

## **NSW ARTS POLICY submission**

Debbie Rudder, August 2023

'The NSW Government is committed to growing arts, culture and the creative industries.'

### ***Definitions***

Arts: literature; music, song and dance; drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and image manipulation; and combinations of these such as stage plays, videos, art installations, online portfolios and performance poetry.

Culture: a broad amalgam of the arts with education, representative government, compulsory voting, mass media, craft, design, science, engineering, invention, industry, architecture, urban planning, beaches, gardens, zoos and aquaria, national parks and care for native flora and fauna, community organisations, sacred indigenous places and ceremonies open only to a few, and special indigenous places where visitors are welcome; it is informed by history, philosophy, law, lore and multiculturalism; and it is communicated through oral and written stories and poems, narrative films and video documentaries, objects (held in keeping places, museums, galleries or libraries), analogue and digital games, and public events.

Creative industries: this term usually refers to a restricted subset of culture, suggesting a type of special pleading on behalf of certain narrow skill sets and styles of work.

### ***A new look at people: How can we create better, more inclusive pathways and support for practitioners in the arts, culture and creative industries?***

Put out an annual call for young curators to manage small unstaffed shopfront galleries in cities, suburbs and towns, with government providing venues, seed funding, permissions and insurance, and curators seeking local artists, designers or makers to display (and sell) work as well as local supporters to assist with set-up, launch event and publicity for each new display. Thus artists/designers/makers and curators could get a leg-up with their careers, while local musicians could gain exposure at launch events, and streets with empty shops could be revived and attract tourists. For an example of such a gallery that ran successfully for eight years in Melbourne, see <http://chapterhouselane.org.au/>

Set up a new program of internships in state and regional museums, galleries and other cultural institutions. Fund a new portal to bring together interns' reports and images to demonstrate their achievements and inspire other young people.

Screen NSW could expand its remit to include short features about a wide range of cultural practitioners.

***A new look at infrastructure: How can we create and improve sustainable access to spaces, programs and other support for all aspects of artistic and cultural activity?***

Consider reducing red tape and subsidising insurance.

Provide small grants to local councils, schools and community organisations to upgrade current spaces, on condition that those organisations make the spaces available for cultural activity for an agreed proportion of time.

***A new look at audiences: How can we grow local, national and international audiences for cultural experiences, for the benefit of our community and the broader economy?***

Each state cultural institution should be funded to create small travelling exhibitions to share their collections and expertise with regional museums and galleries, and to host their staff for short immersive sessions in Sydney. The Powerhouse Museum ran a very successful program along these lines, including co-curating local stories to add to the exhibition content (and appeal) at each venue; the program was led by Rebecca Pinchin (now at National Trust NSW), who might be willing to share her expertise in this area.

Australian exhibition content is crucial for attracting local, interstate and international visitors to Sydney, and strong local content is crucial to the success of regional museums and galleries. Of course, Australian stories can be told in an international context, but overseas visitors in particular don't want to see much of what they can see at home. Audience research by Carol Scott at the Powerhouse Museum in the 1990s revealed that an exhibition featuring products of Australian Innovation was of particular interest to tourists as well as to its target audience (high school students); that topic has been a major strand of the museum's collecting since it was founded in 1879, and new exhibitions on this theme should be developed for both Ultimo and Parramatta.

For the benefit of the community and economy, museums should be encouraged and assisted to showcase the work of Australian scientists, engineers, farmers, doctors, inventors, designers, manufacturers, artists, writers, composers, craftspeople and volunteers. Design thinking, citizen science projects and sustainability initiatives should feature prominently. Current concerns should also be addressed, including at present online security, 3D printing, quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Offer funding to regional museums and galleries to develop or co-develop small exhibitions and travel them within their region or around the state.

\*\*Please see also the suggestion below under the heading 'What's your big idea?'

***Where should the NSW Government focus the greatest effort and resources?***

State institutions, on condition that they assist suburban and regional organisations and initiatives, and that they work with Indigenous people to showcase their skills and tell their stories in substantial ways.

Training, facilitating, inspiring; digitising collections; and assisting the sharing of knowledge and skills.

Supply musical instruments to regional and remote schools, support musicians who are willing to travel to those schools to share their skills, and support composers who are willing to work with the students. Fund schools where this works well so they can become regional music hubs.

***What barriers can the NSW Government remove to unlock the full potential of arts, culture and the creative industries?***

Cease using the divisive term 'creative industries', which implies that creativity resides in a small group of people. Instead use the much richer and more inclusive term 'culture' and encourage discussion of our culture.

***What's your big idea?***

To grow audiences, exhibitions must be developed that attract both schools and families. The Australian Museum does this very well, but the Powerhouse has fallen behind and plans to go further downhill by demolishing its outdoor play area (where schoolchildren can 'let off steam' between sessions) and concentrating on fashion and design. These decisions must be reversed. Alongside a new suite of thoughtful exhibitions across the applied arts and sciences, each year it should develop a new exhibition designed with the needs of young visitors in mind; it should not just display toys or fantasy or popular culture, and it should not talk down to children, but it should offer interesting content that families and schools can discuss and related activities that visitors of different ages can enjoy together.