



## Opening Statement

Thank you, Senator and thank you to the Committee for this invitation to speak today. I am zooming in from lands of the Turrbal and Jagera people, and extend my deep respect and acknowledgement to all the First Nations lands from which we are connecting. My name is Ros Abercrombie. I am the Executive Director of 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 seek to ensure the arts in regional Australia are recognised as essential and work to address the need for the arts and creative industries across multiple policy platforms.

As you would be aware regional Australia has been hard hit with drought, bush fires, floods and now Covid 19. We have a long road ahead of us, with some modelling suggesting our sector will not return to normal levels of activity until the final quarter of 2021.

This pandemic is being experienced in some way by everyone, there are some shared experiences and some levellers and regionally at least there are a diversity of experiences, a diversity of narratives.

The Creative Industry has been united in outlining the specific impacts as well as the industry interdependencies across tourism, accommodation and hospitality, each relying on events and venues for their success:

- loss of income - sole traders, casual, contractors, seasonal, gig economy
- loss of revenue - ticket sales, box office, bar, retail, membership,
- loss of opportunities - short - medium - long term
- loss of touring - local - national - international
- Domestic tourism, festivals

An important characteristic of our sector to emphasise is our connections are not just between employer and employee, but also between individuals, audiences, and other institutions, there is a broad cultural ecology.

Regional Arts Australia has liaised with its state-member organisations to understand the immediate and long term needs of the affected communities they serve. Their answers universally point to the importance of integrating arts and culture into the immediate, medium and long term economic, social and cultural recovery process.

As we talk about recovery plans and programs it is pertinent to note that we are fast approaching summer and any regional response must be approached with an awareness of upcoming the bush fire season.

We welcome the opportunity to work through the next phase of recovery with the Federal government. And just finally, to any artists and organisations who might be listening to the Committee hearings: thank you for the role that you are playing in our community resilience and recovery effort.