

WOLLONGONG  
ART GALLERY



*Framing* **OUR FUTURE**  
WOLLONGONG ART GALLERY STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025



*acknowledgement of country*

Wollongong Art Gallery would like to show their respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

image (cover): Lizzie Buckmaster Dove, *Pool, the Alchemy of Blue*, 2013, installation photograph  
image (left): Christian Thompson, (detail) *He of the Empowered Gaze*, 2016, c-type print on Fuji pearl metallic paper

---

# CONTENTS

Lord Mayor’s Message	4
Overview	7
Our Purpose	11
Developing Our Plan	12
Opportunities & Challenges	20
Our Way Forward	20
Our Implementation Plan	24

---

image: Rosemary Laing, (detail) *groundspeed (Red Piazza) #3*, 2001, c-type photograph

---

## LORD MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Arts and culture are vital to the growth of strong regional centres like Wollongong. We know that the most innovative and thriving centres across Australia publicly celebrate the arts and involve the broader community in creative experiences.

Wollongong Art Gallery is an important part of our cultural landscape and a place where artistic expression encourages people to consider a spectrum of historic and contemporary issues.

The Gallery is located in a beautiful old building and provides many diverse possibilities to engage our community through the production, presentation, collection and interpretation of visual arts. As a source of cultural enrichment and inspiration, the visual arts are a key focus of this Strategic Plan.

This Plan highlights a number of operational and strategic opportunities for the Gallery over the next five years that can substantially improve the visitor experience as well as the development and expansion of the art collection.

It will guide the Gallery in enhancing the cultural and creative experience in Wollongong while contributing to this city's social connectivity, economic development and community wellbeing.

**Gordon Bradbery AM**  
Lord Mayor Councillor





157  
T FIRE  
ADJACENT  
51



**ART BY ITS VERY NATURE PROMPTS A CONVERSATION OF THOUGHT, MESSAGES, MEANINGS AND EMOTIONS THAT RESONATE WITH AUDIENCES THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS.**

image: Daniel Mudie Cunningham, *Oh Industry*, 2009, digital film, 4:11 minutes duration, still image

---

## OVERVIEW

Established in 1978 Wollongong Art Gallery (WAG) has been delivering an important cultural service to the region for over 40 years and continues to be a catalyst in enlivening and enriching the cultural dimension of the city, region and state by engaging in contemporary issues of relevance, interest and public benefit.

The development of this Plan has allowed us the opportunity for some critical self-reflection enabling us to explore new ideas and approaches to what we do and how we do it - an opportunity to redefine and refocus our Vision, Mission and Purpose.

Our Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 builds on our achievements and sets six clear focus areas for the next five years to broaden our reach and deepen our influence with our diverse audiences.

This Plan was developed in consultation with our key stakeholders, including our community through several engagement processes as well as direct audience/user feedback. Effectively this engagement process and resulting strategic plan has provided a pathway for change, so that WAG can remain relevant to our stakeholders and to contemporary life in an increasingly evolving marketplace.

Over the life of this Plan, WAG will concentrate on leading more challenging and meaningful conversations, making art more accessible and stimulating to new audiences and creating new experiences through innovative, thought-provoking exhibitions and activities.

We will achieve these outcomes through imagination, distinctiveness and originality in both our exhibition program and activities; contributing broadly to artistic practice and the sector; and engaging with the diversity and complexity of our people, locally and regionally.

**John Monteleone**  
Gallery Director

**“WE BELIEVE THINGS LIKE ART HISTORY AND THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST’S INTENTION ARE INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT—BUT ONLY ALONGSIDE OTHER VOICES AND APPROACHES THAT REMIND US THAT ART, AFTER ALL, IS MADE AND CONSUMED BY REAL, COMPLEX PEOPLE—WHOSE MOTIVES MOSTLY ARE OBSCURE, EVEN TO THEMSELVES.”**

Introduction MONA. MUSEUM of OLD and NEW ART, Tasmania

image: Jenny Orchard, *Creatures of Consequence, Marvels of Thing Imagined and Miraculous Aspects of Things Existing*, exhibition installation photograph, 2019

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

## COUNCIL'S PLANNING PROCESS

The Framing Our Future WAG Strategic Plan provides contextual detail to support our cultural strategies identified within Creative Wollongong 2019-2024 and Our Wollongong 2028 Community Strategic Plan.

This Plan also sits alongside a number of intersecting ‘supporting documents’, which are connected to the Community Strategic Plan. These documents provide further detail on how we are going to achieve positive outcomes for our community.

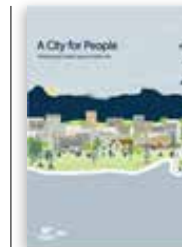
**Framing Our Future is linked to the following supporting documents:**



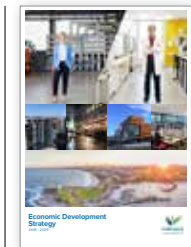
Creative Wollongong  
2019-2024



Public Art  
Strategy  
2016-2021



A City for People -  
Wollongong  
Public Spaces  
Public Life 2016



Economic  
Development  
Strategy  
2019-2029







**“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE CUTTING-EDGE CONTEMPORARY ART WHICH PROVOKES DEBATE AND CONTROVERSY.”**

Engagement participant

image: Janet Tavener, (detail) *Victorian banquet*, 2013, sugar paste, food colouring dimensions variable

---

## WAG - OUR PURPOSE

### VISION

To shape and enrich the quality of life for the residents and visitors to the region, leading the way through innovative art and cultural experiences to create an extraordinary Wollongong.

### MISSION

To make a powerful contribution to the cultural life of Wollongong, the region and NSW by collaborating with creative communities to offer extraordinary art experiences that engage, challenge and inspire diverse audiences.

### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**The following principles underpin our programs and operations:**

- » We believe the experience of our visitors is paramount
- » We imbed accessibility as a fundamental principle in everything we do
- » We commit to excellence in the acquisition, collection, preservation and presentation of art in our care, in our time and for future generations
- » We commit to the highest standards of critical thinking while engaging new methodologies and welcoming new points of view
- » We celebrate art and artists as central to our sense of who we are
- » We listen and contribute to our communities
- » We foster respect and recognition for all who visit and work with us

(I would like to see) “a lot more social media interaction to aid in promoting the gallery and its events and also more collaborative projects with regional galleries or Sydney galleries or international galleries.”

Engagement participant

image: Jan Fieldsend, *Woolgatherers' Arrangement at Coalcliff Pool*, 2016, concrete aggregate (from Coalcliff pool), coal from Coalcliff, sea sponge, wool

---

## DEVELOPING OUR PLAN

As a NSW regional gallery we are acutely aware that our prime purpose is to expose and engage our community and visitors to a range of diverse art and cultural experiences. Equally important is our role in supporting artists and creatives while promoting the continued development of innovative thinking and quality art making in Australia.

### ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

The process for developing our Strategic Plan has included Council and arts sector led community engagement to help inform specific goal setting and future planning.

Targeted WAG engagement occurred in 2017 and again in July/August 2019. This included a high school information stall, world café, a number of workshops for the general public, targeted focus groups and an on-line survey. These activities saw us engage with diverse members of the community and the creative sector across the region with 179 people participating in these engagement initiatives.

Aspects of the comprehensive community engagement process undertaken in 2018 for the development of Council's Creative Wollongong 2019-2024 cultural plan and feedback from Museums and Galleries NSW *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery*, state-wide regional gallery survey 2012, (including 489 surveys from our visitors), also informed this plan.

Draft actions and strategies were then developed based on research and the information gathered from these engagement initiatives.





**“WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE GIFT SHOP EXPANDED AND WITH MORE AVAILABLE STOCK FROM THE AREA AND YOU NEED A CAFE”**

Engagement participant

image: George Gittoes, (detail) *The Vietnamese Refractory Sprayer*, 1989, oil on canvas

---

## WHAT OUR COMMUNITY TOLD US: KEY MESSAGES

### WE ARE A DIVERSE COMMUNITY WITH VARIOUS INTERESTS, VIEWPOINTS AND EXPECTATIONS.

The Community recognised that WAG is a place where they can enjoy the opportunity to participate in the wide range of enriching education and learning programs available. They acknowledged that WAG presents a varied and exciting range of exhibitions, programs and events. They also appreciated that the programs are affordable and accessible – everyone has access to art through different program opportunities and feels welcome and represented at WAG. Our volunteer program, which provides visitor assistance in interpreting exhibitions, was also supported.

#### Things the community told us they want:

- » To create more interaction with the Arts Precinct and broader CBD
- » To see more exhibitions that engage with and tell regional stories
- » To encounter more art and ideas that challenge expectations and beliefs
- » To see more exhibitions that promote inclusion particularly for marginalised groups
- » More opportunities for young people to easily engage and actively participate
- » More opportunities to engage and learn about Aboriginal culture
- » To make visiting the Gallery a more social experience with a cafe and bigger gift shop
- » Improved marketing and communications particularly through social media platforms
- » The gallery to contribute to the night life of the city and the evening economy

**“WHILE THE PANEL RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANT ROLE WAG PLAYS IN PROVIDING CULTURAL EXPERIENCES TO THE COMMUNITY, THEY FEEL THAT THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE PROGRAMMING TO THE ‘NEXT LEVEL’ THROUGH MORE RIGOROUS ENGAGEMENT WITH CRITICAL CONCEPTUAL IDEAS AND WORKING WITH MORE CREATIVES FROM OUTSIDE.”**

Feedback from Arts Funding & Development, Create NSW

**“THE MOST COMMONLY CITED PERSONAL REASON FOR VISITING THE (WOLLONGONG) GALLERY WAS TO STIMULATE MY MIND (61%).”**

M&G NSW, Guess Who is Going to the Gallery, 2012

image: Daniel Mudie Cunningham, *True Colours*, 2009, digital film, 4:11 minutes duration, still image

---

## ENGAGING WITH THE ART SECTOR

In order to plan for the future, WAG needs to ensure that community desires, needs and expectations are addressed within the context of its role and position within the art sector.

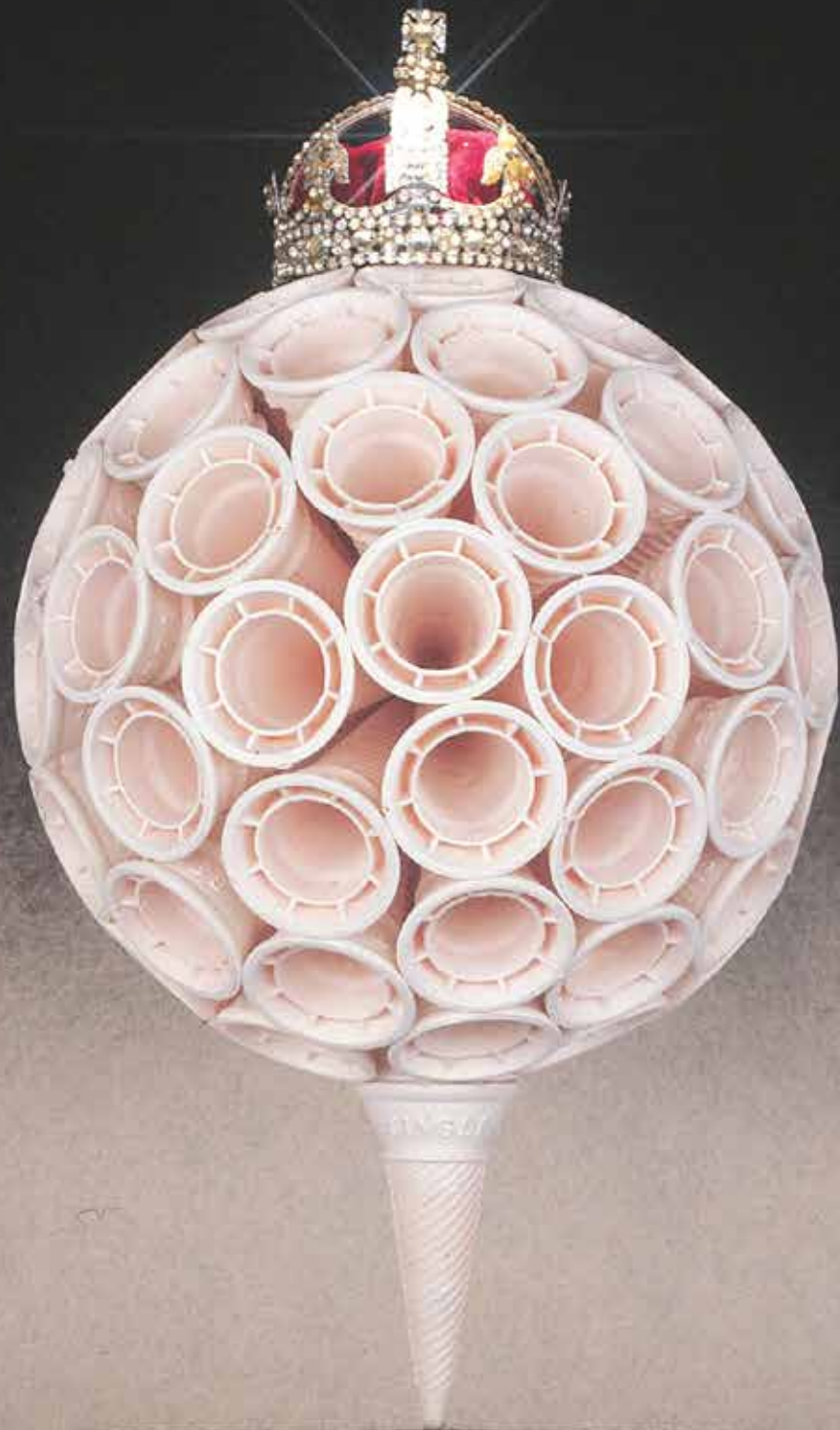
WAG is a member of a network of regional galleries around Australia whose purpose is to bring the best art and cultural material to their communities and to promote the continuing development of art through contemporary practice.

The success of our Strategic Plan is also dependent on WAG’s ability to continue to develop strong partnerships within the Arts Sector and other key stakeholder groups. This includes galleries within the sector, peak arts organisations and funding bodies.

These groups set a high standard in program development and delivery and recognise there are key drivers for galleries to both engage with their communities as well as promote the development of Australian art.







"I personally love wonder and awe. Work that challenges how we see things but also immersive experiences that change the day to day and provide a suspension of reality."

Engagement participant

image: Jacky Redgate, *Work-to-Rule IV*, 1986-1987, Cibachrome photograph

---

## WHAT THE ARTS SECTOR AND STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US: KEY MESSAGES

The important role that WAG plays in providing cultural experiences to the community, particularly with local engagement, was acknowledged by art sector funding and peak organisations. Our solid arts-based approach to community engagement was also acknowledged.

Feedback also indicated the need to strengthen our art critical approach to lift our profile and influence within the art sector further driving the impact of our program. The opportunity to more strongly emphasise the essence of artistic practice – creative thinking, collaboration, risk-taking, and innovation – was also identified.

**These areas can be further reflected and fostered in our program to the benefit of communities and the broader arts sector by:**

» Being ambitious and expanding our profile to become the creative 'centre' for Wollongong, the region and beyond

- » Leading through a stronger "outward" looking focus within the art sector and by strengthening partnership opportunities and promoting and sharing more broadly
- » Investigating how to increase/broaden our revenue base by identifying a range of other government, business and philanthropic funding opportunities
- » Creating a broader range of accessible online and offsite communication opportunities including maximising social media and digital platforms to promote our programs
- » Ensuring there is the organisational capacity to allow a more rigorous approach to program development while enhancing our community and art sector outcomes.
- » Expanding our engagement with Aboriginal communities by working together to develop projects and programs with key partners and creatives.

# ▶▶ OUR WAY FORWARD

“(more) work by and for local communities sharing stories and engaging imaginations. A variety of genres and media.”

Engagement participant

**KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES EMERGED THAT SHARE MANY COMMON THEMES WITH A FOCUS ON ENGAGING, CHALLENGING AND INSPIRING OUR AUDIENCES. THESE HAVE BEEN DIVIDED INTO SIX FOCUS AREAS: PLACE, PROGRAM, COLLECTION, VISITOR EXPERIENCE, PROFILE AND PARTNERSHIPS.**

image: Annette Bezor, *Romance is in the Air*, 1987, synthetic polymer paint, oil, gold thread on canvas

## OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

### PLACE

In contemporary society, the role of art galleries is constantly evolving. As social/cultural/ economic patterns and demands have changed, so too have people’s expectations of their visiting experiences at galleries. WAG’s role in the community, our location and our neighbours, our relationship with our audience, as well as our position as a NSW regional gallery within the art sector all inform and impact on what we program and how we present cultural material to our visitors.

### PROGRAM

WAG has the opportunity to become the ‘go-to’ location for creative engagement for locals and visitors. This requires the development and presentation of exhibitions that are drawn from the best available at a regional, national and international level. The Program needs to extend into more accessible hours with a focus on our diverse community, including Aboriginal people, young people, people with disability and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

In a highly competitive marketplace and through complex funding models we must continually find new and more dynamic ways to tell stories that resonate with and engage broad audiences while encouraging conversation through diverse perspectives.

### ART COLLECTION

The collection is a dynamic community and cultural asset that underpins many of our exhibitions and programs. As such we should take every opportunity to explore how to further develop the collection through artwork acquisition and gift.

There is also an opportunity to take advantage of the digital future to assist with collection management and collection presentation.

To ensure the conservation and integrity of the artworks, industry standard exhibition and storage spaces and HVAC climate control system as well as resourcing for an ongoing art conservation and maintenance program are essential.

Managing these aspects of the collection opens opportunities for us to borrow significant work from other galleries and institutions and the potential for WAG to host major national and international exhibitions. Wollongong City Council has demonstrated significant support for the collection over many years. Continued ongoing support will greatly benefit and enhance this important community and cultural asset and WAG’s ability to safeguard the integrity of the collection into the future.

Romance is in the Air





## ▶▶ OUR WAY FORWARD

"I like to feel engaged and uplifted, exposed to new ideas and different viewpoints. I would like to see the top terrace used as an entertainment/ café area. This could also be a space for an artists' shop/book shop."

Engagement participant

image: Rosie Deacon, *Fashion Forest Seduction*, 2019, installation photograph

---

## OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

A recurring theme through the engagement process and visitor feedback, has been that we need to provide a stronger social experience to our visitors. We are one of the few regional galleries of this scale to not have an in-house Café and retail shop which impacts on service delivery and visitor experience.

Recent cultural sector surveys have shown that an in-house Café and retail shop are important pull factors for members of the public visiting galleries and encourages them to stay longer, enhancing the social aspect of their experience.

### PROFILE

While developing high quality exhibitions and programs is essential to WAG, securing a leadership place within the art sector and how we communicate that message is equally important.

Digital and social media has fundamentally changed the way people access, absorb and disseminate information and we must have 'in house' capacity to meet these changing needs. Essential to this is the effective use of our gallery website and Facebook, as well as developing our profiles with platforms such Instagram and Twitter.

### PARTNERSHIPS

We can build our reputation and brand through strategic, regional and community partnerships by broadening our stakeholder base and developing new approaches to building networks. This includes artists, collectors, galleries, educational organisations and the broader arts-sector and community.

image: Stephen Bird, *Bastard Son of Royal Doulton*, 2015, artist installation photograph

---

## OUR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2020 - 2025

We encourage the use of the Gallery as a space where creativity and innovation grow and thrive, ideas flourish and where the Gallery will be a vital part of the community.

We promote opportunities for engagement with community in a spirit of openness to encourage access and participation.

The opportunities and challenges identified present us with a set of six clear focus areas for moving forward as set out in a schedule of tangible actions to be delivered through the following

Implementation Plan over the life of this Strategic Plan. It will provide WAG the pathway to make a powerful contribution to the cultural life of Wollongong, the region and NSW and offer extraordinary art experiences that engage, challenge and inspire our diverse audiences.





# 1.PLACE

To enable WAG to offer the best arts and cultural experiences, we will invest in the development of the WAG building and surrounds and in programming that connects us more closely to a sense of place.

PLACE						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
1.1	Improve our site-based social experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• City Works</li> <li>• Project Delivery</li> <li>• Open Space and Environment</li> <li>• ISP</li> </ul>				
1.2	Investigate improvements to WAG building and infrastructure to ensure fit for future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• City Works</li> <li>• Project Delivery</li> <li>• City Strategy</li> </ul>				
1.3	Investigate programming opportunities that respond to our building, surrounds and the stories that bring people and place together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> </ul>				

## 2.PROGRAM

WAG's program is at the heart of the service we deliver to our community and other visitors. Ensuring stories that are relevant and resonate with our community and diverse audience, are accessible and presented in varied, interesting and challenging ways, is central to the success of this strategic plan. Balancing cutting-edge approaches in

programming and making them accessible to the broader community is fundamental to audience participation, community engagement and social inclusion. Supporting artists and cultural production and providing innovative and transformative cultural experiences will remain our focus as we program into the future.

PROGRAM						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
2.1	Stimulate creative practice through presenting exhibitions of quality and significance to Wollongong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> <li>• Library &amp; Community Services</li> </ul>				
2.2	Engage new and alternative programming methods to tell community stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• City Works</li> <li>• Project Delivery</li> <li>• City Strategy</li> </ul>				
2.3	Increase our commitment to engaging and presenting local and South-Coast Aboriginal stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Community Development</li> </ul>				
2.4	Develop programs that have a social and cultural impact, promote social inclusion, connection and well-being in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> </ul>				

# 3.COLLECTION

The WAG art collection is a dynamic community and cultural asset that underscores many of our exhibitions and programs. The collection contributes to the cultural enrichment of the local and broader community and is an important resource for teaching, learning and

research. The development, preservation, conservation and curatorial interpretation of the collection is fundamental to WAG's role as custodian of this important asset for current audiences and future generations.

COLLECTION						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
3.1	Continue to interpret our impressive art collection in new ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> <li>• Library &amp; Community Services</li> </ul>				
3.2	Develop capacity to conserve and maintain the collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• City Works</li> <li>• Project Delivery</li> <li>• Finance</li> </ul>				
3.3	Develop capacity to increase collection holdings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> </ul>				

## 4. VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Providing an environment where respect and recognition for all who visit and work with us is a fundamental principle in everything we do. Listening, responding and contributing to our communities

and providing access and an active and engaged visitor experience underpins all aspects of our program planning and development, now and into the future.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
4.1	Imbed accessibility as a fundamental principle in everything we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> </ul>				
4.2	Ensure staff and volunteers are prepared in their ability to communicate to diverse people on challenging topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> </ul>				
4.3	Expand public programs to provide better access, connect people and encourage participation and new audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> <li>• IT</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> </ul>				
4.4	Evaluate social, community and cultural impact of programs on visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Engagement</li> </ul>				

# 5.PROFILE

Key to the ongoing success of WAG, is how it is positioned and viewed within both the community and the art sector. To ensure its relevance and standing moving forward, WAG must take advantage of all the tools available to it, including new digital platforms.

These will encourage people to participate and will build WAG's reputation and promote our distinctive brand, through focused and targeted marketing of our quality cultural production and services.

PROFILE						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
5.1	Advance WAG's reputation ensuring it continues to remain relevant in a dynamic Arts Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>				
5.2	Expand our marketing and communication profile by implementing new methods to communicate, market and promote WAG's programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>				
5.3	Promote and represent arts and culture as an integral component of community life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> </ul>				

# 6.PARTNERSHIPS

Constructive strategic partnerships and collaborations provide opportunities to combine and share expertise and resources, develop new sources of funding, expand capacity and will help grow WAG's customer base, as well as organisational networks and relationships.

PARTNERSHIPS						
NUMBER	STRATEGY	DELIVERY STREAM	SHORT TERM 1-2 YRS	MID TERM 3-4 YRS	LONG TERM 4-5 YRS	ONGOING
6.1	Investigate strategic partnerships with artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> </ul>				
6.2	Seek and support professional development collaborations and or partnerships with external organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> <li>• Cultural Development</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> <li>• Community Development</li> </ul>				
6.3	Investigate opportunities for funding and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> </ul>				
6.4	Investigate and / or consolidate community partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG</li> </ul>				

