

artsource is Western Australia's leading representative body for visual artists. We deliver support, advocacy and critical programs to advance the sustainability and profile of visual artists.

1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects;
The structure that engaged community groups and local government in the development of appropriate local projects is one that as a not for profit company, Artsource found exceptionally useful and intelligent. It allowed for a thorough development and vetting process that is not normally available to groups such as ours. This ensured that the project was well thought through, realistically established and referenced the community for which it was intended.

When this process is followed and there is separation between the project development and any potential local political issues, it is one that would be hard to beat.

2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers;
Having been the recipient of funding for two separate projects through DOTARS, it seems to me that the more difficult qualitative outcomes of a project are disadvantaged against the level of quantitative reporting. Our experience has been that the first stages of project development involve staff (and later Board) at the ACC who learn about our project, understand its ramifications and endorse its objectives. This is later handed off to DOTARS staff who need to learn it all over again. In the project for which we have current funding, we have now had five project officers as staff change. We understand that people do move on, but at each changeover we have had to provide detailed briefings and a couple of times our reports had been mislaid so we had to provide duplicates of previous reports.

We understand that the ACC's have a different set up, but it would seem more efficient and certainly more engaging with less opportunities for information loss to deal with project reporting through the ACC system.

Many community projects require cocktail funding in order to proceed. Regional partnerships funding certainly requires other partners as a condition of funding. In our case we have had up to five funding partners involved in a single project. We have been unable to gain harmonised reporting between state and federal government departments. This not only absorbs a considerable amount of staff time for (in our case) a small not for profit company with an impeccable financial history), but much duplication through assessment procedures for government at all levels.

We understand the importance of clear reporting and transparent conduct in the expenditure of public funding. A rating system for projects that have been achieved to standards could be set up so that the oversight could be minimised.

Jude van der Merwe

