

ARTS AND CULTURE POLICY



Arts and Culture

Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) is seeking a greater share of Australia's public funding for arts and culture for regional Australia to support our growing communities.

Funding for arts and culture in Australia needs to move beyond a capital city-centric approach and better align with contemporary population distribution.

Federal Government funding arrangements reflect population distributions of two decades ago and over-represent arts and cultural institutions in Sydney and Melbourne.

Funding needs to not only fairly recognise the almost eight million residents of regional Australia, but also take account of the current COVID-19 driven growth that is seeing people moving away from the metro capitals to regional capital cities.

RCA acknowledges the commitment of the Australian Government to the development of a new National Cultural Policy and looks forward to engagement with the Minister for the Arts on the important role of arts and cultural activities and arts infrastructure to benefit communities across regional Australia.

The Need

There is growing recognition of the role that social infrastructure, such as arts and culture, plays in enhancing the liveability of our communities.

In regional Australia, arts and culture helps shape the character of our communities and enable our people to express themselves and represent regional life on their own terms. However, in regional areas local government has the greatest share of responsibility for funding arts and culture programs and infrastructure.

As population policy encourages businesses and families to move to the regions, there must be recognition that the 'liveability' value of arts and culture not only drives population growth but also assists in retaining people in regional capitals.

RCA endorsed the recommendation by the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan to capture, measure and assess the quadruple-bottom-line benefits of social infrastructure including arts and culture, and use the framework to collaboratively plan, develop and invest in arts, cultural and other infrastructure which enhances unique regional identities and brands.

Addressing the arts and culture imbalance between the capital cities and the regions is however more than an adjustment of funding and supporting population growth - it is also about recognising, valuing, and enabling the creative capacity of regional Australians and regional institutions on equal terms with those of capital cities.

Policy Settings

Policy and funding need to reflect that regional and remote Australia should not simply be a passive recipient of arts and culture flowing from capital cities. Rather, the real and potential contribution of regional and remote Australia to the nation's broader cultural life should be fully supported.

The policy and funding environment must not only build the cultural and artistic capacity of regional Australia, but also facilitate the exchange of cultural and artistic output between the regions and capital cities.

Additionally, RCA contends that a disproportionate burden of regional arts and culture financial support falls on regional local governments, compared with those in capital cities.

At the same time, the funding capacity of regional local governments are limited by their smaller rate base, rate caps, broader service provision to their residents and their disproportionately smaller contributions from State and Federal Governments.



Recommendations

- Continue to recognise and enhance the role of arts, culture and creative activity in strengthening local identity, contributing to liveability and fortifying population growth in regional Australia;
- Ensure an equitable distribution of arts and cultural funding for Regional Australia to better reflect existing population distribution and anticipated ongoing population growth; and
- Recognise the importance of regional arts initiatives by including a commitment to regional arts funding in the National Cultural Policy of \$200m over 4 years.