

Australia Council for the Arts
372 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Australia
PO Box 788 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 Australia
Telephone +61(0)2 9215 9000 Toll free 1800 226 912
Facsimile +61(0)2 9215 9111 www.australiacouncil.gov.au



Australian Government



24 May 2011

Ms Sharon Bird
Chair
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bird

Following the letter from James Strong, Chairman of the Australia Council, and Julie Boyd, Chair of Regional Arts Australia, on 14 April 2011, I am pleased to enclose a submission to the House Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network (NBN) on behalf of Australia's arts sector.

This submission addresses the impact of the NBN on the development, delivery and access to arts and culture in Australia and describes anticipated outcomes and opportunities.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this submission within your busy schedule. Please do not hesitate to contact me at _____ or _____ should you wish to discuss any of the matters raised in this submission.

Sincerely

Kathy Keele

CC *The Hon. Simon Crean MP, Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Minister for the Arts*

Australia Council for the Arts

Regional Arts Australia

**Submission to Inquiry into the role and potential of the
National Broadband Network**

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure
and Communications

May 2011

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
1.1. Overview of the themes addressed in this submission	3
1.2. A transformational technology.....	3
1.3. Regional economic growth and participation	3
1.4. Increasing productivity and transforming the creative process	3
1.5. Community and social benefits	4
1.6. Improved Educational Resources and Training	4
1.7. Business efficiencies and revenues, especially for SMEs, and exports.....	4
2. Introduction.....	5
The role of the arts in Australia today	5
3. The impact of the NBN on the delivery of arts and cultural outcomes for Australians.....	7
3.1. The NBN has the potential to transform how we create, access and consume Australian arts and culture.....	7
3.2. Regional economic growth and participation	8
3.3. Increasing productivity and transforming the creative process	10
Enhancing audience engagement	11
Transforming the nature of the 'live' event.....	12
Transforming how arts organisations see themselves.....	12
3.4. Community and social benefits	13
Community engagement through the arts	13
Social inclusion: overcoming obstacles to participation.....	13
Distinctive Australian identity and content benefits.....	14
3.5. Educational Resources and Training	14
3.6. Business efficiencies and revenues, especially for SMEs, and exports	15
4. Conclusion	16

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Overview of the themes addressed in this submission

The National Broadband Network (NBN) will have a major and positive impact on the development and delivery of arts programs in Australia and will increase access to Australian arts and culture. This submission describes the outcomes which will be enabled by and as a result of the rollout of the NBN.

1.2. A transformational technology

The NBN is potentially a culturally transformative technology, just as other communications infrastructures and utilities, such as the telephone and television, were. This creates opportunities as well as challenges, particularly in regards to ensuring distinctively Australian culture and creative content assumes a prominent profile in what will quickly become a crowded and an internationalised information landscape. The NBN will also make possible entirely new forms of connection between creators, arts producers and the general population – arts audiences. Moreover, it will increase productivity of the arts and entertainment sector by enabling and strengthening networks connecting artistic talent, skills and resources.

1.3. Regional economic growth and participation

The NBN will have positive outcomes for regional populations by providing greater access to arts content created locally or anywhere on the planet. It will support regional and rural arts and cultural organisations and creative industries, as well as individual artists and practitioners, and it will connect them to new markets. Impacts of the NBN on regional economic growth and employment include expanding the reach of regional arts organisations and arts companies, levelling the playing field between regional and metropolitan players, and facilitating the generation of distinctive local digital content.

1.4. Increasing productivity and transforming the creative process

Enhanced possibilities for creative collaborations will be one of the key benefits of the NBN for this sector, which is characterised by Small to Medium Enterprises (SME's), including national and international collaborations. Social media and current online environments have already had a significant impact on the process of creating artistic content, allowing people to collaborate and find each other through online communities and networks. This effect will be multiplied by the NBN.

1.5. Community and social benefits

The NBN will allow all Australians, particularly those in rural and remote locations, to receive digitised arts and entertainment content from around the world. Australian arts producers will need to ensure digitised content is available for distribution as global content providers will gain access to Australian consumers. Ensuring Australian artists and creatives have a voice and a place on new broadband networks must be a priority. At a local level, the NBN will enable arts organizations to capitalize on their existing relationships with local communities in innovative ways. Previously unimaginable opportunities for communities to collaborate with each other will be enabled via NBN facilitated inter-connected arts projects which will have socially cohesive impacts.

1.6. Improved Educational Resources and Training

Arts organizations have well-established networks delivering educational programs in schools where artists and performers physically travel to schools to perform or interact with the students. The NBN will enable these programs to be distributed to more children, in multiple locations and to offer a whole range of teacher development opportunities, which will be a crucial element in being able to deliver the sequential and developmental arts curriculum.

1.7. Business efficiencies and revenues, especially for SMEs, and exports

The NBN will change the way arts organizations run their businesses. It will allow for artists to collaborate remotely and attract high level expertise into works in progress. The NBN presents an enormous challenge for artists and arts organizations to think about doing things differently. This is not just about audience development but also about the development of young and emerging artists. It creates new opportunities for companies to allow outsiders to be involved and engaged in diverse ways in how they work and to develop new models of collaboration and co-creation.

2. Introduction

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. Its mission is to enrich the lives of Australians and their communities by supporting the creation and enjoyment of the arts. This mission is underpinned by a commitment to:

- Excellent and distinctive Australian art – assisting Australian artists to create and present a body of distinctive cultural works characterised by the pursuit of excellence
- Access for all Australians – assisting Australian citizens and civic institutions to appreciate, understand, participate in, enjoy and celebrate the arts
- A strong and vibrant arts sector – providing infrastructure development for Australia's creative arts.

Regional Arts Australia is the key national body representing the broad and complex interests and concerns of those working with and for the arts in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Recognising the transformative effects of broadband technology on the creation and consumption of the arts, the Australia Council, in conjunction with Regional Arts Australia, is pleased to make this submission on behalf of the national arts and creative sector.

The role of the arts in Australia today

The arts touch the lives of all Australians on a daily basis, in one way or another, whether as audience, participant, amateur or professional artist, or as a worker within the creative and cultural sector. Art helps us to make sense of the world we live in and produces iconic representations of local, regional and national identity for Australia and worldwide, projecting distinctively Australian input into the global marketplace of ideas. It contributes to personal happiness and social innovation, improving the quality and resilience of community life. It is essential to maintaining our cities and regions as world-class attractors of talent and investment.

Research commissioned by the Australia Council and published in 2010 in the report *More than Bums on Seats: Australian Participation in the Arts*,¹ shows that the arts are strongly supported by the community. In the year leading up to the research, four in ten Australians aged 15 and older had creatively participated in the arts (by making something themselves), and nine in ten had receptively participated (by attending a live event, an exhibition, or reading literature).² Attitudes towards the arts are increasingly positive. It is widely believed that the arts should be an important part of every Australian's education, that they make for a richer and more meaningful life, and that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved. The strength of these views has increased in the last 10 years, while the belief that the arts are too expensive and attract people

1

http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/subjects/audiences_and_cultural_participation/arts_participation_research_more_than_bums_on_seats

² *More Than Bums on Seats*, p.3.

who are elitist has decreased.³ Interest in Indigenous arts is growing, indicating the potential to grow the audience for Indigenous art across Australia and the world. Young people displayed higher levels of participation in the arts as creators than the rest of the population, and receptive participation in this age group also appears to be on the rise.⁴

Australians readily associate the arts with a range of individual benefits – such as socializing with friends, intellectual growth, inspiration, or health and wellbeing – as well as community benefits, such as helping people to think and work creatively, social tolerance, communal meaning and providing a sense of belonging.⁵

National Cultural Policy

The current development of a National Cultural Policy for Australia is a high priority for all involved in the arts sector. The Minister for the Arts, Simon Crean has said of a National Cultural Policy:

The purpose is to revitalise the arts in Australia, by highlighting the significant role that arts and culture play in the daily lives of all Australians, and by integrating arts policy within the broader policy agenda of the Government.

These changes will bring the arts and creative industries into the mainstream for policy makers and community leaders.⁶

³ *More Than Bums on Seats*, p.4.

⁴ *More Than Bums on Seats*, p.7.

⁵ *More Than Bums on Seats*, p.30.

⁶ Speech to the National Regional Arts Broadband Forum, 28 March 2011
<http://www.minister.regional.gov.au/sc/speeches/2011/CS05.aspx>

3. The impact of the NBN on the delivery of arts and cultural outcomes for Australians

The arts and creative activities play an important role in the lives of most Australians today. In considering the development of and opportunities presented by the NBN, its impact on the arts is a matter of key importance.

The arts sector believes that the NBN will have a transformative effect on the creation and the consumption of the arts in Australia in ways discussed in the following section.

3.1. The NBN has the potential to transform how we create, access and consume Australian arts and culture.

The NBN is potentially a transformative technology for the arts and cultural sector, just as other communications infrastructures and utilities, such as the telephone and television, have been in the past. It will allow anytime, anywhere access to creative and cultural content. It will make possible entirely new forms of connection between arts producers and audiences, and strengthen networks connecting artistic talent, skills and resources throughout the sector. Most artists and arts organisations are small to medium-sized businesses and the NBN will make it easier for them to connect and collaborate with each other. The NBN has the potential to move us towards a more level playing field for the creation and consumption of the arts between regional and metropolitan areas, reducing the tyranny of distance. Further, the NBN will catalyse new forms of connection between organisations in Australia and internationally, making it easier for Australian artists to take their art to the rest of the world.

The arts and creative sector recognises that broadband is game-changing technology and that this presents a once in a generation opportunity to give a vital voice to Australian art and culture and to increase productivity in the sector. However, we also recognise there is a challenge to ensure that distinctively Australian culture and creative content assumes a prominent profile in what will quickly become a crowded and an internationalised information landscape. To do this, the sector must respond to the opportunities presented by the NBN quickly, imaginatively, nimbly and effectively. We are reminded that during the 1920s the Australian Film Industry was technologically and creatively innovative and ahead of the game. With the emergence of Hollywood, Australia lost position at the forefront of the industry internationally. Today, we again have a vibrant and vital creative ecosystem but it is fragmented and disconnected.

While the sector recognises the opportunities presented via broadband networks, we know that many arts and cultural organisations are not resourced or ready to take advantage of these opportunities at this stage. This means that significant investment will need to be made in capacity and content alongside the roll out of this world-leading technology.

The lessons from the history of television in Australia are also instructive. The start of television in Australia in the mid fifties paved the way for an influx of new content, mainly from the USA. It

took Australian producers of television content many years to catch up, with the application of ingenuity and strategic government intervention. We are better placed and more competitive today in the creation of digital content, but we do not underestimate the need for investment to take full advantage of the opportunities.

In addition to the ubiquitous nature of the NBN, evolving access platforms will further drive demand for digital arts content. Access to arts content is changing dramatically with the proliferation of platforms on which people can access digital media, including smart phones and the iPad-like devices. Arts content is now just as likely to be enjoyed on the move or at home as it is in a gallery, museum or theatre. The NBN will provide the backbone bandwidth to allow for the creation of more and richer materials, which people will access on a range of platforms, including mobile devices. As digital infrastructure improves, national broadcasters, telecommunications companies and online publishers will play an increasingly pivotal role in the distribution of arts content.

Without the NBN, hand-held devices in general will not have the bandwidth to stream high quality video and audio for the foreseeable future. The NBN will provide a crucial infrastructure for these devices, using a download and synchronise model such as is provided by the integration of devices such as the iPhone and iPad with iTunes and the iTunes store. The high-speed connectivity of the NBN will recalibrate consumers' expectations about how they will use these devices to consume data-intensive digital products such as movies and interactive e-books.

The transformative nature of NBN facilitated digital technology is also enabling artists to use new interactive technologies and develop new business models. Artists are creating work that invites audiences to move beyond passively viewing, watching or listening to arts content, and instead encourages them to try stepping inside artwork, contributing to its creation – and in some cases even wearing the artwork. Arts content in digital formats can be copied, shared and repurposed. While encouraging creative interactions, this is creating challenges for those seeking to protect and monetise content, and is transforming traditional business models (which were based on one-off pieces and events). Digital distribution and consumption of arts content opens up new ways of doing business and earning income (such as increasing royalties through posting online back catalogues).

3.2. Regional economic growth and participation

For regional consumers, the NBN will have positive outcomes for regional populations by providing greater access to arts content created locally or anywhere on the planet. And the NBN will support regional and rural arts and culture organisations and creative industries, as well as individual artists and practitioners, connecting networks of artworkers to each other and to new markets. Impacts of the NBN on regional economic growth and employment include expanding the reach of regional organisations and arts companies, levelling the playing field between regional and metropolitan players to some extent and facilitating the generation of distinctive local digital content. In doing this it will bring greater benefits to audiences through the enhanced opportunities for them to participate.

Regional Arts Australia held a national regional arts broadband forum in March 2011, which brought together over 70 people in person with over 600 participating online⁷. Regional Arts Australia's summary of the outcomes of the forum indicates important directions for future development and ongoing discussion within the regional arts sector. A series of recommendations which will connect the dots enabling the arts to build stronger regional communities are in preparation, including: the development of a national cultural policy; the national arts curriculum; new opportunities for collaboration; expanded creation and distribution potentials; new ways to participate, be healthy and sustainable; and new ways of working.

The Australia Council's research on arts participation shows that regional and rural people have similar overall levels of arts engagement as those in metropolitan areas, both as creators and as audience members⁸. Rural people who did not attend the arts were more likely to say that this was because there were not enough opportunities close to home and events were hard to get to. Regional and rural Australians are slightly less likely to be internet users than others, and of those who are Internet users, there is a slightly lower proportion than among metropolitan users who access arts content online (researching artists or works, downloading music or other arts content). As Professor Stuart Cunningham has recently pointed out:

*There is a real cultural divide in Australia that is not a product of differing tastes and preferences but of differing real prices and costs of access. This divide maps to distance and density. The bush-city divide has a lot of history behind it. The NBN debate reignites this. The real price of cultural consumption rises with distance from capital centres. The NBN could be a mechanism to close the gap.*⁹

Living in a regional location affects the practice of professional artists in many ways, and the effects are both positive and negative. Not surprisingly it is performing artists who are concentrated in the cities, since they need to be close to the companies and organisations that employ their talents. Only 13 percent of regional artists claim that their location has no effect on their artistic practice. While almost two-thirds of regional artists say their practice has benefitted from their regional location, unsurprisingly they report greater difficulty accessing markets and promotion than city artists. The NBN will allow regional artists to take advantage of similar employment opportunities as their metropolitan counterparts, such as to teach, to work in the health sector, in data visualisation or game design.

For example, the NBN promises to change and enhance the structure of the traditional modes of touring exhibitions and performance work. Already there seems to be a shift underway towards

⁷ <http://www.regionalarts.com.au/raa1/national-regional-arts-broadband-forum.asp>

⁸ More than Bums on Seats

⁹ Stuart Cunningham and Jason Potts The price of our great digital divide [The Australian](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/the-price-of-our-great-digital-divide/story-fn59niix-1226055295164) May 14, 2011
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/the-price-of-our-great-digital-divide/story-fn59niix-1226055295164>

more collaborative international partnerships. Where traditionally a work may have been created by a company in one location and then taken on tour, more and more partnerships are being seen which start collaboratively much earlier in the process of developing the work. The result is often a work which engages with multiple locations and audiences. These partnerships have spin-off benefits in terms of access to resources, expertise, talent and mentoring opportunities.

There are significant examples from overseas of the impact of broadband networks on audiences and creative industries in regional areas. As noted by the Australian Major Performing Arts Group:

Major performing arts companies are also entering the market for cinema and online content. Successes in these areas include the English National Theatre's NT Live program, the Royal Opera House and the Metropolitan Opera, amongst others. Theatre and dance are less represented in the cinema space than opera, but are beginning to gather momentum overseas. These companies are building financially self-sustaining models for cinema and online content, although none have to date made a significant profit.¹⁰

Evidence about changing patterns of audience behaviour suggests that as well as the online environment, festivals are also a potential opportunity for regional communities. Festivals are strong regionally (e.g. Tamworth Country Music Festival). What we do not yet know is how, in the future, with the assistance of the NBN, events such as these can turn online interest into new revenue streams, including new ways of accessing audience members who will want to translate their 'virtual' experience into a 'real' one by attending in person. It is easy to see however how the indirect spin-off effects of the NBN can include tourism outcomes for parts of Australia that might otherwise be off the beaten path.

Does access to the best in the world, whether it is in Australia or not, mean that people will disengage from local arts organizations and only patronize those international 'brands' which have the resources to provide infrastructures to deliver their content in high-capacity formats? Or will it mean, on the contrary, that having access to the best in the world will mean that individuals will develop a better understanding of the arts and a more sophisticated sense of appreciation of artforms that local organizations and artists can also benefit from?

Adequate bandwidth remains an issue in regional areas, and symmetry of upload and download speeds is crucial for rural communities to be effectively interacting through the NBN.

3.3. Increasing productivity and transforming the creative process

Enhanced possibilities for creative collaborations across regional, national and international locations will be a significant benefit of the NBN for the arts sector. Social media and current online environments already allow people to find each other through online communities and

¹⁰ Australian Major Performing Arts Group, Impact of Digital Technologies on Major Performing Arts Companies, http://ampag.com.au/Current_Issues

networks. Today's internet already supports international collaboration and many artists and organisations are well-networked internationally, but the need for international travel to support these networks remains the norm. The added quality of high-definition video streaming, in comparison with the jumpy low resolution possibilities of technologies like Skype, will mean that collaboration will feel much more natural in online environments. 'Telepresence' becomes achievable, and not just a dream.

Moving towards more symmetrical upload and download speeds is a key element in creating more interactive relationships and partnerships, allowing for collaboration, co-creation and interactive participation rather than one-way broadcast consumption of content. Collaboration requires people to be able to send large amounts of data to each other with as little latency as possible.

The performing arts are set to experience significant benefits from the NBN. Conventional performance development requires performers to be brought together to rehearse, but in the future it will be possible to do a great deal more pre-preparation and collaborative workshopping than is currently possible. The first read-through of a play, for example, could be done online and more intensive face-to-face rehearsals come later in the process. The following sections provide examples of how the production process is being transformed and productivity improved in this sector as a result of the use of broadband networks.

Enhancing audience engagement

The shift towards interactive media that offers the audience greater agency and the capacity to create user-generated content is no passing fad. Currently, 68% of Australians play computer and console games. In households with game devices, 70% of parents play computer and video games and 80% of these parents play them with their children.¹¹

The NBN will accelerate a trend that is already underway towards different ways of framing the audience relationship to art. Social media already allow arts organisations to be more open to feedback from audiences, and therefore to be more relevant and responsive in the works they produce. This allows them to become closer to their communities rather than keeping them at arms' length. Over time we can expect that

Case Study: Digital publishing and e-books

Digital publishing is transforming the nature of literature, with the emergence of e-books and the increasing popularity of portable digital devices for reading. As it becomes easier, with increasing bandwidth, for people to download e-books, we can expect people to move more and more towards these formats. As books increasingly move to digital formats, they are simultaneously being transformed by the possibilities of the digital environment for interactivity, annotation, hyperlinking and rich audiovisual content.

Many authors are responding by rethinking their commitment to traditional publishing models. Writers are getting together online to present and promote their work, and make connections with overseas markets. It is likely that publishers will continue to play an important role, because individual creators will still need to access to marketing and distribution channels. For the foreseeable future many authors will probably still want to see their work in print form, but they will not necessarily be prepared to sign over all rights to their work, including digital distribution rights, to publishers in perpetuity. Broadband networks will facilitate some writers self publishing and connecting to new markets. The State-based network of Writers' Centres is responding to the challenges of the new digital possibilities by collaborating on a national basis through online activities, including workshops whereby aspiring writers who are anywhere in the country will be able to participate in writing workshops.

Digital networking will mean that not only will consumers be able to carry around their whole library wherever they go but that in the post-NBN world the public library network, because of its strong base in local communities, will have the potential to provide key infrastructure linking individuals and communities to services. People anywhere in the country will be able to borrow or buy e-books by downloading them without leaving their home or office, then synchronise their hand-held devices to consume content on the go.

¹¹ Interactive Australia 2009, Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia

this trend will lead to more culturally literate audiences.

Recent research conducted on behalf of the Australia Council into how people use online services to support their attendance at arts events points to online video being particularly important now and into the future as an aspect of how organizations stay in touch on an ongoing basis with their audiences, as well as being an increasingly key element in how audiences access the arts.

The online experience provides audiences with the opportunity to see – and sample - the final product before they buy and also to be engaged by the process of creation and production. Some artforms lend themselves more to the observation of process, to allowing the audience to be a ‘fly on the wall’ throughout the development of a production. Although there are still artists’ rights issues to be resolved, it is now possible that a theatre production, for example, could allow the audience into the process of rehearsal, set construction, lighting design, marketing, and so on. This would provide a much richer experience for the audience of the production itself, whether they are able to see it in person or in streamed or recorded forms. The popularity of reality television in recent years provides strong evidence that this kind of immersive engagement with people operating in a range of diverse situations is extremely popular with audiences.

Transforming the nature of the ‘live’ event

Traditionally, we think of live events as those at which people gather in the same place at the same time, or which are broadcast to a largely passive television audience. We have already been seeing for some time how these assumptions are being challenged by online streaming, tweeting and live blogging. Thanks to broadband technology, ‘live’ can now simply mean being a participant in the event at the same time as it is happening no matter where you live. Audiences increasingly supplement and enhance their enjoyment of events by interacting and communicating with each other, and even becoming involved in the process of shaping the event in process. There is something special about the experience of seeing something at the same time that it is happening, especially when it is a one-off, never-to-be-repeated event.

Transforming how arts organisations see themselves

As the NBN is rolled out to all Australians, arts presenting organizations will feel increasing pressure not just to present but also to develop the capacity to broadcast/narrowcast. In this way they can increase their audience reach to a vastly more widespread region than their local catchment. Internationally, a number of high-profile institutions are already showing the way. The UK’s Tate Gallery, for example, began talking about itself a few years ago as a ‘publisher’ rather than museum. Here in Australia, the Opera House has also started to reorient itself towards being not just an organization which presents live events, but as a *broadcaster*. This expanded role maintains the core focus of the Opera House as a developer, curator and programmer of work, but extends the reach of who can become involved in and access the work it does. The Sydney Opera House is an iconic brand with an international profile and globally distinctive position as a ‘destination’, and is therefore uniquely positioned to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the NBN to take its programming to a previously unimaginable ‘virtual’ level.

3.4. Community and social benefits

Community engagement through the arts

The field of community arts has been strong within Australia since at least the 1970s. The *More Than Bums on Seats* research found that around a quarter of the population is touched by community-based arts. Those living in rural areas were more likely to attend community arts than others.¹²

The Australia Council supports community arts and cultural development through its Community Partnerships programs. In particular, the Australia Council supports programs to enhance the participation of specific underrepresented communities, which include people in regional Australia, people with a disability, young people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and Indigenous Australians.

Although community-based arts practice is often locally based, this is changing as a result of broadband technology. A number of practitioners and organizations working with communities have a well-established track record of working innovatively in the digital space. Increasingly, the NBN will allow these organizations to capitalize on their existing strong relationships with communities in innovative ways creating opportunities for communities to collaborate. The NBN will also allow for more active engagement in programming by local communities, through interactive community-based curatorial models.

Over the longer term, the NBN challenges us to think in new ways about the nature of community itself. Today we tend to think of community in terms of the capacity to gather together in physical space, however community is about sharing meanings, information and resources, when this results in a sense of shared belonging. In the digital age, this is happening more and more between groups of people creating art who never meet, or meet only rarely.

Social inclusion: overcoming obstacles to participation

The NBN will clearly be important enabling infrastructure for people with mobility problems, offering the possibility of innovative ways to address access issues for artists and audiences alike.

However, the arts sector recognises that not all Australians will have the skills or the appropriate device to take advantage of this. Well equipped community centres will be integral to all Australians benefitting from the NBN. We recognize that not everyone who enjoys the benefits arising from the NBN will do so in their own homes. Older people, the disabled, socio-economically disadvantaged people, newly-arrived migrants and Indigenous people living in remote communities are among those likely to access the NBN in community centres. Addressing the digital divide and ensuring equity of access will still depend on giving people not just access to the network but to the computers or other devices that plug into it. Skills development is a component of this need: access is not just about having the technology but also the knowledge of how to use it and of what to do when things do not go smoothly. As the potential of the NBN for delivery of educational and health services becomes a reality, it is important to ensure that existing inequities are not exacerbated.

¹² *More Than Bums on Seats*, p.7.

Distinctive Australian identity and content benefits

As previously stated, the NBN will bring national benefits by providing access to new content anywhere, anytime. The arts sector is focused on ensuring that distinctive Australian content is available to Australians and international audiences via broadband. To do this, Australian artists and arts organisations must have digital-ready content that can compete with the international content that will become available through the NBN. We see in sites like YouTube that the volume and diversity of the material makes it difficult for locally distinctive content to stand out. How we understand 'Australian content' in this new landscape is an issue of great importance. How will 'Australian-ness' be able to be recognised? How will consumers be able to locate and access local content? How can Australia as a nation (as well as local communities all over the nation) be able to build a distinctive 'brand' that will be recognizable in such a busy and diverse international landscape? How will people find and experience culturally rich Australian content?

3.5. Educational Resources and Training

*The Arts have a special relationship to learning, in that the Arts can be learned and can be used as a tool by which to learn about something else. Fully understanding the Arts involves critical and practical study.*¹³

The education sector is already well-positioned to take advantage of the NBN at the moment it becomes available. Visual artists and performing arts organizations have well-established networks delivering educational programs in schools, where artists and performers physically travel to schools to perform or interact with the students. But the reach of these programs is limited by issues of distance and available resources. The NBN will facilitate the distribution of these programs to broader geographies and more students.

In addition, the NBN offers a range of *teacher development* opportunities, which will be a crucial element in being able to deliver the sequential and developmental arts curriculum which will soon be included in national educational programs. For example, Ausdance, the national dance organisation, would like to deliver a regional program for artists teaching dance (an element of the new National Dance Qualifications) to enable artists to work in partnership with schools and communities, especially in more remote locations. At present the skill set is only offered in capital

Case Study: The Song Room's PING program

Victoria's The Song Room was awarded the ATUG 2011 National Awards for the Effective Use of Broadband in the category of Education for its online music education program PING. PING combines social media, blogging and creative musical activities to engage middle year students in Victorian rural schools. A collaboration between The Song Room, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Victorian Opera, Country Education Project Inc and 3MBS FM, PING provides access to online resources, digital learning, in-school workshops, online master classes and live concert streaming where a range of musical styles are explored.

The PING project addresses the gaps that students in rural and regional Victorian schools have, with little or no access to music and arts education opportunities. The beauty of PING is the connections that can be made peer to peer, professional musicians to classrooms, and teacher to teacher, creating an online music education model that is the first of its kind in the country. PING builds the capacity of targeted Victorian rural schools and communities to deliver music education programs, provide greater access for rural and regional schools to elite, city-based performance companies, and strengthens the ICT and music skills of generalist teachers.

¹³ *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts*, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, p.3.

cities, and there is great potential to expand provision to regionally-based artists. There will also be the opportunity for small arts organisations such as Ausdance to partner with larger organisations, especially tertiary providers and cultural institutions, to enable greater NBN access to their programs.

Museums, too, have long played a significant role in education with groups of children travelling to the museum. Broadband will become a key element in allowing teachers and schools to access a vastly expanded array of rich educational opportunities and archives of knowledge for students. This is particularly important for children and young people in regional and remote communities and provides the potential for reaching students from the very earliest years of their schooling as well as maintaining a continuity of development of their arts literacy and awareness.

Connecting with children through the rich sensory experiences of the arts – sound and moving image – will inspire children to consider the arts as a source of pleasure, well being, exciting ideas, engagement with others, and perhaps for some a challenging and rewarding future career option.

From 2012 the Arts will be embedded in the national K-12 curriculum. The *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* document states that currently, knowledge in the arts is not universally understood and taught in all schools. The arts curriculum in development will cater for both generalist classroom teachers and teachers with specialist arts backgrounds, and will focus on five artforms: dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts.

The NBN will also expand the potential to target particular pockets of educational disadvantage through special programs, for example addressing literacy and numeracy issues in remote Indigenous communities.

Finally, the NBN will facilitate skills development within the arts sector itself, enabling artists to both teach others and to learn via working with mentors and teachers from around the country and overseas.

3.6. Business efficiencies and revenues, especially for SMEs, and exports

The NBN will change the way arts organizations run their businesses. It will allow for artistic input and attract high level expertise into works in progress, for example a regionally-based choir may be able to benefit from a 'masterclass' with a leading practitioner based elsewhere. Arts centres are often already multi-use spaces but the NBN will expand their opportunities to present, transforming their programming options. Spaces to present work will be

Case Study: The music business

As is being hotly debated internationally, traditional business models in the music industry have gone through a period of significant change in a period of great invention and the entrance of new players. In spite of this upheaval, audience interest in music continues. An important trend is a shift in emphasis in the industry, with recorded music – which was the foundation of the economic basis of the industry throughout most of the twentieth century – giving way to an emphasis on performance and touring. Interestingly, there is evidence pointing to a differentiation of consumption patterns between different age groups. Sales of recorded music on CD or DVD now seem to be concentrated in older age groups. 16-35 year olds are also interested in owning copies of the music they consume, though this is commonly a digital copy, either bought or illegally downloaded. Amongst those under 16, however, there appears to be less interest in actually owning even a digital copy of a song or a video. What they are interested in is accessible in a streamed form. This suggests that, in the future, cloud-based and streaming services (such as YouTube) will be increasingly important as content delivery models. The challenge for creators, producers and distributors will be to develop viable business models and provide effective revenue streams.

within easier reach of organizations and performers than they might otherwise be – ‘will our piece work in this space’ becomes an easier question to answer.

The NBN presents an enormous challenge for artists and arts organizations to think about doing things differently. Increasing the capacity for artists to collaborate with each other across distance, and to access collaborators with a wider range of skills to work together will mean greater potential for that international collaborations and export opportunities.

We anticipate that the NBN will also support the development of specialised arts businesses catering for niche markets. Topics and work that is of niche interest will find new niche markets as artists and audiences are connected directly and efficiently via broadband technology. We are already seeing that social media are increasingly important in an expanded sense of ‘word-of-mouth’ – recommendations flowing through networks of social connection where trust is built on the basis of shared tastes and established reputation.

The online environment has provided new ways for some arts producers to distribute work which is of limited rather than mass interest. Remote Indigenous arts centres will be able to connect with international collectors via broadband. The online publication of poetry has facilitated a new market for previously underrepresented writers (in terms of printed publications). But as many genres of artform are heavily reliant on significant bandwidth (interactive and visually rich formats), they have yet to see the benefits of the online environment that the NBN will inevitably bring.

However, the ability to take advantage of these opportunities will also depend on the capacity and knowledge of individual artists and companies in the area of both enabling technology and in appropriate new business models and practices. For example, established intellectual property models are being challenged by online consumption of the arts and entertainment. Consumers have become comfortable with making micropayments for individual pieces of digital content (or not paying at all).

Over the last 3 years, the Australia Council has made a limited investment in a sector-wide digital capacity-building initiative, Arts in a Digital Era. Most of the resources in this program have been invested in facilitating digital readiness for smaller arts organizations (e.g. getting their website set up, digital archives, marketing) and supporting the distribution of digitised content. This program has made it clear that more research and investment is required to support the development skills, of digital arts content, to research and develop new digital era appropriate business models for artists and arts organisations and to explore new modes of consumption of arts and entertainment.

4. Conclusion

The NBN presents the nation with a once in a generation opportunity through the delivery of world leading technology that will bind the nation together as never before. Central to our sense of nation is the strength of our culture and the confidence with which we express it. At the heart of our cultural expression are our artists and arts organisations. Australians are enormously supportive of the arts and put a high value on their participation in the arts, whether they are

doing something creatively themselves or they are enjoying the satisfaction that engaging with the arts can bring.

The arts sector's enthusiasm for the digital world illustrates how technology such as the NBN can deliver significant and far reaching social and economic benefits. While this technology will deliver well documented benefits to improved education and health care, for example, the NBN will greatly enhance our ability to have rich and meaningful cultural conversations and to define ourselves and our communities. In the arts and creative industries, our challenge is to ensure we have the capacity and imagination to use the NBN to the benefit of the creative process itself and for the benefit of all Australians as consumers of the arts. The rollout of the NBN challenges us to ensure that the Australian arts and creative industries have digital ready content to entice people to use the NBN so that they are entertained and informed once they are connected.