



**CULTURAL  
ACTIVATION  
STRATEGY**

2022-2026

**camden**  
council



**Cover Art**  
*untitled* | Chanel Bohol



# CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MAYORAL MESSAGE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE FOUR KEY PILLARS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CONSULTING ON CULTURE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ABOUT CAMDEN</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CONTEXT WITHIN THE ARTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW CULTURE IS SUPPORTED BY COUNCIL</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PILLAR 1: CULTURAL ACTIVATION</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PILLAR 2: CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PILLAR 3: CULTURAL DESTINATION</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PILLAR 4: CULTURAL ADVOCACY</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>KEY CULTURAL ASSETS</b>	<b>27</b>
CAMDEN TOWN CENTRE CULTURAL PRECINCT	27
CAMDEN CIVIC CENTRE	27
ALAN BAKER ART GALLERY	29
LIBRARY SERVICES	31
CAMDEN BICENTENNIAL EQUESTRIAN PARK	32
CAMDEN TOWN FARM	33
JULIA RESERVE YOUTH PRECINCT	33



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Camden Council acknowledges the Dharawal people as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

# MAYORAL MESSAGE

Camden is exciting, evolving and filled with a vibrancy that celebrates the rich cultural heritage and diversity of our unique community. With growth comes opportunity to showcase emerging traditions, cultures and artforms as a core part of our community identity.

The Cultural Activation Strategy will provide a framework for the delivery of cultural activity in Camden. Council will work with key stakeholders, government and the local creative community to deliver on key strategic outcomes, while letting the community and visitors know we are an exciting cultural destination.

Arts and culture play an important role in bringing people together. We are excited to provide more opportunities for our community to engage with arts and culture and help support the sector after a challenging period.

The Cultural Activation Strategy formalises our commitment to the arts, and sets out the ambitions and goals we hold for Camden as a cultural centre moving forward.



*Theresa Fedeli*

Councillor Theresa Fedeli  
Mayor of Camden



# INTRODUCTION

The NSW Government Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025 defines culture as ‘the production, distribution and participation in creativity by the New South Wales community and visitors, and the reflection and expression of its customs, traditions, heritage and social character’. It includes the visual arts, crafts, media arts, performing arts, heritage, museums, archives, libraries, publishing, sound recording, film, audio visual, television, radio and digital arts. It also includes creativity in the public realm, such as design of the built environment and public spaces.<sup>1</sup>

However, culture means different things to different people and for the purpose of this strategy we define ‘Cultural Activation’ as the means of engaging the community with culture in everyday life. This includes delivering opportunities for connection through high quality events and programs that are vibrant and culturally diverse, and the provision of well-resourced facilities and support for the cultural community.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Government (2021) Cultural Infrastructure Plan

The Camden Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) establishes a vision for Camden over the next 20 years with reference to Camden's evolving character and unique heritage. Key to realising the vision of vibrant and connected centres and creative spaces, as laid out in the LSPS, is a plan to deliver on cultural infrastructure provision, promotion and delivery of cultural education programs, increased opportunities for social connection, and increased activation of Camden's places, both urban and rural.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework which supports arts and cultural activity in Camden and to identify how Council will foster innovation, curate high quality cultural experiences, support cultural development and enterprise, and showcase cultural talent within Camden.

This strategy also outlines avenues for space provision, programs to support vibrant and connected places across the Camden LGA, and pathways to advocate for infrastructure provision for arts and culture, contributing to the realisation of the vision to create town centres and cultural spaces which are inclusive, and well utilised as Camden grows.

# THE FOUR KEY PILLARS

*“Within Local Government culture encompasses our diverse heritage and avenues of expression through arts, architecture, history, language, education, the built and natural environment, leisure, work and daily life. People use culture to express their fundamental character and aspirations.”*

- ALGA Arts and Culture Position Statement 2020





### Cultural Activation

The role that Council will play to support cultural activity in Camden including the development of a program of activations, local production of temporary and permanent public art, and provision of spaces for creative enterprises.

### Cultural Development

As Camden grows supporting emerging communities, arts and cultural groups and existing arts and cultural practitioners is essential.

Support will include a program of professional development that builds skills and sector capacity, and networking opportunities to assist our creative community to realise their aspirations.

### Cultural Destination

Develop and promote Camden LGA as a key destination for a diverse range of cultural tourism experiences from heritage to contemporary.

This will include locally made cultural product, workshops and programs, exhibitions and services to create a visitor marketing approach consistent with broader Camden destination marketing.

### Cultural Advocacy

Council will deliver our vision for culture through collaboration and partnerships with community, business, education and the arts and cultural sector.

We will proactively advocate for infrastructure provision, revitalisation of existing cultural and community facilities, servicing and funding for arts and culture in Camden at a local, regional, state and federal level.



# CONSULTING ON CULTURE

In preparing the Cultural Activation Strategy, feedback from the community has been considered through consultations undertaken as part of major strategy development and capturing feedback from the general public and creatives through event surveys and engagement in the last three years.

Engagement undertaken included:

- Regular Artist Network consultation;
- Public and stakeholder surveys at events and workshops;
- Feedback through public programs;
- Consultation and engagement activities at large community events;
- Direct one on one consultations; and
- Informal and formal stakeholder engagement.

The engagement provided insight into the local communities' needs, and the following key themes were identified:

- Desire for increased entertainment options including both day and night-time activity;
- The value of history and heritage for Camden and the promotion of contemporary Camden as a destination with rural landscapes, trails, history and culture;
- Support and development of creative and arts networks;
- Re-imagining and revitalising existing cultural events and facilities;
- Local cultural production to support the production, curation of works that are relevant and reflect community values building on and attracting new audiences;
- Profiling and promotion of creative industry;
- Expansion of a diverse cultural and public program which provides opportunity for all ages to engage with the arts and arts education;
- Creation of exciting public spaces, providing affordable and accessible art making spaces; and
- Opportunities for partnerships which support growth and development of the arts through re-purposing and re-imagining of public and private space.



# ABOUT CAMDEN

The traditional custodians of Camden's land are the Dharawal people and their spiritual and cultural connection to Country is acknowledged as a fundamental part of the area and cultural context for Camden.

Camden sits at the intersection of three Aboriginal Nations boundaries including the Darug to the north, the Gundungurra to the west and south and the Dharawal to the south and east. This connection long pre-dates European settlement and despite modification of the land through urban development, many places of significance remain.

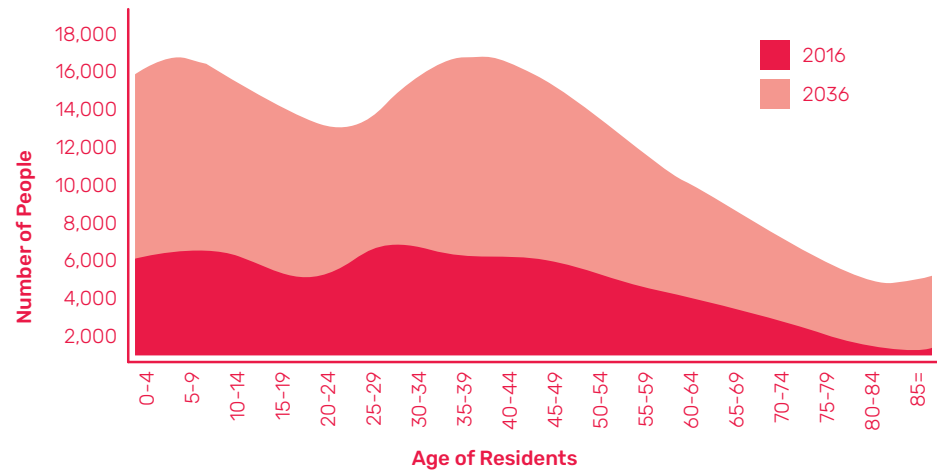
Camden today is known for its heritage features and sprawling rural landscapes juxtaposed with the rapid growth which sees Camden as one of the fastest growing local government areas (LGAs) in Australia.

Camden LGA is located on the outskirts of Sydney approximately 60kms from the Sydney CBD and only 20 kms from the new Nancy-Bird Walton Airport and associated Bradfield Aerotropolis.

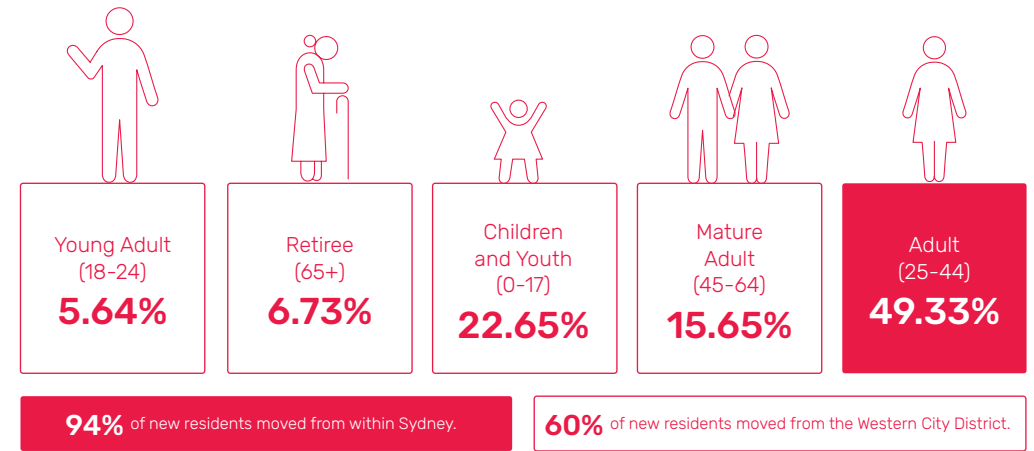
The South West Growth Area (SWGA) is located within Camden's northern boundary with Leppington identified as a strategic centre in the Western Sydney District Plan.

Camden's rapid growth is accompanied by an increasing diversity which presents opportunities to showcase and support the development of increasingly diverse cultural expression, contributing to Camden's evolving community identity.

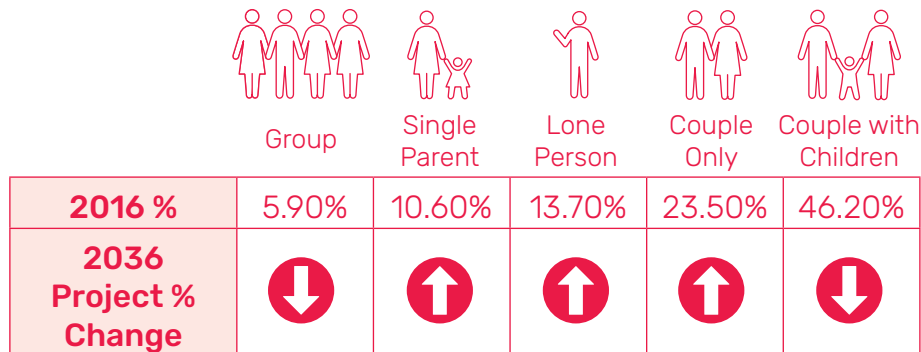
## Age Profile (2016 & 2036)



## New Residents (NET 2011-2016)



## Projected Household Structure (2016 & 2036)



**24,019** households in 2016.

**77,350** households projected in 2036.

## Diversity



## Education (2016)

	Camden	Camden Trend	Western City
<b>University Qualification</b>	12.4%	↑	11%
<b>Vocational Educational Training</b>	26.4%	↑	23%

Source: Camden Council Local Strategic Planning Statement (March 2020)



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A document review identified key recurrent themes across local, state and federal government policies of supporting social inclusion, employment generation, improved health and mental wellbeing, place activation and economic growth.

The strategy aligns with the key principles identified in the following key documents developed at a local, state and federal government level:

- Camden Community Strategic Plan
- Camden Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020
- Camden Destination Management Plan 2016
- Camden Town Centre Urban Design Framework 2018
- Create NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework 2015
- Create NSW Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025
- ALGA Arts and Culture Position Statement 2020
- Mapping Arts and Culture in Western Sydney 2018 - Prepared for Create NSW



# CONTEXT WITHIN THE ARTS

In 2020, ALGA released a position statement outlining the pivotal role Local Government plays in the development of the Creative sector as an essential element to the livability and economic sustainability of all Australian communities.

The statement reiterates that arts, culture and creative industry are highly valued by Local Government as an essential economic driver for visitor, regional and night-time economies, as well as community mental health and social cohesion means of building community resilience.

Acknowledged within the statement is the value of local government investment in culture and heritage, to support and finance galleries, libraries, performing arts centres, museums, festivals, place activations and local artists and arts organisations. Also of relevance is the support for arts opportunities as an alternative engagement for the young people who are not engaged in traditional activities such as sport.

This investment delivers important economic, social, cultural and health outcomes that bring richness and meaning to individuals' lives and strengthens communities by:

- Building community cohesion, wellbeing, and resilience;
- Creating attractive places to live, work and visit;
- Helping to retain populations where drift to cities is a tendency; and
- Highlighting creative talents, natural assets, and unique cultures.

In 2018, Create NSW released the Mapping Arts and Culture in Western Sydney report which identifies the gaps and barriers within the cultural landscape of Western Sydney. Although this report is regional, the gaps identified are relevant for Camden. These include:

- The need for making spaces – all types of making spaces;
- Building a vibrant and robust private sector to relieve reliance on public sector and help diversify opportunity for artists;
- Developing audiences – both in Western Sydney and elsewhere;
- Improving the transport network – in order to decrease travel times across the arts and culture network;
- Training and development of business skills and acumen of artists.

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“...culture, cultural infrastructure and cultural precincts are key to creating great places that bring people together – great places to live, work, visit and do business.”

- Create NSW Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2021

# HOW CULTURE IS SUPPORTED BY COUNCIL

With an understanding that culture is integral for visitor, regional and night-time economies, Council funds facilities such as Camden Civic Centre, Camden Libraries, The Alan Baker Art Gallery, and delivers public programs such as exhibitions, workshops and activities that celebrate culture and bring people together.

In partnership with local community arts groups, special interest networks, individual artists and creatives, Council supports initiatives that offer opportunities for the growing population and culturally diverse people to engage with the arts, to create places of interest and communities that are cohesive and connected.

Camden celebrates festivals of place, large community activations, and smaller place activations that bring people together, build the local and visitor economy, provide opportunity

for artists to gain employment, develop new skills, engage in creative industry, raise awareness of product and develop connections with local business.

Council will continue to deliver:

- Programs that support education and development of new skills;
- Activations that reflect the people, history and culture of Camden;
- Community celebrations that bring our diverse community together;
- Opportunities to enjoy healthy living within our built and natural landscape; and
- Opportunities to engage, participate, learn and celebrate.



Camden Council supports the promotion of a Creative Camden, providing opportunities for local community to access and participate in arts and cultural activities, and various projects and events throughout the Camden LGA to activate our cultural venues, creative and open spaces.

**Join the Creative Camden Directory for future opportunities.**





# PILLAR 1: CULTURAL ACTIVATION

The role that Council will play to support cultural activity in Camden including the development of a program of activations, production of temporary and permanent public art, and provision of spaces for creative enterprise.

## Program of Activations and Events

- Delivery of a high-quality program of activations across the Camden LGA which reflect the Camden community (existing and emerging) including events, live music, temporary public art and pop-up activations.
- Identify spaces across the Camden LGA for pop-up activations, including vacant or underutilised public spaces.
- Proactively identify opportunities for activations outside the Camden Town Centre.
- Develop programs which support mutually beneficial cultural activity in private enterprise.
- Leverage off major events in the Camden LGA.
- Support local artists and creative and cultural networks in the delivery of the program, offering opportunities to curate programs, and create employment opportunities in Council-coordinated activities and through community partnerships.
- Develop partnerships with key stakeholders to reinvigorate and support existing cultural events and exhibitions.



## Delivery of Public Art

- Develop a Public Art Strategy and Implementation Plan for temporary and permanent public art across the Camden LGA, which supports the creation of a public art trail.
- Inclusion of temporary public art in the program of activations.
- Research links and stories to ensure delivered public art is reflective of the Camden community and its cultural heritage.
- Build on existing relationships with key internal and external stakeholders to support the Public Art Policy Framework.

## Develop and Enhance Camden's Cultural Infrastructure

- Better understand Camden's Cultural Infrastructure requirements through the development of a Cultural and Social Infrastructure Plan.

- Reinvigorate the Civic Centre through a capital works program and rebrand of the venue to identify as a cultural hub for Camden.
- Investigate the role that Camden's libraries play as spaces of cultural activation.
- Identify and prioritise opportunities to expand the cultural precinct, network and cultural infrastructure through partnerships with government, community and private sectors.
- Collect developer and council funds to deliver required infrastructure in greenfield areas of Camden LGA.
- Investigate opportunities to repurpose existing council infrastructure to support cultural activity and programs including, but not limited to, artist in residence initiatives.

## Priority Projects

Reinvigorate the Civic Centre to provide more accessible, affordable, flexible spaces for the delivery of high-quality cultural programs and activities that engage new audiences.

Develop a Public Art Strategy and Implementation Plan for temporary and permanent public art across the Camden LGA.





## Priority Projects

Activate Camden's high streets through the extension of the #camdenlive project, establishing a regular Kerbside Exhibition and Live Performance program including temporary art installations to showcase local creative and artistic talent.



# PILLAR 2: CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

As Camden grows, support for established and emerging communities, arts and cultural groups and existing arts and cultural practitioners is essential. Support will include a program of professional development that builds skills and sector capacity, and networking opportunities to assist our creative community to realise their aspirations.

## Understanding Our Creative Community

- Seek to better understand Camden's local creative community and their needs through a structured program of engagement.
- Expand the Artist Register to better understand the skills and services offered by Camden's creative community.

## Supporting Our Creative Community

- Seek opportunities for partnership for the delivery of a program of cultural development including opportunities for networking, business establishment and professional development.
- Effectively communicate to the community through the Artist Register, and more broadly, the available opportunities for development.
- Develop a Cultural Grants Program which includes seed funding for programs and events which support cultural development.

## Celebrating Our Creative Community

- Proactively engage with local creatives in the establishment of content for activations and tourism projects.
- Development of a creative@camden website which showcases Camden's creative community and connects them with opportunities for engagement and development.

## Priority Projects

Develop the Camden Artists Register as an online resource that captures details of the cultural landscape, providing a resource that links artists with opportunities for skill development, local employment, and collaboration between creative enterprises and private businesses.

Develop a program for seed funding programs which support cultural development and establishment of cultural and creative businesses.

Develop a website which facilitates easy engagement of local creatives and showcases their talents and available services to encourage mutually beneficial connections with local businesses and enterprises.



# PILLAR 3: CULTURAL DESTINATION

**Develop and promote Camden LGA as a key destination for a diverse range of cultural tourism experiences from heritage to contemporary. This will include locally made cultural products, workshops and programs, exhibitions and services to create a visitor marketing approach consistent with broader Camden destination marketing to promote Camden.**

- Develop new channels for communication and promotion through social media for key cultural assets including the Alan Baker Art Gallery and Camden Civic Centre.
- Further develop the #camdenlive tagline for use in promotion of cultural activations, facilities and products to encourage greater awareness of local product and create a signature identity for Camden that attracts activity and supports city marketing.
- Development of Camden specific collateral and communication channels including the development of online resources that support cultural tourism, including Camden tourism website and Camden Visitor Guide.
- Work collaboratively with the local creative and arts community to facilitate the development of packages that promote unique cultural products and services to encourage cultural tourism.
- Develop programs of activation in consultation with key community stakeholders at Camden's open space assets including Camden Town Farm and Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park.

## Priority Projects

Further develop #camdenlive, building on the #camdenmade, #camdenlove and #camdenbought campaigns that connect, promote and encourage awareness of local products, facilities and activities.

Develop new channels for communication and promotion of Camden's cultural assets.



# PILLAR 4: CULTURAL ADVOCACY

**Council will deliver our vision for culture through collaboration and partnerships with community, business, education and the arts and cultural sector. We will proactively advocate for infrastructure provision, revitalisation of existing cultural and community facilities, servicing and funding for arts and culture in Camden at a local, regional, state and federal level.**

- Advocate for purpose built cultural and creative infrastructure in new growth areas, engaging with key government bodies and agencies, leveraging relationships developed through the Western Sydney City Deal.
- Advocate for the inclusion of meaningful public art within new developments, with public art delivery integrated into the development of new infrastructure and public spaces.
- Proactively contribute to strategy development at a state and federal government level to ensure Camden's cultural priorities are considered.
- Advocate for increased funding for the cultural sector, within Camden and more broadly for Western Sydney, to support improved programs and opportunities for the Camden community.
- Advocate for policy and regulatory changes which support cultural activations, activities and development.
- Seek partnership opportunities with key peak bodies, industry stakeholders and government departments including, but not limited to CreateNSW and TAFENSW.
- Develop evidence-based business cases to support advocacy initiatives.



## Priority Projects

Establish a stronger relationship with Create NSW and Western Sydney Arts Alliance to raise the profile of Camden's cultural landscape and network of artists, advocating to increase funding and resources.

Proactively engage with strategy development at a State and Federal government level.

# KEY CULTURAL ASSETS

## Camden Town Centre Cultural Precinct

The Urban Design Framework identified an area in the Camden Town Centre as the ideal place for a cultural hub. The hub consists of key Council-owned assets, including the Camden Civic Centre, Alan Baker Art Gallery, Camden Library and Museum and Memorial Park. The precinct is surrounded by heritage building façades and historic open space elements which contribute to the heritage feel of the space.

The precinct is well positioned to support and grow community events, cultural activations and cultural enterprise, being a five-minute walk from the Camden Town Farm and Bicentennial Equestrian Park and central to the vibrant Camden Town Centre with its bustling café and food culture.

## Camden Civic Centre

Camden Civic Centre is well positioned as Camden's flagship cultural and entertainment facility, boasting an extensive program including live cultural performance events with a reputation for comedy, local, national and international promoters of quality entertainment, and an emerging program of art exhibitions.

The centre is home to the Camden Art Prize which seeks entrants nationally to showcase art and culture to the local community. The prize started in 1975 and the collection now houses over 200 works.

As well as the cultural offering, the multi-purpose Civic Centre provides facilities for flexible, affordable and accessible hire for up to 600 people, making it home to many of the Camden communities' largest celebrations and events.





The Centre was opened in 1982 as a major community and central hub.

The Camden Art Prize Collection, acquired over 40 years of the Camden Art Prize, is housed and displayed within the venue, featuring 230 works of significant artists both local, national and international reputation.

The Civic Centre hosts more than 1,000 community and private events each year.

CAMDEN CIVIC CENTRE

[www.camdenciviccentre.com.au](http://www.camdenciviccentre.com.au)

(02) 4655 8681



## Alan Baker Art Gallery

Housed within the Historic Macaria Building, the Alan Baker Art Gallery showcases the life works of 20th century Australian artist Alan D Baker (1914-1987). The collection narrates the story of Australian life, culture and the artist's journey to becoming an established and renowned portrait artist.

Through its exhibition and public workshop program, the Gallery has established itself as a vibrant part of Camden's Town Centre, fostering and promoting arts practice in Baker's tradition.

The gallery is managed by Macaria Gallery Ltd who oversee gallery operations to support the collection, promotion and preservation of the arts through programs which facilitate arts education and exhibitions for the broader community.

Macaria is a grand gothic inspired building of historic significance, built by Henry Thomson in 1859.

Baker was a prolific artist renowned for his raw and realistic still life florals, seascape, landscape, nudes and portraits.

## Library Services

Camden's libraries are vibrant spaces serving as a meeting place for Camden's community to learn, connect and discover. Camden Library is co-located with Camden Museum and Camden Area Family History.

Each library boasts a unique focus; Camden known for its unique heritage and charm is home to the Camden Museum and Camden Family History, Narellan specialising in study hubs, including The

Space digital recording and technology space, and Oran Park for its state of the art 3D printing, smart boards, computer and technology hubs.

Through partnership programs, the libraries support the delivery of regular and pop-up programs with a diverse range of cultural and community networks. Both Narellan and Oran Park have outdoor spaces which can be activated.

Each of the libraries feature an artist of the month program to exhibit and showcase local artists.

## Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park

Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park is on the outskirts of the Camden Town Centre and consists of approximately 200 acres of open space, catering for local equestrian groups and major equestrian, school and community events.

The Park caters for equestrians, walkers, recreation seekers and visitors alike, open to the public every day with all 200 acres, available for use by

recreational horse riders and horse carriage drivers most days of the year.

Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park also contains part of the Camden RSL Memorial Walkway. The walkway meanders for about 5.3 kilometres through the Park, and includes picnic areas, recreational precincts with views of the park and the surrounding rural and urban areas.

The Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park presents a unique opportunity for open space activations and events only five minutes from the Camden Town Centre. Already home to the popular major event, Paws in the Park, there is opportunity to further leverage established equestrian events and seek opportunities for additional complementary major events within the grounds.

## **Camden Town Farm**

Located in historic Camden and set in a picturesque rural landscape, Camden Town Farm, on Exeter Street, was originally a 52-hectare dairy farm that was bequeathed to the local community by the late Miss Llewella Davies.

The farm continues to operate as a working farm by breeding and growing cattle and fodder production. It also houses the Camden Community Garden; showcasing Camden's rich agricultural history.

Camden Town Farm also contains the Miss Llewella Davies memorial walkway which is 2.4 kilometres of walking path through Farm which takes visitors past historic, cultural and natural interests.

The farm is home to major events including Taste Camden and the popular weekly Camden Fresh Produce Market. There is opportunity for further activation and educational activities within the grounds which build on the existing program and deliver Council's adopted vision for the Camden Town Farm.

## **Julia Reserve Youth Precinct**

Within the Julia Reserve Youth Precinct, the community centre is an emerging hub for young people in Camden. Located in Oran Park, the centre provides flexible spaces for indoor and outdoor performances. The centre is co-located with a range of youth-based services and home to an emerging program of youth targeted activities and events.



Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park and Camden Town Farm Committees comprise of committed groups of volunteers who are instrumental in the operation and management of the Park and Town Farm.

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