

National Cultural Policy Submission

Dr Jane Mulcock

Submitted: As an individual

Strong Institutions

I have a PhD in Anthropology. For the past 10 years, I have chosen to apply my skills as the Executive Officer of a small community arts organisation in a regional community with a population of around 14,500, located 8 hours drive from Perth, 5 hours from Albany and 4 hours from Kalgoorlie. Our organisation is run by a volunteer Board and currently employs 1FTE shared between three people – EO, Finance Officer and Volunteer Coordinator (down from 1.8FTE due to reductions to core funding in 2020). We also engage artists and artswriters on a project-by-project basis depending on grant funding. In the last 2 years we have secured around \$500,000 of project funding (mostly external) for arts-based projects in our community in addition to approximately \$100,000 of support from our Local Government, which contributes to our core operating costs (approximately \$130,000 per year). I am paid for three days a week at \$35 an hour and regularly work 20 hour days and 7 day weeks just to keep up with the project funding cycle that keeps the wheels turning for our organisation. I also work 20 hours a week for the local Native Title Corporation.

Our organisation operates within a community arts and cultural development (CACD) framework. Our projects support participation and capacity building rather than simply providing entertainment for those who can afford to pay for it. We source grant funding and other income to ensure that we can provide arts-based experiences for free to remove a key barrier to participation for community members living on low incomes. We work closely with Aboriginal community members and we work hard to make cultural and linguistic diversity visible (there are people from more than 55 different countries living in our community). Our programs are responsive to community needs and interests and are primarily driven by our strong community partnerships. They focus on individual and collective social and emotional wellbeing and support positive social change. Our programs help some of our participants to manage social isolation and mental health challenges.

There is so much I would like to contribute to this consultation, so many case studies, so many reflections and insights based on my professional experience in this role – but I simply don't have the time. This week we have 4 visiting artists in Esperance. We are delivering 12 community workshops and an open studio program. And so much more.

Strong Institutions need increased investment in basic core operations to ensure their sustainability and to avoid constant cycles of burnout.

There is so much more that I would like to add under all of the 5 pillars. But everything rests on strong institutions – we desperately need more of these to be more sustainable in regional communities, at the grass roots level however small. Invest in us.