

**ELIZABETH ROGERS:**

Good morning everyone and welcome to the first day of this conversation here in Bathurst.

I would like to acknowledge we are meeting on Wiradjuri country, and pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, and thank them for the wonderful welcoming ceremony last night. I would also like to acknowledge all the Elders who have travelled from other parts of the state, and all the Aboriginal people who have joined us here today.

I would like to acknowledge the Chair of Regional Arts NSW, Stephen Champion; and the Directors of our Board; the chairs and executive directors from the regional arts development organisations that make up our unique regional network, delivering arts and cultural development projects based on the needs of their individual communities. In a world of constant change, that this model, a state and local government partnership, has been stable for nearly 20 years – is a testament to these regional leaders and their boards. In fact, it is exactly 20 years since the centralised Arts Council of NSW was completely reformed to give us the autonomous and independent arts and cultural development bodies we have today. It is a collaborative and collegiate group which reflects the different landscapes in which they work.

We could not deliver this event without our principal partner, the NSW Government, with funding through Create NSW and Destination NSW; and I would particularly like to thank Grainne Brunson from Create NSW for her support, advice and encouragement during the development of Artstate.

Our local government partner, Bathurst Regional Council, and our strategic partner, Charles Sturt University, I thank them all for their support.

We are fortunate to have a Minister for the Arts who is so committed to this event that he is with us again for the second year. To start off our conversation, please welcome The Hon. Don Harwin.

(Applause)

## **CONFERENCE OPENING**

**THE HON. DON HARWIN MLC, NSW MINISTER FOR THE ARTS:**

Thank you, Elizabeth, and I'd like also to acknowledge the clans of the Wiradjuri nation, their Elders, past and present, and thank them for their custodianship for generations of the land upon which this Artstate is being held. I particularly want to acknowledge Jonathan Jones who will be speaking to us soon, and of course all the other First Nations people present, particularly those who have been taking part in the NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Exchange over the last few days.

Today we get down to business. I think we all agree that last night's Opening Ceremony was a spectacular demonstration of what Artstate is all about.

Last night's Opening Ceremony I think also clearly demonstrated the two themes of Artstate for

this year – ‘a sense of place’ and ‘robust regions’. Two themes we will be hearing much more about from speakers over the next two days.

In terms of ‘a sense of place’, the response of the artists to the landscape and communities they live in and how they express their stories through the landscape was very clear last night. From the stories of the first people to the brave collaboration between Carillion’er and the ensemble performing a piece of music written here at this Conservatorium, spoke to me about the rich artistic and cultural identity of this place.

And I am really looking forward to Jonathan's keynote speech, ‘I Love This Country’, giving his take on ‘sense of place’ here in his country.

We will also be hearing more about Regional Arts practice that responds to culture and landscape through Artstate. In terms of ‘robust regions’ the conference and speakers will be looking at the contributions that arts, screen and culture make to regional and rural communities and asking how collaborations and partnerships are developed and maintained.

It is why this year Create NSW has also supported the NSW Aboriginal Arts and Culture Exchange. This important two-day gathering of 32 delegates from across NSW, has taken place earlier this week and many of the delegates are here this morning staying on for Artstate.

The exchange was an opportunity for NSW Aboriginal artists and arts workers to come together and develop ideas, build networks, build capacity, and devise ways to enrich and grow the sector in NSW.

This morning I am also launching a new resource for the arts and cultural sector, ‘Creating New Income, A Toolkit to Support Creative Practice’. The toolkit is a set of online resources you can access through the Create NSW website specifically designed to meet the needs of NSW creative practitioners and small to medium organisations and will be of particular benefit in the regions.

Strengthening business sustainability and building new income sources for the arts, screen and culture sector are priorities for the NSW Government.

In terms of ‘robust regions’, the conference and speakers will be looking at the contributions that arts, screen and culture make to regional and rural communities, and asking how collaborations and partnerships are developed and maintained, and the toolkit is part of that conversation.

This was one of the five main themes discussed at the Arts 2025 Summit, where you, the sector, and in particular regional delegates, spoke of the need to build skills in fundraising and philanthropy to develop resilience and strength.

In the years to come when looking back on my 20+ years in Parliament and my time as your Minister, one of the things I will be proudest of is the way we tried to advance the discussion about cultural equity during the last few months and year.

I am very proud of how our government has increased funding for arts organisations in western Sydney, by 40% since 2015. And I am also extraordinarily proud of the period of renewal and

focus on Regional Arts. It is not just the buildings, the \$4 million on libraries, the \$25 million on museums and galleries, and the \$16 million on ten performing arts centres so far, because I know what goes on in those buildings is just as important, if not more important.

That is why our Government, through Create NSW, has a far broader focus. That is why we are more than doubling regional touring funding this year. It is not just about making sure, for example, some of what many in the community think are greats of the stage – people like John Bell and Ensemble's fabulous play 'Diplomacy' that will be coming to regional NSW next year. Or Jonathon Biggens, 'The Gospel According to Paul' will be coming to regional NSW next year with our expanded funding.

No, it is about fLiNG physical theatre from the Bega Valley and Ghenoa Gela from the Central Coast, who through that funding and that funding boost will have the opportunity to showcase their talents in Sydney. That is just as important. And there will be many, many expanded opportunities as a result of us more than doubling the funding.

It is why I can announce we will also be doubling the Regional partnerships funding to provide more opportunities for Regional Arts practitioners, and NORPA, Screenworks and NERAM all benefited from that last year and we will be supercharging it for 2019, and of course it is why we are supporting Artstate with annual funding of \$200,000 and a four-year commitment.

As somebody who lived in a regional community for 18 years, one with a great local museum, a vibrant visual arts community and a tiny little arthouse cinema that had the Sydney Film Festival visiting every year, I just know how important the arts and culture are to regional communities.

But this is all made possible because our state is powering ahead – we have got a strong economy, and that is the foundation for supporting arts and culture and for building a stronger, better NSW.

So, ladies and gentlemen, have a wonderful conference. Let's really focus on the 'sense of place', and how we can make our regions more robust. Congratulations Elizabeth, congratulations to the whole Bathurst team. I am delighted to be here and I hope you enjoy it as much as I am already enjoying it.

Thanks.

(Applause)

**ELIZABETH ROGERS:**

Thank you, Minister Harwin, and I think I mentioned last night how much we welcome the increase to regional touring. It is a two-way street. As well as the increase to the funding for regional partnerships because we do know through our Regional Arts development organisations how important the amazing outcomes that has.

**KEYNOTE 1 – INTRODUCTION (ELIZABETH ROGERS)**

It is my great pleasure to introduce our first keynote speaker, Jonathan Jones, who will also acknowledge country and deliver our first keynote. He is a member of the Wiradjuri and

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Kamilaroi nations of south-east Australia, a Sydney-based artist and he works across a range of mediums.

He creates site-specific installations and interventions into space that work with local knowledge systems, are grounded in research of the historical archive and builds on community aspirations. At the heart of Jonathon's practice is the act of collaborating, and many projects have seen him work with other artists and communities to develop major projects.

In 2015, he collaborated with the Bathurst Wiradjuri and Aboriginal Elders to create: "They Made It A Solitude And Called It Peace", at the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. This exhibition has been remounted, especially for Artstate, so please take the opportunity to visit the gallery while you are here.

He is currently working with long-time collaborator Uncle Stan Grant, developing Wiradjuri Galbunha or Wirdajuri Philosophy for a range of projects. Jonathon is an extremely busy man and we were delighted that he agreed to make time in his schedule to deliver the opening keynote. Please welcome Jonathon Jones.

(Applause)

### **KEYNOTE 1 – NGINHA NGURAMBANG MARUNBUNMILGIRRIDYU: I LOVE THIS COUNTRY**

JONATHON JONES:

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

Good morning, friends, my name is Jonathon Jones. I'm Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

I would like to begin by acknowledging Wiradjuri people, acknowledge that we are on Wiradjuri country, my country.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

I would also like to acknowledge the two really important features of the landscape – the Macquarie River and Mount Panorama or Wahlu.

I would also like to pay my respects to all the Elders here today and the community that have travelled across the region to be here with us.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

So, thank you. It is an enormous honour, if not a bit nerve racking to be given this opportunity by my Elders, to not only to deliver today's talk but to extend their warm and extraordinary welcome from last night.

(Speaks Aboriginal language)

Thank you to my Elders.

For those who attended last night's welcome, I think you will agree how lucky we are to have such an amazing group here in Bathurst. They have really been a group who have stood behind me and given me inspiration for all the work I do over the years. As such, this talk is very much

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dedicated to the Wiradjuri and Aboriginal Bathurst Elders, to those aunts and uncles who have generously, always empowered me to undertake a whole number of projects.

So, today I wanted to touch on the cultural life and vitality that exists within our region, and reflect on the conference theme – a sense of place. I wanted first to do this by highlighting the significance of this region, and the gifts that this region offers. And then wrap the talk up briefly by looking at the one project that is playing.

I should mention too, the work has a small soundtrack, so there are no birds trapped in the building. It is the work itself. The talk will be a bit of a crash course in local history, a bit of an artist talk, a bit of language, and a few things that have inspired me and that have kind of directed the way I work and how I come to think about place. So, I hope it all makes sense.

But really at the heart of what I am trying to talk about today is Australia's inability to sort of reconcile with its Aboriginal history and have a true sense of place.

I honestly believe that this problem of reconciling with our true sense of place is the country's biggest failing. And it is what continues to hold us back as a nation, but if we can open our hearts to what we have here, we can truly enact some change.

So first, in order to sort of frame this talk I thought it might be helpful to think about my Wiradjuri worldview. And to do that I thought I might look at one keyword that you probably heard in the acknowledgement, and in the title of this talk, which is 'Ngurambang'. So Ngurambang is used in the same way Aboriginal people today use the word 'country', not 'landscape', country.

If we look at the word and break the word down, we can get an understanding. 'Nguram' is a Wiradjuri word for 'camp', 'place' or 'village'. We can use Nguram to describe Bathurst or any town or city. Nguram is also used to describe a birds nest, or an animal burrow, so any sort of 'home'. The second part of the word is 'Bang'. Now Bang is a word or suffix that we use to amplify a word. So Murunbang... Muran is good, Muranbang is very good, Muranbangbang.. very very good.

Similarly when we put Ngurambang together it really means an intensification of a camp, a good camp, a very special camp. In many ways it is often translated as 'your home country'.

Now because of the context of this exhibition I'm presuming most of us here call our 'Ngurambang' or our home country within this region. So within NSW, ACT, maybe some from Victoria. I was going to ask for a show of hands but I can't see a thing, unfortunately. But I am assuming many of us... (*House lights are turned up*) Here we go, so how many people from this region? A significant group of these people are from NSW, ACT or Victoria. Now this region is probably best described within that sort of.. and now I'm probably going to ask some more questions, so maybe keep the lights on if you want.

So this region is really sort of described as the south-east, it is a large sort of block of the country. Yet, how many of us really know our 'Ngurambang'. How many of us know and really appreciate our very special camp? And how does our understanding of that camp, that very special camp, this very special place that we live, change when we start thinking about Aboriginal worldviews and the gifts that Aboriginal people have kind of enable this entire country

to have?

I guess the saddest part for me in all this, is that the south-east where we call home, this Ngurambang is often not a region associated with Aboriginal culture, which is obviously enormously problematic, and which I will go into. But first I thought it was very important to define the south-east because those borders of those states isn't very helpful.

But really when we are talking about the south-east it is the Murray Darling catchment, the Great Dividing Range, and the coastal waterways that make up that area. So the south-east has probably one of the highest concentrations for Aboriginal communities with over 60 different nations, so that's more nations than in Europe, within this south-east in a much smaller space.

Each with their own unique political, social, religious systems which have developed over countless generations and all contributing to Australia having the world's oldest living culture.

Now, we know and can show you that this is a very very special camp, this is a really important Ngurambang for Aboriginal people and there is many ways we can do this. I thought I'd run through some of the ones that always knock me.

So within this region we have some of the most significant sites in the world, not Australia, not the region, but the world. So, as some of you probably know, we have the world's oldest ceremonial burial site, out at Lake Mungo. Now again, this nearly always interests me - how many people have been out to Lake Mungo? That's pretty good – there's a handful of people here who have been to one of the world's most significant sites. Not that far away, only a few hours.

Around the same age as the Brewarrina fish traps, which are the oldest man-made structure. (*whistle from someone in audience*) Guessing that's someone here from Bree. So, who has been to Bree? A few more hands. Again, one of the world's most significant sites. Only a few hours' drive away, sitting here in our region on our doorstep, and we are all not putting our hands up. What's that about?

Not far from Bree is of course Cuddy Springs, which is were they recovered some grinding stones dating..., that puts Aboriginal communities in this region making bread at 32,000 years ago. This is a closed-off site, we can't go there, but it is a significant site none the less. This is of course one of the cornerstones of Uncle Bruce Pascoe's work, 'Dark Emu', looking at agricultural acts. It is a highly significant site predating the Egyptians, more than doubling the Egyptian record of making bread. From the same site is probably one of the world's oldest ceremonial objects. Something that no one ever talks about.

Not far from home here, up in the Blue Mountains we have sites that date to 22000 years. Rock art sites, campsites. While the oldest surviving boomerang comes again from Wylie Swamp, down in South Australia , only 10,000 years old. Quite close to that is Budj Bim in Gunditjmara Country, one of the biggest and most complex fishing, stone fish arrangements in the world which recently went on to the UNESCO World Heritage listing. Who has been to Budj Bim? What? Anyone?

No one has been, OK. Sense of place.

So this massive infrastructure project is just sitting down there in Gunditjmara Country and crying out for people like us to pay attention to it. This cultural cringe we have terrifies me. That we have the world's most significant sites here in this country, here on our little patch, here in our Ngurambang, and yet we refuse to even acknowledge them for the most part.

this is something I've often talked to Uncle Bruce Pascoe about it, and he often laughs, that there is no archaeologists students lining up to go to rural NSW to do their studies. Everybody is racing overseas. So what can we take away from this? And I'm not, sorry I'm not trying to place any blame here, but what I think I can understand out of this, is that colonisation has affected us all. Colonisation is not just affecting Aboriginal people, it is affecting non-Aboriginal people as well. We are blinded to this history, we are blinded to our heritage. That is how pervasive colonisation is.

You often hear us talking about colonisation and how it derails us. It's now derailing you. Uncle Bruce has often said for Australia to not pay attention to the world's oldest living culture, then you define your own intelligence. I think we started to see some of that here today.

So, south-east communities have long ancestral connections including trade, ceremonial connections which tie the region together, but perhaps it is the experience of colonisation that has really bound us together in new and significant ways that affects all of us.

The region, along with having some of the world's most significant historical sites, is also where colonisation occurs. And of course going hand in hand with colonisation is resistance.

Of course we are standing in Australia's first inland town founded in 1814. It was, of course here, that a massive resistance campaign was launched with a number of key leaders, including Windradyne, whose strength was so overwhelming that martial law was declared in 1824. So that's a government sanctioned war declared against Wiradjuri, leading to our wholesale massacre.

Now it's important to know as Uncle Dinawan often reminds me, that even though the Wiradjuri campaign was so strong it had the white fellas on the run, no white woman or child was harmed. That needless to say, Wiradjuri women and children were targeted in this campaign, while led Windradyne to walk to Sydney and to declare peace. So, we had to negotiate those peace terms because people were engaging more unfairly.

Following this, Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal groups in the south-east were hit with a second wave of smallpox, which sort of hit in this area around 1829 to 1831. It is known locally as (aboriginal language) There were military campaigns, the displacement of resources and other diseases. We were left on our knees. But one of the most significant stories comes from this critical moment. A story that has often inspired me, not far from here, just up in Wellington, it was noted that Elders in the community came together and instead of giving up at this terrible moment of despair, they wrote new songs and they performed new dances to try and combat this terrible foe.

They used creativity to combat this unknown force ripping up the community. So extraordinary acts of creativity can often be seen as ways of defining colonisation and oppression. As a result, the south-east is home to the first Aboriginal art movements. Yes indeed, it needs to be remembered and stressed that the first Aboriginal art movements come from the south-east.

Just over the mountains, not far from here, in Sydney, on the banks of Botany Bay is the first-ever Aboriginal community. Coming out of the community is one of the first art movements. We see the senior men carving and producing extraordinary carving works, and the aunts working with shells which is continued today. That is one of the first art movements coming from the south-east.

And of course the south-east it was also creating these extraordinary pioneers that predate everyone, predate the Central Western Desert movement. Working in 1800 were such artists as William Barak, an extraordinary painter from Melbourne, and Tommy McRae, one of my all-time favourite artists working on the border of NSW and Victoria and even on the South Coast. These heroic men are the founders of the art movement but they are forgotten.

They are the first to engage with European materials and paint their cultural vision and engagement. It is really, really important. I can't stress this enough that Aboriginal art in the context that we see today in galleries started here in our south-east patch.

This creativity continued to 1987. The open Aboriginal art movement crystallised with the establishment of the Aboriginal Art Cooperative happening in Sydney. This organisation was created to create a platform for urban artists who were not being recognised. This extraordinary organisation played a major role in defining what it is to be Aboriginal, what culture is, what it is to look Aboriginal and be Aboriginal, and what things you can say and do as an Aboriginal person.

This organisation was critical within our industry, defining it for us. One of the founding artists of that organisation was Wiradjuri photographer Michael Riley. I was privileged to work with him for a number of years and Michael's work has been a huge inspiration to me.

You can see some of his hand hopefully within this work. Michael's extraordinary work found the beauty in our communities, his (inaudible) where most people saw weakness, and through photography and film created, I guess, a vision of what we were meant to see from this region.

And working materials with non-Aboriginal practices, which is about what it is to be an Aboriginal artist, Michael was a true maverick. It was in Michael's work, something that has continued to define the south-east, in a region that has had the most effects with colonisation, lands where people and culture have been stripped bare, there is always new growth.

During a recent project, I was lucky enough to be working with Uncle Stan Grant, and the philosophy I was really interested in is the way our culture constantly regrows and comes back stronger and stronger. This resistance and revival can be seen in one of his champion projects which is the revival of language.

Uncle Stan is just one of many language Elders who are part of this extraordinary movement. For Wiradjuri it was early in the 1980s that Peter Read announced that there were no Wiradjuri

speakers left. Alas, he probably didn't speak with Uncle Stan. Uncle Stan was probably on the road going to every Wiradjuri town teaching everyone who wanted to learn.

From that point, a lot of people have taken the seed he has planted in extraordinary directions.

In Parkes people took languages into schools, starting in 2006. By 2016, so just ten years after a lot of hard work, and I should say just before the RAMS funding changed, Parkes was teaching Wiradjuri to every schoolchild in every school. Is anybody here from Parkes? Yes? Sorry, I couldn't see you!

This is an extraordinary community. As I said, in 2016 schoolchildren were learning Wiradjuri. 1000 school kids per year were learning it. 1000 school kids in a community of 10,000 people. That is one tenth of the population learning the language of their Ngurambang.

This is only comparable to New Zealand. In the demographics of the Wiradjuri population it's not comparable at all.

Uncle Jeff and Lionel, or Mr Lovett, often talked about the massive change in the school environment – a huge reduction in bullying and greater learning. This was across-the-board for all children. There was a marked improvement in social cohesion, and the way everybody was learning.

So, this process of learning your Ngurambang saw dramatic effects within the schools.

I was lucky enough to work with a number of projects at Parkes, and it is truly a remarkable story and something which I think we should be celebrating more. Sadly, since the RAMS funding has come in, many schools have stopped being able to teach.

I was even impressed that on a recent trip, a couple of weeks ago I was out in Parkes talking with everyone, and I met some Koori parents who had gone through the program. Now they are having little ones, and they decided to actively find the schools that were still teaching Wiradjuri, and they sent their little ones to that school, to the kindergarten, which was fantastic.

But of course, the teachers, Lionel, was thinking, "Oh, god..." All these little ones were coming in with language skills, having learned it at home, they were already empowered – which was great – but poor Mr Lovett had to redesign what he was teaching. The advanced learning of these kids was already taking effect.

And you can't walk down the street without somebody calling out in Wiradjuri language to Mr Anderson.

This is a fantastic example of revival. We see stories like this right across the south-east. And these revival movements are probably best charted through our cultural and arts practices.

For the first time in generations, people are learning their traditional skills and knowledge of their ancestors, once thought lost to the severe blows of colonisation. Possums and cloaks, dances, songs, canoes and carvings – we saw some last night – and some of the cultural practices that have been woken up and are taking off in the south-east.

Many of you in the room have probably been actively part of supporting that, which is fantastic, and you should be enormously congratulated.

In this way, the south-east can inspire everybody that has experienced colonisation and the destruction of the culture. We are a shining example of how colonisation does not win. We can show everyone around the world, in a world where refugees dominate the population, that things live inside you – those stories, that culture, it lives inside you and cannot be knocked out of you. You carry those things within you.

That is an extremely powerful act of affirmation, and shows how special our camp is.

This was supposed to be a short introduction to the south-east, a mix-tape of the things that I love, drawing on some of my contacts and projects to show how unique and fantastic this Ngurambang is. This very special camp has given so many gifts that are not only significant to this country. Again, I stress to the world, from our historical sites to the development of Aboriginal art, our abilities to withstand colonisation and create new pathways forward, these are all gifts from the south-east and gifts from our Ngurambang that we should cherish and celebrate.

They are complex by nature. They speak to an extraordinarily entwined history that is not as simple and straight-lined as the history books would like us to believe. Our history is often too hot to handle. And often it is easier to hide and ignore our histories and try to forget it. But this would do us all a great injustice. We need to relearn our histories and create new futures. But how? How do we access this complex web of knowledge and histories meaningfully, and not continue to be complacent within that process of colonisation?

It is really simple. You work with your local Aboriginals, you work with your local Elders, with your local community members, knowledge holders, to help you, to guide you through these stories. They are complex, but we have lived them, they are part of us. We are so lucky here in Bathurst to have a Wiradjuri group.

The work behind me was part of a major exhibition in 2015 in collaboration with the Elders. There are two film components which are on at the moment at the Bathurst Regional Gallery. This work is an example of how to access and talk about these complex histories – my attempt to talk to my Ngurambang.

The project was originally commissioned as part of the 2015 Bicentenary in Bathurst. Sarah from the Gallery and Richard Perram very generously for the first time handed the gallery over to one artist and one project – a major moment for everyone, if not a bit intimidating.

So, even though my family has very strong connections here in Bathurst, my first instinct was obviously to talk to my Elders, many of whom I have known since I was very young, including Uncle Muliam.

We wanted to show that after 200 years the landscape had changed dramatically, that the Elders were steadfast. They were solid. They were full of respect. And even though all of these things had changed around them, they had remained.

And that is what we wanted to celebrate – putting them in the centre of the work. And in doing so, these living portraits show the Elders in their country and talk about the history of Bathurst as experienced by Aboriginal people.

The Elders are key to understanding the histories. Through dialogue, the Elders nominated specific locations for their living portraits. Most of the artists chose Wambool on the banks of the Macquarie. And obviously this is a very significant site, where Wiradjuri people watched the Union Jack being hoisted for the first time. And today the ceremonial ground is down there – you can see Aunty Jill standing on that ceremonial ground.

The Uncles chose on top of Mount Panorama, and in doing so they started instructing me on the capacities of our Ngurambang. Wahluu is a very complex site, series of sites. The mountain itself is the embodiment of a young man known as Wahluu, who was killed by his brother when they fought over a young woman.

When he was killed, where he laid the ground was opened up and he was covered in lava – that gives the mountain's shape today. Uncle reminds us that this is a story about jealousy, envy and hatred.

On Wahluu there are some important sites – including a young man's initiation site. This site once included a stone Bora ring that sat on the top of a mountain. Bora rings are hugely significant sites. And as Uncle told us last night, Wahluu was a very significant site for all people.

Those stones that were part of the Bora ring were dismantled and destroyed and eventually reused and recycled and reconstituted into a small cottage. In fact, you can see that cottage behind Uncle there.

Today this cottage is derelict, fenced off with cyclone fencing. Part of the reason for this is the annual car race. The Uncles have told me there is no loose debris allowed on the ground because these car enthusiasts – a questionable term – they pick up things and throw them at the cars while they watch. So Wahluu has been cleared of loose debris to prevent accidents.

In a strange way, the stones from the Bora ring have been locked into that building. And in one way we are very lucky that they have stayed on country, stayed on the site where they are meant to be. We cannot dismantle the cottage, we do not know what the Bora ring looked like, but even if we did they would be picked up and used as projectiles.

The cottage is riddled with asbestos, it cannot be used. The colonial conundrum – how do we move forward with these issues? How are the Elders meant to make sense of this? I do not envy the work of our Elders. This is just one example of a complex problem they have inherited and they must deal with. It is really up to us to try to support them through these complex narratives.

In 2015, the Elders won a tireless campaign they had been running for decades to give the mountain dual names. Today we're lucky to say Wahluu and connect it to that mountain known as that name. I had a text message from Uncle Bill with a lot of emojis in it when we won it. But

the battle is not over.

Recently the council sought to have a go-cart track put up there, destroying a number of important cultural sites, and again going against the wishes of the Elders who know that mountain like a family member.

The Elders have constantly stressed they are not opposed to racing or race activities on Wahluu, in fact reminding us that the race belongs on the mountain. The age-old battle between the two brothers is relived every October, but today the brothers are known as Ford and Holden!

And that is a story Uncle Bill tells me, it is how those Elders have actually used their cultural knowledge to make sense of that site.

This Ngurambang has predetermined our activities – we need to listen to the stories and pay respect to our Ngurambang. It is a special camp and we need to keep it that way. I need to say it is very difficult to hear the local council giving an acknowledgement of country. Do they truly mean it? Do they truly understand their Ngurambang?

Again, our role is to support our Elders, and help and listen to them. Like our Ngurambang, we see this work here as a living artwork, and we're really hoping to be able to contribute to this work by taking on more living portraits of emerging Elders.

I should also say, in finishing, that this work is not perfect, or the way you should or could work, but it just worked for us here in Bathurst. I can assure you that in your town there are Elders, knowledge holders and community members who are more than interested in developing a dialogue and sharing their knowledge and helping us with these complex histories. Responsibility rests on us, cultural workers, curators, artists and educators to maintain that dialogue and step up.

I wanted to finish today's talk with a quote from Uncle Bruce Pascoe from his 2007 publication 'Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with your Country':

"We should relish the complexity, the depth, the length of history. We should feel a tiny bit smug that we know things people from other countries do not. Things they find strange, exotic and compelling. Let's bury the stone and steel hatchets and fall in love with our country. Let's share the guiltless embrace of true love, remembering there is a huge difference between loving your country and simply loving your lifestyle. True love does not rely on beaches, barbecues and sunshine."

Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

How amazing and thought-provoking was that presentation, Jonathan, thank you so much. I think you have absolutely set the tone for the conversation that we will be thinking about our statement, thinking about how NSW has been trying to incorporate into those conversations.

A small token of appreciation please...

(Applause)

So, continuing our theme for today, our next panel will discuss how First Nation Artists are Responding to Place in a panel form. Sharni Jones will lead this conversation, she is an Aboriginal woman from the Kabi Kabi and Waka Waka nations of south-east Queensland and she spent her formative years in the Illawarra region of New South Wales.

She has deep knowledge of, and extensive engagement in, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural sector, with specialisations in contemporary visual arts practice, strategic policy development and stakeholder engagement.

She is the Manager of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection of the Australian Museum, and I am extremely proud to say she is director of Regional Arts NSW. Please welcome Sharni who will introduce the panel of First Nations artists responding to place.

## **PANEL 1: FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS: RESPONDING TO PLACE**

SHARNI JONES:

Good morning. Thank you, Elizabeth and thank you to Jonathon and our elders who have come here before us and will always be with us. So, this morning I am excited to be moderating this panel, we certainly have Amala Groom, a Wiradjuri woman, Aleshia Lonsdale is also a Wiradjuri woman and always fabulous, Ian RT Colless, a Gundungurra man.

(Applause)

Before they talk a little bit more about themselves and their practice, we're going to do something a little bit different. So, first of all, I want you all to make sure your feet are firmly planted on the ground, I want you to open your hands, I want you to put your palms up. I want you to take some very deep breaths right into your belly. Now close your eyes, and I want to take you all the way back to country, to your country.

You might be an Elder, you might be a traditional owner, you might be a visitor on that land, you might have other deep connections, long connections. Place yourself deep, deep within that place. Make sure your body and your soul are embedded in that place. You might be in the bush, on the beach, you might be in your home, you might be in your yard if you've got one, you might be on your balcony, you might be in the water.

Feel, hear, listen. What do you know, what do you smell, what is that country telling you? What is it hiding from you? Think about your surroundings. What does the memory of this place tell you? Are you grounded, does it ground you? What ignites your fire? What terrorises your dreams? What can you do to repair country? What are you doing to reinvigorate country? Who are?

Now I want you to bring yourself back to this place and this time. Take another long, deep breath. Bring yourself all the way back. Now open your eyes. Bring yourself back to me. Bring yourself back to this country.

I will have to use the microphone. Be warned that there could be swearing and there certainly will be a lot of crying. Amala and I are known for having a good old cry on stage.

SPEAKER: Yes, there is a 99% chance I will cry.

SHARNI JONES:

Amala Groom is a Wiradjuri conceptual artist whose practice, as the performance of her cultural sovereignty, is informed by and driven by First Nations epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies.

Her work, a form of passionate activism, presents acute and incisive commentary on contemporary socio-political issues. I could talk more, but Amala can certainly introduce her practice in a moment.

I will just run through, while we are here as well, Aleshia Lonsdale is a visual artist based in regional NSW. Aleshia began primarily as a painter a weaver and has since expanded her practice to incorporate installation and sculptural work. Her inspiration is drawn from the issues that Aboriginal people face, including Aboriginality and identity.

Ian needs no introduction. Ian is from the clan of the Dharabuladh clan of the Gundungurra language group that encompasses the Blue Mountains region. He was raised by and he's the grandson of the late Aunty Dawn Colless. Over the past 10 years or so Ian has been the Artistic Director and Chief Choreographer for Untitled Collective. But Ian as we know wears many hats and is now the Project Officer working in the Capacity Building team at The Australia Council for the Arts.

Just as a reminder around this panel, and hopefully you have embedded yourself deeply within country, this morning we will be looking at country, language, ecology, the lifecycle in perpetuity they are all contextual sanctions within this contradiction of this colonial occupation, of displacement, of migration and of alienation, conviction and cultural resilience. We are cultural warriors.

A sense of place and longing is embedded deeply in the unconscious, in the psyche and it is manifested through inter-generational activity, as in intergenerational transformation of cultural practice.

Me, my Elders, those have come before me, those that will come after me, Amala, Aleshia and Ian's Elders that will walk before us and will walk after us. We will look at what it means to embrace agency, we are self-determining our futures. Renewal, what does transformation look like? Cultural identity in place-based context which we can all relate to and we've taken you on that journey.

Amala, can you tell us a little bit about your mob and how your practice is transformed being on

country and in place?

AMALA GROOM:

Sure, I can begin that conversation because it is definitely a long conversation.

(Speaks Indigenous Language).

My belief in place and time is always to respect country, to always respect old people. It is the most enormous privilege to be able to speak on this panel today with everybody. And to be able to be speaking on my own country, so I want to acknowledge that we are on Wiradjuri country, and that our sovereignty has never ceded and to pay my respects to our Elders and to our community and to our country. What is the question?

SHARNI JONES:

How has your practice been transformed being on country and in place?

AMALA GROOM:

Ok, for those who don't know me, I'm a conceptual artist, my practice is the performance of my cultural sovereignty. So I make art because I have to, it is in my body, it's in my bones and it's in my blood, it is the old people working through, walking with me all the time. I've got to do it, if I don't do it I get sick. The fundamental reason, the basis of my practice, is making an argument, and that argument is that colonisation is not just antithetical to Aboriginal people, it is actually antithetical to the human experience.

We are all in this together, right? It's just that backfellas, we know that there's something else, yeah? Because it is still within our living, existing, breathing, physical and spiritual memory because we only have a couple of years of that stuff, whereas you have got wheels and all these other things from before industrialisation.

So, I have been back home for a year and a half, I had to come home. If I didn't come home, I would have been really sick because I had to be grounded in the country. But as an independent practitioner and artist I'm travelling all the time. It is really hard yards. So, I'm not as home as much as I want to be or even as much as I need to be. I would spend probably 5% of my time back on country. But I will get really badly sick if I don't come back.

So, I'm still learning after being back home, living back home, although my mum would say I'm just renting a closet. I will get really badly sick, different things would affect me, when being in town or being off country -- like advertising -- I get a panic attack when I see the Coles truck. These really small things that I never really noticed before: when I lived in the city, it would seriously affect my whole psyche and well-being. Bringing it back to country, so I can get re-grounded, re-group and re-gather so I can continue to do the things I do. It is a hard slog.

SHARNI JONES:

It is. It is important that as Aboriginal people, every day we fight for survival and identity, and who we are, and keeping well physically, metaphysically, spiritually is an important part of practice, and being here, so thank you.

Aleshia, would you talk a little bit about your mob and how your practice has evolved over

recent times and what it means to own agency, how deep guttural drive affects you as an individual and as an Aboriginal woman?

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

The big questions. I am Wiradjuri woman from Mudgee. I was born and bred there and, I guess, for me, my background prior to working in the network was as a cultural heritage officer and in community development. And then I came to the role as the Aboriginal Development Officer for Arts Outwest.

I have no formal arts training, I have basically been winging it and learning on the go. A lot of experiences and learnings I have had are from the opportunities I have had through my position. So, whether that's going to the National Gallery as part of the Wesfarmers program, or (through) professional development opportunities, particularly the Left Field Project through Orana Arts was really significant for me because it gave me the opportunity to work with other artists and see something beyond just the weaving or the paintbrush or the canvas. It opened my eyes and gave me a different language, I guess, to work with.

So, initially a lot of my work was just focused on issues that impacted on us from dispossession, so looking at identity, how people were affected by that, looking at intergenerational trauma, the impacts of removal of Aboriginal kids from the stolen generation until now. I think over time I have used that to talk about things I can't really speak about. An exhibition of works was about kids in out-of-home care and that was because at that point in time there were about six of my nephews and nieces in out-of-home care, and we were fighting with the department to keep them together. But I couldn't say how that made me feel because they were still PR to the Minister and we were told that these children belonged to us and we could take them any time we liked.

I couldn't say what I was feeling or experiencing but I could say it through my art. I think it is the same for a lot of my other work which, when I was looking last night, it seems to be about the impact of mining on cultural heritage. Mudgee has three coalmines and fourth that's mostly likely on the way and that significantly impacts our cultural heritage, and our ability to teach our young ones. Things my grandmother taught me I can't teach my niece because those places don't exist anymore. So, I've used my work to be able to talk about the impacts of that on us as people and share that. I have also with my work tried to talk about current issues that affect us as well. Some of my current works in the exhibition are around cultural heritage and the impacts of mining, but also around dementia and foetal alcohol syndrome. Foetal alcohol syndrome because that is something that my nephew is dealing with at the moment. I guess a lot of my works are about country, community and culture, just drawing from home, always bringing it back to home.

SHARNI JONES:

Taking on some of the big issues, Aleshia, it is certainly no mean feat. And as a practitioner who, as you mentioned, doesn't have a formal art education background, your process, I guess, of discovery and deep self-reflection and nurturing your practice, has that assisted in dealing with complex issues in the community and with family? How that process, where there is that intergenerational trauma, is healing you and your family in practice? Do you feel that that response, that the output that you give is changing you?

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

Yeah, it is a good way to get that out, instead of holding it in, whether it's about dementia and that feeling of loss that is happening to that person, or whether it is about losing a place you know you will never see again. I think you can't always articulate it in the way you want to – I can't always, anyway – but I think through artwork people can look at that and get what we are talking about.

So, I'm not only speaking for me but also for the community, so I will talk to people, I will go on country, I will think about all those things before I pull the work together. I might pull it together at the last minute, in the exhibition space, on the weekend!

(Laughter)

But I think it is pulling all those things together and putting it out there.

SHARNI JONES:

Do you spend a lot of time in creative development and thinking before those ideas come together?

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

I think because I live it, so I have my day job but I also am the chairperson of the local Aboriginal Land Council, so we deal with the issue of mining companies and those issues all the time, so I have kids with their issues, so I guess I am living it, I am thinking about it all the time.

I have a good job where I am driving, so that is my thinking time, when there's no little people talking. So, (while) it might not look like I'm actually working until I get there, I'm constantly pulling things together and thinking about things and somehow manage to put it all in in the end.

SHARNI JONES:

I spend a lot of time in my own head thinking, with my other voice.

Ian, you have had such a diverse career in terms of your practice as choreographer and as a dancer, and we have had a great time working together in previous roles, but also the sharing of practice and how it manifests in other ways.

Can you talk about your inspiration with your beautiful Gran who has passed, and the effect and the relationship that you had with her on country, and how that has transformed you as a queer Aboriginal man, and your identity, and exploring that as an Aboriginal man? Sorry, it is loaded.

IAN RT COLLESS:

She says she's not going to cry! It is like Oprah. A black woman hosting and all!

I want to acknowledge my sense of place where I am geographically with you guys at the moment. I love being here. Can you give a deadly applause for these gorgeous women! Hello, yes, me too! I want to be a woman, they are fabulous. (I am crazy).

But I want to acknowledge the Wiradjuri, and thank you, ladies, for trusting me and allowing me to involve myself to come here, and thank you, Elizabeth, for allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a voice in our own country as well and being part of that contributonal aspect.

My great-great-great grandfather, my grandmother's great-grandfather was Billy Lynch, who knew Katoomba before there was a building on it. My grandmother, the late Aunty Dawn Colless – there is a bridge there I opened after my grandmother's death – she was an extraordinary woman, growing up in the Blue Mountains, in a place formerly known as 'The Gully'. If you have the opportunity, please go there. It is not just the seven sisters – three sisters came out of a 1932 Golden Book, you can google it. My sense of place is there. When I go there it is not a pretty, tourist venue, but it doesn't matter – it gives me something.

My grandmother brought me up in a geography of knowledge, oral tradition, and multi-intellectual, multi-generational information. My people are carbon dated to 43,000 to 47,000 years and the reason why I can tell you this is because when there was a drought in 2001, my grandmother got in a dinghy at 62 – she was always 62, she was always chain smoking and 62! – and she went out in a dinghy and she sorted it out.

My sense of place was very much a sense of being involved in something bigger than me, and it was very special. I don't understand why Nan took the time with me -- I was a very unusual child, very prideful (I still am), too spirited (it was different in Katoomba in those days as well) -- but she did.

For me, when Nanny left and we had to do that funeral at Echo Point where her totem hovered, that was my first Welcome to Country. And suddenly I had a profound realisation of that bigger picture of country and my responsibility of just moving through it, as opposed to being *on* country. Place.

How can I mobilise this safe place for me? I had to move. I needed to go into full-time dance, but I couldn't do it in my own cultural country because our cultural forms had been taken. That is fact. You can google that too! (Laughter)

But, you know, that I had to mobilise place. So, I had to think about this – how can I keep myself culturally safe as I'm going through place? I do not want to call ancestors, I need to be very careful, you know, because I'm going into different language groups that aren't my country, and I take full ownership of that, in the sense that I think many Australians need to understand that, the diversity of those countries.

With time, over 10 years, I think it is 12 years now, I'm getting to the point that I have started to develop something called lifescape practice, and Edith Cowan University are interested in it. I originally wrote a book in my first postgraduate (degree) called 'Dreaming in Motion: How to Maintain Culture, Community and Identity of First Peoples in Movement'.

From that, I started to understand my backyard, and I relocated to the US for three years, and I was really missing home, and that philosophy started to come in because I was listening. And what she is talking about, Ms Lonsdale, with regards to ... sometimes you don't need to put words on it. I mean I can talk underwater, I can talk the head off an emu, but movement means

so much more than words because sometimes people find themselves in a narrative that isn't prescribed to you, it isn't colonised to you, that is something that you can take your own thought with.

This is what happens with the power of art and culture. So, I did buy vegemite on toast and I realised I had it the same way as my mother – a little bit of vegemite and a lot of butter like my dad. I called Mum, "Why do you cut your toast into squares?" Sorry, I'm getting to the point, I went on a tangent...

And I said, "I cut my toast in squares because you do." That is what she said to me, that's right, and I said, "Why are you doing this?" And Mum worked really hard to get us through school, so did dad, so she's a musician but she was like, "What?"

Anyway, she called me two weeks later and she said to me, "Ian, it's interesting, your great-grandmother on your white side cut her toast in squares and mopped it the way that you're doing it." So, it completely contradicted my cultural and human development!

I was sitting there going "What!?" I was on the landline in those days. And I asked what was going on. And Mum said, "No, it's true". And it was so beautiful because suddenly I was in a place through an unconscious act, or conscious ... through something that I had practiced every day, that informed myself. And then I became home in that toast. And it doesn't matter if you are white or black, everyone likes vegemite on toast in Australia.

That analysis doesn't work at New York University! I'd have to say Nutella.

(Laughter)

And afterwards I give them vegemite on toast! A cultural experience.

So, I guess, what I am trying to say is that with time I started to develop a thing called lifescape practice, which is about the internal geography of the previous experience which is lived in. Our movement is older than our spoken word. 75% of movement data is learned within the first year of our human development and our cultural development, which means that the silent geography I'm giving you, and you're giving me right now, and these ladies, is seven generations behind and ahead at all times. Expanding and contracting at different times.

So, my sense of place lives within me.

SHARNI JONES:  
Bravo, bravo!!

(Applause)

IAN RT COLLESS:  
Can we just have a yarn now?

SHARNI JONES:

Yes, I want to talk about agency.

IAN RT COLLESS:

Thanks for allowing me to be here on your country.

SPEAKER:

That sense of place, of country -- but your country, my country is inside of me.

IAN RT COLLESS:

Mobilising what that might mean.

SPEAKER:

Yes, I mean everybody has that inside of them irrespective of whether they're conscious (of it) or not and it is the ability to have agency, not over just yourself, in terms of being able to totally embody Article 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is self-determination. In every moment, at every single opportunity the thing that is foremost in my absolute entire life is to follow my feelings because it is only through doing that that my old people are in unison, and in harmony with me, that is, country is living and existing inside of me and walking with me at all times.

It's not my intellect, it is my body in me. It is your feelings, like follow your feelings. In Western culture everything is upside down.

IAN RT COLLESS:

My housemate – you know Adam, you've met him, but I don't think you have – from Queensland, no one's perfect! But he lives with me – poor man! And he said to me that the most extraordinary thing, he likes my painting – I started painting last year just for me. And I've talked to Sharni about this, and it has given me a sense of tempo, particularly because I'm...

He said, "Ian, I like when you paint" and Sharni used to watch me at Sydney Dance Company and Sharni would say "I like when you choreograph". And I would say "Why? I'm ugly!"

SHARNI JONES:

A bit Jackson Pollock ...

IAN RT COLLESS:

It's bad! There's dribble coming out, I've got two eyebrows ... one eye ... But he said, "Ian, you involve yourself in the creative spirit, and so do I," I asked him what he meant. He is not religious or any of that. But we have known each other for many years. He said, "Ian, when you create something, it has to come from within." It's really interesting that he taught me that, and you are discussing that. And Lonsdale is discussing that in a very private way but exploring it in her practice.

SPEAKER:

Absolutely, and the very fact that the reason we're making art is that you can't help but do it, it's the performance of our cultural sovereignty. That art, the way it manifests in the physical world, we are responsible for it, that art is part of us, it's a part of our physical bodies, part of

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community, there is no delineation between art and life. There is no word in any of our languages for 'art', there is no word for 'time' – it is part of our lives.

I think it is very important for people to be able to understand, for us to continually articulate and advocate for the agency and the sovereignty and the responsibility that exists in our practice, no matter which way it's manifested or presented, because we are responsible for that.

Like, you can't just have work in your collection, and then you go and curate it in an exhibition, without asking me or my family or my community first about it, because that exhibition could be about something that...

We were talking last night about how art is used a lot in diplomatic affairs and in relations between different countries, and I had this analogy about China and the pandas. I don't know if you know, China owns all their panda bears. Every single country that has a panda bear in their zoo, China still owns that bear. When the bears have little cubs, China owns that little cub. If you think about our relationship with China, they are like, "Bitch, I want my bear back."

IAN RT COLLESS:

The gays have been saying that for years but with a different context, darling!

(Laughter)

SHARNI JONES:

Art is also used in this diplomatic relational way and used as cultural pawns and as national identity etc, etc. But we are responsible for it.

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

We need to be able to make sure contracts are changed and that they are culturally appropriate so that when an institution or a collector has any of our work the contract is that we maintain agency and autonomy and self-determination, and through that, that is such a massive thing.

And it is just totally opposite. Our mythology, our ontology, our way of thinking and existing and being is total opposites. But we are actually all in it together. Welcome to Australia.

SHARNI JONES:

I'll jump in, I want to talk about my practice, my background is obviously visual arts, curating and much broader, while I don't practice visual arts ...

IAN RT COLLESS:

You practice every day.

SHARNI JONES:

... my process, my practice these days is my agency, is who I am. And managing a very significant cultural collection at the Australian Museum is a huge burden and it has responsibilities untold. Because, you are right Amala, if the material is collected and presented in ways that are not appropriate, shit hits the fan and it's on me. Every day I go into that collection, I embody those ancestors, those cultural objects have that DNA, it is still there, it's in their hair, it's in the fibre and it's in the work, they are there and they are displaced. They are

living, breathing objects and that energy is palpable and it's powerful.

So, there's a process of deep self-reflection for me in my practice and in my being about what makes me, and what is my role to engage community and to build a capability of others. My practice has shifted into manifesting that response.

AMALA GROOM:

My hat goes off to you, Sharni, it always has. Any blackfella who works in any of these institutions, what an enormous responsibility you have. It is massive, it's so huge. We all doing our own thing, the way we do it. It is this constant running cycle, but I reckon that one of the only things that keeps us up, is about our community. Because if it is not for you and not for you, not for us, and catching up with other people and being able to be with each other, and have these conversations, and go off and have a drink and do whatever that we do -- I couldn't keep doing what I do. How about you?

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

What was the question again?

SHARNI JONES:

We all have so much respect and understanding for what it is that we all do and the roles that we perform in our communities -- and they're so massive, they're ridiculously huge, it is out of control huge -- but the only way that we can continue to do it is by being with other people that also have these ridiculously huge responsibilities in our communities and have that time off. Do you want to talk about self-care, about those relationships?

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

Yes, I think for me being on country and being with community, using my art work to tell stories for people and then sharing that with them. But for me, it is going out on bush, taking the kids out, doing those sorts of things is my debrief, I guess.

But then again, when you are with other artists ... so sometimes it can be a very isolating thing when in a town where you don't have other people you can talk to or bounce ideas off, or have a drink with or whatever. It can be very isolating as an artist in that way. But again, being back with community and family, and going back to country is what recharges me and keeps me sane with my crazy life.

SHARNI JONES:

I think I have learnt a lot about you, Aleshia, in the last few days, so thank you for sharing. These guys, you know, we yarn up all the time but you know there is that sense of urgency, we're making work, it is our culture in terms of, you know, the attempted cultural genocide, it impacts us every day, every day we live, breathe and feel the effects of that.

It is not some policy that ended with assimilation, or with the stolen generations, or deaths in custody, it is our living, breathing experience of who we are and our deep responsibility to give back and share with community through our practice, and performing practice.

AMALA GROOM:

But the other world, where the old people are, that can never be colonised and that exists inside

of us. From my own family, coming from this place and being assimilated and then growing up always knowing that we were Aboriginal but not Wiradjuri, and all the rest of it, and then old people coming to visit me since I was a baby.

The other world and the ability for our country to be able to retain stories and retain its law and customs, inside all of us, will never go away. Never.

It doesn't matter what happens in the physical world, it is never going to go away, that is stronger than anything. That is the biggest responsibility that we have with our art, that if it is not properly cared for by our curators, because they're caretakers, they're looking after us. If it's not properly cared for heather is going come, cyclones will come, someone will get sick, it is not a joke, it is very serious stuff. That power that exists outside of what it is that we can actually see is bigger than anything that anyone would ever understand.

SHARNI JONES:  
Absolutely. Segue.

(Laughter)

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

One of the works I have is at Tremains Mill which is about four generations of my family watching the effect of a coal mine from when my grandmother went there, from a girl looking after that place, to my mother and me and seeing the impact of mining coming in and the displacement objects from our country and being placed in bags.

I think being able to tell that story and share that with people, that they wouldn't necessarily know that. That loss of culture, it ends up in a box or a bag.

Last week we had an archaeologist who was fantastic who ran a workshop with the community and who was excited to show us cultural objects that people hadn't seen for 22 years. They had been in bags and boxes for 22 years. So those things are now going back to the bags and boxes because those places no longer exist.

That work was kind of talking about that, which is really interesting on our opening night, because people walked over the work...

IAN RT COLLESS:  
Yes, they did.

ALESHIA LONSDALE:

And I was so wild at first, but then I thought, I suppose that kind of reflects, in a way, the way our cultural heritage *is* treated. (The OCD side of me had to fix it). So, it is telling those stories and for me art is a way of doing that, in getting people to think of things that they otherwise might not know about, because they are from a different background and haven't had that history, or connection to country or that experience.

SHARNI JONES:  
And as you are sharing, one of the things for me in my life, it changes the way in which I could

exist as a sovereign Wiradjuri woman is when it finally clicked that colonial space and third dimensional reality exists *here* -- the machine, the colonial project -- it's *here*. And then our ontology, our way of being, exists over *here*.

You can fight the machine, you can run on the treadmill and do this and that, but it is only through the practice of our culture and the way that it has been passed down to us and is inherent through our physical bodies and our (inaudible, indigenous language) and our spirits that I can now deeply dissect and dismantle the colonial project. Because they are different spaces.

I used to get Google alerts, I used to get them for *everything* Aboriginal because my background is in Aboriginal advocacy and politics. I was addicted to it, if anything came up I had to know about it, and now, I don't even watch the news. Now, I hear about it from my mum, Chris. She watches the news, my mum...

IAN RT COLLESS:  
Is she here? Hey!

(Multiple speakers)

SPEAKER:  
Thanks, Mum, I knew you were here for a reason. It is because I can't physically handle it any more. It got to the point where existing in the project was making me so sick emotionally and responding to it was just, it wasn't going to work for me anymore, it doesn't work for any of us but we're all stuck in it, third dimensional reality.

I had actually stopped those Google alerts and now I only get 10 including Google alerts for myself. They don't even work...

IAN RT COLLESS:  
They don't work. Can I add something?

SHARNI JONES:  
Yes, don't worry about me.

(Laughter)

IAN RT COLLESS:  
I just recently, I am an author and I'm a bureaucrat and a choreographer. All these different things. Not particularly good at any of them.

SPEAKER:  
You are.

IAN RT COLLESS:  
I don't know (Laughs). But you know, I needed some time just recently, Sharni is aware of this, it was very, very private. I just needed some time. You are aware of it too, Amala.

AMALA GROOM:

Don't worry...

(Multiple speakers)

IAN RT COLLESS:

But I just needed some time because I can only service the arts so much. And because it is not art, this is the issue. I explained this at Columbia University, that information on the wall, or something you put -- a painting -- on the wall (Amala is really good at displacing this and so is Ms Lonsdale) isn't something that can be labelled. Frequently you see Ojibwe people, (actually) you never see Ojibwe people, you see donated by 'such and such' or company 'such and such', it is like the western provenence goes up front and the Indigenous goes at the back.

I needed time to understand and unpack all of that. I went to Western Sydney University as the Senior Academic Literacy and Learning Adviser for a year and 10 months and it was absolutely beautiful. It allowed me that sense of time. On the opposite side of that, I started to realise I was part of a broader ecology, whether I liked it or not. You mob.

I don't know why ... Peter there, Tammy there ... Like, we all support each other.

SPEAKER:

Those relationships are really strong.

IAN RT COLLESS:

And Melanie ... and I realised there was a requirement for you in my sense of my place, because we are involved in that social place, and I had to come home, and I had to come back to the arts. Sorry... I'm here, but you know...

(Laughter)

I make bad jokes because we are talking about something very serious so I like to throw in jokes every now and then just to make sure everyone feels comfortable. But my sendse of place I have worked on metaphysically, ethnographically and academically, but what I've learnt more so about my sense of place as an individual, as opposed to my craft -- and as you said, Amala, they are not separated -- was informed by my community around me. And thank you for allowing me to share that because it is special. Because you hold that person up next to you and we're only stronger as that person is standing with you.

AMALA GROOM:

And we share all of our opportunities in our community. We are always sharing stuff. So there is no competition that exists. If one of us wins an art prize, that is a win for us all. There is no competition -- it is so different to the Western landscape.

We are all walking together. It is not easy because we are all suffering massive identity issues and huge amounts of trauma, and a lot of those times when our trauma is unresolved we are projecting it against other people. But that is actually our business, and we need to sort that out for ourselves, which is not a conversation for other people to be able to comment on.

SHARNI JONES:

Speaking of trauma, I said to our big boss, the CEO, that I had felt the most trauma, I'd experienced more trauma in my life working at this institution than I had ever experienced in my whole life... She was shocked. But that process of deep reflection in that place and healing is hugely important for us all, and as a community.

Healing the institutions in the colonial project, you know, in that way that we offer our practice as individuals and community *is* exhausting. We are a pretty tight crew up here.

AMALA GROOM:

Yeah, I didn't realise how clique-y we were until the other night!

SHARNI JONES:

Others noticed it. It is important in terms of a sense of place and identity and being connected because that is what grounds us in place. I took you all home to be on that journey, to engage with your sense of self, your sense of identity, being urgent and being here, being at Artstate, and coming back. And our experiences and your experiences are different but we are all connected as Aboriginal people and place.

AMALA GROOM:

Whether we like it or not...

IAN RT COLLESS:

We have only got 3 minutes ... What happened?

AMALA GROOM:

We were robbed 10 minutes. When we came out I could see it (the countdown clock), 49 minutes, it was really big. This is like being off Broadway – just saying!

(Multiple speakers)

We were late. There was drama. We don't have Ian.

IAN RT COLLESS:

I need to get my coffee. I'm doing emails! I forgot what I was going to talk about now. What are you going to talk about?

AMALA GROOM:

There is only 3 minutes.

SHARNI JONES:

Ian, do you want to talk more about being a dancer and choreographer, and how your experiences, working in New York and then coming home when we met, and that transformation?

IAN RT COLLESS:

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That was very special.

AMALA GROOM:

We met in New York, do you remember? That was pretty special.

IAN RT COLLESS:

What do you reckon? (Laughter)

What was your question? I interrupted.

(Multiple speakers)

SHARNI JONES:

Let's keep our shit together a bit longer. You talk about movement and your experiences through your grandmother, and the transformation as a young boy into a man and your cultural knowledge and your cultural gifts to us and how you share that fluidity, in movement and place – how has that informed you? And that practice of not only being a dancer but choreographing and working in a very different way to what people would expect as a trained ballet dancer?

IAN RT COLLESS:

Um... Movement is individual. And art is individual, and I have to elevator-pitch it.

What was so unusual... So lifescape practice as an ethnographic philosophy is just the foundation – it is not yet finished, my PhD is being completed.

But it is about trying to instil confidence and a sense of identity in a person. The ballet machine is very regimental, and very misogynistic, it's objectifying. There you go – I remember the link. I didn't want to be an object, which is what you were discussing about being an object. Yes, I wanted to be a cultural tool.

I wanted to understand myself, and I go to choreography to understand other people's stories because movement can tell you a lot more than words can. And when I understand those stories I become a sum of experiences, and we are only informed by our sum of experiences, and they are lived in in this vehicle that we call our human body.

So, yes, I was very unusual in New York but Australia never really picked that up, I don't think that Australia has really understood me in that way, which is OK. I think Australia has a lot of catching up to do with that. But I think it is the same for all of us as Aboriginal practitioners. I return to what I said before – I come home because you guys are here.

We can have a coffee, have a yarn, have a durrie, whatever you need, and now I am in place, and that is sacred to me and we must always instill that.

SHARNI JONES:

Thank you, any final words before we are over time?

AMALA GROOM:

Oh, my god, are we over time? Ok, at the UN, they cut off your microphone if you are over time.

IAN RT COLLESS:

I know, I choreographed for them.

AMALA GROOM:

Can you Instagram that and tag me?

I want to say thank you to the panel and the audience. It is a really big deal for us to be here. I am really proud, and really thankful to everyone for everything.

SHARNI JONES:

Please thank the panel.

IAN RT COLLESS:

Thanks to Sharni Jones, Elizabeth, and Regional Arts and Arts Outwest. Congratulations.

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you, Sharni. And thank you to our fabulous panellists. Give them another round of applause please, everyone.

(Applause)

So, for those of you who would like to see Aleshia's work, it is part of the out-of-office exhibition at Tremains Mill at the bottom of Keppel Street. She will speak as part of the Regional Museums and Projects panel at 2pm in the hall on the other side of the park from where the Opening Ceremony was last night.

Amala's work is in the foyer – look at this on your way through during the day. Amala and Dale Collier will give a presentation here in Conference Room 1 at 3:45.

Some housekeeping. Morning tea and the bathrooms are on both levels of the two-storey foyer. If there is a crowd upstairs, go down. There is a coffee cart for those who need an espresso break and water stations on both levels. Please use your water bottles that were provided in your delegates bags and refill them because we are attempting to reduce plastic waste.

As we don't want anyone to have an unfortunate Bathurst experience with the parking officers, the parking around this block is for two hours, so I suggest you move your car if you have parked it there. We will see you promptly back here at 11:15. Thank you.

(Break)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Obviously there are a few people queueing up at the coffee cart. For those of you back in the auditorium, welcome back. Just to let you know, all the plenary sessions are being recorded and will be available on the Artstate website in due course.

The conversation is obviously very active in the foyer. All the recorded sessions from Lismore, together with the transcripts and the rapporteur's report, are also available.

If you guys want to go to lunch on time, hurry up and sit in your seats. (Laughs)

Welcome back to the second session of Artstate Bathurst. All the plenary sessions are being recorded and will be available on the Artstate website in due course, together with the transcripts and the rapporteur's report from the sessions. All the recorded sessions from Lismore together with the transcripts are also available.

Chris Broad will present a brief summary of the findings of the Artstate report tomorrow night, and their larger written report will be posted later in the year. Over the four years we will have a great record of the ongoing artsy conversations.

Now it is my great pleasure to introduce our second keynote speaker, from Aotearoa, New Zealand, Frith Walker, originally hailing from theatre and events, which I thought was really interesting when we're looking at placemaking, because so often there is that concept that placemaking is just about public art.

Frith joined the Waterfront Auckland team in 2011 as the place maker for the Wynyard Quarter. With a specific focus on the programming and place management of new public spaces on the waterfront. Her appointment in the creation of a placemaking team came from understanding that if they were focused solely on the aesthetics of the physical setting, they would miss a fundamental factor in planning a new positive addition to the city - the people.

You don't make a show without thinking of the audience, after all. As manager, Place Making for Panuku, her role now sees her working within the place shaping directorate on the creation of successful public space networks, supporting the programming and activation of our public places and championing the difference a healthy public realm can make in terms of creating liveable environments.

She will look at Sense of Place: Beyond the Jargon and Into the Need. Please join with me in giving Frith a very warm welcome.

FRITH WALKER:

(Speaks Māori). Thank you so much for lending me your ears this morning and thank you for having me here in your place. Thank you, Wurundjeri people, for your Welcome to Country. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of country in this place and throughout Australia and internationally and their continuing connection to culture, community, land and sea. I pay my very deep respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. As you would say in my country (Speaks Māori) if I got that wrong, please bear with me, I know how much these words mean and I intend to do them justice.

Thank you, if I could go to my slide? I started by being poached out of a theatre career, which was an odd thing to have happened, plunged from theatre straight into a Council environment. I come from Auckland, Tāmaki Makaurau, 'Land of 1000 Lovers', in New Zealand. Auckland is an urban place, if you consider it with regards to this photograph, we are really just an eastern region of Australia, although there is a gap between us.

This is my city, this is a picture that means a lot to me, that's Rangitoto, one of our 50 or so volcanoes in Auckland. Looking out to an island, and a place ironically called Lismore, which is where my granny's family arrived when they were cleared out of the Highlands of Scotland in the 1840s, and this view is taken from Takapuna Beach over on the north shore.

I am 45 years old, I have been in Auckland all my life and I had a career in the theatre for the better part of my working life. This photograph was taken from the Louis Vuitton 150th anniversary tour when Kelly Rowland didn't turn up to the rehearsal. A moment in my life when I learnt about deep humility and the limits of my capacity as anything but a stage manager. These are two of the most patient men I have ever met in my life.

The other thing it reminds me of is what place making is to stage management, and vice versa. It is deeply collaborative sport and theatre making involves a very wide range of people with very different skills and we work together to something and for an audience. There is an opening night, and it doesn't move, and you do it on a low budget. The same as my role as place maker in the Auckland city. It is a strange thing to have these transferable skills in this long-term work that we are now doing.

Forgive me if I skip through the next bit quickly, it is the fine print. Panuku Development Auckland is a company that was formed to try and help bring good redevelopment for a wide part of Auckland. We started on the waterfront with the Wynyard Quarter, and now we are working in some other places, and this is our strapline 'Shaping Places for Aucklanders to Love' and Ethan Kent from Project for Public Spaces, said recently he doesn't see that 'L' word for a lot of city building straplines, so it sort of nice to see that. It's an important thing to live up to and part of the job, I guess.

The word Panuku means to move together, to work together and to move forward, and draws to mind what is to steer a Waka, a traditional canoe. It doesn't have a lot of freeboard, if it is going to go down, it goes down fast, but once it gets going and if everybody is paddling together in the same direction, it is a mighty powerful beast. (Speaks Māori) You will hear that in blessings and incantations to draw up energy from the earth and move forward together, so it's a big word for our organization to carry and very important responsibility.

We are operating in different areas and under three different scales of redevelopment in Auckland, Transform, being the big 20 – 25 year major vision, major change for our project area. Unlock, being the medium scale, working in a couple of sites and using our land ownership to hopefully bring positive development for that wider area. Then Support, which is going to be slightly more transactional. We are not going to be doing a lot of placemaking work in these locations, they will be more about releasing a site for sale and hopefully seeing, mainly housing built in that place.

This is the scope of work that we are doing in the city. So, the big the red dots, not very many of those, blue dots in the middle and the green dots reach out to regional and rural areas within Auckland. A funny little city, about 1 million people in it, with a lot of them living in the city centre, and then being spread out quite quickly to cows and sheep - sorry, I had to make a sheep joke, I am from New Zealand. That's the last one, I promise.

So you see from the very beginning, Panuku is trying to come with this different approach. My focus is really on the right hand side of your screen, the idea we are trying to take a holistic approach and listen to places, and think about what we are making for the good of the long-term. That is why I exist in Panuku, alongside another brilliant set of people in the design team, the comms team, and the engagement team, in a little team of place makers.

Back to the hero shots: Auckland, keep your eye on the Red Line, zooming into the waterfront CBD. Then zooming in again to the Wynyard Quarter. For a long time, you've heard this phrase before, the city had its back to the waterfront. A big red fence, the public couldn't really access what was heavily industrial land. So, we had a lot of really important industry, bulk storage, fishing fleets. Team New Zealand, they're coming back quite soon – that's a major part of our job, that's not really place making.

In 2011, we opened it up as a really redeveloped public place for Auckland, New Zealand and maybe for visitors from other places. The key move was starting with a public space. The public realm was put in first. So the public promenade, you can see it running through the middle of the photograph, the East-West Link, is the most important gesture, that gave people an ability to walk along their waterfront, which they'd never had before.

Then we added the food, the food building you can see in the centre, with the grey/pink roofs. As nothing brings us together as human beings quite like our tummies! So, pop the food in first and people will gather around that.

In the foreground, Silo Park, which is a place I've had the great privilege to work for the last 8 or so years. Making a program for that place that's relevant to all of Auckland, all of New Zealand, and making a public space that's properly democratic, is really why I get up in the morning. I'm blessed to work with a very clever range of people who care for that space, from the security guards to the people picking the movies, everybody cares about what they're doing at Silo Park, and I think that is maybe why we have so many people investing in it from an emotional perspective - and financial.

I got one instruction when I started doing this job, and it was this black and white drawing. What I was told was, think about the energy first, the energy that exists in creating a Plaza and how that builds down to Jellicoe Street, down North Wharf and eventually gets to a heightened level in Silo Park. Those were the instructions given to me by my first boss, and the very wonderful Stewart Niven, who's been a very important guide for us at Waterfront, now at Panuku, gave us this quote, which again, was one of the few instructions I was given at the very beginning.

But I arrived with my theatre career and I thought, "I know this, I know how to build an audience and I know how to try to sustain a program across a year. I can apply that to these public spaces." It has gone pretty well and we know we have created a place that people love, and that means a lot. This place was designed with good thought, deep in its bones.

If you see the wavy line, that says Fanshawe Street, at the bottom of the slide, that is the original shoreline. So in the Wynyard Quarter we were dealing with 100% of reclaimed land and a lot of it was toxic, a lot of it was contaminated. A huge amount of work has gone into healing that man-made land to make it into safe, public space. These big red lines are an important clue. We had very clever urban designers and landscape architects thinking about what it is for

humans to move through space.

So, these big view shafts were designed, and we still use those in our day-to-day life now, in programming the space. If somebody wants to build something on that east-west axis, we will probably say no, because we want to keep the lines of sight open. The north-south street, connecting it to Victoria Park, that is a very important green access to the space, so we honour that. This thinking that was done ten years ago is still held going forward, there is deep forethought going on in the making of this place that still leads our day-to-day programming.

There are three fundamental ways we've approached place for the waterfront and now for Panuku. The first one, place by design, thinking about how people should be using the space, what are the audiences that ought to be able to make this place a home and what built environment can we add in. The hard court, in the middle of the Wynyard Quarter to the east of Silo Park, was put in in recognition of the fact that we have many university students living in apartments in Auckland Central with nowhere to go outside and play. So this hard court is used 24/7 by people from all over the city actually because that is the only lit court in Auckland, so we've got people making quite long journeys to get to it. It is used by a bizarrely diverse range of humans, there are often 18-year-old chaps negotiating with four-year-old chaps who really want to try and use the hoop but aren't really tall enough to and that's really beautiful to watch.

But it's this idea that we are creating space for humans to figure out what it is to be a civic person, what it is to be a citizen in a place that is getting denser. That's our job in terms of designing spaces. The stuff we might be best known for, the programming, the big ticket items like Silo Park – I'm from New Zealand, it's not really big ticket, kind of medium ticket – this job was done in terms of projecting movies onto an old concrete silo, that was put in to make sure that people found this place interesting. A sizeable number was spent making the Jellicoe Street precinct and we had to make sure that people liked it, otherwise, what was the point?

The last bit and probably the favourite bit is the stuff you do to mess with people's heads, the gentle provocations you put in public space to get people to stop and think differently or pause or be in the space for slightly longer. And 99 times out of 100 we will make that a creative stimulation or provocation.

The North Wharf piano – I have to acknowledge Luke Jerram, for the project, Play Me, I'm Yours – this piano sits in a container all day and there is no security guard on it. It generally has someone playing it, either because they live in an apartment and they don't have a piano and they bring their own sheet music. Or photos like this, that look cute but don't sound really cute at all, there's just sort of noise coming out of it.

The best one is these construction guys who are busy building all the bits of the new Wynyard Quarter, who are sitting there having a go. That is slipping music into a space that maybe wasn't going to have music if the piano wasn't there. There is a major gesture of trust there: "We trust you with this piano, please don't break it".

And people generally don't break it, it's only been taken apart once in its life and this is our third piano in eight years and that seemed to be someone who was quite excited to see what was inside. We have had graffiti on it four times and one of them said – 'the hopes and dreams of an artist never die' – and we left that graffiti on the piano.

All of this comes from an understanding that all of us human beings are fundamentally wild. Our reptilian brain is still 10,000 years old and when you get an angry email it still thinks it is a tiger trying to kill you. It is responding on that base fight or flight level. While we have a front cortex that can swipe left or right now, that little reptilian brain is running the same programming.

We have to acknowledge these ideas, I really like looking about 100 m from me, because at that distance I can tell you are no danger to me, that you are a human and not a tiger. Long view shafts help us find our way through place. All these things that we have known for hundreds of thousands of years, we need to be taking into account, now in these new spaces.

This is a polar bear from the Auckland Zoo – we can't give you a photo of the right one because the zoo won't give it to us because of the story I'm about to tell you – I remember this polar bear from when I was young, and it would dance, and we thought it was a happy, dancing polar bear because it would stand and sway. If you looked closely you could see that it was green because it had mould on it and the environment it lived in was purely concrete. The reason it was swaying is because it had zoo psychosis, which is a syndrome that animals develop when they are living in environments that are really unhealthy for them. They become more aggressive they go off their food and they stop mating and they generally are not well in their minds, and indeed, their bodies.

So my question is, when we build spaces like this for human beings, what might happen to us on a subconscious level? This is Fanshawe Street, I walk along it on my way to work, it is known as a traffic sewer, because it is awesome for the cars, the dominant species on earth. (Sorry, that's a bad joke to make in Bathurst, I'm going to get kicked out of Bathurst!)

We are good at making places like this and we wonder why people have issues with people not feeling good about their city and doing bad things to it. Or not really being connected in their communities, this was brilliantly talked about in the panel.

The reason I called my piece, the bleeding obvious is because it is deeply ironic that I'm standing here in this wonderful country talking to you about connection to place, because you have a fundamental set of knowledge in this wonderful country which is pretty incredible to look at from a distance. Again, you guys are operating on pretty basic levels back here and as the panel suggested, other levels, way beyond. You read messages in your front brain and are not paying attention to the fact that 97% of your brain is making other decisions as to how you feel about those messages.

When we make spaces and offer things to audiences we are giving them a whole lot of information and our job should be to make sure that information is positive and kind and good. I think I've potentially spelt Stephen Hawking's name wrong in this presentation. There is a gentle topic to talk about now – which is how we are now as a species and how much damage we've done in the last not very long.

I knew I could have chosen a lot of images to demonstrate this but I've gone for this one, which is Kim Kardashian visiting homeless people in LA. You can like this if you like. I don't know what that means, 'liking' Kim Kardashian visiting homeless people. But there is lots of stuff wrong. This one symbolised a few things for me: What is it to not have a place? Does Kim Kardashian

have a place? If so, where is it?

Last year I was talking in Sydney about this topic, we have this in the Auckland planned, we committed to the Maori being the point of difference for Auckland. But sometimes we operate by saying here is a KPI and a strategy and a plan, so that's good we're going to build them some stuff, so we build a machine and out of the machine will come a widget and that is fantastic. Our machine is working, it's building widgets. But oh goodness, we said 'Maori is Auckland's point of difference'.

So, what shall we do? We will talk about maybe some art or maybe some approvals, and that's brilliant, we fixed it, yay! But the point for me is we know our systems are broken. We know they are not working anymore, especially our Anglo-Saxon systems. Maybe the opportunity is to go into that green box and think about how we are operating.

This is a saying from (Maori word) back home and it means that we don't know what the future is, we never have but if we can walk towards it knowing what we have learnt from the past we might have a bit of a shot at going forward comfortably.

Then, you go into place making speak, this is from Project For Public Spaces and look at 'fosters frequent and meaningful contact and draws a diverse population', and I start thinking about the (Maori word) values that we are working with in Auckland and these words start to sound really familiar. There are words in Maori that say them much better. (Maori word), how we all operate together as a family of humans, (Maori word), respecting unity and diverse populations.

With the wonderful people on our advisory panel, we thought about values we could make as place makers that were better described in Maori than in English, which has evolved beyond this kind of thinking.

Last year we were working with five values and thinking about how we take them to the beginning of our work before we go anywhere near designing anything we are thinking on these levels. And respecting all the time that this is knowledge that our (Māori word) hold and they haven't lost.

To my point, why? Back to that (slide image). This lady exists pretty much entirely online, as I understand, and this man doesn't have a home, which we think that makes you a failure, he doesn't have that commodity you are supposed have to make you a whole human being. Maybe there is more to it than that.

I am not on Facebook, but I understand that when you see this message it freaks you out a little bit. So I would argue our systems are not that resilient these days, and we shouldn't need one of these. As human beings, we are 99.9% genetically similar. 98% genetically similar to bonobo chimpanzees and 60% genetically similar to bananas. We are not that different. We are all actually the same, as Stephen Hawking said.

Maybe we need to reach to the understanding of humanity – this is Oliver Jeffers – and think about what it means for us to be on the plane right now. Because we need to, we need to urgently, we know this. The bleeding obvious again, I suppose, I am mainly of Scottish descent

so when I stand in my country and think about those words, I know don't feel the same level of connection as my MĀ• ori brothers and sisters.

So, I sent myself to Scotland. I learnt my name means footpath in Scotland. Slightly awkward when you are introducing yourself to people. This incredible place where the land is palpable and the sea is right there and these incredible formations are making their way up from plates and this connection that you suddenly feel to the space, which you don't feel in an urban environment, as I said before.

And these reminders of great poets and writers who have been through the space before. These cup and ring marks which are 6,000-7,000 years old, which maybe you would call place maker if they did this today, but I bet you these people didn't consider themselves artists and probably were not asked to scrap for funding and didn't have to prove how they contributed to economic well-being. They were part of society, part of marking who we are as humans.

This is a 7,000-year old civic space that is had been dug up. We have known how to exist as humans in civil society for a long time and we forgot a lot of it as we raced to urbanisation. Yarn bombing, traditional stuff, I have a strong opinion about yarn bombing so I am going to move on from that one.

I would like to acknowledge Scotland for being the only country on earth to have a mythical beast as its emblem. If you think that unicorns have rainbow horns and sparkly hooves, you should look them up, they are way more scary that.

This is the moment when I tell I can't really trace my history in Scotland because it's not really there anymore, the Pictish language is gone. There are some rocks with carvings in them, I will do more work. But this is held in a castle called Dunvegan and you can go out in a green boat and look at seals and the seals are still out there watching all the humans in their little green boats. You wonder what those seals are thinking, How long they have been thinking it for since we removed ourselves from their story. Now we find ourselves lost.

I had this strange experience in Skye that I can't quite explain to you – I grieved when I left there, I thought my bones were in this place. I understood what it was to be from somewhere at a deeper level than I had ever experienced before. Don't tell Immigration I have some Scottish water in this bottle.

I could go home to the wonderful Iwi panel we work with and say I understand what it is to be from somewhere and be removed from there. That changed the conversation from my perspective. Now we work with a more industrial-strength sense of values gifted to us by these wonderful people.

This is not my instructions on how to be MĀ• ori, the most important thing is that the centre of our values as Place Making for Panuku, is (MĀ• ori word). If we can take this into our work as place makers for Auckland we might make a better space for the people who will come after us.

It is not always easy. This is Roxanne Haynes, who has just finished her first low complexity business case for a piece of public art in this space. It proves to us that place makers don't need documents like this to do our work. We operate on the right-hand side of the spectrum.

I would like to ask a question of the group – when did we decide left brain good, right brain weird? There is a great quote from Clarissa Pinkola, who wrote 'Women Who Run with the Wolves', "Artists don't exist in a logical space. There is part of what we do as creatives that is not logical. If things were logical, surely men would ride sidesaddle."

(Laughter)

Back to the man who is now upstairs, and our need to think a bit harder and a bit deeper. There is a thing called the new urban agenda, worked on in Quito, is understanding that we have got to work hard and faster to think about how we build human settlements - not just open, but everything involving human beings. Anything involving messing with the planet, we need to start thinking about how we do that.

Deploy sustainable and people-centred (inaudible) organisations, implementing policies, legal frameworks and strategies. I want to add (Māori word). Now you start to go, dear creative people, we badly need you - we need your courage, conviction, we need your thinking at the front end of how we build cities. We have enough engineers, economists, risk assessors, we need some other thinking. It isn't working.

This is a piece by a wonderful artist, Joseph Michaels, who spent time in Antarctica taking photographs of icebergs. He lent it to the Auckland Museum, and there was a sound effect that along with it, so you could hear the icebergs cracking. You walked away from that feeling chilled on every level, that this iceberg is a fragile beast, it is unstable. In the opening night speech, Joseph said the artist's job is to be in the crow's nest. If human beings are on a ship, the artist's job is to be in the crow's nest to see what is coming towards us and try to take that information back down to the captain and crew.

Sometimes the artist doesn't get the message clear, but they are trying, they trying to say, 'land ho.' That is an important thing to acknowledge, and we have taken art and put it to the side of a city building, and a space for murals, and we need to think about how we live creatively together.

I was never going to spend 96 slides showing what we are doing, so I have picked the two that I'm most fond of. Top left is Northcote, a little town centre, we had the opportunity of going into an under-used retail establishment, a wonderful group called Satellites, came up with an idea to build an art piece.

One of those machines we have to run over and pick up a squishy animal. Northcote, you have a thriving retail centre, through to the local population. Lots of young groovy people who don't connect positively with the town centre. Hannah and Rosa Bell and a wonderful range of artists thought about a piece that will bring all of this together, so people over a month were going, "This actually works."

This is a cute story for us, 'Northcote is cool now because of the claw'. That's us working with a cool-minded person. Coming back to the waterfront, and a piece called (Māori word), a piece of public infrastructure. Being an incredible artist, Lisa was partnered up with the incredible urban design team from the very start, and they were talking about the narrative into space.

This used to be at low tide line and is a very important food-gathering space. Their understanding of this as a physical space, the lights hanging in the sky, represent constellations that the MÄ• ori used for navigation.

The sunglasses circles represent the shellfish in the sand. This is public space, right through the middle of a really high-end development and it is for everybody, except cars.

This is about bringing equity into the middle of whatever we can do, and bringing art as normal, and cultural narrative is just the way that we roll in Aotearoa. That makes you want to put in that place making definition. If we are faced with the opportunity to design a place, how do we work together to create shared value.

Back to Skye, I understand what it means that my bones come from somewhere. I have lived in some places, don't forget... I have come home to my country, noting where I come from. Auckland is my home, I like the beaches and barbecues, but Scotland is where I am really from. That opens up other bits of my brain, into thinking about how we get brave enough to think like that as city makers and place makers.

My first boss said problems let the boss speak for himself. Go and sit with it, listen to it. My second Shakespearean quote, "there are more things in heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies," especially in the Anglo-Saxon philosophies, and it's time we woke up to that.

In closing... I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri. Your custodianship of this place, at this moment, the moment before and all the moments to come, I hope this country continues to respect, and I hope the same for my country and for the world.

We need public spaces to find stability again, the main part of our humanity. It has been central, or was, to knowing who we are. City and place makers, please make good, healthy spaces, we need connection and courage. Artists, keep your eyes on the horizon and keep passing down those messages, and we will work better to keep listening.

Everyone, find where your bones are from and go and stand there, if you can, shoes off. Consider what this does to your understanding, to be from somewhere. We need to look back, how brave can we be, to look forward, to walk together with respect.

To close on a quote from Oliver Jeffers, "It looks big, planet Earth, but there are lots of us here, so be kind - there is enough for everyone." (Speaks MÄ• ori).

**ELIZABETH ROGERS:**

Listening to you talking about going back to your bones, and for so many of us Australians who have actually been here for generations, but we are not the first people to be here. Going back to your bones is kind of a foreign experience. That could be a conversation over lunch. Frith, thank you so much for taking the time to come and talk to us. I am hoping with our large regional cities, we may not make the same mistakes as the big urban metropolitan places have made.

I do know there has been an incursion of those big box retailers, but hopefully the decision

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makers and planners from councils around regional New South Wales will actually recognise the quality of the landscapes in which we work.

So I am optimistic.

Thank you so much, and here is a small piece from one of our local Bathurst artists, Greg Hyde, to take back. Thank you very much.

Frith will be moderating a panel this afternoon in conference room 3 at 3:45.

Last year we heard from a panel of executive directors and they examined cross-sector partnerships in regional NSW. We had a terrific feedback from our delegates about this panel, so while on a good thing, we asked three more of the executive directors – Caroline Downer from Arts North West, Peter Woods from Arts Northern Rivers, and Kerry-Anne Jones from South West Arts – to look at place and practice in regional arts development.

Tracey Callinan will moderate this panel. She is executive director of Arts OutWest, which covers 11 LGAs, and is also a musician, and in 2017 completed a thesis on regional cultural industries. She worked in the UK with the Arts Council. She did musical theatre works, was a musical educator, and like all people in the arts has also had a job as a silversmith's assistant in Jerusalem.

In addition to her work with Arts OutWest she works with a communities choir, and is a harpist. Please welcome Tracey and her panel.

**TRACEY CALLINAN:**

Thank you very much. I would like to acknowledge that we are on Wurundjeri land and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and I would now like to welcome our panel.

I'm going to start at the far end. Kerri-Anne Jones is from South West Arts and she comes from an interesting background. She has a strategic brain, working with government at all levels and is now working at South West Arts, she has a real passion for communities.

In the middle we have Caroline Downer. Caroline came to the arts from a more conventional route, having studied arts for her Bachelor degree, and then her Masters. She also came through the Australian Council's leadership program. Before joining Arts North West, she worked at the New England Regional Art Museum.

Sitting next to me is Peter Wood from Arts Northern Rivers. Arts Northern Rivers is based on the Northern Rivers and had the honour of hosting last year's Artstate. Peter's background has an impressive list of places that he has worked, initially in marketing and communication roles - Sydney Opera House, Belvoir Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare Company and Historic Houses Trust New South Wales.

He has worked at the Assembly Theatre in Edinburgh, and has done a stint at the International Comedy Festival.

Please welcome our panel.

(Applause)

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Before we get to the nitty-gritty of some of the issues that sense of place, it is important to understand a little bit about the context that these three are working in. Across your three contexts, those three areas are very different.

I would just like to ask you if you could briefly describe the environment you work in, and also let us know how that context directly affects the output of your region and the way that you work.

I think we might start with you, Caroline.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

My area, Arts North West, is a very large area - 100,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It includes Tamworth, Armidale, Moree. I go to the Queensland border and across down to the Liverpool Plains as well. There are 12 local government areas that I service. They are all quite different. I then have a large geographical area, I also spend a lot of time in the car, driving about.

In terms of context, one of the big things is getting people together. We are quite isolated, a lot of these villages are long way from capital cities. So we do spend a lot of time building up networks, getting people together, having discussions that are so important in creating work.

In a practical sense that is a lot of what we do, those networks. It's also just listening to what each community is interested in. Tamworth is our largest place and there are about 60,000 there. Equally, I have quite small towns as well, particularly around places like Gwydir and others. Each community is different and we work closely with those communities as to what they want to do and build those discussions.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Kerry-Anne?

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

It is different in the south-west but we do also cover a large geographic area. The difference with us is probably that the majority of our region is classified as regional or remote. My largest population centre is Deniliquin, with about 7000 people. Most places are 3000 and below. There are 40 towns and villages in the region.

I have 78,000 km<sup>2</sup>. I extend right up to Hillston and a little place called Booligal. I'm testing your geography there. Our towns, while they are all very different and they have a strong sense of who they are, the thing that came out of our strategic planning processes that we have done with our communities is that sense of place is one of the key drivers of the communities and what they do and how they see themselves.

They are all extremely passionate about where they live. They all look at sustainability and vibrancy and arts and culture as being a way of developing and sustaining their economies.

Our regional communities, and particularly our arts and culture sector, are led very much by

volunteers. We don't have any professionally run galleries or institutions or organisations. We do have a regional Con in Deniliquin and they help contribute to the sum total of about nine arts workers in the region.

So we are very sparse. We are influenced a lot by Victoria because we are on the border. So we have a strong connection with the local government areas across the river. In some communities more than others, the towns see themselves as one community. The river running through the middle of it doesn't determine who they are, or they don't see themselves as coming from different states. Policy tells them that they do and politics tells them they do.

It makes our job very interesting and I guess because of my background I come at it with a different methodology. We don't activate, no activation, and the main reason for that is our community-based organisations are activating in their communities. For us to be playing in that space means we are competing for the same money and the same scarce resources they are.

So we support them. We work very closely with our local government partners. I have to say that I have six Councils in my region that are extraordinarily good and are very passionate about the communities they live in as well.

And they are moving forward with their arts and culture development strategies. They now know what arts and culture is about and they are working hard to understand how their communities feel and think.

We spend, like Caroline, a lot of time in the car. About 80,000 km, average, we wear out a car every two years.

**TRACEY CALLINAN:**

Let's go to you, Peter, and hear if there are any contrasts in the Northern Rivers.

**PETER WOOD:**

Apart from the fact that everybody thinks it is the best part of NSW. Obviously there are commonalities in the region we service. I am from the Northern Rivers area, it is Bundjalung country. We have a shorthand way of saying where we come from – Byron Bay – and that happens whether I am in NSW, anywhere else in Australia or overseas, a lot of people know about Byron, so it is easy to say, to locate myself in space.

But that is unfair to the rest of the region, it is very diverse and has a lot of elements that make it up. We are a region that has festivals that define us. Splendour in the Grass, Byron Writers Festival, Blues and Roots Festival but spreading further out there are some great festival opportunities that come with important income generation streams for the region.

In the Clarence area there is the Plunge festival, which is an all-encompassing festival in that region. There is a lot going on outside the Byron area.

We are lucky to have a lot of peak bodies established in the region as well. We have organisations like Screenworks, which has just relocated to Ballina. The Writers Festival is based in Byron. Norco is based in Lismore, one of the last theatre companies producing work for regional communities.

And we have just relocated into Lismore, because they have opened a brand-new gallery which is activating that space. And up north, the Margaret Olley Centre, at Tweed Regional Gallery. We are lucky we have three regional galleries established in the region and the resources that go with that.

And there are a couple of strong community galleries. When we developed a creative industry strategy a while ago, we revealed that our region has the highest number of arts and creative industry practitioners living outside the capital cities. And we have the tree-change phenomenon, people moving to the region.

That presents challenges and opportunities for us. A high number of people coming to the region with high expectations about what resourcing they want to access. I think that is a brief overview of a dynamic area.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I think that gives you a flavour of those contexts. I would comment that sometimes we experience that people sometimes struggle a bit to know exactly what the regional arts development organisations do. One of the things we frequently remind people is we are not funding bodies, we are there to enable and support arts.

But you can see that across the different contexts, we don't all work the same way, because we are responding to the needs of our place. One of the things that frequently comes up in exploring sense of place is the idea that you need to tell the stories of your place and through that, you have to explore and provide opportunities for a range of local voices.

I wondered if each of you could talk a bit about how your own arts program in your organisation contributes to the telling of some of those regional stories, and how you make sure that there is a range of voices and interpretations of what that sense of place is. Peter?

PETER WOOD:

I think that probably a good example is a recent place making project we were engaged with, which was If These Halls Could Talk. That project came about with us examining how we were working with our communities up to that point and we were doing a lot of work with the creative industries area and it got to a point where we looked around and thought we were not engaging as strongly or as intimately as we wanted to with the local communities of our region and within our local government areas.

One of the challenges for all of us is to make sure we are showing the love to everyone across our region. I was looking for a project that would do that, work deeply with our communities. After looking around for a project, we settled on Community Halls.

I'm sure everyone here knows the value of Community Halls in regional NSW. In the Northern Rivers, it is a region of villages and at the heart of those villages sits a hall. In a lot of those communities, it is the only cultural infrastructure.

We wanted to locate place in terms of the hall and the people in terms of the community who are engaging with it, but also the rich history to tell the story of that place and that hall. We

found a perfect Venn diagram of place making on that project, putting those things together and letting communities have a voice with us but assisting them with that voice by bringing professional artists to work with them.

We worked with people like Craig Walsh, Opera Queensland to work with us, and Yaegi woman Frances Belle Parker, we found artists we could attach to these halls to help the community tell their stories and we allowed that to happen through a range of consultations we did in each or show-and-tell days, where people brought along their artefacts and their photos and their stories.

That became a rich pool of information that we accessed to create the story. We were careful not to set ourselves up as historians, it wasn't a history project as such, but history would inform the artistic response to that hall in that place to tell the story with the community.

And just briefly, the fantastic outcomes were across several areas. Norco produced a play examining sea-changers to our region. Opera Queensland told an amazing story about a river drowning. And Frances Belle Parker told a story which was about a hall and a rich Aboriginal history came out through that project.

So we have found lots of different voices to tell the story of that place and found a creative way of doing that so it wasn't just a documentary or a rendition of history of the place.

TRACEY CALLINAN:  
Caroline?

CAROLINE DOWNER:

I want to talk about two different projects that Arts North West has been involved with. One is still ongoing but almost finished, called Rivers to Ridges. It is where we have been gathering and documenting stories of Elders and artists and this has been driven by our Aboriginal arts director.

We have been looking at particular communities – Narrabri, Moree, Tenterfield and Tamworth. And working with the Elders to listen to their stories and document them. And we have been also working with an artist who has used those stories as inspiration for their own work.

This will culminate in an exhibition at Tamworth Regional Gallery in February next year.

It's important for us, we feel, to tell those First Nation stories. That is something we are proud of.

The second is a much smaller project but equally interesting in that we have a number of museums in our area. So, we were hearing about regions with very few institutions, we have a mix of things, we have three visual Conservatories in my region. We have a multitude of small volunteer-run museums.

And some of these museums have really extraordinary collections, what we call hidden treasures. What we did was we organised for six local writers to spend some time with those museums and with those collections, and they chose a particular object that they had an affinity

with, that they liked, and they wrote a story based on that object.

That story could be fantasy, a series of different short stories. And we put that together in a short story book, illustrated by a local illustrator. It was a way of telling stories, this time about inanimate objects, but had a sense of place, coming from a particular museum. They were museums like Rose Creek. It is a bit off the beaten track but worth looking at. Different museums with different stories to tell.

That is where Arts Northwest does try to gather those stories and see, as Tracey was saying, the different voices which are so important in being able to tell those different stories.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Kerry-Anne, how have you been able to do this?

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

Our region is quite conservative. They have a strong sense of place and everybody is incredibly passionate about their communities. We have a significant Indigenous population, with higher than the state average of people identifying as Indigenous. There are about 90 tribe groups and several different language groups. Excuse my lack of detail.

I think the important thing, though, for everyone, is recognising the work that we do, everybody has a story to tell, everybody's story is very different, and they are often guided by either Indigenous culture or pioneering history, or the landscape in which they live.

History is very much a part of the communities, and water. We have three significant rivers in our region, the Murray River and the Murrumbidgee. The Lachlan is at the other end, the boundary.

The stories that get told are very much around those guiding facets of people's lives. We try to look at stories that cut across everybody and see how we can engage as many people, and get as many different stories told as possible.

Storytelling is everything in what we do. One particular project, for which we were lucky enough to receive funding through the Anzacs Anniversary Fund, is called Passing Out Parade. This was engaging different arts and culture organisations and different arts practices.

We have a couple of communities that think the answer is all about paintings on walls, and nice things for the ladies to do. So we try to engage the communities to let them know that there is so much more to what we try to do. Passing out Parade started with a collection, using local historians, to collect stories of people who have participated in wars, past and present. And telling their stories from the perspective of not just men who participated in war, but also women, and from all different cultures and backgrounds.

And also, telling stories of people that stayed at home, and the significant impact that war had on them.

We also engaged, following the collection, we worked with local writers groups, and these were created to get them to check what is traditionally... When a collection of an Anzac history, for

example, is told of a person, it is quite often a record of their service and what they achieved in the conflicts that they participated in.

What we wanted the creative writers to do was to turn it into a first-person account of that person's life, during a period of time. We engaged a local, very proud local internationally recognised writer, who lives in a council place, by the way, and she sells her novels around the world. She was engaged to work with the creative writers to help them to develop their skills around creative writing.

It was very difficult for some of the older members of the creative writing groups to write a story based on factional information, without giving a chronological order to what they did. That was an interesting exercise.

From there, we also engaged the Con, and we have students and teachers and tutors from the Con working together to develop a musical score that would underpin these stories and help to create a sound vision of what the stories were about.

We also engaged with the Outback Theatre for Young People. We have an amazing director there, Sarah Parsons. Is she here? No, that's right, she's at a wedding, her sister got married. She worked with young people, and it was about getting young people to understand the issue of conflict, and why there is conflict.

It started because we had a young boy in our region who has autism, and Peter Cosgrove came to our region for an Anzac thing and this young boy stood up in the audience and asked, "Why are there wars?" And he floored Sir Peter, who had trouble answering the question.

What they have done, Outback Theatre, is engaged young people to ask those questions of older members of their communities, and ask the questions why conflict occurs and what strategies can be put in place. There was a performance element, creative writing, a musical element, and we thought we were missing the artistic element. So we worked with the local photography group and put out a call for photography works that would express the types of things out of these stories.

All this came together and the end result was then working with people from the local performing arts groups, who then narrated the stories that were written, and they were recorded using a local studio – a musical parade of stories based on people from the region, involving our groups from across the region from lots of different sections.

Those stories will be used on the 11th for the memorial services right throughout the RSL clubs and history groups, also picked up on local radio, ABC regional radio also picked up the stories around Anzac Day. It has created a real legacy and brought the whole communities together.

The stories were told from so many different perspectives. We had an Indigenous man who lives in a small community called Balranald who was a Vietnam vet, and his story was incredibly compelling. But he came to the launch, this was one of the stories played. To see him and his fellow vets hugging and embracing was quite a significant thing. So many of our war veterans' stories have not been told.

It was a pretty amazing story, but for us it's about cutting across some of the complexities and the different ways we all see our history and see our future. And also giving voice and opportunity to lots of different cultural factors, and cultural arts practitioners, to have their voice and to express how they see it.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I think it is really interesting, to hear across different contexts - the way, in each different environments, the way people have picked up on that and found different ways of responding. Different stories, but all of them have come from the need to be place-appropriate.

I'm going to get on my bandwagon for a moment, I have an issue sometimes in meetings when people say, "Is that idea transferable?" That is dangerous territory, because we do need to respond to place. Do you want to pick up on that, Peter?

PETER WOOD:

Only because we are exploring what they might do with the Halls project. I have a travel grant to explore that opportunity. I went to Edinburgh, because I thought the Halls project would have resonance. It was obviously a sense of place, gathering place or hall, a sense of history around the place and a story to be told, and communities passionate about it who wanted to tell it with art.

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

It's a model or framework as opposed to just transporting something specifically about a specific place. It is transferable. You're talking about the actual framework. In our area, we have some fantastic community halls. The other heart and soul of some of the small villages, and there are so many stories that surround them.

I think it's a fantastic project, I would like to steal...

TRACEY CALLINAN:

And we do steal! It is one of the nice things of being in a network. The 14 regional arts development organisations, we share ideas, we are a great brains trust, we jump on email and ask for templates, and I love being part of the network, where we all help each other.

PETER WOOD:

And we are not competitive at all.

(Laughter)

TRACEY CALLINAN:

We are not competitive, provided we feel we're all are looking OK.

I always said the work we do in the arts, we are often the glue that sticks our communities together. We are not just about the artistic practice, we are often about the social capital that we have in our communities, and also the economic benefits.

I would just like to explore that for a little while, about how we develop projects in our places that enable us to pick up on all those different sorts of capital.

I might start with you, Kerry-Anne.

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

One of my favourite subjects. I have an economic background, economics and regional development is where I come from, and I spend a lot of time even now, working with small businesses.

Economics is often a way that I use to break through to traditional conservative rural councils. It is talking about economic outcomes, and economic benefits of the arts.

We were very fortunate. About 12 months ago, we worked with Regional Australia Murray looking at the dynamics and the ecosystem of arts and culture across our region. And influences of arts and culture, and how it impacts across economies, influences education, the environmental sector, industry, and in particular, agriculture.

They look at interplay, and did they did a mapping exercise, which nobody understood. But it was quite profound. It talked about everything coming back to social well-being, and one of the key drivers is arts and culture and how it influences and plays a part. Everything that we do and the way that we work is very much around... We have to work with local government.

They are a very important, whether it is rebuilding the hall, or in the case of Deniliquin, rebuilding the performance space. Council paid for all that, so they are the key drivers of the economy. Our job is to work with councils to put that art and culture lens over what they are doing. They are investing in a road, how can we then look at the money they are investing in that road, and get leverage that looks at other opportunities that can make the place a better place to live in, a better community?

Quite often I'm working with the engineers within a council – we've got this road, it's running by that lagoon, the local Indigenous community want to put a Coolamon artwork in the middle of the lagoon, how can we leverage the money you are putting into that road and let's see if we can get some money out of state or federal government to try to make this a better place.

We do that a lot. And a lot of our project activities come because we work across lots of sectors. Murray Irrigation Company controls a lot of the irrigation systems around the farming sector, and they are quite a political beast.

But they also have a need and one of their needs is that they need young people to engage in creative industries. They need them to study and become graphic designers and architects and groundwater mapping experts, using technology in creative industries.

For us, it is saying – you have this need, we want to develop creative industries, how can we work with you on an arts project? How can we put arts and culture over the top of what you are doing and engage local people and perhaps influence them in a career path that will benefit you long-term?

It is a strategic way of working but everything is very much around that mix of economic, social, environmental issues in our region and looking at how arts and culture interplay.

One of the biggest lessons that surprised our Council was when we were describing arts and culture, the Councils had a narrow view around what arts practice actually is. For a lot of them it was paintings on walls.

What we did by going through the exercise and saying that culture is a thing that humans create, whether it's language, symbols, architecture – all of this stuff is culture and we create it. And they have an obligation to work with all sectors of the community to make sure that culture is sustained or maintained in a way that everyone agrees with.

So it shifted the learning, I think, for them, around how significant arts and culture is.

**TRACEY CALLINAN:**

Anyone else want to add to how you intersect across the social and the economic?

**CAROLINE DOWNER:**

We have a close relationship with our local government as well. I spend a lot of time talking to local government about the value of arts, and that gets frustrating, to be honest. That we are constantly having to justify the position of arts in our area.

To me, it's almost like a given. The arts, of course they contribute to the economy of an area and have an effect on the social well-being. I find it a very interesting conversation that I constantly have to have with my local government partners.

As I mentioned, for us, Arts North West, building those networks is one of the key things that we do. Some of that does end up, if you like, with economic value. We just spent last weekend doing an Arts Trail around Armidale, Guyra and Walcha, and that was a way to get artists to promote their work in a different space, opening up studios on the weekend.

It was an important way to connect with other people, creating that inclusivity. For me, that's one of the most important things we do, is building social connectedness.

We have another couple of projects we run where we put together a little arts group, using a little community hall, a community that was desperate to find ways of coming together. Arts is certainly there but that is, in a way, a by-product. What they are doing is getting together and chatting and connecting, and that is an important part of what we do.

I would like to emphasise that for me it's more about that social inclusivity and that connectedness, far more than having to constantly justify the value of the arts.

**PETER WOOD:**

Or finding creative ways to have that economic conversation. When we were doing the creative industries work, it was easy to have that conversation. The value of the creative industries and what it brings to a region.

But then to focus on the community value of something like the halls project, we had to shift the terms that we were talking about it in, talking about what we were doing with the halls because a lot of councils, their common response, they see the Halls that they look after as liabilities more

than assets.

So convincing them that it was worthwhile to shine the spotlight on them and talk about the social value of them and the community around them was a difficult conversation to have. It put them over the line a bit, especially with examples like Edensvale Hall in the Clarence Valley, they have increased the number of gigs they get there and we like to think the halls project had something to do with that. It has sustainability aspects to it.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

One of the examples of the things we do is a project called Arts North West on Tour - we negotiate with producers to bring performances directly into the region. And that is certainly about economics, it becomes a sustainable model for regional touring and it is something that those venues, for many of them, they are Council-run, but not necessarily with someone who is from (inaudible).

One venue is run by the person who manages the cemetery and the pool. An interesting way to manage a cultural venue. Those things are important to talk about.

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

One of the areas that we use, social and community well-being, which everyone acknowledges is really important in our region. One of the ways we've been able to tilt the conversation is through a discussion on tourism.

Our region, as Jonathan pointed out in his presentation this morning, I share Mungo with my neighbour, West Darling, and we have some world heritage wetlands in our area. We have the Barmah Forest and some of the most amazing lake systems that you could ever imagine, so you will need to come and visit.

The Indigenous culture in that area is very significant and it's a very proud culture that is just beautiful and is an attraction in its own right. All Councils are interested in tourism and quite often they will have a tourism officer. They are more likely to have a tourism officer than a cultural officer.

What their tourism officers were doing was cultural tourism, but 99% of their activity is cultural tourism. Putting numbers around that, when you look at in NSW in 2016, something like \$12.3 billion was spent on cultural tourism. What percentage of that is this region getting? And how can we do that better?

Sometimes those conversations are really important because suddenly it becomes real for them. It's taken a long time for them to understand tourism and I think we are at a tipping point now where arts and cultural development is at that same precipice, if you like, of getting them to understand that it is significant and it is significant for their communities, whether economic or social.

Sometimes playing back to those examples, it is like the light bulb goes on and they get it. Suddenly investment happens.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Do you find it is difficult to pitch your argument and know your audience? I find sometimes that they will love hearing some of the economic arguments and we can pull out figures that can be convincing. I think, "Do I want to reduce it to an economic argument or not?"

How do you choose what your argument is going to be and how to match it to the person you are talking to?

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

For me it is getting to know the general managers of each council and the senior staff. In getting to know who they are as personalities, they will then influence their Councillors. Some Councillors are very proactive and like to be seen at gallery openings and play in that space. Others are more interested in the road network and making sure agriculture is serviced.

It depends on who I'm talking to. I am never about to preach to the converted, most of our general managers get it anyway, they are just constrained about the resources they have. My job is very much saying – how can we make your resources work better, so we both get outcomes that we need?

When you talk to councils, it is often having those factual conversations. For me it is getting to know who they are because I have one Council, I'm sorry to say this to all the grey-haired males in the audience, but that is the entire Council. Not one female representative on that Council, so breaking through to them is absolutely an economic discussion because they don't get anything else.

I don't say that's a bad thing, it's just who they are. It means the pitch becomes very different, depending on the audience.

PETER WOOD:

It's also when you align yourself to council staff. I think it's important, we have gone through the process of developing our next forward plan, sitting down with the key council staff to make sure we are aligning and supporting and supplementing and not in opposition to their agendas.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

I just want to reiterate, I have 12 councils. They are all very different. I do talk quite differently with them all as well. So, yes, it is definitely a process and something we do quite a lot of.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I have got 11, and none work the same way. Every council you have to plan a different way.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

There isn't necessarily a cultural development officer, so you often talk to a really random person in council who happens to have culture in their portfolio.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

And getting people to understand what our capacity is - what we can do and can't do - is very important. Sometimes people think we are a huge government organisation that can do everything, and sometimes we can't, but at the same time we want people to understand that we can do a lot and we can help.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

We had a discussion about who works in our organisation, and we have 2.3. We are small, but nimble. It is managing those expectations.

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

Another interesting stat I threw the council recently was, by 2020, creativity is going to be one of the top three most sought-after skills. Suddenly they're looking at, "What? We have creative people working for us?" That was interesting, getting them to talk about skill sets. We have to be creative, doing what we do, and being able to deliver across large geographic areas and diverse communities, with a couple of staff.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Coming back to that idea a sense of place, how we work with our communities to interpret that, do you think there are any challenges for issues of integrity, in how we do that? Can I throw that to Peter?

PETER WOOD:

Always, I guess. If you are doing a project where you are talking about community and place, it is about honouring stories and making sure that all voices are heard in that process. I think it is the same approach to work in our art development office, ensuring protocols and integrity, with everything we do, especially with placemaking.

It's interesting, with the halls project, one of the halls, Kyogle, Bonalbo, way out west, we worked with Dr Grayson Cook and the stories were great stories, but he wanted to extrapolate them. He came up with the notion that Bonalbo was the heart of the Australian film industry, and was done over by Hollywood - so he brought the community along with him. It was done with utmost care and integrity.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

I love these little differences that come up, when Peter says, 'way out west', his idea of that is probably very different to Kerry-Anne's.

It also seems to me that we don't do this by working in isolation - we do this by working with partnerships. Does anybody have anything to add about how you able to develop those partnerships, and are those partnerships most valuable if you are working with others in the art sector, or sometimes is it the fact that we can link over with partnerships beyond our area?

PETER WOOD:

We can't anything without partnerships. Whether it is Councils, and key organisations... I'm so pleased that the Regional Partnerships Grant, it has been announced it has doubled.

CAROLINE DOWNER:

I agree, you can't do anything without partnerships, and the beauty of the arts is that we can partner with almost anybody. A lot of what we do is with Tourism, or Health, it is not necessarily Arts. It is a fantastic way of working. I think that's what makes my job so exciting, to foster those relationships and partnerships.

KERRY-ANNE JONES:

I'm going to agree with what they said. Everything we do is about partnerships - we don't deliver anything without partnerships. 90% of those delivered on the ground in terms of activation within the local communities is done by community. Quite often, we are partnering with communities in delivering projects.

It comes back to the question of integrity, being able to listen to what different sectors and different partners have to say, and being able to apply that knowledge and being flexible in the way that we apply that knowledge across partnerships.

And quite often, because we do work across so many sectors, it gives us an opportunity to see things that perhaps others don't see. So quite often we are connecting people together and forming partnerships outside what we do, because there is opportunity for people to work together.

So I think that is one of the key things for us.

TRACEY CALLINAN:

Hopefully that has given you a little bit of an insight into the world of executive directors working across regional arts development organisations. I think, hopefully too, we have managed to explore a little bit about why location really is important in the work we do, and why I think place really does matter.

I would like you to please thank our panel. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Thank you, Tracey, Peter, Caroline and Kerry-Anne. They have extraordinarily challenging jobs, and I have the greatest respect and admiration for what they do in their various places. The miles they travel, the landscapes they work in - it really is quite extraordinary. Please thank them again. These are our heroes.

(Applause)

There was a bit of a segue in that panel towards tomorrow's dreams. Just to let you know that Tracey will be presenting some of the findings from her Ph.D. thesis in a double act with Monica Davidson, in their presentation, Creative Industries in Regional Economies, tomorrow afternoon in conference room 2, 2:00 PM.

Those of you who are interested in following the film screenings after this at the Bathurst Regional Gallery, Lisa is from Screenworks and will explain how to get ready to pitch your film at 3:00. And at 3:45, there is a solution for developing film audiences in regional towns and villages. From 7:00 there is a screening of the best 15 short films made by young regional Australians during the past three years.

Capture the gallery into screen Central, halfway down Keppel Street. Please leave a bit earlier after lunch. You will be able to see exhibitions there, including Jonathon Jones.

This afternoon, you can drop in any time between 2:00 and 5:00, it is on Russell Street. Bathurst is a very easy place to find your way around, it is all in a grid pattern. Russell Street is where we were last night for the opening ceremony. Drop in there to meet the Wurundjeri Elders, using a project that uses technology to engage young people.

The rest of the sessions are in either in (inaudible) or Walshaw Hall... Turn left down William Street, across the park, that is in front of the courthouse. Any questions, ask our staff, or you can use Google.

I was remiss last night, I have had so much feedback about the opening ceremony, and I want you to know that Bec Russell, a local director, put that ceremony together.

(Applause)

In this job, in the heat of the moment, you sometimes go a little off script. Apologies to Bec and congratulations, I thought it was amazing.

Enjoy the arts program this evening. Don't forget to show your tags for free entry to Bathurst museums, and take time to go to the Australian Mineral and Fossil Museum, because we have three museum residencies and one of the outcomes was putting fabulous (inaudible) there.

Climbing Tree starts here tonight, 7:00, tickets for tonight and Saturday night. Plenty available in the box office, and show your delegates tag to get a discount.

Lunch is in the foyer, over two levels, and we suggest you take it outside to the park where there are tables and chairs in the shade. Young musicians from Bathurst Leap project will give you a good day out fix. Allow ten minutes' walk to the afternoon sessions, and they will all start promptly at 2:00.

Thank you all, see you this afternoon.