

Placemaking through public art expresses the unique qualities of each community. Each piece of public art can illustrate points of difference through the artist’s work and the qualities it brings to public spaces. The resulting artworks can explore and record the history of the town, highlight the rich diversity of each community, whilst providing landmarks and wayfinding elements, as well as interactive and playful element in streets, squares and parklands.

The role of public art is particularly relevant across Mount Alexander Shire, as it can contribute to the overall tourist experience and the quality of public spaces for the local communities such as, historic Castlemaine and Maldon and smaller townships like Newstead, Harcourt, Taradale, Elphinstone and Guildford.

Council can encourage temporary and ephemeral public art to raise ideas and debate about local issues. With a transitory nature, these projects can provide artists the opportunity to approach challenging and contemporary issues differently from the development of permanent work.

Local Government plays an important role in infrastructure provision with the development and managing of new parklands and community facilities including libraries, recreation centres, community centres and cultural facilities. This also includes the look and feel of the public realm within towns, as well as the outcomes of private sector development through its planning and approval processes.

With public art designed for a variety of public spaces, there needs to be clear requirements, expectations and approval processes in place. These need also apply to temporary public art in publicly accessible spaces.

This Policy provides an insight into current thinking about the definitions and benefits of public art, current national public art practice and relationship to Council’s Arts Strategy, together with the vision, goals and guidelines for the management of public art across Mount Alexander Shire.

2. Background

2.1 The Aims and Benefits of Public Art

Public art is increasingly seen as more than a sculpture in a park or in front of a building. Contemporary artists push the boundaries of what art in a public place can be with the commissioning for sculptures and murals sitting alongside work created using emerging technologies.

Public art will make a significant contribution to the public realm of Mount Alexander Shire in many ways: building a sense of civic pride; expressing community history or values; and contributing to the economic development of a town or region. Places with successful public art programs tend to be communities that are proud of their streets and parks and while public art should be primarily focused on creating better places for the local community, it will inevitably have flow on impacts on areas such as tourism.

Evidence suggests that public art has a significant effect on reducing vandalism and graffiti in public spaces. This is believed to be a side effect of increased civic pride and community ownership.

2.2 Council’s Role in Public Art Development

Council operations to develop/create public art already exist. Recreation and open space plans have the opportunity to identify appropriate spaces and locations for public art. Whenever new civic buildings are created, artwork could be integrated and when local or regional parks are created or renewed, they could include artistic elements creating unique environments, experiences and a sense of ‘destination’ within communities.

Council has a range of potential roles:

- The commissioner – directly initiating and commissioning artworks for Council projects for exhibition of a permanent or temporary nature;
- The funder – providing grant funds to local community groups seeking to commission artworks;
- A partner – working with other government agencies, the private sector or community groups to commission artworks;
- The regulator – reviewing proposals seeking to place a work of art in a public places; and
- The beneficiary – receiving offers of bequests to commission artwork or offers of gifts of existing artworks.

For council to commission of Public Art within in the public sector, a procedure has been developed that includes the following stages:

- Project Initiation;
- Artist selection;
- Concept development; and
- Commissioning.

2.3 Mount Alexander Shire Arts Strategy 2010 – 2015 Context

The benefits of Mount Alexander Shire Council having a Public Art Policy framework within its Arts Strategy 2011 - 2015 means it can build on the identified objectives. Alongside the Strategy is an Implementation Plan that sets out processes to meet the changing needs of working on public projects whilst meeting the Shire’s procurement requirements and accountability standards.

The Mount Alexander Shire Council Arts Strategy 2011 – 2015 is informed by six principles, goals and resulting strategies.

Principles:

- Foster participation in community arts activity across the Shire;
- Responsive and proactive approach;
- Investment in partnership with a range of organisations to deliver outcomes;
- Facilitate local creative capacity;
- Excellence in quality and approach; and
- Celebrating diversity in our community through a range of arts and cultural opportunities.

Goals:

- Goal 1: Valuing the vibrant arts and cultural sector’s contribution to the Shire
- Goal 2: Nurturing the sustained growth of arts and cultural industries
- Goal 3: Celebrating and promoting cultural activity in Mount Alexander Shire

Relevant strategies in regard to public art in The “Mount Alexander Shire Council Arts Strategy 2011–2015”:

The arts and cultural activity in the Shire contribute greatly to peoples’ personal lives on an ongoing basis as well as contributing to the vibrancy of the region for residents and visitors alike.

1.2: To foster arts and cultural activity as a contributor to the Shire’s public realm

This strategic direction is focused on visually expressing the Shire’s culture and the creativity of its artists through physical interventions in the public realm, be it built or landscape places. This strategy particularly relates to the various forms of ‘Public Art’ which may be either permanent additions to selected sites or temporary interventions with a finite life span.

Strategies:

1.2.1 - Council will explore appropriate controls and arrangements for art in public spaces;

1.2.2- Explore the potential for the integration of permanent public art as a value adding and place making opportunity that will contribute to high quality public space through the integration of art, design, architecture and related elements.

1.2.3 - Council will investigate opportunities for temporary public art and art events to activate key public places across the Shire that provide a focus for local pride, history and storytelling.

Public Art can enhance public spaces and community facilities as well as reflecting aspects of the Shire's unique heritage and the local community's qualities and aspirations. Public art is a valid way to outwardly express the culture of a community and contribute to a sense of civic pride through the presence of quality and well maintained artworks in streets, squares, parks and gardens.

To develop a stronger presence of public art across the Shire, it will be necessary to explore and implement a range of measures. These could include:

The appointment of a Public Art Advisory Panel:

- Investigate options for improving the funding for public art including a "Council Percent for Art" funding model;
- Investigate options for private sector contributions;
- Adopt approval processes for artist and community initiated public art projects;
- Endorse guidelines and procedures for commissioning and managing public art; and
- Establish and maintain a register of public art in the Shire to assist with management and maintenance.

2.4 Funding Options

Federal and State Government Options

At the Federal level, the Australia Council for the Arts currently supports local communities and individual artists through submissions for grants that potentially lead to community or public art outcomes.

At the State level, Arts Victoria does not have a public art grant category, although various State Government departments do commission public art as part of infrastructure projects. While there is no direct grant funding available there can be partnering opportunities where federal or state government departments build new facilities in the Shire. There are examples where federal and state governments have integrated public art into capital works projects, and therefore Council should explore this option when opportunities arise.

Local Government Options

Local Government has become a major commissioner and advocate for public art. These activities have been funded through a variety of mechanisms such as: committing a percentage of the project cost to public art; committing a percentage of Council annual capital works budget to public art; one-off budgets allocations for targeted public art projects; and commissioning artwork as a value adding element of capital works. For example, to commission artists to create artworks as part of streetscape upgrades where the cost is that over and above what an off-the-shelf item may cost.

Where Council wishes to commission temporary artworks or events it is necessary to establish a dedicated budget for the project as it is unlikely that this type of artwork would be associated with the capital works program.

Percent for Art Options

A percent scheme provides sustainability of funding as it ensures that as long as the Council undertakes capital works projects, there will be funds for public art. There are some disadvantages associated with this approach when it is linked to specific project budgets. For example, where projects undertaken by Council are of a relatively small scale, the generated percentage of funds may not be sufficient to create worthwhile artwork.

An alternative option is to have a percentage of the total annual capital works budget set aside for public art. This provides sustainability and has funds can be drawn upon to meet the needs of each project leading to strategic and quality outcomes, allowing Council to determine its priorities as part of a public art program. For example, some large scale projects do not have a major public presence and therefore may not be an ideal site for public art, whereas a small community focused project might be a perfect site for public art. With pooled funds, resources can be allocated to projects that will be of most benefit in the community.

Private Sector Public Art Options

Private sector developers often partner with local governments to integrate public art in their projects. It is also important to remember that while it may seem like a good idea to require a percent for art commitment by developers, they often see it as an unwarranted impost. It is critical that Council's approval processes are implemented to ensure the art not only meets the developer's obligation but delivers quality contemporary public art.

In some states, Councils have used different processes to introduce a range of requirements and obligations on developers that can be utilised for funding public art. There may also be situations where Council is offered money to commission public art or indeed offers of existing artworks for public spaces in the Shire. In these situations Council should subject such gifts or bequests to the same scrutiny as other artwork proposals from the private sector and remember that where private sector funded artworks and gifts become the property of Council, the long term maintenance also becomes the responsibility of Council.

3. Policy Guidelines

3.1 Vision

Public Art in Mount Alexander Shire shall enhance public spaces and community facilities and reflect aspects of the Shire's unique heritage and the local community's qualities and aspirations through a diversity of contemporary art forms.

3.2 Goals

Through the commissioning and support of public art Mount Alexander Shire Council seeks to:

- Enliven and enhance public buildings and public spaces;
- Create a strong feeling of identity, public pride and ownership of public spaces and community facilities;
- Create landmarks in the urban and rural environment;
- Provide a focus for local pride, history and storytelling;
- Contribute to high quality public spaces through the integration of art, design, architecture and related elements;
- Reflect the rich diversity of the Shire's communities;
- Contribute to the quality of life for residents of Mount Alexander Shire;
- Increase the understanding and enjoyment of contemporary art by the community;
- Enhance the potential for cultural tourism within the Shire;
- Create new opportunities for community expression; and
- Foster and provide opportunities for emerging and established local and national artists.

3.3 Guidelines for the Assessment of Public Art in Mount Alexander Shire

It is important that there are clear requirements, expectations and approval processes for Council and the community in managing art in the public domain.

Public art situated on public land and private land needs to go through an approval process. The steps include:

- Discovering who owns the land;
- Getting consent from the owner of the land;
- Determining if any statutory approvals are required;
- Lodging permit applications where required; and
- Finding out whether building or planning permits are required.

Where a planning application is required, the proponent of the work must submit a planning permit application to Council together with a detailed submission to Council's Planning Department. This must show the location, size, colour, content and context of the work, the proposed duration of the display and address the specific planning scheme requirements. (eg. impact on heritage values).

The planning permit application will be reviewed by the Arts Officer and the Manager of Community Activity and Culture in accordance with the criteria and advice will be supplied to the Council's Planning Department. Council's planning staff will assess the application and make a decision on whether a permit should be granted.

The submission will be reviewed using the following criteria:

- The context of the work within the cultural and community landscapes of Mount Alexander Shire.
- Quality, durability and suitability of the materials used
- Adequacy of maintenance arrangements
- Safety and public risk
- The duration of the display
- Particular considerations relating to any site specific planning conditions (i.e. Heritage Overlay)
- That it is lawful and does not contravene any State or Federal legislation because of its content

Applications to install public art must be submitted to Council's Planning Department twelve weeks prior to the proposed dates for installation.

The submission for all forms of public art whether they are ephemeral, temporary, project related or "permanent", must specify the lifespan for display of the artwork. Where an artwork is related to a particular time-limited project or activity, the work will be required to be removed from display as required by the project.

Existing works in public space will be assessed for their suitability for display on an annual basis using these guidelines. Should an amendment to an existing permit be sought for existing work, any further approvals will be at the discretion of Council subject to these guidelines.

3.4 Guidelines for the Development of a Public Art Advisory Panel

Should Council resolve to establish a Public Art Advisory Panel, the following guidelines provide Terms of Reference for the group. The appointment of the panel may be appropriate if Council make it a priority to increase the funding it invests or attracts for public art.

Providing considered oversight, professional advice and community input, the Public Art Advisory Panel (PAAP) will play a pivotal role in the approval and review processes involved in the delivery of Council and non-Council initiated projects.

Roles and Responsibilities

The PAAP will function as an advisory committee to Council and its primary role will be to review public art proposals for artworks located on public land and, where appropriate, on private land in the Shire. In conjunction with Council Officers, the PAAP will provide considered advice to Council regarding the artistic, conceptual and technical suitability of the work for display in a public space.

The PAAP will assist with the following:

- Reviews of all proposed Council public art projects;
- Review and selection of artists for Council initiated projects;
- Review of final artist concepts;
- Review and comment on private sector public art proposals;
- Review and comment on proposed donations and gifts; and
- Provide advice to Council Planning department for new proposals and amendments to existing public art.

Membership

The PAAP membership could include:

- Two Councillors;
- An arts academic or independent arts curator who lives or works in the Shire;
- Two artists that live or work in Shire;
- Two architects, urban designers or landscape architects that live or work in Shire; and
- Two general community representatives with some relevance to the project proposed (could include a youth representative, local heritage representative, local trader etc.)

The PAAP would be supported by Mount Alexander Shire's Arts Officer.

Appointment Process

Other than the Council Elected members of the PAAP, the following appointment options apply:

- Council should advertise for individuals to nominate for membership;
- Council reserves the right to nominate and appoint qualified individuals as required for specific projects;
- Two year membership;
- A period of two years from the end of membership before an individual can re-nominate; and
- Half of the Panel should change every second year.

Reporting Procedures

Recommendations from the PAAP should be communicated to Council through the Manager Community Activity and Culture.

3.5 Guidelines for the Management of Public Art

Handover and Responsibilities

Council Initiated Projects

- Upon completion of the installation the artwork should be inspected to identify any defects in the manufacture;
- Identified defects should be rectified in a timely manner;
- Ownership of artwork transferred from Artist to Council with Council assuming legal responsibility;
- Artist to provide Artwork Maintenance Manual outlining reasonable maintenance requirements;
- Council may wish to hold a formal unveiling ceremony; and
- Completed artworks listed in the Public Art Registry with details of the artist, a visual record of the work, date of completion, artist's statement, location and materials.

Non-Council Initiated Projects

In the case of public art projects commissioned and funded by the private sector but located in a public place and transferred to Council ownership on completion then Council will also have to assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance and public risk and should follow all of the precautionary steps listed in this policy.

With gifted artworks, Council may seek a contribution towards maintenance from the gifting body at the time of the ownership transfer.

Attribution

The artist will be acknowledged as the creator of the works along with their team of technicians, assistants and sub contractors on Council's website and on printed material. Each work will be identified using professional photographic images for these purposes.

Copyright

Definitions:*Public Art*

Public art is art created and located outside of a typical gallery context, such as streets, parks, forecourts of public buildings, shopping centres, airports, cinemas, beach fronts, city gateways or any space accessible to people.

Public art can adopt many forms and approaches from community cultural development, placemaking projects, stand alone public artworks, to art “built in” or art integrated with landscape or urban design.

It can reflect a diverse range of styles and practices from traditional to contemporary art. It includes memorials, monuments, sculptures, or murals and also functional objects such as fountains, street furniture, lighting and paving. It may be permanent and/or temporary including installations, billboard art, video or laser projections, text, advertising, aerosol art and street banners.

The works may be commissioned by either the public or private sectors and may therefore be located on either public or privately owned land. This policy provides guidelines and details of approval processes.

Integrated Art

There is considerable value in working with artists on integrated artworks as part of the landscape, buildings or civic spaces. Options might include paving, street furniture, retaining walls or interpretive signage.

Public space provides an ideal canvas for paving artworks which can either be integrated into the paving materials or applied to the surface. Basic pavement materials can be transformed by surface treatments into a site specific artwork, such as sand blasted images into finished concrete. More complex paving designs can be achieved through the casting in or inlaying of materials such as bronze, stainless steel and granite.

The advantages of involving artists in integrated artworks can be the development of detailing or furniture that has a strong sense of place and uniqueness. Additionally, including an artist in the design team to work alongside the architects and landscape architects can bring a deeper conceptual approach to the project.

Stand Alone

Key locations in a city or landscape may benefit from the addition of a stand alone or landmark artwork. While art in public places can be thought of as being major ‘landmark’ works, the work can also be a small sculpture created for an existing public space.

Stand alone projects are often for high profile locations and require significant budgets to address the scale and to attract professional artists of merit. The commissioning for stand-alone work can involve a competition process where a limited number of artists are selected from an expression of interest and contracted to develop a concept for presentation to Council’s Selection Committee.

Community Art

Councils across Australia have recognised that Community Cultural Development (CCD) or Community Art as a powerful community engagement and development tool, enabling community members to contribute to shaping their physical environment.

Although there are many different approaches to community involvement, the most recognised is a professional artist with community development skills working with the community on developing the conceptual content and either creating the final artwork or supervising the creation of the work. Either way, the community benefits from skills development and increased sense of ownership of place.

Events

Events may include one-off or scheduled events such outdoor exhibitions in parks or other public spaces. These events may be part of a festival program or different symposiums and be gradually built up over a period of time with the benefit of public and private partnerships.

Artworks included in festival events or resulting from a Symposium might also be acquired by Council or private sector benefactors for a permanent collection and display in a public location.

Temporary / Ephemeral

Every city and town has a range of public spaces that can be utilised for art events and temporary installations. These could include parks, plazas, streets, or the entry to a civic building.

Temporary projects provide opportunities for young, emerging and established artists, whose practice is focused on ephemeral art forms, offering an effective mechanism for introducing an element of change into different environments.

An alternate approach is to use digital technology, including various digital platforms that can be used for new media art as well as for event programming and special broadcasts. The advantage of the digital space is that it introduces almost unlimited potential for changing visual stimulation.

Temporary art spaces do provide the possibility of changing content; requiring curating and management to ensure programming and standards are maintained.

Related Policies:

Mount Alexander Shire Council Arts Strategy 2011-15

Related Legislation:

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme

Planning and Environment Act 1987