



NSW Cultural Grants Program Review - Draft Submission 2007

About the Associations

The Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW (LGSA) are Local Government peak bodies. Together the two Associations represent the 152 general purpose councils in NSW. Special-purpose county councils and Aboriginal Land Council regions are also members. LGSA present councils' views to Australian and NSW Governments, promotes Local Government to the community and provides specialist advice and services to councils.

Terms of Reference

The LGSA understands that the NSW Minister for the Arts has directed that a review be undertaken of the Cultural Grants program, by Michael Collins and Sandra Yates. The Review will examine and report on the following five points, which have been numbered below.

1. Examine the structure of the cultural grants program in the light of a range of contextual changes including the State Plan and the State Budget and the State Government's priorities for Western Sydney and regional NSW and Aboriginal development
2. Identify significant issues and recent developments within the arts and cultural sector including recent trends in support for the arts and culture at the national and local levels
3. Identify the key issues for sustainability of the arts and culture in NSW and the implications of these issues for the part played by the cultural grants program
4. Assess the effectiveness of the cultural grants program and identify opportunities to make the program more strategic and more effective
5. Identify opportunities for increased joint programs between arts, heritage and other Government programs

This submission has not been structured around these Terms of Reference, although all of the points are addressed herein.

Executive Summary

State Government investment in arts and culture through Local Government makes sense. These investments catalyse council and community participation. To significantly enhance State Government investments, six recommendations are set out by this submission. The recommendations are:

1. That the State Government create a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund, with multi-year and recurrent agreements, which will enable councils to deliver State Plan priority E8 cultural outcomes to local communities
2. Managerial operations for a Local Government Partnership Fund be collaboratively determined at the LGSA Cultural Development Standing Committee
3. That a range of incentives and pathways for collaboration between multiple agencies be central to the new Cultural Grants Program
4. That the State Government create funding to enable Aboriginal arts positions to be provided in Local Government across NSW
5. That the State Government restructure the Cultural Grants Program to enable greater art form collaboration and to better reflect how new art is being made
6. That the State Government retain peer group assessment committees with formalised Local Government participation and greater transparency in Committee appointments

Introduction

LGSA have a long history of working closely and effectively with the State Government to develop NSW arts and culture, strengthened by the series of Cultural Accords. The Cultural Development Standing Committee is the only LGSA Standing Committee with State Government agency membership, through Arts NSW representatives.

Councils in NSW undertake a wide spectrum of cultural development activity, including:

- Cultural planning
- Community cultural development
- Cultural services such as planning, development, delivery and/or support of the performing and visual arts, art galleries, performing arts centres, museums, other cultural facilities, public art, community arts, festivals, celebrations, new media and digital arts

A 2005 survey of NSW councils by the LGSA showed that councils provide 34 galleries, 40 museums and 25 performing art centres and employ 67 full time, 29 part time and 10 casual cultural staff. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found that in 2005-2006 NSW councils spent \$49.61 per person funding arts and culture.

LGSA look forward to building upon past collaborations between State and Local Government to maximise cultural dividends for NSW communities.

NSW State Plan

The Associations welcome furthering Local Government partnership on the State Plan. We anticipate partnering with the State Government to work on the following Plan directions and targets:

- Developing a more strategic approach with Local Government to increase and improve their arts, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 135, under 'E8')
- Encourage development of arts and culture and cultural precincts in local communities through partnerships with Local Government (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 135, under 'E8')
- Increase visits to and participation in the arts and cultural activity 10% by 2016 (State Plan, November 2006, pg. 7, under 'E8')

Strategic cultural investment in partnership with Local Government is placed best to deliver arts and cultural results throughout NSW, not least because councils have close contact with their communities. Further, Local Government is in a singular position to deliver on-the-ground and tangible outcomes that can flow from the State Plan directions and targets.

Cultural Accord

NSW State and Local Governments have found extensive agreement to develop arts and culture via a series of Cultural Accords. Signed in 1997, the first Accord focused on regional NSW with a three year timeframe. The second Accord, signed in 2002, provided a stronger partnership and included a Western Sydney and Aboriginal cultural focus.

Expiry of the second Accord in 2005 was followed by signing of the third in February 2006, which concludes on 31 December 2008. The current Accord sets out three focus areas for State and Local Government to collaborate on, which provide immediate opportunities for the Cultural Grants Program Review. The three focus areas with appropriate discussion, are set out below.

The first Cultural Accord Focus area, and the one of primary interest to the Review is:

To work collaboratively to establish a new Ministry funding program for Local Government that recognises Local Governments who are making a sustained commitment to the arts and culture through a cultural planning framework.

Arts and cultural funding specifically for Local Government makes sense. Investment in the arts through Local Government has a significant catalysing and multiplying effects, providing for longer term results, especially when initial capital funds are followed with ongoing support for programming.

For example, Cootamundra Shire Council supported local community vision for a new arts centre, buying a derelict building for \$140,000. A further \$60,000 was made available by the Shire for renovations. In 2006 Arts NSW contributed \$75,000, matched in cash and kind by the Shire. Because the arts centre is community originated, there is enormous community support and contributions, including over \$80,000 dollars in goods and trade discounts and more than 6000 hours in volunteer labour, to date.

The new Cootamundra Creative Arts and Cultural Centre was opened on 14 September this year, demonstrating the return to the community of combined Local and State Government arts investments. There are many more cultural development examples similar to the Cootamundra one, as set out in Attachments 1, 2 and 3.

National studies reinforce the key role that councils play in cultural development. For example, the Myer report found “that local government plays a very important role in grass-roots support of community-based arts and craft activities, much of which is contemporary in focus.” Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry, Commonwealth of Australia 2002, Page 307.

Across NSW State arts investments in Local Government produce cultural development results far in excess of the State Government contributions. Inside councils, competing priorities for expenditure necessitate ongoing State incentives for cultural development.

Arts NSW total annual funding figures to Local Government are particularly low, especially when compared to total NSW councils expenditure on culture.

Arts NSW Government	Grants to NSW Local Government	NSW Local Government Cultural Expenditure
Calender year millions		Financial year millions
2002	\$18.5	2001 – 02 \$242.1
2003	\$9.0	2002 – 03 \$350.3
2004	\$2.9	2004 – 05 \$311.9
2005	\$2.2	2005 – 06 \$330.2
2006	\$2.8	2005 – 06 \$330.2
2006	\$2.8	2006 – 07 n/a
2007	\$4.1	

Despite this positive effort, Local Government’s finances cannot be taken for granted. With many NSW Local Governments facing financial challenges, as found by the *Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government*, it is vital that initial cultural investments are followed up with regular State Government funding support for programming.

Arts NSW and the LGSA are currently working together to assist councils in cultural development. Currently over one third of NSW councils have a cultural plan and one third are developing one. Increasing uptake of a planned approach to cultural development requires a greater State commitment to arts funding for councils.

The 2006 Progress Report on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy found that it “provides a valuable model for other regions with a need for integrated cultural development”. (Page 8).

The Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government and the current Integrated Planning and Reporting approach being developed with the Department of Local Government advocate for an integrated approach to strategic planning.

The State's commitment to a new funding program for Local Government under the Cultural Accord, together with the very successful Western Sydney model, show how communities across the State could benefit from substantially increasing the level of State Government arts investment with Local Government. This approach has been proven in other jurisdictions, such as Victoria with the Arts Victoria Local Partnerships Program.

An integrated cultural funding approach is further supported by the second Cultural Accord focus area:

In recognition of the important cultural collections held by Local Governments, to jointly encourage greater integration of the operation of Local Government cultural facilities including libraries, museums and art galleries.

The current Cultural Grant Program structure necessitates numerous applications from councils, to augment their activity in the wide spectrum of Local Government cultural development activities.

Providing packaged State investments for all a councils cultural endeavours would also deliver on State Plan commitments to reduce red tape ('P3' in State Plan).

The third Cultural Accord priority is addressed below under Cross-agency Collaboration.

Artists, arts organisations and councils are all disadvantaged by having to compete for the limited Cultural Grant Program pool. Independent artists and arts organisations are of a different character to Local Government, and all parties would benefit from creation of a new and specific Local Government Fund.

The Associations recommend creation of a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund with two separate strands – Infrastructure and Programs. The Partnership fund would only be accessible by councils and regions of councils. Local Government incentives via negotiated funding ratio agreements, would be explored.

Three to five year funding agreements are recommended, supporting the integrated and strategic approach which has been shown to work so well in Western Sydney. Multi year funding programs respond to the increasing importance of longer term strategic planning, as well as reducing red tape.

A negotiated and strategic approach providing a single funding agreement for the whole of a council's cultural undertakings, is recommended for those councils advanced in cultural development. For those councils not yet in such a position, access to smaller individual project grants will need to be retained. It is also recommended that the current joint State and Local initiatives to assist those councils yet to benefit from a planned approach to cultural development, be expanded.

Recommendation One:

That the State Government create a new and distinct Local Government Partnership Fund, with multi-year and recurrent agreements, which will enable councils to deliver State Plan priority E8 cultural outcomes to local communities

Devolution of Programs to State Peaks

Greater devolution of grants management to State peaks is recommended to best use of their specialist knowledge and direct links to local communities. The Associations support enhancement and expansion of the existing devolved programs, such as those operated by Regional Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW.

The Regional Arts Development Officer program is particularly important for councils outside of Sydney, and requires greater State investment to meet growing expectations of ‘sea and tree changers’.

Creation of a new centralised Local Government Partnership Fund will require increased managerial support, to facilitate the best outcomes for NSW Communities. The Associations can offer the State specialist Local Government understanding and welcome discussions on development of the management of a Local Government Partnership Fund.

For example, the revitalised Cultural Grants Program could include an Associations secretariat to provide advice and direction to councils on the Fund. Particular areas of need, such as help for councils with public art, could also be undertaken by devolution. Such services would require an expanded funding agreement between Arts NSW and the Associations.

In the spirit of the Cultural Accord, the extent, nature, cost and division of responsibilities for Partnership Fund Operation would be explored and determined through the LGSA Cultural Development Standing Committee.

**Recommendation Two:
Managerial operations for a Local Government Partnership Fund be collaboratively determined at the LGSA Cultural Development Standing Committee.**

Cross-agency Collaboration

Working with often limited means at the local level, councils are adept at brokering cultural projects with several agencies, with arts agencies being one of a number of partners. Such projects bring agencies together around a particular issue, which is addressed by an innovative arts project.

The Western Sydney Arts Strategy Progress Report last year found that the “Strategy has demonstrated the contribution the arts can make in traditionally non-arts related social policy areas through cross-agency projects and across the State. Major cultural projects have been delivered across the region in partnership with the health, education, environment and urban planning sectors.” (Page 7)

This year Regional Arts NSW in their Quotes, Stats & Facts publication cite national research finding “concrete links between the implementation of arts projects and lasting social, educational, economic and artistic impacts”. (Pages 3 and 4)

One of the better examples is the Newcastle Live Sites ‘place activation’ project. Developed by an Arts NSW funded ‘cultural broker’, Lives Sites is the joint effort of state government authority Honeysuckle Development Corporation, Newcastle City Council, Arts NSW and the not-for-profit Newcastle Alliance.

Further potential can be demonstrated by existing collaborations between State Government Agencies, such as the successful ConnectEd Arts program Arts NSW runs in consultation with the Department of Education and Training.

The Myer Report also supports council ability regarding multi-partner projects: “It is evident that the local government agencies are used to building on other programs such as tourism, environment and education and are highly flexible and adaptable in this respect.” Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry (Myer Report) Commonwealth of Australia 2002, Page 30.

Mechanisms for cross-agency, collaborative and partnership programs, when built into the new Cultural Grants Program, will maximise arts and cultural returns to NSW communities. This

partnership approach would need to be well supported by increasing Arts NSW advocacy across other State Government agencies.

The Review focus on Heritage collaborations is acknowledged. Given that over 80% of total NSW State cultural funding currently goes to the heritage area, there is substantial opportunity for increased partnership programs. The ABS defines this heritage spending as being on libraries and archives, zoological parks, aquaria and botanic gardens, nature parks and reserves, art museums and other museums.

A danger for the Cultural Grants Program is that funds for arts programming are eroded through expenditure on heritage capital works. New funding support for live and contemporary arts programming of Local Government heritage assets is recommended.

Three Spheres of Government Approach

As well as promoting collaborations across State government agencies and with private and non-government (NGO) sectors, a three spheres of government approach is recommended for cultural development in NSW.

NSW councils receive Australian Government grants and support for cultural development. Existing Local and State Government commitment can be an important precursor to Australian Government involvement. For example in Parramatta, their local Artists Studios project gained AusIndustry participation following State support.

Often councils must apply to numerous different NSW and Australian Government cultural grant programs and categories, resulting in onerous bureaucratic duplication.

A very interesting example of how governments can join together in addressing social issues using the arts can be seen in the Generations project, initiated and run by the Cultural Development Network. The Generations project is collaboration between five councils across three States and supported by the three levels of government funding. It is unique for its size and its objectives.

The five localised projects respond to Local Government identified issues which are significant for their communities. These range across indigenous land use and relationships with graziers; pressurised Aboriginal and Arabic youth in the state education system; aging populations in rural cities; climate change and coal mining in rural Australia; and identity on the urban edge. The Generations project examines links between communities and civic engagement and how a cultural perspective on policies can strengthen that link and provide solutions 'generated' from the community.

The councils, funding bodies, communities and artists participate in regular forums that exchange news on progress and to share ideas. The role of arts activity and its connection to improved health and well-being has been well documented, however the wider cultural impact of public policy on local communities requires more study. 'Generations' is the first major study of its kind.

Participating partners are: The Australia Council for the Arts, Regional Arts Fund Commonwealth Department for Communications Information Technology and Arts, Arts Victoria, Arts NSW, Arts Queensland, Dalrymple Shire (Queensland); City of Liverpool (New South Wales); Rural City of Wangaratta (Victoria); City of Greater Geelong (Victoria); and Latrobe City (Victoria). The project runs for three years between September 2006 and December 2009.

Longer term multi-partner strategic projects such as Generations, which bring agencies together to address particular local issues, demonstrate how a 'joined-up' and 'whole-of-government' approach can really work. The Cultural Grants Review provides the opportunity to 'build in' incentives for such partnership approaches.

There is also room for greater joint NSW Local and State Government advocacy to Australian government on providing structural incentives for tripartite agreements. Such advocacy can proceed to forums such as the Cultural Ministers Council, as agreed in the third Cultural Accord focus area:

To jointly develop a proposal for a national strategy for Community Cultural Development through the Cultural Ministers Council.

Recommendation Three:

That a range of incentives and pathways for collaboration between multiple agencies be central to the new Cultural Grants Program

Aboriginal Arts Development

Expanded Aboriginal arts development has been a joint aim for State and Local Government in Cultural Accords for ten years. However we are yet to implement a substantial package of assistance appropriate to the potential of Aboriginal arts in NSW.

Regional Arts Australia identified the key issues in their 2006 *National Directions* paper:

“Supporting Indigenous artists and communities needs, including clarification of funding programs post-ATSIC; effective means of mentoring emerging artists and enterprise development; better engagement between Indigenous and non- Indigenous artists; and a recognition by local government that Indigenous heritage is a vital part of local identity” (Page 15).

Councils leading in Aboriginal Arts cultural development, like Campbelltown, successfully multiply State arts investments for their communities. When Arts NSW has funded identified Aboriginal arts development positions, as in Western Sydney, councils are able to broker longer term and multi-partner projects with other agencies, such as the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Again, the successful Western Sydney experience shows to how the rest of NSW could benefit from strategic multi-year and multi-partner cultural investment in Local Government.

Recommendation Four:

That the State Government create funding to enable Aboriginal arts positions to be provided in Local Government across NSW

Art Form Funding Restructure

The current Cultural Grants Program structure, with art form funding silos, is rapidly become irrelevant and obsolete. As persuasively argued by Jennifer Craik this year in the ANU e-press monograph ‘Re-visioning Arts and Cultural Policy, Current Impasses and Future Directions’, the most interesting and most commercially viable art is not being made under the historic art form delineations:

“Much contemporary cultural vitality and energy is occurring outside the traditional arts and culture political framework and increasingly challenges the philosophy underpinning it. Examples include circus (physical theatre), new media arts, youth arts, performance culture consumed outside official parameters (CDs, DVDs), sub-cultures, community groups, amateur artists and performers, and electronically networked/produced/consumed arts and culture. These diverse examples of arts and culture are informing the development of active citizenship and cultural competence on various levels — local, regional, national, sub-cultural and global”. (Craik, page 55)

For governments to successfully support these new and emerging ways of making art, and to help amateurs become professional, it is necessary to dismantle traditional art from funding silos and recreate arts funding systems. A new structure would be flexible to accommodate changing priorities, and could be based around career paths of artists and partnership approaches.

Responding to this changing environment will best enable governments to work together to facilitate 'a meaningful role for the arts in the everyday life of all citizens.' (Arts NSW Mission).

Recommendation Five:

That the State Government restructure of the Cultural Grants Program to enable greater art form collaboration and to better reflect how new art is being made

Assessment by Peer Group Committee

Retention of a peer review process, with greater transparency regarding committee appointments and formalised participation by Local Government is recommended by the Associations. Assessment committee composition, committee titles and terms of reference would need to reflect the new Cultural Grants Program structure.

Current assessment Committees include numerous Local Government representatives, indicating the depth of arts and cultural skills, knowledge and experience in councils. It is recommended that the revised Cultural Grants Program include involvement of the LGSA regarding Local Government committee appointments.

LGSA recommend a published and transparent process of Committee appointments, and that Arts NSW ensure a variety of Committee appointments including practicing artists, young people and arts entrepreneurs.

Recommendation Six:

That the State Government retain peer group assessment committees with formalised Local Government participation and greater transparency in Committee appointments

Conclusion

NSW Government investment in the arts finds substantial and on-going returns to communities across the State when done in partnership with Local Government. In touch with communities, councils work locally to maximise the success of cultural development. Rapidly changing cultural landscapes mean the ability of agencies to identify common causes and work together for positive change will determine long term sustainability.

Attachments

The following attachments are provided in support of this submission.

- Attachment One – Case Study: Impact of Arts NSW Cultural Grants Scheme on the development of Art and Cultural activity in the Blacktown LGA
- Attachment Two – Cowra Shire Cultural Plan
- Attachment Three – Cultural Award projects booklets 2005, 2006 and 2007
- Attachment Four - NSW Local Government financial sustainability – identifying and responding to the challenge