

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Good morning, everybody, and welcome back to the second day of Artstate Tamworth. I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Kamilaroi people, and pay my respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and also to acknowledge any other Aboriginal or First Nations people who are here with us today.

I would also like to acknowledge that the Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts, Ben Franklin, is with us, and the member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, who is also the Minister for Innovation.

I hope you enjoyed the arts program last night. A big cheer to Greg Prichard, who put together the arts program.

Over the four years of this project, regional arts NSW hopes to have an ongoing conversation, linking from one year to the next. We consulted our Bathurst report that was written by Chris Orchard and Travis Pollan from Charles Sturt University, who recommended the five themes for consideration. The first two recommendations, to continue exploring an ongoing relationship with Aboriginal arts and culture, was straightforward, and has been a key priority for regional arts NSW and the regional network for over a decade. It underpins both the speakers program and the arts program, and I would like to acknowledge here the wisdom, patience and generosity of Auntie Yvonne Kent who worked with us and gave us her approval of yesterday's theme, as we planned this event on Kamilaroi country we also referred to the excellent protocols document developed by the Tamworth Aboriginal Land Council.

For example, the various spellings of Kamilaroi, we used whichever variations our speakers and artists preferred and there is a note in the front of your program.

However, arriving at today's then was more complex ---; procreation, diversity and uncertainty. Where we build partnerships and collaborations, finding new ways to model best practice and build community resilience, listen to different voices and supporting cultural and artistic risk and emerging ideas.

Arts in the age of uncertainty was not intended to be just about funding, although this is playing out for many NSW arts organisations at this moment in time. It is about the world we live in in 2019, a world of global uncertainty, Brexit, the Trumpian trade wars, the ongoing tragedies of refugees fleeing war zones and of course climate change and the environment.

The question is, how can arts in regional areas address the big issues of our day, and what are the big issues in regional NSW?

To give a national view, we invited the recently appointed CEO of the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian government's arts funding and advisory body, a body that has had its own share of uncertainty in recent years, to give us his take on the theme.

Adrian Collette held the position of Chief Executive of Opera Australia, Australia's largest performing arts company, for 16 years. He also worked in book publishing for a decade, including as the managing director of Reed Books.

His previous role of vice principal engagement at the University of Melbourne included the oversight of the University's museums and galleries and its many art sector partnerships. He has also served on the Australia Council board since 1 July, 2013.

Adrian was made a member of the Order of Australia in 2008 for his services to the performing arts, particularly through executive roles with Opera Australia, as a mentor to young artists, to publishing, and to the community.

Please give a very warm welcome to Adrian Collette, to deliver his keynote, 'Arts and Creativity in Australia'.

ADRIAN COLLETTE:

Think you, Elizabeth, and thank you, colleagues. Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here in Tamworth, and something of an honour to be with you on the second day of Artstate 2019. I would like to acknowledge the owners of the land on which we gather, the Kamilaroi people, and pay respects to Elders past and present.

I have no PowerPoint slides. It is just me for the next 30 minutes, so buckle in, please.

Arts in the age of uncertainty is what I was asked to think about, so I've got a couple of thoughts. And I'm going to start with a metaphor that is probably inappropriate to the point of insensitivity in a land stricken with drought, as we are. But it is a kick off point, so please humour me and be patient.

It was kind by the great philosopher Zygmunt Bauman to describe modern society. He said we live in liquid times. A society incapable of maintaining its form, well bonds are being replaced by different associations, giving rise to different and globalised lives that drive us through uncertainty to become more adaptable.

We navigate the modern life that Baumann likened to walking on a thin crust of ice, too slippery to run across, yet too fragile to stop.

But as our lives have become more protean and more anxious, more people from all disciplines are exploring more ways that art can help. Art can alleviate the symptoms of uncertainty. By reminding us what it means to be human, and how we are connected through our humanity.

Art can also help us navigate uncharted territory by helping us imagine what lays ahead, and to eliminate the uncertain so that we can skate playfully rather than walk fearfully across the thin ice of modern life.

More Australians are facing uncertainty, because we enter a period of unprecedented change that is disrupting regional and urban communities, industries, our environment, and how we interact with the world and each other. A time driven by an economic model that demands we keep moving, technology that is evolving faster than we can run, resisted by an environment that demands we slow down.

At the Australia Council, we have launched a new vision, creativity connect us. Regardless of where we live, where we are going, where we are from, creativity connect us. It connects us to our First Nation's heart, to over 75,000 years of living culture and knowledge. And the country on which we are privileged to live.

Creativity connects us to the diverse peoples who now call Australia home, to a national committee, and a global committee. Our vision looks towards a greater nation, towards greater health and well-being, towards growth and prosperity. Ours is a contemporary vision that response to ever-changing needs in a fast changing world, emboldened by the knowledge that everybody, everywhere has a legal, personal right to experience the cultural, social, and financial benefits of living a creative life.

Art can help us navigate these fluid times, through sharing stories of communities wrestling with change, art and creativity brings people together. In rooms like this across Australia, during the Small Halls Festival, or art that encourages long table conversations. Like at (unknown term), directly engaging with the community, for community audiences.

Art that informs high table debates, like the Garma Festival, Australia's version of the World Economic Forum, where art and culture provide an evidence base for ambitious discussions about policy and ethics.

Our future generations are dealing with extreme uncertainty about the world as we know it. Childhood uncertainties, that we can't even imagine, is part of growing up. In such terms of environmental uncertainty, art has a big role to play. It brings unlikely people together to collaborate and address the problems that we collectively face. Since 2014, Wollongong artists have been visiting the Mackay region working with sugarcane farmers to gain a deeper understanding of that industry, to investigate how artists and farmers may work together on large-scale ecological challenges. These deep engagement informed stories told through the exhibition Sugar Versus the Reef. The exhibition stimulated dialogue between industry, environment, and cultural tradition. It connected people who would otherwise have remained hardened. Building shared and community understanding of what it is like to be a cane farmer, and the relationship between the industry and the Great Barrier Reef.

It allowed Mackay's South Sea Islander community to raise awareness of their connection to the local sugarcane industry.

So our creativity can connect us, especially in times of uncertainty. And in times of emergency. Artists are often quick to respond to what we face, such as the initiatives in the Creative Recovery Network, a podcast that explores art and creativity in disaster management. First responders share stories of creative leaders and impacted communities from all over Australia as they prepare, respond, and recover from natural disaster. The stories and conversation provides vital steppingstones to navigate those liquid times.

Like how a sculptural forest in South Australia can unite a community after bushfire. How a tightknit community can unite to recover from ---. And how an Indigenous-led arts centre and artist network galvanised a local council after a tropical cyclone. These are all of the reasons why Arts Australia needs to be untethered from the narrow definition of what art is to what art does, so it can move freely to where it is needed most.

Here in Tamworth, home to the world's biggest guitar and second-biggest music festival, we have another compelling example of what art does for regional communities. Over the last five years, domestic and international visitors to regional New South Wales has increased to more than 40%. That is a staggering number. Visitor generated income has grown to \$15 billion in 2019. Most overseas visitors aged between 18 and 29, this is a new time for cultural tourists who want to understand new places and cultures, and it heralds a new dawn for Art and cultural fairs. Like the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, which has been growing year after year.

Many of you have been there already, and if you haven't, I recommended. This year was my first, but it will not be my last. The vivacity of the work on display was almost overwhelming. Over 70 galleries giving distinct expression to 70 nations. Work facilitated by community arts centres owned and governed by First Nation people, to promote autonomy, sustained growth, and greater certainty for First Nation communities across Australia.

This year I was one of an estimated 15,000 visitors to an event that in 2018 generated \$15 million for the local economy. It is one of a growing domestic and international audience drawn to a specific place at a specific time where the living art of many First Nations can be experienced, and importantly, purchased in one place. The art fair is more than an exhibition, it is more than a celebration of creativity, it is an important cultural and commercial exchange. As the event tagline proclaims boldly, "Art is living."

It is an important way for people to support First Nations communities and peoples by going directly to art centres that are so often central to the communities themselves, engendering pride in local artists, and binding people closer together through the public services they deliver, and connecting these communities and Australia with an interested world increasingly aware it has something to learn, and that we, Australia, have something very significant to offer.

Our recent research on international arts tourism shone a light on the pivotal role that art plays in driving tourism to Australia. The relationship between art and travel is long-standing, it is deep, and it is complex. We travelled to see art, and even when art isn't our primary destination, we naturally gravitate to the art of the place in order to understand the meaning of that place, to understand its people, its landscape, its history.

An authentic interest in understanding other people and places and cultures also drives adventure and exploration for stop our research showed us that international tourists who engage with art in their travels are more likely to be intrepid, to go beyond the east coast cities and visit regional Australia.

Later this month we will be publishing new research, this time on domestic art tourism, as Australians travel around the country on short trips and longer stays. This will hold a better picture of the Australian willingness to travel for the arts, to value the arts in the place that we are in, and the value of the arts to support local communities.

Today I can give a few insights in the making. I can show that regional Australia is drawing a similar overall numbers of domestic arts tourists as the big cities. We were aware that this was the case with international tourists, but it is a fast emerging trend for domestic tourists as well, moving toward regional Australia in greater numbers.

Like international tourists, Australians who visit regional areas are more likely to include the arts in their mix of activities, and many local hotspots attracting arts tourists will have them stay longer in their communities. These findings reinforce the enormous potential of the arts to drive tourism, both for international tourists and Australian travellers exploring their own country, which creates great public value.

Public value, reflecting public investment, which is what we do, I mean certainly economic value, the importance of our creative sector and future prosperity, and in social value, that is created through supporting the well-being of our regional communities, and I mean cultural value in the expansion in celebration of our cultural identity and shipping how we are seen by visitors to our country. Driving regional tourism is just one example of the greater role that arts plays and what that does. Of the economic and social and cultural value the arts delivers. And why investing in Australian creativity is investing in the prosperity and well-being of all Australians.

At the Council I like to think we are also being intrepid. Shifting to a language of creativity has taken us outside of our particular echo chambers. It has let us to consider other forms, disciplines, point of view, other ways of thinking that are on burgeoning art of its objects, allowing it to travel more freely as a service, deliver greater public value across greater dimensions.

We have only started walking on this path, but there is reason to be hopeful to believe in the future and reason to believe we can become creatively connected nation full stop by broadening the conversation, we are not walking alone, we are

walking alongside others, other disciplines, of ideas, in the footsteps of community is already exploring the public spaces we want to reach. Communities already realising the social value we want to deliver, communities like yours.

That said, I am fully aware that this needs more support than creative conversations. For regional artists struggling to make a living, for towns living in change, destruction, disaster, our change needs to offer more than metaphor. We need site as well as vision, as one speaker said beautifully yesterday. Our vision needs to deliver more than words, and I believe it can. All the steps we take, importantly the investment we make, are guided by priorities that focus our actions, and we have shifted those priority is. The ones that recognise all Australians deserve more opportunities to be inspired by arts and creativity, wherever they live. Priorities that understand our arts must reflect us, not just some of us. We must have equity of opportunity and access in our creative experience, workforce, leaders, and audience.

Rarities that build on long-term commitment that recognises the importance of first Nations people self-determination, cultural authority, and leadership, to our collective prosperity. I am proud to say that our investment in First Nation's art was enshrined in the Act of the Council in 1986, and again in 2011.

And through crater advocacy for events that will increase awareness.

Priorities that will bring about change which may feel slow in coming, but will come, such as the recent changes to funding for the national performing arts partnership. Changes that will make this more flexible and supportive of a regional arts system.

One of the first steps is a scan of how regional arts tourism is serving rural and regional Australia. Much has changed so it is time to take stock of contemporary conditions.

So in these liquid times, art can keep us afloat. If unburdened of its object, so untethered from narrow definitions, art can guide us toward more certain ground, build upon that which connects us all, where we can calm anxiety and explore opportunities, so that we can all experience the social, cultural and economic benefits of living a creative life.

Now, that's what I think, it's what I aspire to do, as CEO of Australia Council for the Arts. But really, I didn't come here to tell you what I think. I came here to listen and to learn, and have very engaged conversations, and I had a lot of very instructive listening yesterday, and I hope for much more.

In these liquid times, I would like to know how the Australia Council can help you do what you do. Thank you for listening.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Another round of applause for our keynote this morning.

(Applause)

It is very encouraging to hear both the extensive research that is being done by the Australia Council that we can all access when we're putting together documentation for local and state government, but also to hear the fact that the Australia Council is recognising and listening to the artists in regional Australia, and in this particular case, in regional NSW.

So, now we're moving on to our third panel. Arts Addressing the Big Issues in Western NSW. This is the opportunity to hear from artist who live and work in the far west of NSW. Our artists have a completely different last, environment and challenges to those living closer to the coast or in metropolitan cities.

Our moderator for this conversation is Anna Moulder, the presenter, reducer, Chief of staff for ABC New England North-West NSW. She grew up on the Darling Downs in Queensland and has lived in regional Australia her whole life.

After studying at Lismore's Southern Cross University and absorbing the North Coast beach lifestyle, Anna was drawn to Tamworth by a great opportunity with the ABC and has since made a wonderful life and career in this thriving regional hub.

With a love of art, music, wine, food and all good things in life, Anna is thrilled to be part of Artstate 2019, and looks forward to meeting some of NSW's most remote and 'extraordinary artists.

Please welcome Anna, who will introduce her panel.

ANNA MOULDER:

Hello! A bit lost without the radio headset on. It's great to have you here this morning, and thank you, Elizabeth. How wonderful it is to be part of the Artstate program for 2019, and here in Tamworth. It is great to have you all the.

I'm going to be a bit interactive this morning, so looking forward to filling your energy down there. ABC new England north-west are proud partners of this wonderful, creative and impactful concept called Artstate, and we think everyone involved in bringing together such an incredible collective of people, ideas, themes and, fingers crossed, dynamic future collaborations. And I thank you all for being here today to share it.

I would like to knowledge this as traditional Kamilaroi land, where we come together today. We come to absorb, be inspired, to keep our creative energy is flowing, to ensure a regional arts community in western NSW into the future. I would like to pay my respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to everyone here today.

The original people who lived here were a vibrant nation who are deeply connected to the waterways. This was also a meeting place of three different tribes, where they would trade, have corroborees, sing, dance and sheer language. I recognise the rich cultural history and the energy that has brought us together on this country today.

Saturday morning, eh, is that the day after the night before? Did you get out and about last night? Maybe to the Impey? We do have a few dance floors on Tamworth and some people can be feeling dusty on Saturday mornings. But events like this challenge the mind but also your bottoms. Plenty of sitting, the emotional stability, emotionally moved and entertained along the way. I think the panel will tick a few of those boxes. But don't worry, we can't tell you fewer squeezing those glutes to keep the blood flowing, and if we do notice, we promise to be polite about it.

Andrew Hull is a storyteller. I called him an over-achiever when I first met him, which is probably a bit rude, in hindsight. But he performs, exhibits, drives public arts projects, speaks at public engagements at this. A musician, photographer, poet, writer, and he tells me he is open to all forms of expression. Interpretive dance, anyone?

He is a jack of most art trades and this is on top of his day job working full-time in natural resource management. Andrew is of Baakindji descent from the Darling River, in Bourke NSW. Is there anyone else from Bourke here today?

He has been on the board of Outback Arts, published in the Sydney morning Herald, The, age... Australian geographic has described him as "A modern-day Lawson". Surely you are done now. No pressure.

He now entertains countless travellers from across Australia as they travel through his hometown of Bourke. With many of the major folk festivals under his belt, he typifies the Aussie artist who is teetering on the edge of the epic leap. You know the one. "Should I give up my day job and be an artist full-time?" I don't envy him.

I think you will agree we can really look forward to Andrew's contribution today.

The lady on my left is Prue Cullen. She has had a life of major contrasts. The most recent started around eight years ago when she came home to Coonamble, returning to her family property after living away for most of her adult life, it has been a transition from lush to dust, from florist re-to cattle, ultimate open to remote isolation.

Having had a successful floristry business in new haven in the US, her past is still evident in the motifs you can see on her hand built and thrown pieces. She also produces elaborate sculptural pieces often themed around the elements of her new life in Coonamble. They reflect the environment that surrounds her day-to-day and the old Shearer's cottage she lives in. She has a view of the severe devastation of the drought often ravish landscape.

Prue says being connected socially is what keeps are in Coonamble because without it will be very hard. She is a member of the ceramic collective, a dynamic group who run and operate a full-time ceramic studio.

Since discovering ceramics in 2013, her creative practice has been a welcome respite for the difficulties life has thrown her in recent years. Prue will engage you no end, I absolutely guarantee that. Please welcome Prue Colin.

And the third member of the panel is Cathy Farry. Cathy was born and raised in Broken Hill. That is just next door to Dubbo, isn't it, Cathy? She said people say that all the time. 750 Columbus? With a degree in English literature and Macquarie University, she then completed a bachelor of visual arts at the national Art School, majoring in sculpture. With this creating double threat, a fusion of words and sculpture, she returned to far west NSW ready to inject her passion for art and culture into the community she so loved and use a well.

Artistically, Cathy has continued to extend the scope of her art practice and gone on to work in a number of positions including art teacher at TAFE, manager of the Broken Hill regional Art Gallery, and as the cultural and heritage curator; try and say that 10 times on a Saturday morning; at the Broken Hill City Council.

It is tough to capture it all here right now and I know that Cathy is going to share more with us. She comes to us today as the Executive Director of West Darling Arts and is very much a practising and exhibiting artist. Welcome, Cathy.

Alright, let's get stuck in now. Today within the theme of arts in the age of uncertainty... Uncertainty... Have you got my Trump? I need the hairpiece. Boris Johnson, do you have his? They are the same one? Right, sorry. No props. We will have to move on with no props today.

Yes, times of uncertainty, age of uncertainty, arts and the age of uncertainty, how the arts address the big issues of our day. We're going to unpack the role that arts play in our regional, rural and remote communities, and hear how these artists are engaging with the local issues they are faced with day-to-day in their committees through their work.

In preparing for today, I spoke to our panel about how the big issues of the moment in their local communities inform their art and I think Prue said it best when she told me that the best story is your own story. I thought about it, and it became clear to me that this is true for us all, artist or not, because it is your own story that informs everything that you do.

So I would like to invite the panellists to share a little bit about themselves and what informs their art. Cathy, let's start with you it was a non-arsed... Freudian slips already! A non-arts-based role, prior to the one you are in now, that informed your recent exhibition. Can you share a bit about your role and the artistic work that came out of it?

CATHY FARRY:

Prior to my current role, I was the CEO of the Far West Community Legal Centre, which was a complete change of career path. Having worked in the arts in one form or another up until that point.

Part of the role was also to manage the family violence prevention legal service, the staying home, leaving violence service, and also the women's domestic violence court advocacy service. So it was four services, all of them related to family and domestic violence, on the whole.

I had amazing staff. I was completely new to this field. These amazing people who honestly don't get paid much and are just really passionate and dedicated to what they do.

And it was during that period, I suppose... I obviously didn't deal with clients because I'm not a lawyer or a social worker, but I suppose the atmosphere was one very different from the arts, and that took a while to get used to. And is how I came about coming up with the theme of the exhibition that I had at the regional art gallery in Broken Hill, which was about shame.

It was really interesting to me, and I hope that it was of benefit to the people who became involved in this project, that shame was usually something that is imposed on people. It is not often something they have been fully in control of, and what they've done. And I saw this at work, which is how this came up.

I had an online survey, which was anonymous, and people could respond to it. I asked for them to set a scene, basically, of their shame. They didn't have to say what had actually happened or what the memory was. They were nearly always very clear memory. But most of them did, was of them elaborated further on the actual scene-setting, which I then illustrated by making artist books. Those were on display with the survey results, so people could read and see the interpretation.

I went in a bit naive in some ways. It took quite a lot out of me. But it was, hopefully, of benefit to people and hopefully also to the audience. It is bound to bring up their own thoughts and feelings, and hopefully people can lose a bit of baggage.

ANNA MOULDER:

You are telling me that domestic and family violence was something you were faced with directly every day in that job. But she went on to turn it into something beautiful, and it extended your skill set as well. Tell us about the books that you made. How do they work? Like a concertina. A tunnel book. Fascinating.

CATHY FARRY:

They have a cover, but they are parallel sheets of paper cut through. They create a scene. This is coming from my sculpture background. They are joined with a

concertina side so they can collapse and close. That is the idea. They create little models as you bring them out.

ANNA MOULDER:

And is with the people that participated in that exhibition made themselves known to you. What was their response when they saw their experience in artwork?

CATHY FARRY:

Maybe they were being polite, but they generally so they had the nail on the head. Quite interestingly, people who were affected quite often didn't buy the work, but other people did, which is always interesting. Not that it was a sell-out show or anything like that. But I was interested that people wanted to have these works as well. That were about somebody else's ---; I assume it is for what they saw in the work and what they related to it.

ANNA MOULDER:

That is one way that community issues can inform work. Andrew, you say that your love for Bourke informs your work, and you share that love with a visiting stream of grey nomads. How did that come about?

ANDREW HULL:

Financial opportunity.

ANNA MOULDER:

An artist wanting to make money? Crazy. (Laughs)

ANDREW HULL:

I inherited this gig. I was invited out to read some poetry to the mass movement of retirees who travel in their caravans. Easter to the October long weekend is the season of the nomad. They get to Bourke and they want to be entertained and they want to learn about the area, so we get a campfire going, and I inflict my poetry on them. It has been a really good way to explore that story myself, because the more you tell it, the more you become familiar with it, the more you understand where the gaps are in the story, and the questions that come back out point out the things people are interested in, trying to understand as part of the world.

It is a bit of a checklist for them, they have done Bourke and Broken Hill, but you need to dig a bit deeper to understand, and I think I had the opportunity to help them with that.

ANNA MOULDER:

What is the most surprising thing people want to know at these performances? When they are ticking their boxes?

ANDREW HULL:

They all want to know about the goats.

ANNA MOULDER:

How many goats are we talking about?

ANDREW HULL:

Too many. I am always quite eager to impart, it is a very different story out there. In my other life and my natural resource management life, as I became exposed to more and more meetings with government funding bodies and whatnot, he would always put his chair back and say, "The thing you've got to know is we're different out here." I am sure every region thinks that, that is why we have regional models. So he would tell this story over and over again, and I would get really frustrated. Like, let's get on to the funding program or whatever. Now that I am older, I find myself doing that all the time. Let's not start the story where you think it starts, because I need to tell you that we are different out here.

While all regions are all unique in their own way, the Western division itself has a whole bunch of dynamic changes that you feel once you get out there. The scale changes instantly, all of the properties become much bigger and fewer. There is nowhere near the amount of people. Communities are small and further apart. Social structures form in different ways, and people's understanding of the scale and the landscape is informed in different ways.

The tenure of the land is different, it is all leasehold in response to natural disasters over the years. There is also a higher Aboriginal population, the Aboriginal population, to the nation's great shame, has a whole set of demographics and metrics that come with it. That means that statistically, life expectancy goes down, health issues arise, education issues arise out of that. So it really is different out there. And I try to find a way to impart that if I can, and people are usually interested in the river system, being on the Darling River, so I do try and sought of talk about the thing they are interested in, but not without the context of the difference they are sitting in. That often means they stick around for longer to try and learn more.

I find people are often interested because they had to put in the effort to get out of there.

ANNA MOULDER:

I think context is such a keyword in today's conversation. To understand these artists, performers, storytellers, you have to understand the context of these great vast places they come from. Prue, from high-end forestry in the US to cows in Coonamble. Can you explain how important it was for you to find ceramics when you came home from the US?

PRUE CULLEN:

I lived in the US for 20 years, as my partner was American, and diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's. I realised that I just did not want to be in the American system over there, it is particularly cruel, and expensive, the health system. And I knew I didn't have any support there. So I wanted to get back to Australia.

So we came back to the family farm, and moved into the manager's house, it was built by the people who built the shearing shed. It is commonly known as a hot box. (Laughs) Corrugated iron ---.

ANNA MOULDER:
In Coonamble? No insulation?

PRUE CULLEN:
I did put insulation in. I have been in Connecticut in an affluent area, where people would spend a lot of money on flowers. It was unpacking flowers, it was just beautiful, lovely. I loved it. I really enjoyed it.

Coming back, we came back to Coonamble, and being a carer, and him being ---; Everything I came back to was in a decaying state. The property was run down ---;

ANNA MOULDER:
Farms don't get run down, what are you talking about? (Laughs)

PRUE CULLEN:
Run down over the period of time that we had been out there. Since then he is in full-time care, so I am out there with my mother who is 96, living in the main house about 100 yards away. And in this really incredible drought. One of the things is actually saved my life was finding the ceramic studio. Although I wasn't doing flowers, I could get in there and get my hands in the clay. I could just build something. Everything seemed to be disappearing before me, everything was ageing, people were losing their minds around me, and I could actually get my hands into that clay and I could build some flowers. I could build pots, I could make them bright, go Frida Kahlo on them, or I could make them all white.

I found the community that really supported me and has kept me there. I could have had other options to go other places, but there is something about being out there that is pretty amazing. There is a big sky, vast landscape, it is isolation, it is loneliness. But they are all really lovely things at the same time. That's where I am with the whole thing. Coonamble is a really amazing community for the arts, we have been really lucky that we have Outback Arts out there.

ANNA MOULDER:
I am very keen to know what that first piece of work looked like with clay.

PRUE CULLEN:
It was the three pea pods, like that. I put it in the outback Archie.

ANNA MOULDER:
Overachiever, everyone.

PRUE CULLEN:
That was my career.

ANNA MOULDER:

When we are dealing with outback Australia, those themes of distance and location really come into play. The pure fact of isolation and vastness are an obvious influence on the work that these artists who live there are using as their inspiration. Andrew, you told me that you have to be prepared to travel due to the sheer scale of the region.

How unique and very is that landscape across the Darling River? Because now you live on a different part of the Darling River?

ANDREW HULL:

Coming back to that issue of scale, the Western division, if you want to draw the line, is about 40% of the state. It is a big state in the first was, but that is a big region. I was very interested to talk to a couple of arts workers last night, with your counterparts, and they were talking about the cultural workers they have in the local councils are. They have got networks of artists, they have got these sorts of things. How many cultural workers have you got in your region?

SPEAKER ?:

None!

ANDREW HULL:

That means that Cathy's scale has gone from the person down the street to connect with to actually entertaining all of the contact between those councils, those roles, and travelling and being on the role. Same with Jamie Lee. If you are an artist Ray to navigate that scale, it can be a bit imposing. Touring arts programs and whatnot, they think, Bourke... Brewarrina is close to that, we will do two shows in one day. And suddenly their program and budgets blow out, because they don't realise people live another 300 miles away. That scale is something you have to get used to.

Because things are overlaid with scale, if you want to operate at that scale as an office, you need to understand those in it. A project I recently did Outback Arts, was to support Aboriginal art and develop profiles of them about their art practice, and try to raise a more professional standard of the way to describe Aboriginal art across the region.

It started off as a local gallery in Bourke, because I know those guys and want to help people understand their story. By the time that I had finished, it was the whole Outback Arts region, which is six or seven shire councils. It changed the project significantly. I was not just ducking down the street whenever I could ---; that is another issue, you can't just catch up when it you can. You have to go and find people in communities and it dig them out and tell them it is important.

If you are doing that on a scale that is enormous, you are doing a lot of travelling, and all the time that comes with that. You end up with more isolation by virtue of that.

ANNA MOULDER:

Do you ever feel forgotten, Andrew?

ANDREW HULL:

No, I guess the flipside to that coin is, you can... There is not a whole lot of artist working in Bourke. If someone comes to Bourke and goes, "We need to talk to an artist," I pretty much get the call. And Bourke is a place that has a residence in the national psyche, 'The back of Bourke'.

People often come to Bourke to take the pulse, I suppose, to go back to Henry Lawson, the oft quoted phrase that if you know Bourke, you know Australia. They rattle that one off all the time. People come out to Bourke to take the national pulse. And if it any vaguely in the Venn diagram borders into the cultural space, I get a call. So I don't feel forgotten.

ANNA MOULDER:

You talk about Broken Hill being a microcosm. How does it sit within your location?

CATHY FARRY:

It's like you are saying, Andrew. It is because of the isolation, really. And traditionally, Broken Hill is 120 years old, more or less, maybe a little bit more... But it has had to be very self-reliant, because it is so isolated. And getting to and from has historically been... And it is still difficult, big trips. We have one airline, it is very expensive. So it is hard to get in and out and it takes so much time.

So I think it is just from that isolation and having to be self-reliant, in a nutshell. So a little town in a nutshell, really. But if you can't get it there, you can't get it, do you know what I mean? You can't just go down the road... People sometimes drive down to Mildura, but it's 350km, to go to Bunnings. And people do that. People used to go there to get pizza before we had pizza.

But on the whole, it is having to be self-reliant and having to provide everything that you need.

ANNA MOULDER:

You tell me that your connection with the world is growing with age. Why do you think that is?

CATHY FARRY:

It's the internet, and that has just made such a big difference. And I suppose things are changing there, again, but television, for example. Getting all these channels. When I was a kid, it was just ABC and Channel 7, and you are dying of envy, because The Simpsons, you didn't get to see The Simpsons. Now you get it all, but of course you get streaming, so you get Netflix and all of that. So you can be watching the same shows as someone on the other side of the world, in the same time.

So there is so much more connectivity than what there was when I was younger. And it just seems to be growing all the time as well.

ANNA MOULDER:

You mentioned that the internet was integral in your last exhibition, because of the anonymity that that provided for the people who were participating with you. How do you see your art changing as your connection with the world continues to grow?

CATHY FARRY:

The seeds of the next body of work I would like to do is actually about loneliness. Thinking about that, I mean, we could talk about it for ages, but the internet is a lonely place too. It gives the illusion of connection, but you kind of don't really.

Like all my 500 Facebook friends, I don't know how many of them I would say are real friends. But I know what they're doing, or what they choose to share, and stuff. But it is a very superficial kind of a connection. I do think what Prue was saying about being isolated... But I think it is maybe just human condition as well.

We certainly don't have a monopoly on loneliness. But that isolation and feeling of being in the middle of nowhere does, I think, exacerbate that that. You get a really big rain, heaven, we hope, but the roads get cut out, the planes can't fly, and you are really cut off from everything. It is times like that that you really notice how far you are from everything.

And particularly on a state level. Adelaide is only 500km, away, but Sydney is 1300km and when things are run on a state level, talking about the distances things have to travel. And Dubbo is my favourite topic of where people think we are, near Dubbo. The government sometimes thinks we're near Dubbo as well, which is a bit of a worry.

So they want to set up a rehab, they were talking about setting up a rehab for drug rehabilitation. And suggested that they have it in Dubbo and that we go to Dubbo if needed. You know, nine hours' drive. And you are so far away from family... It is about saving money, really, bottom line.

ANNA MOULDER:

You can feel the issues and their connection between three very different places, but similarity there as well, as we enjoy, I think, a very wonderful conversation this Saturday morning at Artstate.

Prue, so you have not only left or filter distance from your previous career, but the distance in social connection. You joked with me that you might possibly be known around Coonamble as the vegan terrorist. That is quite a title.

How have you used your art as a coping mechanism or a tool as you juggle having very different

Political opinions to many of the local community where you have returned home and immersed yourself in? Because you still very much want to be an active part of that community. How do you balance that as a vegan terrorist?

PRUE CULLEN:

It is very hard. I am a meat-eating vegan terrorist, as well, and I raise Angus cattle, so I am part of the system at the same time. It is an uncomfortable position.

A lot of the time I have to censor myself. It is interesting ---; art should be the place where you can tell the truth or express that.

One would hope that while we have music and poetry, we can tell the truth without upsetting to many people, or just be authentic. I would be considered a greenie out where I am in Coonamble, which is a very bad person, and not someone to really hang out with.

I'm also somebody who thinks that we are in the sixth great extinction of our time, and we're in climate change, and it's happening rapidly. And I'm watching it happening rapidly right before my eyes.

So I walk into a community that is really devastated at the moment by this drought, with a lot of denial going on, from my point of view, about what's happening to everyone. And trying to creep around the edge of terrible things, and trying to not go there, you know. I do hear things like, "It's just the United Nations conspiracy, to have climate change. There is no such thing, it is a moneymaking situation." It's hard.

And my art... I can get to the ship, and my great mate Sooty Welsh, who is an Aboriginal artist, we sit down together at the table and we can talk about all that. He has watched the rivers dry up, he has watched everything being decimated, he is a Stolen Generation. So now I identify more with the Indigenous people there, because they are feeling the pain, but they are also watching it go downhill, in a very short amount of time. Sooty was taken from his family in the 1970s, I think. And that's in my time. I never knew that was happening in my time.

And he has come back, reclaimed himself, reclaiming his Aboriginal background, and at the same time, becoming an activist, or being politicised. So he is who I talk to. I talked to him, and Penny Evans, she is amazing. She is somebody who can go there, and you can banter and say, "I'm a bit scared about what's happening here." I think the art community is something really sacred. It is a good place to be.

ANNA MOULDER:

I can see you having those conversations and I can imagine they would get quite colourful, actually. But how challenging is it when you are inspired and to be with your work, with those daily challenges? Knowing that you walk through that door of the art space and you can be you, but every other moment is a version of yourself?

PRUE CULLEN:

well, look, I grew up out there, so I have this entree into the community that is part of me...

ANNA MOULDER:

The VIP past situation... And then you get to know people.

PRUE CULLEN:

In situations like this, when you live in places like this, you have to pull together anyway. You can be divided, but this drought is pulling people together, for all of their different beliefs, everyone is having a big reality check. This is the worst drought anyone has ever seen, in living memory. And even in longer, in recorded memory.

So people are trying to support each other, and it is a suicide scene. It is going there if we don't get rain, because we're looking at losing our livelihoods, walking off properties, towns closing down. This slow, incremental death that is coming. You are seeing it out there, in Walgett, Darling River's being gutted. Places that are going to be losing their art communities. What are they going to be left with? Ghost towns full of dust.

Out there, we live with these dust storms that come through, and nobody cleans their house anymore. I'm not cleaning until it rains. That's three years, so it is getting pretty dusty out there. "I'll just make a little spot here..." That is literally how it is. And it blows, the wind is wild, bang, bang. I like it, because it is like this huge orchestra, but you are really in the grip of it out there.

And I think that's why I had this panic about, I'm seeing this. Isn't anyone else seeing this? Why are they going to arrest us now if we do see it? Do I have to be willing now to be arrested, to say this isn't right, what's happening here. This is scary times here.

(Applause)

ANNA MOULDER:

Prue said to me yesterday, "Pretty sure people are not crossing to the other side of the street to avoid me..." But you did say you have had a few unlikely people in your community, you do set those differences aside and come together as a community (inaudible) your history with the community.

But you have had some people come to you, because you are very active on social media, and they secretly read what you post, so they can understand a bit more about where Prue is at. And they just mention they have read your little post.

So you are making some ground there, by the sound of it.

PRUE CULLEN:

I just like the drip. Drip, drip drip of climate change, of drought, my reality, 'my last 20 cows', that was my last post, with my beautiful cows. And my trees dying. And you can see in the background just this dust hanging over it. That's what I'm down to, my last 20 cows. I'm lucky, some people have no cows now. I think I'm actually in the wrong game, because I hate sending them to the abattoir, and I have just inherited it.

So I am always on social media. Informing, trying to inform, or maybe they just see this is happening around them, and other people are suffering. We don't really have a lot of time. I mean, I just feel that, like this walking emergency myself, really.

ANNA MOULDER:

We love your walking emergency, we are glad you are here today.

Cathy, you are a former teacher, and you are interested in training up-and-coming artists. Aren't artists just born? (Laughs)

CATHY FARRY:

We have a strong tradition of self-taught artists. I think it is just devastating that have cut the arts courses. It is such a shame. It now relies on community groups, arts groups, places like the regional Art Gallery, which is not like a TAFE. They do great things, but you can't go and do a ceramics course and learn how to mix glazes properly. You often forced to make matching cups to get the skills and that kind of thing. I am a strong believer in education. It is just devastating, and in communities like Wilcannia and Menindee , which have large Aboriginal populations, they used to have the Aboriginal arts courses, which were at TAFE as well, you can see there is just not the same amount of output as they used to be.

ANNA MOULDER:

What is this going to look like?

CATHY FARRY:

It is like a slow death, but maybe climate change will get us before then. You have got this dust and this heat, it is too early, winters are too short. Some days it feels like the apocalypse. The sun is like a burning red ball just sitting there, you can look at it, because it is filtered by the dust. It is just awful. Things like that make art courses which I think are so important to health and well-being, mental and physical health, I think it all ties in. It can help community and society. Do not have those things is really hard. You can't go to the next town where they might have a big ceramic studio. We do have a little pottery class, but they are very basic. Very enjoyable, I am sure, but not at that level.

ANNA MOULDER:

Could we see a paring back of teaching because of this situation? Where artists would normally go and practice their skills, they are then spending time teaching rather than practising.

CATHY FARRY:

I don't think it should. That should not be a burden to put on our artists, I think.

ANNA MOULDER:

Teaching is quite different to practising.

CATHY FARRY:

It's not for everyone. And I don't think you should have to, if you don't want to. Last thing we need are reluctant teachers. I think it is just something that should be provided, I think.

ANNA MOULDER:

Andrew, you discovered your artistic skills in your late 20s and throughout your 30s, which gives me and many others hope. But you have to develop your skills in isolation, really. How important is it to have support as an artist, people physically there to help you take those steps towards strengthening your art practice?

ANDREW HULL:

It is a pretty interesting thing to think about. It is a very risky space to be in. The example I often use is that I fell in love with poetry and I was writing poetry, and telling everyone who would listen my poetry, and they/go to a festival, and I had no concept of the idea that people got together outside in the world to share poetry with each other.

You are operating very much in isolation, and it relates a bit to the education question before. The social construct of the communities also play into that, sometimes in a positive way, but mostly in a negative way.

One of the things we have is a large cyclic movement of young professionals through western division towns, certainly the police force, and in the education department. Once upon a time the health system used to have an intercity transfer scheme, where young graduates would be offered higher transfer points to go to remote regions. If you do four years in Bourke you can get enough points to go back to where you come from.

It is great because you get these vibrant young professionals in your community. But they also leave again. Local people get their skills and hope built up, but they also get into a cycle of loss. It means next time they come out, and the third time, you certainly don't. So it is risky, operating in isolation around there, and you really need to take the opportunities that come to you to extend and expand your range.

It can skew your perspective. My poetry turned into writing turned into music turned into photography, because I thought maybe there would be other people out there. I just grew very rapidly in my artistic endeavours, and I wanted to fix everything. I got straight on to the boards, and I thought I could see all of the problems in the funding model that exist in regional arts. I've really got a system to fix it, all any to do is get on to the right people and ensure they will see my logic and fix it. And I am doing this from my own unique perspective of western New South Wales, not the greater arts

community. Ruffled a few feathers along the way before Elizabeth Rogers came and gave me a pat on the back and told me to calm down. It feels a lot better than the kick in the arse you could be getting, but she doesn't say that.

So it is really risky to be operating in isolation. You think you have got it, but you haven't got it at all.

(Laughter)

ANNA MOULDER:

Oh dear. Elizabeth Rogers was saying that way before Taylor Swift - "You need to calm down." We might have a lawsuit on our hands.

We mentioned earlier about the active ceramics community in Coonamble. How are those artists learning their skills?

PRUE CULLEN:

We are a two hour's drive from Dubbo. We have about 3000 people. I have lost my train of thought.

ANNA MOULDER:

Blossoming artists.

PRUE CULLEN:

With Outback Arts, we are very lucky that we can get people coming in for a short sprint workshop, which is great. They have been very supportive. But on a day-to-day thing, I can see an attrition that is happening as people get studios in their own homes, we are bringing this industry in Coonamble of ceramicists now. There are four or five are into really good production and going to shows, Sooty is very well-known. We have got three or four others just doing fabulous work. Being staged in magazines. The dust storm, the perfect life of the country. (Laughs)

There is good commercial production happening. But bringing people in – I am still in the studio, and Sooty is still in the studio, but often you don't have time to actually support and bring other people up to speed. I think that is one of the things I would really like to see change. I don't know how that is going to change, but maybe more grooming, is that the right word?

ANNA MOULDER:

I think in this context it is a little less dodgy.

(Laughter)

PRUE CULLEN:

Jamie Lee is quite good in terms of moral support. But when something new comes along, we try to embrace them, but I can see there is this attrition rate when people drop out because they are not getting ---; I think that is the weakness we have in the

space for it now, but we have got a terrific ---; I think it will change. We need to address it, but it is a challenge.

ANNA MOULDER:

We are going to talk about the future in a minute, I do want to touch on that thought, having young children, they say it takes a village, but I don't know where the village are. I feel like I'm on my own with my husband. I wonder, as a ceramicist, you are in a home studio and not a collective space, is that conducive? Or is that not helping?

PRUE CULLEN:

I don't think I would enjoy it. I like company. For me, being part of a group is really important. I live on my own, with the dog, I visit Ruben, who is now in care, I have my mum, and for me, that is a really important structure of community. They are my people. We play music and we took something fabulous. There is a core group of five of us that meet and hang out.

I would not like to have a home studio. It wouldn't support my (inaudible), and it would just be more dust. I need the company, I need to be talking to people. Community is really important in times of stress.

ANNA MOULDER:

We have got a few minutes left of our wonderful panel, and we thought we would look to the future of art. No doubt as community issues change, so will what artists capture. Cathy, you say keeping a constant flow of artists through regional Australia is core to art in New South Wales. In a minute, why is that so important?

CATHY FARRY:

See what other people do, because we are so isolated. We do have some really fantastic artist in the far west. But it is so good to see new things, and not everyone can get out and visit other places. We are really lucky to have such a great regional gallery in Broken Hill. And also Mildura, that is our next closest regional gallery as well. It is great, we can go to Bunnings after you have a pizza.

ANNA MOULDER:

Culture before or after the sausage sandwich?

CATHY FARRY:

It is all part of the experience. I think that is all really important.

ANNA MOULDER:

Prue, you have said some days it is difficult to get to the studio to work. Where will you be looking to get that energy from?

PRUE CULLEN:

I have got Jamie Lee, who runs Outback Arts, and she is my voice in the background going, "What are you doing? Have you got it done?" So I feel supported, and I think that is really important. If I get depressed, there are days when I find it hard to get

out of bed and get into the studio, but on those days I just stay in bed. There are the days when I just get up and go. It is a battle. Everything is a battle with art. It is just hard. Then once I am in the flow and I have got a piece of work going, that is fabulous. Getting that groove.

ANNA MOULDER:

Which is life.

PRUE CULLEN:

Yes.

ANNA MOULDER:

Andrew, how important is art and artists to keep community in these times of uncertainty?

ANDREW HULL:

I think it is the only way to do it. A couple of things I would reflect on there. In the future there is a real need and function for arts practitioners and arts workers to look for bigger opportunities to take that social function we have outlined today. That happens organically in other areas in western New South Wales. If you want to start up a Landcare group, you can probably go to the tennis club, because they will all be the same people. They could also be your drama Society, your arts network, your social convention or whatever. That is where you introduce that idea and concept.

I think in the future we have to think outside our boxes are little bit more, and look for overlays that already exists. As we said, everything is quite dynamic and changing.

The narrative centre to that needs to remain really vital. Being in Broken Hill the other day, it has a really interesting back story that informs its cultural frame right now. To take a quick step to the side... No, I will stay on that one. It was it was a mining town, the home of BHP, it was a union-orientated structured systems of constructing the society.

So women were not allowed to work in those days, not because "Women should be working..."

SPEAKER:

Until the early 1980s.

ANDREW HULL:

Yeah, it was because of the social communism of it. You are getting paid well as young men, let's build a bigger community, we will keep more young men and keep their wages going and supporting families. And let's not shrunk it up to the two income-owners.

ANNA MOULDER:

Starting a breeding program of artists, is that what I'm hearing?

ANDREW HULL:

An interesting side to that story was that a very good mining engineer came to Broken Hill to work, and his wife was a doctor. And doctors are highly prized in regional communities. But they have this problem, because while she was a very well regarded professional, she was also a woman, so she wouldn't be able to work. So the mining Council and the local council and a few others got together and put this conundrum on the table how they were going to solve it.

And the resolution they came up with was, she wasn't a woman, she was in fact classified a doctor, so she could go ahead and work as a doctor and not a woman, and that would be fine.

It's just a story, but these are the social constructs that these communities have all grown in. And it is important, even if you only understand them a little bit, to try and understand them. Anyone who saw the story yesterday over in the other building, the community removed from Tibooburra, was the three generations saying there and saying, "This is my great grandmother's store, my grandmother, my mother's story."

We are in the narrative story of these communities, so it is important, and the particular social constructs carry through. So we do need to tell them and understand them, and if we're going to have any success in operating in these communities, we need to retell them and fit within this narrative.

ANNA MOULDER:

Today's Artstate theme may be centred around arts in times of uncertainty, however think you will agree that what is certain is that there is hope for the future, and we have heard of some of the artistic energy that is pulsing through the far west of our state. We know it is not just in the far west of NSW, but across Australia and beyond. Keep telling the stories, perhaps that is where the big issues in our communities might see the light that they are longing for.

Can you please put your hands together for Andrew Hull, Cathy Farry and Prue Cullen.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Can you please also thank Anna for giving her time up this morning to make such a dynamic conversation.

(Applause)

Thank you all, and I know that I did have to do a bit of arm-twisting to bring you in from the remote western part of NSW, and I thank you all very much for so generously contributing your personal stories. And I think also the three of you have

rather under-sold yourselves. I saw Cathy's Shame exhibition. The work was absolutely exquisite.

I have seen Prue's beautiful ceramic sculpture floral work, it is just amazing. And Andrew also is more than just a poet. I call him the far West's Renaissance man. He can turn his hand to anything. Theatre, a singer, musician, a writer and a poet.

So thank you again, all of you, for coming in. And I hope you really got an understanding of the diversity of the landscapes in which we work.

(Applause)

It has been my great privilege in this job lives is one of the great privileges, apart from overwork and exhaustion, I have had in the last 13 years to traverse all corners of this state. And have had the opportunity, of course, to go to the far west and those communities that our last three artists have come from.

And a couple of weeks before this I did the long haul drive to Coonamble and back in March I went out to work with Cathy in West Darling Arts in Broken Hill. What she's saying about the flights is extraordinary.

I flew via Griffith to Broken Hill. It cost me more money to fly to Broken Hill than it did the following week when I went to KL for a conference. So those economic issues, as well as the isolation facing artist in regional NSW are all very real, apart from anything else. So although we cannot transport Artstate out to the far west, I'm hoping that their voices gives people that come from the closer metropolitan areas a real understanding of the diversity of the different landscapes in which we work.

Now, I'm going to do some housekeeping for a release you to morning tea. If you have to have an orange ticket. You will not be allowed in if not. There are buses living from the town hall at 5:45, 6:15 and 6:45, I think. Check outside. I keep telling people I'm numerically dyslexic, and it goes with time as well.

If you haven't got a ticket and you have paid for the dinner, please see the registration desk. There is very limited parking, and there are road closures up on the lookout. I do know that some people will need to drive. Make sure you have the number of tickets to match the number of people in your car, because there is security on the gate at the road closure, and otherwise you will not get in. Really sorry about that. That's why I'm banging on about it.

There are paper surveys. Please fill in the surveys. We can't do this without funding from the state government and other sources, and if we can't do our reporting accurately, we can't do our acquittals. We all have to do that, so please fill in the surveys.

And of course, needless to say, there will be the inevitable detailed survey monkey to come. And there will be two of them. There will be one from us which we really

need and another one from Destination NSW. I know we all get surveyed out, but unfortunately it is what we have to do in our time.

And the flautist will be performing again during the tea break. I hope you have enjoyed the performances supported by the Tamworth Regional Conservatorium.

We are giving you an early mark, so enjoy your morning tea and please come back on time because we have our final keynote from the fabulous Emma Hogg from WildWorks in Cornwall.

(Morning tea break)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

I can see everybody has been having a meeting conversations in the foyer. Welcome back to our final plenary session. Over the last 1.5 days we have been dealing with some fairly meaty issues, and if any of you are feeling fragile as a result of these conversations, please don't hesitate to contact Beyond Blue or Lifeline. Pick up the phone and have someone to talk to. You don't have to battle these things on your own.

Our second international keynote speaker is Emma Hogg, the executive director of WildWorks from Cornwall in the UK. WildWorks is a critically acclaimed theatre company which combines a process of people and place to create work, large and small, that packs an emotional punch. Projects range from The Passion of Port Talbot in South Wales, marking the outbreak and end of WWI in Cornwall, a project in Nablus, Palestine, to unlocking the stories of Kensington Palace, UK and Gaasbeek Castle, Belgium. Their work sees them embedded in communities, drawing out stories to create work that has people at its heart.

In 2017, the WildWorks faced one of the biggest challenges any company in any sector could face: the untimely death of their founder, Bill Mitchell. With Emma at the helm, the Company has navigated this complex and challenging period by bringing the team together to work towards a brand new five-year plan with a refreshed board of trustees.

WildWorks has secured its place as a National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England and a strategic arts client for their local authority, Cornwall Council.

WildWorks has secured its place as a national portfolio theatre for the National Council and as a strategic partner for their local council. Emma was born and grew up in Cornwall, and after getting a bachelors in human geography at the University of Lancaster, return to draw any Eden Project, Where She Worked for 13 Years with Her Final Role Being Even Live Program Producer. After nearly 10 years a fleeting moment with WildWorks, she joined the team permanently in December 2014. Like many of us, and delicately balances life of a husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. Please welcome for her keynote, Nothing Is Certain But Death and Taxes.

EMMA HOGG:

I would like to thank the First Nations Elders, past, future, and present, for welcoming me here, and the Artstate leaders for joining me.

So, WildWorks is based in Cornwall, the very bottom tip of the UK. We are 80% rural population. We think of ourselves as remote, but I have thought again after this morning sessions. It is quite relative. This morning, in terms of Art in the age of uncertainty, I left the UK last Saturday on an EU passport not knowing whether I would need to cross it out when I return next week.

We started in 2005 by Bill Mitchell, who is also the director of another company in Cornwall. Along with our founding artists, he created a team. At this time in Cornwall, there were no purpose-built theatres, and a lot of theatre happened in places wherever it could be found.

Cornwall is a Celtic nation, akin to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the northern part of France. It has a very long history dating back to pre-medieval times of performing outside. In the Cornish land, these places are called (unknown term).

Bill began experimenting more and more with found work applications, and eventually the team split into those who found it exciting and those that were far more comfortable being indoors in a warm environment.

Some of these pictures are quite old, and hope they are not too pixelated. This is a shot from a Kneehigh show.

As a company, we try to embrace uncertainty. Number one, you can't control the landscape when you are outdoors. Every show brings something unexpected. When you work outside, you never know what will happen at any given moment will stop we find is quite exciting, and we go to a place, the first thing we start to do is determine the gifts of the location. What can we get for free? What can we use?

This is an early show on a beach, where every day a group of young bikers would arrive, it is their beach too, and they would drive up and around the sand dunes. Eventually, after a little bit of trepidation and nervousness about the arty weirdos doing something down on the beach, conversation started, and the result was every night the performers, in the opening moments of the show, would be raced down the sand dunes on the back of these bikes and be delivered onto the stage.

The UK has very unpredictable and often very wet weather. It rains all time in Cornwall. It is the opposite of here. When we do outdoor work, we have to have that in mind and we plan for all possibilities. However, some of our best shows have been in increments weather, mists rolling off the sea at just the right moment, and weather creates a world that you could not afford to do with artificial technology.

We also often start shows in daylight, we look at the sunset times, and we shift shows across a three-week run to make sure the light is as we need it in different parts of the show. We also use a fire of a full stop you also find advantages of changing light levels. This is the opening scene of the show from 2018. That is a Cornish village in the background. This is about the end of war and uncertainty, and the aftermath. This was a promenade piece, and we did a big loop around, and we end up back at the same place at the end, where a very different scene was presented, and all that happened was a son disappeared.

For us, uncertainty number two is our audiences. When you come to see a WildWorks show, you don't really know what to expect. Because we are site-specific, we don't talk, and we don't work the same path the whole time. Our audiences are often new to our work. Our audiences are invited to come in and inhabit a world of us, especially in the great outdoors, and they come with a certain level of good anxiety and trepidation. But they can feel the wind on their face, they can feel that terrain under their feet, the sand and its movement, and they are more in touch with what is going on.

They become a community, they are helping each other on uneven ground, they are holding branches back. You find that our audience comes with us on that journey in a different way and audiences experience any formal theatre setting.

The other thing that we do with our audience, there is no fourth wall. They become part of the landscape we inhabit. When we get into a new space, we spend time with people. We seek out their stories, and we build them into the world that we are creating.

We love entering these new worlds, it is like detective work, truffle hunting. We don't know what the outcome of our show will be. I will talk you through some more of our community embedded projects. It is our major strand of work, and it is the uncertainty of the places in which we are working and the people that are living there that build such powerful pieces.

These people are often living in problematic times, but despite problems they are facing, our strongest project have come from the people that are passionate about who they are and really know their identity, and the values by which they live.

These people have been in conflict, in the aftermath of conflict, loss of industry, poverty, deprivation, lack of job security. They are the most welcoming people. When we invite them to share their stories, what we get is more than just stories and memories, they are telling us who they are and what they want and we magnify those stories in a large mirror, which can be profoundly transformative for those communities.

Our first project under the Kneehigh and WildWorks name was based on the story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in Malta. We wouldn't say we are a company based in activism, but when we go into these places, the work that we do, we notice that

things can shift. When we talk about people, place, performance, we also talk about personal (inaudible).

This is the show when it is happening in Cyprus. I am sure you know in Cyprus there is a divide between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The two communities do not particularly mix. As a result of the work that we do, we ended up with community members from both. There was a bonding moment, when we were asking them to tell us about their culture, they realised it wasn't that different, when the traditional dances they showed us were actually the same. This is the same show in Cornwall in 2005. Sadly, this site is now a supermarket car park. I actually volunteered on this project, I whitewashed all of the sheds.

In 2006, we made a show called Souterrain. This was based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. This was taught in France and the UK. In every location, the underworld into which Orpheus descended was reshaped based on the location and the stories we got from people. The first presentation we did this was in Brighton in the UK. This glorious looking underworld was actually a glorious row of heritage cottages. The local authority had decided that those cottages should become part of the heritage. As people were leaving, they were dying, they worked replacing them. The people left living there were slowly watching their community die in front of them. The remaining residents decorate their houses and gardens, and every night of the show, the audience walked through and were greeted by these residents. In contrast, one of the sites were used in France, has been made into a disused hospital. When you descend into the underworld, the character has to wash her clothes. And this was betrayed as a hospital.

We often ask our audiences to engage in the human narrative. There is often a moment when we ask themselves to leave themselves behind. As an audience member, you were given a tag on your way in, the tags asked you what you wanted to remember, or what you wanted to forget as you went into the underworld. This was in the north-east in the UK, having the keys taken from the blacksmith's shop taken from them.

Not only is the work having an impact on the community, but it also has an individual impact.

In 2013, funded by the British Council, the team spent two weeks in the occupied territories of Palestine, working in the old territory. We were not asked to make a show, but there was one in under two weeks, and the sharing. The workshops commented in storytelling during an evening.

Mercedes is the lady in the green stuff, she leaves our research methodology, there are some interesting times going around, I'm not sure who they were meeting, spending their time talking to people.

This was the area where we made the final sharing at the end of the two weeks. When we go to a place, we do have a professional company that involves

professional performers and production team. But we also involve the local community. When we can, with parts of work embedded in the community, the ideal is that we are not on the stage, it is the people of the place that are on the stage telling their stories. They are their stories, not our stories. We are there to listen, we do a lot of listening. Was interesting to hear that yesterday, as a discussion point.

Somewhere like Palestine, we feel that our role is to simply bear witness.

It was a very small budget, a lot of our work comes with a high price tag, but we can do things on the other side. In a project like this, we use (inaudible) techniques. Video production, the local musicians...

I'm just going to read you a quote, "In a land clothed with sorrow, we receive stories of generosity, endurance, longing. It is a land where people are intimately connected, so in love with each other."

In contrast, in 2011, we made the passion of Port Talbot, this was our biggest project to date, it was a coproduction with the National Theatre of Wales, codirected with Michael (inaudible), he grew up in this area. If you have been to the UK, I think you have probably not been to this port, it is in South Wales, between Cardiff and (inaudible). It is a great industrial town, it was built up around the mining industry, the steel industry is. There are huge funnels that churn smoke out all the time.

There was little regard for the residents. There is one side of the street that is a mirror image, one side still exist, the other side was demolished, and is a motorway. These other people that live on that street, that we engaged in the project. I could talk about it for 30 minutes.

We take our workshops into the places where we know where the community is comfortable.

This was based on the Easter story, we had a school teacher playing the role of Jesus, a company man playing Pilot, it ran over the Easter weekend. Was a free event across the town, there was an audience of 25,000 across three days. It was months and months of community work, story gathering.

It was a few miles long, and Michael insisted he would carry the cross the whole way. I think you got a bit tied a few miles in. We had to move the crucifixion.

In the final moments, this was a roundabout in the middle of the town, behind the cross, that is a part of water, across which video was projected.

In 2015, we were invited by Festival investors in Tunis, we sent a small team, the first visit was just a few days. A few days later, it then experience the bomb, it was when ISIS had a full grip on this part of the world.

The team met a local film maker, we found out, when we were experiencing the museum in Tunis, they had a lot of experience in filmmaking. We decided that there would be a cinema of dreams, and we would just create the staging around the film. Shortly after the team's return, there was the terrorist attack on the beaches. Was a difficult time for Tunis.

The last project I would like to talk about, in contrast, quite varied repertoire, A Great Night Out, was in Sutherland. For the people, it was mining and shipbuilding. The people of the north-east aren't known for big nights out, very glamorous, they love to get dressed up, they are known for not wearing coats... We get known as weak southies for not stripping up. Their thinking is who would want to queue up, to take your coat off?

So it was a very fancy event, sequence, it was a cabaret theme, local men's working club series of entertainment, there wasn't a single person on the stage who wasn't from Sutherland. We just provided the expertise behind. There were chapters of storytelling.

One in particular, we met a lady, who had been part of the miners protest, in 1983, for 12 months, the miners across the UK went on strike against the closures of the coal mines. There were large protest, women have made their own banner. At the end, the women wrapped up their banner, we asked if they still had it, and they dug it out. They told their story, and we used their banner in the show, it is now hanging in the local Council offices.

(Applause)

So, in 2005, we were having a great year, we delivered a critically acclaimed show, and we had lots of projects planned, we went to Tunis, and then Michael dropped a bombshell, terminal cancer. He still had a bucket list, there were lots of things he wanted to see. He didn't want people to know all the details. The word 'terminal' wasn't publicly known.

He was just a machine, he travelled to London on trips. Emotionally, he was a bit more erratic than usual. For each project, we had to think about where he could get treatment. Tunis and Sutherland both happened during that time.

I think you thought when it stopped, it would stop, in reality, when he realised he would not be around much longer, he realised that this company was his legacy. There was a lot of discussion about succession planning and talent development. He had previously refused to discuss this.

I want you to have a think, about how many of you are in artist led organisations, have you thought about succession planning? It is easier to do it before you actually need to.

Fast forward to early 2017, Bill is told that there is no more treatment. He tells me and the board that he wants a company to continue. I'm in the middle of writing a funding application for the next four years, knowing that he won't be there for it. I also have to look up how to close down a charity in UK, by the request of the board.

Bill tells us that he is fine and tell he is not, then when he is not, it will be a quick deterioration.

Bill wanted to make a show in Cornwall, he was desperate to bring something home. Tickets went on sale, but by April, bills health was deteriorating. He worked up until the day of his death. We had a meeting around his bedside for four hours not long before he died, about the future of the company.

At that point, we knew that we had to put 1 foot in front of each other.

We lived in a complete fog for the next 12 months, the only part of light following his death, was working on a show for the second half of the world War one collaboration. The process to get there was very tough. We did not appoint a clear artistic lead, we did it as a team. We won't do that again, someone needs to be there to make the clear choice.

We were trying to deliver a dead man's vision. But, it felt like it was a very important process to end his legacy.

Last year was an even bigger year. The small core group couldn't find the words to work out exactly what we wanted to do. We had to work out who we were, what to do. It was a process of trial and error.

We had to refresh our branding and our website. We explored conversations with the new board, we found that each time, we were returning to conversations about our values. There is this dawning realisation that our values and our process is what we hold onto most tightly, that they have not changed, even if the make-up of the team had changed.

Over the last 12 months, if we've taken a wrong turn, it was because we were not aligned with our values. If you remember what I said in the beginning, our strongest projects have come from communities that know who they are and are passionate about their values. Lo and behold, the same is true for us. We realise that we know how to deal with uncertainty, and the answers lie within our DNA.

So we are experimenting, we are fluid, we are shape shifters, we are authentic. So we will try different options, different shapes, will be fluid and break in our that is bringing us closer than any of the technical decisions of bringing in new programmers and artistic directors full stop

The output of the company will undoubtedly. The difference with new artistic leadership, but it should be underpinned by tree city, humanness, and generosity, and it is, it will be a WildWorks project.

I want to take a moment with you. Do you know the values that inform your work, and when was the last time you truly reflected on if these are still the values you hold dear? Do you share these ideas with the people you work with? Do you discuss it with collaborators and partners? We have reminded ourselves that we have nothing to fear from uncertainty. We have learnt that uncertainty that creates paralysis can be bad, but uncertainty with action can lead to new possibilities.

As artists, we have an opportunity to reflect values to the world, and I think that is a true gift. Think about how many other industries don't get to reflect human values of who they are as people in the work...

****Audio lost****

In uncertainty, lies the power to influence the future. In these polarised times, when we need to listen to each other, and we need to hear what the other argument is saying, when a message is no longer being heard, maybe art has the power to break through. And so I am going to leave you with a message from someone just a little bit closer to home, Bill Mitchell, in reflections on his approaching death. Thank you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

I think that it has been absolutely extraordinary to be able to have Emma here to talk about her project, which are such an great example for those of us working in regional New South Wales, but also to have the courage to talk about the challenges you face losing your leader. Sorry, I have gotten emotional. Thank you, thank you so much. Thank you for travelling to Tamworth. Thank you.

(Applause)

Absolutely extraordinary.

Now for our final plenary panel, we have had a panel change. Sarah Last had to withdraw for health reasons. She is listed in the program. But fortunately, we were able to persuade Vic McEwan to take a place. Sally Blackwood will lead this panel, and she reflect our mantra of being based regionally and working internationally for stop she is an exceptional director and performing arts leader, based in (unknown term), one hour south-west of Tamworth, where I was born. I am a country girl at heart.

She produces major new performance work locally and internationally, she is a passionate advocate for connecting individuals and in communities through engagement in art and culture. She believes creative industries play a vital role in the

sustainability of the cultural ecology of regional and urban Australia. Sally advocates that the role of art and culture is to tell contemporary stories, facilitate discussion about current social and political issues, provide a platform for social cohesion and lobbying, community enrichment, cultural change, and economic sustainability. She is directing graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, holds a bachelor of arts from the universities of Wales, and it a doctorate candidate in music Art at the Sydney Conservatorium. Another renaissance person, who works across all art forms.

Her career highlights include project house, the Louisville Ballet, director and residents, performing arts producer at the Sydney Opera House, resident director at the contemporary circus, associate art director at patch Theatre Company, artistic director at Emerge Festival Australia, and the Treasurer of Arts North-West.

Please welcome Sally for her panel.

(Applause)

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Good morning. I would like to thank the local Elders for having us and welcome us here on country to hold space, which we do so with the utmost respect.

Weathering change, the evolving landscape or independent artists. We are going to have a discussion and chat with these three beautiful people that I have onstage with me, about the experience, the role and responsibility for independent artists. What is that in each community? How they navigate the continually changing arts landscape? And maintain a thriving career and practice?

I am going to introduce each of our wonderful panellists here. We have Adam Deusien, a theatre maker and cultural leader. His work is interdisciplinary performance as well as a scripted theatre. He is also an artistic director at a Bathurst-based Lingua Franca. He has presented work regionally, internationally, and nationally. He was also the creative director for Artstate in Bathurst last year.

(Applause)

Next we have the wonderful Sophie Jones, a musician, choir leader, band manager, also based in Bathurst. So figure up in Tamworth, local girl, and moved to Bathurst in 2010. She is actively involved in her community with Smith and Jones, and they also work with community workshops. Smith and Jones's first single went to number one in the country radio charts on the internet in May. I think that is important thing to say in Tamworth.

(Applause)

Sophie's raison d'etre for singing is a valuable expression and an important social tool. Please put together your hands for Sophie.

(Applause)

Next to me, Vic is the director of the Cad Factory, where he worked with sound, video, and a particular interest in site specific work. He is interested in creating new dynamics by working with diverse partners and exploring difficult themes within the lived experience of the communities and localities. Please put your hands together for him.

(Applause)

I would just like to add that all three city with me are also recipients of various State and Federal fellowships, they sit on advisory panels and boards across the art sector. They all were all still hats and participate in various ways across our diverse art ecology, which I think is true of many independent artists, and I think it is important to frame that.

We are going to talk across three main areas of place, space, and time. We are going to start with those provocations, but first to find out a bit more about our beautiful panellists, I am going to ask what drives you? Why do you do what you do?

VIC McEWAN:

That is a very big question to pull focus onto. The drive behind our practice at the Cad Factory, with my partner and many other people, the driver to change over time. Many years ago as a young man, it was about having a party. Over time, that has changed, what I can offer and what I can contribute and what I can have contributed to me. That has continued to change over my practice.

Recently we looked at some of the statistics around our organisation and discovered that we have engaged with and work with 2,230 artists to an audience of 135,000 people across four countries, from our base in Nerandra. They were amazing statistics, but I think they also speak to a great thing. The statistics around artist engagement that we do speaks to our desire to be putThe main driver that I have is acknowledging that we live in a world that is based on structural inequality. We are not an issue is based organisation, we're not trying to change statistics, but by embedding artists within certain structures, this is a way that we can affect structural change over time.

The fear of that can instrumentalise art practice. By allowing artists to be in those conversations across sectors, we have the ability to, by our very presence, to effect, slowly over time, some of the structures.

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

Just the small things Vic?

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Nerandra, what scale are we talking about?

I think it is just under 5000 people, it is a small town, we are about a thousand kilometres from Wagga Wagga. We are also surrounded by small towns. It is a small population.

Like many towns, the last census, the prediction is that in the next 20 years, it will probably be 4000. It is an ageing town.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

I ask that, because I think it is very important, that work is being made in these areas, it is not all coming from big cities. I think it is incredible, the work that you do, and moving your work and passion there. We will get back to that.

I might jump to Sophie. Sophie, what drives you and your work?

SOPHIE JONES:

I feel very lucky to get to do what I do, as a little girl growing up in Tamworth, people would ask me what I wanted to do, and I said I wanted to be a musician.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Tell me about Annie?

SOPHIE JONES:

I was performing in Annie, a very long time ago here, growing up in Tamworth and wanting to be musical theatre, wanting to be a country musician, it's funny, many people move here to be in the country music scene, but it is quite hard. As the country music town, it is quite hard. Even in Bathurst, there are small cliques. It was that thing, growing up here, going to school, I did not want to stay here for ever. So, I moved to Bathurst to study theatre media, and that's why met Kylie, Stephen everyone, it was important to me to establish myself in Bathurst.

I studied theatre media for three years, then I met Matt Smith, and then we started a chorus, we called it a sole choir, we believe everyone should be able to sing. We started off with the choir, and then we launched Smith and Jones, which started six years ago.

What drives me, is still being able to say that I can make a living doing what I love. I am sure that a lot of people in this room can also say the same. But, it is also still lovely to love what I do. Running choirs, it is great to be involved in the community, in events. With my team, we run the local Emerging Artists program, and the Leap program, helping young artists to get gigs, performing in small places. Moving back, is an opportunity to give young children opportunities that I did not have. I am driven by being involved in the community.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Adam, can I jump to you? What drives you?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

One of the answers, you get to the point, you look at the skills you have, and you think you have to do it, because you can't do anything else (Laughs). But, seriously, I grew up in Darwin, then my family moved to Sydney, I moved to Bathurst for my undergraduate studies, came back 10 years ago.

I am a bit of a small town, small city sort of boy through and through. I just spent three months working in Sydney, the opportunities are extraordinary, but it did not suit me.

I am incredibly grateful for all the opportunities that I have had in a town, in a regional city like Bathurst. I was interested in working there, originally, because I was being opportunistic. I came back, to finish my degree, I hadn't finished it, so I came back to finish it in one semester. Then a Masters program started, then I decided to do that, then some lecturing came up, then I met Alison, a contemporary dancer with whom I founded Lingua Franca, but Alison has moved to Canberra.

Opportunities kept coming up, we were getting wonderful support from arts leaders in Bathurst. It started as thinking that it will be a wonderful place for an emerging artist, but that has evolved, I have been able to reflect on my practice, and acknowledge that, by helping to create capacity for increased visibility, sustainability, liability for performance practice in the region. Some of the work that we do, sometimes it is making work, full-scale performances, the last show that we had, most of the artists were from Bathurst. To have the artists live in Perth or Sydney, but they grew up around here.

The drive with our professional work, is to make sure there is increased capacity for people that live in the region, or around the region, to be able to practice in a context that suits them.

In other ways, we also design, deliver, performance experience programs, for emerging artists and youth. We did a wonderful youth project, involving 11 young people, both high schoolers and uni students, dancers, actors, and gymnasts. And they experienced it as artists in their own right, not just as consumers.

When I think about my work, what I want to make, as a statement of regional artists, at the table, as contributors to the conversation, as makers, of culture, not just consumers of culture.

It is an important statement. Also ensuring that we are seen as valid contributors to the national conversation, continuing to develop our capacity.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

It's interesting talking about giving back, supporting artists, being part of the ecology, Vic, you are talking about going across sectors as well, working across the arts, and into the sciences.

It makes the artist's role in the community very integral. Continuing with that, your place in the performing arts leader landscape and in the local community, Vic, can you add onto that, about structural inequality?

VIC MCEWAN:

I think that the core of addressing things such as structural inequality are things such as working in a way that promotes abilities to communicate across different sectors. Particularly, in relation to our community, we have been working there for 10 years, living there for 10 years. There was some suspicion when we first moved there. I was stopped in the street, being asked why I had asked there. I just wanted to get some bread at Coles. (Laughter)

I think that once people saw the work we were doing, for shows, they realised we were there to give, not to take. Some communities with limited exposure to arts process, may have these original suspicions. Once they understood there was a work ethic behind it, they understood better.

I can only speak about my perspective, but I feel that a big part of our community are proud of us. They are happy that we are there. We understand the strengths of that pride, if that is the right word, and they value that they are placing on us.

It is a negotiation, our intention and our ethics are about the story of people that are around us. That is hopefully what comes through for the people in the community, that understands The Cad Factory as an organisation that we run, but also as about them.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Vic and I were talking outside, and he was telling me the story of moving to the region. My story is that I have only been here for about two years, I am understanding what that is, to be an outsider, and then become an insider, and how they can work, the stories we can tell.

Can you tell us the story Vic of the place you live in? And what was the first event for the first storytelling when you arrive?

VIC MCEWAN:

We live in an old school house, that was built in 1866. We wanted to be in a house that represented the past and the present. We worked with an artist, who works a lot with communities, the focus of our first project was about the history of our schoolhouse. We invited past students there. The oldest was 95 years old.

Each of those phone calls of introduction, the visits, were somewhat hesitant. Because we had validation from some people in the community, that slowly helped them to trust us.

The delivery of the project, we noticed a remarkable difference in terms of acceptance of us in the community, there was a beginning of value being placed in a presence.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Can I ask the other two, if you have had similar, especially for you Sophie, was there a sense of trepidation, making a pathway for you, a way in through storytelling?

SOPHIE JONES:

Absolutely. When I moved to Bathurst, for the first three years, I was part of the University community. But when I graduated, 90% of the graduates move back to Sydney, or where they came from. I started thinking there wasn't much for me in Tamworth, so I would stay in Bathurst, worked for a bit, maybe go to Sydney. I wasn't exactly sure. I just knew that I wanted to stay in Bathurst. The next day after graduating, I walked into (inaudible), one of the last record stores in Bathurst that has now closed down, I spent a lot of time in there, as a musician who was feeling a bit lost.

That is where I met Abby. It is funny, we literally met in a record store over a love of music. That was my way of making space for myself in the Bathurst community, saying that we would create a choir, making that space for our self in singing together. From there, Smith and Jones branched out, we were both working in hospitality, we wanted to make money out of music, so we started teaching, I have about 42 students that I teach now. I also run ensembles, choirs, things like that. It is quite a varied space, but I created it for myself in Bathurst, it is a joy to share that with someone, Abby, it is nice to have that for myself, to know that I moved to Bathurst for university, but over time I created space for that.

It was definitely that thing of gigging here in Tamworth, and then wanting to gig in Bathurst and locals not wanting you to, I definitely had that feeling for sure. Sharing that with someone like Abby, made it a lot easier.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Having that support, Adam, the support that you found through BMEC, how that has supported you and enables you to flourish. If that didn't exist, would your career have been different? And how?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

As it is every time I get the chance, but literally, because of the support of people like Stephen Champion and Kylie and Tracy, I would have a career without them. Their focus and dedication to supporting the professional development of professional practice in the region in particular, and the gatherings like this, I realise a lot of the time they are unfortunately the exception rather than the rule. I think it has got to do with the resources that we have historically had.

What has actually been really beautiful, as an independent artist, that relationship feels really reciprocal. I am collaborating, and I come to them with ideas and we end

up delivering them together. We pool resources, we deliver projects. I think that is something, those relationships that you develop between organisations and independent artists.

I don't think this is unique to the regions either. Just independent practice in general. Finding those long-term collaborations is absolutely vital to a sustainable career, no matter what the context of your independent practices.

However, I have been incredibly lucky they've been taken in to be dismantled by these leaders, I am incredibly grateful. I have done a bit of travel this year around the country, doing some research about how festivals can engage with regional communities. Have been around the country to talk to venues and independent artists, and I have found in some smaller regional centres that if what you are interested in is not aligned with the one gatekeeper or champion, there is nowhere else to go. As an independent in the city, there are multiple gatekeepers and people with resources and programs that you can access. But if you are in a community that is small, that is reduced.

So that might shift the way you make work, or the type of work that you make, that means that you don't get access to those resources because you don't align with what the gatekeeper is delivering. In my context, I have been very lucky in that way. But it is not the reality for a lot of people in different areas.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Do you think you have had to be that person in your community? Have you set out to be that person, to offer space? Do you maintain connections across country? Do you maintain your support, support for you and what you do from where you were in Sydney? To maintain that from other places? Or does it come just from your local community? Or is it a mixture of the two?

VIC McEWAN:

I think it is both. We do have a space to provide space to people in our community, but it is also provided by our community. It is a two way street in the relationship that we are building and exploring. We do have that, and things like Artstate, there are a lot of official mechanisms by which to participate in a broader cultural generative community.

Our program and artistic creation is very focused on Narrandera, we can stay there forever and make things relevant to that place. But our projects to step outside their. But at the same time, drawing links back to Narrandera, nationally and internationally. Whether that is through running an international artist program, bringing them to town and doing a residency with a local artist, that is what we might do that. Or by us ourselves trying to have discussions in the bigger scale about what it is we are doing and how to manage that. And growth is not always necessary.

Then the small things. For example, two years ago we took work to the Tate in Liverpool, and the most important thing we came back was to show that work in

Narrandera. We wanted to put that equalling of value in, we wanted to say those words in our town, we want to say it was there and now it is here, they have the same importance, and we can just as much as we would over here.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Picking up what was said earlier about bringing community with you. That is capacity building as well. Within the community but also developing artists by bringing in artists from overseas.

Do you think exposure for regional communities, to arts, to (inaudible), is integral? And how do we manage that within our own practice? Do you want to continue with that?

VIC McEWAN:

One way to answer that is when we started, we had people complain to us, just a couple of times, about bringing visiting artists into the region. That was something that I found, we engaged in a conversation. I didn't just turn my back on that conversation. For me, that was great to do because it was being done in conjunction with local artists' investment. But we found that it was a great opportunity to expand our practice and expand our thinking.

Bringing in of outside people, in the right balance, is an essential part of that ecology. We saw that that was a really important part.

One of the things that personally makes me the happiest is when I see, when I witness it, artists that we have engaged in some way go off and do their own thing, and we witness a development of their practice. This is talking but the structural change our practice can make. People developing their own belief in their artistic practice and themselves.

That is of such great value. It has a visceral response. In the end, that benefit comes back to us, because it is expanding and growing our creative community.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Absolutely. Adam, we spoke a little bit about this on Thursday with Critical Stages. We spoke about opportunities and access in this idea of self-confidence was raised by one of the independent artists in the audience about how to stand up and bang on those doors and how to get those, how do we make that happen? It was a really interesting discussion about how an artist from the city has a different understanding of self. It became a be a question of opportunity, but also of support mechanisms. I think that is really integral, the work is being done there.

Adam, with the work that you do, do you see your role as in a leadership capacity as well, in terms of mentoring and forging ahead in terms of bringing an audience, but also bringing artists with you?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

I think that the way and independent artists can think about leadership is actually to put the focus on what you are doing, the way you articulate your practice and the way you make work. The way I think about leadership is that it manifests in the type of artists I try to attract to work with us. What the work says, what the work does in our community, the strive for excellence in the work, the way that we make it ---; I think all of that is an expression of leadership.

Other types of leadership you might be able to recognise, sitting on the panel, talking about things, or writing or putting your hand up for an advisory panel. But leadership actually is demonstrated through how you make work, how you reflect on that, and how your work interact with the community that you are practising in.

That doesn't always mean that independent artists working in the region have to have a social outcome at the front of it. I think this is actually really important. We all wear many hats, and all of our work does many things inside of our communities, but I also think artists making excellent work with excellent people sets a benchmark for the type of ambition we want our work to meet, that is the type of leadership that independent artists can really strive for. Ecology in regional areas needs all types of work, and to ask a single project to do it all is probably to the detriment of it.

By the same token, I do believe that any artist worth their salt has the same questions running through their head. Even if social outcomes are inheritors of the work but are not at the front, any good artist does think about how the work interacts with the social, cultural, political, economic contexts.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Within that, you talking about who you invite into the room? What voices are being heard, how you facilitate that as well? In terms of the collaboration.

ADAM DEUSIEN:

Absolutely, and that goes to what I said earlier about what drives me. That is one example of the type of voice that we want to work with, to be able to say that this work was created by entirely regional people and connected artists, that is great to be able to say. This is how we demonstrate that. So it is about who you bring into the room, and we work with them.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Sophie, do you see that coming through with your soul choir?

SOPHIE JONES:

Yes, we are very spoilt in Bathurst with the creative people we have. When we released a new album this year, we took a step away from the alt country sort of style, but there is still the Smith and Jones style of sound. It wasn't just the marketing, the communications, we actually worked with Lingua Franca and a local filmmaking crew, we filmed one of our singles at a very exciting space (inaudible) which opened last year.

Adam's Lingua Franca partner performed, and it was really different, it's great to see the difference in the response on the kind of country music crowd. Our first single, we made a few years ago, went to number one. Just us playing banjo and singing. Then we spent so much time, heart, planning our recent music, Alison dancing around with some local actors. It really got to the heart of the song. Abbey's style is tapping your feet and dancing. A new single is called 'running from something', and it includes the words 'yesterday I was so blue I felt like dying'...

We did a Playschool themed clip, we found it at the University, and an amazing set maker, in Bathurst made us a Playschool set, we had Jemima, the other characters... Getting back to the point, this year it has been amazing as musicians to work creatively with Lingua Franca and Rusty Shutter films, it is been wonderful to see the reaction, it is been very different.

The first album was a little box of country music, and went to number one. It has been different this time around, but it is truer to us. It is a way to engage with Bathurst.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:
And engage with audiences?

SOPHIE JONES:
Yes, we talked about how to manage their success. People say that we have not won any golden guitars, but for us it is about working with local artists, playing in small country towns, making people in drought stricken towns feel better. It has been interesting to see the change in the.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:
I think success, redefining success is key. Adam, what to you is success?

ADAM DEUSIEN:
That is a blunt question...

SALLY BLACKWOOD:
It could have many different forms. You could come in many different facets of your life.

ADAM DEUSIEN:
it is very contextual. A mentor once said to me that your best ally as you get older is attrition. It is the reality for many independent makers. The lifestyle of freelance work does not help you to construct a stable life. But, living in regional Australia, success for me is being able to continue to make work and keep the wonderful lifestyle that I have.

My entire income is off my creative practice, I have a really beautiful lifestyle, I live in a regional town where the cost of living is reduced, I have time and space to make work, reflect on my work, seep in surroundings that encourage creativity, and

criticality about my practice and my ambitions. Success is, "Am I still making the work that I want to make".

I was chatting to a friend of mine who lives in the city, very successful, but I've realised I've never made anything I have not wanted to. Everything that I have worked on, has had a really important core, important to me as an artist, deeply. I think that is a mark of success too.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

You are now on various boards and panels, is that a mark of success? Or is that something that you can take success into, being a part of a bigger conversation?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

It is a responsibility. I take the work I do, quite seriously, when you engage in them, the weight of that is extraordinarily clear. More than success, it's acknowledging the opportunities that you have and the perspective that that creates, how you use that to inform the decisions that are being made, how wide the responsibility, and serious it is.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Vic, you were talking about success, you have seen artists go on and make their work apart from you, continue on, make their own successes. What for you, is this weight of the independent artist? I think this is very important. If that is success, what is the responsibility or a possible burden that you might feel?

VIC MCEWAN:

I use the word responsibility a lot when I talk about my practice. Whether it is giving time to boards or panels, there is a sense of responsibility, but also an opportunity for growth. Volunteering to be on a funding assessment panel, or board, you are not only giving something back, are also (inaudible) people, learning, it is something that I am very keen on. I want to learn from that to be better in my field, in the way that I practice in my hometown, it betters me.

My idea of success, on a personal level, is my artistic success is also related to myself. Both of the same. I don't tell myself that it is 9 AM and I have to go to the studio and be a practising artist.

Another way I can measure this, is infiltrating other sectors with art. When I talk about structural change, across disciplinary areas, but is not about replacing social welfare projects, psychologists, it's the idea that if we focus purely on artistic projects, and put those into the way we live, change will happen, by focusing on our artistic practice.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

I love the idea of infiltrating other sectors, putting our other hats on.

VIC MCEWAN:

Interloping...

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Sophie, what opportunities to thrive in regional New South Wales have you found that you may not find in the city?

SOPHIE JONES:

Adam did touch on this, as did I, we do a fair few things in Sydney, as it is not too far from Bathurst. Almost always, at those gigs, people ask when we are going to move to Sydney, when we will really give it a go (Laughs). They are usually the same people who ask if we will go on The Voice. Don't start me.

Our answer is, "Why would we?". We are not far from Sydney if we want to have those opportunities. But we live cheaper, we have a better network of community in Bathurst and we do in Sydney. We have a network of musicians that we know and respect in Sydney, but I think we definitely have opportunities to collaborate with other musicians in Bathurst, in Orange, and artists in other sectors, like Lingua Franca, to work with a local director and artists on a film clip. We can also say "Here is an example of work that local regional artists have done". That is definitely an opportunity for us to thrive more in a regional community.

It is interesting that people do keep asking us that. The other thing is, I help out a little venue, trying to get some original artists out. Every time someone comes from the city, they say that they can't believe that 80 people would come out on a Thursday night and sit and listen to original music. They say that in Sydney, it would not happen, whether it is due to lock-out laws or other factors. It is wonderful to be able to share that, show that off a bit.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

I want to stay with you Sally, and talk about networks. What regional networks are crucial for you in this time of shifting (inaudible)? What would you do to adapt to change if these networks disappeared?

SOPHIE JONES:

The networks we have a pretty special, it's Kylie and Stephen, they help us with our choir, so incredibly, so much. Definitely would be very different if we did not have those networks of people. Even people like Adam, he has been a wonderful mentor to people like Abby and I. Would be a conversation of perhaps moving to Sydney, if we did not have these networks. I don't know what we would do. It has been a very grounding thing for us.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

It is great to hear... What have you got from (inaudible)

SOPHIE JONES:

We applied for a CASP, asked Tracy for help, she also runs an amazing choir group in Bathurst. There are so many choirs in Bathurst. She runs an amazing yearly event

getting the choir groups together. It is amazing to have so many choirs in a small town. We went straight to Tracy, and we also go to Adam as well, to ask for help. They are always more than happy to help. As an artist, it is really hard to talk about yourself in the way you have to when you write a grant. It is hard to be succinct, get to the point. Having people like Adam and Tracy who are wonderful at writing grants, is incredible. We did actually receive that grant.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Networks for you Adam? Anything you would like to say?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

Yes, those immediate networks are vital. We have all talked about building a community around you to strengthen you. In regional areas, you can't just go to an opening night or something, you have to construct those networks in such a real way. They become absolutely vital in order to build up that confidence around your continuing practice. But then also, I was talking to an artist, she was living on a property a 20 minute drive away from town, and she is the only dance artist in her community. That is a very different context of practice.

So, networks like small presenters have around the stage, they are absolutely vital. I am lucky that I've had some mentors to help me navigate access to those networks. And because of the confidence that we talked about, when you are a single artist that gets the bravery to apply for a grant and you get knocked back, you don't have a group of people around you who have had the same experience.

The reality is, you are sitting in a community of people who have had to learn to be resilient to do that. So is about making contact with those networks, and having the confidence to reach out to those networks can be tricky. We have been quite lucky to have such good proximity to them.

Those networks and peak bodies are vital in regional areas, to the ecology, because it is often the only point of contact to the wider conversation to build confidence and resilience, which is really important for any independent artists, but perhaps more for isolated regional artists.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Resilience is so important over time. I want to segue into the conversation about time. As was alluded to in the previous panel, things are different out here. Time is different. We were talking about the time it takes is to go to the local supermarket, because you can't just duck into 5 minutes, you are bound to recognise someone. I had to make a key decision not to go to the post office during work hours, because even though it is only 2 minutes walk away, it took me three hours to get home one day.

Because there are really crucial conversations that you have with all of the people in town but then become your friends, your colleagues, your mentors, your audiences,

you're participating artists. They are part of that community, which is so incredibly important.

Weathering change over time, Vic, what is your relationship with time where you are?

VIC McEWAN:

That was one of the many benefits of moving to a regional centre. There's not the static of the city, all of the things that might distract you, you might lament not having access to them, but they are not there, so you can do things that have a deeper focus on practice. You can do that to fill time or because you have the ability to do it.

It is a complex relationship, because we understood very differently the scale of time in a regional centre. For a start, you can see the landscape you can see it in decay, you can see it in the drought, you can see it in dying and revived culture. You can see in the tragic histories our cities are built on. Time is present in a way that I never saw in the city. I can feel time, which is a new experience.

I think that has been the biggest change to us and our practice. It has enabled us to have an embodied focus. I guess the offshoot of that is to remind ourselves to actually take time, to not just be completely consumed, to understand the nourishment.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Absolutely. Before we run out of time, Adam or Sophie, would you like to add anything about time and its impact on your career? In the way that you make art?

ADAM DEUSIEN:

I am generally pretty impatient, I talk 1,000,000 miles a minute. But I think living in the country lets me do both. There is an American theatre practitioner who has this great idea that artists need to sidle tediously speed up and a slowdown. I read that a long time ago ---; Talking about time.

(Laughter) And it makes sense to me now. Living in a regional area, it is that being about don't wait, but be patient. Living in a regional area, you spend less time commuting and trying to make your way through the world, physically, literally, you can do both. You can do a lot and also slow down. For me, that idea of speeding up and slowing down simultaneously is the reality.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Do you want to add anything? Or do you want some final words?

SOPHIE JONES:

What Adams said, being busy all the time but also making sure you have time to create that art and collaborate with people. Same as what Adams said. (Laughs)

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

We are out of time, it is now flashing. That is exciting. Are there any words you would like to leave us with?

VIC McEWAN:

When we were at Dubbo for Artlands many years ago, I was sitting in the audience and thinking that the quality of this discussion is amazing. I could be anywhere in the world having high and discussions about art, time, space, place. And none of that conversation was about the deficit of regional practice, especially discussed the need to not focus on the deficit.

I appreciate that this panel has been really positive in talking about regional practice, because we often do focus on the negative aspects. But artists in the city talk about the negative is just as often. I had a discussion recently with an artist who was lamenting their practice, saying all of the opportunities were for artists in the city, and the same day having a conversation with an artist in the city who felt the reverse. But, actually, the positives are all around us in regional Australia. The opportunities are all around us.

I really appreciate what has come out of that amazing Dubbo conference. Focusing on this in a positive way.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Any last words, Sophie, Adam?

SOPHIE JONES:

Just the same, we feel so grateful to live in our regional towns. The supporting communities we have out there is incredible. Very grateful to that, and it is definitely somewhere, I won't be moving to the city any time soon. It is really great to be a part of things at that.

ADAM DEUSIEN:

Building on that, and also in the spirit of the really moving keynote I am, the radical thing that we do in the country is taking care of each other, and holding each other in time and space. I think as artists, particularly independent artists, we have all expressed how we try to create community. I think that is probably in the spirit of something like Artstate, where they bring us together and hold us. What we do in regions is take care of each other. I think how we can continue to do that is the weather change.

SALLY BLACKWOOD:

Thank you, all of you.

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS (MC):

Thank you for moderating such a fascinating conversation. And thank you too Vic, for standing in at the last minute. It is interesting to have Adam here, because he

was a director at last year's Artstate. And, Sophie, thank you for coming back your hometown.

One thing that has come out of out two days, and I will not try and do our (inaudible) job, but I think what we are strongly hearing in this conversation is country and community and opportunity and mutual support. And arts practice, and how, whether it is in a conversation with the Kamilaroi artists yesterday, through our keynote speakers, and through the artists from the far west and inner west today, and Emma's said it, but there are no separations. We are all part of this vast network of creativity, imagination, reimagining, we may be living in uncertain times, but from that comes opportunity. We have to take a step back and accept that change is the new normal, it is the new black. And how are we going to embrace that and make that work for us?

Please thank my panel again, and I will do ---;

(Applause)

Before you rush off to lunch, we do have 5 minutes, and this is the last time most of us will be in one room. I know there is lots of things to do this afternoon, but there are a number of people I need to thank. Firstly and most importantly, you, our delegates. Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives, and having travelled, in many cases, great distances to have joined the conversation. We all know, the matter how great the show is, without an audience, we can't tell our story.

Secondly, our keynote speakers, Brad, Patrick, Adrian and Emma, thank you all. You have all been inspirational. Thank you to our panellists, presenters, and moderators, for sharing your experiences and adding to our knowledge banks.

Thank you to all of the artists who have contributed, who have resoundingly demonstrated that excellence thrives in our practice in regional New South Wales, and to the artistic director, Greg Pritchard who put it all together, Peter Ross for our opening ceremony, to Bridget Guthrie and to Caroline Downer for the visual arts program. Can we give them a huge round of applause?

(Applause)

ELIZABETH ROGERS:

For me, a huge personal thanks to the Artstate team, Belinda King, Peter Papandrea, David Bleach, Zoe and Susie, and the regional arts New South Wales staff. I couldn't survive without you guys, thank you so much. And a special call-out to Jessie in the office, there paying all the bills.

Thank you to Jane Kreis for coming back for Artstate. We miss you in the network. You are all amazing to your commitment to this event. I would also like to thank the entertainment venues and regional gallery staff who have patiently put up with our invasion of their spaces and given amazing support to our production crew.

Our presenters, Caroline and her team and board, without the support of the local regional arts developers organisation, staging this event would be impossible. A huge thank you to our volunteers, they have all been brilliant.

(Applause)

We couldn't do this event without local people who don't know anything about it putting their hands up and offering to help.

I also want to see that we had a fantastic speakers committee that assisted with putting together this program. I want to acknowledge their brainpower and input. That is Peter, Tracy, Caroline, and Sharni.

(Applause)

It is their thinking and recommendations combine the work that we get from the reports that shapes the thinking around the planning for this, which we hope is going to be an ongoing conversation.

Obviously I need a final thank you to our principal funding partner, the New South Wales government. A local government partner, Tamworth Regional Council, not only provides financial support, but the staff across the council have been incredibly supportive to work with. They have done things to support this event that I never thought would happen. We would go into venues and things are already be done like magic. So, thank you all. You have been amazing.

I also want to thank our university partner - UNE. We have partnered with a regional university for each of these Artstate's, the use of their wonderful facilities, for providing a number of the presentations that have been throughout this conference, and it adds to the conversation and the intellectual rigour around the event. And our media partner, ABC North West, working with Anna who agreed to moderate our conversation this morning. They have also supported us getting our message out across the region, I thank them so much.

So, Artstate 2020, put it in your diaries, 5-8 November. Ben Franklin will announce the host city at dinner tonight. And back to the reminder - do not forget your tickets.

We will have live music at lunch. It was beautiful yesterday. There is a lot more left in this conversation this afternoon, and for those who are seeing a little longer, Sunday morning has the Regional Youth Orchestra performance at 11 AM. There will be a textiles floor talk by the Art Gallery of New South Wales curator at 12:30 PM. And at 10 AM there will be a talk by Amy Hammond, she does beautiful weaving, she will lead an exploration of country, the Tamworth public art trail, along the bank of the river. The people who are interested in that, it starts at 10 AM. Still relatively cool, but wear a hat and a quarter and comfortable shoes. And meet in Bicentennial Park at the main gates, at the bottom of Fitzroy Street. Just outside here, across the road,

the next road, you will see them there to give you that tour. If you are really clever, you could possibly squeeze everything in, but you would have to run.

If you are catching later planes out, use the day to explore some of the regional programs. I reinforced Kevin's proclamation of the creative communities booklet that has been put together by Arts North West. And if you're coming back at another time, please take one with you.

If you have enjoyed visiting Tamworth, come back and explore the region. Tamworth Country Music Festival rocks the city in January, and tickets are now on sale.

Thank you everybody. This concludes the last morning session where we are all together in the same room. We look forward to lunch now and then afternoon sessions, and dinner. Thank you all very much for coming.

(Applause)