

20 OCTOBER 2020

The House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts
Australia Government
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Regional Arts Australia Submission to the House of Representatives The Standing Committee on Communication and the Arts

Dear Dr David Gillespie MP

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this House of Representatives inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is pleased to present this submission to the Australian Government on behalf of Regional Arts Australia, our Member organisations and regional program administrators:

- Regional Arts WA
- Regional Arts Victoria
- Regional Arts NSW
- Country Arts SA
- RANT TAS
- Flying Arts Alliance QLD
- Darwin Community Arts NT

The time is right for the arts and creative industries to take a lead role in regional development. Arts and culture are a crucial element in the make-up of future liveable regions and are central to thriving and healthy communities and sustainable growth across regional, rural and remote Australia.

ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA

Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is a not for profit peak body that is the national voice for arts in regional Australia.

We seek to ensure the arts in regional Australia are recognised as essential and are embedded within the Federal Governments Plan for Regional Australia. We believe in strong partnership between governments, industry, not-for-profits and commercial business and we advocate to work more effectively across industry and policy sectors to build a diverse, robust and more sustainable regional, remote and rural Australia.

We work to address the need for the arts and creative industries to be critically positioned across multiple policy platforms; including Digital connectivity, Education and Employment, Health services and drought relief, Tourism and Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The cultural and creative industries play a critical role in contributing to the creativity, diversity and prosperity of Australia's regional and rural economy

The thriving national regional arts sector demands a crucial dialogue on the impact created by regional arts and artists. Partnerships are critical and are key in leveraging cross industry support and championing regional arts beyond the regional arts sector. With support, the creative industries have the potential to lead the wider social, economic and community recovery required.

We recommend that arts and culture are understood as essential through:

- 1. Regional Policy**
- 2. National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan**
- 3. Cross industry engagement;**
 - Tourism**
 - Hospitality**
 - Retail**
 - Education**
 - Health**
 - Connectivity**
 - Agriculture**
- 4. Long term Investment in a Whole of Ecology approach:**
 - Cultural Infrastructure**
 - Small, Medium and Large Organisations**
 - Placed Based Programs & Creative Practice**
 - Industry and Artist lead programs**
- 5. Access to resources and services**
 - Digital Connectivity**
 - Hard and Soft infrastructure**
 - Technology**
 - Training and Education**

We must work alongside our First Nations colleagues to support communities, knowledge, landscapes, ecosystems and Indigenous cultural sites across Australia.

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Arts and culture are essential in regional, rural and remote Australia. Sustainable and vibrant arts and creative industries deliver real short, medium and long-term benefits for all communities and the regions in which they work with measurable impacts across artistic, social, economic and health indexes.

All indicators are pointing to a growing regional sector and greater integration of cultural industries with tourism, agricultural, health, education and technology specifically.

“Contributing \$111.7 billion to the Australian economy 6.4% of GDP in 2016–17, and employing more than 800,000 people (8.1% of the total workforce), this is an industry area that is internationally recognised as resistant to automation and as a jobs-rich area of the economy. The cultural and creative economy has significant growth potential to 2030 and beyond.”

The above quote is from A New Approach's recently released Working Paper 1: Edited Extract from Australia's cultural and creative economy: A 21st century guide. The forthcoming report extrapolates that in 2016-17 Australia's cultural and creative activity was valued at \$111.7 billion, however, it makes an important note that cultural and creative activity is much larger than the creative arts; *“The cultural and creative industries are a subsection of the broader cultural and creative economy. In the same analysis of 2016-17, BCAR found that activity from these industries contributed \$91 billion to GDP”.*

“The cultural and creative economy, including activity in the wide range of cultural and creative industries as well as cultural and creative activity performed in other industries, was worth \$111.7B to the Australian economy in 2016–17 (6.4% of GDP). Of this, the 12 domains in the cultural and creative industries contributed \$91 billion.”

The ABS and BCAR research on Australia's cultural and creative activity includes 12 'domains' – that is, industry groupings – based on the ANZSIC codes. These domains are:

- Broadcasting, electronic or digital media, and film
- Design
- Environmental heritage
- Fashion
- Library and archives
- Literature and print media
- Museums
- Music composition and publishing
- Other cultural goods and manufacturing and sales
- Performing arts
- Supporting activities
- Visual arts and crafts.

The \$111.7 billion contribution to GDP figure combines the economic activity generated in these 12 domains, with the economic activity of people employed in creative occupations working outside the cultural and creative industries (that is, embedded creatives). It refers to cultural and creative activity, based on the Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts.

The Australia Institute created an 'arts and entertainment' subset by using a grouping of ABS industry subcategories drawn from the "arts and recreation" and "information media and telecommunications" categories. These are the same ABS definitions presented in the New Approach forthcoming report 'Australia's cultural and creative economy: A 21st century guide.

The arts and entertainment subcategories are:

- creative and performing arts activities
- motion picture and sound recording activities
- publishing (except internet and music publishing)
- Internet publishing and broadcasting,
- heritage activities
- library and other information services.

To quote from the summary in Australian Institute Background Brief: Economic Importance of the Arts and Entertainment Sector by Bill Browne posted on their website on 25 June 2020

- *"The arts and entertainment sector contributes \$14.7 billion per year in value added (GDP).*
- *Arts and entertainment employ 193,600 Australians. (1.8% of total workforce).¹*
- *For every million dollars in turnover, arts and entertainment produce 9 jobs while the construction industry only produces around 1 job.*
- *Arts and entertainment employs 51% women and 49% men.*
- *Arts and entertainment related industries have seen the largest pandemic shutdowns, with just 47% to 65% of businesses operating in early April. "*

Before COVID-19, creative industries jobs were increasing at twice the rate of the rest of the Australian economy and the live arts attendance was thriving. The Australia Council for the Arts, 'Creating Our Future' report published in August 2020 detailed the results of the National Arts Participation Survey which asked how Australians are engaging with arts and creativity in our daily lives. Among the key takeaways the survey found;

- *"Australians increasingly recognise the positive impacts of the arts.*
- *Nearly every Australian -98% engage with the arts in some way.*
- *More Australians are creatively participation in the arts."*

¹ Within that, the creative and performing arts workforce comprised 33,035 people (0.3% of total workforce).

We understand that by supporting the creative and cultural industries, governments also support Australians and communities to decide how they want to engage with arts and culture, physical activity, mental health services, return-to-work, employment options, small business development.

The Regional Australia Institute advocate the creative industries as an engine for economic growth in regional Australia. In their 2020 'The Big Movers Population Mobility Report' they present regional migration and mobility as central to regional growth.

CONNECTING INDUSTRIES

The cultural and creative industries play a critical role in contributing to the creativity, diversity and prosperity of Australia's regional and rural economy. The arts are vital enablers helping us to explore vibrancy, diversity, accessibility and inclusiveness and are fundamental to nation-building, and to the continual advancement of the economy and environment. Across all art forms, the creative industries allow for individuals and communities to create and engage, to connect experiences, to develop skills, to tell stories, to respond and recover. Through exhibitions, film, dance, performance and music we can generate stories, connection and narratives of place, community and identity and support the recovery/growth of other industries especially tourism and hospitality.

In June 2019, the RAI released its Regional Growth Prospects Report. This research looked at four industries that are critical to the economic future of regional Australia. *"Two of these industries, food processing and tourism, are predicted to grow strongly in the coming decade in response to expectations of growth in international demand and Australia's comparative advantage. Advanced manufacturing is highly important in a small number of regions, reflecting both historical strengths and great adaptability and engagement in global supply chains. **Creative industries have a vital role in supporting business innovation and underpinning the cultural vitality of regions.**"*

There is a strong relationship between positive impact on the success of commercial creative businesses and other businesses. Compared with other industries, the cultural and creative industries also have higher spillover effects into other industries in terms of total output, value-added and employment multipliers.

Cultural Tourism

The arts and cultural sector actively support and enhance Cultural tourism. Arts and culture can inform and reflect Place Making and Place Branding. They can attract tourists and visitors, both national and international.

Arts and culture create a product – the products attract visitors enabling interaction and exchange allowing the place to flourish which in turn equates to Place Making and Place Branding. Place branding is more than the creation and promotion of place and often an extension to the physical and social environment of place.

Arts and culture tourism initiatives include:

- Festivals and events
- Visual arts – galleries, artists open studios, public art, art trails
- Heritage – with a focus on museums
- First Nations – On Country, cultural experiences both traditional and contemporary
- Performance based events – music gigs, concerts, theatre etc

These interconnect with:

- Natural Environment
- Cultural Landscapes
- Local produce – food and beverage
- Hospitality
- Retail

Regional Festivals, visits to regional galleries and museums, artists open studios and art trails all play a part in the cultural tourism destination and visitor experience. The tourism influx generated is especially welcome when it occurs in a medium or low-tourism season since it reduces seasonal ebbs.

Arts and culture;

- Help to capture attention and promote attractions and infrastructures
- They make it possible to maximize and rationalize the use of certain spaces. Preservation of these spaces may result in financial benefits and dissemination of artistic and cultural heritage.
- Through cultural events, places may attract not only tourists but also investments that generate employment and economic diversification.

Bernadette Quinn argues that festivals (arts festivals primarily) are essentially acts of place and image making, *“From a tourism perspective, festivals create ‘product’, enliven a destination, and promise a glimpse into the authentic culture of a place. From a festival perspective, visitor audiences create new forms of demands, sources of box office income, and a means of heightening their reputation” (Quinn, 2006:301)*

Quinn further states, *“festivals create ‘product’, enliven a destination, and promise a glimpse into the authentic culture of a place” (Quinn 2006:301) In this sense a festival can be produced as an “entrepreneurial display... capable of attracting significant flows of increasingly mobile capital, people and services” (Quinn 2005:931).*

The relationship between the social and cultural, the ideological and political, the environmental and geographical is paramount. The relationship between the social and physical environment is dynamic. This interrelation between people and place is a deeply felt, multi-faceted experience that acquires and generates multiple layers of meaning. Arts and culture generate the layers of meaning.

The Australia Council for the Arts – Domestic Arts Tourism Connecting the Country 2020 report presents the clear impact of regional cultural tourism.

- *“Since 2014 there have been increases in the total numbers of tourists engaging with arts activities on both daytrips (+14%) and overnight trips (+20%)” pg 17*
- *“The stories and perspectives brought to life through the arts provide unique conduits for visitors to understand the place they are visiting, its people, landscape and history.” Pg 4*

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Liveability

Place Making and Place Branding have direct correlation to the notion of ‘liveability’. In the Regional Australia Institutes forthcoming ‘Understanding Regional Liveability Briefing Note’ they suggest six indicators of liveability:

- *Health Services*
- *Education services*
- *Cost of living*
- *Amenity*
- *Connections to community, friends and place*
- *Lifestyle and opportunity*

The lifestyle and opportunity index includes “opportunities to be involved in cultural and artistic activities” alongside school and sporting activities, volunteering and work –life balance. The report notes;

“For millennials, the regional lifestyle entails participation in cultural and arts activities and access to sporting and leisure activities. Lower commuting times are valued, as are opportunities to ‘make a difference’ through professional or community activities.”

Bourne, K. (2019). *Understanding Regional Liveability: Briefing Note*. Canberra, The Regional Australia Institute. Page 5 & 9

IMPACT ON CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OF COVID19

Regional Australia has been hard hit by drought, bush fires, floods and now Covid 19. We have a long road ahead of us, with some modeling suggesting our sector will not return to normal levels of activity until the final quarter of 2021.

This pandemic is being experienced in some way by everyone, there are some shared experiences and some levelers. Regionally there is a diversity of experiences and a diversity of narratives. In much of the nation, the creative industries have been all but shut down. Access, inclusion and the 'digital divide' have been significant issues we need to continue to address.

The Creative Industry has been united in outlining the specific impacts as well as the industry inter-dependencies across tourism, accommodation and hospitality, each relying on events and venues for their success:

- loss of income - sole traders, casual, contractors, seasonal, gig economy
- loss of revenue – ticket sales, box office, bar, retail, membership,
- loss of opportunities - short - medium – long term
- loss of touring – local – national – international
- Domestic tourism, festivals
- Consumer sentiment

An important characteristic of our sector to emphasise is that our connections are not just between employer and employee, but also between individuals, audiences, and other institutions, there is a broad cultural ecology. In a regional context the arts and cultural ecology tends to be embedded throughout the community, business and education sectors.

Significant differences of the Creative Sector:

1. Reliance on live performance/ audience attendance, which have disappeared or significantly reduced for most of the arts and creative industries.
2. Incredibly tight financial margins that the sector works on as a matter of course.
3. Interdependent and co-dependent nature of the sector—so we only, even in good times, need one part of that sector to be particularly suffering for that to have a flow-on impact.

Many of the programs announced by the Federal Government, such as JobKeeper, JobSeeker, and the Cash Flow for Business initiatives, have provided significant support to the arts and creative industries. As with any economy-wide program, however, there have been gaps that have been identified and that there are others that will continue to reveal themselves over time.

We know, for example, that local government-run galleries and performing arts centres and venues do not currently qualify for any of the State and Federal Government relief packages, including Job Keeper, but these spaces and their specialist staff are going to be critical for our wider recovery and rebuilding effort.

Performing Arts Connections Australia (PACA)

PACA is the national peak body representing and supporting performing arts centres and presenters in Australia. Their data demonstrates that regional and metropolitan performing arts centres (excluding state owned centres) invest \$44 million in programming. In 2018 -2019 they presented 64,000 performances and hosted 12m attendees. They are projecting significant challenging in centres future programming in 2020-21;

- 60% rescheduled majority performances into 2021 as well as some of their 2021 program
- 14% cancelled 2020 performances and move into 2021 planned programming
- 17% rescheduled the cancelled 2020 performances into 2021 and abandoned plans for 2021
- 9% cancelled 2020 performances and not considering at any future programming
- indication that programming budgets (i.e. direct investment in touring product) have already been cut by \$11.2m for 2021

Digital Connectivity

The 'digital divide' presents significant issues we need to continue to address. During Covid the 'pivot to digital' to generate on-line sales and connect with audiences had been significant. We have seen an increase in accessibility both in regional artists and organisations inclusion in webinars and seminars and artists able to access online auditions and recording opportunities. We have also seen regional audiences enjoying increased access to online content from galleries, concerts, theatres nationally and internationally. None of this can be lost.

However, access to digital platforms, services and resources is not equal. From 13 to 25 May, 2020, Regional Arts NSW (RANSW) surveyed regional artists and arts organisations in order to understand the impact of COVID 19 on their arts practice and business. This survey indicated that the two greatest impacts on this sector were **social distancing** and **access to the internet or NBN**.

"During the COVID 19 crisis, three quarters of the respondents reported connectivity issues. 67% had issues with speed, 43% with capacity and 19% with supply. 82% reported they had received no additional support from their provider. A further 65% reported daily variations in the regularity of speed for both upload and download."

Subsequently, RANSW developed a second survey to unpack the issue of access to the internet/NBN and to understand the reported frustrations of the regional arts sector. . A survey titled '*NBN & online connectivity within the NSW regional arts network*' was distributed via Survey Monkey over the period 18 August to 4 September 2020.

The survey directly targeted the arts and cultural sector in regional NSW found that COVID 19 had sparked a huge spike in demand for online connectivity with 69% needing online connectivity for more than 50% of their work, and 32% needing it for 91-100% percent of their work. A similar result is evident for engagement with audiences and customers. There is a general sense that post-COVID restrictions, there will still be a larger percentage of work delivered online than there was before the pandemic.

A responder to the survey wrote:

"I deal in files sizes that are often in excess of 20GB, it is sometimes the difference between driving for 12 hours to deliver files or letting them upload overnight. I work predominantly in video with a lot of work coming in from overseas. With 8k video becoming a standard the file sizes are too large to be delivered to clients in a timely manner most of the time. This happens a lot with 4k content as well. The NBN speeds we have are fine for 1080p but with it no longer being the standard, and that being the case for quite some time"

In relation to access to connectivity the Regional Arts NSW survey found, *"For those not currently using the NBN, 24% have applied, 24% intend to apply, 14% do not plan to apply and for 38%, the NBN is not available. For those with NBN network connections, 68% have been connected for less than 2 years. For those who have applied for an NBN connection more than 20% have waited more than 12 months, while 40% have been waiting 6-12 months."*

Regional Arts Australia has liaised with its state-member organisations to understand the immediate and long-term needs of the affected communities they serve. Their answers universally point to the importance of integrating arts and culture into the immediate, medium and long term economic, social and cultural recovery process.

We welcome the targeted support for regional arts with the \$10m Recovery Boost to the Regional Arts Fund announced on 9 April and are pleased to inform the committee that this program has been opened across all States and territories from 1 July 2020.

RAA RESPONSE - REGIONAL ARTS FUND (RAF)

The Regional Arts Fund (RAF) is an extensive national program and one of the most successful cultural programs supporting arts and culture in regional, remote and rural Australia.

RAA manages the Regional Arts Fund (RAF), on behalf of the Australian Government, distributing \$13 million dollars every four years. The objectives of the fund are keyed closely to economic outcomes, leveraged income, community engagement, employment and professional development. The RAF demonstrates capacity building within local communities and communities of creative practice and connects and builds partnerships with creative institutions while building cross industry partnerships, in health, education, tourism, jobs and growth contributing to regional communities, wellbeing and livability. It also supports careers in creativity by offering professional development and employment opportunities.

In 2018-19 the RAF provided 1,946 employment opportunities for artists and arts workers. Estimated numbers of people involved in RAF projects were:

- 1,610,758 audience
- 25,124 participants
- 1,946 employment opportunities

The Regional Arts Fund produces significant Leveraged Income

The Regional Arts Fund continues to generate significant leveraged income. It also continues to rely on applicants contributing to their projects. In the 2018-19 year the total applicant contribution was greater than the funding provided.

A summary of the total figures:

- Total funding awarded was \$2,681,493.32
- Applicant cash contributions total \$1,515,216.54
- Applicant in-kind contributions total \$2,406,489.22
- Total applicant contributions **\$3,921,705.76** (\$1.3million more than the funding provided)
- Further in-kind contributions total \$1,989,017.73
- Further leveraged cash (not including applicant contribution) \$3,430,375.62
- Estimated total leveraged income was **\$9,341,099.11**
- For a Government spend of \$2.681 million, a further \$9.341 million was leveraged.

This is consistent with recent years.

RAA has been responsive throughout the pandemic, offering flexibility with timelines and shifting outputs of currently funded projects. There were over 150 live projects in March 2020 when the restrictions first started to affect the arts sector. In consultation with the Office of the Arts we have supported those projects through variations and have been connecting broadly with the sector. We have delivered the first financial quarter of the \$10 million Boost and have maintained all regular grant rounds.

RAF RECOVERY BOOST

The RAF Recovery Boost funds are being delivered through the mechanisms of the RAF. The program has been designed for best practice recovery and responsiveness to the needs of each jurisdiction (State and Territory needs) and moves across three stages **from Relief to Recovery and Renewal**.

The RAF Recovery Boost is assessed against the objectives of RAF:

- To encourage and support sustainable economic, social and cultural development in regional communities;
- To develop partnerships and networks which leverage support for projects and encourage ongoing collaboration;
- To develop audiences and broaden community engagement with the arts; and
- To increase employment, professional development opportunities and profile of regional and remote artists.

The program is being implemented in three stages:

1. **Immediate support – Relief**
2. **Medium-term - Recovery**
3. **Long-term (long term projects should have a strategic focus) - Renewal**

Relief

Designed to provide immediate relief to artists, arts workers, organisations and communities. It has been administered nationally like a Quick Response Grant and funds have been used towards:

- Asset replacement or purchase
- Support for arts practice
- Small projects
- Repositioning programs / adjusting delivery through the reopening stages
- PD opportunities

As at 15th October 2020 214 Relief grants have awarded and assessment completed in all States except Victoria.

Recovery

Provides funds for creative recovery projects, training programs and operational recovery plans for individual artists and organisations.

These are medium-term arts projects that have a recovery focus. Grants are currently being delivered in a nationally co-ordinated round, with all applications closing by 1 November 2020. These funds can be used for project costs including purchase of small assets (up to \$5000) and the development of risk plans and emergency operating procedures and responses.

There is approximately 1.9million allocated to fund Recovery projects nationally.

Renewal

The renewal program is being assessed against the RAF Objectives and the following additional principles:

- Community confidence (evidenced by connectivity)
- Creative confidence (evidenced by arts practice)
- Business confidence (evidenced by partnerships)

This program will provide up to three years of funding to support projects that have strong partnerships, demonstrated long-term outcomes with a sustainable future positioning focus. These projects will be strategic in nature and collaborations across State and Territory borders will be encouraged. The projects can be slow-practice process-driven and are an opportunity to think beyond 'snap back' and to consider the opportunity for renewed practice, adaptability and learning processes.

Funds could be used towards:

- First Nations-led renewal
- Partnership Projects
- Community events
- Wages for workers, First Nations workers would be highly encouraged

7 Renewal grants to the value of \$668,000 have been awarded in NSW. The round is currently open for proposals in Northern Territory and Queensland. Other States will open these rounds in the New Year, with all funds to be allocated by 30 June 2021.

ACTIVITY PERIOD

	Allocation to applicants/ projects	End date for delivery of projects	End date for reporting
Relief Immediate support	By 30 November 2020	30 June 2021	30 Nov 2021
Recovery Medium-term (1yr-2yr projects)	By 1 Jan 2021	30 June 2024	30 Nov 2024
Renewal Long-term (3 yr projects)	By 30 June 2021 Potentially annual payments over three years	30 June 2024	30 Nov 2024

NATIONAL OVERVIEW RAF RECOVERY BOOST TO DATE

- **Relief – all States now closed for applications, assessment in Vic to be completed with the round closed Sep 30 2020. Demand particularly large in Qld & Tas. As at 15th October 2020 214 Relief grants had been awarded representing 9% of the Boost funding**
- **Recovery – national round closing by 1 November. Approx. \$1.9million will be awarded nationally, with projects commencing from January 2021.**
- **Renewal – NSW assessed and will be announced soon. 23 applications, 7 projects awarded funding. NT & Qld currently open for proposals. Other States to follow.**

RAF Relief has distributed 6.5 x what we would usually distribute through RAF Quick Response grants. Over the last 4 years, as an average, the RAF Quick Response stream has delivered \$447,912 annually (which equates to approximately \$112,000 / per quarter). In the quarter July- September 2020 RAF Boost distributed \$722,972.67 through the RAF Relief fund, which is 6.5 x our average delivery.

CASE STUDIES FROM THE RAF RECOVERY BOOST

In Tasmania, through the Recovery Boost, RANT has measured a remarkable increase in demand for the Regional Arts Fund. Comparing the Relief round data against an average of previous program RAF demand (from January 2019 – March 2020) measures this quantifiable increase:

- Overall 7 x increase in demand
- 4 x increase in demand measured against the Community Grant program
- 10-x increase in demand measured against the Quick Response Grant program.

A qualitative demonstration of the increase of the reach of RAF in Tasmania through the Recovery Boost can be seen in the ratio of returning to first-time applicants. For the Relief round, there were approximately 49% first-time applicants, including 5 first-time applicant organisations.

In Northern Territory

NTRA have had overwhelming demand for the Recovery Boost program. We granted 30 Relief applications to NT artists in the first month which exhausted the allocation. The long term Renewal fund has been of particular interest with NT art organisations.

In QLD, Feedback from a Successful Applicant

"In this time of Covid, I was feeling quite left out in the area of support - I am a sole trader in the arts and I make money in lump sums through the year so I did not immediately qualify for other forms of support. When my iMac crashed and wouldn't come back to working, I actually felt entirely hopeless, and wondered where I could find work, at 52 years old, and with no skills outside of writing and making music for others. Your grant lifted my spirit and my game, and I immediately went to work looking for opportunities to help me feel solid again, and the ideas for new projects are flying out of me. I received news that based on a Logline entry, I have won the scholarship for prized Mentorship program from the Rocaberti Writer's Retreat for 2020 (October) and, due to it being a virtual retreat I was also given a partial scholarship to the retreat in France in 2021."

In **Victoria**, the State most heavily impacted by the pandemic shutdowns, 189 applications were received for the 'Relief' component of the Regional Arts Fund Recovery Boost in the **three months** from July-September, seeking support for small equipment; research and development; marketing and digital support; and presentations costs in a changed COVID-19 environment. This compares to 202 Quick Response Grants received in the **six years** from 2014 to 2020.

This is despite the local regional arts administrator Regional Arts Victoria delivering a similar small grants recovery program through May 2020 on behalf of the State Government – a program which itself received 397 applications in **five weeks**. As Regional Arts Victoria requires applicants to speak to a staff member before applying, which may also mean a greater number again of other ineligible (though similarly impacted) applicants do not submit based on informed staff member advice.

Victoria, like NSW and South Australia, also finds itself dealing with the ongoing impacts of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. Creatives and communities in these impacted areas continue to face additional challenges in their recovery, requiring a mix of both grants, on-the-ground support, and ongoing training and preparedness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recognise that regional Australia is not a homogenous place. Recovery needs to be understood across policy agendas in all the variety and richness as part of a whole process. The arts are vital in the recovery and renewal process, and integral in planning and delivery of both the bush fires recovery and Australian Covid19 response. Investment in valuable, regionally led programs provides timely support and recovery to affected regions, industries and communities.

We support the findings in the Australia Council 'Creating Our Future' report that importantly as we navigate recovery and renewal Arts and Creativity; *"will play a critical role in Australia's future success, build social cohesion, contribute to health and wellbeing."*

Further articulated in the New Approach Working Paper: A 21st century guide which identifies that Australia's cultural and creative economy *"has untapped potential to boost Australia's economic and social wellbeing. Governments, businesses, philanthropists, cultural organisations and creators can all play a part in firstly helping it recover, and then keeping it growing, so it can be a part of the social and economic recovery from Covid-19."*

1. Changing the Narrative

The arts are essential within regional and remote communities to maintain dynamic and resilient communities – economically, socially, for mental wellbeing and community cohesion.

To embed arts and culture as central across regional policy. Arts and culture can be leading in cross-sector partnerships, particularly tourism, trade and health and also leading in recovery and renewal.

To strengthen the fabric of the creative ecosystem across regional Australia with sustainable, long-term support that can inform and strengthen a robust creative sector. To support a creative ecosystem that is interconnected and integrated across art form, across communities and across landscapes. A creative ecosystem that is constructed, contested and reimaged. One that is part of a continuum of economic and cultural politics and practices.

This dynamic interrelation needs to be understood across all policy agendas in all the variety and richness as part of a whole process.

2. A National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan

A National Arts, Culture and Creativity Plan would inform more coherent policy settings and investment across all three levels of government.

We call on the Government to demonstrate their understanding that arts and culture are part of the foundational economy, part of the social infrastructure and the public provision of public goods and services based on sites of social need. And that Australian's health and wellbeing, social cohesion and national identity are all-reliant on a healthy arts and culture ecology.

"This could be achieved in the same vein as the existing National Sport Plan, 'Sport 2030', that

identifies the enduring and non-partisan principles and clarifies responsibilities. This should include measures to ensure all areas of Australia have reasonable access to, and can take advantage of, a wide range of different types of cultural infrastructure” ANA

3. ABS Cultural and Creative Industries

Given the scale of the cultural and creative industries and their importance to future employment, the ABS could produce a cultural and creative industries satellite account every year as it does for tourism. We call on the Government to devote resources to measuring the economic impact of the cultural and creative industries.

“Culture should be integrated into public policy on the same grounds as health, education, social services, and housing. [Cultural impact statements](#) for all new policy proposals should be considered along with impact statements for the environment, gender equity, and regional communities.”

4. Place Based Programs

Programming that positions community participation and the distinctive assets of their regional localities at the heart of reactivation. Designed to unlock the cultural ambition and potential of regional Australia.

Place-based programs seed longer-term cultural and economic sustainability, boosting local capacity, diversifying audience engagement, increasing accessibility and connection. Investment in innovative approaches and new types of programming within existing areas of strength such as festivals and cultural infrastructure would make arts, cultural and creative activities more accessible to all Australians.

A whole of ecosystem model will reactivate the cultural and creative industries by developing local capacity and content, providing employment, and exploring new models of co-commissioning, co-producing, and investing. Economic beneficiaries will include small businesses, local hospitality and accommodation providers, freelance arts and media workers, performing arts centres and their personnel.

5. Cultural Tourism

Supporting Cultural Tourism and cultural experiences for local audiences and visitors.

Placed based, local programs support local arts and cultural activity for communities to participate in the arts, for audiences and tourists to celebrate ‘place’.

Invest in a national public campaign across Tourism, Hospitality, Arts & Culture to build consumer confidence and activate engagement and in turn to grow jobs and local businesses.

6. Digital Divide: Building digital capability – regional, remote and community access

Ensure adequate digital infrastructure (software and hardware), education pathways for communities, and training in regional Australia.

To be effectively equipped for the advances, challenges and opportunities that will be part of our future, we need to be supported by robust digital infrastructure and local technical knowledge. We need to ensure infrastructure and training that will enable regional and remote communities to undertake projects that integrate communication platforms with content creation. Ensuring we have a fit-for-purpose legislative, regulatory and investment environment is essential to a viable and relevant cultural and creative economy. By embedding the expansion of digital literacy in projects that are desired by communities we will effectively drive engagement across communities in regional and remote Australia.

7. New Touring Models

Support for the development of new models of developing, producing and touring new Australian works, locally and nationally. Inter-regional production and touring models could be explored.

We recommend a long-term approach through accessible and immediate goals to build resilience, sustainability and vibrancy – working with in across regional communities to build a network of arts and cultural experiences that are high quality and create employment and consumer activity across the regions.

To support cultural participants are 'on both sides of the stage', with a commitment to art as an expression of local identity. In doing so we move beyond the limitations of conventional import touring models, instead building local cultural investment through people: their businesses, their social networks, their ethnicities, their collective values and aspirations. In this model, potential audiences will be inclusive of First Nations people, young people, culturally diverse people, people with disability and first-timers.

8. Industry led responses

Investment in valuable, regionally-led and industry-led programs provide timely support and recovery to affected regions, industries and communities.

The arts are vital in the recovery and renewal process, and integral in planning and delivery of responses to drought, floods, bush fires and Australian Covid19.

Support for small to medium organisations to lead the recovery efforts, administering funding, developing and delivering local community-led recovery projects that engage local artists, local audiences and creative regional tourism initiatives. Small to medium not-for-profit organisations are agile and can respond both promptly and deeply to community needs, especially when they are embedded in the communities they serve. Support needs to be now and ongoing over the coming years, 2021, 22, 23 as recovery will take time.

IN CONCLUSION

Arts and culture are essential in regional, rural and remote Australia. Sustainable and vibrant arts and creative industries deliver real short, medium and long-term benefits for all communities and the regions in which they work with measurable impacts across artistic, social, economic and health indexes.

Support and investment that ensure our regional communities have access to culture, ideas and knowledge must be included in any planning considerations. This improves the lives of those who live regionally and improves the likelihood that people will continue to work and live in our regions.

The thriving national regional arts sector demands a crucial dialogue on the impact created by regional arts and artists. Partnerships are critical in this model and are key in leveraging cross industry support and championing regional arts beyond the regional arts sector. With support, the creative industries have the potential to lead the wider social, economic and community recovery required.

We note that there are many and varied ways in which the arts and creativity continue to shape regional Australia beyond those provided here. The overall health of the arts and creative ecology relies on the interconnection of advocacy, brokerage, presenting and producing elements.

We welcome the opportunity to work through the next phases of recovery with all levels of government. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these in more detail, and can be reached at any of the details below.

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