

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission

Enquiry into museums and galleries

I wish to submit my personal thoughts on the performance or effectiveness of the NSW government policy funding and support for museums and galleries. My experience and knowledge is in relation to a visual arts volunteer managed gallery in a regional area which struggles to survive without support. Having moved from Sydney to the regional area of Dungog I joined Dungog Arts Society Inc. in 2002 and have filled the position of secretary for the majority of that time. Since then our Society has expanded in membership and at present we have 90 members. Each year we hold an annual art exhibition which is growing each year. Last year our prize pool was \$4,500 attracting 250 entries from as far afield as Queensland and this year with a prize pool of \$5000 we hope to attract more to our September 2016 Exhibition.

Our society is a not-for-profit organization run by volunteers, which depends largely on the fundraising from our annual exhibition for our continued existence. Our funds are acquired by the fees for paintings entered, entry fees for the exhibition, commission of any paintings sold in our gallery, as well as our yearly membership fee. Because many of our members are pensioners, students or on low incomes we need to keep our fees affordable.

We need funds to cover the costs of overheads as well as rent, public liability insurance, printing, advertising, equipment and materials for our exhibitions, newsletters, workshops, youth and drawing groups etc.

A few of our members, through commissions, sales and awards, can now be considered "Professional". Others, although still amateurs, have reached the stage of being able to sell their paintings but many are still learning, and for many it is only a hobby. Our successful artists nurture and inspire our beginners. For those who are able to make sales the cost of materials and framing provides very little personal profit. Our members are of any age, gender or talent.

The only support we have ever received from our own council is sponsorship of \$500.00 towards our exhibition. This amount has not changed during my time ie 2002. Originally we had no workshop or gallery. We met for monthly meetings in the local Bowling Club, painted in our own homes and from our fees we rented a venue for our annual exhibition. In 2008 our local real estate agent allowed us to use one of his empty properties as our gallery/workshop, and for our yearly exhibition he empties his shed attached to these premises. He charges us a reasonable rent. We can now display our work in the gallery but our main income is derived from the exhibition. Since having this venue our membership has increased but we realise he will require this building one day and we will be out in the cold again. As well as the Councils Sponsorship the exhibition prize money is sponsored by local businesses and Duralie Coal. In the past we have received one grant to run workshops through Regional Arts, however we have been unsuccessful in gaining support for capital or administration costs for which we have tried desperately. Government initiated associations such as the Mens Shed readily receive grants, as do sporting clubs, but the Arts are ignored even though we cater for any gender age or talent. People capable of Administration ie secretarial duties are limited in small towns and for this reason I have been locked into this position. If equipment was fundable through grants - such as computers, computer programs, photocopiers etc. it would be far easier to hand over duties to less experienced volunteers. However, there seems to be a prejudice against the organisations such as ours.

Our gallery/workshop, as well as our Annual Exhibition provides a valuable tourist attraction for the town. Dungog has many empty shops and with the demise of the dairy and timber industry and recent flood damage - needs tourism for survival. A permanent gallery would be an asset.

Our town is trying to survive the process of a council merger. We cannot foresee how a council amalgamation will effect us but the prospects do not sound good.

I realise your enquiry is more concerned with the larger museums and galleries and is not concerned with assisting a small lone gallery.

My purpose for providing this submission is to ensure you are aware that funding for the arts has not been adequate in the past as small galleries are ignored and struggle. Therefore cutting funding should not be an option.

Instead increased assistance in the way of grants for regional areas for capital costs and administration should be readily available.

I also am very surprised to hear of the sale of the Powerhouse Museum. When living in Sydney this was frequented by us. We would never have driven to Parramatta. This will be a sad tourism loss to Sydney - a loss greater than the profit of the sale for high rise. Cultural tourism should not be underestimated.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission.