

**Araluen Cultural Precinct
Alice Springs**

**A Report on the community meeting
19 November 2009**

**Draft Araluen Cultural Precinct Development Plan
2009-2015**

Prepared by

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1. Introduction

A community meeting was held on Thursday 19 November 2009, as part of the community consultation process for the *Araluen Cultural Precinct Development Plan 2009 – 2015*.

The purpose of the meeting was to gain an understanding of the community's aspirations and vision for the Araluen Cultural Precinct and to receive feedback on what is important to the people of Alice Springs in relation to the future development of the Precinct.

A total of 47 people from the community attended the night (Appendix 1) and appeared to be a good representation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with interests in visual and performing arts, craft, the Museum of Central Australia, the Central Australian Aviation Museum, the Strehlow Research Centre and as community users and supporters of the Precinct.

2. Process

To lend informality to the process people were seated in cafe style on eight tables (Figs 1-5) for the whole of the meeting which began at 7.00pm and concluded a little after 9.00pm. There was a break of 10 minutes mid-way through the evening.

Participants at each table were asked to discuss three questions:

1. What is your vision for the Araluen Cultural Precinct that recognises the special location and culture of where we live?

Imagine you are stepping into this place in 5 years' time:

What would you see?

What interesting things would be happening?

What would people be talking about?

How would you be feeling?

What would people be excited about?

2. What activities and programs are important - for the local community and the NT, in the next 5-10 years?
3. What are some possible site and building developments that are important over the next 5-10 years?

Participants reported back on a table by table basis before the break mid-evening and again towards the end of the second half. Notes were taken on butcher's paper during

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each report back and then read back to the respective tables for confirmation and to ensure a proper record was made.

Appendix 2 provides a collation of all comments made or recorded on butcher's paper by tables at the meeting.

A list of all the raw data recorded on butcher's paper by the tables together with comments made during report back is at Appendix 3.

3. The next steps

Participants were interested in the intended next steps in the process for refining the Development Plan and NRETAS staff advised at the conclusion of the meeting that:

- A record of the community meeting will be circulated to participants and placed on the NRETAS website
- The draft Development Plan will be revised and this will be available in December for further comment
- Opportunity for public submissions on the draft Development Plan remains open until 1 December 2009 and people were encouraged to submit further comment as required.

4. Concluding Remarks

There was enthusiastic participation among the people attending. People were positive in their contribution and virtually no time was taken dealing with any perceived wrongs. A measure of the attitude was probably indicated by the number of people who stayed behind after close of the meeting to assist in packing up and to have further casual discussion.

Among the many suggestions and comments made by participants the following views appeared to be held with particular strength:

- there is a deeply embedded sense of community ownership, pride and partnership in the Araluen Cultural Precinct
- people support a strong presence of Aboriginal art on exhibition
- people value flexibility in the exhibition of art such that there are no permanent displays and there is room to accommodate travelling exhibitions and community art events

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- people want to be consulted on the operations and future development of the Precinct and support the development of appropriate local community advisory structures
- people see value in the linking and cohesive operation of the various elements of the Precinct
- a national Indigenous art and culture centre which may be located on site or elsewhere in Alice Springs was strongly supported
- the Precinct was seen as a place of harmony that encourages intercultural and intergenerational engagement and education - a cultural meeting place
- it was felt important to foster broad community use through appropriate amenities and a well run cafe
- the Precinct was seen as a place of excellence that had a leadership role in nurturing the capacity of local people and organisations
- the Araluen Cultural Precinct is seen as an inclusive place that can shape the future of central Australia

Figures 1- 5



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APPENDIX 1

A List of all Participants

COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

1. Marie Elana Ellis
2. Anne Wilson
3. MK Turner
4. Amelia Turner
5. Ruth Furber
6. Ruby Hart
7. Josi Petrick
8. Barb Gilfedder
9. Anne Scherer
10. Jim Thomas
11. Alison Thomas
12. Barb Neck
13. Robyn Koop
14. Kieren Finnane
15. Trish van Dijk

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16. Bob Read

17. June Noble

18. Constance Price

19. Eli Melky

20. Angus Duguid

21. Emmy van Maarseveen

22. Ron Talbot

23. Clare Tucker

24. Jo Boniface

25. Max O'Callaghan

26. Betty Davis

27. Stan Davis

28. Judy Cotton

29. Loraine Braham

30. Fran Morey

31. Samantha Togni

32. Lynn Day

33. James Spiers

34. David Nixon

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35. Dick Kimber
36. Margaret Kimber
37. Faye Alexander
38. Lynne Thompson
39. Elspeth Blunt
40. Louise Lowson
41. Wendy Hee
42. Vaughn Price
43. Julie Millerick
44. Sue O'Callaghan
45. Dugald Beattie
46. Pip McManus
47. Pamela Lofts

**NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT PARTICIPANTS AND
REPRESENTATIVES**

1. Anna Malgorzewicz – Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
2. James Pratt - NRETAS
3. Tim Rollason – Araluen Cultural Precinct
4. Kate Podger – Araluen Arts Centre

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5. Marion MacLean - Araluen Cultural Precinct
6. Debb Clark - Araluen Cultural Precinct
7. Greg Thompson - Araluen Cultural Precinct
8. Phil Laws - Araluen Cultural Precinct
9. Darcy Dunbar - DPI

APPENDIX 2

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A COLLATION OF ALL DATA RECORDED

Vision

- A welcoming and engaging place for the whole community.
- A place where visitors and local people come to be informed, be creative or enjoy the talents of creative people.
- A strong sense of community ownership reflecting the interests of the entire community.
- A centre of excellence in the curation and presentation of material.
- A focus on innovation and a leadership role in shaping the town and its future.
- A place of balance and intercultural harmony where people can come to understand the perspectives of their own and other cultures.
- A place of education and a focus on meeting the needs of young people.
- Flexible use of facilities.

The Site and its Built Development

- Establishment of an Australian Centre for Aboriginal Art that:
 - is purpose built as the Guggenheim equivalent for Alice Springs,
 - functions as an Aboriginal Cultural Centre,
 - contains a world class Aboriginal art gallery,
 - has a role as an Indigenous Art Academy, and

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- may be located off site if space is limiting.
- Reinvigorate the Strehlow Centre and Museum of Central Australia
- Development of new accommodation providing space for interactive social, cultural and natural history displays.
- Extend Central Craft to provide storage, studio, workshop and gallery space.
- Develop a cafe/restaurant as an indoor/outdoor community meeting place that serves excellent food and beverages and takes advantage of the views.
- Develop the Precinct grounds with a focus on:
 - public art
 - excellent amenity (shade, signage, seating, paths interconnecting Precinct facilities, quiet and contemplative places)
 - outdoor performance space
 - generation of renewable energy
- Develop more space for rehearsals by community groups and for collection storage (art, craft) Space for rehearsal
- More storage space
- New and refurbished buildings to be energy efficient
- Improve transport to and from the Precinct

Programs and Activities

Art

- art exhibitions
- travelling art exhibitions (eg Oceans to Outback, Ned Kelly)
- artists in residence
- develop travelling Aboriginal art exhibitions
- aerosol art

Theatre

- performing arts workshops with visiting acts
- greater variety than currently presented
- outdoor concerts

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Involvement of the local Community

- build the level of community use and engagement including
 - night markets and buskers
 - harmony events that are intercultural (eg Beanie Festival)
 - re-establish the Corkwood Festival
 - encourage conferences
 - concerts, eisteddfod
- user groups gain credits by sitting galleries to offset cost of facility hire
- build community participation and support through re-establishment of Advisory Committees
- build the Precinct's nurturing and leadership role with local arts organisations
- celebrate the community's role in development of the Araluen Cultural Precinct
- expand the Precinct's educational role with schools, lectures, gallery tours, cultural awareness programs

Youth

- focus on being youth (15 - 27 years) friendly including
 - training and employment for young Aboriginal people
 - use of digital technology that appeals to youth
 - recast the webpage
 - digital archives and digital projections to outside walls

Education

- an education program on Aboriginal culture for all Australians
- build educational partnerships and a role in education curricula
- education programs including provision for young Aboriginal people to learn about the culture of their art

Museum

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- enhance the use interactive displays

Flexibility

- flexible use of gallery space by rotating displays on a regular basis

Precinct Management

- improve marketing for the whole of Precinct area
- Link with other institutions and organisations for mutual benefit (Language Centre, Aboriginal organisations, link with Tourism Plan and Town Plan, Desert Park, private galleries, art organisations such as Desart)
- transparency to the public in the decision-making process
- consider the need for a:
 - Volunteer Co-ordinator
 - Public Programs Officer
 - Education Officer
- improve the funding support for the Precinct

APPENDIX 3

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A List of all Data Recorded by the Tables on Butchers Paper and in Report Back

Vision

1. Community and Tourists
 - Inclusive community place
 - Be a place to come to
 - A place for the majority
 - For the community, as a focal point across the board. User friendly to all aspects of the community. The Precinct to be considered as a whole – it is not just an art gallery
 - Ownership by the community and participants
 - Feel happy if the Araluen is for all the community – everyone is creative in their own way
 - Our vision is the Araluen should be a community art complex not an exclusive Aboriginal cultural art museum
 - Reflects the interests of the entire Centralian community
 - Welcomes and engages the community
 - Positive, for locals, tourists and communities
 - Families, tourists, remote community visitors, artists theatre people
 - People would be talking about local and touring happenings
 - Positive place for all visitors (local and tourist)
 - Realistic, sustainable, popular, in demand and on the pulse
 - A place of balance and harmony
 - People would be:
 - Talking about art, how much fun etc they experienced, their admiration of local talent

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- Stimulated
- Sharing ideas
- Respecting diversity

2. Excellence

- Centre for excellence
- An arts centre that focuses on a few key things really well rather than lots of things not very well
- Culturally and environmentally innovative - Outdoor performance space
- Beautiful art space that houses all forms of art of high calibre
- Centre for excellence
- First class arts facility
- People going "wow"- being INSPIRED
- Develop the facilities to conform to the highest standards for showcasing and preservation of art works

3. Art: Intercultural

- Centre of central Australian art – Aboriginal art
- A place where all can learn about art, especially Aboriginal kids to learn about Aboriginal art
- Opportunities for dialogue between Aboriginal and non – Aboriginal
- Promoting Aboriginal Art today and for the future for the next generation for Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people
- It would be very exciting to see all cultures of all walks of life come together and learn from each other
- 50/50 balance black and white and all shades in between – Afghan, multicultural community
- Multicultural
- Facilitate development of Aboriginal art
- To share each other's culture
- Absorption/ understanding/ reflection of the local cultures
- Local culture absorption
- Crucial thing – Araluen should be a cultural meeting place
- High community cultural activity = visitor experiences

4. Education and entertainment for multi-generations

- Education and entertainment
- Entertainment (all forms) and education

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- Interactive
 - More people, more activity – school groups, community groups, amateur groups, the space being USED
 - Multigenerational
 - Students (motivated)
 - Bring history together for children of future generation
5. Safe
- A safe place
 - Safe place
 - Safe place
6. Leads the Town
- Something that actually shapes Alice Springs and not just responds to it
7. Flexibility

Site and Built Development

1. Australian centre for Aboriginal Art
 - Centre for excellence – facilitate development of separate purpose built facility focusing on Indigenous art – display, education, workshops, sales
 - Indigenous Art Academy
 - World class desert Aboriginal gallery –purpose built facility on this site. International architectural competition for design – the Sydney Opera House of Alice Springs
 - National Gallery of Desert/Centre Art
 - If an Aboriginal Cultural/ Art centre is vital, build a specific area for it, not have it taking over galleries needed for local, visiting and rotating exhibition
 - World class designed and purpose built desert Aboriginal art gallery
 - Central Australia needs a dedicated gallery of indigenous art – the Guggenheim of Alice Springs – this is not likely to fit on this site and would be a federal initiative

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- Need for proper Aboriginal cultural centre - but can't turn Araluen into that
- New big gallery/building for Indigenous art
- Contributions from Aboriginal organisations for an Aboriginal Culture Centre

2. Museum

- Reinvigoration of Strehlow, Spencer and Gillen
- Reinvigorate the museum of Central Australia
- Development of new infrastructure to accommodate specific space for social cultural history museum not taking over existing facilities – a purpose built area
- Re-establish the Spencer and Gillen museum

3. Craft

- Craft Acquisition Gallery
- Extension and upgrade of Central Craft facilities (storage, studios, workshops, gallery)
- Studio extensions, including storage for Central Craft
- Thriving Central Craft; eg building extensions; workshops – woodwork, metalwork

4. Cafe / Restaurant

- A good cafe
- Café
- Excellent café with great quality food and coffee that is located to take advantage of the views
- Café creates a presence – look at Olive Pink
- Witchetty's to become a restaurant again – lunch and dinner. Encourage broad community use
- Café of excellence with great food and location
- Café as a meeting place – an outdoor café with BBQs and good shade trees, a playground

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5. Grounds and site

- Public art
- Sculpture garden
- Bubblers, shade, signage, toilets
- Quiet places for contemplation
- Fountains, water bubblers, shade, toilets close to playground
- Amphitheatre - for outside entertainment
- Outdoor performance space
- Linking between all parts with clear signage and paths
- Upgrade and protect all our Sacred Sites and Sacred Trees and acknowledge the importance with the development of a building exhibiting the history of central Australia
- Outdoor, shady
- Permanent outdoor performance space
- Shade - arid land species for shade
- Outdoors - more trees, public art, landscaping, seating and shade and drinking water
- Signage which acknowledges all present and future users
- Children - where is the playground, public art for children?
- Development of outdoor areas - landscaping, public art, gardens, seating, drinking water, and appropriate solar technology

6. Art collection: storage

- More storage for Araluen collection including all sectors (eg Craft, Wearable Arts)

7. Theatre rehearsal space

- Rehearsal space for community use

8. Buildings

- Energy efficient buildings
- Energy efficiency -> insulation ; offsite storage of collection in climate controlled/efficient facility
- Be prepared to extensively add to existing facilities. Schedule competition for gallery design

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9. Services

- Mini shuttle buses that run a town circuit including Araluen. People can get on and off – cheap or free

Programs and Activities

1. Art

- Art exhibitions
- Travelling art exhibitions – such as Oceans to Outback; special exhibitions such as Ned Kelly
- Aerosol art exhibition
- Artists in residence – for all precinct partners
- Artist in residence program
- Welcome travelling exhibitions
- Develop travelling indigenous displays
- Regular exposure to the Town Council collection
- Needs to keep focused on the fact that it is an arts centre as distinct from a museum

2. Theatre

- Theatre programs need to be improved
- More variety in events and visiting acts/performers
- More events and outdoor concerts
- Performing arts workshops with visiting acts/artists
- More variety in theatre shows presented – fabulous in past years – music

3. Community

- Night markets, buskers
- Conferences
- Bring back Corkwood Festival
- Entertainments, concerts, eisteddfod
- Harmony events - intercultural eg the Beanie festival

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- Extensive public programs in partnership with schools, community, touring artists, facilitated by public program officers
- Multicultural activities
- Like to see more cultural awareness programs here over the next 5-10 years
- More exhibitions and entertainment for all Australians
- Dealing with visitors - want to learn more culture -> do things like Harmony Day when every culture is represented - Harmony Festival
- Extend public programs
- Workshops, gallery tours, lectures
- Development plan - short term and long term plan. This should be involving the community - an open plan for community involvement
- Formal acknowledgement of the genesis and development of the Precinct
- Community access to all galleries and theatre
- When it was built it was built to belong to the community -> 50/50, access should be 50/50 - performances especially
- Community advisory group
 - Reconstitute advisory groups
 - Should be a community advisory committee to interact with all the community groups to add to the consultation process
 - Re-establish Centre Advisory Board
 - Ongoing community involvement - advisory group
 - An Advisory group that is comprised of informed, experienced/professional people
- Quite a few user groups
- Active partnerships
- Nurturing the arts organisations in the community
- Work with the community - schools, mothers, fathers, grandparents
Use local resources like the Language Centre + new infrastructure to cater for all users
- Bring back the feeling of community ownership
- Continuation and support of current user groups + new groups that might form
- The place started as a community driven initiative and community funded. Now that the NT Government has Araluen NTG should listen more to what people say
- Continuation and support of current groups (eg Craft, ASAF, Friends, ASAS etc) and be prepared to accept other groups
- People see it as becoming totally Aboriginal
- Community use; eg Art Foundation - use of building - more difficult
- Over the years, Araluen has been too expensive for many people to use

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4. Youth

- Youth friendly and relevant events (youth 15-27 years)
- Activities that attract more young men
- Training and employment for young Aboriginal people at the Araluen

5. Technology and Presentation

- Digital (archival) displays - better webpage, outside on walls and inside, in TV displays
- Exciting digital interpretation -> appeal to youth
- Technology to create greater access - especially for an ageing population
- Better webpage

6. Museum

- Maintain the Museum of Natural History, and enhance with interactive displays for children/ students and scientists. There is a lot of material here for displays
- Not just static displays

7. Education

- Education programme for Aboriginal culture for all Australians
- Develop indigenous educational displays
- Education partnerships - as part of the curriculum

8. Flexibility

- Galleries are excellent and a great reflection of past endeavours. Use of the galleries - need to retain flexibility in the use of the galleries
- Focus on productivity - rotating displays; displays changed on a regular basis
- Flexible/ active/ vibrant, manageable, continuing momentum -> dialogue in decision making
- Flexible

9. Governance and marketing

- Better marketing for the whole of the Precinct
- Transparency (financial reporting and decision making)

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- Restructure HR - a public programs officer, and extend public programs
- ACP positions
 - Volunteer co-ordinator
 - Public programs officer
 - Education officer
 - Educational Officer to lead groups around
- Link to Tourism plan and town plan
- Using local resources eg., the Language Centre in partnership; eg., Aboriginal organisations to contribute to Cultural Centre
- Establish close relationships with other groups, organisations, the industry; eg heritage trail, Desert Park, private galleries, arts organisations.; Araluen - Desert connection =desert mob experience
- Continue to be informed by what is happening in arts nationally and internationally
- Question: Where does all the work from this evening go to from here?
- In UK the demographics in audience, artists, staff have to match

10. Financial Support

- Araluen hasn't had funding
- Araluen can't be everything for everyone because it is inadequately funded
- Araluen needs to be funded to be the inclusive community place we want it to be - meet the vision
- Rather than give Araluen what it needs, things are pushed aside.