

**21 JANUARY 2021**

Australia Government  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

## Regional Arts Australia Pre Budget Submission 2021 -2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this Pre Budget Submission. Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is pleased to present this submission to the Australian Government on behalf of Regional Arts Australia, our Member organisations and regional program administrators:

- Regional Arts WA
- Regional Arts Victoria
- Regional Arts NSW
- Country Arts SA
- RANT TAS
- Flying Arts Alliance QLD
- Darwin Community Arts NT

## ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA

Regional Arts Australia (RAA) is a not for profit peak body that is the national voice for arts in regional Australia.

We seek to ensure the arts in regional Australia are recognised as essential and are embedded within the Federal Governments Plan for Regional Australia. We believe in strong partnerships between governments, industry, not-for-profits and commercial business. We work to address the need for the arts and creative industries to be critically positioned across multiple policy platforms; including Digital connectivity, Education and Employment, Health services and drought relief, Tourism and Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

We encourage programs that support a creative ecosystem that is interconnected and integrated across art forms, across communities and across landscapes.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The cultural and creative industries play a critical role in contributing to the creativity, diversity and prosperity of Australia's regional and rural economy.

The time is right for the arts and creative industries to take a lead role in regional development. Arts and culture are a crucial element in the make-up of future liveable regions and are central to thriving and healthy communities and sustainable social and economic growth across regional, rural and remote Australia.

## WE RECOMMEND:

- **EXTENTION TO THE REGIONAL ARTS FUND RECOVERY PROGRAM - \$10M (2021-2022)**
- **INCREASE TO THE ANNUAL REGIONAL ARTS FUND – ADDITIONAL \$2M / YEAR (\$8M OVER 4 YEARS. This would restore the fund to \$22.5m over 4 years.**
- **CORE FUNDING TO REGIONAL ARTS AUSTRALIA - \$250,000 / YEAR**

## REGIONAL ARTS FUND

**The Regional Arts Fund (RAF) is an extensive national program and one of the most successful cultural programs supporting arts and culture in regional, rural and remote Australia.**

Regional Arts Australia has been managing the RAF on behalf of the Australian Government since 2001. The fund is an extensive national regional arts grants program, delivered in partnership with state and territory members and regional program administrators. It continues to be, one of the most successful avenues for delivering targeted programs, devised by, and meeting the needs of regional Australian communities.

The objectives of the fund are keyed closely to economic outcomes, leveraged income, community engagement, employment and professional development. All RAF projects must benefit regional people and places and must align strongly with these objectives. The program connects and builds partnerships with creative institutions while building cross industry partnerships, in health, education, tourism, jobs and growth - contributing to the wellbeing and liveability of regional communities.

## VALUE OF THE FUND

**In 2019-20 a total of \$3,174,939.19 in funding was allocated to 389 projects across all States and Territories.**

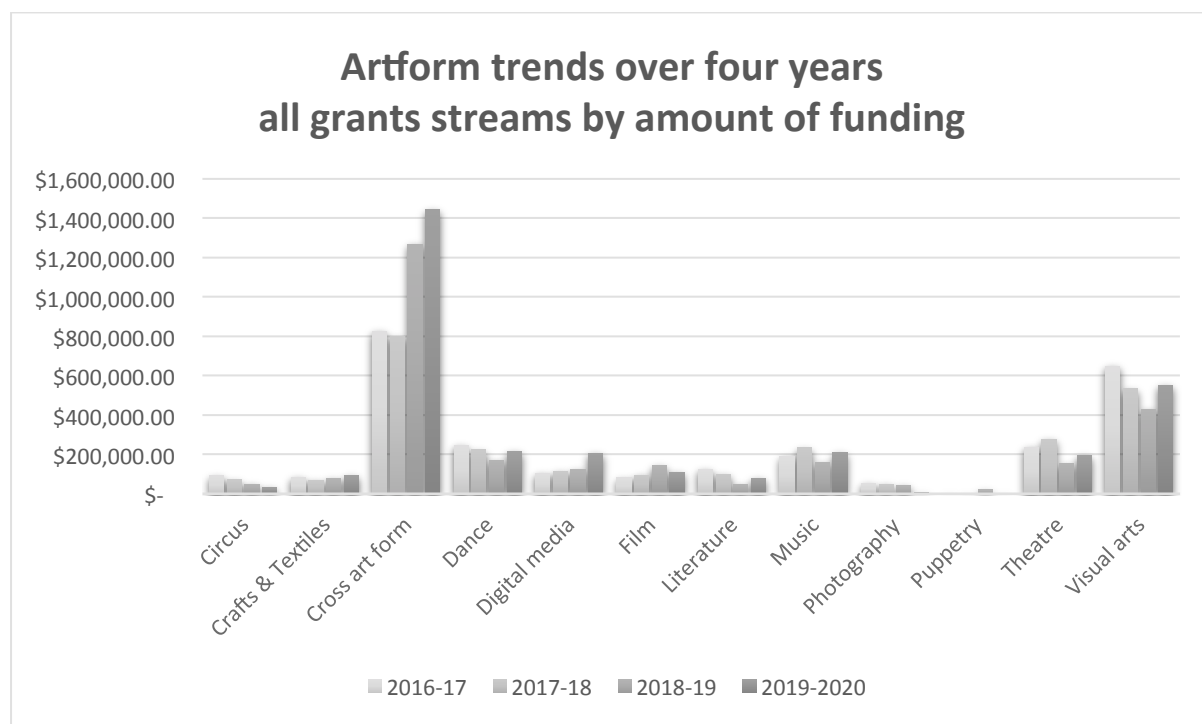
**There are currently four streams;**

- 1. Project Grants**
- 2. Quick Response Grants**
- 3. Cultural Worker Positions**
- 4. Strategic Projects**

The distribution of funds across these streams is outlined in the table below:

Program stream	# grants	%	\$ amount granted	%
Quick Response Grants	257	66.1%	\$ 483,334.63	15.2%
Project Grants	118	30.3%	\$ 1,814,109.56	57.1%

Strategic Projects	5	1.3%	\$ 577,495.00	18.2%
Cultural Worker Positions	9	2.3%	\$ 300,000.00	9.5%
	<u>389</u>		<u>\$ 3,174,939.19</u>	



Our data shows a significant increase in the number of ‘digital media’ projects during 2019-20, which can be attributed to regional artists adapting their work in the wake of the pandemic and creating new ways to engage audiences and communities. **This has in turn had an impact on participant numbers, which are estimated at almost 29,000 participants, a significant increase from previous years. Audience numbers are estimated to be over 4 million for the 2019-2020 year.**

These large increases are due to the accessibility of digital content, which provide regional and remote arts increased access to audiences and communities.

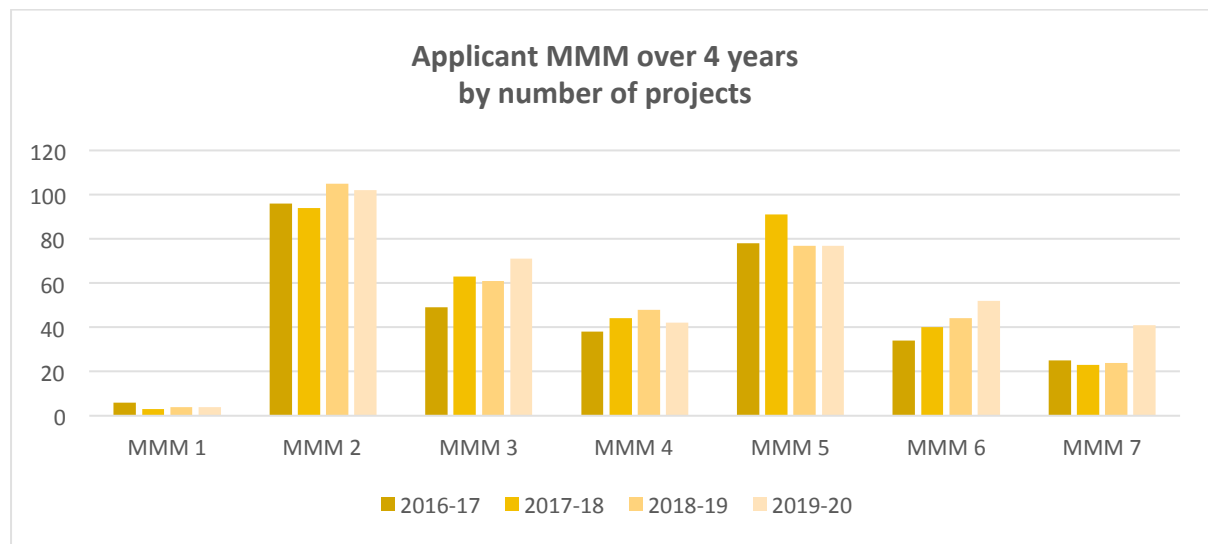
**The Regional Arts Fund produces significant Leveraged Income.** Leveraged income (income from sources other than RAF and applicants themselves) was **over \$4.8million and applicant contributions of over \$3.3 million.**

**Estimated numbers of people involved in RAF projects were:**

- **4,039,879 audience**
- **28,892 participants**
- **3,081 employment opportunities – 1.5 times 2018-2019 statistics**

## DEMAND OF THE FUND

Demand for the fund continues to be high, with a national success rate of 31%. Overall, the fund remains a competitive across regional, rural and remote Australia.



## IN TASMANIA INCREASING DEMAND IS SIGNIFICANT

As shown in recent ABS and CommSec reports, Tasmania continues to demonstrate a strong growing economy and population growth. Likewise, the Tasmanian arts sector is growing exponentially. While the recent Recovery boost data demonstrates overwhelming demand for funding for regional arts in Tasmania, this has been the culmination of Strategic promotion, roadshows, support services, connectivity and capacity building for the fund and its applicants over the past two years.

This is reflected in the regular delivery of RAF by the increasing rates of application numbers, rates of first-time applicants and applicant inquiries. A strong example of this is the increasing demand for Quick Response Grants in Tasmania. **Measured against July-December 2018 data from the fund (when administered by Arts Tasmania), RANT has recorded approximately a 100% increase in applicants per round in 2019 and almost 200% increase per round in 2020.**

## \$10M RAF RECOVERY BOOST

**In April 2020, we welcomed the targeted support for regional arts with the \$10m Recovery Boost to the Regional Arts Fund and are pleased to provide a national update on the program to date.**

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

The RAF Recovery Boost funds are being delivered through the mechanisms of the RAF. The program has been designed for best practice recovery and responsiveness to the needs of each jurisdiction (State and Territory needs). We designed and implemented a three-phase program of Recovery funding that moves across three stages **from Relief to Recovery and Renewal**.

### Relief

Relief grants were designed to assist regional artists, arts organisations and communities to meet their immediate needs. This included asset replacement or purchase, support for arts practice (including self-directed residency/research and development), small projects and professional development opportunities.

**The RAF Relief program was open from 1 July 2020, on an ongoing basis until 26 October when all funds were fully expended. A total of 236 projects were supported, to the value of \$980,797.67<sup>1</sup>**

Project Type	# relief grants	\$ amount of funding
Arts project	76	\$ 315,660.60
Professional development for artists and arts workers	134	\$ 564,158.07
Community capacity building project	26	\$ 100,979.00
	<b>236</b>	<b>\$ 980,797.67</b>

<sup>1</sup> this includes QRG funds from Qld of \$51,868 (approximately 10 projects)

## Relief project type by \$ amount of funding



Funding were provided across all artforms:

Artform	# relief grants	\$ amount of funding	%
Visual arts	78	\$ 327,675.20	33%
Music	34	\$ 141,120.85	14%
Digital media	30	\$ 113,438.90	13%
Cross art form	27	\$ 109,271.00	11%
Theatre	17	\$ 73,332.00	7%
Crafts and Textiles	12	\$ 51,945.00	5%
Dance	9	\$ 37,676.00	4%
Photography	8	\$ 35,319.00	3%
Film	7	\$ 31,609.00	3%
Circus	6	\$ 28,922.72	3%
Literature	7	\$ 26,528.00	3%
Puppetry	1	\$ 3,960.00	0%
	<b>236</b>	<b>\$ 980,797.67</b>	

**Demand on the Relief funding was high.**

**472 applications were received and a total “ask” of \$2,031,944.77.**

**RAF Relief has distributed 6.5 x what we would usually distribute through RAF Quick Response grants. Over the last 4 years, as an average, the RAF Quick Response stream has delivered \$447,912 annually (which equates to approximately \$112,000 / per quarter).**

**In the quarter July- September 2020 RAF Boost distributed \$722,972.67 through the RAF Relief fund, which is 6.5 x our average delivery.**

## Recovery

Recovery grants were designed to meet the medium-term recovery needs of artists, organisations and communities. Projects in this program focus on activities that assist in recovery the impacts of COVID-19. Project activities could include creative recovery projects, training programs, operational recovery plans, asset purchase or replacement (up to \$5000) and the development of risk plans and emergency operating procedures and responses.

Nationally **343** applications were received, with a total “ask” of **\$9,153,684.00 for available funds of \$1.88 million**. The demand on this funding was extremely high with the round receiving five times the applications to the available allocation. The highest demand was in NSW, Vic and Tasmania.

Applications were assessed by peer panels, appointed by Regional Program Administrators in all States and the NT.

**73 Recovery projects commenced from 1 January 2021** and can take up to two years to be completed. Funds will be used for a variety of activities including; upskilling, mentorships, access to facilities, developing new work, and bringing community together, digitising First Nations cultural content, developing podcasts and live streaming of exhibitions, events and performances.

## Renewal

Renewal grants will provide up to three years of funding to support projects that have strong partnerships and demonstrated long term outcomes, with sustainable future-positioning focus.

These projects will be strategic in nature. Collaborations across State and Territory borders are encouraged. The projects can be process-driven and provide an opportunity to think beyond ‘snap back’ and to consider renewed arts practice and learning processes.

The renewal program is being assessed against the RAF Objectives and the following additional principles:

- Community confidence (evidenced by connectivity)
- Creative confidence (evidenced by arts practice)
- Business confidence (evidenced by partnerships)

Project activities could include partnership projects, community events or programs, First Nations-led renewal and wages for workers (First Nations worker positions are encouraged).

The program is rolling out in different timelines across the country:

RENEWAL GRANTS	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	AMOUNT REQUESTED	NUMBER APPROVED / TO BE APPROVED	AMOUNT AVAILABLE/ TO BE AWARDED
NSW – Regional Arts NSW	23	\$ 2,621,200	7	\$ 668,088
NT – Darwin Community Arts	9	\$ 1,080,000	2	\$ 240,000
Qld – Flying Arts Alliance	27	\$ 4,050,000	4	\$ 600,000
Tas – RANT Arts	18	\$ 2,160,000	2	\$ 240,000
	<b>77</b>	<b>\$ 9,911,200</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>\$ 1,748,088</b>

## STATE BY STATE TRENDS

**In Tasmania**, through the Recovery Boost, RANT has measured a remarkable increase in demand for the Regional Arts Fund. Comparing the Relief round data against an average of previous program RAF demand (from January 2019 – March 2020) measures this quantifiable increase:

- Overall 7 x increase in demand
- 4 x increase in demand measured against the Community Grant program
- 10-x increase in demand measured against the Quick Response Grant program.

A qualitative demonstration of the increase of the reach of RAF in Tasmania through the Recovery Boost can be seen in the ratio of returning to first-time applicants. For the Relief round, there were approximately 49% first-time applicants, including 5 first-time applicant organisations.

In **Victoria**, the State most heavily impacted by the pandemic shutdowns, 189 applications were received for the 'Relief' component of the Regional Arts Fund Recovery Boost in the **three months** from July-September, seeking support for small equipment; research and development; marketing and digital support; and presentations costs in a changed COVID-19 environment. This compares to 202 Quick Response Grants received in the **six years** from 2014 to 2020.

This is despite the local regional arts administrator Regional Arts Victoria delivering a similar small grants recovery program through May 2020 on behalf of the State Government – a program which itself received 397 applications in **five weeks**.

Victoria, like NSW and South Australia, also finds itself dealing with the ongoing impacts of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. Creatives and communities in these impacted areas continue to face additional challenges in their recovery, requiring a mix of both grants, on-the-ground support, and ongoing training and preparedness.



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## VALUE FOR MONEY

RAA has demonstrated a 22-year history of responsibly managing the Regional Arts Fund. We inherently understand how to use partnerships to leverage support, how to create programs that have specific outcomes that support the sector in a cost effective way.

By June 2021 we will have collated a five-year data set and will be in a position to present this information and display artform activity across regional Australia. As the national voice for arts and culture in regional Australia, Regional Arts Australia's role is one of a connector, joining the dots and facilitating the exchange.

Our latest public interactive data from RAF competitive grants 2019-2020 can be viewed here: <https://regionalarts.com.au/regional-arts-fund/raf-projects-and-data>

RAF Case Studies can be viewed here: <https://regionalarts.com.au/resources>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

An investment in the RAF as a mechanism for investment provides a tested, rigorous, competitive national process that prioritises effective and responsive support. Both Regional Arts Australia and the Regional Arts Fund provide the government with a direct, cost effective and fiscally responsible means to boosting innovation within the national cultural ecosystem.

Demand for the Regional Arts Fund is higher than ever with some jurisdictions seeing an almost 70% un-met need and demand across applications. We recommend;

**A: An Extension of the \$10m RAF Recovery Program for 2021-2022.**

**Recovery doesn't just happen in one step and it's not necessarily linear. The demand on this fund has been enormous, which demonstrates the need and also points to breadth and diversity of artists and organisations practicing in regional and remote geographies. Recovery is going to take time.**

**B: The Regional Arts Fund be increased in value and restored to its pre 2010 value by lifting the total value of the fund to \$22.5 million over four years. This is a commitment to increase the annual fund by \$2m a year (\$8million over 4 years).**

**C: An investment of \$250,000 a year (\$1 million over 4 years) as core funding to Regional Arts Australia. This funding will ensure arts and creative industries continue to bridge a cultural and geographic divide by respecting and valuing contemporary regional practice across the national regional landscape and regional, rural and remote communities.**

The above support would facilitate an effective and responsive national Regional Arts program. The additional funds would increase artistic and creative activity across regional, rural and remote Australia through multi-artform, cross-industry and multi-location projects and regional development.

Regional Arts Australia's guiding principle is that 'place' is central to creative practice. It provides profound practical and emotional links between the economies and synergies of artistic and cultural practice. Our programs are contemporary, relevant and increasingly necessary.

**Significant Focus would be placed on:**

### **Industry led responses**

**Investment in valuable, regionally-led and industry-led programs such as those managed by Regional Arts Australia provide timely support regions, industries and communities.**

The arts are vital in the recovery and renewal process, and integral in planning and delivery of responses to drought, floods, bush fires and Australian Covid19. Support for small to medium organisations to lead the recovery efforts, administering funding, developing and delivering local community-led recovery projects that engage local artists, local audiences and creative regional tourism initiatives. Small to medium not-for-profit organisations are agile and can respond both promptly and deeply to community needs, especially when they are embedded in the communities they serve.

### **Place Based Programs**

**Programming that positions community participation and the distinctive assets of their regional localities at the heart of reactivation. Designed to unlock the cultural ambition and potential of regional Australia.**

Place-based programs seed longer-term cultural and economic sustainability, boosting local capacity, diversifying audience engagement, increasing accessibility and connection. Investment in innovative approaches and new types of programming within existing areas of strength such as festivals and cultural infrastructure would make arts, cultural and creative activities more accessible to all Australians.

A whole of ecosystem model will reactivate the cultural and creative industries by developing local capacity and content, providing employment, and exploring new models of co-commissioning, co-producing, and investing. Economic beneficiaries will include small businesses, local hospitality and accommodation providers, freelance arts and media workers, performing arts centres and their personnel.

### **Cultural Tourism**

**Supporting Cultural Tourism and cultural experiences for local audiences and visitors.**

Placed based, local programs support cultural activity for communities to participate in the arts, for audiences and tourists to celebrate 'place'. Investment in Arts & Culture to work alongside the Tourism and Hospitality sectors will support consumer confidence and activate engagement, which in turn will support to grow jobs and local businesses.

## IN CONCLUSION

We recognise that regional Australia is not a homogenous place and needs to be understood across policy agendas in all the variety and richness as part of a whole process. The arts are vital in the recovery and renewal processes, and integral in planning and delivery of both the bush fires recovery and Australian Covid19 response. Investment in valuable, regionally led programs provides timely support and recovery to affected regions, industries and communities.

We support the findings in the Australia Council 'Creating Our Future' report that suggests, importantly as we navigate recovery and renewal Arts and Creativity; *"will play a critical role in Australia's future success, build social cohesion, contribute to health and wellbeing."*

We further support our industry colleague's submissions, which recommend; an increase in funds to the Australian Council for the Arts. To support First People's Arts through the development of NIACA. The extension of Job Keeper as a targeted wage subsidy. The establishment of the Business interruption Fund (BIF) to increase industry confidence to re-activate live events and an increase to the Playing Australia Fund to address the structural and operational needs. We see it as essential that we work together to support the arts and creative industries across a whole of ecology approach.

Arts and culture are essential in regional, rural and remote Australia. Sustainable and vibrant arts and creative industries deliver real short, medium and long-term benefits for all communities and the regions in which they work with measurable impacts across artistic, social, economic and health indexes.

We would be happy to discuss this submission and welcome the opportunity to provide further information.

## SUBMISSION CONTACT



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