



Red Hot Arts Central Australia
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National Cultural Policy Submission

We write this submission on behalf of Red Hot Arts Central Australia Incorporated (RHACA), a not-for-profit arts organisation based in Mparntwe/ Alice Springs.

RHACA was established in 2001 and provides accessible spaces, workshops, support and events to facilitate, promote and build the capacity of arts and local artists. Our focus is connecting arts and community. One of the main ways in which we do this is by supporting and incubating new works through our annual multi-arts festival, Desert Festival (desfest.com) and other signature events including Alice Springs Street Arts Festival and Bush Foods Festival.

Across each of the pillars there exist multiple opportunities for Red Hot Arts Central Australia, with exciting potential to deliver nationally significant outcomes. The main challenge across all pillars is the lack of core operational funding available for our organisation to employ permanent staff and have ongoing, reliable program funding. We survive on project-by-project funding, like many other small to medium organisations.

If there is one message, we can embed into the National Cultural policy it would be:

The sector needs reliable, long-term core operational funding for small-to-medium arts organisations (especially in regional areas) so they can generate local employment and get on with the business of delivering arts and cultural programs which enhance social cohesion, community and individual wellbeing, tourism, and the economy.

We respond below to the 5 pillars:

First Nations

First Nations artists, communities and organisations are core stakeholders in all RHACA activities. Over the past 2 decades RHACA has incubated and created iconic First Nations events that have then gone on to have their own life, some of these include Bush Bands Bash, Bush Foods Festival and Desert Song Festival.

Some of the challenges we face include resourcing, both time and financial, in order to properly consult, engage and remunerate First Nations artists and Traditional Custodians. The western framework under which project timelines and funding bodies run does not often allow for cultural timings. An opportunity in this area would be more funding provided for First Nations identified positions to be embedded in organisations (like RHACA) to have a full time, permanent, dedicated

First Nations identified role. This would assist in proper consultation and forward planning for events and engagements. It would provide benefit and social cohesion for all artists in supporting the enhanced and appropriate delivery of programs involving First Nations people in and around Mparntwe.

A Place for Every Story

Mparntwe is a diverse community. We are an iconic remote town with a small but dynamic population including large groups from the Pacific Islands, Northern India, Sudan, United States, the Philippines, and many other nations.

RHACA sees opportunities to work with diverse communities including various multicultural communities, people with Disability and First Nations communities. To this end, we see our main annual showcase event, the Desert Festival, as a platform for many of these groups to express their stories. This year's program includes cultural events with the Pacific Island community, a panel regarding disability-led arts practice and the Desert Diva's showcase of young First Nations' female artists.

A challenge for RHACA is not having the staff resources to do the consultation and engagement work required to build the relationships and upskill these communities that may not have the access to arts education, or the experience to produce their own works.

The Centrality of the Artist

Artists and their connection to community is centred in all that we do. RHACA supports hundreds of local artists each year. RHACA aims to build the local arts and event sector. This aim would benefit from having policy at national and Territory level that favours employing local people, and programs that upskill locals, such as First Nations artists, producers, and production staff.

The challenge of distance is real for us, exasperated with increasing transport costs and limited acknowledgement of the professionalism and strength of the local arts industry. This is evidenced by major events preferencing of interstate artists, arts fabricators and arts workers, who are engaged as FIFO arts providers. These practices take resources away from our region and leave little in terms of skills acquisition and capacity building in our community.

There is an opportunity for local skill-building and arts worker retention through this new national policy. Also, with adequate resourcing, an opportunity exists for RHACA to develop a locally contextual online directory of artists, arts organisations, and arts workers. This might include local artists and resources but also interstate providers that have proven relationships and track record of delivery in our unique context.

Strong Institutions

There are a number of strong arts organisations in the Central Desert region. A challenge for these institutions is not enough core funding to do their work. Too much time is spent chasing project funding and having to employ people on short contracts rather than ongoing permanent positions. An opportunity exists, through this national policy development to ensure that institutions are appropriately supported, with resources and respect.

Reaching the Audience

RHACA has a core local audience/ community that engages with our work. Opportunities exist to bring in more audiences. However, the barriers for people to visit this remote region are real. Subsidised travel and competitive airfares would assist in more Australians being able to afford to see Central Australia and experience the unique and vast arts and cultural offerings that we have here.

A challenge in reaching audiences is (once again) resourcing. As a small arts organisation we receive very small amounts of funding for marketing. As opposed to say local sporting events that receive thousands of dollars to promote their events.

An opportunity exists to value the arts in the same way that sporting, and car events are valued, with increased support to market arts events to interstate audiences, because government understands the value of doing so.

Other things we would like to see in the National Cultural Policy

Overall, the national cultural policy should embed into the Australian psyche the intrinsic value of the arts. We already know that arts are good for wellbeing, on both an individual and collective levels, we know that it directly improves mental health outcomes, physical fitness, and social cohesion. We know that it is good for the economy and for our national identity.

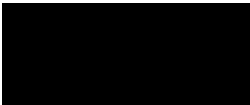
What we need now is a brave national policy that brings appropriate resourcing so that our sector can truly thrive.

Attached to this submission is an overview of our Strategic Plan for 2022-2025.


Please attribute these words (if used as part of the National Cultural Policy Report) to Red Hot Arts Central Australia Inc.

We give permission for these words to be published online and we welcome further conversation on these or any other issues regarding the NT arts sector.

Yours Faithfully,



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