

Art in the Western Sydney Construction Hub



ART in the Western Sydney CONSTRUCTION SKILLS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

“He [Christian Norberg-Shultz] also emphasizes that the meaning revealed by art in a particular place also determines the character of the place”.

Anna Januchta-Szostak in “The Role of Public Visual Art in Urban Space Recognition”

“Public art’s ability to decrease stress, elicit awe, develop shared identity, reinforce self-efficacy, and promote positive health behaviors are clear public health impacts.” (Thomas, 2017)

1. Executive summary

This brief document has the purpose of expanding the conversation about art used in public buildings to enhance the experience, value, and purpose of the building. It is about investigating the great opportunity afforded by the new Construction Skills Centre of Excellence at Kingswood TAFE to impart a greater purpose to the building and therefore providing better outcomes for the students. This is not about defining the art to go into the space but making suggestions of a pathway to develop a plan for its inclusion.

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2. Introduction

The Construction Skills Centre of Excellence at Kingswood TAFE is presently the only COE being built in Western Sydney. A remarkable project which will be built on that site needs to be excellent on various levels. It is defined to serve the purpose of educating individuals to work in various trades within the construction industry. This is an industry that has been predominately made up of young male youth, but that is changing over time. It is also noted that the demographics for Western Sydney has a large number of Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander individuals living in the region. The challenge of any education institute is to keep the students engaged in their learning and to graduate the student to make a difference in the world. To state the given fact is important as it provides a shared purpose that this proposal has with the building of the Construction Skills Centre of Excellence.

It has been widely researched that the social impact of art, in all its forms, is immense for all those that use spaces, buildings and places within the community. Architects over time have understood the relationship between the building and place and recognized that public art plays a part in the dialogue. Kevin Lynch, Le Corbusier, Charles Moore, Christian Norberg-Shultz and countless others have demonstrated that the language of urban planning, placemaking, architecture and the users are inseparable.

3. Body

The framework for this proposal for extending the conversation and moving towards facilitating art within the final project is broken down into the following five steps:

- a. Function of a Building
 - b. Users of the Building
 - c. Purpose of Building
 - d. Placemaking at the site and Aboriginal Art in the Landscape
 - e. Public Art in the community
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- a. Function of a Building
 - The proposal will not require additional space within the building, but consideration of display space on a wall may be considered for permanent or curated work.
 - The proposal will require consideration within the landscape design of an integrated selection of creative work, both permanent and/or curated, to be considered.
 - With the focus being on “construction” of a building on a parcel of land, the relationship to the land becomes essential. This aligns with the Aboriginal view of being connected to the land and the site—seen poetically in their artwork.
 - b. Users of the Building
 - Youth, usually young males, will be trained in the space. Research has indicated that disproportionate number of males in construction end up self-harming or committing suicide (Turner et al, 2017). Therefore, making a space that is safe and meaningful is essential.
 - Many young people crave more meaningful human connection, and art spaces can provide this. These spaces connect and support, as art can nourish, inspire, and delight, and provoke curiosity and innovation. Art can be used to build confidence, self-esteem, and positive identity.
 - Social media creates a sense of connection, and equally, a sense of alienation—young people have never been more connected yet lonelier. Art can address this issue.

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- Users feel more engaged with spaces that are dynamic and changing art exhibits help in addressing this issue.
- c. Purpose of Building
- If the purpose of a building is to be a successful Centre of Excellence that permits extraordinary training in a meaningful way, the inclusion of technology, materials, structure, equipment, lighting and air quality are all controlled in the building design. The teaching is delivered to meet this purpose. Yet success is also measured in the qualitative enjoyment of the space.
 - Healthy, safe environments aid the purpose of education, and meaningful spaces will allow for a higher level of completions and less stress for the student.
- d. Placemaking at the site and Aboriginal Art in the Landscape
- The total Aboriginal & Torre Strait Islander population in WSR is 39512 with Penrith accounting for 7740 of that total (Council Community Profile Data).
 - Placemaking adds value to the project and is part of the Penrith Council's *Kingswood Place Plan* (currently being approved). The Penrith City Council's *Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) Planning for a Brighter Future*, sets out the 20-year vision for land use in Penrith Local Government Area (LGA) and within it the idea of place is essential. These ideas all reinforce wellbeing in the community.
 - The Place making and Public Art Strategy is to cover the nature and style of the place making and public artworks, the method, approach, scale, locations, community engagement process and to utilise themes that reflect the local heritage and or local environment to contribute to a sense of place, pride and identity. (Penrith Development Control Plan 2014 C8 Public Domain C8-17)
 - This proposal seeks the agreement to include Aboriginal Art in the landscape as part of the proposal for the Construction Hub.
- e. Public Art in the community
- Under the *Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) Planning for a Brighter Future* developed by the Penrith Council the Planning Priority 6 discusses strategies towards ensuring that the social infrastructure meets the changing needs of our communities. Items 6.7 and 6.8 directly refer to Public Art and polices around it and funding for it within the community.
 - There is broad acceptance of the positive role art can play in improving the public experience of buildings and spaces. Public art can deliver social, aesthetic, economic, cultural and heritage benefits.
 - Public art and creative expression enhance the appearance of places as well as telling the story of that community. To encourage and foster community events and public art we will facilitate a management and approval framework that is easy to navigate, while providing a safe and risk-free environment. (Government of Western Australia, Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries).
 - Public art is implemented through place making principles and refers to all manner of artworks from traditional forms to the utilisation of new technologies. These creative works are located in and around interfaces with the public domain rather than in galleries and museums. Public art may have an integrated function within street furniture, street infrastructure and or free-standing icon and or integrated into the architectural building designs that interface with public spaces. (Penrith Development Control Plan 2014 C8 Public Domain C8-17)

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4. Stakeholders

There are numerous stakeholders that will benefit from art being incorporated in the Construction Skills Centre of Excellence. Each within various domains of influence and impact.

- **Students:** Central to the core values of TAFE, the many cohorts of students studying in the building and also those in adjacent buildings will benefit from the both the permanent and the temporary art in the space and in the landscape.
- **Researcher and Teaching Staff:** The other main users of the building will also benefit from the inclusion of art in their environment.
- **The Local Public:** It is not to be underestimated the impact art has in the public domain. It will draw visitors to the site, or even those in adjacent buildings walking through the site will drawn to the work in appreciation and connection to the building. Impossible to gauge the impact on future enrolments but will definitely provide a statement of cultural connection.
- **The Large Local Arts Community:** A vibrant arts community in the Penrith LGA, and adjacent city councils indicate a demographics of individuals who work in the creative industries at twice the national average. Their interest in local art would highlight the connection of the Centre to the various communities. The potential to attract new individuals to a TAFE site provides a brand awareness that could lead to enrolments.
- **Penrith City Council:** The dynamic and forward-focusing city council understands the importance of art in the community as witnessed by its numerous creative festivals and events. Its placemaking policy will also define ways that place is developed with art playing an important part of achieving a sense of place within an environment.
- **Aboriginal Community:** Beyond the boundaries of Penrith, the various Aboriginal nations that exist in Western Sydney will welcome efforts of connection culture to the site with the use of art. This is supported by TAFE through the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

5. Next Steps

1. Establish approval to move ahead with this proposal.
2. Set up the Construction Skills Centre of Excellence Arts Committee (CSCEAC) to undertake research into the funding, and promotion of the concept. This will remain beyond the project to management all activities related to Arts in the Construction Skills Centre of Excellence.
3. EOI for artists to submit proposals for permanent work.
4. Selection of a sub-committee to review the work, of both permanent and temporary work.
5. Budget and procurement of work will rest with TAFE NSW under guidance from the CSCEAC
6. Work with TAFE NSW Visual Arts at Nepean to curate the temporary exhibitions.
7. Public opening of all exhibitions.

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The sardines of *Tup* (pictured left) by artist Lynnette Griffiths.



Danie Mellor with his new sculpture at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

6. Conclusion

Simply, the need for art in a public space is not only functional, it provides to the community valued public art, placemaking and wellbeing. The conversation of art at the Construction Hub is vital for its success in addressing the purpose and functioning of the project. It will lead to a sense of wellbeing for the community of students and the greater community. In doing so it will lead to the Centre of Excellence completing more students and attracting others, which demonstrates financial success for the whole project.

7. References

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Other Key documents and sites:

- Government of Western Australia, Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/culture-and-the-arts/public-art#formsofpublicart>
- Museum of Contemporary Arts C3 West Project: <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/c3west/>
- Penrith Development Control Plan 2014 C8 Public Domain C8-18
- Penrith City Council Local Strategic Planning Statement – March 2020
- TAFE NSW's Reconciliation Action Plan