



I currently work as an independent curator, teacher, facilitator, writer and researcher with an extensive career as an educator in schools and universities. Current modes of practice are mostly focussed on visual arts practice and writing though past projects and research have had more of a focus on drama and digital media. Much of my life has been devoted to promoting community engagement and transformation through the arts, education and creativity, especially in regional contexts.

I am also a Board member for [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED]. I was previously a founding member of the Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance and manager/board member for two Queensland RASN (Regional Arts Services Network) programs working across 20 local government regions of Queensland. So most of the projects I have been involved in have been based in regional locations.

My most recent work regionally has been through the 'Wild/Flower Women' suite of projects and exhibitions. These projects have a focus on building awareness and understanding of women's contributions to protecting the environment, and the role of art and creativity for wellbeing and sustainable futures. The touring exhibition 'Wildflowering by Design' involved working with different groups of artists in seven Queensland regions.

What is clearly evident in my work across the regions is that there is a thirst for creative engagement across locations, however the level of support for professional development, education and training is very patchy. There are very few training opportunities for the arts and cultural practice in the regions. Too much reliance rests with the local councils and level of support they are able to provide for arts and cultural programs. Many are punching well above their weight in their levels of support, but it can easily shift with changes to council members, focus and staff.

For small councils, the staff responsible for arts and culture often have to combine that focus with other roles and so professional knowledge and expertise varies enormously. Volunteer groups and associations often are responsible for running galleries, venues and programs, and there are real issues with relying on such with the aging population of volunteers.

The closure of arts education and training programs, and increased costs to be able to study arts and cultural programs is impacting on the future of creative ecologies in the regions. Most regional TAFE programs in the arts have closed, and the fee-free programs that were available after COVID now seem to rely on state government decision making.

What should be reflected in the new policy:

Arts education and regional arts commitments are scattered throughout the 2023 policy but can be strengthened.

A sixth arts and training pillar would be justified. However if this does not occur, significant focus on education could occur through the Strong Cultural Infrastructure pillar.

- Strong Institutions should also include Arts Education Professional Associations, Peak Bodies, and Service Organisations which should be supported to help realise the National Cultural Policy and contribute to the ecology of the arts and cultural sector.
- Address the impact of the 2020 Job-ready Graduates reforms that increased the cost of arts and humanities degrees and still have not been repealed.
- Increase funding of Regional Arts Funding programs and professional development including projects and programs that may occur across states and territories.
- Create a focus area and fund within Creative Australia to support arts education and training initiatives, collaborations, and projects.
- Support arts/education professional development programs targeting the regions (e.g. the \$2.6 million provided to support specialist in-school arts education programs was not open to tender)
- Halt the erosion of arts education training in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and increase curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment course allocation time for The Arts. This includes promoting The Arts as a specialist training area for early childhood and primary education courses.
- Work closely with Jobs and Skills Australia and be responsible for identifying and addressing workforce challenges, to ensure delivery of high-quality training products that meet the skills needs of the sector, and provide opportunities for training in and beyond metropolitan centres.
- Address barriers for participation in arts education by persons with disabilities through review of permitted NDIS funding inclusions. Changes to allowed NDIS funding meant that group tuition and activities that were providing vital services for people with disabilities and employment for arts workers has been vastly diminished.
- Ensure this is a whole of government policy that secures support from other government departments and programs, valuing the role of the arts for realising multiple outcomes for the environment, economy, belonging and social cohesion.

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Wild/flower Women Projects

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