

3C: Arts and culture in regional Queensland



Mary-Kate Khoo, *Umbrelliads* 2008

'I would never have believed, living and working in a remote part of Australia, that I would ever have the opportunity to be involved in a production such as *The Greatest Show on Earth*. I'm sure I'm not the only one that feels inspired to keep the music going.'

Councillor Pat Tanks, Mayor Longreach Shire Council on the 2007 Queensland Music Festival production in Longreach

Arts Queensland and the broader arts portfolio have a strong commitment to supporting arts and culture in regional Queensland, and recognise the vital role of the arts in improving social and economic outcomes and building sustainable, resilient and liveable communities. Local councils, the Australian Government and other agencies in the Queensland Government also provide significant support and infrastructure for arts and culture in regional Queensland. In addition, a range of organisations and groups play a vital role in supporting artists and arts and cultural development outcomes in regional Queensland. These include small to medium arts companies, regional galleries and museums, public libraries, performance venues, artist-run initiatives, education and training organisations and volunteer groups.

To better support the diverse range of artistic practice and leading artists and arts companies who are based in regional areas, Arts Queensland opened its first regional office in Cairns in 2007. During 2007 and 2008, Arts Queensland maintained support for service organisations and cultural infrastructure to deliver regional access to quality arts and cultural experiences, shared spaces and local services. During the first 18 months of the art+place program, over \$3 million or 71 per cent of funding has been allocated to support public art projects in regional communities in Queensland. In addition, the \$3 million in dedicated regional funding for the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) and the Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund (IRADF) continue to deliver a range of artistic and community cultural development outcomes (see discussion later in this section).

As discussed in Part 2, while local council amalgamations brought some uncertainty to regional communities, the current context of redeveloping local cultural plans presents opportunities to reinvigorate arts and cultural support, programming and infrastructure.

In the transition from the Cultural Infrastructure Program to the s2m Program, the assessment process highlighted key areas of need, particularly for viable infrastructure in central and west Queensland, areas with high population growth in South-East Queensland, and new models of arts service delivery that harness the often fragmented services and functions of a range of committees, organisations and funding programs.

Arts Queensland, in partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts, has provided \$550 000 to support a more coordinated and sustainable community arts and cultural development sector in Queensland. In 2009, three organisations — Arts Nexus in Cairns, Creative Regions in Bundaberg and Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) in Longreach — have been contracted to develop partnerships with local artists and community groups to help build their capacity to deliver projects for achieving better community outcomes, support sustainable cultural activities in regional Queensland, and help to develop creative industries in these areas.



*Dream Catchers*, Innisfail. Queensland Music Festival 2007. Photo: atmosphere photography

Arts Queensland's recently released touring strategy for performing arts, *Coming To a Place Near You 2009–2014*, offers regional communities the opportunity to select quality arts and cultural experiences from a menu of theatre, work for children, live music, dance, new media arts, residencies and workshops. There are exciting opportunities to enrich local arts practices and build new partnerships between artists and communities. For example, a group of small towns could invite a nationally renowned choral leader to 'tour' and conduct residencies and master classes with local schools and community choirs to develop a large-scale musical event for their regional festival.

## Investment in regional arts and culture

Arts Queensland invests in artists and arts and cultural organisations in regional Queensland via a number of grants and funding programs. These include the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF), the Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund (IRADF); the s2m Program (and the former Cultural Infrastructure Program); Sector Project Grants; Industry Development Initiatives; art+place; Gritty Places; and the Arts Regional Touring Scheme delivered by the Queensland Arts Council.

Arts Queensland's investment in regional Queensland increased by \$6.48 million or 111 per cent from 2006–07 to 2007–08. ('Regional Queensland' is defined as outside Brisbane.) This increase is attributed to expenditure of \$2.56 million under Backing Indigenous Arts; \$1.5 million for the Hinkler Hall of Aviation in Bundaberg; art+place grants of \$824 000; \$355 000 towards the Hopevale Centre for Arts and Culture; and approximately \$620 000 in project grants (compared to approximately \$450 000 in 2006–07). Investment in Brisbane increased by \$2.58 million or 14 per cent from 2006–07 to 2007–08.

In the transition from the Cultural Infrastructure Program to s2m, the per centage of funding to regional organisations increased from 22 per cent to 24 per cent for 2008. However, the number of regional organisations reduced from 13 to 11. The following arts organisations in regions received s2m funding in 2008 and 2009:

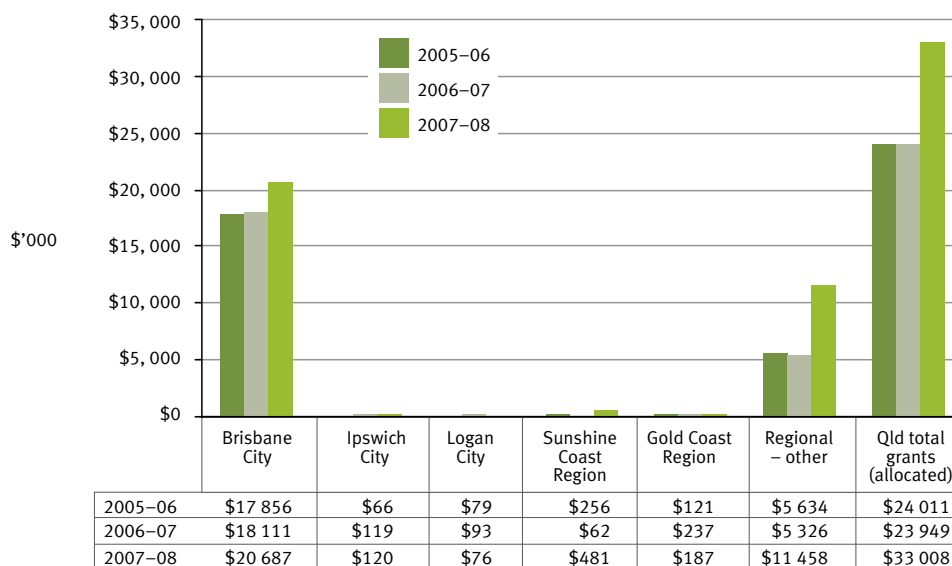
- Cairns — Arts Nexus, JUTE, KickArts, Cairns Centre for Contemporary Arts
- Gold Coast — Swell Currumbin Sculpture Festival
- Mackay — Crossroad Arts
- Townsville — Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Dancenorth, Umbrella Studios, La Luna Youth Arts
- Mornington Island — Woomera Aboriginal Corporation.



Crossroad Arts 2009 Program. Photo: Jim Cullen

**Figure 5** summarises trend data on the distribution of grant funding from Arts Queensland to artists and organisations by locations in South East Queensland (Brisbane city, Ipswich, Logan, Gold Coast region and Sunshine Coast region) and all other regions over the three financial years from 2005–06 to 2007–08.

**Figure 5: Distribution of AQ grant funding by location, 2005–06 to 2007–08 (\$'000)**



In 2007–08, out of a total of \$33.01<sup>1</sup> million in grant funding, \$21.55<sup>2</sup> million was distributed to artists and organisations in South-East Queensland. Artists and organisations outside of the south-east corner received \$11.49 million in grants and funding. In 2007–08, South-East Queensland had 52 per cent of the state’s population and received 65 per cent of Arts Queensland’s grant funding. Those regions outside the south-east corner had 48 per cent of the State’s population and received 35 per cent of the grant funding.

## Diverse arts and cultural practice

The following vignettes highlight the diversity and innovation of arts practice and the cultural offer in regional Queensland during 2007 and 2008:

- New media artist Vivian Hogg received a \$20 000 in development and presentation funding towards **Big Square Eye**. The project saw emerging new media artists partner with young people from Brisbane suburbs and regional Queensland to develop video works that explore diverse youth cultures. Featured as part of the 2008 Brisbane Festival, Big Square Eye was a gallery installation at QUT Creative Industries, available online and also screened on banks of television sets in 16 Retravision outlets across Queensland.
- Operated in partnership between the Queensland Museum, Arts Queensland and local councils, the **Museum Resource Centre Network** provides support to community museums and keeping places across the state. Based in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Noosa and Toowoomba, the MRCN is staffed by six Museum Development Officers. Their role is to identify significant collections and assist regional communities to document, preserve, interpret and display these in local communities.
- Funded under the s2m Program, the **Australian Festival of Chamber Music** is an annual international chamber music festival held over nine days in July–August in Townsville.

<sup>1</sup> The total includes the following funding programs — RADF, IRADF, s2m, SPG, IDI, Qld Arts Council ARTS, and art+place.

<sup>2</sup> The total for South-East Queensland includes \$8.8 million for the four major performing arts companies. While the majors deliver some regional services, this expenditure is not disaggregated. Totals exclude arts statutory authorities, Queensland Music Festival and Brisbane Festival, as these are designated as whole-of-state flagships.

Each year the Festival attracts around 25 chamber musicians from across the world to give concerts and teach Australia's emerging artists through the Winterschool program.

- Cairns-based, contemporary photographer **Michael Marzik** received a \$3249 Career Development Grant for an internship with Reina Irmer, Senior Photographer at the State Library of Queensland in May 2007. During the internship, Michael focused on digitising materials in collections and has since shared these skills when working with local artists, historical societies and museums.
- A partnership between Ausdance Queensland and the Queensland Arts Council, ***Playing for Queensland – Tales My Mother Told Me***, involved a professional creative team working with 240 regionally based artists to explore the practicalities of performance making. The two-year project produced a unique stage performance that involved many artforms including music, song, story telling, spoken word, dance, circus, comedy and drama. In 2007, performances took place in Gayndah, Dalby, Charleville, Mount Isa, Thuringowa, Bowen, Sarina, Bundaberg, Stradbroke Island and Redcliffe.
- **Museums and Gallery Services Queensland (MAGSQ)** receives funding under the s2m Program to promote, support and provide services to foster excellence in museums, galleries and keeping places. Key achievements of individuals and organisations in the sector are recognised through the annual Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards (GAMAA). Joint winners in the 2008 GAMAA for organisations with more than seven staff were the Museum of Brisbane for Remembering Goodna: Stories from a Queensland mental hospital, and the Queensland Museum for Queensland Museum On-Line Learning Resources. The Yugambeh Museum, Language and Heritage Research Centre's Drumley Walk took out the 2008 GAMAA for organisations with six staff or less.
- With \$35 000 in development and presentation funding, **Bonemap** delivered a contemporary media and performance program as part of the **OnEdge Festival** in Cairns in July 2008. The program attracted an audience of over 2800 and featured emerging and established local, national and international artists in cabaret, sound art, installation, new media and contemporary dance works. This success has seen Bonemap secure further development and presentation funding of \$41 000 for the 2009 festival.
- **Queensland Art Gallery** is the only state gallery to provide an ongoing and comprehensive program of collection-based travelling exhibitions and public programs to regional areas as part of its core business. *Queensland Live: Contemporary Art on Tour* set a new attendance record with 47 104 people viewing the exhibition on its eight-venue tour during 2006–07 and 2007–08. As part of the *Picasso & his collection* public program, a regional lecture tour was held at 25 galleries throughout Queensland from June to August 2008. On 17 January 2009, the gallery staged a one-day children's festival in conjunction with 30 regional galleries, libraries and Indigenous communities as part of the *Optimism* exhibition. Children in regional centres took part in a range of activities created by leading artists Gemma Smith, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Robert MacPherson and Michael Zavros, as well as storytelling and music from the Festival's Summer Soundtrack of optimistic songs.



Carl Vine (Conductor) with The Barrier Reef Orchestra. Australian Festival of Chamber Music. Photo: Peter Peach

Funded by an Arts Queensland Creative Fellowship, Jill Chism conceived and ran the *Water's edge – creating environments* project between June 2007 and June 2008.

In *Water's edge*, Jill led regional artists and workshop participants to create site-specific artwork in selected zones within pristine and polluted coastal environments.

Commencing in a small way at Noosa's *Floating Lands* with workshop participants, *Water's edge* gathered force as it moved further north. Jill developed a lengthier, more intensive site-specific practice involving selected artists from Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. She also worked with high school students at North Keppel Island as part of the North Keppel Island Environmental Art project convened by the Rockhampton City Gallery.

The site-specific nature of her practice enabled Jill and the other regional artists to explore the richness of the coastal environment and, in particular, to focus on the importance of water as one of earth's primary elements. Using the environment as a canvas encouraged artists to feel its pulses and observe its unfolding cycles.

The project was realised at six chosen sites: Cape Hillsborough and Broken River close to Mackay; Magnetic Island and Townsville Commons near Townsville; and Cape Tribulation and Cow Bay north of Cairns.

The culmination of Jill's work during her Creative Fellowship year is three exhibitions displaying documentary photography, videos and installations at the participating regional galleries of Artspace Mackay, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery Townsville and Cairns Regional Gallery.

In addition to Arts Queensland's major funding, *Water's edge* was also supported by the federal Regional Arts Fund, RADF funding from Mackay City Council and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Jill Chism credits the award of her Creative Fellowship as a most exciting new phase in her career. The connections she made along the vast coastal stretches of Queensland have led to ongoing projects, in particular with the Environmental Protection Agency.



Jill Chism, *Gaia #2*, former mangrove swamp at Cockle Bay on Magnetic Island. Photo: Jill Chism

## Regional Arts Development Fund

Established in 1991, RADF is a highly successful state and local government partnership that supports professional artists and arts practitioners living in regional Queensland. From July 2004 to June 2007, there were 4784 applications funded and 11 624 paid artists and arts and cultural workers in RADF projects.

RADF focuses on the development of quality art and arts practice for, and with, regional communities. As an indication of the extent of community involvement, over 51 700 volunteers participated in RADF projects between July 2004 and June 2007. **Table 9** summarises trend data on projects funded, artists employed and volunteers involved in RADF over the three financial years of 2004–05 to 2006–07.

Table 9: Trend data on number of projects funded, artists employed and volunteers involved in Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF), 2004–05 to 2006–07				
	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Number of applications funded via RADF	1691	1696	1397	TBC
Number of paid arts workers in RADF projects	3719	3900	4005	TBC
Number of volunteers participating in RADF projects	18 713	18 509	14 544	TBC
<p><b>NOTES on trends</b> over the three financial years from 2004–05 to 2006–07:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of paid arts workers increased slightly by 285</li> <li>• Number of volunteers decreased by approximately 4170</li> <li>• Number of applications decreased by approximately 300</li> <li>• It should be noted that there are some data missing from the 2006–07 data set as annual reports from 13 councils have not been lodged. In light of this, numbers for applications, paid artsworkers and volunteers in 2006–07 are likely to be slightly higher than reported.</li> <li>• RADF annual reports for 2007–08 are not due to be lodged until end March 2009. It is likely that numbers for RADF applications, paid arts workers and volunteers will be affected, to some degree, by the fact that council amalgamations took place in March 2008.</li> </ul>				

In 2005, the UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of the RADF program and to identify issues and strategies to further develop Arts Queensland’s partnership with councils for regional arts development. The evaluation found that RADF has ‘undoubtedly helped to change the perceptions of some people towards the arts, helped to engage more people with the arts ... leading them to become active participants, so that they not only consume art, they also participate in the art making process.’



The Winnie Coopers. Photo: Pete Bongiorno

Revised and refocused RADF guidelines came into effect from July 2007 to reflect the recommendations from the evaluation. Key changes include a renewed focus on supporting professional and emerging professional artists, and the inclusion of categories for concept development, cultural heritage and cultural tourism. To date, feedback from councils indicates that the increased emphasis on emerging and professional artists, combined with a more thorough and demanding application process, has led to a fall in the number of applications made to RADF. However, there are mixed views on whether this has led to an increase in the quality of applications, and improved outcomes in terms of sustainability, community involvement and arts development.

The RADF biennial conference, *taking it to the tropics*, was co-hosted by Cairns City Council and Mareeba Shire Council in November 2007. The conference brought to life the new RADF Guidelines, celebrated RADF volunteers and highlighted innovative regional arts projects and policy directions. In light of council amalgamations, conference delegates voted for an interim process for Arts Queensland's 2008–09 RADF allocations to councils based on the previous year of funding. 2009–10 will see a return to the established annual bid process for Arts Queensland RADF allocations, with an accompanying revision to council population classes to reflect the distribution of council sizes following amalgamation.

In the evaluation survey, respondents who are RADF liaison officers and committee members were required to rate their satisfaction with aspects of service delivery under the program. Respondents were more likely to be:

- *satisfied or very satisfied (56.4 per cent) with the clarity of program guidelines, than to be unsatisfied or very unsatisfied (22.4 per cent)*
- *satisfied or very satisfied (65.7 per cent) with the availability of staff to assist when needed, than to be unsatisfied or very unsatisfied (12.0 per cent\*).*
- *satisfied or very satisfied (64.2 per cent) with the quality of assistance provided, than to be unsatisfied or very unsatisfied (8.8 per cent\*).*
- *satisfied or very satisfied (28.3 per cent) with the RADF guidelines training in 2007, than to be unsatisfied or very unsatisfied (10.8 per cent\*).*

In late 2008, Arts Queensland, the Australia Council for the Arts, the Queensland Arts Council and the Local Government Association of Queensland established the Partnership for Regional Arts and Culture (PRAC) to provide a strategic forum to shape the development of RADF and improve coordination and collaboration for regional services and programs. In 2009, the Inaugural Regional Arts and Culture Conference will incorporate the RADF State Conference, reflecting the greater connection at both a local and state government level between the RADF program and broader strategic priorities for regional arts and culture.



Rock art Workshop facilitated by artist Patricia Brimble (Birri-Gubba Language Group Clan, Group Gia Elder), Lagoon's Hut. Photo: Fiona Bishop

In 2007–08, RADF delivered \$2.2 million in Arts Queensland funding and \$1.2 million in local council funding. The following snapshots indicate the diversity of projects and arts and cultural development outcomes achieved under RADF:

- With RADF funding from **Blackall Shire Council** in 2006–07, visual artist Natalie Billing partnered with eight community groups and a school to create an interactive installation in the Memorial Hall. The installation consisted of one thousand white porcelain bowls laid out on the hall's main floor, with each bowl holding a childhood memory of events in or around Blackall. The audience was encouraged to pick up the bowls, read the memories and to contribute a memory of their own.
- Over four days in 2007, the See Hear Now Festival presented new media arts to Townsville audiences and fostered collaborations between local and interstate artists working across music, dance, theatre, film and photography. The festival received funding support from RADF, **Thuringowa and Townsville City Councils**, the Australia Council for the Arts, and the federal Regional Arts Fund.
- The Nalangu Aboriginal Corporation received RADF funding from the **Booringa Shire Council** (now Roma Regional Council) in 2006–07 to invite mixed media artist, Debbie Deickmann, to conduct jewellery making workshops. Participants designed and created adornment art pieces using found objects or 'jewels of the bush' and traditional beads.
- The A-Venue Youth Music Initiative and RADF funding from **Gold Coast City Council** supported young Gold Coast band, The Winnie Coopers, to tour interstate to promote their single, 'Eating Disorder.' The tour helped hone the band's live performance and extend their fan base. Since then, The Winnie Coopers have signed with Mushroom Records and are involved with Hiphoperations, a Sydney-based community organisation that engages youth at-risk in positive community projects through hip-hop.
- **Broadsound Shire Council** contributed RADF funding to stage the Coalfields to Coast Arts Spectacular in Middlemount in 2006–07. The event featured a range of arts workshops, including character drawing and belly dancing, as well as artist-in-residence, Mary Dias-Brown, working with local artists to create a community canvas.
- **Pittsworth Shire Council** (now Toowoomba Regional Council) provided RADF funding in 2007–08 to employ two cultural heritage experts from the Queensland Museum to assess the Pioneer Village Lace Collection. The experts developed interpretation and preservation plans for the textile collection and delivered a textile preservation workshop to a diverse mix of volunteers.
- With RADF funding from **Longreach Regional Council** in 2007–08, the Outback Thistle Pipe Band employed a professional bagpiper and drummer to further develop band members' musical and performance skills.
- In 2008–09, the Mental Illness Fellowship in North Queensland received RADF funding from **Mackay Regional Council** to employ Sarina-based musician Margie Ward to direct a choir for people living with a mental illness or psychiatric disability. The choir, who called themselves 'Unheard Voices', have already presented a number of public performances for Mackay Mental Health Awareness Day and ABC Radio.



Outback Thistle Pipe Band, *Greatest Show on Earth*, Longreach. Queensland Music Festival, 2007.