

Submission Number: NND.001.00859

Submission Of: ros abercrombie

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What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise? Creative Industries

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? Regional Arts Australia

Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

Cannot comment as we are involved in recovery response not emergency response.

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

Cannot comment as we are involved in recovery response not emergency response.

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

The arts are a crucial element in the make-up of future liveable regions and are central to thriving and healthy communities and sustainable growth across regional, rural and remote Australia. As such the arts are vital in the recovery and renewal process and integral in planning and delivery of the Australian bush fire response.

Regional Arts Australia liaised with their state-member organisations to understand the immediate and long-term needs of the bushfire-affected communities they serve. Their answers universally point to the importance of integrating arts and culture into the immediate, medium and long-term economic, social, land and infrastructure recovery process.

A growing body of research and past projects demonstrate that the arts generate and promote a sense of belonging, support healing and build capacity and are integral to the recovery of communities, landscapes and the narratives of recovery and renewal.

After the 2009 Victorian Bushfires then Emergency Services Commissioner Bruce Esplin (who worked with RAA and CRN) said of arts recovery: "In my experience, arts plays a critical, but hugely undervalued role, in this process (disaster recovery). However, I don't believe it is art as a spectator activity – it is the participation, the involvement in the creative process that makes the difference."

Examples of arts recovery projects include public visual art (sculpture, murals), theatre, writing workshops and performances, music, craft and multi-media. Projects that are created by and with community have the most impact.

Planning and preparation has been identified as a key area that needs reform. There is a need for resources and access to industry in developing organisational emergency response plans (ESMP's for arts orgs and cultural institutions). This is legacy from 2019 / 20 experiences – the cultural sector identifying the need to have greater preparation and plans.

Arrangements for community recovery, specifically social recovery, are improved by the integration of the arts. In order to ensure sector readiness this integration needs to be factored in early. Having 'workers on the ground' in LGA's across the nation will enable the kind of community connectedness that leads to fast and accurate data collection in the aftermath of a disaster, and a direct conduit between community and local government. You have to build the relationships before you need them.

Importantly different communities recover at different speeds and having a worker on the ground ensures there is a trusted voice to communicate their needs.

We recommend three stages of response:

Stage 1 - Immediate need:

1. Funds to be made available for replacement of Creative Infrastructure and Materials and loss of income. Access for artists and arts organisations through eligibility for sole traders to the relevant Emergency and Recovery grants to address:

- Loss of Income from sales (no produce / work left)
- Loss of income from cancellation of gig and festivals
- Loss of Income from tourism and visitation
- Unable to pay rent due to loss of income – this is immediate and will be ongoing due to the multiple challenges - to remake work for sale (material and infrastructure required) No access to outlets and points of sale and to have customers visitors to purchase work
- Unable to complete projects that have been funded (local / state/ federal funding)
- Inability to apply for planned funding and inability to meet acquittal deadlines

2. Financial resources to support each State / Territory to respond and provide the support and services needed.

3. Workers on the Ground are paramount to collate information, provide support and facilitate access to services. They are scalable – an example of funds required is set out below:

- 12 mths = \$250,000
- 18 years = \$350,000
- 3 years = \$500,000

This is based on a worker covering the 7 LGA's in fire impacted areas of Victoria and is costed on 2.5 people.

Stage 2 – Recovery Projects:

A multifaceted approach, producing and presenting across sector collaboration; education, health, tourism, development, agriculture and the environment. Connection across Peak Orgs and connection with each State level counterparts and importantly cross boarder Recovery Projects.

Stage 3 – Future Planning and prevention:

Many arts venues were used as relief and recovery centres during 2020 fires - these need to be appropriately planned for and resourced. There is a need for resources and access to industry in developing organisational emergency response plans (ESMP's for arts orgs and cultural institutions) and appropriate safety and response training.

Discretionary funds to be held and devolved as required in an emergency to a prescribed set of guidelines. This would ensure fast and efficient responses and support particularly if these could also go the facilitators (eg Murray Arts) too to help their support work

References:

For example see Creative Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria's The Role of the Arts in Rebuilding Community: Literature review, 2011, page 59 https://creative.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/56903/The_role_of_arts_in_rebuilding_community_-_Final_Report.pdf

Regional Arts Australia, National Bush Fire Response paper, 2020

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Culture 360, Creative Responses to Sustainability, 2018, page 15, <https://culture360.asef.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/FINAL%20ASEF%20Directory%20online%20version.pdf>

[Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?](#)

Partnerships across arts and non-arts organisations and creative recovery workers for the long-term development of communities through arts and cultural activity are vital. The Creative industries need to work side by side with agencies such as the Red Cross, Save the Children etc

We observe the need for ongoing research and evaluation and the need to learn from past experiences. Leadership by the Commonwealth Government, through the Australia Council, to incorporate art and culture into its bushfire recovery, social cohesion, resilience and regional Australia agendas would provide a blue print for future recovery programs.

Dedicated funding is required to ensure cultural sector readiness across several key areas:

- Training in developing organisational emergency response plans
- Training of dedicated Creative Recovery Artist Facilitators
- appropriate planning and resources for arts venues that are used as relief and recovery centres.
- Funding for loss of creative infrastructure, materials and income
- Funding for and administrative ability to deliver a range of short and long term strategic creative recovery projects led by affected communities

We have provided support material from Regional Arts NSW. This pdf details the preliminary Bushfire Impact on the Arts Survey Results from NSW Regional Arts Development Organisations compiled by Regional Arts NSW 20 Feb 2020.

[Do you agree to your submission being published?](#) Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name

[Supporting material provided:](#)

RANSW preliminary bushfires survey results as at 20 Feb_20_ER.pdf



Preliminary Bushfire Impact on the Arts Survey Results from NSW Regional Arts Development Organisations compiled by Regional Arts NSW.

Preamble

Bushfires spread across the eastern parts of the entire state of New South Wales. The fires in Northern Tablelands and North Coast began in late August and early September spreading through October, November and peaking in the Far South Coast and Snowy Regions during late December and throughout January. A survey developed by [REDACTED] ED South East Arts has been distributed throughout the seven Regional Arts Development Organisations and the Shoalhaven LGA where communities were impacted by this disaster. The survey aims to discover costs to the arts sector in the affected regions. This is still a work in progress and will be added to as further information and survey results come in.

Survey distribution and responses to date

Arts Northern Rivers	48
South East Arts	91
Murray Arts	7
Arts OutWest	9
Southern Tablelands Arts	27
Live Music – Shoalhaven LGA	24
TOTAL	206

It is very possible that more people will have been impacted. It is also likely, that those that haven't responded will have lost homes and business.

Impact

- Loss of Home and Studio: Potentially up to 40 - 50% in S.E. Coast areas. Insurance impact not well known. Other areas have lost some homes but not as many as south. **Value over \$500,000 and up**
- Loss of Equipment: Significant – many would appear not to be covered by insurance. **Value from several hundred dollars up to over \$50,000**
- Loss of Income: Most everyone has lost income at highest income time of year (Summer). Ongoing as longer term impact is being felt and tourism numbers down. Musicians being double hit with requirement to perform for zero in fundraising. Sales down for tourism and festivals cancelled. 65 – 75% rely on this income. **Value from several hundred dollars to well over \$50K**
- Loss of Community Events/Festivals: Numeralla and Cobargo Festivals – \$240K lost performance fees, production costs, potentially over \$1.5 million in tourism dollars. Sales Blues Fest down \$2million with run on economic impact.

LOSS: Loss of income is the strongest issue as most arts/cultural workers are on minimum wage/earnings. Equally, this being summer means that most have lost their largest income with tourism season. This survey has only covered artists but has no, yet, covered technicians, production crew and other closely associated staff.

Who

- Visual Artists
- Musicians
- Theatre Maker/Circus
- Museum
- Director/Writer/Publicists
- Designers



- Printmakers/Jewellers/Leather Craftsman
- Festivals

Immediate Needs

- Clear information and accessible about support and recovery services and grants
- Uncertainty about what is covered by Insurance
- Support for non-insured
- Support for lost income

Opportunities for government investment in Arts led community recovery:

- Cultural Tourism: Festivals; Exhibitions; Heritage; Aboriginal Events and Performances are key drivers of cultural tourism. At this stage, incorporated NFP arts organisations are NOT eligible to apply for the Cultural Tourism Bushfire Recovery fund according to the current guidelines.
- Revive Grants: Establish a simple small grants fund for amounts up to \$1500 to enable artists to hold a start up event that will kick start rebuilding their business income
- Arts Recovery Projects 1: Significant funding to provide long term and strategic arts recovery projects 3 – 5 years (needs to include provision for training of artists in this field)
- Arts Recovery Projects 2: A competitive grant program to enable the development of specific arts projects that respond to community demand
- Opportunities for artists to access mental health initiatives

Selected Comments from Survey

- Most of the individual artists are sole traders who do not have a registered business and as a result are not eligible for much of the small business financial support. In addition, the current recovery grants through the NSW Government do not cover loss of income.
- The uncertainty, dislocation, instability and having to evacuate three times over the last 6 weeks has led to a loss of revenue due to the inability to work. Trying to make up for it now. Am trying to stay positive to support others - have been making a few trips to bushfire affected areas to feed wildlife. Wildlife welfare concerns me more at the moment.
- Regional towns were struggling to encourage tourists to visit their communities and spend money then on top of that the bushfires. It will be difficult for some businesses to survive with little or no income.
- Art sales decreased and patronage also reduced significantly as so many people in our town was affected. We are still feeling the lack of engagement back into the arts. As a community funded gallery, we would usually fundraise but it seems rude to ask for money when so many of our artists have much more urgent needs. We have exhibitions booked for the year and send themes to artists to inspire the creation of work. We need to keep our doors open in order to continue to support our local artists at the grass roots level. The backyard artists, the untrained, the uni graduated artists and the single mums out in the bush whose art practice is their sanity. :) Thanks for letting me share all this, it has been a lot on my mind.
- Our first event of 2020 generated \$6000 in donations for bushfire relief (as opposed to income), as we decided to run it as a fundraiser instead.
- Reimbursed for \$2400 by State government as part of self employed assistance for RFS personnel. Psychological stress from being a member in the RFS and what it entails being a firefighter, when the pager goes off nearly every day for 3 months and knowing you cannot go to every callout because you had work and commissions to do



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