PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE ONE

Summary (November & December 2013)

The community engagement phase one took place throughout November 2013. Its purpose was to encourage conversations with the arts sector and broader community to understand the challenges, priorities and opportunities involved in the City of Melbourne's role in supporting the arts.

The engagement process led to 1,257 individual contributions from 1000 people, in response to three questions they were asked:
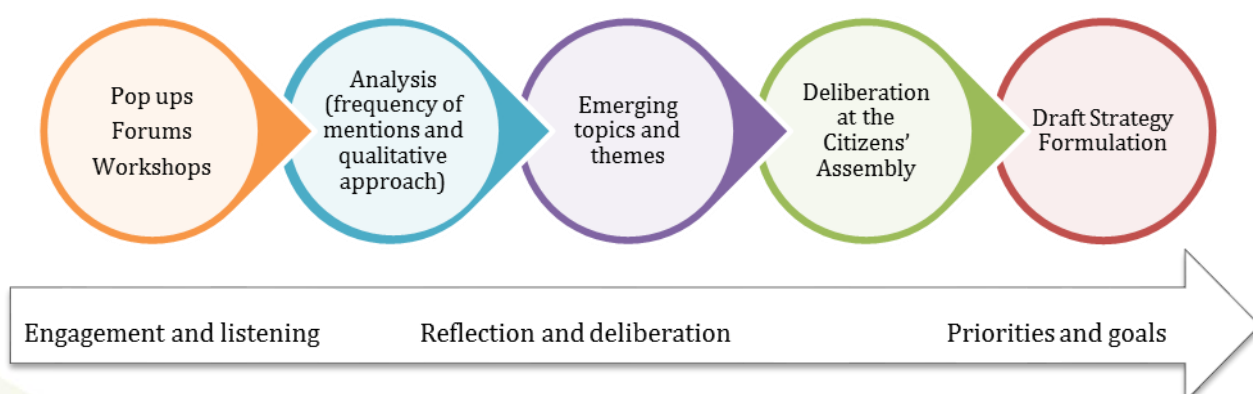
- ❖ *what do you love about the arts in Melbourne?*
- ❖ *what does a bold and inspirational creative city look like?*
- ❖ *how should the City of Melbourne encourage arts and creativity?*

The engagement took place at two forums at the Melbourne and North Melbourne Town Halls, pop-ups events in a number of neighbourhoods; roundtable meetings and online. The response from the community was diverse. The open-ended nature of the questions produced rich qualitative information that was analysed. A number of broad topics and themes emerged from two distinct audiences:

1. The arts sector – artists, creators, producers, administrators.
2. The broader community – individuals and organisations in the municipality as well as the wider community and visitors from overseas.

The topics and themes emerging from the engagement process were then presented to the 35 participants of a one-day workshop, the Arts Strategy Citizens' Assembly, who were selected through an Expressions of Interest process. The participants in this workshop assisted the City of Melbourne in analysing the findings.

The diagram below shows the process used since the completion of the phase one engagement process:

Pop ups Forums Workshops → Analysis (frequency of mentions and qualitative approach) → Emerging topics and themes → Deliberation at the Citizens' Assembly → Draft Strategy Formulation

Engagement and listening — Reflection and deliberation — Priorities and goals

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Emerging Themes

The emerging themes presented to and considered by the Citizens' Assembly in December were:

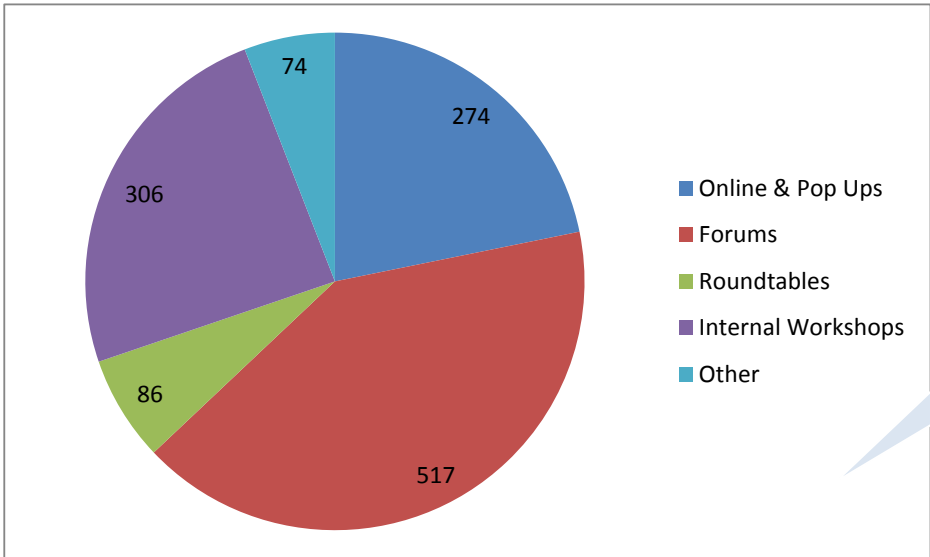| Theme	What we heard from the engagement process
Public realm activation including new, diverse and accessible experiences.	The public realm should have art everywhere and that art should be diverse in form and authentic in delivery. Melburnians want things that are new, innovative and interactive. Under-utilised and non-traditional places should be activated with art. What people often mean by public art is visible art – on the street and in public spaces, so that they chance upon it and have a more authentic, unplanned and unexpected experience. There was a yearning for recognition and celebration of Melbourne heritage, including a desire to see Indigenous stories visible on the streets. Artists expressed a want for ease of access to the public spaces, to be able to activate ideas quickly and for the City of Melbourne to reduce red tape and be more responsive.
A visible presence of the arts across the municipality, including a balance of precincts, hubs and integrated approaches of varying scale and forms.	There were many reflections concerning studio spaces, presentation venues, cultural centres, centres of excellence and co-sharing/co-working hubs. There were two opposing schools of thoughts on precincts. One idea was that traditional precincts – like Southbank – should be created so that artists, organisations and venues could be clustered in order to create intensity and hothouse creativity. Some felt Melbourne was lacking iconic arts venues or concentrated zones for arts and artists. Against this was the view that precincts were stifling and led to a regrettable lack of diversity in the whole municipality. Commentary also included ideas around the City of Melbourne role in acquiring or re-using buildings to support arts housing, arts making and arts experiences. A want for the city to ensure arts offerings are available across the municipality including the CBD and neighbourhoods.
Enabling and contributing to a mix of affordable studios and venues across the municipality.	Artists expressed the need to have access to affordable and craft-appropriate studios and venues in the municipality for two reasons: 1) For them to create their art and 2) For them to host and present their art to the public. In terms of studios, venues and hubs, some artists wanted co-share/co-work spaces while others wanted spaces to both live and work. A common thread was a desire for affordable and accessible presentation venues that support quality experiences for artists and audiences.

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Theme	What we heard from the engagement process
Supporting artists and the arts sector through diverse and flexible funding and subsidy models.	Support for artists through subsidies and funding was noted a key priority. Funding for artists to support the development of ideas and/or realisation of projects. Project grants. Development Grants. Residencies. Fellowships. Stipends. Commentary also included the want to broaden the scope of arts funding to include support to curators and creative producers. Flexible funding models providing easier access to money and simplification of the processes was a strong and recurrent theme. A diverse funding mix taking account of various approaches including crowd sourcing, philanthropy and public/private sector funding partnerships in particular for big ideas was noted.
Supporting a diversity of artists and creative people across all career stages and art forms.	There was a range of views about who should be prioritised to support a diversity of artists, curators and arts organisations to access funding. o Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists from all backgrounds, languages, ages, cultures, abilities. o New, emerging, mid-career to professional artists. o Artistic producers and curators. o Supporting artists engaged in new, experimental as well as traditional forms. o International and interstate versus local artists? o Professional artists versus amateur creators? o Artist driven ideas/projects versus City of Melbourne driven ideas/projects?
Enabling ideas and propagation through artform development and innovation.	There was overall support for all art forms. Many comments supported collaboration across art forms and presentation modes and like festivals that offer visibility to artists across platforms, in different contexts, engaging broad audiences. A key theme was that the City of Melbourne and other funders/collaborators support creative risk-taking. It was felt that both traditional and experimental art forms enable artists and funders/collaborators like the City of Melbourne to take creative risks. Numerous contributions noted the liberating impact on artists of "freedom to fail."

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Theme	What we heard from the engagement process
Improving access to the arts and reaching new audiences.	There were many reflections on how the City of Melbourne can work to support Melburnians to have access to the arts. A recurring theme was that a creative city seeks to provide "art for everyone", and can play an important role in the removal of barriers that inhibit participation. What are the barriers to participation? Physical and cultural barriers? Affordability? Are programs required to target and develop particular audiences (eg. parents with small children)? Is infrastructure and programming required to support everyone's participation, including people living with disabilities, culturally diverse, young people, children, seniors and multilingual communities. Melburnians yearn to see their own stories reflected in art, and whether they are Indigenous or non-indigenous and regardless of their age, ability status, ethnicity, background, want to feel welcome at all venues, events and experiences offered.
Encouraging visibility, celebration and engagement with Indigenous heritage and contemporary arts.	There was notable broad community support for connecting with Indigenous people, ensuring Indigenous artists and producers are supported to create and present work in high-profile ways that attract and retain broad audiences. Melburnians want to engage with art and have a wide choice of art offerings made available, as well as a thirst for more contemporary Indigenous art and culture.
Engaging with the digital realm.	There was commentary about engagement with and use of technology. Technology is an area that is in constant change. Its development provides new ways for the public, artists and organisations to engage and communicate with each other and with others around the world. Commentary included the expanding on the use of social media as a tool for communication providing ease of access to information and resources on the arts. Additional commentary included encouraging artists to explore, innovate and use technology as a tool for their work and engaging with public.
Capitalising on Melbourne's heritage in dynamic ways.	The arts were seen as an ideal platform to facilitate connection to and engagement with the rich heritage of Melbourne. There was a theme of encouraging artists and the public to engage with Melbourne heritage in unique and dynamic ways.

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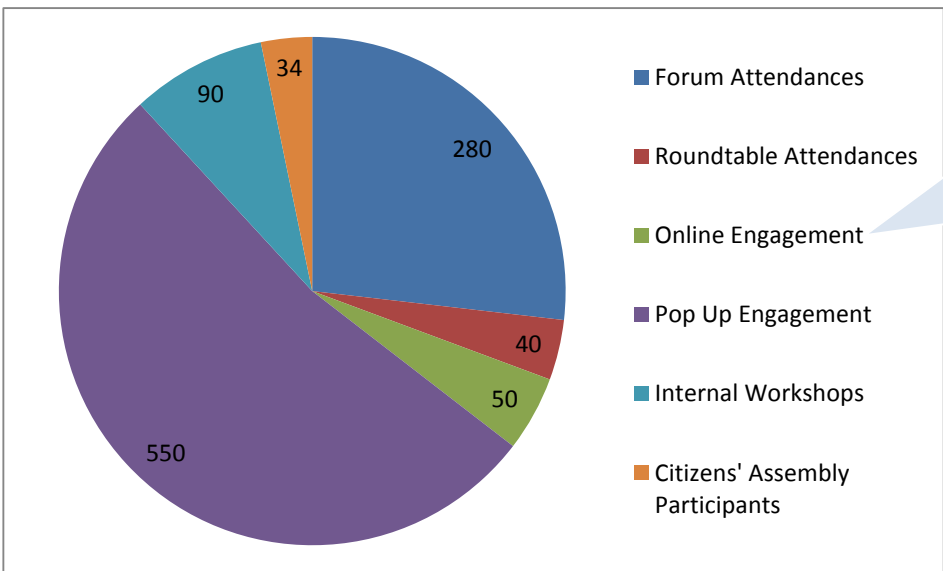| Theme	What we heard from the engagement process
Building the profile and connection to Melbourne artists and the arts sector to wide and varied audiences, locally, nationally and globally.	Artists and art across all platforms needs greater visibility. Use of a range of available channels and platforms, mainstream, niche and alternative was evident. Access to information about the arts and artists through media and quality promotion was a recurring theme. The City of Melbourne can promote the value of artists and the impact of the arts on a thriving, growing city. Lifting the profile of arts and artists across all platforms can raise awareness and connection to the arts. How can the City of Melbourne continue to celebrate the arts, value artists and give due recognition to Indigenous arts and heritage?
Leadership and advocacy through cross sector partnerships, policy and planning.	The overarching theme was that the City of Melbourne can act as a broker of money, relationships and cross-discipline, cross-sector, cross-government partnerships. An overall sense was that more collaboration was needed and that the City of Melbourne was perfect to lead in this area. As well as leading some of these partnerships, the City of Melbourne could also play a role as an enabler of such relationships in which the City of Melbourne may not be involved. The city can champion arts and creativity and the role of artists and the value of a thriving arts scene across all art forms and all levels. The city can also champion the arts and creativity in design and development of new projects, builds and streetscapes. This also extends to an engagement with Indigenous elders and artists in the early stages of planning for projects. Working more closely and building partnerships with the arts sector will facilitate industry development and creative enterprises.

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At a glance:

Total number of individual contributions received = 1257

Legend:
- Online & Pop Ups
- Forums
- Roundtables
- Internal Workshops
- Other

Pie values: 274, 517, 86, 306, 74

2 x public forums at the North Melbourne Town Hall and Melbourne Town Hall
7 x pop up events in the CBD, Southbank, Kensington, North Melbourne, Carlton & East Melbourne
1 x month-long video booth @ Signal
1 x Indigenous roundtable
3 x City of Melbourne internal workshops
1 x Citizens' Assembly

Total number people engaged = 1000

Legend:
- Forum Attendances
- Roundtable Attendances
- Online Engagement
- Pop Up Engagement
- Internal Workshops
- Citizens' Assembly Participants

Pie values: 280, 40, 50, 550, 90, 34

8000+ visits to Participate Melbourne & Arts Strategy landing pages

500+ views and downloads of the FAQs and factsheets
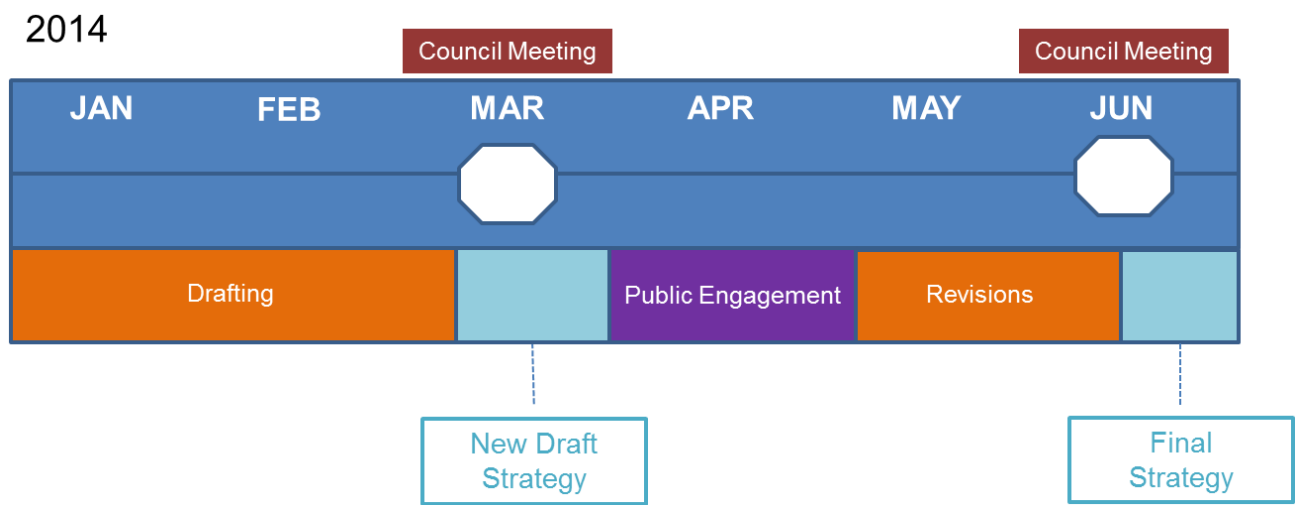
147 tweets to #melbournearts + 48 re-tweets

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Public Engagement Process Word Cloud:

Next steps:

Throughout December 2013 and January 2014 the City of Melbourne began drafting the strategy, guided by, and building on, the outcomes of the engagement process. The draft Arts Strategy 2014-17 will articulate key goals and priorities that have emerged out of this work. The diagram below broadly outlines the next steps in the process.

2014

Council Meeting

Council Meeting

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN |

| Drafting | | Public Engagement | Revisions | |

New Draft
Strategy

Final
Strategy

For more information

Arts and Culture
City of Melbourne
61 3 9658 9658
melbourne.vic.gov.au/arts

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