

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

Local government plays a critical role in Australia's arts and culture sector, making a substantial contribution to capital (building and maintenance) and recurrent (staff and programs) for galleries, libraries, performing arts centres, museums, festivals and events, and regional arts organisations.

The arts, culture and the creative industries are recognised by local government as an essential economic driver for visitor economies, with 'experiential travel' being a key component of economic recovery. They also create attractive and dynamic places to live, work and visit. Investment in the cultural sector benefits communities in multiple ways; by building community cohesion and supporting wellbeing. As our community's recovery from natural disasters, including drought, fires and floods, the arts have a unique and important role to play in their recovery and resilience building.

In regional areas, local government is the largest government investor in this sector. Costs have risen substantially to fill the investment gap left by inadequate funding by both state and commonwealth governments.

The disparity between state funding for metropolitan and rural institutions is clear. It is essential that local governments are recognised as arts organisations and funded appropriately to enable them to plan for, operate and support cultural institutions in their local areas. Short term, competitive funding undermines the viability of these institutions and hampers their ability to reach their potential. Direct funding to local government, rather than financial support delivered through ad hoc funding rounds, will enable tailored programs at the local level and efficient delivery of integrated strategies that can have long-term and sustainable impacts.

In the Bega Valley, Council has made a significant investment in the redevelopment of the Bega Valley Regional Gallery as a regional entre of artistic excellence and a major tourism driver. This builds on the important work the Gallery has played in assisting communities recover from the black summer bushfires. The Gallery is the only facility of its kind in the south-east region of New South Wales with the closest regional galleries located in Albury, Nowra and Goulburn.

Council's commitment has not been adequately supported by the State government, with no capital contribution being received for the project to date. Ongoing operation and programming costs are subject to competitive grant rounds - a process which is time consuming and takes staff time away from the delivery of the services. Reliable and ongoing state funding for capital, programming and operating costs are essential to secure the viability of the gallery and other cultural institutions into the future.