

## **Museums & Galleries of NSW Submission:**

### **Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education in New South Wales**

24 July 2024

Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on NSW Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education.

We are a peak body and service organisation supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW, with a Purpose to '*support the capacity building of small to medium museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres so they can realise and maximise their impact on their communities*'. We develop these organisations skills, connect them with others in the industry, provide funding, point visitors their way, and give them access to ground-breaking exhibitions.

Our Submission focusses on the following Terms of Reference items:

- iv. the role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts*
- xi. factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study*

**1. The role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts**

Our Submission primarily addresses this item. The sector within our remit comprises approximately:

- 39 public and regional galleries;
- 57 public and regional museums;
- 319 community/volunteer-run and managed museums;
- 46 community-managed galleries and artist-run initiatives;
- 8 art spaces;
- 14 university galleries.

The 2022 M&G NSW Sector Census found that this small to medium sector employed 2,257 cultural staff and creatives. This was based on 240 respondents to the Census, so the true number is significantly higher.

This sector plays a critical role in both supporting the cultural needs of young people, as well as providing vital career pathways for cultural workers. We also acknowledge the vital role the volunteer sector plays in often providing a first step into professional curatorial work, but that for many of these volunteer organisations, there are limited funds to support the professional development needs of these individuals.

The M&G NSW 2022 Census reported that 56% of organisations partner with schools and/or education providers to deliver programs to young people. In regional areas this relationship with education providers is especially critical, as for many young people this is their only access to experience cultural content in museums and galleries, and to connect with practicing artists.

The encounter with original artworks and historical items is an altogether different learning experience in the gallery and museum setting, when compared with viewing cultural material via secondary sources in the classroom environment. It is also extremely important that young people have this experience if they are to understand the value of museums and galleries as thriving places of innovation, shared expression, ideas, identity and memory. These institutions play a significant role as safe and social civic spaces for children and young people that are democratic, accessible, safe and free. It should be noted that cultural engagement in museums and galleries through works of art and historical material informs student learning across many curriculum areas and should not just be viewed through the lens of 'Creative Arts' solely.

Our Sector Census also found that 21% of respondents partner with organisations to deliver Skills development, training, work placement or residencies. This partnering again supports the cultural needs of young people, while also addressing the training of staff.

Within the small to medium sector, 36% employ Education Officer's to deliver educational programs for young people. Additional roles such as Public Program Officers and Curators can also oversee and provide input into educational activities. However, anecdotally we have seen a drop in the number of roles focussed on education, as it is often these positions that are the first to be cut within a constrained fiscal environment. This is especially the case at the local government level with the ever-present issue of cost shifting.

These statistics demonstrate that for many educational providers, the local regional gallery or museum plays an important role in providing cultural access for students. Through these partnerships, students have access to practicing artists, they participate in school-based tours and workshops while also experiencing high quality exhibitions.

Further, these small to medium organisations also deliver after-school programs. For many students, and again particularly those in regional NSW, these hands-on programs enhance the arts education students receive within the school environment, and often provide access to artforms unable to be offered in a school setting. M&G NSW would like to see recognition of the role that small to medium organisations play within broader arts education, and advocate for specific funding for these organisations to continue carrying out this vital function.

The small to medium sector is an incredibly significant part of the cultural ecosystem – providing informal, yet critical career pathways for artists and cultural workers. Regional galleries regularly provide the first professional exhibition opportunity for visual artists, which can also encompass developing skills in public speaking, workshop delivery and exhibition display and design. The professionalism of staff in these facilities play a crucial role in supporting these artists.

This workforce feeds the workforce of the major institutions. This is evident when considering the current leaders of the Powerhouse, National Gallery of Australia and National Gallery of Victoria all started their careers in regional museums and galleries.

M&G NSW offers industry placements to staff and volunteers within the states museums and galleries, but would advocate for increased recognition, including leadership opportunities, for these workers.

## 2. Factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study

Careers in the cultural sector are increasingly seen as an unfavourable choice for many young people, given increasing course costs and reduction in course options. This is a national

problem, with many universities reducing their offering to students. Recently the University of Queensland announced the discontinuation of its Museum Studies programs, the last such course in the state.

Within NSW there are no university courses in museum studies outside metropolitan Sydney; while the few remaining visual arts degrees are within increasingly modified and restructured courses, with only one of these courses located outside the Sydney/Newcastle/Wollongong area. Though we note TAFE NSW offers courses such as the Certificate IV in Arts and Cultural Administration (Galleries and Museums) in an online capacity.

We are seeing from this de-valuing of creative courses the lack of student cohorts feeding in to their local regional gallery or museum. The vibrant contributions made by art schools to local cultural organisations that were seen in the past are greatly reduced.

While acknowledging that fees for degrees in the humanities and creative sector can be prohibitive for many students, those from regional areas face the added financial hurdle of relocating to a major city to conduct their studies. This restricting flow of students is leading to a sector consisting increasingly of artists and creatives from wealthier backgrounds.

We understand the NSW Government does have minimal power to enact change in this area, but we see that the offering of a set number of scholarships to regional students will help counter the flow of those less-financially well off.

We also would like to highlight consideration for the accessibility of courses for people with disability, and the additional barriers existing for people with disability who may reside in a regional location. There can be significant added costs for these potential students, especially if they need to relocate, given needs around accessible accommodation and establishing support networks.

We would also like to highlight the non-formal education and professional development provided via small to medium museums and galleries and other arts organisations that provide alternative and accessible pathways to support further education for people with disability.

Museums & Galleries of NSW also supports the recommendations and views outlined by the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA).

## **Summary of Museums & Galleries of NSW Recommendations:**

1. Recognise the vital role small to medium museums and galleries play in supporting cultural access for young people through their own programs, and those in partnership with education providers
2. Recognise the informal arts education delivered by small to medium organisations
3. Recognise the informal training that exists for cultural staff within small to medium museums and galleries
4. Implement specific funding for small to medium organisations to deliver programs aligned with arts education
5. Create NSW to implement a program supporting emerging cultural leaders
6. Recognise the depletion of courses in visual arts and museum management across the state, and in particular regional NSW
7. Implement a Cultural Leadership Program for NSW cultural workers
8. NSW Government to offer tertiary scholarships for cultural programs to regional students
9. Recognition of the need for accessible pathways for people with disability to access formal and non-formal forms of education in the creative industries