
ORDINARY COUNCIL

ORD06

SUBJECT: MACARIA ART GALLERY FEASIBILITY
FROM: Director Customer & Corporate Services
TRIM #: 16/194871

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides information and options for the use of the Macaria building as an Art Gallery and contains a recommendation to establish that function.

BACKGROUND

Arising out of the planned move to Oran Park, Council considered the use of its current buildings. At the Ordinary Meeting 8 December 2015, Council considered a report (ORD06/15) which stated that:

Given the special nature of the Macaria building and the need to maximise community access to and use of that site...officers propose to further investigate the submission lodged on behalf of the Alan Baker Art Gallery and report further to Council on this proposal.

Council resolved that further investigations be carried out into the preferred use of the Macaria site for the Art Gallery proposal.

A workshop was also presented to Council on 12 July 2016 on this matter.

MAIN REPORT

The central component of the Alan Baker Art Gallery proposal was the planned donation, from a private collection, of 70 works created by the artist Alan Baker.

The opportunity presented through Council vacating the Macaria site, and subsequently having the ability to house such a significant bequest, allows for the creation of an exciting addition to the cultural landscape in the Camden region.

Council officers subsequently prepared a brief and requested quotes to provide expert advice to Council on a range of options to establish an art gallery in the Macaria building housing the Alan Baker collection and the ongoing management of the facility. Dunn and Hillam Architects, working with the Curators Department, were retained to develop the report.

Additionally, it was considered timely to also seek their advice on the longer term strategy for a rapidly growing Council to display art to a growing community. This allowed the experts to also give consideration to the existing art collection owned by Council.

As shown in the **attached** report, there is a clear argument for a greater regional art presence to serve the Camden LGA, with the establishment of the Alan Baker Gallery

on the ground floor of the Macaria building showing Baker's works exclusively as the foundation stone for that future regional art presence.

The Dunn and Hillam report provides an overview of the vision for the potential art gallery including potential audience, scope of works, art gallery standards and an operations plan based on two operational options. Consideration is given to the future needs of the growing Camden community and the need for planning for future gallery space.

Importantly, the report gives consideration to both the placement of other art galleries throughout the Greater Sydney Region and also the placement of Macaria within the Camden LGA, noting it is *'ideally suited to a cultural or community purpose, such as an art gallery'*.

As well as providing substantial and detailed examination of the Macaria building, its current state including an engineer's statement setting out its better than expected state of repair, and the preparatory work required to establish the art gallery, the report reviews several existing examples by way of case studies.

The case studies considered are:

- Campbelltown Arts Centre;
- Maitland Regional Art Gallery;
- Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest;
- Wollongong Art Gallery.

In each instance, the case studies are cited as *'examples of high quality regional and local art galleries, often dealing with a heritage interface. Each case study has resulted in direct social, cultural and economic benefits.'*

As part of preparing the report, consultation was undertaken with the Mayor on behalf of Council, the Camden Historical Society, potential donors, Camden Civic Centre staff in relation to the Camden Art Prize, and also Council's Manager Community Services and Arts and Cultural Development Officer.

Arising from the detailed examination, Dunn and Hillam have provided Council with both a long term vision (option A) and an option available to be enacted relatively quickly (option B). Both options connect with the current planning within both the Camden Town Centre Vision and also the Camden Destination Management Plan (which is also currently on the business paper before Council).

The long term vision proposed is described by the consultants as their recommended outcome, however, it has been prepared on the basis that the Alan Baker Gallery, within the Macaria Building (option B), can be clearly established as Stage 1 by Council prior to further consideration by Council in the future as to whether it wishes to proceed with the greater level of development required on the heritage building and the consequent investment required.

It is proposed that both options would require the addition of staff resources (curator/gallery development officer) to assist with the developmental and then operational stages of the gallery operations.

Further details of each option can be found in the report with a useful summary table included also setting the factors associated with each option and the costs.

The estimated cost of works for establishment of option A is \$1,050,000-\$1,800,000 with ongoing operational costs of \$244,000 per annum.

The estimated costs of works for establishment of option B are \$390,000-520,000 with ongoing operational costs of \$124,000 per annum.

The costs for each option are slightly higher than set out in the report as additional estimates have been adjusted to address to the need for publicly accessible toilet facilities and more accurate staffing costs.

Once a decision has been made in relation to the extent of the works and use, a further report will be presented to Council outlining necessary work and any structural issues requiring attention concerning the running of the Alan Baker Art Gallery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds are available within the capital works reserve to fund the required building works. It is proposed to recommend the allocation of \$500,000 from the capital works reserve to fund option B.

Funds for the establishment of the curatorial/gallery development position to develop collection policy and oversee the set up and supporting structures for the gallery will be included in Council's annual budget.

CONCLUSION

The opening of Macaria as a public art gallery would enable residents to access the building while also meeting the need for art gallery and cultural space within our LGA. Council has a unique opportunity to combine the timing of our move with a proposed donation to create an arts presence within the region.

Noting the cost implications, the wish to activate the site as expediently as possible, and the benefits to Council of staging the establishment of the gallery in line with the potential donation, option B is recommended for progression.

Should Council adopt an option for progression and the associated recommendation concerning the funding of a staff resource, a further report will be brought back to Council detailing decisions necessary to progress the relevant works.

RECOMMENDED

That Council:

- i. resolve to use Macaria as an Art Gallery space through the selection of Option B with associated actions as set out in the attachment to this report to be known as the Alan Baker Art Gallery;**
- ii. allocate \$500,000 from the Capital Works Reserve to fund option B;**
- iii. approve the addition of a staffing resource (curator/gallery development officer) with funding to be included in Council's annual budget;**
- iv. receive a further report outlining necessary work and any structural issues requiring attention concerning the running of the Alan Baker Art Gallery; and**
- v. write to thank participants involved in the consultant's report preparation process.**

ATTACHMENTS

1. Macaria Art Gallery Feasibility Report