

STATS AND STORIES - THEME 1


DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA
Worldly

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

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arts
AUSTRALIA

FAST FACTS



DIVERSITY

- 300+ People from different ancestries reside in Australia.¹
- 67% Recent arrivals spoke a language other than English at home.²
- 51.8% Australians have at least one parent who was born overseas.³
- 49.2% are Australian born with parents Australian born.⁴
- 49% Longer-standing migrants speak English at home.⁵

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OUTRANKING OTHER SECTORS⁶

The following statistic highlights the estimated aggregate gross value to the Australian economy compared to the contribution of other industries.

- \$86.0 b Estimated gross value added to Australia’s economy through cultural and creative activity in 2008-2009 (6.9%), compared with retail (4.9%), education and training (4.6%) and agriculture, forestry and mining (2.5%).

ARTS⁷

- 85% Australians think the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life.
- 66% Australians think the arts have a big impact on the development of children.

CULTURE⁸

- 96% Australians express a strong sense of belonging to the community.
- 94% Australians take great pride in the Australian way of life.
- 94% Australians believe maintaining the Australian way of life and culture is important.

VOLUNTEERING

- 6.1m Australians undertook some sort of voluntary work during 2010.⁹
- 403,900 Australians undertook voluntary work for heritage and arts organisations.
- 54% Donors to the arts contribute through volunteering.¹⁰
- 27% of the Australian population either volunteered or donated money to the arts within the past 12 months.¹¹
- 54% Australian arts contributors volunteered at an arts organisation.¹²
- 39% Australians contributed to the arts through monetary donations.
- 25% Australian contributors donated to the arts through crowd sourcing methods.
- 24% Australians contributed to the arts through subscription or membership programs of an arts organisation.
- 41% Volunteer rate in the arts outside capital cities.¹³
- 38% Volunteers in Australia work full-time.¹⁴
- 44% Volunteers in Australia work part-time.¹⁵
- 51% Volunteers are employed full-time and work within a professional or managerial role.¹⁶



COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

- 73% People enjoy diversity (including multiculturalism) in their local area.¹⁷
- 59% People feel safe walking along down the street after dark.¹⁸
- 35% People believe volunteering strengthens communities.¹⁹

DISCRIMINATION²⁰

- 26% Overseas-born with a non-English speaking background experience discrimination.
- 18% Australians have experienced discrimination because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.
- 14% Australians report experience of discrimination at least once per month.
- 16% Born in Australia experience discrimination.
- 11% Overseas-born with an English speaking background experience discrimination.

EDUCATION²¹

- 29% Australian females aged 18-64 hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- 23.1% Australian males aged 18-64 hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- 10.1% Increase in females aged 18-64 attaining a bachelor’s degree or higher 2001-2013.
- 5.7% Increase in males aged 18-64 attaining a bachelor’s degree or higher 2001-2013.

“It is remarkable that this high degree of diversity has not led to social segregation. On the contrary, Australia’s migrants are extremely well integrated by international standards.”²²

“Australia predominantly receives migrants who were qualified and capable of easily integrating into society. This is unlike Europe where for decades, countries such as Germany and Britain failed to select their migrants carefully. Migrants who entered European countries with poor language skills and qualifications found themselves dependent on the welfare state.”²³



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Cover Image: Group – Community Connection, Alice Desert Festival 2013, Alice Springs.
Photograph by Steven Pearce

Image: Bubbles, Hydro+Graphy Project, 2014, Streaky Bay.
Photograph by Steph Redden.

OVERVIEW

STATS AND STORIES: THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Stats and Stories: The Impact of the Arts in Regional Australia is a ground breaking project funded by Regional Arts Australia and Australia Council for the Arts that calls for new ways to identify and respond to Australia’s vast land, diversity and differences, including its challenges and opportunities in regional Australia, using the arts as the vehicle.

The Stats and Stories project covers five themes and five case studies. The five themes were developed from the literature on the regional impact of the arts. One case study is written on each of the five themes.

The five themes are:

1. Community connectedness
2. Economic regeneration
3. Social inclusion
4. Civic pride and community identity
5. Regional development

The five case studies are:

1. Animating Spaces
2. Silver Ball Screening Festival
3. In the Saddle; On the Wall
4. BighArt
5. First Coat

The research project was undertaken by academic staff at Deakin University in the Business School. The project was led by Professor Ruth Rentschler, and Dr Kerrie Bridson at Deakin University, as well as Associate Professor Jody Evans at Melbourne Business School. Research support was provided by Claudia Escobar, Emma Winston and Nick Cooke.

For more information about the project please contact John Oster, Executive Director, Regional Arts Australia john.oster@regionalarts.com.au

“Settling migrants and refugees in regional Australia has become a major policy purpose for Australian governments, both Commonwealth and state.”²⁴

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

INTRODUCTION

Community connectedness strengthens engagement and resilience, especially given the challenges of a global world.²⁶ Linking local communities through arts activities that connect them leads to improved community networks and capacities. One of the paradoxes of the global world is that the faster globalisation develops, the more people require local community connectedness. In short, community connectedness provides four key strategies to strengthen localities:

1. Community engagement that enables people to agree on local priorities for action
2. Partnerships with local and other levels of government, businesses and organisations
3. Networks to strengthen ties locally, nationally and internationally by information sharing, training and development.
4. Physical places to meet such as arts centres, galleries, community halls or recreation facilities.²⁷

Community connectedness through the arts can have significant positive impact on both individuals and communities across a range of areas.²⁸ It has also been discussed that regional areas have significant challenges in economic development, inequity and community identity due to globalisation and migration.

“Social cohesion operates not in the abstract, the realm of the ‘nation’, but at the community level, where people of different backgrounds and cultures make their lives.”²⁵

When looking at community connectedness and the role the arts play to foster and nurture understanding and respect it is also relevant to review examples of connection between communities. In the Mid-West region of Western Australia, the arts were viewed by those interviewed as a means for connecting communities, linking divisive and disparate groups.²⁹ As such, they engage local people, providing solutions to local problems as a means of addressing inequity experienced as a result of globalisation.³⁰

Access to social events and other activities such as festivals, theatre productions and music concerts, were seen as essential for maintaining the morale of the local community.

Beyond the experience of the artistic product, the arts provide spaces and avenues for individuals and communities to access creative experiences, opportunities for networking, self-expression, a sense of achievement, economic opportunities and supplementary income provision.³¹ In this way, the arts become a vehicle to increased social and civic participation to build resilience to inequity as they strengthen community connectedness, essential for health and wellbeing.³²

Community connectedness examines opportunities and challenges for the arts in regional areas including boosting health, engaging in the community in various ways and volunteering which can increase social capital within a region.³³



Miko Smith with Running Water at Bush Bands Business, CAAMA, 2014, Central Australia.
Photograph by Oliver Eclipse

DEFINITION

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

refers to interaction that a person has with others in their community and the community as a whole. Community connectedness provides the opportunity to engage, which enables people to achieve shared goals. Community connectedness is linked not only to the health of individuals but to the health of communities.

Community engagement has meant different things for women and men. In some engagements, women and men contribute equally, but in other areas, such as volunteering or giving support, women and men engage differently.³⁴



BACKGROUND

With one quarter of the Australian population born overseas and a further one fifth with a parent born overseas, Australia is a popular choice for migration. However, migration brings diversity and diversity brings challenges to security, safety, settlement and a sense of belonging, potentially affecting community connectedness.

With negative stories in the spotlight, such as refugee queue jumping, drowning at sea and local terrorism, participating in the arts in regional and rural communities is one way to create positive bonds with all Australians. We know little about community connectedness in the arts in regional and rural communities. It provides a first step to greater understanding and inclusion of all people in this diverse, vast land.

Further, rural, regional and remote locations are unique, complex and a significant part of Australian identity: defined in part by history and landscape; affected by shifts in economics, government policies and population drift; and challenged by access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities.³⁵

Community connectedness programs and projects in the arts in rural, regional and remote locations can define locations in new ways.



Right: Regional Arts NSW,
Heaps Decent Project.
Photograph by Charlie O'Brien.

Left: Holbrook Yellow Submarine.
Photograph by Natalie Ord, Manifeasto Photography.

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

Community connectedness has three dimensions which impact the arts in regional Australia: individual and community health; community engagement; and volunteering.

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Well-being

Individual and community health is engendered by diversity and creativity, which can be used as seedbeds for urban and regional dynamics.³⁶ Diversity provides a major opportunity within rural areas to bring people together who may not normally work with each other reflecting the changing demographics of society.

Diversity is a condition distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, trans-nationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade.³⁷ Diversity creates potential benefits for production, innovation³⁸ and creativity.

Creativity is about self-expression. The arts provide platforms for self-expression. Artists, visitors, audiences, spectators and the local community contribute when they are involved and provided with resources and infrastructure necessary for connecting with each other.

“Investment in community connectedness through the arts also guarantees that creative practitioners are able to operate with cultural integrity supported by the personal infrastructure that a creative practitioner needs.”³⁹

Exclusion and marginalisation

People who are excluded or marginalised reduce community sense of connectedness. Investment in community connectedness using the arts as the vehicle reduces social isolation and builds health, confidence and self-esteem. Diversity reduces ethnocentric attitudes and fosters trust through bridging relationships and being relevant.⁴⁰

Exclusion and marginalisation can be alleviated through strategic projects. Exclusion or marginalisation in communities can lead to racism and prejudice, which emerges as a potential cost of diversity in regional areas. Extreme examples of resistance to diversity may present as riots or open clashes. Conflicting interests and values present multiple, disparate maladaptive reactions within a community context.⁴¹

Further, marginalisation and exclusion can become entrenched over generations. The treatment of

different generations over time imposes a duty of care on the present generation in managing capital that is to be passed on to future generations. Intra-generational equity (i.e. equity within the present generation) implies equal access to both tangible and intangible cultural capital across social classes, income groups, and locations.⁴²

For example, public art is a component of community connectedness, fostering pride and contributing to heritage development.⁴³

“Strategically executed public art raises awareness of issues such as racism, gang violence, and environmental degradation.

Creating opportunities for diverse peoples to participate through public art strengthens community fabric and informs them about the creative impulse.”⁴⁴



Top: Bec's band, Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival, Fish Creek, VIC.
Photograph by John Banikos.

Centre: The WOW club writes on Army Lane wall, Horsham, 2013.
Photograph by Mars Drum.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is aided by education, both formal and informal, and changes with demographic differences. Arts and education have proven to be a successful mix when addressing social issues. A case study conducted by Vertovec in 2007 in Europe showed that most of the tendencies to be trusting and ethnocentric across Europe were amongst men, older people, lowly educated and unemployed, whereas at the country level hardly any indicators for migration or diversity proved to be significantly related to community connectedness.

The overall conclusion of the study highlights that for Europe, ethnic diversity is not a threat to community connectedness. However, lower educational attainments, low incomes and unemployment are associated with the perception of negative implications of diversity.⁴⁵

• Sense of belonging

Community engagement through the arts provides opportunities to create a sense of belonging. Audiences connect to and value creative ideas. At the same time creative ideas need to respond to the motivations and activities of audiences and to the context of the community in which those audiences participate. Audiences create relationships with performers, as they perform in various contexts.⁴⁶

The notion of performance thus offers an alternative theoretical framework for the microanalysis of audience practices. Therefore, the interactive relationship between audiences and performers is embraced as part of community connectedness.

Bottom: Yarnin filmmakers with Open Channel Mobile Training Unit
-left to right: Auntie Phoebe Nicholson, Malika Kirby, Ruth Murray,
Tyra Collis, Rebecca McLean, Branden Smith, Smokey Murray.
Photograph by Stewart Carter.

• Trust

Trust is inherent in community engagement. Arts develop networks of alliance and advocacy.⁴⁸

Other industry networks that are more formal are useful but catalogued as impersonal and too structured; they are more like professional development organisations than actual networks.⁴⁹ Policies and strategies provide support for sports and arts organisations and practitioners who provide platforms for the establishment and maintenance of networks.

Festivals have been identified as key source of economic regeneration that leverage the cultural heritage of a region and use existing networks of community members, building trust.

Trust can be boosted by envisaging a new 'civic realm' promoting social co-operation and continues to present challenges to local governments when faced with the development of robust, socially cohesive policies.⁵⁰ For example, the Australian Government acknowledged the importance of developing understanding and connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and culture through public policy.⁵¹

The importance of trust for linguistically and culturally diverse communities is exemplified by Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV). Accommodating diverse communities enables the nurturance of artists leading to the expansion of career opportunities enabling improved social integration.⁵²

MAV develops contemporary policy frameworks that enable diversity through participation and representation of all Australian cultural sectors leading to the promotion of trust in diverse communities.

"The arts foster the creation of informal sustainable networks that provide economic and social benefits supporting the exchange of ideas and social interaction that are vital for the development of creative economies."⁴⁷

• Upward Mobility

Upward mobility is available when outsiders with new ideas collaborate with locals, using art to bring people together, building strong networks and providing creative ideas, while reducing social isolation, population drift, agricultural restructuring, unemployment and rural decline. Upward mobility overcomes health, mental and social problems that have negative impacts on people and community quality of life, sense of well-being and development.

The arts provide an accessible and socially acceptable platform for self-expression for people who are both in the criminal justice system and those who are at risk of entering it,⁵³ taking them out of a downward spiral.

Upward mobility brings long-term social capital and strengthens production and innovation within the region,⁵⁴ helping people better themselves. The role of the arts for regional upward mobility is relevant when designing cultural policies and local planning strategies.⁵⁵

The arts are seen as providing tools that promote mobility through a common language, which furthers societal development.⁵⁶

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an activity where people give their time pro bono in order to help other people, organisations or a cause. Much of what we understand about volunteering has come from sociology, sport and museums.⁵⁷

Volunteers are used in the arts in events, festivals, galleries and museums, performing arts centres, to name a few. Often, they are crucial in the production of the arts activity itself, including large scale events such as the Cultural Olympics.⁵⁸ At international events, such as the Olympics, for every dollar invested \$21 is created in comparative worth through volunteer efforts.

Volunteering is explained by individual level motivations as well as societal level factors such as the importance of social ties and organisational activity.⁵⁹ For example, volunteers can have the internal motivation to become fans, such as occurs at the Elvis Festival in regional NSW,⁶⁰ following the event at their own cost. As a fan volunteer, there is excitement, nostalgia, friendship and camaraderie for the individual as well as group support and dynamics that keeps motivation high. In these ways, volunteering builds a sense of community connectedness.

As volunteering has positive impacts on people who volunteer as well as those helped by volunteers, volunteering is argued to be beneficial to health and well-being. It aids satisfaction with life, boosts self-esteem, health, and achievement, functioning and reduces mortality. Further, volunteering has been argued to reduce the likelihood of drug abuse and school truancy.⁶¹

“In this context, volunteering has positive effects on people’s physical and mental vitality, purposeful behaviours, providing a sense of control, and greater social involvement.”⁶²

Arts organisations within regional areas rely on volunteers, offering opportunities for marginalised individuals to engage and connect with their community, whilst building networks, skills and professional experience.

*Volunteer Charlie Chaplins guide viewers down the laneways,
Silver Ball Screening Festival, 2014, Warrnambool.
Photograph by Aaron Sawall, The Standard*





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