

## **National Cultural Policy**

### **Submission of Arts Mid North Coast**

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### **Who Are We?**

Arts Mid North Coast is the peak regional arts and cultural development organisation for the Mid North Coast region of New South Wales. It is part of the RADO Network of 15 Regional Arts Organisations (RADOs) in NSW, each providing strategic direction for sustainable arts and cultural development in their region. This Network is unique to NSW and services over 100 local government areas and more than 1.7 million people. The shared values of the Network are:

- Recognition and support of First Nations arts and culture practice
- The professionalism of arts and cultural practice
- The right of people living in regional NSW to participate in and contribute to arts and culture
- Genuine connection to place as expressed through the works of artists and creative communities
- The role of the regions in providing pathways and mechanisms for sustained creative practice and experiences
- The strength of collaborative partnerships within and across sectors to deliver arts and cultural development

The Mid North Coast region comprises the six local government areas of Mid Coast, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Nambucca Valley, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour and embraces the area associated with the Worimi, Bairiki, Dunghutti and Gumbaynggirr Nations. With 325,000 residents the Mid North Coast is the most populated region in the RADO Network with a population greater than two capital cities. (Hobart and Darwin) It is also an area of high population growth so will continue to expand at a rate well above the average for regional New South Wales. By 2036 the projected population of the region will be 384,000. Another feature is that we have the oldest demographic structure of any region in Australia. Finally we note that covering 22,000 square kilometres the Mid North Coast is larger than countries such as Slovenia and Israel.

## The Importance of the Arts for the FUTURE

While we can look at the problems created by COVID it is also important to note that some positives did occur that should also inform the future. These include:

- Agreement that lockdowns and changes in how people went about their daily lives highlighted how important the arts are as people turned to books, music, film, art, dance, video and filmmaking, and other activities for their wellbeing and that of their families. They also looked at new ways of consuming and interacting with the arts.
- Artists showed their agility and flexibility to adapt to new ways of presenting their arts and interacting with their audiences. both established and new
- New business models were developed as digital delivery was embraced and what was presented to a local audience became available for a national or even international audience.

We need to build on those strengths and new opportunities into the future. However it is also the time to address structural and cultural issues that have occurred over a number of years.

We recognise the breadth and scope of the submissions the Committee will need to consider but note our submissions have been informed by our regional location and perspective, albeit that some recommendations are national in focus. We would ask the Committee to consider the following:

1. Recognise and reinforce the importance of the arts to the cultural, social, health and economic wellbeing of Australians by referencing the Arts in all appropriate legislation administered by the Federal Government.
2. Invest in the production of Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to best capture and qualify the economic impact of the creative and cultural industries and where possible link to international approaches to facilitate global benchmarking. This should include additional questions to the Census to gather better data on the creative sector.
3. Adjust policy and talk of the value of STEM to STEAM, placing creative thinking at the centre of policies and solutions for the future.
4. Ensure this is reflected in the funding of tertiary education, training and accessibility by students of all relevant courses rather than a narrow focus of what is a future job or vocation. Critical thinking and analysis is crucial for the future growth of the economy at all levels from Federal to Smart Cities and Regions.
5. Consider greater support for the arts in all schools such as the very successful Creatives in Schools program in New Zealand
6. Adjust income support settings so that artists and independent creative practitioners can access support and stimulus measures.
7. Acknowledge the significant role that local government plays in supporting creative and cultural industries, venues and organisations and work to ensure greater cooperation between all levels of government.
8. Expand the Meeting of Cultural Ministers to include local government representation and viewpoints.

9. Incentivise local government to work in partnership with State and Federal Government to develop creative and cultural plans, projects and activities.
10. Commission new performing arts work which is relevant to regional audiences and premier such work in regional venues and locations
11. Adjust thinking on touring policies and grants to encourage regional productions to be featured in major metropolitan centres rather than a presumption that touring is about taking city work by city arts organisations to the country. Also encourage region to region touring.
12. Review funding opportunities so they not only provide for or focus on the creation of work but the enhanced capacity building and business development of regional and community arts organisations
13. Invest and encourage the establishment and support of artist led creative hubs and innovation centres in both community and education settings and in particular Federal and State Government spaces surplus to requirements.
14. Support the establishment of funded traineeships and pathway programs in the creative industries in regional areas.
15. Establish targeted capital funding support to establish and equip media and film production hubs in regional areas.
16. Expand the recent recognition of Wellbeing outcomes from arts to stronger support of the connection between Arts and Health.
17. Recognise the importance of the arts to the AGEING of the Australian population and that this is a growing sector of the population that needs to be specifically provided for.
18. In recognition of the importance of cultural tourism ensure that grants and funding for new ideas or tourism projects may also come from arts organisations that should not be excluded by grant eligibility being only from local government or tourism organisations.
19. Encourage further steps to enhance digital connectivity in regional areas at affordable prices.

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