

EMBARGOED – 9.30am 22 November 2023

Have your say on Wagga Wagga's cultural, creative and economic future!

What public venue do you want in Wagga Wagga for events, shows and conferences to make our city an even better place to live?

That is the question Wagga Wagga City Council is asking the community to answer through its Cultural Precinct Engagement survey, launched in the city today (Wednesday 22 November 2023).

Our city is growing, and we have two big ideas that will create opportunities in entertainment, conferencing and cultural life as we move toward our future.

There are two potential projects that would provide increased access to arts, entertainment, conference, and cultural experiences while generating jobs and providing significant economic benefits to the community.

PROJECT A: *A new regional scale entertainment centre that supports larger entertainment opportunities as well as conventions and conferences with configurable space options and incorporates a First Nations cultural centre, located at Riverside.*

PROJECT B: *An expansion of the Civic Theatre at the Wollundry Lagoon that adds two new venue spaces to support more performances, theatre, live music concerts and workshops.*

The aim of the engagement process is to find out which of these concepts is seen as the highest priority by local residents.

Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga Councillor Dallas Tout said it is an important decision for the future direction of culture and entertainment in the city.

“We've listened to past engagement and now we need our community's help to determine what cultural infrastructure will meet the future needs and potential for our city,” Cr Tout said.

“We really want to see the community get involved in this process and let us know which concept they want us to pursue first.

“Both opportunities being put forward are relevant to our growing population which is forecast to reach 80,000 in the next 20 years.

“As one of the leading regional centres in NSW, Wagga Wagga needs facilities which provide both lifestyle and economic benefits for the community at a regional scale.”

Cultural, business conferencing and entertainment venue – Est. \$102.5 million

In June 2023, Council obtained NSW Government funding to develop a business case for a major entertainment and conferencing centre incorporating a First Nation's cultural centre within the Riverside Stage 3 precinct.

The project would create a regionally significant venue on the current Cross Street carpark site adjacent to the river, that would attract and host concerts, business conferences, trade shows and exhibitions and provide a premier space for gala dinners and award nights.

In addition, the precinct would include a First Nations Place Keeping Facility and Cultural Centre to allow the stories of Aboriginal people to be told through high quality exhibitions, education and public engagement activities.

The Riverside Precinct would be a place of celebration, storytelling, teaching, learning, reflection and will complete the final stage of our Riverside Masterplan.

Expansion of the Civic Theatre – Est. \$55.6 million

A draft masterplan has been created to explore expanding the theatre by adding two more performance and event spaces to the current 491 fixed-seat theatre, one with 328 seats and the other with 119 seats, including an option to open up to the adjoining park to cater to a larger audience.

All of this would increase the capacity of the theatre on any one night, boosting night-time economy in a bustling performing arts centre.

General Manager Peter Thompson said our community has been the biggest advocate for these projects through past community engagement.

“They would both be great additions to our city and surrounding region, generating jobs and stimulating the economy for decades to come,” Mr Thompson said.

“However, as it is highly unlikely we would be able to get external funding to pursue both projects at the same time we are seeking to understand the community's priority at this point in time.

“By giving us your feedback on the two options, it will help to direct Council's efforts in seeking this crucial funding support.

“I encourage our residents and businesses to get involved in this consultation; now is the time to have your say on how you would like to see the heart of our city grow and transform into the future.”

“Our staff will be heading out to locations and events over the next 28 days to chat with you and answer your questions face-to-face, so keep an eye on our socials to find out where and when our ‘pop-up’ information stall and drop-ins will be in your area.”

Read more about the two proposals, see some artists' impressions, and complete the survey at www.haveyoursay.wagga.nsw.gov.au

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PROJECT A



New regional entertainment and conferencing venue - Estimated cost of project - \$102.5 million (to be secured through State and Federal funding):

- A 5000-person standing capacity indoor venue for entertainment, live music, business conventions/conferences
- Variable capacity convention space from small intimate spaces to seating 1200 attendees
- A major, regional First Nation's cultural centre with a dedicated keeping place

PROJECT B



Expansion of the Civic Theatre project – Estimated cost \$55.6 million (to be secured through State and Federal funding):

- 2 new venues and maintenance of pre-existing 491 seat auditorium (Venue 1)

- Venue 2 suited for live music / festivals: 328 people seated, 774 people standing. Includes a large retractable window for indoor and outdoor events on the Wollundry Lagoon
- Venue 3 suited for intimate gigs and events

Contact 6926 9190 or media@wagga.nsw.gov.au

About Wagga Wagga City Council

Wagga Wagga City Council serves more than 68,000 residents across an area of 4825 square kilometres with an overall budget of more than \$236M.

The organisation manages more than \$2.48 billion in assets, including a 2300km road network, Wagga Wagga Airport, Livestock Marketing Centre and the Oasis Aquatic Centre.

Council also provides important community facilities such as Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Wagga Wagga City Library, Museum of the Riverina and Civic Theatre, as well as maintaining countless parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities to ensure Wagga maintains its reputation as 'the City of Good Sports'.

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