

National Cultural Policy Submission

Regional Galleries Association of South Australia

Submitted: On behalf of an arts peak body

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

Public and community galleries in regional South Australia are strong supporters of First Nations Arts and Culture. In some regions, the galleries are the only arts facility and take very seriously their role in nurturing First Nations artists and encouraging others to engage with their culture in a variety of ways. There are several challenges however, which includes:

- Funding – galleries in regional SA are very poorly funded. Some are funded largely by local Councils but others receive little or no funding and rely largely on volunteer support. In the context of supporting First Nations artists and preserving and promoting First Nations culture, there is little or no funding available. This work is important but resource intensive and limited funding limits the potential in this space. There is so much richness within the First Nations Culture in regional SA – stories, amazing artists and traditional ways of interpreting landscape, could all be better utilised within regions and beyond.
- Gallery structures – Galleries are based on a very European model, which is traditional in nature and perpetuate ways of doing that are associated with colonialism and occupation. This isn't deliberate but is ingrained in the structures, governance and processes of galleries. It could be the type of building the gallery is in, or the nature of the exhibitions / collections housed within the facilities. Training and resources to support galleries to become safer spaces for First Nations artists is essential to overcome this challenge. Appointing First Nations artists into roles designed to challenge the sector and ensure these important cultural institutions are structured in ways that reflect First Nations culture.

A Place for Every Story

Again, Regional Galleries in SA play a critical role in storytelling across the regions. As the primary cultural organisation for large geographical locations, Regional Galleries encourage

engagement in stories about people and place and provide opportunities to engage with history, multiculturalism, First Nations, industry and everything else between.

The challenge in this space relates to collections, with many galleries managing important collections, that reflect and preserve the stories of regional communities. Resources however to adequately care for, manage and catalogue these collections is not available. This leaves many important artworks left to deteriorate and limits the opportunities for galleries to share these with community members and artists. Collections can play an important role in storytelling, education, politics and career pathways

The Centrality of the Artist

There is a serious lack of career pathways for artists in regional South Australia – and more generally. Putting artists at the centre means fostering career pathways for aspiring artists and letting people know that becoming an artist or pursuing a career in the arts is a feasible option – not a pipe dream. When was the last time a careers expo including a stand promoting careers in the arts?

It's time we took this seriously and promoted the arts as a legitimate career for young people. Arts based traineeships and apprenticeships could easily be developed that provide a strong foundation for arts careers. Providing more opportunities for emerging or aspiring artists to be exposed to professional practicing artists through Artists in Schools programs, mentoring and the development of apprenticeships for visual arts, music, dance, public art etc.

Strong Institutions

Compared to our counterparts in eastern states regional galleries in SA are poorly funded. Many operate on very small amounts of funding and rely heavily on volunteer labour. Our members do well with very little but in terms of unfunded excellence and generally under servicing of regional communities from a cultural perspective, there are serious concerns.

Ongoing organisational funding for regional galleries to improve resourcing is essential for these organisations to be considered strong. A range of priority areas include:

- Arts and cultural tourism – both experience development and marketing
- Collection management – including innovative use of collections as well as preservation and development.
- First Nations support and development
- Education and Arts Career pathways development.
- Health and wellbeing

Reaching the Audience

Marketing and promotion are largely under resourced within the gallery sector. Arts Funding is geared very much towards paying artists and creating art – which makes complete sense.

Unfortunately, however organisations and artists fall into the trap of creating great art experiences but not having the capacity to reach audiences effectively – people just don't know what is on and where arts and cultural experiences can be enjoyed!

Social media platforms are often seen as the solution to this but this still requires time and money to be used effectively. There is also a need to build skills in this space, improve branding and increase the profile of arts and art galleries more broadly. They are much more than places with pictures on walls but this is difficult to convey on little or no budget.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

This has been captured in the answers above.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

- Greater collaboration between all levels of government.
- Increased operational funding for galleries.
- A well-resourced marketing campaign that broadens people's recognition of arts, and increases their understanding of its role and value in so many aspects of life – education, tourism, health etc.
- Incentives for businesses to engage with artists in legitimate ways that fosters greater recognition of the arts as a practical component of industry.
- Better funding for artists in schools – long term placement of artists in schools – not just for a few weeks occasionally.
- The development of arts apprenticeships where people can start careers in the arts in a practical sense – working directly with artists and arts professionals alongside studying.