
Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

Public Art Policy (Stage 1 of 1)

Consultation period: 7 December 2022 to 29 January 2023

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1. Summary

This report outlines the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of the review cycle for the Public Art Policy.




An internal review of the policy confirmed there were no suggested amendments from internal stakeholders. At the 22 November 2022 Council meeting it was resolved to place the existing (unamended) policy on public exhibition and invite the community to provide feedback.

The nine unique responses collected during consultation revealed/indicated a moderate level of support for the Public Art Policy with comments citing various suggestions for improvement in the delivery of public art on the Northern Beaches.

Feedback also suggested Council should consider giving more support to local artists and arts organisations.

Respondents who were not supportive of the policy felt that funds were better spent on essential services, that art should not be placed outdoors in competition with the natural environment, and that public art must be culturally appropriate.

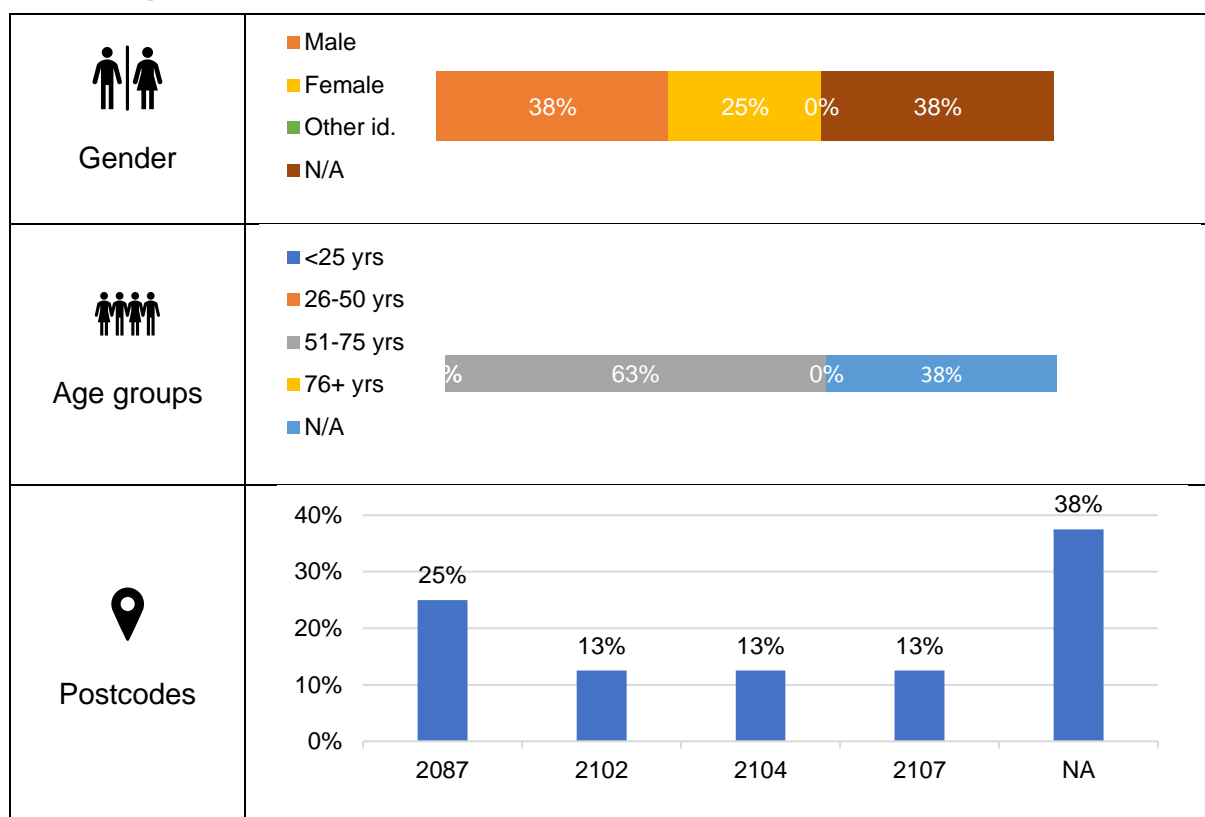
1.1. Key outcomes

 Total unique responses	9	
 How responses were received	Submission form Written responses (email/letter)	Completions: 8 Number received: 1
 Feedback themes	Art is a waste of taxpayer funds Art should not be placed outdoors	More support for local artists

1.2. How we engaged

 Have Your Say: visitation stats	Visits: 472	Visitors: 412	Average time onsite: 0 min 36 sec
 Electronic direct mail (EDM)	Community Engagement (fortnightly) newsletter: 1 edition Council (weekly) e-News: 1 edition (13/01/23)		Distribution: 23,000 subscribers Distribution: 62,000 subscribers

1.3. Who responded¹



2. Background

Council's public art program creates opportunities for artists and the community to celebrate the creative life of the Northern Beaches in public spaces and places.

The Public Art Policy and Guidelines, adopted at the May 2019 Council meeting, provide a framework of principles that express Council's commitment to the vital role of public art for the Northern Beaches.

In line with Northern Beaches Council Operational Policy – Policy Framework, policies are to be reviewed at least every four years. The Public Art Policy has been reviewed and no amendments are proposed.

3. Engagement objectives

Community and stakeholder engagement aimed to:

- build community and stakeholder awareness of participation activities
- provide accessible information so community and stakeholders could participate in a meaningful way

¹ Demographic data was gathered by request only. The data represented only includes those respondents who provided this detail.

- identify community and stakeholder concerns, local knowledge and values
- communicate to community and stakeholders how their input was incorporated into the planning and decision-making process.

4. Engagement approach

Community and stakeholder engagement for the Public Art Policy was conducted between 7 December 2022 and 29 January 2023 and consisted of a series of activities that provided opportunities for community and stakeholders to contribute.

The consultation window was extended beyond the 28-day statutory requirement as the exhibition was held largely during school holidays.

The engagement was planned, implemented and reported in accordance with Council's [Community Engagement Strategy](#) (2022).

A project page was established on our have your say platform with information provided in an accessible and easy to read format.

The project was primarily promoted through our regular email newsletter (EDM) channels. Consultation during the holiday period was affected by a lower volume of inclusions in regular newsletters that had either ceased or scaled back content and distribution.

Feedback was captured through an online submission form embedded onto the have your say project page. There was no direct sentiment question included on the form.

An open-field comments box provided community members a space to provide submission sentiment as well as any other feedback they wished to contribute.

Email and written comments were also invited.

5. Findings

There is broad support for the Public Art Policy as it is currently written.

The following table provides a summary of feedback received by theme and Council's comment.

Table 1: Issues, change requests and other considerations

Theme	Issues, change requests and other considerations raised	Council's response
Cultural appropriation	Artworks should be selected on a culturally appropriate basis, i.e. only Aboriginal artists engaged to make Aboriginal-themed work or work that refers to Aboriginal cultural heritage.	All artworks are rigorously selected on a culturally-appropriate basis, and the right of Aboriginal people to own and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage and expression is listed in the principles of the Cultural Collections Management and Gifts Policy.

Functionality	It would be good if artworks were also functional i.e. as seating.	To be considered in future projects.
Misuse of public funds	<p>Suggestion of annual allocation from Council's budget to ensure programs are sustained.</p> <p>Suggestion that roads are fully repaired before public art is funded.</p>	Council allocates a portion of its budget each year for public art maintenance. Funding for the Coast Walk public art project comes from the Merger Savings Fund, a reserve set up for this purpose.
Public Art Selection Panel	Two randomly-selected, non-expert local community members should be added to the Public Art Selection Panel.	The function of the Public Art Selection Panel, as stated in its Terms of Reference, is "To provide independent expert advice to Northern Beaches Council on the procurement of permanent public art for the Northern Beaches, as required by Council's Public Art Policy." To add non-experts to the Panel would require an amendment of the group's purpose and function.
Subjectivity	Art is subjective therefore should not be placed in the public domain.	Potential sites are identified with the community during engagement for projects such as the Northern Beaches Coast Walk and endorsed by Council. Public artworks are selected by experts in their field. Artworks are selected on the basis of preliminary concept designs, which are then developed during further community engagement for each project.
Support for local artists and art organisations	Council should include the support of local artists and arts organisations in its Public Art Policy.	This is addressed in the Public Art Policy under Principles: "Support public art opportunities for local artists".

Appendix 1 Verbatim community and stakeholder responses*

No.	ID/Source	Submission
1	62733	There seems to be a general admission that the council does not have sufficient funds to attend to the proper repair and maintenance of roads under its jurisdiction. Until such time as these needs have been fully met, I respectfully request that Art expenditure is paused.
2	62743	Public art is a wonderful lift to all members of the community. I feel there is great scope to showcase our local artists
3	62746	<p>Well done - great policy. Minor suggestions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use funding to help develop and maintain a vibrant local arts community including facilities and equipment. 2. Include funding and support for local artist public exhibitions/indoor or outdoor arts markets. 3. Promote junior arts - annual program to collect and/or display the best local school student art including HSC works. Promote local HSC school art display nights and provide council awards/recognition. Council to collaborate and work with local schools (and businesses) on this policy (proactive engagement). 4. Support small scale local initiatives such as artbyseaau. It's great to see their hidden gem efforts on the Bayview-Church Point walk. 5. Allocate annual % of council budget to ensure programs are sustained. Policy without funding is just talk. Ensure administrative costs are tracked/capped/clearly reported. 6. Funding to integrate arts into local council supported community managed public facilities/clubs eg tennis (court screening), football (soccer kick walls), surf, bowling etc clubs. 7. The art definition in the policy is open ended which is great but could include some specific non traditional art examples eg model railway, community garden, photographic groups. 8. Expand public art selection group should be expanded to include 2 non experts i.e. randomly selected/invited from the local public (jury peer system).
4	62750	I fully support the concept especially when the pieces reflect their installation site.
5	62766	<p>Submissions regarding the Public Art Policy. Northern Beaches Council.</p> <p>21. Dec. 2022</p> <p>I have read your public art policy objectives and pose the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted your objectives <i>"requiring a high standard of artistic quality and appropriate and meaningful connections"</i> As all artwork is subjective how will you achieve this objective? 2. Noted, <i>"Ensure excellence in public art"</i>

*Personal details and inappropriate language have been redacted where possible. Spelling and grammatical errors have been amended only where misinterpretation or offence may be caused.

		<p>How will you ensure this excellence? Whose opinion in council and the 4 representatives of the Public Art Selection Group is deemed “excellent” for public art? Keeping in mind subjectivity.</p> <p>3. Noted, <i>“contribute to the enhancement, enjoyment or understanding of the community’s experience of its context”</i> Again, how do you do this when the public has such diverse opinions and tastes? One person will be enamoured with your choice where another will be appalled at your choice and then also be annoyed at the wastage of their rates to showcase such a poor artform.</p> <p>4. Noted, <i>“Ensure that art is appropriate to the significance and character of its location”</i> How will you do this? Whose personal opinion will be ensuring this?</p> <p>5. How does someone’s opinion in council with 4 representatives <i>“improve the quality of our public spaces and places”</i>, when the artistic value of the piece is so subjective?</p> <p>We live in such a beautiful area of Sydney where the landscape is our natural beauty. One may conclude this to be of general consensus due to the number of people wishing to live on the Northern Beaches. People do not move to the Northern Beaches because of some wacky or odd artwork displayed in public areas.</p> <p>On the other hand, the ‘artwork’ a few people wish to display is completely subjective with some liking or appreciating a piece and others revolted by the same piece.</p> <p>The motivation of artists having their work displayed is self-promotion. As a ratepayer I object to my rates being used for this purpose.</p> <p>Let’s keep our natural environment intact and spend ratepayer funds on ensuring exactly that. Spending rates on subjective ‘artwork’ that will need funding for installation, maintenance, removal or cleanup from graffiti is not a smart choice for ratepayer monies.</p> <p>Best to keep artwork in galleries for those to come and enjoy and pay accordingly, not place the burden on the ratepayer to then be subjected to someone’s weird or wonderful personal tastes in our divine public settings. Our public settings are not there to promote some artists personal agenda.</p> <p>I welcome a personal response to my questions and hope you consider the logic of my submission.</p> <p><i>Name and email address redacted</i></p>
6	62800	<p>It is nice when art can also be used. Having interesting seating and tables at viewpoints. example. https://mymodernmet.com/karl-henning-seemann-handrail-sculpture/</p>

7	62828	I believe the policy must include conditions that the public art must be culturally appropriate. An example is the Oyster Shells - Middens as shown at the top of this page. It would be culturally inappropriate for this art to be supported by Northern Beaches Council unless the artist identified as Australian Indigenous. Some guidelines for determining cultural appropriateness will be required.
8	62833	I'm keen to see art installations around the area but the clam shells are a bit naff and don't really look very good in my opinion.
9	Email	<p>What's not to like??</p> <p>This needs to be promoted!!</p> <p><i>Name and email address redacted</i></p>

Document administration	
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Related Projects	Public Art Policy and Guidelines Coast Walk Public Art Strategic Plan and Scoping Study Cultural Collections Management and Gifts Policy
Notes	Community and stakeholder views contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Beaches Council or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.