

**Artstate Wagga Wagga – Saturday 07/11/2020 – Final Wrap (4.45pm-5.30pm) – unedited captions
Transcript**

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you very much for coming back. The first thing is to let us know that Wagga's resident superstar DJ Nina Las Vegas has been based at home during COVID and with high-energy dance being a COVID risk, we asked her to imagine what low-energy dance sounds like but feel free to dance in your seats but do not break a sweat! Let it go.

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

(Music plays)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Fortunately, most of my activity happened out of sight.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

That was really cool. We will keep this as fast as we can because we have William Crichton playing tonight at 7:00 and his crew is trying to bump in behind the screen. If I go fast, forgive me.

Straight to business. Welcome to the rapporteurs. At every Artstate, we have been fortunate enough to partner with regional universities that have supplied us with outstanding academics who about the massive challenge of seeing as much of the speakers program as they can and then turning round to present a 5-minute report summary.

This has been more difficult this year because they have only had 20 minutes since the last session finished. We have got Dr Holly Randell-Brown, the senior lecturer in Indigenous Australians Studies and Prof Sue Green, the Prof of Indigenous Studies at the Wagga Wagga Campus.

Welcome them to give a summary of the speakers program.

(Applause)

DR HOLLY RANDELL-BROWN:

Hi, everyone. We would like to thank everyone for their presentations and for the tech support and all the people such as the lunch marshals who are working hard behind the scenes.

(Applause)

A couple of things that we discussed were the themes around access and inclusion and what are the systems, structures, resources that exist to enable and disable artistic flourishing.

We also saw this morning the way that technology can show us how systems work. Can be make use of that technology to map networking and how resourcing underpins artistic endeavours in the region.

We thought about the need to centre Wiradjuri and First Nations creativity. -- Wurundjeri.

A good dancer is someone who kicks up dust.

PROF SUE GREEN:

One of the most important things was about inclusion and ensuring that gradually• -- Wiradjuri voices are front and centre and all you do and we would ask you to put at the front of all you do the wisdom of creating a world worth living in.

At no point in time has that been more relevant than where we are now. The last couple of days, we have heard repeatedly about the impact of the droughts and the bushfires and COVID. We live in the world we have created and we can also change what we have done.

Art is a way that we can communicate to all people and I ask you to use your art now to communicate and help us to create a world worth living in.

(Speaking non-English) Wagga Wagga - Thank you for coming to Wagga Wagga.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you both. I reiterate the statement - the use of COVID has given us a chance to pause and reflect and hopefully treat the world in a kinder way as we need to treat ourselves.

So, thank you very much, Holly and Sue for delivering the impossible task that I said you.

We have heard from the academics let's get an artistic interpretation of the event from Port Lachlan Brown, a senior lecturer at Charleston University and the author of 'Limited Cities' and his poems have involved -- appeared in many journals.

(Applause)

LACHLAN BROWN:

Every wine is an anagram of art state Wagga Wagga. There is lots of Wagga in this volume.

Artstate Wagga Wagga, Wagga Wagga, wag garages and it was quokka and wag and ragtag wasted and what rag is it?

(Reads poem)

(Applause)

I have got a couple of others but I will not read that one because it is about the arts minister.

I went to an event this morning. I know that none of you were there. I was the only one there. It was in Bunnings car park at 8:10. There is a specific type of poem which you write when you leave your lover as the sun comes up.

I listened in the Bunnings car park. I did not leave my lover there, that is another poem. I listen to 'All' and this is the poem I wrote after that.

Sunlight toes is open to the car park is so eager for Saturday morning chores
accompanying magpies role melodies like the throaty song of two starting up on the edge of someone's sleep.
Collars are clear and system. The green algae of the channel and the red of the Bunnings hammer and scatters
of graffiti and the sky with Riverina blue.

Then there is hope's car, resting on its mags with all four sides flung open, receiving the Lancashire gift and
drinking in the grace of courtesy trailers with generously jangling chains.

Hope's boot is raised in white most wonder and the speaker box fills all space like a stone the builders have
rejected.

Treaties flow past in streams off sanctioned productivity, moving towards the glories of renovations or a new
build.

Then the sound begins as though broadcast from another universe.

A peddling cello unconsciously levels the day into existence.

The voice opens up sky with its perfect fits.

Birds send the shift flying by an experimental path.

What world calls out to the maker and the maid. What the symmetry of voice and string taking us back into
ourselves.

Performed the intervals cast back and return and the roundabouts through vehicles into unofficial lanes.

Everything still draws us skywards following the light, the breath, the tensioned stream that rises, the car speaker
vibrating and turning designers into prayers.

Thanks.

(Applause)

This is the last one. There is another form of poem of a series of repeating lines and I think it is a helpful form when we are thinking about responding to big events like this and so we try to catch bits and pieces as they go past.

You might notice some of those pieces in this. It is called 'Artstate Wagga'.

Here we are in Wagga with water everywhere.
Wisps of different conversations flowed across Wollundry Lagoon and it reminds us of the hidden depths.
The welcome gets delayed as recorded birds live and falter.
Wisps of distance conversation flowed across Wollundry Lagoon.
Joel bounces on a cosmic axis, spinning under moonlight.
We welcome is delayed as recorded birds look and falter.
Outside as I love phonics spinal cord sounds its Pavlovian nights.
Joel dances on a cosmic axis, spinning the strands off moonlight.
The money blowing into the fire becomes the price of a good yarn.
Outside the xylophone and spinal-cord sons it's pavlovian notes at St John's church Jesus stretches out his arms like an arts minister.
Nanna's money flowing into the fire becomes the price of a good yarn.
I'm sorry, but an expression of interest should be a yes or no question.
At St John's Church, Jesus stretches out his arms like nine arts ministers.
Imagine the tower of Babel but we all understand the language.
I'm sorry, but an expression of interest is a yes or no question.
Eight enormous doors transform a wall into a portal.
Imagine a tower of Babel but we all speak the language.
The space between the stars is where meaning gets held.
Eight enormous doors transform a wall into a portal.
The fenceline reverberates into eternity.
The space between the stars is where meaning gets held.
Marcus says, "You and I are gone but the earth will remain."
The fenceline reverberates into eternity. Jackie holds her words like a precious breath.
Marcus says, "you and I will guard but they are still weird."
The songs twist and dip as though escaping the river.
Jackie holds her breath like precious words.
Calm and resting on the surfaces and covering hidden depths.
Songs twist and return as though following the river.
Here we are in Wagga with water everywhere. Thanks.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you so much. That was absolutely amazing. I do not know how you can put those words together and summarise things so since it -- so succinctly and I would have liked a poem about the Arts Minister.

(Laughter)

I would now like to invite the Regional Arts NSW cheer Julie Briggs. Increased funding has come at the expense of RANSW and Julie would like to give you an update on the board's position on the future of the organisation.

(Applause)

JULIE BRIGGS:

Wow. Here we are. The final Artstate comes to an end and fortunately this one has been somewhat shadowed or stocked by the announcement the Minister made yesterday morning that the recommendations are correct and that Regional Arts NSW will be defunded and our funding would be reduced by three quarters from the start of next year.

Those recommendations have been adopted. Elizabeth, myself, the board, the staff at Regional Arts NSW have been overwhelmed by the support and the assistance operas that have flowed since the decision became known.

We were advised of it on Monday morning as were Elizabeth and I. RANSW passionately believes in the artists and the arts organisations in remote, rural, regional NSW and we were moved beyond belief to find that as much as we believed in you, you really believe in us.

Your response to us, even after 75 years of working to promote and support and advise an advocate for the arts in the regions, that we remain both relevant in this sector.

Our board members have taken the opportunity that art state that presented to meet with the chairs, artists, other arts organisations, and Create NSW, to talk about the future and what it might look like.

The board met this morning and dragged us out of bed for a breakfast at 7:30. I was not happy about the time. If we miss the 9:70 recession, Elizabeth will kill us. We were talking about the way forward.

The board and staff agree that for the next 12 months it will be business as usual at Regional Arts NSW and you can call us or text us or email us and we will be there for you.

We will continue to advocate as strongly as ever on your behalf and on behalf of the sector and, of course, we will continue to be responsible for the delivery of the Original Arts Fund for NSW.

However, it is clear that the services and support we currently provide to regional artists and arts organisations for free, we cannot do that any longer. We cannot provide those free services any more.

Over the next six months, the board will be considering for the new business model might look like.

Those discussions, as you can imagine, have started and we plan to consult with you and other stakeholders about how we reposition ourselves for the future.

We are confident that we can structure services to meet the needs of the sector that we hold so dear.

I cannot stress enough how committed the board and staff are ensuring that regional arts and arts organisations continue to have a strong representative voice in NSW and indeed nationally.

We think that is vitally important that we are continued to be committed to be that voice.

The way we operate in the future will undoubtedly change because it must. If 2020 has taught us anything, it has taught us to roll with the punches and find new ways of doing business and that adversity can and does make us stronger.

We are proud of our work and shared achievements and so we approach this with a really positive attitude and a positive frame of mind and we are looking to all of you to assist us in that process.

You make us stronger. When you leave here today, now that Regional Arts NSW is here for you and we have been here for 75 years and we are planning to make 100.

I would like to thank all of you for your support over the last, well, we have done since Monday, but all of you since Monday who have been so strong in your support for us.

I would also like to thank all of you for coming to Artstate and I would like to say travel safely and stay well. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

I would now like to invite Susan Brindle, the chairperson, to come forward to make a presentation.

SUSAN BRINDLE:

If I could ask Elizabeth to come back on the stage please. Do you want me to start?

I did not have enough time to write a poem. I was amazed - how fast can a person write the poem? I could have three weeks and I still could not do that.

There we go. Thank you, Julie. It is the final wrap. Here we are. I am really thrilled that I have been around and involved in this network for at least the five years that Artstate has been a twinkle, or more than a twinkle in the eyes of Elizabeth and it started I do not know how many years ago but she will remember when she had the idea and regional NSW had the idea and somehow they cobbled together Dubbo and we have had a lot of science and art today so it was a of concept for myself and out of it Artstate came.

Elizabeth gave shape to the vision and brought people on board and, most importantly, saw the idea and sold it to the NSW government.

I was lucky enough to be at the dinner on the night when she announced the funding from the Minister of the Arts then. Here we are. It has been an extraordinary journey for you and everyone involved and for all of us who have been lucky enough to be here to witness it and participate.

I thank you for having the vision and I thank you for having the determination to bring the delivery of this amazing four years of Artstate.

We are all richer for it and we will never forget it and it has been an extraordinary experience for all of us. Perhaps you could just approach me in a COVIDSafe manner and I will be able to hand this to you.

It has been in plastic so it is OK. It is a small gift to thank you for Artstate. We have loved it.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you so much. It is beautiful and I am a little bit overwhelmed. Thank you, Susan, thank you, Julie.

My next job is to summarise four years and I am very aware that to thank all of the people who have been part of Artstate for the past four years would take most of the evening and so I will make this as abridged as possible.

It has been an honour and privilege to develop this hybrid event that used the concept of a conference to bring people together from the regions and it was an opportunity to experience the high quality and diverse artistic offerings from artists working in NSW.

Underpinning the event was a clear commitment to hear the voices that our Aboriginal Elders and leaders have and to experience the work of Aboriginal artists and I'm extremely grateful to the Elders and leaders from the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people who have welcomed us and I would like to thank the Wiradjuri Elders especially.

As you know, Auntie Yvonne passed away this year and I have obtained permission from her family to speak her name and she her image.

From this region, Uncle Stan Grant AM, Auntie Cheryl Pearce. We also wanted to show the diversity of the NSW landscape and I want to thank the four partnering councils for their support for Artstate including Lismore Council, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Tamworth Regional Council, Wagga Wagga Council.

Without these partnerships and be considerable support, Artstate would never have got off the ground and we wanted to show the crucial role that local government plays in the provision of cultural infrastructure and in providing employment for local artists and arts workers.

I would like to thank Madeline Scully, Marisa Campbell, and their teams for the fact that no request is impossible and for the guidance and advice as they face the challenge of running an event during COVID and live streaming to those unable to travel.

This brings me to the amazing network. NSW is the only state to have decentralised arts and cultural development with independent organisations. We have heard even today that we have highly regarded their services in the regions.

Although there was never the capacity to visit every region in a four-year project, I feel Artstate has raised the profile of the small organisations that punch so far above their weight.

Again, we could not have come and we could not have done this without you and special accolades to Arts Northern Rivers, Arts OutWest by Tracey Callinan, and Eastern Riverina Arts led by Tim Carrillo which. And their boards and staff.

I am fully aware that each year it has been a huge commitment of time and resources for you. Obviously, an event of this scale takes money and we are grateful for the four-year investment by the NSW government from Create NSW.

Each year, we have written numerous grant applications to find additional money and this year our funding partners were the Original Arts Fund, NSW Self, -- NSW Health, Team NSW. I hope you saw the presentation and if you did not it will be available online on the Artstate website a couple of weeks along with the rest of the live stream program.

I would like to thank Jane creese for her work in rustling up grants from a myriad of sources for the events including putting up with a myriad of declined applications.

It takes courage to keep writing was very complex grant applications. I really appreciate her work.

The regional and university partners have provided us with a diverse range of resources over the years. Southern Cross University and New England University and Charleston University in Bathurst and here in Wagga.

Thank you all for the use of your facilities and the expertise of your staff and the amazing speakers who have contributed to the program from the institutions.

Local ABC radio has also been an ongoing partner in the Central West and North West and no Riverina.

Sadly this year we were unable to stage the annual concert of the Original Youth Orchestra and Artstate has been the platform for a wonderful closing Sunday morning concert from these talented musicians in the past but it was a COVID casualty but I would like to thank the Original Conservatorium Partnership.

Each arts program has been developed and curated by local artistic directors and I would like to thank Marisa Snow, Adam, Greg Prichard, and Scott Howie for programming are diverse, imaginative and intriguing arts program that has allowed delegates to have a rich and rewarding regional arts experience from which many new opportunities and collaborations have arisen.

For me, having the chance to show off the work of artist living in regions to an entirely new audience has been one of the great achievements of Artstate. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Paul Burke and the design group we develop the brand and have been responsible for all the print and digital design and development each year.

This year was particularly challenging as the program kept changing and the deadlines moved but all delivered in the nick of time.

I would also like to thank you, the delegates. It is your first Artstate or your fourth, thank you for joining the conversation and celebrating the arts.

I don't want to keep you much longer but I want to acknowledge the team because they are the people who make this work so firstly Prue Tan, and Jesse and Lexi from the Sydney office. For various reasons, none of them could attend this year and Lexi was particularly at loss that she could not be here. I could have used another word.

She has been part of this project since we began. I would like to bring three of the core team onstage, Belinda King, David Bleach, and Peter Papandrea.

(Applause)

Could we have some lights on them please? Thank you.

(Applause) We all worked together for the first time in Dubbo for Artlands and they have helped ensure the event is delivered to the higher state of excellence and no problem has arisen that could not be solved and I've been honoured to work with you all and I know you would rather be offstage backstage but please give them a big hand for a job well done.

(Applause)

I would also like to ask Scott Howie to come on stage. Is extraordinary that someone with a full-time executive director job is prepared to put aside that job because of his personal and and his belief that he could actually program the best for the Riverina people and I think he has done that.

Please give him a round of applause.

(Applause)

Again, it has been an honour and a privilege to work with someone as creative an amazing Scott Howie.

Finally, I would like to thank... This is not in my script...

DAVID BLEACH:

We have been too busy to do what we plan to do. We wanted to get Elizabeth a gift privately but I would like to acknowledge that Elizabeth Rogers has been an extraordinary person to work with for all of us and that is why we have worked so hard for the last five years....

We will continue to find ways to do that in the future. We believe in the Artstate vision and are proud of what we have achieved both for the regional arts community and also the amazing work we have done in integrating with original culture in Australia and we are proud of that and I like to thank her for her guidance and leadership.

From the crew, Elizabeth Rogers.

(Applause)

Also, Julie Briggs, I would also like to call her back out.

JULIE BRIGGS:

It was cute how he said, "Finally."

Finally, I would like to call on Caroline Downer he will make a presentation to Elizabeth on behalf of the directors.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

Is one of the newest members of the network has been an extraordinary experience to experience something people tell you about and there is earth, wind, fire, and Elizabeth Rogers.

One of the great forces of nature. This conference and event is, as far as I am aware, one of the first post-COVID conferences anywhere in NSW and that only happened because of the drive, vision and determination of Elizabeth Rogers and the work that she has done and she has inspired us and cajoled us and encouraged us and...

She has helped us to do it. We are really grateful so please another round of applause for Elizabeth Rogers.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you. My goodness. So overwhelming and I cannot tell you because it has been a particularly challenging year in a lot of ways and particularly the last week so having that acknowledgement from my peers and colleagues is just beautiful and I thank you all sincerely from the bottom of my heart.

I am trying very hard not to cry. I will get to the end of my speech because William Crichton's production crew want to get bumped in and I want to help them.

I would like to thank all the speakers, artist, production crew, front of house staff, and I would particularly like to mention Jimmy Hunter who is running all the AV and has been doing it for five years and has been an invisible part of the team.

So many babies have been born during this period. I wonder if Artstate is responsible for that as well. I think Artlines is responsible for Prue's first and it was nice to welcome Elise Fisher's QVB. Another girl.

I want to thank you all for having the courage to come out and for those who have travelled so far and other friends, we have driven to your areas and hopefully one day we can have an Artstate billion in Broken Hill.

I hope you have enjoyed visiting the towns and meeting the artists and building collaborations and Artstate might not be here any more and it was only intended to be four years but if we can build collaborations and communications that will last long beyond the conference, getting back to the point, thank you to those who attended the focus group and please, when it comes out, fill in the evaluation forms.

There are so many more people I would like to mention by name but as I said earlier I would be here all night but I would ask you to read the list of credits that is inside the printed program.

That is enough for me and I would like to welcome on the stage for the final performance by Dig didge player Wiradjuri man Luke Whighton.

LUKE WHIGHTON:

(Plays didgeridoo)

(Plays didgeridoo)

(Applause)