

Creative Climate Cities Profile
SYDNEY



GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

26.18 sq. km



POPULATION

242,229



GDP

AUS \$131.6 billion

CITY STRATEGY LINKS

Environmental Action 2016-21 Strategy and Action Plan

Creative City: Cultural Policy and Action Plan 2014-24



Welcome to Sydney



Culture Fact

Sydney is home to one of the oldest living cultures in the world. With Aboriginal Australians arriving over 50,000 years before Europeans arrived in Australia. The environment is at the core of Aboriginal Cultures throughout Australia.



Climate Fact

The City of Sydney has reduced its carbon emissions by 20% between 2006 and 2017 despite a growth in its population.

Introduction

Sydney, capital of New South Wales and one of Australia's largest cities, is known for iconic landmarks such as Sydney Opera House, a masterpiece of 20th-century architecture, and the Harbour Bridge, one of Australia's grandest engineering feats. Sydney is a fusion of cultural, artistic, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities formed by waves of immigration. This cultural makeup has given rise to a vibrant mix of musical, theatrical, visual and literary expressions, and major outdoor events. Sydney New Year's Eve is an annual event viewed by more than 1 million people around the harbour foreshore and an estimated 1 billion people worldwide via television and online broadcasts. The City's Lunar Festival is attended by up to 1.3 million people and is one of the largest celebrations of the lunar New Year in the world.

Aboriginal peoples have always lived in Sydney and there are about 29 clan groups of the Sydney metropolitan area referred to collectively as the Eora Nation¹. Music, dance and theatre are an important means of cultural, political and spiritual expression² and various learning opportunities and initiatives have led to an extraordinary variety of art practices, exhibitions, galleries and artists' cooperatives³.

Environmental Ambition

Sydney's natural beauty, from unspoilt beaches to public gardens and landscapes are home to possums, kangaroos, wombats, flying foxes, and long-nosed bandicoot⁴. Sydney Harbour, the deepest natural harbour in the world, and Circular Quay port are hubs of human recreation and waterside life, with species such as green sea turtles, little penguins,

¹Barani. <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aboriginal-people-and-place/>

²Barani. <http://www.sydneybarani.com.au/themes/visual-arts>

³City of Sydney. <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/sydneys-history/aboriginal-history>

⁴The Wildlife Diaries. <https://www.thewildlifediaries.com/sydney-animals-wildlife-in-sydney/>



Australian fur Seal and humpback whales all gracing the local waters⁵. However these precious habitats are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, including fires and rising sea-level; Australia's population is concentrated in coastal areas and its tourism industry depends on a healthy Great Barrier Reef and other fragile ecosystems. In November 2018 intense low pressure system delivered Sydney's wettest November – more than one month's worth of rain fell in just two hours across Sydney.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore – currently the longest serving Lord Mayor of Sydney – has committed to a target of net zero emissions by 2050 and launched the city's climate adaptation strategy. This strategy is part of a series of environmental strategies for the city – covering themes such as renewable energy, decentralised water, and sustainable waste management. Sydney now has the opportunity to make its diverse arts and cultural community a leader in its vision to be a 'green and resilient' city⁶.

Connecting Creative & Climate Action in Sydney

1. Creative Programmes & Campaigns

Creative content and activities that engage audiences on themes of climate and the environment

- Every year, the City of Sydney seeks expressions of interest to create new work as part of its Art & About public art programme.

The opportunity is open to anyone with a big idea that will create a moment of surprise and delight in the urban space, including major installations, intimate exchanges, and thought-provoking exhibitions in unusual spaces. Projects inspired by environmental themes include:

- **Wasteland** (2018) by Mundane Matters. Suspended from the ceiling of Customs House, 120 kg of ocean plastic rescued from the Great Barrier Reef was reimaged as 2,255 objects that resemble oranges. Wasteland addressed two significant environmental issues: plastic pollution and food waste; reminding viewers of three vital principles: reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- **The Blue Trees** (2016): an environmental art installation drawing attention to global deforestation that used living trees painted bright blue using a biologically safe water-based colourant. Artist Konstantin Dimopoulos transformed the trees in Pirrama Park to create The Blue Trees in Sydney for the first time. Visitors were encouraged to share a selfie at The Blue Trees and include their thoughts on the environment.
- The **Creative Hoardings** program aims to transform the visual impact of construction sites and enliven surrounding streets, whilst providing opportunities for artists to showcase their work on large-scale visible locations. Construction sites in high-traffic areas must cover their hoardings in art by a living Australian artist, or historical images relevant to the area where the hoarding is located. Developers can commission their own artist, or they can

⁵Sydney Marine Park. <http://www.marine.org.au/sydney-s-marine-life.html>

⁶C40. https://www.c40.org/blog_posts/lord-mayor-of-sydney-clover-moore-on-a-bold-new-plan-for-a-green-and-resilient-future

use artworks licensed by the City of Sydney, free of charge. Work focused on environmental issues includes:

- **Glacier** by Timothy Harland, a photographic exploration of the Perito Moreno glacier in Patagonia.
- **Birds of Australia** by Egg Picnic (Camila De Gregorio and Christopher Macaluso), comprising illustrations of critically endangered, vulnerable and common native Australian bird.
- The **Australian Museum**, based in Sydney, is committed to raising awareness of climate change, recognising that: “climate change poses a serious environmental, economic and social threat to our current way of life and to the security of future generations across the globe”⁷. With collections spanning both the natural and human worlds, the Museum is ideally placed to demonstrate climate change impacts on ecology and people through exhibitions, education programs, outreach in the wider community and online resources. The Australian Museum is a founding partner of the **Sustainable Destination Partnership** and is targeting **carbon neutrality** by 2020⁸.

2. Resources & Support

Investment, training and materials that support environmental knowledge and practical action

- Sydney’s Cultural Policy references the City’s commitment to providing open forums for discussion and debate on future issues for Sydney. The open forums are organised across three strands: City Conversations, City Talks, and Design Excellence. They typically include international thought-

leaders and local experts, and provide a mechanism for building community awareness and engagement on major social, cultural, environmental and economic issues that affect urban development throughout the world.

- The City of Sydney’s Major Events and Festivals team strives to deliver the most sustainable events of their kind in the world. With a scope including Sydney New Year’s Eve, Sydney Christmas, Sydney Lunar Festival and Art & About, the team is undertaking a range of initiatives to make City of Sydney events a demonstration of sustainability best practice. The City is also using this experience to build guidelines for the cultural organisations they sponsor or partner with.
- The City also supports cross-departmental sustainability initiatives within the city. A new governance process has led to stronger interdepartmental collaborations that help ensure risks and resource implications (e.g. financial, environmental, etc.) across work areas are considered before a project is sent for approval.

3. Partnerships & Innovation

Diverse disciplines and communities sharing and co-developing ideas and resources that accelerate environmental action

- The integrated cultural evaluation framework recognises that all parts of the City of Sydney can have a critical impact on the viability of cultural activity in Sydney. The City ensures all council decisions identify cultural impacts and opportunities alongside social, economic and environmental issues. This allows new opportunities, competing issues, or policy conflicts to be appropriately identified and appraised.

⁷The Australian Museum. <https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/climate-change/>

⁸ The Australian Museum. "Sustainability Action Plan 2019 - 2021"

- The City of Sydney collaborated with C40 to create the **Making Sydney a Sustainable Destination** plan which incorporates actions for the cultural sector. A key program to emerge from this is the **Sustainable Destination Partnership** which is using the collective impact model to drive improved environmental outcomes across Sydney's accommodation providers and cultural institutions.
- Green Square town centre has received national recognition as one of Australia's most sustainable communities. The town centre has been awarded a 6 Star rating from the Green Building Council of Australia – the highest possible rating that can be awarded. This represents 'world leadership' in the areas of governance, liveability, economic prosperity, environment and innovation.
- City of Sydney has launched a new business pledge that will dramatically reduce single-use plastics, including plastic bottles, straws, throwaway cups and food utensils. More than 30 organisations have so far taken the pledge, including city events and cultural venues such as Sydney Opera House.

4. Policy & Strategy

Guiding policy and strategy frameworks that drive climate and environmental action, investment and accountability

- Sydney's Cultural Policy is framed by eight Foundation Principles, one of which describes cultural and creative

activity contributing to community concerns, covering economic, social, behavioural and environmental objectives. The City aims to catalyse civic participation and promote stewardship of place to preserve cultural heritage, explore the challenges of climate change and support economic development. The Cultural Policy sets the following strategic goal to embedding sustainability into its cultural infrastructure: '1.18 Develop coordinated, strategic placemaking plans for each village that integrate cultural, economic, social and environmental actions'.

- The City's Public Art Policy provides a framework of principles to support the City's commitment to public art in strategic planning, and the implementation of Sustainable Sydney 2030. The 'City Art Public Art Strategy' is the implementation plan for the Public Art Policy and includes eight guiding principles for public art across the local government area. All eight principles are underpinned by the overarching vision for a sustainable city based on universal access for all. Each principle addresses sustainability through different lenses, including environmental, cultural, economic and social sustainability⁸. In order to ensure an integrated approach to the creation and management of public art, the City Art Public Art Strategy has been developed to dovetail with current city-wide strategies including the Liveable Green Network – a plan to make the local area as green, global and connected as possible.

⁸City of Sydney. https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/139810/Final-Version-City-Art-Public-Art-Strategy.pdf

Highlights

1

Creative Programmes & Campaigns

The City of Sydney seeks expressions of interest to create new work as part of its Art & About public art programme. Environmentally-themed work includes: Wasteland (Mundane Matters) and The Blue Trees (Konstantin Dimopoulos).

2

Partnerships & Innovation

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Resources & Support

The City of Sydney's Major Events and Festivals team strives to deliver the most sustainable events of their kind in the world. The City is also using this experience to build guidelines for the cultural organisations they sponsor or partner with.

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Policy & Strategy

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Where Next?

Spotlight

MAJOR EVENTS & FESTIVALS TEAM

The City of Sydney's Major Events and Festivals team is working hard to reduce the environmental impacts of events across the city, including working with environmental consultants to conduct Event Sustainability Training for the Major Events and Festivals team, and also to conduct a gap analysis of the City's event sustainability management system. Actions for reducing the environmental impact of events include:

- eliminating the use of disposable coffee cups;
- reducing water bottle consumption on event sites from 8,820 to 280 during Sydney Christmas and Sydney Lunar Festival by installing water stations;
- using reusable toggles in the place of plastic cable ties on all event-related fencing and banners, leading to cost and time savings;
- using the procurement process to build clauses into all contractual agreements with City event suppliers, requiring compliance with sustainability standards;
- the new suite of Sydney Christmas infrastructure that utilises low-voltage LED lights and stainless-steel construction wherever budget permits, ensuring a longer life-span and minimising the need for repairs or replacement.

A number of opportunities have been identified:

1. **Share good practice**

Research creative and cultural initiatives across the city which engage with environmental themes and practices, making them publicly available through an online resource. This will encourage new collaborations and good practice exchange and help build environmental knowledge, awareness and inspiration within the sector. It would also recognise traditional ecological, aboriginal and local knowledge and encourage citizens and practitioners to appreciate local culture, ethics and skills.

2. **Collaborate**

Organise a regular meeting or working group to support ongoing collaboration between cultural and environmental departments and building on the success of the [Sustainable Destination Partnership](#) – a flagship collaboration with all the major cultural institutions (and others) in Sydney on improving environmental performance. Meetings will support implementation of city strategy and topics could include: environmental management advice for cultural buildings and events; public art commissions; artist advocacy; and citizen outreach and engagement activities. Connecting with local creative and environmental businesses, academics, community leaders and other city stakeholders could produce new knowledge, partnerships and resources.

3. **Connect environmental & cultural strategy**

Sydney's cultural Strategy reinforces its Aboriginal history, culture and its contemporary expression. The city's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and contemporary cultures are unique, visible and a central source of cultural riches. The city's diversity brings rich cultural expression and opportunities for connecting culture, social justice and environmental issues, developing projects and collaborations informed by principles of sustainable development.

4. **Build the business case**

Sydney has worked extensively on sustainable events; some of these learnings could be developed and tailored to the city's cultural buildings. Work with environmental experts to develop the business case for investing in cultural buildings to reduce their environmental impacts. This could include carbon and cost-saving projects such as building upgrades, low-carbon technologies and staff training etc.

5. **Support practical environmental action within public art**

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With special thanks to:

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City of Sydney.



Julie's Bicycle
SUSTAINING CREATIVITY

—
BOP
Consulting