

NAL

sharpening the arts in regional Australia



SHARPENING



sharpening

Regional Arts Australia gives
a national voice to artists,
arts workers and
organisations from regional
Australia so they and the
communities they live in
can take part in a rich
artistic and cultural life.

FRONT COVER:
STEAM!, LAKE
GOLDSMITH, VIC,
KEN EVANS AND REBECCA RUSSELL, 100TH LAKE GOLD-
SMITH STEAM RALLY, 2012
IMAGE BY NEIL NEWITT

TOP:
THE ROELANDS QUARRY, ROELANDS, WA
JULIE COX, 2013
IMAGE BY EVA FERNANDEZ



CONFLUX, MILDURA, VIC
KIM CHALMERS & SALLY HEDERICS,
CENTENARY OF CANBERRA, 2013
IMAGE BY LINDY ALLEN

REGIONAL

Regional Arts Australia

Regional Arts Australia is the national advocacy and industry development body for the arts in regional Australia.

Arts and culture are at the heart of community life across regional Australia. Regional Arts Australia promotes, convenes, facilitates, and resources arts and cultural activity for the one-in-three Australians who live in regional, remote and very remote Australia.

Regional communities are strongly optimistic that arts and cultural development are having a significant impact on the ability of communities to cope with the changing face of regional Australia, and the long-term resilience of regional communities to work together for a positive future.

Regional Arts Australia 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. Regional Arts Australia and its members are important partners in supporting regional artists, arts workers and communities to meet the special needs and challenges that accompany arts practice, arts promotion and market development in regional, remote and very remote Australia.

Regional Arts Australia played a vital role in the establishment of the Regional Arts Fund (RAF) in 1996 and, with its state-based members, has managed this fund since 2001, directly injecting an estimated \$150 million into local communities in the form of RAF grants and locally-generated funds to support regionally-inspired arts projects and events.

Regional Arts Australia and its members are also actively engaged in touring Australia's best performing arts companies to regional, remote and very remote locations, with the support of its biannual performing arts market, *Long Paddock*, and its on-line tour development and delivery mechanism, *Cyberpaddock*.

Regional Arts Australia's national biennial conference is now the largest arts gathering in Australia attracting

average attendances of 800, promoting the value of the arts, profiling the regional arts sector and providing important networking and skills development opportunities. Since it was reinvigorated in 1998, it has been held in every state and territory (except the ACT), most recently in Goolwa SA (2012), Launceston TAS (2010), Alice Springs NT (2008) and Mackay QLD (2006). It will be held in 2014 in Kalgoorlie-Boulder WA.

Regional Arts Australia has a long tradition of consulting with arts communities in regional, remote and very remote Australia to find out what they need to sharpen their practice and programs. It has done so in 2005, 2009 and again in 2013. The information we gather is used to advocate for improved access and opportunities, including professional development, funds to support arts activities, regionally-based arts professionals and infrastructure.

Regional Arts Australia has summarised the issues raised in the 2013 consultation under five goals, namely:

- Marketing the value of the arts
- Injecting life into towns
- Engaging young people in realising their creative ambitions
- Connecting regions by invigorating local networks
- Improving support for professional artists

It is interesting to note from the findings of our 2013 national consultations that the emphasis in community priorities has changed since 2009, although the 2009 issues remain important to communities. The priority of environmental sustainability, particularly in relation to support for cross-sector collaboration, has less emphasis in 2013 than in 2009, however, there is feedback asking for this topic's inclusion in the 2014 National Conference. We note that for many practicing artists, the environment is both an inspiration and a pre-occupation.

This report documents the findings of Regional Arts Australia's 2013 national consultation. The work has been supported by the Australian Government through the Regional Arts Fund and the Australia Council for the Arts. The primary research was conducted by Anne Dunn.

National Consultation

Key Statistics

Throughout the month of June 2013 Regional Arts Australia consulted widely across the nation using an online survey, video conferencing, face-to-face forums and, in addition, direct consultation with Aboriginal interest groups and young people. The consultation engaged 2,488 participants from over 100 communities, speaking on behalf of 458,522 people in regional Australia. 2,197 people completed the survey; 76 people from 11 communities contributed via video-conference and 232 people travelled for 330 hours and drove 27,510 kilometres, at their own expense, to participate in focus groups.

The people who engaged in this research were from many different walks of life including artists, community leaders, local government mayors, councillors, CEOs and senior management, theatre managers and programmers, public and private museum and gallery operators, representatives of community and professional organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program co-ordinators and participants and youth arts program co-ordinators and participants.

"The arts help create a sense of community, place and belonging."



FAR FROM HOME, KALBARRI, WA
KALBARRI ZEST FESTIVAL, 2013
IMAGE BY DES CROASDALE

How people value the arts

Survey respondents were asked to identify ways in which the arts contributed to other social outcomes in their communities. They rated community wellbeing and entertainment as the most significant social outcomes.

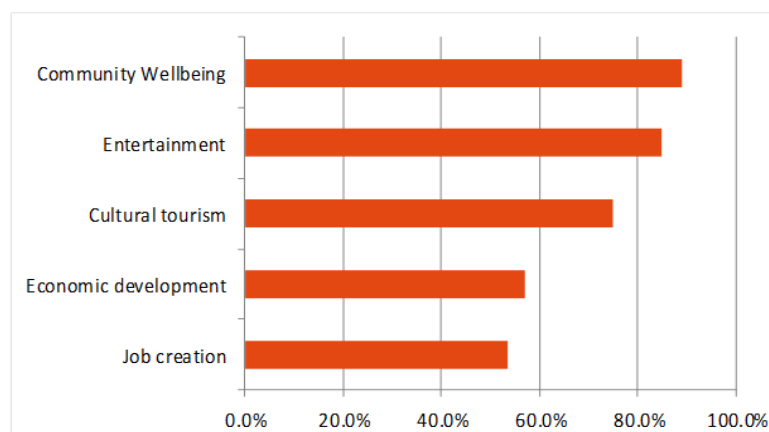


Table 1: How the arts contribute to broader social outcomes in regional communities

"The arts are keeping local stories alive, celebrating local culture."

How people engage with the arts

Respondents were asked to identify the ways in which they have engaged with the arts in recent years. While most had engaged as an audience member, almost half, 47%, said they had volunteered, and the same number said they had been a participant. Sponsorship was also surprisingly high, with 16% saying they had sponsored the arts in recent years.

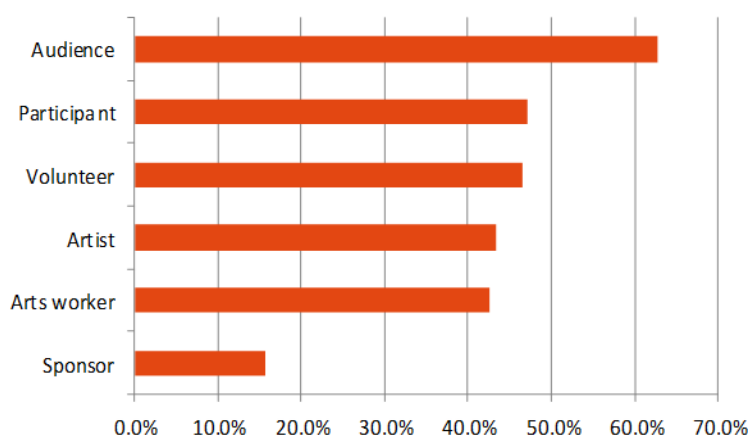


Table 2: How people have engaged with the arts in the last few years

Barriers to engagement

Respondents were asked to identify some of the barriers that make it difficult for people to get involved in the arts in their communities. 95% of respondents agreed there were barriers to engagement, and the most significant of these were cost and transport.

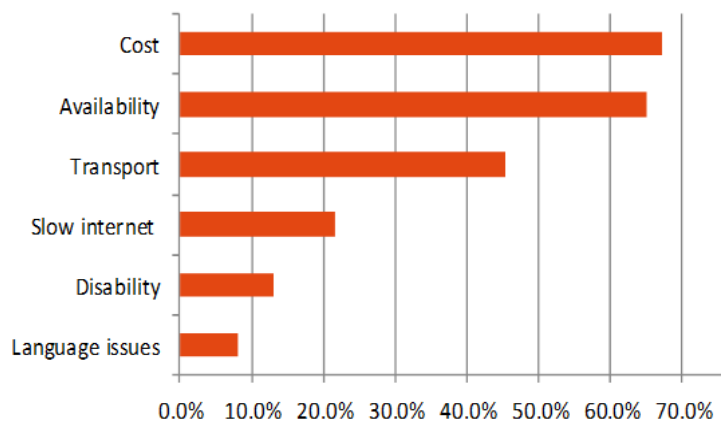


Table 3: Barriers to arts engagement in regional communities

How well the arts engages with other community sectors in regional Australia

Almost **89%** advised that they were aware of partnerships between the arts and other sectors (education, employment, health, sports and recreation and tourism), within their community.

Factors impacting positively or negatively on arts activity in recent years

72% of respondents believed arts activity had been impacted by changes in the external environment in recent years. Respondents identified factors with a positive impact as improved broadband access (**22%**) and regional infrastructure funding (**23%**). Respondents identified factors with an adverse impact as the global financial crises (**34%**) and natural disasters including fire, flood, cyclone and drought (**24%**).

"The arts help foster diversity."

"The arts provide access to training and career pathways."

ANIMATING SPACES, EUDLO DREAMING EUDLO, QLD
LOUISE KING, LYNDON DAVIS, TUNJI BIEIR,
THE ORIANA CHILDREN'S CHOIR
ARTSLINK QUEENSLAND AND
THE EUDLO CULTURAL COLLECTIVE 2013
IMAGE BY KERRYANNE FARRER



Key Outcomes for the Future

Marketing the Value of the Arts

Issues and Directions

Regional communities are ready to engage with their community leaders to document the value of the arts and culture and to communicate this more clearly at a local level. They are looking to Regional Arts Australia to provide the material to do this including hard data and compelling stories. This was the highest priority theme to emerge from the consultations.

Participants universally asked for assistance in marketing the value of the arts. They seek ways of raising the profile of the arts and culture so that artists are treated as serious contributors to community life, not just hobbyists, and that the arts are recognised as part of what makes a community successful, economically and socially.

After twelve years of delivering the Regional Arts Fund and collating solid data and compelling case study evidence, Regional Arts Australia has a wealth of information to draw on to create information packages, tool kits and ready made presentations that will assist regionally-based artists and organisations to make the case for greater support for the arts in the regions.

Regional Arts Australia is keen to ensure that the contribution of the arts and culture is regarded by all tiers of government as a pillar of vibrant and successful communities in regional Australia. In particular, the broad nature of the positive impacts of arts and cultural activities in regional communities should be seen as an extremely important component of all national programs.

RAA Goals

- ◇ Demonstrate the value of regional arts and culture and regional artists
- ◇ Improve online advocacy tools and resources and promote these through our networks
- ◇ Research, evaluate and communicate outcomes, value and benefits of regional arts
- ◇ Identify media partner; develop and implement national publications and on line programs including journals, articles and other resource material

Proposals for Action by Regional Arts Australia

Develop an advocacy toolkit in easy to use format for people in regional communities for speeches, presentations and applications both locally and regionally, including:

- ◇ data trends over time as contributions to economic and social life of the community
- ◇ case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of the arts on social outcomes
- ◇ clear statements about return on investment for local government and potential sponsors
- ◇ evidenced-based statements useful for Local Government planning
- ◇ downloadable PowerPoint presentations and other digitally-based resources accessible via social media
- ◇ training in how to use this material

Develop a leadership program for regional communities that will:

- ◇ engage champions from local and regional organisations to promote the value of the arts to regional leaders
- ◇ Link with existing regional and community leadership programs to have the arts and culture included as a significant theme

Develop an online training program for regional communities including:

- ◇ 'how to' resource guides in all aspects of project development and delivery
- ◇ live-streamed training sessions in partnership with other peak organisations

"Many in the community don't recognise arts as important to their health and well-being."

"Without good communication, a lot of good stuff goes unnoticed."

Injecting Life into Towns

Issues and Directions

Australia's regional arts participants are artists and volunteers who are looking for support and assistance to inject new life into their own work and their communities. They seek to engage and interact with new people arriving in their towns, and with the local indigenous community. They are concerned about how to manage, particularly in places where there are no paid staff such as regional arts development officers. This theme emerged as participants shared their feeling about life in regional Australia and their desire to direct their energy towards supporting and, where necessary, rebuilding a sense of vibrancy and positive future in their communities, towns and regional centres.

Communities are looking for practical support to increase participation: readily available and affordable insurance, national volunteer cards which incorporate police checks and assistance in opening up existing spaces for cultural use including workshops, performances and exhibitions.

They seek changes to existing funding programs to increase support for artist-in-residence programs, provide longer funding periods to increase community engagement and development and more support for artists' collaborative exchanges. Where artists tour to their regions, they seek opportunities for professional development through workshops and master classes. There is interest in developing the relationship between the arts and heritage and libraries sectors.

RAA Goals

- ◇ Strengthen the delivery of services through our members and national networks
- ◇ Use web-based forums and online streaming to extend access to new ideas for regional artists and arts organisations
- ◇ Take a leadership role in implementing the National Performing Arts Touring Action Plan including working with the Performing Arts Touring Alliance to develop the National Regional Touring Strategy

Proposals for Action by Regional Arts Australia

Partner with the Australian Local Government Association and the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association to:

- ◇ link touring artists with local artists for meaningful exchange including workshops and master classes
- ◇ prioritise remote touring including extended engagement with communities
- ◇ encourage regional venues to program more presentation of local work either alongside touring work or standalone
- ◇ encourage regional venues to provide training and support to smaller community-operated venues and halls in outlying communities
- ◇ create greater and more affordable community access to Council-owned venues
- ◇ develop non-traditional spaces for use as arts venues

Partner with other peak national organisations and agencies to:

- ◇ encourage libraries and museums to develop funding applications to engage artists and writers in arts and cultural projects
- ◇ investigate the creation of a national volunteer card

Advocate for changes in funding programs that will encourage and support:

- ◇ provision of indigenous arts coordinators and facilitators in regional communities across Australia
- ◇ increased opportunities for artist-in-residence programs
- ◇ increased participation of indigenous people in mainstream arts activities

"The heart and soul of a community is enhanced by a healthy arts scene."

Engaging Young People

Issues and Directions

Every community consulted expressed a desire to engage young people more successfully in developing and realising their creative ambitions. It is acknowledged that the *arts* may not be an attractive label for young people. There is generational change in the use of language and new means of engagement needs to be found.

Providing young people with real control over their creative output is a high priority for most communities. They recognise that mentoring programs are very effective in providing support without exerting control.

Communities ask that Regional Arts Australia provide national advocacy for the proper resourcing of schools in regional, rural and remote areas for the successful implementation of the new national curriculum and to enable the engagement of local artists in animating the curriculum in a local and regional context.

This theme has emerged through growing understanding that the engagement of young people in arts activities in the community may not follow the traditional patterns of the past, and that the regional arts community must learn to support young people developing their own art in their own way, often using a completely different language. Art forms may now include costume making, body art, phone films and aerosol art and it is important to allow these forms to define themselves rather than seek to create definitions that meet existing funding models. Many of the ideas for this section were stimulated by Country Arts WA's *Y Culture* grant program.

RAA Goals

- ◇ Maintain and develop national projects / programs of significance
- ◇ Maintain, develop and create dynamic partnerships
- ◇ Maintain and expand devolved funding focus

Proposals for Action by Regional Arts Australia

Advocate for the creation of a Youth Arts Fund as part of the Regional Arts Fund, to provide grants of up to \$7,000 to be applied for and managed by young people between 18 and 26 years who:

- ◇ can articulate an idea or a project
- ◇ have a mentor and/or support person
- ◇ have included skills development as part of the project
- ◇ are willing to document the process of the project and the outcomes

Create new youth-focused national programs that support young people to develop artistic skills through:

- ◇ Intra-regional visits and exchanges, including cross-cultural exchanges
- ◇ Urban immersion programs including workshops and work placements in cultural institutions

"There are not enough programs for teens and young adults to be involved in the arts."



Making Regional Connections

Proposals for Action by Regional Arts Australia

Issues and Directions

The consultations identified that regional arts people feel isolated in their towns. They feel that towns in a region operate as silos thereby forcing artists and organisations to compete with each other, rather than creating region-wide initiatives that would open new opportunities for the arts.

Participants recognise resources are scarce and there is a sense that better use could be made of what is available. Ideas included greater communication among arts organisations regionally and more active participation by artists on regional non-arts boards and committees, such as local government, tourism, regional development organisations, the education sector, to create arts-based programs in the non-arts sectors.

This theme arose through many discussions about the need for communities to work together and move beyond addressing just their own needs.

RAA Goals

- ◇ Develop existing and build new sector plans/accords with allied regional organisations such as Performing Arts Touring Alliance, National Rural Health Alliance, Creative Recovery Network, Australian Local Government Association, Feral Arts, Regional Australia Institute
- ◇ Develop and implement a Local Government Engagement Strategy in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association

Advocate for new funding for regional cultural facilitators to:

- ◇ work with local government and major regional cultural and non-cultural organisations to align strategic planning processes
- ◇ develop clearly articulated cultural strategies across regional Australia that identify key regional artists and activities
- ◇ develop single regional digital platforms for each region for information about events, artists, funding, activities, facilities and cultural tourism for residents and visitors alike
- ◇ ensure regional artists and communities are mentored in the new creative and learning opportunities offered by improved broadband access in regional and remote areas
- ◇ improve regional planning of tours, exhibitions and artist exchanges
- ◇ ensure all programs are culturally inclusive and accessible to all abilities

"Small villages spread across a wide area make it difficult for artists and arts workers to work together as a single group."

VIDEO ARCHITECTURE , ALICE SPRINGS, NT
ARALUEN CULTURAL PRECINCT
& ALICE DESERT FESTIVAL, 2012
IMAGE BY MICHELLE GOODWIN



Supporting Regional Artists

Issues and Directions

Participants in the consultations expressed great concern for professional artists living and working in regional Australia. It is felt that there is a low success rate in funding applications to the Australia Council and State Governments because of a low profile and limited access to professional development opportunities. It is felt regionally-based artists' need increased opportunities to display, showcase and demonstrate their work. There is much interest and support in regions for the recognition of the economic impact of the contribution professional artists can make to regional tourism.

Professional artists living in regional Australia find it difficult to make a living from their creative endeavours. They feel isolated, under-recognised and distant from the opportunities for growth experienced by their capital city counterparts. As opportunities for casual teaching diminish, programs need to provide support to diversify skills within this sector so that regionally-based professional artists can benefit from partnerships and other opportunities.

Participants in the 2013 consultation seek Regional Arts Australia support and advocacy to increase the respect and recognition of professional artists in regional Australia.

RAA Goals

- ◇ Provide resources that improve technical skills for regionally-based arts and cultural workers and communities and ensure ease of contact
- ◇ Activate digital infrastructure, technology and platforms to strengthen virtual office and communications
- ◇ Build a new national digital platform for regional arts
- ◇ Regional artists represented on key national bodies

Proposals for Action by Regional Arts Australia

Work in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association to promote the work of regional artists through:

- ◇ more arts trails, public art and town beautification projects that make visible the arts and culture of towns and regional centres
- ◇ local arts 'legends' campaigns that profile significant regional artists and acknowledge their contribution to tourism and regional identity

Provide new online professional development opportunities for regional artists including:

- ◇ training in social enterprise ventures, micro-business and product/market development
- ◇ how to increase successful applications to career artist's funding programs

"More education of the enjoyment and benefit of the arts is needed."

ROAD CUNNAMULLA TO ST GEORGE , 2012
IMAGE BY LINDY ALLEN





REGIONAL

REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA | COUNTRY ARTS SA | ARTS NT | COUNTRY ARTS WA
REGIONAL ARTS NSW | ARTSLINK QUEENSLAND | TASMANIAN REGIONAL ARTS



Australian Government



The Regional Arts Fund is an Australian Government initiative that supports sustainable cultural development in regional remote and very remote Australia.

The research in RAA's 2013 consultation was conducted by Anne Dunn. Surveys, face-to-face consultations, focus groups and video-conferencing were supported in each state by RAA's member organisations listed above. The consultation engaged with 2,488 participants from over 100 communities, speaking on behalf of 458,522 people in regional Australia. We thank the Australian Government (through the Regional Arts Fund) and the Australia Council, for their support for this research.

© Regional Arts Australia October 2013

BACK COVER:
DREAMTIME PETER PAN,
BRISBANE POWERHOUSE, QUEENSLAND
BLACKROBATS INDIGENOUS YOUTH CIRCUS TROUPE FROM KU-
RANDA, FAR NORTH QLD 2010
IMAGE BY IDOGORGEOUS.COM

REGIO REGIONAL



Milton House
Level 1, 25 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
03 9654 8121
www.regionalarts.com.au



REGIONAL