

**Submission
No 116**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Shoalhaven City Council and Shoalhaven Arts Board

Date received: 12 August 2016

NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into state's museums and galleries- 2016

Dear Sir

The following information has been collated by the Shoalhaven Arts Board and Shoalhaven City Council Arts Unit staff in response to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Museums and Galleries NSW.

1. NSW Government policy, funding and support for museums and galleries, museum and gallery buildings and heritage collections, including volunteer managed museums and museums managed by councils

Response

- Funding through the Arts NSW and devolved funding programs are highly competitive and difficult to achieve if you do not have a prior history of successful grant applications.
- Program funding requires a strong history of project funding, but in general only offers annual support now – meaning a lot of work and time goes into developing programs and finding staff without any long term certainty.
 - Multiyear funding is only available to those organisations who are seen as leaders or emerging leaders in art and cultural production and development.
 - Annual program funding is to a maximum of \$150,000 which is not a significant amount if you are trying to fund contract staff for program development etc. Again, the level of work required to achieve the funding does not really match the return.
 - In contrast Creative Victoria offer 4 year 'Organisation Investment' grants with amounts ranging from \$240,000 to over \$5m, and organisations do not have to have a history of other grants from Creative Victoria before applying.
- Regional Capital funding provides a maximum of \$60,000 and requires matched funding to be successful. This again is an insignificant sum when compared to the costs of the majority of capital works, and places a significant burden on the organisation to find other funding or fund themselves. As an example, the replacement of the air conditioning system needed to bring to SCAC galleries up to standard (and thereby being able to access major collections) is \$430,000.

2. Potential funding impacts on museums and galleries affected by council amalgamations

Response

- There will be little significant impact on Shoalhaven City Council as it is a stand alone Council and is neither merging nor amalgamating.

Recommendation

The establishment of Joint Regional Organisations has been proclaimed and funded by the state government and begin to plan and action their priorities and collaborations.

While development, housing, health, transport, education, waste and road/freight networks have been identified as key elements in the regional vision, so should 'culture and recreation' be included as an essential key element to the new emerging society and thereby fundamental to Regional Organisational planning and thinking.

3. Opportunities to revitalise the structure, reach and impact of museums and galleries, and their research and collecting priorities

Recommendation

A Revitalisation Travelling Team (ARTT) or like, might be developed and funded; its role to visit regions, as a team of sector professionals and mentors to collaboratively work with regional areas to target management, collection and structural issues, develop strategic change priorities needed and actions/programs to ameliorate. This scheme would then need follow up and funding to realise the issues that need revitalising.

The issue support might also take into account need for digital/virtual audience development.

(Similar to the current Office of Heritage and Environment Heritage Office approach in NSW)

4. Access to the collections of the MAAS, the Australian Museum and any other state collections held in trust for the people of NSW, and programs that promote physical and online access

Response

- SCAC have limited opportunity to access the physical items held by state collections due to strict environmental and security controls. Art Gallery NSW has recently promoted their intention to work more closely with regional galleries to ensure requests for loans can be negotiated and the collection in store does travel. But it is still a long and complex process.
- As a small regional gallery without the staffing resources to plan well in advance, and without a dedicated curatorial position, loan requests from state institutions are often too arduous and time consuming.
- MAAS and other organisations are good with travelling exhibitions and ensuring that collections are seen regionally through those opportunities.

Recommendation

It is therefore important to develop smaller, simpler and well interpreted regional art/museum exhibition package loans curated by and from larger State Collections to provide ongoing support for regions. Queensland has established specific funding to develop such travelling exhibitions packed to travel and for ease of loading and with educational resources for regional museums and galleries and is a wonderful and simply managed resource. The packages might also be developed for the range of capacity of regional places.

5. The cost benefits of the sale of the Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo and its proposed move to Parramatta, and whether there are alternative strategies to support museum development

Response

6. The development and transparency of advice to the government on priorities for NSW museums and galleries

Response

7. The impact of the efficiency dividend on museum and gallery budgets over the last 10 years, and funding levels compared to other states

Response

- The efficiency dividend has been disastrous on programs operated and developed by state cultural organisations. The reduction in service levels and support for regional institutions is visible, the reduction in touring shows is evident and the cuts to grants and devolved funding programs has had a significant impact on the regional network. As state institutions are forced to cut programs and staff, they focus on their collection and buildings and their support programs and regional commitments are removed.

8. The economic impact of museums and galleries on cultural tourism, and their role in supporting the visitor economy in Sydney and regional NSW; and

Response

Many regional museums and galleries rely heavily on volunteers whose role it is to gather objects which are the very essence of their local communities, their narratives and histories.

State and local governments rely upon tourism and recreational travellers for revenue. Local museums and galleries are a draw card and appeal to a wide and varied audience, yet are still severely underfunded.

While volunteers can do much, regional museums require a level of certainty of funding for professional development which translates into capability and opportunity to provide visitors with valuable, educational and cultural experiences.

Indeed, museums and galleries can be the first port of call for schools, educators and the inquisitive 'cultural' tourist.

The vitality of these organisations and places rely on keen and committed volunteerism, energised professional staff, ongoing funding and the cultural sector to keep revitalising itself with innovation and technology and contemporary best practice.

9. Any other related matter

Response

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