

ARTS QUEENSLAND

CREATIVE PRODUCTION HUB SCOPING STUDY

CONSULTATION PROGRESS REPORT

JUNE 2008

Background

Arts Queensland is undertaking a study to scope the development of a Creative Production Hub to support small and mid scale performing arts in Queensland.

Detailed consultation with key stakeholders across Queensland was undertaken during May 2008. Eighty people participated in this process. Four focus groups and twenty meetings were held with independent artists, producers, venues, funded organisations, local government and Arts Queensland officers and other stakeholders.

This document contains key learnings from this consultation exercise. A brief 'snapshot' summary is provided to the right.

Focus group attendees were provided with a Project Overview and a list of Consultation Questions prior to the four sessions, held in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. Discussions centred on themes relevant to the project of strengths, opportunities and ideas, and key issues. A selection of specific ideas put forward by participants has been included, as well as quotes from some participants. These are shown in italicised text.

Arts Queensland is most grateful to the many people who generously gave their times and ideas to this process. More information on this project can be viewed at the Arts Queensland website at www.arts.qld.gov.au

You are invited to respond to the discussion paper available on the Arts Queensland website by Wednesday 16th July 2008.

Summary

The consultation generated constructive discussions around support for artists. Priorities for a Hub would be to make great work where viable markets can exist, foster research and development, and stimulate critical discourse. Identified needs included richer networks and information to better tap opportunities for artists and improve sector productivity, and more artist led infrastructure.

Producers were identified as pivotal to making things happen. They can free up artists to create work and can be vital enablers and brokers to grow quality, and generate artist employment and audiences. There is a real shortage of producers and mentoring and development is required.

Building engagement and collaboration with presenters is a priority. Discussions covered presenter partnerships in investment and development to encourage and extend creative work, and manage financial risk. Improved marketing, advocacy and exploitation of regional, national and international markets were identified as critical to future sector success.

Strengths

- There is an incredible freshness in the local independent scene
- Queensland is a good place to experiment and trial the new
- Creative talent, including Indigenous & interdisciplinary artists
- Considerable and diverse independent art making practice
- Growing quality and recognition of small and mid scale work
- Effective collaborations and partnerships already in place
- Many venues are very supportive of artists
- International Asia/Pacific location, leading lifestyle region

OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS	RELATED ISSUES
<p>Artists: Make great creative work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop great creative work for which there is a viable market, and support the highest possible quality work - Back more work with potential, make longer term investments - Provide great role models for creative practitioners - support research and development of creative work - Create a climate that supports risk-taking, enables artists to experiment and provides the right to fail - Identify <i>Intervention points</i> in creation of a work and at each intervention point clearly define roles & responsibilities within sector - Provide artists with longer term support to enable them to build a solid body of work, and to build critical mass and scale of work - Provide a structured forum for critical exchange and assessment: direct, rigorous and constructive, useful to develop artistic quality - Develop productions that are <i>season ready</i> and <i>tour ready</i> - Encourage more collaboration with international artists <p><i>Idea</i> Provide a place to take an idea where professionals with knowledge of venues, opportunities and pathways provide advice and evaluation</p>	<p>Artists: Make great creative work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is difficult for artists to build a body of work. This is needed to provide viable careers <p><i>“There is a lack of top companies in this state who are pushing the boundaries, and creating unique, edgy and distinctive work that can inspire young artists and provide great role models”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a lack of direct, honest critique of work, our politeness and desire to be supportive, while understandable, is not good for a creative innovative art scene <p><i>“If you don’t try and fail often, work can’t develop and grow”</i></p> <p>Beware the term ‘uniquely Queensland’, may be of limited value to other markets; ‘world’s best practice and an understanding of our global positioning are the issues here</p> <p><i>“Currently in Queensland there seems to be a lack of people/ organisations scanning the industry for works with promise then lobbying, representing and developing them”</i></p> <p><i>“There is a need for more extensive local critique of work to “cut the flab off”, serious industry critique about what is and isn’t working, so that works can, through peer critique, develop and improve”</i></p>
<p>Artists: information and networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information and resources to inform, empower and improve artists understanding of the professional environment - Encourage richer artist networks to foster links between artists <p><i>Idea</i> A blog where local arts information, ideas and views can be shared and critiqued, discussing what is and isn’t working. A daily conversation. A platform for artistic dialogue and exchange for the industry</p>	<p>Artists: information and networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a lack of professional information and communication and an overview of sector workings to match the needs of practising artists <p><i>“a gap exists between the initial urge to create things and the knowledge of how to steer the ideas into a professional environment where it can become a career and on-going work”</i></p> <p>There are substantial gaps in local media coverage</p> <p><i>“There is a need for a way of connecting talented people”</i></p>

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<p>Artists: artist led infrastructure and decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop more mechanisms to realise great ideas and potential - Provide support for artist self produced seasons; these are seen as important drivers in a healthy arts ecology - Provide regular opportunities for Artists to independently create work <p><i>Idea</i> Encourage more self produced artist seasons and spaces such as The Audio Pollen Social Club and Tongue and Groove Program</p>	<p>Artists: artist led infrastructure and decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a shortage of affordable rehearsal and performance spaces - There is a lack of artist run spaces, seasons and initiatives eg: former dance spaces <i>The Crab Room</i> or <i>Cherry Herring</i> - Recognise the huge challenges for artists who self produce their work - Artist led projects are the least supported in the sector <p><i>“There is huge talent and interest in the Arts with 18 year olds, but after a “death phase” in the late 20’s many drop out of the sector, how can we keep these people? The Hub could target intervention at this period”</i></p>
<p>Producers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognise the critical role of producers in making things happen - Producers can play a vital role as enablers, as champions of artists & collaborators, as guides, career advisors & as quality bench-markers - Producers can free artists up to create work and can develop pathways, partnerships and identify market potential - Build productive, collaborative artist - producer relationships - Develop the definition of the tem ‘producer’ to recognise speciality - Provide ways to mentor and skill up producers, possibly on the job - Develop a network of skilled producers - Producers need varied skills to work with varied artforms <p><i>Idea</i> 3 artists each do a creative development with a small budget, these are then presented to a panel of producers/presenters to be critiqued, developed and/or further funded (as used by a Montreal company)</p> <p><i>Idea</i> The Hub could form a Producer’s network. Collaboration can reduce isolation, and develop richer networks and increase opportunities</p>	<p>Producers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a gap in emerging producers and few skilled producers operate independently within the state - Producers have different skills & specialities, needed at differing times - Limited avenues of support for producers - Uneven understanding of what a producer is <p><i>“There has to be a shift in thinking away from Producers vs. Artists, towards equal relationships with Producers as a creative partner. Producers should be viewed as an opportunity, not as a threat”</i></p> <p><i>“Art should not be limited by the aesthetic opinions of a few Producers. There needs to be safeguards for art production that may not appeal to the Producer, but may have other values”</i></p> <p><i>“A Performing Lines type outfit is needed for Queensland”</i></p>

OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS	RELATED ISSUES
<p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster mechanisms to encourage discussion and engagement between venues, producers, tourers and funders - Develop more collaborative, partnership based investment models with venues to encourage creative risk taking and reduce financial risk - Encourage presenters to use external plus 'in-house' producers <p><i>Idea</i> More support for smaller venues would enable them to in turn support more risky, experimental works</p> <p><i>Idea</i> Early stage presenter involvement may assist practitioners, may encourage presenter investment and reduce the risk of a sight-unseen performance</p>	<p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk aversion by venues means that work can be quite boring / safe <p><i>"Venues are not empowered by governments to do adventurous work"</i></p> <p><i>"Venues want to support artists, but they're flat out"</i></p> <p><i>"Venues are often types of Hubs anyway. Venues are also in a unique position to find work that can match their community requirements"</i></p>
<p>Audiences and markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More innovative and clever marketing using specialist skills is required - Provide clearer signals to audiences about type of work, eg: 'cutting edge' - Develop more viable markets for great work including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Brisbane venues & Contemporary performance circuits o Regional, National and International circuits o Young people and in schools - Provide better marketing for the great work we make - We must exploit national and international markets to be viable - Strengthen external advocacy & platforms for Queensland work - View Queensland as a base for pan-pacific markets - Bring buyers to Queensland to see new work: similar to <i>Big Sound</i> - The arts could learn a lot from sports marketers <p><i>Idea</i> More ways to pitch 'works in development' are needed, perhaps a showroom kind of idea, maybe called "Micro Paddock" or "Back Deck"!</p>	<p>Audiences and markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our state is too small to provide a viable market for much of the performing arts, touring is essential to achieving and sustaining great work - There is a limited tapping of regional markets by local work - There is a lack of advocacy for Queensland work <p><i>"Audiences' need to be seen as a critical stake holder in the Arts Ecology, and the Producer's main role should be as the vital link between the Artist and the Audience"</i></p> <p><i>"A purely Queensland focus is unrealistic, there is a need for Producers/The Hub to look at careers long term and be able to see the National and International Picture, and also connect Artists into this bigger picture"</i></p>

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<p>Sector and the Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faster moving mechanisms are needed to exploit more artistic and business potential - Think beyond existing touring circuits - Think beyond 'live' and consider the role and potential of digital media <p><i>Idea</i> Look into developing a curated Touring Circuit in SE QLD, and setting up of a data-base of all venues available to practitioners, and on what terms</p>	<p>Sector and the Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timing is of the essence to make things happen - Considerable partnerships and collaborations already exist and many are working well. These need to be recognised and acknowledged - Some artists naturally have producing skills & business savvy, others don't - Time spent on business activities reduces an artists time to make art, their primary activity <p><i>"there is a need for more maturity and sophistication in the sector, with collaboration and work moving around"</i></p>
<p>Funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Place some funding decisions closer to the work <p><i>Idea</i> Provide devolved grants for creative development. Ideas are pitched to an artistic panel. Pitching seems more relevant for the performing arts, rather than grant applications. The panel would provide critical responses for further development, and decide where further funding should be put - Develop more flexible and responsive ways to back great ideas <p><i>Idea</i> Award small grants that enable artists to "prove themselves" and experiment. Like IT industry's "proof of concept" money, or film industry's "Project Green Light". Should have a long term and artist pathway focus.</p> <p>More porous approaches to funding, eg: a % of major performing arts funding held in a pool & competitively sourced for new innovative projects</p> <p><i>Idea</i> An "innovation fund" of about \$500,000 (from funding currently allocated to major arts companies), could be tapped by anyone, not just majors, where innovation/idea not size of organisation counts, anyone can apply</p> </p>	<p>Funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risks for government: there needs to be a willingness to take some risks and write some money off in developing and encouraging new work <p><i>"The Hub should not just be another layer of bureaucracy. Decision making should not be seen as an Arts Queensland decision, rather place decisions with the producers so they have the ability to be responsive to the market, move quickly, to take advantage of opportunities"</i></p>

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<p>A Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Hub needs to be part of an integrated ecology. A Hub could: - Have a rotating roster of producers on tap with specialist skills - Connect across artforms, to ignite and enrich creativity - Provide ongoing presenter involvement to interest presenters in artists, ideas and projects and invite their input during development - Use varied models, sometimes the producer will drive an idea & source artists: other times the Artist has the idea and producer is the enabler <p><i>Idea</i></p> <p><i>There is scope for more platforms to showcase new artists / art, it could be 'five good minutes' of a new work to show its potential and build a profile</i></p>	<p>A Hub</p> <p><i>"it would be disappointing if hubs fund producers only"</i></p> <p><i>"The Producer should be value-adding. But it shouldn't just be framed on a commercial level, there needs to be the environment created where work can grow, and experimental work can happen"</i></p> <p><i>"Artists need to make relevant creative decisions and have control over their projects. It is inappropriate for well-meaning producers who have an economic focus but who want to be making creative decisions. There needs to be a balance with this"</i></p>
<p>Specific Regional Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop more locally based quality work that is relevant and has touring potential, can include Indigenous work - Develop more collaborative ways of working across sector - Strengthen distinctive local cultural offers - Further harness creative entrepreneurial strength of the north - Better tap into the 2 million visitors who pass through the region - Strengthen existing infrastructure and networks to achieve goals - Increase local investment decisions, such as 'seed funds', this may involve a scheme for local producers to pitch to Council <p><i>Idea</i></p> <p><i>Create a new category in RADF targeting quality local performing arts productions with producing and presenting partners in place</i></p> <p><i>Idea</i></p> <p><i>Establish a local Cultural Foundation, attracting private and public money: a mechanism to pool business / tourism / philanthropic investments</i></p>	<p>Regional issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong local capacity already exists, requiring recognition & resourcing - The arts could learn from tourism sector and further professionalise by building stronger, more collaborative networks - There is a real need for administrative support: grant writing, acquittals, bookkeeping, able to be shared by a number of groups - There is potential to engage in regional creative industry clustering <p><i>"more 'can do no wrong' spaces are needed for artists to try ideas out, experiment and develop their practice"</i></p> <p><i>"ideas that may work can exist locally, the work may be half way between what the audience wants to see and what we want to do"</i></p> <p>Regional strengths identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vibrant regional centres, potential for art industry clusters and hubs - Indigenous dance artists and considerable goodwill to Indigenous arts - Regional centres with active local cultural sectors and infrastructure