

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Australian Design Centre

Date received: 14 August 2016

The Hon Robert Borsak MLC
Chair
Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4
Parliament of New South Wales
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chairman

Re: Inquiry into museums and galleries

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of the Australian Design Centre.

We believe that this is a critical and timely review of government policy and support for galleries and museums in New South Wales and we offer the following comments.

Government support for the arts has diminished over the last 12 months, particularly at the Federal level where we have seen the Australia Council defunding many strong and viable organisations, such as the Australian Design Centre, that it has made a considerable investment in over many years.

This review needs to consider the impact of the Federal funding cuts on the ecosystem in New South Wales and how this impacts directly on State Government policy.

The small to medium size visual arts organisations were the hardest hit by the Australia Council cuts. While not measuring up in size and scale to the larger institutions, it is many of the small to medium sized visual arts organisations that are well known across the sector for having significant impact across the country through their robust national programs. They include organisations such as our own as well as over 60 museums and galleries that we work with on delivering our programs throughout Australia.

These museums and galleries consider our exhibitions of incredible importance. This quote from Western Plains Cultural Centre exemplifies the feeling across the regional network.

“Design has strong resonance in regional areas. These areas have very high representations of those who ‘make’ be they farmers, tradespeople or traditional crafters such as quilters and wood turners. These audiences are very well served by the breadth and diversity of ADC’s touring product”. - Andrew Glassop, General Manager at Western Plains Cultural Centre (WPCC)

In our fifty-year history we have supported thousands of designers, makers and craftspeople. We maintain strong connections to them, representing and showcasing their work through exhibitions, public programs, learning resources, tours and digital content production. We launch careers and continue to uncover and celebrate the work of Australian artists who embrace the highest degree of craftsmanship and who continually explore material, process and ideas.

From nurturing young and emerging talent to showcasing work for excellence through our national *Living Treasures* series, ADC is an engine room for the visual arts, craft and design sector. We've worked hard to build a strong foundation for support of individual artists.

Exhibitions are the fundamental way that we showcase Australian craft and design. Our extensive touring program that partners with museums and galleries across the country is at risk. There is no one else doing for craft and design on a national scale what we're currently able to achieve. The funding cuts put this at significant risk.

"ADC has always delivered the most considered, significant and forward thinking explorations of design and its many uses". - *Kiersten Fishburn, Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre*

Our learning programs are one of the key ways that we connect audiences to creative practice across the country. We unpack the processes and materials makers and designers use to create and enable young people to learn new skills. Over the years our core infrastructure has enabled us to establish a learning program of national reach. It has allowed us to also further support makers and designers to travel to regional venues across the country with these programs to facilitate arts, culture and learning in communities.

"... Beyond their exhibition program, they also deliver education and public programs that are accessible, inclusive and thought provoking. They have a very significant place in the Australian cultural landscape..." - *Kiersten Fishburn, Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre*

Regional New South Wales has an exceptional network of galleries and art centres that enrich communities. Without Australia Council funding past 2016 the ability to develop, produce and tour exhibitions and public programs to over 60 museums and galleries across the country is severely impacted. Not only would this be a major loss felt throughout the regional network across Australia, the loss would directly impact audiences within these communities as well as to the artists diminished opportunities to present their work in regional Australia.

These are the many museums and galleries who rely on ADC exhibitions for their annual program. Those in New South Wales include:

NEW SOUTH WALES

Albury Library Museum
Albury Regional Gallery
Australian Museum
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
Bega Regional Art Gallery
Blue Mountains Cultural Centre
Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery
Casula Powerhouse
Cessnock Regional Art Gallery
Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery

Cowra Art Gallery
Dubbo Regional Art Gallery
Gosford Regional Art Gallery
Grafton Regional Art Gallery
Hawkesbury Regional Art Gallery
Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery
Maitland Regional Gallery
Manning Regional Art Gallery
National Art School
Sturt Gallery
Tamworth Regional Art Gallery
The Glasshouse Port Macquarie
Tweed River Art Gallery
Wagga Wagga Regional Gallery
Western Plains Cultural Centre

Arts NSW has also substantially reduced funding to the Australian Design Centre in its three year funding from 2016. This reduction was made without any prior consultation or indeed without any substantive feedback.

We are currently seeking to fill the huge gap caused by these funding cuts at the State and Federal level. This is by no means an easy task and will impact on tens of thousands of museum and gallery audiences throughout regional Australia who may no longer have access to the extent of arts and cultural programs we've been providing to them for decades.

We would be most willing to participate in any policy development process that seeks to ensure that the available funding is best invested in the organisations and projects that continue to deliver for NSW. A long term strategic approach to organisational funding is what is needed.

More broadly, we believe that the museum and galleries sector is a huge part of the cultural fabric of the State and provides a vital contribution to the \$8.3 billion that cultural and heritage visitors generate for the NSW economy.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Cahill
Director