

creating a better life for regional Australians



REGIONAL
arts
AUSTRALIA



Regional Arts
Australia promotes
the development of
the arts for the one-
in-three Australians
that live in regional,
rural and remote
Australia.



NEST INSTALLATION BY ARTIST JEAN CONROY FROM IRELAND AS PART OF RAF MARSH ART 2007 IN DERBY. PHOTO: MATT SCURFIELD

TRANSCENDANCE CAST MEMBER PREPARING FOR PERFORMANCE AS PART OF FESTIVAL OF THE WIND 2008 IN ESPERANCE. PHOTO: DAN PARIS. PHOTO COURTESY DADAA.

COVER IMAGES: WORK FROM THE IMAGINE ALICE PROJECT
ARTIST: ALAN BETHUNE PHOTO: PIP McMANUS
HUMAN CANVAS PROJECT PERFORMING AT THE BADUM CLUB,
2008 REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ALICE SPRINGS. PHOTO: JAMES SPIERS

Regional Arts Australia

Regional Arts Australia is the national advocacy and industry development body for the arts in regional Australia.

Regional Arts Australia promotes the development of the arts for the one-in-three Australians that live in regional, rural and remote Australia.

For regional communities, issues of funding, infrastructure, education, remoteness and isolation all impact on their ability to access and participate in the arts and to develop and promote their own artistic endeavours.

In 1997 Regional Arts Australia played a vital role in the establishment of the Regional Arts Fund. Since then the Regional Arts Fund has seen over \$100 million, both in Regional Arts Fund grants and locally generated funding directed into regional communities, to support locally inspired arts projects and events.

Regional Arts Australia has also strongly supported regional communities in improving opportunities for Australia's best performing arts companies to present performances across regional Australia on a regular basis.

Through its biennial national conferences Regional Arts Australia has promoted opportunities for regional communities to access the arts and has

significantly raised the profile of the regional arts sector. Regional Arts Australia conferences now attract over 1,000 delegates making them the largest arts gatherings in Australia.

In 2005 Regional Arts Australia conducted a national consultation to seek the views of its constituency about future needs and priorities. As a result Regional Arts Australia advocated strongly for improved opportunities for smaller and remote communities to access professional arts activities and for new opportunities for regional communities to improve the quality of local arts buildings and related infrastructure.

In 2009 Regional Arts Australia carried out a second consultation to once again seek the views of its constituency about the future of the arts in regional Australia. Regional Arts Australia has summarised the issues raised in the consultation under five goals, namely:

- Building a Strong Sense of Purpose and Identity
- Developing Inclusive and Resilient Communities
- Engaging Young People in Creating Regional Futures
- Health and Wellbeing
- Environmental Sustainability

This publication details the outcomes from this consultation.

THE QUICKEST DREAM EVER BY ANDREW MOYNIHAN
PHOTO: DAVID NIXON
ALICE SPRINGS TELEGRAPH STATION
PHOTO: JAMES SPIERS

national consultation

Key Statistics

During June and July 2009 Regional Arts Australia consulted widely across the nation with people engaged in the arts and cultural development, allied regional organisations, national organisations with significant regional interests and State, Territory and Local Government representatives.

Through this consultation twenty five community meetings were held in eighteen locations across regional Australia. A further nine meetings were also held with representatives from eighty allied peak bodies and stakeholder organisations from all states and the Northern Territory. In addition, an online survey resulted in over three thousand people contributing to the consultation process.

Overall, Regional Arts Australia estimates that over 85,000 people were represented in this consultation.



Regional arts and cultural organisations are ready to contribute to the development of regional plans that will articulate and celebrate regional identity and strengths to attract people to invest, live and work in Regional Australia.



Results from the consultation are as follows:

- Over 85% believed the arts play a vital role in the community wellbeing and entertainment.
- Over 70% believed the arts play a role in cultural tourism
- Over 50% believed the arts play a role in economic development and job creation
- Over 90% believed that increased funding was required to build on existing levels of arts activity
- Almost 70% believed that more skills development training and professional development opportunities were required to assist in the development of the sector
- Importantly, almost 85% advised that they were aware of partnerships between the arts and other sectors, (Education, Health, Indigenous, Disability, Aged Care and Sport) within their community

Key Outcomes for the Future

Building a Strong Sense of Purpose and Identity

Issues and Directions

Participants have asked Regional Arts Australia to provide national leadership for new ways of working in partnership with other organisations committed to a strong, sustainable future for regional Australia. From the consultations it is clear that the arts and cultural sector has much in common with a broad range of economic, social and environmental organisations. This can be built upon.

Regional arts and cultural organisations are ready to contribute to the development of regional plans that will articulate and celebrate regional identity and strengths to attract people to invest, live and work in Regional Australia.

Regional Arts Australia is keen to ensure that the contribution of the arts and culture is a key component of any national discussion of the future of regional Australia. In particular, the broad nature of the impact that arts and cultural activities have on regional communities should be seen as an extremely important component of all national discussions.



Goals

- Build new partnerships between economic, social, environmental and cultural organisations to support sustainable and resilient regional communities
- Celebrate the unique and diverse culture, landscape, history and people of regional Australia
- Increase awareness of the breadth of arts, cultural and creative practice towards a greater acceptance of their value to regional communities in achieving their aspirations

Proposals for action by Regional Arts Australia

Bring together key national peak bodies to develop a regional agenda for joint action including:

- gaining a better appreciation and understanding of major issues and priority areas

- developing ways in which the different sectors can share information and consider possible future collaborations
- finding ways that national regional issues and stories can be better promoted and profiled through increased collaboration

Establish a Regional City of Culture program which designates a regional city for a period of one calendar year and support the city to develop and showcase its cultural life. It is anticipated that the program would be a partnership between the Commonwealth, relevant State and Local Governments and the private sector. It would be the catalyst for the transformation of the city with consequential cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Developing Inclusive and Resilient Communities

Issues and Directions

Regional Australia is changing rapidly and communities are looking for ways to build the legendary “country spirit” with a wide range of new residents, some from other parts of Australia and some from other countries. There is a need to celebrate all cultures in regional Australia and to develop a national sense of direction for regional Australia.

In many places there is an enthusiasm for building lasting relationships with the local Indigenous community for proper acknowledgement of local Indigenous culture as central to the identity of the area and for greater appreciation of contemporary expressions of Indigenous culture. It is recognised that building respect and an ability to work together as partners between Indigenous and non Indigenous people is critical to the sustainable future of regional Australia. Community leaders are seeking support and facilitation for a process to promote this.

Goals

- Build strong links between Indigenous and non Indigenous people in the host community in the lead up to the Regional Arts Australia national conferences
- Encourage the involvement of new arrivals to regional communities in being involved in the national conference activities
- Partner with the Australian Government in its Social Inclusion Agenda

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia action

Develop a leadership training program for Indigenous and non Indigenous participants towards forming a local engagement group for the Regional Arts Australia national conferences

- Involve this leadership group in the conference programming to highlight the identity of the area.
- Carry out SmArt in Business training for the leadership group
- Involve older and new residents, people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, young people, townspeople and rural people in the leadership group

Commit to active participation in the Australian Government’s social inclusion national Compact in the first instance through providing feedback on the draft Compact, and over the longer term, by aiming to have a Regional Arts Australia representative at the table and engaging on an ongoing basis with activities surrounding the Compact.

Engaging Young People in Creating Regional Futures

Issues and Directions

Young people in regional Australia often see the arts community as a lot of older people doing things in old fashioned ways and do not see their own interests in photography, film making, digital storytelling, new media, hiphop etc being reflected in descriptions of art, or as priorities for funding. They are often interested in remaining in regions, but seek respect for their contribution, celebration of their achievements and engagement in decision-making.

Marginalised young people are frequently inspired and transformed through engagement in the arts and involvement in projects with talented arts facilitators, but these projects are often funded for too short a period, without the necessary equipment and not in “youth spaces”. Young people with disabilities have particular challenges and want to be included in mainstream arts programs.

The skills learned and confidence developed through arts and cultural activities provide a bridge for many young people into the workforce and into mainstream community life. They can make such a positive difference to the lives of young people that it is difficult to explain to them why there is so little sustained support for these activities.

Goals

- Engage young people actively in the arts and cultural life of their communities in ways that reflect their view of the world they live in
- Provide opportunities through arts and cultural activities for marginalised young people to develop skills, confidence and active citizenship
- Engage young people in the decision-making about their art and their communities

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia action

Establish a specific Regional Youth Arts Fund to build on the Regional Arts Fund with a youth funding panel in each State.

This fund would acknowledge the specific requirements for equipment, in particular digital equipment and software. This fund would also provide new opportunities to engage young people in decision-making.

Establish an annual National Regional Youth Arts Fellowships program which provides up to six young people each year with opportunities for their own self development including:

- A structured placement with key national or state based arts and/or training institutions
- A self directed program of placements with arts organisations or educational institutions of their choice or a placement with a practising artist

Adapt the SmArt in Business training package for young people to enhance their skill development not only through artistic activity, but also through acquiring knowledge, understanding and practice of the business and organisational skills required for successful projects.



**photography, film
making, digital
storytelling, new
media, hiphop**



Health and Wellbeing

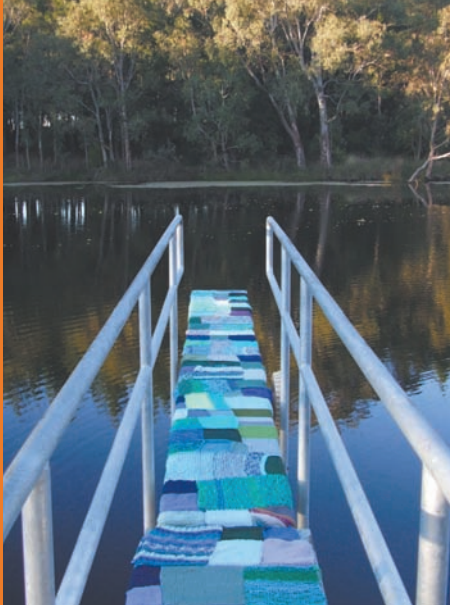
Issues and Directions

People in regional Australia are aware that ensuring consistent service delivery from health professionals is difficult, and recognise that there are difficulties in recruiting doctors and specialists to small regional towns and remote areas. Regional leaders in many places are now talking about new and different ways to ensure that their communities are healthy and stay healthy. They see prevention as the key.

A large number of regional arts projects being undertaken have strong health and mental health and wellbeing goals, and have a major focus on prevention of illness and individual behavioural change. In addition substantial numbers of people in arts organisations in regional Australia are also members of health and allied health organisations.

Communities are seeking greater recognition of this work from the mainstream health system, and are looking to incorporate arts and cultural development as part of normal health education practice. If the benefits of using the arts as a tool for better health outcomes are better understood by health systems and community providers then this practice could be built in as part of regional health programs.

For Indigenous communities this relationship between health and arts and culture is fundamental, and support for the ongoing pairing of arts and health preventative measures will make a significant contribution to the Closing the Gap Strategy.



Goals

- Demonstrate the positive outcomes of using arts and culture as a significant health tool
- Develop acceptance within the health sector of the importance and success of pairing arts and health activities
- Form new partnerships between the arts and health sectors for the benefit of all Australians

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia action

Develop a paper on the importance of arts and culture as a health preventative measure.

The paper would be prepared in consultation with Commonwealth and State health and arts authorities.

The paper would focus on development of a joint national policy and contain practical steps for implementation.

Publish stories of arts and health projects and seek funds for a significant publication outlining successful projects, lessons learnt and “how to” information for regional communities.

Develop and promote conference presentations on arts and health in order to generate mainstream acceptance for art and culture as a health tool.

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of regional areas
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Environmental Sustainability

Issues

Communities in regional Australia live daily with the evidence of climate change and most people are actively engaged in some form of environmental protection through individual action, as members of community groups such as Land Care, in environmental groups and many through their artistic activities.

For most residents of regional areas there is a direct connection with the land and country which they love and respect. For many artists it is the landscape, the stories, the history, the flora and fauna that form the basis of their work. For most Indigenous artists it is their connection with country that forms the basis of their culture.

Dealing with climate change, and particularly the changing face of water, is the source of much conflict between people and communities are seeking new ways to engage in helpful discussion that increases their understanding of the topic and each other.

Goals

- Increase the general awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability in regional communities through arts and cultural activities
- Demonstrate the value of arts activities in conflict resolution to the environmental sector

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia action

Develop materials on arts and the environment for conference presentations and handout materials which can be provided to conference organisers across the country.

Materials would include stories and pictures and demonstrate the wide range of arts activities that support the environmental movement.

Establish a Regional Arts and Environment Online Network by forming a partnership with other story telling organisations to encourage the recording of environmental art stories and to link people nationally.

This Art and Environment Network would link with other allied story telling networks so that the value of the arts in this topic can be demonstrated more broadly.

Through this network it will be possible for people to gain a new understanding of each other and their commitment to the environment.



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Australian Government
Regional Arts Fund



Australian Government



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REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA IS SUPPORTED BY THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S ARTS FUNDING AND ADVISORY BODY, THROUGH ITS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SECTION.