

**Notes from Public Forum
“ARTS WE ARTS WISE”
Thursday, 14 May 2009
Darwin NT**

Minister for Arts and Museums, the Hon Alison Anderson MLA, welcomed all guests and encouraged everyone to take part in the discussions.

Jacinta Price from Alice Springs introduced herself, thanked the Minister, and introduced Paul Rajan as facilitator for the evening, from Strategic Executive Services within the Department of Education & Training (DET).

Paul introduced the *Arts Lives* Discussion Paper

He outlined the three main points to think about:

1. Place art at the centre of NT lives
 - how will the community able to get the full value from the \$10M budget, not just the arts sector but NT wide
 - focus on arts education
2. Focus on indigenous visual arts
 - arts to be managed by local aboriginal people from the community
 - Main Focus
3. Art as a business service
 - broadening the art arts instead of creating an arts ghetto

Jacinta outlines Minister's position and priorities:

- Indigenous visual arts – locals and indigenous employment
- structured opportunities within the arts/art centres
- arts ghettos – arts business
- this meeting is beginning of a conversation

Paul opens the discussion by asking

- how many people have read the discussion paper? – about 50% of the room
- How many have read the 2030 strategy – about 30% of the room

Paul: What are your responses to the Arts Lives Discussion Paper

Janice McEwen - Top End Arts Marketing (TEAM)

- document says something that we all like but doesn't say how it will be achieved
- lot of things mentioned are great – hard to disagree – no solid information – concerns about the process
- changes happening in the arts there are a lot of rumours
- lack of information – a lot of rumour going around

Darren Johns - New Australian Consultants (NAC)

- are good things in there - but vague on the detail
- what are the achievements and objectives?
- what is the strategy?
- practitioners accessing business skill is not addressed – no clear way forward

- a vision is what a dream is – but what is the purpose of this document – creative economy is a burgeoning economy and can see why it is.
- not quite sure that arts is the absolute solution for the health of the community – it's a big ask – does have a strong community focus – artistic excellence is not prominent in the visions

Penny Campton - Arts Access Darwin

- supports arts/health partnerships – strong NT examples are Bindi Arts

Louise Partos - Artback NT

- need to talk about artistic standards, artistic excellence, innovation and criteria
- not elitist
- needs to be public and driven by community
- will it be community arts focus versus innovation/ excellence

Paul Rajan

- how do we spread production and consumption?

Bong Ramilo – Darwin Community Arts

- there is not necessarily a contradiction between community arts and excellence
- a lot of excellence innovative art arises from community - a lot of conceptual art comes out of community

Andrish St Claire – Intercultural Services

- funding rounds - is it just about having a good track record to receive funding
- in application the arts industry is to much arts industry = nothing to do with making art - see the Robyn Archer article
- how does arts for arts sake get support

Carol Phayer - Arts Warehouse

- 2030 is an opportunity to try and get things done
- Creative Industries is just a report
- its good government thinks about Darwin as a creative city – but no reports are going to make that happen but the creative people
- we need to lobby for studio space and residencies, affordable accommodation – need these things to make creative people come here – need infrastructure

Maria - Teacher

- I think that creating a culture based on creativity is a wonderful idea
- I think education is the base of it – going through education you need a direct link with education – need infrastructure
- document does not give you anything to bank on

Janice McEwen

- If your serious about putting art at the centre of peoples lives then you should think about the comparison for sports and arts
- This government spends \$8M on arts and \$30M on sports – silk purse out of pigs ear

Darren Johns

- the Queensland Government has given \$40M to Indigenous arts with \$1,5M towards a printmaking studio

- I agree to infrastructure – setting up an arts services hub in Cairns which has shared services, where artists can come in and use marketing services
- artists could also access some of those business services
- I agree that studio space is a real need – if you're going to have these I think then you need legislation/policy

Tim Hill - Tiwi Design

- one thing I would like to see is to do an audit to see what is doing well – fine-tuning better than re-inventing
- what steps are there towards arts centre sustainability p build on the past to a clearer future

Deb Hudson – Happy Yess

- we need youth services – age appropriate activities – specific things for young adults such as 16 and 17 year olds
- need support as they come out through the schools and there is no support
- we need to get young people interested, get them engaged and valued in the community – would like to see the link between art and health
- for instance young musicians come up through schools, but there are no opportunities for them

Andrish St Claire

- there is no infrastructure in remote areas – only arts centres, which is why visual arts is strong – commercialised makes money
- also music – but there is no infrastructure for dance - lots of kids come up and dance and then they give up due to frustration
- is there any hope for regional hubs

Carol Phayer

- just to add to that as a group we are not really good at lobbying the government
- when kids are engaged in the arts and not drinking they are not being supported – need support and reward to look after the next generation - government needs to support artistic development and direction

Alex Ben Mayor – Darwin Theatre Company

- we are a bad lobbying group
- there is an immense amount of cultural output in the Northern Territory but not that many generators and facilitators for the output in comparison
- all doing more jobs than for one person - logistics
- how we place art at the centre of life – what does that mean
- the connections into education are interesting - the creation of cultural policy begins to highlight the arts
- what about in schools everyone must go and see one play, one concert or a film to create a culture of patronage

Jane Hampson - Writer and Journalist (can't hear all)

- I think there is a hunger in Darwin for more communication
- "Off the Leash" is successful in getting opinions about it
- often audiences don't get bigger than mates – need policy level

Brian Manning - NT Music School and Music NT

- I am optimistic – there are education projects in remote communities
- but there are issues in communities is to engage kids in the arts and music

- I see remote festivals to empower kids in communities to engage in the arts and music – festivals do not support dance in the community

Darren Johns

- some of the infrastructure could be mobile – is that something that we would want

Andrish St Claire

- mobile infrastructure happened already – there was a \$1,5M touring rig to fold out - this idea comes up every few years – like ideas of building stages - none of it has ever had the support to take off properly
- Concur with Brian about the dance – very little support – there is traditional movement up here – Bangarra, Chooky Dancers

Janice McEwen

- the CDU and NT Music School offer music and cross collaboration
- but there is no support for dance at all - nobody teaches it anywhere – and nobody teaches theatre
- no specialisation of an art form around when not taught – realisation that basics are not in place – although arts is now in the national curriculum
- to expect the NT to achieve this can be counter productive as there are limited funds
- I know of three dancers that went interstate to learn dancing and aren't not coming back – one dancer is cutting hair to make a living

Jacinta Price

- at the Alice Springs forum was the suggestion of a Central Australia Arts School

Bill Wade – Charles Darwin University

- the discussion paper speaks about what we all believe
- there are good news for remote communities: CDU has received \$30M to focus around indigenous engagement
- and, creative arts will be a top priority for CDU
- the existing university theatre will be refurbished – and there is discussion that all of the art forms are converging – not just singular music, but performing arts
- I am fairly optimistic that good things are coming
- the creative tropical city report found that there is economic prosperity – but there needs to be greater investment in the arts to meet some of the objectives
- 2030 – see the arts as a business – broad success

Paul: Let's looking at the broad framework – what is the role of government and what is the role of arts organisation

Steve Eland – 24 HR Art NTCCA

- I find the language quite disturbing
- like “we will work together with arts organisation” but in the same paragraph it says “will set the priorities”

Tess Lea – Charles Darwin University

- there are two roles - for organisations and creative industries
- in terms of its direct relationships the policy has to be open ended and as liberated as possible – the government role needs to open minded.

- the government can offer support with accommodation, public transport, residencies, freight, scholarships, exchanges – things you would expect and which are missing here

Jane Hampson

- creative industries talk about who has actually done it - consultants to advise policy – government is business support – artists create

Damien Pree – Corrugated Iron Youth Arts

- it's also about Darwin's position in South East Asia – the absence of a sophisticated presence is evident

Andrish St Claire

- when you can get \$15,000, it's not much to make of it – it's virtually impossible to get a partnership - and your not emerging -

Jack Tinapple – The NEO

- I would like to see a point of reference about peer assessment – this is importance for excellence

Louise Partos

- interesting to read about remote, regional distribution – but how will it be achieved – resource of artshub?
- Katherine Regional Arts could achieve a lot more if it was resourced better
- what is happening in Arnhem land - a lot are interested

Darren Johns

- the role of government is to understand lost of creators and generators
- people here have products that could be commercialised – but the government needs to understand the value of it – this includes the understanding of the value to initiate and develop a product – export

Sandra Thibodeaux – NT Writer's Centre

- a lot of organisations service across the NT
- we need crucial information about the Regional Arts Funding (RAF)
- we need some information about how you can pay for future programs
- it would help to have one position in the education department to liaise with arts organisation and the schools

Paul Rajan

- I will take suggestion to the Education Department

Alice Rae – Darwin City Council

- thinking about support for commercial product
- arts producers are also full time workers – unemployment is low – and these skills are very employable

Bong Ramilo

- the only way that arts and culture can be at the heart is if every NT person can create art and then we can hope for excellence
- you need to talk about education and health – it will take at least 15 years to have something sustainable – to where people live
- also we should all refuse to take one year grants – one year grants are the ruin of sustainable art projects
- the role of government should be to invest in sustainability

- role of grants comes down to make art with or without government

Andrish St Claire

- youth funding is usually about behavioural change – it does take along time and we are funded to do a two week workshops and one day festival and then asked if this has made a difference
- government does not seek information – there hasn't been communication going on for a long time about what is happening in regional or remote communities – government could be better informed
- not sure how you set it up
- but needs consistency

Tim Hill

- huge amount of arts money is going to Darwin
- what good art needs to make it to the ground
- there is a big amount which is going to the Darwin Entertainment Centre (DEC) and Araluen Cultural Precinct – this is eating half of the arts budget at a fixed expense – that's a community budget – need clarity on what is hitting the artists
- I agree that everything is always a one time approached – government should consider triennial funded for projects that have potential – to not be buried in administration
- no more short term approaches

Heather Sjoberg – Darwin City Council

- the really critical issue is money – at the end of the day the strategies need to be funded
- I need a think tank, brainstorming
- a document about this is useless without a resource statement – anybody who has something to say about it should
- where should the conversation take place

Sarah Price – Darwin Festival

- we need to develop more strategic partnerships with businesses and private sector - government could facilitate these relationships
- role of government should be to facilitate corporate functions and link arts and business

Paul Rajan

- other government agencies have an interest

Talitha Kennedy

- we need to build the skills
- broader community benefits rather than individual careers – but need to build individuals as well to be employable

Darren Johns

- point of the Quick Response Scheme is to build capacity

Penny Campton

- outstations are valued as creative spaces

Paul: What do you think is the role of arts community?

Carol Phayer

- collectively of the arts need to lobby the government to understand the importance of a creative city – and the benefits of the arts to health, education, tourism – needs to come from all areas

Andrish St Claire

- when profit is easy to understand, when its things that do good ???

Christine Nathanael – Darwin Patchworks and Quilters (DPAQ)

- we have an exhibition once every two years – costs DAPQ \$22 000 to run exhibition at DEC – free in Alice Springs at Araluen as they earn volunteer points throughout the year
- we cannot find a studio to hang the quilts – we have an arts space at Winnellie which we are grateful– but there is nothing to have an exhibition in Darwin – the government should help us to have a space to hang their quilts

Louise Partos

- I would like to see the arts community and government to come together to work on a policy
- strong policy needs a shared vision

Paul Rajan

- there is a tension between participation/excellence and regional/remote

Bill Wade

- the CDU is working towards a draft policy
- I hope the new vision will enhance a growth of the policy

Alex Ben Mayor

- what is the responsibility of the arts community and artists?
- some people make art for the community, some arts is an expression of their souls/self – DPAQ are making art and trying to get it out there
- artists make work that they must
- rest of community there for dissemination
- artists if they can express themselves are not a separation but an expression of the community

Jane Hampson

- the Darwin festival is starting to show that tourism is economically beneficial
- if you don't have art then no one would live here

Deb Hudson

- art can't always been seen as a business and some people don't want money for their art they just want to do it with there friends and community
- need to provide opportunities as that is what people want to do

Damien Pree

- arts organisations give that support to make things happen
- some money should be kept aside to reward the success – like reward behavioural change

Andrish St Claire

- there has been a history that when works are successful then Arts NT can't seem to support that kind of work anymore– Arts NT is stuck at funding emerging works

- can't support major works

Damien Pree

- the role of the arts community – usually decision are made at the top and everyone arranges themselves – very destructive to history and momentum
- arts sectors tends to rebel against the government – policy is developed and then wipes out years of hard work
- it is up to the government to respond to the arts community
- often models exist elsewhere with an industry to graduate up to
- here is a different equation because you don't have a level of industry to graduate up to – rather have the industry judge the work not the government
- and how can we assist to see if the stats are benefiting the community

Talitha Kennedy

- is that what an arts ghetto is?

Paul: Let's talk about the journey – what does the journey look like from here to the future?

Jane Hampson

- Have an audit about what's working

Janice McEwen

- collaboration and consultation about what the priorities are
- the priorities that Jacinta mentioned are very broad – we need information along the way

Darren Johns

- is it time for the NT to have a regional arts organisation?

Janice McEwen

- needs business type networks – talk to each other more – tend to be in a bunker

Andrish St Claire

- we are all speaking out there and there is no dialogue – we need more regular dialogue with Arts NT and finding what Arts NT is doing
- how does government work better?

Bernadette Eggington - Austrade

- NT Government has got significant contracts that link to communication – consider other mechanisms that are able to support the arts – some companies have contributed significantly
- as a government we can be innovative to create additional funding to support the arts – look at private/public partnerships
- can government create additional fund raising to support the arts

Darren Johns

- we need programs for established practitioners –professional development for established practitioners

Andrish St Claire

- perhaps some ideas are transport – cheaper transport – it is an issue about bringing people into talks like this from everywhere – costs are too expensive
- it is impossible to get to communities

- and ideas are never taken up

Tim Hill

- I would like to see the linking with South East Asia – it's the closest audience
- arts is one of the easiest ways to connect through culture
- Darwin could be the gateway to Australia

Damien Pree

- globalisation can be confused with Americanisation – Darwin can appeal to its own sensibilities – you don't necessarily need to push people to be interested in Darwin
- people will stop being interested in Darwin if it starts being like everywhere else
- it is important for Darwin to maintain its uniqueness – entertain itself

Bong Ramilo

- don't pigeonhole America
- professional stuff comes out of America – let avoid generalisations

Damien Pree

- still need to appeal to a global funding

Barbara Amberg-Pedersen – Mimi Arts

- remote people don't have a voice – their voice is the people travelling out there. I would like for my aunts to speak to each other so art can happen – it's a communication thing
- can we do something for those with a broken public telephone
- need direct conversations

Darren Johns

- creative tropical city – broadband being so poor has an impact

Christina Davidson - ANKAAA

- concrete planning on reaching out to community

Tim Hill

- clarity and communication – tap into the response – true working document before for it hits the ground

Tess Leah

- philanthropic just doesn't happen – it needs to be in their interest – that's what government needs to achieve – being a broker

Andrisha St Claire

- there is no great communication between governments – needs to be better
- conversation needs to start – infrastructure all the way through

Jo Nicol – Katherine Regional Arts

- and wasn't there talk about more money

Paul and Jacinta end the session and thank all for coming and speaking up.