

# THE DRUM STRATEGIC PLAN

2016

 GREATER  
DANDENONG  
*City of Opportunity*

  
Drum THEATRE

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# 1. A CULTURAL HUB FOR OUR COMMUNITY

“THE DRUM IS CENTRAL TO A VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT IS RICH IN ARTS AND CULTURE”

In February 2016, Drum Theatre celebrated its tenth year of operation. The City of Greater Dandenong has a long record of supporting and investing in arts and cultural heritage, through its provision of facilities, programs and projects and partnerships with others. Conceived and developed for our community, Drum Theatre has established itself as a major theatre in the southern metropolitan region and a cultural hub for our community. Located in a significant historic building dominating Central Dandenong on the site of the former 1890 Dandenong Town Hall, Drum Theatre was redeveloped in 2006. The sensitive development retained the prominent corner clock tower and historic Lonsdale Street façade, linking a new auditorium and backstage facilities to the heritage structure with a transparent foyer and the fly tower wrapped in an iconic red drum.

City of Greater Dandenong invested significantly in the initial years to provide Drum Theatre the opportunity to establish itself. In the years that followed, the redevelopment of Lonsdale Street coupled with the sustained economic downturn that began in 2008, rising costs, the increase and proliferation of entertainment and leisure choices have all contributed to a cultural environment very different from the one that informed Drum Theatre’s original plans.

In 2012 Council established the Drum Theatre Advisory Committee. Its role has been to provide independent advice to assist Council in setting the strategic direction for Drum Theatre. The Advisory Committee has provided guidance to develop a long term vision and future business model for Drum Theatre and has overseen the development of a new Strategic Plan for Drum Theatre which sets out a new long term direction for the venue.



Drum Theatre has been operating since 2006 with a programming and management structure that is similar to many Council owned metropolitan and regional theatres. Over the past three years, the Drum Theatre Advisory Committee (the Committee) has conducted a thorough analysis of all aspects of business operations. There is a strong desire to build greater participation and engagement by the community through building on acknowledged strengths, increasing attendance and better utilising all spaces at the venue. In planning for the next ten years, the Committee has recognised some key constraints for the continuing operations under the current model and identified the need for a revised strategic direction. This direction has informed the Strategic Plan and recognises the need to ensure a



sustainable financial position, and desire to increase access, engagement and participation with our diverse community.

This forward looking Drum Strategic Plan proposes greater emphasis on programming to support increased participation and use of all parts of the venue, and was informed by market research<sup>1</sup> with more than 275 respondents from our community. The Strategic Plan also responds to Council's *Arts and Cultural Heritage Plan 2016* which seeks broad engagement across all of Council's cultural venues and greater participation in all art forms.

This Strategy creates the pathway for Drum Theatre to work actively with artists, arts organisations and our community, to integrate and celebrate the diverse forms of cultural practice uniquely found in Dandenong. It enables Drum Theatre to work as a leader in the community, to embrace a more holistic view of the cultural landscape and identify new possibilities for Greater Dandenong to engage with the arts.

## 2. THE DRUM THEATRE STRATEGIC PLAN

### OUR VISION

THE DRUM IS CENTRAL TO A VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT IS RICH IN ARTS AND CULTURE

### OUR PILLARS

1. ENGAGED AND INSPIRED
2. PEOPLE CENTRE PROGRAMS
3. PARTNERS IN PERFORMANCE
4. ACCESS FOR ALL
5. ACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE





## OUR MISSION

The Drum drives accessible community engagement, and participation in the arts through:

Diverse, engaging and accessible programs;

Promoting community participation and artist development through arts activities and classes;

Being a hub of community engagement;

Developing and engaging in community and industry partnerships; and

Sustainable multi-purpose venue for use by this and future generations

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- A community which has the arts fully available through accessible programming and facilities
- Engaging, accessible and sustainable programming
- Collaborative working with business, community groups and hirers
- Affordable programming for community access
- Maximising usage and protecting long term community access

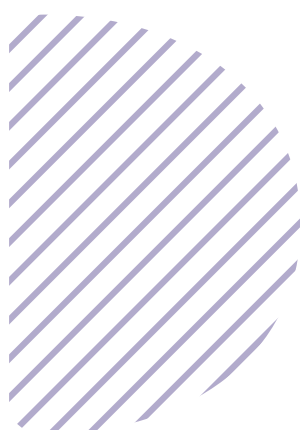
## OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Provide opportunities for the community to participate in the arts as a performer, active participant and audience member
2. Support the development of local emerging performance artists through a range of initiatives including artists-in-residence programs
3. Work with industry partners to ensure that performance companies provide community benefit and engagement opportunities as part of their season at The Drum
4. Provide a program that represents and engages our diverse, local and regional community
5. Diversify the program beyond direct procurement to mitigate financial risk and diversify revenue streams
6. Attract and steward business partners to support The Drums' performing arts programs
7. Create opportunities for the business sector to engage and support The Drum's developing artist programs
8. Secure partnerships with local government agencies to extend and deliver a range of cost effective programs
9. Grow venue attendance and financial sustainability, through extending the spaces for programs and hire,
10. Through participation in events and festivals, grow access to The Drum extending the venue beyond its physical boundaries
11. Through diversity of programs and affordable opportunities to focus on enhanced community engagement, grow attendance rates and arts engagement activities
12. Enable community organisations to access The Drum and its venues
13. Grow the active utilisation of all spaces within The Drum
14. Achieve a sustainable operating model to ensure access to The Drum by the community for future generations
15. Maintain building assets and progressively reinvest into the building asset and equipment to support cost effective hire and diverse programming

### 3. OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Strategic Plan embraces the successes of the past ten years and directly responds to challenges identified through a thorough and considered review and planning process and is based on the following strategic priorities:

No.	Strategic priority	No.	Strategic priority
1	Provide a diverse program of active arts participation activities	8	Enable community organisations to access The Drum and its venues
2	Build financially sustainable operations through building new income streams, growing audiences, and being attractive to corporate and other sponsors	9	Grow venue attendance and financial sustainability
3	Work with industry partners to ensure that performance companies provide community benefit and engagement opportunities as part of their season at The Drum	10	Build access to The Drum by extending the venue beyond its physical boundaries
4	Provide a program that represents and engages our diverse, local and regional community	11	Focus on enhanced community engagement, attendance rates and arts engagement activities through diversity of programs and affordable opportunities
5	Diversify the program to mitigate financial risk and diversify revenue streams	12	Grow the active utilisation of all spaces within The Drum
6	Attract and steward industry partners in The Drums' performing arts programs	13	Achieve a sustainable operating model to ensure access to The Drum by the community for future generations
7	Create opportunities for industry to engage and support The Drum's developing artist programs	14	Maintain building assets and progressively reinvest into the building asset and equipment to support cost effective hire and diverse programming





## 4. KEY INDICATORS

To support accountable and robust reporting to Council and ensure financial accountability, Drum Theatre reports on performance to Council against agreed performance indicators.

The following key indicators will be used to monitor results against Drum Theatre's strategic priorities:

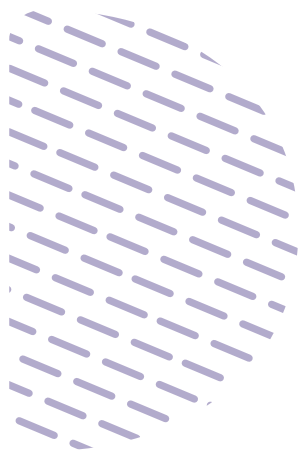
No.	Key performance indicators	No.	Key performance indicators
1	Attendance at ticketed and un-ticketed events (segmented by program strand)	11	New partnerships with other community organisations
2	Geographic and demographic market penetration	12	Space by space utilisation, within The Drum
3	Community satisfaction with Drum services and activities	13	Paid and unpaid attendances at festivals and outreach activities
4	Support for local artists	14	First-time attendances
5	Engagement and education activities linked to performance program	15	Visitor satisfaction with affordability and customer care/ venue welcome
6	Visitor response to program content	16	Repeat attendees
7	Hirer satisfaction with venue services and management	17	Number of days or sessions each space used for events
8	Number of hiring's and hire-days completed (past) and under negotiation (future)	18	Performance against budget – end of year and intra-year results
9	Business partnerships by number and by \$ value	19	Level of income received
10	Coordinated program planning with LGA's, bookings achieved by number and value saving	20	Performance against asset management plan

## 5. PILLARS

This Strategic Plan proposes an emphasis on participation and utilising all parts of the venue to support increased community participation and long term viability, and is based on five pillars:

1. **Engaged and inspired:** A community which has the arts fully available through accessible programming and facilities
2. **People-centred programs:** Engaging, accessible and sustainable programming
3. **Partners in performance:** Collaborative working with business, community groups and hirers
4. **Access for all:** Affordable programming for community access
5. **Active and sustainable:** Maximising usage and protecting long term community access





## PILLAR 1

### ENGAGED AND INSPIRED: A community which has the arts fully available through accessible programming and facilities

Council values the cultural diversity of its community. 'Arts Nation, An Overview of Australian Arts (2015)' supports the findings of our market research which affirms the importance of, and community value in, providing access to a diverse arts program. Once our community engages, they are likely to keep engaging. A community fully engaged and involved in the arts is central to the Drum Theatre Strategic Plan.

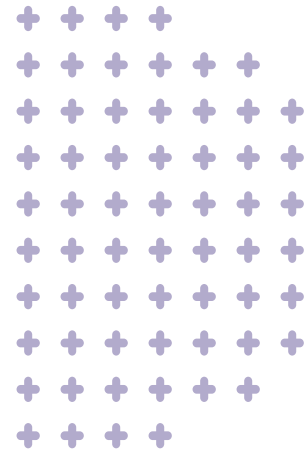
Consistent with *Imagine 2030 Community Plan and Council's Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy*, the Drum Theatre Strategic Plan will provide opportunities for the wider community to participate in the arts. This can be as a performer, active participant and audience member through developing a diverse range of activities which engages participation of audiences and utilises the meetings rooms and other spaces within Drum Theatre to deliver a range of art-making activities, workshop and classes. Responding to market research findings, the Strategic Plan aims to tap into audiences both within and beyond our city. This wider engagement also provides increased opportunities to support the development of local emerging performance artists through a range of initiatives including artists-in-residence programs.

To support increased engagement, the Strategic Plan aims to grow an enhanced understanding of the activities that occur within the Drum Theatre building. Strategies include signage, exterior lighting and activation of the forecourt to provide a welcoming and engaging face to the building. Consideration of using the abbreviated name 'The Drum' may also assist in breaking down the barriers and encouraging a more inclusive audience base.

#### STRATEGIES - ENGAGED AND INSPIRED

1. Provide opportunities for the community to participate in the arts as a performer, active participant and audience member
2. Support the development of local emerging performance artists through a range of initiatives including artists-in-residence programs

No.	Pillar 1 Engaged and inspired	Short term 0-3 years	Longer term 3+Years
1	Establish and deliver a program of activities which supports greater engagement and participation in art-making activities, workshop and classes	•	
2	Reposition and if required, rebrand Drum Theatre to be known colloquially as 'The Drum' to reflect the vision and broaden community engagement	•	
3	Provide a range of arts engagement opportunities that have broad appeal and bring new participants into the venue	•	
4	Promote greater artist engagement through The Drum's programs, performances and workshops		•
5	Introduce a performing artist in residence program at The Drum		•
6	Provide community engagement outcomes as a result of the Artist in Residence and other developmental programs		•



## PILLAR 2

### PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMS:

#### Engaging, accessible and sustainable programming

Drum Theatre achieves a high retention of loyal users. Recent market research<sup>2</sup> supports the development of a programming approach which engages our broader and culturally diverse community, indicating that once engaged, people are highly likely to attend Drum Theatre again. These loyal users are strong advocates of The Drum encouraging family, children and friends to attend. Our community is fascinated by our rich cultural heritage, food and our history; they want to engage, connect and to know more.

This market research also highlights a strong desire to engage more extensively with Drum Theatre beyond programmed theatre performances. Insights from the market research highlight the desire attend workshops and talks, tours and exhibitions and, through Drum Theatre achieve greater connection to Greater Dandenong's culture and history. The Strategic Plan focusses on delivering a more diversified program which extends beyond theatre programming to activity-based programming which will attract and engage the broader community with Drum Theatre. This activity ensures Drum Theatre has an active base to attract high quality fee-for-hire shows. This more expansive approach to program delivery is a central theme of the vision<sup>3</sup> for arts and cultural heritage in Greater Dandenong. That is:

- Cultural diversity and the distinctive cultural heritage of our communities, including our Indigenous community will continue to be celebrated and promoted.
- Arts and cultural heritage initiatives will be inclusive and accessible, attracting high levels of engagement and participation by both local residents and visitors from across Greater Melbourne and beyond.
- Arts and cultural heritage will continue to be core to the city's health and wellbeing.

To bring high quality touring productions to Drum Theatre (which otherwise would not come to Dandenong) a range of direct procurement and shared risk arrangements have been made with theatre companies. The investment in direct procurement of programming is budgeted, but with Drum Theatre shifting this practice to shared risk arrangements, expenditure has been reduced and Council now currently directly procures only approximately twelve shows each year (mostly Encore/seniors and Family shows) where the financial risk is borne by Council.

Additionally, a comprehensive range of fee-for-hire shows that provide quality and broad-based entertainment at Drum Theatre has been further developed. Recent examples of hired shows include popular children's entertainment such as *The Wiggles* and *Octonauts* as well as adult theatre like *Anh Do – The Happiest Refugee* and *The John Lennon Story- Looking through a Glass Onion*. For hired shows, any financial loss is met by the producers and Council receives the hire fee plus box office booking fees. The community reports high satisfaction in these shows and there is a flow-on effect of reducing financial exposure for Drum Theatre. The Drum Theatre Strategic Plan responds to and addresses the balance of subsidised theatre performances and fee-for-hire shows in future program delivery. It also seeks to schedule both traditional and non-traditional performances and events to extend engagement, a need highlighted through market research.

<sup>2</sup> Drum Theatre Quantitative Benchmark Presentation, TKR (June 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Arts and Cultural Heritage Plan, 2016

Further, the revitalisation of Central Dandenong continues to attract worker populations to Dandenong, with people coming from adjacent cities, in particular the Cities of Casey, Kingston and Monash to work. This change in the profile of our work community provides the opportunity to engage a wider audience in Drum Theatre programming.

Consistent with Council's *Community Hub Framework 2015* and *Multipurpose Use of Community Facilities Policy 2012* and building on key findings and recommendations from market research, Drum Theatre Strategic Plan will deliver a diversified program which engages the community in a wide range of programs and activities in addition to delivering a diversified performance program.

Informed by key measures within the *Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy* and increasing pressure for a financial sustainable program, future programming will reduce the number of performances that are directly procured with selective programming responding to the vision and strategic pillars for Drum Theatre as a cultural hub. To support a diverse and entertaining program of shows which can be promoted to the local and regional community, this programming shift will be supported by provision of the venue for use by producers of touring shows, where producers underwrite the performance.

**STRATEGIES - PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMS**

1. Work with industry partners to ensure that performance companies provide community benefit and engagement opportunities as part of their season at Drum Theatre
2. Provide a program that represents and engages our diverse, local and regional community
3. Diversify the program beyond direct procurement to mitigate financial risk and diversify revenue streams

No.	Pillar 2 People-centred programs	Short term 0-3 years	Longer term 3+Years
1	Benchmark and establish a market competitive pricing strategy for venue hire for external hirers	•	
2	Program hired shows and Encore daytime programs	•	
3	Build on market research findings to develop a comprehensive and market responsive Business Plan incorporating income and expenditure projections for financial sustainability	•	
4	Revise and implement marketing strategies responding to key market segments	•	
5	Build on market research findings to develop a comprehensive and market responsive Marketing Plan responding to strategic priorities and identified target markets	•	
6	Promote availability of The Drum to external hirers	•	
7	Establish/ build on a program that links performances by commercial organisations with community engagement outcomes within the broader community.		•

## PILLAR 3

### PARTNERS IN PERFORMANCE:

#### Collaborative working with business, community groups and hirers

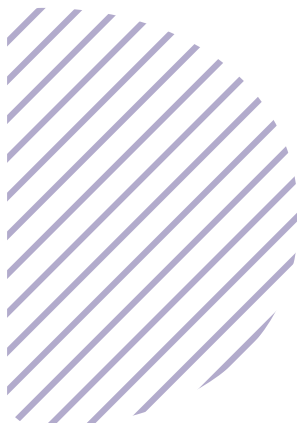
Council's *Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy* states that 'Wherever possible, Council will work in partnership with artists, arts organisations, education institutions, state and federal governments, other agencies, community groups, historical and heritage organisations and local residents to enhance arts and cultural heritage in Greater Dandenong'. The Drum Theatre Strategic Plan provides a deliberate framework to continue to foster engagement with government agencies and partners who will support the delivery of a diversified program which engages our multicultural community. This includes groups such as Multicultural Arts Victoria, Arts Access and Vic Health who assist by informing programming ideas, providing avenues to funding and potential partnering in projects which help Drum Theatre meet its priorities.

The business community of Greater Dandenong has altered fundamentally over recent years with the reinvigoration of Central Dandenong and the growth of the business precinct. There is a strong desire to build greater engagement with the business community through identifying partnering and sponsor opportunities which support increased community access and engagement. There is also an opportunity to engage with individuals in the business community who are likely to become champions of Drum Theatre. Improved and extended engagement with these important community stakeholders will aim to identify means of adding value to the business through offering premium meeting facilities.

#### STRATEGIES - PARTNERS IN PERFORMANCE

1. Attract and steward industry partners in The Drum s' performing arts programs
2. Create opportunities for industry to engage and support The Drum's developing artist programs
3. Enables community organisations to access The Drum and its venues

No.	Pillar 3 Partners in performance	Short term 0-3 years	Longer term 3+Years
1	Frame and document a 'case for support' including options for sponsorship	•	
2	Define opportunities for potential sponsors to engage with The Drum program	•	
3	Based on case for support, identify potential sponsors, including for artist development	•	
4	Establish a pricing strategy for venue hire for community organisations	•	
5	Scope proposals for specific sponsors and present to identified organisations		•
6	Revise and implement marketing strategies and plan to promote availability of The Drum to community organisations		•
7	Establish a program that makes provision for and engages community organisations		•



## PILLAR 4

### ACCESS FOR ALL: Affordable programming for community access

Consistent with the *Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy* and supporting increased community engagement, the active programming and use of existing meeting rooms for the delivery of arts-related programs provides the opportunity to build community engagement through delivering community focussed arts activities and education programs, and building an 'artist in residence' or 'company in residence' program to increase engagement and involvement of the community with the Arts. Additionally, The Drum can program activities in other venues, at festivals or open spaces to move the arts programs beyond the physical boundaries of the Drum's building. Maximising usage and protecting long term community access will be delivered through active programming of meeting rooms for the delivery of arts-related programs. Consistent with the *Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy*, use of existing meeting rooms for the delivery of arts-related programs provides the opportunity to seek longer term tenants, to build an 'artist in residence' or 'company in residence' program that in turn fosters engagement and involvement of the community with the Arts.

Stakeholder engagement through market research highlighted the low awareness of Drum Theatre in the broader community and the perception of The Drum's imposing façade as intimidating and unwelcoming. Strategies to activate and increase engagement must be supported by external signage and lighting to enhance the community's awareness of the building as a cultural hub, not a Town Hall.

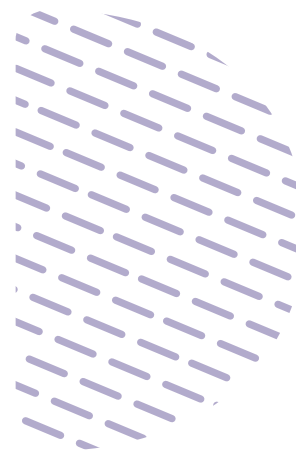
Through aligning programming to the broader *Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy*, this approach will:

- Develop the focus of Drum Theatre as a cultural hub, a re-branded multipurpose community venue which is actively programmed. The focus on active programming is supported in the Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy.
- Market 'The Drum' as a place to learn, engage and get started – to meet others, develop connections and enjoy performances and other arts engagement activities.
- By offering arts activities, encourage new people to engage with the facility and become familiar with it. Research has shown that the building's facade presents an imposing form, it is not seen as welcoming and represents 'authority'. This is especially important for our highly multicultural community where traditional or government buildings may represent an oppressive structure.
- Bring children into classes and their parents will come too – build whole family familiarity with the venue.

#### STRATEGIES - ACCESS FOR ALL

1. Through extending the spaces for programs and hire, grow venue attendance and financial sustainability.
2. Through participation in events and festivals, grow access to The Drum by extending the venue beyond its physical boundaries.
3. Through diversity of programs and affordable opportunities to focus on enhanced community engagement, grow attendance rates and arts engagement activities.

No.	Pillar 4 Access for all	Short term 0-3 years	Longer term 3+Years
1	Establish a framework and measures to report on the frequency of current and new hirers	•	
2	Progress a promotional and signage plan to improve recognition of The Drum as venue for arts engagement	•	
3	Establish a program which extends The Drum as a venue beyond its physical boundaries		•



## PILLAR 5

### ACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE:

#### Maximising usage and protecting long term community access

There is a strong desire to build greater participation and engagement by the community through increasing attendance and use of all spaces at Drum Theatre. In planning for the next ten years, the Committee has recognised some key constraints to the continuing operations under the current model and identified the need for a revised strategic direction. This direction has informed the Strategic Plan, recognising the need to ensure a sustainable financial position, and desire to increase access, engagement and participation from our diverse community.

Informed by key measures within the Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy and the need for a financially sustainable program, a broader approach to venue use and future programming will support the vision and strategic pillars for Drum Theatre to be recognised as a cultural hub. The community will continue to benefit from a diverse and entertaining program of performances, promoted to the local and regional community, supported by provision of the venue for use by producers of hired touring shows.

The Heritage features of the building are a significant asset and will be protected for future through the specific actions noted in the Conservation Management Plan for the venue. The building fabric is intended to be maintained to a high standard in keeping with the Drum’s position as the municipality’s premium performing arts venue.

With increased population density in Central Dandenong over the past few years, there is increased opportunity to develop sustainable commercial operations, in particular café operations to activate the public foyer and nearby precinct. By activating the building entry, more people will be encouraged to enter the building and familiarise themselves with what Drum Theatre offers and how they can engage with it.

#### STRATEGIES - ACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE

1. Grow the active utilisation of all spaces within the Drum
2. Achieve a sustainable operating model to ensure access to the Drum by the community for future generations
3. Maintain building assets and progressively reinvest into the building asset and equipment to support cost effective hire and diverse programming

No.	Pillar 5 Active and sustainable	Short term 0-3 years	Longer term 3+Years
1	Build on market research findings to develop a comprehensive and market responsive Marketing Plan responding to strategic priorities and identified target markets	•	
2	Establish a framework and measures for utilisation of all spaces	•	
3	Build on market research findings to develop a comprehensive and market responsive Business Plan incorporating income and expenditure projections for financial sustainability	•	
4	Undertake review of the Conservation Management Plan to ensure long term building maintenance program is current		•
5	Review Capital Improvement Plan to identify priorities for 5 years taking into consideration diversified programming and venue hire		•
6	Identify enhanced opportunities for revenue including options for leasing particularly, café and bar operations.		•

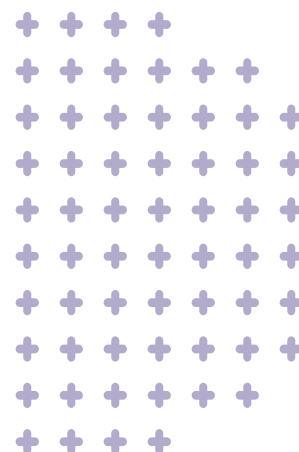


## 6. PRIORITIES AND KEY RESULTS AREAS

### Engaged and Inspired:

### A community which has the arts fully available through accessible programming and facilities

Strategic Priorities	Key Results Areas	Supplementary Performance Measures
<p>1. Provide opportunities for the community to participate in the arts as a performer, active participant and audience member</p> <p>2. Support the development of local emerging performance artists through a range of initiatives including artists-in-residence programs</p>	<p>A. Attendance at ticketed and un-ticketed events (segmented by program strand)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>B. Geographic and demographic market penetration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year v last year</li> <li>• Share of total market in the catchment area</li> <li>• Actual v target (possibly – if, for example, a specific ethnicity were being targeted)</li> </ul> <p>C. Community satisfaction with The Drum services and activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target (a % of very satisfied or quite satisfied)</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>D. Support for local artists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artists in residence actual v target or this year v last year</li> <li>• Artists satisfaction with The Drum engagement this year v last year</li> <li>• Level of Hive engagement actual v target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participatory program/s established</li> <li>• New participants</li> <li>• Database activity               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– new names captured</li> <li>– retention of existing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Online services (e.g. website hits, online ticket sales)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– newsletter subscribers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Growth and churn in “Friends of Drum Theatre” membership and loyalty program</li> <li>• Growth in brand awareness for The Drum</li> <li>• Number of local artists supported through provision of space, advice, investment or other</li> </ul>



## People-centred Programs: Engaging, accessible and sustainable programming

Strategic Priorities	Key Results Areas	Supplementary Performance Measures
<p>3. Work with industry partners to ensure that performance companies provide community benefit and engagement opportunities as part of their season at Drum Theatre</p> <p>4. Provide a program that represents and engages our diverse, local and regional community</p> <p>5. Diversify the program beyond direct procurement to mitigate financial risk and diversify revenue streams</p>	<p>E. Engagement and education activities linked to performance program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>F. Visitor response to program content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance levels for different program strands (as for previous Pillar)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Actual v target</li> <li>– This year v last year</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Satisfaction feedback from visitors (re spread, attraction, quality of program)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Actual v target</li> <li>– This year v last year</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>G. Hirer satisfaction with venue services and management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>H. Number of hirings and hire-days completed (past) and under negotiation (future)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new programme initiatives</li> <li>• Number of partnerships with arts/cultural organisations</li> <li>• Number of local artists and organisations included in performance program</li> <li>• Number of own/entrepreneuried productions (i.e. with at-risk investment by CGD)</li> <li>• Number of community events accessible to low income earners (i.e. free or low-cost)</li> <li>• Visitor experience of ticketing, catering, car-park and loyalty programmes</li> <li>• Hirer experience of administration, technical and front of house services</li> <li>• No fines or breaches of applicable legislation</li> <li>• No unsolved complaints under relevant codes of practice</li> </ul>

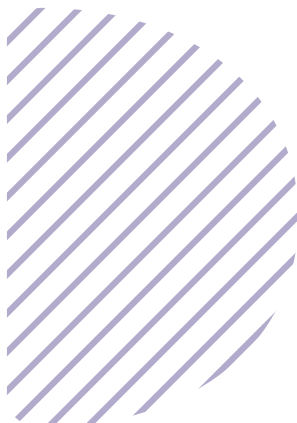
**Partners in performance:  
Collaborative working with business, community groups and hirers**

Strategic Priorities	Key Results Areas	Supplementary Performance Measures
<p>6. Attract and steward business partners to support The Drums' performing arts programs</p> <p>7. Create opportunities for the business sector to engage and support The Drum's developing artist programs</p> <p>8. Secure partnerships with local government agencies to extend and deliver a range of cost effective programs</p> <p>9. Enable community organisations to access The Drum and its venues</p>	<p>I. Business partnerships by number and by \$ value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>J. Coordinated program planning with LGA's, bookings achieved by number and value saving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>K. New partnerships with other community organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor and donor CRM activity                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– sponsor cultivation events</li> <li>– potential sponsors identified, and in negotiation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• First time sponsors/ business partners and donors</li> <li>• Retention of sponsors and donors</li> <li>• Sponsor/ business partner satisfaction</li> <li>• Number and range of hirers</li> <li>• New hirers (arts, and non-arts)</li> </ul>



## Access For All: Affordable programming for community access

Strategic Priorities	Key Results Areas	Supplementary Performance Measures
<p>10. Through extending the spaces for programs and hire, grow venue attendance and financial sustainability</p> <p>11. Through participation in events and festivals, grow access to The Drum extending the venue beyond its physical boundaries</p> <p>12. Through diversity of programs and affordable opportunities to focus on enhanced community engagement, grow attendance rates and arts engagement activities</p>	<p>L. Space by space utilisation, within The Drum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>M. Paid and unpaid attendances at festivals and outreach activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>N. First-time attendances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>O. Visitor satisfaction with affordability and customer care/venue welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>P. Geographic and demographic market penetration (as for Engaged and Inspired)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year v last year</li> <li>• Share of total market in the catchment area</li> <li>• Actual v target (possibly – if, for example, a specific ethnicity were being targeted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average ticket price/ yield</li> <li>• Customer care professional development activity for staff</li> <li>• Visitor response to affordability and customer care/ welcome</li> </ul>



## Active and Sustainable: Maximising usage and protecting long term community access

Strategic Priorities	Key Results Areas	Supplementary Performance Measures
<p>13. Grow the active utilisation of all spaces within The Drum</p> <p>14. Achieve a sustainable operating model to ensure access to The Drum by the community for future generations</p> <p>15. Maintain building assets and progressively reinvest into the building asset and equipment to support cost effective hire and diverse programming</p>	<p>Q. Number of days or sessions each space used for events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared with total days or sessions available</li> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> <li>• Compared with industry benchmarks</li> </ul> <p>R. Performance against budget – end of year and intra-year results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual v target</li> <li>• This year v last year</li> </ul> <p>S. Level of income received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring</li> <li>• Programming/entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Ticketing and events services</li> <li>• Catering</li> <li>• Labour cost recovery                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Actual v target</li> <li>– This year v last year</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>T. Performance against asset management plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of tasks in current year plan                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Actual v target</li> </ul> </li> <li>• \$ spend                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Actual v target</li> <li>– This year v last year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New clients, hirers (arts, non-arts. Same as under Partnerships)</li> </ul>

## 7. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

### 10 years of bringing theatre to the community

The City of Greater Dandenong is a dynamic city that is recognised as the gateway to Melbourne's south-east growth corridor. Dandenong is Melbourne's manufacturing heartland and is home to over 9,000 businesses. Our community profile is expected to remain culturally diverse, with 3300 new settlers choosing to live in Greater Dandenong each year<sup>4</sup> and the population growth expected to remain on par with past population growth<sup>5</sup>. Our City has an estimated population of 145,000 people based on 2012 population<sup>6</sup> data and is unique in its cultural diversity with approximately 156 nationalities and 60% of our community born overseas. The south-east growth corridor is home to over 1 million people and is considered to be one of the fastest growing and most culturally diverse metropolitan regions in Australia.

Drum Theatre is Greater Dandenong's key cultural venue and is managed as part of Council's Community Services Directorate. It is part of a suite of cultural venues that provide arts engagement activities across the areas of performing arts, art exhibitions, public art, arts education, heritage and artists-in-residence, which is guided by Councils' Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy. Drum Theatre is uniquely situated to engage with this growing community and celebrate the vibrancy and diversity of the region. Drum Theatre will continue to demonstrate the value of performing arts for an expanding and diverse population.

The arts are recognised as a universal language of engagement and provide new ways to share our stories with others. This is affirmed by UNESCO which notes that celebrating and affirming cultural diversity is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations. For the past 10 years, Drum Theatre has played a central role in the delivery of Greater Dandenong's performing arts program provided by Council, supported by other programs at the Springvale City Hall, The Castle (youth performing arts focus) and the intimate 'black box' theatre at Walker St Gallery and Arts Centre.

Drum Theatre has consistently delivered a professional, quality artistic program as an integral part of a suite of cultural venues in Greater Dandenong. Over the past 10 years, a committed management team, supported by the Committee have:

- Delivered a high quality performance program
- Built attendance through implementing an expanded marketing and social media plan to support increased awareness and engagement
- Ensured diverse engagement, steady attendance and loyalty through a member program
- Established long term, sustainable relationships with key cultural organisations ensuring an ongoing, high quality performance program
- Implemented comprehensive planning including Business and Marketing Plans and effective reporting to Council
- Reviewed programming and operational performance
- Increased utilisation of Drum venues, with a total of 352 hires in 2015
- Planned for the future through the development and implementation of effective building management, capital planning and risk management plans
- Established broader community partnerships through business sponsors and partners

### Delivering a high quality performance program

The programming direction for Drum Theatre was endorsed by Council upon opening, recognising that without direct subsidy by Council for many productions, touring companies may not be attracted to Dandenong and the local community may miss out on these opportunities. Programming has been based around a more recognised theatre model, presenting a balanced program of theatrical productions selected from the range of touring shows available each year. The program guidelines respond to a range of groups within the community: children and families, seniors, culturally and linguistically diverse audiences, indigenous community and mainstream night time audiences for shows.

4 Data source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Settlement Report, 2012

5 Average Population growth of 1.7% 2005-2015, Data source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

6 Economic Profile, Our People- City of Greater Dandenong. Data source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

The Drum Theatre auditorium has 521 seats. Whilst some touring shows require a larger auditorium to meet the staging costs, Drum Theatre has become a chosen destination for many companies that prefer the high standards and connection to audience that Drum Theatre uniquely offers. The program is also developed in collaboration with other performing arts venues in the region, including Frankston Arts Centre and Whitehorse Centre so that programming can be presented in a complementary fashion.

Due to the distance of Greater Dandenong from larger Melbourne theatres, direct procurement programming has focussed on delivering a range of high quality productions at Drum Theatre by established, well recognised touring companies. Direct procurement represents a small number of performances (and account for approximately 10,000 attendances per year). Other shows and events (shared risk and hire arrangements with community and commercial hirers) make up the majority of attendances at performances and events as highlighted in Figure 2.

## Building attendance

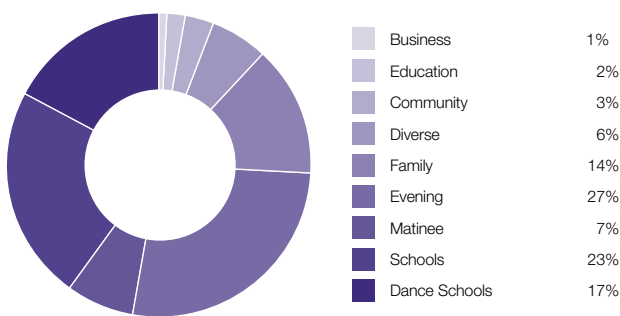
To support increased community awareness and engagement, Drum Theatre has been pro-active in engaging marketing tactics which aim to reach across the local and regional community. Rather than the reliance on more expensive printed marketing material, there has been a growing emphasis on social media and electronic forms of promotion to improve market penetration. In order to increase engagement and build additional audiences across the region (in particular in Monash, Kingston and Casey) there will need to be a fundamental change to the way Drum Theatre is marketed. The emphasis will shift to building the brand and experience rather than simply promoting the performance program. Market research<sup>7</sup> highlighted negative market perceptions to the word 'theatre' which is perceived as a barrier to engaging audiences. To achieve this, Drum Theatre may be repositioned to be known colloquially as 'The Drum', in certain circumstances responding to the more diversified programming approach.

Drum Theatre tracks postcodes of attendees to improve the understanding of audience profile. Program attendance at Drum Theatre has remained steady over its ten year history with an average of approximately 60,000 attendees each year. 33% of these audiences are from Greater Dandenong, with 25% of audiences coming from the neighbouring City of Casey (Refer Table 2), and a further 26% from the nearby Cities of Monash, Cardinia, Knox, Kingston and Frankston. This same market research has highlighted high retention of loyal users, with nearly 1000 registered 'Friends of Drum Theatre' regularly attending Drum Theatre. The Strategic Plan is also informed by Councils' *Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2014-17*. The diversified Drum Theatre programming and provision of high quality venue hire will attract attendance from both within and beyond Greater Dandenong.

In forward planning, Drum Theatre recognises the likely impact on current audience profile when the new performing arts centre opens in Casey in the near future. In addition to people living in Casey, there are some attendees who travel from beyond Casey to come here, say from Upper Beaconsfield who may find it easier in the future to travel to Casey rather than Dandenong, further impacting audience numbers in the future. The considerable risk to attendance informs a diversification of programming for Drum Theatre to maximise utilisation and attendance and support a financially sustainable future.

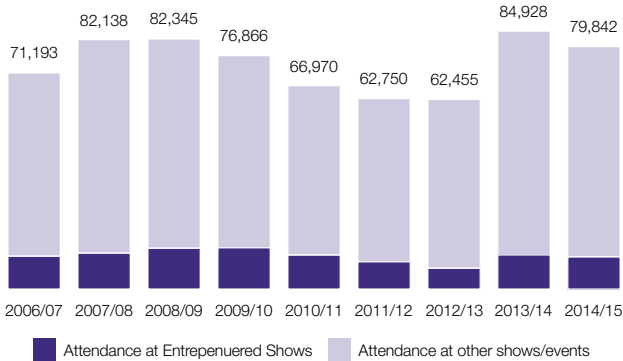
The 2015 attendance shown in Figure 1 of the theatre program highlighted a current emphasis on evening programming with 27% of all audiences attending evening events. Attendance at schools and dance school presentations represents a combined 40% of total attendances coming from these groups. Consistent with market research<sup>8</sup> findings, programming shows relatively low engagement from the community and business sectors. The need to increase engagement and diversify audiences informs the Strategic Plan.

**FIGURE 1 | ATTENDANCE PROFILE**



Although attendance at Drum presentation shows is relatively low (Figure 2), the program presented is well respected and continues to raise the profile and awareness of Drum Theatre, making it a more attractive venue for community and commercial hirers.

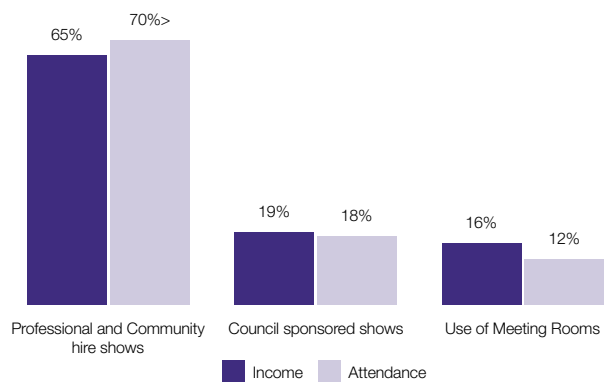
**FIGURE 2 | DRUM VISITORS BY YEAR (2006-2015)**



**Sustainable Programming**

In 2013-14, theatre presentations represented 84% of total revenue for Drum Theatre (Figure 3) To support sustainable programming, the Strategic Plan outlines a new approach to increase engagement and utilisation of all of the Drum Theatre facility including the auditorium, foyer and meeting rooms, making these spaces more widely available for the community.

**FIGURE 3 | DRUM THEATRE INCOME AND ATTENDANCE (2013-2014)**



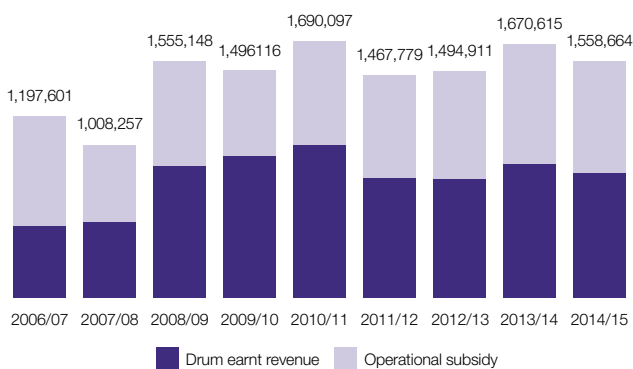
**Improved Planning and Reporting**

Since being appointed in 2013, the Committee has conducted a thorough analysis of all aspects of Drum Theatre’s business operations to inform planning for a long term sustainable future. Informed by the development of a capital plan and 3 year operational budget, Drum Theatre has a well-developed business planning process and reports to Council annually.

Table 1 highlights the support Council subsidy provides to offset operating costs over the past 9 years. Drum Theatre generates revenue through ticketing and hire charges. In 2015, programmed shows (also called curated, entrepreneured or subsidised) met budget (targets set per show to recover all direct show costs such as marketing, staffing, performance fees excluding administrative costs), while family and evening shows performed below budget. Recognising that increasing operating costs is unsustainable, the Committee have spent the past three years reviewing the operational model which underpins the continued Council subsidy of Drum Theatre. The financial implications of pending changes resulting from rate capping drives an imperative to develop strategies which also ensure a sustainable financial future which preserves Drum Theatre for future generations.

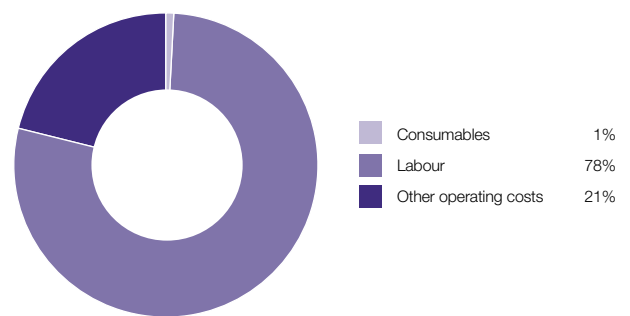


**TABLE 1 | DRUM OPERATING EXPENSES (2006-2015)**



It is recognised that the delivery of community or cultural services, such as provided at Drum Theatre, are highly dependent upon human resources. Analysis of staff costs is an important issue in forward planning for The Drum. Whilst 2015-16 records salaries (and related costs) as 78% of the operational costs, it is the commitment and delivery of high standard technical, marketing and management services that have built and maintained Drum Theatre’s reputation as a high standard venue operation. Drum Theatre has worked to contain costs and develop revenue with approximately 28% of salary costs being recoverable through on-charging staff costs to hirers.

**FIGURE 4 | LABOUR COSTS**



**Protecting The Drum for the future**

As an active performing arts venue, Drum Theatre has invested time and resources in developing a *Capital Improvement Plan*, a *Building Management Plan* and a *Conservation Management Plan* which will ensure the position of the historical landmark building is maintained through progressive reinvestment into operating equipment and building fabric which will support a diverse contemporary artistic program. The Strategic Plan recognises the importance of protecting Drum Theatre for the future.

Management has been proactive in achieving high standards of risk management achieving ‘Top 3’ result in the 2015 Hazard Identification, Assessment and Risk Control audit.

## 8. PLANNING FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

### Creating a cultural hub which is relevant to our community

Council acknowledges the value and importance of continuing to invest in arts and cultural heritage in recognition of their significant contribution to a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and sustainable community. This Strategic Plan sets out how Drum Theatre will play a key role in delivering Council's overarching vision for its community that *'Greater Dandenong is a safe, vibrant city of opportunity for all – to visit, work, live and play'*<sup>8</sup>.

Through a thorough analysis of the market, of operations and the financial position of the venue, the Committee has recognised some key constraints to the continuing operations under the original operating model and has identified the need for a revised strategic direction. It proposes greater emphasis on participation and utilisation of all parts of the venue to support a sustainable model and maintain access to the community for the next 10 years and beyond.

Council subsidises the operations at The Drum. Without some level of subsidy the Theatre would not be able to operate, and research has shown that there are no metropolitan theatres within Australia that operate without financial support from some level of government<sup>9</sup>.

In order to contain the escalation of the subsidy while still maintaining an excellent level of programming, staffing and customer service, the Committee has proposed a new direction in programming and operations moving forward. This is intended to:

- Build new income streams
- Grow the audience
- Be attractive for corporate and other sponsors
- Provide a diverse program of activities and events as well as theatre.

### Listening to our community to inform the Strategic Plan

A comprehensive review of operations and evident need to diversify programming to increase engagement resulted in the first comprehensive community survey for Drum Theatre. Delivered mid-2015, the market research undertaken by TKR, provided a range of insights into community perceptions and use of Drum Theatre.

The research was extremely comprehensive and highlighted feedback regarding perceptions of Dandenong, audience participation patterns, barriers to participation and preferences for future performances and engagement activities.

The research showed that those with experience of Drum Theatre love it. The quality of the shows was highlighted as consistently good and the high level of customer service provided by the staff was also a recurrent theme from those who had attended Drum Theatre.

The market research also pointed to lower market awareness of Drum Theatre, both with local residents and with those outside of the municipal boundaries. This, as well as concerns regarding the appeal of programming to engage more culturally diverse markets and affordability of programming were highlighted as challenges facing Drum Theatre in the future. There were also challenges regarding the perceptions of Dandenong as a destination with concerns about lack of complementary eating places and after-show cafes or bars, night time safety and availability of parking.

The research was conducted through a robust approach which ensured active and effective engagement across the community, quantitative benchmarking and workshops which informed the development of the Strategic Plan.

8 Council Plan, 2013-2017 and Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy, 2016

Market research was undertaken involving direct contact with 275 respondents.

Engagement activities included:

- Four focus group sessions conducted at The Drum
  - Friends of Drum Theatre
  - Single ticket buyers
  - Lapsed and potential attendees
  - CALD/Community representatives
- Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews
  - Engagement with general public (random sample drawn from defined areas)
  - Current and lapsed customers (drawn from lists provided by Drum Theatre)

## Embracing our vision for our City

The arts are a pervasive aspect of contemporary life, with 95 percent of Australian participating in some artistic activity in any given year<sup>10</sup>. Market research demonstrates the Greater Dandenong community are thinking about the experience of culture differently, placing value on authentic and interactive participation, seeking to activate their own creativity in new and unusual ways.

Council's Community Wellbeing Plan and Cultural Diversity Strategy, promotes improved community access to the performing arts, strengthened community connectedness and showcasing the creativity of our diverse community groups. There is significant evidence to show that active participation in society leads to improved mental and physical health benefits. The Drum Theatre Strategic Plan embraces active participation and supports the Council Plan 2013-17 and Council's Community Plan – Imagine 2030, through diversity in multicultural programming and balanced mix of community and commercial activities which provides vital connection between cultural awareness and an appreciation for the community and performing arts.



## 9. DELIVERING ON OUR PLANS

‘ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE GIVE THE CITY SOUL AND ARE CENTRAL TO IT S DEFINITION, CHARACTER, HEALTH AND WELLBEING’



## Alignment with the Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy

'Arts and cultural heritage give the city soul and are central to its definition, character, health and wellbeing'<sup>11</sup>.

Council's Arts and Cultural Heritage Plan states that 'The City of Greater Dandenong is a place of great diversity, uniqueness and opportunity. The Greater Dandenong community is one of immense cultural richness, which respects and supports people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Council's overarching vision for its community is that Greater Dandenong is a safe, vibrant city of opportunity for all – to visit, work, live and play'.

The vision for the Arts and Cultural Heritage Plan is:

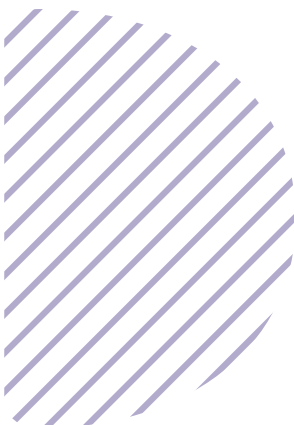
'The City of Greater Dandenong will be recognised as a creative and vibrant city, rich in arts and cultural heritage'.

Arts and cultural heritage play a central role in the achievement of this vision:

**Arts inspire us**, challenge us, give us a way to understand each other and give us the opportunity to express how we feel, even when we can't find the words.

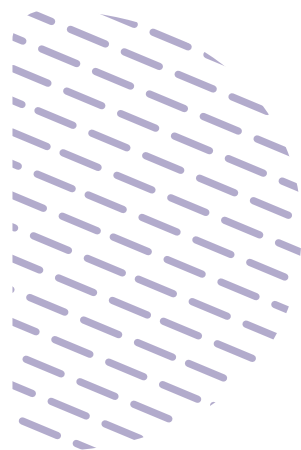
Our **cultural heritage** invites us to reflect on where we came from and imagine how we would like things to be in the future.

It goes on to say that 'Looking to the future, Council will continue to create efficiencies and innovation in the planning and delivery of its arts and cultural heritage agenda. This includes ongoing evaluation against community benefit outcomes and pursuit of funding partnerships with state and federal governments and other organisations'. The Drum Theatre's Strategic Plan provides a focussed and deliberate strategy for broader community engagement and benefit, the delivery of innovative programming responding to market research which will support broader means of engaging with our diverse multicultural community.






## 10. REPORTING

The Strategic Plan will inform business and marketing planning for Drum Theatre which will be measured against the defined key performance indicators. Performance results will be presented to Council annually. The Business Plan including the Marketing Plan for Drum Theatre will be reviewed and updated every 3 years as part of an ongoing planning process.







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