



15 October 2020

Dear Committee Members,

**Re. Inquiry into Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions**

With a membership of 48 gallery institutions, Regional and Public Galleries New South Wales (RPGNSW) is the peak body for public galleries across the State. RPGNSW has close associations with peer membership bodies from each Australian State and Territory through the National Public Galleries Alliance (NPGA) and works with the Australian Museums & Galleries Association (AMaGA) to promote and support Australian cultural institutions.

Please find below responses prepared by RPGNSW to the terms of reference for the inquiry into Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions.

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**The direct and indirect economic benefits and employment opportunities of creative and cultural industries and how to recognise, measure and grow them**

NSW has the largest public gallery sector of all Australian States. In 2019 over 1,270 exhibitions were displayed in public galleries in NSW, attracting over 3.5 million visitors. The benefits of a well-supported and prosperous public gallery sector are well understood by the tourism, creative industries, health and education sectors due to the massive flow on effects to economic growth. Arts and cultural activity is a catalyst for;

- Growing tourism markets both domestically and internationally
- Supporting and attracting creatives for the development of innovative, 22<sup>nd</sup> century industries
- Resourcing all levels of education and providing employment opportunities in the cultural sector
- Providing community wellbeing through cultural engagement and community building initiatives
- Building better communities
- Providing professional opportunities both at home and abroad for leading artists and creatives

All of the above activities are tangibly measurable in economic terms.

**The non-economic benefits that enhance community, social wellbeing and promoting Australia's national identity, and how to recognise, measure and grow them**

Australia's public galleries are an intrinsic part of our social fabric, engaging audiences with art, ideas and culture. They stimulate learning, debate and critical thinking; encourage creative expression; and enrich the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of our country's metropolitan, regional and remote communities.

Regional & Public Galleries Association of NSW members are at the coal-face of cultural activity in regional NSW. Our galleries are in many cases the cultural lifeblood of communities and are being relied upon to support social wellbeing, particularly in difficult and fractious times.

Measuring the benefits of a well-supported arts sector must be nuanced. Many benefits are intangible and intrinsically linked to whole of community health. Too often governments judge the success or failure of arts and cultural activity on audience size or income earned, these tangible measures often miss the value of arts

practice and engagement in building synergies within communities and supporting healthy and engaged societies.

### **The best mechanism for ensuring cooperation and delivery of policy between layers of government**

The recently completed snapshot of the Australian Public Gallery sector, prepared by RPGA shows investment in Public Galleries is made up of 46% local government funding, 13% State government funding, 1% Australia Council for the Arts funding and less than 1% Federal funding. On average, commercial income and philanthropy offsets 37% of the running costs of public galleries.

Local government arts organisations deliver the majority of arts and cultural activities across Australia, particularly in regional areas, through a wide range of facilities including galleries, theatres, artist spaces and public domains. It is clear from the above that local governments provide the majority of funding for arts and cultural services in Australia. In most cases State governments are continuing to reduce their support for the public gallery sector, placing pressure on local governments to make up the shortfall.

Further support at a federal level is needed in the public gallery sector and this support would be best delivered through extending grant opportunities for local governments to access funding directly from the federal level, specifically for gallery programming and capital works.

- **The impact of COVID-19 on the creative and cultural industries**

Regional and public galleries have been particularly hit hard by COVID-19 restrictions. Local governments have made significant cutbacks to funding support to the sector and within NSW, the State Government has shocked the sector in 2020 by stripping support to local government run arts organisations. On the back of the 2019 bushfires, these cuts have decimated the sector and resulted in many regional galleries reducing their hours of operations, community services and staffing.

While the arts and cultural sector is being relied upon to support communities in hardship, provide resources to support mental health initiatives and take on community building projects, sources of funding support continue to decrease. This dichotomy is in stark contrast to the advice of economic development agencies that advise now is the time to infuse funding in to arts and cultural industries to both support communities, stimulate spending and lead economic recovery given our sector is a key driver in the domestic tourism boom.

Yours sincerely,

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