



Championing a National Focus on Regional Arts to Enliven Regional Communities.



1

Regional Arts Australia – Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020

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Executive Summary

Regional and remote Australia is a rich fusion of many places, full of diverse and engaging cultures and possessing unique physical, social and creative environments. Regional Arts Australia has served regional Australia for almost 70 years and, like our constituency, we are resilient, adaptive, creative and authentic.

Regional artists are renowned for their artistic and creative excellence. One in three people in Australia live in regional Australia and their arts and cultural contributions have a national impact.

Regional and remote Australia is no longer characterised by debilitating distance and disconnection from mainstream Australia. There is a new debate to re-define what regional Australia means to the nation. New NBN satellites will revolutionise communications within the next two years. Policy development for northern Australia will underpin expansion of new infrastructure designed to increase productivity and population. Regional and remote places now use art and culture to build strong communities, generate jobs, reimagine places and develop innovative infrastructure.

Over 2016-2020 RAA will work with our members to provide the national leadership required to mobilise, elevate and amplify the regional arts sector, with the aspiration to grow our regional communities as vibrant liveable places where the arts and creative industries can flourish.

We will do this through unique collaborative and committed relationships with our state and territory partners, through our signature events Artlands and the National Visual Arts Showcase, and by continuing our research and advocacy work to ensure the stories and statistics from the regional arts sector are strong, clear and heard.

Our delivery of strategic investment on behalf of the Australian Government provides critical resources that will help power the arts. We anticipate a strong continuing partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts, as well as a new structure for delivery of the Regional Arts Fund, will increase the national impact and visibility of regional arts over the next four years.

Through arts and culture, we want to broaden our national vision of the brilliance that regional, remote and very remote Australia contributes to the nation. We want to ensure that all regional and remote Australians, including Indigenous Australians, have valuable and equitable opportunities to engage with the arts. We will pursue these aims with a strong and revitalised engine that provides the power of good governance and strong financial management.

We will know we are succeeding every time we see our Australian cultural identity enriched through creative expression by, and for, the artists, arts organisations and audiences of regional, remote and very remote Australia.

About Us

Our purpose

To lead a national focus for regional arts in regional, remote and very remote Australia through advocacy and investment.

Our vision

Arts and culture enrich the lives of regional Australians, and build innovative and creative communities across regional Australia.

Our mission

We provide national reach and national impact to resource and promote regional arts and culture in collaboration with our members, the state-based Regional Arts Organisations

Our values

- We conduct our business with rigour and integrity.
- We are committed to a vibrant regional arts and culture sector.
- We appreciate the richness of a diverse and pluralist society.
- Collaborative partnerships are fundamental in our operations.

At a glance

Regional Arts Australia transforms the cultural life of our nation as champions of the issues, concerns, opportunities and common interests of all those engaged in the arts in regional, rural and remote Australia. We are known for our vital advocacy and leadership for the regional arts sector, our signature events Artlands and the National Visual Arts showcase, and for the breadth and depth of our national reach in partnership with our members. We are the longest continually-existing arts organisation of its kind in Australia. This means we are resilient and adaptive to the world around us.

Our members are regional arts organisations (RAOs) Artslink Queensland, Country Arts SA, Country Arts WA, Regional Arts NSW, Regional Arts Victoria and Tasmanian Regional Arts. We also work closely with Arts NT to deliver the RAF in the Northern Territory.

Our Goals

Goal One: Regional Arts Leadership

To promote and advocate for the arts as key to a vibrant regional society and culture.

RAA will focus on building and communicating knowledge and understanding about the value of the arts to regional communities. We want to inform the work of government by broadening the shared vision of the place regional, remote and very remote Australia occupies in the nation.

Our national regional coverage brings important perspectives to our strategic relationship with The Australia Council. We particularly want to develop stronger linkages and cooperative approaches with Local Government as one of the largest single drivers and resource providers for arts and culture in regional Australia.

Ultimately, we understand that the creativity of artists and the experience of audiences are the fundamentals which make the arts a key driver to enliven communities. We want to grow that audience by encouraging the highest quality arts experiences, ensuring regional artists have visibility and voice in our national sector and enabling communities to engage in contemporary and accessible dialogue.

Goal Two: Investing in the Future

To have a more viable and sustainable regional arts sector into the future.

We want to see regional artists powering Australian culture with unique perceptions and arts practice that command national attention. We will recognise and support artistic excellence and exceptional practice. We appreciate that excellence is present in a broad range of individual and collective practices.

It is important that we create opportunities for artists and cultural leaders to increase their skills and grow their standing in the sector. We need to reinforce this work with credible research that will help us articulate the value and the impact of the arts.

We want to see regional artists promoted and celebrated with expanded opportunities for delivery of regional arts experiences to metropolitan audiences and arts markets. This includes

We want to increase the capacity of artists and communities to participate in a national dialogue by exploiting new opportunities in digital communication.

Goal Three: Access & Participation

To have equitable access for all regional Australians to arts experiences.

One of the intrinsic values of the arts is its ability to capture our humanity. All of humanity possesses an innate need to be creative and to be fed with creativity. This need transcends race, creed and wealth. We recognise that Indigenous artists are primary contributors to rich regional cultures. Diversity of culture, gender, ability, experience, geography and generation all contribute richness as we encourage a pluralist society.

We also know that access to arts and cultural experiences build aspiration, resilience and flexibility amongst our young people, and we will strive to ensure young people in the regions have access to these formative opportunities.

We will seek out new opportunity for the exchange of arts products. This means raising awareness and opportunity for performing arts touring to and from regional Australia to the rest of the world. It also means stimulating the engagement of major performing arts companies in regional Australia.

We will ensure our research, advocacy and delivery programs tell the story of the importance, relevance and impact of arts and culture in our regional communities.

Goal Four: A strong engine

To be a strong and resilient organisation that provides resources for the arts to prosper.

We will ensure that RAA remains a well-managed, sustainable organisation with good governance, financial security, and a clear vision for the future.

Our delivery of a range of contestable and strategic government funding is a critical element in our strategy. It powers resources for artists and community culture projects. Our relations with the Australia Council for the Arts and the Ministry for the Arts ensure there is a coordinated approach to funding rounds and reporting mechanisms. There is a wealth of data available in our reporting and management system that we can mobilise in better ways to share a clearer picture of the spread, nature and impact of this investment.

One of our greatest strengths is our unique and expansive member networks of regional arts organisations across the nation. They have enormous reach and capacity, with deep knowledge of the networks, organisations and artists within their jurisdiction. Their experience and expertise enrich RAA in everything we do. We will continue to value and nurture our collaborative professional relationship with the management and staff in each of these organisations.

Measuring our performance

Goal One: Leadership						
<i>To promote and advocate for the arts as key to a vibrant regional society and culture</i>						
Strategies:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the case for the arts to governments and strategic partners. • Build a larger and more informed regional arts audience • Build the capacity of our Signature events and produce national forums that stimulate the sector 						
Key Performance Indicators	Current	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of strategic meetings to advise government/partners /sector leaders	22	25	25	25	25	25
RAF audience	827,505	+10%	+30%	+30%	+30%	+30%
Signature events	1	1	1	1	1	1
National forums	2	3	4	4	4	4

Goal Two: Invest in the future						
<i>To have a viable and sustainable regional arts sector into the future.</i>						
Strategies:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue strategic research, consultations and collateral publications in collaboration with the community. • Strive to deliver an annual program of 5 Regional Arts Development Fellowships • Increase digital engagement and digital literacy 						
Key Performance Indicators	Current	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Research, Consultation & Publication	2	2	1	2	1	2
RAD Fellowships	5	0	5	5	5	5
Digital coverage	320,000	+25%	+25%	+30%	+30%	+30%
Web visitors	32,189	+20%	+10%	+20%	+20%	+30%

Goal Three: Access and Participation						
<i>To have equitable access for all regional Australians to arts experiences.</i>						
Strategies:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain equitable access to all our programs. • Ensure access for regional artists in the performing arts touring marketplace. • <i>Enliven Regional Communities</i> program. 						
Key Performance Indicators	Current	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
RAF access KPIs	169	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
NTS Users	22,846	+20%	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase
<i>Enliven</i> program: Philanthropic support & in-kind support	0	\$100k	\$200k	\$250k	Maintain	Maintain
<i>Enliven</i> program: Key partnerships	0	5	8	10	Maintain	Maintain

Goal Four: A Strong Engine						
<i>To be a strong and resilient organisation that provides resources for the arts to prosper.</i>						
Strategies:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the RAF as a catalyst for great art making. • Maintain high quality governance, operations and program management. • Develop and deliver on the RAA Reconciliation Action Plan. 						
Key Performance Indicators	Current	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Reconciliation Action Plan activities	0	10	5	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
RAF projects funded	388	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Board / network meetings	32	35	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Operational meetings with Ministry	31	40	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Governance / program review	1	2	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain

Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy

We are committed to providing services that have genuine impact and relevance for artists and communities. Not only does this mean robust delivery, but it also means assessing the national reach and national impact of our programs. We strive for relevance, integrity, quality, distinctiveness and continual learning.

Through our activities we support:

- Great art – that is subjected to the rigour of highly competitive peer assessed RAF funding rounds and the critical expectation of a national audience.
- Great artists – that receive opportunities through Artlands, webinars, social media, the National Visual Arts Showcase and RAD Fellowships to advance their professional development and exposure.
- Engaged audiences – by regular purposeful consultation with regional arts audiences, disseminating information and striving to increase a cultural dialogue across regional, remote and very remote Australia.
- Engaged communities – by connecting with communities (including communities of practice) to improve performing arts touring, increase engagement in our Signature events and national forums and promote community arts projects.
- Vibrant society and culture – that portrays and promotes its distinctive regional Australian identity with pride and passion.

We use a wide range of assessment tools to determine the relevance and effectiveness of our organisation and our programs.

RAF guidelines ensure that independent peer assessment is rigorous. We also assess the program twice each year to examine delivery of the funds on the basis of location, art form and social/demographic groupings, including youth, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders, people with disability, the elderly, as well as cultural and linguistic diversity.

Our national consultations with regional artists and communities have an extensive reach. The last consultation in 2013 gathered representation from some 458,500 people to crystallise policy considerations across the sector. We will strive for similar engagement in 2017.

Artlands is assessed closely with audience surveys central to maintaining attendance and event viability through audience engagement.

We continually assess our organisational effectiveness. In 2015 we embraced changes resulting from a strategic review of our governance to ensure we remain responsive, agile, connected and strategic. Our regular team and Board meetings are carefully documented. The Boards conducts an annual review of its performance and the performance of its operations.

Strategic Context Analysis

This analysis outlines the key issues facing us, the culture of our organisation and the manner in which we will engage with a contemporary world.

History

Regional Arts Australia is the longest continually-existing arts organisation of its kind in Australia.² RAA transforms the cultural life of our nation as champions of the issues, concerns, opportunities and common interests of all those engaged in the arts in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Our members are regional arts organisations (RAOs) Artslink Queensland, Country Arts SA, Country Arts WA, Regional Arts NSW, Regional Arts Victoria and Tasmanian Regional Arts. We also work closely with Arts NT to deliver the RAF in the Northern Territory.

Milestones and key activities

As a national advocate, RAA has achieved significant results over the last decade in winning better recognition and support for the enormous contribution that regional arts make to the cultural, economic and social wellbeing of the nation.

- Since 2001, RAA and its member organisations have managed the national delivery of the RAF program on behalf of the Australian Government. The fund is currently valued at \$12.54m over four years. In the 2014 – 2015 financial year:
 - Investment in RAF projects produced additional income in excess of \$3,612,000.
 - Over 1,943 Artists and Artworkers received employment.
 - Of the 378 funded projects, 50% of all recipients were first time applicants to the fund.
 - 58,620 people participated in supported activities.
 - Funded activities resulted in audience members of 827,505.
- National consultations in 2005, 2009 and 2013 have been important initiatives designed to engage with regional artists, audiences and communities and ensure we are well informed about their aspirations and concerns. The 2013 consultation engaged 2,488 participants from over 100 communities, speaking on behalf of 458,500 people. The

² The Arts Council of Australia, now trading as Regional Arts Australia, came into being in 1947 and grew out of the Council for the Encouragement of Music (CEMA), founded in 1943 with the original aim of taking the arts to the people of regional Australia.

findings have been published as: 2006 *National Directions: Regional Art*; 2009 *Creating a Better Life for Regional Australians* and 2014 *Sharpening the Arts in Regional Australia*.

- Artlands³ is our biennial signature event, offering a unique blend of conference and festival which is the largest event of its type in regional Australia. It has been held in every state and the NT, most recently in Kalgoorlie WA (2014), Goolwa SA (2012), Launceston TAS (2010), Alice Springs NT (2008) and Mackay QLD (2006). Artlands brings large numbers of people together for professional development, network building and celebration. It builds significant strategic partnerships with local government and local business. Unique festival events, community and Indigenous engagement, the gathering of a national network and a variety of international perspectives and collaborations all contribute to an event of extraordinary reach and impact. Each Artlands leaves a tailored legacy for future arts and cultural development in the host community.
- National Visual Arts Showcase: Piloted in 2014, and consolidated with the 2015 exhibition *Right Here Now: A Powerful Regional Voice in Our Democracy*, the National Visual Arts Showcase is planned as a biennial exhibition to compliment Artlands. The showcase has a unique delivery platform in which a high profile artist representing each state and the NT exhibit new works and mentor an emerging artist in creating collateral exhibition pieces. In this way the National Visual Arts Showcase builds professional skills and relationships that enhance artists' careers in a national setting.
- National networks and exchanges: RAA maintains national networks that strengthen and support the work of arts professional in regional Australia. These include the newly established CEO committee comprising the leaders of RAOs, the Regional Arts Promoters Network, RAF Managers network and RADO network. RAA is also a foundation member of the Performing Arts Touring Alliance.
- National publications: Our suite of national publications showcase some of the best regional arts projects and programs from right around the country to discuss and promote best practice processes and celebrate excellence. These include 2014 *Belonging, Great Art Stories from Regional Australia*; 2011 *Seeded*; 2009 *Creating a Better Life for Regional Australians*; 2008 *Big Story Country*; 2004 *Heartwork: Great Arts Stories from Regional Australia*. These publications have been crucial resources for promoting regional arts with all levels of government, with business, philanthropic partners, NFPs and the arts and culture sector. In 2014-2015 we formed a research partnership with Deakin University to research the impact of arts in regional Australia. The research findings were published as a suite of 5 themed papers titled 'Stats and Stories' which identify key impacts, trends and case studies.

³ The use of Artlands as a consistent brand for these events was adopted in 2014, and was launched for the 2016 event.

- National touring: For many years we have played a strategic role supporting performing arts touring. This involved *Long Paddock* performing arts markets for regional and remote touring, the development of *Cyberpaddock* as an online mechanism and coordination of the Blue Heeler Network. We continue this strategic role and have been instrumental in recent development of this sector through the Performing Arts Touring Alliance and the development of a Regional and Remote Touring Advisory Group.
- National forums: In order to promote the value and outcomes of government investment in regional arts, RAA has hosted several national forums at Parliament House in recent years: 2012 National Roundtable to build partnerships between arts and health; 2011 cultural sector leaders' forum on the NBN and how this might help build stronger regional communities. In 2015 we established a national webinar program in conjunction with Deakin University, which builds on our research partnership involving '*Stats and Stories: The impact of the Arts in Regional Australia*'
- Regional Arts Development (RAD) Fellowships: In 2014/15 we received resources from the Ministry for the Arts to manage a national program involving five Fellowships to support professional development for artists and artworkers across regional Australia. The program has been a great success and we anticipate seeking further resources to support the Fellowships into the future.

Key issues

We value highly our strategic partnerships with both the Australia Council and the Ministry for the Arts. In addition to Australia Council Key Organisation funding, RAA has secured project funding for a range of national projects, most recently for the Stats & Stories research project and development work on the National Digital Arts Project. This partnership allows us to contribute an overview of regional data and regional concerns. Artlands has regularly provided a rich avenue for sharing our perspective.

We are in partnership with the Ministry for the Arts for delivery of the Regional Arts Fund (RAF). We are currently negotiating a new funding agreement with the Commonwealth for the delivery of the RAF to apply from July 2016 until June 2020. We anticipate this will put in place an arrangement in which RAF Funds are directed to RAA and then devolved to the states. This is an important development that will create new efficiencies in delivering the RAF whilst strengthening the national reach and national impact of our organisation. The flow of funds is projected in our forward estimates. We expect there to be no decrease in the amount of grant funds distributed to regional arts projects. There will need to be an increase in resources to allow RAA to undertake increased administrative and financial responsibilities.

The newly established *Catalyst - Australian Arts and Culture Fund* provides opportunity for us to pursue new national projects. We will focus our attention on two important projects

designed to increase the capacity of artists and artworkers and to enliven regional communities through a richer engagement with performing arts. This activity will activate increased energy in seeking additional philanthropic and sponsorship resources.

Since the election of the Gillard Government in 2010 there has been increased focus by the federal government on regional Australia. Recent Ministers and Shadow Ministers for the Arts have demonstrated a genuine interest in regional arts. The White Paper on Developing Northern Australia is an important policy development that will underpin expansion of new infrastructure designed to increase productivity and population. We are keen to highlight the role arts and culture can play in promoting liveable communities and creative industries in regional, remote and very remote Australia.

Similarly, the National Broadband (NBN) network has the potential to revolutionise communications for regional Australians. New satellite technology will begin coming online in mid-2016. We are keen to work with our stakeholders to increase the capacity to engage in national dialogue and inclusion in a national arts audience. Currently there are many black spots, limited engagement with social media and low digital literacy. It is important that we continue to be active in supporting regional, remote and very remote artists, arts workers and organisations in this area.

Other External Factors

RAA works in close co-operation with a several national peak bodies and national organisations. We benchmark our governance and management practices and processes against all of these peers, and we are also strongly guided and supported by our member organisations, all of whom are the peak regional arts organisations in their state or territory. As a federated national body, RAA's primary stakeholders are its members, and more broadly, their members. We work in close collaboration with our funding bodies and our programs are developed to meet mutual goals.

There have been many recent changes to the way performing arts touring operates in Australia. We have responded with increased sector collaboration to reimagine the tools that service the performing arts touring sector. We are an enthusiastic supporter of the Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA). PATA is Australia's national peak alliance representing producing companies, presenters, venue managers and tour coordinators. We are committed in pursuing the outcomes identified in the National Performing Arts Touring Action Plan. In 2015 we invested in development the National Touring Selector (NTS) to replace Cyberpaddock. The NTS is a powerful online tool that uses a database of over 1800 Users from the Australian and NZ performing arts industry, including approximately 700 Producing companies and 300 Presenting organisations. The system is open access for artist/producers to upload their artistic production information and enter it into one of the many different markets hosted by the NTS. The system can facilitate the information gathering and distribution for any

performing arts marketplace. The Board has determined that this needs to be a self-sustaining mechanism. It is likely that the NTS has an application in both the USA and Canada touring markets. We will consolidate NTS intellectual property rights so we can exploit new business opportunities. We have also established a Regional and Remote Touring Advisory Group to advise the Board and to promote the interests of regional artists and audiences in the touring marketplace.

Internal situation

RAA is a small organisation (1.6 FTE Staff). We rely on the strength of our reputation, the quality of our relevance and the depth of our partnerships with RAOs to leverage national reach and national impact. We have a solid reputation and track record for balanced advocacy and have built and maintained strong relationships based on trust and respect with politicians, national bureaucracies, funding bodies and peer organisations.

We maintain a rigorous approach to governance based on a culture of excellence that might be expected of a national organisation. Our Board is representative of the regional arts leadership in Australia. In 2014 we conducted a governance review resulting in significant changes to our Constitution to ensure that the organisation retains the capacity to be agile and responsive in a contemporary world. This quite comprehensive process conducted over more than a year has been implemented with the unanimous support of our members. We now have a contemporary Constitution and associated governance structure in place to best serve the regional arts sector as a transparent and effective organisation.

RAA is fortunate to have substantial financial reserves which are invested to produce an annual income. They are managed by Evans and Partners, an Australian investment house that provides a broad range of investment, advisory and execution services to a diversified client base of private and institutional investors. Financially, RAA is well-managed. Recently we appointed Morri Young as an independent Director. Morri is a principal of Matrix on Board and Accounting for Good and brings extensive experience in not-for-profit governance and financial management. RAA is audited annually at the end of the financial year. Financial challenges include costs associated with operating a national network with many members required to travel for up to 3 days to attend face-to-face meetings. Our turnover for 2014-2015 was \$918,000, resulting in a shortfall against budget of \$42,000, however this was a planned 'paper loss' associated with write-down of over-valued assets rather than an actual cash shortfall.⁴ At June 2015 total equity was \$749,321. The Board has assessed RAA's financial risk as low but requiring tight management at all times.

⁴ In 2015 significant structural work was done to divest a number of underperforming assets. While this process decreased our balance sheet by some \$43,000 it means those costs no longer need to be amortised in future budgets.

In October 2014 we made the permanent appointment of John Oster as Executive Director to replace Lindy Allen who had been acting in the role since August 2013. With that appointment our headquarters have been relocated to Alice Springs. We believe this makes an important statement; that RAA is based in the regions – for the benefit of regions.

Though small in number, RAA staff are supported in many areas by an extensively qualified, collegiate and collaborative Board. They are also supported by a rich network of arts professionals in the RAOs who constantly demonstrate their commitment to participating collaboratively in national projects and agendas.

Markets

Most broadly, RAA's market is the Australian community, with a particular focus on people living in regional and remote Australia. We want to engage primarily with regional and remote Australia, but we also want to engage with the whole Australian community to promote the national profile of the regions. Specific markets include artists and arts workers living and producing in regional and remote Australia. We also target our messages to politicians, particularly the Australian Government and state governments. Local Government has been a constant partner to our members at a state level and in the coming triennium we aim to increase engagement at a national level, through the Australian Local Government Association. RAA's funding bodies such as the Australia Council and MFTA as well as other federal government agencies particularly those focused on social inclusion, regional development, young people and health are important audiences and collaborators. Other markets are the network of regional arts agencies and the broader creative community including national and state-based arts organisations, touring and presenting companies and other national cultural organisations that affect the lives of regional and remote artists. Corporate leaders, philanthropic bodies and other national organisations with an interest in regional Australia are also target markets.

RAA promotes the importance of the arts as a key driver in creating vibrant and sustainable communities in regional, rural and remote communities. RAA is uniquely placed to draw on its members' networks and their broader networks to make direct contact with people involved in developing, supporting and practising the arts in regional and remote Australia. RAA brings its track record of achievements, its recognised expertise and extensive national networks to its markets.

Competitors and Collaborators

RAA is unique in its position and role as national representative for RAOs in Australia and has no direct competitors. This means that we have willing and generous collaboration with those RAOs. It also means that if the quality of RAA's operations and service provision was diminished it would undermine confidence and loyalty across the sector.

We understand we operate in an increasingly competitive funding environment and that we rely heavily on funding as a source of income. This means that collaborations involved in managing and distributing the RAF are critical.

The performing arts touring environment involves significant competition. New online mechanisms and performing arts showcases have tested old paradigms. While the NTS remains the largest online tour selector other organisations are testing the market with other tools and RAA can no longer claim a monopoly in any sector of this market. Accordingly, RAA will focus its attention on its regional constituency and collaborate with other sector leaders where their expertise can provide greater sector benefit.

Artlands, RAA’s marquee event, competes for registrations with a plethora of other community-focussed and creative industry conferences and professional development opportunities including the APACA conference, the Australia Council Marketing Summit, state arts conferences and forums and APAM. In straitened times, we also face the added challenge of drawing people from regional locations to, often remote, conference locations at their considerable expense and the 2014 conference in Kalgoorlie-Boulder was no exception. Again, all these activities play a vital role in continuing to revitalise, renew and resource the ever-changing arts sector as a whole. In this environment, it is critical that we use all means at our disposal to communicate our message effectively and seek out more efficient event management.



⁵ Lyndon Davis - Gubbi Gubbi Dance & Louise King, Cello Dreaming. © Bibiana Stanfield


Strategy

RAA strategies drive a strong program of activities designed to increase our engagement with government, with artists and with audiences to promote the value of regional arts and enliven regional, remote and very remote communities.

Strategies	Key Activities	Priority
Leadership		
National arts advocacy	Develop high level engagement with the Australia Council and government in key policy areas in arts, communications and northern Australia to increase the profile of arts and culture in national decision making.	1
	Develop relationship with Australian Local Government Association to sharpen the focus on arts and culture, particularly regarding public art.	2
	Develop a well-informed and strategic RAA policy platform ahead of the 2016 election and beyond	3
Build a larger, more informed regional arts audience	Promote awareness of the RAF as a catalyst for great art making among regional artists and audiences through mainstream media, social media, Artlands conferences	2
	Assess and monitor the size and reach of the regional arts audience	1
Build the capacity of our Signature events and produce strategic national events that stimulate the sector	Build a stronger resource base for Artlands conferences including philanthropic and in-kind support	1
	Explore new and innovative delivery platforms for Artlands	1
	Establish a strong delivery framework for the National Visual Arts Showcase through partnership, alternative funding and profile building	2
	Mobilise national forums, including webinars, to increase audience engagement and public awareness of regional arts	2
Investing in the Future		
Pursue strategic research, consultations and collateral publications in collaboration with the community	Conduct a wide-reaching national consultation to assess the priorities for regional arts in Australia	1
	Initiate a rigorous research project procuring partnership resources from a major research institution	2
	Generate regular publications linked to consultation and research	2
RAD Fellowships	Campaign for resources from government and other philanthropic partners to drive an ongoing Fellowship program	2
Increase digital engagement	Strategic engagement with national arts digital futures – The Platform, Place-Stories and their derivatives	2
	Adopt 2014 recommendations from Australia Council funded National Digital Arts Program	1
	Undertake review of social media strategy	1

Access and Participation		
Measure and maintain equitable access to programs	Assess and monitor access for Youth/Indigenous/Disability/linguistically diverse/Elderly participants	1
	Work collaboratively with RAOs and the Ministry to ensure RAF guidelines support equitable delivery and relevance in the sector	1
Maximise access for regional artists in the performing arts touring marketplace	Ensure the Regional & Remote Touring Advisory Group is an effective national advocate for regional artists and venues	1
	Maintain collaborative and constructive working relationship with the performing arts sector through PATA	2
	Engage strategically and collaboratively with APAM, state showcases and the national performing arts exchanges/marketplaces	3
	Increase access for regional artists and venues using the NTS as an online tour selector mechanism	1
	Vigorously pursue international opportunities to expand the coverage and profitability of the NTS	2
<i>Enliven Regional Communities Program</i>	Develop a business case for <i>Enliven</i> as a major, long term national project	1
	Seek <i>Enliven</i> program partnerships involving government, community groups and major performing arts companies	1
A Strong Engine		
Deliver the RAF as a catalyst for great art making.	Establish RAA as a focal agency for coordinating, devolving, monitoring and reporting a more efficient delivery of the RAF	1
	Ensure there is collaborative, collegiate and well informed relationships with RAOs in the delivery of the RAF	1
Maintain high quality governance, operations and program management.	Annual review of Board skills and performance	1
	Membership Charter developed and articulated	3
	Comprehensive induction for each new Directors and staff members	2
Develop and deliver on the RAA Reconciliation Action Plan.	Work collaboratively with Reconciliation Australia in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan	1
	Promote the Reconciliation Action Plan and its values across the sector	3
	Provide opportunities for Directors to engage in cultural awareness training	2

Goals / Strategies Matrix

Goals Strategies 	1. Leadership	2. Investing in the Future	3. Access and Participation	4. A Strong Engine
National arts advocacy	√	√		√
Build a larger regional arts audience	√	√	√	
Build the capacity of strategic national events	√	√	√	√
Pursue strategic research, consultations publications	√	√	√	
RAD Fellowships	√	√	√	
Increase digital engagement	√	√	√	
Measure equitable access to programs		√	√	
Maximise access through developments in the touring marketplace		√	√	
<i>Enliven Regional Communities Program</i>	√	√	√	√
Deliver the RAF as a catalyst for great art making	√	√	√	√
Maintain high quality governance, operations and program management	√			√
RAA Reconciliation Action Plan	√	√		√

Key Strategies

Our key strategies are designed to champion regional arts with impact, reach and finesse. We use a variety of scope, scale and methods to ensure our impact is both broad-reaching and targeted.

Our key strategies are:

- National Arts Advocacy
- Building the audience
- Signature events
- Consultation, research and publication
- RAD Fellowships
- Digital Engagement
- Performing Arts Touring
- Enliven Regional Communities program
- Regional Arts Fund coordination
- Reconciliation Action Plan

These are each outlined below.

National Arts Advocacy

We make the case for regional arts and culture as a strategic element of our activities. Our central purpose is to reinforce the engagement of governments of all persuasions in this sector. We also want to celebrate, promote and inspire artists, communities and potential partners and collaborators. Our signature events are focal points of activity. National consultations help us identify sector needs and aspirations. Research projects and flow through publications will continue to identify the impact of arts and culture in regional Australia. We will build stronger relations with local government to enhance the substantial investment local government makes in arts and culture. One of the ways we can do this is to advocate for increased appetite for, and consistency in public art policy.

Building the audience

We believe it is vital that we make a substantial contribution to growing the audience for arts and culture in regional remote and very remote Australia. We believe the audience will grow in response to increases in the quality, the relevance and the vibrancy of regional arts activity. The RAF is an important catalyst. Increasingly competitive grant rounds and rigorous peer assessment are the fundamental drivers. We will also continue to promote RAF projects throughout the sector. RAF data and our national consultations also enable us to assess and monitor the size and reach of the regional arts audience.

Signature events

RAA will continue to organise, host, manage and initiate national events. Our two key Signature events are the biennial Artlands national conference and the complimentary biennial National visual arts Showcase. These critical focal points of activity capture significant audience attention and provide opportunities for participation and professional development.

By any measure, Artlands is a highly respected national event. It provides rare networking and professional development opportunities for those working in the cultural sector in regional Australia. The growing importance of the event for non-regional attendees signifies its broader relevance as a conference that engages in international debate and models of best practice for artists, communities of artists and communities generally, whether urban, regional or remote. The event also creates cultural capital, profile and economic returns to the host community and significant ongoing profile for the arts community in the host state.

We will continue to build a strong framework for delivery of Artlands. This means establishing and maintaining the core relationship with the Artlands producer, local government and other key partners. We believe there are efficiencies that can be made that will help mitigate the some of the financial risk associated with the event. We are also keen to explore new and innovative delivery platforms into the future

RAA's National Visual Arts Showcase (NVAS) has now become established following outstanding exhibitions in Canberra in 2014 and 2015. It is a focal point for artist engagement and career development. RAA recognises that there are few opportunities for emerging artists in regional and remote Australia to participate in national projects. Following the success of the 2015 NVAS *Right Here Now: A powerful regional voice in our democracy* held at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, we will escalate the profile and branding so that it becomes a well-recognised national event.

Both Artlands and the showcase will be continued as biennial events in alternate years. Each will create a focus for our national advocacy in that year. We will strive to secure philanthropic, business and other in-kind partnerships for these events.

We will complement our Signature events with smaller, more regular strategic national events. In 2015 RAA held a national webinar in partnership with Deakin University. The success of the webinar has encouraged us to coordinate an annual webinar program to share information and insight through a growing digital audience. We will also explore national forums. We have natural partners with shared purpose in rural health, remote communications, disaster recovery and community and cultural development. We will collaborate to bring national attention to these areas through national forums. We see these initially as biennial events held in Canberra in conjunction with the biennial showcase.

Consultation, Research and Publication

RAA has a long tradition of consulting with the arts communities in regional and remote Australia and has done so in 2005, 2009 and 2013. Consultations identify concerns in communities and bring important focus to our strategic thinking. They are also opportunities for drawing artists, audiences and communities together by building a sense of common purpose for a positive future. We expect to allocate RAF funds for a national consultation in 2017.

We will continue to pursue research of the sector in addition to the national consultation. The Stats & Stories research project conducted with Deakin University in 2014 has provided a stimulus for our advocacy agenda. For example, Stats & Stories provided a research base for engagement with Regional Development Australia and also lays the foundation for conference themes at Artlands Dubbo 2016. We expect to formulate another major piece of research for 2019.

We will continue to see a flow of this information working through the organisation in our publication strategy. RAA produced *Belonging; Great Art Stories from Regional Australia* as a major publication in 2014. We now see value in more targeted small publications, and generating web based material that will help us grow our digital audience.

RAD Fellowships

In 2014 we received a one-off allocation from the Ministry for the Arts to establish the RAD Fellowships. Five Fellowships have been distributed with outstanding success. There was keen interest in the program across the regions and the quality of applicants and the work they are undertaking is exceptional. We believe there are critical benefits in the advancement of artistic practice and the professional development of artists and artworkers. We want to establish the RAD Fellowships as an ongoing program with the support of the Ministry's *Catalyst* program. We also see an attraction in this program for potential sponsors and philanthropic supporters.

Digital engagement

We need to increase the capacity of our audience to participate in a cultural dialogue. We expect the NBN will increase the capacity for digital participation over the next five years. However, there is significant under-utilisation of existing technologies—including common social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter; web-publishing platforms such as blogs or wikis; and arts-specific platforms such as Place Stories by regional, remote and very remote artists, arts workers, arts organisations and communities. Access to information continues to be a significant obstacle to self-directed digital literacy learning. We will continue to strengthen RAA's capabilities as a leader in the use of digital technologies in the arts.

Performing arts touring

RAA's primary interest in the performing arts touring sector is to advocate for access and participation for regional artists in the national touring marketplace. We will do this through active and collaborative engagement with PATA and linkages with all the major showcases and performing arts exchanges that are a feature of this vibrant sector. We will also strive to ensure that the NTS is an effective, relevant and well managed resource for the sector so that regional artists and venues have an innovative online mechanism for tour selection.

Enliven Regional Communities program

We want to develop a program that explores better models of engagement and supports communities as key drivers of lasting value in arts participation. The program will also provide new opportunities for regional artists and audiences.

We propose that such a program involves:

- Applying resources to enrich the relationship between major performing arts companies and regional audiences through more effective community engagement, education initiatives and career development for regional artists.
- Expanded opportunities for delivery of regional arts experiences to metropolitan audiences and arts markets.
- Working with selected performing arts companies for empowerment and professional development outcomes including mentorships and residencies.
- Building partnerships in the regions to create new artworks in collaborations between performing arts companies and regional communities.
- Providing a funding platform with the security and integrity to leverage additional resources from other agencies, including philanthropics.

Regional Arts Fund coordination

We will coordinate delivery of the RAF on behalf of the Australian Government as a devolved fund through RAOs in each state and through Arts NT in the Northern Territory. The program delivers \$2.65m annually in resources to artist and communities in regional Australia through a community grants program. In addition, the RAF supports a range of National Strategic Projects providing benefit through national reach and national impact. It is expected that the RAF will be maintained at its current value of \$12.54m over four years. This has a number of growth implications. We expect numbers of audience, new applicants, partnerships and leveraged funds to grow because of the promotion and advocacy work we do. We do not expect the number of grants to change significantly. This means we need to be mindful of the unmet need and maintaining realistic expectations for applicants. By promoting success, we expect to increase both the competitiveness and vibrancy of the sector.

Our coordination role involves distribution of funds to the States and the NT, oversight of the program guidelines, promotion of the program, consolidated reporting and operational relations with RAOs and the Ministry for the Arts.

Reconciliation Action Plan

As a national organisation we have the capacity to influence the culture and behaviour of our stakeholders and those around us. All of our programs and events demonstrate a deep commitment to an engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We want to formalise this engagement and commit resources to it. The RAA Board has approved the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and we will begin working with Reconciliation Australia in 2016. One of the ways we will generate effective reconciliation action is to provide opportunities for RAA Directors to participate in cultural awareness training.

Financial Overview

RAA's financial strategy is to deliver high-value programs through the distribution of RAF funds by agreement with the Australian Government. It also brings specialist expertise to the management of its own operational funds and asset base.

Current Financial Situation

RAA is financially stable with strong reserves. These are principally held in an investment portfolio valued at <\$700,000. The portfolio generates income through dividends and interest in the order of \$40,000 pa.

RAA is reliant of government funding, and while earned income is stable it represents a low proportion (12%) of total income. We have DGR status but receive no philanthropic income at this time.

The RAF is the most important income stream for RAA and provides significant resources for artists and arts organisations. The fund is subject to an annual indexation increase in the order of 5%.

The RAA Board has now stabilised the annual budget. Recent asset write downs and other efficiencies now enable a balanced annual budget. Artlands is our largest major event with a total budget in the order of \$1.5m. We recognise the event carries some financial risk and needs to be managed carefully. The Board has primary oversight of finances and has appointed Morri Young as an independent Director on the basis of his skills in governance and financial management in the not-for-profit sector.

The NTS remains a valuable tool in the performing arts touring sector and remains an important RAA asset. RAA’s IP interest in the NTS needs to be protected. We anticipate discussion with the USA and Canadian touring sectors about their use of the NTS. We see these as important business development opportunities that need to be explored further.

Financial Strategy

RAA will deliver the RAF and devolve funds in an accountable and equitable manner according to the RAF Guidelines established with the Australian Government. We will maintain close operational links with the Ministry for the Arts and with RAOs in this process.

We anticipate increased administrative and financial responsibilities in the structure of the RAF program after 30 June 2016. This means RAA will need to acquire the services of a professional accounting firm and employ a full time RAF Manager with expanded responsibilities at some additional cost. From 2017 we anticipate a 3% annual increase in salaries and administrative expenses over the forward estimates.

We see new opportunity for accessing sponsorship, philanthropic and in-kind resources. The Board has established these as priority areas for Director recruitment so there is increased capacity within this organisation to build the partnerships that will support us into the future.

The Board will maintain close oversight of RAA assets. We will seek professional advice about the portfolio asset mix and monitor volatility in the share market. Similarly, the Board will manage and mitigate risks especially from Artlands through the Artlands Committee set up to oversee delivery of the event.

Management of the NTS has been outsourced to Country Arts SA for 2015-16. The Board will continue to monitor its performance in the Australian market. We expect the NTS to be self-sustaining. We will also keep abreast of business opportunities in the international touring market with a view to licensing and other agreements that can underpin profit generation.



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⁶ ‘A Banquet of Wild Proportions’ event, ‘Taste of the Gascoyne’. © Anton Blume

Financial Forecast:

INCOME	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Earned Income					
Subscriptions	14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000
Interest/Investment income	53,000	60,000	65,000	70,000	75,000
Total Earned Income	67,000	74,000	79,000	84,000	89,000
Grant Income					
Australia Council Core Partnership Funding	144,030	145,000	145,000	145,000	145,000
RAF – Core Grant Funds	-	2,650,000	2,782,500	2,782,500	2,782,500
RAF - RAA National Strategic Projects	65,500	65,500	*69,000	69,000	69,000
RAF - RAOs National Strategic Projects	310,695	210,500	*221,000	221,000	221,000
RAF - RAA National coordination	138,560	210,000	*220,500	220,500	220,500
~ RAD Fellowships	125,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000
~ Project Income	100,000	200,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Total Grant Income	883,785	3,631,000	3,838,000	3,838,000	3,838,000
TOTAL INCOME	950,785	3,705,000	3,917,000	3,922,000	3,927,000
EXPENDITURE					
Program Expenses					
Artlands Conference	46,500	46,500	46,500	46,500	46,500
National Visual Arts Showcase	41,235	5,000	50,000	5,000	50,000
National Consultation & Research	12,000	50,000		35,000	
National Network Coordination	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Forums & Events	12,325	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Publications/Marketing	18,000	5,000	20,000	15,000	20,000
RAF – Core Grant Funds	-	2,650,000	*2,782,500	2,782,500	2,782,500
RAF – RAOs National Strategic Projects	310,695	210,500	*221,000	221,000	221,000
~ RAD Fellowships	125,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000
~ Project expenditure	100,000	200,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Total Program Expenses	680,755	3,342,000	3,545,000	3,530,000	3,545,000
Operating Expenses					
Salaries and related expenses	180,345	240,000	247,000	255,000	257,000
Administrative expenses	75,655	115,000	118,500	120,000	123,000
Total Operating Expenses	256,000	355,000	365,500	375,000	380,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	936,755	3,697,000	3,910,500	3,905,000	3,925,000
OPERATING SURPLUS/DEFICIT	14,030	8,000	6,500	17,000	2,000
RESERVES	763,351	771,351	777,851	794,851	796,851

* 5% indexation increase to core 2017 income and expenditure and continuing in 2019 & 2020.

~ Projects: RAD Fellowships and *Enliven Regional Communities* program are realised as stand-alone projects with discrete income, expenditure and project administration inclusive.

Risk Analysis

Financial Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Major loss from Artlands	Possible	High	Closely monitor the progress of the conference host against the MOU. Develop scenarios for ticket sales ranging from 250 through to 1,000.
Loss of funding from one or both funding agencies	Possible	High	Closely monitor the performance of the organisation in meeting its funding requirements and ensure sufficient resources are made available to deliver funding body requirements. Ensure sufficient reserves are maintained to continue operations whilst new funding sources are secured.
Significant reduction in value of investments	Possible	Medium	Monitor Investment strategy. Regular portfolio reports. Explore other income streams.
Fraud	Unlikely	High	ED maintain weekly oversight of bank acc. & accounts payable. Regular staff performance reviews. Annual independent audit by certified auditor.
Operational Risks			
Injury to staff, contractors and/or volunteers at major event.	Possible	High	Complete and enforce WHS system including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff first aid training • Incident management protocols Thorough event risk assessment protocol. Maintain adequate insurance cover.
Loss or absence of key personnel due to illness or accident: Executive Director or RAF Manager	Possible	High	Establish well documented HR recruitment and retention practices. Develop succession plans and ensure standard operating procedures exist for all major tasks, ensure back up plans are in place to assist with ensuring continuous service delivery in the event of loss or absence of staff.
Lack of organisation knowledge retention	Unlikely	High	Induction and exit processes for staff and Directors. Documentation of key project policies and contact lists.
Records Management - Loss of physical and/or data records	Unlikely	High	Review the current records management system (physical and IT) and back up procedures for data records. Ensure all critical systems have current and up to date business continuity plans. Review the physical storage equipment used, review the security attributes and check equipment reliability. Renew IT assets. Maintain software upgrades and IT Support services.
Legal action against RAA	Rare	High	Maintain comprehensive policies and procedures. ED regularly attend workshops/briefings/updates on relevant legal frameworks incl. Subscribing to relevant professional journals & networks. Ensure adequate Professional Indemnity Insurance. Ensure staff and consultants sign employment contracts.
RAA program, event or other deliverable failure	Possible	Medium	Establish clear TORs for all RAA projects, committees and working groups. Ensure Minutes kept of all meetings and reported to the Board.
Breakdown in relations with a member	Rare	Medium	Maintain relationships with regular meetings and contact. Document relationships (letters, MOUs, contracts)

Management

The Board of Directors

RAA is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Each of our members; Artslink Queensland, Country Arts SA, Country Arts WA, Regional Arts NSW, Regional Arts Victoria and Tasmanian Regional Arts nominate a Director for election to the RAA Board. The Constitution also provides for three Directors appointed by the Board. These appointments allow the Board to exercise a commitment to national coverage by including a Director based in the Northern Territory. They also allow us to bring additional skills, experience and qualities to the Board where our regular audit of the Board identifies areas that require greater emphasis. Elected Directors are appointed for a term of three years. Board appointed Directors have a term of one year.

At present the Territories are not represented by formal RAA membership. In the NT there is no widely recognised RAO that might play a traditional role at RAA in the same way as other RAOs. In the ACT there are additional considerations connected with a definition of what is considered regional, and the role of the ACT Government in administering a small proportion of the RAF. Going forward the RAA Board will consider opportunities for formal recognition and inclusion of the Territories as RAA members.

Board performance

The Board meets 4 – 5 times per year. Meetings are usually held via teleconference and there is one extended (2 day) face to face Board meeting each year. In addition, the Constitution provides for circular resolutions via email in circumstances where agile decision making is required. The Board is led by an Executive Committee comprising the office bearers of the company. The Executive meets more regularly to deal with arising business and to provide support and oversight to management.

Conflicts of interest are addressed as a protocol included at the beginning of every meeting. The potential for conflicts of interest has been greatly reduced in the new RAA Constitution adopted in 2015. Where such a conflict is identified the Board requires the relevant Director to absent themselves from discussions.

Succession planning

There is a variety of stimuli that help drive replenishment of the Board. The Board has adopted a matrix of skills designed to assess requisite qualities of Directors. An annual review of skills and performance is critical at the time when the Board is considering the appointment

of Directors following the Annual General Meeting. When there is a vacancy brought about by the retirement of an elected Director the skills matrix assists members in their consideration of nominees.

Operations

RAA currently employs an Executive Director, RAF Manager, a part time Accounts Manager and engages consultants as needed for specific activities.

The key operational management position for the company is the Executive Director. Staff are employed on a fixed-term contract basis. The Executive Director’s contract is managed by the Chair of RAA with reference to the Executive Committee. Other RAA contracts are managed by the Executive Director. This includes goal setting and annual review processes as applicable. It is usual in our organisation that the appointment of Executive Director is a considered process with recruitment managed by the Executive Committee. If an unexpected Executive Director vacancy occurs, the Executive Committee will assume a greater hands-on role until the position can be filled by contract or appointment.

The 2015/16 Board of Directors

Name	Position	Member affiliation
Ms Kate Fielding	Chair	Dep. President, Country Arts WA
Mr Martin Paten	Dep. Chair	Director, Regional Arts Victoria
Ms Louise Partos	Secretary	None Co-opted NT representative
Mr Morri Young	Executive member	None Co-opted member for financial and governance expertise
Mr Lee Cole	Director	Director, Tasmanian Regional Arts
Ms Mardi Jennings	Director	Director, Country Arts SA
Ms Kay Mays	Director	Chair, ArtsLink Qld.
Mr Peter White	Director	President, Regional Arts NSW

