



**WESTERN SYDNEY
CREATIVE**

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Interim report

Fibonacci Forum: Creative Communities and Cultural Wellbeing Framework

Dr Karin Louise, Dr Cheryle Yin Lo,
Dr Rohini Balam, Cris Townley,
Kasturika Bhattacharjee and Dinusha Soo

A vibrant nebula in space, featuring swirling clouds of gas and dust in shades of blue, purple, and pink, set against a dark background filled with numerous bright stars. A semi-transparent red rectangular box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image, containing white text.

**Fibonacci Forum:
Creative Communities
and Cultural Wellbeing
Framework**

**Western Sydney University
2022**

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith 2751, NSW Australia

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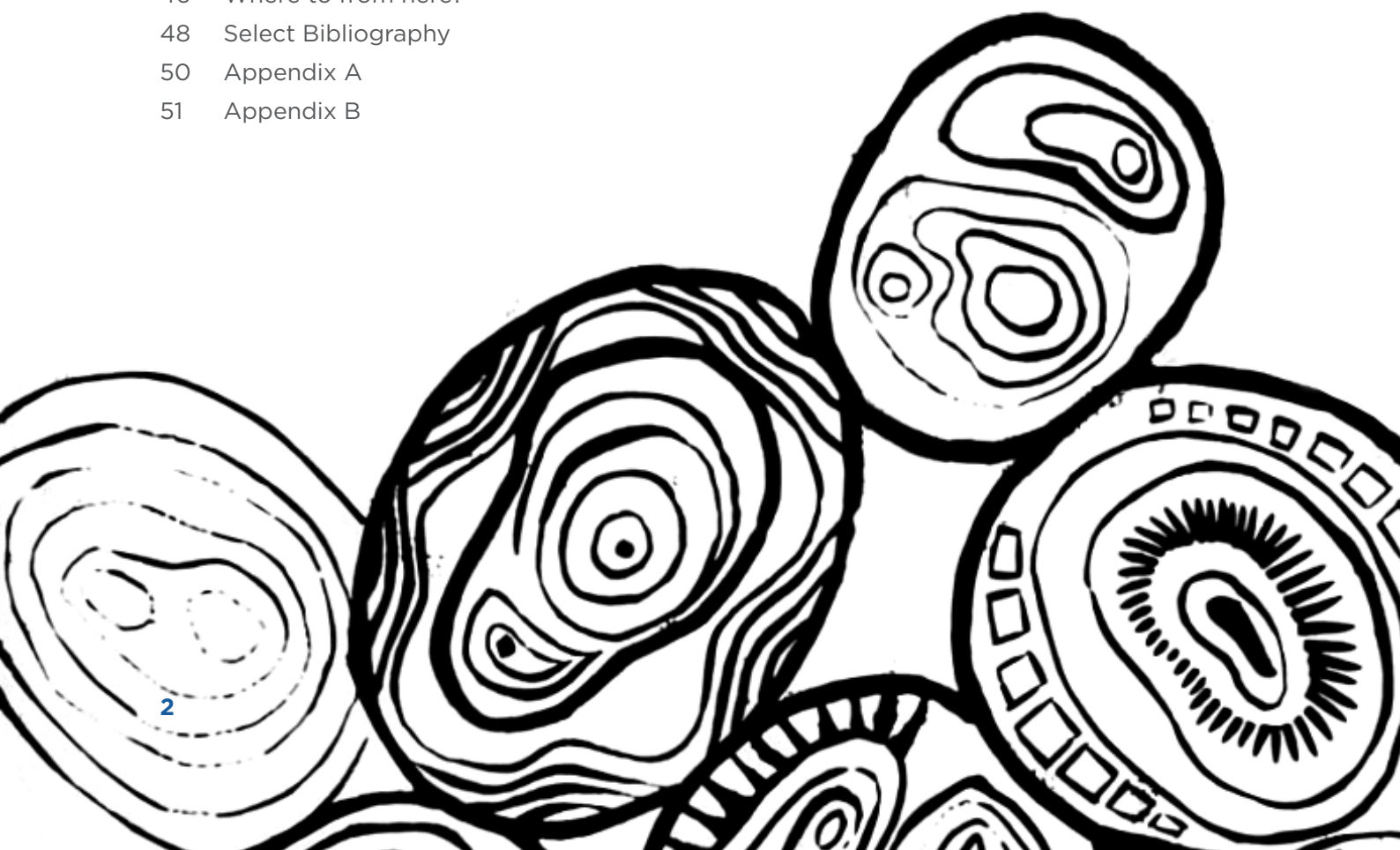
Information presented in this report reflects a summary of the Fibonacci Forum Series, centred on the Cultural Wellbeing Framework (Mackay 2021), which served as a platform to initiate and foster conversations about cultural wellbeing among community cultural practitioners, artists, researchers, and educators nationally, with a focus on the Greater Western Sydney Region.

This report is complemented with a brief review of current directions in arts, cultural and wellbeing, prepared by Dr Karin Louise, Dr Cheryle Yin Lo, Dr Rohini Balram and Dr Cris Townley with research assistance from Mumu Bhattacharjee and Dinusha Soo, in good faith, exercising all due care and attention, but no representation and warranty, express or implied, is made as to the relevance, accuracy, completeness, or fitness for purpose of this document in respect of any particular user's circumstances. Users of this document should satisfy themselves concerning its application to themselves, and where necessary seek expert advice in respect of their situation.

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Foreword



**Dolla Merrillees, Inaugural Director
Western Sydney Creative**
Commenced September 2021



Western Sydney University is a modern, forward-thinking, research-led university, located at the heart of Australia’s fastest-growing and economically significant region, Western Sydney. Boasting 13 campuses – many in Western Sydney CBD locations – and more than 200,000 alumni, 49,500 students and 3,500 staff, the university has 13 Schools with an array of well-designed programs and degrees that are carefully targeted to meet future industry demands.

As the newly appointed Director of Western Sydney Creative, I aim to establish new and exciting opportunities for the arts and culture of the Western Sydney region. Drawing on my national and international expertise as director, curator, cultural producer and consultant, I have been charged with leading the implementation of the university’s Decadal Strategy.

The Decadal Strategy presents a bold vision for the university. The strategy incorporates eight priorities that encapsulate the following key principles: foregrounding the student experience, recognising the arts and cultural priorities of First Nations and Torres Strait Islander people, enriching our cultural environment, and drawing on our existing research expertise. Western Sydney Creative endeavours to celebrate our region’s diversity and to foster a deep engagement between the university and the local arts and cultural sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dolla S. Merrillees'.

“A thriving, diverse and highly-creative independent arts and culture sector is vital to the economic development and cultural life of our cities – something we need now more than ever, as we emerge from the pandemic lockdowns and look to the arts to enrich our lives and sense of wellbeing.”

Dolla Merrillees



Western Sydney Creative Arts and Culture Decadal Strategy 2019-2029

Western Sydney University embodies the histories, identities and achievements of its students, staff, alumni, and the wider community. We are the most culturally and linguistically diverse university in Australia, with more than 170 cultural and ethnic groups represented across our community.

For Western Sydney, the arts not only provide a voice, but also enable the expression of identity, culture, and community. Championing, celebrating and investing in the community to see the region's arts and cultural expression flourish is at the heart of this strategy. Throughout the extensive consultation process undertaken to shape this strategy, we were always conscious of the university's high reputation, and thriving embedded network across Western Sydney. This equips us to influence the creative and cultural economy in the region and to support the university's leadership role in the education of arts and cultural professionals.

As a research-led university, Western Sydney University recognises the vital contribution that the arts make to the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of our local community and beyond. The university acknowledges the value that creative and arts-based research methodologies bring to problem solving and critical thinking. The establishment of interdisciplinary creative hubs that bring together expertise, skills and disciplines across the arts and sciences will generate long-term partnerships and drive creative collaboration.

Western Sydney is home to a vibrant network of independent creative practitioners who live, produce, and operate within the region, forming a growing small-to-medium arts sector.

This sector acts as the laboratory, or the research and development engine of the local creative arts industry. It is typically described as dynamic, risk-taking, inventive, self-reliant, independent, multi-skilled, diverse, innovative, and experimental. It is also vulnerable due to the impacts of the pandemic, changes in consumer behaviour, loss or reduction in employment and an uncertain funding environment, as well as a dearth of long-term strategic vision and policies by successive governments. Robust policy frameworks and ongoing funding commitments are critical to supporting independent artists and small-to-medium businesses. Consequently, this has hindered our local arts and cultural industries from flourishing.

While we welcome the launch of the Federal Government's new National Cultural Policy Revive, as well as recent announcements by the NSW Government into transformational cultural infrastructure projects across Western Sydney, we recognise that the sector requires Local, State and Federal government, industry and community to work together to sustain and further the development of Western Sydney's creative and cultural economy.

The University of Western Sydney's Creative Arts and Culture Decadal Strategy 2019-2029 has adopted the following priorities:

- 1.** Develop an overall concept masterplan, appropriate to each campus, that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and placemaking through wayfinding landscape, visual identity, art, language, and voice, together with longer-term plans to establish an iconic 'meeting place'.
- 2.** Identify, develop, and nurture a collaborative partnership with the arts and cultural sector that is built on raising our ambitions, a shared commitment to excellence, skills development and delivering high-quality education and training.
- 3.** Develop a new gallery and social space with a mixed art-science focus, to spearhead public engagement with a range of disciplines. This includes launching an annual art-science speed dating event as part of National Science Week, to enable practitioners to find common ground and develop new professional relationships and research collaborations.
- 4.** In response to growth and development in Western Sydney and the unique opportunities created by the Western Sydney Aerotropolis, the university will partner with key cultural organisations to identify, develop and support four transformational projects aligned with the university's interdisciplinary research themes of education and work, environment and sustainability, health and wellbeing, and urban living futures.
- 5.** Support the small-to-medium arts sector by establishing creative/tech hubs and incubators, as an extension of LaunchPad or in parallel with LaunchPad. This will provide space and support for networking, business development, collaboration, co-production, and community engagement, and reflects our ambition to create links between our academic work, industry partners, and the cultural and creative sector.
- 6.** Appoint a director for Western Sydney Creative, who will lead the expression of arts and culture at Western Sydney University. The director's responsibilities will include the implementation of this strategy, external relations, audience and community development, partnerships and relationships management, collections development, as well as an ongoing program of cultural events and activities.
- 7.** Develop a digital information hub that encompasses the university's Art Collection as well as transmedia resources and imaginative interfaces to enable engagement with a wide range of audiences.
- 8.** Establish and sustain innovative long-term partnerships that amplify creative practice, increase student participation, reach out to new audiences, promote diversity and intercultural exchange, as well as offering opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and co-creation.



Project Background

Why is an Arts and Cultural Wellbeing Forum needed?

According to NAVA, the peak body representing artists in Australia, the creative arts sector contributes a significant \$111.7 billion to the Australian economy, or 6.4% of GDP.

The arts sector employs 600,000 people, including 48,000 professional artists. Despite this, there has been an 18.9% fall in the Australian Government's arts expenditure per capita during the past decade (NAVA, 2022). While the small-to-medium arts organisations are vital sources of cultural and artistic diversity and significant employers of visual artists, investment in that sector has declined drastically.

The part that local arts organisations play in cultural wellbeing is not well understood or evidenced. International perspectives on arts and cultural wellbeing have been emerging since 2002 (Dalziel, 2019). Australia's growing interest in the arts and wellbeing was sparked by Mills and Brown's seminal work in collaboration with the Australia Council for the Arts and VicHealth in 2006. More recently, The Australia Council signalled renewed interest in the field, holding several public consultations on arts and wellbeing as well as adopting a policy direction focusing on connectedness of community (2022a, 2022b, 2022c). Alongside these developments a new National Cultural Policy, released on 30 January 2023, focuses on a dominant First Nations perspective as well as strongly promoting the benefits of participating in arts and culture.

While cultural wellbeing is implied in these new policy directions, its ideas are as yet not well understood or embedded in policy in meaningful ways. Despite this The Cultural Wellbeing Framework, as introduced in this report, has the potential to change and reinvigorate the arts, cultural and creative community sectors, through highlighting the lived experiences of wellbeing in diverse communities, thus positioning Australia as a leader in the field and aligned with international best practice.

The concept and experience of wellbeing came to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fibonacci Forum: Cultural Wellbeing Series was a necessary response to the pandemic-disrupted arts sector, when cultural and arts practitioners had become disconnected from their own communities. Despite efforts made by the community to maintain local networks during and after the pandemic, its impact on Western Sydney's creative economy was immediate, ruthless, and ongoing. Anecdotally, this led to a desire by a range of cultural practitioners to explore how wellbeing was lived in their communities and to explore their own understanding of wellbeing. The research team responded to Western Sydney Creative's call for initiatives to reinvigorate local arts networks and the creative based community sector – and so the Fibonacci Forum Series was created.

About the Fibonacci Forum Cultural Wellbeing Series

The Fibonacci Forum Cultural Wellbeing Series was funded by Western Sydney Creative Collaborate in 2022 to conduct a series of six creative wellbeing workshops, targeting the small-to-medium arts sector, with the aim of rebuilding cultural networks disrupted during the pandemic.

The driver for the cultural wellbeing focus emerged from two previous wellbeing seminars held in June 2022 as part of a research project with Multicultural NSW and Western Sydney University. In these workshops the Cultural Wellbeing Framework (Mackay, 2021) was introduced to guide thinking about what individuals and communities need to live well. Dr Karin Louise presented the Cultural Wellbeing Framework and a number of guest presenters responded: the Coordinator General of Refugee Resettlement, Peter Shergold, the newly appointed Special Envoy for the Arts, Susan Templeman MP, the New Zealand wellbeing economist, Connell Smith, and Professor James Arvanitakis, Adjunct Professor, Western Sydney University. Attending the workshops were representatives from 50 community arts organisations, NGOs, education department officers, academics, policymakers and artists. Workshop discussions focused on the need to move beyond arts and culture as a single policy issue and to initiate conversations around a broader vision of arts that encompasses its relationship with cultural wellbeing.

The Fibonacci Forum Cultural Wellbeing Series successfully brought together a renewed network of arts and cultural practitioners, artists, and academics in the small-to-medium arts sector in NSW, with a particular focus on Western Sydney.

The project engaged the creative community in conversations about why and how creative practices and art making influence community wellbeing and how this relates to bigger picture issues of global wellbeing. To date, the project has delivered four of the planned six forums via Zoom from August to November 2022. Two more forums have been scheduled for March to May 2023.

The forums have strongly engaged with participants, who are keen to continue the conversations and sharing beyond the six forums. There have been nine expert presenters and a total audience engagement from four sessions of 102 participants (average of 28 per session). The event was viewed on Eventbrite 991 times and a total of 130 free tickets were sold. We achieved a 75% Zoom attendance rate from ticket sales. This is very heartening as our network started off modestly with approximately 200 local contacts. Community practitioners have shown a strong interest in presenting their work and want to engage with the planned Cultural Wellbeing Working group and research project during 2023.



What inspired the Fibonacci Forum name?

The Fibonacci Forum name was derived from the famous Fibonacci sequence, a mathematical spiral pattern that can be seen in nature everywhere, including flowers, pinecones, hurricanes, and even huge spiral galaxies in space.

The sequence was introduced by Leonardo Fibonacci, an Italian mathematician. It is the basis of the Golden Ratio that has inspired many artists and can be applied to everything from logo design and architecture to liveable cities. Fibonacci is about harmony and interconnectedness in human and natural systems. Our aim for the Fibonacci Forum is to find creative, inspiring, and sustainable ways to live well in our communities.

The aims of the project

- Provide a forum for practitioners, artists, researchers, and educators to have their voices heard and to share understandings of how cultural wellbeing is understood in community and cultural organisations.
- Hear from experts in fields such as arts, culture, education, and community development to share thought-provoking perspectives on what cultural wellbeing means in terms of the cultural wellbeing framework.
- Build a supportive network of community practitioners, educators, academics, and policymakers to inform the National Cultural Wellbeing Policy.
- Invite previous participants in the Cultural Wellbeing Framework workshop to talk about how they can use the framework in their own projects and workshop these ideas with others.
- Publish an inaugural report on the Cultural Wellbeing Framework in community contexts, with the aim of identifying best practice in cultural policy in a diverse community.
- Provide an opportunity for people to publish original work in a “digital zine” self published publication of text, images ideas and topics.



Scope of this report

This interim report is intended as a precursor to a full research project that will be supported by HREA ethics approval H15283. This is an interim report on the Fibonacci Forum Cultural Wellbeing Series, covering four of the six scheduled sessions that were held online between August and November 2022. An updated report will be completed after the final two sessions in early 2023.



The Cultural Wellbeing Framework

In my engaged community arts research over the last decade, I found that wellbeing is intrinsically linked to our human desire for cultural expression of relationships between people and places, a need for connectedness that can be traced back to humanity's earliest beginnings (Dissanayake, 2015).

I also found that wellbeing is often mistakenly framed in terms of sickness or health, rather than as the ecology of interconnected life experiences. Wellbeing is contingent upon the relationship between freedom of cultural expression in tension with our lived experience of the sociopolitical structural realities in which we find ourselves. I concluded that wellbeing is best understood as a lived relational ecology rather than as a snapshot of measurable living standards, as it is usually presented. It is for this reason I devised the Cultural Wellbeing Framework to consider how wellbeing might be experienced from a community ecology perspective — a way that was not reflected in most previous wellbeing models.



Dr Karin Louise (Mackay), author of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework

The term cultural wellbeing is used in this report to describe how individuals and communities express life experiences, stories and art, imaginal creativity, and spirituality in relation to place, to develop their own cultural practices for wellbeing. I collectively term these practices as creative cultural practices. Creative cultural practices are expressions of people's belief systems, such as those used in art, stories, and ritual celebrations (Mackay, 2014). Therefore, cultural wellbeing is a site for self and community expression, reflecting complex relationships between people and place, including the non-human world.

My work with diverse women artists has shown me that it is only when wellbeing is reframed in relational terms, rather than within the usual rigid socioeconomic perspective, that life-sustaining practices (and those that precipitate breakdown) are exposed. This work has taught me that measuring and reporting wellbeing through Living Standard Frameworks and GDP does not adequately reflect the lived wellbeing ecologies that I witnessed in my community-based work. Similarly, psycho-subjective perspectives have not always encompassed all the political and societal impacts to an individual's lived experience. I saw that challenging life experiences, such as displacement, discrimination, educational disadvantage, and inequities of power, influence people's wellbeing in ways often not captured.

The New Zealand Government is at the forefront of embedding cultural wellbeing into policy and GDP. Cultural wellbeing in New Zealand is described as “the vitality that communities and individuals enjoy through participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities [and] the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage, and traditions” (Creative NZ, 2017). While the New Zealand model is inclusive of all cultural and natural assets, it was originally developed to value Māori concepts of land, ancestry, and spirituality (Durie, 2004; Dalziel, 2006; Dalziel et al., 2019). Consequently, the NZ focus is on the measurement of culture as an asset rather than as a flexible tool that reflects community understandings of wellbeing.

Although The Creative Cultural Wellbeing Model (the framework) used in the Fibonacci forums has been devised with reference to the New Zealand model, its focus is more on capturing the lived experience of arts and cultural wellbeing to better understand community needs. The framework includes twelve interactive wellbeing elements, with micro and macro layers, intertwined with past, present, and future perspectives (see Figure 2). It is intended as a resource for arts and cultural practitioners and emerged from a practice-based community arts approach that is specifically tailored to Australian communities (Mackay, 2021).

The framework has enabled many conversations on how wellbeing and arts can be expressed in local and national communities. It has provided community and arts practitioners and researchers with an analytical tool to investigate how cultural wellbeing is entwined in every aspect of our lives from the individual, communal, national, to the planetary and cosmological.

The Fibonacci project’s purpose was to test how the Cultural Wellbeing Framework can be used by community arts practitioners and others to inform, document and evaluate their important work. The research team was also interested in finding ways to benchmark the framework against New Zealand models, in order for Australian practitioners to embed cultural wellbeing into wider policy of cultural arts, education and health. The forums have led to the formation of a working group to explore how the framework could inform cultural policy and meet the needs of Australian arts and cultural communities. Importantly, the research team will need to take a strategic approach to this mission, as there is currently no platform for people from arts and cultural sectors to come together with institutions such as education, health, environment, spirituality, infrastructure or sport, to focus on the value of wellbeing within arts and creative cultural practices.



2014
 Doctorate
 Reclaiming
 Women’s
 Wellbeing
 through Story
 and Art

2017 Navigating
 Resettlement:
 Creative Media
 Design and
 Refugee youth
 SYDWEST

2019 Refugee
 Youth Voice:
 Postcards to
 The Premier
 Multicultural
 NSW

2019 Dance for
 Life: Expressive
 Arts for Cultural
 Wellbeing with
 Youth

2020 Parallel
 Lives of
 Women; Syrian
 and Sri Lankan
 women’s
 experiences in
 Australia

2021 Better
 elder care;
 CALD older
 Refugee
 cultural
 wellbeing
 NSW

Current Projects

2021 Cultural Transitions and Family Dynamics for Refugee Youth with HOST International funded by Department of Communities and Justice

2021 to 2023 The Positive Peace, Cultural Wellbeing and Youth Agency Initiative (PPCWYAI) with IEP, DHRRRC and funded by a Compact MNSW grant

Curriculum Design Creative Living and Cultural Wellbeing Minor WSU to begin in Spring 2023

Figure 1: Research projects based on the Cultural Wellbeing Framework in various ways



Cultural Wellbeing Framework:

A Nexus Model for Living Well (Mackay 2021)

1. **Being:** The interplay of Inner and Outer Life. The material physical, embodiment.
2. **Mind:** Consciousness, intellect, learning, knowledge and perceived reality.
3. **Belonging:** Connectedness to kin, people, nature, home, displacement and networks.
4. **Love (Philia):** Caring for and caring about self, others, place, planet. What holds meaning and value.
5. **Shared Experiences:** World events, planetary effects, culture, language, ritual and celebration.
6. **Creative Cultural Practices:** Creativity, art, culture, museums, galleries, sport and spirituality.
7. **Time, Place, Space:** Context, nature, environment, time, ownership, cycles and ecology.
8. **Life Sustaining Practices:** Survival, work, money, sustenance, food, shelter, peace and healing.
9. **Power and Governance:** Self governance, autonomy, agency, power structures and economy.
10. **Breakdown:** Illness, aging, decay, disease, death, war and process.
11. **Transformation:** Change, adaption, creative responses, learning, hope and activism.
12. **Lifeforce Energy:** The force that animates life, the energy to power actions (homes, cars etc).

Figure 2: The Cultural Wellbeing Framework (Louise, 2021)

What is Cultural wellbeing?

NZ Ministry uses the term cultural wellbeing to describe

“The vitality that communities and individuals enjoy through participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities and the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage and traditions” (Dalziel et al 2019)

Thinking about cultural wellbeing in this way recognizes that we make and remake ourselves through social networks and relationships within place. Cultural wellbeing incorporates the nexus of life factors in a complex process of becoming rather than a static phenomenon. This opens up possibilities for reimagining who we are and how we live.

I use the term **cultural wellbeing** to describe “how people and communities use their learnings from life experiences, stories, art, imaginal creative processes, being in place, spiritual beliefs and practices to develop their own wellbeing. I call these creative cultural practices, which are powerful sites of expression in the negotiation of multifaceted identity.”

Figure 3: Slide from Forum # 1 – A summary of cultural wellbeing

About this event

The series of five workshops and associated activities are sponsored by **Western Sydney Creative Collaborate Fund**

Forum for creative practitioners, academics, artists and policy makers to come together to discuss and develop understandings of Cultural Wellbeing within Communities.

Figure 4: Slide displayed at each forum with brief explanation of its purpose

The Forum Series

The forums are designed to form a catalyst of conversations around arts and community practices seen through the lens of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework.

The aims of the workshops and associated arts activities are to:

- Provide a forum for dialogue and discussion on cultural wellbeing in your own community context
- Hear from experts in fields such as arts, culture, education, and community development who will offer thought-provoking perspectives on what cultural wellbeing means and how the cultural wellbeing framework can be relevant to different contexts
- Build a supportive network of community practitioners, educators, academics, and policymakers to inform the National Cultural Wellbeing Policy
- Invite previous participants of Cultural Wellbeing Framework workshops to talk about how they might use the framework in their own projects and then workshop these ideas
- Publish an inaugural report paper on the Cultural Wellbeing Framework in community contexts with the aim of informing best practice cultural policy in a diverse community context
- Provide an opportunity for participants to publish their own creative work in a digital zine (a small local magazine for creative expression).

Each workshop includes an invited external guest speaker, and a member of the forum community. These speakers will generate a conversation guided by the Cultural Wellbeing Framework. There will also be time for people to share in small groups how this conversation can inform their own work.

The forums will be facilitated by Dr Karin Louise (Mackay), Dr Cheryle Yin Lo and Dr Cris Townley from Western Sydney University and will be centred around the Cultural Wellbeing Framework that has been developed through Dr Louise's community-focused academic research over the past ten years. This current project is supported by Western Sydney Creative and Western Sydney University's Arts and Culture Decadal Strategy.

The Fibonacci Forum Series has begun its work to develop and extend community engagement by considering how we can work together to achieve cultural wellbeing. Cultural wellbeing is a concept that is gaining momentum in cultural arts and political spheres as an useful way to reframe what communities need to live well and to form a nexus between people, place, culture, and nature.

Snapshots of the Fibonacci Forum Series

FIBONACCI FORUM #1: Stories and Art

Thursday August 15, 2022



Figure 5: Storytelling with South West Arts (radio program)

FIBONACCI FORUM #1

PRESENTERS

Dolla Merrillees

Director, Western Sydney Creative



Dolla is a highly experienced director, curator, cultural producer and consultant who is currently the Director of Western Sydney University's Western Sydney Creative. Dolla led the development of the Western Sydney Creative Decadal Strategy, and now leads its implementation.

She has held various senior roles, including CEO and Director, Curatorial, Collections and Exhibitions with the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences; Associate Director, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation; Director, Visual Arts, Museums and Galleries NSW; and was the London correspondent for the Sherman Centre for Culture and Ideas. She has also held appointments on the advisory board of the Institute for Culture and Society and has served on the Curatorial Advisory Committee of the City of Sydney.

In her presentation to the forum, Dolla spoke about the Western Sydney University Arts and Culture Decadal Strategy, stressing the importance for the small-to-medium arts sector to have a dedicated space where rich stories of being and becoming in place could be told and shared. To illustrate, Dolla shared her own experience of growing up among the shards of archeological digs in the Middle East and Europe with a dual culture family that meant having to navigate two worlds and two ways of being. While the nomadic way of life gave her a love of art, culture, history, and objects that told fragmentary stories of people and place, constantly moving from place to place with no sense of community connectedness also instilled in her a certain restlessness. A sense of belonging to multiple places was thus something Dolla recognised from her own experiences and she saw it reflected in the Greater Western Sydney region where around 30% of the population have parents who were born overseas. Dolla said she realised that we must support and maintain spaces for community arts that are an expression of cultural connectedness. She also spoke of the need to create spaces for diverse women in the arts sector and beyond, especially in creative and cultural leadership roles.

Maria Mitar

Co-Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Cultural Arts Collective and Sydney Sacred Music Festival



Maria is an artist, vocalist, singer-songwriter and creative producer of Blue Mary, Worlds Collide and Sydney World Music Orchestra.

Maria was born, raised and has worked in Western Sydney for 25 years which strongly influenced her artistic work, career and musical practice. Her vision is to create new, exciting and inclusive arts and cultural projects that showcase the diversity of Australia to the world.

As a culturally diverse woman and mother, her body of work embraces and empowers access for women and culturally diverse artists and communities in the arts across Western Sydney, Sydney's inner west and beyond. Maria shared her practice-led insights on cultural wellbeing through producing contemporary, cross cultural and sacred music.

FIBONACCI FORUM #2: Mental Health in Communities

Thursday September 29, 2022

The rise of mental disorders is a global trend

- A global youth survey states 59% of young people suffered climate anxiety. They felt sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty about climate change and betrayed by government inaction, which impacted on their daily life (Hickman et al 2021).
- Similarly, due to patriarchal neoliberal systems, women globally were twice as likely to experience mental health issues due to multiple roles; gender discrimination violence and pay gaps. (Kessler et al 2007; Brysk 2022).



Figure 6: Slide from Workshop 2: Arts and Mental Health Forum

FIBONACCI FORUM #2

PRESENTERS

Lydia Gitau

Post-Doctoral Fellow UNSW

Lydia Gitau is a migrant woman from Kenya, East Africa, living on the unceded land of the Darug First Nations people in Western Sydney. She is committed to exploring creative and innovative ways to understand, connect with and support cultural, mental and emotional wellbeing among refugee communities.



Lydia is a Post Doctoral Fellow of Psychosocial Practice at the University of New South Wales's FEEL Lab School of Art and Design. She is also an Adjunct Fellow, Honorary Associate, Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney. Lydia has previously worked as a trainer and trauma counsellor with NSW STARTTS.

Lydia shared her ideas about cultural wellbeing from her experience of creative and community-led approaches to mental health, working with people from refugee backgrounds, especially the South Sudanese community. Lydia's unexpected stumble into poetry led to the Big Anxiety Festival and her contribution "Responding to Dance" which encouraged young people to talk about mental health and suicide - both elements that are prominent in the Australian curriculum.

Gill Nicol

Museum of Contemporary Art

Gill has over 30 years' experience in the arts, working with contemporary arts and audiences. She moved from the UK to join the MCA in 2015. Originally trained as an artist, Gill has worked for numerous organisations across the UK.



She has a long history as a creative coach and has offered professional development advice to over 200 creative people. Her focus for the MCA has been to embed a culture of research and reflection, enabling teams to fully understand the impact of all the work they deliver. Alongside this has been a drive to explore what access, diversity and inclusion means to the museum and for its many audiences. All this work shows her commitment to making contemporary art accessible in as many ways and for as many people as possible. Gill was granted a Distinguished Talent visa in December 2019 to enable her to continue this work in Australia. Gill has an MA in Fine Art Printmaking (Distinction) from University of Brighton (1985-1988) and an MA in Feminism and Visual Arts from the University of Leeds (1996-1998).

Gill spoke about **Art Flow: The Guided Experience** - a space at the MCA where people can pause, reflect, and connect to an artwork (and perhaps themselves) in a new way. It is an invitation to come together after years apart. The Guided Experiences provide a supportive and structured opportunity for us to experience a deepening awareness and understanding of our emotional selves.

Cheryle Yin Lo

Director of Creative Traveller Enterprises

Dr Cheryle Yin Lo is an artist, creative mentor, cultural consultant and founder of Creative Traveller Enterprises, which seeks to transform people's lives through integrating creativity into everyday life.



Cheryle has had various roles in the visual and performing arts. She is an arts manager and community cultural development specialist with over 30 years of experience in the arts and cultural sector in Australia and overseas and ten years in local government cultural planning and policy. She has designed and managed several creative projects with Aboriginal and diverse communities in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Cheryle completed her workplace based Doctorate of Cultural Research at Western Sydney University as Cultural and Community Engagement Manager with the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, researching how the creative arts act as a catalyst for community participation in environmental stewardship.

Cheryle is an arts educator. She was an Academic Tutor teaching Learning and Creativity, and was Production Coordinator of Reconnect zine: Creative Contributions of Cultural Wellbeing.

Cheryle shared her use of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework with community participants in her art and creativity workshops. She has witnessed how the synergies arising from use of the framework have empowered people from many cultures, including those with mental health issues, and given them deeper understandings and a new-found sense of identity and confidence when seeing themselves interconnected through the lens of the different domains of the cultural wellbeing framework.

FIBONACCI FORUM #3: Regional Arts and Engaging Youth


Thursday October 27, 2022

**Federal Budget
Regional Arts Fund Review:
Where is the Support for Youth?**

- The Australian Government committed \$10.5 million in last night's Federal Budget for a new Youth Engagement Model 10.5M
- provide ongoing funding for Australia's national peak youth organisation, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
- establish issue-based youth advisory groups to give a direct youth voice in policy and program development across government
- fund the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy
- NSW Govt: A record \$59 million over four years will be invested in regional youth as part of the 2022-23 NSW
- Budget to deliver local programs that ensure young people continue to thrive in their communities



Figure 7: Slide from the Youth and Regional Arts Engagement Forum



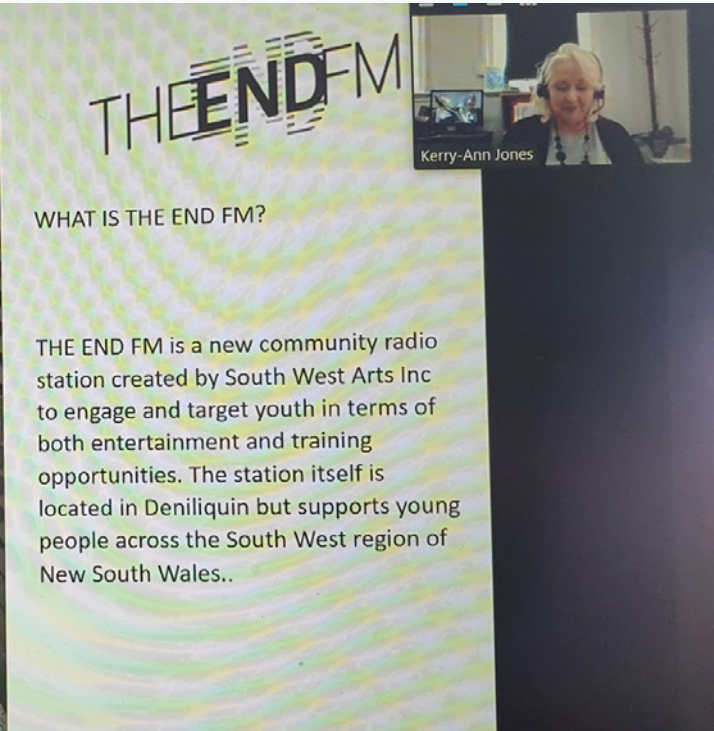


Figure 8: South West Arts youth radio

FIBONACCI FORUM #3

PRESENTERS

Kerry-Anne Jones

Executive Director, South West Arts



Kerry-Anne spoke about the youth-led Youth Community Radio Station (THE END FM), which is engaging with young people from rural and remote communities in Southern New South Wales.

She shared her experiences of how cultural wellbeing underpins South West Arts' mission to connect young people to community through skills, leadership, and shared experiences.

Catherine Madziva

Western Sydney Community Forum

Catherine spoke about the Codebreakers project, which aims to engage young people of Western Sydney in conversations about race, identity and belonging and equip them to be champions for community harmony.



This is a collaboration between Multicultural NSW, Blacktown Youth Services Association, Youth Action, and Platform Youth Services. Young people aged from 12 to 24 from Western Sydney engage in critical conversations about race, identity, and belonging on social media. At the heart of the conversations is the aim to shift the contemporary narrative surrounding youth concerns and stresses by opening up discussion of cultural identity, racism, and inherited cultural legacies. The project is in its second year and now gearing for another round of activities that will include panels, performances, webinars and short films. The project will showcase young people's work through the Codebreakers Gallery and will also host a listening circle and youth summit conference.

FIBONACCI FORUM #4: Speaking of Community Crisis

Thursday November 24, 2022



Speaking of Community Crisis

Cop27 and the crisis of the *climate carnival*

Bill McGuire is professor emeritus of geophysical and climate hazards at UCL, and the author of Hothouse Earth: an Inhabitant's Guide

What is needed is an apparatus that is less cumbersome and more manageable – something leaner and meaner that zeros in on the most critical aspects of the climate crisis, that does its work largely hidden from the glare of the media, and which presents a less obvious honey pot to the busy bees of the fossil fuel sector. One way forward, then, could be to establish a number of smaller bodies, each addressing one of the key issues – notably energy, agriculture, deforestation, transport, loss and damage, and perhaps others.

more than 600 fossil fuel representatives and many others who are there to prevent, rather than promote progress and action. Some old hands have labelled it the worst COP ever, and I doubt many would argue.

**Take home message:
Small actions and community groups matter**

Figure 9: Slide from Speaking of Community Crisis Forum

FIBONACCI FORUM #4

PRESENTERS

Dr Coralie Properjohn

Researcher at Western Sydney University



Coralie has been a social worker in Newcastle, NSW for 40 years, working in many health settings, including mental health, spinal cord injury, pediatric palliative care and with people living with dementia.

For 20 years she has combined her social work with teaching yoga. Her interests lie where social justice for Indigenous peoples, women and other marginalised groups intersect. Her current research covers the impact of COVID lockdowns on vulnerable groups and educating children about the Stolen Generations. She currently sits on the Western Sydney University Board of Trustees as the postgraduate representative and teaches and supervises social work students at the University of Newcastle.

Cris Townley

TeEACH Strategic Research Institute



Cris is a researcher in the TeEACH Strategic Research Institute at Western Sydney University and has recently completed a doctorate researching social support and identity in community playgroups.

Currently, Cris is involved with several research projects including Acknowledgement of Country practices in early learning centres, service integration in Western Sydney, and how the education system can create the conditions for more students to finish school well.

FIBONACCI FORUM #5: Navigating Different Places and Spaces

Thursday 23 March, 2023

PRESENTERS



Katrina Hardie

Changemaker, Wellbeing and Culture Consultant

Katrina helps leaders and their teams recognise how their work environment impacts their people's health, wellbeing and performance.

Katrina has over 30 years' experience delivering complex, organisation wide, strategic change programs in dynamic business environments within diverse industry groups, spanning public and private sectors.



Paulina Larocca

Creative Catalyst, Author, Trainer and Researcher

Paulina helps people connect to their creativity to create a culture of innovation. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney. Paulina studied at Parsons School of Design, NYC has an MSc in Creativity from the International Centre of Creativity Studies (NY) and a Master of Management from Macquarie Graduate School of Management.

Paulina is author of three books on creativity. Her research interests are creative problem solving and ways to increase possibilities at the start of the creative process.

FIBONACCI FORUM #6: Creative Citizenship and Cultural Wellbeing

Friday 19 May, 2023

INTERNATIONAL GUEST SPEAKER

Dr Gus Casely-Hayford (via video presentation)

Inaugural Director of Victoria and Albert Museum, East London

GUEST SPEAKERS

Miranda Aguilar

Creative Producer and Community Arts Worker, CuriousWorks

Emily Cooper

Creative Director, Hands Heart & Feet

Toby Chapman

Visual Arts Director, Penrith Regional Gallery and The Sewers Bequest

Kiri Zakinthinos

CEO, CuriousWorks

Emmanuel Asante

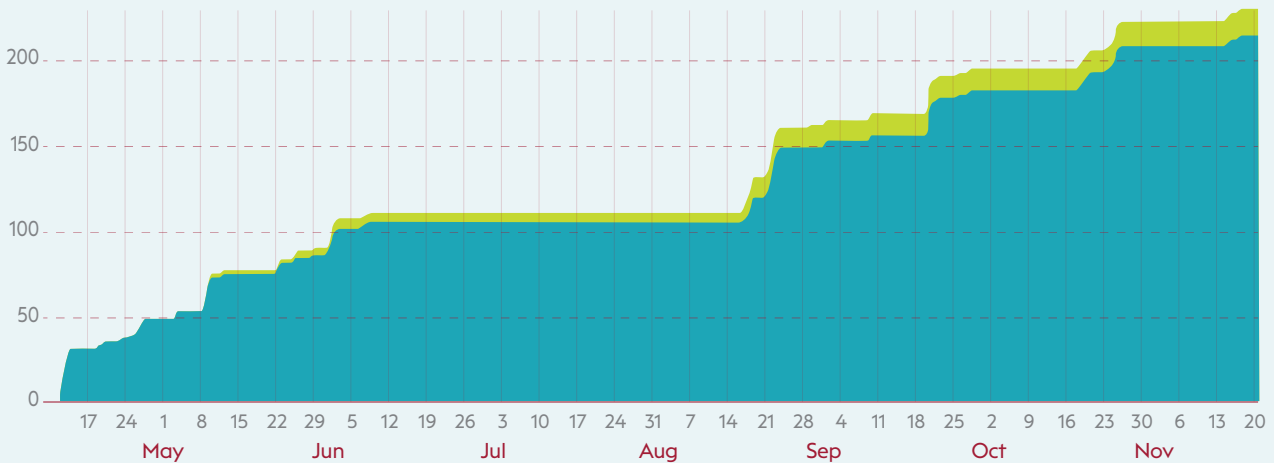
Artist

Who was involved in the Fibonacci Forums?



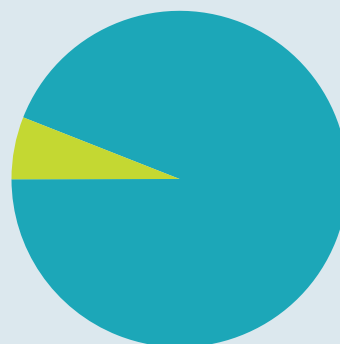
The event was viewed on Eventbrite 991 times and 130 free tickets were sold in total. We achieved a 75% attendance rate from ticket sales to zoom attendance. This is very heartening as our network started off modestly before growing to approximately 200 local contacts. Participants came from a range of sectors, such as regional arts, urban arts, community workers, disability workers, community development, education, health, academics, creative industries and sports.

Number of registrants for cultural wellbeing workshops and Fibonacci forums



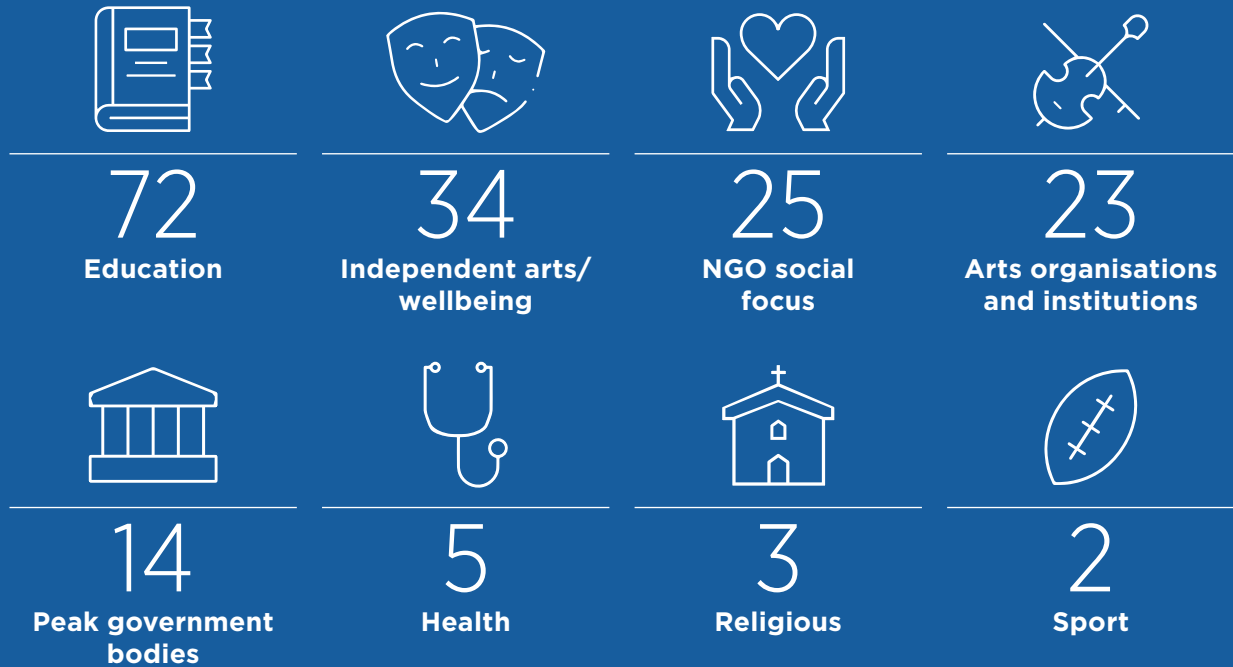
Social media traffic

6%
Eventbrite channels



94%
Organiser channels

Registrant statistics by sector



Registrants' geographical locations

City	Attendees
Sydney	89
Brisbane	8
Melbourne	7
Bathurst	4
Newcastle	3
Yogyakarta	1
Wollongong	1
Wilberforce	1
Wettingen	1
Perth	1
Katoomba	1
Kassel	1
Central Coast	1
Canberra	1
Brooklyn	1
Alba Iulia	1
TOTAL	133



Observations and Reflections from the Fibonacci Forums

Comments from participants suggested that there was a pressing need for a space for cultural arts practitioners to discuss issues in their local communities that they were dealing with on the ground. Participants said that they were often overstretched, and they wanted a space to debrief with others working in similar ways, so they would not feel isolated.

The Cultural Wellbeing Framework wheel was well-received, as cultural practitioners recognised that it did reflect the way they worked and were excited by the prospect of having a tool that could capture the rich complexity of the work they were doing. Participants affirmed that they could use the framework as a conversation starter with their communities to determine social needs as well as to document and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. They believed this framework captured socioecological elements of their communities in ways not found elsewhere.

There was widespread agreement among participants that currently there were very few spaces where expressions of arts and culture could be related to community and cultural wellbeing. In terms of their communities' needs, practitioners recognised that arts projects can function as a space for individual and group cultural expression. In particular, such projects can strengthen communities that have undergone trauma or isolation and serve to re-establish broken connections to people and places. Participants wanted to make it clear that this kind of perspective on arts and culture is different from arts being used in healthcare settings for therapeutic purposes, and is also different from the work of individual artists interested in mental health. This new definition of an

art space is deeply integrated with an individual's expression of self within community, and so intrinsically linked to Cultural Wellbeing Framework (see Figure 2, page 15).

Many participants returned to every session or, if they were not able to attend, requested a recording of the session. This indicated that the sessions were valued and were operating as a way for practitioners to stay connected. One practitioner stated that she had been really missing connecting with external creative practitioners and had felt isolated in her busy regional practice. She was very much looking forward to participating. Even if cultural practitioners were not able to attend in person, this kind of feedback showed that the forums were seen as an important space where practitioners knew they could listen and be heard.

There seemed to be two kinds of participants: those who wanted to listen to the expert speakers and participate in the short Q&A sessions, and those who were more interested in the in-depth workshop discussions that followed the speakers. The research team noticed that there was a drop-off of about one third in numbers after the speakers' presentations. A survey for participants will be developed to better understand future needs and support.



This first set of Fibonacci forums were all conducted online. This was not the initial intention but as most participants were coming from regional areas, interstate or

even from overseas, a decision was made to present in an online space. However, the Fibonacci Forum team would like to trial a hybrid style in future forum series.

The forums were places where sometimes difficult and often uplifting conversations about contemporary societal issues could be held through a cultural arts lens.

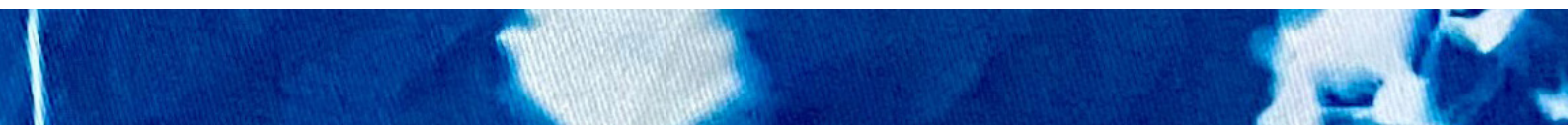
Some of the questions and issues that came up:

- How to be inclusive of transgender issues
- Inclusion and exclusion of cultural identities
- What is meant by culture and cultural diversity?
- What does it mean to feel connected or disconnected to community?
- Suicide in young African women's communities
- Anglo male uncertainty about how to be in diverse social spaces
- How to work appropriately in First Nations communities
- The mental health crisis for young people, especially in regional Australia
- How can young people protect themselves from exploitation in community arts and research projects where their stories are used as moral signalling?
- The invisibility of the disability sector
- How power struggles between workers and management are silenced in the arts sector
- The impact of societal crisis, such as the recent pandemic, and the need for more thoughtful responses to social, emotional and cultural wellbeing as opposed to the usual responses based on health or economics.

The forum heard from the small-to-medium arts sector as well as individual artists and community workers who are interested in broader definitions and understandings of wellbeing.

While wellbeing messaging was a prominent theme in the first session, we also wanted to offer support to participants, while making it

clear the forum was not a therapy space. We invited a Wellbeing Diversity Counsellor from WSU to advise on how to address difficult topics when conversations veered into territory that the facilitators were not able to address at that time. This was an important feature that strengthened this first forum's direction and purpose.



We realised that the forums and cultural wellbeing workshops needed a dedicated social media officer, as it was a lot of work to manage registrations and to get our message out to multiple interested parties.

Possibly, we should consider holding 6 events over 12 months rather than making them monthly, but also include more

speakers. This might create more audience engagement with a working group that just meets once every two months.

The overwhelming majority of participants were women over 30, reflecting the demographics of the small-to-medium arts sector.

“ Many people attend for the presentations but don’t stay for the practitioner conversations. ”

“ For some the Forum is a place to advertise what they do, for others a place of emotional and wellbeing connection. ”

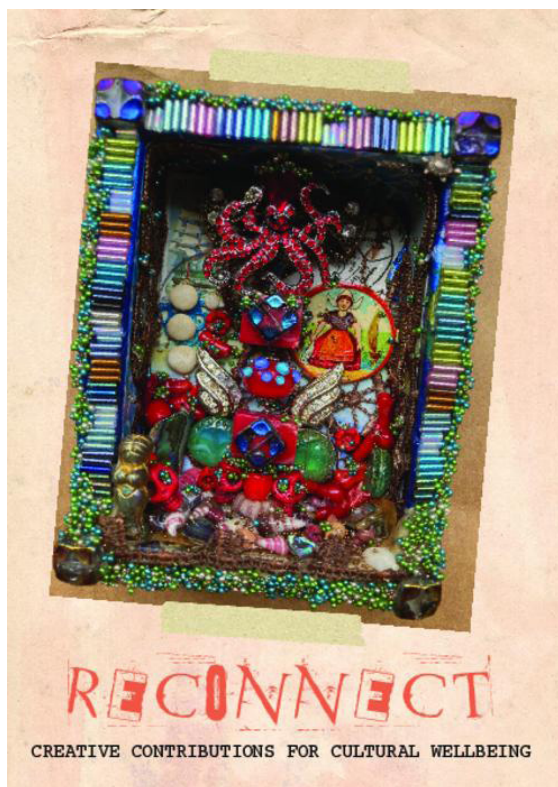
“ It can be a rejuvenating space for practitioners to feel they are with others who wrestle with similar work, and how hard this work can be. ”

The Digital Zine Project

As part of the project, we also created a collaborative arts space in the form of a published zine, which showcased the community responses to the Cultural Wellbeing Framework (Mackay 2021) as well as a platform for practitioners to continue to explore their creative identities.

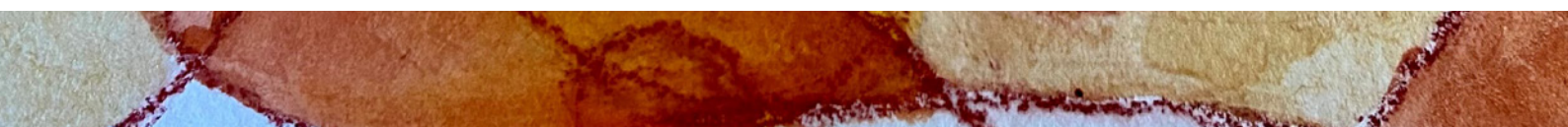
The Reconnect Zine was an initiative of Western Sydney Creative that enables the ongoing sharing of ideas. It provides a platform for participants to share their creative contributions and will help to turn the cultural wellbeing project into a collaborative art space. We believe that exchanging ideas through art enriches our community and adds to our goal of fostering social and cultural connections. Artwork in any form, from writing, poetry, visuals, photography, paintings and performances, to 3D art objects such as installations, sculptures, and craftwork were welcomed.

There was considerable interest in contributing to the zine, and we received 41 creative contributions, which were published in a both a hard copy version and in digital format. A copy of the Zine was sent to each participant and they were encouraged to share their social media links in what could be a further opportunity for our participants to connect with others and create new conversations.



Discussion

The Australian arts sector remains remarkably robust considering funding cuts over many years and the devastating effects of the pandemic; however, there is a pressing need to rebuild and redefine arts and cultural networks, particularly at the community level. In the current process of re-evaluation and rebuilding, we see a valuable opportunity to broaden the reach of the sector. We aim to do this through strengthening arts and cultural education in a range of contexts and by developing a national cultural wellbeing framework that will support a better understanding of the intrinsic, tangible, and intangible value of the arts to the wellbeing of all of us.



National Cultural Policy in Australia

“Cultural policy is more than some funding announcements for the arts. When you get it right, it affects our health policy, our education policy, our environment policy, foreign affairs, trade, veterans’ affairs, tourism.”

Tony Burke, in a speech to the Arts Industry Council of Australia in 2021

Culture permeates every aspect of our public and private lives, yet we rarely attempt to unravel its intrinsic value. The Gillard government introduced the Creative Australia strategy in 2013 but later that year the Coalition government abandoned it. Since then, Australia has had no formal national cultural initiative and government funding for the arts has flatlined (Heath 2022). The formation of a national ministry of culture was one of the main recommendations of the Creative Australia consultation process.

After declaring an end to “the nine-year political attack on the arts and entertainment sector”, incoming Minister for the Arts Tony Burke announced a new National Cultural Policy to be developed in consultation with artists and organisations and due to be unveiled before the end of the year (Heath 2022). The Australian Government’s new national cultural policy is guided by the premise “First Nations first,” and has adopted five pillars that acknowledge the essential role of Indigenous narratives in Australian arts and culture (Heath 2022). These five pillars reflect the goals of the 2013 Creative Australia strategy and also underpin the new National Cultural Policy:

- First Nations first
- A place for every story
- The centrality of the artist
- Strong institutions
- Reaching the audience

These pillars provide a solid foundation for the cultural and creative industries to consider the needs of, and effectively plan for, a thriving creative sector that delivers benefits to all Australians (www.arts.gov.au). However, the pillars as they stand may not be in line with some ecological aspects of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework, which provides a nexus model for living well and also supports the networking of creative arts practitioners in Western Sydney and nationally.



Cultural and Creative Arts Practitioners' Networks

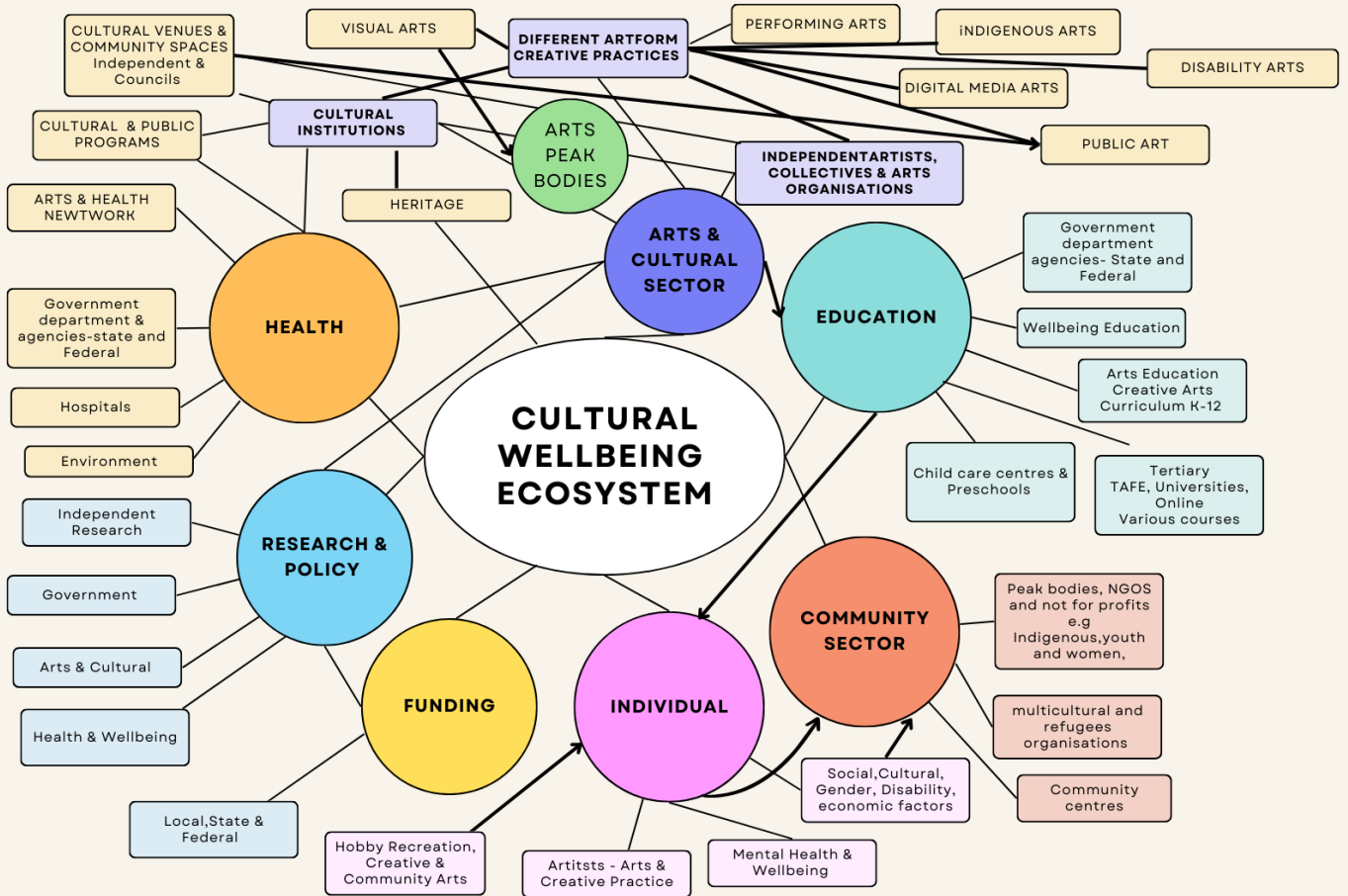


Figure 10: Mind map of the arts and cultural sector ecology (Cheryle Yin Lo, 2022)

The Ecology of Arts Policy and Cultural Strategies in Australia

The arts and cultural sector in Australia operates with national, state, and local government, NGO, and individual layers (see Figure 10).

One area requiring attention is access to consistent funding support for independent artists and the small-to-medium arts sector (Australian Council 2022a). A substantial issue for arts and culture in the Australian context is the reliance on short-term funding from all levels of government and

a lack of private investment in broad-based arts education. A growing interest in arts and wellbeing is now evident (Australia Council, 2022c) and the current treasurer, Jim Chalmers, has highlighted the need for wellbeing to be included in national policies (Treasury, 2022).

Despite these encouraging steps forward, the long-term consequences of depleted funding and short-term policies means that the sector operates in an ultra-competitive environment that is not conducive to collaboration. Therefore, the Fibonacci series and the Cultural Wellbeing Framework, presented in this report, is a small but important step forward in bringing together various parts of the cultural sector in a collegial and open forum for the community of Western Sydney and New South Wales.

While Australia's arts policy is set and administered by the Australia Council for the Arts, there are several other peak bodies that support the arts and cultural sector. For example, Australia's National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) provides the Australian visual arts community with the opportunity to come together, engage in national discussion, learn about the best ideas from Australia and around the world, build relationships and networks, and develop shared positions from which to act. While it does not actively produce art or culture, NAVA plays a key role in developing submissions into national enquiries, developing policy for artists and forming a conduit between government and the visual arts sector. NAVA has been at the forefront of developing Indigenous protocols and has commissioned several significant reports that have influenced state and national policy.

At the state level in NSW, other important peak bodies, such as Museums and Galleries NSW (MGNSW), the Live Music Office and Create NSW, have worked to create new streams of funding and lobby at legislative level to reduce red tape and make arts

and music more accessible. At the local level, The Western Sydney Arts Alliance (WSA) is a collective from the Greater Western Sydney Region that emerged out of a loose group of individual artists and cultural workers in independent and local government contexts concerned about policy and funding issues. While they are a non-legal entity, they have a growing profile and a public face that can be influential.

Covid has highlighted the need for public policy to rethink how the arts relate to issues of social cohesion and isolation and this has led to policies that emphasise the role of wellbeing within the arts.

This is not the first-time wellbeing has been seen as intrinsic to community arts practices.

Among others, Mills and Brown developed strategies for collaboration and co-funding across sectors, introducing an arts and health funding model as well as innovative practices and community cultural development processes (Vic Health 2002). There followed a period where selected local governments employed cultural development officers or cultural planners. In New South Wales, community cultural development initiatives became the responsibility of local government; however, these were not compulsory and not every local government had staff with culturally specific roles.

In NSW arts and cultural development is closely tied to the Local Strategic Planning Statement (LEP). When developing local government arts or cultural policy it is expected that this will dovetail to local councils' livability framework (LSLP), which

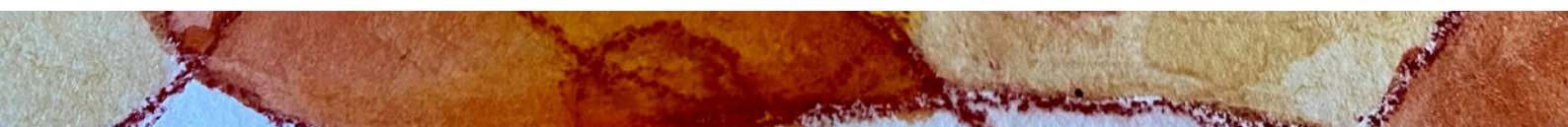
is set by the state and federal vision on arts and culture. Who sets the policy and where the specific arts and cultural policy is embedded will also determine who has the power to decide what defines art and culture. This means that cultural production or creative-based arts activities are in part controlled by policy requirements rather than by the expressed needs of artists and communities. For example, creative projects require social and physical infrastructure that most local governments manage. Access and cost of venues can make it difficult for the sustainability of projects if permanent spaces are not available to arts groups or companies.

When arts organisations, artist co-operatives and individual artists are dependent on a shrinking pool of annual funding, applications become competitive and less collaborative, which creates a tendency for groups to work in silos. For example, in 2015, funding for Create NSW had only a 2% success rate. Other avenues for arts and cultural funding are therefore sought from state government funding, such as from Multicultural NSW or NSW Communities and Justice, where parameters for funding are based on cultural, social or sustainability policy outcomes rather than arts outcomes.

An important development in the Australian arts/health space is the emergence of The Arts and Health Network and several other arts-focused wellbeing networks. The Arts Health Network is an association of academics, artists, health practitioners, and allies who provide information, research, resources, and activities to recognise the value of the creative arts in improving

community health outcomes (www.artshealthnetwork.com.au). Moreover, specialist service providers such as Creative Recovery Network (CRN) advocates for the arts and culture within the emergency management field, collaborating with public, nonprofit, and private sector providers who are involved in disaster prevention, response, and recovery (www.creativerecovery.net.au). A notable model from Vic Health has moved to integrate social, cultural, economic, and environmental pillars, as well as creating an evaluation model to track the tangibles and intangibles of cultural production.

What has been missing in the Australian arts and cultural landscape is a focus on the important role of cultural wellbeing that brings together local, national, and global perspectives on lived wellbeing from a range of diverse community experiences. This is needed to properly inform policymakers and practitioners of the material impacts on artists, cultural practitioners, academics, community arts organizations, art intuitions. This is critical for national arts bodies and the small-to-medium arts sector so that there is a rich and sustainable flow of creative talent and production that is well supported. The use of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework in the workshops led to conversations about the wellbeing needs of creative communities both at a local level and also considering national and global trends. Approaching arts and cultural wellbeing through forums such as these will provide important on the ground knowledge from practitioner experts that will ensure the continuing vibrancy of the arts sector in Australia.



Reflections on the Fibonacci Forums and the Role of the Creative Wellbeing Framework

The Fibonacci forums provided a unique cross-sectoral platform for arts and cultural practitioners to develop and evaluate their relationship to cultural wellbeing. The forums were interdisciplinary and applied the lens of the Cultural Wellbeing Framework (Mackay, 2021). Dialogue among practitioners reflected a culturally inclusive community, as participants shared their projects. The forums provided a valuable space for practitioners in the small-to-medium arts, education, and health sectors to share feedback on their interdisciplinary work. Participants heard from expert peers and contributed to robust discussions and evaluations of their work. The forums were designed to encompass the benefits and challenges of leading socially engaged arts practice at the local level. They provided a valuable space to consider the intersectional and multiple elements of wellbeing from local, national, and global perspectives.

- There is growing recognition from universities that arts, culture, and creativity are intrinsic to a well-functioning vibrant society. Consequently, there has been a corresponding increase in infrastructure investment in creative spaces from Australian universities to reinvigorate their creative arts curricula. Until recently, Australian universities had moved away from hands-on arts courses in favour of digitised media courses, as these were seen as providing clear pathways to employment. At the same time, however, there are few academic papers or scoping reviews on the arts sector. This is possibly due to the paucity of funding for arts-based research at scale and so there is little incentive for academic researchers to pursue this research. Consequently, there are no large scoping reviews or surveys of arts and culture nationally or for the state of NSW, which indicates that there is a need to rebuild much of the tangible and intangible infrastructure.
- The Fibonacci Forum is one example of Western Sydney University's commitment to supporting creative communities and was funded as part of Western Sydney Creative to support the small-to-medium arts sector in Western Sydney. In another example, the university, through its 21C Curriculum Renewal program, has developed three new creativity minors to be implemented in 2023. One of these is the Creative Living for Cultural Wellbeing Minor, which will be based on the Cultural Wellbeing Framework mentioned earlier in this report (refer to Figure 2, page 15).



The Creative Living for Cultural Wellbeing Minor harnesses students' nuanced capabilities to engage in and curate artistic and cultural practices for a liveable and democratic world. Students will explore interpersonal and global understandings of creativity, sustainable living practices and cultural wellbeing. They will have opportunities to become the changemakers of the future, who can adapt, design, collaborate and curate projects that contribute to cultural wellbeing in your field of expertise. Through a curated cultural event, students will bring together theoretical and experiential arts practices to develop a robust approach to working with communities and a range of notable industry and community organisations.

- The Fibonacci Forum Series was successful in starting conversations about what is needed for arts, culture, and wellbeing to thrive in communities, and exploring what the impediments to this might be. The Cultural Wellbeing Framework acted as a nexus to many connections: connecting participants' lived experience to their professional life, the personal to the structural, individual day-to-day wellbeing, to national and international events, and people to each other. The wellbeing wheel (Mackay, 2021) helped participants to think creatively and reframe their thinking about some of the intractable problems they were dealing with in their community practice, such as loneliness in youth and older people, how to engage Indigenous young people, and how to navigate change in communities who want to hold on to the past. The framework helped participants to see many individual and community possibilities and challenges but also revealed the structural elements that they needed to address.
- Cultural practitioners are often working from project to project without time to properly document and evaluate projects or address the more structural issues that arise from their work within community contexts. Often they will be experiencing a heavy workload so have little time to reflect on and document the excellent work they are doing – sometimes they will feel they are lurching from project to project. There is even less time to nurture their own creative practice. Interestingly, we noted that most of the participants in the forum were women or transgender, with fewer men in attendance. This reminded us that women in the arts is a topic that deserves significant attention as women are often underrepresented in the arts sector in general. Older women are especially underrepresented.

- The Fibonacci forums proved to be an ideal way to test out the Cultural Wellbeing Framework in a community space. In each forum community practitioners presented their work and commented on how it related to the framework. In this way the forums could illuminate how important it is to understand and consider the wellbeing needs of a community. The framework is thus an important tool with which to evaluate the wellbeing needs of communities and also to document what is already being done. Therefore, the forums were able to instigate conversations about wellbeing and potentially germinate new projects that embed cultural wellbeing from the start. Curating the forums (who was asked and why) brought in changemakers who were committed to bringing together arts and wellbeing with innovative strategies and models of creative expression that can send a community message about lived wellbeing.

The Outputs of the Fibonacci Forum Series

1. Establishment of a network of 200 cultural practitioners and artists in New South Wales who are interested in cultural wellbeing, from fields such as visual and performing arts, curators, writers and poets, educators and health practitioner. First Nations and multicultural communities are especially represented in this network.
2. Research: We are applying for ethical clearance for future research that will investigate the wellbeing needs of community cultural practitioners and their communities in changing times and to learn about their priorities. This research will explore how the CWF can be used as a tool to a) investigate the wellbeing needs of communities b) to know what is already being done in communities c) to consider how the CWF can guide wellbeing conversations and potentially inform new projects that embed CW from the start.
3. A digital zine can become a collaborative arts space.
4. This interim report for Western Sydney Creative reflects on the value of the forums as an expression of cultural wellbeing.
5. A set of recorded digital assets is being compiled to showcase the work of the work of creative cultural practitioners.

Concluding Remarks

- Many individual researchers and cultural practitioners are doing excellent work in the field of arts, culture and wellbeing. However, there is currently no state or national body in Australia to be a voice for cultural wellbeing. Such a body would make it easier for researchers and practitioners to advocate for the creative cultural wellbeing of their communities or to work in a cross-sectoral way.
- We have identified a significant need for more collaborative spaces where individual artists, cultural practitioners, academics, and policymakers could work together to achieve more democratic access to arts and culture. Such access includes not only physical space but also representation, and a guaranteed basic income.
- A flourishing arts and cultural sector recognises the intrinsic value of the arts to society; such recognition goes beyond the values of social cohesion and community health to a broader understanding that encapsulates what could be described as a cultural wellbeing ecology (see figures 3 and 4).
- Cultural wellbeing as a practice and concept differs from current understandings of the arts and health that are dominated by a medicalised perspective. The framework presented in this report takes a broader view, that cultural wellbeing is a human right and that we all have the right to enjoy creative and cultural expression. Cultural wellbeing is not about fixing illness but about joyful, life-affirming experiences. Cultural wellbeing means having the right to speak out about the things that are important to us, seeing lived experience from different perspectives and acknowledging that grief, trauma, and emotional breakdown are also part of life. The cultural wellbeing framework is a tool that allows us to consider both the intimate and big picture issues that affect the wellbeing of all of us.
- The cultural wellbeing perspective on arts and culture has a conceptual language to document arts practice and to interrogate relationships between individual, communal, national, global and cosmological layers of society. In essence, the framework provides an ecological view that acknowledges a shared past and taps into an ancient inner knowledge of living in harmony with cosmological rhythms.
- There are many creative cultural practices that individuals or communities participate in regularly that are not usually considered part of the arts or cultural sector. The benefits of participating in such practices are therefore rarely studied or represented in current research. Creative cultural practices that are not included in what is usually considered as art might be daily rituals, cultural festivals, folk arts, making place, or even walking in nature as meditative practice. An illustrative international example is the recent addition of the baguette to icons or emblems of France national culture.

- The arts and cultural sector in Australia has an existing ecology of networks; however these networks could be better connected, and parts of the network could work more collaboratively if funding policies were set to encourage a co-design and deliver focus.
- Some Australian universities are reinvesting in arts and cultural programs and infrastructure after a long period of decline. This provides exciting opportunities for sector reform and reimagining how arts, creativity and culture can be incorporated into the education sector. Western Sydney university is one such institution that is supporting programs in a new creative curriculum, including the inclusion of a Creative Living and Cultural Wellbeing Minor for 2023 as well as two other creative minors in innovation and developing creativity.
- The Australian Government is presently renewing its national cultural policy and has invited submissions from the public. The new policy has not yet been released but indications are that First Nations perspectives will be front and centre. While the budget response was disappointing in terms of extra funding for the arts sector it is hoped that the new policy will advocate a broader-based arts education within schools and higher education institutions so that all Australians can have the opportunity to be involved in the arts at various levels.

Where to from here?

This interim report has set out what the Fibonacci Forum was able to achieve in four months with support from Western Sydney Creative Collaborate funding and a small project team.

There has been strong interest from a range of individuals and communities across sectors to continue the cultural wellbeing workshops and forums.

We have carried over two forums into 2023 so that we ensure maximum engagement, as during the latter part of November and December many participants were either too busy to attend or on leave. Considering this, we will review the current report to include outcomes from the next two forums by mid-2023.

Our strategic aims beyond the forums include a more in-depth research study on the use of the Cultural wellbeing framework as a tool for cultural practitioners to design programs and policy as well as an analysis and evaluation tool that is cognizant of how well programs have embed cultural wellbeing into their projects.

Considering this we will

- Complete and lodge an ethics application for a pilot study into the use of the Cultural wellbeing Framework and forum space with the Human Ethics approval.
- Scoping review on what has already been done across the arts and cultural sector in term of cultural wellbeing.
- Work with individual artists and the small to medium arts sector to see how the cultural wellbeing framework can help them capture the benefits of arts and wellbeing activities. We also want to document how the framework might influence the design of projects in implementing cultural wellbeing strategies.
- Work with peak arts and cultural intuitions to determine if the cultural wellbeing framework is valid across sectors in evaluating programs and policy.
- Instigate a Cultural Wellbeing Working Group drawn from previous participants in the Forums as well as representative from peak arts and cultural institutions, education, health, NGOs, government organizations.
- Procure funding support to establish a Creative Cultural wellbeing research group to support the ongoing work of the Forums that have been hosted by Western Sydney Creative and Western Sydney University.
- In collaboration with Dolla Merrillees, Director of Western Sydney Creative and Dr Karin Louise, the School of Education at WSU, we will host Director of the V & A East London, Dr Gus Casley-Hayford through the international visiting scholar program at WSU in August 2023. A comprehensive itinerary with peak arts institutions in NSW with a focus on Western Sydney has been scheduled and will focus on the role of arts, museums, galleries in living well through understanding the ecology of cities and placemaking. Collaborative research and exchange with the V & A East will be part of the outcomes of this visit.

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Appendix A

Fibonacci Forum: Cultural Wellbeing Series Western Sydney Creative

<p>Workshop 1 Dolla Merrillees (Director - Western Sydney Creative) Maria Mitar (Cultural Arts Collective and Sydney Sacred Music Festival)</p>	15/08	Focus of Stories and art
<p>Workshop 2 Lydia Heyward (Big Anxiety Festival) Cheryle Yin Lo (Creative Mentor CCD) Gill Nicol (Art Flow: The Guided Experience - MCA Australia)</p>	29/09	Mental health in communities
<p>Workshop 3 Kerry-Anne Jones (Executive Director of South West Arts) Catherine Madziva (Code Breakers project - Western Sydney Community Forum)</p>	27/10	Regional arts and engaging youth
<p>Workshop 4 Coralie Properjohn (PhD researcher at Western Sydney University) Cris Townley (WSU TeEACH)</p>	24/11	Speaking of community crisis
<p>Workshop 5</p>	Will take place in 2023	Creating democratic community spaces
<p>Workshop 6</p>	Will take place in 2023	Arts and cultural policy working group

Appendix B

Creativity and cultural wellbeing for communities (Capstone unit)

This unit will explore how art making can foster individual and community wellbeing and global citizenship. Cultural wellbeing is broadly understood as the vibrant relationships between people and places, and the freedom to participate in recreation and creative cultural activities. In the practice-based modules students will experiment with art genres and reflect on how creative processes can nurture embodiment, belonging, safe spaces for cultural expression, intergenerational wellbeing, relationship to place, creative agency, and adaptability. Students will identify a social issue that is important to them or their community and apply design strategies to carry out a creative community project.

Content

1. Cultural meaning making in place. Story and Art in First Nations and diverse cultures
 2. Safe spaces for creative expression: boundaries, ethics, mindfulness
 3. Cultural creative practices: Creativity as an expression of being and belonging
 4. The Cultural Wellbeing Framework and the role of intergenerational wellbeing
 5. Cultural histories and creative agency: power, autonomy, and voice in creative practice
 6. Ecologies of wellbeing. Creative process and sustainable practices
 7. Making community: Curating experiences for community engagement (Jo Beasley)
 8. Art and activism as responses to planetary wellbeing
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Learning Outcomes

1. Articulate how art making and creative practice are important in cultural meaning making, using a First Nations perspective.
2. Integrate theoretical perspectives on arts and culture through investigating the practice of creativity and wellbeing.
3. Critically analyse the role creative cultural practices play in contemporary society.
4. Reflect on personal experience and intergenerational perspectives that influence life-sustaining practices for cultural wellbeing.
6. Create and exhibit artefacts that respond to the cultural histories of individual and/or community wellbeing.
6. Document and critically review personal experiences of learning through creative processes such as digital and other technologies.







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A. MACKAY

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