

# Tenancy Vision

RATIFIED FEB 2011



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## SOURCES:

- Abbotsford Convent Foundation Draft Business Plan 2006–2011, and earlier business plans
- Tenancy Vision – Community Participation Arts/Cultural Precinct – Environmetrics 2002
- Tenancy Selection Criteria

## 1. Background

The Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) recognises that the Abbotsford Convent arts culture and learning precinct is a dynamic and evolving place.

From time to time, the ACF reviews the vision and operation of the precinct to ensure that the Tenancy Vision and Leasing Policy are aligned with the vision for the precinct. The current draft of the Tenancy Vision is based on the most recent Business Plan (2007-2012), but also refers substantially to the original Tenancy Vision prepared by Environmetrics in 2002.

## 2. Overall vision for the site

The overall vision for the site is to create Australia's unique arts, cultural and educational/learning destination.

## 3. Objectives

Within the vision the objectives of the ACF expressed in the Business Plan are to:

- Be financially viable and self sufficient with regard to annual operating costs
- Build a precinct offering the public a wide range of arts, cultural and learning opportunities, experiences and development models
- Support and strengthen ties between individuals, groups and organisations and increase the level of community interaction
- Increase awareness of the Abbotsford Convent: its location, activities and historical significance
- Maintain and support a dynamic and sustainable organisation
- Improve environmental sustainability across the site in all areas of operations; including water and waste management, energy efficiency, building materials and methodologies employed for redevelopment etc.

A range of key activities and themes for the site emphasise the creation of a precinct that the whole community can access and use as a resource while respecting the heritage, cultural and natural values.

In addition, the ACF must be economically viable, financially responsible and comply with the obligations and requirements of the Deed, the Master Plan, the Planning Scheme Amendment and heritage requirements.

## 4. Themes and site concept

The three themes around which the site's vision is built are:

- Arts
- Culture
- Learning

Community and visitor participation are important aspects of the tenancy vision. Food and Beverage is a significant contributor to the amenity and community engagement with the precinct.

#### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INCLUDES;**

- Respect for the heritage, cultural and natural value of the precinct
- Community benefit activities are an important consideration; in a range of art & cultural forms, learning modules and wellbeing experiences
- Working practitioners sharing their knowledge, skills and experience with the wider community
- The site will focus on the three core themes of Arts, Culture and Learning with Hospitality and Wellbeing as important elements
- Enjoying the benefits offered by our events, markets, venue hire, food and beverage outlets, retail stores, galleries and Wellbeing Centre
- Enjoying the parkland setting and the heritage buildings
- The site will over time build to offer a unique cultural tourism experience for local, intrastate, interstate and international visitors through our reputation for excellence
- The site will be open for day and evening activities seven days a week

The Community Participation model sees the community of tenants as being integral to the success of the project. Balanced against the tenants' needs is the impact and sometimes pressure of venue hirers, weddings, short term visitors, film shoots and other temporary activities. A diversity of additional visitation is required to sustain a viable and lively precinct, even though, at times, the range of different uses and users may not be consistently harmonious.

The Abbotsford Convent has at its core the establishment of an arts and cultural precinct where practitioners can work and creativity can flourish. With this in view, planning for the site will increasingly need to take into account visitor perceptions and needs and must continue to be visitor friendly.

## **5. Tenancy Philosophy and Selection Criteria**

### **a. Tenant Mix**

#### **I. CORE TENANCIES**

Tenancies should correspond with the core concept for the site which comprises three thematic areas: Arts, Culture & Learning. Arts and Culture will be regarded as predominant themes. The tenant mix will see priority given to those in the Arts and Culture fields.

The three themes are outlined here:

#### **ARTS**

A wide range of arts activities are considered appropriate for the precinct. Activities may range from local community arts through to highly refined art forms. Visual arts, performing arts and literature will be included and may range from the traditional through to contemporary multimedia forms. These may include:

- Practicing artists, individuals and groups, development and rehearsal spaces
- Display areas such as galleries and exhibition areas
- Offices for small to medium arts organisations, professional associations or supporting bodies

The project aspires to be truly multi art form, providing spaces for physical theatre, design, architecture, music, dance, publishing, broadcasting and any other arts practice. The aim of not focusing on a few art forms will increase the attractions of the precinct and further bolster the unique proposition that is the Abbotsford Convent.

## **CULTURE**

Culture is regarded very broadly to include creative expressions of contemporary Australian culture in all its forms. The emphasis is on production, retail training, display and consumption. For example cultural production and consumption may include the culinary arts (cooking, wine, cheese and other food production and sale) garden design and production or fine craftsmanship and artisan enterprise in any medium. The gardens and gardening are an important expression of culture, community and learning opportunities.

## **LEARNING**

Preference will be given to those learning activities which relate to Arts and Culture. Educational or learning activities may be the primary purpose of a tenancy or could be a secondary offering. Preference will be given to those learning tenancies which do not make large portions of the site inaccessible to the general public.

The following kinds of learning based tenancies would be desirable: training in the arts, fine crafts, wellbeing, self directed learning opportunities via interpretive centre or exhibition space, demonstrations, or workshop/studio spaces; hospitality, culinary and horticulture training; workshops and courses. Where possible, tenants will be encouraged to provide opportunities for the wider public to learn about their art form through workshops, classes, open days and other activities.

## **II. SUPPORT TENANCIES**

In addition to the three key areas, two other tenancy types help to distinguish and support the key activities. These are Wellbeing and Food and Beverage and they are included in order to compliment the precinct and offer a more holistic and well- rounded visitor and tenant experience.

### **WELLBEING**

This theme encompasses a broad range of health and life education activities which relate to Arts or Culture. Services may address physical, psychological and social wellbeing. Preventative, remedial and curative services will also be considered. A large room suitable for yoga exists so it is logical to offer a full time yoga studio with sessions aimed at various sectors of the community (e.g. pregnant mothers, elderly people, and children). Sub-tenancies within those rooms will be accepted to enable a wide range of modalities on offer.

### **FOOD AND BEVERAGE**

Services such as food and beverage, catering and functions will be notable in the tenant mix. Most hospitality services will operate as stand alone businesses, independent of other activities on site, however some will cater to the needs of workers and visitors. Preference will be given to those hospitality tenancies which correspond sympathetically with our themes. The following services are considered desirable:

- Destination restaurant
- Functions and events management
- Café/deli/bakery
- Mobile carts on the grounds for weekends and special events
- Hospitality that can cater for visiting resident artists in accommodation

### **III. SPECIFIC SERVICES OFFERED**

The tenant mix should include a number of tenants who provide services to communities such as the vulnerable or disadvantaged sectors, professional associations or support groups for the creative arts. The emphasis will be on tenants whose services relate to the three themes of the core concept.

The ability to demonstrate Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status as an arts /cultural organisation is highly desirable.

### **IV. EVENTS AND MARKETS**

Although regular monthly and annual events/markets will be a core part of the site's energy, these activities are not regarded as being tenants per se. They support the ongoing tenancies, add a further dimension and act as destination attractors. Contractual arrangements specific to each activity will be entered into, however they will not become precinct tenants (industry bodies representing these activities may be eligible as tenants for office space within availability).

### **V. COHERENCY PRINCIPLE**

In order to provide synergy across the site, a general principle of coherency will be applied to the tenant mix:

Authenticity – tenants should have a logical and visible connection with the core themes.

Depth of offer – there should be a dominance of tenancies that relate to particular themes.

Variety – the site should offer a variety of experience within the boundary of the core themes. A diversity of experience should be offered in the tenant mix.

### **VI. DESTINATION VS. PRIVATE TENANTS**

It is preferred that tenants cater to either a particular user group or the general visiting public, either in their core business or in a secondary strand of their business. A proportion of tenants who neither attract visitors nor serve them will be included in the tenant mix.

### **VII. FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITY**

The tenant mix will endeavour to ensure some public activities are offered by tenants on site day and evening, seven days a week.

### **VIII. SPREAD ACROSS PRECINCT**

The tenant and events mix will be planned to ensure that all parts of the precinct are used appropriately; including outdoor spaces as well as the buildings. For example, the outdoor spaces will support the following activities:

- Weddings/functions that rely on the formal garden areas and outdoor spaces;
- Refreshment/sustenance for cyclists, joggers, dog walkers, strollers;
- Synergies with the Collingwood Children's Farm;
- Activating the French Meadows or the Goat Paddock.

## **IX. THE CALIBRE AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE TENANT MIX**

The final make-up of tenancies will reflect the intended status of the site as a significant cultural tourism destination at the local and international level.

A good number of the tenancies should be regarded as being the 'best in their field', with high quality work being produced regularly. In order to support the planned visiting artists' programs the site should also seek tenants who are interested in collaborating with short term visiting artists in a range of art forms.

## **X. SELECTION METHODS**

The ideal tenant mix will be achieved by actively seeking out tenants that fit the themes for the core concept in varied and innovative ways. This may include calling for expressions of interest, the ACF providing assistance in developing particular tenants that enhance the offering on the site for users and/or seeking out potential partners or operators by private search. Using a variety of methods to identify new tenants will always be appropriate for populating such a diverse, eclectic and organic project.

## **XI. MANAGING COMPETING USES**

The needs of the community of tenants will always need to be carefully balanced with the visitors' needs and demands as visitation grows. Whilst the full time tenancies are core to the precinct's survival, a strong visitor base is essential to maintain. It is critical that tenants understand that the precinct is a lively, public access and community based precinct; and as such, at times it may be noisy and that quiet contemplative work will not always be feasible – despite the bucolic appearance of the site.

### **b. Specific Locations**

- i. Tenancies will be selected in accordance with the preferred uses designated in the site's Master Plan and the specific uses to which individual buildings and spaces best lend themselves, having regard to the form and structure of the building.
- ii. Tenants for prominent locations/major buildings must be very closely aligned with the core themes and opportunities of the site.
- iii. Tenants and/or uses for ground floor spaces in the majority of significant areas of the main buildings should ideally be open to the public.
- iv. The majority of tenants should be capable of scaling up to serve the needs of large numbers of visitors for Open Days. A percentage should be capable of contributing to regular Festivals, Markets and other special events.

### **c. General principles for longer term management**

- i. Where a tenant's income stream depends on site management (e.g. a café serving workers and visitors to the site), management will show due diligence in offering viable business opportunities; however, the final responsibility for assessing the viability remains with the tenant.
- ii. Tenancies will be structured so as to allow for flexibility to respond to social and economic changes.
- iii. The tenant mix may include more of tenants who attract/serve visitors to the site.
- iv. The tenant mix can grow to include more tenants of national and international significance.

- v. Tenancy agreements will include community participation requirements.
- vi. If funds are available after operating costs have been met, ACF management may provide additional community benefit services through the provision of a Community Development Officer.
- vii. Events and programs aimed at attracting audiences from beyond Melbourne and from international sources will complement the ongoing services offered at the local and community level.
- viii. Business opportunities may be offered in combined structures (e.g. one operator with several business offerings) or in synergies (e.g. a bar that depends on a performing arts venue).
- ix. Care will be taken regarding the location of tenants within the precinct is mutually beneficial.
- x. Care will be taken to avoid the possibilities of tenants undermining each other's business or being disadvantaged by inappropriate competitive activity.
- xi. No one tenant can lease more than two different spaces within the precinct. If a tenant already has a large footprint priority will not be given to them if a second space is sought. This will assist in creating a diverse range of tenancies across the physical site.
- xii. Building use that does not preclude the public from entering a leased space will be prioritised.
- xiii. A number of arts and cultural tenancies would ideally be able to operate in an 'open door' fashion, thus enhancing the visitor experience to the site (galleries, shop, arts studios etc). Over time studios could be developed with facilities for visitors to watch but not disturb creative practice.