## **Notes from the first NSW Aboriginal visual arts practitioners to be heard at the workshop:** Building blocks for a stronger NSW Aboriginal visual arts sector (Capacity building)

11am - 12pm AEDT, Thursday 3 December 2020

**Introduction**

A reality for NSW is that for the last decade only four organisations in NSW have accessed IVAIS funding, which is 334k out of 21 million, 1.71%.

NSW voice needs to be heard and we need to do this strategically.

Important to add your voice to these inquiries and consultations and tell personal stories to give context to your perspectives and contributions.

Create NSW wants to hear about what they need to take on board, to be part of the solution, and from these conversations continue to connect and inform their approach.

Regarding capacity building and career pathways, how do we build and extend those pathways, what are those skills, what are the frameworks, what works for us?

**Telling your story**

April Phillips, Wiradjuri-Scottish illustrator, researcher and visual arts educator, talked about her experiences working and living off country, that making regular visits back to Wagga to learn her language and connect with community was building her as a person as well as her practice.

April noted that it is hard to measure the building of capacity, how do you validate trips back to country? She noted the pressure of having to produce something, especially within the constraints of a funding timeline.

April recently ran a VR/AR creative lab on the far south coast that had no pressure for an exhibition, no set outcome and no promises. This was one of the best decisions they made as it changed the dynamic of capacity for learning and growing. The project still had incredible outcomes, but these were open ended and not set on timeframes.

**What’s needed for a stronger NSW Aboriginal visual arts sector - capacity building**

Nicole Foreshew, Wiradjuri artist, writer and curator spoke about the importance of defining the ‘arts and culture sector’. When considering money, economics, and grant applications - how does the industry framework, institutions and artists work within arts and culture as a duality?

Nicole spoke more about the authority and ability of those who are judging her work and deciding on whether she should be given money, especially within the context of dispossession and disempowerment.

There is a uniqueness in Sydney - federally funded institutions, festivals that are national and international - is there a peak advisory body that works in those different spaces? What does that gateway look like?

Nicole posed the question of what freedom means to a maker, especially within the context of the duality of arts and culture. How does that feed into making art and authoritative power? Nicole’s work is ephemeral and is difficult for institutions to acquire as it is made of organic material and breaks down over time. What does support mean in this context?

NSW suffers from identity issues, are we in the business of contemporary art practice or are we in the ring?

There is an opportunity for a statewide agreement that looks at the national impact of this consultation paper. When raising any questions, it has to come from the people.

**General points raised in discussion**

Capacity refers to the individual and is a western term, need to be thinking about sustainability and not allowing anyone to be left behind.

The artform boards involved in grant assessment are not ideal when there are so many cultural layers at play.

IVAIS can only fund new people if others are defunded or there is new money

The impartiality model doesn’t always work.

Other states tend not to understand the NSW model or manner of business, especially with regard to not having art centres.

Lack of leadership in NSW, who is responsible and accountable for advocacy and reform? Critical to this question is the intimate relationship between art and culture.

No art centre in Dubbo, small galleries - no permanent Aboriginal exhibition spaces, no board representation, it feels very isolating and without real support or shared inspiration places.

Elders are essentially running their own art centres in NSW, self managed and self run.

Need an entity, a brokerage, someone to advocate, someone who is going to fight for IVAIS funding.

How do we have creative freedom, how do we navigate through the space of dogmatic authority?

Australia Council just announced some movement with regard to NIACA, but this is a national body, and does not assist in NSW representation. There is no centralised communication, no linking up.

Need to develop opportunities to come together and work out plans, we can’t move forward until we have come together in shared realities.

Needs to be more Aboriginal owned and runned enterprises.

Organisations that are not NFPs struggle to find opportunities to apply for.

ACHAA is on the way to being an autonomous peak body through a lot of complex funding.

There is not one model of business in NSW.

This is a pivotal point in time, as in climate/politics/health, arts and culture deserves the same opportunity - the solution has to be big and broad.

How do we come together to create a system of support?

A core focus needs to be looking at the definition of an arts and craft centre and broadening it to capture artists who have galleries in NSW.

Lismore and Ballina art gallery in the Northern Rivers are about the only opportunities to exhibit in this area. There are a lot of people working separately, wish there was a cultural centre to enable artwork to be done collaboratively and to create connection. Have to search out activities and events.

How do we form a collective power base? How do we create a cultural tsunami? So that government at the federal, state and local levels cannot ignore us.