

Ref: Cultural Programs

20 May, 2009

Ms Mary Darwell
Executive Director
Arts NSWBy email: artsfunding@arts.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mary

Re: Arts NSW Issues Paper for the 2010 Funding Round Program

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Issues Paper that was developed following feedback on the 2009 Arts Funding Program.

This response has been prepared by WSROC in consultation with member Councils, however, it should be noted that it does not necessarily represent all their views. Some of these Councils may have made submissions, which should be considered separately and in addition to this response.

It needs to be mentioned that WSROC is concerned that NSW commits less per capita funding to the arts than any other State and believes that there are serious threats to the sustainability of the arts and cultural sector.

Western Sydney Arts Strategy (WSAS)

Of particular concern to the cultural sector in Western Sydney are the proposed changes to the WSAS. Extensive and careful planning, development and assessment have already taken place through the WSAS, to develop infrastructure and programs to not only address the backlog of deficit but also to assist in the further development of internationally recognised art practice.

The WSAS has also gone some way towards redressing the imbalance of funding in the Sydney metropolitan area and has also been effective in fast tracking the development of arts and culture in Western Sydney.

Arts NSW's dedicated Western Sydney position enabled the State Government to:

- better understand the role played by local governments in the art sector in the region; and
- provide invaluable support and advice to Councils and arts organisations.

The program manager's role assisted by:

- brokering partnerships with a knowledge base on what was acceptable and possible;
- providing matched funding;
- helping local governments to give greater funding commitment to fast-track developments and funding positions;
- providing strategic operational advice;
- build on successes; and
- adapt to the growth and change of the region.

Without the proactive strategic intervention of the WSAS with an Arts NSW dedicated position with strategically directed funds, there will be no strategic approach to Western Sydney's arts and cultural development. There will also be no well-informed ongoing dialogue with the region

or advocate within Arts NSW to ensure that one third of the population of New South Wales receives its fair share of funding and that funds are spent in accordance with identified priorities.

- Identified priority areas of the WSAS

- *Indigenous arts*

Arts NSW needs to fulfil its promise of an Indigenous Arts Development Strategy for Western Sydney as outlined in the 2006 Progress Report on the WSAS. Western Sydney is home to the highest urban Indigenous population in Australia, with concentrations in the northwest and southwest. Strategic Indigenous arts funding provided in 2008 has assisted with Indigenous arts development in the region, however, further concerted consultation, support and coordinating effort is essential. This requires a significant increase in the budget for Indigenous Arts.

Further strategic initiatives need to include:

- a comprehensive audit of Indigenous arts activity in all artforms
- reporting on existing and potential organisational capacity and resources, with detailed recommendations for action to address resource issues
- creation of education and advocacy resources to reflect and encourage recognition of Indigenous arts activity
- support for the development of local artists' networks and cooperatives
- provision of spaces for exhibition, performance, rehearsal and studios
- audience development and better opportunities for exposure of Indigenous artists' work
- analysis of education and training needs for Indigenous artists and how these might be met
- ongoing programs at different levels across all artforms to develop career pathways within Western Sydney

- *Audience development*

Audience development research is critical in assisting Western Sydney's participation in the arts and current Arts NSW research is addressing this priority area, however, a multi-pronged development strategy is needed to make the sector viable.

- *Underdeveloped artforms*

Arts NSW needs to support those artform areas that are particularly underdeveloped in Western Sydney, including music and literature and specifically cross-cultural musical forms, literature appreciation and children's literature. The establishment of specialist amateurs (especially in the areas of music and literature) need to continue to be appropriately located and resourced by Arts NSW for Western Sydney.

Other issues raised in the Submission Paper and the funding program

Council funding and the application process

A responsive funding model for Western Sydney will not assist council cultural staff operating in an increasingly conservative environment. Assistance is required to keep council cultural activity and expenditure a priority so that all of the activity over recent years is not lost through budget cuts or agendas that do not build on the region's strategic development.

The WSAS and matched council funding initiatives have provided vision and skills that has impacted on local government expenditure in highly productive ways. For example, Blacktown

Council's allocation of \$40,000 for a cultural plan in 1999 has grown to arts and cultural expenditure of \$800,000 annually. Matched funding programs provide councils with the opportunity to lobby for funds within councils for positions and programs. Seed or part funding also provides the opportunity for securing funds from other sources and gaining in-kind partnerships.

Western Sydney's council funding for arts activity over recent years has been considerably large and to maintain this effort Arts NSW needs to work towards negotiated agreements based on a combination of Council and State government priorities. For example, in an Arts NSW stated priority area such as Indigenous Arts perhaps these programs should be negotiated where funding is conditional on particular program delivery. This aspect reflects a need for both Arts NSW and council staff to work together so that priority areas are addressed.

Council arts centre staff requested that if fully negotiated agreements cannot be undertaken then applicants should be able to prioritise what activities are funded so that activities funded reflect core needs of centre operations. This would include program funding being prioritised over project funding and projects being ranked by applicants. There was confusion for some staff, particularly those without cultural infrastructure, as to whether to apply under program or project categories.

Staff also raised concern that coordination needs to occur so that Arts NSW, councils and arts organisations are all aligned with the financial year.

Some cultural staff found it difficult that they were not able to speak to staff during the application process and felt that if Arts NSW is taking a leadership role in developing the arts then they need to be able to provide expertise when needed.

Also, as cross-agency collaboration is a priority for Western Sydney then Arts NSW will need to assist in brokering partnerships for co-product development with organisations in the CBD, and this requires funding.

Concerns were raised about the need for dedicated community cultural development funding given the broad social challenges associated with the "global economic situation".

Questions were also raised about what Arts NSW will do about providing support for individual artists and how they will be accessed as part of any consultation.

Whole of government approach

Arts NSW has an important role to play in making explicit links between cultural development and broader development agendas within the State public sector. This includes the Department of Planning, Tourism NSW, Events NSW, the Department of State and Regional Development, the Office of Western Sydney, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Ministry of Transport, the Department of Housing, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Community Services (and particularly the Communities Division), Department of Health, Department of Commerce (Industrial Relations), the Community Relations Commission and so on. WSROC and its member councils look forward to hearing ways to assist Arts NSW with this complex task that has the potential to bring more funding to the sector.

The cultural interfaces of these State agencies are currently under-developed. Clear points of contact within those agencies are needed to interface with Arts NSW and to mirror the increasing level of integration within local government of cultural development and planning with processes of urban development and regeneration, economic and employment development, and environmental sustainability.

Arts NSW must have meaningful and substantial participation in the Department of Planning's processes to inform planning for the Government's arts investment in new areas of Western Sydney. This should include consideration of cultural development both in the regional cities as well as major and emerging centres. Arts NSW should also be empowered to reinforce the importance of arts investment in planning for newly developing areas, regional centres and areas still subject to urban consolidation, linking arts and cultural development to the broader planning agendas within State agencies, planning more strategically to accommodate changing infrastructure demands and recognising the scale of the social and cultural transitions that are taking place in the region.

Western Sydney's future cultural development is dependent on the State Government agencies working in a whole of government approach.

If you need clarification or further information on any of these points do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,



Jenny Brown
Regional Cultural Development Program Coordinator
Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils