

South Australian Arts Plan 2019-2024

LGA Submission

April 2019

Introduction

As the closest government to communities, councils deliver hundreds of facilities and services that:

- drive economic development;
- protect the environment;
- bring communities together;
- support public health; and
- improve the local amenity enjoyed by all South Australians and visitors alike.

Arts and culture is an important part of the work which many councils do, and the role of local government in arts and culture has many benefits for the South Australian community, supporting **health and wellbeing, economic, social and cultural development**.

In this context, the Local Government Association of South Australia (**LGA**) welcomes the decision of the State Government to develop an Arts Plan, and the opportunity to make a submission.

Local government is an experienced partner in government, and the LGA and our member councils look forward to working with the State Government and Arts South Australia to capture that involvement in the *South Australian Arts Plan 2019-2024* (**'the Plan'**).

About the LGA

The LGA is the voice of local government in South Australia, representing all 68 individual councils across the state.

Our mission is to provide leadership, support, representation and advocacy on behalf of South Australian councils, for the benefit of the community.

The value of LGA membership has been independently verified by UHY Haines Norton as being worth around \$139 million to the local government sector in 2019.

This submission has been informed by consultation with our member councils.

Development of an Arts Plan for South Australia

The LGA is keen to be involved in the development of the Plan and this submission is provided for consideration of the consultants engaged to prepare the Plan.

The LGA understands that the consultants undertaking the Plan are seeking to:

- understand how the arts sector could be developed;
- articulate the important role South Australian artists, organisations and institutions contribute to the state, national and international arts and cultural ecology;
- help all South Australians access rich and diverse arts activities and experiences, wherever they live; and
- guide the South Australian Government's support for arts and culture into the future.

Arts South Australia is strongly supported in the development of the Plan which will be critical to the health, economic, social and cultural development of South Australia.

The creative arts are vital to life in South Australia, stimulating cultural development and economic growth, as well as health and social well-being. The State Government is encouraged through the Plan to:

- **Commit ongoing funding to local arts programs**, on the basis of the strong economic returns on funds invested in the creative industries;
- **Facilitate ongoing partnerships between State and local government**, as local government, being the level of government closest to the community, is an efficient and effective way of implementing arts programs; and
- **Consider infrastructure improvements, particularly in regional areas**, which enable a robust arts culture to develop.

Development of the creative industries has a myriad of benefits to the State Government which supports a whole-of-government approach. There are opportunities to incorporate the creative arts through many portfolios, for example:

- the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) can incorporate public art in its roadworks;
- the Department for Education can support the education and employment of art, music and drama teachers in schools;
- SA Health can utilise the arts in its preventative and restorative strategies; and
- the South Australian Tourism Commission can develop its promotion of arts and culture tourism.

Importance of the arts to a healthy society

Participation in the arts is important for a healthy and robust society. The health and wellbeing benefits are well-documented, improving both mental and physical health.

VicHealth has developed an [Arts Strategy 2017-19](#) in recognition of these direct benefits, noting “*the central role of arts and culture, the creative industries in promoting health and preventing illness*”.

VicHealth states on its website that:

“The arts can promote health and wellbeing through building empathy and kindness, developing skills and self-efficacy, reducing prejudice, creating a sense of pride and belonging, and producing further options for increasing physical activity.

Broadening access and exposure to the arts is not only beneficial for individuals and communities, but also for arts organisations, producers, and artists themselves.

The arts are expressions of what it is to be human: they reflect our hopes, dreams and aspirations as well as our foibles, anxieties and imperfections.

The arts are able to present different points of view, while underpinning our common humanity and shared concerns about living. Engaging with the arts draws us into a network of shared experiences and understandings. Communities – which may start with, but go beyond, location, ethnicity, gender and occupation – are created and celebrated.”

The Plan could include recommendations that SA Health include the arts in its preventative and restorative health activities.

Importance of the arts to a strong economy

Development of the arts and creative industries also contributes to a strong economy. The *Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (BCAR) 2019 Working Paper* shows that creative industries are closely connected to economic growth, with creative skills requiring original thought and innovation being particularly resilient to automation. Creative industries also grew around twice as quickly as other industries during 2011-2016.

Investment in the creative industries has economic returns to South Australia beyond the original investment. Partnerships with commercial patrons, such as the successful collaboration between the State Government, BHP and the Art Gallery of South Australia for the Tarnanthi Festival, could be modelled for local government activities with the support of Arts South Australia.

The Plan could include recommendations about financial investment in the creative industries and model commercial funding arrangements.

Importance of the arts to community development

Participation in the arts is also central to development of a robust community, which builds social capital, and resilience in the face of disasters. Commenting on the third National Arts Participation Survey report, *Connecting Australians*, Australia Council CEO (2001-18) Tony Grybowski said:

*“The research demonstrates that **the arts have a unique capacity to connect Australians from diverse backgrounds**, and that two in three of us believe the arts help us to understand other people and cultures, and allow us to connect to others. We are highly connected digitally and yet we live in a global era of growing social, cultural and political division that is being evidenced through major social threats. These findings confirm that Australians firmly believe the arts contribute to addressing these issues through breaking down barriers, promoting inclusion and creating understanding.”*

Key National Arts Participation Survey findings include:

- 98% of Australians engage with the arts and since the 2013 survey there is substantially increased recognition of their positive impact on our wellbeing and ability to develop new ideas.
- More Australians now believe the arts reflect Australia’s cultural diversity and that they shape and express Australian identity.
- 3 in 4 Australians believe the arts are an important way to get a different perspective on a topic or issue.
- 7 million Australians experienced First Nations arts last year, double the number since the first survey in 2009. 4 in 5 believe they are an important part of Australia’s culture.
- Three-quarters of Australians think the arts are an important part of the education of every Australian and are proud when Australian artists do well overseas.
- Younger Australians (15-24 years) create and experience the arts at the highest rates, especially online; a high proportion attend festival and First Nations arts; and over half engage with the arts as part of their cultural background.
- Online and live arts experiences both remain important to Australians, creating greater access and new experiences rather than one replacing the other.
- 8 in 10 people engage with the arts online, increasing from 7 in 10 in 2013, and 5 in 10 in 2009 - with music streaming the largest contributor to this growth. Online activity is creating new opportunities to collaborate and share, and connecting artists and audiences directly.

- 9 million Australians attended an arts festival in 2016. Arts festivals are diverse and accessible, bringing local communities together in immersive experiences and encouraging regional and international tourism.
- The number of Australians attending theatre or dance increased from 2013 (42% to 53%), as well as increases for visual arts and craft, and new data which shows 1 in 5 Australians attend literary events such as book clubs, talks and festivals.

The Plan could include recommendations about support for the arts which benefits community development through funding and improved venues.

LGA Policy on the Arts and Cultural Development

The LGA's existing Policy on Arts and Cultural Development dated October 2018 states that:

Arts and Cultural Development:

*Local government is committed to maintaining a **culturally diverse, tolerant and open society**, and shall equitably contribute to facilitating arts and cultural development activities and programs that promote **social cohesion and harmony**, notwithstanding the responsibilities of federal and state governments. The local government sector is keen to continue to **partner with State Government** to ensure ongoing delivery of arts services to the community.*

This endorsed policy forms the basis for this LGA submission and its tenets align with the direction of the consultation on the Plan.

Local Government Grants Commission data shows that in 2016-17 South Australian councils collectively invested (operating expenses) over \$31.6 million in performing arts, heritage, museums & art galleries, and other cultural services. This is in addition to the \$114.8 million South Australians spent on operating library services.

Local Government Arts Activities

Local government is uniquely placed to engage in and support a range of creative industries and the arts. The benefits to local communities are immense and delivery by local government is efficient and economical.

Availability and support of arts activities by local government is particularly important outside of the metropolitan area, ensuring that participation is open to everyone. Regional areas in South Australia in particular would benefit from improved venues which encourage high-quality and accessible events. Many country venues do not facilitate disabled access which limits participation in the arts by people with disabilities as well as older South Australians.

There are many examples of local government supporting and delivering arts activities in South Australia, with examples such as:

- **Performing Arts Events**, such Fringe events as *Fringe Fun in the Hills* held by Mount Barker District Council, *UneARTh Festival* supported by Whyalla Council, *Stirling Fringe* supported by Adelaide Hills Council, and the Marion Fringe Hub at the City of Marion. Performing arts events build social interaction and community resilience, with many long-term benefits.



UneARTh

Festival in Whyalla

- **Inclusive Activities**, such as the City of Adelaide's support of Tarnanthi Art Fair, which is a festival of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art. This showcases art from cultures which might not otherwise receive such acclaim.
- **Activities for People Living with Disability**, such as the *Access 2 Arts* organisation which has worked in partnership with the City of Unley and the City of Adelaide to present *Beats*, a series of workshops and events for learning disabled people getting creative and connecting with their local community and the world through digital technology. The importance of involvement in the arts by people living with disability was highlighted in the Discussion Paper produced by the Department of Communication and the Arts in preparation of its *National Arts & Disability Strategy*. This showed the importance of people living with disability practising as creative individuals, expressing themselves through participation in the arts, and connecting with the arts as audience members. Access to the arts is highlighted in the Arts South Australia consultation documents, so consideration of disabled access should be central to the Plan.

- **Activities for Older People**, such as art and craft activities held by many councils, including the City of Salisbury. Many studies show the health benefits of social interaction as well as artistic endeavours for older people. Recognising access to all demographics is highlighted in the Arts South Australia consultation documents and is encouraged in South Australia, especially with its ageing population.



Atrium Art Program by the City of Burnside

- **Visual Arts Programs**, such as the *Atrium Arts Program* held by the City of Burnside and *All Connections to Unley Art Prize* by the City of Unley. Visual arts not only enhance personal creativity, but also promote community engagement and may focus on different demographics such as youth, older people or Aboriginal people.

- **Arts Institutions**, such as the State Library of South Australia, the South Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of South Australia are all important

tenets of the arts landscape in South Australia. Through the State Library, the LGA strongly supports the public library system in this State which is fundamental to a range of arts and educational opportunities.



All Connections to Unley Art Prize by the City of Unley

- **Writers Events**, such as the *Salisbury Writers Festival*. Writers Festivals are important in connecting writers with readers, supporting the publishing industry and encouraging cultural interest in books.
- **Funding of Public Art**, such as the *Rundle Lantern* funded by the City of Adelaide or the *Dig and Delve* program funded by Arts South Australia and the City of Marion, situated in the Hendrie Street Inclusive Playground. Public art contributes to place-making and enhances creativity in the community, and can be incorporated into all kinds of infrastructure.



Rundle Lantern at the City of Adelaide



Dig and Delve at the City of Marion

- **Development of Art Centres**, such as the *Pepper Street Arts Centre* run by the City of Burnside. Art Centres support creative endeavour and arts education.

- **Promotion of Live Music**, such as the *Live Music Action Plan 2017-2020* developed by the City of Adelaide. Facilitating live music for all ages and at all times of the day supports community development and creativity.



Geoffrey Carran's mural of Red Tailed Black Cockatoos, Naracoorte Town Square (photo credit Geoffrey Carran)

- **Community-driven Arts Events**, such as the *Naracoorte Caves - World Heritage on our Doorstep* project part-funded by the Naracoorte Lucindale Council and Inspire SA, which told the story of the World Heritage Naracoorte Caves through visual and performing art.
- **Arts Leadership.** Local government has also played an integral role in leadership in arts and culture in South Australia, particularly over the past 25 years. The Creative Communities Network (**CCN**) is an informal network of local government cultural development workers and representatives of key state-wide arts and cultural organisations which has been at the heart of the development of many culturally-based activities in this period.

Engagement Process on the Plan

The LGA looks forward to ongoing involvement in this important process and encourages the consultants to engage with local councils directly through the Open Town Hall meetings proposed around the State.

Given the particular importance of the arts to people living with a disability and the barriers they face, the consultants are encouraged to adopt an inclusive approach to community engagement here. By way of example, the Australian Government's Department of Communication and the Arts review of the *National Arts and Disability Strategy Discussion Paper* included a consultation process in 2018 which was inclusive and diverse.

Conclusion

Local government is involved in a range of arts and culture activities and as the level of government which is closest to the community, undertakes and supports these activities efficiently and with strong community involvement.

South Australian councils are well-positioned to deliver a range of outcomes which benefit communities, particularly in regional areas. The ability of councils to deliver these outcomes will be strengthened through funding opportunities from the State Government, development of its ongoing partnership with State Government, and a focus on improving arts venues around the State.

The LGA and our member councils look forward to working with Arts South Australia in development of the *South Australian Arts Plan 2019-2024*.

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