



GEELONG CULTURAL PRECINCT.

Masterplan Project Update Volume 3

With the end of the year rapidly approaching, and the Masterplan nearing completion, it is a timely opportunity to reflect on the project's significant achievements and some of the defining outcomes of the work undertaken during the year.

Looking back, the project has covered a lot of ground since the Minister for Major Projects first announced in October 2006 that the State Government and the City of Greater Geelong would jointly fund the \$500,000 Geelong Cultural Precinct Masterplan project.

Key activity undertaken in 2007 includes:

- **March** – consultation with key stakeholders commences
 - **April** – Steering Committee announced. Cr Peter McMullin appointed as Chair
 - **April-May** – Ken Gorbey interviews over 40 individuals from Geelong's arts and cultural organisations and other key local stakeholder institutions, to develop a vision for the Cultural Precinct
 - **May** –
 - o Biruu Consultant team appointed and commence Phase 1 of the Cultural Precinct work
 - o Gary Grimmer Consultants appointed and commence phase one of the Geelong Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCEC) work
 - **June-July** – further consultation with arts and cultural stakeholders, including Ken Gorbey workshop
 - **July** –
 - o Biruu Phase 1 Report presented to and noted by Steering Committee
 - o Gary Grimmer GCEC Report received for consideration
 - o Biruu commence Phase 2 work
 - **August** –
 - o Phase 1 work presented to stakeholders
 - o The Geelong Cultural Precinct Leadership Group formed in response to a recommendation from Ken Gorbey. It had its first meeting in August and continues to meet monthly
 - **September** –
 - o Additional demand/size analysis for GPAC and Library and Heritage Centre undertaken and completed
 - o Following consultation with arts and culture stakeholders preferred Precinct option agreed by Steering Committee
 - **September-October** – SGS Economics and Planning consultation with Arts and Culture representatives
 - **October** –
 - o Ken Gorbey's final report circulated to stakeholders
 - o Arts and culture stakeholders consulted on draft Masterplan
 - o Steering Committee endorses draft Masterplan and remaining work to proceed on this basis
 - o GCEC Report findings presented to key stakeholders
- The Masterplan development is just the first step in what will be a lengthy process should the project be successful in securing funding in next year's Budget. The ongoing involvement of stakeholders, particularly the Precinct's arts and culture institutions, will be important for the life of the project, and especially in the detailed design development and project planning.



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There were some common themes emerging in the work undertaken by the respective consultants.

In particular there was general agreement that for the Geelong Cultural Precinct to be successful into the future, it would require more than just an upgrade of the facilities.

David Lock and Associates, the urban planners assisting the Biruu team were of the opinion that to be successful, the precinct had to be more than merely an area with a collection of art and cultural buildings sharing geographic proximity.

“The regeneration of the Geelong Cultural Precinct should start from the perspective of the people of Geelong who will be the primary users of the place. The precinct should provide for them a lively destination in a shared space with a diverse range of activities...”

“Activities are the basic building blocks of a place and give people a reason to go and return to it. The nature of these activities in a place defines its character and provides a sense of speciality and distinctiveness from other areas. Thus to draw people to the cultural precinct the attraction of the uses has to be maximised.”

John Montgomery of Urban Cultures, also assisting the Biruu team, had a similar viewpoint albeit on an expanded scale. He observed that a good cultural precinct requires a unique mixture of activity (especially cultural and mixed use), form (the relationship between building and spaces) and meaning (a sense of place, historical and cultural).

The consultants found that each of the precinct's elements play a role in the strength of the precinct as a whole:

- The Library and the Heritage Centre are the largest traffic generators with the most diverse range of users
- GPAC provides a substantial promotional role, as well as a diverse range of performing arts activities
- The Courthouse is an attractor for young people, engaging them in the arts scene and exposing them to the wider range of arts and activities
- The Gallery presents visual art to the community and provides a contrasting contemplative setting to the other elements
- Back to Back Theatre, with their national and international reputation illustrate that the arts can be both cutting edge and accessible to the wider community
- The public realm provides the links to the surrounding community, can act as an attractor in its own right, and introduces the passer-by to the opportunities of the precinct.

Work on the Masterplan is nearing completion.

Recent feedback from the stakeholders on the draft Masterplan has been very positive. All of the Precinct's arts and cultural organisations have been involved in its development, and the project team would like to thank everyone for their valuable contribution. This really has been a team effort!

The Steering Committee will be presenting the completed Masterplan to the Minister for Major Projects at the end of the year.

It is expected that the Government will provide a response to the Steering Committee around the time of the Budget announcement in May next year. Needless to say the Steering Committee will be in touch with stakeholders as soon as there is any news to report!

So from the Geelong Cultural Precinct Masterplan Project Team – Merry Christmas to you all and all the best for a fruitful 2008.



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