

Yarra City Council

Public Art Policy 2015-2020

1. Vision

The City of Yarra will strive to increase art in public places so that arts and culture can be enjoyed as an everyday experience.

2. Background

The City of Yarra values the impact of creativity on the fabric of our city and recognises arts and culture to be intrinsically linked to the City's identity.

Council is committed to making arts and culture an everyday experience for its citizens and visitors; we believe public art that is integrated into the City's public spaces and places as one of the most effective ways to make this happen.

Public art can highlight the hidden layers of a place, including its history, characteristics, use and meaning. It can shape landscape and neighborhood, as well as its perception, while giving form to the values and ambitions of a community.

Public art has an enduring positive impact on the cultural, social and physical fabric of a city.

Council commits to increase the commissioning of public artworks across Yarra and to ensure that these are of high quality and that they be well maintained.

3. Scope

The Public Art Policy sets out Council's strategic direction and defines the administration framework for public art in the city.

The Public Art Policy provides a framework for assessment of works to be commissioned or acquired by purchase, donation or transfer. It sets out guidelines for Council in facilitating privately commissioned works that have public benefit and it articulates the management framework for Council managed public artworks.

4. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'public art' is defined as art specifically created to be experienced in the public realm outside the gallery and museum context. The work may be of a temporary or permanent nature. Located in or part of a public space or facility provided by both the public and private sector, public art also includes the conceptual contribution of an artist to the design of public spaces and facilities.

5. Council's Role in Public Art

Public art exists in the public realm. It can elevate the aesthetic profile for our urban environment, play a role in attracting creative businesses and workers, and encourage the growth of a culturally informed public.

Local government has a significant role in shaping the city's public realm. Council has opportunities to increase public art through: Council commissions; acquisition by purchase, donation or transfer; by facilitation and advocacy.

Council has high profile, well utilized and publicly accessible open spaces that include parks, reserves, squares and retail precincts. Some of these sites are suitable for permanent works, whilst many are suitable for temporary public art projects which can be responsive to emerging local issues and as physical environments and contexts change over time.

Council is also the owner of important civic infrastructure such as town halls, libraries and leisure centres; these represent opportunities for the City to express its creative aspirations through public art.

As a planning authority, Council also has the capacity to facilitate public artworks as part of private developments. The provision of public artwork can significantly improve the amenity of private developments, including the aesthetics and perception of public accessibility to individual architectural projects.

As a place manager of streets and as a local service provider, Council also has the capacity to facilitate public artworks using a place management approach; the commissioning of murals is a good example of this.

5.1 Council funded program

To increase the commission of public art Council commits to incorporating public art into future civic infrastructure projects and to identifying suitable sites in the public realm for temporary and permanent commissions.

5.1.1 Public Art Funding

Public art will be aligned with all civic infrastructure projects. The City recognises this will deliver the best outcome for the public from an aesthetic, functional and economic basis.

This mandates for public art to be considered from the earliest planning stages of civic capital work projects, allows for the design and function to influence the art and vice versa and enables the effective design and implementation of the works. It also enables public art commissions to include diverse art forms, practices and styles in response to each unique infrastructure project, site and context.

To facilitate this alignment Council will implement a 'Percent for Art' scheme which makes a set provision for arts infrastructure based on a percentage of the total capital work budget for major developments. This is a practice that has been adopted by many local governments across Australia.

The Percent for Art will be triggered by new or major renewal infrastructure projects over \$1m, be set at 1% of the budget and capped at \$1m.

There is a strong preference for the Percent for Art funds to be aligned directly with the infrastructure development project and for this to be used to commission public artworks integrated within the development. However, Council acknowledges that this is not always suitable or possible. Therefore it will assess projects on an individual basis and where a public art outcome cannot be achieved, the funds may be otherwise used to produce

creative spaces or alternatively for the funds to be pooled for use on other projects as they arise.

Action 1: *Council commits to allocating 1% of the total project budget for new community or significant renewal of capital infrastructure projects over \$1 million towards public art or arts related projects. This is to be capped at \$1m.*

5.1.2 Integrated Public Artworks

Many opportunities to integrate public art as part of streetscape or civic building projects arise from urban design and infrastructure improvement projects. These provide valuable and appropriate opportunities for public art and consideration for its inclusion should be part of the scoping phase of Council led projects.

Action 2: *Council will include public art as a consideration in the initial scoping phase of urban design and infrastructure projects.*

5.1.3 Temporary Public Art

The commission of temporary public art, sometimes on an ongoing platform, provides new points of interest to Yarra's community, opportunities for emerging artists and as a whole, it is more affordable than permanent works of art.

Council has developed three sites for installations of temporary art (Public Art Billboard Program at the corner of Otter Street and Smith Street, Collingwood; Victoria Park Projection site in Abbotsford; Yarra Light Box Art Program at Carlton Library) and commits to manage these existing sites using best practice curatorial practices and to investigate future opportunities for an expansion of this program via a dedicated annual budget. This includes investigating the long term plan for a rotating sculptural commission program for the empty Former Queen Victoria Plinth in Edinburgh Gardens, North Fitzroy.

Action 3: *Council will allocate \$40,000 in its annual operational budget towards maintaining the three public art sites.*

5.1.4 Murals/Street Art

Yarra is an exciting centre for street art and attracts local and international visitors. Many murals or street artworks tend to occur organically and Yarra's streets are ever changing displays; which are most often the work of spontaneous creative artists.

In terms of murals and street art (including but not limited to paste up, stencil and spray art), Council has a service provision role in graffiti management projects, particularly in coordination with private property owners; a facilitating role in providing information and guidance; and lastly a commissioning role.

There are instances where Council may deem it necessary to provide clean up services to residents. This will occur where works are deemed offensive to the general public or are of illegal nature.

Council recognises the ongoing interest in murals and street art from artists, community members and businesses and will endeavour to play a facilitating role to enable private commissions. Reference documents such as fact sheets will be produced.

Council will continue to commission murals and street art treatments as a graffiti management tool, but they are also used to improve open space amenity and the

improvement of streetscapes. They are an important artform in their own right with a long history and the ability to respond to architecture, culture and social contexts.

Given the number of commissioning opportunities happening privately, by other teams in Council and neighbouring municipalities, Arts & Cultural Services will take on mural projects intermittently with a focus on addressing the gap; facilitating and fostering opportunities for artists or organisations from outside or at the periphery of the street art scene and from diverse backgrounds and importantly, who have the interest and capacity to produce high quality murals in the public domain.

Action 4: *Council will formalise a commissioning process for murals and street art to ensure these works are commissioned in a considered manner whilst enabling a timely response to place management.*

Action 5: *Council will produce an online fact sheet as a key resource for residents, property owners, businesses and artists who are interested in mural and street art commissions. This will also provide advice on when approvals are required, channels for such permission, how to search for artists or seek opportunities.*

5.2 Donation or Transfer

Donations and transfer of works to Council are a valuable and valid way for Council to realise works in the public domain.

There have been examples of transfer of work into Council's Collection by private owners in the past, where the work has met established criteria; these works are usually those with a high visibility and connection to the public realm.

There are often mutual benefits of such transfers as these ensure the works are appropriately managed and maintained.

Any donations and transfers must meet Council's criteria in accordance with this Policy. Considerations should include artistic merit, relevance to the City of Yarra and ongoing maintenance requirements.

Action 6: *Any proposed donations or transfers of public artworks, monuments and/or memorials are to be considered and determined by the Visual Art Panel.*

5.3 Council facilitated projects

Much of private infrastructure development impacts on the public realm and contributes to the physical fabric of the city. Private developers therefore have great opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a creative and liveable Yarra; this can be best achieved where creativity is embraced at the conception of the project and that public art is able to be a primary consideration of the design.

Council has taken a leading role in including public art as a primary consideration in civic infrastructure developments; it strongly encourages private developers to do the same.

To further support this, Council has produced *Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development* that set out clear procedures to assist private developments to incorporate public art into their buildings. The guidelines are intended to be useful for all private developments and may be aligned to developments where public art has been agreed as a

condition of the planning permit. These are most often the case for significant developments and where there is deemed to be significant public space.

They set out Council's requirements for public art in private development; avenues for the professional procurement of public art; Council's objectives, standards and principles to direct the commission and the delivery and approval process.

The *Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development* document forms an attachment to this Policy and is intended to be updated as required.

Action 7: *Investigate amendments regarding public art and private developments to Yarra City Council's Municipal Strategic Statement and Planning Scheme when next reviewed.*

Action 8: *Encourage and facilitate opportunities for public art to be commissioned by private property owners. Where suitable and when led by Arts & Cultural Services, murals may be commissioned which give priority to artists, groups or organisations from diverse backgrounds and communities, as well as aspiring or mid-career creative practitioners who require opportunities to enter the street art scene.*

6. Management of Public Art

6.1 Visual Arts Panel

Council is advised on matters relating to Arts and Culture by the Yarra Arts Advisory Committee (YAARTS). This committee is formally appointed by Council and its role is to provide independent expert advice to Council.

Council will establish a Visual Arts Panel that will provide independent expert advice regarding Council's Art and Heritage Collection as well as on matters of Public Art to Council via YAARTS.

The Visual Arts Panel will advocate for public art and the collection, advise on policies, guidelines and procedures including the acquisition, commissioning and de-accessioning process as they arise, and also provide advice and support to Council staff and programs relating to visual arts.

The Visual Arts Panel shall be appointed by Council and shall operate within the purpose of the current Public Art Policy and Collection Management Policy. The panel will work closely with YAARTS.

The panel shall be comprised of nine (9) representatives, including the Chair of YAARTS, a member of Council's Arts and Cultural Services team, and the remaining seven (7) representatives to be made up of a minimum of two visual artists, and the remaining from the following disciplines:

- Arts Administrators
- Arts Consultants, Art Curators and Museum Professionals
- Art Historians and Heritage Professionals
- Architects, Landscape Architects and other Design Professionals
- Business Representatives
- Civil Engineers
- Community representatives
- Conservators

6.2 Process for commissioning/acquiring

While public art is a key method in terms of enlivening the City, it is necessary to implement consistent and strong commissioning processes to ensure high quality and contemporary outcomes. In order to achieve this, Council will implement a curated approach for large scale, prominent and permanent public art projects.

Council will adopt a four stage process in commissioning of these works:

1. A brief will be developed for each identified project and a pool of suitable artists based on relevant experience and practice will be selected; both will be presented to the Visual Arts Panel for review and approval.
2. Selected artists will be invited to develop a concept design in response to the brief. This design stage will have an allocated fee depending on the scale and scope of the project.
3. The concept design submissions will be assessed by the Visual Arts Panel or project specific panel and one artist may be successfully selected to proceed to commission round.
4. The artist may be engaged for a further design stage or proceed straight to commission, however a fixed budget will be established and the artist contracted to deliver the project within this set fee.

There may be specific projects which require more in depth community consultation than others. The Visual Arts Panel will be called upon at the outset of any project in regards to consultation and the brief will be developed in accordance to their advice. For major and permanent works installed in Council facilities, open spaces and precincts, the community may have an opportunity for feedback on proposed projects before commission occurs.

Action 9: *Council adopt a curatorial commission process for major, permanent projects to ensure high quality public art outcomes.*

Action 10: *Where appropriate, use open invitation call out rounds for smaller and/or temporary scale projects in order to provide opportunities for emerging creative practitioners. For this process, Council will seek minimal documentation from artists to avoid administrative burden for artists.*

6.3 Criteria for commissioning/acquiring

Public art commissions and acquisitions will be assessed by the criteria outlined below. This applies to Council commissions, acquisitions and negotiated or unsolicited donations and transfers from external parties.

- Standards of excellence, innovation and quality.
- Relevance and appropriateness of the work to the context of proposed site.
- Consistency with Council's current planning, heritage, environmental and social policies.
- Consideration of public safety and the public's access to and use of the public domain.
- Consideration of ongoing maintenance and durability requirements.
- Adequate funding and resources.
- Responsive to the brief where applicable.

6.4 Maintenance of artworks

Council recognises the importance of adequate and appropriate maintenance of public artworks. As such, the life of the work should be considered in the commissioning phase and any ongoing maintenance requirements form a core part of the consideration for the work; an assessment of the work's ongoing durability, life of materials and the limitation of maintenance are criteria for Council's consideration.

Council also recognises the ephemeral nature of some works, especially in the area of murals and street art works, and outside exceptional circumstances, adopts a five year lifespan ceiling for murals and street art commissions; Council understands that many works may have an even shorter lifespan.

Action 11: *Council will commission a comprehensive assessment of the maintenance needs of Council's Public Art Collection on a five year cycle and allocate funding in the collection maintenance budget as required.*

Action 12: *Ephemeral works, such as murals and street art, will have a life span limit of five years, excluding exceptional circumstances.*

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development in Yarra

KEY REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Yarra 2013-2017 Council Plan
Arts and Cultural Strategy 2011-15
City of Yarra Collection Management Policy 2011
Draft Graffiti Management Framework: Policy & Strategy 2015
Yarra Youth Arts Program Action Plan 2012-15