

National Cultural Policy Submission

Regional Arts NSW

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

RANSW recognises the importance of our First Nations arts sector and supports its prominent place as the first of the five pillars. There a number of considerations from a NSW perspective that we would like to see considered:

- NSW has the largest First Nations population in the country. As the place of first white settlement NSW First Nations community dealt with many of the challenges of settlement and colonisation. From this has grown a contemporary art scene with stories that respond to place, history and challenges. NSW First Nations art practice has been over-shadowed in the national picture, so we welcome the opportunity to put this practice more firmly on the national stage alongside other parts of Australia that have become more established on the national and international stage.

A Place for Every Story

- Regional places have always had an important part within the Australian arts. However there has been a tendency in recent decades to relegate the place of regional arts practice to that of community development practice. We need to support the emergence of a new, contemporary practice that is occurring the regions which enables:
 - Regional stories to be told at a professional level.
 - Touring networks to be developed which encourage a sharing of these stories. While the prevalent touring model of bringing major metropolitan work to regional places needs to continue to ensure that regional people have access to high-quality arts experiences, the sector needs to also support opportunities for regionally-developed work to be able to be shared beyond its geographic place of origin.
 - IN addition to touring of regionally developed work, we need to find ways of supporting major publications to find ways of reviewing regionally-developed work so that it does not remain invisible to the rest of the country.
 - Community arts development practice needs to retain its place as an important aspect of regional life and for its ability to promote cohesive, liveable places. To help this part of the arts sector to continue to thrive, a whole of government approach to arts sector support is welcomed. We would like to see more cases in which different parts of government come together to produce frameworks for operating, co-funding opportunities and sharing of outcomes.

The Centrality of the Artist

- Placing artists at the centre of the arts is a positive approach. Considerations include:
 - Finding ways to address the precarious nature of working as an artist. International models that are worth looking at include income for artists in lieu of the dole, addressing the sporadic nature of arts income through topping up the fallow times, assisting artists with other support such as transport, materials or accommodation and premises subsidy.
 - Ensuring that the job of an artist is recognised as a professional one

- Giving greater clarity on artist entitlements. For example, the rights of artists to superannuation remains a murky area in which employers find it hard to decipher what the expectations are and how to ensure they are compliant with regulations
- Artist – especially in the regions – usually balance their professional arts practice with other income. This does not get adequately captured in the employment data. It is difficult to make a case for the support of these artists when they are statistically invisible. Covid demonstrated this weakness so we need to find a way of making sure that artists are not lost in future interventions to support workers.
- Diversity in all forms needs to continue to be recognised, particularly as this is an areas in which versions of diversity are constantly shifting. Regional artists do not fit the profile of metropolitan ones (often older, more women, more disability, less cultural diversity), so we need to make room for all types of profiles through changing narratives, making sure that all types of artists are able to have their work seen and that all types of audiences are able to see themselves in Australian art works.
- We need to ensure that regional artists do not become disadvantaged through lack of access to opportunities, or by feeling isolated. This does mean that targeted regional resources are required to make sure that access opportunities are equitable. This means continuing the work of the regional arts organisations in each state and more resources into the Regional Arts Fund.

Strong Institutions

- The complex ecology of the arts needs to be considered. The major arts institutions are important, but so are the smaller ones in which people learn their craft and gain experience.
- Peak bodies and service organisations need greater recognition in supporting the sector. In funding terms, they should not be competing in the same funding pools as producing organisations but need to be acknowledged in their own right.
- We need to keep finding more innovative ways to ensure that people living in regional Australia have access to strong institutions
- Education and training in the arts has often fallen between the gaps between the education sector and the arts sector. This was further marginalised by the increasing of fees in arts tertiary education, which failed to acknowledge the expertise in the education of the arts sector, the employability of graduates and people trained, the significant income and contribution to GDP generated by the arts and the creative industries and the way in which the arts plays such an important role in the lives of Australians. Government needs to address this in tangible terms such as addressing education costs as well in the overall narrative about the sector.

Reaching the Audience

- Regional places will continue to provide challenges for the arts. Locally produced arts has a limited audience, and the costs of touring work are high – and becoming higher. Audiences are behaving differently since Covid. But regional places and communities are better for having access to the arts. Finding ways of keeping opportunities open for regional audiences will require ongoing development and innovation.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

It is about respect. And being on country. And the experience of being Australian.

A Place for Every Story

The arts is almost always responding to place. As an organisation advocating for regional practice, Regional Arts NSW champions the recognition of non-metropolitan stories.

The Centrality of the Artist

We want to see artists respected as workers and celebrated through better systems of support.

Strong Institutions

I want to see the arts and creative industries sectors understood and nurtured as an important part of Australian life across all of Australia, in the cities and the regions, the rural and remote. A whole sector approach that understands that both the large and small institutions have a role, that some will require financial support while others will contribute significantly to Australian GSP, that the value of this practice is also in the way the arts contribute to the social fabric of Australia, to its environment and sense of place, but that most importantly, that arts and culture have their own inherent value that is worth celebrating and worth supporting.

Reaching the Audience

The arts improves lives. Our regional places are better when the people there have the opportunity to be challenged, to extend their realm of experience, to see themselves in artwork, to think differently through the innovation in artwork. Regional Arts NSW sees many opportunities for a National Cultural Policy to articulate this value which in turn can influence the mechanisms that will keep our regional audiences having access to the arts.