

Media Release - For Immediate Release

Regional Arts Australia welcomes new President.

Regional Arts Australia announced today Mr Lee Cole's appointment to the position of President following the key national body's annual general meeting in Melbourne.

'Mr Cole is a practising artist and passionate advocate for the arts, he lives in Ulverstone, Tasmania and is the current President of Tasmanian Regional Arts. Lee has been Vice President of Regional Arts Australia for the last two years and it gives me great pleasure to welcome him to the role of President.' said retiring RAA Executive Director Ruth Smiles.

Lee Cole brings with him a very strong community focus and a great deal of experience in both the arts and education. He has made a significant difference to regional communities throughout Tasmania, working with students in isolated, rural, urban and metropolitan schools. As President of Tasmanian Regional Arts Lee has successfully combined his commitment to regional communities with his life long involvement in the arts.

At last week's annual general meeting, the board paid tribute to outgoing President Julie Boyd, who has served as RAA's President since 2009.

'It has been a privilege for our board to be directed by Julie, she has a strong understanding of how the arts can inspire regional communities'.

'We acknowledge and thank Julie for her tireless efforts for regional arts over her term as President,' said Regional Arts Australia's National Secretary Lindy Allen.

Ms Boyd noted last year's national regional arts conference in Launceston, *Junction 2010*; the national regional arts broadband forum held by RAA in Parliament House, Canberra earlier this year and the publication of *Seeded, great arts and health stories grown in regional Australia*, as some of the highlights of the 2010-11 year.

"Our advocacy role continued to be a major focus, with many valuable hours spent in Canberra speaking to Government Ministers and representatives, to further strengthen the cause of regional arts." Said Ms Boyd.

Incoming President Mr Cole said he was looking forward to continuing to advocate on behalf of regional arts organisations, individuals and regional, rural and remote communities.

"It is an exciting time for Regional Arts Australia and I am really pleased to be taking on this new role, with the opportunity to further build and strengthen regional arts in Australia".

The RAA board includes some of the nations most experienced arts advocates, including Vice President Mr Lew Owens, Chair of Country Arts SA, Secretary Lindy Allen, CEO of Regional Arts Victoria and Treasurer Mr Steve Saffell, CEO of Country Arts SA,

Regional Arts Australia is the key national body representing the broad and complex interests and concerns of those working with and for the arts in regional, rural and remote Australia.

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