

**open your eyes**

**2020nine  
manifesto**

**concrete  
steps**

## **A manifesto for regional arts in Western Australia**

This manifesto is a call to action that will be pursued by all attending the state regional arts conference. It is a marker on the arts landscape upon which to focus as we strive for an ideal regional arts state for 2029. It will be reconsidered and reviewed every four years (2015, 2019, 2023 and 2027) at future conferences.

This 2020nine manifesto is a public declaration of the ideal regional arts state for 2029.



**Australian and overseas research shows that direct involvement by communities in arts activity can contribute significantly to individual and community wellbeing and can enhance the efforts of government agencies in realising their policies for community wellbeing and ecologically sustainable communities.**

(Art and Wellbeing, Deborah Mills and Paul Brown)



## Contents

Preamble	1
Manifesto Principles	2
Concrete Steps	3
<b>OPEN YOUR EYES</b> – a step back to reflect	5
A changing Western Australia – the context for concrete steps	6
Steps taken	7
The need to take further steps	8
Arts and Culture in Policy – other steps, other places	9
About Country Arts WA	12
Acknowledgements	15

1  
2  
3  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
12  
15

**The arts can melt boundaries.**




# Arts needs passionate politicians behind it!

## PREAMBLE

This document is different. This is not another paper from an individual artists' group or arts organisation simply calling for more funding for regional arts.

This document is a statement of intentions that represents the regional arts community of Western Australia as a whole. It is a call for leaders in the public and private sectors to be part of realising these goals.

In September 2011, over 150 people from all walks of life representing the nine regions of Western Australia gathered in Geraldton for **OPEN YOUR EYES**, the State's Regional Arts Conference. The aim of the 2011 conference was to enable regional people to debate and take responsibility for their role in regional society.

At the close of the Conference, the following statement was inspired by the delegates.

**"We, the participants of the 2011 OPEN YOUR EYES conference, have developed 'concrete steps' to achieve our vision for Arts and Culture in regional society in Western Australia in 2020nine.**

**We respect and thank the seven language groups who welcomed us to country and allowed us to meet on their land to have these important discussions. Thank you to the elders of the Amangu-Nhargardi, Naaguja, Nhanda, Bardimia, Wajarri, Widi, and Malgana peoples. We also acknowledge the cultural diversity of the regions and commit to embrace these influences.**

**We know that Arts and Culture, in all forms, is more than self-expression of the artist and does not occur in isolation. Arts and Culture contributes to individual and economic development, social cohesion and the health and well-being of successful regional communities. Arts and Culture creates social, personal and skills development, and community connectedness. Arts and Culture is at the heart of all strong civic societies. We recognise Arts and Culture is a way to affect change and express who we are and how we feel.**

**Regional communities face ongoing and rapid change. Arts and cultural expression is a dynamic mechanism to help people to face challenges, see new perspectives and create opportunities.**

**Simply put, Arts and Culture improves our quality of life and benefits every person in a community".**

## MANIFESTO PRINCIPLES

- ▶ **Arts and Culture challenges long-held ideals**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture gives voice to those whose voice is not always heard**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture provides opportunities for people to come together and connect**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture creates community identity and a sense of belonging**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture promotes self-examination and cultural identity**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture encourages appreciation of the diversity of humanity and our environment**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture is not an 'elective'; it is part of all our lives every day**

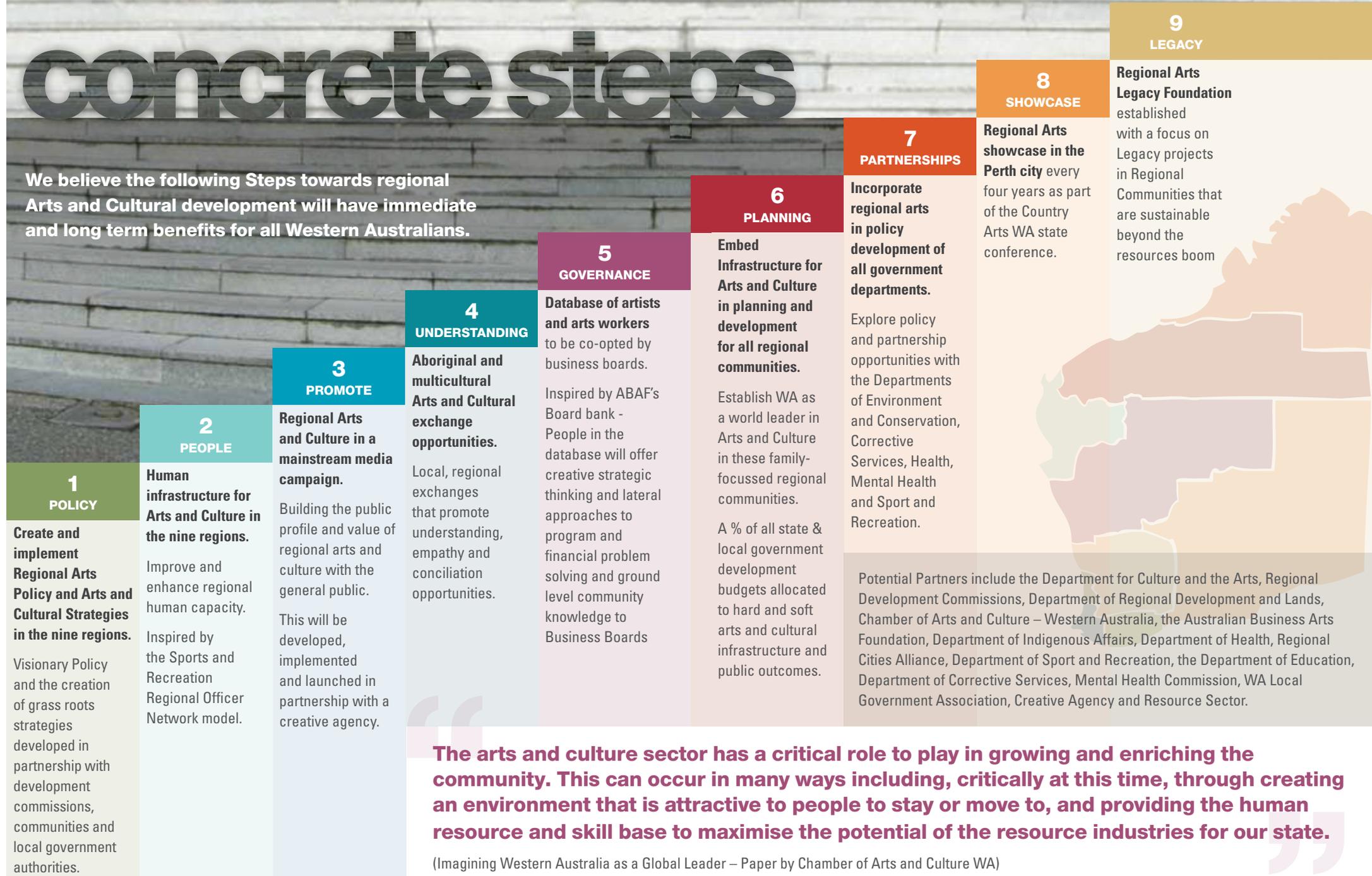
During **OPEN YOUR EYES**, delegates recognised that Arts and Culture has always played an important role in providing regional communities with a sense of identity and belonging and improving the quality of life. They recognised that creative and committed artists and cultural volunteers are part of the complex web of social, economic and educational well-being. They also recognised that many communities struggle to sustain or develop in the 21st century.

Delegates called for a revitalization of regional arts practices, policy and ideas and Country Arts WA responded by supporting delegates to create the 2020nine manifesto - concrete steps - A Manifesto for regional arts in Western Australia. This manifesto is another step for regional arts in a journey towards, and beyond, the State's bicentennial in 2029.

**We call for governments, artists and arts and cultural organisations from across regional Western Australia to join together to uphold and promote these principles and concrete steps now, and through to 2020nine.**

# concrete steps

We believe the following Steps towards regional Arts and Cultural development will have immediate and long term benefits for all Western Australians.



**The arts and culture sector has a critical role to play in growing and enriching the community. This can occur in many ways including, critically at this time, through creating an environment that is attractive to people to stay or move to, and providing the human resource and skill base to maximise the potential of the resource industries for our state.**

(Imagining Western Australia as a Global Leader – Paper by Chamber of Arts and Culture WA)

# Technology allows people to find their tribes, even if virtually.

## OPEN YOUR EYES – A Step Back To Reflect

As the state's peak body for regional arts, Country Arts WA presented **OPEN YOUR EYES** in Geraldton from 13-16 September 2011. The forum was a chance for regional people to discuss some of the issues affecting our state. **OPEN YOUR EYES** followed on from the success of past conferences in Denmark (2007), Karratha (2003), Esperance (2000) and Busselton (1997).

Internationally renowned Artistic Director, Sean Doran, was engaged to develop a concept for Country Arts' 2011 Conference. In response, Sean proposed a title of **OPEN YOUR EYES** (literal translation of Aboṛlhos) and five programming principles; Youth, Aboriginal, Sense of Place, Issue Led, and Legacy.

Drawing on these programming principles, nine debate subjects were chosen to form the heart of the four day event. Each debate was started by a commissioned paper from a specialist in the field, delivered online to delegates ahead of the conference. The overarching theme for all the debates was "Regional Society and the Arts – A Soul for Western Australia". **OPEN YOUR EYES** drew the arts in from the periphery to intersect with some of our society's most heated debates.

The nine debate themes and authors included:

- ▶ **Mining, ethics, legacy AND THE ARTS** - David Flanagan
- ▶ **Economy, politics, big business AND THE ARTS** - Philippe Legrain
- ▶ **Technology, democracy, social change AND THE ARTS** - Peter Rigby
- ▶ **Environment, climate change, water, lifestyle AND THE ARTS** - John Kinsella
- ▶ **Suicide, mental well-being, a civil society AND THE ARTS** - Louise Helfgott
- ▶ **Elitism, the bogan within, sports, media AND THE ARTS** - Griffin Longley
- ▶ **Boredom, behave, crime, incarceration AND THE ARTS** - Renata Salecl
- ▶ **Aboriginal culture, guilt, sovereignty, spirituality AND THE ARTS** - Charmaine Green
- ▶ **Racism, multiculturalism, asylum seekers AND THE ARTS** - John Sanderson

Delegates were asked to discuss these subjects and ask "Where can we contribute? How can the arts help? Where do the arts fit best in developing Western Australia's future?"

## A CHANGING WESTERN AUSTRALIA – The Context For Concrete Steps

Western Australia is in a period of unprecedented development. Rapid expansion of the global mining industry has been felt by all of Western Australia over the past ten years. This has brought economic prosperity and rapid growth to some regions, but has caused the decline of some industries, resulting in a loss of population and basic services in other

regional places. Other changes in community aspirations, in technology, in global economic and political uncertainty and in long term climate change also affect us all.

Many communities must now reinvent and rebuild their sense of identity and purpose in the face of these changes.

**There is a groundswell of sentiment among our community that government needs to take the lead in driving a bold future vision for arts and culture in WA. One that will underpin our sense of "who we are" as a State and tell our story. The government that grasps the mainstream, cultural and community nature of this opportunity and its transformational quality for our people will create lasting and important legacy for our future generations that will be remembered through this century and beyond.**

(Imagining Western Australia as a Global Leader – Paper by Chamber of Arts and Culture WA)

# Creativity at work = productivity.

## STEPS TAKEN

The Western Australian State Government through the Department of Culture and Arts (DCA) has created several successful cross-sector partnerships that have resulted in meaningful outcomes for the WA arts' community. Examples include partnerships with the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Department of Education, the Department of Building Management and Works, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and The Office for the Arts. DCA is also developing Regional Arts and Cultural Action Plans for each of the nine regions in Western Australia.

Country Arts WA has developed Gascoyne Arts - an Arts and Cultural Strategy for the Gascoyne Region through its Focus Region Initiative in partnership with the Gascoyne Development Commission. The strategy has direct input from the community and local government and is aligned with existing regional development plans. This is a successful model that can be implemented across Western Australia.

Regional artists, arts groups and communities take many steps every day toward creating their ideal regional arts state.

What is needed now is collective and decisive action.

**In more recent times the economic rationalism of the Market has replaced spiritual dimensions of Culture as the justification for alienation of the land. The Market demands that your land and your labour be put to the use that provides the greater and more immediate return. The regions suffer the fate of disengagement...and exploitation that sees a loss of permanent population and a lack of commitment to long term vision.**

(OPEN YOUR EYES Paper – racism, multiculturalism, asylum seekers and THE ARTS, John Sanderson)

**This exciting project of yours has produced a Manifesto that breathes life into culture and arts here in Western Australia. It is breathtaking in its simplicity, it's practical and has what I call 'flow'. I really like what you've achieved and like the change.**

(Ricky Burges, CEO Western Australian Local Government Association)

## THE NEED TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS

Western Australia does not have a Regional Arts Policy. It is the only state in Australia that does not have a funded Regional Arts Development Officer network.

There is no integrated vision of arts and cultural development in regional Western Australia.

Human and built infrastructure in the regional arts sector is under pressure from long term under-investment. The Community Development and Justice Committee Inquiry in 2004 found the majority of arts programs are delivered by a declining number of ageing volunteers due to changes in regional employment and the weight of regulation. The Inquiry heard from

many witnesses, themselves volunteers, who want to continue to contribute to regional life, but need support to do so. Seven years on, this situation has been exacerbated by significant social, economic and political change.

Country Arts WA wants to work with all levels of government to achieve each and every concrete step, as designed by regional communities, starting with a Regional Arts Policy, Arts and Cultural strategies and a regional network of arts workers. These first steps will support volunteers, professional artists, Indigenous arts centres, local governments, and other stakeholders that play a vital role in making Arts and Culture part of sustainable regional life.

# People with disability have a voice.....But are you listening?

## ARTS AND CULTURE IN POLICY – Other Steps, Other Places

This manifesto is not a lone voice. The Australian state and federal governments acknowledge the role of Arts and Culture in the revitalisation and strengthening of Australia's rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. This is seen in various policy and positioning documents.

“...not only do the arts play a central role in society and cultural expression but artists play a central role in all aspects of social endeavour” (**Australian 2020 Summit Final Report**, Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, 272).

The arts provides “the creative edge needed to face the new and potentially difficult problems of sustainability...It is clear that the Arts and Culture are playing an increasing significant role in community engagement, in health and well-being, in social inclusion of communities of all kinds (including youth, Indigenous, the aged, those of different cultural and geographic origins, and the socially marginalized) and importantly in reconciliation and the life of people in regional communities” (**Western Australian Government's State Sustainability Strategy**, Government of Western Australia, 2003, 223)

“Arts and culture continues to play a vital role in the lives of Western Australians and

their communities. While many individuals are actively and personally involved in arts and culture, others appreciate the value of the arts to the community even if it is not something they participate in often.... Western Australians appreciate the significant contribution that arts and culture make to a wide range of public value areas including community wellbeing, cultural identity and education.” (**Arts and Culture in Western Australia 2011**, Department of Culture and the Arts)

### Inquiry Into Regional Arts In Western Australia

In October 2004, the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee in Western Australia tabled a report, “Impact of the Arts in Regional Western Australia”. The report was a result of the broadest-ranging inquiry into regional arts ever undertaken in Western Australia and presents well researched findings and recommendations. These recommendations, if implemented, would improve access to the arts for regional people and have significant impact on the quality of life for all regional communities, not just those involved in arts activities.

“Throughout the world, arts and culture have been instrumental in changing communities and reviving cities, towns and regions. Arts and culture attract people to places to visit and live, and create a powerful sense of belonging. There is a growing body of recent work that documents the impact of creative communities, including the research and writings of Richard Florida, Elizabeth Currid and Charles Landry. These thinkers make a strong case for the contribution of arts, culture and creative industries to the economy and liveability of communities, and also suggest a kind of blueprint for intervention and re-invention through the arts.”

(artbeat – Regional Arts & Cultural Strategy 2010-2014, Arts Queensland)

# you cannot get art wrong

## The Report's Executive Summary States:

"The Committee considers that the arts are of central importance to regional communities.

The arts provide a creative, non-competitive and inclusive base upon which communities develop tolerance, mutual respect and an enjoyment of each other and their environment. The arts also foster and strengthen the identity of a town, community and region.

The Committee has seen benefits of the arts that go well beyond the economic, although the arts are demonstrably making an increasingly important economic contribution, both of a State and national basis.

The benefits of the arts can be seen in improved health outcomes, in providing young people with relevant and powerful forms of self-expression, and in improving the prospects of people staying out of the criminal justice system."

The report's Finding 23 states:

"The lack of a network of regional arts development officers is the single biggest obstacle to regional communities achieving equal access to arts funding, touring

programs and government support. Many of the problems facing a dwindling volunteer base in regional arts organisations would be overcome with such a network of locally-based arts professionals"

## Political Will Needed To Take Concrete Steps

Arts and Culture now feature strongly in government documents. Statements like these in policy, consultation and research documents show that both state and federal governments acknowledge the tangible and significant impact Arts and Culture has on our nation in terms of health, well-being and economic and social development.

We anticipate the unshakeable presence, encouragement, and support of a vibrant arts and cultural scene throughout regional Australia as we move toward 2029.

**We urge our government to read our manifesto, and see it as one of the planks of a strong and robust regional arts policy platform.**

**Diverse societies not only tend to create more new ideas, they also tend to be more receptive to them. Exposure to different cultures tends to broaden people's horizons... So, to unleash the power of diversity, you have to bring people together, believe in them, value them and match words with actions.**

(OPEN YOUR EYES Paper - economy, politics, big business AND THE ARTS, Philippe Legrain)

**Future predictors from the World Health Organisation indicated that depression is expected to become the world's second most burdensome disease by 2020. While medical and therapeutic solutions are usually invoked, we often don't consider the arts as a viable solution. It is time to ask how the arts can help restore and heal our ailing society. ...the arts can improve our mental well-being.**

(OPEN YOUR EYES Paper, Louise Helfgott)

## ABOUT COUNTRY ARTS WA

Country Arts WA is Western Australia's peak body for regional arts. Country Arts WA is highly regarded as an innovative, high value leader in the arts and in regional arts development, both locally and nationally.

Country Arts WA is a non-Government, membership-based organisation that assists communities across the nine regions of Western Australia to improve quality of life, build community cohesion, improve economic sustainability, increase sense-of-place, and support activities that engage people of all ages and cultures with the arts.

Country Arts WA has four key strategies that support regional arts development:

1. Performing Arts Touring - delivering shows that are chosen by regional groups. Country Arts WA supports these groups with presentation, marketing and media advice.

2. Regional Arts Investment – advice on arts projects across all disciplines (visual, performing, literature and youth) and funding to assist in making them happen.
3. Focus Region Initiative - targeting energy and resources to one region over a four year period in order to develop capacity, resources, and policy for sustainable arts practice.
4. Special Projects Stream - broadening the organisation's scope of activities in the regions, providing new opportunities for artists and communities, and generating much needed income for core needs.

Country Arts WA delivers funding and programs to regional centres on behalf of the State Government under a highly effective devolved structure. It has also been successful in leveraging \$1.78 million from the Commonwealth 2009 -2012 through the Regional Arts Fund which is also delivered through a devolved funding structure.

# Art needs to be a part of the fabric of communities in everyday life.

## OPEN YOUR EYES Conference 2011 – Delegate Quotes

“

**Arts needs passionate politicians behind it!**

**Technology allows people to find their tribes, even if virtually.**

**Creativity at work = productivity.**

**People with disability have a voice ...  
but are you listening?**

**Art needs to be a part of the fabric of communities in  
everyday life.**

**The arts can melt boundaries.**

**Arts can connect and communicate with fringe elements.**

**How do communities sustain themselves beyond mining?**

**Arts needs to be the first resort not the last – used in  
developing communities not fixing them.**

**Rediscover the cultural legacies we have lost (or are losing).**

**Arts creates a space to belong and share, creates the  
opportunity to connect.**”



**“What is required is a deeper connection  
to landscape – one that draws people  
together through a sense of inclusion and  
belonging and creates an identity that  
is truly Australian. This is the path to  
redemption – the rediscovery of a soul  
for Western Australia and the Australian  
nation as a whole.”**

**(OPEN YOUR EYES Paper – racism, multiculturalism, asylum  
seekers AND THE ARTS, John Sanderson)**

**Where do new ideas come from?  
...one crucial aspect is often neglected: the role  
of immigrants and of diversity more broadly.  
Newcomers' and outsiders' different perspectives and  
experiences and burning drive to succeed can help  
stimulate the new ideas and business on which  
our future prosperity depends.**

**(OPEN YOUR EYES paper - economy, politics, big business AND THE ARTS, Philippe Legrain)**

# Arts needs to be the first resort not the last - used in developing communities not fixing them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**OPEN YOUR EYES** was proudly supported by the State Government through the Department of Culture and the Arts and its Royalties for the Regions Grant Scheme through the Mid-West Development Commission, City of Geraldton-Greenough, Rio Tinto, Lotterywest, Crosslands Resources, 2029 and Beyond an initiative of the City of Geraldton-Greenough, Worley Parsons, Skywest and The West Australian.

The development of the 2020nine manifesto is community owned.

More than 150 people representing all nine regions gathered in Geraldton to participate in **OPEN YOUR EYES**. Many more people participated online to debate the Conference's cultural issues paper. All these peoples' ideas have helped create this Manifesto.

We would also like to thank the people who generously donated their time to assist with the manifesto process.

A small working party and regional reference group evaluated and refined these ideas in the months following **OPEN YOUR EYES**, distilling them into nine Concrete Steps contained in this manifesto.

## Manifesto Working Party

Suzie Haslehurst	Chair Country Arts WA
Sean Doran	Founder & Artistic Director, IDEA WA 2029
Jessica Machin	CEO Country Arts WA
Paul MacPhail	General Manager Country Arts WA
Frank Daly	Executive Director Royal Perth Hospital

## Regional Reference Group

Justine Lawler	Jan Teagle Kapetas
Annette Carmichael	Justine Walsh
Charmaine Green	Sharon Winter

“For the one in three West Australians who live and work outside the Perth metropolitan area, access to the arts is not a given. The art that is being made in these communities is often world class, it engages both communities and professional artists and often reflects local distinctiveness that captures the imagination of visitors and adds to the quality of life in regional centres.”

(Country Arts WA)

# COUNTRY+ ARTS+WA=

- 
-  PO Box 7012 Cloisters Square, WA 6850
  -  Level 1 King Street Arts Centre, 357 Murray Street, Perth WA 6000
  -  **PHONE** (08) 9200 6200 **FREECALL** 1800 811 883 **FAX** (08) 9200 6201
  -  **WEB** [www.countryartswa.asn.au](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au) **EMAIL** [info@countryartswa.asn.au](mailto:info@countryartswa.asn.au)
  -  **GASCOYNE OFFICE** PO Box 781, Carnarvon WA 6701 **PHONE** (08) 9941 7016