually, reaching an estimated 784,850 by 2036 (NSROC 2020: 17). Higher growth is expected in Ryde (1.8%) and Lane Cove (1.7%) compared with other areas covered by NSROC.

The population is diverse, with the breakdown by [ancestry](#), [origin](#), [English proficiency](#) and [languages](#) capability in 2021 as follows:

English:	26.7%
Australian:	21.9%
Chinese:	19.7%
Irish:	9.0%
Scottish:	7.8%
Indian:	4.5%
Italian:	3.9%



Korean: 2.8%  
German: 2.7%  
Filipino: 1.8%  
Indigenous: 0.4%

Others are present in smaller percentages.

Total overseas born: 42.7%  
Australian born: 54.4%

Monolingual in English: 60.7%  
Bilingual (w/ English fluency): 30.8%  
Speak another language and not English-fluent: 5.1%  
Speak a language other than English at home: 35.8%

Ten per cent of NSROC residents earned over \$3000 per week, compared with 4.5% in Greater Sydney. However, the median weekly personal income varied significantly across the region: Ryde \$700; Hornsby \$800; Hunters Hill, Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai ranged from \$900-\$1000; Lane Cove varied from \$1100-\$1200; Mosman \$1300; North Sydney \$1400 (NSROC 2020: 16). Homeowners who fully own their home (32%), homeowners paying a mortgage (31%), and renters (31%) were almost equally represented.

Residents with a university degree constitute 45% of the population (compared with 28% in Greater Sydney), and 16% are employed in professional, scientific and technical services (compared with 10% in Greater Sydney) (NSROC 2020: 15).

Of the total population of NSROC, children (0-17 years) constitute 22%; young adults (18-34 years) 22%; parents and home builders (35-49 years) 22%; older adults/retirees (50-69 years) 23%; seniors (over 70 years) 11% (NSROC 2020: 15). Therefore, NSROC has a relatively high percentage (34%) of an ageing population.