

Scoping Survey - Four Local Governments supporting Museums

There are certainly more than four local governments whose museums could be described but the ones which I have researched in the time available are:

- Newcastle Museum - Newcastle City Council
- Orange Regional Museum - Orange City Council
- Albury LibraryMuseum - Albury City Council
- Yarra Ranges Regional Museum (Lilydale) - Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Some relevant features and but not necessarily comparative descriptions pertaining to the above four museums follows.

Newcastle Museum - Newcastle City Council



With 180,000 visitors to the museum per annum and approximately one million visitors in total in less than seven years, it is meeting its stated aim "To be an accessible, vibrant centre where there are always things to see, do and learn". It is operated on a budget of approximately \$3m. with the major contribution being from council sources. The Newcastle City Council identifies closely with the museum and views it as a good-news story through engaging the community and providing social connection.

The museum is an architectural blend of old and new which showcases Newcastle through its extensive collection, exhibitions and programming. It is located, since 2011, in three heritage railway buildings (Honeysuckle Railway Workshops). The museum has a mix of permanent exhibitions that include local history in A Newcastle Story, Supernova Hands-on Science Centre, and BHP and coal stories in 'Fire and Earth', plus a dynamic temporary and travelling exhibition program.

There have been extensive in-depth surveys of visitors conducted so that management and council are aware of the nature of the visiting population, their satisfaction as well as their suggestions. Some of the survey results are of interest:

32% have visited the museum more than 5 times

7% of visitors were from overseas or interstate

75% live within 50 kms.

3% stay longer than 3 hours

74% of tourists rated their experience as 'Terrific'

60% rate the museum with 'Very Well' /'Extremely Well' in achieving its 'Vision'

67% stated 'Local History' as their main interest in making their visit

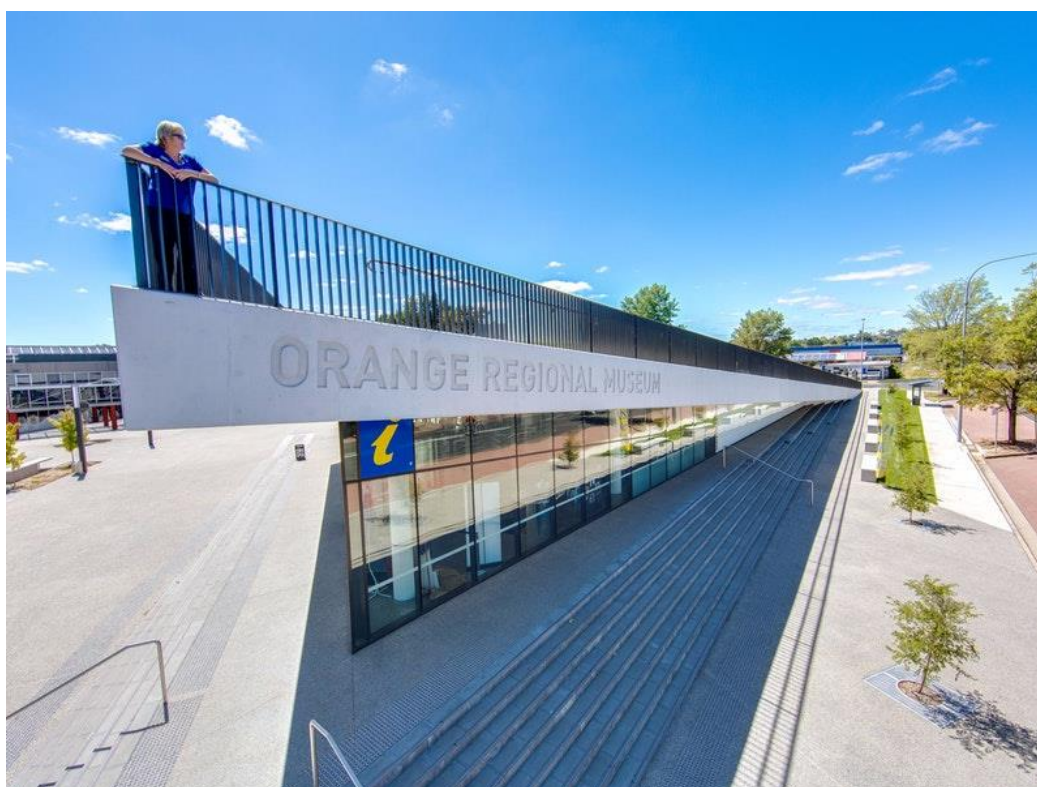
23% rating the venue with its great use of space, atmosphere and the historical buildings' renovation and repurpose

21% rating it as a child friendly facility and having activities for children that entice parents and grandparents to visit.

A staff of ten and a number of casual Visitor Services staff conduct exhibition planning, media, building maintenance, education programs, event management, and collection care. Some 270 public programs are mounted yearly with it functioning as a 'community hub' via such activities as education programs, concerts, party nights and more.

www.newcastlemuseum.com.au

Orange Regional Museum - Orange City Council



Opened only recently at the end of 2016 at a cost of approximately \$10m , the Orange Regional Museum arose after council adopted a plan in principle at its December 2000 meeting that included planning principles, vision, mission, goals, strategies and actions looking forward to 2050. With the appointment of a museum adviser and approval of a council budget line for museum programs, a more focussed and strategic plan was put in place to underpin development work over a period of five years.

Council engaged the Museum Advisor in 2001 who instigated the plan with preliminary work beginning in 2006. Federal funding of \$4 million in 2013 then lead towards the recent completion of the works. Also, during this period, community consultations were held in 2005 and 2011-12. There was a recognition of the need to develop an appropriate plan for traffic management to the area based on a projected increase in visitors to the site.

These consultations underlined community support for a collection and exhibition program around various key themes including Aboriginal history and culture, gold and mining, the environment and heritage of Orange, people and community collections. There was strong support for a regional museum that complemented the collections held in community museums in the region.

The plan was structured with both long and short term key strategies and desired actions, addressing various aspects of development essential to the foundation of a successful cultural institution. The resulting outcome of the modern grass-roofed triangular Crone Architects building offers considerable flexibility in exhibition options along with functional areas for the foyer with a combined Visitor Information Centre; a café (currently leased); amenities; office space and back of house facilities.

Orange Regional Museum's 'Vision' is aimed at being a vibrant cultural hub where the rich history and heritage of the city and region is valued and celebrated through the dynamic programs developed by the museum. It achieves this vision through exhibitions, collaborative programs and cultural partnerships with the community, other agencies and organisations as well as state and federal governments and the business sector.

Reflecting the current approach to modern museum management, the Orange Regional Museum features

- **Greater emphasis on interpretation, thematic exhibitions, interactives and new technology**
- **An emphasis on people stories not just objects; the museum explores places and landscapes**
- **Temporary and travelling exhibitions**
- **The web being a central part of how the museum works**
- **Fewer objects being on display but more access to collections through the web**

Current staffing (2018) for the museum under the Director (Gallery and Museum) is as follows:

Museum and Heritage Manager 1.0 FTE; Collections Officer 0.4 FTE; Public Programs and Education Officer 1.0 FTE; Public programs and events - Casual staff; Front of House - Volunteer Program.

'Friends of the Orange Regional Museum' is a community support group with membership being an opportunity to meet like minded people while helping the museum fulfil its role in the community.

www.orangemuseum.com.au

Albury LibraryMuseum - Albury City Council



The Albury LibraryMuseum opened in July 2007 as the first stage and a key component of the revitalised QEII Cultural Precinct. The building opened to great community expectation welcoming 7000 visitors on opening day. Since opening, the combined facility is averaging 240,000 visitors per annum with one third of these (80,000) being visitors to the museum.

The Albury LibraryMuseum was designed by architects Ashton, Raggatt, McDougall (ARM) leading to a modernistic building sitting within Albury's heritage streetscape. A key driver of the architectural brief for the building was the convergence of spaces – the building was to incorporate the functions of a public library, research and technology centre and social history museum but with limited barriers between the zones in the building to encourage integration of spaces and experiences.

The building design incorporates elements of the region's heritage and environment with the iconic X facade of the building referencing the heritage rail bridge across the Murray River and the internal colour palette reflecting the Murray River environment. There is 700 sq.m. of core museum exhibition and collection space with a high diversity of objects recording the general history of this region. The collection includes objects made from timber, metal, plastic, natural fibres and many other materials. The museum's textile collection is significant as it includes costumes from the 1800s, international dress that forms part of the Bonegilla collection and a number of possum skin

cloaks in the aboriginal collection. Significant sub-collections include the Bonegilla migrant collection and the Uiver collection, which is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. The three dimensional collections are currently stored at an off-site museum storage facility.

AlburyLibraryMuseum is a local government business unit that operates as a service or not for profit business. The social and cultural value of the LibraryMuseum is recognised by significant funding by the AlburyCity Council , amounting to \$950,000 for the Museum Program (2018), which includes facility management and staffing costs. The council recognises the role of the LibraryMuseum facility in generating economic and building development in the CBD.

The Albury LibraryMuseum is managed by a Libraries and Museum team through program delivery driven by a Cultural Services Strategic Plan, within the overarching community plan, Albury 2030. The museum staff of five accounts for an annual cost of \$440,000 within the museum budget of approximately \$1m. (2018)

www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/leisure-and-culture/libraries-and-museum

Yarra Ranges Regional Museum (Lilydale) - Yarra Ranges Shire Council



While the streetscape of the current museum preserves the original 1889 Shire of Lilydale Shire Offices, the heritage building was incorporated into a contemporary extension in 2011 after a three year \$3m. development program (Williams Boag, Architects). Its Gracious Grace in-door/out-door cafe and gift shop add to the visitor appeal and function of the new museum addition. Along with this was the provision of an off-site purpose built environmentally controlled storage building of approximately 200 sq.m. costing \$800,000. [Costs quoted are 2011 dollars].



The three year redevelopment did not appear out of a vacuum but out of a long-standing involvement of local government, with its Museum Board of Management having been established in 1989. For the redevelopment the Board commenced a campaign within the community and was given fund raising targets for individuals, organizations and businesses. A Friends group was formed to assist with fund raising. Both funding support and political support were needed for the success of a project of this type and in 2006 the former of these supports was achieved while getting the commitment of community members involved in the project was the catalyst for the latter.

Owned and managed by Yarra Ranges Council, the Regional Museum is one of a number of cultural facilities operated by council and it sits within the Arts, Culture and Heritage (Creative Communities) Department and aligns with the Council Plan informed by the 'Community Vision for Yarra Ranges - Vision 2020'.

The museum's 'Vision' is that it "describes, reflects and celebrates our world class municipality. It aims to be the leader in managing, developing and celebrating cultural heritage in eastern Melbourne and eastern Victoria. " With its Public Programs activities it works towards being a regional cultural hub and affirms its responsibility as a community gathering place and important visitor destination.

The museum is supported by council with effectively a staff of five, including specialized staff at the off-site facility. There is provision in the budget of \$40,000 for exhibitions and the museum is currently looking forward with a three year plan of curated exhibitions. Such temporary varying exhibitions aim to work in tandem with the core exhibition which now focuses on the local stories of indigenous history (Coranderrk Mission) and Dame Nellie Melba. Other interesting linkages to local stories tend to be sought, for example, in a local association with Walter and Eliza Hall. An e-news provides the latest information on school programs and there are a variety of learning experiences ranging from workshops, exhibition-related events and school holiday programs for all ages and abilities.

[http://ach.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Regional Museum](http://ach.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Regional_Museum)

An Alternative Recommendation to Council

I want to put forward that, rather than the acceptance as per the council meeting of February 21st 2018 of effectively no consideration of a future Bendigo museum until the completion of three significant time and cost recommendations, that there should be an 'in tandem' arrangement set in place. A council shift to this broader view that the necessary artefact storage and the related organizational issues can proceed along with preparatory consideration of a museum is one that I hope may be advanced by making this submission.

This suggestion is supported by what is presented in the previous section's brief scoping of the issue, with it examining the establishment and functioning of just four Australian museums having strong local government support. These examples show that those councils are seeing a dynamic and modern museum concept as having both a justifiable social and an economic value for their respective regions. As with this city's view of the importance to it of the high quality Bendigo Art Gallery, these councils hold their new museums in a similar prestigious position.

It is acknowledged that this is a complex issue but there is some support for the view that there is advantage in the earliest possible entry into trying to resolve it. To put this into a perspective coming out of actual experience in

museum development, I believe that it is worth quoting from an early report submitted with regard to working towards the future Regional Museum in Orange.

"Developing a museum is a lengthy process for both the building and the exhibition content. Even if Council decided to go ahead with the museum, it would be a minimum of five years planning, research, concept and content development, design and building. Council can proceed with a lot of the preliminary museum planning work without making a formal commitment to a firm building date and capital works budget. This careful and staged planning will only enhance the final result and is an appropriate response to community demand" (Report to General Manager, Services Policy Committee, 2005).

With the recent successful visit to Dunedin by Bendigo councillors and officers, it is of interest to note that the Toitu Otago Settlers Museum appears to be a facility of some note in that city. As distinct from the broad-based Otago Museum, the Settlers Museum emphasises a regional historic view. It is housed in the original Edwardian galleries, Dunedin's former New Zealand Rail Road Transport building with a modern entrance foyer and has a staff of eleven museum personnel. No contact was made with that museum for information for this submission but ready cooperation with more detail would certainly be available on an approach to the museum from the City of Greater Bendigo.

<http://www.toituosm.com/>



Toitu Otago Settlers Museum