

Minutes

Arts Advisory Committee Meeting



Date	Wednesday 3 December, 2025
Time	6pm -7.30pm
Location	Collingwood Town Hall, Abbotsford
Chair	Cr Sarah McKenzie
Minute taker	Ariel Blum (Acting Coordinator Arts Development)
Content Manager Reference	

Statement of Recognition of Wurundjeri Land

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

Attendees

Councillor/s	Cr Sarah McKenzie and Cr Andrew Davies
Committee members	Nabila Malik, Nikki Ralston, Alan Hill, Michael Fikaris, Zoe Rinkel, Annette Shiell, Miranda Hill
Council Officers	Vicky Guglielmo (Manager Libraries, Arts & Events) , Penny Kyprianou (Coordinator Festivals and Events), Ariel Blum (Acting Coordinator Arts Development), Grace Longato (Visual Arts Officer)
Guests	
Apologies	Brigid Moriarty, Wai Zhen Chok, Gabriela Bazan

Item number	Item title or subject	Minute notes
1.	Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country Cr. Sarah McKenzie	
2.	Declarations of conflict of interests of interest Cr. Sarah McKenzie	No conflicts of interest registered by Committee members
3.	Adoption of minutes from previous meeting Cr. Sarah McKenzie	Minutes adopted by the Committee
4.	Additional Business Cr. Sarah McKenzie	Brigid Moriarty requested it be noted that she did not receive an invitation to the first meeting on October 15 due to an administrative error by Officers

5.	<p>Forward Planning</p> <p>Cr. Sarah McKenzie</p>	<p>March 4, 2026 July/August, 2026 (exact date to be circulated) October/November, 2026 (exact date to be circulated)</p>
6.	<p>Discussion around City of Yarra’s investment picture towards the Arts.</p> <p>Ariel Blum Acting Coordinator Arts Development</p>	<p>The following questions were posed to the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who, what and why should Council invest in the arts? • Are current investment priorities aligned with community needs? • Where are priorities working well? • Where are there gaps? • What emerging needs should be anticipated? <p>Key discussion points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists should be valued equivalently to other professional trades. • Yarra’s international arts reputation should be preserved and strengthened. • Strong evidence exists linking arts participation to wellbeing and positive mental health outcomes, despite chronic underfunding of the sector. • Greater focus is required on access and participation for communities facing barriers to entry. • Diversity in the arts should be a top priority, particularly for groups traditionally excluded due to financial pressures. • A proposal for a “Yarra Archibald Prize” was discussed, noting that while valuable, it represents only one element of a much broader, multi-disciplinary arts ecosystem. • The need for improved data to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of programs, particularly smaller interventions, was identified. Officers advised that while grants, major projects and festivals are well measured, broader sector impact data remains limited. • It was noted that sector-wide impact evaluation would benefit from support by Creative Australia and Creative Victoria. • Discussion included whether receiving a grant has long-term career impacts for artists. • Officers confirmed there has been no acquisition budget for the City of Yarra art collection for approximately 10 years. • The City’s art collection is displayed in Council buildings, with 40% currently available online, and further digitisation planned under the refreshed Collections Policy. • The need for increased investment in affordable and secure studio spaces for artists was highlighted.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns were raised regarding artist burnout and limited resource-sharing or social connection. • Suggestions included developing a collaborative artist register and more secure lease arrangements to support sustainability. • Opportunities were discussed for connecting artists with buyers, including a “Meet the Maker” database. • New developments (e.g. Nightingale) were cited as evidence of demand for culture-led urban design. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers to provide the Committee with the success rate of current grant round and last year’s grant round
7.	<p>Engaging with underrepresented communities of artists</p> <p>Ariel Blum Acting Coordinator Arts Development</p>	<p>The following questions were posed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which sectors are currently overlooked? • What is driving these gaps? • What does accessible public art look like? • Which industry examples demonstrate effective engagement? • What actions should be recommended going forward? <p>Key discussion points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant concern regarding reduced opportunities for emerging theatre makers following La Mama’s loss of funding, with disproportionate impacts on artists of colour, particularly emerging female Muslim theatre makers. • Arts participation lacks the visibility and cultural uptake of sport and dining, driven by limited public awareness and education. • This lack of awareness also impacts grant accessibility. • Suggestions included stronger promotion of grant rounds via poster campaigns and paid social media. • Comparisons were made with European models where arts participation is more embedded in everyday life. • Discussion centred on how arts can better connect with the “every person.” • Data indicates higher engagement in the arts than in sport, despite perceptions to the contrary. • Consideration was given to Yarra’s identity as a city and the role of arts within it. • Opportunities for private sector involvement were discussed, including partnerships with trader groups. • Leveraging existing Council arts investment to attract private partners was suggested. • The Berlin model was referenced as an example of sustainable arts support.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A self-registering “What’s On” platform on City of Yarra channels was proposed to support tourism and visibility. • Potential impacts of the social media ban on young people’s engagement with the arts were noted. <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair requested that this discussion be revisited at the next meeting, with a focus on immediate actions to sustain Yarra’s arts ecosystem. • Officers noted that defining whether Yarra seeks to be an “artist city” and an “accessible artist city” may be a cornerstone for future Committee work.
8.	<p>Temporary Exhibition program update</p> <p>Grace Longato Visual Arts Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers provided an update on the Temporary Exhibitions Program. • Cr Davies requested greater utilisation of Richmond Library for exhibitions. • Officers advised that exhibitions at Richmond Library had been paused due to refurbishment works.
9.	<p>Advocacy Roadmap</p> <p>Penny Kyprianou Festival and Events Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Government projections anticipate an increase of approximately 44,000 dwellings in Yarra over the next 25 years. • Officers will circulate the Advocacy Roadmap to Committee members. • Key arts-aligned advocacy priorities include: Protection of live music venues through a designated live music precinct Support for grassroots events (e.g. Leaps and Bounds Festival, Brunswick Street Festival) Funding for the upgrade of Richmond Library Expansion of the Pride Festival <p>Actions Committee members are encouraged to review the Advocacy Roadmap and identify opportunities for arts and culture input</p>
Meeting closed		7.30pm
Next scheduled meeting		Wednesday March 4, 2026