Urban Acupuncture

“A socio-environmental theory that combines contemporary urban design with traditional Chinese acupuncture, using small-scale interventions to transform the larger urban context. Sites are selected through analysis of aggregate social, economic and ecological factors, and are developed through a dialogue between designers and the community. Just as the practice of acupuncture is aimed at relieving stress in the human body, the goal of urban acupuncture is to relieve stress in the built environment.” Wikipedia

Urban Acupuncture: A Cultural Overlay

The rationale of applying Urban Acupuncture is to use small-scale but culturally catalytic interventions into the city's fabric to stimulate community engagement with cultural / art activities in the built environment that lead to the development of diverse and culturally rich urban places.

Every place and every community have multiple stories and many layers of history and development that can form a conceptual base for public art interventions.

Famed Australian poet, David Malouf summed this concept up in his 1998 Boyer Lecture, titled "A spirit of play", when he wrote:

“A land can bear any number of cultures laid one above another or set side by side. It can be inscribed and written upon many times. One of these forms of writing is the shaping of landscape. In any place where humans have made their home, the landscape will be a made one. Landscape making is in our bones.”

This is particularly relevant to the Port Lincoln context with its many centuries of Aboriginal husbandry and cultural practices; significant role in the exploration and establishment of South Australia; and the great diversity of European fishing and farming stories. And overlaying this culturally richness, the modern-day city!

Malouf's notion of "cultures laid one above another or set side by side" can be seen as a powerful metaphor in terms of the surfacing of Aboriginal heritage stories and the European settlement and Modernity overlaid one above the other from a chronological perspective. While the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities continue to live side by side in an intercultural contemporary world.

The consultation undertaken by the Jensen Plus team in late 2018 demonstrated that the people of Port Lincoln have many and varied ideas and opportunities to enhance the public realm of the foreshore, city centre and marina precincts. This applies not only to the urban planning, landscape and placemaking possibilities highlighted as part of the Master Plan consultation, but equally to the cultural agenda and specifically opportunities for public art.

Indeed, it is the rich diversity of ideas and opportunities highlighted by the Port Lincoln community that suggests the notion of a cultural mosaic, a way to bring together many small pieces to make a whole. Just as the bringing together of many small ceramic pieces creates a whole mosaic, the cultural overlay for the Port Lincoln Precincts Master Plan can bring together a diversity of small urban acupuncture interventions across many subjects, imagery and activities to create a whole sense of place and personal experience. Indeed, it can function as a living “Cultural Character Statement” that will evolve as the community and the environment changes over time.
A toolkit of public art opportunities

The ‘toolkit of public art opportunities’ can inform the public art opportunities that can be drawn upon and added to the public realm as they become a reality.

It is recommended that this ‘Overlay’ features the following three opportunity groupings:

1. **Revealing**

2. **Enhancing**

3. **Activating**

These groupings can cover a wide variety of opportunities that might include, but not be limited to:

1. **Revealing – Surfacing, Storytelling & Healing**

   Every place and every community has a wealth of diverse and at times contradictory stories and histories. At times these stories are controversial and challenging, but deserve to be surfaced and told as part of making a meaningful place. Exploring and engaging in all aspects of a place’s past can also function as a healing process, especially in dealing with impacts of European settlement on the Aboriginal community.

   **Surfacing** – During the consultation sessions we were told that there are many aspects of Port Lincoln’s history that are not evident in the public realm and could be ‘surfaced’ through permanent and temporary public art. This approach is particularly relevant in finding public expression for the region’s Aboriginal history.

   **Storytelling & Healing** - Given Port Lincoln’s Aboriginal and settlement history, cultural diversity and range of important maritime and agricultural industries, there is a wealth of stories upon which to draw. Art initiatives such as this can be seen to assist in bringing communities together and where relevant be part of a healing process.

Revealing opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- During the consultation it was suggested that Cultural Healing Opportunities include artworks that recognise the diversity of Indigenous stories from all three of the regional groups, the Nauo, Barngala and the Wirangu. There might be the need for a cultural facilitator, who is respected by all the groups, to bring together the communities through collective public art projects;

- Creative Interpretive opportunities should be explored. Community members expressed their desire to see more interpretive content in public spaces but emphasised that it needs to be creative and not more “boring didactic stuff”; and

- Community members highlighted the fact that the trail network is extensive and provides lots of opportunities for Indigenous and Natural History story telling nodes along walking/riding trails.

**Potential Revealing Acupuncture Sites**

Potential locations within the study area include but are not limited to:

- The pedestrian crossing node with buildouts in Liverpool Street;

- The Parnkalla Trail walkway along the foreshore;

- The foreshore plaza;

- Key nodes on link between CBD and Marina and key nodes on Parnkalla trail; and

- Proposed pontoon and trail at Marina.
Revealing – Benchmark examples from around Australia
A. Story telling of Aboriginal and European histories and everyday life through wayfinding and paving artworks.
2. **Enhancing – Places/Spaces, Environment & Infrastructure**

One of the important functions of the arts is to enhance the quality of public realm both from a purely aesthetic and from the perspective of demonstrating pride and valuing of the city’s sense of place. There are opportunities for public art that are a stand-alone piece of contemporary or commemorative art, such as the Tuna Poler statue, and opportunities for a more integrated approach to commissioning artists to work with architectural or landscape design teams on artwork for environmental and or civic infrastructure projects as an expression of local creativity.

**Places/Spaces**

Port Lincoln’s public places and spaces would benefit from a range of public art that help to build a greater sense of place through unique artworks in strategic nodes across the CBD at gathering points and to support place making initiatives.

The Foreshore has been nominated as the location for public artwork, sculptures of local significance and could be considered as a suitable location for an “Outdoor Gallery” that is contributed to over time. It should be noted that there was concern during the consultation that further artworks might limit the flexibility of the Foreshore open space for major festivals and events, therefore any future artwork installations should be carefully planned to ensure they are well sited.

A review of the Lincoln Cove Marina environment would suggest that there is considerable potential for public art that highlights the history and ongoing importance of the fishing industry. Such artworks could help to provide life to the Marina environment in the absence of the fleet and dock activity.

**Environment & Infrastructure**

It is widely recognised that public art can greatly enhance civic infrastructure and landscape projects. Many Australian Councils are committed to integrating public art into capital works projects such as public buildings, including libraries, recreational centres and parks. Opportunities include the use of street art on Council owned walls and Council encouraging property owners with large blank walls to support street art that might remain in place for 2 or 3 years and then be repainted bring new artwork into the environment.

Council installs a range of street furniture and paving that could be greatly enhanced by involving artists in the design and construction of seating, bus shelters, drinking fountains and paving designs. All of which can help to generate a unique Port Lincoln sense of place.

**Enhancement opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Artist designed placemaking elements such as street furniture, paving associated with streetscape upgrades. Community members responded very positively to the images of artwork design incorporated into road surface included in the precedent display boards;

- A common theme of the community feedback was the need for better wayfinding and signage which could be created by artists and therefore be distinctive and relevant to the environment. This was especially highlighted as a trail opportunity; and

- Silo mural art was highlighted as a great opportunity given the prominence of the Viterra Silos. While the idea of painting the silos is not unique the skill of contemporary street artists is resulting in silos around Victoria and South Australia being highly relevant to ‘place’ and therefore each being a unique feature. It may be that the large sides of the silos are not painted, but the jetty side could potentially be utilised as a Street Art Gallery seen by people walking the trail around the silos and from the jetty, e.g. Viewed by tourist arriving on the cruise ships.

**Potential Enhancing Acupuncture Sites**

Potential locations within the study area include but are not limited to:

- Upgraded street furniture, art banner poles and surface of pedestrian crossovers in Liverpool and Porter Streets;

- Artwork incorporated into wayfinding signage on Parnkalla Trail and CBD to Marina link; and

- Street furniture and retaining wall infrastructure in Foreshore parklands.
Enhancing – Benchmark examples from around Australia
Permanent and temporary enhancement of public infrastructure.
3. **Activating** – Enlivening, Stimulating & Challenging

In addition to making evident the stories of the city and region and enhancing the quality of Port Lincoln’s public realm, public art can play a critical role in helping to activate and bring vibrancy to the city. Especially using temporary and ephemeral artwork interventions that enliven the public realm during both day and night time.

**Enlivening** - While permanent public art works around the city and along the foreshore are important as place making elements they are, unless kinetic in nature, limited to a static presence and therefore the use of temporary and ephemeral art can be used to enliven spaces with changing works that might last a day/night, days/weeks or be a series of constantly changing digital images projected onto buildings or trees.

One of the great advantages of developing a program of temporary art is that the artworks will be of low cost and low risk and therefore can be utilised to give local artists public exposure and to help build creative capacity in the region.

**Stimulating & Challenging** -

Given the transitory nature of temporary and ephemeral art it lends itself to allowing a greater degree of personal and creative expression on the part of artists. Permanent and expensive public art, by its very nature tends to be conceptually safe in order not to generate too much community controversy, while the low key and changing temporary art allows artists to tackle stimulating and challenging themes in their work.

**Activation opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- The concept of temporary art ‘Platforms’ has gained increased importance in cities and involves the installation of infrastructure where changing artworks can be installed. These platforms may be physical infrastructure such as plinths for sculpture, art billboards or digital platforms such as screens or projection.
- Projection artwork that might utilise a temporary or permanent digital projector. Council could invest in suitable digital projection equipment and either install in a high-profile location that will gain maximum exposure or move the projector around a number of different sites within the city to gain maximum activation.
- It was suggested by a number of the community that the silos would be a great location for some regular large scale projection projects, not just at festival time and in preference to having the silos painted.

**Potential Activating Acupuncture Sites**

Potential locations within the study area include but are not limited to:

- Silos for projection and or street art gallery on the northern side adjacent to the walling trail;
- Temporary installations, light boxes and street art in CBD laneways; and
- Changing exhibits of Sculptural installations on Town Jetty and at Marina.
Activating – Benchmark examples from around Australia
Bringing activation to the public realm through projection, light box art, street art and temporary projects.
Conclusion:

The “Urban Acupuncture: Cultural Overlay” provides a range of opportunities that Council can implement on an incremental basis as infrastructure and renewal projects evolve across the city. The Cultural Overlay can be seen as a strategic approach to bring together many different elements, stories and artworks to create a “cultural mosaic” of interventions that will, over time, result in a complex and rich picture of Port Lincoln as a place and community.

NOTE:
The Benchmarking Images provided are collected from public art projects across Australia and are provided only as an indicative example of how artists might respond to the curatorial framework and the “Toolkit” themes.

They are not directly suggesting art projects for Port Lincoln, rather as examples of the range of approaches that Councils have taken to the commissioning of public art around Australia.