

**STATS AND STORIES - THEME 3**



# **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

**THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**

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# FAST FACTS



## DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>

22.9m Estimated population of Australia.  
60% Increase in Australia’s population from net overseas migration 2001-2012.  
40% Natural increase in Australia’s population 2001-2012.

## EMPLOYMENT

11.6m+ Australians are employed. The workforce is highly concentrated on the Eastern seaboard, with more than three quarters employed in the three most populous states (New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland).<sup>2</sup>  
6.3% Unemployment rate in Australia in November of 2014. In Australia, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force.<sup>3</sup>  
6% Reduction in persistent family joblessness 2002-2010.<sup>4</sup>

## EDUCATION<sup>5</sup>

75% Australians aged 20–24 years have completed a Year 12 certificate.  
18% Increase in post-secondary school qualification attainment of Australians aged 25-64 1997-2012.

## INEQUALITY

1.5m People aged over 15 years have low economic resources and high financial stress.<sup>6</sup>  
640,000 Australians experience multiple and entrenched disadvantage.<sup>7</sup>  
590,000 Children under 15 lived in jobless families in 2011.<sup>8</sup>  
100,000 People were counted as homeless on Census night in 2006.<sup>9</sup>  
73% Australians agree that gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large.<sup>10</sup>  
42% Australians disagree people living on low incomes in Australia receive enough financial support from the government.<sup>11</sup>  
54% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 15-24 are fully engaged in education and/or work.<sup>12</sup>

## ETHNIC DIVERSITY

84% Australians agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.<sup>13</sup>  
25% Australian population was born overseas.<sup>14</sup>  
20% Australian population has one parent born overseas.<sup>15</sup>

## SATISFACTION AND WELL-BEING<sup>16</sup>

75% Australians are satisfied with their life.  
79.5 yrs. Average life expectancy for males.  
84 yrs. Average life expectancy for females.  
68% Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of self-reported good health.<sup>17</sup>  
85% Australians have a higher rate of self-reported good health than the OECD average.<sup>18</sup>

## ARTS<sup>19</sup>

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.  
8% Increase in visual arts and craft participation 2009-2013.  
7% Increase in creative participation 2009-2013.

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Cover Image: Measuring water clarity using a Secchi Disk, Hydro+Graphy Project, 2014, Streaky Bay. Photograph by Mark Tipple.

Image: Water, Water carrier silhouette, 2013, Renmark, SA. Photograph by Tracey Chapman.

## 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](mailto:john.oster@regionalarts.com.au)



# SOCIAL INCLUSION

## INTRODUCTION

Australia has increasing ethnic diversity and a changing landscape. It is confronted with challenges to develop inclusive communities that understand, recognise and integrate social inclusion effectively. Little attention has been paid to how to integrate social inclusion into the community. Hence, there is racial discrimination and racial tension, sometimes leading to violence and abuse. Such phenomena highlight the importance of understanding social inclusion.<sup>20</sup> The arts can be a force for promoting social inclusion, thus creating greater harmony in society.

On the positive side, Australia is perceived as a stable, democratic, pluralist nation with a skilled workforce and a strong, competitive economy. Its success in embracing social inclusion has been an example to the world in part due to immigration policies and programs that welcome people from all over the world who are qualified and capable of integrating into society.<sup>21</sup>

“The arts play a vital role in social inclusion, which incorporates cultural as well as social, economic and political systems that are inter-related, and determines the social integration of its people.”<sup>22</sup>

However, most work on social inclusion has occurred in the social, economic and political aspects. There is less understanding of social inclusion in a cultural framework.

The arts play a vital role in social inclusion, which incorporates cultural as well as social, economic and political systems that are inter-related, and determines the social integration of its people,<sup>22</sup> leading to social inclusion. Social inclusion is an active process by which the personal and structural impacts of socio-economic disadvantage are addressed.<sup>23</sup>



Tjanpi Desert Weavers, WOWK, Katherine, NT.  
Photograph by Kara Burns.

## DEFINITION

### SOCIAL INCLUSION

entails a society where all people feel valued, their differences respected, and their basic needs met so they can live in dignity. Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community. It is a determinant of mental health & wellbeing.<sup>24</sup>

Social inclusion is often described as a ‘human right or moral imperative.’ It refers to policies or programs designed to remove barriers to participation in mainstream society. Social inclusion provides a society ‘in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in [its] life.’ Hence, social inclusion alleviates social problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown.’<sup>25</sup>





“The arts play a significant role in community engagement, in health and well-being, in social inclusion of communities of all kinds and in reconciliation and the life of people in regional communities.”<sup>27</sup>

## BACKGROUND

Through social inclusion, the arts are used as a way of reaching and engaging with people in regional areas, providing entertainment, light relief and facilitating communication among community members, government, and industry,<sup>26</sup> and engaging with stakeholders, artists and audiences.

The arts play a significant role in community engagement, in health and well-being, in social inclusion of communities of all kinds (including youth, Indigenous, the aged, those of different cultural and geographic origins, and the socially marginalised) and in reconciliation and the life of people in regional communities.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the role of community associations involved in craft, music, and other artistic and creative practices that have the potential to bring disparate groups together, without requiring a minimum number of participants, is receiving attention in community development, health, and academic settings.

Arts and craft groups bring disparate groups together, particularly when there are limited alternative social opportunities or existing historical, racial or family divisions. For example, touring shows and concerts bring a lot more people out of the woodwork. The arts draw a different crowd of people who would not normally engage in sport or racing, or join a group, or be involved in a committee.

In this sense, the arts provide both social opportunities and entertainment value by engaging with different people in different ways.

*The crew, Sand Tracks tour 2010, Country Arts WA.  
Photograph by Mathew McHugh*



## DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion consists of seven sub-dimensions: Feeling valued; Respecting differences; Human rights and moral imperatives; Policies and programs; Removing barriers to participation; Systemic discrimination; Crime reduction.

### FEELING VALUED

Interpersonal life is loaded with both opportunity and peril. Feeling valued by others allows people to satisfy deep-seated and fundamental belongingness needs<sup>28</sup> including partners, family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and immediate local community.

People need to feel they belong and this connects with the need of feeling valued. The arts provide pathways to enable people to feel valued. This is relevant in regional, rural and remote areas where people can feel more isolated. The arts provide opportunities to marginalised groups in these areas.

Networks in the arts and outside them provide access and opportunities to share ideas and develop.<sup>29</sup> For Indigenous communities living in

regional areas, arts networks provide a means to engage with community members, government, and industry.<sup>30</sup>

The arts can enhance civic agency and play a significant role in establishing egalitarian ethos. For example, the making of art can help individuals to define their identity, discover agency, and challenge themselves to take responsibility as citizens both in an established or new community context.

“The ability to be truly creative, to imagine that which is not there, and to have the skills to bring what is imagined into being is a fundamentally empowering capacity, one that gives people agency and opens possibilities for mobility.”<sup>31</sup>

*Jason Dhamarandji from Saltwater Band performing, Country Arts WA Sand Tracks tour 2010, Photograph by Mathew McHugh.*



“The pluralist picture of the world enjoins us to recognise that there are diverse and incompatible conceptual and moral frameworks, belief systems and values, without there being an overarching criterion to decide which provides the ‘truth’.”<sup>32</sup>

## RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

Australia contains a high degree of diversity and is described as a multicultural society. The source of diversity is immigration where large numbers of individuals and families are admitted from other countries.

Immigrants maintain some of their customs regarding food, dress, recreation, religion and associate with each other and with settled communities, in order to maintain practices but also to see them fuse into mainstream society.

“An increasing number of countries now contain sizeable immigrant communities, but it is the New World ‘countries of immigration’ which have the greatest experience in this area particularly Australia, Canada and the United States.”<sup>33</sup>

But even so, the latest Mapping Social Cohesion survey by the Scanlon Foundation found 19% of Australians were discriminated against because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religious beliefs in 2013 - up from 12% in 2012. It was the highest level since the survey began in 2007.<sup>34</sup>

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in resettling refugees in regional areas of Australia.<sup>35</sup> There is a growing need to promote and maintain respect for differences, while values and traditions commonly accepted by refugees may not be accepted or understood elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

It is common for ethnic groups, especially the newly arrived, to naturally be interested in the arts from their own culture, suggesting there are opportunities for arts practitioners and organisations to extend their reach by ‘connecting ethnic groups’ and ‘enabling them to overcome cultural divisions’.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, other marginalised groups such as the GLBTIQ community within regional areas experience cultural divisions. For these communities, ‘negotiating a sense of belonging in and to Australia is a contested and complicated process’.<sup>38</sup> In comparison to Australian metropolitan cities, rural areas are seen as sites of ‘gay/lesbian oppression and absence’.<sup>39</sup>

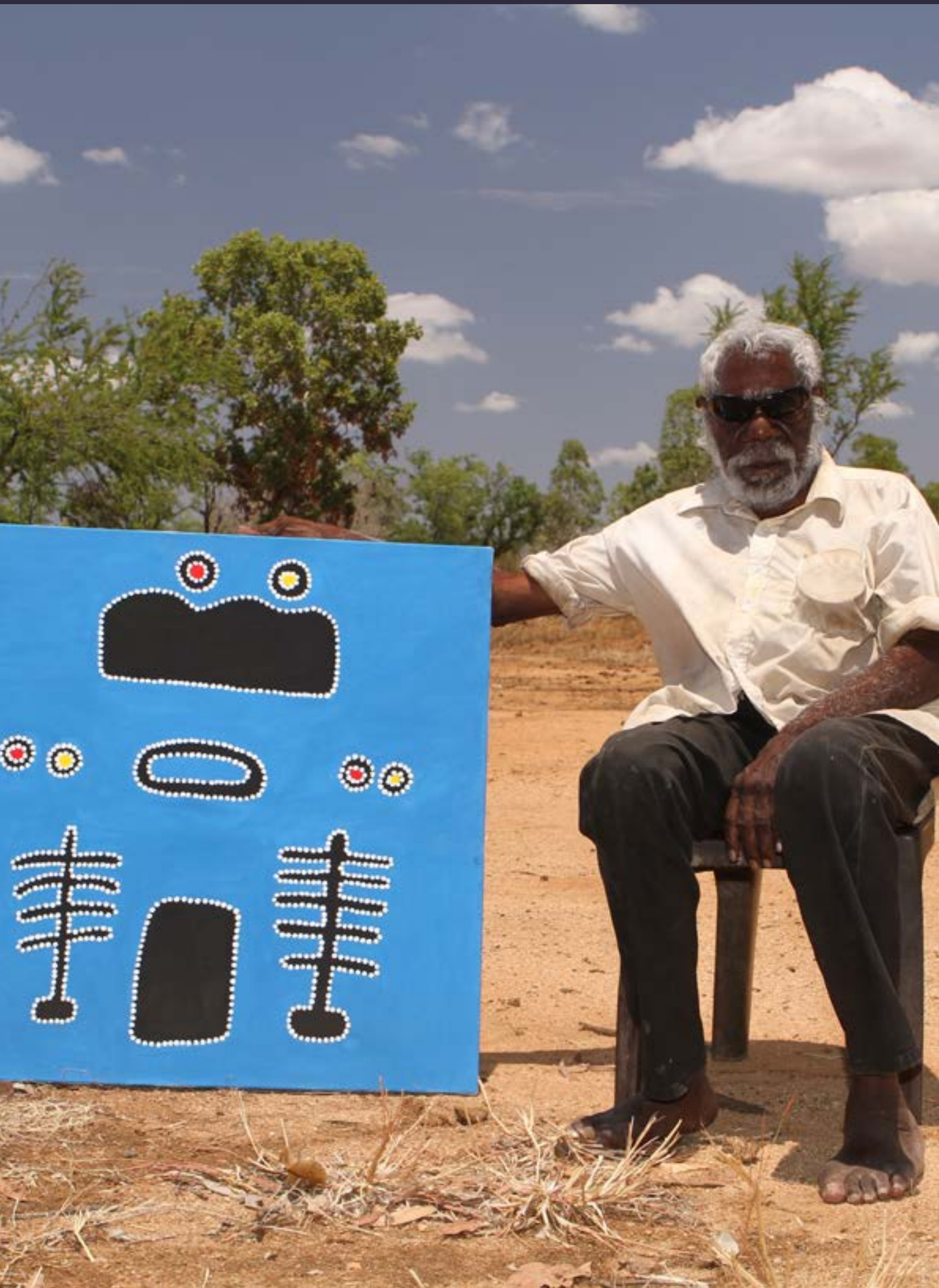
As a pluralist society, cosmopolitan ethics are emerging among significant minorities growing on a worldwide sense of community that are identified in four ways: the anthropological consciousness that recognises unity in diversity; the ecological consciousness that recognises singular human nature within the biosphere; the civic consciousness of common responsibilities and solidarity; and the dialogical consciousness that refers both to the critical mind and to the need for mutual understanding.<sup>40</sup>

The arts provide avenues to include people in a pluralist society, so that they encounter mutual respect within different cultural outlooks.<sup>41</sup> They provide a means for inclusion and respect in instances where minority groups are isolated and disconnected from the wider community.

*Theaker von Ziarno performing her Aerial show ‘Minerva’ at TropiCOOL 2013, Kununurra WA.  
Photograph by Anton Blume.*







## HUMAN RIGHTS AND MORAL IMPERATIVES

Human rights and moral imperatives underlie social inclusion initiatives, which are consistent with federal and state legislation and policies.<sup>42</sup> Human rights argue that stigmas need to be removed in order to include everyone in the community. Stigma is associated with disadvantaged groups within communities and results in social isolation. Stigma occurs when a group of individuals are labelled as having undesirable characteristics that develop into stereotypes, and those labelled experience discrimination.<sup>43</sup>

‘Disadvantaged communities can experience stigma as a result of health, disabilities, socio-economic status, and ethnicity that then affects employment, housing, education and illness experience stigma, delaying their access to timely treatment, reducing positive outcomes.’<sup>44</sup> Human rights of refugees and migrants are sometimes trammelled, especially if they cut across other areas of disadvantage such as mental illness. With refugees and migrants settling more and more in regional communities, respecting their human rights and understanding their moral imperatives is part of social inclusion.

The arts can help to educate and connect individuals to address issues of stigma, thus protecting human rights and moral imperatives.

“There is good evidence that the creative arts have a role in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of participants and challenging stigma against people with mental health problems to promote social inclusion.”<sup>45</sup>

*Rammy Ramsey, In the Saddle, On the Wall.  
Photograph by Matt Fallon.*

## POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Social inclusion occurs when policies and programs provide strategies and structures to bring people together. Australia is a country where ‘people born in a non-English speaking country are less likely to creatively participate in the arts: 38%, compared with 48% for those born in English speaking countries.’<sup>46</sup> Hence, developing policies and programs to bring people together, to stop feelings of being an outsider or of alienation promote social inclusion.

Further, social inclusion occurs when there is strong representation of an individual’s cultural heritage in the mainstream culture. Australia is a “fusion culture.”<sup>47</sup> where new habits, foods, lifestyles and artistic styles are eventually adopted and absorbed into the mainstream, developing something new. Policies and programs that help fusion occur more quickly promote social inclusion.

Policies and programs formalise the pride that individuals feel and encourage inclusivity.<sup>48</sup> Diversifying cultural practices provides the Australian community, including refugees and migrants, with a sense of belonging, self-determination, and ethnic identity.<sup>49</sup>

Policies and programs that include the arts have “a key role to play in creating a single shared identity within a diverse population as they can bring people together in ways that allow them to learn with and from each other.”<sup>50</sup>

Social inclusion is what mostly drives recently established ethnic communities to participate in the arts, highlighting the importance of the cultural peoples can collaborate and develop knowledge and understanding. Policies and programs are a key tool to promote social inclusion.





Hozaira Ahmad writes on the Horsham Regional Library WOW wall, 2013.  
Photograph by Mars Drum.

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Social inclusion entails removing barriers to increase participation and build sustainable communities that facilitate action and co-operation for mutual benefit.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, a key part of creating social inclusion is to remove barriers to participation that may otherwise cause social isolation. Social isolation occurs when people do not feel connected to community.

Of Australia's 20 million people, 66% live in capital cities, towns or other major metropolitan centres, the remaining 6 million people are spread out across 8 million square kilometers, living in what are referred to as rural or remote areas.<sup>52</sup>

People living in rural and remote Australia can be socially isolated, due to less face-to-face contact with family, friends and other support networks.<sup>53</sup>

Experiencing social isolation can cause harmful thoughts, loss of self-esteem, fear and anger, social rejection, punishing the self, and exclusion.<sup>54</sup> This social isolation can lead to suicidal behaviour and may contribute to the reasons behind suicide rates in rural and remote areas of Australia being significantly higher than the national average and very remote regions have suicide rates more than double that of major capital cities.<sup>55</sup>

Motivations to access mental health services can be a challenge due to limited mental health services offered in regional and remote areas.<sup>56</sup>

However, the possibility of social exclusion and the pain that accompanies it is ubiquitous. Across social contexts, perceived or anticipated rejection experiences not only exert an immediate influence on affect, cognition, and behaviour, but they also guide future interactions.<sup>57</sup>

Social inclusion entails enabling full participation in community life, part of which is engagement with the arts, their organisations and its diversity of cultural expression. Social inclusion entails 'an inclusive environment where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds are given an opportunity to participate in and contribute towards the socio-economic development of society.'<sup>58</sup>

The arts can assist marginalised individuals, such as low-income earners, older people and individuals with ill health and from diverse cultural backgrounds, through integrating them into business processes.<sup>59</sup>

Increased participation from marginalised groups improves self-esteem and confidence, leading to improved employment opportunities, higher income and better health.<sup>60</sup>

**“Community arts organisations have made a significant effort to include marginalised cultural groups from the community into the workforce.”<sup>61</sup>**

Hence, the arts bring people together in a professional capacity to create art, rehearse, and take part in performances, contributing towards a collective sense of identity and place.<sup>62</sup>





Lilly Bone, *Hunting for Foxes*, Mullewa, WA.  
Photograph by Carlo Fernandes.



Center: *Unravelling the Maranoa*, Mitchell State School workshop, Teachers, visiting artists and scientist, Jude Macklin and Mark Macklin and students, March, 2013.  
Photograph by Bronwyn Moore, Maranoa Council.



Right: Louise King, Community Launch Event, *Eudlo Dreaming, Animating Spaces*, 2013, Eudlo, QLD.  
Photograph by Peter Ryan.

## SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION

Systemic discrimination refers to “indirect” or “effect” based discrimination in policies, practices or procedures or the way things are done,<sup>63</sup> It can also refer to discrimination of a certain type (e.g. gender, race, disability, sexual preference) that is widespread, persistent and which entrenches inequality.

Systemic discrimination occurs where legislation, policies, procedures, practices, organisational structures or workplace cultures enshrine discrimination. It may involve allegations of a pattern of violations or a systematic failure to protect the rights of a group or individuals.<sup>64</sup>

Marginalised groups experience discrimination when efforts hinder diversity within communities. Cultural or intellectual differences can be overlooked and used as reasons for exclusion. Even though Australia has anti-discriminatory laws, racism and discrimination are reported in Australia.

To overcome discrimination, marginalised individuals and groups can celebrate their uniqueness and be given opportunities to share and collaborate their perspectives with majority groups<sup>65</sup> through the arts.

Systemic discrimination is found in Aboriginal Australians and CALD communities who often experience systemic barriers to full participation in Australian life.<sup>66</sup>

Equal Opportunity regulators across the country receive complaints of race-based discrimination in a variety of settings, including employment, education, provision of goods and services, accommodation, and clubs. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission has found evidence of over-representation in low paid employment, underemployment, intimidation in the workplace and bias against promotion.

The sources of discrimination have been identified as attitudinal, ignorance, fear and lack of understanding of cultural differences, power and privilege.<sup>67</sup> The arts provide programs for identity to take place, reducing systemic discriminations.

## CRIME REDUCTION

Social inclusion has been criticised as promoting violence and racial tension. On the contrary, when implementing policies and programs for social inclusion, using the arts as a vehicle,<sup>68</sup> diversity can provide an opportunity in rural areas to reduce social isolation and build health, confidence and self-esteem in rural or regional communities, hence reducing crime, drug use or violence. It can limit racism and prejudices, resulting in fewer open clashes and riots.<sup>69</sup>

Crime reduction can be costly to implement due to its negative perceptions, linking it to low education, low incomes and unemployment. However, it has community support as it creates inclusion through promoting safety and social harmony.

Arts interventions have positive social inclusion outcomes for crime reduction. A case study of a drama-based cognitive development program with violent offenders—the Pump Challenging Violence program— found ‘a positive impact on participants’ cognitive skills and capacity to reflect on personal behaviours, including criminal behaviours.’<sup>70</sup>

“Arts programs have been shown to keep people ‘off the streets’ and have ‘positive psychological benefits that reduce individuals’ predispositions towards criminal activity.’”<sup>71</sup>

Hence, ‘engaging in the arts has been found to improve self-esteem, self-understanding and interpersonal communication, leading to an increase in the use of art in health care settings around the world,’<sup>72</sup> as well as criminal settings, as the two can be linked.

Sometimes people with mental health problems resort to crime due to a feeling of exclusion or inability to cope in the community. Bringing them into the mainstream through the arts is one way to engage them. Arts engagement provides people with mental health problems with a means of communication and self-expression,<sup>73</sup> more positive outlets for them and for the community.





# ENDNOTES

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*Lewis McDonald, emerging from the deep,  
Hydro+Graphy Project, Streaky Bay, 2014.  
Photograph by Mark Tipple.*







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