

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA**

**REPORT BY KEN LLOYD**

**2007 CHURCHILL FELLOW**

To examine arts and cultural programs which have provided opportunities for regional and remote communities to access and participate in the arts.

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Ken Lloyd

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12<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Dated.....

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## 1. Introduction

The Churchill Fellowship enabled me to travel to the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America in order to study arts and cultural programs which have assisted regional communities' access to and participation in the arts.

I would very much like to extend my appreciation to the Churchill Trust. The opportunities provided for me to visit and inspect arts facilities; see touring arts productions and exhibitions; meet interesting people and see first hand regional communities working in the arts has undoubtedly been the best thing that has ever occurred as part of my career in the arts.

A very big thank you to my darling wife, Julie who helped keep my notes together and helped me find the offices of the people I met and the facilities I inspected (which was often an adventure in itself). Also, thank you to my daughter Natalie who looked after things at home while we were away.



State Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota

## 2. Executive Summary

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The Churchill Fellowship was undertaken between 15<sup>th</sup> May and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The aim of the Fellowship was to visit and inspect arts and cultural programs and facilities which provided opportunities for regional communities to access and participate in the arts.

During my Fellowship I was able to meet people working in regional arts organisations, regionally based arts workers, arts funding agencies, arts and business development organisations and to inspect both regionally based and metropolitan arts facilities. I gained an insight into numerous regional arts initiatives from both a producer and presenter perspective and saw first hand the arts programs which are regarded as priorities by arts funding agencies.

Based on my findings I have no doubt that regional Australia, and regional South Australia, in particular is well served in terms of opportunities to access professional artists and touring programs and in being able to seek government arts support for community inspired arts and cultural projects. However, I believe there are numerous opportunities to improve access to the arts and to improve the sustainability of the regional arts sector in the longer term.

### Highlights

- Visiting outstanding arts facilities including the Baltic Contemporary Arts Centre, the Wales Millennium Centre, the Muni Arts Centre, the Harbourfront Arts Centre.
- Speaking to the Promoters Arts Network and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council.
- Hearing about the issues and challenges for the regional arts sector in Minnesota.
- Meeting Yvan Gauthier, Quebec Arts Council and Bill Boyle, Harbourfront Arts Centre.

### Recommendations

- Improve opportunities for regional decision making within State and National arts funding agencies.
- Improve opportunities for South Australian (and national) smaller and remote communities to access professional performing arts.
- Establish a South Australian (and national) funding program which would assist in the development of arts facilities and would match the needs and requirements of the communities they serve.
- Improve arrangements between the South Australian tourism and arts sectors to establish a more cohesive and marketable annual South Australian regional arts festival program.
- Establish a South Australian (and national) challenge grants program which would match corporate sector cash sponsorships, in particular for small regional arts organisations.
- Build on the success of the South Australian Regional Centre of Culture program by establishing a national program where up to three Regional Centres of Culture can be celebrated on a biennial basis.
- Provide increased opportunities for public art commissions to be undertaken across regional South Australia.
- Establish a new relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to enable exhibitions of visual arts and craft that showcases the work of regionally based artists to be displayed at Australian Embassies overseas.

### Implementation and Dissemination

- I will either directly implement many of the abovementioned recommendations or strongly advocate for the implementation of the recommendations.
- I will speak about the abovementioned recommendations with my arts colleagues at industry meetings and forums; and at arts/community/local government conferences.
- I will disseminate my views about possible future opportunities in arts newsletters and specialist arts magazines.

### **3. Fellowship Program**

**15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008 – England**  
**4<sup>th</sup> June to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

- Arts and Business, England
- Southbank Theatres, London
- Brighton/Hove City Council, London
- Brighton/Hove Arts Commission
- Arts Council of England (Westminster)
- Arts Council of England (Nottingham)
- Arts Council of England (Newcastle)
- London Palladium Theatre
- The Tate Modern London
- Prince of Wales Theatre, London
- Baltic Contemporary Arts Centre (Newcastle)
- Liverpool Capital of Culture
- Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
- Empire Theatre, Liverpool
- National Rural Touring Forum (Somerset)
- Take Art (Somerset)
- Rheged Centre, Cumbria District
- The Watermill, Penrith (Cumbria District)
- St Martins Theatre, London

**31<sup>st</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008 – Wales**

- Arts Council of Wales
- Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff
- Caerephilly County Council
- The Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd
- The Colliseum Theatre, Aberdare
- The Park and Dare Theatre, Trecorci

**8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Scotland**

- HiArt, Inverness
- Promoters Arts Network (Isle of Skye)
- Arts and Business, Scotland
- Edinburgh Festivals Office
- Arts Council of Scotland

**14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Toronto, Canada**

- Ontario Arts Council
- Harbourfront Arts Centre
- Toronto Cultural Trade Industry Council

**19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2008 – Montreal, Canada**

- Quebec Arts Council (Montreal)

**24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – New York and Washington, USA**

- Americans for the Arts
- Wintergarden Theatre, New York
- New York State Arts Council
- Broadway Theatre, New York
- Australian Embassy, Washington
- Kennedy Centre, Washington

**30<sup>th</sup> June to 3rd July 2008 – Minneapolis, USA**

- Minnesota State Arts Board
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (St Paul)

**4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008 – Chicago, USA**

- Illinois Arts Council
- Millennium Park/Outdoor Performance Space

**11<sup>th</sup> July 2008 – Arrived in Adelaide**

## **4. Outcomes from Fellowship**

### **4.1 Background**

Over 6.8 million people, or just over one third of Australia's population live in regional, rural and remote Australia. These Australians are spread across 7.7 million square kilometres in literally thousands of communities - some large, many small - and often many hours from major service centres

Generally, regional communities have little or no professional arts infrastructure, and in relation to their big city cousins only receive a relatively small share of the total funding and resources available across the arts industry.

Through an increasing awareness by all levels of Government, and in particular, the Commonwealth Government, regional Australia has seen the establishment and growth of arts initiatives which have provided new opportunities for regional communities to:

- Access high quality performing arts and visual arts touring programs;
- Plan and develop regionally based arts festivals and events; and
- Develop locally initiated arts projects.

In addition regionally based artists have had new opportunities to develop their skills and be involved in many more projects and initiatives.

State Governments have also played their part by providing increased funding to support touring and related programs across regional communities.

There has also been a significantly increased awareness of the value of arts and cultural activities by local Councils and Shires. Local Government has increasingly been making a significant contribution not only to support community inspired arts projects but also in developing arts facilities.

In undertaking my Fellowship I was keen to look at different ways to build on these successes and develop a more comprehensive series of programs and initiatives for achievements in the future.

During my Fellowship I was pleased to be given two opportunities to speak about the arts in regional Australia and the work of Country Arts SA – to the Board and staff of the Promoters Arts Network (Inverness) and the Board and staff of the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (St Paul). The feedback from both of these sessions made it clear that the arrangements for supporting the arts across regional Australia was highly regarded.

However, my Fellowship also made it clear that there are a number of issues which would assist in building the regional arts sector both in South Australia and nationally.

## **4.2 Regional Decision Making**

During my Fellowship in England I was impressed with the decentralised nature of the Arts Council of England.

The Arts Council of England, which is based in London, has eight decentralised Boards located across the length and breadth of England.

Each of these Boards have their own staffing establishments and the Chair of each Board (or nominee) has a seat on the London based Arts Council of England Board of Directors.

Whilst in England I met with representatives from the Arts Council's London based office and with both staff and Board members from the East Midlands Board (Nottingham) and the North East Board (Newcastle).

Each of these decentralised Boards has a broad responsibility for funding both individuals and organisations within their respective region, with funds devolved through the main London based Board of Directors. The London based Board is mainly responsible for funding the national arts organisations and institutions and managing major national initiatives (for example developing the cultural programs for 2012 Olympic Games).

This decentralised approach, from a regional perspective, has two principal advantages:

- Funding decisions are made locally, with the local Arts Council staff working on the ground to understand issues and to assist in achieving the best possible industry development outcomes; and
- The main London based Board is made up of a number of members who represent individual regions of England. As a consequence they have a real ability to influence decisions to ensure a greater level of resources and equity for regional England.

When discussing these issues in England it mirrored the success which has been achieved in Australia through the Regional Arts Fund. This national arts funding program has been devolved to States and Territories who make local decisions based on the knowledge and understanding of local issues and challenges. This devolved program has been an outstanding success, with funding partnerships from other sources maximised and the ability of individual communities to deliver on their project aspirations matched with funding.

Yet, the national arts funding agency in Australia (the Australia Council for the Arts) has no major devolved funding arrangements. Although each of the agency's funding Boards are made up of State based representatives no staff are outplaced.

While it is appreciated that the agency must support artistic excellence, the outplacement of staff (in State based offices) would, over time, assist in building new relationships with the respective State based funding agencies and the arts industry generally. I have no doubt that an outplaced staffing model would significantly assist in both improving the agency's appreciation of local issues and in establishing improved local and State based funding partnerships.

Overall, it is felt that at the very least a greater emphasis should be placed on appointing regionally based people to the funding Committees (this would apply equally to the State arts funding agencies). If possible, consideration should be given to outplacing Australia Council staff into each State and Territory, with the responsibility to improve the opportunities for new funding partnerships and assist in building a greater understanding of local issues and challenges when funding proposals are being considered.

### **4.3 Small Centre Touring**

Regional Australia has a strong record in delivering high quality professional performing arts touring product. Over the past decade regional touring opportunities have increased significantly. However, these new opportunities have, in the main, been limited to regional communities with a professional performing arts centre and funds available to purchase touring product.

During my Fellowship I was very impressed with the work being undertaken in England and Scotland to support professional performing arts touring opportunities for small centres and villages. Both the National Rural Touring Forum (England) and the Promoters Arts Network (Inverness) operate in a similar manner and are committed to:

- Providing training (through publications and skills development workshops) for volunteer based presenting groups.
- Undertaking showcases where artists perform excerpts of proposed touring productions at meetings of local presenting groups.

- Providing written menus of possible touring productions which include full details of each production – availability, costs, theatre requirements etc.
- Supporting the ability of each presenting group to select the productions that they believe will work best in their village. When all the presenters have selected the productions they would like to present, the touring agency confirms final touring itineraries to both the production company and the presenter.
- Ensuring the cost of each touring production is kept low enough (the touring agency will often subsidise the cost of the production to the presenter) to ensure that ticket prices can be kept affordable and the risk of a financial loss to the presenter is kept to a minimum.
- Providing marketing materials to the presenters to assist them in selling tickets to the touring productions they are presenting.

It is also worth noting that the Illinois Arts Council operates a similar arrangement in the USA, although in this case the presenter must apply for a grant to support each touring performance selected.

This comprehensive approach to the provision of professional touring to small centres and villages while at the same time giving the presenter a choice of product, is very impressive.

Both the National Rural Touring Forum and the Promoters Arts Network receive arts funding support to be able to present the showcases, develop menus and marketing materials and importantly subsidise the cost of touring productions to local presenters.

The National Rural Touring Forum offers a comprehensive service across all of rural and regional England and has branch offices in numerous offices throughout England. I visited the office situated at South Petherton, Somerset and was impressed at the energy and commitment of the agency's three staff. Overall, literally thousands of performances are presented across rural and regional England each year as a result of the efforts of the National Rural Touring Forum.

As was stated earlier regional Australia already has a strong record in the area of regional touring. However, there is no doubt that more could (and should) be done to support smaller and remote communities access professional artists and arts organisations. In establishing a new small centres touring scheme issues such as State based showcases, skills development for local presenters and the effective management of ticket pricing and financial risk would need to be considered.

#### **4.4 Arts Facilities**

Arguably the most impressive aspect of my Fellowship, across all of the places I visited was the commitment to the development of high quality arts facilities. In the United Kingdom in particular some of the facilities were outstanding. The most interesting issue was the use of older buildings, whose first life was over, given a new start as an arts facility – a theatre, gallery or community arts space.

In particular I also took the opportunity to inspect a number of major city arts centres with a view to gaining a broader appreciation of contemporary theatre practices and programming arrangements.

In regional areas across the United Kingdom what was most impressive was the thought that had gone into developing a facility (usually redeveloping an older building) which would match the needs of the community. For example, I visited several theatres which appeared to have the right stage dimensions, backstage arrangements and seating numbers to suit the scale of productions which would effectively service that particular community.

Across the United Kingdom the arts have access to a proportion of the National Lotteries Fund. While not exclusively dedicated for capital development projects almost all of the theatre and gallery developments I visited had received some financial support through the National Lotteries Fund.

As I have stated earlier, in regional Australia there are numerous opportunities for regional communities to access the arts. Often the major issue for a community wishing to present a touring show or exhibition is the quality of the local arts facility.

There is no doubt that there is considerable interest on the part of regional communities regardless of population or regional isolation, to improve the quality of their local arts facilities. If the standard of their local facilities were improved they could seek not only touring performances and exhibitions, but importantly use the facilities as a local arts hub and to present local art work.

Overall, I strongly believe that regional Australia should be actively seeking to establish a national regional arts facilities program.

This program should be aiming to seek funds from all levels of government and ensure that facilities are established which have strong community support and are in accord with the community's requirements and aspirations.



Shaw Festival Theatre  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

#### **4.5 Regional Festivals**

Arising from my meetings and visits in the Cumbria region situated in the North West of England and meetings with representatives of the Edinburgh Festival's office, it is clear that regional South Australia can learn much more about regional festivals programming, coordination and marketing.

In the Cumbria region there are over 60 arts festivals each year. These festivals encompass all art forms and vary in size and scale.

There appears to be a unified commitment to promoting the region as a 'festival destination' with a considerable effort being made to:

- Ensure that the major festivals include programming arrangements to entice visitors to the region.
- Make visitors welcome to the region – this extends to special hotel offerings, which enable visitors to enjoy a full on festival experience over a weekend (or selected period) without leaving the hotel.
- Promote the region's other arts attractions to visitors. The displays at the very impressive Rheged Tourist Information Centre clearly demonstrated the whole region's commitment to the local arts scene.

Not only does the local community have the opportunity to access arts festivals and events on a regular basis, this commitment to an annual festivals program is now an important component of the local economy as well as a major income source for local artists.

A very similar story was evident in Edinburgh where the Festival's office oversees an annual festival program which includes the Edinburgh Festival, the Tattoo and the Jazz and Blues Festival. These festivals have become a significant component of the city's economy while at the same time, labeling the city as a major world cultural capital. It is a reputation Edinburgh appears to be very proud of.

South Australia, with improved planning and coordination, could do much better in raising the calibre of regional festival programming.

At the same time tourism and arts should be looking to promote the regional festival program as part of South Australia's Festival State image.

#### **4.6 Arts and Business**

Through my meetings with representatives of Arts and Business, England and Arts and Business Scotland I saw many similarities with the role played by the Australia Business Arts Foundation.

However, a new program which has recently been introduced in Scotland by Arts and Business Scotland appeared to be well suited to the Australian arts industry.

Briefly, where there are a number of smaller regional communities, they are able to seek a special challenge grant through Arts and Business Scotland, which matches any cash corporate partnership the organisation has been able to achieve (up to agreed levels).

Arts and Business Scotland believes that it provides an incentive for sponsoring businesses to support the arts rather than other worthy local endeavours.

I was advised that arts organisations who are seeking 'first time' corporate partnerships are given priority and that the program has been very successful with all of the available funding fully committed.

In addition, as part of the Arts and Business Scotland's annual awards program a category has been established to recognise the regional arts worker/volunteer who has achieved the best corporate partnership.

There is no doubt that across regional Australia a challenge grant system could assist small regional communities generate corporate partnerships. Similarly, the awards program would assist in increasing recognition for the arts across regional Australia.

A new national program of this kind could be managed by either Australia Business Arts Foundation or the national regional arts advocacy organisation, Regional Arts Australia.

#### **4.7 Regional Centre of Culture**

As part of my Fellowship I was very keen to visit Liverpool and be briefed on the European Capital of Culture which is currently being celebrated.

In South Australia a Regional Centre of Culture Program has been established and in 2008 Port Augusta is playing host to the Centre of Culture Program. In 2008 Port Augusta is developing a new cultural precinct for the city and undertaking a year long program of art and cultural activities and events.

The Regional Centre of Culture program is proving to be extremely successful in Port Augusta and I was interested to gain an impression of the success of the program in Liverpool.

It appears that the Liverpool European Centre of Culture program is fundamentally very similar to the South Australian approach. The major difference is that the Liverpool building program, which includes the re-generation of the centre of the city, is almost 'gobsmacking' in its scale.

Whilst in Liverpool I visited both the Empire Theatre and the Walker Art Gallery which have been redeveloped as part of the Centre of Culture program.

Both of these facilities were extremely impressive and I have no doubt they will be seen as major cultural institutions in the city for many years to come.

Liverpool's program of arts events is extremely comprehensive (I just missed a major outdoor concert featuring Sir Paul McCartney). However, it is fair to say there has been some criticism of the program mainly due to a perception of not enough local showcasing and too great a focus on esoteric work.

Despite this criticism the program does offer arts activities that have broad appeal, for example while I was in Liverpool I was able to see a fantastic touring production of Evita, attend a rollicking comedy club and visit numerous exhibitions on display in and around the city.

Overall, the benefits of the Centre of Culture program are clear. Not only does the city (whether it be Liverpool or Port Augusta) achieve building regeneration through the arts, the community is also given the opportunity to access and participate in the arts across all art forms as part of a comprehensive program. This can only provide an increased interest and valuing of the arts for the future.

There is no doubt that from a regional arts perspective the Centre of Culture should be expanded to give more communities the opportunity to celebrate their arts and cultural achievements. Importantly, over time I am sure that programs like this will ensure the arts are repositioned as crucial to the ongoing social and economic success of the community.

#### 4.8 Public Art

Across all of the arts funding agencies I visited I was impressed with the priority given to public art commissioning.



Chicago Millennium Park



Chicago Millennium Park

In regional South Australia a greater emphasis is placed on working with communities on locally inspired projects. However, as a consequence of my Fellowship it is my intention to seek a greater priority in supporting regionally based public art commissioning.

This would be particularly so as part of the South Australian Regional Centre of Culture where a major commission could become a centre piece of the program of arts and cultural activities.

#### **4.9 International Visual Arts Touring**

While visiting Washington I met with representatives of the Australian Embassy.

During my visit we discussed the Embassy's arts program. I was very impressed with the Embassy's Gallery space and the exhibition of Utopia Batiks that were on display. I was advised that a part of their role in Washington, the Embassy manages a changing exhibition and promotes Australian culture.

There is no doubt that regional Australia is able to develop high quality exhibitions which could be displayed at Australian Embassies and be part of Australia's overseas cultural promotion program.

### **5. Recommendations**

To provide new opportunities for regional Australians to access and participate in the arts I will be advocating and working to:

- Improve opportunities for better regional decision making for State and National arts funding agencies.
- Improve opportunities for South Australian (and national) smaller and remote communities to access professional performing arts they have selected for presentation in their community.
- Establish a South Australian (and national) funding program which would assist in the development of arts facilities and would match the needs and requirements of the communities they serve.
- Improve arrangements between the South Australian tourism and arts sectors to establish a more cohesive and marketable annual South Australian regional arts festivals program.
- Establish a South Australian (and national) challenge grant program which would match corporate sector cash sponsorships, in particular for small regional arts organisations.
- Build on the success of the South Australian Regional Centre of Culture program by establishing a national program where up to three Regional Centres of Culture can be celebrated on a biennial basis. Within this program also establish an ongoing evaluation and research program to consider the economic and social impact of the arts through the Centre of Culture program.
- Provide increased opportunities for public art commissions to be undertaken across regional South Australia.

- Establish a new relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to enable exhibitions of visual arts and craft, which showcase the work of regionally based artists (and also promotes Australia's unique cultural identity) to be displayed at Australian Embassies overseas.

## **6. Dissemination**

I will use my influence as the Chief Executive Officer of Australia's largest State based regional arts agency and the Secretary of the National Regional Arts advocacy agency to either directly implement many of the abovementioned recommendations; or strongly advocate for the implementation of the recommendations.

I will, wherever possible speak about the abovementioned recommendations – with my arts colleagues at industry meetings and forums; and at arts/community/local government conferences.

Also, I will disseminate my views about possible future opportunities in arts newsletters and specialist arts magazines.