



Expanding Cultures

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THE SUM OF US: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN GLENELG SHIRE

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Abstract

Measuring economic outcomes of cultural activity in Portland: the why and how

Glenelg Shire Council has a Cultural Strategy Plan, which has now been in place for ten years. One of the strategies listed in that Plan the undertaking of a study of the economic impact of Arts and Culture in the Shire. There was recognition that arts and cultural activities probably had a quite significant economic impact, but there was no statistical data to support this assumption. It was felt that a study of this kind would be beneficial to both community groups and Council with respect to future planning, and could also provide valuable support for any funding submissions to organisations external to Council, when seeking support for future arts and cultural projects. The study was finally implemented in 2005-2006 at the instigation of the Cultural Services Officer, and this presentation provides an outline of how the study was funded, the kind of research strategies utilised, and a summary of the outcomes of the study and proposed recommendations to Council.

Introduction

THE SUM OF US is a major economic study that was undertaken by Glenelg Shire Council in 2005-2006. Its main purpose was to demonstrate to both Shire Councillors and potential funding bodies that there were sound economic reasons for providing significant on-going support to arts and culture in the Glenelg Shire, not least of which is the social capital derived from such support. This presentation briefly outlines the impetus for undertaking the study, how it was funded, the scope and research methods utilised and also provides some comment on the resulting outcomes.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

GLENELG SHIRE COUNCIL

Glenelg Shire Council, which is located in the south-west corner of Victoria, was established in 1994 as the result of an amalgamation between Portland City Council, the Shire of Heywood and the Shire of Glenelg. The current Shire has a population of just over 20,000 people and covers an area of 612 sq. km. The main town is Portland with a population of 10,000.

Portland is located on Portland Bay and became the site of the first permanent European settlement in Victoria when the Henty brothers took up land there in November 1838. For several years it vied with Melbourne as the major southern settlement, until the discovery of gold in Victoria led to Melbourne becoming the pre-eminent city. Portland thus has both historical and cultural significance.

THE STUDY

Why was the study implemented?

The concept of undertaking an Economic Impact study was first embedded in the Shire's initial **Cultural Strategy Five Year Plan**. This document, which was adopted by Council in 1997, was the result of close consultation between Council and the local community. This Five Year Plan included several references to the need for an economic impact study of arts and culture in the Shire.

How was it funded?

In 2004, funding was provided by Arts Victoria through its grant scheme for PIRs and CLOs, to partially fund the salary of a temporary, part-time position dedicated solely to the Economic Impact study. This grant was supplemented with funds from both my Arts & Culture budget and Council's Grants Support Fund.

Who was the author?

Council advertised a twelve month, part-time (0.6) Arts Research & Marketing Officer position. **Bruce Campbell**, the person ultimately appointed, had been employed as the Community Arts Officer for the Portland Town Council in the early to mid 80s and again as the Cultural Services Officer in 1997-98, shortly after the establishment of Glenelg Shire Council. As well as appropriate analytical and research skills, Bruce thus came to the position also having very useful inside knowledge of the local arts community and a broad understanding of the social and historical character of the region.

What was the scope?

The study took approximately 18 weeks (full-time equivalent) to complete, but as it was a part-time position, the research and compilation of the study was actually spread across 14 months. The aim of the study was to assess the *current and future potential value* of arts and culture in the Shire, and to measure this both quantitatively and qualitatively.

How was 'Culture' defined?

For the purposes of the study, **Culture** was defined as being generally the arts, crafts, creative industries and cultural heritage as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This aligned the research generally with the cultural and heritage interests of Council. However, natural heritage and religion were generally excluded, even though these are included in the ABS definition.

BASIS OF RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Bruce utilised several typical research methods:

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| <u>Desk research:</u> | relevant reports, documents, studies, surveys, drawn from local, state, federal government and from overseas |
| <u>Surveys:</u> | customised surveys of individuals and relevant organisations and businesses in the Shire |
| <u>Interviews:</u> | these were conducted with selected individuals, and representatives of various organisations and businesses in the Shire |

Surveys used were based on similar Australian and international examples, and were modified to suit the particular needs of the study.

MULTIPLIERS

To avoid the problem of double-counting any statistical data relating to the economic impact of some cultural activity, THE SUM OF US uses what are called '**gross value added multipliers**'. The multipliers that were used for analysis in THE SUM OF US are provided by the ABS. They are generally regarded as conservative indicators, and so the economic impact figures arrived at in THE SUM OF US may be substantially lower than actual impacts.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The document is divided into eleven (11) chapters. The first three – the *Executive Summary*, *Summary of Key Research Findings*, and the *Recommendations* provide a good overview of the content, conclusions and recommendations of the study. Chapter 9 – *Research Details, Conclusions and Commentary* – is by far the longest and most detailed in the study, and is sub-divided into 12 separate sections.

The study, which is 216 pages long, also includes a comprehensive list of References plus 22 Appendices. This latter material is quite lengthy, but includes a number of discussion papers, samples of all surveys used in the study, lists of all anecdotal responses, and summaries of various forms of data collected.

The finished document also contains two other elements that give it a unique human face.

- 1) 11 pages are interspersed throughout the study, each of which provides a “snapshot profile” of a local artist or a person employed in an arts industry in the Shire.
- 2) Quotations included on many pages of the report, commenting on some aspect or issue relating to arts and culture.

SELECTED OUTCOMES

- There are 80 arts and cultural organisations in the Shire with a combined membership of about 2,000. These members contribute approximately 64,000 hours of volunteer labour per year, with an estimated value of \$1 million.

- There are 70 businesses and about 125 workers in Culture Services Industry in the Shire, which collectively generate a total income of \$1.2 million annually.
- The Shire receives an additional \$940,000 of income annually, generated by the Shire's three major Festival events.
- Between 2000 and 2005, Council's grant seeking fund for culture-related projects leveraged \$2.5 million.
- Shire residents spend an estimated \$1.5 million annually on performing arts activities located outside the Shire.

PROCESS OF ADOPTION

Step 1: Assessed and approved by Manager's Group

Step 2: Presented to a Council Workshop

Step 3: Released for public view over a three week period

Step 4: Formally adopted at a Council meeting in late December 2006.

The basis for adoption was as follows:

"That Council adopt the document, and utilise its contents when and where appropriate for both reference and research, particularly with respect to future planning, and that Council provide on-going community access."

CURRENT STATUS

Distribution

Within the Glenelg Shire, several printed copies of the study are available for public access through the Glenelg library network, and the study is also accessible on the Shire's website. Copies of the completed study have also been provided to a range of people and/or organisations. So far, these include:

- Arts Victoria;
- Regional Arts Victoria;
- Cultural Development Network;
- Public Galleries Association of Victoria;
- Cultural Minister's Council's Statistics Working Group, which is administered by DCITA;
- Australia Council;
- Economic Policy and Research Unit, MAV
- relevant Officers in several local Councils.

Use and implementation of recommendations

At a more local level, the study has had limited use so far. This is partly because with my broad portfolio, I've been distracted in recent months by other issues requiring more immediate attention. However, representatives of several local groups and festivals have already accessed relevant data and comment, and in the short term, especially with regard to local festivals, it is planned to build on this by specifically assisting local festival committees to develop Business Plans and improve the strategic planning for their events. Some of the other recommendations in the study can only be implemented through collaboration between my Manager, other Council staff and me, and it is planned to initiate this process in the next few months.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

That brings me to my concluding remarks on the study.

I'd first like to thank Arts Victoria for providing significant funding support. Their grant covered just under half Bruce Campbell's part-time salary, and without that assistance the study would not have been possible. Thanks to Berice Jones (ex-President, The Arts Company Inc) and Jan Colliver (President, Portland CEMA Inc) for their valuable contribution as members of the Project Reference Group. Thanks to Bruce Campbell, for his professional approach and commitment throughout all stages of the study. And thanks to Sandra Robertson, Secretary in the Development Services Department, Glenelg Shire Council, who entered all data from the various surveys into Excel spreadsheets, in order for Bruce to analyse the results.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE

The title of the study was at Bruce's suggestion, and is derived from a quote taken from 'Cultural Vitality', a paper written in 2004 by Jon Hawkes, author of the *Fourth Pillar of Sustainability*. The full quote reads:

*"Culture is not a pile of artefacts – it is us;
the living, breathing sum of us."*

I think THE SUM OF US is a very appropriate choice of title for the study, because it captures the essential quality of why arts and culture are so important in our lives, and most significantly, it also places people at the very centre of that argument.

Karl Hatton has been the Cultural Services Officer for the Glenelg Shire Council since 1999. His responsibilities include management of the Portland Arts Centre (a Council-owned performance and gallery space), development and implementation of an annual Glenelg Shire Arts Program, facilitation of community-focused arts and cultural projects within the Shire, and supervision of staff managing the Shire Cultural Collection. He was previously a Senior Lecturer in Educational Drama and Theatre Studies at Australian Catholic University, Aquinas Campus, Ballarat from 1978 to 1997, and at various times has been actively involved in community theatre as both a director and performer.

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