

Artstate Wagga Wagga – Friday 06/11/2020 – Plenary (9am-1pm) – unedited captions Transcript

SPEAKER: Thank you and good morning everyone. And welcome to day one of Artstate Wagga Wagga. I would like to welcome our socially distanced audience in the auditorium here at the Wagga Wagga civic theatre and also those who are tuning in, tuning in on line for the digital experience.

So to open our Artstate speakers program for 2020, I would like to invite Wiradjuri Elder, Aunty Isabel Reid, to welcome us to country. Welcome Aunty Isabel.

AUNTY ISABEL: Good morning everyone. Welcome to this beautiful country of ours, Wiradjuri country. I would now like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the custodians of this land, the Wiradjuri peoples, whose land you are gathered on here today. I also wish to acknowledge our Elders, past, present and future, for the whole memories, their trials and culture, of all Aboriginal Australians. In recognition and respect for all Aboriginal people, our culture and heritage, it gives me so much pleasure to welcome you all here to the land of the Wiradjuri people.

Always was, and always will be. Thank you.

ELIZABETH ROGERS: Thank you so much Aunty Isabel. And I also would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Wiradjuri country and pay my respects to the Elders past and present and the future leaders. Thank them for the wonderful welcoming ceremony last night. And apologies again for the technical hitch.

I would also like to acknowledge all of the Elders who have travelled from other parts of the state and all Aboriginal and First Nations people who are here with us today.

As you know, if you've read our website, that our welcome to Wiradjuri country comes from - - sorry, given permission for us to use by uncle Stan Grant and the film that skrooercher screened, as everyone was coming in to the auditorium this morning, was explaining the overall concept of the Indimarra and was used with the film permission of the Elders and I thank them for that. It was a beautiful, beautiful beginning to our speakers program.

I would also like to acknowledge the chair of Regional Arts NSW Julie Briggs and the directors of our board who are here. The chair of Eastern Riverina Arts, Anne Lowe, and executive director Tim Kurylowicz along with the chairs and executive directors from the other Regional Arts development organisations that make up our unique network delivering arts and cultural development projects based on the needs of their individual communities.

We could not deliver this event without our principal partner, the NSW Government, with funding through Create NSW and our local government partner, Wagga Wagga City Council. Additional essential support for Artstate Wagga Wagga comes from the Regional Arts Fund, NSW Health and TAFE NSW. Our local supporters are Charles Sturt University and ABC Riverina. I thank them all sincerely.

To start off our conversation, please welcome the hon-Don Harwin Special Minister of State, Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and most importantly, the arts.

Please welcome minister Harwin.

THE HON DON HARWIN: Good morning everyone. May I start by thanking Aunty Isabel Reid for this morning's and, of course, for last night's incredible filmed art welcome to country and I just wanted to acknowledge Elders of the Wiradjuri nation, past and present, and thank them for their custodianship of what is, was, and always will be Wiradjuri land upon which this theatre stands.

Look, I'm absolutely delighted once again to be here with you at Artstate. And as you know, 2020 marks the fourth year of Artstate and it's been great being a part of each of those four.

Three exceptional years of exhibition, performance, inspiration, and long lasting connections from across NSW. We've been on the country of the Bungalang and twice, the mighty Wiradjuri nation as well.

Every one of them has been special. What a start in Lismore. Who will ever forget the opening night in the rain. The cheeky cabaret and that fantastic festival club in the Bollo.

Then Bathurst, which for me at least, as you heard last night, I will forever associate with Jonathan Jones' powerful presentation about connection to country. But I will also remember how impressed I was with Bathurst council's investment in art cultural facilities and how Artstate really so effectively show cased them with a great program and, in particular, a wonderful opening night around the pavilion.

Tamworth, in the middle of a drought, where the focus on Aboriginal arts and culture was absolutely outstanding and, again, another superb opening night.

A huge shout out today to Scott Howe. Who has had the most extraordinary challenges to face this year. But here we are. And that welcome to country, as I said earlier, was absolutely first class.

Scott, Caroline Downer, Adam Ducinin an Peter Woods, you've done us proud over the last four years. You really have. It speaks volume about the strengths of the arts in the regions and the maturity and capability of our regional development arts organisations.

Each year the themes of each Artstate event are developed based on the discussions from the previous year and this year, we continue the conversation with Walking Together and shaping tomorrow. That's exactly what I will be doing in the remarks I make.

Integral to the 2020 program of course is a continuation of the strong focus on Aboriginal arts and arts leaders as well as the recognition of the contribution of local government to arts and cultural development in regional NSW.

So, Walking Together. And shaping tomorrow. Last night, I spoke about the NSW Government's great record of support of regional, cultural astronaut and regional arts. The last two -- cultural infrastructures. The last two competitive rounds in 2020 showed that Regional Arts is well an truly punching above its weight.

I'm also committed to ensuring the sustainable and bright future of the Regional Arts network. This time last year, I announced I would be looking at how the NSW Government invests in the Regional Arts network to ensure it's ongoing sustainability and relevance for the nets 10 years.

The network has been responsible for considerable growth of the sector. And for being on the front foot in providing support to communities during times of drought and flood.

From next year, every Regional Arts development organisation will receive a \$28,000 funding increase, shifting funds from Sydney to the regions, to drive front-line support for artists and arts organisations in regional communities. This will take annual core funding from the State Government to \$168,000.

Regional Arts NSW will have a transition year in 2021 receiving \$120,000 from the NSW Government and thereafter, it will be entirely accountable to the RATOS. In addition, \$150,000 will also be made available each year for strategic programs for RATOS to access. They will also now self-manage the \$250,000 country arts support program. Which will allow for customised small grants in local communities and streamlined processes.

A senior role will also be established to at Create NSW that will be dedicated to working with service organisations and the Regional Arts network and facilitating partnerships.

If you only read the sub editor's headline in Monday's 'Sydney Morning Herald', you might have been a bit alarmed. But I stress that contrary to media reports, the overall budget for the Regional Arts network will not, will not, decrease as a result of this reform.

This reform is about imeempowering local decisions, to be made by locals and recognising that the RATOS are mature organisations who can determine their own future and the future of the service organisation in Sydney that supports them.

We're providing the funding and the support to the RADOs directly so they is support the services they want and need including an ongoing role for Regional Arts NSW if that is what they want.

For those of you who have arrived this morning, I just want to let you know that last night, I mentioned that create infrastructure will soon be conducting a survey of regional councils. The regional arts network and independent art organisations based in the regions to update the NSW Government's understanding of the current and future cultural infrastructure needs of regional communities.

The regional cultural fund has done its work and we need an update on what the sector needs are in the short to medium term.

I want to end, as I foreshadowed last night, with some what I hope will be very welcome news to the Regional Arts NSW sector. As you would be aware, the NSW Government established the \$50 million rescue and restart package to support the non-profit arts and cultural sector emerge from COVID-19 on its feet.

Almost \$12 million has been allocated so far to those who are facing imminent voluntary administration. At the request of the sector, the government has made it clear it will not be talking at this stage about which companies are being assisted to protect the companies and their reputations.

And since it was announced not a single arts and cultural company has gone under. This morning I'm announcing two further initiatives.

First of all, but first of all, I will mention that on Monday, I will be making additional announcement of relevance to the whole sector, not just Regional Arts and on Monday, I will be talking about more than \$3 million in direct stimulus funding that will be going to Regional Arts and cultural organisations.

But the two extra initiatives I want to talk about are this. I recognise, of course, that much of our cultural infrastructure and in that I am not talking about buildings, much of our network, much of our architecture of the arts and culture sector, most of the organisations are metropolitan based. So I'm absolutely determined that the \$50 million will not be disproportionately spent in the cities.

So this morning I'm announcing that \$5.5 million in stimulus funds will be provided - sorry, an additional - yes. I'm announcing that more than \$5.5 million in stimulus funds will be provided to restart the Regional Arts sector in NSW. Including one-off \$130,000 grants to be made available to each RADO. And secondly, in addition, a targeted \$2.5 million package in strategic funding streams will be made available for independent artists with a particular focus on regional NSW.

That will support a raft of residences, writing hubs, regional music, micro festivals and other activities. These funds are all about kick starting arts and cultural activity in our regions. Employing artists and delivering great cultural experiences for audiences to enjoy.

More details of how that scheme will work will be available shortly from Create NSW. So, that is \$130,000 for each RADO to spend, kick starting the arts in their region. And secondly, a targeted \$2.5 million package, particularly for independent artists which we will support through residences, writing hubs, regional music, micro festivals and other activities.

These funds are all about kick starting arts and cultural activity in our regions. Employing artists and delivering great cultural experiences for audiences to enjoy.

The key thing, of course, is to get the money spent and spend it well to bring the cultural vitality in regional arts that we've come to know and love back as quickly as we can. We've got an exciting day ahead of us. The next few days will be filled with in-depth and insightful conversations around the themes which send an optimistic and empowering message that if we work together, we can achieve better outcomes for all.

I invite all of you to enjoy the following days at Wagga Wagga. And make connections as we come together to celebrate and amplify the stories and future of NSW's talented region ally based artists.

So finally, I just want to say to the board of Regional Arts NSW and to Elizabeth, thank you for all the work that you have done this year. With Scott Howe in bringing to us an amazing start and ladies and gentlemen, I hope all of you enjoy it. Thanks very much.

ELIZABETH ROGERS: Thank you minister Harwin. I'm sure everybody welcomes the injection of new funding to the Regional Arts sector that has just been announced. It is obviously very welcome news that the government has been able to find this new money to be able to support the reinvigoration and restart of the sector after this particular challenging year that we've had.

The theme today is Walking Together. It continues on with the close engagement that we have had through the four years of Artstate with our Aboriginal colleagues across the state. But we also wanted to make it a more inclusive theme because one of the features of Eastern Riverina Arts has been over the last 15-20 years, is their engagement with the disability sector and disability artists, but also the change in the dem environment in regional country towns with the influx of people from other lands.

So the Walking Together is about everybody. Us, you know, the Aboriginal people, the new arrivals and, of course, the people that have been living in regional NSW for a few generations.

So that is our overarching key note for today.

So with this extraordinary year that we've all endured, with drought, dust, smoke and fires immediately followed by the pandemic, the arts sector in regional NSW has been impacted in ways we could never have imagined.

Last year in Tamworth, in a devastating drought, the city shrouded in smoke, our opening key note, Brad Moggridge, talked to us about learning from Aboriginal culture new ways of managing our depleted water supplies.

All the uncertainty, fear, loss and change we have experienced this year has made deep inroads into people's confidence. Lockdowns, job losses, careers on hold, financial pressure, family concerns and isolation have resulted in greatly increased mental health issues within all of our communities.

Mental health is an issue that impacts us all and the participation in arts provides an opportunity to engage with our own social and emotional well being.

So how does a pharmacist who works in mental health get a gig at Artstate? Using her own lived experiences as a Wiradjuri yinaa, Faye McMillan will talk about the importance of finding yourself to allow flourishing. Faye is the associate Professor and is the 2019 NSW Aboriginal woman , senior Atlantic fellow for social equity, and a founding member of indigenous allied health Australia. Faye works at Charles Sturt University as the director of the dir dir program, Bachelor of Health Science, a -- Djirruwang Program, a program dedicated solely to the education of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people for the mental health workforce. So please give a very warm welcome to associate Professor Faye McMillan.

FAYE MCMILLAN: Wow, good morning. Can't see anybody but let's go. Firstly, thank you to Auntie Isabel for that beautiful welcome to country and the ceremony last night. Can I say how lucky are we that the potential, 2020, NSW senior Australian of the Year has welcomed us to this magnificent event.

I too would also like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri nation, and pay my respects to my Elders here, those emerging, and my ancestors. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custody iarns of the lands upon which people are coming in virtually and acknowledge the diversity of the lived experiences that they all bring. I would also like to acknowledge other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander with us today.

As well as the diversity of the lived experiences of the people within the audience and thank you for being on this journey with me.

Can I also thank the Elders that put my name forward and I hope that I make you proud.

Artstate NSW, a four year project by Regional Arts NSW, that shines a light on the excellence in Regional Arts practice whilst at the same time exploring the exciting possibilities for arts and cultural development across the state and, indeed, the globe.

From the success of artlands in Dubbo 2016, where my brother, Mark, gave the key note and he spoke to seeing work by indigenous artists as not only in aesthetic terms, but as moments that articulate a sovereignty never seeded. And over the preceding three years, this has been demonstrated over and over again.

Across the three sites that Artstate has been, Lismore, 2017, Bathurst in 18, Tamworth last year, and culminating here in Wagga Wagga, where using the words of the city mayor, we will get to witness a spectacular program of exhibitions, performances, cultural experiences and special events curated to be true to our place, while at the same time, allowing us to learn, celebrate Regional Arts and excellence.

So, when I was approached to give the key note, I, A, thought that they had stentially sent the email to the wrong person. -- accidentally. And B, was petrified. So during the subsequent conversations and sharing the information, Elizabeth Rogers asked me a simple question. Oh, I see from your bio that you come from Trangie. Are you in any way related to Mark McMillan as he gave our key note in Dubbo in 2016. My response was yep, that would be my brother.

Now, don't get me wrong, I love my brother, in actual fact, both my brothers, sisters an let's face t my entire family. They have shaped who I am today. However, saying that, if you could imagine the actor that plays Thor in the Marvel movies and I'm sure many of you have a mental image of Chris Hemsworth right now, well, I'm Liam or Luke. All actors, same family, one is just more famous than the other.

So as I sat and pondered what could I bring, what do I have to offer to this speaker series, apart from my imposter syndrome complex, I came up with the following.

Me. All of me. My realness. My vulnerability. My experiences. Because if I am honest, that is the only thing that I know with any a surety is how to be me.

So what started with I am not an artist, I have no artistic talent whatsoever, I put forward the following and I have to say was pleasantly surprised that I didn't get "No". So I also contemplated doing a whiz bang slide show. However, in doing my research, it said know your audience. And I wasn't going to try and do anything artscy to an audience like you mob.

So mental health. It is an issue that impacts us all. And the participation in art provides an opportunity to engage with our own social, emotional well being. So, as the title said, how does a pharmacist who works in mental health get a gig at Artstate?

By using my own lived experiences, and talking to the importance of finding yourself and allowing flourishing, and this is a journey that I am on every day.

So, my experiences and I mean all of them, have shaped my art. Why I do what I do. And why I have come to the belief that human flourishing starts with human kindness and when we all choose to be kind, to stand together, to contribute to, the issues to stand up to be heard, to speak back to and to challenge injustices and inequalities, the world can become a potential place of peace. With a sense of belonging and with intentions that are matched with actions.

The stigma that is still attached to mental health and how it impacts us all directly or indirectly is a challenge that we need to meet head-on. We need to meet it on so many levels. Personally, organisationally, societally, and, indeed, globally.

Whilst I have said earlier in this talk the use of art allows for so many possibilities for this challenge to be stared down, art is subjective and can often be the response of the objective.

Anything objective sticks to the facts. But anything subjective has feelings. Objective and subjective are opposites. But that doesn't mean they can't play nicely together in the sandpit.

So using my own experiences and my own interpretation of art, I present the conversation so here is what I've learnt about art, whilst doing my research.

Art is a diverse range of human activities involving the creation of visual, auditory, or performing artefacts which express the creator's imagination, conceptual ideas, and technical skill, intended to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

Research found that learning and practising art strongly correlates with higher achievements in reading and in maths. New brain research has showed that creativity, social development and self-worth are promoted through art. Roman statues were made with detachable heads. One head could be taken off and replaced by yet another. Sorry, that is the American election.

There are many ways in which we can interpret the world. Kids learn through art to celebrate the multiple perspectives of our world. Art is the perfect vehicle for having fun. Whilst learning even during play. There can be more than one solution to a problem. And art has taught us that. Look until you find a solution.

Imagination and critical thinking are developed through art. Everyone is born creative. Some just need more practise to find their creativity. Learning to become creative is a deliberate process. Very much the same as learning to read or do maths.

Art used to be an olympic event. I know. The Olympics was not always about your abs, or doping scandals. The founder of the modern Olympic Games was so enamoured by the idea of true Olympians being talent the artists an sports people. It is thanks to him that between 1912 and 1948 medals were given out for sporting inspired master pieces of architect, music, painting, sculpture and literature.

The relationship between art and emotion has been the subject of extensive studies. Emotionally or aesthetic responses to do art have previously been viewed as basic stimulus responses. But new theories and research has suggested that these responses are much more complex. And are able to be studied. Emotional responses are often regarded as the key stone to experiencing art and the creation of an emotional experience has been argue the as the purpose of artistic expression.

Research has shown that neurological underpinnings, of persevering art differ from those used in standard object recognition. Instead, brain regions involved in the experience of emotions and goal setting are activated when viewing art.

So within my bio, that was read but there are a few things that I have been fortunate to be part of. A small part but nonetheless a part.

I want to talk to why I see these things as my art. My body of work that I have invested my time in that hopefully creates conversations just like the development of physical artworks or the art of other artists.

Daniel Burnham, an American architect and urban planner, stated the following. Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realised. Make big plans. Aim high. In hope and work. Remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die. But long after we are gone, we will be - it will be a living thing. Asserting itself with ever growing insistency an remembering that our grandchildren are going to do things that would stagger us.

So, the Atlantic fill land throw peace, big bets for a better world, chuck Chuke Feeney founded Atlantic in 1982. He has invested \$8 billion to advance and promote equity and dignity. It took decades. But Chuck Feeney are the former billionaire and co-founder of the retail giant duty free shoppers, which I'm sure many of us have

passed through on our travels, has finally given all of his money away to charity. He has nothing left now. And he couldn't be happier.

In September of 2020, quietly and with dignity, the final giving whilst living pledge took place. The man invested in people for as he has said, that it will be people who change the systems and the world. The Atlantic fellows for social equity is an Indigenous led, life long, collaborative fellowship program and the platform for systemic change.

It harnesses timeless, Indigenous knowledge, ingenuity and creativity to bring a unique approach to transformative change.

The program was established in 2016 at the University of Melbourne and was funded by Atlantic philanthropies. It is one of senglobal hubs an it is interconnected through the Atlantic fellows program to which the foundation has committed over \$660 million US worldwide. It includes partner organisations and governments to support this work of the global network of thousands of Atlantic fellows that will come over the next two decades and beyond. And I was one of the inaugural fellows for social equity in Australia.

Indigenous allied health Australia, in June 2019, I had the honour of being one of nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals that came together to form the first meeting of Indigenous allied health Australia and to be elected to the board. IHAR is a national member based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health organisation. It leads sector workforce development and support. To improve the health an well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health students and graduates value adding to existing professional development, educational, cultural, and structural supports. They support the broader allied health workforce and its associate membership of individuals and organisations with expertise, interest, and commitment to improving the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I think membership is diverse and it works across sectors, including but not limited to, health, mental health, disability, aged care, education, justice, community services, academia and policy.

In 2019, IHAR celebrated 10 years. I can shout out to members or supporters of IHAR. Thank you. Director of the dir dir program, Bachelor of Health Science, for the last decade, it has been my great honour to be in a role that supports the opportunity for education, to change the lives of individuals, families and communities, to have hope. Hope gives people a glimmer that the world can be different from what it was yesterday and that tomorrow is full of potential but today is where we can really make a change.

To the students and graduates, can I say thank you for your work and your artistry that supports mental health and well being within our communities.

So I have to say I was a little intimidated in coming here today. Being key note is a privlebl but it is also tough. It is hard to come up with something to share with you that you haven't heard heard. What can I possibly say? What inspirational possible words of wisdom could I share with you?

There is nothing you haven't already learned from your from your parents, from your Elders, within your family, from your friends, or even your colleagues that hasn't already been provided.

So I'm here to tell you that I don't have any new lessons. Yep. No new lessons. What I do ask is that we reflect on the old be lessons and learn from them again and again. It often feels like we are surrounded by problems. Here is a variation on some of the problems but problems nonetheless.

Black Lives Matter. Yes, indeed, all lives matter. We need greater acceptance of what is different to stop othering and create belonging. Many of us have often heard from managers don't tell me the problems, talk me through the solutions. Your art, your expression can and will be part of taking these problems, creating conversations, and being the solutions.

History is still being written. We are writing it every day. It is influenced by our actions, our words, and our commitment to each other. When you give your word, keep it. For you are building a legacy. But your legacy will not be built on one thing. But it will come from everything you do. And we have no idea what our legacy will be. Because your legacy will be in the life of every person you touch. Every life you touch. We need to care enough to try. We need to come together to create forces and be in service for something or somebody other than ourselves. Because something to someone, who feels that they have nothing, can be everything.

Stop comparing yourself to others. We are only on this planet to be ourselves. Not someone else's imitation of you or you of someone else. Your life's journey is learning to be who you are. And fulfilling the highest and truest expression of your self as a human being.

That is why we are all here. Why we will do and how we will do that is through our work, art, however that looks to you, through our relationships and through our kindness to others. So to quote Albert Einstein, education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school. I have no special talent. I'm only passionately curious. A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new. Every day I listen to what my Elders speak of. Every day I listen to the truth of my children. And every day I choose kindness.

I don't always get it right. But I keep trying. There are days where I don't want to get up. There are days where I don't want to publically speak. But I get up. I make my bed. I have accomplished something. I go out. And I match my intentions with my actions.

So, I wish you all great curiosity, great passion and may you feel kindness from others but also most importantly from yourself. I truly believe that we can all flourish together when we acknowledge the difficult is different to every person and that difficult is difficult.

So, I thank you for being on this journey with me. And taking the time to spend part of your Artstate Wagga Wagga here, being part of the speaker series, and I thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS: Thank you so much for your presentation. I think that the words of wisdom that you gave us today, particularly at this time, resonate with everybody and can I say personally, they resonated with me. You don't have to be an artist but you do have to have that get out of bed, put on the clothes, stick on the lippy and get going. I really appreciate the words.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS: Gosh, I hope I didn't contaminate that stand. Wasn't that wonderful. Wonderful, inspiring and I love the opening analogy about the second super hero. We need lots of super heroes in our industry at the moment. And it's not necessary the biggest and the strongest that survive.

I just wondered is the house ton Briggs in the audience, because we need you backstage for our conversation -- Lillardia Briggs. So our panel, our next panel is creative journeys. And we're exploring the theme Walking Together. This conversation looks at the creative journeys of three young, well from my experience anyway, Aboriginal artists who have walked quite different paths.

It will be moderated by Marcus Hughes. A board member of Regional Arts NSW and the director of Indigenous engagement at the national library of Australia.

Marcus is a proud descendent of the - now, I've practised this and I'm going to get it wrong - mun Mununjali Peoples people's of the Yugambah Nation and has worked within the arts and cultural sector throughout Australia and the UK as a producer, presenter and advocate across all artistic disciplines, contexts and environments.

In 2014, he creased the sixth world summit on arts and culture in Chile, which was really ironic because he was live anything Melbourne, I was living in Sydney, and that was the first time we met, in Chile.

And was adjuncts associate Professor at Victoria University's Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit. I've asked Marcus to introduce his panel of young artists. So please welcome Marcus and Dane and Joel and Lillardia.

Of course, we saw Joel's absolutely beautiful performance last night and Dane is definitely on the program for at the Playhouse later on. So enjoy the conversation.

SPEAKER: Thank you so much for your very generous words. It's a delight. We did have a really good time when we were in Chile. I'm just wondering if we could raise the house lights a little, just so that we can see who we are talking to today. Beautiful. Thank you.

SPEAKER: No, darken them again.

MARCUS HUGHES: So here we are. At Artstate. In Wagga Wagga. I want to acknowledge the Wiradjuri as the traditional owners of this remarkable country, acknowledge their custodianship and pay respect to their Elders past and present and those who are with us today. Thank you so much for your very, very generous welcome and for permission for us to be on country and to work and to do business. In saying that, I acknowledge my own ancestors who come with us and drive us forward.

Elizabeth spoke about our meeting in Chile those not so long years ago. And by default, I was invited to present to the global summit on arts and culture. And I had about - I had an evening to prepare for that. And I went into absolute panic and came up with what was really a lot of garbage that I really didn't want to recycle.

So I put that all away and I just went into that room and spoke. Many years later, I was at the Powerhouse Museum, responsible for Indigenous programming there, and I was tasked with building a theme. And I sort of said okay, yeah, well let's have a yarn. And they said to me yeah, that's good but what is it? I said well, it's a yarn. And they kept asking me what it was. Is it a convidium, is it a seminar, is it a summit?

I said no, it is just a yarn. We just want to get together and speak to each other as human beings. When I speak to my executive now, I invite them to for a cuppa. And they reckon no, look, we are really busy, we don't have time for a cuppa. But I really want to have a cuppa. And they finally get there when I say that and make that request, it's a time for us to come together at a table, with a cup of tea, as human beings to come and speak together.

I carried that with me for a long time because so often we don't just come together to yarn. And in this session, I hope you get a sense that we are just having a yarn. That is why we want to see you, to see who you are.

That's enough about that business.

Today we coming in as an old fella, it is an absolute delight to be in the presence of two remarkable young men. Who have shown great leadership. And are doing remarkable things. So we've got beautiful Dane. Beautiful Joel who many of you would have seen dance last night.

Dane, do you want to give us a bit of your background.

DANE SIMPSON: I have never been called beautiful before. So thank you. I live here in Wagga Wagga. My mob come from - we have got Lillardia.

MARCUS HUGHES: Lovely to meet you. Lillardia lovely to meet you too.

SPEAKER: We needed this energy.

SPEAKER: More energy would be good.

SPEAKER: I was going to kick in about football. Mark just briefly who you are.

DANE SIMPSON: My mob is from Walgert, my mum is from Queensland way, near Bundaberg. Yeah. I do comedy, stand up comedy. Yeah.

JOEL BRAY: Normally I live down in Nam, down on Cooloom country, so when I do an acknowledgement of country, I kind of thank the Elders and the ancestors and the people of the Wiradjuri for honouring me as a guest and treating me so well and then I talk about my Wiradjuri ancestry, so it is such a pleasure, I'm getting goosebumps, to be able to fold those two things into one today and acknowledge my Wiradjuri Elders and those Elders that we have here and those who came last night, which was really special.

In particular, I acknowledge my father, Christopher Coperight who maybe some older people might know that name. He was a leader of the NSW land rights movement and actually drew on a napkin the first sketch of the land rights map back in the 80s.

I'm a - I was credited last night on stage and in the program as a dancer. Part of me was like I'm an experimental contemporary performance maker, excuse me. (Laughter) but I spend most of my time doing but then if we took that role, I would just be calling myself a professional grant writer. (Laughter)ing so upon reflection, I was chuffed to be - for my creative identity to be a dancer because I think that's where my soul is at. It's in my body. It's dancing. It was last night was the first time I've ever performed on country. And it was a very special, very, very special moment for me. To put and to come out to my country and I'm Wiradjuri northern mob, so I'm more up the north, so it's very difficult for me to admit how beautiful it is down here in the Riverina. So yeah, I'm rambling. That's me. Choreographer.

MARCUS HUGHES: Thank you. What was it? An experimental?

JOEL BRAY: Experimental performance maker.

MARCUS HUGHES: Got it. Lillardia, how are you?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: I'm good thank you.

MARCUS HUGHES: You arrived safely?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: Just in time.

MARCUS HUGHES: Do you want to give us a little baby bear introduction?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: Sure, my name is Lillardia Briggs. I'm a Wiradjuri... woman. I'm based in Narandra, so my grandmother's Sunshine State she is a Johnson. I'm a textile artist, print maker, designer. And trying to carry my grandparents' stories and their legacy through text taoils and fashion. And doing it on country, which is great. Yeah.

MARCUS HUGHES: That's great. So how did you get to that kind of place?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: It took decades. I started - my grandmother actually was, you know, into fashion an went and studied garment construction and everything in the 60s as an Aboriginal woman. So she kind of passed down that knowledge when I was in her care from a very young age. And I guess I always followed it and it wasn't until the last couple of years that I kind of took it on seriously. I guess when I was a lot younger, there was - I was always told, you know, you work to live and you can't really follow your passions and your dreams. It was always about trying to provide and be there for the family.

So I put it on the backburner for a long time. It was only until the last couple of years that I've kind of picked it back up and moved home and decided to take it on full time. Yeah, it's been a long journey. But so far I've been loving it.

MARCUS HUGHES: Has it involved any formal training?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: No. I am going back and doing training next year. But yeah, it was all started from my grandmother teaching me. She would sit me down at the table and teach me how to draft patterns an construct gar means from such a young age and it was something that I continued for a long time. Now I've been doing it for so long, but yes, I will be going and getting formal training to be doing it. But textiles is the same. All self taught. And that I've learned from my family through painting and, yeah, fashion.

MARCUS HUGHES: I think that business of the learning that comes from our old ways and that passing on the knowledge is -

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: It's not just cultural knowledge. It's absolutely everything. She was from the sand hills, was worn at Waraganda mission, an when I have conversations with people, they say oh, your grandmother used to sell us our school uniforms, and it was something that she was known for and she continued for such a long time. She sowed all of her kids, her seven kids clothes from when they were born right up until they were adults.

So it's a strong legacy for me to continue. And to have that knowledge started from her, you know, in a cultural sense, not just in going to learn at university and everything else, but starting it from such a young age, from one of my matriarchs. So yeah, it is really been a special journey.

MARCUS HUGHES: That's beautiful. The old girls, (inaudible) has been leading a project there where the old girls are remaking their mission dresses. And sharing that with the young ones. But also bringing on new designers to work with that. It's remarkable process.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: Definitely. I think a lot of the olds ones were taught how to sow and a part of these domestic servitude and stuff from a young age on the missions and it's interesting to see how that has kind of carried on to the young ones and their children and their grandchildren. So yeah, it's a really interesting space at the moment. I think in the next year, two years that the future of Australian fashion will be Indigenous fashion. So it's really important that it is kind of stemmed from our grandparents and in a cultural sense.

MARCUS HUGHES: Absolutely embedded in that.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: Exactly.

MARCUS HUGHES: Dane.

DANE SIMPSON: I love that, I think that that is amazing. It is I experienced something similar but certainly not on that kind of scale. But I feel like the resilience of Aboriginal people making these uniforms, like where else were these kids going to get them? They weren't. And they made these uniforms so that they didn't - so that they could fit in, I suppose, and that they were wearing the same uniforms as everyone else. They could get their education an that type of stuff.

I love that yarn. I think it is such a representation of Aboriginal people, especially in that era. I love that about you. My mum used to make my uniforms as a kid as well. Yeah. So it is crazy. She used to make them with only two stripes going down the side on my tracksuit pants. That is not how Adidas does it mum.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: My grandmother was similar. She would go and pull the curtains out or grab the curtains off, hang them from the windows and take out the old newspaper and tape them together because resourceful, keeping that sustainability, reusing absolutely everything. It's so deeply embedded inering that we do.

MARCUS HUGHES: How did you get here?

DANE SIMPSON: Yeah, similar sort of yarn. So my nan was in Walgett, it was this really funny person and I used to sit at the end of her bed when I was a kid and we would just spin yarns and be silly and tell stupid stories. She used to play her walking stick, like a trumpet or a trombone, I suppose. It just made me laugh. I was like six years old, this song would come on the radio and it was like... and it was great. I think that that's where I sort of first got into like having a laugh with people and being just really enjoying people's company, similar to what you were saying earlier too, about having a yarn and just really getting to know.

I feel like Walgett is one of those kind of places too. Even though I grew up here, my dad live indeed Walgett and would travel up there from - since I was about six. Every school holidays and go and see him and hang out and hang out with my mob up there and just, yeah, spin yarns, have a laugh. That's the kind of place it is. There's nothing really much else happening in Walgett, surprise, apart from the people. It's the people there. And it's, yeah, really fun. One of my dad's really good friends, he got - he killed like a wild boar and the head is massive. It's about that big. Right. I'm starting to sound like a Walgett yarn already. But it's above the ATM and every time I go to Walgett, I ask how he killed the boar and he's got a different yarn every time. And it's so funny.

I think his latest one he told me he had a gutful of OP rum and he burped on it. It is just stuff like that. I love that. So growing up around these yarns an really having that my nan sort of being really funny, my dad's like a character. It really just leans steuchl towards spinning yarns and telling stories.

I know some of your cousins. Nadi, remarkable family. I know many of the Briggs.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: I know Lucy as well.

MARCUS HUGHES: That is what happens. We always find those familial connections. Again, it is such an important part of the way we can yarn. We have that innate flaert.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I did - like so I did my solo show last year, it was all about how I got into comedy and where it really comes from and it heavily lent towards my family and particularly my nan, but there was a story that I will always remember from a young age. My nanused to iron clothes for white fellas and obviously, and they pay her and using the fire, you know, back when the iron - this lady came around with a big mob of clothes and paid my nan up front and when she went to iron the clothes, the money flew, like, just blew into the fire. And it burnt up. Obviously it's sad.

But nan told everyone who came and dropped clothes off or people who were visiting her, just told them about the yarn, about the money blowing into the fire. She was like oh, what are you going to do and just have a laugh about it. At the end of the day, was like you know that money blowing into the fire was worth the yarn.

That's it. That's where I think my comedy comes from. I think that is really fun to just have that and just go oh, that yarn is worth it. That's great.

MARCUS HUGHES: Joel, what's your journey been?

JOEL BRAY: I will jump on the cleaner connection. I remember when I first moved down to Sydney and my dad was - how do you say, he had another gig and was supporting them, really at the beginning when they were doing the local pub in Redfern, my dad would get on his guitar and sing country and western.

DANE SIMPSON: Opening act.

JOEL BRAY: Yeah. What was the question? All right. How did I get into what I do?

MARCUS HUGHES: Yeah.

JOEL BRAY: Well, I came to pro dancer, I came pretty late. I was at Sydney Uni doing arts law degree. Well, I was enrolled in an arts law degree. (Laughter) I spent most of my time getting, you know, arrested for sit ins and locking myself to things and student activist. It was - and this is a dynamic that I've seen happen in kind of progressive white organisations ever since. Is that they were like oh, you're a black fella, oh, you know, you can be the - and they would put me into this important position, that I was completely unready for and didn't know what I was doing, was supposed to speak for all Aboriginal students and I barely understood my own. My own cultural identity.

I knew who I was and I spent weekends and summers with my Wiradjuri father but for all intents and purposes, I was white in terms of my cultural capital. And so I had - here is the yarn. It was in Bathurst. I went to a student conference. There was a big party and everyone fell asleep and I was still awake and it was dawn. I walked out. And I came to a hill. On top of the hill was a tree. And swooping through the tree was this flock of tiny little birds. I stood there and I looked at them and you know, very cinematic, right, Sun is coming up behind the trees.

I noticed that they didn't seem to be a kind of dull evolutionary reason for them to be doing this, they didn't seem to be breeding or feeding. They were just dancing. And so I don't know if this story is true. I've told it so many times I can't remember. But according to the story anyway, that was the moment when I decided yeah, I'm going to become a dancer.

I went to Naystar. Less out of a desire to dance and more out of a desire to be in a black community for a bit. Just to go each day and hang out with other black fellas. I thought that would be worthwhile. And then like five minutes into the first class, it was an old school Broadway jazz class. Taught by Ronny Arnold, I don't know if anyone knows Ronny. May he rest in peace. He passed last year. It was like proper, yeah, proper African American, like, jazz. It was awesome. Five minutes into it, it was like you know, the heavens opened and I was like this is what I want to do with the rest of my life.

That was 20 - phew, that was 20 years ago. So I did that for a couple of years. And then I guess there's kind of a certain pathway that's laid out for a young talented Indigenous dancer. And that is Bangara which is an incredible company, offers maids opportunities to dancers and offers amazing opportunities to dancers who want to move on and do other roles in the organisation.

But I saw that and I thought no, I'm more interested in what's happening in the south-east. Even though Bangara has amazing relationships with mob up in Arnhem Land, from Turkey Creek and Torres Strait and northern country, I'm - I had this idea, I was like I'm interested in the south-east. And now, of course, we're seeing that and I was yarning with you this morning, we were seeing a renaissance, I was looking at the lagoons there, and it's the old and the new, it's the thousand years old and the new technologies and it's bubbling.

So I went to Wopa, studied there, all up I studied full time for five years. Jumped on a plane. Maxed out my credit card. Landed in Paris. Came from summer here, still in shorts and singlet, landed in new year's in Paris, it was snowing. Got my first gig which was in Grenoble, which I didn't realise was in the alps, I had a full koopz cool Runnings moment. Like I was literally in the train with people wearing ski gear and I was in the shorts and T-shirt, I jumped on the plane.

That was it. Then yeah. Just kind of danced in - got into a little company in the Portuguese country side. Learnt Portuguese. And then fell in love with a boy. And followed him to Jerusalem and then I lived in historical Palestine, yeah, the country they now call Israel for nearly 10 years before I got really home sick and decided to come home. Yeah. That's it in a nutshell.

MARCUS HUGHES: Great stuff. I mean, you know, it just reminds me and reinforces how interconnected we are as mob. Because they are all family.

DANE SIMPSON: I really got into whoppers as well! (Laughter)

SPEAKER: That is the Western Australian academy of performing arts, Dane. It is like in those - you have all have diverse experiences, working in very different disciplines but there that is commonality between all of them that it is about the ongoing narrative and the historical narrative. And keeping the business moving forward.

What has been, I guess, the biggest highlight for you - in your career to date?

DANE SIMPSON: It's so strange. Because I have always sort of - you set goals and then and to me they're crazy goals. Like crazy, I would love to one day get on tele and do some comedy. And then when that finally happened, but I say "finally" it happened really quickly. I was like oh, I didn't really expect that. It was, yeah, I still remember the getting that phone call to do a show on ABC, it was called 'comedy up late', to do a little spot on that was just phenomenal.

But then I set another goal and I wanted to do the Melbourne International Comedy Festival gala, it is the most incredible gig in the country. And then the following year, it was just to get that phone call was nuts.

Again, I talk about this until my show. But people don't - I quit my job. I was a social worker for the government. And I quit my job on a 5 to 5 on a Friday, it was government. And I walked out of the office just expecting not to return. Taking like two weeks sick leave or whatever I had. I sat in my car and I was just really upset. I know that my mum would have been cranky if I would have told her that I had left a stable job for such a fickle business.

I drove to my mum's house here. And it was like one hour directly after I quit that I got that phone call to do the gala. Which was crazy. I was driving in to my mum's driveway and, yeah, the call came through the car. I just,

yeah, I was just such a relief, I suppose, to get that phone call. But then obviously the excitement kicked in that I get to do this incredible gig.

I was relieved because I got to tell my mum that I was doing a job. She was going to flog me. (Laughter) and then yeah, then it led on. Have you been paying attention, one of the best shows on television. Doing that. And then yeah. I just goal after goal, it has just been crazy for me. I've loved every single bit of it. I think it's all really sort of weird humble beginnings from Walgett to 'have you been paying attention', I feel like that should be the name of my new show. But yeah. I think it has been incredible. Such an incredible ride. It's not just like, yeah, we do work hard, like trying to get trying to be funny and trying to write gags and stuff like. That

But I blame it purely on the support. Like I live here. Having incredible supports. Civic Theatre, number one. Who have really supported me and have allowed me to just blossom. Nothing's too big. All of the staff here are incredible. Chris, thank you. Paid ad.

Everyone here has just been absolutely amazing and supporting me. Yeah. Eastern Riverina Arts, obviously, Scott Howe is really so helpful and Tim obviously now. As much as I sort of pester them, there is nothing that they won't help me with which is just great.

I love being here in Wagga. It is just that support.

MARCUS HUGHES: What's been your highlight?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: I will have to agree with what they've been saying. Just being able to leave the full time kind of government jobs and branch out and do something for yourself. Just continue to follow that. I'm really appreciative that I'm able to do what I do on country. You know. Build something from scratch. I mean, it hasn't been easy. I work in textiles and getting that started has been massive. A lot of people don't really understand a lot of the effort and time that goes into hand printing and screen printing and block printing metres upon metres of fabrics and sill ks.

Being able to take that home and do it entirely myself, with my partner, has been the most rewarding part of my journey so far. I think it kind of backs the whole self determination autonomy and being able to really support and work around your culture and do something that you truly are passionate about. And on country. Respecting my family, my grandmother, grandfather and my ancestors.

So that's the highlight for me. Makes me emotional, yeah.

MARCUS HUGHES: And Joel, your highlight?

JOEL BRAY: I think it depends on a bit what the yardstick is. Yeah. Like I guess maybe like probably like career wise, it's probably what - I'm able to be here today because I'm actually based in Sydney at the moment making a new work with Sydney dance company. So that's probably a step up for me. As well as just being an absolute pleasure to be in the studio with these incredible dancers, you know.

That thing you were doing on the floor, you can do it 2m in the air, and they are like yep. It is like being at a toy store. It is so fun. And the work is like a crow and it's, you know, you're independent artist, normally you are fund raising everything yourself, organising everything yourself, so it has been really amazing to have the support of a large organisation like Sydney dance company but they really are beautiful.

Spiritually, maybe last night. I don't know. Or last year I spent two weeks with my dad, we jumped in a car, we came here, we went out to the rock, we went to Dubbo, we went to about the bat, we went up to my great, great, grandfather's country who is Trucka Rally's brother up near Macquarie marches and I was telling him about this - I was doing research last year at the national library Australia, an we found a place that I think, we still need to confirm, but I'm pretty sure based on my research it was a Bullabong ground. That is the word for Bora, so the ceremonial ground. And this huge wedge tailed eagle flew in and landed and two kangaroos were standing underneath it. And they were just looking at us for this moment. That was like a real kind of like wild moment.

But then there's been like ones like, I don't know, performing on the theatre at the Shayo, which is this, like, massive palace of dance in Paris. You are dancing 2,500 people in the audience, you're like whoa, this is a long way for a kid from Orange, you know.

I guess it depends on your yardstick, what is the most important. The thing I miss the most, having been in lockdown in Melbourne all year, is that moment you come into a dance class at 9:30, 10:00 in the morning and the other dancers are all lounging around and you get to go in and you kind of roll around and stretch and you catch up and that mealing of tribe, that feeling of community that you get. Like that is what I'm really looking forward to getting back after this year.

MARCUS HUGHES: You're all doing remarkable things. I keep saying that. The experiences that you've been having are so important for old ones like me to hear. And to see and know about.

There's a memorial to my family back home in the desert, it's further out from the desert, and it goes (speaks foreign language) and it translates roughly to you and I will go. But the earth will remain.

So for us to hear the beauty of what you are doing and the joy that lives within that, it helps us feel safe for the future. And for the next generation. The generations that you will be concerned with and will be the old ones for.

With that always comes a sense of what are the challenges that you face. Because we still want to know what we can do to help you move forward.

DANE SIMPSON: Yeah, I've got that one ready. Especially knowing that we have decision-makers here today and people who do have the capacity to make change. We must become unchained from white fella bureaucracy. Like, I made a joke earlier that I should be called a professional grant writer. It is actually true. All that skill that I have been gifted from the teachers and the Elders, you know, I stand on the shoulders of giants when it comes to Indigenous dance in this country, I don't get to use that most of the time. I have to sit and write grant apps and do spread sheath and do meetings and do network.

If you were to ask me what would make my next work even better, free me from that and let me come and sit on the banks of the Murambidgi and just happen to hear a story from an Elder. Let me go and learn my traditional dance. Let me do all of those - let me come and do the language program here at the uni. All of that stuff would make my work better. Like I literally enrolled in that program this year and had to withdraw it because I looked at my schedule, looked at how many fucking grant apps I had to write, EOI, oh my God, it is a yes or no question! (Laughter)

Are you interested? Yes. Excellent. Let's move on. Oh, you miss that hour and a half Zoom meeting. Here's the recording of it. Like, like, you know, we joke about it, that's how I deal with stuff, but it's actually crushing us. It's actually crushing artists. No you just black fella artists, it is actually crushing us and it is getting worse by the day.

COVID was a year I did 25 grant apps this year. Each - like, if you were to do the maths on like if you took all of the creative talent in this country and the number of labour hours that were spent doing this shit, it is just such a waste.

(Applause)

I have many great relationships with people who are beautiful people who work in major organisations and funding organisations and I believe on an individual basis the vast majority of people are good and have good intentions. But the matrix effect of the system is that because there's all of these arts bureaucrats doing work, we have to match their work. Like do you know what I mean? Arts organisations and kind of programmers and producers, they need to do work so they need to have the meetings, they need to write the emails, they need to put out the grant apps, so the artists need to join the meetings, they have to fill out the grant apps, they have to sit there, you know.

So we're being creative making art. My request to you is be creative and find ways to facilitate us making art that doesn't mean we have to do all of this bureaucracy.

(Applause)

MARCUS HUGHES: Joel, when you said those words good intentions, one of the messages that I constantly have to give is that the missionaries have very good intentions. But the devastation for our cultures was the cost of their good intentions. Thank you so much for being so strong and clear.

Your challenges.

SPEAKER: That's so on the money. I think also like because I live here, I've got to do the - I go to Sydney Comedy Festival, I do Melbourne, international Comedy Festival, these festivals go for a month. So that's just so much cost for me. I've got to live in Melbourne for a month. I will end up not doing it but I just go down there for a couple of weeks. Just to keep costs down. Paragraph in a lucky sort of spot now because I can cover those costs. People can come and watch the show.

But there's a time where you're trying to get to people coming to your show and yeah. You go to Melbourne International Comedy Festival because you - you've got this product, you've got this show that you've worked all year on and you want to go down there and show it off and have people come to your show and then a side effect of that is that it is a job, so you want to make some money. It costs you money. Like it costs thousands of

dollars for you to go to Melbourne and show off your show. That just doesn't - you're paying people almost to come watch you. Which just sucks.

I suppose on the other side of that too is if you are at the Melbourne Comedy Festival, if you are in Melbourne Sydney Comedy Festival, Adelaide Fringe, go and watch somebody who you don't know. Will Anderson doesn't need your money, right. I love Will, he is a friend. But yeah. You know, he is rich. Go and watch somebody off beat. And make sure you support them. It's festivals and stuff. You can really find out whose the talk of the town. Whose got a really good show on and just needs your support and go and watch it. And pay for a ticket. There is nothing worse than because I could have a sell out audience and I'm like oh yeah, but that is all my mob. Aunties and uncles, yeah, pay for a ticket.

JOEL BRAY: I have one auptty who always turns up with muffins, which is super cute. I can't pay the rent with your muffins though, aunty. Sorry, I took over.

DANE SIMPSON: No, that is so accurate.

JOEL BRAY: Auptty's muffins, go for it. -- aunties.

DANE SIMPSON: It's on your ticket. Free muffin.

MARCUS HUGHES: Lillardia, the challenge?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: I would have to agree with both these brother boys are saying. Support is really important. Yeah, I find living in a very small community, it's difficult to have support. I've got a fantastic arts (inaudible) who I also work for part-time though. And on maternity leave. Anja, she is here, she is fantastic rchlt she is always chasing me up for grants an always helping me but I find it really important to touch on things like not having an Aboriginal arts officer or not having someone I can connect with. I do connect with my executive western Riverina and arts but I also want to have mob that I can talk to and have that understanding between us.

When you talk to black fellas, we don't have that. My population, Aboriginal population sits at around 10, 11%. We are three times the average for our community alone. I just think why don't we have something like an Aboriginal arts officer to help us progress within the arts? It's such an important thing. It can hech so much. Just having that support there.

I mean, in textiles an fashion, it is such a struggle at the moment because it's such a new niche industry. You know. We're few and far between. I know I have been fortunate enough just to get a 10 m print table and there are only few areas in remote communities that have these tables. There is no knowledge that can be shared between us. There is not a lot of support.

But it is partly so because we are supa new industry, new market -- such a new industry, new market. But it has been really difficult. I think support is important. Especially for rural and regional towns. Like I don't want to have to continually go to Sydney or I have even for my studies, I will have to travel four hours each day just to complete them. It's really hard as a regional artist to have support, whether it is cultural or not. It is really lacking.

I think until we are at a point where we could have these things in smaller towns an communities where we are not always having to travel around and search out assistance and support with everything from grant writing to just talking out your ideas on what you need or what you want, yeah, until we have that, I think the regional communities will be lacking. You know. So yeah, support's a big thing for me. It just makes it really difficult sometimes. But we persevere as we always do.

JOEL BRAY: The other thing to add to that is that there's a whole deasprira of artists, it is true to all language groups, there is heaps - like in Melbourne, there is heaps of amazing Wiradjuri artists who feel incredibly connected to country an wish we had more opportunities to come back, engage with other of our peer artists, the young mob coming up through meeting with Elders. Like I don't know. Like this is a provocation to throw out. And vice versa. We would love to have you come and visit us and share that particular unique aspect of culture that you have because you get to live here. We're like jealous of that, you know.

So finding - it would be great to start finding more ways of being able to bring artists back and bring artists who live on country out to deaspra artists. I think that would be hot.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: We will have a yarn later.

MARCUS HUGHES: Even though there are things like the festivals and Comedy Festivals and dance festivals, it all gets so cluttered with the business of getting there, the support, I'm just wondering if there are ways that we can look to declutter what we do so that we can truly focus in on the way that we connect?

SPEAKER: My experience coming here was decluttered. Jonathan Jones said he wanted a dancer. They asked around. They found me. They gave me a bit of money. Flew me here. I made the work. Performed it. Everyone - do you know what I mean? It was actually - I was think being that last night. Afterwards I was like actually, that was in terms of this project, I spent most of my time making the art. Radical. Yeah. It's doable. It's totally doable. Like you know, you know. Couple of production meetings to talk about the stuff. Yeah. It is doable. Maybe actually like the regions could be the Paragons of that because we're working in the regions and I know people are working in the context of less resourcing, fewer staff and, you know, so you hear of stories of like oh yeah, we have got this space, go and make it. I don't know.

I think decluttering is a really excellent word and it is something that we could be thinking about. I don't think we need to imagine what that is. I feel like there are people doing it. We should just, like, do more of that.

MARCUS HUGHES: The EOI would be yes.

JOEL BRAY: Would you like to do something, yes, great!

MARCUS HUGHES: We don't have much more time left. You sort of laid the seeds around what the challenges are. I was thinking maybe we should talk about how to address those challenges. But I don't think it is rocket science.

What I would love to hear is what your vision for the future is, coming back to that thing old one, here but you guys are doing what you're doing. And feeling secure for the future. What is your hope for the next generations to come?

JOEL BRAY: Me? I feel like I'm talking a lot.

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: You're right. Joel jome all right, cool. My dream is to - what uncle Stan Grant and my father and lots of othermaids people have done with the language, I want to see that happen with other ritual practices.

I'm a Wiradjuri man, so I'm starting off with the men's initiation ceremony. I was at the national library of Australia as the first dance, the first black fella to be the creative arts fellow, the national library investigating all the white fella archival sources and now I'm in the process of connecting with Elders and mob, men in particular, who are the custodians of this ritual that has continued. And is secret and sacred and therefore like stepping very gently in this terrain.

But I think that those - that European fetishisation of categories, this is dance, this is geography, this is history, this is comedy, this is fashion, that's going. It makes me laugh. I hear white fellas go oh, we've discovered this amazing stuff, it is called intersectional art. Or it is sight specific performance. Durational work. I'm like girl, we've been doing that for tens of thousands of years!

So what I am excited about, the next thing that's going to happen, is already happening, it is happening in this rensos, it is happening in the south-east of the country and get on the band wagon because this is where it's at, ladies and gentlemen, is the fashion, the comedy, the dance, the geography, the history, the law, the food stuffs, all of it. Coming together into what we call ceremony. And that, what that looks like in the next decade. I think that is what I'm really excited about. And people like Jonathan Jones and Vicki van Houtton, you mob, goosebumps thinking about it. Yeah.

(Applause)

DANE SIMPSON: Well, I suppose because I live here, so we're sort of doing - we've got the Riverina comedy club which I'm really proud of the guys, when we first started, so me and my partner had this idea, particularly started that I needed a sandpit, sort of thing to, play around in. And Wagga, we didn't have anything. We didn't have any comedy clubs. We don't even have open mics here today, to this day. And so we invented this comedy club for me to muck around in and we got some local guys to, I don't know who, was interested in comedy.

I want to continue that. I want to grow that. So that we've got comedians come from Wagga. I think there is a particular brand of humour that comes from country NSW. It's very funny and I would love to nurture that. We have been for the past five years. But I would love to grow it. I would really love to see some of these people that are like our performers who are - next week, little plug for my show. But next week, and also randy is going to headline, the purple puppet, if you don't know who that is, I would love to see these performers like local performers really get involved in the festivals. Really get involved in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and start to just force their own careers from local.

It annoys me going to the Melbourne Comedy Festival and seeing deadly funny is a competition run for Aboriginal people, finding the next Ernie Dingo, the class clowns is a school based competition, raw comedy is the next amateur comedian. All of these competitions and you see the finalists, and our finalists from Victoria,

from Melbourne, our finalists from NSW, from Sydney, and all of the states, it's always the capital cities. I know that there's just country humour that is really funny and we could really take it out. We just need to have that - just that road I would love to just form.

I would hate people to have to do the hard slog the way that I did it. I would love to just let them walk in the, yeah, footsteps in the sand that I've done. Make it really easy for them. So that's what we're working on at the moment.

We've gotten some grants through NSW arts to try and inspire more and more people. Yeah. So that's what we're working on at the moment. Which I would love to keep continue on. And get that support.

MARCUS HUGHES: And your vision for the future, young one?

LILLARDIA BRIGGS: Figure vision for the future. Gosh. I guess I would just like to see the young people in my community, small communities, be able to like what Dane said, do whatever they want, whether it is comedy, dance, cultural practices, whatever they are, be able to do them at home with the support of their mob. I think that is really important. Because you know, it is true. We have had to really slug it out to get to where we are. With not a lot of support. Especially kind of new areas and see all of these merging Aboriginal artist notices there, respective fields, coming and I think yeah, being able to do that at home and let the young ones be able to do it with ease. So they can say "Oh, hey, look at this person in my community. Look what they're doing, maybe I can do that in the future or maybe there's an opportunity for me to do something extraordinary".

Especially in a small town of 4,000 people. When there's not a lot for kids. When I was 15, I said I wanted to be a fashion designer, I was laughed at by my teacher. So I don't want that for the young ones. I want them to feel like they can do anything. So yeah. That is my dream. For the other kids that we have now so they can strive and excel in whatever they choose to do. And really have their culture behind them. And that - let that be at the centre and forefront for Australia to see.

I think, yeah, it's a long journey but we will get there eventually. And there will be some hope for our kids in community. Because it is a struggle and I think when we start doing these things and we start being able to show that we can do things in community, it alleviates a lot of other things. It's healing for one. More importantly it heals. Especially with all of our traumas and everything else that we face. I think that's so important. So important for small towns. Not even a small town, but for mobs in the cities.

So yeah, that is the dream. To be able to do what I'm doing at home and be able to see the younger generation thrive in fashion or comedy or dance or whatever they choose to do. But be able to do that at home.

MARCUS HUGHES: Thank you. Thank you Lillardia.

DANE SIMPSON: The example that I always - I would love to see a black fella on the - particularly me - on the project but not being (inaudible)

(Applause)

MARCUS HUGHES: Absolutely. Dane, thank you for your humour. Joel, thank you for your beauty. Lillardia, thank you for your incredible sense of care.

In closing, because it's NAIDOC week next week, I think one of the - those wonderful phrases that we sing are always was, always will be, always creatives, always scientists, always thirst and always concerned with our community.

Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS: Thank you all so much. Marcus, thank you for moderating such an absolutely fascinating conversation. And my very deep thanks to the three of you for being so open, so honest, sharing your stories, so that we all learn to walk together but extraordinary creative journeys. I can't tell you how grateful I am that you were all prepared to give up this hour this morning and share your time with us.

So once again, everybody, they were just wonderful.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS: I think there was some very pertinent words of advice that we can take notice of as we continue our theme of Walking Together. Now, please just be seated for a moment because we have a COVID-Safe plan and I have to tell you about it. You're going to get very bored by the end of the next two days.

The first thing I just want to say is that anyone who is going to any of the arts programs tonight, who are in the performing arts, has to have a ticket. The only ticket that has a price attached to it are delegates, there are no tickets with prices attached to delegates.

If you have a ticket and for some reason you change your mind and you don't want to go, would you please return it to the box office. Because for some of the smaller capacity performances, we have a waiting list. So I would really appreciate it if you decided, even 4:00 this afternoon, I'm over this, I need to go to bed, totally understand that. Please just drop your ticket back to the box office. We would really appreciate that so that the people on our waiting list can have a chance to experience that performance.

For the smaller workshops, they are also ticketed but the tickets are hard tickets and they're available from registration and I know a number of you have picked those up for things like the hands on workshops, the art state focus groups that are being held tomorrow and I just wanted to briefly say that we are doing an evaluation with an independent research company. They will be conducting focus groups and there will be surveys and a whole pile of information about that. But anyone that has something they would like to say about Artstate, about its future direction, what was good, what was bad, I encourage you to get a ticket to that.

Morning tea breaks. Because we're state COVID state conference, your breaks will work differently this year. There will be a staggered exit to collect morning tea to avoid overcrowding in the foyers. So because we're a conference, although we are in a theatre, we are able to have increased capacity, we couldn't increase the capacity of the conference audience because it's determined by the capacity of the foyer. Go figure.

So you will be instructed to exit via the front door and please follow the directions of staff. They are just trying to keep everybody safe. They're not trying to make your life misery.

So as you go down the room, down the ramp, there are bathrooms available on the right. In the lower foyer, you will collect your morning tea. Then you will need to go up stairs and there is a lift. And straight back into the auditorium to your seat which has been allocated to you for the duration of Artstate.

The upper foyer bar will be open for anyone who wants to purchase an additional drink. Please remember no mingling. Please allow 1.5m distancing as you flow through and queue. Those waiting in the house please remain in your seats until invited to exit.

So, please obey the instructions of staff. I know it is so great to be out and actually see our friends and colleagues again. But please be aware we do not want to - we need to obey these instructions, both the Wagga civic theatre and Regional Arts NSW have registered a COVID-Safe plan, and if you break the law within our jurisdiction, we will get a fine and as you know, we actually can't afford that at the moment.

So thank you everybody. Enjoy morning tea. And we look forward to seeing you back for the -- forward to seeing you back for this morning's second part speakers program.

(Morning tea break)

>> Good morning. Welcome back. I hope you enjoyed your socially distanced tea. All the plenary sessions are being recorded and will be available on the Artstate website in due course. If people want to go back and revisit Jonathan Jones was my keynote address in Bathurst, it is available. This year we have Dr Holly Randell-Moon and Professor Sue Green performing the roles of rapporteurs. They will present brief findings on Saturday. Their written reports will be provided later in the year. We will have a fantastic record of their conversation. I have a little sad news because unfortunately Gayle Kennedy, our next keynote, cannot be with us in person this morning due to an unexpected illness that made it inadvisable for her to travel. So we sent up a film crew into her home this week where she recorded her keynote so we can bring it to you today. I have to tell you our great technical team sorted this out after we got advice on Monday. They are totally amazing. I also need to have a big yellow of appreciation to my colleague, Kerry Comerford, from accessible are two helped facilitate's involvement in this program today. -- Who. She put together the disability sparkling panel that follows this afternoon and I would like to thank her for this contribution to the programme. Award-winning writer, one bone woman and wheelchair user Gayle Kennedy puts her spent on working together. -- Wongaiibon woman. She will provide distinctive and entertaining insights in how opportunity is access and how what is a patient is made available to people and communities across the state. So, not in person but on the screen, please welcome Gayle Kennedy. -- Accessed. >> My name is Gayle Kennedy. I am a member of the Wongaiibon woman -- clan. I would like to pay my respects to the Wiradjuri mob whose blood runs through me. I'm sorry I could not be there with you today in person. I was looking forward to being there and catching up with family and friends but unfortunately, you'll this had other plans. So, today I am speaking to you as a disabled artist and speaking on behalf of hopefully, with their permission, other disabled artists and Deaf artists as well. This year started very promisingly, had a few gigs lined up including the Sydney writers Festival and I was really excited because I had not been invited to a writers festival for quite a long time because it seems to me that money is always tight when it comes to paying for a carer or a mobility assistant to come with me and then COVID it and lots of my gigs were actually cancelled and I thought, what am I going to do? Then all of a sudden I did an online thing with Accessible Arts and everything

exploded from there and suddenly, like for years and years, disabled artists have been screaming out for a way where we can actually be involved in the arts, get our art out there, our books, our music, dance, theatre, be part and parcel of the arts world and also the world in general, like working, being able to work from home when the need arises or being able to work from home full-time if possible, but all of this was too hard. "We cannot do that. That is impossible." But all of a sudden, everybody is running around with cameras and there are Zoom meetings and Broadway musicals and shows were suddenly being live streamed. Everybody was working from home and it all happened really quickly and without any real fuss, and the reason, because it all happened really quickly and without any real fuss, was because suddenly able-bodied people needed to use this technology. We had been sitting around with our noses pressed against the windowpane looking in at the music, at the theatre, the art galleries, and a lot of theatres were of course not disabled accessible, not a lot of stages were accessible. I had actually been to a couple of events where there was no accessible stage for me to get up and so I am sitting down there, I levelled the audience instead of being up there on a stage where I could command some presence, like everybody else. And it amazed me and we are not going to be able to go back now because we know, we disabled artists know now, we can be part of all these festivals. I was part of a very successful festival of all disabled artists that came out of Wagga Wagga as well as this year and there were all these amazing artists, dancers, singers, painters, authors. I read a story. We were being represented across the nation and things were being streamed overseas and people were seeing us for the first time because for far too long, people go, "You wrote a book? You did a painting? It is good you have something to occupy your time." Not at all thinking this was our livelihood, the way we paid our rent, how we put food on the table. We were professional artists as well just because we are sitting in wheelchairs or we are Deaf or we have autism, any number of disabilities, our art is our life, our art is beautiful, is unique, as is all art, and art really should be... Are should connect everybody. We should all be able to understand the beauty of a painting, all be able to understand the beauty of a song, to understand the beauty of a stage play, and we can. Art is almost like a giant tower of Babel. We all speak its language. But that was not being utilised, and now it is. Yes, art is... Should be and really is a tower of Babel. We all speak its language. And we can all understand that it is service and comes from the heart of people and it is unusual, different, and disability does not in any way detract from the beauty and the power of the art that we make, and for too long, able-bodied people have been appropriating our disabled artists. Frieda Carlo was disabled but you would not know it because everybody likes to cut her off above the rest with her beautiful blouses and her fabulous mono brow and the brilliant flowers in her hair and you have appropriated her and taken her away from us as a disabled artist. Songwriter was never able to dance because of disability from a bout of polio. -- A. Joni Mitchell and a lot of artists spent many years as children isolated and looking out at the world because of illness, just as I did with polio and you grow up with a completely different sensibility, grow up basically knowing... Living inside your head really, creating inside your head because you learn. It is a skill that you learn. You will find that most artists with disabilities are like most other artists – we do not get bored because we very luckily have this incredible ability to amuse ourselves and to live with that inside ourselves that we can look at the world because we're so used to looking out over the world and over the way others communicate and you could learn a lot from us. And even Steven Hawking. I think it annoyed people immensely, although he was not an artist but a scientist and author, but I think it annoyed people intensely that one of the greatest minds on the planet in this and any other century was severely disabled and they could not ignore his disability and he did not want his disability to be ignored. He had said before, I feel privileged, I can live inside my head. I don't have to run around and be part of this or this. My mind is free to wander the universe, the endless universe. It is free to wander and make up its own mind. I think it annoyed people he was just so... His disability was just so there, so in your face, and it was very, very annoying for people with disability that when he finally died they could finally reclaim him, and so they had him standing up from his wheelchair dressed in mad men like clothes, suits and China shoes and running off into the world. "Off you go. The free. You are not confined to a wheelchair anymore." One calling one had him standing in a suit and shiny shoes at the end of a golden stairway where he could run up to heaven because he was free. He was not confined to his wheelchair. His wheelchair was part of his DNA. It is a part of us, how we get around, but carries us around, whether we need a wheelchair, whether we need walking sticks, whatever it is we need to get around, we are not confined by it. We are freed by it. We have the NDIS for a start, but there are also these fabulous technologies now. We have electric wheelchairs. Everybody can have an electric wheelchair now and scoot around and write up as high as anyone else and look people in the eye when they speak to them. Technology means that we are no longer invisible as well and it has given us a mobility that a lot of us have not had before. The world needs to catch up with us. It needs to stop excluding us and I would have thought, I genuinely would have thought, that the arts community would have been more accepting and more welcoming and open their arms to us and welcome us in. They would welcome us into the brethren, or the sisterhood, whatever you want to call it.

You would think that they would say come in, come in, brother and sister, you are an artist. You are welcome on our stages. We will make our stages accessible for you. I mean, watching people that have won awards, disabled artists that have won awards not able to be up there on stage with everybody else. They are sitting down below the stage with their award. It is appalling and it should not be happening. We are not going to go back anymore. You have shown us that we can do this. This technology is there. You have shown us that you can do it, that we can be part and parcel of the world of arts.

We can write our own stage plays. We can act in them. We can stop attending that we do not exist. That needs to stop. It has to stop. We need to stop writing and presenting films where the person in a wheelchair goes and kills themselves rather than be a burden on anybody. We are not burdens. Most of us have the ability to pay people to

care for us and to meet the needs that we have, with mobility and we have all kinds of barriers put between us. They are trying to get a train, or get a bus, or an aeroplane, it is a nightmare. They can put in all of these fancy first class compartments on aeroplanes, with our own personal bathrooms and their own suites, but they cannot put in a disabled bathroom and a disabled toilet on a plane. People with disabilities are left in all kinds of dilemmas.

We should not have to do that. We should be able to get on a plane and go to London easily if we are invited, or go to Attenborough. It should not have to be the sort of drama that it is. We should be able to go to a show. We should be able to go and see a play. It should not be a drama. We should not have to spend hours trying to figure out how to get in and out of the theatres.

I am pleased with the changes that have been made at the Sydney Opera House. But it is nowhere near enough and for the first time ever a lot of disabled people are getting to see live streamed Broadway shows. These are shows that they never would have been able to see or never would have been able to be part of. They are able to be at the frontline of a concert now because it is all being live streamed. We are able to get our point across and we are able to perform two people. We are able to show our art. We have got this. In the space of a few short months, you have shown that it can be done because it suits you. But it also suits us. We are not going to go back. We are not going to go back to the way that it was.

It is not only just up to the able-bodied people and the able-bodied artists, but it is also up to us as disabled artists and deaf artist to speak out and yell and make a noise and say stop, you are not going to use that excuse with us anymore. We know. We know perfectly well that these things can be done. You cannot, you cannot keep pushing us out and pushing us aside. We need to be vocal and we need to claim our place at the table. We need to be able to reclaim our artists. The brilliant Caroline Bowditch did a fantastic play that was brought out to Australia called finding -- Finding Frieda. She reclaim herself. Other disabled artists that have been with disabilities have been hidden. I did not come out, as they say, as an artist with a disability for quite some time. I did not until I virtually had to. I was finding that if I went to a festival I needed somebody to travel with me and I needed somebody to carry my bags and help with my wheelchair.

I needed help. But I could not afford to actually go to them, because they would not pay for an assessment -- assistant to come with me because it was not in their budget. This should be something that is in every arts festival budget and every literature festival budget. Every arts for adjustable -- arts Festival budget. I am sure that a lot of those wealthy writers that get flown out here would be more than happy to donate a little bit of their business class airfares or first-class airfares back to the festivals in order that a disabled artist could attend. A disabled artist could have somebody with them — it is not that big a deal. It is not a big deal to get a seat on a plane on a budget plane to fly somebody along with us, somebody that can assist us. They do not need to assist us and do the things that we need done in order to participate. That is to participate in our art form and participate in things like festivals. We cannot go back — and as I said, it is up to all of us to start looking at ways and means of keeping these kinds of things going. I thought that I would not be able to participate in this festival because of my illness at the moment. I thought no, no, I will throw this out there. I will say that I cannot go out there and I cannot travel and I'm not well enough, but I am more than happy to speak at your festival if we can find a way to do it. And yes, we could. And here we are I am coming to you from my own home and in front of a camera and a very nice chap called Jordan who is filming me and listening to my rant.

I want to the world... We are the forgotten people, the disabled people. We come from all kinds of cultures and all kinds of backgrounds. We are not all the same. There are certain cultures that will not allow the use of guide dogs for instance. And a white cane in some countries. It is absolutely useless. Nobody knows what the hell a white cane is. That will not stop you from getting run over or hit when crossing the road. Many people would find the idea of using a guided dog offensive and they would use their relatives or their friends or their children. They would use them to help them around. We are not all one size fits all, and in many cultures having a disability is frowned upon because you need to be able to continue -- contribute to your community and if you cannot physically or monetarily contribute, then you are pushed aside.

In my travels, speaking at disability conferences, I have had some pretty horrendous stories of the way that people with disabilities have been treated. It was eye-opening for me. It is something that I would not think happens anywhere. It does. We needed to be mindful, and we need to look at a more diverse art scene not only in terms of people with disabilities but for people from all backgrounds. The arts in Australia is white. Let us face it. It is white. Yes, we have made great strides because we now have our own Indigenous arts production companies. But again, people with disabilities are not being included. Why can we not be included in films? Why can we not be included in television shows? Why are we not on television shows? There are enough mouthy disabled people out there that would be quite happily included in panels on shows like Have You Been Paying Attention? But we have white people with the odd brown skin person thrown in now and then just to add a little bit of colour. Why can't we have fantastic people with disabilities on the show? Why can we not be shown on television and in films, it has just been part and parcel of the community? We are now. That is what is happening now. You need to look around your communities and you need to stop excluding people, excluding us. It is becoming ridiculous. Everybody wanders around and it is right on and woke, but it is all rhetoric, and rhetoric needs to be translated into positive, real change. People with disabilities should be able to go to a show, should

be able to see a band, the able to have their own band on stage at any pub. I have been wanting to go to gigs to see favourite bands. -- Pub. I can't get in because pubs have heritage listings slapped on them. I have been to Amsterdam. If they can make those beautiful old buildings like the Louvre accessible, you can wrap (inaudible) a ramp in your old pub. But they get away with it. Thousands upon thousands of home units are being built around the city with no real laws in place that say you must have at least two disabled, accessible apartments in them, that all the door fronts should have access to them. There is so much change that needs to be made, and I think even a vent bodied people, you people out there in the audience listening to me, you cannot keep ignoring it and you have to speak up, too. We should not have to be screaming all the time. One step is... Does not access make. One step is insurmountable for many of us and you need to wake up, look around your environment and you need to step up to the plate and go, "Is there access here for somebody in a wheelchair? Access here for an artist, a disabled artist to be able to perform, to put their show on?" And be aware of your surroundings as well. I have just been given, along with Dan Graeme, another disabled artist who will be directing, given a one-woman show by Giant 12 to do and it is wonderful to hear that the time -- by the time I get to perform the show on 24 February, their stage will be completely accessible, can have the same rights as any other artist performing in the theatre and this needs to be part and parcel of every theatre, of every restaurant, place where there is any form of entertainment. Not only do other patrons need to be able to access it but other artists need to be able to access it and we need more support. I think it is straightforward there is only one disability grant available at the moment, a mentorship one with the Australia Council. We need more than that, more than just an award and we need more than just a mentorship. We need to be considered. Our needs need to be considered when applying for art, applying for a grant because we will need extra money. Everybody may think, they are asking for an awful lot, but we need to be able to hire equipment, for instance, if we perform in another town, need to be able to hire assistants if we go to another town, and so we have extra expenses that need to be considered if we are applying for a grant and we need extra money in assistance if we are going to be going... If we will be finally getting a seat at the table at these festivals that we have been so long denied but the trouble with people, disabled people and death people is nobody considers us. -- Deaf. We are supposed to be wheeled out to Australians and wind beneath my wings, held up as an inspiration, but you find your inspiration elsewhere. Don't come to us, look at Usk, don't go, "Dear, oh dear, here I was thinking I am hard done by and there you are." We put up with all kinds of things and in the arts community that is supposed to be the most enlightened of all, we should not have to put up with that and nobody marches across bridges for the rights of people with disabilities, nobody stands at the front of town halls and on stages or great platforms and screams for the rights of disabilities, the rights of people with disabilities and we can speak for ourselves but you need to be able to make that bridge walk accessibility, need to be able to make that balcony on the town Hall or on that building accessible, need to have the right kind of equipment, the right kind of microphones, need to let us speak for ourselves. We don't need you to speak for us anymore but what we need you to do is provide us with the platforms to get our work out there, to get our feet out there and stop ignoring us and we are people, too, human beings, and we are not abnormal. If we were, we would be Superman. We forget the fragility of the human body and some of the greatest changes made in disability rights and access and equity have come from people who are able-bodied -- were able-bodied and suddenly find themselves after an accident or illness or whatever dreadful thing that has happened to them, suddenly find themselves in wheelchairs or being unable to walk long distances or find themselves with a disability and they cannot do the things they were able to, cannot just randomly pick up the telephone and book tickets to see a show or book seats and a restaurant because these places are inaccessible and they are jumping up and down and going why? People like me who have lived their whole lives with a disability... I guess until I went into your wheelchair didn't realise just how inaccessible the place was. I had always found it difficult stays and distance but suddenly, in a wheelchair, and my own friends will hold parties and it will be upstairs. -- Stairs. They will save that they can carry me up. No, an electric wheelchair. If you want me or anyone else who has disabled friends, if you want us at your parties, want us at your gigs, you have to make sure they are held at places that we can easily access without losing... I am loathe to use the word dignity. I think dignity is overrated, but without it being so stressful, without us virtually winding up in tears and staying home and missing out. This should not be happening, and I'm actually really glad to have the platform today to say all this. We need to work together. Obviously we cannot be working separately. We need to unite in the arts, on the arts front. You need to start talking to us and we need to start talking to you. We need... Theatres, television production agencies, film, literature, festivals, we need to start talking. How do we make this happen? We can tell you what we need and you can tell us how you can provide it. It has to be that way. There is no more begging any more, no more taking the crumbs from the table, no more of our nose prints from the door looking in. We know this can be done and you need to step up and we need to step up. It is not a one-way street, not all on you, is in us too. We need to stop intimate, need to stop accepting this kind of behaviour towards us. We will not sit in the corner anymore. I want all my fellow disabled artists to stand or sit or whatever, however we get around, but we need to yell and scream and start demanding to be heard, and it is wonderful -- all kinds of people are making great strides -- Joe Garvin's incredible show winning incredible awards. We can do it, we have the talent and the technology and we know the technology is there and you need very much... We need very much to work together, so thank you very much for listening to me today and I truly wish I could have been there and have met you all today and I hope I haven't offended too many people. I generally do somewhere along the line, but have a wonderful festival, and think of me at home tucked up in bed with my tea. And cake. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> What an amazing woman and what an extraordinary, powerful message that she has given us and it makes you think really about living in the 21st-century and while we are still regarding people who have less than their full physical abilities, the challenges of getting through buildings and getting through airports and getting through

the built environment, and I just think of how challenging it must be for elderly people trying to get on an aeroplane for example, the vast distances we are expected to walk in airports and changing gates and everyday things. It must be frustrating and yet we are living in an era of fabulous designers, new technology, why every door is not built wide enough for wheelchair, I have no idea. However, hopefully Gayle's message will resonate beyond this room, through the live stream and get some decision-makers thinking a little more seriously about how they can make the arts sector farm or friendly and welcoming for our artistic colleagues. -- Farm or. The magic fairies have reset the stage. -- Far more. We were on the subject of working together and this next panel is about Walking Together. This is a timely conversation in light of the events this week. Service organisations play an important role in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, communications and support. This statement is still available on the arts New South Wales website and it was made in 2010, 10 years on, is this still the case and what is the value, their value to the sectors in New South Wales? Three leaders of service organisations join us for this conversation, Antonia Seymour, Emily Collins from using New South Wales and Kerry, Ford --, Ford from Accessible Arts New South Wales. -- Kerry Comerford. Would you welcome our panellists on stage?
(Applause)

>> Maybe we can lift the microphones a little bit so we can sort of see people. Conversation is difficult. Little did I realise when Elizabeth asked me to chair this panel months and months ago how pertinent it would be with the announcement this morning about the peak body that I chair. I think it is very timely that we have this discussion and particularly at a time when regional arts New South Wales has been looking very closely at what we do and what services we will prepare to provide for artists and art organisations moving forward. I am very grateful for this conversation and I'm looking forward to taking away some ideas. We have three very experienced people from peak organisations in Australia today. She is a director of music New South Wales and the industry network, and Emily has worked in the music arts industry for over 10 years. She has been with the organisation for 5 1/2 years. She has had roles with the Cockatoo festival, the spirit of youth award, Sydney Writers' Festival, underbelly arts, the radio, and she grew up in remote Northern Territory analysis in Sydney. Bit of a change. -- Now lives in Sydney. She is interested in finding further ways to connect communities and organisations to help to provide support. One of the key things that the peak bodies and organisations is about connecting people.

We have Kerry, who is the CEO of Accessible Art, and she has been there since 2018. She comes with an enormous and diverse portfolio before she has taken on accessible arts. I'm sure that she has been the chair of arts on tour in New South Wales, director of Hayes Theatre in Sydney, she has been with Destination Sydney, at Destination New South Wales regional tourism network, she was a CEO of the Asia-Pacific Andrew Lloyd Webber's group between 2012 and 2016. She joined a group back in 1996. What I find quite remarkable is that she developed the first Chinese language to cats, and I'm sure that is just a story in itself. Closely followed by Phantom of the Opera and South Korea. I cannot even imagine. I cannot imagine what Phantom sounds like in Korean. Carrie has worked with many Australian arts organisations, including Theatre Royal, access equity, Australian theatre, the youth arts festival where she was a director and the director of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and a vast array of other things. She has a vast array of experience.

And Antonia Seymour is the director of arts onto and she has been there for 4 1/2 years. She has brought a rich knowledge from that background and she has worked with the Sydney dance company, to urban theatre projects as well as London's Lyric Hammersmith alliance. Over her 20 year career in the sector she has held senior roles in producing and development. We have quite a diverse group for you this morning to have a bit of a discussion about peak bodies and service organisations. What we thought we would do just to start with is to get each of our panellists to talk about their organisation and who they represent. So that way you will get an understanding. We might start with you.

>> Accessible Arts has existed for over 34 years. In the early 2000 it started to be a funded organisation and it had funding originally from the New South Wales government through to departments. That existed up until 2018 with the introduction of the NDIS. At that point the state disability or family organisation support for the organisation was withdrawn. So our core funding comes from Creator New South Wales -- Create New South Wales. We are seeking more funding from the NDIS through grant applications. The organisation is based at the art exchange building in the rocks. We have what I like to call 3.8 staff. We service all of New South Wales. The organisation has about 12 people, so like many arts organisations, I suppose, our support structure has reduced. I would suggest that our demand for services are particularly this year have increased as the sector has turned to us. They have turned to us for greater support at this difficult time.

>> Antonia.

>> Hello, everybody. At aunt on tour we are a peak body for touring in New South Wales, one of the largest in Australia. We have two strands of programming. We have one program that is our sense and development program. The touring program sees us work with about 100 artists and producers in New South Wales. There is a network of about 150 regional arts performance centres and essentially we connect those by helping them to form a relationship and then developing tours and providing funding for tours and putting on those tours. Pre-COVID-19 in 2019 we delivered 41 tours over 300,000 audience members in Australia. To give you an idea of the scope, those two is -- tours had a combined expenditure of \$4.5 million. It is good stimulus into regional art sectors, and my favourite statistic is that \$1 million of that went to wages for and salaried artists that were touring for artists with huge sorts of ways to sustain their careers. What we are passionate about and what we find very

important is the work touring, so touring around a long time obviously. In terms of diversity, which is obviously good for audiences and also the sector, the last four years we have really increased the number of First Nations people touring and we are trying to get more regional people touring as well. That is kind of a key thing for us. We work across the sector from small artists to major touring -- touring companies. We work across all genres as well, from theatre and music to push music and dance and performance.

In terms of operation we have an FTE of 0.40 -- 0.4. So we have not many staff. We were lucky to get core funding for the next few years. We get \$260,000 from New South Wales and if COVID-19 allows in 2020 that will turn into \$3.2 million. About 90% of our income is from competitive grants for touring and for the service fees that we can charge our producers. I think... That is our program.

Our second program, which is ever-growing, is about providing the best practice leadership for touring. We do things like salon, so yesterday as part of Caps art State -- Art State, we try to put producers together to do these tours. Like Kerry, we have been very much needed in these covert times -- COVID times. We had a regional tour that was sold out and will now be recorded and put on our website. We have done some work on the guidelines, so we do a lot of support like that. We have also done a lot of work on mental health. We provide mental health training and we also launched yesterday a new initiative called out artist's residence initiative where we help to collect artists to be able to support workers being paid locally in regional communities around New South Wales.

>>Surely, can I just say that I did not explain who we represented.

>>You did say...

>>That is enough from me.

>>Sorry, I realise that I did not say who Accessible Arts represents. We are defined as the peak arts and is a organisation. In the two years that I have worked out a major focus has been on change and been working on artist with disability. We want to support artist with disabilities to have careers and provide pathways for professional development. I would like to think that we work with the art community as well. We service the art community in delivering their commitment to inclusion.

>>Thank you. I would like to acknowledge that we are on country today. We called ourselves the state music oddi. -- State music body. We separate artwork into two primary areas; one is the sector development and the other is for the existence -- and we have been in existence for 22 years. We have six staff on our core staff and we also have 1.2 on our project staff. We generally split our organisation up into — given that there are three of us in the offices — we have the sector development work which I take care of the consulting of a whole range of industry. We refer to the music industry as the ecosystem and there are so many moving parts and microbusinesses and moving parts. There are so many different careers that may come with us. We feel like there is a constant challenge for us to make sure that the people that we represent are heard and understand the challenges that they experience and we try to support them out with their growth and sustainability and accessibility and we try to make the music industry a better and a happier place for artists and the people.

Our professional development work focuses on supporting creative musicians that want to have lifelong music careers. We often find that musicians will have a short, sharp burst into a music career and then get a real job later. We really think that that is a shame, because we like to see the creativity and we like to make sure that people have a career beyond the age of 26. A lot of what we do is trying to support musicians to better understand the music industry, and equip them with the skills to help to navigate this. It is primarily the commercial space as well, so we look at good business management and having a strategy to know exactly what you are doing. We consider ourselves to be an organisation that helps people to navigate that and make sure that they can make the most of what the creative offering is.

>>You were saying before that you mainly work with early people. How early?

>>I think because the music industry is a commercial industry, we find that once I get to a certain level, artists have other people that work with them. They have an agent and a manager and an arranger of labels. They have business support and development. They need to come up with strategies and plans. They often will not get to that point until they are several years into their career. We try to support them in the early career face -- phase, and work with people to try to understand how they can get out and tour and release music and we see early career instead of emerging, because we understand that it is older people as well as young people. We have a lot of people that are a range of ages, so we do have people just starting out.

>>We heard this morning about how difficult it is for comedians to find their pathway. Kerry, do you work with early career artist with a disability?

>> I think most artists in my sector is that they are often branded emerging for their entire careers which is one of their frustrations, so we work with artists of a variety of stages within their careers. For many of our artists, just getting they fought in the door into professional or mainstream organisations is difficult. -- Foot. We find the small to medium sector is more welcoming than the mainstream, so it is largely about changing perceptions within the

arts organisations, all the stuff Gayle talked about, about making environments welcoming. We also focus on encouraging programmers to think about audiences with disability.

>> Antonia, you do the early career stuff through the sounds -- salons.

>> It is a great starting point and we have emergency -- emerging voices in that salon. With touring we do a lot. Because it is so complicated and a niche field of knowledge, we try and mentor companies that want to have to ring as a major part of their business model and we try and mentor them through the development process so they then almost graduate and don't need us any more, so it is trying to spread our knowledge as far as we can in terms of capacity building companies, build their own relationships, handle their own areas and funding applications. -- Itineraries.

>> Sometimes it become they just do not need you anymore. You are successful when you are fired, basically. Now we have COVID. Obviously what you do to support people you represent has changed and this year has been a lot more demanding. How has working with the people you represent changed with COVID? 75% of artists were out of work and while Job Keeper has been great for those who could get it, particularly emerging people, we think it would be hard to demonstrate you actually had sufficient income to do that, so what have you done to support during COVID?

>> When COVID first hit, one thing that MusicNSW did with another organisation that is a peak body, the Australian festivals Association, we very quickly built... I lost my gig, the website tracking gig cancellations across Australia, me on a website on Friday afternoon, the day I submitted an application, was going, my gosh, what is happening? Within a few weeks, we tracked three \$40 million of economic loss as result of cancellations -- 340. It was so quick and happened instantly that we needed data to take to government which was really useful to have conversations with government around how do they better support our industry, and not just music, the creative industries and live performance and being quick on our feet and thinking about those impacts, I would say that is the role of service organisations -- to represent those challenges and the crisis that came of that and my job since then has been primarily trying to convey the challenges of the music industry as result of COVID to government and to other industries, really trying to represent those challenging circumstances, but we provide resources and programs to emerging artists or early career artists or independent artists. We took a bit of time at first because I think there was so much going on but then we have shifted all our programs to digital programs now, so we made a very early decision to not even try to do any real world events for 2020 and just move everything online and now we have a great suite of resourceful years around, great three-part series on grant writing for all people spending time writing grants. There are a lot of resources we are trying to tailor the needs of what we do, the needs of the sector and artists trying to navigate this crisis like all of us and one of the biggest challenges has been that part of the uncertainty and not knowing what is going on is that traditional career pathways do not apply any more. What used to be, and there are many ways to navigate the music industry, that it used to be you would record and then release and do a little tour and do more recording and release some more. There was a recipe in many flavours but it was something people understood and now we are in a situation where we are noticing artists of a certain calibre can charge tickets to gigs but I really worry for early career artists who don't have a fan base yet and what that means for our industry moving forward because how does an artist without any fans sell tickets? We are worried about that means and the work we do is trying to better support artists and the industry and government to navigate what is really a complicated scenario.

>> A very good overview of the diversity of how a service peak body responds in a crisis because I think lots of people here (inaudible) would have used I lost my gig and encouraged as we did in Regional Arts NSW and I am on the board of Regional Arts NSW (inaudible) Australia and utilise the platform to try and capture how much money was lost in the sector and I think that was quite influential in decisions made regarding funding support.

>> We would have done it differently if we had our time again (inaudible) even if you are doing something in two hours and you want me to get a website up and I am building it myself so I think it was his for capturing a snapshot of what went on at the time and from a personal perspective that it was incredibly harrowing to read the stories shared with us. We had over 13,000 submissions to that site tracking gig and work cancellations and the stories of the impacts those cancellations had on people's lives and mortgages and families, was really full on and that's what inspires me to keep working -- to make sure people can keep doing the great work they do.

>> Antonia, you said you put in mental health activities and goes to whatever you are saying now about how you are dealing with, at the coalface of people have lost their livelihoods and thousands of dollars worth of work, hundreds of thousands in some cases, gone in and it's in. How have you looked after people you represent through COVID?

>> For us, there was a lot of time spent initially on producing tours for 2020 and then adjusting itineraries for next year and unravelling over 100 contracts and renegotiating all of that, so that took months and the great thing that has happened in our world is there has been huge collaboration with the companies I work with and key touring producers, so how do we try and navigate touring for 2021? The really scary thing is there is no Job Keeper post March and 2021 is when it gets scarier than it has been, I think, and so we obviously... We have 11 tours hopefully next year on the road and trying to navigate how that is viable financially. We have independent artists where they are quitting their jobs to go on to. How can I guarantee their wages will get paid? -- Tour. We have tried to see how government can underwrite the risks with cancellations. We have developed collaboratively to ring guidelines and again we are doing this webinar next week because touring is so complicated so COVID has made your brain kind of melt, so for us, we have been less strictly -- directly connected to artists in that way and it is more about the infrastructure of how touring works in this new world kind of thing and in a real waste or planning tours for 2022 because work is so far to having these bizarre conversations with Victorians in lockdown about imaginative tours they will have in two years time, I think, so ours has been more at that backend and then

still doing things like mental health, which we delivered on line, so similarly we have done a lot of things online, accessible our -- art as well. Cheryl McCarey, how has a change for you?

>> There have been good things coming out of it. I think some of the stuff I picked up back stage about Kerry talking about about how you can make an event accessible, particularly if doing it online. The art industry had a demand for that came to us so we have been able to run a series of programmes, could get funding to develop a program around online accessibility so that we could provide a service for that demand, that demand has reached... One of our workshops recently had participants from Hong Kong, so that is fantastic. We have certainly spread our network this year. We also had the opportunity to train up some artists with disability to help provide the training and we could do that around online events but also around website audits, so we could get... I think we have run about three or four train the Trainer program is where we have brought together artists with disability and trained them. We have also run a couple of programs. One of the other speakers on the panel today, Alison, ran an online program about developing regional arts groups and that resulted in an online exhibition, so there have been good things that have come out of COVID for us in relation to sharing our information, demonstrating how to make events accessible. I think like Antonia, I am nervous about 2021 and where we will be at the end of next year when JobKeeper runs out, how the arts sector who we rely on selling our service to as part of our business model, what capacity they will have to continue to pay for the services? And the big question is us not going back, and one of the challenges as ICS coming out of COVID is we have to pay for all this COVID safety so we cannot afford to pay for accessibility. We don't want to see that change and go backwards. -- That I see.

>> If I had my time over again... I hope we never have to do it again. It would be awful. Where'd you see your future direction? Antonia, you are planning for project for 2022. What you see as your future directions the organisations? Kerry?

>> Vision.

>> Who needs a vision?

>> I would like to see... The future... I would like us to continue to build on what we have learned around accessibility in 2021, would like to see accessibility as much a part of every art event as gluten-free food is and not something that someone tells you they cannot afford and I would like to see arts organisations take the learnings, the priority they found around being able to do online accessibility continue to happen in their live events as well.

>> It is interesting. We look at the online thing and do you know, from a work perspective, we all said for years, we could do online, but it all seemed a bridge too far and then two weeks it took us all to make the conversion and I agree with you that there have been opportunities that have come out of the whole online accessibility, not just your kind of accessibility but regional arts ran a grants workshop online and we had phenomenal numbers turning up to participate and it has forced, I think, as to rethink about delivery and also for people to rethink about how things are delivered. From an arts point of view and what Emily was saying, it is not going to be a way that they can get a career. It is certainly a great way for these people to get started.

>>There is a point that I would also like to make, that it does not take all of the boxes. There are members of our community that are excluded. The isolation of COVID and not having good internet or access to support to gain access to that online activity has also been a challenge.

>>That is also a problem for rural and remote communities. Regional arts New South Wales has just put in a submission for an enquiry to raise all of those sorts of issues around this fallback position which is online. Unless you have good quality broadband, you cannot stream these things anyway. I am absolutely in agreement with you.

>>What is your view, Antonio?

>>Digital is obviously a big new area of exploration from a touring perspective as well. There has been a lot of talk this year about hybrid touring models, and Carolyn yesterday was talking about digital life, which she describes as the new language. I think that has to sort of continue to develop as to what kind of role post covert -- post COVID digital will have.

Interestingly I have done a lot of work on COVID policy and contracts, and I have tried to bring in the digital experience in lieu of performance, but you cannot get that. It was completely amplified which I was happy about in terms of the message I got from that was the fibres where it is at. There is the opportunity for the pie to be sliced in these portions particularly with the desire for the FIFO touring model and to make a connection with the artist coming in at the audiences. I hope that digital becomes a bit more of an option so that you have the live performance but you also have the augmented digital experience to go along with that. I think it is really interesting -- interesting and we need to make sure that artists are paid in that because a lot of the digital stuff is happening and there's not much money going to artists for that. I think we have got some things there. Some things that have been obvious post COVID has been the focus on local artists. When states have been shut down or regions have been shut down, there has been a huge focus on local artists and profiling and they now have this opportunity that they did not have before. That will obviously remain, and I think it will be great from my point of view to see much more inspiration between artists and communities from a touring perspective and also what is that happening in an integrated conversation between those programming aspects and artist exchanging. You know how Michele was talking this morning.

>>I think from a local artist perspective, it is time for that to really change.

>>I think for us as an organisation we are really continuing on the path that we started 1.5 years ago which was to focus on regional opportunities for these industries in New South Wales. We have a regional music officer program which has three staff and that is based in Wagga Wagga, and there is one on the south coast and the Southern Highlands. To follow on from Antonia's point, I think there needs to be a big shift in the music industry particularly around who people go and see, that culture of discovery and seeing the artist. It is something that we would really like to foster and we have a lot of opportunities for regional touring and for these artist to tour regionally and also for Metro artists. We are really looking to support that movement with our offices and see if we can make it such that there is a better attitude when it comes to seeing live music. Often you would have digital -- people go and see an artist that that you know rather than somebody that they do not know. I think the domestic market in Australia is quite limited and that there are only some -- so many musicians I consult -- that can sell out a venue. We will need to start taking some risks and focus on how to support that change and support artists through the change. We can see if the music industry can adapt and the audiences can adapt. There is a lot of opportunity in the last few months and we are trying to navigate those opportunities as best that we can — but in terms of what the future holds, it is all very uncertain. We want to make sure that people get paid and get paid well. We want to make sure that people continue to see live music and continue to enjoy it. When COVID-19 first hit, people were performing online and we got quite a few people that were to be those live streams and they were not making money. It was not about making money necessarily in the short term. But I think there is still the sense that they are waiting for the industry to find any financial model to support live gigs that can be part of that. Venues of also struggled we can also look at music venues. It is a challenging time and I cannot say that I have the answers and we are trying at the organisation to focus on whatever opportunities we can. We are still making it up as we go along.

>>It is the message that they've said this morning. Go and see people that you do not know. Support them. Support emerging artists. Support early career artist. Take a chance, take a risk. See somebody that you have never heard.

>>That is exactly right. Everybody was once a nobody.

>>You talk about talent, challenges, Emily, and what are the challenges that you face? I think we have heard the depth of the work that you do, all of you do, with the people that you represent. You do everything from providing training to support grants and making sure that they have work and are represented. What sort of challenges are there for you, you have four staff... 2.6 Star. -- Staff.

>>Actually the ongoing issue is that we need to look at our capacity to deliver and the ongoing capacity. If we have something for them we can try to do that as much as possible and we have three staff with two of them only three days a week. We are running those events last year. We had a huge amount of engagement and looked into resourcing and how many panels we have spoken to and there is only so much the three people can do. I think trying to communicate with those limitations to an audience or to the people that you represent is really hard. You do not want to say that you do not have enough money or do not have enough people to help you. That is kind of what you need to end up saying. We have a list of priorities. Regional is one of them. We have an in-house manager as well. We are making sure that artists have a way to navigate the industry and to support venues and the other echelons of the music industry. We need to go through that progressive change that needs to happen.

>>You are very busy.

>>Yes. And I do not want it to be an excuse for not doing stuff. It is our job to do as much as we possibly can. It is always a challenge for us with our expectations and resources.

>>Antonia?

>>It is hard not to say exactly the same thing.

(Laughter)

>>It is the whole industry, if you know what I mean. It is also the nature of this industry that we are working incredibly hard to be passionate about and we... We have the same — there is an infinite demand for what we do. We have 4.0. The other thing is that touring is very complicated. It is hard work. It is the simple things like the mechanics of funding. We endlessly have this problem when we get into state funding -- interstate funding. We then need New South Wales funding and that can take a year to get together. The amount of work that we put into — I do not want to count how many grants we have looked at over three years. It is a huge amount of work to put together to us. You do not want to see that fall down because you have only half the funding. It is incredibly frustrating and a waste of time. That is the sort of stuff that gets you down. When you are trying to help people and you just spend a lot of time doing the same thing.

>>Ditto. Ditto.

(Laughter)

>>What I would also like to say is that we are like to remind people -- we like to remind people that 3.4 million Australians identify as a person with a disability. There is 42% of representation? To what -- compared to what he would not disability have. How do we support that, how do we get organisations to keep access as part of their programming and it's about including -- and to think about including audiences and artists when they start to develop a program. You are not contacting us three weeks before the event and ask what we need to do to make it accessible.

One of the big wins for me this year has been that our art and development manager has coordinated training for the Creative New South Wales assessment panel to understand about accessibility and to be able to when they are looking at the client -- grant application, when people talk about inclusion, to understand whether the programs are inclusive and are really supporting diversity and programs. I think for me that is the biggest challenge. I madly ran around making phone calls trying to encourage artists that only with his ability to apply to be on those assessment panels, because there is this much representation for people with disabilities on those panels. When we are talking about 20% of the population identifying, that is not good. Not good in a sector that prides itself on being inclusive.

>>So how long does it take for you to be heard? You are all representing sectors. There are issues around funding, issues around ensuring that the people that you represent are on these panels and things. Do you think that you heard? What do you do to make sure that you are heard? One of the key activities of body's advocacy. -- Of a peak body is advocacy.

>>Well, throughout COVID-19 we have had quite good relationships with our agencies and the ministers directly and their staff. Both at a state and a federal level. Being heard is one thing but being actioned and following up is another. For example, one of the issues that were working through at the moment is that a lot of music venues are facing imminent permanent closure because I cannot financially sustain themselves -- they cannot financially sustain themselves and they are reducing capacity. We are about to lose a whole range of music infrastructure and we have been telling government about this and they have listened but what is their capacity to assist? As an advocate, it is our job to tell what is going on in the sector but action is also hard to follow up with. That is a constant challenge for us or for me anyway.

>> Kerry Comerford?

>> We need a lot of change from the top so we need to see that on boards, in management and government. For me, one of the things that hit me when I started working in this sector was the lack of representation of disability on boards and particularly arts boards and how do we make the change? I suppose that is a challenge to chairs of boards across the state. There will be change only if there are voices at the table.

>> Antonia?

>> We have good relationships with government agencies, similar to Emily -- some things we have had success with, particularly recently, and sometimes not. (Laughs)

>> And sometimes you learn more from what does not work than what does.

>> I would love more as of peak body with a Birds Eye view of what is going on, would love my knowledge to be listened to more kind of thing but yes.

>> I think that is what make peaks really special -- from the music industry perspective, there are so many micro businesses and individuals all very specialised. I am one of the very few people in the music industry who has to look at the whole ecosystem and navigate that and that puts me in a particular position to be put to talk about that a government or other industries, so that, for me, is what makes peak body special.

>> As we wrap up, that is what we should be asking -- what is the great value of a peak body? You talk about this helicopter view, that you are engaged as a peak body with everybody in your particular sector, you are able to look across at what is happening, make an assessment of what is going on on the ground based on all the people that you interact with and it would be great to be able to convey that information into wherever decisions are made because you are a one-stop shop. Kerry, is that one of the great values of a peak body?

>> I feel I am a difficult position to answer that question because I have not been in the sector for so long but what I understand from reading the histories once upon a time we used to be an organisation that helped devolve funding so government would give us money and we would help generate and support the sector and that has been taken away from us, and I'm not sure it is being replaced. I think the sector is still looking to us for that support and we do not have the resources for that, so I'm not sure where that funding has gone. When I first arrived, Create NSW were running a program called Create ability, about setting up artists with disability as interns. A great program. It is gone, is over. It did not continue to grow. I think we worked with Create NSW to nurture and support those artists.

>> Have you got a roll now as an advocate to look for those opportunities?

>> We try to talk about what those opportunities are. We have applied for several grants now to try and run similar mentorship programmes but we have not been successful. It is competitive.

>> Antonia, what do you think the intrinsic value of a peak body is?

>> I think particularly... I feel like our sector is really fragile at the moment and I the irony is the more fragile we are, the more we need and appoints or hubs people can connect to to feel they are part of a tribe or belong or have support or they are not doing everything alone and unfortunately, when things get fragile, it feels like the glue, which I think service organisations are, is the first thing to get taken away, and I totally see that in terms of when there is not enough money for people to make you were, that has to have priority but everything just gets harder, so I think a big role we all play is connecting people and providing support at a really basic level. As well as advocating, but both ways.

>> I give point to rest about it being the glue holding things together is a really valid one. -- Think the. And having a helicopter view you can hold things together because you know what everybody is doing and make linkages and networks because you know what everybody is doing, so going forward, what do you think your highest priority will be, Kerry? Three words.

>> Survival.

>> Survival. You feel really challenged for survival. You are talking to the chair of Regional Arts NSW. I feel your pain. (Laughs)

>> We have secured four-year funding which is great. We have a base, but it is a really tiny base and doesn't cover our 4.8 people and we want to service and bring about significant change, so it is about what we can do, how we can continue to support the arts sector and our artists with disability and how we can collaborate and this year I have collaborated with both these organisations to increase inclusion and diversity and we will continue to do that and I look forward to learning more about the Minister's announcement this morning about a senior member of the Create team bringing together – hope that is what it meant – our service organisations to see how we can develop partnerships.

>> Antonia?

>> I want to work towards a thriving, vibrant and diverse sector and touring plays a key part of that and that is what we will do.

>> Great.

>> Thriving to have a diverse, sustainable industry.

>> And we thank Kerry, Antonia and Emily?

(Applause)

>> Thank you very much.

>> Thank you, Julie. I think you have worked well and beyond the amount of money that we pay you to be our chair and take you very much again to our panellists. I it is really interesting to sort of lift the veil on actually what these extraordinary organisations do and the service to their sector with a small number of people that they have in their team. -- Think. Continue the conversation over your lunch, but you cannot go yet. Sorry, I'm turning into bossy boots here. I just need to say again about the COVID process at the venues this afternoon as you move to your breakout sessions. We have been very fortunate we are working with the Rotary club of Wagga Wagga and they are our volunteers assisting at all our breakout venues this afternoon. Please, they are volunteers, doing as they are told, so be nice to them. When you go to your venues, I know you're lunch... I will give you lunch instructions in it, but please be away there are not allocated seats but there will be socially distant seating. If the Veni is full, you will have to choose another one. The live streaming for our live streaming audiences will be done from the sessions at Romanos and at the Playhouse and available through the Artstate website. -- Venue. The lunch procedures. As with morning tea there will be a staggered Exeter Lodge. Please follow the directions of staff. Lunch is served in the lower -- foyer. It is a lovely, Sunnyside and there are picnic spots at the Memorial Park. -- Sunny day. It has a fabulous Rose garden. I like to get rid of the Deadheads. It has been raining here and as soon as that happens, they get destroyed. We would like to be at your venues before we start. We will start on time because of our live stream audience and we look forward to seeing you all regroup in here tomorrow morning as a group. Just to let you know there are still tickets left for a couple of the hands-on workshops, keeping postcards, this afternoon, and you can pick this up at registration and for (inaudible) thank you very much. Enjoy your lunch break.