

# Town of Port Hedland Arts and Culture Strategy

COMMUNITY VOICE

DRAFT ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



Town of  
**Port Hedland**

# Hedland's people are what drives its unique culture and creativity.

Embarking on the Town's first formal Arts and Culture strategy meant getting out there and hearing from the people who are at its core.

In April 2019, the Town launched its 'Live it –Tell it - Creative Hedland' Engagement program.

This involved:

- An online survey
- Pop Up stalls at a range of community events
- A workshop with the Vibrant Hedland subcommittee of Hedland Collective
- Social Media polls

The team also undertook an extensive review of engagement undertaken through the 2017 'Live-it, Tell-it' Strategic Community Plan process and other data from recent events and initiatives.

# The program sought to explore a range of questions related to...

- Hedland's unique 'points of pride' and cultural assets
- The current arts, cultural and events programming
- Aspirations for a more creative Hedland
- Perceptions on the role of the Town in supporting and programming activity
- How to amplify local participation and engagement

With the intent of informing an Arts and Culture Strategy which provides an inspiring vision which the community is behind; guides investment of time and resource; and promotes broad community collaboration.

# Community were keen to contribute.

860 community and stakeholder voices were heard through the process.

The online survey showed us there was:

- A good mix of those had lived in Hedland for a long time (56% - 10 years or more) and those who are newer to town (17% up to 5 years and 17% between 3 and 5 years).
- A mix of ages– 20% of survey respondents under 25, 28% between 25-34, 25% between 35- 44, 26% over 44.
- 70% female respondents
- Over ¼ of all respondents identifying as ATSI.
- 22% who speak languages other than English at home

# The high level of response reflected the strong importance of arts and culture to the Hedland community and the desire for more opportunities to participate.

- 87% either agree (38%) or strongly agree (49%) that the arts, culture and heritage are important aspects of community life.
- Less than half (48%) agree that they are satisfied with current opportunities to participate in the arts and culture in Hedland. A quarter are unsure, and a quarter disagree.

## A range of key themes emerged.

1. There's a lot to be proud of in Hedland
2. Arts and Events are front of mind, but there's more to Hedland's culture
3. We should be telling our unique stories, but also creating shared ones
4. People are keen to participate, not just attend
5. Empowering locals to contribute to the creative scene is essential
6. We should be looking for ways to amplify the local
7. There's opportunity in unexpected places
8. The right infrastructure will help enable outcomes

# 1. There's a lot to be proud of in Hedland.

- When asked about 'points of pride', the most common responses were about the town being a strong community, having a community spirit, it being a friendly community and that there is community pride.
- Responses also reflected the town's:
  - History –indigenous connection to land, links to war, role in state development etc.
  - Industry – the port, tugs and ships, salt piles, mines
  - Environment – coastline, reefs, beaches, sunset, vast red dirt, heat, connection to country
  - Recreation – Camping, fishing, community activities

**Recommendation:** There is opportunity to celebrate and leverage these 'points of pride' through arts, cultural and events programming which better connects with the spirit of the community.

## 2. Arts and Events are front of mind, but there's more to Hedland's culture.

- Community prioritised investment in Festivals and Community Events; Live Music; and Performing Arts.
- When asked about where they would take someone for a 'cultural experience in Hedland' around half mentioned the Courthouse Gallery or Spinifex Hill Studio.
- However, people also mentioned taking their visitors on tours of historical; industrial and environmentally significant sites (e.g. to watch the Turtles hatch) – locations that may not be readily thought of as associated with 'culture' but are clearly significant for local people.

**Recommendation:** There is opportunity to explore how we get Hedland's less obvious 'cultural experiences' embedded as integral to a holistic arts and culture approach and to shift the community's thinking about what this should include.



### 3. We should be telling our unique stories, but also creating shared ones.

- The community is proud of its unique cultures and communities.
- Feedback suggests that there is a particular interest in sharing stories and celebrating culture related to the aboriginal heritage of the area.
- However, people also see arts and events as an opportunity to build new shared narratives.

**Recommendation:** In a transient community like Port Hedland, the community narrative is especially important to embed through arts and cultural programming.

## 4. People are keen to participate, not just attend.

- Both the pop up event survey (70%) and youth event survey (76%) showed a high proportion of respondents wanting to participate in arts and cultural activities rather than attend performances / events / shows.
- The top three responses regarding why people participate in arts and cultural activities and events are: entertainment (69%), spending time with friends and family (63%), and to feel part of the community (53%).
- Stakeholders see opportunities for participation as an important step towards community led activity.
- *“Participation turns into empowerment – the community will begin to run their own events and create their own groups”.*

**Recommendation:** Entertainment is important, but perhaps more so are opportunities to connect and build relationship through participation.

## 5. Empowering locals to contribute to the creative scene is essential.

- 50% of all survey respondents expressed an interest in volunteering to organise local events – a heartening number in the context of declining rates of volunteering across Western Australia’s communities.
- However, only 9% of survey respondents would be willing to volunteer to help organise an existing or new community event in the future with no present barriers to this volunteering.
- A further 20% would volunteer but there are not enough opportunities, and 21% would volunteer but would require support / training.
- Feedback also reflected the perception that a key role of the Shire should be to support (either financially or through other in-kind mechanisms) the community to deliver its own events and programming.

**Recommendation:** There is a need to focus on developing pathways to volunteering and to ensure community have the adequate support/training to meaningfully contribute to the delivery of initiatives.

## 6. We should be looking for ways to amplify the local.

- Whilst people like having access to touring performers and new experiences, there are many local experiences and offerings which are special and should be fostered e.g. Welcome to Hedland, Pier Hotel Karaoke Night

### *How to amplify the local*

- Stakeholders identified the need to better support 'micro-communities of practice' through access to physical space & digital frameworks
- Leverage increased interest in collaboration
- Investment into social impact frameworks which communities can use to measure their programs and continuously improve
- Encourage pride in existing locations/venues
- Town of Hedland support to advertise events which they may not be associated with

**Recommendation** – Embed a focus on supporting the good stuff happening locally through adequate resourcing, partnerships and capacity building.

## 7. There's opportunity in unexpected places.

- Feedback highlighted opportunity to bring an arts and culture focus to unexpected locations around the Town of Port Hedland:
  - Mining camps - artist take over at Maya Maya
  - Utilising empty retail for pop up artist spaces
  - Activating underutilised spaces e.g. the Old Tafe on Hamilton Road
  - Connections to broader Pilbara programming and shared investment
  - Embedded in school curriculum
  - Outside of the town centre – connection to aboriginal communities and sites of significance

**Recommendation:** Use Hedland's iconic/underutilised places to host arts and cultural programming which is unexpected and exciting.

## 8. The right infrastructure will help enable outcomes

- Investment in both digital and physical infrastructure is seen as important. The following opportunities were flagged:
- Physical:
  - Artists Studio
  - Spinifex Studio Expansion
  - Performing Arts Centre
  - Creative Industries Hub (multi-user)
  - Precinct for art at Spoilbank
  - Memorials and statues to celebrate history
- Digital:
  - Investment into UX & database access for cultural data sets
  - Social impact frameworks

**Recommendation** – Urban planning to support economic development through the arts and culture is critical.

## We also heard a lot about your priorities for specific elements of arts and culture.

- Performing arts / Visual Arts / Live Music
- Public Art
- Events
- Libraries

# Performing Arts / Visual Arts / Live Music

- Survey respondents prioritised investment in Festivals and Community Events; Live Music; and Performing Arts.
- This is further defied in the pop up jar activity which showed a ranking in priority of the following: film (35%); music events (25%); performing arts events (16%); and visual arts events (12%); literary events (12%)
- Facebook polls supported this, showing that people are more likely to pay to see a new release film (55%) than a live show (45%).



# Public Art

- Data shows mixed feedback re: importance of public art.
  - In the youth survey (96%) and the 'all other events' survey (90%) there is strong desire to see more public art around the Town of Port Hedland (e.g. sculptures, murals, installations etc.).
  - 67% of Facebook poll respondents responded that they would like to see more public art around the Town. 33% that responded no suggested that there are other higher spending priorities tied to safety, security and enhanced maintenance of existing public amenity.
  - However, in the broader survey when asked 'What roles should Council play in supporting arts, cultural activities, festivals and events in the community' commissioning public arts for the public was the least selected option with only 30% of people selecting it.
- Broadly speaking this indicates that the benefit of public art may not as widely understood in the community, or that people may not specifically see this as the Council's role.
- Stakeholders flagged that they see value in the development of a Public Art Strategy to compliment the broader Arts and Culture Strategy.

# Libraries

- Libraries are the least frequented cultural activity with 18% of all survey respondents visiting a library in the last year.
- The most common responses for desired programming included a focus on workshops that the library could hold e.g. adult workshops, artist workshops, writing workshops, computer literacy workshops and creative workshops.
- Comments highlight a desire for more diversity in the demographics which the library is catering for, including a greater focus on older people; adults and teens.
- Comments highlight that the programs that run for children need to be at appropriate times (i.e. after school, prior to 'bed times', etc.)

# Events

- The general survey showed that the four most strongly valued Town of Port Hedland events are: Spinifex Spree (70%), Welcome to Hedland (63%), North West Festival (53%) and Australia Day celebrations (46%), closely followed by the Outdoor Market Series (42%).
- These events were also popular with youth, with the addition of Youth Week Celebrations.
- These events have remained consistently popular- with little change from earlier consultation undertaken in 2017.
- While a number of these events are ‘big splash’ events bringing in external talent, its interesting to see Welcome to Hedland consistently rank in the top three most liked events across the various surveys. This is reflective of themes which emerge throughout other questions around celebrating and supporting the good things which are happening locally.
- The most commonly suggested events by survey respondents are festivals (e.g. cultural, drama, food, fringe), and arts events (e.g. rock art, gallery events, performing arts, kids art)

Stakeholders highlighted that....

- “Events don’t need to be everyone, does not have to be big”
- “We need a greater focus on social impact, personal value and experience over volume/attendance”

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# What should the Council's role be?

## Capacity Building

- People believe the Council's role should be more-so to foster grassroots art (83% Facebook survey) rather than driving arts and programming in the town (17%).
- This was broadly reflected in the general survey results which showed a significant proportion of respondents believe Council's role should be to support community to hold events (78%) and fund community to organisations to hold events (59%). Interestingly, 71% also believe that the Council should be organising its own events.

## Communication and Advertising

- 88% of Facebook poll respondents selected 'lack of information' as a key barrier to participating in arts and cultural activity.
- There is opportunity for the Town to support the advertisement of events which are not run by them.

## And...

- Remove red tape
- Support the delivery of a consolidate calendar of activity across all seasons
- Provide ongoing or recurring funding e.g. 3-4-year cycles + substantial amounts
- Providing continuity when people leave town through the custodianship of a shared strategic direction
- Investment into social impact frameworks that communities can use to measure their programs and initiatives
- Providing resource (e.g. staffing) to help community organisations and not-for-profits with program evaluation