

Notes from Public Forum

“ARTS WE ARTS WISE”
Thursday, 23 April 2009
Alice Springs NT

Minister for Arts and Museums, the Hon Alison Anderson MLA (The Minister) Mathew Fagan (MF) Jacinta Price (JP) Susan Benham Page (SBP)
Judy Lovell (JL) Louise Partos (LP) Mark Wilson (MW) Kelly Lee Hickey (KLH)
Virginia Heydon (VH) Davina Edwards (DE) Vincent Lamberti (VL) Pip McManus (PM)
Lucy Kenneth (LK) Pam Lofts (PL) Lisa Stefanoff (LS) Kieran Finanne (KF) Lyn Allen (LA)
Michael Watts (MW) Mary Menotti (MM) Ardys Zoellner (AZ) Scott Large (SL) Jenine Mackay (JM) Angela ODonnell (AO) Franca Barraclough (FB)

5.30pm Jacinta Price Introduction

5.35pm Jacinta introduces Mathew Fagan Senior Advisor to Minister for the Arts, Alison Anderson

Main points Mathew Fagan

Relaying The Minister's messages:

- Arts Funding in NT is approx. \$8.5Million/year (NTFO, C'wealth, NTG)
- There is a perception in NT that there is lesser funding being distributed
- There are no clear priorities for arts funding in NT
- How can we take these \$ and spend it better?
- The Minister has ideas but does not want to impose without consultation
- The Minister wants to spread funding equitably across the NT
- Thematic strategies to be spread across NT
- The Minister wants towns and regions to have long term funding certainty
- The Minister will not dictate to sector about:
 - How this funding is spread
 - How priorities are met
 - How arts organisations can collaborate to achieve this
- Challenge is how could this take place?
- No additional money – we need to look at how we can spend more effectively

5.49pm Jacinta introduces Susan Benham Page

Susan Benham Page is the Director, Australia Business Arts Foundation for the Northern Territory and South Australia.

5.50pm
– 6.50pm SBP facilitates discussion

Main points from this discussion

- JL What does equitable distribution across the region mean? What methodology will be used? Is this preconceived and already determined?
- MF -Where there are skilled grants writers and raconteurs in places they do better. Other places also deserve to have art at the centre of their life
- JL Is there a skewing of funding around peak bodies?
- MF yes
- LP What is the timeframe for this change in distribution and priorities?
- MF These changes have to go through cabinet. Aiming to get something to cabinet by June 2009. The process of change will be staggered. From next financial year there will be some change.
- LP To ensure a robust arts policy and regional arts policy we need at least a year of consultations and process. We are at strategy level with no strong policy in place.
- MW I would like to see a model that gives more access to more people.
- KLH We also need to look at other social determinants like education and health and how we can distribute funding to those most in need. We also need to be more strategic about cross government approach /cross sectoral approach/multidisciplinary approach.
- VH Arts as a tool for social change – we need to have research and development so we can distribute according to need.
- SBP ...or according to art forms?
- DE Artists have no economic stability. Too much money goes into administration. Artists should have economic viability, skills recognition, business development.
- VL arts are seen by general public as something that belongs to everyone. Once that happens you solve economic viability.
- SBP Do we need an education process?
- ?? Arts need to be seen as a part of life. Essentially we need enough funds to actualise connections and access and to be visible in the community
- JL Education isn't just about young people it is about lifelong learning
- PM it is really important to bring art into all forms of mainstream consciousness and I think the NTG should legislate a percentage for art for all major infrastructure projects – buildings, landscaping ect
- VL Looking at infrastructure - If you compare Alice Springs arts activities to sports and compare venues. There are no band venues !!!

- LK If you look at the RedHot Arts cultural audit. The hot arts book explores infrastructure needs and recommends rehearsal spaces for bands etc. Can the Minister look at this book. This could be used to feed into policy. We are already acting on some of these recommendations. For instance the merger between RHA and the festival to create RHACA. This is collaboration. We need to look at the arts sector over the last 10 years look at infrastructure and funding and what is already being done and done well.
- PL A lot of the arts budget goes to arts administration and self perpetuation.
- LS all education is currently through Charles Darwin University short courses/high schools/workshops. Has NTG considered a Central Australian Art School? This could be a place for artists, designers, architects ect (cross sectoral) could gather Could be a gleaming beacon An arts hot spot This could expand on what we have and what is needed
- KF How much of the 8.5million -- How much money goes to administration?
- LA This is hard to calculate --- aprox \$2million
- SBP is it true that smaller orgs who have to do all this admin can't do the art?

Art Making versus Art Business
- LK we all have to do the late nights – it is apart of this industry. I am leaving so I can be a practising artist. I am sick of being a business manager.
- DE We know that ASHS and Anzac HS are merging – we should lobby for a strong arts presence now Advocacy is important. Arts should be apart pf the national curriculum.
- LP What consultation process is going to take place?
- MF Minister and I are visiting 20 of the largest remote communities in coming weeks. 93% of NT's indigenous population live in these areas.
- LS Is there a perceived problem about NT wide organisations servicing well enough the whole NT region?
- MF yes there is – they become silos – time and duplicated programs. Organisations must determine their priorities not NTG
- PM Do Government departments talks to each other? This is a problem with bureaucracy For DPI artists are an irritant. There needs to be more discourse between Government departments. We need to have shared forums and exchanges between government agencies, artists, NFP orgs etc

- MF The Minister talks about the 'arts ghetto'- competitive and scrambled. There is business development money sent back to Canberra each year...There are \$ in government but most departments do not see the need for art as a central part.
- JL ,We need discussion, dialogue and forums not just words but art. this can be creative process in itself
- PM we need cross sector exchange
- SBP The NT does not have an arts industry council – do we need to consider?
- MW We have not mentioned a pursuit of excellence, innovation, new ways of looking at things and artistic merit. Artistic merit does need to be judged. We have a NT peer review assessment. will arts NT have a lesser role?
- MM Where are the plumbers and the bricklayers? Arts needs to be apart of the wider community.
Whose job is it to make this happen?
- VL We need to celebrate the arts to make it part of the wider community. We need more festival and awards. But we need the infrastructure to support this first. We can show excellence at major events. Sports have awards.
- LP Audience development across all art forms needs to be a priority
- LS Are these priorities part of a long term sustainable vision?
- MF NTG has a 2030 vision. First draft coming out very soon. This includes an entire section on arts, culture and knowledge. This is a real opportunity to feed into that process.
- AZ Since our building burnt down we have noticed that there is a lack of spaces and places for artists to gather and be creative together.
- SL There needs to be a focus on development for artists, arts workers. There is a big skills shortage here in Alice. And we need more focus on artistic and professional development.
- JM Mid career artists also need development and they seem to miss out
- PL The submission process needs to be simplified. A lot of artists find the application process a minefield and application should be assessed on artistic merit.
- MF We are looking at having the assessment at the end of the activity. What do you think? Applicants have to meet a basic set of criteria and get the dollars up front.
- ?? so the evaluation is at the end?
- LP what if too many applications come in to fund them all?

- JM At a policy level there needs to be a place for disability, equity and access
- LK There is concept evaluation currently applied to triennial arrangements
- PM We need a Multi purpose venue – a permanent outdoor space for performance/music etc Some sort of amphitheatre
- LS Well this should be at the precinct
- AO I would like to reinforce the need for skills development. I come from Melbourne and I can't believe the skills shortage here and the jobs that go by unfilled. Also in my experience administrators put in a lot of hours to support artists.
- JP My current study is at CDU and I have a promised job at the end of it. I would like to see more indigenous people in positions of importance in the arts.
- LP Question to group – should we still put resources into supporting NT artist? Should we still bring in work from elsewhere to provide stimulus and development?
- LK There are commercial mechanisms that should do that. But we should have exchange and exposure form interstate. How else do we gauge our positioning and skills nationally?
- FB More training in arts management for indigenous people
- JP Put funds into Indigenous staff to support communities and outlying areas. Make sure we have skilled up and professional indigenous staff.
- SL I would like to see the gap in funding for key orgs and independent projects. Not attached to key orgs and stable long term funding. I run an independent project (Bush bands bash) and I would like to make this project more sustainable over the long term instead of struggling from year to year.
- MM We need to target the common person. I am a volunteer (Friends of Araluen) and I feel like there is too much money spent on academics in pursuit of academic ideals
- DE we need to protect this community from bringing in artists e.g. Mission Australia. We need to invest in local knowledge and prioritise what is here and don't waste what we have.
- MF Asset Based Community Development - look at what we already have
- 6.55pm Wrap up and thanks from Jacinta Price.
All participants advised they can respond to arts office by email by May 31st.
- 7pm End