

National Regional Arts Summit

Minister affirms key recommendations for future development for regional arts

THE FEDERAL MINISTER FOR THE ARTS and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, has affirmed seven key recommendations of a national roundtable on regional arts held in Canberra on 10 August.

Instigated by Regional Arts Australia and hosted by the Minister at Parliament House, the 2006 Regional Arts Summit consisted of a facilitated panel discussion amongst 25 diverse representatives of regional arts practice, decision-makers and business leaders from around the country. The discussion took place before an audience of approximately sixty stakeholders from across Australia, who also had input into the proceedings.



Minister for the Arts & Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, with the President of Regional Arts Australia (and Chair of Regional Arts NSW), Meg Larkin, at the Summit in Canberra, 10 August 2006.

After a day's intensive discussion, a number of recommendations around seven national themes emerged:

1. That the centrality of the arts to sustainability be recognised

- The arts in regional communities need to be recognised for their capacity to contribute to social capital, promote belonging, assist when populations are changing and help to build and strengthen regional communities.
- Regional arts initiatives need to be contextualised; there is no 'one size fits all' approach across the country.
- The arts need to be seen as a part of regional economic development and acknowledged for their role as a stimulus to labour markets.

2. That more research be done

- Extensive research needs to be conducted and statistics collected to help demonstrate the benefits of the arts to regional communities.

3. That regional arts be better promoted

- A national communication strategy is called for including media, promotions, marketing and reward and recognition initiatives.
- Regional arts messages need to help make sense of and demystify the arts.
- Regional arts promotion campaigns need to celebrate regional communities, excite people and persuade them to join in the arts in their communities.

4. That better partnerships be formed

- Regional arts needs a strategy to develop extensive and dependable relationships with local government.
- Regional arts needs a strategy to build partnerships with philanthropic organisations, other networks and businesses, big and small.
- Better coordination of initiatives across all three tiers of government is needed.
- New partnerships need to be forged between regional arts, health and education sectors.

5. That infrastructure needs be addressed

- Infrastructure concerns need to be recognised as being about facilities *and* the human capacity to help bring people together.
- A program for the development of new arts facilities and arts spaces and the redevelopment of existing community facilities is needed.
- The new role for libraries as gathering places needs to be explored.
- Existing arts facilities across Australia need to be mapped and gaps identified.
- Human capacity needs development – facilitators on the ground, partnership brokers and training.

6. That young people be included

- The arts should engender a feeling of 'belonging' in young people and should aim to bring young people together to meaningfully connect with each other and with adults.

September

2 – 24 September

👁 Annual Briscoe Art Award & Exhibition In honour of local artist, the late John Briscoe. Raglan Gallery, **COOMA**
Tel 02 6452 3377

4 – 8 September

📄 Northern Rivers Arts Law Week
Free legal workshops and clinics. Various locations across the **NORTHERN RIVERS**.
Tel 02 6628 8120

5 September

🎭 *The Seven Stages of Grieving*
Integrating contemporary and traditional Indigenous storytelling. Sydney Theatre Company Production. **BATHURST**
Memorial Entertainment Centre
Tel 02 6333 6166

6 September

📄 Women's Symposium **GOULBURN**
Workers Club Tel 02 4821 2043

- Young people need to be encouraged to express themselves in their own way.
- Regional arts should aim to 'hear' young people; pass on the Australian cultural heritage and encourage a respect for it.

7. That interconnectedness and community exchange be fostered

- Touring arts should be prioritised. Touring is important – from regions, to regions, to cities, from cities, across regions.
- People do not want to be isolated and the arts should encourage regional communities to work together and cooperate.
- Regional arts should aim to 'engage the disengaged' and include socially isolated, culturally and linguistically diverse, Indigenous and disabled people.
- Cultural maintenance programs should be recognised and encouraged to ensure history is not lost.
- There needs to be diversity on arts boards and committees across Australia.

Summit facilitator, Anne Dunn, noted that the day's proceedings affirmed what people in regional Australia said during the community consultations that fed into the *2006 National Directions: Regional Arts* policy document (which was the catalyst for the summit). Presenting the key recommendations to the Minister, she prefaced her summary with the words, "Art is life. It forges the character of the nation. Treat it seriously."

Minister Kemp concurred. In his four years as Minister for the Arts, he observed, this was the first national summit on regional arts, and "there is a need to work out a better case for arguing for the value of the arts." But he also reminded us that the best case for the arts was communities' demand for it.

"Don't forget one key thing: the arts can be enjoyable for a lot of people – the sheer joy and pleasure of taking part or seeing a performance – they can be very engaging on a lot of levels."

The Minister commended Regional Arts Australia for initiating the summit and thanked the participants for their contributions. Addressing the recommendations, he said he broadly

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agreed with each of them – on research, communications, partnerships, infrastructure, young people and arts exchange. He cautioned that there are no easy answers for many of these issues, but said he would be interested to see what can be done and that regional arts movement has his support.

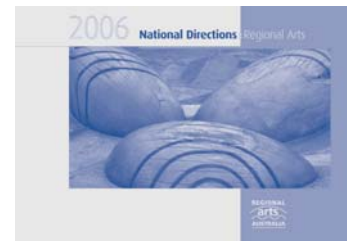
Regional Arts Australia President, Meg Larkin, reiterated Regional Arts Australia's commitment to furthering arts and cultural development in regional, rural and remote Australia.

"We are absolutely committed to assisting arts and cultural programs in regional, rural and remote communities, to gaining recognition for the arts by society and governments at all levels, to fostering strong and vibrant communities by sustaining arts and cultural activity, and to growing local cultural facilities," she said.

"The 2006 Regional Arts Summit has set a very clear agenda for the way forward to making these commitments a reality." ■

Key participants in the summit included the Hon Mr John Hill, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts (SA); Nicola Downer, high profile arts advocate (SA); David Singe, CEO, Wheatbelt Development Commission (WA); Sylvia Admans, CEO, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (Vic); Elizabeth Walsh, Artistic Director, Ten Days on the Island (Tas); Julie Boyd, Mayor of Mackay (Qld); Lynne Makin, President of Public Libraries Australia (NSW); Tim O'Loughlin, Chair, Community Partnerships and Lydia Miler, Executive Director, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts.

The facilitator of the summit was Anne Dunn, Director of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, Chair of the Australian Government's Regional Women's Advisory Council and specialist chair and facilitator in community consultation and organisational development. Ms Dunn was also the author of the report on the 2005 national community consultations which formed the basis of the 2006 National Directions: Regional Arts policy document.



Download a PDF of 2006 National Directions: Regional Arts from the Regional Arts Australia website www.regionalarts.com.au

September

7 – 15 September

👁️ *From Workshop to Work* Exhibition of student's work **GOULBURN** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 4823 4443

8 – 10 September

👁️ *Art in the Vines* Paintings, sculptures, drawings, photography invited from local artisans. Nightingale Wines **BROKE** Tel 02 6579 1040

8 – 10 September

👂 Morpeth Jazz Festival Food, Wine and Fabulous Entertainment, set in the popular historic riverside port of **MORPETH**. Tel 02 4931 2888 Website www.morpethjazz.com.au

8 – 10 September

👂 Wagga Wagga Jazz Festival Featuring Australian and International acts. **WAGGA WAGGA** Tel 0419 601 149 Website www.waggajazz.org.au