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**CCL 22/11/2022 – ADOPTION OF NEWCASTLE CULTURAL  
PRECINCT CONCEPT MASTERPLAN**

**PAGE 2**      **ITEM-94**      **Attachment A:**      Newcastle Cultural Precinct  
Concept Masterplan

**DISTRIBUTED UNDER SEPARATE COVER**

# NEWCASTLE CULTURAL PRECINCT

CONCEPT MASTER PLAN





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All maps in this report have been styled for  
illustration purposes and are not to scale.  
Information shown is correct as at May 2022.

Image courtesy of City of Newcastle.

# CONTENTS

1/

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2/

INTRODUCTION

3/

THE NEWCASTLE ARTS  
PRECINCT AXES (NAPA)

4/

STRATEGIC POLICY &  
DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

5/

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

6/

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

7/

NEEDS ANALYSIS &  
EXPECTED OUTCOMES

8/

ACTION PLAN

9/

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT  
REFERENCES

# 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





429,000

PATRONS TO THE CIVIC AND VICTORIA THEATRES EACH YEAR



192,000

VISITORS TO THE NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY EACH YEAR



34,950

ADDITIONAL VISITOR NIGHTS ACROSS CITY OF NEWCASTLE EACH YEAR



\$16.22M

TOTAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS PER ANNUM

City of Newcastle recognises that its existing cultural institutions are of national significance. In October 2020, the elected council resolved to explore the creation of a formal 'Civic Cultural Precinct' to ensure appropriate long-term planning for the protection of the City's cultural institutions. The Council's support extends to the **creation of a formal Civic Cultural Precinct**. Prior to the passing of this October 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute, City of Newcastle (the City) granted development approval for two key cultural projects (amongst other planned improvements). These projects are:

- Expansion of the Newcastle Art Gallery, which includes a significant increase in exhibition space (and the provision of café/dining and specialised function area/catering facilities, and
- Revitalisation of the Victoria Theatre as a multi-purpose facility to accommodate a range of live performances and functions and events.

Other planned improvements in the vicinity of these investments include upgrades to Newcastle City Hall, with the intent of improving utilisation of the venue, and planned improvements to the Hunter Street Mall. These planned improvements include service upgrades, road and pavement renewal, improved cycleways, new soft landscaping, as well as new street furniture.

Another recent investment in the precinct is Crystalbrook's 'Kingsley', Newcastle's first five-star hotel. Located in the former City Administration Centre (CAC), adjacent to Newcastle City Hall, The Kingsley has added 130 rooms to the city's accommodation stock and created an additional incentive for improving the visitor experience in and around neighbouring cultural institutions.

**The purpose of this report is to provide the City with a master plan that articulates existing and emerging opportunities within the arts precinct, backed up by an economic assessment that is consistent with NSW Treasury guidance.**

The master plan is supported by extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken in February and March 2021. Importantly, the master plan does not attempt to impose on existing venues and operators a new vision or direction for the precinct. Instead, by responding to stakeholders and new investments, the master plan proposes strategic interventions to improve the overall visitor experience with a view to unlocking desired investments and visitor economy outcomes.

Through consultation with existing institutions, community groups, and local businesses, this report proposes the following Vision Statement for Newcastle's inner-city cultural institutions and the streets and public spaces that connects them:

*To grow the visitor economy in the Greater Newcastle by creating a nationally significant platform for arts, culture, festivals, and expression. This will be achieved by unifying the strengths and ambitions of existing cultural institutions, and then connecting these institutions along corridors of complementary economic activity (the north-south axis and the east-west axis).*

This Vision, along with inputs from key stakeholders, has informed the proposed identity and design of the Cultural Precinct.

Importantly, this study finds that with modest investments in the city's arts and entertainment precinct (through expanding Newcastle Art Gallery, increasing collaboration across institutions and refurbishing the Victoria Theatre), the City will unlock \$16.22m in direct and indirect benefits. This includes 34,950 additional visitor nights per annum, longer visits to the Cultural Precinct (half day), and increased visitation to the Newcastle Art Gallery, Civic Theatre, and Victoria Theatre. Total visits to these institutions, with improvements completed, could be as high as 621,000 per annum.

In addition to the above mentioned projects, this report identifies 'Five Big Moves' for the precinct. These moves are summarised on the following page and located within the proposed precinct.

# 5 FIVE BIG MOVES

1

## Create an 'Academic Corridor' to knit the Cultural Precinct and University of Newcastle's City Campus.

Harness the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between City of Newcastle (CN) and the University of Newcastle to integrate the Cultural Precinct with the University's City Campus. This could include creating an 'Academic Corridor' between Civic Park and Hunter Street, and potentially further north towards Honeysuckle. Other actions include improving public domain, shade coverage, and view corridors.

2

## Create a legible east-west journey through public art, lighting and wayfinding.

Consider investing in public domain, open space, and wayfinding to strengthen the corridor between Perkins and Auckland Streets via King Street. This will create a 'desire path' between key sites such as the Boat Harbour precinct (including the Victoria Theatre) and Performing Arts Centre (including City Hall and the Civic Theatre). Through collaboration with the University of Newcastle, this journey continues north-west to Worth Place via 'Academic Corridor'.

3

## Explore opportunities to expand and enhance Museum Park.

Harness the MOU between the City and the University of Newcastle to consider creating a unique interface between the Museum and the City Campus. Other actions include improving view corridors and address to Hunter Street, improving permeability between Honeysuckle and Performing Arts Centre (Wheeler Place), and enabling performances and events to more easily 'plug in and play'.

4

## Activate Wheeler Place with seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies.

Explore options for erecting seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies in Wheeler Place to make programming easier. This could include creating two 'laneway' environments by erecting temporary pavilions or structures in the middle of the space. Other actions include programming Wheeler Place as part of a larger "Performing Arts Centre" that includes City Hall, Civic Theatre, and Civic Playhouse.

5

## Invite the community to identify new cultural infrastructure for the Boat Harbour site.

The Boat Harbour site, adjacent to the proposed QT Hotel and close to the c1891 Victoria Theatre, is the north-eastern gateway to the Cultural Precinct. By working with the local community and key stakeholders, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, new cultural infrastructure could be identified for this site. Examples of complimentary facilities could include rehearsal space, a black box theatre, a multi-purpose pavilion, and/or an Aboriginal Cultural Centre.



# BIG MOVES

- 1 Create an 'Academic Corridor' to knit the Cultural Precinct and University of Newcastle's City Campus.
- 2 Create a legible east-west journey through public art, lighting and wayfinding.
- 3 Explore opportunities to activate and enhance Museum Park.
- 4 Activate Wheeler Place with seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies.
- 5 Invite the community to identify new cultural infrastructure for the Boat Harbour site.



-  Light Rail
-  Bus Station



# 21

# INTRODUCTION





## A CITY'S GREATNESS, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, IS NOT MEASURED IN TERMS OF COAL OR STEEL, IMPORTANT AS THESE ARE, BUT IN TERMS OF THE MIND AND OF THE SPIRIT EXPRESSED IN LITERATURE, ART, THE DRAMA, MUSIC, AND SUCHLIKE ACTIVITIES. TO PROVIDE THESE WILL COST MONEY, ADMITTEDLY, BUT CAN THE WORTHWHILE IN LIFE BE SECURED WITHOUT COST?"

*P. D. Riddell, Principal of the Newcastle Technical College  
Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners Advocate, 14 November 1938.*

Newcastle has an established reputation as a city of arts and entertainment. When a theatrical company playing at the Victoria Theatre visited from the United States in 1929, one of their most favourable impressions was that of Newcastle's "theatre district" which, at that time, stretched from Market Street to the West End. This district of theatres and music halls was well known to generations of Novocastrians and their visitors. It was inside the darkened auditoriums of theatres such as the Strand, Victoria, Royal, Lyric, Central Hall, and Civic that many a treasured and formative memory was made; for the opening

of *Frankenstein* in 1932, the proprietor of one theatre employed an actor to dress up as a seven-foot-tall monster and to lurch about Hunter Street.

Newcastle is much changed since those days. Economic, social, and urban transformation has grown Newcastle from being a steel town of national importance to an aspirational, emerging global city. This evolution will only continue with the Federal Government's announcement in May 2021 that Newcastle Airport's runway will be upgraded to accommodate longer range domestic and international passenger services.

Closer to the city, investment in the visitor economy will deliver more than 370 additional hotel rooms along the Newcastle light rail line by 2022. This is on the back of significant urban renewal and infill projects that have transformed the city centre since the release of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy in 2012.

The retention of heritage buildings such as the Civic Theatre (c1929) and the Victoria Theatre (c1891) provides Newcastle with a unique opportunity to create an arts and entertainment precinct that is contemporary and authentic. Whereas many cities must create their precincts from scratch, Newcastle is in the enviable position of having a range of institutions and venues that, due to their proximity and programming, present solid bones for the creation of a nationally significant arts and cultural precinct.

In proposing a holistic vision for this precinct, this master plan and economic assessment considers the spatial, temporal, and programmatic relationships that exist between a range of venues and public spaces. The principles and investments proposed in this report are strongly informed by extensive stakeholder engagement and an appreciation for the long terms plans and ambitions of existing institutions. As the overarching ambition of this document is to identify opportunities for synergy and collaboration, great emphasis has been placed on what is already working and how that might be supported and, where appropriate, scaled up.

Through consultation with stakeholders, a focus on two corridors of activity has been adopted. These are the north-south 'axis' between Honeysuckle and Newcastle Art Gallery, and the east-west axis between Boat Harbour car park and the University of Newcastle's Q Building at the corner of Honeysuckle Drive and Worth Place.

By focusing on the consistency, quality, and legibility of the public spaces on these corridors, this report proposes a precinct that runs along intersecting axes that are easily programmed, activated, and navigated by visitors. These axes are informed by a range of proposed or adopted strategies to revitalise Newcastle's urban core. This includes the recommendations of the 2004 Newcastle Civic and Cultural Precinct Masterplan, prepared by the NSW Government Architect's Office and City of Newcastle, as well as the objectives of the NSW Government's "Revitalising Newcastle" program.






















This most recent step to connect, strengthen, and grow cultural assets in Newcastle is the result of an October 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute that read:

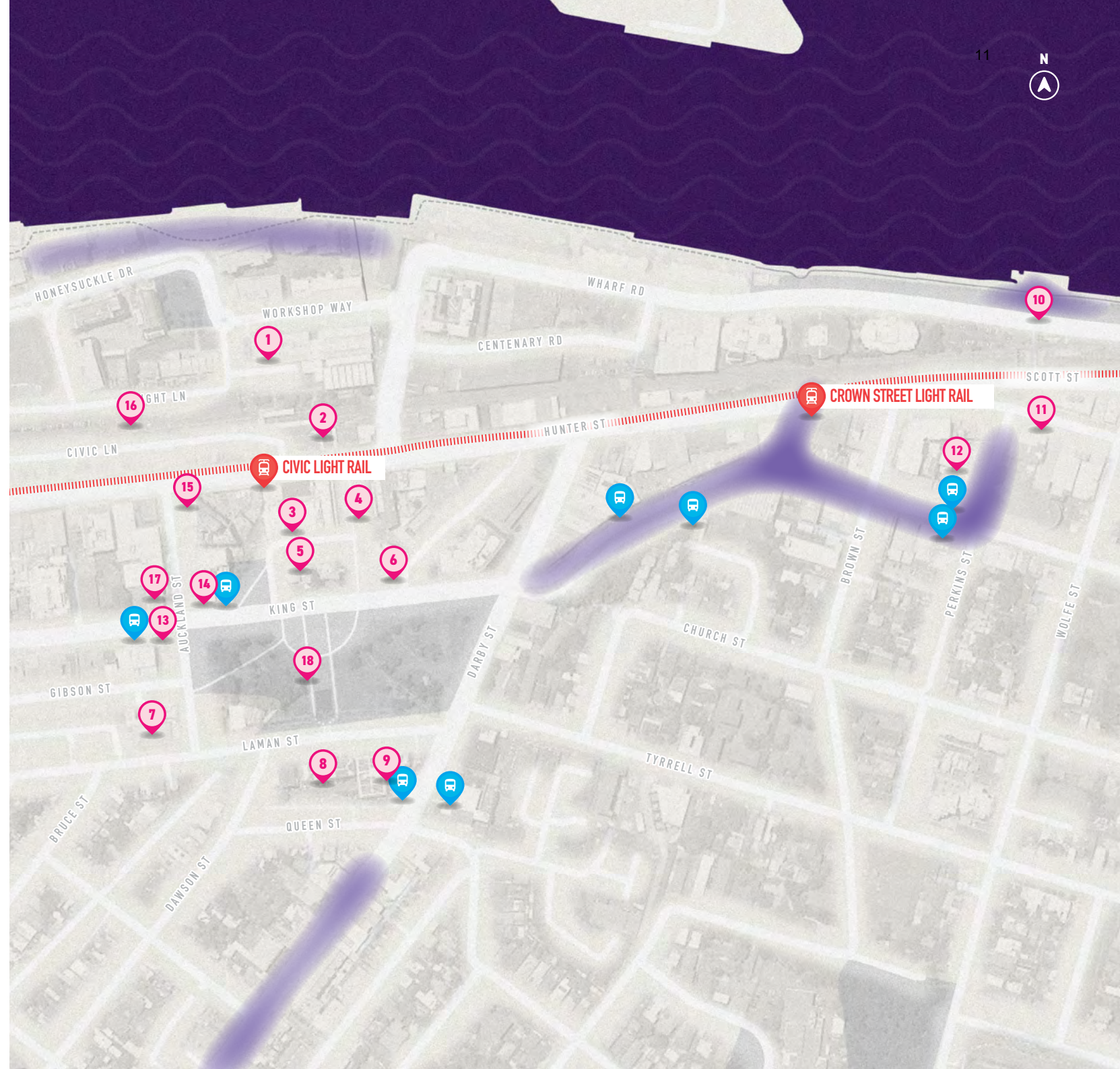
*City of Newcastle:*

1. *Supports the Community and Cultural Advisory Committee and Chairperson Cr Carol Duncan who have resolved to explore the creation of a formal Civic Cultural Precinct to ensure appropriate long-term planning for the protection of the City's cultural institutions, including: Newcastle Art Gallery, University of Newcastle's School of Music and Conservatorium, University House, City Hall, Civic Theatre, Civic Playhouse, Newcastle Region Library, Wheeler Place, Newcastle Visitor Information Centre, Newcastle Museum, Victoria Theatre*
2. *Includes City of Newcastle's support for the creation of a formal Civic Cultural Precinct, and the benefits of defining such a Precinct for economic development and protection of cultural heritage in Newcastle, in our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry.*

# VENUES + KEY SITES

This map identifies key venues and sites referred to in the report.

-  Newcastle Museum
-  Visitor Information Centre
-  Civic Theatre & Playhouse
-  Wheeler Place
-  Newcastle City Hall
-  Crystalbrook Kingsley Hotel
-  Conservatorium of Music (University of Newcastle)
-  City Library & Lovett Gallery
-  Newcastle Art Gallery
-  Boat Harbour Site
-  Proposed QT Hotel
-  Victoria Theatre
-  Proposed Alumni House (University of Newcastle)
-  University House (University of Newcastle)
-  NUspace (University of Newcastle)
-  University of Newcastle City Campus
-  Northumberland House/Watt Space Gallery (University of Newcastle)
-  Civic Park
  
-  Food & Beverage Operators
-  Light Rail
-  Bus Station



## Existing venues

### 1 Newcastle Museum



Newcastle Museum opened to the community on 4 August 2011. It is located in the historic Honeysuckle Railway workshops, adjacent to the Visitor Information Centre and across the street from the University of Newcastle's Forum gymnasium. The Honeysuckle Railway Workshops are unique pieces of classic railway architecture. There are three buildings listed with the National Trust:

- Locomotive Boiler Shop
- New Erecting Shop
- Blacksmith and Wheel Shop

The former Locomotive Boiler Shop is an example of Victorian Romanesque Architecture and was constructed between 1882 – 1887. Original plans for the building were changed to fit in a large overhead 'Craven' crane, the only one in the southern hemisphere.

The Boiler Shop operated for 42 years until 1929 when the work was taken over by the new Cardiff Locomotive Workshop. The Boiler Shop was later used as a timber mill (1937 – 1940) and then as a Locomotive Machine Shop. It became Elcom's first diesel operated power station in 1951 and from 1957 served as a motor vehicles garage for NSW State rail Authority. It is now permanent home to Supernova, the interactive science exhibit.

The New Erecting Shop was constructed in 1920 as an adjunct to the Old Erecting Shop which was demolished. Locomotive engines or rolling stock due for repair went to the New Erecting Shop where they were dismantled, sent for repair and returned for re-assembly.

The sawtooth roof contrasts with the style of other buildings, reflecting changes that occurred in building technology and architecture since the 1880s. The building was extensively damaged in the 1989 earthquake and now includes a substantial concrete structure to stiffen the building in case of another earthquake. The building is now home to Fire and Earth, including the BHP story and an exhibition on coal mining.

The Blacksmith's shop is one of the oldest of the three buildings and was built in 1880 out of local bricks. The Blacksmith's and Wheel Shop was responsible for all the wheel shop and smithing work required by other workshops on the site. It continued its role for 55 years up to 1937. The Blacksmiths shop is now home to enclosed exhibition spaces. The Wheel Shop now includes a theatrette available for venue hire.

*(Source: City of Newcastle)*

### 2 Newcastle Visitor Information Centre (Newcastle VIC)



The Newcastle Visitor Information Centre is located on Hunter Street in the former Civic railway station building. A new addition to the city, the Newcastle VIC orientates visitors and enables improved connectivity between the Performing Arts Centre (City Hall & Civic Theatre), Newcastle Museum, and the waterfront.

The building is of heritage significance, noted as an example of interwar railway station design. Retained and adapted during the 'Revitalising Newcastle' program, the site provides context for the growth and development of the surrounding precincts.

### 3 Civic Theatre & Civic Playhouse

The Civic Theatre is of state significance and regarded as one of the finest theatre buildings in New South Wales. Designed by prominent theatre architect Henry Eli White, architect of Sydney's State and Capitol Theatres, it is an artfully crafted example of the Georgian Revival style and one of only a handful of surviving atmospheric theatres

from the interwar period. The theatre's largely intact interior is considered to be an outstanding example of the Spanish/Moroccan style.

The building is also an important townscape element, being part of the Civic 'cultural precinct', located adjacent to the City Hall (also designed by White) and reflects Newcastle's status as the state's second city at the time of the theatre's construction. The theatre has operated almost continuously as an entertainment venue since 1929 and continues to be a focus of social and cultural activity, highly valued by the citizens of Newcastle for its outstanding historical, aesthetic, and social significance and rarity.

*(Source: NSW Government State Heritage Inventory).*

Capacity: 1450 in the main auditorium (885 in the lower-level stalls and 565 in the upper-level dress circle) Additional spaces include the Playhouse Theatre, a thrust studio theatre, seating 195 in raked seating, as well as the Promenade Room, the Commonwealth Promenade Foyer, Stall Foyer & Entrance Foyer, and the Civic Bar.



#### 4 Wheeler Place



Wheeler Place, adjacent to the Civic Theatre, is open public space named after Harry Lambert Wheeler. Wheeler was an alderman (1924-30) of the City of Newcastle. In 1928-29 he served as mayor, corresponding with the official opening both City Hall and the Civic. Wheeler Place, however, did not attain its current configuration until the demolition of a building that once occupied half the present-day plaza. This occurred circa 1980.

Wheeler Space is approximately 1800m<sup>2</sup> and is addressed by the Civic Theatre, Kingsley Hotel, and a café inside the Bennett and Wood building. It is occasionally activated by events.

#### 5 City Hall

Newcastle City Hall is of historic and aesthetic significance to the State of NSW and is an outstanding example of the Inter-War Academic Classical style in NSW. The building's planning, construction and history of use demonstrates the evolution of local government in Newcastle, reflecting



the growth, development, and increased power of local government across the twentieth century in New South Wales.

The style of the building is illustrative of significant social and aesthetic values of the inter-war period in NSW, demonstrating a desire to hold onto traditional forms of architectural stylism particularly in public architecture, in the face of modernism and social and political change. Locally, the architectural pretensions and central Newcastle site demonstrates the perceived centrality of local government to the City of Newcastle during the interwar years, and ambition of mayors and civic leaders to leave their mark on the city by transforming this previously industrial area into a unique cultural precinct to form the civic heart of the City.

City Hall has strong associations with its designer Henry Eli White, an internationally noted theatre architect of the early twentieth century, and JV Rowe, principal designer for the Wunderlich company from 1904 to 1925, responsible for the original interior finishes and decoration. Locally the City Hall

has a significant association with Alderman Morris Light (1859-1929), Mayor and businessman, the realisation of the City Hall and Civic Theatre complex being his greatest achievement. The building is also associated with Alderman Joy Cummins, who was the first female Lord Mayor in Australia.

*(Source: NSW Government State Heritage Inventory)*

#### 6 Crystalbrook's Kingsley Hotel



'Kingsley' is Newcastle's first five-star hotel, occupying the former City Administration Centre on the corner of King and Burwood Streets. A prominent and well known landmark, the 'Kingsley' is an important part of the Cultural Precinct streetscape and from its upper levels guests can take in views of the entire precinct and beyond.

'Kingsley' addresses both Civic Park and Wheeler Place, occupying an important site in the north-south activity corridor.

#### 7 University of Newcastle's School of Music and Conservatorium



In 2017 the Conservatorium celebrated 65 years of music education in the Newcastle and Hunter Valley region. From its humble beginnings in huts in Civic Park, "the Con" now boasts state of the art concert and teaching facilities adjacent to the city's other cultural institutions.

The Harold Lobb Concert Hall, inside the Conservatorium, is a premier facility, which is in constant demand for concerts by local, interstate, and international artists. This 400-seat concert hall is also available for university staff and students, as well as members of the public to hire for private functions. Additionally, the Conservatorium's creative production, recording and computer labs are available for all types of classes.

*(Source: University of Newcastle)*

## 8 Newcastle Region Library (including the Lovett Gallery)



Newcastle (City) Library is in the iconic War Memorial Cultural Centre in Laman Street. In 1957 the building was dedicated as the 'centre of culture' for the city, then housing the Library, the Art Gallery and the Conservatorium. The library now extends over all levels of the building and includes an extensive lending library, a study area, and computer lab as well as one of the country's most comprehensive local history collections. The second floor also houses the exhibition spaces: the Lovett Gallery and the Local History Lounge.

(Source: City of Newcastle)

## 9 Newcastle Art Gallery

Newcastle Art Gallery is the city's major cultural institution for the visual arts and is responsible for the curation and preservation of its nationally significant collection. The Gallery aims to develop and present high quality exhibitions, public programs and events that connect to

diverse audiences locally and nationally, fostering a passion and curiosity for the visual arts.

Nationally recognised as one of the finest public collections in Australia, Newcastle Art Gallery holds over 7,000 works of art and the quality and breadth of its collection makes it a significant cultural asset for the city.



Led by director Andrew Ferguson, a purpose built Gallery was constructed in the mid-1970s and officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Friday 11 March 1977. Proudly, Newcastle Art Gallery is Australia's first purpose built regional Gallery. Applauded as a model for medium-sized galleries, it has an innovative floor plan and hanging system. Further, the building is also an important example of early 1970s architecture with its geometric forms and brutalist aesthetic. Owned and operated by the City of Newcastle, Newcastle Art Gallery continues to present a dynamic range of exhibitions and events for the local community and visitors alike. It's collection continues to grow, through the support of the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation, the Newcastle Art Gallery

Society, and the benefaction of countless individuals, artists, and companies.

A major expansion of Newcastle Art Gallery is currently underway. The expansion project will deliver an additional 1,600 square meters of exhibition space and will also deliver a new café and retail shop, multi-purpose and educational program spaces, a secure international standard loading dock, and will extend the building's footprint east along Darby Street and Queen Street.

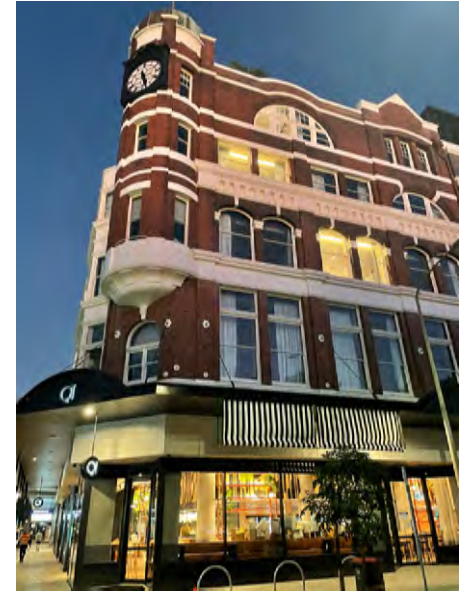
(Source: Newcastle Art Gallery, nag.org.au)

## 10 Boat Harbour site



Boat Harbour refers to a car park at 203 Wharf Road and the adjacent former rail corridor land. Although partly occupied by a car park, the site has been identified in this report as it occupies an important location at the eastern edge of the Cultural Precinct. It has also been identified in previous reports, including those from 'Revitalising Newcastle' as a desirable site for tourism-related activities. This report has considered the Boat Harbour site in its entirety with the aim of identifying and enabling highest and best use of City-owned land.

## 11 QT Hotel



QT's Newcastle hotel, at the corner of Hunter and Perkins Streets, strengthens the eastern boundary of the precinct adjacent to the Victoria Theatre. The QT Hotel adds 106 rooms to the city's visitor accommodation stock, as well as a rooftop bar and dining options. The development retains the distinct facade of the former David Jones department store and will act as a catalyst for investment in and around the eastern edge of the Cultural Precinct.

## 12 Victoria Theatre



The Victoria Theatre is a building of State importance. It is the oldest theatre building still standing in New South Wales. It represents an age of silent pictures, vaudeville, and early legitimate theatre.

The theatre represents an 1891 facade, an auditorium that is both 1891 and 1921, with extensive backstage facilities. It is an important part of Newcastle's heritage, but also a significant building for NSW.

In 2015 the former theatre was acquired by Century Venues. City of Newcastle approved Century's Development Application (DA) for the theatre in August 2020, paving the way for the theatre's refurbishment and reopening.

According to an independent economic impact study, prepared by Hawkrigde Entertainment Services, by its third year of operation a refurbished Victoria Theatre will generate a positive economic impact of \$13,613,219 per annum. The theatre will also result in a positive economic

impact exceeding \$50 million from the commencement of capital works to the completion of three years of operation.

Source: Hawkrigde Entertainment Services (2020)

## 13 University of Newcastle's Alumni House (proposed)



Alumni House will be located on the former TPI House site (now vacant land) at 231 King Street, adjacent to University House and Civic Park.

The cost to bring this project to fruition is estimated at \$15 million. The University of Newcastle has committed a cornerstone investment of \$5 million, as well as the site at 231 King Street, towards this project. Alumni House will be a digitally-enabled space dedicated to fostering the pride and nostalgia that alumni feel for the UoN, giving them a sense of belonging and enabling them to give back with impact by offering their time and expertise to the next generation of graduates.

Alumni House concept design by Durbach Block Jagers Architects with Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture, Cox Inall Ridgeway, Surface Design and Northrop. Source: University of Newcastle

## 14 University House



University House, as it is now known, is a significant example of classic Art-Deco style and was previously known as NESCA House. It was named after the Newcastle Electricity Supply Council Administration that were headquartered there from the time of its construction in 1937-39 until its operations were subsumed by the Shortland County Council on site in 1959. In 1995, the University of Newcastle established a library within the building, and in 1999 it was added to the NSW State Heritage Register.

More recently the building has also become the Graduate School of Business and the Newcastle Legal Centre. Currently known as "University House", the building now accommodates the University of Newcastle Legal Centre and the Newcastle Business

School. It is adjacent to the Watt Space Gallery on Auckland Street.

University House is an important part of the city's streetscape and was designed to compliment neighbouring City Hall. Built for utilitarian purposes, it continues to perform an important role for the city and its people.

## 15 University of Newcastle's NUspace



NUspace is UoN's landmark education precinct in the heart of Newcastle's CBD, harnessing the latest in technology and innovation in teaching and learning to deliver a world-class student experience. NUspace is part of the Newcastle City campus and is home to the Newcastle Business School and the Newcastle Law School. The Wollotuka Institute also has an office on the first floor of the building.

NUspace occupies a prominent location on the corner of Auckland and Hunter Streets, adjacent to the Civic Theatre and City Hall.

## 16 University of Newcastle City Campus



University of Newcastle's City Campus is part of the University's 10-year Master Plan to deliver a mix of innovative research and education spaces, places to collaborate with industry and community, and accommodation for students to enjoy the best of living and working in the heart of the city. The campus is on the western side of the Cultural Precinct, between the Civic Theatre and Worth Place, and extending north to Honeysuckle.

The first building in the Honeysuckle precinct, Q Building, is situated on the corner of Worth Place and Honeysuckle Drive. Q is our new creative and entrepreneurial hub in the city and provides state-of-the-art facilities for the School of Creative Industries (SOCl) and Integrated Innovation Network (I2N).

## 17 Northumberland House/Watt Space Gallery

Since its establishment in 1989, Watt Space has been a community leader in innovation



and creative experimentation. Through engagement with contemporary issues and artistic practices, Watt Space has a proud legacy featuring a host of talented emerging and established cross-disciplinary artists and curators. Watt Space continues to challenge, inspire and inform with an ever-changing program of innovative creative endeavours.

## 18 Civic Park



Civic Park is one of the City's most loved green spaces. Bound between King, Darby, Laman, and Auckland Streets, the park provides connectivity between key cultural institutions. Civic Park also has a long history of hosting major events, including the City's flagship New Annual festival.





# 3/



## THE NEWCASTLE ARTS PRECINCT AXES (NAPA)

## Where is NAPA?

The purpose of this master plan is to define a precinct for cultural and economic development and to protect the heritage within it. The area, or precinct(s), within which this report focuses has been known by various names dating back prior to European arrival. In more recent decades, the sites considered in this master plan sit at the confluence of distinct areas that Novocastrians may refer to as Honeysuckle (north), the Civic (central), Laman Street, Tower Cinemas, and the edge of the Hunter Street Mall (East). Straddling an array of associations and built forms, the precinct is enriched by its contrasts and contradictions. To give the precinct purpose, however, consideration has been given to naming this confluence and encouraging new associations that will give priority to the cultural collections and programming along its axes.

This report proposes **Newcastle Arts Precinct Axes, or NAPA**, as an identity for the area that is loosely defined by the institutions and public spaces adjacent to:

1. A north-south corridor between Honeysuckle Drive and Newcastle Art Gallery, and
2. An east-west corridor between Perkins Street and the University of Newcastle's Q Building at the corner of Honeysuckle Drive and Worth Place.

## Vision Statement

Through consultation with existing institutions, community groups, and local businesses, this report proposes the following Vision Statement for Newcastle's inner-city cultural institutions and the streets and public spaces that connects them:

**TO GROW THE VISITOR ECONOMY IN GREATER NEWCASTLE BY CREATING A NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PLATFORM FOR ARTS, CULTURE, FESTIVALS, AND EXPRESSION.**

**THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY UNIFYING THE STRENGTHS AND AMBITIONS OF EXISTING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, AND THEN CONNECTING THESE INSTITUTIONS ALONG CORRIDORS OF COMPLEMENTARY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY (A NORTH-SOUTH AXIS AND AN EAST-WEST AXIS).**



# ACTIVITY CORRIDORS

This map demonstrates the desired flows of pedestrian activity in the precinct.



The precinct will not have fixed boundaries. Instead, it will hang off two corridors – North-South, and East-West.

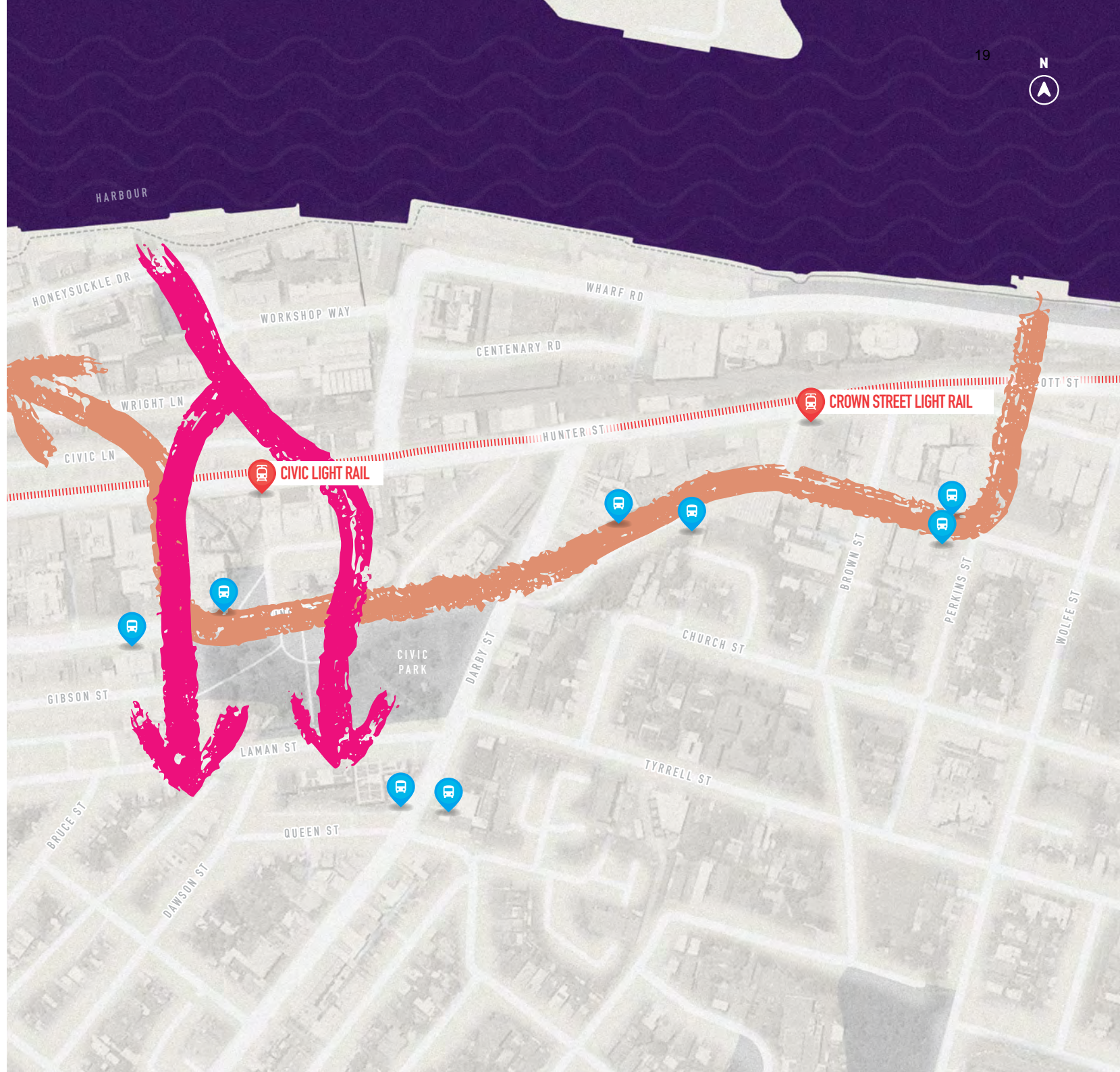
## ← North-South Activity Corridor

On the NS corridor, activity flows from the harbourfront, where Honeysuckle Drive turns right, across Workshop Way, through existing green space, across the light rail stop (Civic), through Wheeler Place, and into Civic Park.

## → East-West Activity Corridor

On the E-W corridor, pedestrian activity is encouraged from the Boat Harbour site to the University of Newcastle's Q Building via Perkins, King, and Auckland Streets.

-  Light Rail
-  Bus Station



## Precinct Boundaries

Initial conversations with the City of Newcastle and key stakeholders focused on the existing boundaries of the city's cultural assets. Although the institutions identified in the 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute provides an indicative boundary for a future precinct, through stakeholder engagement we have refined the study area to include institutions (existing and future), as well as public spaces along the two axes of activity. These axes are:

- The North-South Axis between Matthew Harding's *ship to shore* sculpture on Honeysuckle Drive and Newcastle Art Gallery, taking in existing open space on Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle Museum, the Visitor Information Centre, Wheeler Place, Civic Theatre, Kingsley Hotel (opening 2021), City Hall, University House, and the eastern side of Civic Park.
- The East-West Axis between the Boat Harbour site and UoN's Q Building, taking in the QT Hotel, Victoria Theatre, King Street, City Hall, University House, Auckland Street, and the University of Newcastle's City Campus.

Due to the status of developments on and around these axes, it is envisaged that the north-south link between the harbour and Newcastle Art Gallery will be initial focus for future programming and investment. This is because it is already endowed with established cultural institutions, most of them City-owned, and a major hotel that opened in mid-2021. Once this axis of cultural and economic activity has been established, and is flourishing, attention should turn to improving the east-west link that is currently contingent on the revival of the Victoria Theatre on Perkins Street.

The NAPA plan has deliberately not used the existing street layout to create fixed and definitive boundaries. Instead, this plan looks at the legibility of the precinct through its public spaces and existing venues. The 'boundaries' proposed in this document are programmable 'desire lines', linking sites

of interest and attraction and providing two 'spines' along which creative and economic activity is less easily diffused.

This report proposes NAPA as an identity for the area that is loosely defined by UoN's Q Building to the west, Honeysuckle Drive to the north, Laman Street to the south, and Perkins Street to the east.

## Site & Story

### Indigenous History

The Awabakal and Worimi peoples are the traditional custodians of the land situated within the City of Newcastle local government area. This landscape including wetlands, rivers, creeks, and coastal environments. It is known that their heritage and cultural ties to Newcastle date back tens of thousands of years.

Aboriginal connectedness to places and communities is linked through their *dreaming* stories. *Biraban*, the eagle hawk, is held in highest regard by the coastal tribes. Homage to the eagle hawk is conveyed in their stories and linked to their tribal social structures. *Koin* is another revered local sky-hero who announces the coming of Kooris from distant tribes for rites or corroborees.

Natural landscape features and known sacred sites include *Whibayganba*, Newcastle's famous landmark Nobbys. It is said that a notorious kangaroo jumped from *Tahlbihn* Point, at the site now known as Fort Scratchley, to the safety of *Whibayganba*. The kangaroo remains hidden in the island's bowels occasionally thumping its tail and making the land tremble. The thumping is said to be a reference to the region's earthquake activity.

There is also a high cliff named *Yi-ran-na-li*, renowned for being a fearful place. *Yi-ran-na-li* must be respected by all, and no one should linger or speak in its vicinity because of the danger of falling rocks.

In 1881, an Aboriginal burial ground was discovered in the vicinity of what is now Number 1 sportsground, approximately 700m from present-day Civic Park. The *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate* described the discovery as follows:

*Yesterday afternoon some workmen employed at the corner of Parry-street near the approach to the racecourse, came across, a few feet from the surface, a number of aboriginal skeletons. Three or four were exhumed from their sandy grave in a good state of preservation; one in particular – measuring 5ft 8in – being almost perfect, and enshrouded in a large sheet of tea-tree bark, the material generally used for such purposes by the blacks. Those already dug out were removed by Constable Smith to the lockup. Other skulls and bones are visible in the sand, and will probably be dug out to-day. Medical examination having proved them to be the remains of aborigines (sic), and the Coroner, Mr. C. B. Ranclaud, having personal experience of the spot having many years ago been a general camping place and burial-ground of the blacks, no inquest is considered necessary. (NMH&MA, 9 June 1881, page 2).*

The discovery of these human remains indicates that present-day Civic Park and environs was, and continues to be, an area of great significance to traditional owners.

## Recent History



An undated (pre-1957) aerial photograph of the Civic block. Note the warehouses on the north-eastern corner of Civic Park. Note the plantings in Civic Park and desire paths between Wheeler Place and the site of the future Newcastle Art Gallery. Source: Hunter Photobank, Newcastle Libraries.

In the decades after European arrival, the area now defined by our cultural institutions served various purposes, much of which directly served the city's industry and waterfront. The northernmost area, near Honeysuckle Drive, was associated with the growth of Newcastle as a port and major city. This area was known for much of last century as 'Lee Wharf', and the adjacent former railway workshops continue to represent its evolving associations with the railways and waterfront.

The precinct we now refer to as 'the Civic' has its origins in the early 1920s. Under the visionary leadership of Mayor Morris Light, ratepayers voted in favour of a proposal to erect a new Town Hall (later City Hall) and theatre that would be "befitting the prestige of the city". Sadly, Light passed away only months before both new public buildings were opened to the public in 1929. Since then, the City Hall and Civic Theatre have provided Newcastle with a

distinct cultural core. In addition to their architectural significance, both buildings are cherished by Novocastrians as important sites in Newcastle's social history. City Hall, for instance, remains associated with the lord mayoralty of Joy Cummings, Australia's first female lord mayor (elected 1974). The Civic Theatre, although built as a 'picture palace' when 'talkies' were in their infancy, is still to this day associated with the various acts that have graced its stage since it was modified for live performances in the 1970s.

Later, but no less significant, additions to the Civic are the War Memorial Cultural Centre, Newcastle Art Gallery, and the Conservatorium of Music. These institutions flank Civic Park, which has been associated with the city's ANZAC commemorations since the 1950s when it became the preferred venue for services over less-accessible King Edward Park. A description of Civic Park in 1951 provides some indication of how its layout and appearance has changed considerably since that time:

*"In Civic Park, with the vacant land between King-street and the Cultural Centre site and the Darby-street area, now used for industrial purposes, Newcastle has a basis for a park area which future generations will value even more than the present. There must be a limit to the time in which a railway line can be permitted to bisect the park, as well as an important part of the city. (Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate, 2 April 1951).*

Improvements to the park followed the closure of the 'Glebe coal line' in 1954, uniting Civic Park in a format more recognisable to modern-day locals and visitors. Burwood Street, between Hunter and King Streets, remains a reminder of this transport corridor that once cut the park in half.

Further east, between Crown and Wolfe Streets, are the remnants of a much earlier entertainment precinct. The oldest of these venues, the Victoria Theatre, was first built in the 1870s but replaced with the current structure in 1890-91. Other venues of significance in this precinct included the former Lyric Theatre on Wolfe Street (c1910 as

the Masonic Hall and c1915 as the Lyric), the Central Hall on King Street (c1903), the Strand Theatre on Hunter Street (c1916), the Kensington Theatre on Hunter Street (c1970), the Tatler theatre on Hunter Street (c1944), and Tower Cinemas on King Street (1976). Given the high number of complimentary venues in and around this precinct, it is reasonable to assume that the blocks between Market and Crown Streets have long been associated with the city's retail and entertainment landmarks. Of these, however, only the former Victoria Theatre and the former Central Hall remain in a largely unaltered condition. Tower Cinemas closed in 2018 and both the Stand and Lyric theatres have been demolished. The Kensington and Tatler theatres are now retail space.



By the 1950s, there was a theatre on almost every city block between Market and Auckland Streets. The Stand (pictured) was on Hunter Street facing Market Street. The Lyric, Victoria, Central Hall, Tatler, and Civic were all an easy walk west. Only the Victoria, Central Hall, and Civic are still standing.





# PRECINCT PERSONALITIES

The precinct has six distinct personalities.

- North-South Activity Corridor
- East-West Activity Corridor

- Light Rail
- Bus Station

- Light Rail
- Bus Station



1

## Workshop Way

Workshop Way is the interface between the city's civic heart and its working harbour. Still defined by its rich maritime history, Workshop Way is home to the Newcastle Museum and Newcastle Visitor Information Centre. The museum's saw-tooth roof is a distinct part of the precinct's built environment, so too the c1908-1910 cargo sheds at Lee Wharf. Workshop Way is one of the northern gateways to the Cultural Precinct, connecting it to the Honeysuckle waterfront.

2

## Performing Arts Centre

Performing Arts Centre encompasses the Civic Theatre, Civic Playhouse, Wheeler Place, and City Hall. It is the city's original civic heart and maintains its role as a gathering place for the community and its elected officials. The City Hall clock tower is a dominant feature of the built environment, adjacent to the Brutalist 'Roundhouse' (now Crystalbrook Kingsley). Performing Arts Centre is at the crossroads of the North-South axis and the East-West axis. It is perfectly suited to large events, activations, and continuing its role as the preferred venues for major performances.

3

## University of Newcastle Honeysuckle Campus

University of Newcastle's City Campus is part of the University's 10-year Master Plan to deliver a mix of innovative research and education spaces, places to collaborate with industry and community, and accommodation for students to enjoy the best of living and working in the heart of the city. The campus is on the western side of the Cultural Precinct, between the Civic Theatre and Worth Place, and extending north to Honeysuckle.

4

## Civic Park

Civic Park is the city's green lungs. Situated between the Performing Arts Centre and Cooks Hill, Civic Park has strong associations with the city's military history and its enduring commitment to social justice. The park is defined by the 'honeycomb' City Library & Lovett Gallery, as well as the Brutalist c1977 Newcastle Art Gallery. It is the city's solemn gathering place, committed in form and function to lifelong learning and the preservation of Newcastle's stories, memories, and public collections.

The park provides a crossroads between major cultural institutions and the University of Newcastle's City campus. It also provides a southern entrance to the Cultural Precinct from vibrant Darby Street.

5

## King Street

King Street, between Auckland and Perkins Streets, is an emerging ribbon of food and beverage operations. The strip is defined by its eclectic architecture, spanning much of Newcastle's European history, and provides an intuitive 'ramble' from the Victoria Theatre in the east to University House in the west.

The small business community along King Street are important partners in the creation of a Cultural Precinct. Their operations are essential to creating a vibrant streetscape that will help grow the city's visitor economy and compliment the development and delivery of cultural experiences.

6

## Boat Harbour

The Boat Harbour site refers to a partly vacant parcel of land between Scott Street and Wharf Road. The site, enlarged by the truncation of the inner city railway line, has been earmarked for future uses that will compliment and grow the city's visitor economy.

The Boat Harbour precinct also includes Perkins Street, a dense inner-city environment dominated by the future QT Hotel (formerly David Jones) and the c1891 Victoria Theatre.

The Boat Harbour site is both a northern and eastern gateway to the Cultural Precinct. It is perfectly suited to activations, events, and installations that create an enchanting environment and draw locals and visitors into the North-East axis.



## Delivering the Vision

Newcastle is already recognised as a growing metropolitan area with vibrant cultural institutions at its heart. To build on this strength, the following Vision Statement has been proposed for the NAPA, otherwise known as the City's Cultural Precinct:

**“TO GROW THE VISITOR ECONOMY IN THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE BY CREATING A NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PLATFORM FOR ARTS, CULTURE, FESTIVALS, AND EXPRESSION. THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY UNIFYING THE STRENGTHS AND AMBITIONS OF EXISTING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, AND THEN CONNECTING THESE INSTITUTIONS ALONG CORRIDORS OF COMPLIMENTARY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY (A NORTH–SOUTH AXIS AND AN EAST–WEST AXIS).”**

Delivering on this vision requires ongoing collaboration between the City of Newcastle, its cultural institutions, the University of Newcastle, small businesses, landowners, and the community. This could include the creation of a Precinct Steering Committee to oversee and evolve the delivery of the master plan.

The purpose of this master plan is to provide stakeholders with a 'roadmap' to delivering a vibrant Cultural Precinct (the NAPA). It includes five 'Big Moves' that will reshape the precinct, along with a series of smaller actions that take place within these strategic interventions. These are detailed in a supporting Action Plan that is consistent with other City of Newcastle documents.

The master plan, informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, aims to create corridors of economic activity

across the precinct. This includes two North-South corridors between Workshop Way and Civic Park, as well as an East-West corridor between the Boat Harbour site and the future University of Newcastle Honeysuckle campus.

To nurture these corridors, the master plan proposes:

- 1 **An 'Academic Corridor' linking the future University of Newcastle's City campus and Civic Park, via Laman Street,**
- 2 **A more legible east-west journey that better connects food and beverage operations with the city's cultural attractions,**
- 3 **An expanded and enhanced Museum Park at the precinct's northern gateway,**
- 4 **A seasonally activated Wheeler Place within the Performing Arts Centre, and**
- 5 **New cultural infrastructure on the Boat Harbour site, creating a strong and inviting gateway to the precinct at its north-eastern corner.**

## Master planning Design Approach

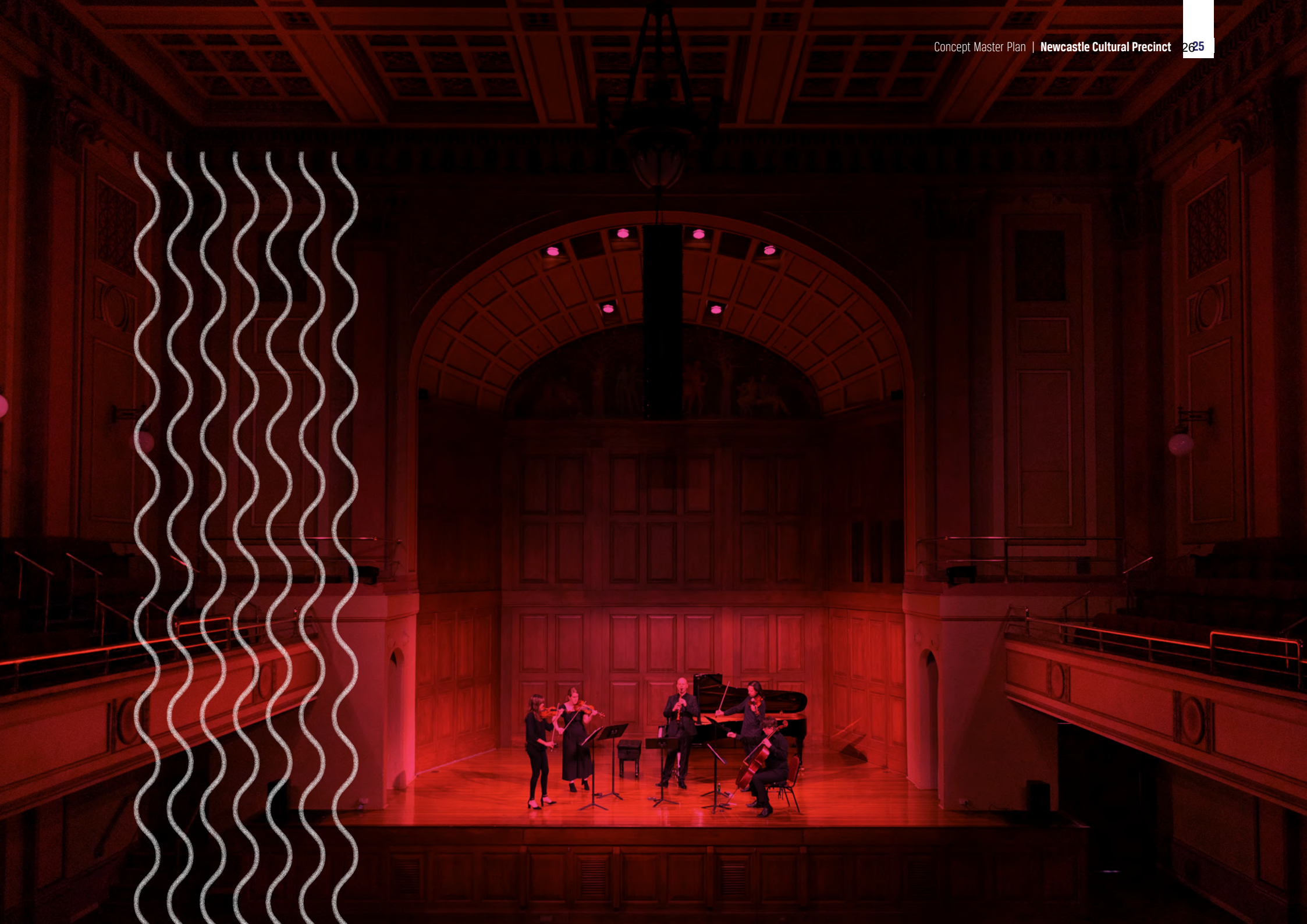
Rather than designing a new destination, this master plan is an exercise in exposing an 'invisible place' within the existing built environment. The NAPA already exists and has done so for many decades. The problem is few people can see it.

With this focus on sight, and a preoccupation with the unseen, existing and potential view corridors have guided our approach to this master plan. By subordinating the inconsistent street layout, this plan has prioritized lines of sight between institutions to energise the public spaces and to facilitate movement through the precinct. The NAPA is these lines of sight. It runs along clear lines between public art, theatres, galleries, and restaurants.

Importantly, the master planning approach acknowledges both recent and historical concepts and planning outcomes

that have shaped parts of the precinct. These include the original 1920s Civic scheme that gave Newcastle its City Hall, Civic Theatre, and later (former) Civic railway station. The approach also acknowledges, and supports, a long-held desire to create a strong north-south pedestrian corridor between Newcastle harbour and Wheeler Place. This corridor has been identified in multiple master plans, including the 2004 *Newcastle Civic and Cultural Precinct Masterplan*, and was again identified in the NSW Government's *Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy* (2014 update). Although partly delivered through the truncation of the heavy railway line, the link remains incomplete due to inconsistent public domain between the Visitor Information Centre and the Matthew Harding sculpture on Honeysuckle Drive.

The master planning design approach is about seeing the unseen. By focusing on the relationships and lines of sight that already exist between institutions, businesses, and public domain this master plan creates an opportunity to see familiar places through fresh eyes.



## Objectives

### Holistic

This master plan identifies and respects what is already working. Rather than proposing an array of new venues and experiences, this plan proposes a holistic view of what we already have and how it can be supported and grown. Through considering the spatial, temporal, cultural, and economic links between the sites identified in this plan, a more holistic vision for this part of the city has been created.

### Defined

One of the precinct's limitations is its disputed boundaries and purpose. At the crossroads of our axes is the Performing Arts Centre, an area that would be readily identifiable to most Novocastrians. With most of the City's operations relocating to the West End, however, the Performing Arts Centre's raison d'être has evolved. The repurposing of the Council Administration Centre as Crystalbrook's Kingsley Hotel, adjacent to the 1,450 seat Civic Theatre, underpins its new role as an important contributor to the NSW visitor economy. Making the precinct 'fit for purpose' is an important objective for this master plan. This can be achieved by giving the precinct spatial and programmatic definition that builds on existing associations (seeing a show at the Civic) and incorporates new experiences and attractions that are complimentary. To achieve this, focus has been placed on the north-south axis and the east-west axis.

### Complimentary

The evolution of the precinct will be driven by complimentary design and programming. By building on relationships between institutions and sites, whether they be spatial, historical, or otherwise, the precinct will develop in a way that creates benefits for all stakeholders (including small businesses). Where there exists a need or opportunity

for new spaces or experiences, consideration should be given to the requirements and potential of neighbouring institutions and existing users. The ethos of NAPA is very much that the 'whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.

### Inclusive

Great places are accessible and enjoyed by all. Underpinning this master plan is a desire to make the NAPA even more inclusive by improving the experiences of everyone who enters it from new and clearly demarcated arrival points. Inclusive design also involves strong collaboration with Traditional Owners, ensuring that the stories and sites associated with Awabakal people – which have origins tens of thousands of years before Newcastle – are prioritised and, where appropriate, shared. Inclusive delivery of the master plan could include working closely with the Awabakal community on the design of public art and historical interpretation. One visible opportunity to do this is through the creation of an 'Academic Corridor' on Auckland Street.

### Activated

One of the reasons that NAPA is not already functioning as a precinct is due to inconsistent activation. Although parts of the NAPA are successfully programmed for festivals or events, these activations are infrequent and do not encourage activity beyond the sites on which they are held. Wheeler Place is an example of this. Although successfully activated during New Annual (2021 and 2022) and, more recently, through corporate partnership, activations in Wheeler Place have not traditionally encouraged a flow of pedestrian activity south into Civic Park. An objective of this plan is to design a public realm that is intuitive 24-hours a day and is successful in moving visitors through the precinct and its attractions.

### Day and Night

Most of the institutions along the axes operate between 9am and 5pm. Although in recent years there has been a strong focus on the night-time economy, activating the NAPA during the day-time economy and on weekends is just as important as creating a safe and inviting experience after dark. This plan gives equal consideration to both the daytime and night-time economies, considering the needs and desires of visitors at all hours. Improving the connectivity between Workshop Way and Civic Park is a priority of this plan, recognising the benefit to both precincts of more frequent and more fluid movement between the waterfront dining precinct and the cultural institutions to its south.

### Enabling

The vision for NAPA is not for a neighbourhood, but rather a platform; the NAPA is a supportive and resourced space for cultural initiatives to be bumped in and out. The entirety of the axes should be regarded as venues; every blank wall, parklet, tree canopy, and restaurant should be treated as a potential space for artistic expression. Building capacity along these axes is critical to enabling new and spontaneous initiatives. Deploying the city's 'Smart City' technologies provides one opportunity to enable these experiences, especially on key sites such as the 'King Street Wall' at the corner of King and Darby Streets.

### Accessible

Good destinations are accessible, in both a physical and experiential sense. The precinct should cater to a wider range of needs and interests, and an improved public domain will make the experience of visiting more enjoyable for all. Improved wayfinding could enable greater access to public transportation, parking stations (Civic West), and nearby attractions. To ensure that accessibility is at the heart of delivering the master plan, a NAPA Accessibility and Inclusion Action Plan could be prepared. Such a

document might consider championing specialized tactile and Auslan interpreted tours as well as A3 and braille maps. Other initiatives could include incorporating accessibility requirements into the planning and design stages of new building works, scoping the possibility of more onsite accessibility parking and drop-off facilities, creating a priority list for all building retrofit works, and reviewing signage to improve wayfinding into and around the NAPA for people with a disability.

### Authentic

Newcastle is unlike any other city, and the NAPA should reflect this. To create an authentic destination, all stakeholders must stay faithful to the city and its values. Where there exist opportunities for naming or interpretation, local stories and achievements should take pride of place. For example, Newcastle has been synonymous with a vibrant live music for many decades. Where permissible, live music should be enabled and encouraged to give the NAPA a personality that is distinctly Novocastrian. Other ways of doing this could include naming or renaming public spaces to reflect the artistic achievements of Novocastrians. In Adelaide, for example, a laneway was recently named "Cold Chisel Lane" in honour of the Australian pub rock band. Gestures such as this one can even become economic enablers, incentivising businesses to open on or around spaces that can offer flavour or personality.

### Preserving

As detailed in the 2020 Lord Mayoral minute, the precinct should preserve the city's cultural heritage. By focusing on pedestrian activity and the links between institutions, this report attempts to preserve the city's cultural history by making visible temporal and spatial connections between sites. Several sites within the precinct are already noted for their State or local significance. When undertaking improvements or changes in the precinct, the City and other stakeholders should be mindful that much of the precinct

is of great historical importance and that the stories and features of key sites should be drawn out and celebrated as much as possible.

### Sustainable

The precinct needs to be sustainable, both environmentally and financially. The success of the NAPA will be its ability to achieve longevity and to outgrow the ideas and ambitions given to it by this document. Resilient design should enable it to endure, respond, and evolve throughout the following decades. The NAPA is not a fixed location, it is a platform that should always respond to its anchor institutions and audiences.

## Design Strategies

### Activated and Adapting

The NAPA is the unfamiliar within the familiar. Born out of a traditional and ornamental Civic scheme dating back to at least 1929, the NAPA reflects the city's renewal by reinterpreting itself within its preserved heritage. More permeable and pedestrian friendly, the NAPA is a crossroads that facilitates an improved visitor experience within the Newcastle CBD. Although recognised by its heritage institutions and landmarks, the NAPA is an adapting platform for new and experimental expression at the confluence of old and new, enabling the collisions and untraditional meetings that have made Newcastle what it is.

More a garden path than a neighbourhood, the NAPA rambles up the sides and around the edges of Newcastle's cultural assets, making as much use of their stage doors as their front doors. Acknowledging the surplus of unprogrammed open space in the site, the NAPA threads itself through key spaces and sites where activations can deliver the greatest benefit, and where the orbits of institutions are in proximity.

High-level principles include:

1. Creating an activated and enchanting 'desire path' from Workshop Way to Civic Park,
2. Creating an activated and enchanting 'desire path' from the future University of Newcastle Honeysuckle campus to the Boat Harbour site, via King and Perkins Streets, and
3. Enabling events, installations, and activations to easily bump-in and out at key sites along both desire paths. These sites could include Museum Park, Wheeler Place, Civic Park, Crown Street, and Perkins Street.



*Image: Public art can play an important role in creating 'desire lines' between cultural institutions. The Matthew Harding sculpture 'ship to shore' on Honeysuckle Drive provides the perfect departure point for a north-south 'ramble' to Civic Park via Workshop Way and the Performing Arts Centre. Source: Author's collection.*

### City Technology and Innovation

City of Newcastle's *Smart City Strategy 2017-2021* underpins its reputation as a highly innovative, emerging global city. The master plan aims to incorporate and support a range of initiatives in the strategy, particularly those that improve the amenity of the precinct, support creative industries, nurture artists, and seed the creation of digitally connected institutions. Relevant strategic interventions endorsed in the *Smart City Strategy* that support the intent and development of the NAPA include the following:

<b>Program 1</b>	<b>Smart City Infrastructure</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Develop and deploy city-scale technology infrastructure to improve the amenity of the city and the lives of its residents and visitors

On the ground, this looks like:

- The City's Smart Pole network and underpinning communication networks enabling the City to deploy technologies into the NAPA, and
- 'Federating' the City Wifi networks so the system inside Newcastle Art Gallery, City Hall, and the Civic Theatre is consistent across the interlinking public spaces.

<b>Program 2</b>	<b>Digitally Interactive Places</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Deploy interactive technologies into a high quality public domain to create well loved, active, safe places of interest, education and discovery

On the ground, this looks like:

- The City actively piloting and deploying interactive technologies into public space. These are about sensor-based interactivity with light and sound. They include digital and mixed reality (VR/AR) applications anchored to physical locations. Another example of a Digitally Interactive Place that could provide inspiration for the NAPA is Kuwami Place (Night Henges Project).

<b>Program 1</b>	<b>City Data</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Enable access and utilisation of city data to improve planning, stimulate economic development, attract people to Newcastle and make people's lives easier

On the ground, this looks like:

- The City App, which can guide curated experience of different aspects of the city (including the future North-South and East-West axes), and
- Digital Wayfinding (using augmented reality to support A to B journeys (i.e., Victoria Theatre to University House), as well as the cultural interpretation of sites.

<b>Program 3</b>	<b>Digital Creative Newcastle</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Provide access to city digital platforms to support creative industries and broaden audiences for culture supporting local cultural production

On the ground, this looks like:

- The City working towards a shared digital architecture approach to its digital platforms, enabling their 'take over' and creative use for exhibition and performance.

<b>Program 1</b>	<b>Innovation Ecosystem</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Actively develop the regional innovation ecosystem's capacity to nurture businesses, artists, creatives and innovators and generate economic growth in key industry sectors

On the ground, this looks like:

- Developing the close alignment between the NAPA Vision Statement and the emergence of creative and innovation clusters in the Newcastle city centre.

<b>Program 2</b>	<b>City Digital Precinct</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	Seed the creation of a digitally connected innovation district in the Newcastle city centre to attract businesses and industries working in the digital economy and creative industries

On the ground, this looks like:

- A Digital Corridor, including the establishment of a superfast fibre network through the city centre that connects all cultural institutions and enables next generation digital arts and media applications, as well as real-time integration of content across sites and into city.

High level principles include:

- 1 Deploying the city's Smart City technology to activate spaces and nurture its artistic and creative communities,
- 2 Improving access to the city's public collections (including those at Newcastle Art Gallery) with Digitally Interactive Places, and
- 3 Aligning the vision for NAPA with the emergence of creative and innovation clusters in the city centre.



Image: The City's Smart City Strategy provides a roadmap for deploying new technologies across the NAPA that can nurture artists and activate the built environment. Sites such as the 'King Street Wall', at the corner of King and Darby Streets, can be transformed into a digital canvas using interactive technologies. Source: Author's collection.

### Connected City

Bringing more people to the precinct, and keeping them there for longer, is key to its success as an attractive destination. Improving connectivity with other precincts will enable this, with focus placed on Honeysuckle to the north, Darby Street to the south, East End to the east, and West End ("Midtown") to the west. At present, movement through the precinct is primarily east-west along King or Hunter Streets. Softening this east-west flow and encouraging pedestrian movements between the harbour and Newcastle Art Gallery is a priority.

Another way to improve connectivity within the precinct is to improve public domain in laneways, across open spaces, and between buildings.

High level principles include:

- 1 Creating strong pedestrian corridors between cultural institutions and the University of Newcastle,
- 2 Work with Newcastle Transport & RMS to improve public transportation options to and from the precinct (including more weekend and night-time services), and
- 3 Knitting the public domain at the edges of the precinct so the experience of walking from adjacent precincts is intuitive and uninterrupted (this includes consistent lighting, footpaths, street furniture, and wayfinding).



Image: Integrating the future University of Newcastle's City Campus with Museum Park will facilitate improved connectivity between the NAPA, the University of Newcastle, and Midtown beyond. Source: Author's collection.

## Arrival

The primary entry points to the precinct are from the north and south, with an additional entry point in the east after the reopening of the Victoria Theatre on Perkins Street. The north-south corridor between Newcastle Harbour and Newcastle Art Gallery forms a 'backbone' for the precinct, off which an internal circulation arrangement enables improved access to all venues. Consideration has been given to the original 'Civic scheme' from the 1940s and 50s, ensuring that the revitalised cultural core remains true to its earlier vision as the Civic.

High level principles include:

- 1 Creating 'gateways' to the precinct. These could include electronic signage, illuminations, creative public domain, and/or ornamental arches,
- 2 Improving access to venues from side and rear entrances (for instance, at City Hall, improved access via the eastern Wheeler Place entrance) to enable more 'touch points' and creative address to the NAPA, and
- 3 Activating 'dead spots' with bespoke or creative architecture that also improve shade coverage within the precinct.



Image: The Boat Harbour site, at the precinct's north-eastern corner, provides a unique opportunity to create a sense of arrival and an enchanting beginning to the East-West axis. Source: Author's collection.

## Permeability

Internal circulation paths favour pedestrian movements. Existing 'desire paths' between venues such as Newcastle Museum and Newcastle Art Gallery are nurtured, and the north-south corridor is made legible to improve accessibility and the visitor experience. Improvements to permeability are guided by elevating the spatial relationships between venues and their programs. Internal circulation paths take greater notice of side entrances and stage doors, improving the ease with which audiences and visitors can access venues and local businesses. Obstructions to lines of sight have been removed, reorientating audiences and visitors to consider the precinct from new angles and in relation to adjacent precincts (Honeysuckle in the north and Cooks Hill in the south, as well as East End in the east and Midtown in the west).

High level principles include:

- 1 Activating laneways, desire paths, and spaces between institutions to allow for exploring,
- 2 Removing obstructions to line of sight between Honeysuckle Drive and Civic Park,
- 3 Improving the pedestrian crossings at Civic tram stop and King Street between Wheeler Place and Civic Park.



Image: Delivering on the 'Five Big Moves' in this master plan includes many 'light touch' interventions. This could include embracing the precinct's 'pokeability' (a term phrased by urbanist Elizabeth Farrelly) by supporting food and beverage operations to make use of laneways and underutilised space. This image is of café seating on a laneway near Martin Place in Sydney. Source: Author's collection.

## Active Edges

Hard corners and surfaces currently dilute activity within the precinct. These spaces are softened and activated by harnessing digital opportunities (including projections) and aligning future investments in public art with precinct priorities. 'Priority edges' for activating and softening include:

- Eastern edge of Darby Street between Laman and King Streets,
- Southern edge of King Street between Darby and Crown Streets,
- North-western corner of Darby and King Streets (in front of the ATO Building),
- Western and eastern edges of Wheeler Place,
- Burwood Street corridor (between Hunter and King Streets), and
- Perkins Street corridor (between King Street and Newcastle Harbour).

High level principles include:

- 1 Activating the eastern edge of Darby Street (between Laman and King Streets) with illuminated installations,
- 2 Investing in public art to activate and illuminate streetscapes, and
- 3 Investigating and consult on installing heritage neon signage on former and existing theatres.



Image: Activating the 'edges' of public spaces, including Wheeler Place, make them more inviting to visitors and easier to program during festivals and performances. Source: Author's collection.

### Views and Vistas

The master plan prioritises the spatial relationship between the precinct, the working harbour, and the neighbouring village environments. The north-south corridor between Workshop Way and Civic Park is strengthened by removing obstacles at Wright Lane and improving legibility from the Visitor Information Centre through Wheeler Place into Civic Park.

The dominant feature in this view and activity corridor is the City Hall clocktower, enabling visitors to orientate themselves and to appreciate the precinct's rich built environment. Similarly, the east-west corridor along King Street prioritises an existing view of St Andrews Church in Laman Street. By orientating the corridor in this way, attention and activity is drawn further west across Civic Park, enabling better use of the park corner addressing Auckland and King Streets.

High level principles include:

- 1 Illuminating key sites to provide visual linkages,
- 2 Treating City Hall clocktower, St Andrews church steeple, and NUspace as points of orientation that should be protected from future developments that could obstruct them, and
- 3 Working with the RSL on options to improve visibility of Newcastle Art Gallery, which is currently obscured by the memorial in the south-eastern corner of Civic Park.



Image: Encouraging north-south pedestrian activity includes protecting and enhancing existing and new view corridors. In this image, looking down Settlement Lane towards Auckland Street, an important view corridor to Civic Park is obscured by properties addressing Hunter Street. The delivery of an Academic Corridor, proposed among the 'Five Big Moves' would create a new view corridor and a more legible north-south journey. Source: Author's collection.

### Shade coverage

Consideration has been given to improving shade coverage in the precinct. Although the NAPA benefits from a dense built environment and the greenery of Civic Park, shade coverage has been proposed through activating Wheeler Place with seasonal tenancies and expanding and enhancing Museum Park. Through collaboration with the University of Newcastle, additional shade coverage could be delivered within the future Honeysuckle campus to ensure both axes provide sufficient shade coverage at all times of the year.

High level principles include:

- 1 Investing in a master plan for Civic Park that improves shading on the eastern side,
- 2 Investing in temporary and/or architecturally designed structures to provide coverage along the north-south axis – especially between Honeysuckle Drive and the Visitor Information Centre, and
- 3 Trialing temporary structures in Wheeler Place to make it more enjoyable during all seasons.



Image: Shade coverage could be improved within the precinct by trialing temporary structures in public spaces, including Wheeler Place. The University of Newcastle's Honeysuckle campus provides another opportunity to expand shade coverage in and around the precinct, ensuring all venues are accessible along shaded 'desire lines' at all times of the year. Source: Author's collection.



## BIG MOVE 1/5

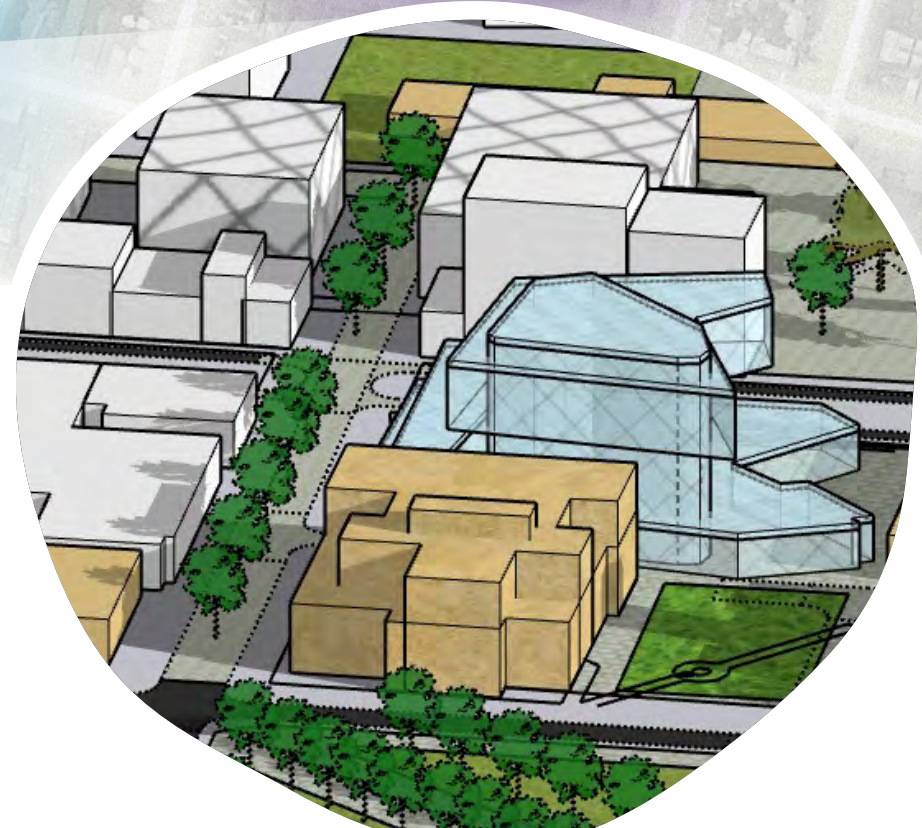
Create legible north-south journey(s), including an 'Academic Corridor' that connects the Cultural Precinct and University of Newcastle's City Campus

Pictured: A concept for improved permeability between King Street and University of Newcastle's City Campus, via 'Academic Corridor'.



- 1 Harness the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between City of Newcastle (CN) and the University of Newcastle (UoN) to improve connections between the Cultural Precinct and the University of Newcastle's City Campus.
- 2 Investigate ideas to create a gateway to the precinct at Honeysuckle. This could include electronic signage, illuminations, and/or additional public art.
- 3 Explore funding opportunities for temporary, architecturally designed structures to provide coverage along the north-south axis.
- 4 Improve north-south permeability by working with University of Newcastle to improve connections between their City Campus and the Cultural Precinct.

- 5 Begin discussions with the University of Newcastle to explore the idea of an 'Academic Corridor' connecting Civic Park/Alumni House with other parts of the University's City Campus and Honeysuckle.
- 6 Identify opportunities to improve and expand public art in and around Christie Street.
- 7 Consider a master plan for Civic Park that improves shading on the eastern side (Darby Street).
- 8 Activate the eastern edge of Darby Street (between Laman and King Streets). This could include projections, public art, and/or illuminated street furniture.
- 9 Work with the RSL to improve visibility of Newcastle Art Gallery, which is currently obscured by the Civic Park Memorial Grove.



## BIG MOVE 2/5

### Create a legible east-west journey through public art, lighting and wayfinding

Pictured: Through public art, lighting and wayfinding a stronger east-west axis encourages pedestrian activity along King Street and across to the University's City Campus via an 'Academic Corridor' along Auckland Street.



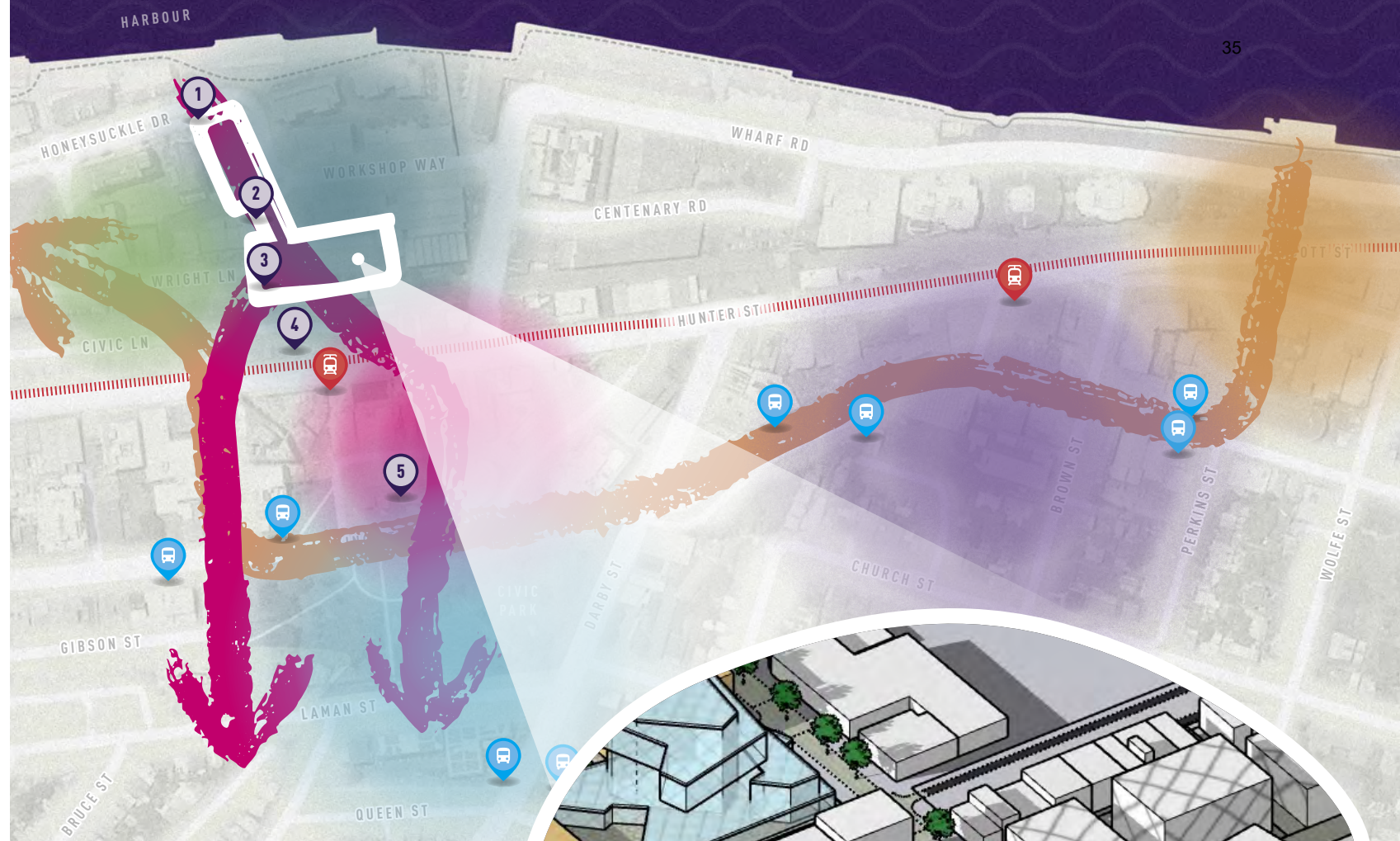
- 1 Consider view corridors to and from orientation points such as City Hall clocktower, St Andrews church, and NUspace.
- 2 Enable events, installations, and activations to easily bump-in and out at key sites along the east-west axis.
- 3 Enable permanent and/or temporary projections and installations along the 'King Street Wall' (between Darby and Crown Streets).
- 4 Invest in public domain, open space, and wayfinding to strengthen the corridor between Perkins and Auckland Streets via King Street.
- 5 Investigate potential closure of Crown Street.
- 6 Work with local businesses to better align their operations and trading hours with those of the cultural institutions.
- 7 Investigate funding opportunities to incentivise neon signage on properties along Perkins and King Streets.
- 8 Create an arrival point to the precinct at the Boat Harbour site.



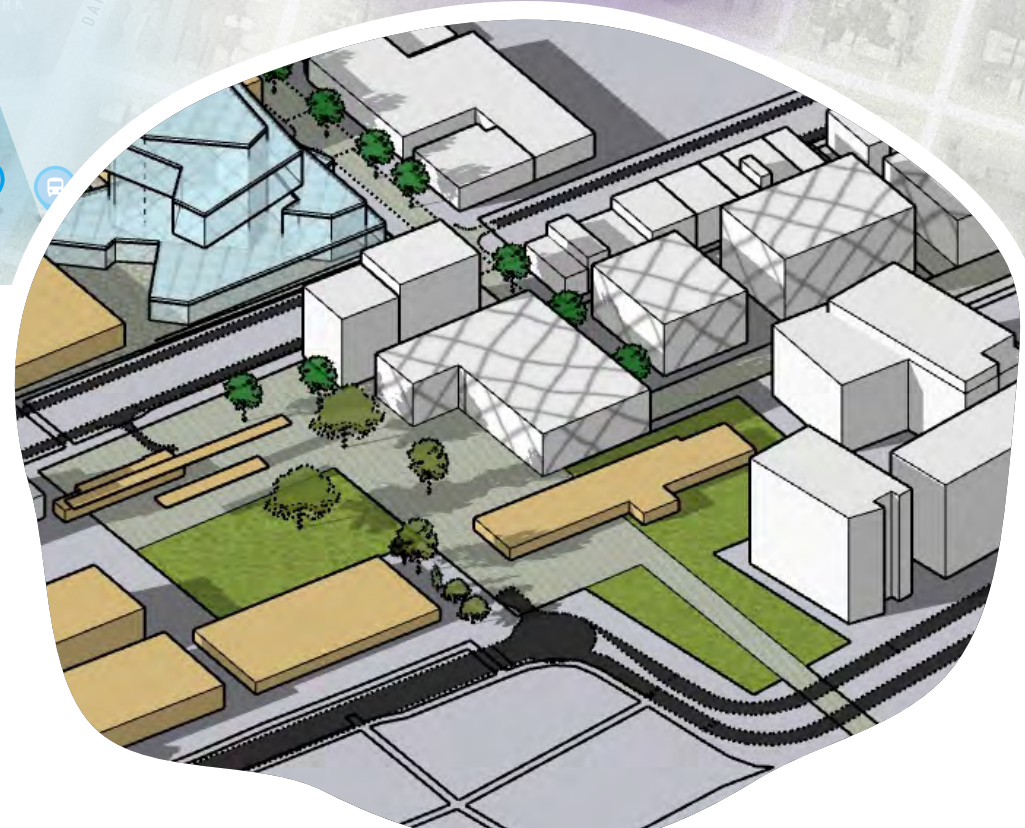
## BIG MOVE 3/5

### Explore opportunities to expand and enhance Museum Park

Pictured: One concept for expanding and enhancing Museum Park. In this illustration, there is improved Hunter Street frontage – including a new view corridor from Honeysuckle to the Civic Theatre. A landmark building on the University of Newcastle's City Campus has also provided the park with a defined western edge.



- 1 Enable events, installations, and activations to easily bump-in and out at key sites along the north-south axis.
- 2 Improve Museum Park and work with the University to improve connectivity to their City Campus and Honeysuckle.
- 3 Program Museum Park to compliment major exhibitions and events at Newcastle Museum and the Visitor Information Centre.
- 4 Investigate opportunities to improve links from Hunter Street towards Honeysuckle.
- 5 Investigate removing obstructions to line of sight between Honeysuckle Drive and City Hall.



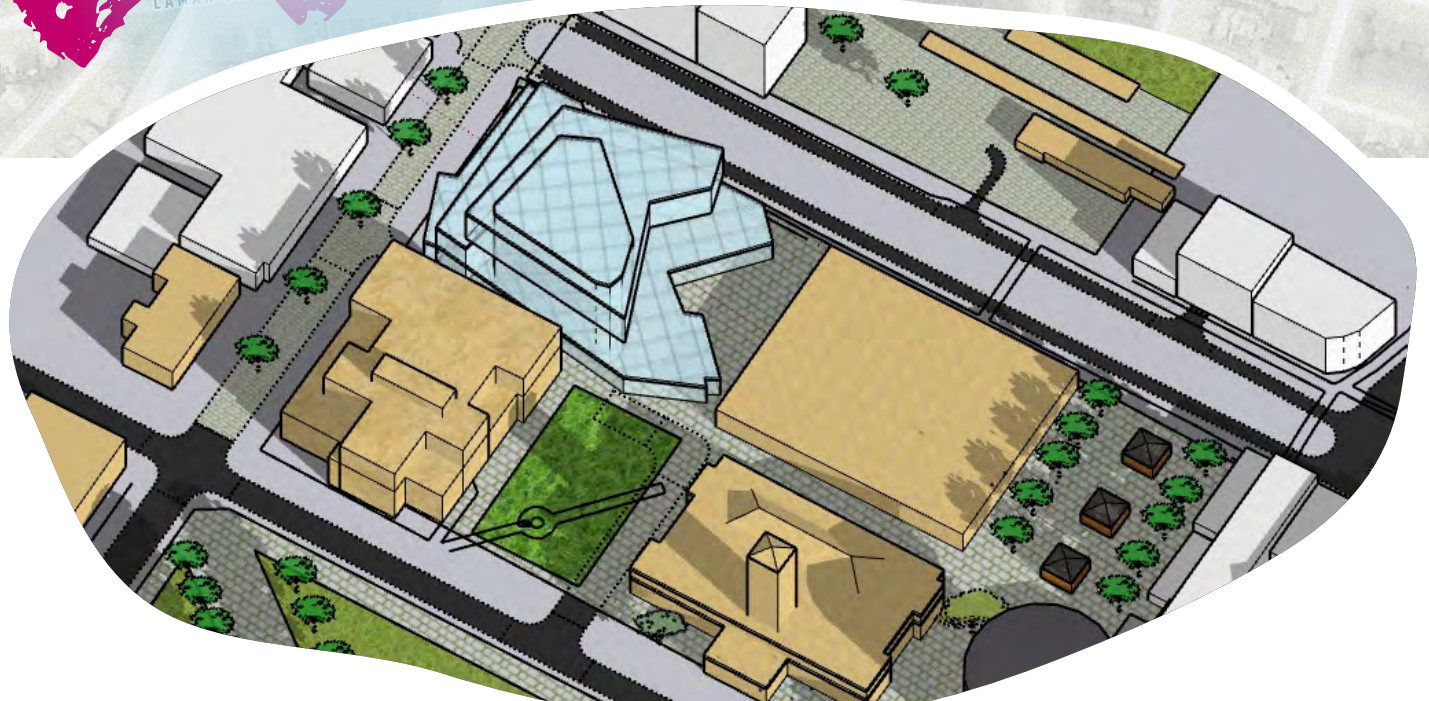
## BIG MOVE 4/5

### Activate Wheeler Place with seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies

Pictured: A concept for creating more defined spaces in Wheeler Place through installation of pop-up or seasonal tenancies.



- 1 Explore opportunities to harness scheduled upgrades or works to improve the space by delivering new plantings, street furniture, and lighting.
- 2 Consider erecting seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies in Wheeler Place to make programming easier.
- 3 Program Wheeler Place as an extension of Civic Theatre & City Hall.
- 4 Nurture the north-south axis by improving pedestrian flows between Wheeler Place and Civic Park. This could include installing a traffic-light controlled pedestrian crossing.



## BIG MOVE 5/5

### Invite the community to identify new cultural infrastructure for the Boat Harbour site

Pictured: 'Serpentine Pavilion 2017/V', architect: Francis Kere. Blue-stained timber walls and a soaring spoked canopy designed to provide shade and catch rainwater. By the Serpentine Gallery, City of Westminster, London.

A pavilion or installation that responds to its setting, and provides an eastern gateway to the broader precinct, could be informed through further community engagement.

*Image credit: George Rex.*



- 1 Engage with local theatre, dance and music groups to inform thinking about the site and its suitability for rehearsal space(s).
- 2 Engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform thinking about the site and its future use.
- 3 Identify the site in upcoming strategic documents as the eastern gateway to the NAPA.





# 4

## STRATEGIC POLICY & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT



The vision for a 'formal Civic Cultural Precinct', as defined in the October 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute and developed in this report, aligns with many of the aspirations and targets set in key State and local documents. These include, but are not limited to:

- Hunter Regional Plan 2036
- Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan
- Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework (2015)
- (NSW) Visitor Economy Strategy 2030
- Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Newcastle 2040
- City of Newcastle Draft Local Social Strategy
- City of Newcastle Smart City Strategy 2017-2021
- City of Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2021
- City of Newcastle Draft Social Infrastructure Strategy

## Hunter Regional Plan 2036

The NSW Government's vision for the Hunter is to be 'the leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant new metropolitan city at its heart'. To achieve this vision the Government has set four goals for the region:

1. A leading regional economy in Australia
2. A biodiversity-rich natural environment
3. Thriving communities, and
4. Greater housing choice and jobs.

## Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan (GNMP)

The GNMP sets out strategies and actions that will drive sustainable growth across Cessnock City, Lake Macquarie City, Maitland City, Newcastle City and Port Stephens communities, which together make up Greater Newcastle. The Plan also helps to achieve the vision set in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 for the Hunter to be the leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant new metropolitan city at its heart.

The vision articulated in the GNMP is for a Greater Newcastle that is:

1. Dynamic and entrepreneurial, with a globally competitive economy and the excitement of the inner city and green suburban communities,
2. offering great lifestyles minutes from beaches or bushland, the airport or universities, and from the port to the lake, and
3. a national leader in the new economy, with smarter cities and carbon neutral initiatives, and with collaborative governance that makes it a model to others in creating and adapting to change.





## Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework (2015)

*Create in NSW* is a ten-year framework that draws on the strengths and ambitions of NSW residents, artists, cultural workers, and arts organisations across the diverse communities of Metropolitan Sydney, Western Sydney, and Regional NSW. *Create in NSW* outlines 'Key Actions' for Regional NSW. These include:

- NSW Government collaborating with local governments in Regional NSW, with a focus on opportunities for creative hubs and cultural precincts,
- enhancing performing arts touring by developing a Regional Partnerships and Touring Framework for the State Cultural Institutions
- supporting self-determined practice and creating professional development pathways for artists and for arts and cultural workers
- supporting the development of digital platforms to extend the reach of the State Cultural Institutions' collections, programs and events to schools, universities, family historians, researchers, artists, and cultural practitioners across NSW, and
- Promoting opportunities for cultural tourism through Destination Management Planning (DMP) – in consultation with the Regional Arts Network and Destination NSW.

Among the Actions identified in the *Create in NSW* framework, the following relates directly to unlocking cultural and economic opportunities in Newcastle:

"We will also clarify funding and partnership opportunities and provide advice and expertise, where required to ensure stronger business cases and sound co-funding opportunities. Further, we will explore and maximise opportunities for creative hubs and cultural precincts across the State" (*Create in NSW*, 2015).

## Visitor Economy Strategy 2030

The NSW Government's *Visitor Economy Strategy 2030* provides a roadmap to support all industries involved in the visitor economy to recover from the impact of drought, bushfires, and COVID-19 and to grow in the future. The state's 'vibrant contemporary culture' is identified as one of five key strengths to focus on going forward. These include:

1. Living Aboriginal culture
2. Significant cultural infrastructure,
3. Art, music, screen, and live performance, and
4. LGBTQIA+ culture and events.

## Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012

The Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) is a legal document that provides rules and standards for uses on private and public land within the City of Newcastle local government area. The LEP is made up of a written document (instrument) and a series of accompanying maps.

Amending City of Newcastle's (CN) LEP is a legal process which must be carried out in accordance with Part 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

## Newcastle 2040

Newcastle 2040 is the highest-level plan that CN prepares. Its purpose is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals. Newcastle 2040 guides all other CN strategies and plans and must be developed with and on behalf of the community. Newcastle 2040 has been developed through an extensive engagement process undertaken throughout 2020–2021. The focus of this process was to listen to the needs and aspirations of our community to determine our future priorities based on our strengths, challenges and opportunities.

## City of Newcastle Draft Local Social Strategy

The City of Newcastle's s Local Social Strategy 2030 places people at the centre of its vision of a socially just and inclusive place for all. The City recognise that human health and the health of our planet are deeply interwoven. The City believes that it must balance Newcastle's social foundations – things like healthcare, education and food – with ecological concerns such as a healthy climate, biodiversity and clean water. From this basis, the strategy champions evidence-based decision-making and innovative practice to inform its approach, while ensuring strong, respectful and transparent relationships with community partners.

## City of Newcastle Smart City Strategy 2017–2021

The Smart City Strategy expands on Newcastle 2030 and outlines the City's role in working towards the delivery of a shared community vision for Newcastle. It aims to improve operational efficiency, achieve higher levels of sustainability, better service local community needs, stimulate economic development activity, increase community inclusion and participation, and position Newcastle as a smart city internationally.

## City of Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2021

The City's new Economic Development Strategy sets out a vision for Newcastle as it recovers from the economic impacts of the pandemic. The Strategy focuses on existing and emerging strengths and its delivery program highlights four priority areas. These including:

1. 'Skilled People',
2. 'Innovative People',
3. 'City Shaping' and
4. 'Vibrant City'.

## City of Newcastle Draft Social Infrastructure Strategy

The City's Social Infrastructure Strategy (SIS) outlines its future priorities for social infrastructure provision. It is a decision-making tool through which future demand is assessed, invested in, planned for and delivered. The SIS will:

- Support an integrated strategic approach to the provision of contemporary SI, in partnership with neighbouring councils and other levels of government, the local community and other key stakeholders including the private sector
- Improve coordination and fairness in decision-making around SI investments, resourcing and equitable delivery
- Position the City for collaborative funding opportunities and partnerships
- Realise the delivery of quality SI across the LGA that will meet the needs of our future population and enable the delivery of community activities, programs, services and events for all.



# 5/

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



During 2021, twenty-three (23) interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the precinct. These interviews lasted one (1) hour and were undertaken with representatives from the following institutions and/or organisations:

- City of Newcastle (Lord Mayor and Chief Executive Officer)
- City of Newcastle (Director – Citywide Services)
- City of Newcastle (Manager - Civic Services), speaking to City Hall
- City of Newcastle (Venues and Visitor Services Manager)
- City of Newcastle (Manager - Economic Development)
- City of Newcastle (Director – New Annual Festival)
- City of Newcastle (Chair – Community and Culture Advisory Committee)
- Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Civic Theatre
- Newcastle Museum
- Newcastle Art Gallery
- Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation
- Newcastle Region Library
- University of Newcastle (Conservatorium of Music)
- Century Venues, speaking to Victoria Theatre
- Crystalbrook, speaking to Kingsley Hotel
- Newcastle Business Improvement Association
- Neil Slater, Scratchleys restaurant
- City of Newcastle (Innovation and Futures Manager)
- University of Newcastle (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Office PVC - Human and Social Futures)
- University of Newcastle (Director of Advancement)
- University of Newcastle (Head of Government Relations)
- University of Newcastle (Director, Infrastructure and Facilities Services)

## What were stakeholders engaged on?

Interviews conducted as part of stakeholder engagement gathered feedback on people’s vision and aspirations for a thriving cultural precinct in the Newcastle Central Business District (CBD). To ensure that the vision articulated in this masterplan remains consistent with existing priorities and plans, stakeholders were asked the following questions:

- Do you believe that Newcastle has an arts and culture precinct? If so, can you describe its boundaries and attractions.
- Does your institution/organisation/business have a vision statement? What are your medium and long-term plans to grow audiences/visitors/patrons? Are you working with neighbouring institutions/organisations/businesses to achieve any targets?
- Regarding the precinct you described, do you have any comments on the following:
  - Public domain (including footpaths, open space, and shade),
  - Wayfinding (including signage),
  - Lighting and safety,
  - Ground floor tenancies and the operating hours of institutions and businesses,
  - Accessibility (including public transportation and parking), and
  - Programming (including the quality and frequency of performances, exhibitions, festivals, and activations),
- Do you have any further comments or ideas about improving or creating a cultural precinct in the Newcastle CBD?

## What did stakeholders say?

### Cultural Precinct (Boundaries)

Stakeholders identified the existing Civic precinct as an existing or potential site for a cultural precinct in the Newcastle CBD. The Civic Theatre and Newcastle Art Gallery were identified as key anchors in this precinct, although opinions on precinct boundaries varied. Most stakeholders interviewed said that the city’s cultural precinct is in the blocks and open spaces between the Newcastle Museum (north), Newcastle Art Gallery (south), and the City Hall (west). The eastern boundary was difficult for most stakeholders to define, and although there was some awareness of the Victoria Theatre (Perkins Street), some stakeholders located their idea of a cultural precinct in and around Civic Park and Wheeler Place.

Stakeholders who were aware of the Victoria Theatre suggested its inclusion, extending the eastern boundary as far as Queens Wharf and the Hunter Street Mall. The potential for King Street to grow as a dining precinct was identified by some stakeholders. One (1) stakeholder suggested closing Crown Street so it could be better used for al fresco dining and live music.

### Existing institutions (aspirations and collaboration)

Stakeholders from existing institutions spoke to their clear and ambitious visions. There was strong agreement among stakeholders that the existing institutions are of national significance but that their operations and programming are undertaken in silos.

Stakeholders from all institutions demonstrated a good understanding of the precinct’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. All stakeholders believed the precinct, and its institutions, have much potential and that some of this could be unlocked while major capital works were pending or being delivered.

Some stakeholders said that existing institutions already have forum(s) to meet and coordinate their programming, although it is not clear how frequently these are held and whether the group's membership includes all precinct stakeholders.

Some stakeholders pointed to the Princess Theatre in Melbourne as an example of the kind of experience and destination that could be offered by the Civic Theatre.

Some stakeholders pointed to the Enmore Theatre in Sydney as an example of the kind of experience and destination that could be offered by the Victoria Theatre.

### Public domain

Most stakeholders were either dissatisfied or had no comment on the public domain within the precinct. Some common observations included:

- Civic Park was described as "tired" and in need of improvements by several stakeholders,
- Wheeler Place was described as a "dead zone" by several stakeholders, difficult to activate by others, and generally uninviting by most,
- Stakeholders were generally unhappy with the condition of footpaths in the precinct, although there were no specific references to where footpaths need replacing,
- Stakeholders were generally happy with more recent investments in public domain, including at the Visitor Information Centre and Newcastle Museum,
- Comparisons were drawn between the laneway culture in cities such as Melbourne and the potential to activate Burwood Street, Christie Street, and Crown Street.

### Wayfinding

Most stakeholders were either dissatisfied or had no comment on wayfinding in the precinct. As an extension of commentary on institutions operating in "silos", several stakeholders said that wayfinding was non-existent and that visitors to the city have difficulty navigating the precinct in its current state.

Some stakeholders believed wayfinding was improving on the northern edge of the precinct, around the Visitor Information Centre. The quality of signage in and around this area was considered good by some stakeholders, and an example for how to improve wayfinding within and around Civic Park.

The need for wayfinding between the Victoria Theatre and the Civic Theatre was suggested by some stakeholders.

### Lighting and safety

There was a dominant perception among stakeholders that the precinct is dark at night. For some, particularly those representing institutions or organisations addressing Civic Park, this creates safety concerns after dark. Four (4) stakeholders referred to negative experiences in Civic Park at night, all of which took place on the eastern side of the park near the Memorial Grove and public toilets.

Some stakeholders spoke to the opportunity to use public art to illuminate and enliven 'dark spots' within the precinct. Burwood Street and the 'King Street wall' (stretching between Darby Street and the former Tower Cinemas) were two sites identified for public art.

Some stakeholders spoke to the need for an activated 'hub' after dark. Across interviews, this varied in form from an illuminated box office to a pop-up amusement. Many stakeholders felt that there is a need to create a highly visible and inviting 'hub' within the precinct, from which visitors can orientate themselves after hours.

### Tenancies and operating hours

The emergence of a dining precinct on King Street (between Darby and Perkins Streets) was commented on by many stakeholders. However, comments about tenancies and operating hours were mostly focused on areas for improvement.

Noting the opening of a five-star hotel, many stakeholders felt there is a need for higher quality ground floor tenants that have extended trading hours on Friday and Saturday nights.

Some stakeholders suggested stronger relationships between existing institutions and existing businesses, particularly those in the hospitality sector. Greater visibility and sharing of upcoming performances, exhibitions, and events was suggested as a 'quick fix' to the disconnect between institutions and nearby bars and restaurants.

Stakeholders from the hospitality sector said their awareness of cultural offerings was low.

### Accessibility

Comments about accessing the precinct were mixed. Perceptions of car parking varied, with some stakeholders believing a lack of parking prevents major events while others suggested that visitors should be encouraged to walk, cycle, or use public transportation.

Awareness of public transportation within the precinct was low. Some stakeholders were not aware of local bus services and/or their frequency and stops.

Some stakeholders commented on the need for improved public domain, especially footpaths, to improve accessibility for people with mobility limitations.

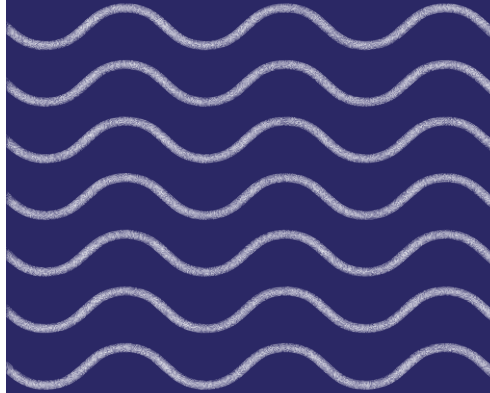
## Programming

Stakeholders were proud of the quality of performances and exhibitions within existing institutions, but many felt that the cultural program was sparse or infrequent.

Some stakeholders commented on opportunities to align the programming of existing institutions to create, or support, festivals that would attract a wider audience who would stay in the precinct for longer.

As most existing institutions have ambitious medium and long-term plans, several stakeholders suggested more adventurous programming within existing institutions. Some stakeholders believed that Newcastle should be 'testing the boundaries' when it comes to artistic expression, citing the city's reputation for counter-culture and progressive values.

Festivals were identified as a good way to extend programming out, and between, existing institutions. The New Annual Festival was referred to by some stakeholders as a beneficiary and driver for more frequent and adventurous programming across the precinct.



## Summary of stakeholder engagement

- Twenty-three (23) stakeholders agreed to participate in a one (1) hour interview about the precinct and the preparation of this masterplan,
- All institutions identified in the October 2020 Lord Mayoral Minute were represented, except for University House. University of Newcastle did participate, however, by providing a representative for the Conservatorium of Music.
- Most stakeholders believed that the city already has a "cultural precinct", and that it is in and around Wheeler Place and Civic Theatre,
- All stakeholders believed that there is opportunity to improve the cultural precinct. Common suggestions for doing so included:
  - More regular exhibitions and performances
  - Activated public domain, including Wheeler Place
  - Collaborating more regularly on major shows and experiences
  - Expanding Newcastle Art Gallery
  - Reviving the Victoria Theatre
  - Improving wayfinding, lighting, and public domain
  - Keeping the small business community on Darby Street and within the CBD informed.

# 6/

# ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT



## Estimated Visitation at Full Capacity

### Total Visitation

The key drivers of increased expenditures within the Newcastle Cultural Precinct can be attributed to the following factors:

- Increased visitation to the Newcastle Art Gallery due to the expansion; and
- Increased visitation to the (reopened) Victoria Theatre and the Civic Theatre.

To determine the full capacity scenario, consideration has been given to analysis presented in the Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020) report, which outlines visitation to the Enmore Theatre in Sydney, which we would assume would be operating at close to capacity.

The Enmore Theatre is a 1,600-seat venue, which attracts annual visitation of approximately 303,000 patrons. This translates to daily visitation of 830 persons, representing an average daily utilisation rate of 51.9% of seats.

At full capacity, our assessment has assumed an average daily utilisation rate of 50% for both the Victoria Theatre and the Civic Theatre. Based on this assumption, this would translate to annual visitation of 429,000 patrons to the Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre.

Our assessment has assumed that the Civic Theatre is currently operating at 30% of full capacity, which translates to approximately 79,500 patrons per annum. The Victoria Theatre is currently closed.

Table 1 summarises the calculation of total annual visitation to the Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre based on the above assumptions.

Table 1 – Annual Visitation to Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre at Full Capacity

	Victoria Theatre	Civic Theatre	Total
<b>Number of Seats</b>	900	1,450	2,350
<b>Assumed Daily Utilisation (%)</b>	50%	50%	50%
<b>Assumed Daily Visitation</b>	450	725	1,175
<b>Assumed Annual Visitation</b>	164,000	265,000	429,000
<b>Visitation Uplift Relative to Current Situation (Victoria Theatre closed)</b>	164,000	185,500	349,500

*Note: Visitation estimates have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 persons. Source: Bull & Bear Economics analysis, based on Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020)*

Prior to the expansion of the Newcastle Art Gallery, it is understood that the facility was operating at close to capacity, with visitor growth constrained by the availability of exhibition space. Prior to COVID-19, the facility attracted approximately 78,000 visitors in 2018 and 2019.

It is understood that the gallery expansion would increase exhibition space from 1,122sqm to 2,757sqm. Based on historic data, this translates to an indicative capacity of 69.5 visitors per square metre of exhibition space. Applying this relationship to the expanded exhibition space, this suggests capacity for approximately 192,000 visitors at the expanded Newcastle Art Gallery.

Table 2 summarises the capacity of the Newcastle Art Gallery both prior to and after the expansion.

Table 2 – Capacity of Newcastle Art Gallery, Prior and After Expansion

	Prior to Expansion	With Expansion	Uplift
<b>Exhibition Space (sqm)</b>	1,122	2,757	1,635
<b>Annual Visitation (persons)</b>	78,000	192,000	114,000

*Note: Visitation estimates have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 persons. Source: Bull & Bear Economics analysis, based on Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020)*

### Visitation by Segment

In calculating the economic impact of an intervention (in this case the improved activation of the Newcastle Cultural Precinct), it is imperative to understand the distribution of local and non-local visitation.

The assessment has assumed that whilst the Newcastle Art Gallery, Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre would be predominately frequented by locals within the Hunter Region, it would also attract visitation from non-locals (i.e. persons from other parts of New South Wales, interstate or overseas).

The assessment has assumed the following visitor profile both prior to and with the interventions to the precinct:

- 80% of visitors from locals (i.e. within the Newcastle LGA); and
- 20% of visitors from non-locals (i.e. outside the Newcastle LGA).

This assumption represents a conservative assumption (as the interventions represent potential to attract a larger share of visitation from beyond the Hunter region) but also recognise the existing status of Newcastle as a vibrant arts and cultural destination.

Table 3 summarises the consequent visitor profile both prior to and after the interventions within the Newcastle Cultural Precinct.



Table 3 – Capacity of Newcastle Art Gallery, Prior and After Expansion

	Current Visitation	Capacity Visitation	Uplift
<b>Locals</b>			
Victoria Theatre	-	131,200	131,200
Civic Theatre	106,000	212,000	106,000
Newcastle Art Gallery	62,400	153,600	91,200
<b>Non-Locals</b>			
Victoria Theatre	-	32,800	32,800
Civic Theatre	26,500	53,000	26,500
Newcastle Art Gallery	15,600	38,400	22,800

Source: Bull & Bear Economics estimates

## Estimated Expenditure on Event Attendance at Full Capacity

### Expenditure on Attendance at Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre

To determine the expenditure patterns of visitors to a performance at the Victoria Theatre or Civic Theatre, consideration has been given to analysis presented in the Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020) report. The assessment identified per person expenditure patterns by both local and non-local patrons attending an event at the Enmore Theatre, which has been reproduced and summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 – Per Person Expenditure, Enmore Theatre

	Local Patrons	Non-local Patrons
Admission/Tickets	\$62.10	\$62.80
Food or Beverages	\$35.30	\$28.60
Souvenirs	\$1.90	\$4.10
Clothing or Accessories	\$2.20	\$4.60
Transportation	\$2.20	\$8.50
Nightclubs, Lounges and Bars	\$12.50	\$8.10
Child/Dependent Care	\$2.10	\$0.00
Other	\$0.00	\$2.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$118.30</b>	<b>\$119.10</b>

Note: This table excludes expenditure on overnight accommodation as this is assessed separately in other parts of the report.

Source: Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020)

If it is assumed the expenditure profile of visitors to an event at the Victoria Theatre or Civic Theatre aligns with this profile, this translates to the following annual expenditure uplifts attributable to increased visitation directly attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct (excluding expenditure on accommodation):

- \$33.08 million by local patrons; and
- \$8.33 million by non-local patrons.

Table 5 summarises the annual expenditure uplifts attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct (increased visitation at Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre) at a full capacity scenario.

Table 5 – Annual Expenditure Uplifts Attributable to Interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct (\$m), Increased Visitation at Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre

	Local Patrons	Non-local Patrons
Admission/Tickets	\$17.36	\$4.39
Food or Beverages	\$9.87	\$2.00
Souvenirs	\$0.53	\$0.29
Clothing or Accessories	\$0.62	\$0.32
Transportation	\$0.62	\$0.59
Nightclubs, Lounges and Bars	\$3.50	\$0.57
Child/Dependent Care	\$0.59	\$0.00
Other	\$0.00	\$0.17
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33.08</b>	<b>\$8.33</b>

Note: This table excludes expenditure on overnight accommodation as this is assessed separately in other parts of the report.

Source: Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020)

### Expenditure on Attendance at Victoria Theatre and Civic Theatre

In the case of visitation to the Newcastle Art Gallery, estimates are not readily available on expenditure patterns of visitors.

Our assessment has assumed that expenditures on food or beverages, souvenirs, clothing or accessories and transportation align with those identified within the Hawkrige Entertainment Services (2020) report for visitation to the Art Gallery, which translates to annual expenditure uplifts as follows:

- \$1.06 million by local patrons; and
- \$0.07 million by non-local patrons.

Table 6 summarises the annual expenditure uplifts attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural

Precinct (increased visitation at Newcastle Art Gallery) at a full capacity scenario.

**Table 6 – Annual Expenditure Uplifts Attributable to Interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct (\$m), Increased Visitation at Newcastle Art Gallery**

	Local Patrons	Non-local Patrons
<b>Food or Beverages</b>	\$0.90	\$0.05
<b>Souvenirs</b>	\$0.05	\$0.01
<b>Clothing or Accessories</b>	\$0.06	\$0.01
<b>Transportation</b>	\$0.06	\$0.01
<b>Total</b>	\$1.06	\$0.07

*Note: This table excludes expenditure on overnight accommodation as this is assessed separately in other parts of the report.  
Source: Hawkrigde Entertainment Services (2020)*

### Expenditure on Accommodation

As outlined in Table 3, interventions to the Newcastle Cultural Precinct are anticipated to increase non-local visitation as follows:

- 32,800 additional visitors per annum to the Victoria Theatre;
- 26,500 additional visitors per annum to the Civic Theatre;
- 22,800 additional visitors per annum to the Newcastle Art Gallery (with the assessment assuming that these visitors would also attend a show during their visit to Newcastle).

Our assessment has conservatively assumed that these non-local visitors identified in the analysis would dedicate an extra half a day to engage with improvements to the Newcastle Cultural Precinct relative to the current situation

(e.g. through spending additional time at the Newcastle Art Gallery relative to current situation due to extra exhibitions to experience, attending a show at the reopened Victoria Theatre).

Applying this assumption to this assessment translates to an additional 34,950 visitor nights per annum within Newcastle at a full capacity scenario that can be directly attributed to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct.

Current trends identify 49.7% of visitor nights spent in commercial accommodation in Newcastle LGA, translating to 17,373 visitor nights per annum in commercial accommodation directly attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct. Based on an average spend of \$186/night for commercial accommodation (by both international and domestic overnight visitors), this translates to \$3.23 million spent on commercial accommodation per annum as a direct result of interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct.

Table 7 summarises the calculations associated with deriving non-local expenditure on accommodation per annum directly attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct.

**Table 7 – Annual Expenditure Uplifts on Accommodation Attributable to Interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct**

Description	Estimate
Non-local visitor uplift / annum (visitors)	69,900
Additional nights spent due to interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct (visitor nights)	34,950
Proportion utilising commercial accommodation	49.7%
Additional visitor nights in commercial accommodation due to interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct (visitor nights)	17,373

Average spend on accommodation / visitor night	\$186
Additional expenditure on commercial accommodation due to interventions in Newcastle Cultural Precinct (\$m)	\$3.23

*Source: Bull & Bear Economics estimates*

### Expenditure Summary

The annual uplifts in expenditure within the Newcastle Cultural Precinct due to the proposed interventions is summarised below:

- Expenditure on event attendance:
  - Civic Theatre and Victoria Theatre: \$33.08 million per annum by local patrons, \$8.33 million per annum by non-local patrons;
  - Newcastle Art Gallery: \$1.06 million per annum by locals, \$0.07 million per annum by non-local patrons;
- Expenditure on accommodation: \$3.32 million per annum by non-local visitors.

## Estimated Economic Contribution of Newcastle Cultural Precinct at Full Capacity

The annual economic impacts directly attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct are estimated as follows:

- Output: Total impact of \$16.22 million per annum, comprising \$11.63 million per annum in direct impacts and \$4.69 million per annum in indirect impacts;
- Household Income: Total impact of \$4.34 million per annum, comprising \$3.15 million per annum in direct impacts and \$1.19 million per annum in indirect impacts.
- Employment: Total impact of 88.6 FTEs per annum, comprising 73.0 direct FTEs per annum and 15.6 indirect FTEs per annum; and
- Value added: Total impact of \$7.49 million per annum, comprising \$5.43 million per annum of direct value added and \$2.06 million per annum in indirect value added.

## Economic Benefits of Branding

The purpose of this section is to provide a high-level overview of the economic benefits of branding, signage, and improved destination management within the Newcastle Cultural Precinct, based on publicly available studies on the economic value of branding.

The importance of destination branding has increased significantly over time due to more discerning tourists, the rise of new competing destinations and the resulting increase in promotional activities by both established and new destinations (Carballo, Arana, Leon, & Moreno-Gil, 2015). The perceived image of a tourist destination is important due to its high power of persuasion and plays a key role in a tourist's destination decision process (Hunt,

1975, Goodrich, 1978, Woodside and Lysonsky, 1989, Um and Crompton, 1992).

Given the levels of global competition for tourists, successful city branding is not limited simply to communication and marketing efforts, but must also encompass urban planning, culture, trade and investment (Herget, Petru, & Abraham, 2015). This is reflected in this document.

## Destination Image and Willingness to Pay

Carballo, Arana, Leon & Moreno-Gil (2015) undertook an analysis to identify the factors which contribute positively and negatively to an individual's utility as a tourist and the willingness to pay for improvements in destination image attributes.

This assessment identified that the attribute with the highest positive contribution to individual tourist utility was preservation of the natural landscape, followed by accommodation resort services, travel time required and availability of leisure activities. This finding highlights the importance of marketing Newcastle as a creative, coastal destination which also offers high quality accommodation options, with the Newcastle Cultural Precinct delivering a diversity of experiences in a walkable footprint.

Carballo, Arana, Leon, & Moreno-Gil (2015) also estimated the mean daily willingness to pay (in euros) for each attribute, with visitors willing to pay an additional €20.33 a day for accommodation improvements, €17.41 a day for improvements in leisure offer and €13.47 a day for improvements in urban environment. Inflating these values to March 2022 Australian dollars suggests an indicative willingness to pay of \$47.27 a day per tourist for accommodation improvements, \$40.48 a day per tourist for improvements in leisure offer and \$31.32 a day per tourist for improvements in urban environments. Herget, Petru and Abraham (2015) also identified that brand value has a

positive impact on the price charged by hotels in major global cities.

The Newcastle Cultural Precinct, once fully delivered, has the potential to not only increase visitation, but also increase the willingness to pay of tourists due to the various improvements to accommodation offering and urban environment (i.e. improved linkages between offerings within the Newcastle Cultural Precinct).

Whilst the research undertaken by Carballo, Arana, Leon & Moreno-Gil (2015) does not provide a mean daily willingness to pay for improvements across multiple categories, an indicative estimate can be derived that can be directly attributable to improvements in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct.

Based on the outcomes of Section 2.2.3, there would be an uplift of 34,950 visitor nights directly attributable to interventions in the Newcastle Cultural Precinct, with 17,373 of these visitor nights spent at commercial accommodation.

The potential uplifts in willingness to pay from these visitors, based on the outcomes of Carballo, Arana, Leon & Moreno-Gil (2015) would be:

- \$0.82 million per annum due to accommodation improvements;
- \$1.41 million per annum due of improvements in leisure offer; and
- \$1.09 million per annum due to improvements in the urban environment.

Table 8 – Indicative Estimates in Uplifts in Willingness to Pay, Visitor Nights Directly Attributable to Improvements in Newcastle Cultural Precinct

	Dec 2007 Euros	Dec 2007 AUD	Mar 2022 AUD	Relevant Visitor Nights	Uplift in Willingness to Pay Per Annum (\$m)
<b>Accommodation improvements</b>	20.33	34.00	47.27	17,373	\$0.82
<b>Improvements in leisure offer</b>	17.41	29.11	40.48	34,950	\$1.41
<b>Improvements in urban environment</b>	13.47	22.53	31.32	34,950	\$1.09

Source: Bull & Bear Economics estimates based on historic exchange rates, ABS CPI and estimates in Carballo, Arana, Leon & Moreno-Gil (2015)



# 7

## NEEDS ANALYSIS & EXPECTED OUTCOMES



A needs analysis was undertaken to determine problems that would substantiate the need for further investment in arts and culture infrastructure within the Newcastle Central Business District (CBD).

Through stakeholder engagement and the preparation of an economic assessment, a total of five key problems were distilled. These problems are summarised below. The anticipated benefits to be realised by addressing each problem, and the metric that could be used to validate that the goal has been achieved, has also been summarised.

The problems identified in our needs analysis include:

**1/** Lack of precinct-wide vision to support requests for State and Federal funding,

**2/** Fragmented and inconsistent visitor experience within the precinct,

**3/** Limited collaboration between cultural institutions, tourism operators, and small business,

**4/** Permeability and connectivity issues within and around the precinct, and

**5/** Escaped expenditure from the City of Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA) on arts and culture.

## PROBLEM 1/

Lack of precinct-wide vision to support requests for State and Federal funding

### What is the problem?

- Newcastle has world-class cultural institutions, but they are not programmed or promoted as a combined and consistent visitor experience. This has undermined efforts to secure State and Federal funding as institutions have lacked resources to demonstrate their wider cultural and economic impacts.
- Lack of overall vision for the precinct has meant complimentary projects can appear in competition for the same resources or funding. This should not be the case.
- There is no consistent message to State and Federal governments regarding the economic benefits of increased expenditure on arts and culture in the City of Newcastle.

### Benefits of addressing the problem:

- Successful State and Federal funding requests for cultural institutions.
- Improved collaboration between existing institutions.
- New opportunities to request State and Federal funding for whole-of-precinct events and improvements.

### Metric to be used to validate the problem has been solved:

- The number of successful requests for State or Federal funding within the precinct(s),
- The number of visitors to precinct and any increase associated with collaborative programming, and
- Expanded eligibility criteria as it relates to State and Federal funding.

## PROBLEM 2/

Fragmented and inconsistent visitor experience within the precinct

### What is the problem?

- There is a lack of visible collaboration and coordination between cultural institutions, in part because institutions are planning exhibitions and performances in unaligned timeframes. This has resulted in unnecessary clashes between complimentary events and performances, missed opportunities for cross-promotion, shorter and less frequent visits to the precinct, unintentional gaps in the precinct calendar, and retail and dining trading hours that are not aligned to performances, exhibitions, and events.
- Public domain in and around the precinct is of varying quality. The north-south activity corridor between Newcastle harbour and Newcastle Art Gallery has been identified in multiple studies over the last twenty years but remains illegible to pedestrians. This lack of legibility hinders improved access to venues and a coherent sense of place.
- Risk-averse programming has resulted in performances and exhibitions of varying quality. Audiences have difficulty differentiating professional and amateur performances, resulting in an inconsistent experience in otherwise world-class venues.

### Benefits of Addressing the problem

- Increases in visitation to the precinct and duration of visits,
- Improved perceptions of safety and amenity moving through and around the precinct,
- Greater recognition of Newcastle's cultural offering through improvements to programming and visitor experience, enabling event and performance attraction commensurate with the aspirations of each institution.

### Metric to be used to validate the problem has been solved:

- Ticket sales and/or attendance at exhibitions and performances in existing institutions,
- Qualitative data about experiences and perceptions in the precinct, and
- Increase in the number of articles, publications, or online promotions that feature exhibitions and performances in the City of Newcastle LGA.

## PROBLEM 3/

Limited collaboration between cultural institutions, tourism operators, and small business

### What is the problem?

- Food and beverage operators in and around the precinct have limited or no visibility of upcoming performances, exhibitions, and events. As a result, food and beverage options are limited after dark and even more so on weeknights.
- Accommodation providers, airlines, and travel agencies do not have resources to promote attractions and experiences in the precinct. This results in shorter visits to and around the precinct, as well as overall reduced expenditure on arts and culture.
- Lack of a holistic 'precinct experience' that can be packaged and promoted as a destination.

### Benefits of addressing the problem:

- Greater offering of venues and experiences in the night-time economy,
- Improved trading conditions in both day and night-time economies for hospitality venues, retailers, and accommodation providers, and
- Improved marketing collateral with clearer selling points and calls to action.

### Metric to be used to validate the problem has been solved:

- The number of small bars, restaurants, hotels, and accommodation providers operating within 500m of both the north-south axis and the east-west axis,
- Qualitative and quantitative data relating to both day and night-time economies within 500m of both the north-south axis and the east-west axis (Newcastle Business Improvement Association), and
- Increases in both Leisure Travel and Leisure Events markets, as defined and measured in the Destination Management Plan 2021-25.

## PROBLEM 4/

Permeability and connectivity issues within and around the precinct

### What is the problem?

- North-south activity corridor should be a dominant thoroughfare between harbour and Newcastle Art Gallery, but it is partly illegible and obstructed by Wright Lane.
- Civic Park is perceived as tired and at times dangerous. Appearance and lack of amenities in this area reduces connectivity between Laman Street and Wheeler Place.
- There is an emerging cluster of complimentary food and beverage options on King Street (between Darby and Perkins Streets), however lack of collaboration means these operators do not identify with the brand and experiences offered by cultural anchors.

### Benefits of addressing the problem:

- Improved flow and increase in pedestrian activity between complimentary precincts and products (Honeysuckle waterfront and cultural institutions),
- Improved perceptions of safety after dark and potential increases in foot traffic and improved trading conditions within the night-time economy, and
- Improved product to take to market (dining & entertainment experiences).

### Metric to be used to validate the problem has been solved:

- Pedestrian movements between Honeysuckle and Wheeler Place, via Museum Park.
- Qualitative and quantitative data relating to perceptions of safety after dark, and
- Products that cross-promote cultural attractions and nearby dining options or accommodation providers.

## PROBLEM 5/

Escaped expenditure from the City of Newcastle Local Government Area

### What is the problem?

- There is unmet demand for arts and cultural events in the City of Newcastle LGA. This is resulting in escaped expenditure to capital cities and competitors.
- There is unmet demand for recreation, education, and tourism offerings in the City of Newcastle LGA.
- Property value uplift and increases in commercial revenues will be missed without investment in the precinct.

### Benefits of addressing the problem:

- \$223.47 million in expenditure on arts and cultural events, translating to \$125.37 million in gross regional product uplift, by satisfying unmet demand for arts and cultural events through the revival of the Victoria Theatre,
- \$45.03 million in property value uplift for properties within 500m of the precinct,
- \$24.07 million in recreation benefits over the life of the project (30 years) through increased visitation to the Newcastle Art Gallery, and
- \$46.40 million in additional benefits. These include education, tourism, commercial revenues at Newcastle Art Gallery and City Hall, and non-use value.

### Metric to be used to validate the problem has been solved:

- Expenditure on arts and culture in the City of Newcastle LGA.
- Expenditure on recreation, education, and tourism offerings in the City of Newcastle LGA, and
- Property value uplift and increases in commercial revenues within 500m of both the north-south axis and the east-west axis.



# 8/

# ACTION PLAN



## BIG MOVE 1/5

Big Move	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
<b>CREATE LEGIBLE NORTH-SOUTH JOURNEY(S), INCLUDING AN 'ACADEMIC CORRIDOR' THAT CONNECTS THE CULTURAL PRECINCT AND UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE'S CITY CAMPUS.</b>	<b>1</b> Harness the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between City of Newcastle (CN) and the University of Newcastle (UoN) to improve connections between the Cultural Precinct and the University of Newcastle's City Campus.	Medium		✓	
	<b>2</b> Investigate ideas to create a gateway to the precinct at Honeysuckle. This could include electronic signage, illuminations, and/or additional public art.	Medium	✓		
	<b>3</b> Explore funding opportunities for temporary, architecturally designed structures to provide coverage along the north-south axis.	Medium		✓	
	<b>4</b> Improve north-south permeability by working with University of Newcastle to improve connections between their City Campus and the Cultural Precinct.	Long		✓	
	<b>5</b> Begin discussions with the University of Newcastle to explore the idea of an 'Academic Corridor' connecting Civic Park/Alumni House with other parts of the University's City Campus and Honeysuckle.	Short		✓	
	<b>6</b> Identify opportunities to improve and expand public art in and around Christie Street.	Short	✓		
	<b>7</b> Consider a master plan for Civic Park that improves shading on the eastern side (Darby Street).	Short	✓		
	<b>8</b> Activate the eastern edge of Darby Street (between Laman and King Streets). This could include projections, public art, and/or illuminated street furniture.	Short			✓
	<b>9</b> Work with the RSL to improve visibility of Newcastle Art Gallery, which is currently obscured by the Civic Park Memorial Grove.	Short		✓	

## BIG MOVE 2/5

Big Move	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
<b>CREATE A LEGIBLE EAST-WEST JOURNEY THROUGH PUBLIC ART, LIGHTING AND WAYFINDING.</b>	<b>1</b> Consider view corridors to and from orientation points such as City Hall clocktower, St Andrews church, and NUspace.	Medium	✓		
	<b>2</b> Enable events, installations, and activations to easily bump-in and out at key sites along the east-west axis.	Short	✓		
	<b>3</b> Enable permanent and/or temporary projections and installations along the 'King Street Wall' (between Darby and Crown Streets).	Short			✓
	<b>4</b> Invest in public domain, open space, and wayfinding to strengthen the corridor between Perkins and Auckland Streets via King Street.	Long	✓		
	<b>5</b> Investigate potential closure of Crown Street.	Medium	✓		
	<b>6</b> Work with local businesses to better align their operations and trading hours with those of the cultural institutions.	Short		✓	
	<b>7</b> Investigate funding opportunities to incentivise neon signage on properties along Perkins and King Streets.	Medium	✓		
	<b>8</b> Create an arrival point to the precinct at the Boat Harbour site.	Long	✓		

# BIG MOVE 3/5

Big Move	Action		Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
<b>EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND AND ENHANCE MUSEUM PARK.</b>	1	Enable events, installations, and activations to easily bump-in and out at key sites along the north-south axis.	Medium	✓		
	2	Improve Museum Park and work with the University to improve connectivity to their City Campus and Honeysuckle.	Medium		✓	
	3	Program Museum Park to compliment major exhibitions and events at Newcastle Museum and the Visitor Information Centre.	Short	✓		
	4	Investigate opportunities to improve links from Hunter Street towards Honeysuckle.	Long		✓	
	5	Investigate removing obstructions to line of sight between Honeysuckle Drive and City Hall.	Long	✓		

## BIG MOVE 4/5

Big Move	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate	
<b>ACTIVATE WHEELER PLACE WITH SEASONAL AND/OR SEMI-PERMANENT TENANCIES.</b>	<b>1</b>	Explore opportunities to harness scheduled upgrades or works to improve the space by delivering new plantings, street furniture, and lighting.	Long	✓		
	<b>2</b>	Consider erecting seasonal and/or semi-permanent tenancies in Wheeler Place to make programming easier.	Medium	✓		
	<b>3</b>	Program Wheeler Place as an extension of Civic Theatre & City Hall.	Medium	✓		
	<b>4</b>	Nurture the north-south axis by improving pedestrian flows between Wheeler Place and Civic Park. This could include installing a traffic-light controlled pedestrian crossing.	Medium	✓		

# BIG MOVE 5/5

Big Move	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
<b>INVITE THE COMMUNITY TO IDENTIFY NEW CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE BOAT HARBOUR SITE</b>	<b>1</b> Engage with local theatre, dance and music groups to inform thinking about the site and its suitability for rehearsal space(s).	Short	✓		
	<b>2</b> Engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform thinking about the site and its future use.	Short	✓		
	<b>3</b> Identify the site in upcoming strategic documents as the eastern gateway to the NAPA.	Medium	✓		

# 91

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