

Positively

PENRITH



We Create Penrith

# DRAFT CULTURAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2024-2028

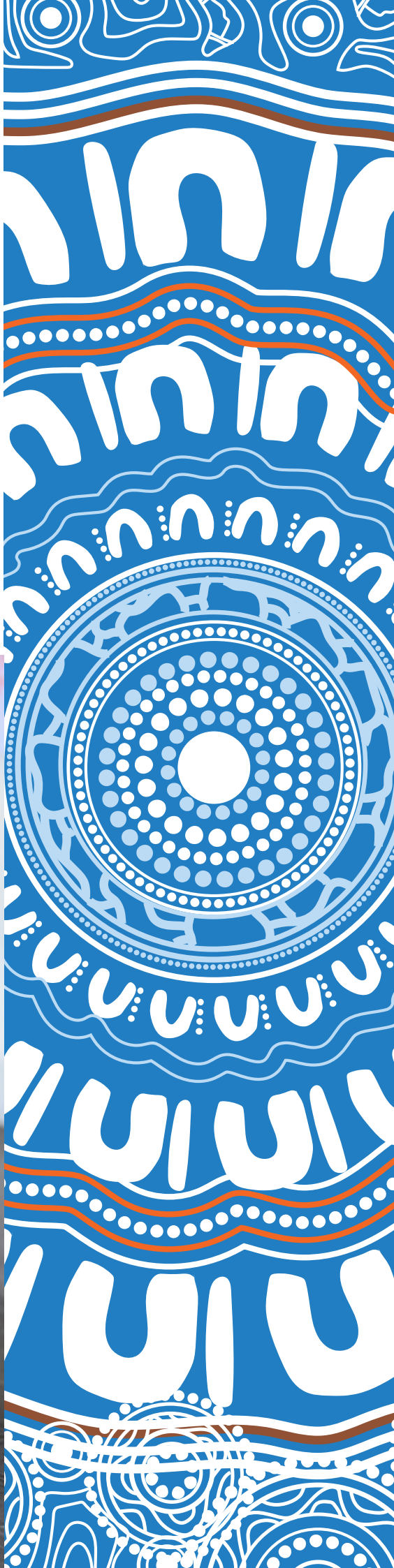


Statement of Recognition  
of Penrith City’s Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander  
Cultural Heritage

Council values the unique status of Aboriginal people as the original owners and custodians of lands and waters, including the land and waters of Penrith City.

Council values the unique status of Torres Strait Islander people as the original owners and custodians of the Torres Strait Islands and surrounding waters.

We work together for a united Australia and City that respects this land of ours, that values the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and provides justice and equity for all.



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# We Create Penrith

**We Create Penrith: Cultural Strategy and Action Plan is Penrith City Council's approach to advancing cultural outcomes for people and places in our local government area.**

We Create Penrith is inspired by our community. It builds on Penrith's great cultural strengths and focuses resources to champion our stories, strengthen local connections and help build our future here together - both through the creation and consumption of arts and culture.

We Create Penrith facilitates opportunities for all Penrith residents to come together in ways that are creative, respectful and inclusive, giving us the means to express and celebrate our shared culture.

#wecreatepenrith

Welcome





# Our Cultural Strategy

## We Create Penrith: Cultural Strategy and Action Plan

Is Council’s approach to advancing cultural outcomes for people and places in the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA). It builds on Penrith’s cultural strengths and focuses resources to champion our stories and provides opportunities for all Penrith residents to celebrate our shared culture.

In developing this Strategy, we have listened to our community, researched current data and trends and developed a four-year Action Plan that articulates the creative cultural aspirations of our people and the changing nature of our city.

## Penrith as a place is changing

As major investment such as the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport Line and the nearby Western Sydney International Airport and Aerotropolis radically transform familiar landscapes and daily routines. New transport infrastructure will deliver faster and more accessible connections while unlocking opportunities for the creation of new places and neighbourhoods to live, work and play.

## The people of Penrith are also changing

In 20 years an additional 76,000 people will live in our City, growing the population from 219,000 in 2021, to 295,000 by 2041.

Our community is more culturally diverse. We hear more languages spoken and increasingly more people identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

These diverse stories of Penrith weave together personal histories and cultural traditions with a shared connection to this place.

## We Create Penrith

Responds to these changes in people and place and positions arts and culture as essential to Penrith’s future.



# Our Vision

**We share the diverse stories of Penrith and our people through arts, culture and creativity, forging connections, inspiring reflection and building our future together.**





# Our Goals

The goals we seek to achieve through collaboration and partnerships are:

## Sharing our stories

Our values, community culture and diversity are shared and visible.

## Actively participating

Our creative cultural spaces and arts offerings are welcoming and accessible to all.

## Creating pathways

Our artists, creatives and makers are Penrith proud, recognised for their work and able to access local career development opportunities.

## Alive with creative expression

Our City is full of creative places and spaces to meet, share, reflect and grow and be curious.



## We want everyone in our community to benefit from having access to and participating in arts and cultural opportunities right here

Evidence shows, Western Sydney residents have less access to cultural facilities and programs than those who live in the eastern parts of Greater Sydney, and the region continues to experience inequities in government support for the arts <sup>1</sup>.

Penrith needs more spaces and opportunities, not just for the consumption of arts and culture, but for its creation and production as well.

**Now is the time to build on the past, and leverage new investment in the region to increase arts and cultural opportunities for the people of Penrith and amplify the vibrancy of the City.**

<sup>1</sup> Western Sydney attracted only 3.4% of Federal arts funding between 2015–2023. At a State level, Western Sydney received 36.6% of cultural infrastructure funding from 2015–2022, and only 12% of Sydney-based grants awarded by Create NSW with the remaining 88% provided to institutions in Eastern Sydney. State of the Arts in Western Sydney, Centre for Western Sydney, 2023

## We are stronger as individuals and a community when we engage in arts and culture

We are a stronger community when we are culturally inclusive and can connect with other people’s stories. Every time we come together to share our stories, our culture is enlivened, and we celebrate, nurture and sustain a culture that is uniquely and authentically Penrith.

Creativity is good for our local economy, contributing to a city that is attractive to live, visit and work in, because it is authentic, vibrant and fun.

**Through We Create Penrith we seek to ensure that everybody can genuinely participate in the cultural life of the city.**

As individuals we grow stronger through arts and cultural engagement because being creative builds confidence and curiosity. It keeps us healthy and well and has been proven to reduce anxiety, depression and stress, and bolster resilience.

**Creating and experiencing art brings people together and strengthens social connections. Art opens our minds to new ideas and increases empathy because through art we can imagine different perspectives. Creative participation benefits us as individuals and as a community.**



## What is culture and why does it matter?

We define culture as the values, beliefs, and accumulated knowledge that we express through our behaviours, connections, identity and creativity.

Culture is part of our everyday. It is through culture that we express who we are, and the meaning we give to life. The expression of culture imprints a community's personality into a place.

Culture is ever evolving, which means our collective culture changes along with the people and places of Penrith. What is important is that amidst these changes, together we identify the values, places and stories that are most meaningful to us as a community, so that we can maintain and share them as uniquely Penrith.

(Culture is) the shared sense of meaning that determines a group's way of life... People usually participate in a number of cultures a family culture, a work culture, a religious culture. Cultures also evolve over time.

**Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001**

"...culture is how and why we do things around here".

**Professor Paul James,  
Institute for Culture and Society,  
Western Sydney University**

"When you practise culture then you understand who you are and where you come from and what you believe in."

**Watkin Lui, a first-generation  
mainland Torres Strait Islander**

"Culture is made up of the values, beliefs, languages, knowledge, art and wisdom, with which a person or people, individually or collectively, expresses both their humanity and the meaning they give to their life and its course."

**United Cities and Local Government (UCLG),  
Agenda 21 for Culture which commits to  
the role of culture in sustainable cities**





# Issues and Trends

## Growing interest in First Nations cultures

Our community's interest in learning about First Nations cultures and traditional owners is also reflected at a state and national level as seen in the of the First Pillar of the National Cultural Policy.

## People want to make and create, not just consume arts and culture

People are seeking immersive experiences that invite interaction and stimulate all their senses. This can range from virtual reality and 360° projections, to hands-on workshops. The rise in collaborative makerspaces around the world show that the process of making is key to learning, problem-solving and innovation. Makerspaces are about creation rather than consumption.

## The creative economy is labour-intensive and offers jobs for many

The creative economy is labour-intensive, rather than capital-intensive. For every million dollars in turnover, arts and entertainment produce nine (9) jobs while the construction industry only produces around one (1) job<sup>2</sup>. The arts sector also has links to other labor-intensive sectors like tourism. The arts ecosystem supports multiple jobs, which is particularly beneficial to local economies.

For those wanting to study creative and performing arts, tertiary education offerings in Western Sydney are limited to three institutions. With the Powerhouse Parramatta scheduled to open in 2025, major cultural infrastructure being planned for the Aerotropolis alongside creative industries and innovation precincts, and \$562 million invested in Western Sydney for arts and cultural facilities through WestInvest, the demand for creative skills, training and professional development is set to grow over the next five years.

## Arts and entertainment sectors are still recovering from COVID-19 restrictions

The arts and entertainment industry continues to rebuild from the impact of COVID-19. The loss of workers across the whole supply chain – including many experienced professionals leaving the sector altogether – has led to critical shortages in the industry. Recovery from COVID-19 has seen the return to a strong demand for workers, and a need for training and upskilling.



## Communities want to support local artists and stories

Communities increasingly want to support local musicians and makers, and hear stories from artists who know their local community. People seek these experiences, not just for the convenience, but because they generate a sense of connection, ownership and pride.

## Participating in arts and culture is good for our health and wellbeing

There is abundant evidence on the positive relationship between arts engagement and health and wellbeing. Individuals and communities benefit from skills development, increased self-confidence and expression, deeper social connections, and sense of belonging. In Penrith, residents have shared that they enjoy arts and cultural activities because they fulfil “social needs for myself and others and help(s) everyone feel part of their community. Creative arts and activities are a vital part in keeping our brains and bodies active and healthy, and most importantly, it is fun”.

## Our public spaces and natural landscapes are cultural assets

Use of public spaces such as local parks increased significantly during COVID-19 in 2020 and remained high, even as restrictions eased in 2021. Our community enjoys outdoor cultural events, and also see opportunity for combining natural areas and art and creative experiences for example, public art walking trails along the Nepean River and spaces in parks that facilitate spontaneous performances.







# Snapshot

## Dalmarri

### Local cultural organisation based in St Marys

**“We love bringing people together with art and storytelling, it’s a reconciliation journey,” said Trevor Eastwood, co-founder of Dalmarri.**

Dalmarri (meaning “meeting place”) was formed in 2018 by Trevor and Jason Douglas. Through artmaking, Dalmarri provides cultural education, working with corporates, government agencies and communities. Their artwork is also in 63 schools and more than 100 childcare centres.

Trevor grew up with, and has been making art, his whole life. His dad, Danny Eastwood, has won Aboriginal Artist of the Year in NSW and nationally, and Trevor worked on mural commissions with him from the age of 8.

Both Trevor and Jason Douglas grew up on Dharug Country. Trevor hails from the Ngamba people (Brewarrina) and Jason is a proud Kabi Kabi man (south-east Queensland).

“On Dharug country, it’s important to understand the storytelling on this Country. If you are going to do cultural work on this land, you need to know this land,” Jason explains.

Dalmarri’s corporate partnerships have enabled them to open a gallery space in St Marys. Community members are welcome to drop in and use the space, learn culture, create artworks and hang them in the gallery. Dalmarri doesn’t charge any fees or commission for sales. It’s an important way of paying it forward. Elders often visit to view the gallery or just watch them paint.

“We have a fractured culture, but Aboriginal art has kept our culture alive through storytelling. It brings people together,” said Trevor reflecting on Dalmarri’s Two Worlds, One Culture motto.

“Whatever culture you’re from, be proud of that culture, and whenever you’re on this Country, respect this Country’s culture. Embrace it. Be part of it. Be proud of it,” said Jason.

They both imagine a place where everyone benefits from the beauty and depth of Aboriginal art: “The more we see Aboriginal art around Penrith, it’s keeping the stories alive. As an Aboriginal person, seeing art all around such as murals, public art, it goes a long way.”





# Our Strategy Responds to Our Community

## How we developed We Create Penrith

### Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Occurred over 2021 and 2022 including the #wecreatepenrith campaign when residents were encouraged to make art during COVID-19 lockdown and share their work on social media. This generated over 100 #wecreatepenrith posts with a reach of over 6,000 people, building awareness that Council was developing a cultural strategy.

During 2022, Council engaged 380 people via an online survey, focus groups, interviews and postcards distributed at events and Council services. The key question asked was “What creative life do you want for Penrith?”.

### Community Wellbeing Surveying

Was completed in November 2022, with 614 residents responding to a telephone survey. The biennial survey will track over time the extent to which our community participates in local activities such as arts and culture, and is strong and connected.

### Staff Engagement

Involved hearing from over 70 Council Officers who provided feedback on the Strategy and input into the Action Plan. We also worked closely with our Penrith Performing and Visual Arts (PP&VA) colleagues benefitting from their considerable experience and expertise.

### Review of best practice approaches

Involved a review of local and international cities and communities making significant strides to deliver cultural outcomes, and examined current issues and trends impacting on the arts and cultural sector. Council Officers also reviewed local, regional, national and international cultural strategies to ensure We Create Penrith aligns with best practice.

### Next Steps

Will include public exhibition of the draft We Create Penrith: Cultural Strategy and Action Plan where we will ask the community to review and provide feedback on the document to ensure it reflects their cultural aspirations.



# Who We Heard From



**221**

**residents and visitors**

completed the 'Your Say Penrith' online survey



**39**

**creative artists, artists with disability, multicultural service providers and general public**

engaged in focus groups



**15**

**representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and artists, Primary School staff, people with lived experience of disability, cultural groups, LGBTQIA+ artists and youth service providers**

participated in interviews



**48**

**general public members**

completed a postcard and responded to the question "What creative life do you want for Penrith?"



**37**

**young people**

(aged 11-22 years) were surveyed during Youth Week 2022 events responding to the question "What creative life do you want for Penrith?"



**20**

**children**

(aged 0-5 and 5-12 years) took part in an image-based and storytelling engagement about the art and creative activities that they most enjoy, or would like to try based on the stories of their peers



**74**

**Council officers**

across the organisation participated in action planning workshops



# What You Told Us Arts and Culture Includes

The Penrith community took a broad approach to what ‘arts and culture’ includes, with respondents noting traditional artforms and venues such as art galleries, museums and theatres but many also included natural environments, gardening, food, public spaces, hanging out in a group, spiritual activities and ‘kindness rocks’.



<sup>3</sup> Kindness rocks was a global trend during COVID-19, where people painted rocks, often with inspirational messages, and left them in public spaces for others to find and collect.





# What You Told Us About Your Participation in Arts, Culture and Creative Life

## Penrith residents are engaged in arts and culture

76% of residents surveyed in 2020 and 2021 attended a range of cultural venues and events including art galleries, theatre, dance and music performances, and festivals.

29% of residents were creative themselves, often participating in daily activities such as singing, playing a musical instrument, performing, ceramics, crafts and painting.

98% of residents participated in arts and culture more broadly including the above activities as well as going out to a restaurant, bar or café, hanging with a group of friends, going to the movies, attending local markets, religious or spiritual activities, and sporting events.

Penrith residents stated they want more opportunities to participate in arts and culture, including opportunities to make art and express themselves creatively.

## Penrith residents participate in arts and culture because it's fun

Residents told us that arts and cultural participation makes people feel good, open and connected to their community.

## Penrith residents attend both arts and sports events

In 2021-2022, residents bought tickets to both arts and sports events at 4 times the rate of the national average.

## Access to arts and entertainment offerings are key drivers for going out at night

Respondents surveyed in 2021 nominated live music, performing arts, and galleries as the top reason that they would come out at night, followed by restaurants, food trucks and food markets, and then "bars, pubs and wine tastings".

## Accessibility, health issues and cost are barriers

Accessibility, health issues and cost are barriers to people's participation in arts and culture in Penrith.





# What You Told Us is Important

## Key themes emerged throughout the consultation process:

### First Nations cultures

Learning about local First Nations cultures and seeing First Nations stories, language, arts and culture in the public domain.

### Arts participation makes people feel good and connected

It supports personal health, wellbeing and learning outcomes and people’s sense of belonging.

### Opportunities to connect and strengthen our arts community

Building an active and collaborative Penrith arts community supported by spaces where creatives can come together.

### Multicultural communities

Experiencing and learning about our multicultural communities, particularly through music, dance, language, food, celebrations and stories.

### Creative expression

Opportunities to actively participate, interact, make and express themselves creatively.

### Fit-for-purpose cultural facilities

That keep pace with a growing community with diverse needs, particularly spaces where art is made – makerspaces, studio spaces, rehearsal spaces, outdoor creative spaces.

### Access and inclusion

A cultural life that is accessible, inclusive and welcoming for all, with cultural experiences programmed throughout the year.

### Free arts and cultural events

Access to free and affordable cultural events and activities in easily accessible locations.

### Arts and culture at night

Arts and cultural experiences that complement and assist Penrith’s 24-hour economy to grow, by adding interest and fun while making people feel safe at night.

### Outdoor arts experiences

Experiencing more public art and creative cultural events outdoors, including in natural landscapes.

### Opportunities for local artists

Support and professional development for local artists, musicians and performers, including opportunities for young artists to build a career in Penrith.

### Partnerships with private and commercial sector

To contribute to a vibrant cultural life, such as through live music venues and programming.





**Photo** / Lyndal Irons for Penrith Regional Gallery

# Snapshot

## Toby Chapman

### Director, Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of the Lewers Bequest

For Toby, arts and sport are both “powerful means of community participation and community expression. The way that we engage in the spectacle of the sporting match, it is as much a form of culture as visual arts and theatre”.

It was during 2020, in the context of COVID-19 shutting the doors of arts centres and stadiums alike, that Toby Chapman became the curator at Penrith Regional Gallery. 2020 was also a record-breaking season for the Penrith Panthers, on a winning streak and headed to their first grand final in 17 years. With the COVID-19 pivot seeing the NRL season played without crowds, it was a strange time to be a Panthers fan.

In sharing his love for sport and NRL, Toby describes that “the spectacle only really exists when the community are involved as well.” The project he developed in 2020, Outside the Stadium, celebrated the Panthers – but rather than the players, it focussed on what their success meant to the Penrith community and fans.

The fans’ portraits were printed large and installed on the windows of The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, to engage with people on the Mondo. The participants and their families arrived in large groups “to see themselves at The Joan, represented with pride and dignity”.

After a season of play to empty stadiums, Toby saw the opportunity to “re-insert the fans into the visual landscape. Outside the Stadium was a tribute to the fans and the energy and support they gave to the team.”

Toby grew up in regional NSW playing rugby union, and as a teenager made the “code switch” to league, deciding the Panthers were his team. His own Panthers fandom has only grown over the years in part due to the Club’s commitment to community development.

“The Panthers cultivate success in their own backyard,” Toby explains. “They have the largest junior rugby league in the world, a schooling ground for future players. And that leads to an amazing and loyal culture not just in the NRL but in the club, and community itself.”

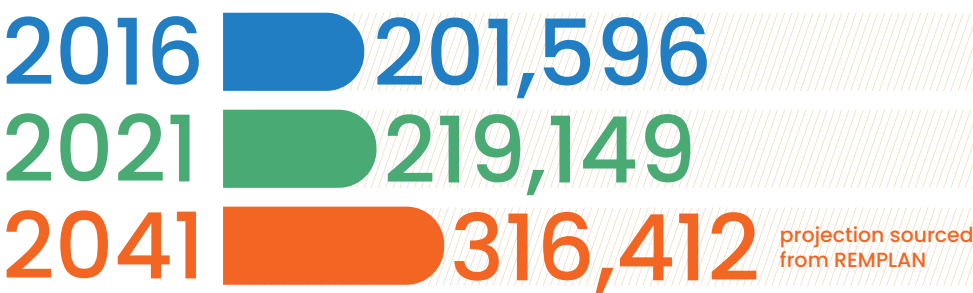
“The club feels very accessible. We see the players around here. It’s nice to have the professional sporting world interacting with the Gallery.”



# Penrith Now

## People<sup>4</sup>

### Population



Penrith LGA is home to a larger proportion of First Nations residents than Greater Sydney but is less multiculturally diverse. Both population groups in Penrith are trending upwards.

### First Nations Population



In Penrith LGA, increasingly more people identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In 2021, 5% of the population identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, (compared to 1.7% in Greater Sydney).

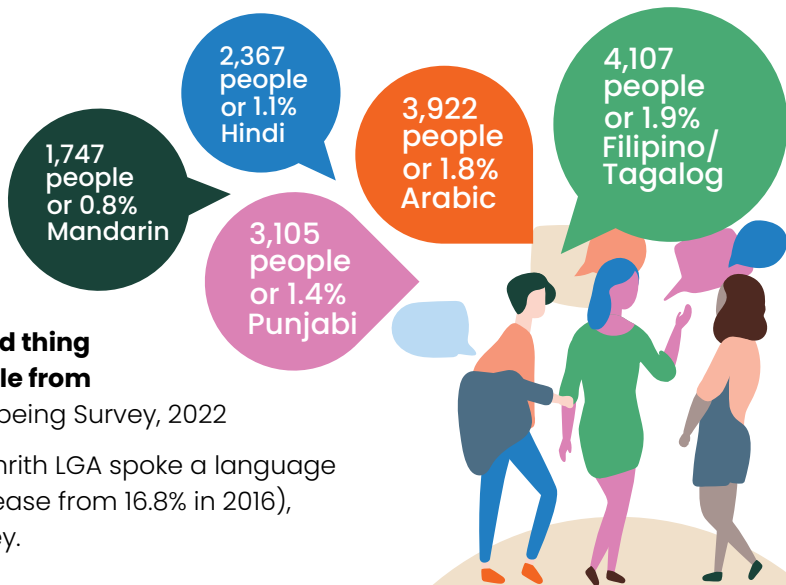
### Cultural Diversity

#### Language spoken at home

19.6% spoke a language other than English (2021), an increase from 16.8% in 2016.

87% of people agree with “It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures” Community Wellbeing Survey, 2022

In 2021, 19.6% of the population of Penrith LGA spoke a language other than English at home (an increase from 16.8% in 2016), compared to 37.4% in Greater Sydney.



<sup>4</sup> All data from .id Community Profile ABS Census 2016 and 2021 unless otherwise stated.

## Health

6% of our community needs assistance due to disability  
12,041 people

In Penrith LGA, 5.5% of the population reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability in 2021. This proportion is similar to 2016, and is also similar to Greater Sydney.

32% of the population has at least one long-term health condition  
68,701 people

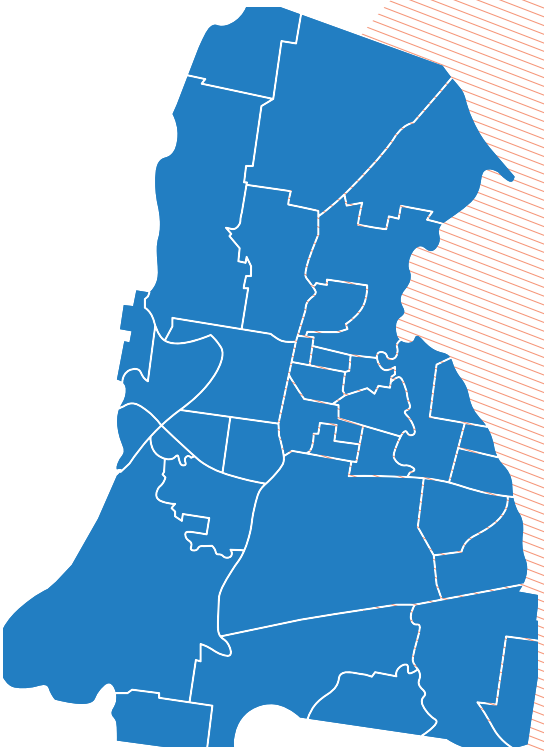
8.9% have a diagnosed mental illness

These rates are both higher than in Greater Sydney (27.5% and 6.6%).



## Place

The Penrith LGA spans 36 suburbs over 404km<sup>2</sup>



<sup>5</sup> REMPLAN Community, ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021, 2016.

## Economy<sup>5</sup>

1,403 residents of Penrith LGA worked in the creative industries in 2021 (1.4% of the total workforce).

This is a drop from 1,642 resident workers in those industries in 2016 (COVID-19 impact)

Half of the Penrith LGA residents employed in the creative industries work locally (765 jobs).

There are 0.54 jobs in creative industries in Penrith for every resident worker employed in these industries.





# Penrith in the Future

**Based on demographic trends in recent years and the transformation occurring throughout the Local Government Area, we can expect that the future community of Penrith will include:**

- A relatively young population compared to NSW and Australia, with a high proportion of families with children, and young couples without children.
- Increasing numbers of people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- An increasingly multiculturally diverse population.
- Many new households living in new communities in greenfield residential developments, as well as an increasing number of households living in medium and high-density dwellings.
- More people undertaking tertiary education.
- People will be employed in these industries: Health Care and Social Assistance, Transport and Logistics, Education, Professional Scientific and Technical Services, and Construction.
- With the completion of the arts and cultural facilities funded through WestInvest, the proposed Bradfield Cultural Centre, the Aerotropolis' creative industries and knowledge employment precincts, and the Powerhouse Parramatta, there will be demand for creative arts skills and local employment opportunities.







# Our Role

## How Council contributes to arts and culture in Penrith

### Cultural infrastructure

Owned by Council include the Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of the Lewers Bequest and The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. Council provides funding for their operations and management through the Penrith Performing and Visual Arts (PP&VA).

Council also owns and manages libraries with branches in St Marys and St Clair and the Penrith Central Library.

### Festivals and events

Including the flagship interactive and immersive REAL Festival held each year along the Nepean River. Stage shows, visual art installations and pop-up performances transform the riverbank, while hands-on activities and workshops are also available.

Other festivals and events include Penrith Producers and St Marys Lights Up which continue to grow in popularity, along with regular outdoor night-time cinema and lunchtime tunes activations in Penrith and St Marys. Community events such as Family Fun Days bring activities to neighbourhoods so that people can attend cultural activities closer to home.

### Public domain

Arts and culture inclusions, whereby Council delivers public art, such as the Blak Douglas artwork The Penroglyph in the upgraded Regatta Park. Other less obvious but important opportunities exist through the delivery of functional street furniture, landscaping and lighting where arts and culture can be interwoven to showcase the importance of a place and its people.

### Council programs

Magnetic Places Grants fund creative placemaking projects as part of Neighbourhood Renewal. It enables local residents living in priority areas to contribute their energy and imagination to transformative local projects lead by professional artists and community service organisations.

### Advocacy

Efforts through Council preparing submissions to other levels of government seeking equitable support for arts and culture in Western Sydney. Council is also a member of the Western Sydney Arts Alliance (WSAA) that represents over 40 arts organisations across the region, advocating for Western Sydney's artists and cultural practitioners.



Council’s investment in arts and culture

Council invests in local arts and cultural activity, providing annual funding of \$9.4 million to Penrith Performing and Visual Arts, Library services and Activations and Events. In 2022-23, these business units generated another \$3.1 million through external grants, sponsorships, partnerships and other income streams.

Together, they offered over 2,100 arts and cultural activities – or the equivalent of 5 arts and cultural activities every day of the year – attracting 555,000 people annually.

Measure (2022-23 financial year)	PP&VA 2022-23	Library 2022-23	Activations and Events 2022-23	Total
# performances/events /exhibitions programs	1,586	457	69	2,112
# visitors/attendees in total	195,663	322,830	37,110	555,603
# items borrowed from the library	N/A	423,376	N/A	423,376
# items in the gallery /PP&VA collection	Over 3,000	N/A	N/A	Over 3,000
\$ amount that Council invests in PP&VA, Libraries and Place and Activations.	\$2,302,344	\$6,441,132	\$700,000	\$9,443,476
\$ amount received through external grants, sponsorships, partnerships and other income streams.	\$2,214,352	\$681,545	\$207,875	\$3,103,772

Snapshot

REAL Festival

**REAL Festival 2023 is Penrith City Council’s marquee event and a major event for Western Sydney. It brings together our region’s best performers, musicians and creatives with celebrated Australian acts and artists, in a spectacular fusion of fun at the Nepean River.**

After a three-year hiatus and a newly upgraded site at Tench Reserve, REAL Festival 2023 was back with a family-friendly all ages event across three days from 15-17 September, attracting 50,000 people.

Building on the success of past programming to transform the riverbank, offerings ranged from energetic and spectacular headline performers on the Main Stage, including Junkyard Beats and Dauntless Movement Crew to chill vibes on the Acoustic Stage, as well as many workshop opportunities to create and learn new skills.

The return of REAL Festival also saw some exciting new partnerships. REAL commissioned Illuminart to create animations, stories and soundscapes with local No Boundaries Art Group, which were projected onto the Nepean Belle paddlewheeler. In addition, Penrith Performing & Visual Art was programmed at REAL, with Q Theatre presenting 30-50 Feral Hogs, an interactive theatre experience.





# Strategic Alignment

**We Create Penrith** aligns with a network of strategic documents including Local strategies and Regional, State, National and International cultural policies.

By connecting **We Create Penrith** with the investment and goals of others, we amplify our advocacy, build important relationships and potentially secure greater resources to grow arts and cultural participation in Penrith.

Strategy	Alignment
PENRITH CITY COUNCIL	
Penrith 2036+ Community Strategic Plan	The Plan identifies the shared vision, aspirations and values of our community and its desired outcomes to inform long term planning and strategies to achieve them.  The importance of arts and culture align with Outcome 2: We are welcoming, healthy, happy, creative and connected.
Penrith Library Services Strategy 2023–28	The Strategy encompasses a set of guiding principles, priorities and supporting strategies and actions to guide how Council will manage and deliver its future library service outcomes.
Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022–26	The Plan is committed to improving access and inclusion for residents of Penrith City, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strategy 4: Deliver accessible and inclusive community events, programs and services.</li><li>Strategy 6: Support participation in the creative arts for producers, makers and audiences with disability.</li></ul>
Draft Penrith Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 – 2030	The Strategy aims to strengthen Penrith’s reputation as NSW’s adventure capital and recreation destination.
Draft Penrith Economic Development Strategy 2023–2031	The Strategy includes the Thrive Framework a driver to connect Council’s Economic Development, Visitor Economy, Night-time Economy and Cultural Strategies.
Draft Penrith and St Marys 24-hour Economy Strategy	The Strategy aims to deliver a safe, vibrant and diverse 24-hour precincts in the Penrith City Centre and St Marys Town Centre.

<sup>6</sup> To meet the needs of a growing and changing population the Greater Sydney Commission’s (now the Greater Cities Commission) Greater Sydney Region Plan is built on a vision of three cities, where most residents live within 30 minutes of their jobs, education and health facilities, services and great places. The metropolis of three cities comprises: the **Western Parkland City** (with Greater Penrith, the Aerotropolis, Liverpool and Campbelltown functioning as metropolitan clusters), the Central River City (with Greater Parramatta as a metropolitan centre) and the Eastern Harbour City (with the Harbour CBD as a metropolitan centre).



Strategy	Alignment
REGIONAL	
State of the Arts in Western Sydney, 2023 (Centre for Western Sydney)	The report highlights that the arts in Western Sydney is facing critical inequities in funding, infrastructure and resources that have restricted the growth and success of the arts economy and resulted in challenges in the region.
Western City District Plan, 2018 (Greater Cities Commission)	The Plan proposes that more cultural facilities are needed in the Central River and Western Parkland cities to balance the three cities <sup>6</sup> .
State	
NSW Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+	The Plan proposes that significant cultural infrastructure investment, aligned with centres, transit hubs and planned transport upgrades, will have a catalytic effect on the emerging Western Parklands City.
National	
REVIVE: National Cultural Policy 2023–2027	The Policy seeks to renew Australia’s arts, culture and entertainment sector by investing in the “soft” infrastructure that will enable the sector to flourish.
International	
UNESCO Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27	Recognises that participating in the cultural life of the community and enjoying creativity, arts and its myriad of benefits, is a fundamental human right.
United Cities and Local Government (UCLG): Culture, the fourth pillar of sustainability	Culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development alongside economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance.



# Mapping Culture in Our City

## Cultural Assets 2023

### Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of The Lewers Bequest

Was home to visionary artist couple Margo and Gerard Lewers. Today, the collection and gardens inspire an evolving program that engages the local community.

### Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre

‘The Joan’ is the hub of performing arts. It presents comedy, drama, music, talks and ideas, and family shows, ranging from ‘the classics’ to new works.

### Penrith Conservatorium

Is based at The Joan, and offers private music lessons, group classes, and opportunities to play in ensembles.

### Q Theatre

Is based at The Joan, and runs drama classes for young people, and adults with disability. It commissions and produces new work that explores stories of relevance to Western Sydney.

### Penrith Central Library

Houses the Local Studies Collection and offers regular programs for all age groups. The Peter Goodfellow Theatre is available for hire.

### St Marys Library

Branch features a Children’s Library and Bilingual Storytime. Collection strengths include bestsellers and established and emerging authors from Australia and overseas.

### St Clair Library

Branch has over 25,000 items and lends print, DVD and audio formats, graphic novels, newspapers and magazines. The Childrens collection is complemented by a Toy Library.

### Arms of Australia Inn Museum

The Inn was once a staging post for travellers from Sydney to the goldfields via the Blue Mountains. The Museum displays 19th century artefacts.

### St Marys Arts and Craft Studio

Includes two rooms and kitchenette. Nepean Potters Society is the main tenant, and it is used by other craft groups and Nepean Multicultural Access.

### St Marys Memorial Hall

Was originally built in 1961 and refurbished in 2009. It features a large hall and stage, dressing rooms, and commercial kitchen, and is frequently hired for weddings.

### REAL Festival

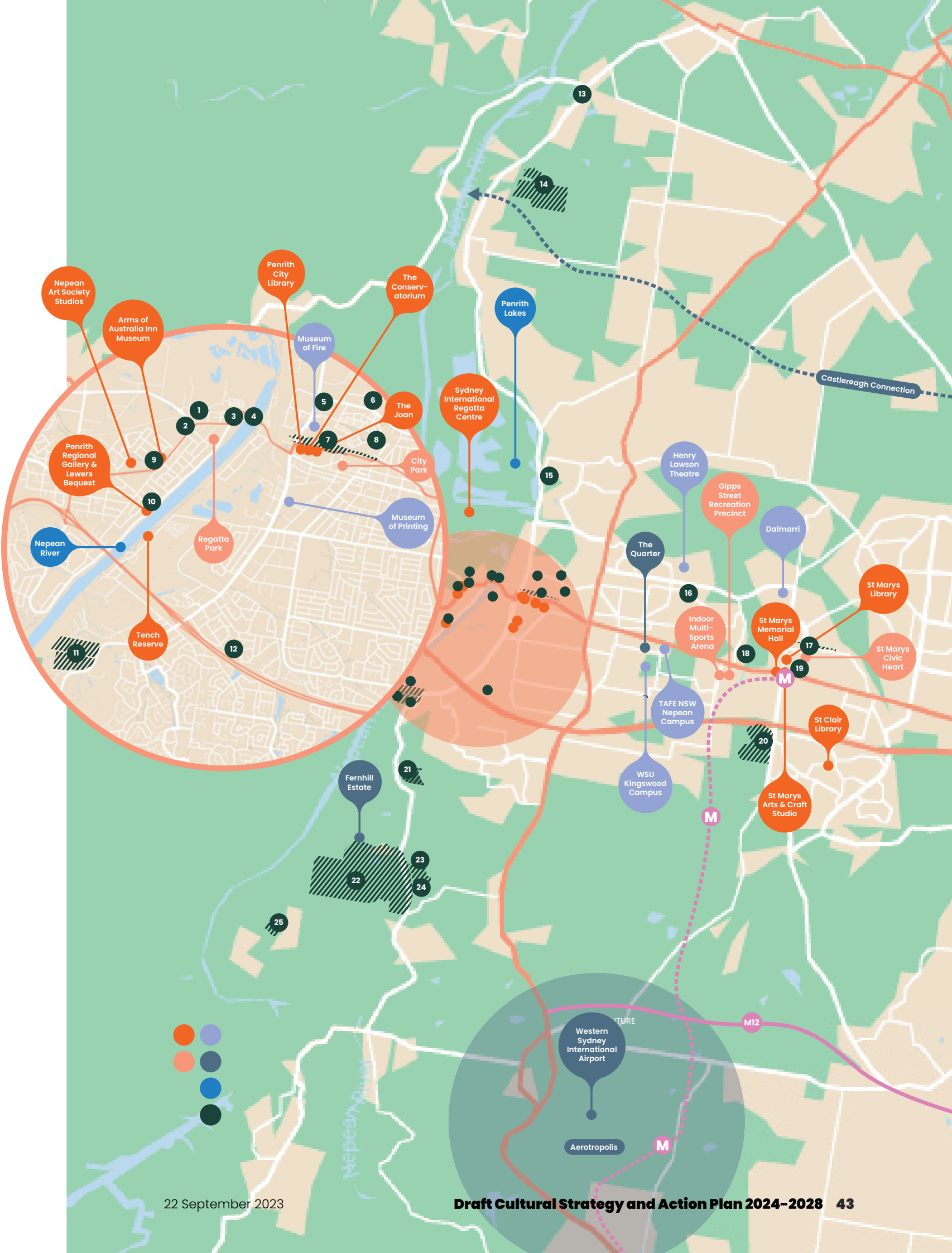
Is Penrith’s flagship interactive and immersive event held each year at Tench Reserve. Stage shows, visual art installations and pop-up performances transform the riverbank.

### Penrith Museum of Printing

Purpose is to collect, conserve, operate and showcase letterpress printing machinery and equipment to keep alive the history, knowledge and skills.

### Museum of Fire

Purpose is to provide a world-class facility for the study and enjoyment of the history, use and control of fire, and fire service history in Australia.





### Nepean TAFE Kingswood Campus

Offers a range of creative arts study options from Certificate IV through to Bachelor level; as well as short open studio practice courses.

### Western Sydney University Kingswood Campus

Offers creative degrees in Communication, Design, Music and Screen Media, and Creative Industries; and post graduate creative study.

### Dalmarri

Is a certified Aboriginal Owned company offering immersive cultural education to communities, schools and corporations through collaborative art making.

### Henry Sports Club

In Werrington Country is ome to the Henry Lawson Theatre, a community theatre.

### The Nepean River

Is our region's greatest natural asset and a much-loved recreational destination for residents and visitors.

### Penrith Lakes

Is a 20km<sup>2</sup> site extending 11km along the Nepean River. The former quarry site is home to world class Olympic facilities and is an opportunity for a unique regional aquatic playground.

## Transformative projects 2023 – 2033

### Indoor Multi-Sports Arena

(\$106 million) will accommodate local, regional, state and national events for netball, basketball, volleyball, futsal, squash, badminton, and more.

### Gipps Street Recreation Precinct

(\$44 million) will incorporate active and passive sports and recreation, with sports fields and courts, inclusive children's play and youth precinct.

### Regatta Park is being upgraded

(\$34.2 million) to include new play spaces, an accessible path to the river, over-water viewing platforms, junior cricket oval, and kiosk and restaurant.

### Penrith City Park

(\$19 million) will be a natural green retreat in the city centre, with themed gardens, water features, natural shade, public artwork and large central lawn.

### St Marys Civic Heart

Will be a welcoming communal space with a multipurpose community hub and new library, opening out to a central park with outdoor stage and public art.

### Tench Reserve upgrades

Include new play spaces, improved water access, public artworks and an amphitheatre to support large scale events, like Council's annual flagship event, REAL Festival.

### Western Sydney Airport

Is due to open in late 2026 and will offer international and domestic services and air cargo flights through 24/7 operations.

### The Aerotropolis

With its proximity to the Western Sydney Airport, will create an innovation precinct and a home for technology, science and creative industries.

### Sydney Metro Western Airport Line

Will see 23km of new railway from the Western Sydney Airport and Aerotropolis to St Marys, where it connects to the rest of Sydney's public transport system.

### The new M12 motorway

Will provide direct access to the Western Sydney Airport at Badgery's Creek and connect at the M7 to Sydney's motorway network at Elizabeth Drive.

### Castlereagh Connection

Will facilitate regional connectivity to key employment, health, education, entertainment and recreation centres in Western Parkland City and to the Western Sydney Airport.

### The Quarter

Is a centre for Health and Education and aims to be an international destination for investment and excellence in health care, medical research, education and technology.

### Fernhill Estate

Is an idyllic landscape of heritage significance, most of which is on the State Heritage Register. It is progressively being opened and managed as a public park.

## State Heritage Register

- 1 Emu Plains Railway Station
- 2 Former Australian Arms Inn
- 3 Emu Hall
- 4 Victoria Bridge
- 5 Combewood House
- 6 Marcel Breuer Torin Factory Building
- 7 Penrith Railway Station
- 8 Thornton Hall
- 9 Arms of Australia Inn Museum
- 10 Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Gallery
- 11 Glenleigh Estate
- 12 Cemetary
- 13 Agnes Banks
- 14 Agnes Banks Nature Reserve
- 15 Cranebrook Olive Trees
- 16 Werrington House
- 17 St Marys Railway Station
- 18 Rose Cottage
- 19 St Marys Magdalene Anglican Church
- 20 Mamre House
- 21 Glenmore
- 22 Fernhill Estate
- 23 The Cottage
- 24 Fernhill Estate
- 25 Fairlight





# Heritage

## Aboriginal cultural heritage

Aboriginal people have inhabited the land in the Penrith LGA for thousands of years. Aboriginal cultural heritage includes knowledge, objects and places that are of significance to Aboriginal people and can be related to customs, traditions, lore, beliefs, history and traditional ways of living. Tangible cultural heritage includes items such as stone tools, cooking and eating utensils, carvings, scar trees and art, and special places of spiritual, cultural and historical significance such as sites for ceremonies and burial.

Intangible cultural heritage includes peoples’ memories, storylines, ceremonies, language and ‘ways of doing things’, as well as a sense of belonging that people have with the landscape and with each other.

Many places across Penrith LGA continue to be vital in the cultural and ceremonial lives of local Aboriginal people, providing essential connections to Country and community that were established thousands of years ago and are still intact today. Penrith has a rich Aboriginal cultural heritage and has recorded 757 places and objects of significance to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Heritage includes places and objects that have a sense of living history and offer physical links that connect the community to earlier generations and their way of life. This section explores both Aboriginal and European Cultural Heritage, and the significance of this heritage for Penrith Local Government Area.



# Snapshot

## Cranebrook Terrace

### Evidence of Aboriginal people in Sydney 40–45,000 years ago

An archaeological investigation of the Cranebrook Terrace on the banks of the Nepean River, Penrith, in 1974, found artefacts in a gravel bed dating over 31,000 years. In 1987, the gravel bed was re-dated as being between 40–45,000 years, making the stone tools artefacts some of the earliest evidence of Aboriginal people in Australia.

These findings are consistent with discoveries at Pitt Town which show establishment of regional Aboriginal populations on the river by at least 36,000 years ago, and at the Windsor Museum which demonstrates Aboriginal visitation by 33,000 years ago. These sites reveal substantial use of the Nepean–Hawkesbury River and its resources by Aboriginal populations<sup>7</sup>.

The stone tools are at the Australian Museum where they can be accessed by researchers and Aboriginal people. Cranebrook Terrace is listed in the Aboriginal Heritage and Information Management Sites (AHIMS) database.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Alan N, Burrow, Adrian, Toms, Phillip ORCID: 0000-0003-2149-046X, Brown, Oliver, Richards, Michelle and Bryant, Tessa (2017) *The Cranebrook Terrace revisited: recent excavations of an early Holocene alluvial deposit on the banks of the Nepean River, NSW, and their implications for future work in the region.* *Australian Archaeology*, 83 (3). pp. 100–109. ISSN 0312-2417







## European heritage

Penrith has a rich European heritage, and has recorded:

- 244 heritage items of local significance
- 59 items listed by State government agencies on the Heritage and Conservation Register
- 29 heritage items of State significance listed on the State Heritage Register.

Council encourages residents and visitors to explore Penrith's heritage to learn about the people, places and events that have shaped Penrith into the City it is today. Below is a list of some notable items:

The **Arms of Australia Inn Museum**, is a locally listed heritage item that was a staging post for those travelling from Sydney over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst and onto the goldfields. Built in two sections, the first in 1826, it is one of the oldest buildings in Penrith. The Nepean District Historical Society operate this Council-owned item as a museum, displaying 19th century artefacts.

The **Museum of Fire** is the official heritage partner of Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW). It is located in the former Penrith Power Station, a locally listed heritage item. The museum celebrates the important and heroic history of firefighters and fire services across Australia. Many of the items in the museum's extensive heritage collection of large vehicles, photographs and historical items are listed on the State Heritage Register.

The **Penrith Heritage Drive** (50km) takes in 27 sites across St Marys, Penrith, Castlereagh, Emu Plains and Mulgoa. The **Penrith Heritage Walk** (11km) starts at the historic Penrith Train Station and features 22 stops through Thornton, along the Nepean River and across to Emu Plains.

Our region's natural features – the Nepean River and waterways, bushland, mountain and rural vistas – have significant cultural and heritage value to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The Great River Walk offers a picturesque walk along the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, with picnic spots and places of interest including the Penrith Regional Museum and the Museum of Fire along the way.





# Snapshot

## Police Cottage

### Adaptive reuse of the old Police Cottage

This modest turn of the century Federation timber cottage was designed by the Government Architects Branch, as the purpose-built police station and residence for Emu Plains from 1908 to 1921. It is a locally significant heritage item, forming part of the historical development of the locality of Emu Plains.

The Police Cottage retained its characteristic Federation features over time, and its aesthetic value is further enhanced by its setting in a small allotment with a mature garden setting.

In 2022, Council realised its vision to bring the Police Cottage back to life through adaptive reuse, providing a link to the new Regatta Park recreation, dining and entertainment precinct. Works included restoration of the façade, replacements to the verandas and roof, services upgrades, internal enhancements and upgrade of the outdoor privy. Extending the deck has created a large outdoor dining area, with views of the iconic Yandhai Nepean Crossing and Nepean River.

Sensitive adaptive reuse of a heritage item is an effective means of heritage conservation. It maintains the original built form and architectural features of the building, and ensures it is cared for by keeping it good use – in this case, as a vibrant café and restaurant.

The Police Cottage is listed in the Penrith Local Environment Plan 2010. In 2023, it was a Finalist in the National Trust Heritage Awards 2023 and the UDIA Awards for Excellence.





We Create Penrith

# Our Four Year Action Plan

## Our vision

We share the diverse stories of Penrith and our people through arts, culture and creativity, forging connections, inspiring reflection and building our future together.

## Our goals and objectives

The goals we seek to achieve through collaboration and partnerships, are:

1. Sharing Our Stories
2. Actively Participating
3. Creating Pathways
4. Alive with Creative Expression

Each goal has a number of objectives which are introduced in the Action Plan.

## Our role

Council's role in the delivery of the Action Plan is as:

- **Owner:** where Council has direct ownership over an initiative or function
- **Advocate:** where Council is not directly responsible, but can seek to advance through planned and opportunistic ways
- **Partner:** where Council will work with other stakeholders and agencies to achieve change together.

## Our timeframe

- Short-term (immediate - 2 years)
- Medium term (2-4 years)
- Long-term (4+ years)
- Ongoing



Implementing and monitoring our Action Plan

Council is committed to achieving cultural outcomes for the City ensuring the diverse stories of Penrith and our people are shared through arts, culture and creativity.

With support from our partners, we will implement the Action Plan over the next four years and document its progress annually. This information will be shared through the Annual Report and via our website.

The implementation of the Action Plan aims to achieve cultural, economic, social, environmental and governance outcomes across the four goals of the Cultural Strategy and Action Plan.

The five outcome areas we seek to make an impact in are summarised below:

Outcome Areas	Outcomes <sup>8</sup>
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creativity stimulated</li><li>• Aesthetic enrichment experienced</li><li>• Diversity of cultural expression appreciated</li><li>• Knowledge, ideas and insight gained</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wellbeing (physical and/or mental) improved</li><li>• Feeling valued experienced</li><li>• Social connectedness enhanced</li></ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local economy supported</li><li>• Individual artist and arts practioners employment and skills increased</li></ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive sense of place enhanced</li></ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to networks and resources increased</li><li>• Sense of civic pride enhanced</li></ul>

<sup>8</sup> Measurable Outcome Schema adapted from Dunphy, K & Smithies, J (2018). Outcome schema for cultural engagement. Melbourne: Cultural Development Network <https://culturaldevelopment.net.au/outcomes/about-measurable-outcomes/>





# Our Four Strategic Goals

1

## Sharing our stories

Our values, community culture and diversity are shared and visible.

### What we will do:

- Support our community to experience and participate in the arts and cultural activities of diverse cultures, from First Nations to those who have more recently arrived, and to celebrate together so we learn about each other and build connections.

### What we want to achieve:

- The people of Penrith are welcoming and recognise that we all belong to the same community of Penrith, no matter how we came to be here.
- Penrith values the multiple histories of our people and places, and celebrates the community gathering to write the next chapter of our story together.

2

## Actively participating

Our creative cultural spaces and arts offerings are welcoming and accessible to all.

### What we will do:

- Deliver arts and cultural experiences that are welcoming and inclusive, well communicated and easy to get to, so that people feel safe and enriched by the experience and look forward to the next one.

### What we want to achieve:

- More people, from a broad cross section of our community, attend, participate and benefit from arts and cultural events, activities and venues around Penrith.

3

## Creating pathways

Our artists, creatives and makers are Penrith proud, recognised for their work and able to access local career development opportunities.

### What we will do:

- Cultivate Penrith’s creative cultural industries and champion and support local artists so they can sustain viable career pathways locally.

### What we want to achieve:

- Penrith is known as a place that values and supports artists, and increasingly more artists are proud to call Penrith home.

4

## Alive with creative expression

Our City is full of creative places and spaces to meet, share, reflect, grow and be curious.

### What we will do:

- Embed cultural focused outcomes in Council’s projects, programs and services, and plan and advocate for the adequate provision of arts and cultural facilities and public spaces.
- Advocate to other levels of government for equitable arts and cultural opportunities in Western Sydney.

### What we want to achieve:

- Penrith has fit for purpose cultural facilities and spaces that support production, consumption and interactivity.
- Penrith’s places and spaces are engaging and interesting, and offer an authentic experience because they reflect the unique cultural character of our community.



# Goal 1: Sharing our stories

Our values, community culture and diversity are shared and visible.

# Goal 2: Actively participating

Our creative cultural spaces and arts offerings are welcoming and accessible to all people.

Objective 1.1 Engage with the heritage, continuing culture and connections to Country of our diverse local First Nations community.		
Action	Council's role	Timeframe
1. Develop First Nations strategies and cultural protocols that increase visibility of cultural values, stories and practices.	Owner	Short - Medium
2. Embed First Nations cultural outcomes into Council's planning and delivery.	Owner	Short - Long
Objective 1.2 Engage with the heritage and cultures of the diverse people and places that make up Penrith City.		
Action	Council's role	Timeframe
3. Embed multicultural outcomes into Council's planning and delivery, and build capacity in small and emerging communities to share their culture.	Owner	Short - Medium
4. Protect the places of Penrith's that hold heritage significance and tell the multilayered stories of its histories.	Owner	Short - Long

Objective 2.1. Deliver and promote high quality, affordable and inclusive arts and cultural experiences for the community.		
Action	Council's role	Timeframe
5. Provide free access to cultural experiences through Penrith Regional Gallery and the implementation of Council's REAL Festival Strategy, Events Strategy, Penrith Library Strategy 2023-2028.	Owner	Ongoing
Objective 2.2. Support the diverse communities of Penrith City to have greater participation in local arts and cultural life.		
Action	Council's role	Timeframe
6. Review and update marketing and communication channels to increase participation in Council's arts and cultural offerings.	Owner	Short - ongoing
7. Identify and remove barriers to inclusive arts and cultural participation.	Owner, Partner and Advocate	Short - ongoing
8. Broker cross-sectoral partnerships to increase arts and cultural opportunities with community services, organisations, schools and others.	Owner and Partner	Medium - Long





# Goal 3: Creating pathways

Our artists, creatives and makers are Penrith proud, recognised for their work and able to access local career development opportunities.

# Goal 4: Alive with creative expression

Our City is full of creative places and spaces to meet, share, reflect, grow and be curious.

Objective 3.1. Champion local artists and creatives to develop and sustain viable career pathways.			
Action		Council's role	Timeframe
9. Support local artists and creatives through quality professional development, networking and employment opportunities.		Owner and Partner	Short - Ongoing
10. Nurture the next generation of young creatives.		Partner	Short - Ongoing

Objective 3.2 Cultivate Penrith City's creative cultural industries ecosystem.			
Action		Council's role	Timeframe
11. Utilise empty spaces as pop up or temporary spaces for creative activity.		Advocate	Medium - Long
12. Advocate for, and support infrastructure initiatives and programs that generate employment in the creative cultural industries.		Advocate	Medium - Long

Objective 4.1. Embed cultural outcomes in Council's planning and delivery			
Action		Council's role	Timeframe
13. Deliver inspiring public art and public spaces that contribute to city pride and sense of safety.		Owner	Short-Medium
14. Develop and implement a 24-hour Economy Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy that enliven our centres through arts and cultural experiences.		Owner and Partner	Short - Long
15. Develop processes that embed social and cultural outcomes in project scoping and project management tools.		Owner	Medium
16. Continue to advocate to State and Federal Governments for equitable arts and cultural investment in Penrith and Western Sydney to match arts and cultural investment in other parts of Sydney.		Advocate	Ongoing





**Objective 4.2. Enable access to cultural infrastructure that supports the creative interests and needs of our community.**

Action	Council’s role	Timeframe
17. Utilise existing Council buildings and facilities to support arts and cultural activities.	Owner	Long
18. Continue to provide Council funding to Penrith Performing and Visual Arts (PP&VA) for the operation, management and promotion of Penrith’s regional cultural facilities.	Owner	Ongoing
19. Plan for the delivery of fit-for-purpose cultural infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing population, and the strategic regional role of Penrith City.	Owner and Partner	Short - Long
20. Investigate establishing makerspaces in the Penrith LGA.	Owner / Partner	Short - Long
21. Identify and promote the diverse cultural assets of Penrith LGA and surrounds.	Advocate	Medium- Long

**Objective 4.3. Explore opportunities to leverage our natural landscapes to support creative and cultural experiences.**

Action	Council’s role	Timeframe
22. Continue to advocate for public access to Penrith Lakes for recreational and cultural activities.	Advocate	Ongoing

# Measuring Success

Success of the Cultural Action Plan 2024-28 will be measured through community surveys, attendance and engagement data at Council’s cultural venues and events, and reporting of the implementation and impact of actions outlined in this plan.

Cultural Strategy Goal	Indicator	Benchmark (2023)	Target (2028)
Sharing our stories	“Our city is welcoming of diversity”	70%	75%
	“Our City has a strong and connected community”	57%	65%
Actively participating	Participation in arts activities in the past 12 months	80%	85%
Creating Pathways	Number of local and Western Sydney artists engaged in Council work	To be developed	Seek 10% increase
Alive with Creative Expression	Number of visitors/ attendees at Council venues and events	555,600	Seek 10% increase
	Number of hours of Council delivered arts and creativity place making activities	134 hours	Seek 5% increase
	Number of new public space capital projects that have embedded arts and cultural outcomes in their project delivery	To be developed	To be developed







# Leading the Way for Greater Impact

Council is committed to listening and reflecting the community's aspirations and priorities in our work. The actions in this Strategy can be delivered within existing resources. Council has identified and scoped a further five priority projects that can be implemented should additional funding be identified, and will strengthen our local arts and cultural sector and increase community participation. If resources can be identified, the following projects would be prioritised:

## Nighttime Live Performance Partnerships

Strategic partnerships with public and private local venues that create vibrancy for the city through increased opportunities for live music and performance.

## Adaptive Re-use Heritage Study

Assessing the suitability of heritage items for adaptive reuse as cultural spaces.

## Indigenous Planting Toolkit

Develop a planting toolkit to encourage the planting of species that are indigenous to the Penrith region, and to share stories from original custodians about the cultural, nutritional and medicinal value of these plants and their ecosystems.

## First Nations Events Strategy

Develop a strategy to embed First Nations cultural values and experiences in Council's overall community event programming.

## Artist Professional Development Workshops

Deliver workshops designed for artists and creatives to build their skills in business, finance and marketing, and turn their creative talents into sustained self-employment in the creative and cultural industries.



## PENRITH CITY COUNCIL

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