

## REGIONAL ARTS STRATEGIES

### **Language**

Diversify language around Regional Arts.

There is an arts hierarchy in Australia that creates a structural barrier to regional arts succeeding and part of it is the language used when framing regional projects and artist. Regional arts are often framed in all sorts of writing from grants applications to press releases as the younger sibling of the Arts. I think we have capacity in the regions in terms of technical skills, project management, experience in events, exhibitions and festivals and the artistic excellence but this capacity looks different from arts workers in the cities. Regional artists build resilience, diversify their skills bases and project manage varied events because of population and scarcity of skilled workers in the regions.

I would like to see recognition for regional skills built into the language we use in grants and media. An artist in the country may well have a small business, being a wedding photographer, managing a landcare company or a farm actually adds capacity to the arts. Rather than ignoring this mode of artist we could celebrate the skills the same way we celebrate artists who work in big institutions in the city such as MCA or GOMA. If the regional artists were in the city they would have jobs that related more strongly on a superficial level to arts work. I think that the diversity of experience and skill brought to Australia's arts industry by regional artists strengthens the industry and should be acknowledged.

We could do this by:

- Changing grants applications to acknowledge regional skills and regional modes of practising art. This would mean that a regional artist could include their history and skills within diverse fields in their resume and proposal without being judged not to be a "serious" artist because of their diverse work experience. We could acknowledge and celebrate this unique aspect of the regional artist experience, it adds to the distinctive flavour and look of regional arts as compared to urban arts.
- We could as an industry, encourage politicians on all levels to say the phrase "Arts work is work" building recognition for artists as workers within every community.

### **Export**

Regional Arts is often seen as an area that needs development, this is often achieved by importing projects and artists from urban areas to the regional areas. I argue that we should look at the proportion of the arts budget spent on importing to the regions and flip it. Regional Arts could spend more budget developing existing capacity exporting artistically excellent projects to urban areas rather than importing to the regions. This serves two goals, the first is to increase the skills and capacity

of arts workers and artists within regional communities and the second is to increase recognition of the excellence and unique flavour of Australia's regional arts both nationally and internationally. I would love to see a Regional arts industry that is constantly developing project from the regions, within small communities and exporting them to big urban festivals, Triennales and events.

I would like to see an Australia where amazing projects completely built in the regions were looked forward to with anticipation by curators and festival programmers.

This would mean:

- More budget for developing projects with regional communities
- Success in funding not tied so strongly to numbers within the regional community
- A strong pathway for regional artists to develop projects that will then be funnelled into urban festivals, creating a network that regional artists can access that enables regional projects to develop in the regions and be funnelled into the urban areas. This involves actual funding in the regions rather than funding imports to the regions.
- A national network of arts regions, each distinctive and supported with organisational back up for artistic projects. Something similar to how food regions are developed and marketed. This not only creates a movement of culture from country to city but also builds community pride in culture produced locally. It's really important for future generations of artists in the regions to see success, to see a pathway where their projects can be shown to large audiences. Not just to see urban excellence and feel that they have to move to the city to succeed.

## **Education**

Regional arts, and all arts, need to foster the next generation.

We need TAFE colleges and if they are based in the regions, this not only builds technical capacity but also creates another level of arts that is embedded within regional communities. In the next ten years we need to work growing pathways to careers in the arts from regional Australia. This also means opening a path for urban artists to train and learn in regional settings. Educational institutions bring many things to regional communities, diverse populations, new skills, business to accompany student population. The flow of emerging artists should be seen as a two-way street between urban and regional Australia. Attending a training institution in regional Australia should be a concrete and prestigious option to enhance both the regional arts eco-system and the national arts eco-system

This could be achieved by:

- Re-opening training courses in regional TAFE colleges. A ten-year plan to offer specialised arts training course at regional TAFE colleges.
- Assessing the training requirements for TAFE, at the current moment someone who is an established artist with decades of experience and teaching experience and a Masters degree or education degree still has to complete an expensive Cert 3 through a private training college in order to teach at TAFE. This should be changed so experienced artists with existing degrees can do a cheaper, shorter course administered within the TAFE in order to become teachers. As it currently stands a TAFE teacher would spend most of their first year of work (which is generally part-time) repaying the expenses incurred in order to teach at TAFE. This is a strong economic disincentive for experienced artists and teachers who can get teaching jobs through state Education Boards, private colleges and training institutions and universities without having to commit the money or time to this CERT3