

Submission
No 52

INQUIRY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTS AND
CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSIDE THE SYDNEY
CBD

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SUBMISSION TO

The Legislative Assembly,

NSW Public Works Committee

For

The Inquiry into the Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Outside the Sydney CBD

BY: Community Cultural Development NSW

91 Canal Road, Lilyfield, NSW 2040.

August 2008.

About CCDNSW:

CCDNSW provides advocacy and support services over 1000 community arts and community cultural development practitioners based in metropolitan, outer metropolitan, rural and regional NSW. CCDNSW provides;

- Project advice and support
- Information and resources
- Accredited training and professional development, and
- Advocacy and lobbying, for its constituents in NSW.

CCDNSW is funded to provide these services through annual grants from Arts NSW and the Australia Council for the Arts.

In 2006/7 CCDNSW conducted a series of focus groups, followed by an on-line survey, to determine the priorities for the sector in 2008-2010. This submission is based on those consultations and anecdotal information from CCDNSW's stored data.

1. Issues of public and private funding and allocation of resources;

Traditionally, the CCD sector found its national infrastructure, support and much of its funding from the Community Cultural Development Board (CCDB) of the Australia Council, created in the mid-1980s out of the pre-existing Community Arts Board. In 2004, as part of a restructure of the Australia Council, the CCDB was disbanded and research for a national *Scoping Report* was carried out to canvas the opinions of CCD practitioners and organisations nation-wide on the direction the Council should take in relation to the CCD and community arts sectors.¹

As a result of the restructure, NSW, including CCDNSW, has suffered a decrease in the amount of funding available to sustain an active and engaged community cultural development and community arts sector and to provide professional support services to the field of community based practitioners.

Notably, in their research paper *Don't Give Up Your Day Job* David Throsby and Virginia Hollister report that CCD workers have experienced a decrease of \$5,000 in their total average salary since 1993, whilst the average artist income increased by \$7,000 (Throsby and Hollister pg 51). This research also indicates that CCD and community arts workers were amongst the lowest paid of all the arts workers surveyed (no CCD workers surveyed earned over \$50,000 in total income) and were listed as one of the top three occupations with "the most extensive experience of unemployment" (pg.43), a point acknowledged in the *Creative Communities* report (Ozco..)²

CCDNSW's consultation process identified a range of dominant issues and themes,
These were:

- The breadth and scope of the field of community cultural development
- The need for advocacy to increase recognition of the sector and its values to government and non-arts agencies
- The need for professional development and training programs that cater to a diverse range of practitioners with different levels of experience

¹ Where to From now? : A review of Community Cultural Development NSW and its services within the NSW CCD sector, Angela Lauman, UTS Shopfront, 2006.

² Op cit.

- The need for information and research on a variety of issues: resources, best practice, opportunities
- The need for strategic regional approach
- The need for industry services including insurance advice, networking advice, funding advice etc
- The need for 'quick response funding' i.e. grants with a quick turn around between application and results.³

The feelings of uncertainty, isolation and being undervalued raised in the literature referred to above, is clearly reflected in the responses of participants of CCDNSW's *Communion* sessions. In particular the increasing instability of funding sources, the implications of the Australia Council restructure for smaller projects, lack of recognition for the sector and lack of support for emerging, as well as established, artists and CCD workers were raised at all the sessions. Furthermore the need for networking and information sharing within the sector is raised repeatedly, particularly in the sessions held in regional areas.

These findings point to a lack of support for arts and cultural workers in this sector who are directly engaged in providing community based arts and cultural projects, programs and services. Not only do they suffer from low income from their chosen profession and high unemployment, but the distribution of available funding favours those employed in the arts sector rather than those in the community sector who deliver the most direct 'participation' in, rather than consumption of, the arts in communities.

2. Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life;

Local government is recognised as a significant resource for community cultural development practice. Local government has become much more understanding and values this practice more highly. Many councils have appointed cultural staff and developed cultural plans. Local government is perceived as an important source of funds, an important advocate for community cultural development and an important employer.

However, local government was perceived as a volatile environment still needing encouragement and incentives to become and/or remain involved. In addition to local government's volatility, the essentially conservative nature of this institution is also seen as placing a limitation on practice. Another issue in this context is the tension between user-pays policies often adopted by local government and access and equity principles. The lack of access to suitable spaces and places for community cultural development practice is a recurring issue in all communities consulted.⁴

3. The desirability of locating cultural facilities in close proximity to create hubs;

Arts and cultural development workers engaged at community level invariably operate in non-arts sectors, such as local government and the health sector, and are able to access members of the community who do not frequent arts facilities.

There is an argument, well documented in overseas countries, that locating arts facilities together to create hubs may inadvertently establish a barrier between the facilities and participants or patrons who avoid unfamiliar experiences, such as arts activities. Community arts and cultural development workers have achieved much success by accessing participants for arts projects and programs in the places that they already frequent, such as parks,

³ Op cit

⁴ Report on the Sector Consultation To Inform The Development Of Ccd NSW's Business Plan Deborah Mills & Associates, December, 2006

swimming pools, shopping malls, PCYCs, schools and other public spaces. While there may be advantages to establishing arts facilities as part of other public facilities, such as libraries, the notion that arts facilities located in close proximity to one another may create a desirable relationship may perpetuate existing audiences, but fail to make contact with other non-arts audiences.

4. Accessibility of cultural and arts education;

It is encouraging that, in terms of K-12 arts education, there are core performing and visual arts and music subjects that can be undertaken by school students and carried through to HSC level. The direct engagement in arts subjects at school provides a well-rounded range of options for students to take up beyond school education into TAFE and tertiary sector graduate and post-graduate studies.

However, it is notable that tertiary courses in visual and performing arts subjects are being closed down in NSW and that there are no alternative arts tertiary courses being offered to communities throughout Greater Western Sydney (through the University of Western Sydney) and, increasingly, other regions outside the CBD such as the Northern Rivers. Concern for access to tertiary studies in the arts includes access to training in community cultural development, the only course for which, an on-line diploma provided by CCDNSW, has been discontinued. The on-line diploma in CCD has been discontinued as of June 2008 due to the lack of funds to write content for the new course, notwithstanding a waiting list of 36 students eager to take up study in this area. This form of arts practice in communities could arguably be seen as an increasingly important practice in the service of communities, but remains the least supported across the arts sector.

Additional to the needs of CCD practitioners, access to arts skills development courses for local communities is vitally important to the cultural development of communities. Courses of this nature not only provide a range of new skills for participants but increase the social skills of participants through the introduction and enhancement of individual and collective creative pursuits.

5. Economic impacts on communities;

It is well documented that arts and cultural facilities in communities increase commerce and market activity in and around their programmed events, community cultural development projects are invariably provided at no charge to communities as they service low income and, most often, disadvantaged people. The economic advantages of locally based projects for youth, migrant communities, Indigenous communities, people with disabilities etc. have different intentions to generating income that are connected to social inclusion, equity and community engagement strategies.

It is requested that these principles be included in any consideration of the value of arts and cultural facilities, and that public spaces be recognised as providing these basic facilities to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, alongside the provision of secure facilities to service community cultural development projects and programs that do not, and cannot be based on a requirement to generate economic outcomes.

6. The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan for the state to maximise diversity of access, with reference to the Tourism Masterplan and other relevant planning strategies.

In terms of increasing participation in existing arts and cultural facilities in NSW, the State Plan may be extended to include active engagement in the arts, rather than purely passive consumption of the arts. In most communities in NSW, locally based cultural traditions

contribute to a sense of place, of belonging and of community connectedness and these activities encourage participation in cultural development. The outcomes are achieved through active engagement in decision making as well as in creative activities and programs.

In order for cultural facilities to provide more than live entertainment, the State Plan needs to encourage support for the inclusion of community based celebrations and for community to be consulted in the development of new facilities, programming considerations and issues associated with cultural identity and place making.

7. Any other relevant matters.

CCDNSW recommends that the Inquiry consider how it can develop strategies to ensure that the arts are genuinely provided across the NSW community and that a process be embarked upon to ensure that access to the arts and creative expression become part of the infrastructure on which our community life is built. Inclusion of arts and cultural outcomes in local, regional, state and national plans both currently and in the future would help realise a healthy and vibrant community life for all citizens in our state.