

MINUTES OF ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY, 18 AUGUST 2025 ON MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Present: Councillor Indu Balachandran, (Chairperson)
Councillor Barbara Ward (Deputy Chairperson)
Mayor, Councillor Christine Kay
Tony Bates, Community Member
Wendy Blaxland, Community Member
Anne Cahill, Community Member
Andrea Doney, Community Member
Mary Faith, Community Member
Hong Huang, Community Member
- Staff Present: Director Community, Janice Bevan
Director Strategy and Environment, Andrew Watson
Manager Community Development, Danny Houseas
Manager Library Services, Michelle Swan-Beardmore
Manager Visitor Experience and Events, Melanie Morson
Project and Policy Officer, Community Development, Nick Goryl
PA to Director Community, Suzanna La Cava
- Others Present: Peter Whitehead, substituting for Dee Jackson
Giselle Beale, Marian Street Theatre for Young People
- Apologies: James Austen, Community Member
Dee Jackson, Community Member
Shipra Shah, Community Member
Marketing and Programs Lead, Library and Art Centre, Samantha Groth

The Meeting commenced at 5:32PM

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

NOTING OF MINUTES

Minutes of Arts and Culture Committee

File: S14328

Meeting held 5 May 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That Minutes from the meeting on 5 May 2025 were taken as read and confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings of the Meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Note: The items in the agenda were re-ordered for the meeting. These minutes reflect the sequence of items as they were discussed.

Marian St Theatre Update

(brought forward from Other Business)

Andrew Watson, Director Strategy and Environment

- Andrew Watson, Director Strategy and Environment, provided an update on the Marian Street theatre.
- The current DA remains active until late August 2026.
- The building is structurally sound, watertight, and the power is isolated.
- A modification application has been submitted for some internal demolition works, comprising removal of some internal walls and redundant equipment.
- This modification application will preserve the existing DA in perpetuity.
- Director Strategy to provide details of modification application for circulation.
 - The link to the application is: [DA Tracker – 2 Marian St, Killara](#)
- Committee member feedback – members were pleased to hear that the modification application, if approved, would mean the DA would not expire.
- Members were also pleased to learn the minor internal demolition works proposed would not alter the existing function or character of the building.

Arts and Cultural Forum 2025

Create Ku-ring-gai

File: S14328

Vide: GB.2

To provide feedback to the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee on the Create Ku-ring-gai event held on 25 July 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That members receive and note the update on the Create Ku-ring-gai event held in the Gordon Library on 25 July 2025.

Nick Goryl, Project and Policy Officer, Community Development

- Nick Goryl summarised insights from the 25 July 2025 forum and the *speed-creating* engagement.
- 5 major themes emerged: spaces and venues; events and nightlife; learning and participation; community connection; support structures.
- Example suggestions: sculpture park/arts trail; storytelling circles; night markets; culture-themed picnic-in-the-park; residencies and artist-school links; multidisciplinary workshops at St Ives Showground.
- There was a suggestion that the role of Council could be enabling community-led activity (marketing, networks, affordable infrastructure) rather than owning delivery with some events.
- There were approximately 60 attendees; and the committee is keen to maintain momentum, continue engaging with the arts cultural community and consider a follow-up forum.
- Committee members were asked for feedback, what types of initiatives they felt Council should prioritise, and how best to balance grassroots creativity with Council-led initiatives.
- Lots of positive feedback about Create Ku-ring-gai from members who attended.
- Alignment with the Nighttime Economy initiative was noted.
- Intergenerational, cross-cultural and inclusion were themes suggested as priorities for

Council in this space.

- Also positive sentiments about having the art exhibition extended into the library from the Ku-ring-gai Arts Centre. This could be a model example for future initiatives activating existing spaces for artistic exhibition and expression.

Increased access to community facilities for the arts community in Ku-ring-gai

File: S14328

Vide: GB.1

To update the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee on a proposed pilot program designed to increase access to community facilities for the arts and cultural groups in Ku-ring-gai.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. For members of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee to receive and note the update on the proposed pilot program that has been developed to assist in providing increased access to Council venues for arts and cultural groups in the community.

Danny Houseas, Manager Community Development

- Danny Houseas shared a proposal for a pilot program to improve access and affordability for the arts and creative sector across community venues.
- The objectives are to improve access, reduce financial barriers, support local creatives, and to grow utilisation
- Eligibility and Support – community arts groups and creatives would be eligible, with tiered subsidies for venue hire
- Scheduling – short, time-boxed access to priority facilities in off-peak windows.
- Implementation timeline – draft program to Council by Nov 2025, with a pilot program from Jan 2026, and evaluation by February/March 2027.
- Facility upgrades – low-cost/high-impact improvements (lighting, AV, acoustics, ventilation) to inform 2026/27 budget bids.
- Committee member ideas and comments –
- November report should identify which facilities are suitable for different types of creative use (e.g. performing vs other activities). Should act as a gap analysis to guide uptake and investment decisions.
- Suggestion to invest in portable assets (e.g. microphones, PA systems, staging sets) that can be moved between venues; links to idea of a Council-facilitated equipment “co-op.”
- Members commented that cost relief (even partial) would make Council venues more attractive compared to independent venues.

Arts and Cultural Events Update

File: S14328

Vide: GB.3

To provide members with an update on recent arts and culture events in Ku-ring-gai.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Committee members receive and note the update on recent arts and culture events in Ku-ring-gai.

Melanie Morson, Manager Visitor Experience and Events, Ku-ring-gai Council

- Gai-Mariagal Festival (26 May–13 Jul): 11 events were delivered across 5 venues in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs NSW and regional partners.

- Arts & Cultural Festival (14 Jun–24 Jul): 25 events, 15 venues, 5,362 visits, the largest to date.
- New collaboration with Sanskriti (School of Indian Performing Arts) and an all-abilities event with Cerebral Palsy Alliance.
- Submissions have been made to Multicultural NSW for support with the 2026 Multicultural Festival.
- Further funding submission to NSW Government for Seniors Week 2026 and will be focusing efforts on creative opportunities, wellness, and life skills.

OTHER BUSINESS

Marian St Theatre for Young People Update

Giselle Beale – Chair, Marian St Theatre for Young People

- Giselle Beale provided an update on the MSTYP advising that a successful fundraising campaign has enabled the MSTYP to continue operations and offer theatre related programs to the community.

Arts and Culture Advisory Committee

Discussion about future committee meetings, format and activities

- Discussion about the future schedule and format of the committee, noting the success and high engagement of the recent Create Ku-ring-gai event, as well as the recent meeting attendance.
- Possibilities include reducing the number of meetings and increasing the number of forums each year, or focusing solely on forums.
- The Committee discussed a hybrid model which would result in 2 committee meetings per year and up to 2 forums (or similar events) per year.
- The Committee recommended that the number of meetings be reduced to 2 per year.
- The next forum was proposed for early-mid 2026, with the option of holding a committee meeting in early 2026 to assist with planning for the next forum.

The Meeting closed at 7:05PM