CULTURAL SETTING | REPORT

Bega Valley Shire Council

FOREWORD

It is with pleasure that we present the Bega Valley Shire Council Cultural Setting Report. This report follows on from Council's previous Cultural Action Plan 2006 – 2011.

The adoption of Council's Community Strategic Plan in 2011 under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework has enabled the Council to demonstrate a holistic framework to its corporate planning, encompassing the social and cultural issues of our community. The Cultural Setting Report provides an additional resource to identify and provide greater awareness and understanding of the significance and potential of the cultural life of our communities.

There are a number of cultural focus areas addressed within this document. These focus areas have been established based on the direction of our community today. The Cultural Setting Report is written as a dynamic document and as significant changes occur for particular interest groups or issues they will be updated or revisited.

Council is currently working on a range of strategies, long, medium and short term to address and support cultural development and activity within the Shire. Details of this work are outlined in the Council's response section of this paper and also forms part of Councils four year Delivery Plan and longer term Community Strategic Plan. Council is only one of many stakeholders involved in developing and supporting our cultural environment, and is committed to working in partnership and supporting others in achieving the maximum benefits for the community.

This briefing paper could not have been developed without significant contribution from a range of people. We wish to thank all of those who participated and provided feedback on issues and areas of development.

Cr Bill Taylor   Peter Tegart
Mayor   General Manager

Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

UNESCO UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY 2002

The Bega Valley Shire is alive with cultural activity which enriches the lives of local residents, and attracts thousands of visitors to the area annually to share in our festivals, exhibitions, performances and creative spaces.

Bega Valley Shire Council is committed to supporting our cultural communities, and the opportunities that cultural activity brings to the Shire. This commitment is expressed throughout Council's Community Strategic Plan, Bega Valley 2030 and is further defined through the formalisation of the Cultural Setting Report which is a key implementation stage in setting out what Council will do to achieve Bega Valley 2030.

The purpose of the Cultural Setting Report is to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the significance and potential of the cultural life of our communities.
- Ensure that key aspects of the Bega Valley's cultural strengths and opportunities are identified and highlighted to encourage and provide a platform for discussion with community, government and industry partnerships to enable cultural development planning and support.
- Support and encourage an environment that is conducive to active, diverse and rewarding cultural endeavour and enterprise.
- Identify priority areas for focus within the framework and direction provided by the community and Council updated adopted Bega Valley 2030

The Cultural Setting Report explores cultural focus areas which are significant to the Bega Valley community. These focus areas provide a summary of the current cultural activity and direction of our community and cultural industry.   Effort has been made to capture as

much of the community and business activity that is currently happening within the Bega Valley to provide a picture of the array of cultural activity, it is appreciated that this is a dynamic sector, and areas and industries will evolve over time. Activity has been grouped into the following focus areas:

- Our cultural places
- Our cultural activity and community
- Our cultural celebrations
- Our creative industries

To assist Council and the community in working towards a vibrant cultural future, this report identifies and details five key opportunity areas for development.

1. Planning for our cultural future
2. Supporting cultural economic growth
3. Researching and understanding our communities cultural needs
4. Communicating our cultural strengths
5. Identifying and supporting cultural partnerships

BEGA VALLEY A CULTURAL SNAPSHOT

• The Bega Valley Regional Gallery is the only Council supported gallery in the South East region and opened in 1988 due to the growing interest in art in the community and the recognised need for space to support this. The Bega Valley Regional Gallery is one of approximately 40 regional galleries in NSW and it attracts over 10,000 visitors every year through a comprehensive schedule of exhibitions and public programs. The Gallery has a professional curator who manages an exhibition program highlighting the work of local artists and contemporary artists from around Australia. The Gallery hosts the biannual Shirley Hannan National Portrait Award, the highest valued prize of its nature in regional Australia

• The Bega Valley Shire Library with four localities, Bermagui, Bega, Merimbula and Eden and has a mobile volunteer service. The library has a membership of 23,170. In the collection year of 2012 the total book circulation was 217,339, with the visitation numbers for 2012 at 166,506 visitors across the four libraries. In 2012 there were 4,383 bookings for free wireless access; this is an increase of 83% on the 2011 collection year. In addition to traditional library activities, the Bega Valley Shire library service hosts community education events, with a total of 249 events held over 2012 attracting 1,747 attendees.

• The Bega Valley is brought to life through music with over 15 active music groups and choirs across the Shire that meet and perform on a regular basis, including the Kameruka Bush Orchestra, The Nomads Choir, Montague Choristers and the Sapphire Orcehstra The Bega Valley has produced many internationally renowned musicians and continues to attract musicians from around the world to share their art and skill with our local community. The South Coast Music Camp which is hosted by Bega Chamber Orchestra is an annual event which attracts musicians and tutors from around the world. The music camp inspires nurtures and celebrates the musical talent within our region.

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• There are 22 community halls in the Shire, of which 20 are managed by committees of Council. Community halls are a hub of activity and provide a strong focal point for communities with regular classes, courses and gatherings held in each of the halls weekly. Annually over 200 events such as music concerts, dances, exhibitions are held in the community halls across the Shire in addition to the weekly scheduled events.

• The Bega Valley is vibrant with community markets that showcase local produce and handicrafts. Markets are strongly supported by the community, with recognition of the importance of buying locally, and appreciation of the social hub each market provides. There are 14 regular markets that are held on a monthly / bi-monthly basis, providing the community with over 150 community markets each year to buy local goods.

• The Bega Valley has a diverse range of festivals, ranging from large scaled internationally renowned festivals such as Four Winds Festival to community focused events such as the Eden Whale Festival. The variety of festivals held illustrates the wide range of talents and interests within the Bega community. Events such as the Bemboka Banquet which is a community initiative of the Bemboka Show Society, sourcing 90 per cent of our food from within 15km of the Bemboka Post Office, to the artistic talents showcased at the Bermagui Sculpture on the Edge. Music is a strong connector within the Shire, and festivals such as the Four Winds Festival, Candelo Folk Festival and the Merimbula Jazz Festival provide the local community with opportunities to celebrate and attract tourists to partake in quality music events. Including the local district shows which hold a strong tradition, there are 15 regular annual or biannual festivals held within the Bega Valley. All of these festivals are community driven, and are a major benefit to both the economy and the social fabric of the local community.

• Dance and physical theatre are popular within the Bega community. fLiNg is Bega's professionally supported youth dance company which was founded in 2001 and is the only company of this kind in regional NSW. Through support and tuition of fLiNg, dance troupes perform locally on a regular basis and have had the opportunity to travel broadly through the region and State, and have recently performed in Singapore. There are also numerous smaller dance companies and theatre groups, many of which utilise our local community halls to reach a broad network throughout the Shire.

• The Bega Valley fosters the talent and growth of emerging artists. There is a strong commitment at a local level to private and government art and creative course based learning. High Schools in the Bega Valley consistently produce high quality artwork. Each year the Bega Valley Regional Gallery holds 'The Grad Show' a popular exhibition which profiles selected work from HSC Visual Arts students across the Shire and the graduating class from the Illawarra TAFE.

• In 2011 South East Arts celebrated 10 years as a regional arts organisation supporting arts and cultural development across the south east region of NSW. In this time, South East Arts has secured $1.1 million in funding to develop arts and cultural activities, presented over 300 performances and exhibitions for over 30,000 audience members and employed over 250 artists, technicians and designers in a designers in a diverse range of art forms.

INTRODUCTION

Our national cultural environment

Research undertaken by the Australian Council for the Arts Bums on Seats (2010) found that nine in ten Australians aged 15 and older had creatively participated in the arts (by making something themselves), or receptively participated (by attending a live event, an exhibition or reading literature).   At a national level, the arts and creative industries are recognised as a core foundation in the development and sustainability of our communities.

The Australian Government provides core funding of more than $740 million annually directly on arts and culture activity through a suite of funding programs and support mechanisms, including investment in 2011-2012 of:

1. $570 million for cultural institutions and agencies;

2. $92 million for support programs for arts and culture projects; and

3. $22 million support for non-profit organisations providing professional artists' training.

The Australian Government 'Snapshot of the Arts' (Australian Government Office for the Arts – Dept of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport)   identifies the arts and culture sector as making vital contributions to Australian society and the economy in a number of ways including:

• domestic economy – creative industries are worth over $30 billion annually to Australia's gross domestic product;

• employment – the arts and culture sector employs 285,000 people and has more than 200,000 volunteers;

• tourism – more than 51 per cent of all international visitors to Australia visited a cultural or heritage destination, contributing $26.9 billion to the Australian economy; and

• community participation – 15 million or 85 per cent of Australian adults, attend at least one cultural event or performance every year. If going to the cinema is added to the list of cultural activities undertaken by Australians, there is an even greater level of participation.

The Bega Valley cultural environment

The Shire's coastal fringe extends from Wallaga Lake in the north to Cape Howe and the Victorian border in the south. The Shire has a relatively small population of approximately 31,950 people. Geographically, Bega Valley Shire is somewhat isolated; being a long distance from other major coastal centres, and separated from the inland by windy roads through the Great Dividing Range. The closest large city is Canberra, 225km north and inland by road. Current projections of population growth of 1.1% per annum will see a population of 41,600 people calling the Bega Valley home by 2030.

The traditional inhabitants of the Shire are the communities of the Monaro and Yuin Nations. Sites throughout the Shire demonstrate indigenous occupation for more than 6,000 years. Our indigenous communities nurtured an organised and active culture many thousands of years older than the great pyramids, with some of the oldest records of human occupation and activity to be found anywhere in the world located here in the Bega Valley Shire[1]. Colonisation and white settlement of the Shire occurred in the early nineteenth century and was originally focussed on the Twofold Bay and Bega areas. Farming and agricultural activity was supported by timber cutting, the collection of wattle bark and later by fishing, whale processing at Twofold Bay and the occasional discovery of gold. In later years the area became synonymous with the production of butter and cheese and continues to enjoy a reputation for its 'clean and green' production. The Shire has one identified regional centre, Bega and three main towns Merimbula, Eden and Bermagui.

There are also a number of villages and locations which provide services for the local community.

Since 2006, population growth has been slow and consistent, with an increase of 889 people in 5 years to 31,950 people at the 2011 Census, representing growth of 2.9%. The largest increase was within the population range of 55+. Bega Valley is expected to grow to over 41,000 people by 2031, about 27% larger than the current population.

Bega Valley has relatively low individual and household incomes compared to Regional NSW and total NSW. Despite low incomes, education levels are slightly higher than Regional NSW and not far below the NSW average[2].

The main industries in Bega Valley are farming, particularly dairy farming, and the associated cheese manufacturing industry in Bega, fishing in some of the coastal areas, particularly Eden, and tourism along much of the coast. Merimbula, Eden, Bermagui and Tathra have significant tourism and the long stretches of coastline in the Shire are a summer drawcard for many tourists.

Bega Valley's economy generates about $1b of national wealth, around 0.3% of the NSW total, and most of this remains within the local area, due to self-containment of the workforce and local ownership of businesses. The key industries are Manufacturing ($123m), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing ($87m), Construction ($87m), Health Care & Social Assistance ($62m) and Public Administration and Safety ($61m). The Arts and Recreational sector have an value of $12 million which equates to 1.3% of the local economy. This contributing percentage is higher than the NSW average which is 1% and the Regional NSW average which is 0.8%[3].

Arts and Recreation Services

Inputs, outputs and employment, Bega Valley Shire and New South Wales 2011 (ANZSIC 2006 - Latest industry classification)
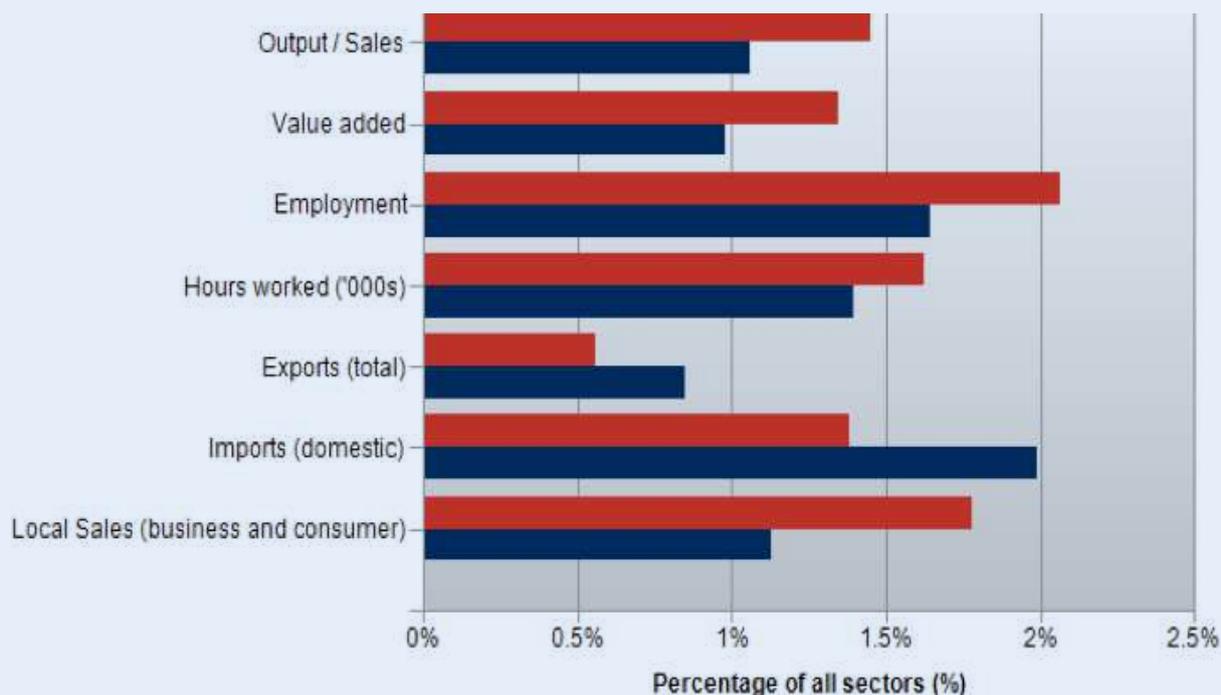
Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2011 Please note that NIEIR modelled estimates are subject to change and review for the most recent two financial years.. Modelled data - All $ values are represented in constant 2008-09 year dollars

Definitions

For the purpose of this report, culture is defined as having three dimensions:

i.   Our sense of place, our values and our identity

ii. The material products of creative processes

iii. Our engagement with and participation in creative processes.

## Our sense of place, our values and our identity

This setting is about a way of life and connections between people and between places and people. Along with the experiences of its inhabitants, the culture of an area is strongly shaped by its history, its geography, its character (land use, settlement patterns, demographics and the built environment). Our culture encompasses the ways in which we belong in and to a place. Local cultural planning helps us to understand the unique character of our communities, it assists communities to express pride in their environment. Cultural places are those with importance or symbolic significance to people, often playing an important role in collective memory, identity and spirituality. Examples of the values dimension of culture include:

•   relationships

•   shared memories, experiences and identity

•   diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds

•   values and aspirations

•   what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

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Percentage Change in Arts and Recreation Services
Inputs, outputs and employment, Bega Valley Shire and New South Wales 2006 (ANZSIC 2006 - Latest industry classification)
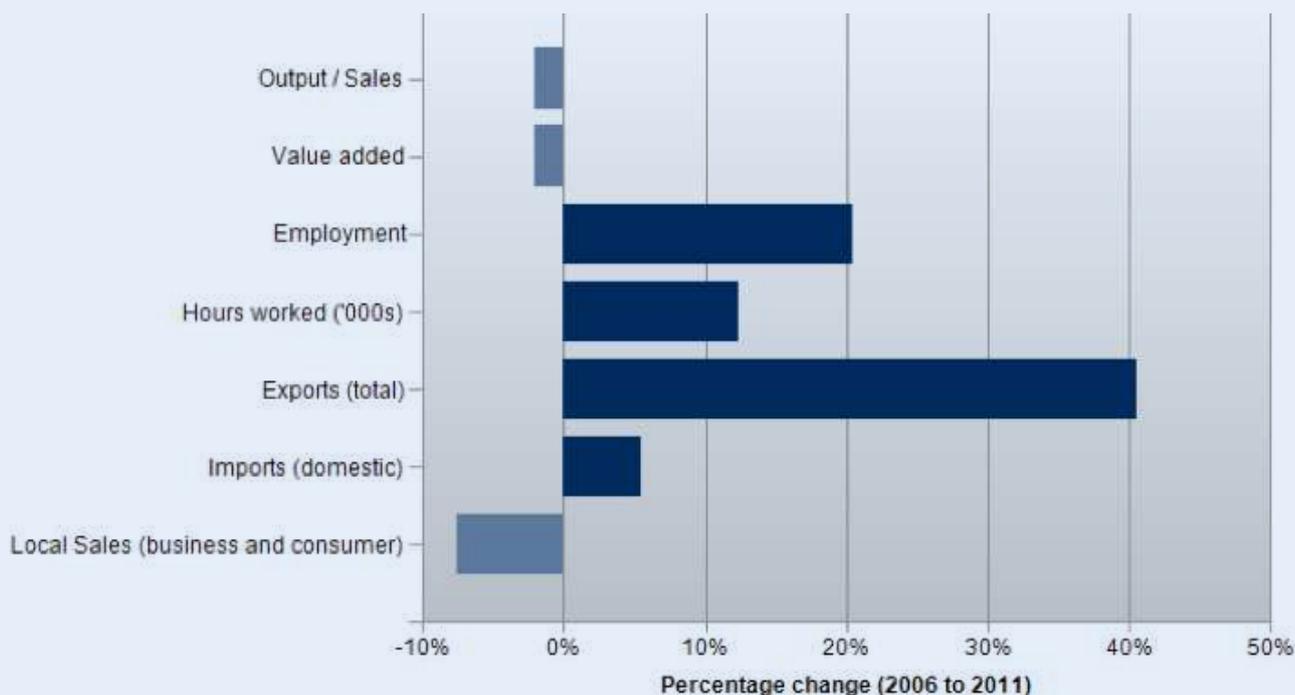
Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2011 Please note that NIEIR modelled estimates are subject to change and review for the most recent two financial years.. Modelled data - All $ values are represented in constant 2008-09 year dollars

The material products of creative processes

This setting includes the creative products produced by artists and designers, architects and media as well as the creative products of communities. Cultural assets and resources are also included in this way of considering culture and refers to places, buildings, facilities, knowledge, skills and works of art which provide a foundation on which people can draw for a community's cultural development.

Examples of the material dimension of culture include:

- the performing and visual arts including; digital and website art, craft, design and fashion
- media, film, television, radio, video and language
- museums, art galleries, artefacts, local historical societies, archives and keeping places
- libraries, literature, writing and publishing

- significant buildings, heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- playgrounds and play activities
- informal leisure pursuits

Our engagement with and participation in creative processes.

This setting encompasses the various ways and levels people experience and define our cultural values. It is the interaction between people and our engagement with (and participation in) intellectual and artistic production that exposes us to new information, ideas and experiences that influence and challenge our values and behaviour. It includes our relationships with education, community life, our celebrations and our connection with place through such things as local festivals and local produce.

References

1. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, The Aboriginal People of the Monaro, 2000

2. Source http://profile.id.com.au/bega-valley/home

3. Source http://economy.id.com.au/default.aspx?id=354&pg=12330

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CULTURAL SETTING REPORT

The Cultural Setting Report is available via the Council website www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au Hard copies are available on request.

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