



7 November 2019

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To the Committee Secretary,

Reference: Regional Australia Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Australia. Regional Arts Australia is pleased to provide a response in support of the role artistic and creative practice plays in our regional regions.

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

We provide below a response including:

- Information about Regional Arts Australia
- General information about Culture and Creativity in Australia
- Responses to the sub-headings of the Resolution of Appointment

We also note that recent work of *A New Approach* (full report available here: <https://www.humanities.org.au/new-approach/report1/>) which emphasises the role of local government in support arts and cultural practice. This data is useful to consider in a regional context, where local government is often a significant leader in support arts programs.

We have worked in partnership with one of our key state-member organisations, Regional Arts Victoria, to prepare this submission, and note that a number of on-the-ground examples provided are largely Victorian. There are, of course, similar examples from across the country, which we would be happy to provide on request.

About Regional Arts Australia

Regional Arts Australia (RAA) was founded in 1943 as the Arts Council of Australia. Today's organisation is a not for profit peak body that is the national voice for arts in regional Australia.

We work to:

- Raise the profile of Arts in regional Australia
- Advocate that regional Arts are considered in the development of National Policy
- Increase resources for the Arts in regional Australia
- Demonstrate Best Practice

We champion the politics and poetics of regional, rural, and remote creative practice by speaking across multiple platforms, policy agendas, and cultural landscapes.

Our research connects the three tiers of partnerships, advocacy and practice. We are actively engaged in research that:

- Evaluates the social impact of the creative arts in regional communities ¹
- Measures and articulates the impact and outcomes of the Regional Arts Fund;²
- Evidences a range of indicators that convey the health and self-care capacity of communities are improved through arts and cultural activities
- Provides a national framework and international connection

We recently implemented an intelligence software program, Tableau, with our grants management program and are able to display analytics and responsive infographics that map a visual narrative of the national regional arts landscape.

We seek to ensure the arts in regional Australia are recognised as essential and are keyed with the Morrison's Governments Plan for Regional Australia³ among others plans. We are working to address the need for the arts and creative industries to be critically positioned across multiple policy platforms;

Digital connectivity
Education and Skills
Health services
Regional Deals
Decentralisation
Agriculture
Resources
Tourism
Building infrastructure
Water and the Environment

We believe there needs to be far greater partnership between governments, industry, not-for-profits and commercial businesses and are advocating to work more effectively across industry and policy sectors to build stronger, diverse and sustainable arts sector in regional, remote and rural Australia.

¹ <https://regionalarts.com.au/resources-research/regional-arts-and-social-impact-project>

² <https://regionalarts.com.au/regional-arts-fund/raf-projects-and-data>

³ <https://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan-regional-australia>

Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia 2008 -09 to 2016-17 ⁴

As detailed in the Department of Communications and the Arts working paper October 2018 cultural and creative activity increased by \$25.8 billion or 30.0 per cent, from \$86.0 billion in 2008-09 to \$111.7 billion in 2016-17.

Examining the breakdown:

- Cultural activity increased by \$12.1 billion or 23.5 per cent from \$51.4 billion in 2008-09 to \$63.5 billion in 2016-17
- Creative activity increased by \$24.5 billion or 32.6 per cent from \$75.2 billion in 2008-09 to \$99.7 billion in 2016-17.
- GVA for cultural industries increased by \$6.6 billion or 18.8 per cent from \$35.2 billion in 2008-09 to \$41.9 billion in 2016-17.
- GVA for creative industries increased by \$19.9 billion or 34.5 per cent from \$57.9 billion in 2008-09 to \$77.8 billion in 2016-17.
- The value of volunteer services to arts and heritage organisations was \$983 million in 2016-17, \$227 million more than in 2008-09. The value of volunteer services to arts and heritage organisations was \$983 million in 2016-17, \$227 million more than \$756 million in 2008-09. This value is identical to the total cultural and creative value of volunteer services due to the cultural and creative overlap of arts and heritage organisations.
- Non-market output of market producers in cultural industries was \$68 million in 2016-17, with an increase of \$13 million compared to 2008-09.
- Non-market output of market producers in the creative industries was \$73 million in 2016-17, with an increase of \$18 million compared to 2008-09.

By the gross value-added metric, the contribution of cultural and creative industries to the economy in 2016–17 was \$86 billion, or 5.2 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics). That's almost twice the contribution of agriculture, fishing and forestry (\$48 billion), and more than half that of the mining industry (\$148 billion in 2017–18). ⁵

The National Farmers Federation recently reported that the agricultural sector at farm-gate, provides 3 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product. Australian farm production was valued at \$60 billion in 2016-17, with 77% of what is grown and produced exported.

Tourism Research Australia (TRA) recently indicated that 1.7 million domestic overnight guests and 939,000 international guests visited farms during their trip for the year ending 2019. The agritourism sector is currently worth approximately \$9.4 billion a year. ⁶

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

⁴ <https://www.communications.gov.au/publications/cultural-and-creative-activity-australia-2008-09-2016-17>).

⁵ Alison Croggon – The Desertification of Australian Culture -- The Monthly - October 2019

⁶ Domain Age Newspaper 2 November

Response to the Resolution of Appointment

We have provided a response to selected headings listed under the Resolution of Appointment dated 25 July 2019.

a) Examining the contribution and role of regional Australia to our national identity, economy and environment

Geographic diversity and locational politics are vitally important conversations of upmost significance in the Australian arts landscape. The arts provide unique expressions of community, as they are firmly rooted in the local environment and through participation in cultural life enrich both to the individual and communities. Research demonstrates that they can generate and promote a sense of belonging.

Arts and creative industries bridge a cultural and geographic divide by respecting and valuing contemporary regional practice across the national regional landscape. The cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia's population has been shaped by our First Nations traditional owners and over the years by migration and as such our national identity cannot default to a single or linear narrative. Our national identity is transformed as our population changes and regional, rural and remote communities are integral to this narrative.

RAA manages the Regional Arts Fund (RAF), on behalf of the Australian Government. We submit that the RAF is one of the most successful programs supporting arts and culture in regional and remote Australia, distributing \$13 million dollars over four years. The objectives of the fund are keyed closely to economic outcomes, leveraged income, community engagement, employment and professional development. The RAF helps bridge the geographical divide between Australia's regional cities and regions. It demonstrates capacity building within local communities and communities of creative practice and connects and builds partnerships with creative institutions while building cross industry partnerships, in health, education, tourism, jobs and growth contributing to regional communities, wellbeing and liveability.

The cultural and creative industries play a critical role in contributing to the creativity, diversity and prosperity of Australia's rural economy. The arts are vital enablers helping us to explore vibrancy, diversity, accessibility and inclusiveness and are fundamental to nation-building, and to the continual advancement of the economy and environment. Through exhibitions, film, dance, performance and music we can generate stories, connection and narratives of place, community and identity.

b) Promoting the development of regional centres, cities, towns and districts including promoting master planning of regional communities

Place is important and provides part of the narrative, a space to conduct dialogue between practice and thinking, between people and communities. It is precisely this relationship between the economic, the social and cultural, the ideological and the political that is paramount to understanding arts and creative industries in rural, regional and remote Australia.

There is a need for long-term planning to integrate and support artistic practice and creative industries in a regional framework. Cultural infrastructure and facilities such as performing arts centres, galleries, black box venues, fit for purpose multi arts spaces, community halls, festivals and gathering spaces all contribute to the fabric of regional communities. Through

formal and informal venues, the arts are significant contributors to the economic, social and creative impact of place.

Cultural engagement, cultural tourism and arts tourism enables local, national and international exchange and presents an understanding and dynamic that can build social cohesion. Program such as UK City of Culture for 2021 in Coventry are international examples⁷ where cultural and heritage experiences in every ward of the city are programmed to showcase a sense of place and community in a regional centre. This intentional framework provides a structure for purpose and knowledge that by design is embedded in place-based creativity and industry best practice.

Enhanced government engagement and investment in the arts will increase the vibrancy, diversity and capacity to explore and reflect regional Australia and contribute to the social and economic benefits and improved social cohesion through to regional resilience and development and strengthened regional futures.

g) Investigate the development of capital city size regional centres in strategic locations and the benefits this offers regional cities, capital cities, the Australian economy and lifestyle

In a number of the larger regional centres already existing in Australia, a number of strategic benefits are becoming apparent for arts and culture.

In 2018, the Regional Centre for Culture initiative⁸ in Bendigo and surrounds demonstrated how a major regional centre might leader a regional-level conversation. Recognising the benefits of this approach, the City of Greater Bendigo committed in its Creative City strategy that followed in 2019 to a number of ongoing regional-level initiatives. One of these initiatives recently resulted in Bendigo being designated a UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy⁹ - with an explicit focus beyond just the City.

Developing regional economic and lifestyle benefits require this kind of leadership, a kind that looks beyond the immediate municipal boundaries that govern local government. In our experience, this approach is more easily supported by larger regional centres with appropriate scale and resourcing to explore opportunities that smaller centres cannot.

j) Examining ways urbanisation can be re-directed to achieve more balanced regional development

A number of smaller local government areas in Victoria are currently seeking to address their distributed populations through the development of less centralised arts and culture strategies, and might be looked to as exemplars.

⁷ <https://coventry2021.co.uk/>⁷

⁸ <https://creative.vic.gov.au/showcase/regional-centre-for-culture-2018-celebrating-victorias-creative-heart>

⁹ <https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/6467465/bendigo-officially-a-city-of-gastronomy/>

Moira Shire, in the north of the state, for example, recently released a draft Arts & Culture strategy¹⁰ that approaches the task by establishing a series of ‘creative network hubs’. The approach codifies what many small councils have sought to achieve for some time by stepping away from the centralisation of resources towards a network model.

There may be benefit in the Committee exploring this work in further detail to determine if similar approaches can be taken outside of arts and culture.

k) Identifying the infrastructure requirements for reliable and affordable health, education, transport, telecommunications, clean energy, water and waste in a new settlement of reasonable size, located away from existing infrastructure.

In the Southern Grampians Shire in South West Victoria, the Smart Cities initiative¹¹ provides an innovative example of the ways in which our regional communities are exploring new leadership opportunities in digital infrastructure provision. This project is worthy of further exploration for the systematic manner in which it identified needs, solutions, and partners to address connectivity.

For the next stage of this project, having trialled and tested new approaches to data collection to inform decision-making, the Shire is now looking for support in data visualisation and application development. In this space, they are actively looking for young, creative minds to set up in Hamilton (the regional centre in the area) – and it is for this that arts and creative practitioners, particularly those working in digital media, are required.

We have no doubt that new and growing regional settlements will require investment in education, health, public transport and similar infrastructure. We provide the example above to illustrate that thriving and connected regional communities must also consider how they attract and/or retain the creative minds that are needed to deliver these services once they are established.

l) Consider other measures to support the ongoing growth and sustainability of regional Australia

Regional centres and clusters such as the G21 Group in Geelong and surrounds have identified creativity as a central pillar for the future of their regions.¹² This recognises the growing recognition of the importance of the arts to the growth and sustainability of our regions.

The G21 have outlines a series of ‘Pillar Projects’ under the Arts, Heritage & Culture banner which are indicative of some of the measures being taken. These include a study of the economic benefits provided; heritage listings; a cultural precinct; and asset registers (<https://www.g21.com.au/arts-heritage-culture-pillar>).

¹⁰ <https://www.riverineherald.com.au/cobram-news/2019/10/30/882458/council-aims-to-boost-shires-arts-and-culture-with-creative-hubs>

¹¹ <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/smart-cities/collaboration-platform/Smart-Community-Services-for-the-Southern-Grampians.aspx>

¹² <http://www.g21.com.au/g21-pillars>

In Conclusion

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

Measures that ensure our regional communities have access to culture, ideas and knowledge must be included in any planning considerations to improve the likelihood that people will continue to work and live in our regions.

We note that there are many and varied ways in which the arts continue to shape regional Australia beyond those provided here. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these in more detail, and can be reached at any of the details below.

Sincerely,



ROS ABERCROMBIE
Executive Director (CEO)
Regional Arts Australia



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This submission is intended to assist in the thinking and understanding of regional issues. No responsibility is accepted by RAA, its Board or members for the accuracy of the advice provided or for the quality of advice or decisions made by others based on the information presented in this submission. Unless otherwise specified, the contents of this submission remain the property of the Regional Arts Australia.

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