

## ***Speech given by Meg Larkin, Chair of Regional Arts NSW, at Palette on the Pier***

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you tonight to the inaugural Palette on the Pier. The weather has been kind and we have a balmy Sydney night to enjoy.

Acknowledge:

- Hon Virginia Judge, Minister for the Arts, Minister For Fair Trading;
- Mr Justice Ian Gzell, Patron of RANSW (in his absence)
- My Fellow directors of RANSW – Kym Fuller (Broken Hill), Lindy Hume (South Coast), Janice Summerhayes (Wagga Wagga);
- Mary Darwell, Executive Director Arts NSW
- Ruth Smiles, Executive Director of Regional Arts Australia
- Chairs of Regional Arts Boards – Amanda Colwell (Orana Arts), Stuart St Hill (Arts Upper Hunter)
- Regional Arts Board Staff – James Giddey and Eddie Harris (West Darling Arts), Andrew Grey (South East Arts Region), Merryn Spencer and Kerry Ellen (Orana Arts), Ivan Skaines (Arts Upper Hunter), Alyce Fisher (South West Arts), Vivienne Naimo (Murray Arts) who volunteered their time and travelled to assist with the preparations for this event.

**Regional Arts NSW** is the peak body for the development of arts and culture in regional, rural and remote communities in NSW. We are passionate about the role that arts can play in creating and sustaining vibrant communities and we work with 14 regional arts boards across the state through advocacy, capacity building, communicating and supporting the development of arts programs and activities. You will see the map of our regions – and of our reach across the state.

Our programs are wide ranging and provide opportunities for regional communities to participate in creative arts activities across all art forms. We support regional creative industry development through forming networks, cross agency partnerships and business development support.

Our regional arts boards and their staff provide community cultural development projects meeting the needs of individual communities. They work with local government authorities, environmental agencies, health and disability organisations and tourism bodies to arrange projects and programs that engage community members, and visitors to the regions, in a range of creative activities.

There is renewed interest in Aboriginal arts and emerging arts hubs in our regions so we are providing skills development through training and mentoring, business development to assist with sustainable production, and marketing assistance to create an awareness of contemporary artworks being produced in regional NSW.

And that's just a tiny snippet about what is happening. There's much, much more. Our programs are carried out with government funding, without government funding, with private sponsorship or without, with professional arts people and with many, many volunteers. If you are sitting near a regional person ask them about what they do. They'd love to tell you their story and how interesting and stimulating life in the regions can be.

Tonight we are here to enjoy a marvellous evening of fine wine and fine food, with some excellent music and fabulous company. Funds raised tonight will be deposited in our Public Fund – to which all donations are tax deductible – and used to support Regional Arts NSW's core business .

As you have heard, the evening is a joint initiative of the Walsh Bay Precinct Committee and Regional Arts NSW. We have indeed been fortunate that five excellent restaurants in the Walsh Bay area have agreed to donate their cuisine, their expertise and their services for this event. We have provided Profiles of the Chefs in your programs. You will see they certainly all come very well credentialed. Their biographies are fascinating. The menu looks extremely enticing.

The wines have been supplied by winemakers from the Canowindra district and, again you have some tasting notes in your Programs. The wines promise to be quite delicious. I thank all the Wine companies and Taste Canowindra most sincerely for their great support. This is generosity in the extreme and very much appreciated.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the artists from regional NSW who have contributed works for the silent auction this evening. The art works you will see behind us have been donated by artists living and working in regional NSW. Their action in making these works available is indeed most generous and is appreciated enormously. I encourage you keep your eye on them and place your bids between courses.

The Staff at RANSW have worked mightily to make this event happen. As a small, active organisation with a statewide remit there is really no spare time for the preparation required for an event such as this. I know just how much personal time and additional effort has gone into making it happen. My particular thanks to CEO Elizabeth Rogers, and Hannah Fitzroy for a job done extremely well. Your volunteer ushers for the night are students from TAFE Northern Beaches Diploma in Events and Hospitality. They're most deserving of our gratitude.

And I thank you all for coming. Without you it would be no fun at all. I hope that each and every one of you has a fabulous evening and that tonight you find new friends, new flavours, new wines, new art, and new interest.

Thank you for support.