

# · PUBLIC · ART · IN · DAREBIN ·

## 1. INTRODUCTION



This Public Art Framework outlines the vision, broad direction, priorities and approach Darebin Council will take in developing public art in the municipality.

The Framework has been developed after an extensive period of internal and external consultation.

This document will form the basis for a comprehensive Public Art Policy and Guidelines – including internal processes, artist and community engagement guidelines, contracts, commissioning process, and de-commissioning process.

## 2. PUBLIC ART – WHAT IS IT?

Public art, art in the public domain, public realm art, urban art, outdoor art – these are all terms for the same thing. Public art is art specifically created to be experienced in the public realm outside the internal walls of a gallery or museum. By its nature it is accessible, free, and available for all of our community to come into contact with and enjoy.

**Permanent artworks** can be standalone sculptures, 2D or 3D wall pieces, installations, lighting or sound based works, multi-media pieces or artistic interventions. They can also be artworks integrated into a building or landscape or artist designed outdoor furniture, fittings or decorative elements. They are intended to be in-situ for an extended period of time.

Newly commissioned permanent artworks will normally have an expected lifespan of up to 25 years and will be required to be robust and long lasting. Some public artworks, due to the nature of the medium used, or site issues, may be considered ‘permanent’ even though they may be in-situ for a period of less than 25 years. Some existing statues, sculptures, memorials or other historic works of bronze or other long lasting materials may have been in place for more than 25 years.

New permanent public artworks in Darebin will be specifically commissioned from an artist in response to an artistic brief prepared or approved by Council. The best works are developed with an appreciation of their physical location and are responsive to the specific issues of the site.

Public Art forms a visual and tactile record or trace of the issues, thoughts, concerns, ideas and concepts that were/are important to the community at a particular point in time.



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**Temporary artworks** can encompass artworks in a wide variety of mediums and technologies. The majority of these artworks are developed by the artist specifically for the short term opportunity available. Others may be pre-existing artworks reimagined in a new context. The lifespan of a temporary public artwork or project can range from a few days to a number of months.

Temporary artworks are often experimental in nature and the artist may be responding to specific sites, themes, or opportunities. Due to their shorter anticipated exhibition period, these works may be made from less durable material and are often not able to adapt to longer term display. On occasion, works developed as temporary projects may be suitable for re-occurring display (video, banners, posters etc.)

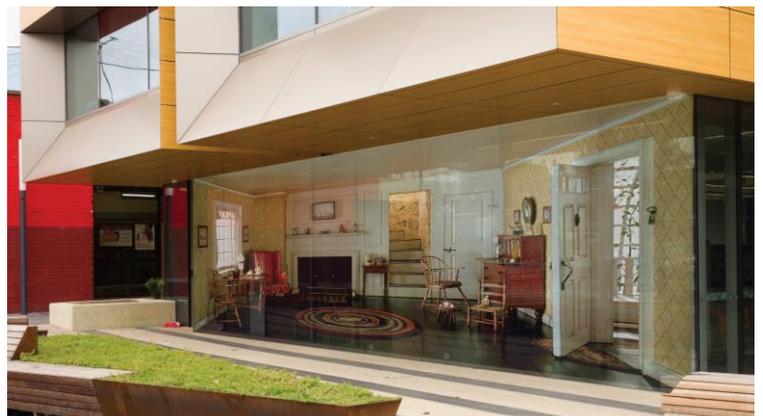
**Ephemeral artworks** include performance or event-based pieces that are experiential. They may be fleeting, providing an immediate and momentary experience for the viewer, or last a few hours. Ephemeral artworks can also be works made from materials that degrade quickly such as paper or ice, these works are specifically designed by the artist to disappear over a period of time and this disappearing is a key component of the concept.

Temporary and ephemeral artworks or any art projects, installations, events or activities happening in the public domain of Darebin will be curated or initiated by Council or developed and delivered by external providers with the express approval of Council.

Council is committed to engaging the community in many aspects of its public art program, however, our emphasis is to support public artworks that are created or led by **experienced professional artists**. We believe this provides the best opportunity for high quality outcomes. As the leading creative practitioners in developing public art projects, professional artists will sometimes work with expanded creative teams, professional fabricators or community members to deliver the artwork. For example, in the event Council supports a creative project that will occur in the public domain involving local community members, untrained artists or school children, our priority will be those projects involving professional artists who will oversee and direct the project. Likewise, we encourage professional artists to be engaged in Council or external projects for creative signage, play spaces, seating or other furniture or decorative elements in the public domain.

We do not believe that unsolicited graffiti such as tagging is public art. However, whilst not sanctioned or commissioned by Council, we are aware that there may be a range of unendorsed guerilla art interventions in the public realm such as stenciling, sprayed murals or other street art and craft practices that many community members are receptive to due to their artistic merit or because of their relevance to, or commentary on, local or community issues.

We are committed to public art in Darebin being high quality, engaging, relevant, well maintained and safe. We will regularly review artworks to ensure they meet these requirements and if necessary may choose to remove, relocate or replace unsuitable works.



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## 3. CONTEXT

Darebin is a municipality with an extremely varied range of communities living and working within its boundaries. We delight in our diversity, the range ages, abilities, genders, and experience, the mix of socioeconomic circumstances, and we embrace the varied backgrounds of our residents and workers, acknowledging and celebrating those with Indigenous and multicultural heritage. We enjoy what this diversity brings to our lives, the great range of restaurants and cafes, the unique retail offerings, and the other distinctive services and businesses in our neighborhoods. We delight in the unique character of individual places and people in our municipality.

As a Council we aim to retain and celebrate what we already have that is unique to Darebin, and we seek to encourage and support new innovations, ideas, projects and events that explore and activate our city in exciting ways.

**We will create diverse and changing experiences of public spaces and provide outstanding opportunities for local and national artists to create new works**

We already do this by ensuring significant heritage places, buildings and landscapes are preserved and maintained and we acknowledge their continued contribution to our environment. We encourage groundbreaking and responsive design for exciting new buildings and civic infrastructure, we are involved in reinvigorating our streetscapes, and we invest in green spaces and parklands. We support cultural practitioners to stay living and working in our municipality through various Council programs and grants and invest in numerous local cultural organizations because we know they are important contributors to the culture and ethos of Darebin. We find a myriad of ways to support community cultural activities that happen in our public spaces such as festivals, events and markets.

Our role is also to encourage, plan and design vibrant, safe and welcoming public spaces that are enjoyed and utilized by our residents, local workers and visitors. Embedding culture into the design and use of these spaces enhances and activates these environments.

We can bring culture into the public realm by supporting and encouraging public art – permanent, temporary and ephemeral. Public art offers a tangible way to express and animate our varied stories - our histories, our heritage, the past uses of our land and buildings, a celebration of those people who are important to us, our acknowledgement and appreciation of practices and rituals and issues of relevance to our various communities. Public art, especially experimental temporary art projects, also provide opportunities for our community to experience first-hand many emerging artistic trends and technologies that are impacting our world.



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## 4. BACKGROUND

Darebin has a proud record of encouraging and supporting public art. Public art provides Council an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to placing community, creativity and ideas as central to its vision for Darebin as a forward thinking, responsive and exciting place to live and work. It provides physical evidence that the City of Darebin is committed to fostering *innovation, creativity and diversity*.

Over many years, the City of Darebin has supported public art through a variety of mechanisms, primarily through commissioned permanent artworks and temporary projects initiated or funded by the Council's Creative Culture & Events unit. There have also been a number of public art projects and activities that have come about through one-off projects, via external providers as well as by other Council departments.

Recently, there has been significant work done in trying to clarify Council's objectives in supporting public art, and to streamline internal processes to ensure best-practice mechanisms going forward and to avoid some of the ad-hoc approaches of the past.

Council's most recent Public Art Framework *Beyond FIDO, Darebin's Public Art Strategy* expired in 2015. In 2017 an independent consultant and a City of Darebin Arts Ambassador, Lindy de Wijn was engaged to create a Public Art Discussion Paper.

To inform the development of a new Public Art Framework, a community consultation process took place to explore what types of public art the community would like to experience and where. In late 2017, De Wijn's Discussion Paper was made available online through the Darebin's *Your Say* consultation page and local residents, artists and the broader community were encouraged to participate in an online survey and provide feedback. The online survey attracted 174 respondents. Accompanying this, an extensive internal engagement process with staff from across various departments was facilitated.

Council also supported a roundtable of public art specialists comprising professional artists living in the municipality and beyond including Indigenous artists, educators and academics, and representative of local arts organisations. They provided insight and recommendations about the opportunities in delivering and managing public art going forward.

Council staff also undertook a review of the policies and frameworks of City of Melbourne, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Moreland, and City of Yarra to gain insight into the approach of other municipalities with strong public art programs.

A key finding of the public and specialist consultation was the high level of enthusiastic support for Council's ongoing role in supporting and presenting public art within the municipality. **90% of those surveyed believed that public art in Darebin can make the community more inspiring and surprising and 92% would like to see more artists creating art in the public domain. The type of art ranked as of most interest to survey respondents was temporary and ephemeral public art projects.**

Given that 66% of the respondents were residents and another 26% worked in Darebin, this feedback provides strong evidence that the City of Darebin should feel confident in supporting new and engaging public art projects, especially temporary and ephemeral art projects in the public domain.

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## 5. THEMES AND FOCUS AREAS.

Five themes for public art emerged through the review period. They were:

1. Public Art as an **ACTIVATOR** of public places
2. **VALUING, DOCUMENTING & MAINTAINING** the public art and heritage we have now, and in the future
3. **INTEGRATING ART** into urban design and planning at the preliminary stage of projects (master plans)
4. **ENCOURAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR** to engage artists to ensure developments are innovative & dynamic
5. Quality public art projects, permanent and temporary, used to enhance brand, marketing & **CULTURAL TOURISM** for Darebin.

Following community and stakeholder feedback regarding these themes, some focus areas for public art have been identified. They can loosely be broken down into four key areas:

### TEMPORARY AND EPHEMERAL PROJECTS:

- An emphasis on temporary and ephemeral public art projects which provide more experimental but short term outcomes
- An aim to explore opportunities to create re-occurring temporary public art events or festivals
- Where possible, develop projects or opportunities in partnership with other organizations

### PROVISION OF PERMANENT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TEMPORARY ART:

- A recognition that Council should support the provision of a range of permanent infrastructure such as screens, light-boxes and projectors in order to facilitate programmed artistic content

### PERMANENT PUBLIC ART PRIORITIES:

- Closer alignment of permanent artworks with Council strategies, capital works, and renewal projects
- Ensure Creative Culture and Events staff are involved in early discussions about new developments in order to facilitate public art in these developments where possible
- Set up a rolling reserve to accumulate funds for more significant permanent projects to be commissioned by Council.
- Council to provide guidance to private developers, building owners and other external organizations regarding public art such as incorporating public art into new residential or commercial developments, or hosting public artworks or events. Council will encourage external providers to engage professional public art project managers, professional artists and to have clear briefs and legal agreements.

### ARTIST RESIDENCIES:

- Support artists to undertake short or long term residencies leading to public realm art outcomes. Such residencies might be community based or aligned with specific Council initiatives or in collaboration with local arts organization or educational institutions.

### AIMS:

- Artistic excellence
- Transformative, accessible, inclusive experiences
- Broad geographical reach
- Appropriate resources & processes
- Supporting artists
- Leadership and innovation

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## 6. OTHER ISSUES INFORMING PUBLIC ART PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Collaborations, partnerships and communication are key to coordinating a successful public art program. We will further develop our positive relationships with locally based arts organizations and educational institutions and explore partnership or collaborative public art projects, events and related activities. We will foster relationships with internal and external partners including funding bodies, other government departments and agencies and private developers to deliver projects of a budget, scale or complexity that we do not currently deliver. We also seek to work in closer collaboration with other arms of Council to share opportunities, funds, and knowledge and to ensure a more consistent approach across Council that delivers quality outcomes.

Our public art program will be responsive to our community, and we will enable community connections and facilitate new relationships for civic engagement into our public art programs. For example, we will explore opportunities for community members and stakeholders to contribute to research, themes, and content (via a range of mechanisms including oral histories, workshops or other feedback avenues) which can then be interpreted and expressed by artists in new public art projects.

We also want to encourage an appropriate timeline for any new permanent public artwork being commissioned by Council or by private developers and ensure artists are engaged at the earliest stage of the project. Ideally:

- Year 1 scope sites and community engagement.
- Year 2 full design, due diligence and tender documents, procurement for construction.
- Year 3 construction and launch event.

Likewise, we want to ensure that budget provision is adequate for high quality artworks and that funds are earmarked for ongoing repair and maintenance at the time of commissioning.

## 7. PUBLIC ART SELECTION CRITERIA

Public Art projects will be assessed against the following criteria:

- relevance to the Public Art Framework
- artistic merit
- projects which are contemporary, are of a high quality, are innovative and engage with the issues, trends, materials and techniques of our time
- involvement of a professional artist in the project
- appropriateness and relevance to the site
- consideration of public safety, maintenance and durability requirements if longer term
- non-duplication of projects, or support for projects of a similar type to existing or previously supported artworks
- non-duplication of memorials or monuments commemorating same or similar events
- consistency with current planning, heritage and environmental policies and other Council programs

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## 8. ADMINISTRATION

Council does not currently have a Public Art Officer with responsibility for delivering the public art program.

Until such time as a Public Art Officer is appointed, public art commissioning and curation at Darebin will be managed by the staff of Bundoora Homestead Art Centre (BHAC) and overseen by the Manager, Creative Culture & Events.

BHAC staff will follow the guidelines for commissioning art projects in the public domain outlined in the Darebin Public Art Policy (currently in development). This policy will cover the commissioning process, briefs and agreements, rules and guidelines for acquiring and removal of artworks, guidelines for outside contributions (grants, donations, other non- government sources, gifting), etc.

A Darebin Public Art Quality Assurance Group (DPAQAG) to be led by Creative Culture & Events and representing a range of key Council departments will consider and advise on all public art projects in the early stage of planning. Recognizing there has previously been a dispersed and uncoordinated approach to planning and delivering art in the public realm, this new whole-of-Council approach is to be adopted to ensure best case outcomes for public art, cultural activations, and artwork commissions. This group will ensure that Council responds consistency to public art opportunities, that there is a uniform vision and whole of municipal approach, artists and community are at the heart of concept development, and that all ethical, moral and legal considerations are met.

The DPAQAG will meet quarterly or as required and will be guided by the professional expertise of the BHAC and Creative Culture & Events staff regarding the most appropriate process for selecting and engaging professional artists and the standards for artist agreements and project management systems. DPAQAG will also review guidelines and templates used by Council for public art projects.

A specialist Public Art Advisory Panel will be appointed on a case by case basis, dependent on the scale and complexity of any new public art initiative. This panel will include external visual art experts, BHAG Senior Curator, other Darebin staff members and relevant community participants. The Panel will not be involved in day-to-day planning or management of the public art program nor will they be involved in approval of individual projects.

## 9. RELEVANT COUNCIL DOCUMENTS THAT INFORM THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

- Darebin Council Plan 2017-2021
- Darebin Art Strategy 2014-2020
- Darebin Collection Policy
- Darebin Public Art Policy (currently in development)
- Council Graffiti Management Policy
- Any future documents approved by Council and any guidelines set out by the DPAQAG