

National Cultural Policy Submission

We are happy to provide this submission to the discussion around a National Cultural Policy. It is drawn from consultation, conversations and relationships with the Western Australia Regional Arts sector over three decades of supporting and celebrating the fantastic work undertaken by regional artists and regional arts organisations.

Whilst the Challenges outlined below arise from these conversations and relationships, we believe they have a bearing on any national conversations and have articulated Opportunities in response to these Challenges through a frame for National action and policy-making.

We applaud the decision to create a National Cultural Policy and look forward to a subsequent 10 year visioning document in the form of a National Cultural Plan – aligning with State and Local authority planning documents to deliver a seamless national vision for how arts and culture is recognised as the driving force behind the lives of all Australians.

We also work closely with both the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA and Regional Arts Australia and commend and support both of those submissions, particularly RAA's Regional Strategic Framework that is embedded in and adds value to all five pillars and is cross-disciplinary, multi-artform, inter-generational and importantly is self-determined by and for regional communities.

Established in 1994, Regional Arts WA is the State's peak regional arts body and the only Western Australian multi-arts organisation with a purely regional focus. Our ongoing challenge is finding ways to coordinate resources and opportunities to as many regional communities and artists as possible – celebrating and championing the world-class work already happening and helping to strengthen and develop further work.

Each region has its diverse communities, imperatives, cultural requirements and challenges. Regional Arts WA honours these distinctive communities by developing a series of investment, advisory, development and networking offerings which are flexible, innovative and relevant.

Regional Arts WA delivers a diverse suite of programs including funding for arts projects large and small; development support for key regional arts organisations and artists: opportunities for the state's peak organisations to develop regional programs; youth and First Nations' specific projects; and a growing network of Regional Arts Hubs to share knowledge and drive statewide priorities.

First Nations: recognising and respecting the crucial place of these stories at the centre of our arts and culture.

Key WA regional arts challenges

1. Need to acknowledge the importance of First Nations peoples' self-determination, cultural authority and leadership in the arts and culture space and advance understand how art and culture is already at the heart of their connection to country and being.
2. Not enough well-paid employment opportunities to encourage First Nations leaders or potential leaders to stay in the arts and too much reliance on existing under-resourced First Nations arts and cultural organisations to lead the way.
3. There needs to be better recognition of the role Regional and remote Indigenous Art Centres play as key economic, social and governance drivers in their communities.
4. Lack of digital access and education impacts remote communities generally, and First Nations communities and individuals in particular. This in turn limits the skills and ability to produce and disseminate art for members of those communities.

Opportunities

1. Initiate a First Nations Arts and Cultural Plan for A Creative Australia to drive cross-sector responses placing arts and culture at the centre of everything.
2. Investment in First Nations-led education, training, mentorship and skills development programs in the arts to support First Nations employment and representation in middle-tier jobs, leadership roles, boards, and Aboriginal advisory groups.
3. Increased investment in regional and remote Indigenous art centres and their related peak body.
4. Implement a digital strategy and infrastructure for regional and remote WA communities.

A place for every story: reflecting the diversity of our stories and the contribution of all Australians as the creators of culture.

Key WA regional arts challenges

5. Sheer geographic size of the State makes it difficult to reach regional and remote communities to offer the opportunity to tell their stories.
6. Diversity of artforms and practitioners not being acknowledged or supported in regional WA.
7. An export mindset exists – art is created in capital cities and delivered to the regions.
8. Lack of digital access and education affects regional and remote communities.
9. Current investment/funding models and governance/developmental structures are not equitable or accessible – particularly for CaLD, youth, First Nations and disabled artists.
10. Regional arts and education disconnect – no specialist teachers or arts curriculum available to encourage and nurture diverse storytelling.

Opportunities

5. Federal, State and LGA partnership agreement to fund the development and coordination of the emerging Regional Arts Network of Hubs across regional WA to share knowledge, build connections and offer the opportunities for all Australians to create.
6. Regional arts has the opportunity to position itself as the key cultural glue of Australia, leading to better support mechanisms for the acknowledgement and delivery of diverse stories.
7. Shift the balance from funding metropolitan organisations to export arts programs to the regions to investing in the diverse work and stories produced by regional arts organisations and individuals.
Aligns with Recommendation 19 from Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends the Office for the Arts investigate ways in which to support regional peak bodies for the creative and cultural arts industries and institutions.
8. Development of a digital strategy and infrastructure for regional and remote WA communities.
9. Implement a national trial of alternative funding models to reduce access barriers, for disadvantaged groups.
10. Replace STEM with STEAM
Aligns with Recommendations 9 and 14: Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government consider working with tertiary education providers to develop a program of internships and cadetships which would see students and young people work in regional, small and/or community-focussed galleries, libraries, archives and museums. The Committee recommends that the criteria for capital expenditure set out in the Australian Education Act 2013, provided for in the Capital Grants Program, include expenditure relating to equipment and facilities for arts, performance and cultural activities.

The centrality of the artist: supporting the artist as worker and celebrating their role as the creators of culture.

Key WA regional arts challenges: see Appendix 1 – White Paper Sustainable Support

11. The true economic value of artists and artworkers (practitioners) - either contracted or employed – is not acknowledged and/or paid and does not fit neatly into an industrial framework.
12. Practitioners struggle to make a living and are further burdened by the extra costs of working regionally and/or remotely.
13. Mental health and well-being of practitioners at an all-time low.
14. Little or no recognition of the value of arts or the impact its outcomes have in communities.
15. Lack of alignment from three tiers of government around the strategic direction (or even the need) for arts and cultural planning.
16. Regional arts and education disconnect – no specialist teachers or arts curriculum available to encourage and nurture creativity.

Opportunities

11. A framework to ensure safe, employment/contracting standards with recognised minimum awards/rates, transferrable superannuation and leave considerations and a recognition by Centrelink of the artist as worker.
12. Regional Arts WA's Fellowship program has been in high demand and is proving very successful. It is essentially a subsistence allowance for two years for a very small number of artists. Australia needs a universal Living Wage for the Arts.
13. Provide Federal funding to set up a Regional all-artform artist/artworker version of the charitable support organisation [SupportAct](#).
14. Secure national agreement on a set of public policy outcomes (Cultural Development Network [Outcomes Schema](#) as an example) leading to shared and unified funding application and reporting processes.
15. Return of Federal Cultural Minister's Council to enable alignment of shared strategic goals. Aligns with Recommendation 2: Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government encourage each level of government to develop and administer strategies to grow cultural and creative industries within their own jurisdictions. The levels of government should liaise regularly, and place a strong focus on rural, regional and remote support for the creative and cultural industries
16. Replace STEM with STEAM
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The Committee recommends that the criteria for capital expenditure set out in the Australian Education Act 2013, provided for in the Capital Grants Program, include expenditure relating to equipment and facilities for arts, performance and cultural activities.

Strong institutions: providing support across the spectrum of institutions which sustain our arts and culture.

Key WA regional arts challenges: see Appendix 1 – White Paper Sustainable Support

17. Costs to run institutions in regional and remote WA are higher than metro and yet government funding programs for core operations offer metro orgs more money to fund their core costs.
18. Regional arts institutions are lacking resources to plan long-term and lacking energy to build capacity.
19. Regional arts and education disconnect – no specialist teachers, no tertiary opportunities to build the leaders needed for strong institutions.
20. Sheer geographic size of the State makes it difficult to create the support and knowledge sharing opportunities to build a sustainable sector.
21. Lack of alignment from three tiers of government around the strategic direction (or even the need) for arts and cultural planning.

Opportunities

17. Establish a multiyear Regional Organisation Core funding (A National Regional Arts Partnership Framework) – paying attention to the loading required for regional delivery
Aligns with Recommendation 19 from Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends the Office for the Arts investigate ways in which to support regional peak bodies for the creative and cultural arts industries and institutions.
18. Regional Arts Fund (and all government funding guidelines) recognise the [Paying What It Takes Report](#) and acknowledge the core support required to build sustainable institutions is 33% of delivery, not 13%.
Aligns with Recommendation 19 from Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends the Office for the Arts investigate ways in which to support regional peak bodies for the creative and cultural arts industries and institutions.
19. Replace STEM with STEAM
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The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government consider working with tertiary education providers to develop a program of internships and cadetships which would see students and young people work in regional, small and/or community-focussed galleries, libraries, archives and museums.
The Committee recommends that the criteria for capital expenditure set out in the Australian Education Act 2013, provided for in the Capital Grants Program, include expenditure relating to equipment and facilities for arts, performance and cultural activities.
20. Establish a Federal, State and LGA partnership agreement to fund the development and coordination of the emerging Regional Arts Network of Hubs across regional WA to share knowledge, build connections and offer the opportunities for the regional arts sector to sustain arts and culture.
21. Return of Federal Cultural Minister's Council to enable alignment of shared strategic goals.
Aligns with Recommendation 2: Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –
The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government encourage each level of government to develop and administer strategies to grow cultural and creative industries within their own jurisdictions. The levels of government should liaise regularly, and place a strong focus on rural, regional and remote support for the creative and cultural industries.

Reaching the audience: ensuring our stories reach the right people at home and abroad.

Key WA regional arts challenges

22. An export mindset exists – art is created in capital cities and delivered to the regions.
23. No incentives or quotas for ensuring our stories are on our screens or in our schools.
24. Tourism WA still not addressing the value of regional arts – and regional arts not recognising their tourism appeal.
25. Embracing digital and tech to supplement not supplant.

Opportunities

22. Increase the Regional Arts Fund to encourage more regional work to connect with existing regional audiences and new metropolitan audiences, including the recognition of significant travel and freight costs.

23. Introduce quotas.

Aligns with Recommendations 8 and 13: Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –.

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government introduce legislation that requires over-the-top (OTT) media services (streaming and video/subscription video on demand services) to allocate at least 20 per cent of their local revenue on new Australian drama, documentary, children's content, commissions, co-productions or acquisitions of content. The new legislation should also prescribe that OTT services allocate at least 20 per cent of the 20 per cent quota to local children's content and drama.

The Committee recommends that there be a minimum threshold of Australian-authored literary texts in the Australian Curriculum.

24. Regional arts has the potential to contribute more significantly to Cultural Tourism
Aligns with Recommendation 5: Sculpting A National Cultural Plan –

The Committee recommends that the Office for the Arts consider what resourcing or data would be required to create an app which contains a repository of information of current artistic and cultural events. The Committee further recommends that the Office for the Arts consult with Tourism Australia, and State and Territory Government peak bodies and other industry-relevant entities.

25. Develop a digital arts strategy and infrastructure for regional and remote WA communities.

WHITE PAPER #1

SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

A thriving regional arts sector is critical to the future productivity and wellbeing of regional Western Australia. The work undertaken by the regional arts sector to

- connect communities with a sense of belonging
- enrich lives with creative inspiration and insight, and
- foster mental, physical, social and economic wellbeing

is widely acknowledged and rightly lauded. But is it valued? Are artists and arts organisations truly supported to carry out this work?

The regional arts sector in 2019 was:

- Struggling to make a living
- Too reliant on too few paid staff
- Burnt out and anxious about the future
- Buckling under community expectations
- Lacking resources to plan long-term
- Lacking energy to build capacity
- Lacking time to free up creativity

This has led to a sector trapped in a perpetual project poverty cycle – forever chasing the absolute minimum investment to carry out meaningful work on a shoestring with no opportunities to build resilience or sustainability.

These sustainability faultlines in the regional arts sector have been deepened and widened by COVID19. The recent release of the Chamber of Arts and Culture's Finance and Wellbeing research sadly highlights this issue. The shared regional data we have analysed alarmingly points to:

- More than 50% of regional arts orgs indicated the financial impact of COVID over next 6 months will be severe or extremely severe
- More than 50% of individual regional practitioners accessed their superannuation or sought loans to get through the past two years
- More than 50% of the regional arts sector is Extremely or Very Concerned about the health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

The pandemic has highlighted that it is time for a change in the relationship between funding bodies and artists. The potential and opportunity for change has been presented to us by the disruption to all our lives and the acknowledgement from both State and Federal governments of the need to provide increased investment to shore up a struggling sector.

But we need to ensure we don't simply go back to the way things were.

Sustainable support for regional arts should focus on

- The need for artists and artswomen to earn a living wage
- The mental health and wellbeing of those working in the sector
- The development of impact measurement through outcomes frameworks
- The recognition of core (or indirect) costs - examples of which include IT, marketing, fundraising, human resources, strategy development, learning and development, finance and accounting support, and bank fees and compliance costs.

How do we convince funders of the need to sustainably support artists and arts organisations?

Some talking points from Regional Arts WA:

1. We need to better demonstrate the impact of the regional arts sector. The Catch 22 here is that the measurement and demonstration of this impact requires an investment commitment beyond piecemeal annual or project support.
2. Productivity argument is key – creative labour requires more hours than other sectors.
3. Arts are seen by funders as a cheap cherry on the cake – need to better communicate the ‘arts are essential and everywhere’ arguments.
4. Art sector itself needs to change mindset – grossly underpaid, working unrealistic hours – but we still keep doing it? Do we actually believe we’re essential?
5. Can we quantify the resources spent continually chasing money rather than just delivering or producing?
6. What would an arts and culture 24 hour strike look like?
7. Need to research and explore new models of funding eg Irish Living Wage for 2,000 artists.
8. Is connectivity the key?
9. Need to consider short, medium and long term action plans.
10. Economic Impact statement – innovation, tourism, health – how do we pitch what funders get out of this?

The most recent Insight Report from A New Approach into Arts & Cultural Spending suggests we have some way to go before we can say our government investment truly values the arts:

- *Cultural spending has not kept up with population growth, with a 6.9% decrease in per capita expenditure on arts and culture in the period between 2007–08 and 2019–20. Cultural expenditure from the three levels of government combined was \$282 per person in the 2019–20 period; in the 2007–08 period, it was \$303 per person (adjusted for inflation).*
- *At the time of this report, Australia was ranked number 23 out of the 34 OECD countries – a slight increase in ranking from 26th in 2015. In 2019, the OECD average for expenditure on culture, recreation and religion was 1.23% of total GDP, while the Australian figure was only 0.95% of GDP.*

To ensure our arts investment keeps up with population growth and raise our OECD rankings to at least the top ten, State and Federal governments should embrace a program of sustainable support.