Cairns Regional Council’s 2009-2014 Cultural Plan, *Strengthening our Cultural Vitality*, was developed around the vision to be a more vibrant, progressive and collaborative community, working together to achieve greater local, national and international recognition for the unique and culturally diverse artistic excellence of our region and its distinctive, tropical lifestyle.

This vision, born from extensive community consultation back in 2009, shaped the strategies and actions delivered over the course of the five-year planning cycle, with almost 20,000 people actively participating in the activities flowing from the plan and around 1.6m people passively engaged as audience members.

Council is now poised and well positioned to develop a new set of priorities for the future. The 12-month period between the finalisation of the plan in 2014/15 and the beginning of the new planning cycle has allowed for a comprehensive assessment and review process that will partly inform the development of the new Culture Strategy.

The timing is now right, and in order to initiate dialogue and action, Council ask that you take part in the conversation towards a new, relevant, multifaceted, and outcome-driven Culture Strategy for Cairns.

The following pages of this discussion paper and hyperlinked documents aim to provide a starting point and reference for further conversation and we acknowledge that this is just a small piece in the broader narrative that shapes our cultural environment. We encourage you to add to the bank of knowledge as we move through the process.

What is your vision for the Arts and Culture in Cairns 2020?
CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

Cairns Regional Council acknowledges that the outstanding achievements realised throughout the previous planning cycle were due to the creative innovation and vigour of the producers that continued to drive the cultural vitality of the region, as well as the thousands of consumers who enthusiastically embraced the arts and culture of Cairns.

Consultation around the development of a new strategy is based on the premise that Cairns Regional Council, in its support and facilitation role, is but one piece of the dynamic creative and cultural ecology of the region – an ecology that relies on the sum total of its complex parts in order to prosper and endure.

Engagement and discussion with the community and cultural sector therefore aims to:
› deliver a people-centred and participatory approach to planning
› gain a better understanding of the strengths, issues and scope of the arts and cultural environment in Cairns
› build consensus and acceptance of priorities
› improve and develop programs and services that respond to identified needs; and
› foster community involvement and ownership of local community initiatives.
Consultation towards a new Culture Strategy for Cairns aligns with the development of Council’s new four-year Corporate Plan. In a strategic sense, the Corporate Plan is a lead guiding document that sets direction across the broader core business areas of Council.

This convergence in planning cycles presents new operational synergies and opportunities for delivering an integrated and whole-of-Council response to arts and cultural priorities.

Community engagement around the development of both the Corporate Plan and Culture Strategy will be rolled out over the next couple of months. Information and findings from both consultative processes will be shared across these two strategic platforms.
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT AND ASSUMPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION POINT 1: BROAD TRENDS IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

In order to develop more effective responses to cultural service delivery it is important to understand and interpret the internal and external environment that will impact on the Culture Strategy.

The following overview presents an initial scan of the landscape and environment in which our new four-year strategy will be required to do its work. These critical factors and basic assumptions will underpin and shape our priorities and directions for the future, and affect our ability to deliver high gain and sustainable outcomes.

The development of a new Culture Strategy for Cairns aims to enable a cohesive and strategic approach to ongoing cultural development. The following internal factors continue to be critical to the delivery of cultural services:

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<th>INTERNAL FACTORS</th>
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| Leadership       | • Growing capacity in the strategic and operational framework in which Council coordinates and manages its cultural resources and services.  
|                  | • Proactive response to the development of policies and plans that support and guide the delivery of arts and culture. |
| Strategic Direction | • Strategies in place to guide development and diversification opportunities that aim to capitalise on cultural events as a generator of visitation.  
|                  | • Increased interdivisional & across-government, corporate and business sector partnerships and collaboration. |
| Financial Commitment to Arts and Cultural Sector | • Steadily increasing financial investment in the arts and culture through annual funding programs: Cultural Infrastructure Grants; Arts and Cultural in-kind assistance; RADF; Festival and Events funding; and key organisation Resource and Performance funding agreements.  
|                  | • Investment in new capital projects; CPAC Development, School of Arts/Cairns Museum; Munro Martin Parklands; Tanks Arts Centre and Cairns Regional Gallery venue renewals and upgrades; and City Centre Alive. |

In your opinion what is Council’s role in the arts, culture and creativity in Cairns?

What strengths can we maximise and build on – what do we do well?

What weaknesses need to be addressed and strengthened – what could we do better?
A real and tangible shift has occurred in all sectors of the arts and cultural field over the past few years, and many longstanding assumptions are currently being tested, particularly in line with expectations around the delivery of services and organisational and funding models.

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<th>EXTERNAL FACTORS</th>
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| National Trends in Participation and Engagement       | • Levels of engagement with the arts are high – 85% of Australian’s agree that the arts make for a rich and meaningful life, and 38% creatively participated in the arts six or more times per year.  
  *Australia Council 2015 Overview of the Arts.  
  • 19% growth over the past four years, with 2.4 million international visitors in 2013-14 engaging in arts tourism. *Australia Council 2015 Overview of the Arts. |
| Federal & State & Local Government Policy & Funding Priorities | • Annual Federal, State and Local government expenditure on culture $7b and core arts $1.3b (2012-13).  
  *Australia Council 2015 Overview of the Arts.  
  • Restructure and refocus on funding priorities across government agencies, and focus on integrated planning & capital infrastructure investment to fuel economic stimulus.  
  • Shift from patronage to partnership approach to funding. |
| National Private sector support/ Investment in the Arts and Culture | • Steadily increasing private sector investment in arts and culture, with annual private sector support raised by arts organisations $221million (2009-10). Indicating a 59% increase since 2001-02.  
  *Australia Council 2015 Overview of the Arts. |
| National Creative Economy                             | • 2011 Census data shows that Australia’s creative and cultural industries contribute around $86 billion to the national economy annually. The creative industries and creative work in other industries have emerged as one of Australia’s strongest performers, with employment growing by a steady 2.8% a year between 2006-11, 40% faster that in the economy as a whole. |
| FNQ Regional Strategic Directions & Priorities         | • Growing capacity of FNQ regional tourism and economic development sector.  
  • Strategic focus areas include: Growing international domestic market share; increasing visitor expenditure; strategic aviation growth; sustainable funding and destination management partnerships.  
  • Data indicates tourism in TNQ contributes $3.6B to the Qld economy. *TTNQ Visitor Economy 2016.  
  • Strategic priorities identify the need to develop industry capacity in order to progress culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities. *Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Inc. – Strategic Priority Packages. |
| Local Community Capacity & Engagement                 | • Strong community capacity and willingness to partner and participate, with around 20,000 people actively participating in activities flowing from the 2009/14 cultural plan, and around 1.6m people were engaged as audience numbers.  
  • Valuable and long-term partnerships and collaborations exist between CRC, local industry partners, educational institutions, REACH and community-based arts and cultural organisations and individuals.  
  • Cairns region accommodates the highest concentration of creative industries workers in the Far North Region *Cummings Economics 2014 |
DISCUSSION POINT 2: RESOURCE MAPPING, ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Cairns Regional Council is undertaking a staged and progressive process towards the development of the new Culture Strategy. In order to gain a better understanding of the strengths and scope of the arts and cultural environment in Cairns, the following research has been completed. Please take some time to follow the links and read the reports.

1 A quantitative assessment of the outcomes of the Cairns Regional Council Cultural Plan: Strengthening our Cultural Vitality 2009–2014

The assessment indicates significant and steady progress in the region’s cultural development, with high audience and participant rates in arts and cultural activities, a number of employment opportunities in the arts and cultural industries for local practitioners, and valuable long-term partnerships forged with local, regional, state and federal governments, industry partners, and community-based arts and cultural organisations and individuals. [Hyperlink]

In general did any aspect of the Cairns Regional Council Cultural Plan: Strengthening our Cultural Vitality 2009–2014 impact on you, your organisation or your business?

2 Cultural Resource Mapping: Resource Inventory/Audit across key sectors

The development of a new Cultural Strategy for the region requires an understanding of the many resources and assets that support the cultural sector in Cairns. In order to better visualise, value, manage and promote the city’s cultural resources, the first stage of a broader resource mapping project has been completed in collaboration with Arts Nexus. [Hyperlink]

Watch this space – this mapping data is currently being converted into a new online and publicly accessible Cairns Culture Map.

In your opinion, what are our community’s most important cultural resources and assets?

3 A statistical analysis of the Creative Industries with comparative analysis across regions

According to 2011 ABS statistics, the economic contribution of Australia’s creative and cultural industries exceeds the industries of agriculture, forestry and fishing, administrative and support services, and supply of essential services, such as electricity, gas and water. [Hyperlink]

In your opinion, what are the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the creative and cultural industries here in Cairns?
DISCUSSION POINT 3: STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Taking into account the data collected following the last planning cycle, as well as the current trends in Australia’s cultural environment, it is possible to identify a number of positive local conditions for the development of a robust Culture Strategy:

› Cairns has an abundance of new assets and resources and a rich landscape of cultural organisations, artists and craftspeople, cultural facilities, festival and events, fuelling the cultural life of the region. Coupled with the highest concentration of creative industry workers in Northern Queensland cities, Cairns has the opportunity to leverage our developing reputation in these areas.

› Potential partnerships and collaboration with the region’s tertiary providers JCU and CQU towards the development of ‘real time’ case study research into links within the sector.

› The combination of: a new framework in which Council manages its cultural services; the certainty of a new four-year Council term; the concurrent development of a new Corporate Plan and a new Culture Strategy; and a new Council Committee dedicated to cultural development, present opportunities for new strategic and operational synergies.

› Cairns Culture Map is a new online tool that contains information on Cairns arts and culture resources and related information. It has multiple applications that will acknowledge, recognise and promote the arts and cultural community of Cairns.

› Council’s acknowledgement of and investment in the arts and culture in Cairns is steadily increasing: the new CPAC development, the revitalisation of Tanks Arts Centre, the reinvigorated Cairns Museum and the revitalisation of the Munro Martin Parklands and City Centre will provide ongoing employment opportunities for a diversity of creative professionals.

› In addition to these capital investments, Council has rolled out funding programs such as cultural infrastructure grants to enhance and maintain the longstanding premises of Cairns’ well-loved NFP organisations, and funding through the Regional Arts Development Fund program to assist in developing young creative professionals in our region.

What else, what other opportunities exist to build the capacity of your organisation as well as the broader arts and cultural sector in Cairns?
DISCUSSION POINT 4: THEMATIC ELEMENTS AND VALUES

To stimulate conversation around a united vision for Cairns’ new Culture Strategy, we wish to start discussions around thematic elements or guiding principles that, from Council’s perspective, encapsulate the cultural and creative services that we provide.

These themes have been distilled from the broad core business activities of Council’s Cultural Services branch, as they have been shaped over time in response to the needs of the community and its many cultural organisations, institutions, industries and businesses, artists, artisans, and craftspeople. They also represent the areas in which Council has the capacity to influence change and development. Broadly, these core business areas are:

**CULTURAL ECONOMY**
- Professional Development
- Grants Management
- Creative Industry Development
- Development of collaborative partnerships
- Mentoring and Training
- Cultural Tourism Development

**URBAN VITALITY AND PLACE MAKING**
- Public art commissioning and management of a city-wide approach to design and art in the built environment
- Support of key community events and place making initiatives
- Activation of the CBD and regional centres

**CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**
- Infrastructure Investment
- Facility Management and Presentation
- Venue Hire
- Visual Art Presentation and Support

**COMMUNITY & CULTURAL DIVERSITY**
- Festival and Events Production
- Audience Development
- Cultural Diversity Education Programs
- Youth-based Creative Activities

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**
- Heritage place Conservation & Interpretation
- Capacity Building of volunteer groups
- Management of cultural heritage assets
- Presentation and promotion of heritage assets

In your opinion what other core values or guiding principles should underpin our new four year Culture Strategy?
The Creative Industries, in all diverse manifestations of disciplines and practice, are important drivers in our local economy and the creative sector in Cairns has the vital elements in place to build a strong and sustainable regional brand.

Mapping demonstrates an expanding base of creative industries across the region, including visual arts and crafts, advertising and marketing, digital media, architecture and design, photography, film, television and radio, music and the performing arts, heritage professionals, writing, publishing, media and journalism.

Census figures reveal that there has been a 22 percent growth in employment between the years 2006-2011, with around 2,734 people employed in the arts and creative industries in the FNQ region in 2011.

These local industries are driven by a variety of enterprise models, such as: sole creative operators and small to medium businesses that focus on local market demand, as well as specialised service businesses that cater to larger local and export markets.

Gaps and needs identified through our ongoing dialogue with arts and cultural sector highlight:

› The need for affordable studio spaces, incubator facilities and artist-controlled venues for promotion and professional exchange
› The need for ongoing business skills training
› The precarious nature of funding – almost entirely short-term project funding with no guarantee of continuing support.

What else – where are the gaps in provision and what are the needs of your organisation and the broader arts and cultural community?

CASE STUDY:
URBAN SPACES – CREATIVE ACTIVATION

Urban Spaces is a Cairns Regional Council program that matches unique and creative local enterprises with vacant spaces in the Cairns CBD, to be transformed into pop-up retail and creative outlets for short-term leases. The program helps make the CBD an even more dynamic place to visit for both residents and tourists, and also aims to nurture the sustainability of enterprises with business development and other support.

“Urban Spaces is a fantastic initiative! It has given my small business, Hello Miss Poppyseed the opportunity to set up a temporary shopfront to test the Cairns market without investing a huge amount of capital. It has not only provided us with business support and advice, but has assisted us with marketing and publicity to get our name out there. It is such a great way to bring life back into the Cairns CBD and opportunities like this really support the rising concept of Mumpreneurs.”

- Kate Dunne, Hello Miss Poppyseed.
2. PLACE MAKING AND URBAN VITALITY

It has long been recognised that economic performance is strongly tied to the liveability and character of a city or a regional centre, and that creativity and the arts play an important role in creating dynamic and distinctive environments where people want to live, work and visit.

In terms of civic identity and sense of place, our unique tropical identity is palpable. The region is a sophisticated international destination with a diverse, multicultural community characterised by creativity and innovation – qualities that can be promoted to the rapidly growing national and international cultural tourism market.

Our smorgasbord of festivals and events, public art and interpretive trails express our vitality and identity. Revitalisation initiatives such as the CBD City Centre Alive projects in Lake Street and Shields Street, the new Munro Martin Parklands, Cairns Performing Arts Centre and the School of Arts projects breathe new life into our city centre and create landmarks and destinations that will attract local residents and tourists.

Gaps and needs identified through our ongoing dialogue with the arts and cultural sector highlight:

› A combined presentation and promotion strategy to build a cultural tourism brand for the Cairns region.
› New sustainable models for the acquisition and funding of public art and more opportunities for local artists in place making and public art initiatives.

What else – where are the gaps in provision and what are the needs of your organisation and the broader arts and cultural community?

CASE STUDY: BABINDA HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Babinda Harvest Festival is an annual community event held in October, celebrating the start of the sugarcane harvest as well as the harvesting of other tropical produce. The Festival is supported by Cairns Regional Council through a Resource and Performance Agreement (Local Community Anchor Events).

“The Babinda Harvest Festival brings the town alive on the Saturday morning with Traders Day combined with street entertainment and market stalls, followed later in the day with the Grand Parade of floats from local schools, sporting clubs, community groups and businesses moving along Munro St and back.

All of this brings the whole local community together and attracts people from the Cape to Townsville as well as neighbouring communities. In particular, it gives the farming community a chance to catch up in a relaxing social atmosphere.”

- Graham Lynch, Treasurer, Babinda Harvest Festival.
Cairns’ many heritage places provide a tangible connection to the people and events that came before us, and shaped our region. They help us to appreciate the social and technological changes over time and give a point of reference for the changes to come.

A Thematic History of Cairns and its Regional Towns produced by CRC and the Department of Environment and Resources in 2010 identifies and describes themes and places that are significant and distinctive to our area and provides an historical context for understanding historical importance.

Cairns Regional Council is committed to protecting and managing the region’s cultural heritage for current and future generations. Our historic buildings, relics, archaeological sites, landscapes, plantings and streetscapes, along with the social practices, oral traditions and knowledge associated with these built and natural assets, collectively define our background and character and help reinforce our sense of identity and belonging.

Attracting more than 2.4 million domestic and international visitors each year, the Cairns region is fast becoming the front door to Australian culture for the neighbouring Asia-Pacific countries and the closest major hub to the Indigenous artists of the Cape and Torres Strait. Our cultural heritage assets provide an opportunity to tell the complete, meaningful story of our region to visitors, new residents and children.

Gaps and needs identified through our ongoing dialogue with the arts and cultural sector highlight:

› Better presentation platform for linking and promoting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Cairns
› Opportunities to strengthen linkages between culture, heritage and tourism

What else – where are the gaps in provision and what are the needs of your organisation and the broader arts and cultural community?

CASE STUDY: HERITAGE REVITALISATION - MCLEOD STREET PIONEER CEMETERY

From 2012, Cairns Regional Council, in partnership with the Cairns & District Family History Society, has implemented a strategic program of conservation, interpretation and activities based on the heritage fabric of this important and historic cemetery and the lives of those buried there.

“Our members began a huge effort in researching as many of the 2500 people buried there as possible, which strengthened our interest in ensuring that this beautiful heritage-listed cemetery is conserved for the future. This then encouraged us to reach out to the community to share what we found in the form of day walks. We also shared our information for the interpretive displays, the QR Codes and Education Kits for Primary Schools. “Shadows of the Past” dramatized evening walks were then formed and have been successful beyond our expectations with a huge community interest...”

- Dell Deed, President of Cairns & District Family History Society.
Cultural diversity in Cairns embraces ethnicity, faith, gender, ability, and age. Acknowledgment and acceptance of these vital differences is fundamental to our region’s growth and sustainability.

With a population of around 158,000 people, made up of more than 47 nationalities and some of the oldest surviving intact Indigenous communities in the world, cultural diversity is an intrinsic part of our everyday life.

Cultural mapping accentuates the diverse and dynamic range of arts and cultural activities, organisations, individuals and practices that contribute to our cultural identity.

Festivals and events that support and celebrate community and cultural diversity, such as the highly-acclaimed Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and the Chinese New Year celebrations have become important aspects of the Cairns tourism ‘offer’, and are good examples of the intersection of culture and the economy.

This vital interdependency between creative expression, lifestyle and background and the region’s economic progress, continues to grow in strength and reputation.

Gaps and needs identified through our ongoing dialogue with the arts and cultural sector highlight:

› Specific and targeted responses to the creative needs of children; young people; older people; and people with a disability.
› Opportunities for creative cross-cultural, intercultural and intergenerational projects using community cultural development practice and principles.

What else – where are the gaps in provision and what are the needs of your organisation and the broader arts and cultural community?


With the assistance of RADF in 2010, the project created a cross-cultural theatre performance of a collective refugee story. Theatre workshops strengthened community relationships and built a common language through theatre. The creative process equipped the Bhutanese community with the tools to share their cultural identity and experiences of their journey to Australia.

“The biggest outcome for me personally… was the learnings gained from the cross-cultural experience; what we found together in translation, the obstacles overcome and the joy in finding a new way to share and communicate stories… Invaluable friendships have been made and 6yrs later we now have over 750 Bhutanese resettled here in Cairns… I am now back doing a 2nd community theatre project with the next wave of arrivals and the new issues arising from cross cultural and intergenerational exchanges.”

- Sue Hayes, project facilitator
5. CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Council plays an important role in the provision of infrastructure that supports and enhances the cultural life of our community. Assets such as our libraries, our community centres, performing arts and recreational spaces, are without a doubt crucial to the sustainability and vitality of the region.

We also recognise that cultural infrastructure is much more than the hard capital bricks and mortar of Council-managed buildings, spaces and venues. Cultural resource mapping has provided a clearer understanding and definition of the broad range of assets that we share.

Six thematic resource components across: cultural facilities and spaces; cultural organisations; cultural industries; cultural festivals and events; cultural heritage; and natural heritage, paint a broad and multifaceted picture of the infrastructure that supports and shapes our cultural and creative identity.

Coupled with these tangible themes are the soft and intangible skills, experience, dedication and productivity of thousands of individuals that, in turn, form the backbone of the human resources that sustain this collective cultural infrastructure.

Gaps and needs identified through our ongoing dealings with the arts and cultural sector highlight:

› Paucity of affordable fit-for-purpose buildings and spaces that support arts and cultural enterprise; community cultural development; and/or specialised, co-located or integrated services.
› Evidenced-based review of supply and demand trends of cultural facilities within the Cairns region.

What else – where are the gaps in provision and what are the needs of your organisation and the broader arts and cultural community?

CASE STUDY: CAIRNS JUNIOR CHORAL SOCIETY

The Cairns Junior Choral Society is a not-for-profit organisation that supports young people (ages 8-18) in Cairns to develop a love for and an appreciation of music. The Society was established over 63 years ago and is still run entirely by volunteers. With the support of a Cairns Regional Council Cultural Infrastructure Grant, crucial renovations were made to the choral hall in 2014-15.

“We are very grateful for the recent Cultural Infrastructure Grant, which has allowed us to make some very necessary renovations to our choir hall on Grove Street. We have been able to build an extension which now includes inside access to toilets... We have also been able to add space for a kitchen to be installed. These two additions have added greatly to the value and usability of the hall, and we hope to attract many more community groups to make use of it. It is now a much more user-friendly space.”

- Yvonne Gardner, Vice President of the Cairns Junior Choral Society
Thank you for your interest and participation in this consultation process. We look forward to further discussion and gathering your input into the creation of an effective, relevant and robust Culture Strategy for Cairns.