

# South Australian Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy

**LGA Submission**  
**May 2021**

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## Summary

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the South Australian Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy ('the Strategy').

Consistent with the LGA's previous submission on the State Government's Arts Plan ('the Plan'), the State Government is encouraged to:

- **Commit ongoing funding to local arts programs**, on the basis of the strong economic returns on funds invested in the creative industries;
- **Facilitate ongoing partnerships between State and local government**, as local government, being the level of government closest to the community, is an efficient and effective way of implementing arts programs; and
- **Consider infrastructure improvements, particularly in regional areas**, which enable a robust arts culture to develop and to attract and support visitors.

The LGA recognises that its previous recommendation 'that the South Australian Tourism Commission develop its promotion of arts and culture tourism' has in part led to development of this Strategy.

The LGA anticipates that the Federal Government's initiative expert panel to 'Reimagine the Visitor Economy' will be an opportunity for the State and Federal Governments to collaborate to pursue a range of outcomes to support arts and cultural tourism.

Through this submission, the LGA recommends that the South Australian Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy considers:

1. Opportunities for the State Government to collaborate with local government to promote and develop tourism opportunities in their communities, adapting to changing visitor patterns;
2. Recognition of the need for State Government to support tourism infrastructure provided by local government which supports tourism activities;
3. Support for arts and cultural tourism events and their delivery to meet COVID requirements;
4. Opportunities for 'smart cities' to respond to arts and cultural tourism initiatives; and
5. Opportunities for the State Government to work with local government in integrated destination plan development to manage the visitor economy.

## Introduction

Arts and culture development are an important part of the work which many councils do, and the role of local government in arts and cultural tourism has many benefits for the South Australian community, supporting health and wellbeing, economic, social and cultural development.

In this context, the LGA welcomes the decision of the State Government to develop the Strategy, and the opportunity to make a submission.

Local government is an experienced partner in government, and the LGA and its member councils look forward to working with the State Government and Arts South Australia to capture that involvement in the Strategy and support delivery of arts and cultural tourism experiences.

## About the LGA

The LGA is the voice of local government in South Australia, representing all 68 individual councils across the State. Its mission is to provide leadership, support, representation and advocacy on behalf of South Australian councils, for the benefit of the community.

The LGA enjoys a productive relationship with both State and Federal governments. As a partner in government, the sector plays a critical role in working with the State Government to drive economic and community development. South Australian councils collectively manage a budget of \$2 billion and public assets worth more than \$22 billion.

## Background

The LGA made a submission to the State Government's Arts Plan ('the Plan') in April 2019 in which it highlighted the importance of the arts to a healthy society, to a strong economy and to community development.

That submission referred to the Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (BCAR) 2019 Working Paper which shows that creative industries are closely connected to economic growth, with creative skills requiring original thought and innovation being particularly resilient to automation. Creative industries also grew around twice as quickly as other industries during 2011-2016.

We also know that investment in the creative industries has economic returns to South Australia beyond the original investment. Partnerships with commercial patrons, such as the successful collaboration between the State Government, BHP and the Art Gallery of South Australia for the Tarnanthi Festival, could be modelled for local government activities with the support of Arts South Australia.

We know from key National Arts Participation Survey findings that 9 million Australians attended an arts festival in 2016. Arts festivals are diverse and accessible, bringing local communities together in immersive experiences and encouraging regional and international tourism.

The LGA has demonstrated the support of local government in cultural tourism through its participation in engagement in the State Government's Heritage Tourism Strategy. That Strategy has strong links to the Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy, with that strategy focussing on accomplishing three interconnected goals:

- **Connect:** *Heritage encounters that deepen the visitor experience;*
- **Lead:** *A tourism industry that benefits from a professional heritage sector; and*
- **Conserve:** *Tourism activation conserves and enhances heritage places, sites and landscapes.*

## Development of the Arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy

The LGA understands that the Strategy will rely on the six strategic priorities established in the South Australian Visitor Economy Sector Plan 2030:

- **Marketing:** Driving awareness, appeal and booking of South Australia by our target consumers;
- **Experience and Supply Development:** Balancing supply constraints with demand growth and developing experiences across South Australia;
- **Collaboration:** Working closely together and aligning efforts;
- **Industry Capability:** Cultivating a sophisticated industry;
- **Leisure and Business Events:** Using event to drive awareness and as a trigger to visitation; and
- **Promote the Value of Tourism:** Ensuring a solid understanding of the contribution of the Visitor Economy.

The creative arts are vital to life in South Australia, stimulating cultural development and economic growth, as well as health and social well-being.

*Consistent with the LGA submission on the Plan, the State Government is encouraged through the Strategy to:*

- ***Commit ongoing funding to local arts programs, on the basis of the strong economic returns on funds invested in the creative industries;***
- ***Facilitate ongoing partnerships between State and local government, as local government, being the level of government closest to the community, is an efficient and effective way of implementing arts programs; and***
- ***Consider infrastructure improvements, particularly in regional areas, which enable a robust arts culture to develop.***

*The LGA is pleased that one its recommendations in its submission to the Plan, that the South Australian Tourism Commission develop its promotion of arts and culture tourism, has led to development of this Strategy.*

## Federal Government Direction on Cultural Tourism

The Federal Government's announcement in April 2021 that an expert panel has been appointed to 'Reimagine the Visitor Economy' is supported. The Panel has been tasked to advise industry and government on the future of Australia's visitor economy, helping to shape a policy framework that can guide the sector through longer term transformation to sustainable growth.

*The LGA hopes that the Federal Government's initiative expert panel to 'Reimagine the Visitor Economy' will be an opportunity for the State and Federal Governments to collaborate to pursue a range of outcomes to support arts and cultural tourism.*

## Local Government Policy

### Australian Local Government Association Policy on Arts and Culture

The LGA is a member of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) which is a federation of seven State and Territory Local Government Associations which in turn represent 537 local governments across Australia. The Board of Directors of ALGA endorsed an Arts and Culture Policy Position Statement on 24 September 2020 as follows:

“The Australia Local Government Association calls for support of the pivotal role local government plays in the development of the creative sector, which is essential to the liveability and economic sustainability of all Australian communities”.

The ALGA Arts and Culture Policy Position includes these positions:

- 1. Support for the arts and culture:** ALGA seeks the preservation, development, and promotion of cultural services to provide personal, community, economic and civic development.
- 2. Equal Partnership Approach:** Local government contributes around 30% of total government expenditure on arts and culture and as a result a ‘whole of government’ and partnership approach to planning and delivery is required to ensure a flourishing creative sector.
- 3. Direct Funding to Local Government:** Councils have a strong track record of working collaboratively at the local level, efficiently and effectively integrating program delivery and strategic responses to natural disasters and social and economic challenges. Given financial constraints, direct financial supports from other levels of government will sustain Councils arts and culture focus and best achieve efficient and long-term local impact.
- 4. Eligibility of Local Governments for arts grant applications:** It is essential that Local Governments are eligible to apply for all government grants programs.
- 5. Integrated Destination Plan Development:** The visitor economy depends on a strong arts and culture scene and requires integrated destination plan development and delivery. Local government has the capacity and capability to enhance “experiential travel” as a key component of economic recovery.

Most relevantly to the development of the Strategy, the LGA encourages the State Government to work with local government in integrated destination plan development to manage the visitor economy.

### LGA Policy on the Arts and Cultural Development

The LGA’s existing Policy on Arts and Cultural Development states that:

“Local government is committed to maintaining a culturally diverse, tolerant and open society, and shall equitably contribute to facilitating arts and cultural development activities and programs that promote social cohesion and harmony, notwithstanding the responsibilities of federal and state governments. The local government sector is keen to continue to partner with State Government to ensure ongoing delivery of arts services to the community.”

This endorsed policy forms the basis for this LGA submission, and its tenets align with the direction of the consultation on the Plan.

## Local Government Activities

### Arts and Culture

As the level of government closest to the community, local government is uniquely placed to engage in and support arts and cultural tourism. The benefits to local communities are immense, delivery by local government is efficient and economical, and they are already heavily engaged in the tourism sector.

Local Government Grants Commission data shows that in 2016-17 South Australian councils collectively invested (operating expenses) over \$31.6 million in performing arts, heritage, museums & art galleries, and other cultural services. This is in addition to the \$114.8 million South Australian councils spent on operating library services.

Availability and support of arts activities by local government is particularly important outside of the metropolitan area, ensuring that participation is open to everyone. Regional areas in South Australia in particular would benefit from improved venues which encourage high-quality and accessible events. Many country venues do not facilitate disabled access which limits participation in the arts by people with disabilities as well as older South Australians.

There are many examples of local government supporting and delivering arts activities in South Australia, and these are articulated in the LGA submission on the Plan. Many of these activities are also linked to tourism, whether local, interstate or international.

### Arts and Cultural Tourism

Local government is active in promoting cultural tourism, particularly in regional areas. We know that the destinations where tourists are especially likely to engage with the arts are in regional Australia, where local government helps facilitate access. We also know that domestic tourists are more likely to attend the arts than sports events, amusement parks or wineries. With museums and art galleries being the most popular arts activities on domestic trips, the role of local government is evident, with many councils managing or supporting local museums and art galleries.

As South Australia recovers from the COVID-19 crisis, investment in arts and culture, which brings economic and social benefits, is even more important than ever. Arts and culture tourism is a positive way to involve local communities in the recovery, promoting what makes their community special and working together to achieve growth for the benefit of the community.

Given the wide range of arts activities in which local government is engaged, the LGA believes there are many opportunities for collaboration between State and local government in developing the arts and cultural tourism sector. The LGA encourages a partnership approach to the inclusion of local government in this approach, as the level of government closest to the community.

There are also opportunities for 'smart cities' to respond to arts and cultural tourism initiatives, contributing to a more meaningful and informed tourism experience. The LGA has developed a Smart Cities Framework for Metropolitan Adelaide which supports this.



## Responding to COVID-19

For visitors to have a positive experience, as well as attractions, there also needs to be appropriate infrastructure to support visitors. Some councils are reporting that with increases in local tourism due to the COVID-19 crisis, infrastructure such as toilets are proving to be inadequate. Some areas such as the Eyre Peninsula have experienced a significant increase in campers who place added pressure on these facilities. Services such as libraries are reporting significant increases in visitors using resources and technology and some areas have also experienced an increase in demand on waste services.

The COVID-19 crisis has also brought a change in the demographics of local visitors, with people being able to travel closer to home who would normally travel overseas or to a different type of accommodation. For instance, expectations around local infrastructure and facilities may be different for visitors more familiar with luxurious overseas resorts, or from intergenerational family groups. This has led tourism operators to change some of the ways in which they operate.

As a result of groups travelling to regional areas who would not typically do so, some councils have also experienced an increase in interest in local arts and cultural sites such as museums and art galleries, historic buildings and places, and arts and cultural events.

As some hospitality staff have moved out of the hospitality sector due to uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 crisis, a lack of hospitality staff especially in regional areas has also contributed to problems in delivery of experiences and accommodation by councils and tourism operators.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the need for Covid Management Plans for large events, some councils have experienced challenges in receiving approved plans in a timely fashion. Long timeframes for approval are exacerbated by risk to funding, which is often dependent upon having an approved plan in place.

Some councils have reported an increased focus on their visitor information centres, where visitors have accessed online information prior to their visit, but still value the opportunity to receive local advice through a visitor information centre.

While local government is pleased with the increase in visitation to regional areas, and the economic and social value this brings, the changing patterns in tourism need support and an increase in funding, as well as recognition in the planning and promotion of the tourism experiences for these visitors.

## Role of Local Government

The role of local government in arts and cultural tourism is vast and varies between councils. As well as managing attractions, councils are also responsible for providing significant infrastructure support which contributes to a positive visitor experience.

Some of these roles of local government include:

- Managing or supporting **art galleries and museums**;
- Managing or supporting **events**, including the South Australian Living Artists Festival (SALA), **writers festivals**, **live music** and **arts events**;



- Providing **interpretive signage**, to promote and educate visitors about local history and attractions;
- Managing of supporting **visitor information centres**, such as the Copper Coast Visitor Information Centre;
- Providing **infrastructure**, such as roads, toilets, drinking fountains, trails, benches, carparks, wharves, jetties and waste services;
- Providing **public libraries**, an important service for the increasing numbers of tourists visiting within their own State, who access resources, internet and computers, events and programs; and
- Provision and promotion of **public art**, such as the silo art throughout regional South Australia.





## Recommendations for the Strategy

*The LGA considers that the Strategy could include:*

- 1. Opportunities for the State Government to collaborate with local government to promote and develop tourism opportunities in their communities, adapting to changing visitor patterns;*
- 2. Recognition of the need for State Government to support tourism infrastructure provided by local government which supports tourism activities;*
- 3. Support for arts and cultural tourism events and their delivery to meet COVID requirements;*
- 4. Opportunities for 'smart cities' to respond to arts and cultural tourism initiatives; and*
- 5. Opportunities for the State Government to work with local government in integrated destination plan development to manage the visitor economy.*



Signal Point Gallery at Goolwa

## Engagement Process on the Plan

The LGA looks forward to ongoing involvement in development of the Strategy and is keen to be included in further workshops. The LGA particularly encourages the State Government to engage with regional councils about the changes in tourism patterns they are experiencing. The LGA can also assist the State Government in its engagement with the local government sector.

## Conclusion

Local government is involved in a range of arts and cultural tourism activities and as the level of government which is closest to the community, undertakes and supports these activities efficiently and with strong community involvement.

South Australian councils are well-positioned to deliver a range of outcomes which benefit communities, particularly in regional areas. The ability of councils to deliver these outcomes will be strengthened through collaboration with the State Government, supporting tourism attractions and visitor infrastructure.

The development of the Strategy coincides with changing visitor patterns as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and raises opportunities to provide guidance in this transition.

The LGA and its member councils look forward to working with the South Australian Tourism Commission and Arts South Australia in development of the Strategy.

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