

Submission National Cultural Policy



COOLAH, 2843, NSW

Coolah 2843 is a small rural and remote town of fewer than 1000 population. Median age 47 ABS. In reality, the main age groups are elderly retired and children/youth less than 18 years. I have lived in the area and worked voluntarily with many community groups for over 50 years, particularly with youth and senior groups, in arts and history interest groups principally.

There are few opportunities for children and youth to learn any musical instrument and the only piano teacher has left the district this year. The school is a Central School with fewer than 80 students, and sometimes has a qualified music teacher but currently does not have this personnel. Due to the remoteness, 100km to nearest main centre of Dubbo 2830, families cannot travel for music tuition.

In the past, Musica Viva artists have visited and Country Arts Support Programs, CASP grants have facilitated these events together with other artists who have conducted school workshops in conjunction with a local event such as Rockn' at the Racecourse and Jazz in the Tops. These successful Coolah events conducted by volunteers have been successful in securing funding for workshops and performers with assistance from Orana Arts rural entity from Wellington 2820.

Elderly persons interested in recording family history have participated in Creative Writing groups with facilitators who have been funded through CASP grants. These facilitators have been sourced from other urban places and funding for travel, accommodation and workshops has been sought from CASP grants.

Children and youth have been particularly enthusiastic to participate in lantern making workshops, puppetry workshops and Hip Hop workshops culminating in performances, again funded through CASP, primarily. A didgeridoo group was particularly well received by First Nations children and all their classmates. For rural and remote children and youth, these opportunities are essential to introduce them to different forms of art and culture and to learn how to stage their own live events so as not to rely solely on electronic entertainment.

Recording local history forms a very important part of remote and rural towns to showcase the life of pioneers to locals and tourists. Coolah is the Home of the Black Stump and this Government Gazzettal recording for Coolah 2843 stands as an authentic claim to this iconic nomenclature. Surrounding districts – Dunedoo/Leadville 2844 and Cassilis 2329 are included in Coolah's history and an accessible form is now possible by digitisation and CreateNSW has assisted with grants to secure this information for future generations of researchers, safely and sustainably.

Public art is an essential element of local rural culture and local artisans recycle, reuse and rejuvenate public spaces with their creativity. Schoolchildren are encouraged to help design and fabricate these art pieces and especially for First Nations students, this inclusion is a very important cultural experience and connection to country. The Coolah 2843 Riverwalk with Yarning Circle and installations of local art is a popular recreational area for all ages and abilities.

The five pillars outlined work very well with our natural environment of Coolah Tops National Park and Riverwalk for cultural experiences for First Nations history and pioneer endeavours of farming and timber getting. Art in many forms of sculpture, painting and folk music burst from this heritage connecting and inspiring and is set out most in the framework in Pillars 2 and 3 for our rural and remote area.

In the next National Cultural Policy we would like to see a strong emphasis on rural and remote NSW. Not just bigger centres, but hearing the stories of smaller centres that are struggling to hold onto their identity with the changing face of rural landscape with Renewables turning us into Energy Factories rather than natural vistas of farmland.