

BURRA REGIONAL ART GALLERY SUBMISSION

Burra Regional Art Gallery (BRAG) has been “doing its own thing”, based on what the current crop of volunteers has to offer, for nearly 25 years. As a self-funded volunteer run gallery we are proud of our success and longevity. We curate exhibitions and a yearly program of events including residencies, workshops, school engagement and competitions. Country Arts SA provides us with touring exhibitions, supporting, encouraging and keeping us in touch with the wider arts community.

In Burra we value heritage and are passionate about the preservation of our historic streetscapes and traditions. Visitors who come to the town are impressed by the way we mix agriculture, business and conservation with our own ways of doing things. They feel they have found something unique and precious. Word spreads, more people come, and they stay longer.

The SA Arts Plan can help Burra Gallery fulfil its potential for the expression of community and wider cultural values through all forms of creative expression.

Our volunteer run gallery functions with in-kind support from the Regional Council of Goyder, and no regular funding. We value the strength in our programming integrity owing in large part to the autonomy of our board and executive. This asset can conversely hamper consistency being subject to a volunteer workforce.

1: AMBITION

RE: Regional Council of Goyder Arts Strategy 2018 to 2023 document

- Better utilisation / activation of space: Find ways to activate existing spaces, both indoor and outdoor, public and privately owned, and create more shared spaces that are flexible, accessible and affordable
- Engage an Arts & Cultural Facilitator who knows the sector
- Provide greater exposure for artist skills and expertise
- Increase activity, creativity and engagement
- Develop a cultural precinct , including a Visitor Information Centre
- Create partnerships to deliver new initiatives
- Support local artists and strengthen arts volunteer groups

RE: Burra Regional Art Gallery's Strategic Plan

- Increase community engagement and work with other organisations
- Promote an active education and public program
- Create links with relevant community art networks and community groups
- Foster links with educational, health and environmental groups
- Exhibit and promote art and artists

2: FIRST NATIONS ARTS AND CULTURE

Burra and the Goyder region acknowledge the Ngadjuri people and celebrate First Nations culture. Burra Gallery delivers a diverse range of Indigenous arts as part of the exhibition program partnership with Country Arts SA and others. This region has sites, stories, and links to First Nations, but we do not have accessibility.

- Employ a First Nations person to consolidate this area through research and development: a person with cultural authority for the region who can facilitate the building of ongoing and meaningful relationships.

3: PRIORITY AREAS AND OUTCOMES

BURRA CULTURAL PRECINCT

The Regional Council of Goyder is committed to arts in the region through its Arts Development Strategy 2018 - 2023. Plans are underway for the development of the space between the Burra Town Hall and the Burra Regional Art Gallery as a Cultural Precinct showcasing tourism, heritage and the arts.

Advise and advocate the Regional Council of Goyder to access funds to construct the Cultural Precinct. This can be a space that speaks not only to untapped tourism potential but placemaking for the community, a future that embraces an evolving state. The regions are a cultural resource that complements destination tourism objectives and liveability for residents.

ART EDUCATION

South Australia's role in the Arts Sector should include a greater regional and remote versus metropolitan focus. Major institutions should have dedicated funding for regional arts and education public programs for as part of their statutory obligations.

Teachers with an interest do their best. Burra Gallery does too, to give students the experience of art, artists, and what it is to create. Children draw before they can write: young people should not miss out on this life-enhancing skill to express themselves in all areas of the arts. Creative literacy is a key skill used by all, not just those with potential careers in the arts sector.

It is unacceptable that Burra Community School does not have an art teacher.

- Employ a dedicated art teacher in Burra Community School
- Equalise art with other social/sports and educational activities.
- Fund the delivery of school holiday programs as curriculum extensions
- Make art a mandatory stand-alone subject

If art were a priority equal to STEM and sports there would be greater engagement. If arts prizes and awards were equal to those given for sport, artists would not have to pay tax on them. We would like to see funding for the arts, to facilitate the advocacy and networking required in the regions.

Funding need not come from arts pools. Use education, health and recreation as alternate funding pools and dedicate policy to reflect this.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Art galleries and art spaces could not function without volunteers. Arts dedicated organisations are committed to providing a creative and enjoyable environment for much needed arts workers. When they succeed, it's a quality experience.

Celebrate dedicated volunteers as a limited resource.

The importance of late career artists is obvious across Australia in all areas of service in communities. When people retire they return to a passion that could not be a career in the 60's & 70's. Arts employment was not available at the time. Retirees are our regional volunteers: they are often artists who desire a late career in the arts. They can complement an eco system that rewards mentorship and unconventional routes to engagement in community.

Provide opportunities for early/mid/late career artists. Sea change/ tree change regional communities could become a key asset in affordable cultural capital investment. Quality of life

across generations link employment opportunities and educational aspirations at all stages of life. We can stop the drain of youth from regional towns to create vibrant multi generational hubs of activity and prosperity.

- Encourage a diverse demographic - eg. multicultural populations and new immigrants.
- The employment of gallery directors and curators could be paired with senior volunteer roles, growing expertise by offering a symbiotic model that is of the community.

4: GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Strong Volunteer cultures enable communities to thrive and inform local government.

However there is a disconnect between council and the arts, councils are inclined dismiss local arts workers and artists in favour of outsourcing.

There is a disconnect between the aspiration of the council Arts Strategy and its integration into standard practice. Attention to detail with a holistic approach integrating the micro and macro creates a more nuanced picture.

Encourage council to employ local artists and design practitioners for web design, street signs, promotions, reports and documents for public consumption, to offer internships, fellowships, old style cadetships, and apprenticeships to regional arts workers and late career artists.

- A dedicated Arts Officer could identify opportunities on both scales and assist the coordination of arts activity in the region and between regions.
- Local council Arts Officer works across three areas as in Burra (Tourism, Heritage and the Arts - the role tends to become focused in one area – Tourism) diluting each area of expertise.
- Country Arts SA fund cultural facilitators as a collaboration between councils and the arts community. It is an inconsistent approach in a statewide strategy. Diversity of creative thinking and the management objectives of local councils do not always align to create a coherent arts focused and resourceful outcome.

In mandatory partnerships volunteer hours should be a genuine financial contribution to funding application budgets. It is critical to accept volunteer hours as in-kind real cash donations in funding applications.

5: AUDIENCE AND ACCESS

Visitors come to the gallery as part of their experience of the town. Visitation is by donation, not an entry fee. It is a right to see and appreciate arts and culture and visitors should not need to feel they should pay. However, the gallery could not function without the generosity of visitors.

Philanthropic support and investment require invitations to prospective donors, and management of the donors. Volunteers do not have the time to engage and administer the support, which needs to be continual, respected and thanked accordingly.

The volunteers themselves provide most philanthropic support, but their in-kind donations are not accepted as cash value in funding applications.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS

BRAG has limited funds for advertisements in arts publications, to give our programs national exposure crucial for tourism driven economies. We would like to see state government social media platforms (eg. Arts SA, SATC) develop ambitious marketing that is inclusive and comprehensive. This would give a united voice that works on a collaborative model, with strength in consistent branding statewide.

6: INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION

Education is the key to cultivating entrepreneurial and innovation skills across business and industry. Isolation for Burra is also its attraction, for locals and tourists. It is an outback town and runs on entrepreneurship, requiring digital skills. Burra's older inhabitants volunteer to keep the institutions going and then in time pass on to new retirees. Many older people are reluctant and fearful of the new technologies in even their simplest forms. If consistent opportunities to upskill were available there would be greater online presence through new communication skills, enhancing independence and greater input into the affairs of the town - for arts, culture, tourism, gallery volunteering and life. Upskilling is an important point in the Regional Council of Goyder's Arts Development Plan 2018 - 2023.

7: EMBEDDING ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture are embedded in government and flow into everyday life. Government is nourished and uplifted by the arts, given relevancy and authenticity in a bottom-up approach.

Everyday life goes on as it always has. A few artists will not give up even when times are hard. In such times we all try to find ways around the problem, discover the solutions that are available to us, if we have vision and leadership. The opportunity to create, free the mind and think beyond the obvious is not just an enhancement to everyday life: it is a basic necessity.

8: ECOLOGY

The arts ecology of Burra is dependent on the equality of the relationship between local council and contributing organisations. This approach can be extrapolated to a statewide view. There are simple rules:

- Share information
- Trust each other
- Communicate on a regular basis

Disruption occurs when these rules are broken.

9: FINAL THOUGHTS

Burra Regional Art Gallery is important to the town and region and to our artists. Funding support and regionally focused opportunities would sustain and prepare the gallery for the future. It would enable employment of a director, longer term artist mentorships, early and late career advancement through internships, fellowships etc. It would facilitate study and research, particularly with late career artists and local First Nations culture. These things are vitally important in places like Burra, but not publicly evident.

Together with the Regional Council of Goyder, we trust in the long-term viability of Burra Regional Art Gallery and its place in this community.

We look forward to further developing these ideas and being part of the SA Arts Plan with a restructured and adaptable model.

Lis Jones Ingman, Denise Officer, Lisa Smedley and Kerry Youde.

Burra Regional Art Gallery Exhibitions Group