Regional Arts Australia promotes the development of the arts for the one-in-three Australians that live in regional, rural and remote parts of the country.

Regional Arts Australia: It’s members give country Australians access to outstanding cultural experiences that are either home grown or tour from other towns and cities. In this way, Regional Arts Australia gives a voice to artists and puts culture at the heart of community life across country Australia.

As a national advocate, 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, artworkers and communities to meet the special needs and challenges that accompany arts practice, arts promotion and market development in regional and rural Australia.

Regional Arts Australia is committed to developing positive collaborations and partnerships that will help to create healthy, inclusive and culturally rich regional communities where people’s abilities, strengths, diverse cultures and needs are taken into account.
The national regional arts broadband forum was an initiative of Regional Arts Australia, delivered in partnership with Feral Arts and was supported by the Regional Arts Fund.

Feral Arts are innovators in the field of digital storytelling, community mapping and communications and specialise in partnerships with leading agencies in the arts, community, environment and health sectors.

Feral Arts enhance storytelling and communications capacities, and grow their reach and impact across the community. They build world-leading user-led software systems, and explore the potential of emerging digital technologies in finding creative solutions to social and cultural challenges.

Feral Arts’ broader aim is to encourage cultural pluralism, social inclusion and sustainable development. They respect the cultural rights of all people, acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia’s original cultures and the proper starting point for cultural development.
On Monday 28th March 2011, Regional Arts Australia held a national regional arts broadband forum at Parliament House, Canberra with special guest the Hon Simon Crean MP, Minister for Regional Australia Regional Development and Local Government, Minister for the Arts.

The forum was facilitated by well known arts leader Ms Anne Dunn. It brought over seventy leading practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders from across the country together with over six hundred participants online, to discuss the roll-out of broadband and address the question ‘how will better access to broadband enable the arts to help build stronger communities?’

Streamed live from Parliament House by Feral Arts, forum participants saw comments as they came in online and via twitter, and featured a showcase of leading regional arts projects from across the country. The webcast was designed for people particularly in rural and regional areas to listen in and have their say.

The forum was an opportunity to hear the views of professionals with an interest in the arts, media, technology, communications, education and training and the roll out of the national broadband network, and be a part of the discussion to find new ways for regional Australians to create and participate in the arts.

The audio of the day is available online at www.regionalarts.com.au/raa1/national-regional-arts-broadband-forum.asp
In August 2010, during its national conference _Junction 2010_ in Launceston Tasmania, Regional Arts Australia decided that one of its priorities was to consider how the roll out of the national broadband network (NBN) was likely to change the arts and cultural sectors in regional Australia.

At the same time a national gathering of regional arts development officers at the conference, together with Feral Arts, started a national postcard campaign online to highlight the importance of the national broadband network to arts and culture in regional communities. The postcards can be viewed at: www.regionalarts.com.au/raa1/rural-broadband-campaign.asp

The forum

Anne Dunn engaged the forum in a conversation around the following questions:

What does the National Broadband Network (NBN) mean?

What is the relationship between the Arts and Broadband?

How will it be articulated?

How are we going to get it on the agenda?

What are the things that need to be done to make this direct relationship between the Arts and Broadband work?

For information about the national broadband network, first and second release sites and case studies, go to www.nbnco.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/main/site-base/main-areas/home

Key topics

The forum came up with six key topics for the arts to address in relation to broadband:

- Content
- Business and enterprise
- Community
- Education and training
- Infrastructure
- Creative Intersections
Issues and Directions
The national broadband network will deliver new ways to encourage artists to expand their thinking – to think differently, imagine what they can do that they don’t do at present.
Artists across the country will be able to use the NBN to find inspiration, create content, collaborate with other artists, develop their skills and distribute their work.
Arts organisations, regional development agencies and arts funding bodies need to support local programs and projects that will help generate new Australian content.

Key ideas
• Get arts organisations up to speed on the technology.
• Develop artist’s communication networks.
• Develop tools such as digital catalogues of artists work and online marketing tools.
• Develop artists understanding about new markets and audiences.
• Profile and acknowledge the artists that create online content to help develop their careers.
• Use multiple platforms for arts events, conferences, festivals etc.

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia
• Have a key focus on content creation in relation to the NBN for future Regional Arts Fund grant programs.
• Promote funding opportunities for regional artists and arts organisations to get up to speed on the technology.
• Include a focus on developing new markets and audiences as a result of the NBN in the Regional Arts Australia national communications strategy.
• Work with the ABC to find new ways to direct artists to the ABC ArtPost site.
• Feature artists that create new online content in publications and the RAA website.
• Focus on content development for future Regional Arts Australia national conferences and forums and use multiple platforms to deliver these events.
Business and enterprise: new ways to work

**Issues and Directions**

To help drive productivity growth and skills development, artists, arts organisations and businesses need new opportunities to access markets outside their local community, to work with other artists, technicians and businesses, to use archival content and access innovative cutting edge ideas – all of which can offer greater opportunities to develop sustainable careers in the arts.

Small and micro businesses need assistance and advice so they can start up and have new opportunities to learn how to manage businesses more economically and effectively online.

**Key ideas**

- Develop people’s understanding of better online business tools to help run arts organisations.
- Develop the online marketing capability of arts organisations.
- Expand the Australia Council’s ‘Geek in Residence’ program.
- Promote better business tools to run arts organisations eg cloud computing and business tracking.
- Develop an ‘arts ready’ traineeship for young people in schools.
- Gather information which demonstrates the impact of the NBN in regional Australia.
- Make it possible for Indigenous communities to access new markets by ensuring virtual connections will support uploading of quality information, footage and images.
- Local government and Regional Development Australia help to grow good business practices and enterprise development in local communities via the NBN.

**Proposals for Regional Arts Australia**

- Seek sponsorship and develop better online communications tools to support national networks and meetings.
- Seek a ‘Geek in Residence’ from the Australia Council for the Arts to assist Regional Arts Australia and its member organisations to improve their own business practices via the use of high speed broadband.
- Promote better business practice through using new technologies.
- Contribute to the development of an ‘arts ready’ traineeship for young people in regional communities.
- Have a key focus on research and data collection alongside the roll out of the NBN.
- Work with the Australia Council for the Arts to expand the reach of their national marketing summit to regional arts organisations.
Community: new ways to participate, be healthy and sustainable

"...we were talking about the NBN linking artists and performers around the world, in ‘virtual communities’ and ‘communities of interest’ finding inspiration, developing skills and creating new markets. We talked about mainstreaming the arts into a creative nation, the importance of creativity in education, in industry and in resilient communities.

MEG LARKIN, BOARD MEMBER OF REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA AND CHAIR OF REGIONAL ARTS NSW.

Issues and Directions

The national broadband network gives local government and others a chance to present information in the community and relate to community in new ways. People will be able to participate in things they have not been able to be part of in the past.

For communities to take ownership of the space and have a voice, local government, regional development agencies, arts funding bodies and lead arts organisations need to invest in community based development so that people can use the technology to benefit their community.

The NBN has the potential to increase productivity in the regions by opening up the reach of regional arts organisations and introducing them to new audiences and markets.

Key ideas

• Communities learn and develop expertise in online technologies.
• Communities learn new ways to protect and preserve their language and culture.
• Communities can present their own culture and art and market and brand themselves online.

• Local libraries are hubs for communities to access research material through digital archives and artefacts.
• Communities take up intergenerational opportunities to learn, eg younger people teaching older people.
• Communities get to participate in and experience the arts in their own communities and from across the world in new ways.
• Develop new ways to deliver arts partnerships, programs and projects eg with health and environment.

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia

• Promote new NBN funding opportunities for communities in regional Australia.
• Have a key focus on the NBN for community cultural development projects under the Regional Arts Fund grants programs.
• Work with the Australia Council for the Arts’ Community Partnerships program to develop some pilot models of good practice for digital communities online.
• Develop and promote online stories, case studies and information on arts and health, and arts and environment projects and programs.
Issues and Directions

At the forum the Minister talked about the government’s commitment to delivering a national cultural policy. You’d be aware that the government is committed to delivering a national cultural policy. This is a major initiative and it will be the first time for more than two decades that a government embarks on this.

The development of a national cultural policy will integrate arts policy within the broader policy agenda of Government, taking the arts and creative industries into the mainstream for policy makers and community leaders.

The NBN is the largest nation building infrastructure project ever undertaken in Australia and the national cultural policy can help Australia to position itself to take advantage of it.

In November 2010 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications started an Inquiry into the role and potential of the NBN. The committee is due to report to Parliament in August 2011. To raise the profile of the arts with national broadband decision makers in Australia it is important that the Inquiry receives a submission from the arts sector.

Key ideas

- Ensure funding programs support the new environment of developing and diverse technologies.
- The development of locally produced content is a key policy direction.
- There are ways for people to be informed about accessing culturally rich online content.
- The potential for opening up new markets and expanding the arts and creative industries is recognised.
- Research and data collection that supports and informs sustainable arts practice is put in place.
- The arts are included in the government’s Inquiry into the role and potential of the NBN.

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia

- Commit to active participation in the development of the national cultural policy.
- Consult with regional Australians across the country and represent the policy views of regional Australians to government.
- Have a key focus on the NBN for the Regional Arts Fund national strategic initiatives.
- Collaborate with the Australia Council for the Arts to make a submission to the Communications Committee inquiry into the role and potential of the NBN.
Issues and Directions

The NBN will change how regional schools can access and participate in the arts. It will bring new opportunities for children and young people to create art, to learn from and experience working with artists, to access digital archives from across the world and for collaborating with others to create work on projects, events and performances. It can bring places like arts venues, studios, indigenous cultural centres and film sets into the classroom.

The new national arts curriculum must incorporate the potential of the NBN into curriculum content, delivery and assessment mechanisms. The NBN will help teachers to be better equipped and confident in bringing the arts into classrooms, and strengthened by working more effectively with artists, arts organisations and institutions. New management systems, course content, research, teaching and learning methodology and assessment are all possible through the NBN.

Key ideas

- Develop effective new online education and training delivery and assessment methodology.
- Provide new opportunities for students to create art and experience art using multiple technologies.
- Create new, safe ways for students to communicate and network with other students across regional and remote areas.
- Tap into archives of knowledge across the world and conduct research online.
- Inform students about new career pathways for young people in their own communities and beyond.
- Incorporate online access into the Australia Council for the Arts’ artists in schools program for both program delivery and creation of art.
- Ensure relevant professional development in digital technologies for existing arts teachers and effective pre service arts teacher training.

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia

- Feed key ideas about the potential of the NBN for regional schools into national arts curriculum development.
- Develop ways for local artists and arts organisations to link with schools in regional Australia.
- Provide Smart in Business Unit ‘Train Others’ to regional artists so they can work more effectively with schools.
- Have a focus on arts education and the NBN at Regional Arts Australia’s national conferences.
Issues and Directions

Broadband brings opportunities for individuals to collaborate and access other’s skills and support from outside their own communities. New communities of interest will spring up through the NBN, with more opportunity for collaboration between people in arts communities and other disciplines to work together. The arts can take up new opportunities that the NBN will bring for partnerships across art forms, creative and technical areas as well as between creators, producers and presenters. New opportunities will open up for the arts to develop collaborations across other sectors such as health, education, regional development, communications, local government and the environment locally, statewide and nationally.

Key ideas

- Have arts and culture incorporated into local planning, programs and projects by Regional Development Australia committees.
- Recognise and promote successful cross sector partnerships and programs.
- Cultivate the development of online communities of interest using community cultural development practices.
- Facilitate an ongoing national exchange of ideas about the NBN roll out.

Proposals for Regional Arts Australia

- Have a focus on stories about digital content in the 2012 RAA publication of great regional arts fund stories, including collection, telling and publishing the stories.
- Collaborate with Feral Arts to encourage greater involvement of the arts and cultural sector in the NBN roll-out and maximise the benefits to regional communities.
- Support the network of Regional Arts Development Officers across the country to develop their own expertise and be at the forefront of preparing their communities for the roll out of the NBN.
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