



**Songwriters & Original Musicians
Association Dubbo Inc.**
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SOMAD Submission on Draft Dubbo Cultural Plan 2020-2025

To whom it may concern,

We wish to make comment on the Draft *DUBBO CULTURAL PLAN 2020-2025* (the plan). Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to provide our submission.

The Songwriters and Original Musicians Association of Dubbo (SOMAD) is a not-for-profit group that aims to support live music and original musicians in Dubbo, with the ultimate goal of making Dubbo a 'Music City'.

We wish to express support for the draft plan, and commend Council on its vision and work so far to form this five-year work plan. Many elements touch upon musical artists who we represent, and the music scene and the general cultural scene to which we live and work within to create and perform. For this, we are optimistic this plan could make a big difference to the city of Dubbo and the wider LGA in years to come.

We support the broad objectives and themes of the plan.

There were a number of actions that we wished to provide specific comment on, in order to offer specific opinions and suggested improvements from our members' perspective.

- **1.2 – night time activation planning** – an excellent action - we strongly support this
- **2.2 – Partnerships** - while it is unclear who you mean in this action, we hope this means local art NGOs like SOMAD – and if so, then we support this action.
- **Actions 3.2 and 3.3 art collection and storage.** While it is not stated, we assume this action relates to 'traditional' physical art collections. It would be ideal if this could also apply to digital collections of our city's contemporary musical art. To date, we are not aware of any collection of local musical art - for which there is available content going well back in time. This seems inequitable and we would be very keen to support such an addition.

- **4.2.2** This action specifically relates to the Conservatorium, but we suggest this should be widened to encompass *all musical education* in the city – schools, TAFE, private trainers and the con. Related to 12.4.1.
- **Action 4.2.5** *Seek funding to develop a regional recording studio to assist with the development of digital media opportunities and skills* . We suggest this would be in competition to at least two (sometimes struggling) local sound recording studios, plus the TAFE studio. We seek more detail on this item and how it might impact current commercial studios.
- **4.3.1 outdoor event infrastructure** – we support this action. We suggest site fencing or the ability to fence a site easily, and a defibrillator would be other useful inclusions in this action, in addition to other sharable and reusable resources such as seating, staging, rubbish bins, marquees etc...
- **5.1** – we support these actions, particularly 5.1.1.
- **6.2.3** we feel this benchmarking/auditing action is critical. We acknowledge it can be an onerous resourcing need but feel it is a quite essential one, particularly to gather ‘deep’ dataset every 3 or 5 years. For example, looking at the last plan – is there any evidence collected about whether it made a difference to the art or music scene trajectory over time? It would be also ideal to gather some data backwards in time to compare. Example metrics could include
 - Do we have more professional and non-professional artists now than before? If so, how many and in what art forms?
 - Do we have more live music, venues, events etc
 This appears related to item 8.2.2. (local database) and 10.1.1. (economic impact).
- **6.4** We note local original music (musical art) is not on the list for any ‘encourage DRC facilities to support’ lists. We suggest it should be – particularly events at DRTCC and WPC. There have been examples of DRTCC booking local covers musicians to support travelling original artists, for example. We would hope this could be remedied if they were focussed on supporting local musical artists instead.
- **8.1 Events** – also relevant to 22.2 - we suggest there should be stronger commitment in this plan around maintaining the current excellent event-support services provided by DRC and enhancing where possible.
- **8.2.2. Artist Database:** We support this, although caution that it would require links to key organisations and a budget for ongoing maintenance of the database. There have been other attempts at this (Orana Arts, Neighbourhood centre) that have not perpetuated.
- **12.0 Youth engagement:** we suggest the specific use of the Eisteddfod as an opportunity to enhance youth music in the city. DRC could work with SOMAD to achieve increased content there for original musical art rather than just playing cover songs to test musicianship.
- **14.1.3** We support this action, and look forward to discussing this action specifically with Council. This would be more than just additional live music however – recorded music, related media play and cultural integration of local music would need to be included.

- **16.1.1 – space.** We would consider this to be a critical item for our organisation. Part of this should be to review the current usage of existing spaces. Can they be better shared to achieve this outcome?
- **16.2.1** – we support this action wholeheartedly and would be keen to be involved in this.
- **16.2.2** – cost-effective access to public facilities is highly supported. Our members are currently effectively priced out of some publicly-owned venues in the city.

There were some minor edits suggested to Page 16 of the document:

- Our regional engagement with culture: we assume this might be annual averages, or what happened in one year eg 2018 calendar year? It would be good to make this clear in terms of supporting benchmarking (mentioned later)
- The number of people involved is not specifically stated. I assume this either means you cannot tell from the data available, or that it is very small. Either way it should be stated, and recommendations made to improve the data or number (see benchmarking, above)
- This section does not appear to acknowledge event managers and workers who are not artists but get financial benefit from cultural events – eg Audioplus, venue managers who rely upon events, hire companies.

We also feel that it is worth mentioning that of the three music-related photos in the document two are of the Triple J One Night Stand event that happened seven years ago and was an out-of-town production, and the other is of an unnamed child playing guitar. There have been many locally run music events in recent times (Under Western Skies, events at the Old Dubbo Gaol, Lust for Live, the music stage at the DREAM festival, Zoocoustic) which have featured and celebrated local artists. And we have many local musicians who could be featured (including Phil Stack and Moju if you want to have more recognisable faces). We would be happy to provide images if council does not have any on file.

Our last set of comments relate to what we thought was missing from the draft document::

- Reporting on previous plan: Are there recommended actions from the 2008 plan that remain unfulfilled (and are still relevant)?
- Links to Sustainability initiatives: There is an opportunity to partner with other parts of Council to work towards boosting environmental sustainability outcomes at cultural events in the LGA - 'green events'. As an organisation, this is something we are focussing on with increased attention, such as at the Under Western Skies Festival. There are some barriers to this still to be overcome that could be assisted with some specific attention from Council staff.



We again thank Council for your work on this draft plan and look forward to seeing some, or all, of these actions being implemented over time. We would be happy to meet with Council staff about any of our comments or partnerships regarding specific items.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Randell', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Fred Randell
President
SOMAD Inc.

