



Public Arts Policy

Policy Owner	Manager Liveable Communities Arts, Culture and Heritage
Creation Date	1/3/2021
Revision Date	August 2025

Contact us:

Phone: (03) 5734 6200

Fax: (03) 5734 6222

Email: mitchell@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Website: www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au





Mitchell Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, those of the Taungurung and Wurundjeri People. We pay our respects to their rich cultures and to elders past and present.

Purpose

To provide a clear and transparent framework for assessing and making decisions about the design, funding, commissioning, installation, placement and conservation of art in public spaces in Mitchell Shire Council, with the aim of ensuring artworks are:

- Strategically planned regarding location and maintenance requirements.
- Appropriate to their context including alignment with Aboriginal Cultural and celebrates the Shire's diversity.
- Relevant to the local community in terms of content and meaning.
- Supported by the local community (its purpose as well as design, size and location).
- Of excellent quality and high aesthetic value (durable materials, respectful design).
- Cultivating and contributing to a sense of identity and pride in the public space.
- Exciting the imagination of the public and creating conversation and social connection.
- No danger to people or the environment.

Scope

This policy covers artwork proposed for public spaces within Mitchell Shire Council including:

- Public art commissioned or acquired by Council.
- Public art proposed by local individuals or community groups.
- Public art proposed by individuals or groups from outside the shire.
- Art proposed for public spaces within the municipality or private developments.
- Permanent pieces.
- Temporary installations.

This policy should be considered:

- When capital works are developed on land owned or managed by the Shire.
- At the conceptualisation phase of public infrastructure projects undertaken (such as major streetscape projects) or visible from major public spaces (including private and public sector, and redevelopment projects).
- When project teams are formed for major projects.
- When new relevant policy documents or strategies are created or reviewed.

Policy

Mitchell Shire Council is in a unique position to consider public art as an integral aspect of open spaces as development moves through the Shire. The Council has an opportunity to be able to innovatively and creatively connect our community with public art that reflects its diversity with sensitivity. Public art that is tailored to engage our community members in different life stages and backgrounds can lead to an enhanced sense of wellbeing and awareness of these sectors of our community.

Public art in Mitchell Shire Council will reflect everyday life and help tell important stories about its places, people and common values and ideas. Public art is considered as both permanent and temporary works. All public art should consider the following:

Relevance to Mitchell Shire:

- Public art may explore and encourage awareness of global, national or local issues and themes.
- Public art may interpret historical sites and tell important local stories.
- Public art may encourage community and visitor engagement.
- Public art projects may be utilised to increase community connectedness.

Quality of the artwork and artist:

- Public art will always reflect a high standard of artistic practice.
- Public art is usually made or designed by an artist, with or without community participation.
- The quality of the artwork and artist are primary considerations and local arts practitioners will be preferred.

Durability of the work:

- Public art will not be limited to works that are physical and permanent.
- Works of art in public places may occur for a short time or have a long-term placement. Some works of very short duration may be able to be repeated, electronically or manually activated.
- Permanent works of art will be made of durable materials and be affixed to a location for an agreed lifespan (usually a minimum of 10 years).

Safety and suitability:

- Council will assess permanent works for safety and durability.
- The public artwork project and maintenance costs will be considered.

Potential sites for public art

- The context of public art is important.

- Public art will be used to enliven sites and events throughout the Shire. These may be large-scale, small or very subtle.
- Areas where people congregate such as town centres, waterways, public parks and gardens, children's' playgrounds, walking trails, empty or under-utilised spaces, bare walls of buildings, and streetscapes may all be suitable sites for public art.

Public art for the Shire should be designed or selected to consider the following:

- Suitability for a specific place, including character, heritage and position on the site.
- Public safety concerns – this may include the shape and nature of the materials used.
- Visual impact and spatial considerations.
- Present and future uses of the area.

Also, there are non-traditional artwork materials to be considered and these may come in the form of temporary public art:

- Public art may include music, poetry, sound and light installations, temporary installations, street furniture, street lighting, gardens, paving, water features, sculptures, street theatre, parades, murals and street art.
- Multimedia, and digital art can create projected or screened, or electronically conveyed images and films, and soundscapes in public places may be movement activated, or at specific times of day and night.
- Public art may include digital technology – as in virtual choirs, online exhibitions or digital interactive projects.
- Festivals may also include elements of public art such as exhibitions of actual or projected works of art, or parades and performances in public places. However, only those elements that offer free access to all can be considered public art.
- Landscaping and gardens may also be considered works of public art. Gardens developed with experienced landscape artists may help connect diverse sectors of the community and enhance significant and everyday places.

Acquiring Public Art

Mitchell Shire Council may acquire or sponsor public art by following the Acquisition section of the Collections Policy.

De-accessioned Public Art

Mitchell Shire Council may de-accession public art by following the De-accession section of the Collections Policy.

Definitions

Art: in its broadest meaning is the expression of creativity or imagination, or both. Art is an original work of visual art that is either created by the artist or artists; or produced under the authority of the artist or artists.

Artists: All professional and emerging practitioners in the visual, literary and performing arts, including visual artists, designers, craftspeople, writers, poets, performers, composers, and musicians engaged in art making.

Community art: Community art is rooted in a shared sense of place, tradition or spirit. Community art is likely to celebrate cultural traditions or provide a space for a community to reflect. It is as much about the process of involving people in the making of the work as the finished object itself.

Contemporary art: Works of art that are current or of this time.

Multimedia art: Artworks that utilise multiple forms of media, which can include but is not limited to text, audio, animation, video, photography and graphics.

New media art: New media art are works which incorporate technologies that were invented or introduced in the later part of the 20th century.

Public arts: Art that is:

- located in the public domain and/or
- accessible to members of the public and/or
- created through a public event or activity.

Examples of public art may include but are not limited to sculpture, landscaping and landscape features, parts of buildings, sound and light works, performances, historical and cultural interpretations, multimedia and many other art forms. Public art celebrates who we are and is an important way to bring our public spaces to life, adding to their vibrancy, accessibility and their role in educating and sharing stories. Successful public art adds value in aesthetic, cultural and economic terms to places and communities.

Permanent public art: Public artworks that have an intended enduring lifespan. Permanent public artworks are generally considered to be made from materials and construction methods that guarantee a lifespan of at least 10 years in external conditions.

Public space: A space, place or any physical (or conceptual) open or enclosed area, to which the public has access or can view, regardless of the legal ownership of the property, excluding collecting institutions. Such spaces may include parks, streets, squares, promenades and art works incorporated within building facades.

Temporary public art: Public artworks that have a limited lifespan, which for the purposes of this document is no longer than 12 months in total.

Transitory public art: For the purpose of the policy, transitory public art can be defined as a brief or fleeting work or performance, for example, a school choir performance, busking, or costume parade.

Urban screens: Are various types of displays in an urban space that are utilised to promote interaction and exchange between community members. Such displays may include, but are not limited to plasma, projection, or architectural screens.

Responsibilities

List of areas responsible for maintaining/upholding policy.

Related Documents

- *Heritage Act 2017*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2006*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Regulations 2018*
- *Public Records Act 1973*
- *Copyright Act 2006*
- Mitchell Shire Council's Property Holdings, Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- Mitchell Shire Council's Public Arts Policy
- Museums Australia Code of Ethics for Art, History and Science Museums 1999
- Heritage Collections Council- Volume 1, Development of a Best Practice Model for Conservation and Preservation Assessment Plans for Cultural Collections- Method and Analysis
- Heritage Collections Council- Volume 2 A Best Practice Model for Conservation and Perseveration Assessment- Plans for Cultural Collections
- reCollections-
 - Caring for Cultural Material
 - Damage and Decay
 - Handling, transportation, Storage and Display
 - Managing Collections
 - Managing People